

# **KARAGODIN® Investigation**

## **White Paper**

### **Methodological and Analytical Framework**

Denis Karagodin

Technical Information	3
Document Overview	6
Executive Summary	8
Introduction	10
Manifesto	20
Problem Statement and Structural Diagnosis	21
Context	27
Conceptual Positioning	31
The Case	37
Methodology	53
Framework	68
Originality of the Approach	119
Terminology	124
Research Ethics	137
Findings	149
Relation to Existing Discourse	155
Implications	180
Implementation and Applications	182
Media and Public Dimension	185
Scalability and Transferability	186
Limitations	187
Conclusion	189
Author	191
Future Development	193
Sources and Documentation	196
Support	200
Contact	201

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# Technical Information

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## **Document Description**

This document establishes a structured conceptual, methodological, and analytical framework for the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

It defines the principles and conditions through which documentary materials, institutional processes, and historical evidence are interpreted and mobilized within processes of attribution and responsibility.

While formally defined in this version, the framework constitutes a foundational structure for the investigation and remains open to further refinement, expansion, and development in parallel with its ongoing progression.

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## **Version Note**

This document is subject to updates, revisions, and expansion as part of the ongoing development of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

The canonical version available at the URL above should be considered the authoritative and most current version.

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# Document Overview

This document presents the **KARAGODIN® Investigation (Расследование КАРАГОДИНА®)** as a hybrid form that operates simultaneously as an investigation, a research process, and the development of a methodological framework. The investigation generates research, and the research produces a transferable framework.

It is addressed to a broad audience, including legal practitioners, researchers, social scientists, media professionals, and the general public. The document is designed to be accessible across disciplinary boundaries while maintaining analytical precision and methodological clarity.

The purpose of the document is threefold. First, it provides an understanding of how responsibility for acts of political violence can be reconstructed through documentary evidence. Second, it introduces a methodological model that can be applied in other investigative and analytical contexts. Third, it offers a practical framework that enables action through structured engagement with institutional systems.

The structure of the document follows the internal logic of the investigation. It begins with the presentation of the case and its empirical foundation, followed by analytical sections that articulate the methods, outputs, and findings derived from the investigation. The later sections outline the broader implications of the work, including its future development and its potential applications.

The document should be understood as an evolving framework. It reflects a process that is ongoing and open to further development, both in terms of empirical material and conceptual articulation.

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# Executive Summary

The KARAGODIN® Investigation is a legal and documentary project aimed at establishing full criminal responsibility for an act of Soviet state violence through the reconstruction of an unbroken chain of individuals involved — from direct perpetrators to the highest levels of authorization.

The project departs from conventional historical approaches by treating past political violence not as a closed historical phenomenon, but as an unresolved sequence of decisions, actions, and responsibilities. It applies contemporary juridical logic to archival materials and rejects the assumption that temporal distance precludes accountability.

The investigation operates within a specific structural context: Soviet repression is formally acknowledged, yet responsibility remains unarticulated. Victims have been rehabilitated, but perpetrators have not been systematically identified or held accountable. At the same time, access to archival evidence is both legally enabled and institutionally restricted, producing a contradictory environment of simultaneous recognition and concealment.

Within these conditions, the project develops a methodological framework for reconstructing responsibility across institutional levels. It establishes document-based links between identifiable individuals, procedural actions, and institutional decisions, demonstrating that accountability can be articulated even under conditions of limited access and systemic resistance.

The investigation has demonstrated the operational viability of this framework. Archival materials have been obtained and structured into evidentiary chains, enabling the identification of concrete participants in the act. The process has also produced broader effects, including sustained public engagement and independent ethical responses.

Although initiated as a single case, the investigation constitutes a scalable model. By focusing on individual responsibility within specific acts of violence, it provides a replicable framework applicable to a wider range of cases related to Soviet repression.

The significance of the project lies in establishing the practical possibility of completing an unfinished historical process. It demonstrates that the absence of accountability is not a structural inevitability, but a condition that can be addressed through systematic investigative practice.

At its current stage, the project has developed a comprehensive evidentiary and methodological foundation and is advancing toward the completion of prison-level process reconstruction, including the identification of individuals responsible for logistical operations, concealment practices, and restricted archival control.

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# Introduction

The KARAGODIN® Investigation emerges not only as an individual initiative, but as a continuation of a process that began at the moment of the arrest of *Stepan Karagodin* on December 1, 1937. From its earliest stage, the case generated attempts by family members to understand the circumstances of his fate. The present investigation represents a continuation of this trajectory, resumed under contemporary conditions and with expanded methodological means.

At its core, the investigation is driven by a structural problem: the absence of attributed responsibility despite the existence of documented acts of violence. Initial inquiry began with the identification of a single investigator associated with the case. However, access to archival materials revealed a significantly more complex structure, involving multiple individuals across different levels of the system, none of whom had been held accountable.

This discrepancy between documented participation and the absence of responsibility constitutes the foundational problem of the investigation.

Existing approaches proved insufficient to address this condition. Historical research has generally treated such cases as closed or descriptive, without pursuing direct attribution of responsibility. At the same time, earlier institutional attempts to investigate these crimes — including internal investigations conducted by Soviet security services — were structurally limited and ultimately discontinued when they approached higher levels of authority.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation proceeds from a different premise. It treats the case not as a completed historical event, but as an open structure in which responsibility remains unarticulated and therefore subject to reconstruction.

The project continues and extends earlier investigative efforts, while introducing a distinct methodological framework. This framework combines legal procedures, archival analysis, and public communication, operating within a legalistic structure that allows past events to be examined through contemporary normative standards.

Rather than functioning solely as a historical study, the investigation is structured as a working system — a procedural and analytical mechanism aimed at reconstructing responsibility through the coordinated use of juridical, documentary, and narrative instruments.

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation can be understood as a hybrid formation: at once an investigation, a methodological framework, and a practical system of action. It integrates elements of legal reasoning, structural analysis, and philosophical reflection, supported by a media environment that enables the articulation and dissemination of its results.

## **Epistemic Status of the Investigative Field**

At its initial stages, the KARAGODIN® Investigation operated within a field whose structure was not yet known. The boundaries, internal logics, and ontological configuration of this field could not be presupposed in advance.

In this sense, the investigation did not begin from an already defined analytical framework, but from a position of entry into an unstructured and partially unknown domain. The process resembled exploratory engagement, in which the descriptive language, conceptual apparatus, and structural understanding of the field were developed in parallel with the investigation itself.

As a result, both ontology (what constitutes the field) and terminology (how it is described) emerged through iterative interaction with documentary, institutional, and procedural realities.

Although the present white paper provides a structured and coherent methodological framework, it should be understood as the outcome of an ongoing process of field construction rather than as a complete or final description of a pre-existing domain.

## **Conceptual Description of the KARAGODIN® Investigation**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation is an independent research and media platform that combines archival investigation of Soviet state violence with contemporary institutional inquiry, philosophical analysis of bureaucracy and temporality, and the development of new narrative and public forms of investigation.

The project began as an investigation into the execution of *Stepan Karagodin* in 1938, a victim of Soviet political repression. Through extensive documentary and archival research, the investigation reconstructs the institutional mechanisms of repression and identifies individuals responsible for acts of state violence within the Soviet bureaucratic system.

A distinctive feature of the KARAGODIN® Investigation is that it does not operate solely as an archival reconstruction of past events. Alongside archival research, the project actively engages with contemporary state institutions and administrative systems, submitting formal inquiries and documentation requests to a wide range of Russian governmental bodies. These include the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, regional and federal prosecutor's offices, military prosecutor's offices, the Federal Security Service and its regional branches, civil registry offices, municipal and regional archives, university archives, and national archival institutions.

Through this process, the investigation directly interacts with the living bureaucratic infrastructure that historically inherited the Soviet administrative system. Because many legal and institutional frameworks of the Russian state are formally continuous with Soviet legal structures, archival materials related to Soviet repression often remain embedded within contemporary institutional procedures. As a result, the investigation is able to access, contest, and analyze documentary materials not only as historical records but also as elements of an administrative and legal system that continues to operate in the present.

This methodological approach creates a unique situation in which materials typically perceived as "historical" are treated as part of an ongoing institutional reality. The investigation therefore engages with documents and bureaucratic responses in ways similar to contemporary legal or administrative inquiries. In this sense, the archive is not approached as a closed repository of the past but as a dynamic field of institutional interaction through which historical violence continues to produce legal, political, and administrative consequences.

Conceptually, the project operates at the intersection of long-form investigative research, public history, accountability-oriented documentation, transmedia documentary practice, and theory-driven research. At its core lies a sustained examination of how bureaucratic structures organize political violence, how documentation operates within administrative systems, and how archival materials function within the temporal continuity of state institutions.

Another defining feature of the KARAGODIN® Investigation is its methodological focus on the interaction between temporality and bureaucracy. The investigation examines how administrative procedures, documentary practices, and institutional memory create temporal structures through which past events remain embedded within present political realities. Through this lens, documentation becomes not only evidence of past events but also an active medium through which institutional responsibility and political narratives are articulated in the public sphere.

The project is also unusual in that it transforms a personal family inquiry into a structured institutional investigation. What begins as an attempt to understand the fate of a single individual gradually develops into a broader examination of the mechanisms of state violence and the institutional systems that produced and preserved it.

Over time, the investigation has also developed its own narrative framework, STEPINQUEST®, a genre that emerged directly from the investigative process. Combining elements of investigative documentation, narrative reconstruction, and institutional engagement, STEPINQUEST® functions as a hybrid narrative form designed to present complex historical investigations while acknowledging their real-

world legal and political implications. The formal definition and legal registration of this genre further reflects the project's effort to conceptualize and institutionalize its methodological approach.

For these reasons, the KARAGODIN® Investigation can be understood not merely as a single historical case study but as an independent intellectual and investigative platform. Integrating archival research, contemporary institutional inquiry, narrative experimentation, and public engagement, the project explores new ways of examining state violence, historical responsibility, and the role of documentation within both historical and present political realities.

## **Short description**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation is an independent research and media platform examining Soviet state repression through a combination of archival research and contemporary institutional inquiry. Beginning with the 1938 execution of Stepan Karagodin, the project reconstructs the bureaucratic mechanisms of repression while identifying individuals responsible through documentary evidence. A distinctive feature of the investigation is its interaction with present-day state institutions whose legal and administrative structures continue to inherit Soviet frameworks. Over time it has developed its own narrative framework, STEPINQUEST®, positioning the investigation not only as historical inquiry but also as a broader platform for examining the political and institutional legacy of state violence. By combining archival investigation, direct bureaucratic engagement, narrative media, and theoretical reflection on temporality and institutional systems, the project operates

at the intersection of investigative research, public history, and accountability-oriented documentation.

## **Legal and Institutional Dimension of the Investigation**

A central dimension of the KARAGODIN® Investigation lies in its legal and institutional implications. Through extensive documentary work and systematic interaction with contemporary state institutions, the investigation reconstructs the full bureaucratic chain of responsibility involved in the execution of Stepan Karagodin in 1938.

The collected documentation makes it possible to trace this chain across multiple levels of the Soviet administrative system: from the individuals who carried out the execution, through the local and regional structures of the NKVD, to higher administrative authorities in Moscow, and ultimately to the central political leadership of the Soviet state.

Importantly, this reconstruction is not based on speculative interpretation but on official archival and administrative documents, many of which have been obtained through formal requests to contemporary institutions that inherited Soviet archival and bureaucratic structures. As a result, the investigation operates not only as historical reconstruction but also as a form of documentary verification of institutional responsibility.

Because the contemporary legal and administrative system of the Russian Federation maintains a degree of formal continuity with Soviet legal structures, the documentation assembled by the project can potentially acquire direct legal relevance within modern juridical

frameworks. This creates a situation in which materials traditionally treated as historical evidence may also function as elements within an ongoing legal and institutional context.

The project therefore pursues not only the identification of historical actors but also the broader question of legal accountability for acts of state violence. In this sense, the investigation explores the possibility that the documented chain of responsibility — from direct perpetrators to higher administrative authorities — can be examined within contemporary legal frameworks governing crimes committed by state institutions.

This dimension of the investigation helps explain why the project often encounters institutional resistance, including restricted archival access and administrative barriers. At the same time, the documentation assembled over the course of the investigation has already produced a substantial evidentiary corpus that continues to support both public and potential legal examination.

For this reason, the KARAGODIN® Investigation can be understood not only as a historical inquiry or media project, but also as an ongoing institutional and legal intervention, in which archival research, documentary analysis, and public documentation converge in the broader effort to address the legacy of state violence and the structures of responsibility embedded within it.

## **Bureaucratic Temporality and Methodological Approach**

An important methodological component of the KARAGODIN® Investigation lies in its analysis of the relationship between bureaucracy

and temporality. Within bureaucratic systems, time does not function in the same way as it does in everyday historical narratives. Administrative structures operate according to their own temporal logic, defined by documentation procedures, institutional continuity, and the persistence of legal frameworks across political periods.

Understanding this specific form of bureaucratic temporality allows the investigation to address events that are commonly perceived as "historical" within the context of contemporary legal and administrative systems. Because many legal structures of the Russian Federation formally inherit elements of Soviet administrative and legal frameworks, documentary traces from the period of Soviet repression remain embedded within institutional processes that continue to function today.

This creates a methodological situation in which past acts of political violence can be examined not only as historical events but also within the procedural logic of contemporary legal systems. By carefully reconstructing the chain of administrative decisions and documentary authorizations involved in specific acts of repression, the investigation demonstrates how responsibility can be traced across multiple bureaucratic levels — from direct executors to higher administrative authorities.

A central principle of the project is the emphasis on individual responsibility within bureaucratic systems. Each administrative decision documented in the investigation is attached to specific signatures, positions, and institutional roles. This makes it possible to analyze the operation of repression not only as a systemic phenomenon but also as a sequence of individual decisions carried out within institutional frameworks.

The methodological implications of this approach extend beyond a single historical case. By demonstrating how bureaucratic documentation and institutional continuity can be used to reconstruct chains of responsibility, the investigation suggests that similar analytical frameworks may be applicable to other documented cases of repression. In this sense, the project contributes to broader discussions about how archival documentation, administrative systems, and legal reasoning interact in the examination of historical state violence.

For this reason, the investigation has attracted attention not only in public discourse but also within academic research and international discussions on historical accountability, documentation practices, and the institutional legacy of political repression. The project illustrates how the intersection of archival research, bureaucratic analysis, and contemporary legal frameworks can open new methodological perspectives for understanding the relationship between historical events and present institutional realities.

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# Manifesto

The KARAGODIN® Investigation redefines archival practice as an operational engagement with institutional systems, transforming the archive from a site of storage into a field of action within bureaucratic processes.

Documents are treated not as records but as active elements within procedural chains; the archive functions not as a repository but as an interface; time operates not as a background but as a persistent bureaucratic structure.

Investigation shifts from interpretation to activation, and the researcher becomes a data operator working within institutional mechanisms.

As a result, the investigation produces not static knowledge but a generative system in which documentation, institutions, and discourse remain dynamically interconnected.

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# Problem Statement and Structural Diagnosis

This section outlines the core problem addressed by the investigation and provides a structural diagnosis of the conditions under which institutional responsibility remains obscured, deferred, or unresolved.

Rather than treating the problem as a set of isolated failures or historical anomalies, it is approached here as a systemic configuration. The persistence of unresolved responsibility is not understood as an absence of documentation, but as the effect of specific bureaucratic, procedural, and discursive mechanisms that stabilize closure while preventing accountability.

The analysis identifies a structural contradiction between acts of institutional violence and their subsequent administrative normalization. It further examines how documentation, rather than resolving this contradiction, may participate in its maintenance through processes of formal recognition, fragmentation, and displacement.

This diagnosis establishes the analytical foundation for the framework that follows.

# Institutional Resistance and Discursive Stabilization

This problem is further reinforced by the presence of institutional resistance and stabilized discursive formations that frame the past as closed and no longer subject to inquiry.

In particular, certain narrative positions — often associated with earlier historiographic or administrative paradigms — assert that revisiting past events is unnecessary, undesirable, or even dangerous. Such positions typically operate under the assumption that the relevant processes have already been completed and resolved.

However, this perceived closure is not neutral. It reflects the internal logic of the very systems that produced the original events and their subsequent administrative normalization. As a result, resistance to renewed investigation should be understood not as an external critique, but as a structurally conditioned response emerging from within the system itself.

This resistance is not merely a matter of interpretation or historiographic preference. It functions as a protective mechanism that stabilizes a broader system of administrative representation — one in which acts of violence are retrospectively normalized, partially concealed, and formally resolved through documentation.

In this sense, discursive stabilization does not simply frame the past as closed; it actively contributes to maintaining the conditions under which institutional responsibility remains diffuse, deferred, or structurally unarticulated.

# **Bureaucratic Closure and the Problem of Post-Factum Normalization**

## **The Structural Contradiction**

A fundamental problem addressed by the KARAGODIN® Investigation concerns the structural contradiction between acts of state violence and their subsequent bureaucratic normalization.

In many cases, individuals were executed, and decades later formally rehabilitated through administrative procedures. This produces a paradoxical condition in which an act of irreversible violence is retrospectively framed as resolved through documentation — specifically, through documents issued by the same institutional system that originally carried out the act.

## **The Paradox of Administrative Resolution**

In simplified terms, the structure may be expressed as follows: an institutional actor destroys a life, and that same institutional actor later issues a document declaring that the injustice has been corrected. This declaration does not correspond to any actual reversal of the act, nor to any form of effective accountability. It operates purely at the level of administrative assertion within the system itself.

# **Documentary Concealment and Distortion**

At the same time, this process is frequently accompanied by systematic practices of concealment and distortion. These may include the production of falsified or misleading documentation (such as inaccurate death records), the manipulation of civil registry data, and the temporal dispersion of records in ways that obscure the scale and coherence of the original acts. As a result, the administrative representation of events is not only insufficient but actively configured to fragment, dilute, and conceal the underlying reality.

Importantly, these distortions are not limited to historical practice but may persist within contemporary institutional records, where inaccuracies remain uncorrected and continue to structure the available documentary field.

## **Formal Recognition Without Responsibility**

Crucially, such rehabilitation is performed within the internal framework of the same institutional system as a formal recognition of error, yet without fully articulating or actualizing responsibility in relation to the specific act of killing. The individuals directly responsible for the act are not held accountable in a concrete and case-specific manner. As a result, the declaration of correction remains disconnected from both the destroyed life and the agents who carried out the act.

## **The Contradiction of Accountability**

This produces a structural contradiction: a document affirms that an injustice has been corrected, while no corresponding mechanism of responsibility — either institutional or individual — is fully realized.

## **Circular Displacement of Responsibility**

Moreover, a circular displacement of responsibility emerges. Institutional actors may attribute violence to “the state” as an abstract entity, while distancing themselves as individuals; conversely, the state may refer back to specific individuals as responsible agents, without assuming systemic accountability. This produces a closed loop in which responsibility is continuously reassigned but never fully established.

## **The Limits of Procedural Closure**

However, such procedural closure does not negate the original act. The existence of a rehabilitative document does not restore the destroyed life, nor does it resolve either the institutional responsibility or the concrete responsibility of the individuals involved.

## **Simulation and Persistence of Distortion**

This reveals a deeper systemic problem: bureaucratic systems are capable not only of producing documents that simulate resolution, but also of maintaining documentary environments in which the original violence is partially obscured, fragmented, or misrepresented. In such systems, both

the appearance of correction and the persistence of distortion coexist, reinforcing a structure in which accountability is continuously deferred.

In this sense, the system does not correct itself but instead generates a formal representation of correction while preserving elements of concealment within its own documentary infrastructure.

## **Rehabilitation as an Incomplete Process**

The investigation therefore treats rehabilitation not as closure, but as an incomplete procedural step that must be extended toward the establishment of concrete responsibility. The central issue is not only what occurred, but how institutional systems represent, absorb, and attempt to neutralize their own acts of violence through procedural means — and how these processes can be reactivated to produce actual accountability.

## **Primary Formulation of the Contradiction**

In its most direct form, this contradiction can be expressed as follows:

The following formulation was originally articulated in Russian.

**Original** (Russian):

*“Один человек убивает другого, а потом говорит: “вы знаете, я его убил, но вот справка, что я его реабилитировал — теперь всё в порядке”. Нет — не в порядке. И это абсолютно очевидно.”*

**English translation:**

*“One person kills another, and then says: “you know, I killed him, but here is a certificate stating that I have rehabilitated him — the matter is now resolved.” No — it is not. This is absolutely obvious.”*

This formulation captures, in condensed form, the underlying structure of the problem.

## **Analytical Restatement**

Analytically, it may be expressed as follows: the same institutional actor takes a life and later produces a document as if to say that the injustice has been corrected and the matter resolved. But it has not. The document neither undoes the act nor restores the destroyed life, and it does not establish responsibility for the killing.

This structural condition indicates that the problem cannot be resolved at the level of documentation alone. It requires a shift toward processes capable of establishing concrete responsibility — both at the institutional and individual levels — beyond the internal mechanisms through which the system currently represents and neutralizes its own actions.

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## **Context**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation emerges within a specific historical and institutional context defined by the partial recognition and simultaneous concealment of Soviet political violence.

In contemporary Russia, the fact of repression has been formally acknowledged. Victims have been rehabilitated, archival materials have

been partially opened, and memorial practices such as Books of Memory have been established. In certain cases, deaths have been officially registered, and the existence of investigative files has been confirmed.

However, this recognition remains structurally incomplete.

Repression is acknowledged as a general historical phenomenon, but not consistently defined as a system of mass killings. The dominant framework emphasizes the innocence of victims, while leaving unaddressed the question of responsibility for those who carried out the acts of violence. As a result, the process of recognition remains asymmetrical: victims are named, but perpetrators are not fully identified, qualified, or held accountable.

This incompleteness is reinforced by institutional contradictions.

On the one hand, legal and administrative mechanisms exist that formally allow access to information, including archival procedures, official requests, and legislative frameworks such as the law on the rehabilitation of victims of political repression. On the other hand, access to documentation is systematically restricted. Archival materials remain classified, access is limited or denied, and periods of secrecy are extended. In recent years, these restrictions have intensified, further reducing the accessibility of evidentiary sources.

This produces a dual structure in which recognition and concealment coexist within the same institutional system.

The specificity of this context is particularly pronounced in Russia, where the central decision-making structures of the Soviet system were located. The key mechanisms of political repression, including the highest levels of authorization, were concentrated within this institutional core. As a

result, the question of responsibility is structurally tied to this central context, making it a critical site for any attempt at reconstruction.

Within this framework, the historical processes associated with the Great Terror remain unresolved.

Although victims have been formally rehabilitated, the acts that led to their deaths have not been fully juridically qualified. The individuals who participated in the processes of accusation, sentencing, execution, and concealment have not been systematically identified and recognized as perpetrators within a unified framework of responsibility. Burial sites remain undisclosed, documentation related to execution logistics is restricted, and the evidentiary chain remains incomplete at the institutional level.

At the same time, the existing legal framework contains the procedural and normative conditions necessary for addressing these gaps. The absence of accountability is therefore not the result of a lack of legal possibility, but of an uncompleted process.

It is within this structurally incomplete and internally contradictory field that the KARAGODIN® Investigation operates.

The project demonstrates that even under conditions of restricted access and institutional resistance, it remains possible to reconstruct chains of responsibility through systematic procedural engagement. The investigation thus occupies a position that both depends on and extends beyond the existing system: it operates within available legal and documentary frameworks while advancing them toward their logical completion.

In this sense, the investigation does not emerge despite the constraints of the current context, but through them. The limitations of the system function as the very conditions under which the methodological framework of the investigation acquires its precision, universality, and demonstrable effectiveness.

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# Conceptual Positioning

This section defines the conceptual position of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

It outlines the project's status as a hybrid investigative formation, its role within scholarly and public discourse, and its relation to institutional systems of law, archives, and responsibility.

Together, these elements establish the theoretical framework within which the investigation operates.

1. **General Position of the Project.**
2. **Research Subject Model and Reference Anchor.**
3. **Position within Institutional Systems.**
4. **Conceptual Note.**

## General Position of the Project

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates at the intersection of historical inquiry, legal practice, and documentary reconstruction.

It does not conform to a single disciplinary framework. Rather than functioning exclusively as historical research, legal advocacy, or archival work, the project integrates these domains into a unified investigative process.

In this configuration, the investigation is not limited to the analysis of past events. It is structured as an active engagement with institutional systems, documentary infrastructures, and mechanisms of responsibility.

The project can therefore be understood as a hybrid formation in which research, legal procedure, and public articulation are combined into a single operational framework.

This positioning distinguishes the investigation from conventional academic and institutional approaches. It does not merely interpret historical material, but intervenes in its structure by reconstructing responsibility and producing conditions for accountability.

## **Research Subject Model and Reference Anchor**

### **Conceptual Description**

### **The KARAGODIN® Investigation as a Research Subject Model and Reference Anchor**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation represents a research configuration that differs from the conventional academic model of authorship and citation. Instead of primarily functioning as a body of scholarly publications authored within academic institutions, the project operates as a research process that itself becomes an object of scholarly analysis. In this sense, it can be described as a Research Subject Model within the humanities and social sciences.

In the traditional academic framework, researchers produce articles and monographs that are subsequently cited by other scholars. The KARAGODIN® Investigation follows a different trajectory. It is an independent historical investigation into Soviet political repression that has generated a substantial documentary archive and a structured evidentiary reconstruction of the chain of command responsible for a specific act of Stalinist violence. Because of this evidentiary and methodological structure, the investigation itself has been taken up by scholars as an empirical case within broader debates on historical memory, political repression, transitional justice, and archival accountability.

In this configuration, the project does not function merely as a source but as an analytical object. Academic works published by international presses have discussed the investigation as an example of a contemporary initiative aimed at identifying perpetrators of historical state violence and establishing responsibility through documentary evidence. As a result, the investigation occupies a position in which the research process becomes part of the scholarly discourse itself.

This dynamic leads to a second conceptual characteristic of the project: the emergence of a Reference Anchor. In historiography and memory studies, certain investigations or historical cases come to serve as stable reference points that scholars use when discussing broader theoretical or methodological questions. Such anchors allow researchers to ground abstract debates — about historical responsibility, archival access, or the politics of memory — in a concrete empirical case.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation increasingly functions in this way. Scholars referencing the project are not only citing specific findings but

also engaging with the methodological structure of the investigation: the reconstruction of chains of command, the use of archival documentation, the identification of individual responsibility, and the interaction between historical research and contemporary public discourse. Because these elements intersect with central themes in the study of twentieth-century political violence, the project has begun to appear across different scholarly contexts as a case study within discussions of Soviet repression and historical accountability.

Over time, such cases can contribute to the formation of what may be described as a research field around a case. When multiple scholars from different institutions and disciplines refer to the same investigation as an analytical example, a cluster of references begins to form. This cluster connects the original investigation to broader scholarly conversations about methodology, ethics, and historical interpretation. The investigation thus becomes not only a historical inquiry but also part of the intellectual infrastructure through which the past is studied.

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation illustrates how independent historical research can enter academic discourse not only through publication but through the creation of a documented case that scholars find analytically significant. The project therefore occupies a hybrid position between historical investigation, archival reconstruction, and an emerging reference point within the scholarly study of political repression and historical memory.

# Position within Institutional Systems

The investigation operates within existing legal and administrative frameworks, utilizing formally established procedures for requests, and access to information.

This positioning is critical. The project does not function outside the system, but engages with it through its own legal and regulatory mechanisms, including legal requests, procedural norms, and institutional protocols.

In this sense, the investigation demonstrates that systems of repression and concealment may be addressed through the same procedural infrastructures that sustain them.

At the level of archival systems, the project treats documents not as static records, but as elements of an active evidentiary structure. Archival materials are approached as components of reconstructible chains through which responsibility can be articulated.

With regard to responsibility, the investigation rejects abstract or collective attribution. Instead, it operates on the principle that responsibility must be identified, documented, and assigned at the level of specific individuals and institutional roles.

This positioning establishes a direct link between archival reconstruction, legal procedure, and the attribution of responsibility.

# Conceptual Note

## **The Investigation as the Completion of an Unfinished Historical Process**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation can be understood as a practice aimed at completing a historically unfinished process.

Acts of political violence are often treated as closed historical events once they have been temporally displaced. However, the absence of attributed responsibility indicates that such processes remain structurally incomplete. The event, in this sense, has occurred, but its juridical, ethical, and symbolic resolution has not.

The investigation proceeds from the premise that historical processes cannot be considered complete until responsibility has been articulated and established.

This perspective redefines the relationship between past and present. Temporal distance does not terminate the process, but rather suspends it in an unresolved state. The reconstruction of responsibility therefore constitutes not a retrospective act, but a continuation and completion of the original process.

In this framework, the investigation does not merely describe past events. It operates within their unfinished structure, extending them into the present in order to bring them to resolution.

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# The Case

## Origin of the Case

The KARAGODIN® Investigation originates from the case of *Stepan Karagodin*, who was arrested and executed during the period of Soviet political repression.

For decades, the circumstances of his fate remained obscured by incomplete and contradictory information. Initially, official records indicated that he had been arrested in 1937 and sentenced to ten years without the right of correspondence. Subsequent documentation issued during the post-Stalin rehabilitation period falsely stated that he had died in custody in the 1940s, rather than having been executed.

Only in the late 1980s, through the publication of memorial records, did it become publicly known that Karagodin had in fact been executed in 1937. However, this clarification did not include any attribution of responsibility, nor did it provide a coherent account of the individuals, decisions, or institutional processes involved.

At the outset of the investigation, the available information was therefore limited to fragmented documentary traces: records of arrest, contradictory statements regarding the circumstances of death, and partial references to individuals involved in the case. Crucially, no established account of responsibility existed.

The investigation began with an attempt to obtain access to archival materials in order to clarify the documentary basis of the case. Initial

points of reference included the identification of a named investigator associated with the case, as well as the broader question of whether any individuals involved in the arrest, prosecution, and execution had ever been held accountable.

Early examination of archival materials revealed a fundamental structural problem: despite the existence of identifiable participants in the process, no evidence could be found that responsibility had been attributed or pursued at any level. This gap between the documented fact of execution and the absence of accountability became the central problem of the investigation.

From this point onward, the investigation was directed toward the systematic reconstruction of the full chain of responsibility, including the identification of individuals, institutional structures, procedural mechanisms, and documentary links associated with the arrest, sentencing, and execution.

The initial scope of inquiry therefore included:

1. access to the investigative and archival case files;
2. identification of individuals involved in the process;
3. reconstruction of documentary evidence;
4. and the determination of the burial location, which remains unresolved and continues to be a central objective of the investigation.

# Expansion of the Investigation

The investigation initially focused on the individual case of *Stepan Karagodin*, but rapidly expanded as the structure of the case revealed itself to be collective rather than isolated.

Early analysis of the archival materials demonstrated that the case did not concern a single individual. Multiple persons were prosecuted and executed within the same procedural framework, each with separate but structurally similar documentary traces. Examination of civil registry records further revealed systematic inconsistencies: in some cases, later corrections reflected the true circumstances of death, while in others falsified records remained unchanged. This asymmetry suggested a broader pattern of document manipulation linked to the presence or absence of surviving relatives.

The investigation therefore shifted from an individual case toward a comparative and structural analysis of multiple interconnected cases.

This expansion proceeded across successive institutional levels. What was initially presented as a locally determined case within the Tomsk NKVD was subsequently revealed, through documentary analysis, to be part of a regional structure coordinated from Novosibirsk. Further reconstruction of directives, orders, and procedural documentation demonstrated that regional actions were themselves subordinated to central authorities in Moscow.

At the central level, the investigation established that decisions were connected to the Special Council of the NKVD and the Prosecutor of the USSR, operating within a framework defined by directives issued by the Politburo. This reconstruction made it possible to trace a continuous

chain of decision-making from local execution to central political authorization.

The key mechanism enabling this expansion was the systematic reconstruction of documentary chains. Orders, signatures, reference numbers, and interlinked case files allowed the investigation to move across institutional levels and establish connections between individual actions and overarching administrative structures. In addition, the case was identified as part of a broader operational framework — specifically, a larger repressive campaign in which multiple cases were processed sequentially and aggregated within a unified procedural logic.

The transition from an individual case to a systemic understanding became fully evident once a complete chain of responsibility and procedural coordination had been reconstructed. At this point, the investigation no longer concerned a set of isolated actors, but a coherent institutional system operating through reproducible mechanisms.

## **Reconstruction of Responsibility Chains**

The reconstruction of responsibility within the KARAGODIN® Investigation is based exclusively on documentary evidence. Attribution is established through the analysis of archival materials that directly link identifiable individuals to specific actions, decisions, and procedural steps.

Responsibility is determined through documented indicators such as signatures, official positions, procedural authorizations, and references

to higher-level directives. Each document is treated as part of a chain in which actions are not isolated, but embedded within a structured sequence of orders, approvals, and executions.

This approach allows for the precise identification of individuals involved at multiple operational and administrative levels.

At the level of direct execution, the investigation establishes the identities of individuals who physically carried out the executions, as documented in official execution records. These records provide explicit attribution through names, roles, and signatures.

At the level of immediate command, responsibility is attributed to officials who issued and transmitted operational orders, including heads of local NKVD units and administrative supervisors responsible for implementing execution directives.

At the investigative level, responsibility extends to officers who conducted interrogations, compiled case materials, and participated in the fabrication or procedural construction of charges. Their involvement is documented through investigative files, reports, and procedural documentation.

At the prosecutorial level, responsibility is attributed to officials who sanctioned the cases, including city and regional prosecutors who approved the progression of cases through the system.

At the regional administrative level, responsibility includes the leadership of regional NKVD structures, which coordinated, aggregated, and transmitted cases to central authorities for final approval.

At the central level, the investigation establishes the direct involvement of the Prosecutor of the USSR and the head of the NKVD, who formally

authorized execution decisions through documented procedures, including the mechanisms of the Special Council. These decisions were themselves grounded in directives issued at the level of the Politburo, where lists and orders were formally approved.

Through this multi-level reconstruction, the investigation establishes a continuous and uninterrupted chain of responsibility extending from local execution to central political authorization.

Importantly, the investigation does not treat decision-making and execution as separate or unrelated domains. All identified participants are understood as operating within a unified procedural and institutional framework, sharing a common functional role within a coordinated system. Responsibility is therefore not fragmented, but distributed across an integrated chain of action.

The investigation proceeds from the premise that within such systems, responsibility cannot be reduced to isolated acts. Instead, it is constituted through the alignment of roles, decisions, and actions across multiple levels of authority.

At the current stage of the investigation, additional work is focused on the reconstruction of lower-level operational processes, including the identification of individuals responsible for detention conditions, logistical operations, and the handling of bodies following execution. This requires access to additional archival materials, including prison records, which remain partially inaccessible.

# Documentary Achievements

The KARAGODIN® Investigation is grounded in the systematic acquisition and analysis of archival materials that make it possible to reconstruct both individual cases and broader institutional processes.

Several categories of documents have proven to be of critical importance.

At the core of the investigation are the original investigative case files from 1937 – 1938. These materials document the initiation, progression, and procedural construction of the case, including interrogation records, charges, and administrative decisions. They constitute the primary evidentiary basis for reconstructing the initial stages of repression.

A second key layer is formed by the postwar review materials, including verification and filtration cases conducted in the 1950s by Soviet security services. These documents are of particular significance, as they contain internal examinations of earlier investigative procedures, including interrogations of officials who participated in the original cases. Despite the existence of such reviews, the investigation has established that no meaningful attribution of responsibility followed.

One of the most decisive documents obtained is the official execution record. This document provides direct evidence of execution, including the identification of individuals who physically carried out the act. It serves as a critical point of convergence between procedural documentation and material outcome.

Equally important is the reconstruction of the decision-making framework underlying the executions. Documentary evidence establishes that execution orders were authorized at the central level by the

Prosecutor of the USSR and the head of the NKVD, acting within formalized procedures. These decisions were embedded within a broader chain of directives that connected local investigative processes to central political authority.

The investigation has also reconstructed the logistical chain through which cases were processed, transmitted, and approved. This includes documentation of how cases were compiled, transferred across institutional levels, and ultimately transformed into execution orders.

Additional categories of documents include materials related to personnel. Service records, operational files, and award documentation provide insight into the roles, activities, and institutional recognition of individuals involved in the repressive process. In some cases, such records contain quantitative data regarding participation in executions and related operations.

The investigation has further identified the existence of prison-level documentation, including records related to detention conditions, pre-execution procedures, and the handling of bodies. These materials are considered critical for completing the reconstruction of the final stages of the process, but remain only partially accessible.

A significant aspect of the investigation concerns documents whose existence was previously denied or concealed. This includes execution records, decision-making documents, and elements of the procedural chain linking local and central authorities. The successful acquisition of such materials has made it possible to challenge and revise established narratives concerning both the existence of documentation and the structure of responsibility.

The impact of these findings is substantial. The identification of execution records has enabled the attribution of responsibility to specific individuals, including those directly involved in carrying out executions. Comparative analysis of similar documents across multiple regions has further revealed the existence of structured execution groups operating within defined institutional frameworks.

At the current stage, several categories of documents remain inaccessible but are considered essential for completing the investigation. These include prison case files, documentation related to burial locations, and comprehensive personnel records of relevant officials. Their recovery represents a central objective of the ongoing work.

## **Current State of the Investigation**

At its current stage, the KARAGODIN® Investigation is focused on the reconstruction of prison-level processes associated with execution, detention, and post-execution handling.

The primary objective is to obtain access to prison documentation related to the facility in which the execution of Stepan Karagodin was carried out. This includes records concerning internal procedures, personnel assignments, and operational practices within the prison system.

Substantial preparatory work has already been completed in this direction. The investigation has identified a broad range of individuals who were employed at the relevant prison during the period in question. This includes personnel across multiple functional levels, from guards and wardens to administrative staff, logistical coordinators, medical personnel, and prison leadership.

In addition, the internal structure and hierarchy of the institution have been reconstructed, including the distribution of roles related to custody, logistics, medical supervision, and administrative control. A comprehensive database of personnel is currently being developed, covering a significant portion of the prison staff.

The central task at this stage is to correlate this reconstructed personnel structure with documentary evidence that can establish direct involvement in specific acts. This requires access to prison case files, which are believed to contain detailed records of detention, execution procedures, and associated logistical operations. These materials are considered essential for identifying specific individuals involved in the final stages of the process.

At present, access to these documents remains restricted. The investigation has established that prison case files exist and are preserved within institutional archives, but access is blocked or limited by relevant authorities.

In addition to prison records, other categories of critical documentation remain inaccessible. These include materials related to burial locations, which were subject to strict secrecy, as well as archival records of postwar internal investigations conducted by security services into the actions of personnel involved in repression. Personnel files of relevant officials are also only partially accessible.

These restrictions constitute a significant structural limitation, as they prevent the full completion of the documentary reconstruction. At the same time, the existence of these materials is not in doubt, and their recovery remains a central objective of the investigation.

Parallel to this work, the investigation has demonstrated the applicability of its methodological framework beyond the original case. The reconstruction of documentary chains and institutional structures has been extended to multiple locations within the same administrative system, including execution sites and prison facilities in Tomsk, Novosibirsk, and the Mariinsk area.

This expansion reflects the fact that the investigated events were not isolated, but formed part of a unified administrative system in which personnel, procedures, and operational practices circulated across institutional boundaries. The identification of such patterns confirms the scalability of the investigative method and its capacity to reveal broader structures of repression.

## **Operational Outputs of the Investigation**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates not only as a process of historical reconstruction, but as a system that produces structured outputs across documentary, analytical, institutional, ethical, and conceptual domains.

These outputs are not incidental results, but systematic effects generated through the investigation's methodological framework and its interaction with archival and institutional environments. While The Case describes the development and structure of the investigation itself, this section defines the types of outputs it generates.

# **1. Documentary Reconstruction**

The investigation produces structured documentary reconstructions in which dispersed archival materials are transformed into coherent evidentiary chains.

These reconstructions make intelligible the structure of events, decisions, procedural sequences, and institutional actions that would otherwise remain fragmented or obscured within archival and administrative environments.

# **2. Attribution of Responsibility**

On the basis of documentary reconstruction, the investigation produces attributable chains of responsibility across multiple levels, including individual actors, institutional structures, and procedural mechanisms.

Responsibility is not treated as an abstract category, but as a traceable relation between documented actions, authorizations, and outcomes.

# **3. Structural and Analytical Knowledge**

The investigation produces analytical knowledge concerning the functioning of repressive systems. This includes the identification of procedural patterns, institutional hierarchies, decision-making mechanisms, and recurring forms of administrative violence.

Such knowledge allows individual cases to be understood within broader systemic configurations.

## **4. Institutional Interaction and Response**

The investigation produces institutional effects through formal requests, legal procedures, and public documentation.

This interaction generates observable responses, including cooperation, refusal, restriction of access, and procedural resistance. These responses themselves become part of the analytical field, revealing the degree of institutional continuity and the persistence of concealment practices.

## **5. Human and Ethical Outcomes**

The investigation may produce voluntary human and ethical responses that arise from the public articulation of documented truth.

These include acknowledgment, dialogue, and, in certain cases, acts of reconciliation that occur without the transfer of responsibility across generations. Such outcomes emerge not through coercion, but through the conditions created by documentary clarity and ethical restraint.

## **Systemic and Conceptual Production**

Beyond its practical outputs, the investigation also generates effects at the level of conceptual and systemic formation.

# **1. Production of a New Analytical Framework**

The investigation produces a structured framework for understanding historical responsibility, institutional violence, and documentary systems.

# **2. Formation of Stable Conceptual Structures**

It generates stable conceptual and discursive forms through which complex historical processes can be articulated, analyzed, and communicated.

# **3. Cultural and Symbolic Articulation**

The investigation produces cultural and symbolic forms that support the transmission and stabilization of its analytical framework within broader public and intellectual contexts.

# **4. Goal-Oriented Systemic Operation**

The investigation functions as a goal-oriented system in which documentary, analytical, and public processes are directed toward the reconstruction of responsibility and the articulation of accountability.

# Emergent Human and Ethical Outcomes

In addition to its documentary and analytical functions, the KARAGODIN® Investigation may produce conditions under which unexpected human and ethical responses emerge.

A notable example is the case of a descendant of one of the identified perpetrators. After encountering the published materials of the investigation, she independently contacted the project, expressing shock upon discovering the role of her grandfather in the execution of *Stepan Karagodin*. In her letter, she acknowledged the historical reality of the crime, rejected any attempt at denial, and articulated a personal ethical position aligned with the recognition of truth.

This initiative did not arise from any demand, accusation, or expectation directed toward descendants. The investigation does not attribute responsibility across generations. However, by making documentary evidence publicly accessible and structurally articulated, it creates a space in which individuals may confront the past and define their own ethical relation to it.

The exchange resulted in the formulation of a document titled ***Act of Civil Consent and Reconciliation***, in which a gesture of reconciliation was extended without the transfer of guilt, accusation, or inherited responsibility. The act explicitly affirms that descendants are not subject to blame, while at the same time acknowledging the historical reality of violence and the necessity of its recognition.

This case demonstrates that the investigation operates not only as a mechanism of reconstruction, but also as a generator of ethical articulation. It produces a framework in which historical truth, once established and made visible, can lead to voluntary forms of acknowledgment, dialogue, and reconciliation.

## **Relation to the Ethical Framework**

The emergence of this case is consistent with the **ethical structure of the investigation**. The project does not initiate contact with descendants, does not assign hereditary guilt, and does not seek symbolic retaliation. By reconstructing responsibility through documentary evidence while maintaining clear limits with regard to non-participating individuals, the investigation creates a framework in which voluntary acknowledgment and reconciliation may arise without displacing responsibility across generations.

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# Methodology

This section outlines the methodological architecture of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

The methodology operates as an integrated system of analytical, procedural, and operational practices designed to activate, reconstruct, and structurally interpret bureaucratic processes through documentary evidence.

The methodology combines archival analysis, procedural intervention, and structural reconstruction of institutional action, and is oriented not only toward the interpretation of historical material but toward its activation within contemporary administrative and discursive systems.

**The methodology is presented through two complementary layers: a conceptual core and a structured architecture.**

## Methodological Core

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates through a methodological framework that combines archival reconstruction, institutional engagement, and narrative articulation. The investigation treats historical documentation not simply as a record of past events, but as part of an ongoing bureaucratic and institutional system whose structures continue to shape present realities.

# Methodological Principle

The methodological approach of the KARAGODIN® Investigation is grounded in the analysis of bureaucratic temporality and institutional continuity. Rather than treating archival documents as static remnants of the past, the investigation approaches them as elements of an administrative system whose procedures, legal frameworks, and documentary practices continue to operate in the present.

Within bureaucratic systems, time follows a distinct logic: decisions, signatures, and administrative authorizations persist within institutional structures long after the events they produced. By reconstructing these documentary chains, the investigation transforms archival materials into a field of active institutional analysis, where responsibility can be traced across bureaucratic hierarchies and examined within contemporary legal and political frameworks.

In this sense, documentation is treated not only as historical evidence, but as a mechanism through which past violence remains embedded within present institutional structures.

## Conceptual Formula

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates on the premise that bureaucratic systems possess their own form of temporality, in which administrative decisions and documentary traces remain embedded within institutional structures long after the historical events they produced. By reconstructing these bureaucratic chains, archival documentation becomes not only a record of past violence but also an

analytical medium through which institutional responsibility can be examined within present legal and political realities.

## **Core Principles**

**The methodology is structured around the following core principles:**

1. Dead Water and Living Water: Reconstruction and Activation
2. Bureaucratic Temporality: The Time of Institutions
3. The Machine and the Shavings: Primary Investigation and Secondary Effects
4. Bureaucracy as Executable Code
5. The Operator: Intervention and Systemic Exploitation

### **1. Dead Water and Living Water Reconstruction and Activation**

The structure of the investigation can be understood through a recurring motif in Russian folklore. In many traditional tales, when a hero has been killed and his body scattered, helpers first gather the bones and fragments. They pour dead water over them so that the body is restored and the bones reconnect. Only afterward do they pour living water, which brings the hero back to life.

The first phase corresponds to the work of dead water. Archival fragments are collected: execution protocols, administrative orders, correspondence, prison records, signatures, and institutional traces. Each document represents a fragment of a dispersed documentary body.

Through systematic research, these fragments are assembled into a coherent reconstruction of the bureaucratic process that produced the act of repression.

The second phase corresponds to living water. Once the documentary structure has been reconstructed, the investigation introduces these materials into the framework of contemporary legal and administrative systems. Because the legal and bureaucratic institutions of the Russian Federation maintain formal continuities with Soviet structures, archival documentation can re-enter the procedural logic of contemporary institutions.

In this way, the archive becomes active again. Historical documentation acquires new force when placed within the legal and institutional structures that inherited the bureaucratic lineage of the Soviet system.

Dead water restores the structure.

Living water restores the force.

## **2. Bureaucratic Temporality The Time of Institutions**

Bureaucratic temporality is a central analytical concept of the investigation.

In bureaucratic systems, time operates differently from the time of historical narrative. Administrative decisions, signatures, authorizations, and procedural chains continue to exist within institutional frameworks long after the events they produced. Documents do not simply belong to the past; they persist as elements within administrative systems that maintain institutional continuity across political eras.

Understanding this temporal structure allows the investigation to move beyond the conventional boundary between “past” and “present.” What appears historically distant may remain embedded within contemporary institutional procedures. Through the reconstruction of bureaucratic chains, responsibility can be traced across multiple administrative levels — from direct executors to higher authorities within the political hierarchy.

The investigation therefore treats documentation not only as historical evidence, but as part of a living institutional process through which the legacy of political violence continues to operate.

### **3. The Machine and the Shavings Primary Investigation and Secondary Effects**

A second metaphor emerges from industrial production.

When a metalworking machine shapes a piece of steel, the primary object gradually emerges from the cutting process. At the same time, bright metallic shavings spiral outward — thin curls of metal reflecting light as they scatter across the workshop. These shavings are visually striking, but they are not the product of the machine. They are by-products of the process through which the product is made.

The investigation functions in a similar way.

The central work of the project is the systematic reconstruction of the bureaucratic chain of responsibility behind the execution of *Stepan Karagodin* and the institutional system that enabled it. This reconstruction constitutes the primary objective of the investigation.

At the same time, the investigative process generates a range of secondary cultural and human narratives: encounters with descendants of historical actors, public discussions, artistic interpretations, moments of reconciliation, and broader reflections on memory and responsibility. These narratives can be meaningful and powerful, but they remain secondary to the central investigative mechanism.

They are the “**sparkling metal shavings**” produced by the machine of the investigation.

They signal that the process is active, but they do not define its purpose.

## **4. Bureaucracy as Executable Code**

Bureaucratic systems can be understood as semiotic structures that function in a manner analogous to executable code. Administrative procedures, documents, requests, and authorizations operate as structured sequences of instructions embedded within institutional frameworks.

In this sense, a bureaucratic request is not merely a communicative act but an operational input that activates specific procedural pathways. When properly formulated, such inputs trigger responses, generate actions, and produce effects within the system, much like the execution of code within a computational environment.

This perspective reframes bureaucracy as a modifiable and actionable system rather than a static institutional structure. Because bureaucratic reality is constituted through formalized semiotic operations, it can be navigated, redirected, and strategically engaged.

The role of the investigator, as a Data Operator, is therefore not only to interpret or reconstruct bureaucratic processes but to intervene within them by introducing structured inputs that activate, redirect, and expose the underlying procedural logic of the system.

## **5. The Operator: Intervention and Systemic Exploitation**

Within bureaucratic systems, most actors function as internal operators who execute predefined procedures according to institutional logic. Their actions reproduce the system by following established protocols and administrative routines.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation introduces a different figure: the Data Operator as an external and reflexive agent. Rather than being fully embedded within a single institutional framework, this operator navigates across multiple bureaucratic domains, engaging with their procedural logic while remaining structurally independent.

This position allows the operator to identify discontinuities, inconsistencies, and latent vulnerabilities within bureaucratic systems. Such points of instability—gaps between procedures, delays, contradictions, or unanticipated intersections of administrative rules — can be strategically engaged to produce effects that exceed standard procedural expectations.

In this sense, bureaucratic engagement operates not only through linear procedural execution but also through the exploitation of systemic openings. Without stepping outside legal and institutional frameworks, the operator is able to redirect processes, accelerate or decelerate responses, and expose hidden structures of responsibility.

This mode of operation can be understood, in a limited and controlled sense, as analogous to a “hacker” approach: not as a violation of the system, but as a precise navigation of its internal logic, including its limits, inconsistencies, and unanticipated behaviors.

At a broader level, this position extends beyond procedural interaction and may engage with the transformation of institutional frameworks themselves, including the potential initiation or influence of legal and regulatory change. In this way, the operator does not merely act within the system but participates in shaping the conditions of its operation.

## **Investigation as Institutional Intervention Methodological Synthesis**

Together, these three principles define the methodological core of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

The project reconstructs dispersed historical documentation (dead water), activates this documentation within contemporary institutional frameworks (living water), analyzes the persistence of responsibility through the temporal structures of bureaucracy (bureaucratic temporality), and recognizes the cultural and symbolic narratives that emerge as secondary effects of the investigative process (machine and shavings).

Through this approach, the investigation operates simultaneously as historical research, institutional inquiry, and public intervention. It demonstrates how archival documentation, bureaucratic structures, and contemporary legal frameworks can intersect to reveal the enduring mechanisms through which state violence is organized, remembered, and contested.

# Methodological Architecture

The core principles are further elaborated through a structured system of methodological components.

The methodology of the KARAGODIN® Investigation can be understood as a structured system composed of the following operational components, oriented toward the activation of institutional processes.

1. Ontology of documents
2. Philosophy of bureaucracy
3. Mechanics of investigation
4. Institutional consequences
5. Narrative form

The methodological architecture unfolds through the following components:

## Part I

### Foundations: The Philosophy of Investigation

#### The Event and Its Documentary Shadow Reality, Evidence, and the Semiotics of Bureaucracy

Every event leaves traces within institutional systems. Documents function as semiotic residues of reality — incomplete but structurally

linked to the events that produced them. Understanding this relationship between lived reality and documentary trace forms the starting point of the investigation.

## **Documentary Echo ("echoes of events") Documents as Residues of Action**

Bureaucratic records do not reproduce reality but echo it. Each document reflects an action that has already occurred. The archive therefore becomes a fragmented map of events, in which traces of reality survive in administrative form.

## **Bureaucratic Memory The State as an Operator of Historical Existence**

When bureaucratic systems fall into institutional inertia, they accumulate the traces of the lives they once governed. Lists of the executed, investigative files, and administrative records become the residual memory of individuals who can no longer speak. In such situations, the state itself becomes an operator of memory through the language of bureaucracy.

## **The Problem of the Data Operator Who Speaks for the Dead?**

Multiple actors compete to interpret archival reality: bureaucratic institutions, former officials, researchers, and investigators. Each possesses different forms of access, authority, and interpretive limitations. The investigation therefore confronts a fundamental

methodological question: who has the legitimacy to operate documentary truth?

## **Part II**

### **Mechanisms: How the Investigation Works**

#### **Dead Water Reconstruction of the Documentary Body**

The first phase of the investigation consists of gathering dispersed fragments of documentation — protocols, signatures, orders, and institutional traces — and assembling them into a coherent reconstruction of the bureaucratic structure that produced the act of repression.

#### **Living Water Activation of the Archive in Contemporary Institutions**

Once reconstructed, the documentary structure is introduced into contemporary bureaucratic and legal frameworks. Because modern administrative institutions inherit structural continuities from Soviet systems, archival materials can be reactivated within the procedural logic of present-day institutions.

# **Bureaucratic Temporality**

## **The Time of Institutions**

Administrative systems operate according to a temporal logic distinct from historical narrative time. Decisions, signatures, and procedural chains persist within institutional frameworks long after the events they produced. Understanding bureaucratic temporality allows the investigation to operate across the boundary between past and present.

## **Bureaucratic Activation**

### **Procedural Triggers and Institutional Motion**

Bureaucratic systems often remain inert until activated by formal requests, petitions, or inquiries. Even small procedural actions can trigger large institutional responses. The investigation therefore functions through strategic activation of bureaucratic procedures embedded within administrative systems.

## **Part III**

### **Dynamics: The Investigation in Motion**

#### **The Machine**

#### **The Investigative Process as Institutional Mechanism**

The investigation functions as a systematic mechanism that reconstructs chains of responsibility through documentary evidence and institutional

interaction. Its central objective remains the identification of the administrative structures that organized political violence.

## **The Shavings Cultural and Symbolic By-Products of Investigation**

As the investigation unfolds, it generates secondary narratives: human encounters, cultural interpretations, moments of reconciliation, and artistic responses. These narratives are meaningful but remain by-products of the primary investigative process.

## **Part IV**

### **Consequences: Investigation as Intervention**

#### **Documentary Responsibility Tracing the Administrative Chain of Violence**

Through the reconstruction of documentary chains, the investigation reveals how acts of repression were produced through bureaucratic systems rather than isolated decisions.

## **Institutional Continuity**

### **The Persistence of Administrative Systems**

The investigation demonstrates how bureaucratic structures persist across political regimes, creating unexpected continuity between historical archives and contemporary institutions.

## **Investigation as Institutional Intervention**

### **Archive, Bureaucracy, and Public Action**

By combining archival reconstruction with procedural engagement, the investigation transforms documentation into a form of institutional inquiry that interacts with the administrative systems it studies.

## **Part V**

### **Narrative Form**

#### **STEPINQUEST®**

### **A Genre of Investigative Narrative**

The narrative form developed within the project combines documentary reconstruction, bureaucratic analysis, and public intervention. STEPINQUEST® functions as a hybrid genre that reflects the methodological structure of the investigation itself.

# Epilogue

## The Archive in Motion

The KARAGODIN® Investigation demonstrates that archives are not merely repositories of the past. When documentary traces are reconstructed and activated within contemporary institutional systems, the archive becomes a field of action where history, bureaucracy, and responsibility intersect.

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# Framework

The framework presented below systematizes the methodological, operational, and analytical principles of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

It translates the investigative approach into a structured model that defines how documentary materials are interpreted, activated, and transformed into processes of attribution and responsibility.

The framework should be understood not as a static description, but as an operational system in which ontological structures, bureaucratic mechanisms, and discursive environments interact.

## Ethical Layer of the Framework

The framework operates under a set of embedded **ethical constraints** that regulate intervention, attribution, and interaction within the investigative process. These constraints are not external limitations but integral conditions of the system itself. They apply across all structural domains and inform each level of analysis and operation.

## Framework Structure

The framework is organized into four interrelated structural domains that together define the investigative system:

### I. Ontological Structure of Documentary Systems

1. Documentary Echo ("echoes of events") and Bureaucratic Activation
2. Static-to-Dynamic Transition
3. Dead Water and Living Water
4. Memory of Form: Persistence and Manifestations

## **II. Operational Mechanisms of the Investigation**

1. Bureaucratic Temporality
2. Bureaucratic Activation
3. Executable Bureaucracy
4. Procedural Input and Systemic Discontinuity
5. Data Operator
6. Operational Strategy

## **III. Discursive Environment and Interpretation**

1. The Machine and the Shavings ("Sparking Metal Shavings")
2. Media Reactions
3. Academic Reactions

## **IV. Establishing Responsibility: Legal and Structural Framework**

1. The Limits of Documentation as Closure as a Mode of Closure
2. Localization of Responsibility
3. Formalization and Legal Qualification
4. Attribution and Accountability

5. Legal Replicability and Distributed Agency
6. Operational Logic of Accountability
7. Symbolic and Cultural Embedding
8. Responsibility as a Structural Process

## **Part I**

# **Ontological Structure of Documentary Systems**

## **1. Documentary Echo ("echoes of events") and Bureaucratic Activation Documents as Traces and Institutional Triggers**

Another important dimension of the KARAGODIN® Investigation concerns the nature of documents themselves and the relationship between documentation and reality.

Every bureaucratic document is, in a sense, an echo of an event. A document does not reproduce reality in its entirety; rather, it preserves a trace of something that has happened. Administrative systems record events through signatures, protocols, orders, receipts, and procedural forms. These traces are partial and often fragmentary, yet they retain a structural relationship to the events that produced them.

A simple example illustrates this principle. Two people meet in a café, drink coffee, and talk. The event itself disappears once it has taken place. Yet a small documentary trace remains: a receipt indicating that two

coffees were purchased. The receipt does not describe the conversation, the ideas exchanged, or the meaning of the meeting, but it records a fragment of the event within a bureaucratic form.

In large institutional systems, such documentary traces accumulate into complex bureaucratic archives. Within these archives, documents generally fall into two broad categories.

The first category consists of directive documents. These documents actively organize reality: orders, authorizations, instructions, and administrative commands. In the context of political repression, such documents include arrest warrants, execution protocols, operational directives, and logistical instructions that made acts of violence possible.

The second category consists of descriptive documents. These documents do not directly produce action but instead record, regulate, or interpret institutional processes. They include laws, regulations, administrative guidelines, and procedural frameworks that define how institutions operate.

Together these two types of documentation form the bureaucratic environment in which events are produced and recorded.

Yet bureaucratic systems possess a peculiar characteristic. When no active request or inquiry is directed toward them, these systems tend to stabilize themselves into a state of administrative inertia. Documents remain stored in archives, regulations remain formally valid, and institutional structures continue to exist, but no process unfolds. The system appears complete and self-contained. The bureaucratic archive silently absorbs events into a condition that might be described as institutional forgetting.

However, this condition changes the moment an active request enters the system.

A formal inquiry, a legal petition, or a citizen's request can activate administrative procedures that otherwise remain dormant. Once such a request is registered, the bureaucratic machinery begins to move. Files must be located, records examined, responses issued, and administrative responsibilities clarified.

What is striking is that even a relatively small procedural action can activate a vast institutional structure. Bureaucratic systems may appear enormous and opaque, but they are ultimately designed to respond to procedural triggers embedded within their own legal frameworks.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates precisely at this point of activation.

Through carefully formulated inquiries, archival requests, and institutional correspondence, the investigation introduces procedural triggers into administrative systems that inherited Soviet bureaucratic structures. Each request initiates a chain of institutional reactions: archives are searched, documents are retrieved, legal interpretations are produced, and administrative responses are issued.

In this way the investigation does not simply interpret bureaucratic systems from the outside. It activates them from within.

The process requires a deep understanding of how institutions behave: their procedures, their limitations, their reflexes, and their internal logic. Bureaucratic systems can appear formidable, but they also possess predictable patterns of response. When approached with precise

procedural actions, even large institutional structures can be guided into revealing the documentation they contain.

The investigation therefore relies not only on archival analysis but also on a form of active engagement with bureaucracy itself. Documents are treated not only as historical evidence but as procedural elements within living administrative systems that continue to operate in the present.

In this sense, the investigation transforms bureaucratic inertia into bureaucratic motion. What appears as a silent archive becomes an active field of institutional interaction once the appropriate procedural questions are asked.

## **2. Static-to-Dynamic Transition The Ontological Activation of Archival Material**

### **Abstract**

This section introduces the concept of the Static-to-Dynamic Transition, a foundational principle identified within the KARAGODIN® Investigation. It describes a phase shift in the mode of existence of archival material, whereby static documents are transformed into dynamic, generative components of an evolving epistemic system. This transition is not merely technical but ontological, involving a reconfiguration of the document's function, structure, and capacity for meaning production.

### **Problem Statement: The Limits of Static Archives**

Traditional archival practice is grounded in preservation. Documents are collected, stored, and presented as fixed artifacts — stable, complete, and closed. In their digitized form, this condition often persists: scanned images, even when publicly accessible, remain fundamentally static.

Such materials exhibit the following characteristics:

1. they are non-indexable or weakly indexable;
2. they are structurally isolated;
3. they do not participate in narrative continuity;
4. they do not generate new relations or interpretations.

In this state, the archive functions as a repository of the past, but not as an active epistemic system.

## **The Transition: From Object to Process**

The Static-to-Dynamic Transition occurs when archival material is transposed into an environment defined by:

1. textualization (conversion into machine-readable form);
2. indexability (integration into search and retrieval systems);
3. narrativization (placement within a structured temporal sequence);
4. interconnectivity (linking across documents, contexts, and systems).

At this point, the document undergoes a qualitative transformation.

It ceases to function as a static object and becomes a process.

This process is characterized by:

1. temporal unfolding (the document exists within a developing sequence);
2. semantic expansion (meanings accumulate through interpretation and linkage);
3. relational integration (the document becomes part of a networked structure).

Thus, the transition is not additive but transformational: it alters the very ontology of the archival unit.

## **Conditions of Possibility: Technology and Discourse**

This transition is enabled by the convergence of technological and discursive conditions.

### **Technological Layer**

1. Internet-based infrastructures.
2. Content management systems.
3. Indexing protocols and search engines.

Machine-readable formats (text over raster).

These elements allow the document to become visible, accessible, and operable within a broader informational ecosystem.

### **Discursive Layer**

1. Narratology (structuring of meaning through temporal sequencing).
2. Post-structuralist frameworks (openness, multiplicity, non-finality).
3. New media studies (interaction, modularity, network logic).

These frameworks provide the logic through which static material can be reorganized into dynamic systems of meaning.

The transition occurs precisely at the intersection of these two layers.

## **Phase Transition Model**

The transformation can be described as a sequence of qualitative stages:

### **1. Static Representation**

Archival documents exist as isolated images or records.

### **2. Textual Activation**

Documents are converted into indexable, machine-readable text.

### **3. Narrative Integration**

Documents are embedded within a structured, evolving narrative.

### **4. Systemic Expansion**

The archive becomes a networked system generating new relations and interpretations.

### **5. Meta-Dynamic Amplification**

External systems (media, academia, algorithmic platforms) engage with and reinforce the archive.

At Stage 5, the system acquires the capacity for self-reinforcement and recursive growth.

## **From Dynamics to Meta-Dynamics**

Once activated, the archive begins to operate beyond its internal structure.

External actors and systems contribute to its expansion:

1. journalistic coverage introduces public visibility;
2. academic citation stabilizes epistemic legitimacy;
3. algorithmic systems (including large language models) enable large-scale dissemination.

This results in a second-order dynamic: the archive does not merely evolve — it is reproduced across external environments.

This can be defined as meta-dynamic expansion, where the system becomes:

1. self-amplifying;
2. recursively integrated;
3. distributed across multiple knowledge infrastructures.

## **Conceptual Implications**

The Static-to-Dynamic Transition challenges the conventional understanding of archives as passive containers.

Instead, it proposes that:

1. an archive can function as a generative system;
2. documents can act as processes rather than objects;
3. meaning is not stored but continuously produced;
4. the past is not fixed but dynamically reconfigured in the present.

This aligns with broader theoretical frameworks emphasizing openness, incompleteness, and processuality as fundamental characteristics of cultural and epistemic systems.

## **From Archive to Informational Entity (Supplementary Clarification)**

While the concept of the Static-to-Dynamic Transition is initially articulated in relation to archival material, its implications extend beyond the archive as such.

Once previously inactive documents are digitized, indexed, and narratively structured, they begin to coalesce into a unified configuration. This configuration is no longer reducible to a collection of individual records.

It acquires coherence.

It acquires context.

It acquires agency within informational environments.

At this stage, the system transitions from an archive into an informational entity.

This entity is defined not by the mere presence of documents, but by:

1. internal relational structure;
2. narrative continuity;
3. contextual unity (e.g., a specific person, event, or investigation);
4. capacity for external interaction (media, academia, algorithmic systems).

What was previously dispersed and inactive becomes:

1. structured;
2. activated;

3. self-referential;

and ultimately: ontologically distinct as a singular informational formation.

In this sense, the process is not simply the activation of archival material, but the emergence of a new epistemic object.

This object:

1. exists across platforms and systems;
2. evolves over time;
3. produces and accumulates meaning;
4. becomes recognizable as a coherent unit within broader knowledge infrastructures.

Thus, the Static-to-Dynamic Transition culminates not only in dynamism, but in the formation of an entity — a system that can be identified, referenced, and engaged with as a distinct presence within the informational landscape.

## **Core Formulation**

A static document preserves the past.

A dynamic archive produces it.

## **Summary**

1. Static archival materials are ontologically closed and non-generative.
2. Textualization and indexing enable a phase transition into dynamic systems.

3. Narrativization is the key mechanism of activation.
4. Technological and discursive conditions jointly enable transformation.
5. The system evolves into a meta-dynamic structure through external engagement.
6. The archive becomes a self-expanding, generative epistemic system.

## **Core Interrelated Concepts**

### **1. Informational Entity Emergence**

#### **Definition**

Informational Entity Emergence refers to the process by which a set of previously static, fragmented, and inactive materials — typically archival documents — becomes transformed into a coherent, structured, and dynamically evolving informational entity through processes of digitization, textualization, indexing, and narrativization.

This transformation results in the formation of a distinct epistemic object that is no longer reducible to its individual components.

#### **Description**

In its initial state, archival material exists as a dispersed collection of isolated artifacts. These materials are structurally unconnected, contextually incomplete, and epistemically inactive.

Through the Static-to-Dynamic Transition, these materials are:

1. digitized and made accessible;
2. converted into machine-readable and indexable formats;

3. organized into a narrative structure;
4. interconnected within a unified system.

As a result, the materials undergo a qualitative transformation: they begin to function not as discrete documents, but as elements of an integrated whole.

At this stage, the system acquires:

1. internal coherence;
2. contextual unity (e.g., centered around a person, event, or investigation);
3. relational structure;
4. capacity for temporal development.

This marks the emergence of an informational entity.

## **Key Properties**

An informational entity is characterized by the following properties:

1. **Coherence**

The materials form a unified and internally consistent structure.

2. **Contextual Integrity**

The system is organized around a defined thematic or referential core.

3. **Relational Density**

Elements within the system are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

#### **4. Temporal Unfolding**

The entity evolves over time through continuous expansion and reinterpretation.

#### **5. Indexability and Machine Legibility**

The entity is accessible to search engines, algorithms, and computational systems.

#### **6. External Interactivity**

The entity can be engaged with by external actors, including media, academia, and large-scale information systems.

### **Ontological Status**

An informational entity constitutes a distinct epistemic formation.

It is:

1. not a collection, but a system;
2. not a representation, but a process;
3. not static, but continuously generative.

In this sense, it exists as a distributed, evolving object of knowledge, spanning multiple platforms, contexts, and interpretative layers.

### **Relation to Static-to-Dynamic Transition**

Informational Entity Emergence represents a second-order development within the Static-to-Dynamic framework.

1. The Static-to-Dynamic Transition enables activation.
2. Informational Entity Emergence describes the result of that activation.

Thus:

Static material becomes dynamic structure.

Dynamic structure becomes informational entity.

### **Conceptual Formula**

Dispersed documents → Structured system → Informational entity.

### **Condensed Formulation**

An archive becomes an entity when its materials begin to act as a system.

## **2. Narrative Activation**

### **Definition**

Narrative Activation refers to the process by which static or fragmented materials acquire meaning through their integration into a structured, temporally ordered narrative framework.

It is the mechanism through which otherwise disconnected elements become intelligible, interpretable, and capable of producing coherent knowledge.

### **Description**

In their unstructured state, documents and data remain informationally inert. They may contain facts, but they do not produce meaning independently.

Narrative Activation occurs when these elements are:

1. arranged within a temporal sequence;
2. contextualized within a broader interpretative framework;
3. linked through causality, association, or thematic continuity.

Through this process, the materials begin to function as parts of a narrative system rather than isolated informational units.

Narrative is not an additional layer imposed on data — it is the condition under which data becomes meaningful.

## **Key Properties**

### **1. Temporal Structuring**

Elements are organized in a sequence that enables unfolding over time.

### **2. Contextual Framing**

Each element is interpreted within a broader conceptual or historical context.

### **3. Relational Meaning Production**

Meaning emerges from the relationships between elements, not from isolated facts.

### **4. Interpretative Openness**

The narrative remains expandable and subject to reinterpretation.

## **Ontological Role**

Narrative Activation transforms information into meaning.

Without narrative, data remains inert.

With narrative, it becomes epistemically active.

## **Relation to Other Concepts**

1. Narrative Activation is the primary mechanism of the Static-to-Dynamic Transition.

2. It enables the conditions for Informational Entity Emergence.

## **Conceptual Formula**

Data → Narrative structuring → Meaning

## **Condensed Formulation**

Data becomes meaningful when it enters a narrative.

### **3. Epistemic System Affirmation**

#### **Definition**

Epistemic System Affirmation refers to the process by which a dynamically structured informational entity becomes validated, stabilized, and recognized as a legitimate unit of knowledge through interaction with external systems.

These systems include media, academic institutions, and algorithmic infrastructures.

#### **Description**

Once an informational entity has emerged, it exists as a structured and dynamic system. However, its epistemic status is not fully established until it is acknowledged and engaged by external environments.

Epistemic System Affirmation occurs when:

1. the system is referenced by independent actors;
2. it is cited, discussed, or analyzed in academic contexts;
3. it is represented in media discourse;
4. it is indexed and integrated into algorithmic systems (e.g., search engines, LLMs).

Through these interactions, the system transitions from internal coherence to external legitimacy.

#### **Key Properties**

### 1. **External Validation**

Recognition by independent sources and institutions.

### 2. **Reproducibility Across Contexts**

The system is represented consistently in multiple environments.

### 3. **Stabilization of Meaning**

Core interpretations become relatively устойчивыми (stable) across discourse.

### 4. **Integration into Knowledge Infrastructures**

The entity becomes part of broader informational and epistemic systems.

## **Ontological Role**

Epistemic System Affirmation transforms a system into a recognized unit of knowledge.

It marks the transition from:

→ existence

to

→ acknowledged reality within knowledge structures.

## **Relation to Other Concepts**

1. Narrative Activation produces meaning.
2. Informational Entity Emergence produces a structured system.
3. Epistemic System Affirmation produces recognition and legitimacy.

## **Conceptual Formula**

Informational entity → External validation → Epistemic recognition

## Condensed Formulation

A system becomes knowledge when others recognize it as such.

## Internal Structure of the Static-to-Dynamic Transition

**The Static-to-Dynamic Transition** is not a singular transformation, but a multi-layered process composed of distinct yet interrelated mechanisms. These mechanisms define the internal logic through which static material becomes dynamic and acquires epistemic significance.

At the foundational level, **Narrative Activation** functions as the primary mechanism of transformation. It organizes fragmented materials into a temporally structured and contextually coherent sequence, enabling the production of meaning. Without this stage, data remains informationally inert.

As this process develops, **Informational Entity Emergence** occurs. The activated materials coalesce into a unified and self-referential system, no longer reducible to individual documents. At this point, the archive transitions into an informational entity — a structured, evolving formation capable of generating and sustaining meaning over time.

Finally, **Epistemic System Affirmation** completes the transition. Through interaction with external systems — including media, academia, and algorithmic infrastructures — the entity is recognized, validated, and integrated into broader knowledge frameworks. This stage stabilizes the system as a legitimate epistemic object.

Taken together, these processes constitute the internal dynamics of the Static-to-Dynamic Transition: from activation, to formation, to recognition.

### **3. Dead Water and Living Water Structural Reconstruction and Procedural Reactivation**

Russian folklore preserves a recurring motif: when a hero is killed and his body scattered, helpers first gather the bones and fragments that remain. They pour "dead water" over the body so that the bones reconnect and the wounds close. Only afterward do they pour "living water," which restores life itself.

The distinction between these two waters is subtle but fundamental: dead water restores structure; living water restores force.

This symbolic structure provides a precise description of the methodological logic of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

The first phase of the investigation corresponds to what may be called the principle of dead water. In this phase, the task is to locate, collect, and reconstruct fragments of a dispersed documentary body: archival files, execution protocols, administrative orders, institutional correspondence, and other traces connected to the execution of Stepan Karagodin in 1938. Each document exists as an isolated fragment. Individually, these fragments appear incomplete; together, they form the skeletal structure of an event.

The work of the investigation is to assemble these fragments into a coherent system: to reconstruct the chain of decisions, identify the individuals involved, and restore the bureaucratic infrastructure through which the act of repression was organized. This includes not only direct executors, but also the administrative mechanisms — offices, signatures,

authorizations, and procedures — that connected individual actions to institutional authority.

Like the bones of the hero in the folktale, these documents must first be reassembled. Only when the fragments are structurally connected does the full mechanism of repression become visible.

However, reconstruction alone does not activate the investigation.

The second phase introduces the principle of living water. Once the documentary structure has been reconstructed, the investigation places these materials within the framework of contemporary legal and bureaucratic reality. The legal and administrative system of the Russian Federation — which in many respects inherits the institutional structures of the Soviet state — becomes the environment in which these documents begin to operate again.

At this point, archival materials cease to function solely as historical evidence. They re-enter the procedural logic of institutions that preserve continuity with the structures that originally produced them. The past, reconstructed through documentation, intersects with the legal and administrative mechanisms of the present.

The archive begins to move.

What appeared to be a closed historical record reveals itself as part of an ongoing institutional reality. Bureaucratic systems possess their own temporality: decisions, signatures, and administrative authorizations continue to exist within institutional frameworks long after the events they produced.

Through this interaction, the investigation operates simultaneously in two temporal dimensions. It reconstructs the past while engaging the

present. Documents recovered from the archive are not merely interpreted; they are reintroduced into the living administrative systems that give them operative force.

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation functions as a form of bureaucratic and temporal intervention. The archive provides the fragments; the contemporary institutional framework provides the conditions under which those fragments regain agency.

The folklore metaphor is therefore not merely illustrative. It captures the operational logic of the method itself:

First, the scattered body must be reassembled.

Then, the structures of the present allow it to act.

**Dead water restores structure.**

**Living water restores force.**

## **4. Memory of Form: Persistence and Manifestations**

*In addition to documentary and procedural forms of persistence, historical processes may also endure through spatial configurations shaped by prior conditions of intensity.*

**Memory of Form** refers to the capacity of a spatial structure to retain and rearticulate patterns of human concentration, intensity, and presence that were once enacted within it — even after the original function, population, and explicit meaning of the space have completely changed.

This concept does not describe memory in a narrative, symbolic, or archival sense. It refers instead to a persistence of form that emerges from conditions of extreme existential intensity.

In situations involving radical events — such as arrest, confinement, violence, or execution — multiple layers of human activity converge: physical bodies, institutional procedures, logistical systems, bureaucratic operations, and symbolic orders. These elements do not operate independently; they become synchronized and compressed into highly dense configurations.

Such configurations can be understood as nodes of concentrated existential intensity. Within these nodes, human presence is not merely accumulated but structured through overlapping systems of control, movement, classification, and meaning.

These nodes are not only events in time. They imprint a structural condition onto the space itself.

After the original function ceases, the node may dissolve at the level of explicit activity. The arrests stop, the violence ends, the institutional function is dismantled. However, the structural imprint produced by the prior concentration does not necessarily disappear.

In some cases, the configuration disperses completely. In others, it persists.

Where it persists, it does not return in its original form. Instead, it re-emerges through indirect, non-linear manifestations. The space begins to organize new forms of human activity in ways that echo the prior configuration — not in content, but in structure.

These manifestations may take different forms, including material, spatial, behavioral, and notably aesthetic configurations. In many cases, it is precisely through aesthetic practices that the persistence of form becomes perceptible. Artistic production, representation of the human body, and the reproduction of human figures may unconsciously rearticulate prior structural conditions embedded in the space.

Such manifestations are not intentional and not designed. They are not representations of the past. Rather, they are structural continuities emerging from the residual organization of space.

This persistence may become visible when the space once used for extreme concentration of human bodies continues to generate conditions in which human forms are again accumulated, reproduced, or articulated within the same spatial limits.

A concrete example of this phenomenon can be observed in the former NKVD building in Tomsk. The building, once used for detention and confinement during the period of mass repression, now houses an art school. In its present function, children produce drawings of human figures, while in the basement, sculptural workshops generate large quantities of human bodies and body parts in material form.

Although these activities belong entirely to a different institutional and cultural context, the spatial configuration reveals a striking structural continuity. The concentration, reproduction, and articulation of human forms within the same bounded environment echo the prior condition of densely confined bodies within the same structure.

This correspondence does not operate at the level of intention or representation. It emerges as a readable and stable form of structural

persistence, where aesthetic production becomes a medium through which the residual configuration of the space is manifested.

The phenomenon may be described as a form of structural after-effect: the space retains a capacity to organize human presence according to patterns established under previous conditions of intensity.

In this sense, Memory of Form is not about remembering events, but about the endurance of spatial configurations shaped by those events.

It becomes perceptible in moments where the present unexpectedly reveals a structural echo of the past — where different actors, purposes, and meanings nonetheless produce a recognizable density, repetition, or concentration of human forms.

This persistence can be understood as a form of existential saturation of space: a condition in which the accumulated intensity of past human experience continues to shape the spatial logic of the environment beyond its original historical context.

*This phenomenon has been identified within the investigative process as a recurrent structural condition observed in specific spatial contexts.*

*While not reducible to documentary or procedural analysis, it constitutes an additional analytical dimension that may be engaged through interdisciplinary approaches, including spatial analysis, aesthetic practices, and forms of situated observation.*

*Its inclusion in the framework reflects the recognition that not all forms of persistence operate within explicit institutional or archival systems, and that certain structural continuities may require alternative modes of perception and interpretation.*

*This phenomenon constitutes a recurrent structural condition that cannot be fully reduced to existing analytical frameworks, yet manifests in stable and readable forms and therefore requires further investigation.*

## **Part II**

# **Operational Mechanisms of the Investigation**

## **1. Bureaucratic Temporality**

Bureaucratic systems operate within a distinct temporal structure that differs fundamentally from linear or event-based conceptions of time.

Within such systems, actions do not simply pass into the past. Decisions, authorizations, and procedural acts persist as active elements embedded within institutional frameworks. Documents do not merely record events; they preserve and sustain their operative potential.

The investigation operates across two interrelated temporal dimensions:

1. **the historical dimension**, in which events originally occurred and were documented;
2. **the procedural-present dimension**, in which these documents re-enter institutional processes and regain operative force.

Through this interaction, archival materials cease to function solely as historical evidence. When reintroduced into contemporary legal and administrative frameworks, they become part of ongoing procedural chains.

In this sense, bureaucratic temporality is not passive duration, but an active condition of persistence and reactivation. The archive does not belong exclusively to the past; it constitutes a latent operational field within the present.

The investigation intervenes precisely at this point, transforming temporal distance from a limitation into a structural resource.

Time within bureaucratic systems does not erase responsibility — it preserves the conditions for its reactivation.

## **2. Bureaucratic Activation**

Within bureaucratic systems, documents do not act automatically. Their existence alone does not produce consequences.

Archival materials, records, and documented facts may remain institutionally inactive unless they are introduced into operative procedures. In this sense, the archive constitutes a latent field — structured, but not yet activated.

Activation occurs when documented material is reinserted into formal processes that require institutional response. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. submission of formal inquiries;
2. initiation of legal claims;
3. procedural requests within administrative systems;
4. procedural submissions to state authorities.

Through such acts, documents transition from passive records to operative elements within bureaucratic logic.

Once activated, documents begin to circulate within institutional frameworks:

1. they are registered;
2. processed;
3. evaluated;
4. and responded to within formalized procedures.

This process compels institutions to engage with the material not as historical residue, but as part of an active procedural chain.

Activation therefore does not impose external pressure on the system. It operates internally, by triggering mechanisms that are already embedded within bureaucratic structures.

In this sense, activation is not an intervention from outside, but a reconfiguration of existing procedural dynamics.

The investigation functions precisely through this mechanism. It does not seek to confront institutions externally, but to initiate processes that compel them to act according to their own rules.

### **3. Executable Bureaucracy Semiotic Code and Procedural Execution**

Bureaucratic systems can be understood as structured semiotic environments that function in a manner analogous to executable code. Administrative procedures, documents, requests, authorizations, and procedural forms operate not merely as descriptive records, but as ordered sequences of instructions embedded within institutional frameworks.

In this sense, bureaucracy does not consist only of static rules or accumulated records. It operates through formalized signs that are readable, actionable, and procedurally binding within the system itself. A signature, a registration number, a stamped request, or a procedural directive does not simply represent an administrative act; it performs one.

This perspective allows bureaucracy to be understood not as a passive institutional structure, but as an active system of execution. Its semiotic forms are not inert. They carry operative force insofar as they are recognized within the procedural logic of the institutions that sustain them.

To engage bureaucracy, therefore, is not only to interpret its language but to understand how that language functions as code. The investigation approaches documents, requests, and institutional correspondence as elements of an executable environment in which formalized expressions trigger processes, redirect workflows, and produce institutional effects.

From this standpoint, bureaucratic reality is neither fixed nor purely representational. Because it is constituted through formalized and executable semiotic operations, it can be navigated, strategically engaged, and, under specific conditions, redirected from within its own procedural logic.

## **4. Procedural Input and Systemic Discontinuity Activation, Vulnerability, and Strategic Navigation**

Within such a system, a bureaucratic request is not merely a communicative act but a procedural input. When properly formulated, a request, petition, submission, or formal inquiry enters the system as an operational element that activates specific pathways of response.

These inputs do not function uniformly. Their effects depend on timing, phrasing, institutional context, jurisdictional overlap, and the procedural conditions under which they are introduced. For this reason, engagement with bureaucracy requires more than formal literacy; it requires an operational understanding of how administrative systems receive, process, delay, or redistribute action.

At this level, bureaucratic structures reveal another characteristic: they are not seamless. Every institutional system contains discontinuities — points of inconsistency, delay, contradiction, overlap, or structural misalignment. These may arise between different offices, jurisdictions, procedural mandates, or archival and legal regimes. Such discontinuities are not external to the system; they are internal features of its actual operation.

The investigation treats these discontinuities not simply as obstacles, but as strategic points of engagement. They are moments where the procedural logic of bureaucracy becomes visible through its limits, frictions, or unanticipated intersections. Under such conditions, precisely formulated procedural inputs can produce effects that exceed routine

expectations, making hidden chains of responsibility or institutional inertia newly accessible.

In this sense, bureaucratic engagement does not proceed only through linear compliance with formal rules. It also depends on the capacity to identify and work through systemic openings. This may include the acceleration of dormant procedures, the redirection of requests across institutional boundaries, or the exposure of contradictions between archival records, legal obligations, and administrative responses.

This mode of action may be understood, in a limited and controlled sense, as analogous to a "**hacker**" approach: not as a violation of the system, but as a precise navigation of its internal logic, including its gaps, inconsistencies, and latent procedural possibilities. The investigation remains within legal and institutional frameworks, yet it does not confine itself to passive procedural expectation. It acts by understanding where the system is executable, where it is unstable, and where intervention may produce disproportionate institutional effects.

## **5. Data Operator Authority and Mediation in Documentary Reality**

Another important methodological problem revealed by the KARAGODIN® Investigation concerns the question of the data operator: who speaks for documentary reality when those whose lives were destroyed can no longer speak for themselves.

When bureaucratic systems fall into administrative inertia, they do not simply preserve records. They accumulate within themselves the traces of the lives with which they once dealt. Lists of those executed, investigative

files, prison documents, administrative decisions, and procedural records become the surviving documentary remains of people who were deprived not only of life but also of the possibility of speaking in their own name.

In such situations, the bureaucratic system itself becomes an operator of memory. It stores, classifies, and reproduces the traces of existence according to its own internal logic. Because bureaucracy forms the institutional skeleton of the state, this also means that the state speaks about the people it has processed — and, in many cases, destroyed — through the language of administration itself.

Yet this raises a fundamental problem. Bureaucratic memory is not neutral. It preserves reality selectively, categorically, and according to procedural necessity rather than human experience. The people whose traces remain in the archive survive there in an administrative form shaped by the same structures that once governed their persecution.

A second group of interpreters may consist of former security officials or institutional insiders who had direct access to such archives. They often possess a degree of documentary completeness unavailable to outside observers. Yet their understanding of reality may remain constrained by the institutional logic that formed them. Their proximity to the archive does not necessarily produce critical distance from the system that generated it.

A third group consists of historians, researchers, and external investigators. These actors may be more capable of ethical or critical reflection than institutional insiders, but they often lack full documentary access. Their interpretations can therefore remain partial, limited by secrecy, restriction, and incomplete records. They too become operators of memory, but under conditions of structural incompleteness.

This creates a difficult methodological tension. Institutional insiders may possess greater documentary completeness but limited reflexive freedom. External interpreters may possess greater ethical and analytical independence but limited documentary reach. The question of who is more accurate, more competent, or even more humane in relation to the documentary remains of the dead cannot be resolved easily.

In some cases, bureaucracy itself may preserve certain forms of reality more faithfully than later interpreters, simply because it records procedural traces without transforming them into moral capital, symbolic spectacle, or political self-display. At the same time, bureaucracy also depersonalizes, categorizes, and absorbs human lives into administrative abstraction. Neither bureaucratic custody nor external interpretation can therefore be accepted as self-evidently adequate.

For this reason, the KARAGODIN® Investigation treats the problem of the data operator as a central methodological issue. The question is not only how documents are found or activated, but who has the authority to interpret them, under what conditions, and with what degree of ethical, documentary, and institutional adequacy.

In this framework, the data operator is not only a figure of interpretation but also an operational agent. The engagement with archival materials takes place through structured procedural actions that function within bureaucratic systems as executable inputs. By initiating, redirecting, and sustaining such processes, the operator navigates institutional pathways and engages with points of systemic discontinuity, where procedural logic reveals its limits, inconsistencies, or latent possibilities.

The investigation does not resolve this problem once and for all. Rather, it exposes it as a constitutive tension of documentary inquiry itself. In this sense, the archive is not merely a repository of evidence but a contested field of representation, where bureaucracy, institutions, researchers, and public actors compete — or fail — to speak for lives that were once silenced by the state.

## **6. Operational Strategy Institutional Co-optation and Discursive Integration**

1. Institutional co-optation as an operational strategy.
2. Licensing-based and procedural integration of external actors.
3. Structuring and conditioning of discursive infrastructure.

This strategy reconfigures external, previously uncontrolled, or newly emerging uses into structured, regulated, and project-aligned forms of participation.

The objective is not to confront external structures — including previously uncontrolled or newly emerging ones — but to incorporate and align them within the project's system.

Within the KARAGODIN® Investigation, a specific operational strategy is articulated that can be described as institutional co-optation through licensing-based and procedural integration.

Rather than engaging exclusively in adversarial legal actions against unauthorized use of materials by media organizations or other institutional actors, the approach reorients interaction toward formalization, incorporation, and conditional alignment. Media entities,

as well as administrative or legal bodies whose outputs intersect with the project's domain and make use of the project's materials, conceptual products, or developed conceptual frameworks, are approached through legal and procedural mechanisms and offered structured frameworks for the regulated use, integration, or contextualization of relevant materials and representations.

This process transforms previously uncontrolled and externally defined uses into regulated, contractually bounded, or procedurally structured relationships. Through this mechanism, external actors are not simply restricted, but functionally integrated into the project's broader operational and discursive framework.

As a result, outputs produced by such actors — including media publications, institutional statements, academic works, and other forms of public or interpretive representation — are generated within, or in relation to, parameters shaped by the project's conceptual, visual, and narrative structuring. Even in cases where the institutional, editorial, or scholarly stance remains independent, partially misaligned with the project's logic, or explicitly adversarial, the underlying material and contextual infrastructure remains anchored in the project's system.

This produces a form of indirect discursive influence, whereby external institutions and agentive actors participate in the circulation and reproduction of structured narratives derived from the project's internal logic. The strategy does not seek to eliminate external interpretation, but to condition the material, procedural, and discursive framing upon which such interpretation is constructed.

In this sense, institutional co-optation operates not as direct control or suppression, but as a reconfiguration of the conditions under which

discourse and representation are produced, enabling a distributed yet structurally coherent extension of the project's analytical and narrative framework, which in turn retains the capacity to shape and stabilize its own discourse even through external descriptive practices and agent-driven activity.

## **Part III**

# **Discursive Environment and Interpretation**

## **1. Machine and the Shavings ("sparking metal shavings") Core Process and Secondary Effects**

Anyone who has ever seen a *metalworking machine* in operation knows a familiar image. A large industrial tool shapes a solid piece of metal into a precise form. As the machine cuts and grinds the material, the main object slowly emerges — the finished component the machine was designed to produce.

At the same time something else happens.

From the surface of the metal, thin fragments begin to spiral outward. Bright metallic shavings twist through the air: curls, spirals, small ribbons of steel reflecting the light of the workshop. Sometimes they spark as they fall away from the cutting edge. These fragments are visually striking. They appear dynamic and almost alive, scattering in unpredictable directions.

Yet they are not the product of the machine.

They are only the by-products of the process through which the product is made.

This image offers another way to understand the dynamics of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

At its center, the investigation pursues a clear and disciplined objective: the reconstruction of the bureaucratic mechanisms behind the execution of Stepan Karagodin in 1938, the identification of the individuals involved, and the documentary reconstruction of the institutional chain through which the act was organized and carried out.

This is the main work of the machine.

The investigation gathers documents, reconstructs administrative procedures, traces signatures and authorizations, and establishes the bureaucratic structure that produced the act of repression. The primary goal remains constant: to reconstruct the chain of responsibility and to examine it within the framework of contemporary institutional and legal analysis.

But as this process unfolds, something else inevitably appears.

Alongside the central investigation, a series of unexpected cultural, symbolic, and human narratives begin to emerge. These narratives arise from the documents, the people connected to them, the families of those involved, the historical traces uncovered during the work of reconstruction. They generate moments of reflection, dialogue, reconciliation, or interpretation that were never planned as the primary objective of the investigation.

These are what might be called the "*sparking metal shavings*" of the project.

They are real. They are meaningful. Often they are deeply human and emotionally powerful. Yet they remain secondary to the central mechanism that produces them.

One example illustrates this dynamic clearly. During the course of the investigation, the granddaughter of one of the NKVD executioners involved in the shooting of Stepan Karagodin wrote to the investigator. In her letter she asked for forgiveness for the role played by her grandfather. The reply she received expressed respect and goodwill, describing the exchange as an ***Act of Civil Consent and Reconciliation***.

Observers outside the investigation often interpreted this moment as the culmination or conclusion of the project. But this interpretation confuses the shaving with the machine.

The exchange was important and meaningful. It revealed the human dimension of historical responsibility and the possibility of dialogue across generations. But it did not constitute the investigation itself.

It was a fragment produced by the process — a luminous spiral of metal briefly visible in the air — while the machine continued its work.

This distinction is important because complex investigations often generate symbolic or cultural interpretations that attract attention. These interpretations can be powerful and valuable in their own right. They create narratives, public discussions, artistic reflections, and moments of reconciliation.

Yet the investigation cannot be reduced to any single one of these outcomes.

The central process remains the same: the systematic reconstruction of bureaucratic responsibility through documentation, institutional analysis, and interaction with the legal structures of the present.

The cultural narratives, symbolic moments, and human encounters that arise along the way are part of the broader intellectual landscape produced by the investigation. They reflect the energy released when historical evidence is brought into the present. But they remain secondary effects of a much larger mechanism.

Like the metal shavings that spiral outward from the cutting edge of a machine, they are vivid signs that the process is underway — not the product for which the machine was built.

## **2. Media Reactions Structural Analysis of Discursive Positioning**

Media coverage of the KARAGODIN® Investigation is approached through a parallel but distinct analytical framework. Rather than engaging in direct contestation of individual media narratives, this model classifies and situates media outputs within a structured typology of discursive positioning.

### **(1) Classification and Structural Interpretation**

All forms of media attention — including critical, inaccurate, or overtly ideological representations — are incorporated into the analytical system. The emphasis is not on refutation, but on classification: distinguishing between different types of media actors, institutional affiliations, and modes of representation. In particular, a clear analytical distinction is

drawn between independent, international, and state- aligned or pro-government media environments.

Within this structure, distortions are not treated as anomalies but as functionally intelligible features of specific media contexts. Selective framing, misrepresentation of archival evidence, and attempts to discredit the project are understood as operating within broader narrative and institutional logics, rather than as isolated deviations.

This approach enables a shift from reactive engagement to structural interpretation. Media outputs are no longer positioned as challenges requiring response, but as data points within a larger system of representation. By situating each instance of coverage within its appropriate analytical category, the framework renders visible the conditions under which particular narratives emerge and circulate.

Crucially, this model preserves transparency without collapsing into polemics. All sources are documented and made accessible, yet their interpretative status is clarified through systematic classification rather than evaluative rhetoric. In this way, media reactions are integrated into the project not as external pressures, but as components of a broader discursive environment subject to analysis.

The outcome is a reconfiguration of media engagement itself: from a field of contestation to a structured domain of observation. Through this transformation, the project establishes not only its empirical foundation, but also a coherent analytical lens through which its public representations can be understood.

## **(2) Normative Closure and Discursive Dynamics**

An additional dimension of media interaction concerns the normative structure of public discourse within institutional environments.

Bureaucratic and state-aligned discursive systems tend to produce stabilized narratives that present institutional reality as coherent, complete, and already resolved. Within such frameworks, past events are often implicitly or explicitly framed as closed, administratively processed, and no longer subject to active inquiry. This produces a condition that may be described as normative closure: a discursive stabilization in which further investigation appears unnecessary, redundant, or even disruptive.

Interventions that seek to reactivate archival material or reintroduce questions of responsibility into contemporary institutional contexts may therefore be perceived as external disturbances. In such cases, media responses — including attempts at discreditation, reframing, or selective interpretation — can be understood not as isolated reactions, but as structurally conditioned responses emerging from within an already stabilized narrative system.

These responses frequently rely on pre-existing ideological or institutional templates that aim to absorb, redirect, or neutralize investigative processes. Rather than engaging with the full structural scope of the investigation, they often isolate particular elements, reframe them within familiar discursive patterns, and present them as explanatory endpoints.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation approaches such reactions not as obstacles but as analyzable and, to a certain extent, predictable components of the broader discursive environment. Because these

responses operate within relatively fixed narrative constraints, they can be anticipated, mapped, and strategically engaged.

In certain cases, this allows for the deliberate structuring of discursive exposure. By introducing specific elements into the public domain, the investigation can trigger predictable interpretative responses, effectively revealing the operative limits of the surrounding narrative system. Such moments function as controlled points of discursive activation, where the structure of institutional interpretation becomes visible through its own reactions.

## **Strategic Implication**

This leads to a specific operational position:

The strategy does not aim at direct confrontation but at structural exposure. By allowing stabilized narratives to articulate themselves in response to selected inputs, the investigation renders visible the mechanisms through which institutional discourse maintains coherence, deflects inquiry, and reproduces its own conditions of stability.

### **3. Academic Reactions Analysis of Interpretative Distortions**

Academic engagement with the KARAGODIN® Investigation is treated here not as a site of dispute, but as an object of analysis. Rather than entering into case-by-case rebuttals, this approach reframes scholarly responses as instances of broader interpretative patterns that can be identified, classified, and examined within a systematic framework.

In this perspective, academic publications are not excluded on the basis of disagreement, nor are they positioned as adversarial texts requiring

direct refutation. Instead, they are incorporated into a structured analytical model that seeks to understand how knowledge about the project is constructed, transformed, and, in certain cases, distorted within specific epistemic and institutional contexts.

The framework proceeds by distinguishing recurring mechanisms of interpretative distortion. These include, among others, the reduction of complex investigative processes to symbolic or ideological categories; analytical extrapolation beyond available empirical evidence; the construction of associative links or organizational structures lacking factual substantiation; and the absence of engagement with primary archival materials. Such mechanisms are not treated as isolated errors, but as manifestations of broader tendencies within particular segments of academic and public discourse.

By shifting the analytical focus from individual arguments to the conditions and patterns of their production, this approach situates academic responses within a wider field of knowledge construction. In doing so, it renders visible the methodological assumptions, interpretative frameworks, and epistemic limitations that shape these texts.

The result is a transformation of critique into data. Academic publications, including those that offer reductive or factually inaccurate accounts, become part of a cumulative analytical corpus through which the dynamics of interpretation themselves can be studied. This allows the project to remain open to scrutiny while maintaining a clear distinction between empirical investigation and the interpretative models applied to it.

## Part IV

# Establishing Responsibility: Legal and Structural Framework

**Responsibility is not an event, but a structure** — This principle defines the methodological orientation of the entire framework. Rather than an isolated act or moment, responsibility is understood as a process distributed across documents, institutional structures, and chains of decision-making.

## The Limits of Documentation as Closure as a Mode of Closure

Documentation has often been treated as a form of closure — a means of establishing that an event has been recorded, acknowledged, and thereby resolved.

However, within bureaucratic systems, documentation frequently performs a different function. Rather than closing a case, it stabilizes a partial representation of events within administrative form. Records, protocols, and official files preserve traces, but do not exhaust the reality to which they refer.

In this sense, documentation can operate as a mode of closure that conceals unresolved responsibility. The existence of records may create the appearance of completion, while the underlying structures of accountability remain unarticulated.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation begins precisely at this limit. It treats documentation not as an endpoint, but as an entry point — a field from

which responsibility must be reconstructed rather than assumed to be resolved.

## **Localization of Responsibility**

Responsibility within bureaucratic systems is rarely concentrated in a single actor. It is distributed across chains of decisions, authorizations, and procedural actions.

The investigation therefore proceeds through the localization of responsibility at multiple levels:

1. **individual** (executors, signatories, officials);
2. **institutional** (organs, departments, administrative bodies);
3. **systemic** (structures of governance and decision-making).

This involves reconstructing a continuous chain of responsibility — from those who carried out specific acts to those who authorized, enabled, or structurally produced the conditions under which these acts became possible.

In the case of *Stepan Karagodin*, this reconstruction extends across the full vertical of power, linking immediate perpetrators to higher-level political decision-making structures.

Responsibility is thus not assumed, but located through documentary and procedural analysis.

## **Formalization and Legal Qualification**

Reconstructed responsibility must be translated into legal form.

This stage involves:

1. systematizing the documentary evidence;
2. structuring it according to legal categories;
3. formulating claims that are compatible with juridical procedures.

The investigation is oriented toward the preparation of a legally coherent case, including the potential submission of formal claims seeking recognition and legal qualification of the acts committed.

This process transforms dispersed archival material into a structured evidentiary base capable of supporting legal argumentation.

It marks **the transition from reconstruction to action.**

## **Attribution and Accountability**

Attribution requires the precise assignment of responsibility to identifiable actors.

Within bureaucratic systems, this involves overcoming the tendency toward diffusion — the displacement of responsibility across procedures, hierarchies, and institutional abstractions.

The investigation establishes responsibility as concrete and attributable:

1. linking actions to specific individuals;
2. connecting decisions to identifiable positions;
3. demonstrating continuity across administrative chains.

Accountability, in this sense, is not abstract or symbolic. It is the result of structured attribution grounded in evidence and formalized within legal reasoning.

Once responsibility is successfully attributed within a single case, the question shifts from attribution to reproducibility.

## **Legal Replicability and Distributed Agency**

This approach is grounded not only in theoretical reasoning but in historically demonstrated legal practice, particularly within the *German legal tradition*, where analogous mechanisms of responsibility attribution have been successfully implemented.

The significance of the investigation extends beyond the resolution of a single case.

Its methodological structure produces a replicable model of legal action.

Once a case is:

1. reconstructed;
2. documented;
3. formalized;
4. and articulated within a legal framework;

it establishes a pathway that can be followed by others.

The investigation thus functions as a transferable algorithm:

1. enabling other actors to reconstruct analogous cases;
2. apply similar evidentiary methods;
3. and initiate corresponding legal procedures.

This creates a form of distributed agency, in which responsibility is pursued not by a single actor, but through a multiplicity of structurally aligned actions.

## **Operational Logic of Accountability**

The force generated by the investigation is cumulative.

Each reconstructed and formalized case contributes to a growing field of:

1. documented responsibility;
2. consistent legal reasoning;
3. articulated claims.

Over time, this produces increasing pressure within institutional systems.

This pressure does not arise from external coercion, but from the internal contradiction between:

1. documented acts;
2. existing legal norms;
3. and the absence of accountability.

As this field expands, the threshold for further action decreases, and the conditions for accountability become progressively more stable and difficult to reverse.

## **Symbolic and Cultural Embedding**

Legal processes do not operate in isolation.

As responsibility is reconstructed and articulated, it enters broader symbolic and cultural domains:

1. public discourse;
2. collective memory;
3. media and academic interpretation.

These processes reinforce the visibility and legitimacy of the claims being made.

However, within the logic of the investigation, symbolic and cultural effects are not the foundation, but the consequence of prior documentary and legal work.

They amplify and stabilize what has already been structurally established.

## **Responsibility as a Structural Process**

Responsibility is not a single act or event.

It is a process that unfolds across time, institutions, and layers of action.

The investigation demonstrates that responsibility:

1. emerges through reconstruction;
2. is stabilized through legal articulation;
3. expands through replication;
4. and transforms institutional conditions over time.

At a certain point, this process may produce a qualitative shift, in which accountability becomes not an isolated outcome, but a structural possibility embedded within the system itself.

In this sense, responsibility is not imposed — it is produced.

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# Originality of the Approach

This section outlines the core conceptual shifts that define the originality of the KARAGODIN® Investigation. These shifts represent a reconfiguration of how documents, archives, time, and institutional action are understood and engaged.

## Conceptual Reconfiguration: The Originality of the Approach

The KARAGODIN® Investigation introduces a set of conceptual shifts that redefine how archival documentation, bureaucratic systems, and institutional processes are understood and engaged. These shifts do not merely reinterpret existing categories but establish a different operational ontology of documents, time, and institutional action.

## From Document as Record to Document as Active Element

Within conventional historical and archival frameworks, documents are treated as static records of past events. The KARAGODIN® Investigation approaches documents as active elements within an administrative system. Documents are not only traces of actions but components of procedural chains that can be reconstructed, reactivated, and reinserted into contemporary institutional processes.

# **From Archive as Repository to Archive as Interface**

The archive is not understood as a passive storage of historical materials, but as an interface through which institutional systems can be accessed and activated. Archival documentation becomes a point of entry into ongoing bureaucratic structures, allowing interaction with the mechanisms that produced and preserved it.

# **From Time as Background to Time as Operational Structure**

Time is not treated as a neutral background for historical narrative. Bureaucratic temporality operates as an active structure in which decisions, signatures, and procedural authorizations persist within institutional systems. This temporal persistence allows past actions to remain operational within present frameworks.

# **From Interpretation to Activation**

The investigation shifts from interpretative analysis toward procedural activation. Archival materials are not only analyzed but strategically introduced into contemporary institutional systems, where they trigger responses, processes, and administrative motion.

# **From Researcher to Data Operator**

The subject of investigation is no longer positioned as a detached observer. The investigation introduces the figure of the Data Operator — an actor who works within and through bureaucratic systems, initiating processes, reconstructing chains, and activating institutional mechanisms.

## **From Event to Chain**

Instead of focusing on isolated historical events, the investigation reconstructs chains of bureaucratic actions. Responsibility is distributed across procedural sequences, making it possible to trace institutional accountability beyond individual acts.

## **From Representation to Mechanism**

The investigation does not aim to represent reality but to engage with its underlying mechanisms. Bureaucratic systems are approached as operational structures that can be analyzed, entered, and activated.

# **From Linear Narrative to Multi-Layered System**

The investigation moves beyond linear storytelling and constructs a multi-layered system in which documentation, institutional processes, and discursive effects interact dynamically.

# **From Narratives to By-Products of Process**

Cultural, emotional, and symbolic narratives are not treated as the primary goal of the investigation. They are understood as secondary effects — "shavings" — generated by the operation of the investigative mechanism.

# **From Static Knowledge to Generative System**

The investigation does not primarily produce knowledge as a fixed outcome, but establishes a generative system in which documentation, institutional interaction, and public discourse continuously produce new layers of meaning and consequence.

# **Operational Shift**

These conceptual transformations do not only redefine how archival systems are understood but establish a different mode of engagement

with institutional reality. The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates not at the level of interpretation alone, but as an operational framework that intervenes within bureaucratic systems, activates procedural mechanisms, and produces institutional effects.

## **Summary**

Together, these conceptual shifts define the originality of the KARAGODIN® Investigation as a methodological and operational framework that transforms archives from passive records into active components of institutional processes, and redefines investigation as an operational form of engagement with institutional systems and the structures that organize reality.

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# Terminology

This section introduces the core conceptual terminology developed within the KARAGODIN® Investigation framework.

These terms function as analytical instruments for describing and structuring the processes identified within the investigation.

The definitions provided below should be understood as operational rather than purely descriptive, and may evolve alongside the further development of the framework.

## Conceptual Index

The following conceptual index reflects the internal architecture of the framework.

### I. Ontological and Epistemic Structures

#### 1. Documentary Echo ("echoes of events")

A documentary trace understood as a residual reflection of an event within a bureaucratic or administrative system. A documentary echo does not reproduce reality in its entirety, but preserves a structurally linked fragment of an action, decision, or occurrence in procedural form.

Unlike direct representation, the documentary echo is partial, selective, and conditioned by the institutional logic through which it is produced. It

captures not the full event, but its administrative imprint — a signature, protocol, record, or transaction that evidences the occurrence of an action without fully describing its content or meaning.

Within the KARAGODIN® Investigation, documentary echoes function as the primary material of reconstruction. Through their accumulation, correlation, and structural analysis, dispersed echoes can be assembled into coherent chains that reveal the underlying bureaucratic mechanisms of historical events.

This concept emphasizes that reality does not persist in archives as a complete record, but as a distributed system of echoes requiring reconstruction, interpretation, and activation.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Documentary Echo and Bureaucratic Activation.*

## **2. Static-to-Dynamic Transition**

The Static-to-Dynamic Transition refers to the transformation of archival material from a fixed and inert state into an active, generative component of an evolving epistemic system.

In its static form, archival material exists as isolated records: non-indexable, contextually fragmented, and incapable of producing new relations or interpretations. It functions as a repository of the past, but not as an active system of knowledge.

The transition occurs when these materials are transformed through processes such as textualization, indexation, and narrativization, enabling them to enter structured informational environments.

As a result, documents cease to function as static objects and become part of a dynamic process. They acquire temporal continuity, semantic expansion, and relational integration within a broader system.

This transformation allows the archive to operate not as a passive container, but as a generative structure capable of producing meaning, forming connections, and evolving over time.

In this sense, the transition is not merely technical, but ontological: it alters the mode of existence of the archival material itself.

Within the KARAGODIN® Investigation, this transition constitutes a foundational methodological principle, structuring the transformation of archival evidence into an active investigative and epistemic system.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Static-to-Dynamic Transition.*

### **3. Dead Water and Living Water**

In Russian folklore, "**dead water**" restores a broken body by rejoining its structure, while "**living water**" restores life itself. This distinction provides a conceptual model for the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

"**Dead water**" refers to the reconstruction of a dispersed documentary body: archival records, administrative orders, and institutional traces are assembled into a coherent structure that reveals the bureaucratic mechanism of an event.

"Living water" designates the subsequent phase in which this reconstructed structure is reintroduced into contemporary legal and

administrative systems. Within these frameworks, archival materials cease to function as passive evidence and regain operative force.

**Dead water restores structure.**

**Living water restores force.**

The investigation thus operates as a dual process: structural reconstruction and procedural reactivation.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Dead Water and Living Water.*

## **II. Institutional Constraints and Documentary Distortions**

### **1. Institutional Documentary Obfuscation**

The systemic production, maintenance, and preservation of distorted, fragmented, or misleading documentary records that obscure the structure and scale of institutional violence, often persisting across temporal layers of administrative systems.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Problem Statement and Structural Diagnosis.*

# **III. Bureaucratic and Operational Mechanics**

## **1. Executable Bureaucracy**

The understanding of bureaucratic systems as structured, semiotic environments in which documents, procedures, and requests function as executable operations that produce institutional effects.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Executable Bureaucracy.*

## **2. Procedural Input**

A structured bureaucratic action (such as a request, petition, or submission) that activates specific procedural pathways within an institutional system.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Procedural Input and Systemic Discontinuity.*

## **3. Systemic Discontinuity**

A point of inconsistency, delay, or structural misalignment within a bureaucratic system that can be strategically engaged to alter procedural outcomes.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Procedural Input and Systemic Discontinuity.*

## **IV. Temporal and Procedural Dynamics**

### **1. Bureaucratic Temporality**

A non-linear temporal structure within bureaucratic systems in which past actions persist as active elements embedded in institutional frameworks. Time does not eliminate responsibility but preserves the conditions for its reactivation.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Bureaucratic Temporality.*

### **2. Historical Dimension**

The temporal layer in which events originally occurred and were documented. It constitutes the source material of the investigation.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Bureaucratic Temporality.*

### **3. Procedural-Present Dimension**

The temporal layer in which archival documents re-enter institutional processes and regain operative force within contemporary legal and administrative frameworks.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Bureaucratic Temporality.*

## **4. Latent Operational Field**

The condition of the archive as a structured but inactive domain containing documents, records, and evidence that possess potential operative force but remain inert until activated.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Bureaucratic Activation.*

## **5. Bureaucratic Activation**

The process through which archival material is introduced into formal procedures, transforming passive documentation into operative elements that trigger institutional response.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Bureaucratic Activation.*

## **6. Operative Elements (Operative Documents)**

Documents that have entered procedural circulation and function as active components within bureaucratic and legal processes.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Bureaucratic Activation.*

# **V. Operational Agency**

## **1. The Data Operator**

Is the actor who speaks for documentary reality when those whose lives are recorded in the archive can no longer speak for themselves.

In bureaucratic systems, documents do not merely preserve information. They accumulate traces of human existence in an administrative form. As a result, institutions themselves become operators of memory, producing and reproducing representations of lives through procedural language.

In this sense, the data operator is not only a representational figure but an operational one. The data operator acts within and across bureaucratic systems by reconstructing, activating, and strategically engaging procedural structures. Rather than remaining a passive interpreter of archival materials, the operator initiates processes, navigates institutional pathways, and produces effects within administrative systems.

However, this representation is not neutral. Bureaucratic memory is structured by categorization, selection, and institutional logic. The lives preserved in the archive appear in forms shaped by the very systems that governed their fate.

Other actors — including institutional insiders and external researchers — also function as data operators. Each operates under structural constraints: proximity to the archive may limit critical distance, while critical independence may coexist with incomplete access to documentation.

The problem of the data operator therefore concerns not only access to documents, but the authority to interpret them. Documentary reality emerges as a contested field in which different operators attempt to represent lives that were once silenced.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation treats this tension as a constitutive condition of archival inquiry rather than a problem that can be fully resolved.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: The Data Operator.*

## **VI. Discursive Environment and Control**

### **1. Normative Closure**

A condition in which institutional discourse stabilizes reality as coherent, complete, and already resolved, thereby structurally excluding further investigation or reactivation. Within such frameworks, past events are framed as administratively processed and closed, rendering additional inquiry unnecessary, redundant, or disruptive.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Media Reactions.*

### **2. Discursive Exposure**

A methodological strategy in which controlled inputs into public discourse provoke predictable institutional or media responses, thereby revealing the structural limits, internal logic, and operational constraints of stabilized narrative systems.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Media Reactions.*

### **3. Discursive Trap**

A deliberately constructed informational or narrative element designed to attract, channel, and contain predictable interpretative or institutional responses. Discursive traps enable the redirection of external reactions into analytically productive pathways, exposing the limitations and structural patterns of surrounding discourse.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Media Reactions.*

### **4. Structural Exposure**

An operational mode in which systemic mechanisms are revealed indirectly through their own responses to controlled inputs, rather than through direct confrontation. This approach allows institutional structures to articulate their internal logic, contradictions, and defensive mechanisms through observable reactions.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Media Reactions.*

### **5. Discursive Positioning**

The analytical classification and structural placement of media outputs within a system of institutional affiliations, narrative logics, and representational patterns. Through discursive positioning, media reactions are interpreted not as isolated statements but as components of a broader discursive environment.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: Media Reactions.*

## VII. Process and By-Products

### 1. The Machine and the Shavings ("Sparking Metal Shavings")

The distinction between the machine and the shavings describes the relationship between the core process of an investigation and its secondary effects.

The "**machine**" refers to the central investigative mechanism: the systematic reconstruction of bureaucratic structures, the identification of responsibility, and the analysis of documentary evidence within institutional and legal frameworks.

The "**shavings**" — or more precisely, the "**sparking metal shavings**" — designate the secondary phenomena generated by this process: cultural narratives, symbolic interpretations, public reactions, and human encounters that emerge alongside the investigation.

These effects can be meaningful, emotionally significant, and socially visible. However, they are not the product of the investigation itself, but by-products of the process that produces it.

A fundamental methodological error occurs when these secondary effects are mistaken for the investigation as such. The visibility and intensity of the "**shavings**" can obscure the underlying mechanism that generates them.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation maintains a strict distinction between the two. The investigation is defined by the operation of the machine, while the shavings indicate that the process is underway, without constituting its primary outcome.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Framework section: The Machine and the Shavings ("Sparking Metal Shavings").*

## **VIII. Narrative and Epistemic Form**

### **1. STEPINQUEST®**

A hybrid narrative and investigative framework developed within the KARAGODIN® Investigation, in which historical inquiry unfolds step by step through archival research, analytical reconstruction, and the public documentation of evidence.

Functioning both as a literary genre and a methodological approach, STEPINQUEST® integrates narrative reconstruction with real institutional processes, enabling investigative work to generate legal, political, and institutional consequences.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the STEPINQUEST® – White Paper.*

## **IX. Responsibility and Accountability Structures**

### **1. Operational Responsibility**

Responsibility attributed to identifiable individuals who, within contemporary institutional frameworks, actively participate in or execute decisions, procedures, or actions that sustain, reproduce, or enforce the concealment, restriction, distortion, or non-disclosure of information related to committed crimes.

Operational responsibility does not derive from past participation in the original acts, but from present involvement in maintaining the conditions that prevent their clarification, legal qualification, or institutional acknowledgment.

It designates the level at which abstract institutional processes become actionable through concrete actors exercising procedural authority.

*This concept is developed in greater detail in the Research Ethics Statement section: Historical Responsibility and Institutional Continuity.*

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# Research Ethics

The KARAGODIN® Investigation is conducted as an independent research project devoted to the documentation and analysis of state violence, archival evidence, institutional continuity, and historical responsibility.

Its ethical position is grounded in a commitment to documentary rigor, methodological restraint, non-speculative interpretation, and the avoidance of secondary harm. The investigation does not treat ethical considerations as an external supplement to research, but as an integral part of the investigative method itself.

The project operates under the principle that responsibility must be reconstructed through evidence, procedural analysis, and institutional context, while clear ethical limits must be maintained with regard to material traces, descendants, and non-participating individuals.

The following principles define the ethical architecture of the investigation.

## Ethical Principles Index

- 1. Research Purpose**
- 2. Sources, Evidence, and Methodological Restraint**
- 3. Non-Intervention in Material Traces**

4. **Contact with Descendants and Relatives**
5. **No Claims Against Descendants**
6. **Representation of Individuals and Attribution of Responsibility**
7. **Historical Responsibility and Institutional Continuity**
8. **No Retrospective Revocation of Historical Decorations or Titles**
9. **Independence of the Investigation**
10. **Ethical Position of the Investigator**
11. **Limitations and Ethical Boundaries of Knowledge**
12. **Concluding Ethical Principle**
13. **Integrity of Sources and Archival Responsibility**
14. **Defensive Activation and Institutional Response**

## **1. Research Purpose**

The purpose of the investigation is not retaliation, symbolic revenge, or moral denunciation for its own sake. Its aim is to reconstruct the documentary, procedural, and institutional conditions under which acts of political violence became possible, and to articulate responsibility within historically and legally intelligible frameworks.

The project therefore seeks clarification, reconstruction, and accountability, rather than affective escalation or punitive spectacle.

## **2. Sources, Evidence, and Methodological Restraint**

The investigation is based on verifiable documentary materials, including archival records, official correspondence, administrative files, published sources, and other publicly accessible evidence.

Interpretation is grounded in available documentation and proceeds through reconstruction rather than conjecture. Where evidence remains incomplete, this incompleteness must be acknowledged explicitly. The project does not substitute moral certainty for evidentiary demonstration.

Ethical responsibility in research therefore includes restraint: not every possibility should be asserted as a fact, and not every archival trace should be interpreted beyond what the available material can sustain.

## **3. Non-Intervention in Material Traces**

A strict ethical limit of the investigation is the prohibition of physical interference with graves, burial sites, memorial objects, or other material traces of historical actors and events.

Such objects are treated not as targets for symbolic intervention, but as historically significant evidence-bearing forms. Their existing condition, appearance, inscriptions, placement, and material continuity may themselves constitute important documentary or interpretive sources.

For this reason, the project rejects any practice of physical alteration, desecration, manipulation, or retrospective symbolic correction of such sites or objects.

## **4. Contact with Descendants and Relatives**

The investigation does not initiate primary contact with descendants or relatives of individuals connected to Soviet repressive institutions, including employees of the NKVD and related structures.

No active outreach, pressure, or unsolicited contact is undertaken toward such persons. Interaction may occur only where they themselves independently initiate it.

This principle serves several ethical purposes: it avoids the production of secondary harm, prevents the transformation of descendants into surrogate bearers of inherited guilt, and maintains the distinction between documentary investigation and personal intrusion.

Observation, where relevant and lawful, may be possible; direct intervention is not.

## **5. No Claims Against Descendants**

The project recognizes no moral, legal, or historical guilt by descent.

No claim is advanced against descendants merely on the basis of kinship. Responsibility is not biologically inherited, nor is it transferred through

lineage. The actions of historical perpetrators do not create automatic ethical or legal culpability for their children, grandchildren, or other relatives.

This principle is fundamental. The investigation is directed toward acts, documents, decisions, institutions, and their contemporary concealment or protection — not toward descendants as such.

## **6. Representation of Individuals and Attribution of Responsibility**

Where individuals are named, this is done only within an evidence-based framework of documentary attribution and procedural analysis.

The project does not reduce complex historical processes to personalized accusation alone. At the same time, it rejects anonymous structural abstraction where documentary evidence permits concrete attribution.

Responsibility is therefore approached at multiple levels: individual, institutional, and systemic. Ethical representation requires precision in naming roles, acts, authorizations, and documentary links, while avoiding both arbitrary accusation and depersonalized erasure.

## **7. Historical Responsibility and Institutional Continuity**

The investigation draws a fundamental distinction between descendants and inherited institutions.

No claims — ethical or legal — are directed at descendants solely on the basis of kinship. Responsibility is not biologically inherited, is not transmitted through lineage, and cannot be attributed to individuals who did not participate in the relevant actions.

By contrast, claims may be directed toward contemporary institutions, administrative bodies, and bureaucratic structures insofar as they continue to withhold, restrict access to, distort, or procedurally protect information concerning committed crimes.

In this context, the issue does not pertain solely to the past as a completed temporal domain. Where practices of concealment persist — including restricted archival access, refusal of disclosure, or institutional protection of identifiable participants — such practices acquire the character of an ongoing legal and procedural problem.

Crucially, institutional action is not abstract. Bureaucratic structures operate through identifiable individuals occupying specific positions and exercising procedural authority. Where such individuals participate in decisions or actions that maintain concealment, restrict access, or otherwise obstruct the clarification of committed crimes, responsibility may extend to them as operators of institutional processes.

In this sense, the investigation recognizes a dual level of responsibility:

1. institutional responsibility, as embedded in structures and procedures;
2. operational responsibility, as exercised by concrete officials acting within those structures.

Accordingly, claims — including legal and ethical claims — may arise not only in relation to institutions as such, but also in relation to individuals

who, in the present, enact and sustain practices of concealment, distortion, or non-disclosure.

Responsibility may therefore persist not only through past actions, but through contemporary forms of their institutional maintenance, including concealment, distortion, refusal of disclosure, and procedural protection.

The investigation proceeds from the premise that within bureaucratic systems, crimes are not exhausted at the moment of their commission if structures remain in place that prevent their identification, qualification, and legal articulation.

## **8. No Retrospective Revocation of Historical Decorations or Titles**

The investigation does not advocate the posthumous removal of decorations, ranks, titles, or honors previously granted within the historical logic of the period in which they were issued.

Such signs are treated as documentary indicators of institutional valuation and historical structure, not as objects to be symbolically erased in retrospect. A decoration awarded for participation in repression is itself a significant archival marker: it records the normative and institutional order in which violence was recognized and rewarded.

For this reason, the project does not seek symbolic purification through retroactive removal. It seeks clarification through analysis.

## **9. Independence of the Investigation**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation is conducted independently and without institutional subordination to the bodies it studies.

Its interpretations are not shaped by state affiliation, political loyalty, or the preferences of institutions whose historical or contemporary role is under examination. Independence here is not only organizational but methodological: the project retains autonomy in the interpretation, structuring, and publication of its findings.

At the same time, independence does not mean arbitrariness. It is constrained by evidence, procedure, and self-imposed ethical limits.

## **10. Ethical Position of the Investigator**

The ethical position of the investigation is neither neutral indifference nor unrestrained accusation.

It is grounded in the conviction that documentary reconstruction of violence must proceed without reproducing violence in investigative form. This requires rigor without harassment, attribution without hereditary guilt, exposure without desecration, and legal articulation without symbolic excess.

The project therefore understands ethics not as a softening of inquiry, but as a condition of its legitimacy.

## **11. Limitations and Ethical Boundaries of Knowledge**

Like all archival inquiry, this investigation operates under conditions of incompleteness, asymmetry of access, and institutional mediation.

Not all records survive. Not all archives are open. Not all chains of responsibility can be fully reconstructed in equal detail. Ethical research requires acknowledging these limits rather than masking them through overstatement.

For this reason, the investigation remains open to correction, refinement, and expansion as new documents, testimonies, or institutional disclosures emerge.

## **12. Concluding Ethical Principle**

The investigation proceeds under a simple ethical rule: responsibility must be reconstructed as precisely as possible, but never displaced onto those who did not act, never pursued through physical desecration, and never detached from documentary demonstration.

Its ethical horizon is therefore twofold: to refuse both oblivion and excess.

# 13. Integrity of Sources and Archival Responsibility

The investigation operates exclusively on the basis of primary and verifiable sources. This includes archival documents, official records, and other materials whose origin, status, and provenance can be established.

No fabricated materials, altered documents, or speculative reconstructions are introduced into the research process. The integrity of the evidentiary base is treated as an absolute condition of the investigation.

Interpretation is strictly subordinated to documentation. Where evidence is absent, incomplete, or ambiguous, this condition is explicitly acknowledged rather than compensated through conjecture or narrative construction.

All work with sources is conducted in accordance with applicable legal norms governing access, use, and publication of archival materials. The investigation does not bypass legal frameworks but operates within them, while critically analyzing their limitations where relevant.

In addition, the project adopts a principle analogous to archaeological responsibility: the documentary field must not be exhausted, damaged, or rendered inaccessible through the act of investigation itself.

Materials are handled, presented, and structured in such a way that subsequent researchers can:

1. verify the evidentiary base;
2. trace the chain of interpretation;

3. access the same or equivalent sources;
4. continue the investigation within an open and reproducible framework.

The investigation therefore does not treat archives as resources to be consumed, but as structured environments that must remain intelligible and accessible beyond the scope of a single research project.

## **14. Defensive Activation and Institutional Response**

The KARAGODIN® Investigation does not operate through personal attack, harassment, or extrajudicial pressure. Its primary mode of action is documentary reconstruction, analytical exposure, and procedural engagement.

However, the project recognizes that research of this nature may encounter resistance, obstruction, or attempts at discreditation, including legal, administrative, or discursive pressure.

In such cases, the investigation adopts a principle of defensive activation.

This means that, in response to external pressure or attempts to suppress, distort, or delegitimize the investigation, the project may intensify its activity within the boundaries of legality, evidence-based reasoning, and institutional procedure.

Such activation may include:

1. expanded publication and documentation;
2. increased transparency of materials and methods;

3. discursive clarification and rebuttal;
4. procedural engagement with legal and administrative systems;
5. mobilization of public, academic, and institutional attention;

The objective of this response is not retaliation, but the protection of the investigation's integrity, continuity, and evidentiary base.

At the same time, the project operates with an understanding of asymmetry: while it does not initiate confrontation, it does not remain passive under pressure. Its response may escalate in scope and intensity, but remains strictly within legal, discursive, and procedural frameworks.

The investigation therefore maintains a dual position:

1. non-aggressive in initiation;
2. but fully capable of structured, strategic, and proportionate response;

This approach reflects a broader methodological principle: the investigation does not rely on vulnerability or neutrality as protective strategies. Instead, it operates through the controlled and precise activation of existing legal, institutional, and discursive mechanisms.

The strength of the response lies not in force, but in structure.

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# Findings

The KARAGODIN® Investigation has produced a set of findings that extend beyond the reconstruction of an individual case and establish a broader understanding of responsibility, institutional violence, and documentary systems. These findings concern the structure of responsibility, the functioning of repressive systems, and the relationship between documentary evidence, institutional processes, and accountability.

They are derived from the systematic analysis of archival materials, the reconstruction of documentary chains, and the identification of individuals and institutional mechanisms involved in acts of political violence.

## **1. Responsibility Is Structurally Traceable**

The investigation demonstrates that responsibility for acts of political violence can be reconstructed as a continuous and verifiable chain.

Through documentary evidence, it is possible to establish direct connections between individual actions, procedural decisions, and institutional authorizations. Responsibility is not dispersed or indeterminate, but organized within identifiable structures that link execution, administration, and political decision-making.

This finding challenges the assumption that large-scale repression produces anonymity or the impossibility of attribution.

## **2. Repressive Violence Operates as an Integrated System**

The investigation establishes that acts of violence are not isolated events, but components of a coordinated institutional system.

The reconstruction of documentary chains reveals a unified structure in which investigative procedures, administrative processing, prosecutorial authorization, and execution are interconnected elements of a single operational framework.

Participants at different levels do not act independently, but function within a coordinated system governed by shared procedures, directives, and objectives.

## **3. Formal Legality Can Function as a Mechanism of Violence**

The materials examined in the investigation demonstrate that acts of repression were often carried out in accordance with formally valid procedures and documented authorizations.

However, the existence of formal legality did not prevent the production of unjust outcomes, but functioned as a mechanism through which they were systematically produced. Legal and administrative forms thereby

enabled, organized, and justified acts of violence, executed by identifiable individuals acting within these structures.

This finding establishes a distinction between formal validity and substantive legitimacy, and underscores the necessity of evaluating legal norms in relation to fundamental principles of justice.

## **4. Large-Scale Violence Can Be Executed by Small Operational Groups**

The investigation demonstrates that large-scale executions can be carried out by relatively small, structured groups operating within institutional frameworks.

Analysis of execution records shows that a limited number of individuals may be responsible for a significant volume of killings, functioning in organized units with defined roles, procedures, and coordination.

This evidence enables a critical reassessment of prevailing narratives about the scale and distribution of participation in repression. Rather than being diffuse or broadly distributed across large segments of the population, the execution of mass violence appears as operationally concentrated within specific, identifiable groups acting within a coordinated system.

This finding is supported by comparative analysis of execution records across multiple regions examined in the investigation.

## **5. Documentary Systems Both Reveal and Conceal Violence**

Archival materials function simultaneously as sources of evidence and as instruments of concealment.

The investigation identifies systematic practices of document falsification, partial disclosure, and post-factum modification of records. At the same time, these same documentary systems preserve the traces necessary for reconstructing events and attributing responsibility.

This dual function establishes archives as both a medium of concealment and a site of potential disclosure, depending on the method of analysis applied.

## **6. The Absence of Accountability Is a Structural Condition, Not an Accident**

The investigation establishes that the lack of accountability for identified participants is not the result of missing information, but a structural property of the system itself.

Despite the existence of identifiable individuals, documented actions, and internal reviews conducted in later periods, no effective attribution of responsibility was carried out.

This gap between documented participation and the absence of legal or institutional consequences constitutes a central structural problem revealed by the investigation.

## **7. Institutional Continuity Persists Across Historical Periods**

The investigation demonstrates that institutional structures responsible for repression may persist in modified forms within contemporary administrative systems.

This continuity is observable in restricted access to archival materials, procedural barriers, and patterns of institutional resistance to disclosure.

Such continuity does not necessarily imply direct equivalence between past and present systems, but indicates the persistence of structural mechanisms that limit transparency and accountability.

## **8. Documentary Reconstruction Produces Conditions for Accountability**

The investigation establishes that the reconstruction of documentary chains creates the structural conditions under which accountability becomes possible, even in the absence of immediate legal consequences.

By identifying individuals, actions, and institutional mechanisms, the investigation transforms dispersed information into structured knowledge that can support future juridical, analytical, or ethical evaluation.

This finding suggests that accountability does not depend exclusively on the existence of formal judicial mechanisms, but can emerge from the systematic articulation of documented truth.

## **9. Ethical Responses Can Emerge Without Coercion or Inherited Responsibility**

The investigation demonstrates that the public articulation of documented truth can generate voluntary ethical responses.

Such responses may include acknowledgment, dialogue, and reconciliation, even in cases involving descendants of individuals identified as perpetrators. These outcomes occur without the imposition of guilt across generations and without coercive mechanisms.

This finding establishes that ethical engagement with the past can arise from conditions of clarity, evidence, and restraint, rather than accusation or symbolic retribution.

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# Relation to Existing Discourse

This section situates the KARAGODIN® Investigation within the broader intellectual, historical, and institutional landscape. Rather than presenting the investigation in isolation, it defines its position in relation to existing theoretical traditions, established forms of institutional practice, and concrete legal precedents.

The analysis proceeds across three interconnected analytical levels.

## Discourse Structure Index

### I. Conceptual Position of the Project

### II. Relation to Intellectual Traditions

1. **Conceptual Resonances**
2. **Michel Foucault** — Power, Institutions, and the Archive
3. **Bruno Latour** — Documents as Actors in Networks
4. **Giorgio Agamben** — State Violence and Responsibility
5. **Hannah Arendt** — Bureaucracy and the Banality of Violence
6. **Jacques Derrida** — The Archive and Political Memory
7. **Hermann Lübbe** — Temporal Acceleration and the Shrinking Present
8. **Henri Bergson** — Duration and the Persistence of the Past

## **9. Contemporary Methodological Parallels**

## **10. Where the Investigation Stands Apart**

### **III. Relation to Institutional and Legal Practices**

Each of the following cases illustrates a distinct dimension of how responsibility is reconstructed, evaluated, and operationalized within institutional systems:

- 1. The Nuremberg Investigations and the Logic of Documentary Responsibility** (Documentary Reconstruction of Responsibility)
- 2. The Radbruch Formula and the Problem of Unlawful Law** (Limits of Legal Validity)
- 3. The East German Experience: Accountability Without a Special Tribunal** (Operational Accountability)

Taken together, these levels demonstrate that the investigation does not introduce an external interpretative framework but operates within, and extends, existing structures of knowledge, law, and institutional reasoning. It articulates a model in which documentation, legal evaluation, and institutional accountability converge as a single analytical and operational process.

# Part I

## Conceptual Position of the Project

The KARAGODIN® Investigation positions itself not as an external critique of existing historical, legal, or memorial discourses, but as a structural continuation and completion of processes that remain internally unfinished.

The dominant discourse surrounding Soviet political repression has been shaped by partial processes of rehabilitation, archival disclosure, and institutional acknowledgment initiated during the mid-20th century and developed unevenly thereafter. While these processes established important precedents, they remained limited in scope, particularly in relation to the attribution of responsibility and the formal qualification of acts of mass violence.

As a result, a structural asymmetry persists: victims have been partially recognized, yet the mechanisms for establishing full accountability — legal, procedural, and symbolic — have not been systematically realized.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates within this gap. It does not introduce an external interpretative framework, but instead reconstructs and extends the internal logic of the system itself—drawing on its documentary, procedural, and institutional foundations.

By mobilizing archival materials, legal reasoning, and evidentiary reconstruction, the project advances a model in which responsibility is articulated at multiple levels simultaneously: individual, institutional,

and systemic. In this sense, it restores continuity to processes that were historically interrupted or constrained.

The project therefore functions as a form of structural and ontological completion: a continuation of investigative, legal, and memorial trajectories that were initiated but not fully carried through. Its contribution lies in the formalization of accountability across all relevant levels, and in the integration of legal, symbolic, and narrative dimensions into a coherent framework.

In doing so, the KARAGODIN® Investigation not only engages with existing discourse, but actively reconfigures it — establishing new conditions for how responsibility, memory, and historical violence may be articulated and recognized.

In this sense, the project is positioned as an internal extension of Soviet bureaucratic and juridical rationality, as well as its institutional and legal continuities in the post-Soviet Russian context — understood not as a rupture, but as a transformation within a continuous administrative and juridical framework — rather than its negation.

## **Part II**

# **Relation to Intellectual Traditions**

## **Conceptual Resonances**

The methodological architecture of the KARAGODIN® Investigation structurally resonates with several major lines of twentieth- and twenty-first-century social and political thought. Although the project emerged from a concrete historical investigation, its analytical structure resonates with a number of theoretical traditions that examine power, bureaucracy, documentation, and institutional time.

These connections do not indicate theoretical dependence but rather reveal how the investigation operates within a broader intellectual landscape.

## **Michel Foucault — Power, Institutions, and the Archive**

One of the closest conceptual resonances appears with the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault analyzed how systems of power operate through institutions such as prisons, administrative structures, and bureaucratic documentation. In his work, archives are not merely repositories of historical information but systems through which power produces knowledge and organizes reality.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation similarly treats archival documents not as neutral historical remnants but as elements of an institutional structure that produced and regulated political violence. By reconstructing chains of administrative decisions and identifying the bureaucratic procedures that enabled repression, the investigation reveals how power operated through documentation itself.

In this sense, the archive becomes not simply a historical record but a map of institutional power.

## **Bruno Latour — Documents as Actors in Networks**

The work of Bruno Latour and actor-network theory offers another point of resonance. Latour argued that social systems are composed not only of human actors but also of documents, technical objects, and institutional procedures that participate in networks of action.

Within the KARAGODIN® Investigation, documents function in a similar way. Administrative orders, signatures, protocols, and archival records are treated not merely as passive evidence but as active nodes within a network of bureaucratic decisions. By reconstructing these networks, the investigation demonstrates how a single act of repression emerges from a complex chain of interactions between institutions, documents, and individuals.

# **Giorgio Agamben — State Violence and Responsibility**

Giorgio Agamben's work on sovereignty and state violence provides another conceptual parallel. Agamben examined how states construct legal frameworks that allow acts of violence to occur within administrative structures while obscuring individual responsibility.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation approaches this problem from a documentary perspective. By reconstructing the administrative chain of decisions that led to the execution of *Stepan Karagodin*, the investigation demonstrates how acts of violence carried out by the state were embedded in bureaucratic procedures and institutional authorizations.

At the same time, the project insists on the principle of individual responsibility within institutional systems, emphasizing that each bureaucratic action is attached to specific signatures and decisions.

# **Hannah Arendt — Bureaucracy and the Banality of Violence**

Hannah Arendt's analysis of the "banality of evil" examined how bureaucratic systems can transform acts of violence into routine administrative procedures. In such systems, individuals often perceive themselves as simply fulfilling institutional roles rather than participating in acts of political violence.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation reveals similar mechanisms within the Soviet administrative system. By reconstructing the bureaucratic chain of responsibility — from direct executioners to higher administrative

authorities — the investigation demonstrates how violence was organized through a sequence of administrative actions that appeared ordinary within the bureaucratic structure.

This reconstruction exposes the institutional logic through which violence was normalized within administrative systems.

## **Jacques Derrida — The Archive and Political Memory**

Jacques Derrida's reflections on the concept of the archive explored the relationship between documentation, authority, and political memory. Derrida argued that archives are not neutral collections of documents but sites where power, memory, and institutional legitimacy intersect.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates within a similar conceptual field. By uncovering documents that reveal the mechanisms of repression and placing them within contemporary public and legal contexts, the investigation transforms archival materials into instruments of historical and political reflection.

The archive becomes not only a record of the past but also a site where questions of responsibility and memory are contested in the present.

## **Hermann Lübbe — Temporal Acceleration and the Shrinking Present**

Hermann Lübbe's analysis of modern temporality provides an important conceptual point of reference. Lübbe described contemporary societies as characterized by an acceleration of historical change, resulting in what he termed the "shrinking of the present" (Gegenwartsschrumpfung). In such

conditions, the duration of what is considered present rapidly contracts, and events are quickly displaced into an ever-expanding past.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates in a critical tension with this model of temporality. While modern institutional systems tend to absorb and neutralize past events through bureaucratic closure and historical distancing, the investigation reverses this dynamic by reactivating past actions within contemporary legal, institutional, and discursive frameworks, while also sustaining their presence within the operative horizon of the present.

By reconstructing administrative chains and reintroducing documentary evidence into present-day processes, the investigation effectively extends the temporal horizon of the present. In this sense, it resists the contraction of historical relevance and demonstrates how past events can persist as active elements within ongoing institutional structures.

## **Henri Bergson — Duration and the Persistence of the Past**

Henri Bergson's concept of duration (*durée*) offers another significant conceptual resonance. Bergson understood time not as a sequence of discrete moments but as a continuous flow in which past and present interpenetrate. In this model, the past is not eliminated but remains operative within the present as a constitutive element of experience.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation reflects a related but operationally transformed understanding of temporality. Rather than opposing Bergson's localization of duration within subjective consciousness, the investigation extends this logic by demonstrating how elements of lived

experience become indirectly inscribed within material and documentary forms. In this sense, documents function as echoes of events, preserving traces of existential reality in a stable and transmissible form.

The investigation therefore shows how past events continue not only within consciousness but also materially within documentary systems, institutional procedures, and bureaucratic infrastructures. Through these material traces — which may be understood as partial imprints of human and event-based existence — the continuity of the past is not merely remembered but structurally maintained and rendered operative within the present.

Archival documents, administrative decisions, and procedural continuities function as carriers of temporal persistence, allowing past actions to remain operative within present institutional contexts. In this sense, the investigation can be understood as operating through a form of externalized duration, where historical events are not merely remembered but actively maintained and reactivated within systems of documentation and responsibility.

## **Contemporary Methodological Parallels**

Beyond these conceptual resonances, the KARAGODIN® Investigation also intersects with several contemporary methodological approaches that treat knowledge production as an active engagement with material, institutional, and procedural systems.

In particular, it shares affinities with science and *technology studies* (STS), which examine how knowledge emerges through networks of actors, practices, and material infrastructures; with *legal anthropology*,

which analyzes how law operates within institutional and bureaucratic contexts; and with investigative practices such as those developed by *forensic architecture*, where documentation, spatial analysis, and institutional interaction are used not only to reconstruct events but to intervene in legal and public processes through evidentiary and discursive means.

In addition, the investigation resonates with broader approaches that conceptualize institutions as procedural and operational systems, including strands of *systems theory* and *governance-oriented analyses of administrative processes*. These perspectives similarly treat institutional reality as structured through formalized operations rather than static entities. However, the KARAGODIN® Investigation extends beyond these approaches by introducing an explicitly operational position of the investigator, capable of engaging, redirecting, and activating institutional processes from within.

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation integrates these analytical perspectives within a single operational framework, where archival reconstruction, institutional engagement, and procedural activation function as components of one investigative system.

## **Where the Investigation Stands Apart**

Despite these conceptual parallels, the KARAGODIN® Investigation occupies a distinctive position within this intellectual landscape.

Most theoretical traditions analyze institutions, archives, and power structures from a distance. The investigation, by contrast, engages directly with the bureaucratic systems it studies. Through formal

requests, institutional correspondence, and interaction with contemporary state structures, the project operates within the administrative frameworks that inherited the Soviet system.

In this sense, the investigation combines theoretical insight with practical institutional engagement.

It does not simply interpret bureaucratic structures; it interacts with them.

This creates a methodological approach that integrates historical research, institutional inquiry, and public intervention within a single investigative process.

## **Part III**

# **Relation to Institutional and Legal Practices**

This section situates the KARAGODIN® Investigation within established legal and institutional approaches to addressing state-organized violence. The following historical and legal frameworks are considered:

1. The Nuremberg Investigations and the Logic of Documentary Responsibility.
2. The Radbruch Formula and the Problem of Unlawful Law.
3. The East German Experience: Accountability Without a Special Tribunal.

### **Methodological Note:**

## On the Relevance of the German Legal Experience.

The focus on *German legal* and *institutional practice* in this section is deliberate. It does not reflect a merely comparative or illustrative interest, but is grounded in a deeper historical and structural consideration.

The Soviet political and administrative system did not emerge in isolation. It developed within a broader European intellectual context, drawing in part on theoretical frameworks that originated in 19th-century German social and political thought. These frameworks were subsequently transformed, adapted, and radicalized within the Russian revolutionary and Soviet institutional environment, including the transformation of law into an instrument of political violence.

At the same time, Germany itself underwent a series of profound political ruptures in the 20th century, including the collapse of the National Socialist regime and the later integration of the German Democratic Republic into a unified legal system. These processes generated a set of legal and institutional responses to the problem of how to address state-organized violence that had been embedded within administrative, legal, and bureaucratic structures.

For this reason, the German experience provides not an external analogy, but a structurally relevant precedent. It demonstrates that systems in which violence has been normalized through law, procedure, and documentation can be subjected to critical reconstruction and legal evaluation, even when such systems once operated under formally valid institutional frameworks.

The examples considered below therefore serve a methodological purpose: they show that the reconstruction of responsibility within complex bureaucratic systems is not a theoretical abstraction, but a historically realized practice. In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation does not propose an unprecedented task, but operates within a field of problems for which concrete legal and institutional approaches have already been developed.

## **The Nuremberg Investigations and the Logic of Documentary Responsibility**

Although the KARAGODIN® Investigation emerged independently as a personal historical inquiry, its methodological structure shows an unexpected resemblance to the investigative logic developed during the Nuremberg Trials after World War II.

This similarity does not lie in legal jurisdiction or historical context but in the method of reconstructing responsibility through documentary chains within bureaucratic systems.

## **Documents as the Primary Field of Evidence**

One of the defining characteristics of the Nuremberg investigations was the central role of documents. Rather than relying primarily on testimonies or confessions, prosecutors relied heavily on official bureaucratic records produced by the Nazi state itself.

Orders, memoranda, administrative correspondence, transportation records, and internal directives revealed how state violence was

organized through bureaucratic procedures. These documents became the foundation for demonstrating that crimes had not been isolated actions but the result of systematic administrative processes.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates according to a similar principle. The project reconstructs the bureaucratic structure behind the execution of *Stepan Karagodin* primarily through official documentation produced by the Soviet administrative system. Orders, signatures, protocols, and institutional correspondence form a documentary network through which the chain of responsibility can be traced.

In both cases, the state's own documentation becomes the most powerful evidence against the system that produced it.

## **The Reconstruction of Administrative Chains**

Another central feature of the Nuremberg methodology was the reconstruction of administrative chains of command. Prosecutors demonstrated that responsibility for crimes could be traced across multiple levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy — from individuals who carried out specific actions to the higher authorities who authorized or coordinated them.

The goal was not merely to document atrocities but to demonstrate how those acts were embedded within a structured administrative system.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation follows a comparable analytical path. By reconstructing the bureaucratic chain behind the execution of *Stepan Karagodin*, the investigation identifies multiple levels of responsibility: the individuals who carried out the execution, the local NKVD structures

that organized it, the regional administrative authorities, and the higher political institutions that established the policies under which repression operated.

The investigation thus reveals how acts of violence emerge from a hierarchy of bureaucratic decisions rather than from isolated individuals.

## **Individual Responsibility within Institutional Systems**

One of the most significant legal principles established at Nuremberg was the idea that individuals within state institutions could be held responsible for actions carried out through bureaucratic structures.

The defense often argued that the accused were merely following orders or acting within the institutional framework of the state. The Nuremberg trials rejected this argument by demonstrating that administrative procedures do not dissolve individual responsibility.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates with a similar emphasis on individual responsibility within bureaucratic systems. Each administrative action reconstructed by the investigation is connected to specific names, signatures, and institutional roles. The bureaucratic system does not appear as an abstract structure but as a network of decisions made by identifiable individuals.

This principle prevents the historical narrative from dissolving responsibility into an anonymous institutional process.

# **Bureaucracy as the Architecture of Violence**

Both the *Nuremberg investigations* and the KARAGODIN® Investigation reveal a crucial insight: large-scale political violence is rarely chaotic. Instead, it is typically organized through administrative systems designed to manage and normalize violence within institutional procedures.

Orders are issued, protocols are recorded, logistics are organized, and reports are filed. Violence becomes embedded in administrative language and procedural routines.

The reconstruction of these bureaucratic processes allows investigators to understand not only what happened but how institutional systems made it possible.

## **A Crucial Difference**

Despite these methodological similarities, there is an important difference between the two contexts.

The Nuremberg investigations were conducted after the collapse of the Nazi regime and within an international legal framework created specifically to prosecute crimes committed during the war.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation operates in a different historical situation. It engages with archival documentation and institutional structures that remain embedded within contemporary administrative systems. Rather than working within a special tribunal created after regime change, the investigation interacts directly with bureaucratic institutions that inherited elements of the Soviet administrative system.

This creates a unique methodological environment in which archival reconstruction, institutional inquiry, and public documentation intersect within an ongoing bureaucratic framework.

## **Conclusion**

The comparison with Nuremberg therefore highlights a methodological affinity rather than a legal equivalence.

Both approaches rely on the reconstruction of documentary chains within bureaucratic systems, demonstrating how acts of state violence emerge from administrative structures and how responsibility can be traced through institutional hierarchies.

Where Nuremberg established this logic within an international legal tribunal, the KARAGODIN® Investigation applies a similar documentary reasoning within the complex institutional landscape of contemporary archives and administrative systems.

In both cases, the archive becomes a decisive arena in which the relationship between power, documentation, and responsibility is revealed.

## **The Radbruch Formula and the Problem of Unlawful Law**

### **The Problem of Legalized Violence**

If the *Nuremberg investigations* demonstrated how responsibility for mass violence can be reconstructed through documents and administrative chains, the postwar development of German legal thought

introduced a second crucial problem: how to judge actions that had been carried out under the appearance of legality.

This question is especially important in cases where violence was not committed only by direct executors, but also by jurists, judges, prosecutors, administrators, and officials who acted through legal and procedural forms. In such situations, responsibility cannot be reduced to the person who physically carried out the act. It must also extend to those who translated violence into valid orders, legal decisions, administrative categories, and officially sanctioned procedures.

## **The Radbruch Formula and the Limits of Legal Validity**

The legal-philosophical importance of Gustav Radbruch lies precisely here. The Radbruch Formula established a way of addressing the problem of unlawful law: situations in which enacted norms may possess formal validity within a state system, yet lose their claim to legal character because they radically violate justice, equality, and the basic conditions of human dignity.

## **Legal Form as a Mechanism of Violence**

This principle is directly relevant to the methodological logic of the KARAGODIN® Investigation. Soviet repression did not function only through arbitrary personal cruelty. It was organized through documents, signatures, decrees, procedural authorizations, investigative categories, and administrative routines that presented political violence in the form of legality. The problem, therefore, is not only that crimes were

committed, but that they were embedded in legal and quasi-legal mechanisms that sought to transform violence into norm.

From this perspective, the key issue is not whether a given act was formally permitted within the administrative framework of the time. The central question is whether the norms, procedures, and acts in question possessed genuine legal legitimacy, or whether they represented a distortion of law into an instrument of organized injustice.

## **The Breakdown of Formal Legality as a Defense**

This distinction is essential because bureaucratic systems often defend themselves by appealing to legality in a purely formal sense. Officials may argue that they merely executed existing regulations, applied operative instructions, or acted within the legal framework available to them. Yet the Radbruchian problem begins precisely where legality and justice diverge so radically that obedience to enacted norms can no longer serve as a sufficient defense.

## **The Archive as a Field of Legal Critique**

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation does not approach Soviet repressive documentation as a neutral administrative record. It treats it as a field in which legality itself must be examined, rather than presumed. Orders, sentencing mechanisms, investigative protocols, transport records, and execution documents are not only evidence of violence; they are evidence of the juridification of violence — the transformation of injustice into procedure.

# **Responsibility Beyond the Immediate Perpetrator**

This has major implications for the attribution of responsibility. It means that accountability cannot be restricted to the immediate perpetrator. It must also include those who gave legal form to repression, translated ideological will into procedural acts, and sustained a system in which murder could appear as administration.

The significance of this perspective lies in the fact that it breaks one of the most persistent defenses of bureaucratic violence: the claim that legal form neutralizes responsibility. On the contrary, where law has been converted into an instrument of systematic injustice, legal form may itself become part of the structure of responsibility.

## **Methodological Implications for the Investigation**

The comparison with Radbruch therefore does not suggest a simple transfer of postwar German doctrine into the Soviet case. Rather, it highlights a structural affinity: both contexts confront the problem of how to judge acts committed under the authority of norms that presented themselves as lawful while serving radically unjust ends.

For the KARAGODIN® Investigation, this means that the archive is not only a record of what happened. It is also a record of how violence was legalized, proceduralized, and normalized. To reconstruct responsibility therefore requires not only the identification of perpetrators, but the critical examination of the legal and administrative forms through which injustice acquired institutional force.

# **The East German Parallel: Accountability Without a Special Tribunal**

## **From Legal Theory to Institutional Practice**

While the Radbruch Formula establishes the philosophical grounds for overcoming the authority of formally valid law, the East German experience demonstrates how such reasoning can be operationalized within a functioning legal system.

If the Radbruchian perspective establishes that formal legality does not in itself preclude responsibility, the post-reunification experience of Germany introduces a further crucial dimension: the possibility of accountability without the creation of a special tribunal or the prior total invalidation of an entire state system.

## **Post-Reunification Legal Context**

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, the legal system of the Federal Republic was confronted with the problem of how to address acts committed within the institutional framework of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). These acts included the use of lethal force against individuals attempting to cross the border, as well as judicial decisions and administrative practices that were formally valid within the legal order of the GDR at the time.

## **Accountability Without Systemic Rupture**

Importantly, the approach adopted in this context did not depend on declaring the GDR as a whole a criminal state, nor did it require the

establishment of an exceptional international tribunal analogous to Nuremberg. Instead, accountability was pursued through existing legal mechanisms, focusing on the actions of specific individuals who had participated in or enabled practices that were fundamentally incompatible with basic principles of justice.

This approach relied on a critical distinction between the formal validity of enacted norms and their substantive legitimacy. The fact that certain actions were carried out under existing regulations did not automatically exempt individuals from responsibility if those regulations themselves violated fundamental legal principles.

## **Application: Individual Cases and Legal Judgments**

As a result, border guards who had used lethal force, as well as judges and officials who had applied repressive legal provisions, were in certain cases prosecuted and convicted. The central issue in these proceedings was not merely whether the individuals had followed the rules in force at the time, but whether those rules could be recognized as law in a substantive sense, and whether their application could be justified within a framework of justice.

## **The Structural Possibility of Accountability**

This experience demonstrates that the absence of a special tribunal does not eliminate the possibility of accountability. Responsibility can be established within an ordinary legal system, provided that the legal framework is capable of critically assessing the normative foundations of past actions.

## **Relevance for the KARAGODIN® Investigation**

For the KARAGODIN® Investigation, this parallel is of particular significance. The project does not operate in a context of regime collapse followed by the creation of an extraordinary court. It engages with archival materials and institutional continuities that persist within a contemporary administrative environment. In this situation, the question of how responsibility can be articulated without reliance on exceptional judicial mechanisms becomes central.

### **A Model of Non-Ruptural Accountability**

The East German experience suggests that such articulation is possible. It shows that individual accountability does not require a total symbolic or legal rupture with the past, nor does it depend on the prior classification of an entire system as criminal. Instead, it can proceed through the careful reconstruction of specific acts, the identification of specific individuals, and the evaluation of those acts against fundamental legal principles that transcend the formal validity of past norms.

### **Limitations of Institutional Willingness**

At the same time, this approach underscores a critical limitation: accountability remains contingent on the willingness of legal institutions to engage in such evaluation. Where such willingness is absent, the documentary reconstruction of responsibility may remain without formal juridical consequences. Nevertheless, the structural possibility demonstrated by this precedent remains essential.

# **The Investigative Framework in Practice**

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation can be understood as operating within the same conceptual horizon: it reconstructs chains of responsibility, identifies individual actors, and exposes the normative contradictions embedded in bureaucratic documentation. Whether or not these reconstructions are translated into formal legal judgments, they establish the structural conditions for accountability within an existing legal and institutional framework.

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# Implications

The KARAGODIN® Investigation does not seek to redefine fundamental concepts such as justice, history, the state, or the archive. Instead, it demonstrates their operative reality.

In relation to justice, the investigation establishes that justice exists as a principle toward which action can be directed. It is not nullified by time, nor is it dependent on the will of the state. The investigation shows that justice can be pursued, articulated, and progressively realized through structured engagement with evidence and institutions.

In relation to history, the investigation demonstrates that past events require articulation and designation. It reveals the distinction between historical reality and the narratives constructed around it. In particular, it exposes the existence of mediating myths that may obscure the structure of events. By reconstructing documentary chains, the investigation repositions such narratives as secondary elements, while restoring empirical reality as the primary reference.

In relation to the state, the investigation demonstrates that institutional systems function through the actions and orientations of identifiable actors. The state is not an abstract entity, but a configuration of procedures, decisions, and directives. Depending on the structure of these directives, such systems may produce violence, concealment, or accountability. The investigation makes visible how systems operate when oriented toward each of these outcomes.

In relation to documents and archives, the investigation establishes that documentary records are not equivalent to events, but constitute structured traces of them. A document functions as an interface through which access to past reality becomes possible. In this sense, archives operate not merely as repositories, but as systems that enable entry into the evidentiary, legal, and existential dimensions of recorded events.

In relation to the individual, the investigation demonstrates that the initiation of large-scale processes is not limited by institutional position. Just as individuals may initiate systems of violence, individuals may also initiate processes oriented toward justice. The investigation shows that a single actor, through sustained and structured action, can generate effects that extend beyond the initial scale of the case and produce broader systemic consequences.

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# Implementation and Applications

The KARAGODIN® Investigation demonstrates a methodological framework that can be applied across multiple domains, including legal practice, education, media, and archival systems.

In the legal domain, the investigation provides a replicable procedural model. By systematically submitting requests, obtaining responses, and assembling documentary evidence into cumulative chains, it becomes possible to reconstruct responsibility and, where applicable, initiate processes aimed at legal accountability. Even in cases where formal prosecution is not achievable, the method enables the structured acquisition of documentary evidence, which constitutes a significant result in itself.

In the field of education, the investigation establishes a practical model for knowledge production. It demonstrates that new historical knowledge can be generated not only through passive study of existing materials, but through active engagement with institutional systems, including the use of formal requests to access previously unavailable data.

In media and public communication, the investigation provides a framework for transforming documentary materials into structured narratives. The collected evidence can be articulated in formats that combine analytical rigor with narrative accessibility, allowing complex archival data to be presented and understood within broader public contexts.

The investigation also has implications for archival systems. Its approach to structuring and connecting documents introduces methods through which dispersed materials can be reactivated and reorganized into meaningful evidentiary configurations. In this sense, documents are not treated as static records, but as elements of dynamic systems capable of producing new knowledge and interpretations.

The framework developed within the investigation is accessible and transferable. It can be applied by individuals, independent researchers, and institutions. The method demonstrates that responsibility can be reconstructed through consistent procedural engagement, making it possible for similar investigations to be undertaken in other cases and regions.

At the same time, the investigation functions both as a practical tool and as an emerging model. It provides concrete procedural mechanisms while also establishing a broader conceptual framework that can inform future applications.

The potential for institutionalization is significant. The investigative framework may serve as a basis for larger-scale processes, including state-led initiatives aimed at addressing historical violence. By demonstrating the feasibility of reconstructing responsibility through individual cases, the investigation provides a methodological foundation that could be expanded within formal institutional contexts.

Existing applications of the approach confirm its viability. The publication of materials has generated sustained public engagement, while independent initiatives have emerged that apply similar principles at regional levels. These developments indicate that the investigative

model is not only theoretically transferable, but already operational in diverse contexts.

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# Media and Public Dimension

Within this framework, media and public communication are not treated as external or auxiliary components, but as integral elements of the investigative and methodological process.

Media functions simultaneously as a field, a tool, and an operational environment within which the production, documentation, and dissemination of analysis, records, and public articulation take place. It operates not only as a channel of representation, but as an active mechanism for structuring knowledge, shaping public discourse, and ensuring accountability.

This approach involves a reconfiguration of the conventional role of media: from an instrument that passively reflects or shapes events, to a procedural and analytical mechanism that enables documentation, interpretation, and discursive influence within the same public and informational environment.

At the same time, the public dimension of the project functions as a mechanism of response and risk management, allowing the project to engage with external pressures, contested interpretations, and institutional reactions through structured forms of publication, documentation, and communication.

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# Scalability and Transferability

The framework presented here is designed to be scalable and transferable beyond the specific case from which it emerged. Rather than constituting a unique or closed system, it offers a methodological pathway that can be adopted, adapted, and extended by others.

Its significance lies in its reproducibility: the capacity for similar investigative, archival, and procedural practices to be implemented across diverse contexts, enabling the systematic production of documented knowledge and public engagement. In this sense, the project functions not only as a singular investigation, but as an open, replicable model for independent research and for the practical application of its methodological framework, enabling similar forms of inquiry and structured intervention across diverse domains of application.

Its implementation depends on the availability of documentary material, procedural access, and the capacity to structure and maintain coherent evidentiary and discursive frameworks.

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# Limitations

The framework presented here operates within a set of structural, documentary, temporal, and procedural constraints that define the conditions of its applicability.

## Jurisdictional Constraints

The applicability and effectiveness of the framework may vary depending on the legal jurisdiction in which it is implemented. Differences in legal systems, archival regulations, access policies, and institutional practices can significantly influence the availability of materials, the scope of procedural action, and the potential for formal recognition or legal outcomes.

## Procedural and Legal Constraints

The framework operates within existing procedural and legal environments, which may impose limitations on access to archives, the initiation of formal processes, and the recognition of findings within institutional structures.

## Documentary Constraints

The effectiveness of the framework depends on the availability, accessibility, and integrity of documentary sources. Gaps in archival

material, loss of records, or restricted access may limit the completeness and verifiability of reconstructed processes.

## **Temporal Constraints**

Temporal distance introduces additional limitations, including the degradation of sources, the fragmentation of institutional memory, and the increasing difficulty of reconstructing events across extended historical periods.

## **Structural Constraints**

The implementation of the framework requires sustained engagement with public and informational environments, making it dependent on the continuity of documentation, publication, and discursive presence.

These limitations do not invalidate the framework, but define the conditions under which it can be effectively applied.

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# Conclusion

The KARAGODIN® Investigation demonstrates that historical processes cannot be considered complete while the question of responsibility remains unresolved. Acts of political violence, even when temporally distant, retain a structural incompleteness if those responsible are neither identified nor formally recognized.

The investigation establishes that justice, in this context, consists in the articulation of responsibility at all levels: individual, institutional, and systemic. To name perpetrators as perpetrators, to define the system within which they operated as criminal, and to restore the integrity of the affected individuals and families is not a symbolic gesture, but a necessary completion of the process itself.

Beyond its empirical results, the investigation proves a fundamental principle: the reconstruction of responsibility is possible. Even under conditions of restricted access, institutional resistance, and temporal distance, documentary evidence can be obtained, structured, and transformed into a coherent basis for legal, analytical, and ethical judgment.

As a result, certain conditions can no longer be ignored. The existence of a structured system of violence, the identifiability of individuals involved, and the continued restriction of access to relevant materials all indicate that the process remains unresolved. The absence of accountability is not a closed historical fact, but an ongoing condition.

The significance of the investigation lies in its demonstrable scalability. By establishing responsibility in relation to a single, concrete case, it produces a framework that can be extended to a broader set of cases involving similar structures of violence. The articulation of justice in one instance creates the conditions under which it may be pursued in others.

At the same time, the investigation does not constitute a finished result. It operates as an open and developing system, in which methods, procedures, and documentary practices continue to evolve. Its structure allows for transparency and reproducibility, making it possible for similar processes to be undertaken in other contexts.

In this sense, the KARAGODIN® Investigation is not only a reconstruction of the past, but an ongoing practice aimed at completing what remains structurally unfinished.

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# Author

**Denis Karagodin** is an independent researcher based in Russia, working at the intersection of political history, archival studies, and media analysis.

He was born in Tomsk (USSR) and received his education at Tomsk State University, where he specialized in philosophy, with a focus on ontology and social philosophy, developing an approach grounded in ontological analysis of temporality, informed by deconstruction as a critical method and extended within post-structuralist thought, and operationalized through narratology and semiotics.

Prior to initiating the KARAGODIN® Investigation, he was engaged in developing narrative and communication strategies in the business and media environments, gaining practical experience in constructing and managing complex informational structures.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation emerged initially as a personal inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the execution of his great-grandfather during the Stalinist period, and was from the outset structurally developed as a potentially scalable system, shaped by the author's methodological background and practical experience, designed not only for an individual case but for broader application by other actors and in comparable contexts.

Through this transferability, the author's approach extends beyond an individual investigation into a reproducible mode of practice, constituting a hybrid operational model that integrates legal, symbolic,

and narrative and discursive practices into a cumulative and adaptive system of action in the analysis of political repression, archival systems, mechanisms of state violence, moral responsibility, and politics.

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# Future Development

The future development of the KARAGODIN® Investigation is defined by a combination of operational continuity, methodological consolidation, and the completion of unresolved evidentiary elements.

At the operational level, a primary priority is the preservation and stability of the investigation's infrastructure. This includes ensuring the continuity of digital systems, archival databases, and communication channels under conditions of political and institutional pressure. The capacity to maintain uninterrupted access to data and to protect accumulated materials is a critical condition for the continuation of the project.

A central strategic objective is the transition of the investigation into a fully articulated methodological and academic framework. This includes the formalization of its procedures in the form of white papers, analytical publications, and conceptual models, enabling the investigation to operate not only as an empirical project but as a transferable methodological system.

Parallel to this, the investigation is expanding its media and narrative formats. This includes the development of podcast-based formats, structured narrative forms, and the articulation of a hybrid narrative-investigative framework termed STEPINQUEST®. Within this framework, historical inquiry unfolds step by step through archival research, analytical reconstruction, and the public documentation of evidence. Functioning both as a literary genre and a methodological approach, STEPINQUEST® integrates narrative reconstruction with real

institutional processes, enabling investigative work to produce legal, political, and institutional consequences, while translating complex documentary material into accessible public discourse without compromising evidentiary rigor.

At the level of substantive inquiry, the investigation remains focused on obtaining access to critical missing documentation. The most significant unresolved element concerns prison-level records, including materials related to the handling of bodies and the identification of burial locations. These documents are considered essential for completing the reconstruction of the full operational chain.

The absence of these materials constitutes the principal structural limitation of the current stage. While the investigation has already established a substantial evidentiary base sufficient for the attribution of responsibility at multiple levels, the acquisition of these records would allow for a fully exhaustive reconstruction, extending from decision-making authorities to the final stages of execution and concealment.

The investigation also operates within conditions of potential systemic obstruction. Restrictions on access to archival materials, including those that are legally subject to permanent preservation, represent a significant risk factor. At the same time, the existence of such restrictions confirms the continued relevance and sensitivity of the materials in question.

Although the project does not define scaling as a primary objective, its methodological framework has demonstrated replicability. Independent initiatives have already emerged that apply similar principles at regional levels, indicating the broader applicability of the investigative model.

Technological and methodological development remains an ongoing process. The investigation has evolved from manual documentation to complex digital infrastructures, including distributed data storage, networked systems, and public-facing platforms. Simultaneously, its methodological structure continues to develop through integration into academic, analytical, and cultural contexts.

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# Sources and Documentation

This section provides structured access to the primary materials, references, and external sources that constitute the evidentiary foundation of the KARAGODIN® Investigation.

## Primary Investigation Materials

Archival and evidentiary materials forming the empirical basis of the investigation.

1. KARAGODIN® Investigation (Расследование КАРАГОДИНА®)  
[KARAGODIN.ORG] — primary project website (karagodin.org, Russian-language)
2. STEPINQUEST® — White Paper

## Project Outputs and Internal Materials

Internal materials and analytical outputs produced within the investigation.

1. Act of Civil Consent and Reconciliation

# Media and Public References

Public representations and media coverage of the investigation.

1. Media Coverage

# Academic and Conceptual References

Scholarly and theoretical engagements with the investigation.

1. Academic Reference

# External Analytical and Cultural Engagement

External analytical and cultural engagements with the investigation.

1. Literary and Cultural References

# Legal and Institutional Documents

Official responses, legal and policy materials, and institutional outputs related to the investigation, including its methodological, legal, and governance framework.

1. The KARAGODIN® Investigation (Расследование КАРАГОДИНА®) [KARAGODIN.ORG] – White Paper (Foundational Framework) – formally established as the

foundational methodological and operational framework of the project.

2. Legal and Policy Framework of the KARAGODIN® Investigation (Расследование КАРАГОДИНА®) [KARAGODIN.ORG] — operational framework implementing the methodological and ethical principles defined in the KARAGODIN® Investigation — White Paper.
3. Intellectual Property and Copyright (karagodin.com)

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# Contact

This framework is open to academic discussion, institutional collaboration, and further methodological development.

Inquiries related to research, documentation, or collaboration may be directed through the **contact form**:

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