

# **STEPINQUEST®**

## **White Paper**

### **A Conceptual, Methodological, and Operational Framework**

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## Document Description

This document establishes the conceptual, methodological, and operational framework of STEPINQUEST® as an investigative narrative genre.

It defines the principles through which narrative, documentary evidence, and institutional engagement are integrated into a unified process of investigation and intervention.

The framework is presented as a formalized structure for application, analysis, and further development across investigative, academic, and media contexts.

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This document may be updated, revised, and expanded as part of the ongoing development of STEPINQUEST® as a conceptual and methodological framework.

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

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# Introduction

Contemporary investigative practices operate within a fragmented landscape of narrative forms, institutional procedures, and public communication. Investigative journalism, documentary storytelling, historical reconstruction, and legal inquiry each provide distinct frameworks for engaging with complex events. Yet these frameworks often remain structurally separated: narrative forms tend to describe and interpret, while institutional processes operate independently of how such narratives are constructed and disseminated.

This separation produces a fundamental limitation. Narratives about investigations frequently remain retrospective, representing events that have already been concluded or interpreted, while institutional mechanisms — legal, administrative, or political — follow their own procedural logic, often insulated from narrative articulation. As a result, the relationship between storytelling and institutional action remains indirect and, in many cases, ineffective.

At the same time, certain categories of cases — particularly those involving unresolved historical events, institutional failures, or contested interpretations of responsibility — require a different mode of engagement. These cases often exist in a suspended state: formally closed, insufficiently examined, or considered beyond the reach of contemporary legal or institutional processes. Traditional narrative forms may reconstruct such cases, but they rarely alter their status within institutional reality.

STEPINQUEST® emerges in response to this structural gap.

Developed within the context of the KARAGODIN® Investigation, STEPINQUEST® represents a new approach in which narrative is no longer limited to representation but becomes integrated with the investigative process itself. Rather than describing an investigation from a distance, STEPINQUEST® operates through a step-by-step unfolding of evidence, analysis, and public articulation, directly engaging with institutional frameworks and producing tangible effects.

In this sense, STEPINQUEST® establishes a form of investigative practice in which narrative, evidence, and institutional action are no longer separate domains but function as a coordinated system. The investigation unfolds not only through the accumulation of documentary material but also through its structured presentation in the public sphere, where narrative itself becomes an active component of the process.

The significance of this approach lies in its capacity to transform the status of a case. Events that are historically distant, institutionally inactive, or publicly obscured may be reactivated through a combination of documentary rigor, procedural logic, and narrative articulation. In this process, the boundaries between past and present, analysis and action, and representation and intervention are systematically reconfigured.

This document introduces STEPINQUEST® as an autonomous narrative genre and an investigative framework designed to operate within and across institutional, legal, and public domains. Its purpose is to define the structure, principles, and applicability of this approach, providing a clear and operational model for its understanding and use.

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# Definition of STEPINQUEST®

STEPINQUEST® is an autonomous narrative genre structured as a step-by-step investigative framework in which storytelling is inseparable from the investigative process itself and functions as an active instrument capable of producing legal, institutional, and political consequences.

Unlike conventional narrative forms that represent or interpret events, STEPINQUEST® operates through direct engagement with the conditions it investigates. Narrative in this context does not merely communicate findings; it actively participates in their formation, organization, and public articulation. As such, STEPINQUEST® transforms storytelling into an operational component of investigative practice.

At its core, STEPINQUEST® is defined by its capacity to intervene. The genre is oriented not toward retrospective description but toward the production of effects within institutional and public domains. Through the systematic accumulation of evidence, analytical reconstruction, and structured narrative presentation, it establishes a process in which investigation and narration advance simultaneously.

A defining condition of STEPINQUEST® is its ability to reactivate cases across temporal boundaries. Events that are historically distant, institutionally closed, or publicly inactive may be reintroduced into contemporary legal, institutional, and discursive processes. In this sense,

STEPINQUEST® operates not only within time but upon it, transforming temporality into an active dimension of investigation.

STEPINQUEST® is not limited to a specific subject matter, though it originates in the context of criminal investigation. Its structure allows it to be applied to a broader range of cases, including historical, political, and institutional inquiries, provided that they involve the systematic reconstruction of events and the potential for reactivation within present conditions.

The genre is further distinguished by its recursive character. The effects produced by its narrative — public reactions, institutional responses, and shifts in discourse — are not external to the investigation but are incorporated into it as new material. In this way, STEPINQUEST® establishes a feedback loop in which narrative generates effects, and those effects become part of the evolving evidentiary and analytical structure.

Finally, STEPINQUEST® is independent of any specific medium. It may be realized through text, audio, video, or hybrid forms, but its defining characteristics remain constant: a sequential investigative logic, a documentary foundation oriented toward legal articulation, and a narrative structure that operates as an active force within the investigative process.

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# Etymology of STEPINQUEST®

The term **STEPINQUEST®** combines two semantic components that define the structure and orientation of the genre.

The first component, **step**, refers to the step-by-step progression of the investigative process. It indicates a sequential logic in which evidence, interpretation, and argumentation are constructed cumulatively, with each stage establishing the basis for the next. At the same time, **step** also functions as a direct reference to **Stepan Karagodin**, whose execution and the subsequent investigation into his case provided the originating context for the development of STEPINQUEST®. In this sense, the term carries both methodological and commemorative significance.

The second component, **inquest**, draws on the legal tradition of formal inquiry into the circumstances of death. In its conventional juridical sense, the term refers to an official investigation aimed at establishing the causes, conditions, and responsibility surrounding a death. Within STEPINQUEST®, this meaning is retained and expanded: *inquest* signifies not only legal inquiry in the strict sense, but a broader investigative orientation toward responsibility, institutional accountability, and the reactivation of unresolved cases.

Taken together, the term **STEPINQUEST®** expresses the defining logic of the genre: a step-by-step investigative process grounded in documentary evidence and oriented toward formal inquiry, responsibility, and institutional consequence.



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# Origins and Context

STEPINQUEST® originates within the methodological and practical development of the KARAGODIN® Investigation, an independent inquiry into Soviet political repression centered on the execution of *Stepan Karagodin* in 1938. From its inception, the investigation was not limited to historical reconstruction but was oriented toward identifying individual responsibility through documentary evidence and engaging with contemporary institutional frameworks.

This orientation produced a specific set of conditions in which existing narrative and investigative forms proved insufficient. Traditional historical research allowed for the reconstruction of events, but did not provide a mechanism for translating that reconstruction into present-day institutional processes. Investigative journalism offered tools for public exposure, yet typically operated within temporal and procedural limits that did not accommodate long-term archival inquiry or the systematic pursuit of accountability across decades.

At the same time, the investigation unfolded within a media environment that enabled continuous public documentation. Archival discoveries, analytical interpretations, and procedural developments were not confined to closed research contexts but were progressively articulated and published. This created a dynamic in which the investigation was simultaneously conducted and narrated in real time, producing an evolving structure that could not be fully contained within any existing genre.

Within this context, STEPINQUEST® emerged not as a predefined model but as a necessary response to the demands of the investigation itself. The need to integrate archival research, legal reasoning, public communication, and institutional engagement into a coherent process led to the formation of a narrative structure that was inseparable from the investigative method.

A defining feature of this development was the interaction between temporality and institutional logic. The investigation addressed events that were historically distant yet retained unresolved legal and political dimensions. By treating archival documents not only as records of the past but as active elements within a present investigative framework, the process challenged conventional assumptions about the closure of historical cases.

The KARAGODIN® Investigation thus functioned as a proof of concept. It demonstrated that a case considered historically concluded could be re-examined through a structured combination of documentary evidence, legal analysis, and public articulation, producing tangible institutional and discursive effects. STEPINQUEST® emerges from this demonstration as the formalization of a method and a narrative form capable of operating under such conditions.

At the same time, STEPINQUEST® is not confined to its originating case. While the KARAGODIN® Investigation provides the empirical and methodological foundation for its emergence, the genre is defined in terms that allow for broader applicability. It articulates a generalizable approach to investigations that require the reconstruction of complex events, the reactivation of institutional processes, and the integration of narrative as an operational component of inquiry.

In this sense, STEPINQUEST® should be understood not as a singular innovation tied to a specific project, but as the conceptual and methodological articulation of a form of investigative practice that has become possible under contemporary conditions of archival access, media dissemination, and institutional interaction.

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# Core Principle: Institutional Intervention

The central principle of STEPINQUEST® is institutional intervention.

All other elements of the genre — sequential structure, documentary rigor, and public narrative — function as instruments designed to enable, support, and sustain this intervention.

Unlike narrative forms that aim primarily to represent, interpret, or communicate, STEPINQUEST® is oriented toward direct engagement with institutional systems. These include legal frameworks, administrative structures, and political environments within which questions of responsibility, accountability, and interpretation are formally processed.

Institutional intervention, in this context, does not refer to abstract critique or symbolic positioning. It denotes a concrete process of entering, addressing, and influencing institutional mechanisms through the structured presentation of evidence, argumentation, and procedural logic. The investigation is therefore conducted not only at the level of analysis but within the operational space of institutions themselves.

The sequential structure of STEPINQUEST® serves as an epistemic mechanism through which evidence is accumulated, organized, and validated. Each step contributes to the construction of a coherent evidentiary framework capable of withstanding institutional scrutiny. In this sense, progression is not merely narrative but procedural, reflecting the requirements of legal and administrative reasoning.

Documentary rigor emerges as a necessary condition of this process. Evidence must be collected, verified, and articulated in forms that are compatible with institutional standards. Documents are not only sources of information but elements within a formal structure that enables the translation of investigative findings into legally and administratively meaningful terms.

Public narrative operates as a complementary mechanism that extends the intervention beyond institutional boundaries. Through structured articulation in the public sphere, the investigation generates visibility, establishes interpretive frameworks, and creates conditions under which institutional processes may be activated, influenced, or reconsidered. Public exposure is therefore not an external effect but an integral component of the intervention itself.

Taken together, these elements form a coordinated system in which narrative, evidence, and institutional engagement operate in alignment. STEPINQUEST® does not separate the production of knowledge from its application; instead, it integrates them within a single process oriented toward concrete outcomes.

At its core, STEPINQUEST® redefines the function of narrative within investigative practice. Narrative is no longer limited to describing institutional reality but becomes a means of acting upon it. Through this shift, the genre establishes a framework in which the investigation is conducted as an intervention, and the intervention is articulated as a structured narrative process.

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# Operational Structure of STEPINQUEST®

The operational structure of STEPINQUEST® is defined by the coordinated interaction of three core mechanisms: sequential progression, documentary construction, and public articulation. Together, these elements form a unified process through which investigation, narration, and intervention are carried out simultaneously.

At the foundation of this structure lies sequential progression. STEPINQUEST® unfolds through a step-by-step accumulation of evidentiary and analytical elements, each of which contributes to the construction of a coherent investigative framework. This progression is not merely narrative in form but procedural in function: each step establishes conditions for the next, producing a cumulative structure capable of sustaining institutional engagement.

Sequentiality in STEPINQUEST® operates as an epistemic mechanism. It organizes the investigation into discrete but interconnected stages, enabling the systematic assembly of facts, interpretations, and arguments. This structure allows complex cases to be reconstructed in a manner that is both intelligible and operationally effective, ensuring that the investigation remains grounded in demonstrable continuity and logical coherence.

Documentary construction constitutes the second core mechanism. Evidence within STEPINQUEST® is not only collected but structured in a way that aligns with legal and institutional standards. Documents are

treated as active components within the investigative process: they are selected, verified, contextualized, and presented in forms that enable their translation into formal procedures of evaluation and judgment.

This documentary dimension ensures that the investigation maintains a level of rigor compatible with institutional scrutiny. The accumulation of evidence is therefore oriented not toward narrative completeness alone, but toward the possibility of legal articulation and procedural recognition.

The third mechanism, public articulation, extends the investigative process into the public domain. Through the structured presentation of findings, arguments, and evidentiary materials, STEPINQUEST® establishes a narrative field in which the investigation becomes visible, interpretable, and actionable. Public articulation is not an external stage following the investigation; it is an integral component through which the investigation advances.

Within this framework, narrative functions as the medium that connects these mechanisms. It organizes the sequence, frames the documentary material, and mediates the interaction between investigation and public reception. At the same time, narrative itself participates in the operational logic of the process: it generates responses, produces new information, and contributes to the ongoing development of the investigation.

The interaction of these three mechanisms results in a dynamic system in which investigation is continuously constructed, articulated, and extended. Sequential progression provides structure, documentary construction provides validity, and public articulation provides

activation. Together, they enable STEPINQUEST® to function as an integrated investigative process capable of producing both knowledge and effect.

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# Dual-Phase Model

STEPINQUEST® operates as a dual-phase investigative system that ensures continuity of action regardless of the outcome of institutional engagement. This structure allows the investigation to remain effective under varying conditions, including those in which direct institutional results are constrained or unattainable.

The first phase is oriented toward direct institutional outcome. In this phase, the investigation proceeds through the systematic accumulation and articulation of evidence with the objective of producing concrete legal, administrative, or political consequences. The process is structured to meet the requirements of institutional evaluation, enabling the possibility of formal recognition, accountability, or procedural action.

This phase is characterized by a high degree of evidentiary rigor and procedural alignment. The investigation advances through clearly defined steps, each contributing to the construction of a coherent case capable of entering institutional frameworks. Narrative, in this context, functions as a mechanism for organizing and presenting the material in a form that supports institutional engagement.

However, STEPINQUEST® does not depend exclusively on the success of this phase. Structural limitations — such as incomplete archival records, restricted access to institutional mechanisms, or constraints imposed by existing legal frameworks — may prevent the realization of a direct outcome. Rather than terminating the investigation, these conditions mark a transition.

The second phase is oriented toward discursive transformation. When direct institutional intervention reaches its limits, the investigation shifts into a mode in which its findings are used to reshape public understanding, generate interpretive frameworks, and produce forms of pressure within the public sphere. The accumulated evidence and analysis remain central, but their function is extended beyond formal institutional application.

A critical component of this transition is the explicit recognition of limits. The investigation identifies the point at which further progress within institutional structures is not currently possible and articulates this boundary as part of its findings. This act of delimitation does not represent failure; rather, it establishes the conditions for a different form of intervention.

In the second phase, narrative assumes an expanded role. It becomes the primary medium through which the investigation continues to operate, transforming documented evidence into a structured account capable of influencing perception, discourse, and, indirectly, institutional conditions. Public articulation generates responses — social, intellectual, and political — that may, in turn, reopen or reconfigure the possibilities for further action.

The dual-phase model ensures that STEPINQUEST® remains a non-terminating system. Whether through direct institutional outcomes or through the transformation of public and discursive environments, the investigation continues to produce effects. The distinction between phases is therefore not a division between success and failure, but a shift between modes of operation within a unified investigative framework.

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# Temporality and Reactivation

A defining characteristic of STEPINQUEST® is its capacity to operate upon temporality.

The genre is not limited to investigating events within a fixed temporal frame; rather, it engages with the conditions under which events are considered temporally closed, inactive, or inaccessible, and transforms those conditions into an active dimension of the investigative process.

Many cases addressed by STEPINQUEST® exist in a state of temporal suspension. They may be historically distant, formally concluded, or institutionally abandoned, yet retain unresolved questions of responsibility, interpretation, or legal relevance. Within conventional frameworks, such cases are often treated as part of the past, their status defined by archival preservation rather than active inquiry.

STEPINQUEST® challenges this condition by reactivating cases across temporal boundaries. Through the systematic accumulation of documentary evidence, analytical reconstruction, and structured narrative articulation, events that were previously confined to the past are reintroduced into the present as objects of active investigation.

This reactivation is not merely interpretive. It involves the transformation of archival material into operational elements capable of engaging with contemporary institutional frameworks. Documents cease to function solely as historical records and instead become components of an ongoing process in which past events are reassessed under present

conditions of legal reasoning, institutional accountability, and public scrutiny.

In this sense, temporality in STEPINQUEST® is not a passive background but an active field of intervention. The investigation operates by altering the temporal status of a case — shifting it from closure to openness, from archival containment to procedural relevance, and from historical distance to contemporary engagement.

This transformation produces a reconfiguration of the relationship between past and present. Events that were previously understood as concluded may acquire new significance when placed within a structured investigative framework that integrates evidence, analysis, and public articulation. The past is not simply revisited; it is reconstituted as part of an active process that unfolds in the present.

The capacity to reactivate temporality functions as a defining criterion of STEPINQUEST®. Investigations that do not engage in this transformation remain within the domain of descriptive or analytical practices. By contrast, STEPINQUEST® establishes a mode of inquiry in which the temporal boundaries of a case are themselves subject to investigation and intervention.

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# Narrative as Action

In STEPINQUEST®, narrative is not confined to the representation of events; it functions as a mode of action within the investigative process.

Storytelling does not follow the investigation as a descriptive layer but operates as an active mechanism through which the investigation advances.

Conventional narrative forms are structured around the communication of information: they recount, interpret, or reconstruct events that are considered external to the act of narration itself. In STEPINQUEST®, this separation is dissolved. The act of narration becomes inseparable from the production, organization, and transformation of investigative material.

Narrative in this context performs multiple operational functions. It structures the sequence of the investigation, articulates the evidentiary framework, and mediates the interaction between the investigation and its public and institutional environments. At the same time, it produces effects that extend beyond communication, influencing perception, generating responses, and contributing to the evolution of the case.

A defining feature of STEPINQUEST® is that the effects generated by narrative are incorporated back into the investigation as new material. Public reactions, institutional responses, and shifts in discourse are not treated as external consequences but as elements of the evidentiary and analytical structure. In this way, narrative establishes a recursive

dynamic in which action produces effects, and those effects become part of the ongoing process.

This recursive structure transforms narrative into an operational force. It does not merely accompany the investigation but participates in its construction, expansion, and redirection. The investigation unfolds through narrative, and narrative evolves through the investigation, creating a continuous feedback loop between articulation and action.

As a result, STEPINQUEST® cannot be reduced to a form of storytelling in the conventional sense. It constitutes a mode of investigative practice in which narration is an instrument of intervention, capable of generating material, influencing institutional processes, and reshaping the conditions under which the investigation proceeds.

Through this shift, STEPINQUEST® redefines the role of narrative within investigative work. Narrative is no longer limited to explaining what has happened; it becomes a means of producing what happens next.

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# Distributed Narrative Field

STEPINQUEST® operates within an expanded narrative field in which the process of investigation is not confined to a single author or institutional actor but is distributed across a network of participants. Within this field, narration becomes a shared and evolving process involving investigators, institutions, audiences, and other actors engaged with the case.

While STEPINQUEST® maintains a structured investigative core, its narrative dimension extends beyond the individual who initiates or leads the investigation. Each interaction generated by the process — whether through institutional engagement, public response, or interpretive participation — contributes to the unfolding of the narrative and, consequently, to the development of the investigation itself.

This distributed structure transforms the role of participants. Institutions are no longer passive objects of analysis but become active components within the narrative field, responding to claims, evidence, and procedural initiatives. Audiences, likewise, are not merely recipients of information but participants in the formation of interpretive frameworks, influencing the perception and trajectory of the case.

In this sense, STEPINQUEST® establishes a multi-layered narrative environment in which meaning, evidence, and action are continuously negotiated. The investigation unfolds through a series of interactions that extend across individual, institutional, and public domains, each contributing to the overall structure of the process.

A key effect of this distributed narrative field is the transformation of cognitive and institutional boundaries. As participants engage with the investigation, their understanding of what is possible — legally, historically, and procedurally — may shift. Institutional actors may reconsider established assumptions, and audiences may adopt new interpretive frameworks, thereby altering the conditions under which the investigation operates.

This expansion of narrative beyond a single authorial perspective does not result in fragmentation but in a coordinated field of activity. The investigative structure maintains coherence through its sequential logic and evidentiary foundation, while allowing for multiple points of participation and response.

Through this configuration, STEPINQUEST® redefines narration as a distributed process embedded within a broader system of interaction. The investigation is not only documented but enacted across a network of actors, each contributing to the evolving narrative and its effects.

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# Distinction from Adjacent Genres

STEPINQUEST® operates in proximity to several established narrative and investigative forms, including true crime, investigative journalism, documentary narrative, historical nonfiction, and advocacy-oriented media. While it shares certain features with these genres — such as evidentiary focus, narrative structure, and engagement with real events — it differs from them in its fundamental orientation toward action.

True crime and documentary storytelling are primarily structured around the reconstruction and presentation of events. They seek to inform, interpret, and engage audiences through narrative accounts that render complex cases accessible and compelling. Investigative journalism, while oriented toward uncovering hidden information and exposing wrongdoing, typically operates within defined temporal and procedural frameworks, often concluding with publication rather than continuing as an evolving process.

Historical nonfiction provides detailed reconstructions of past events based on documentary sources, but it generally treats those events as temporally closed, focusing on interpretation rather than reactivation. Advocacy-oriented media may aim to influence public opinion or policy, yet it often does so through argumentation and persuasion rather than through a sustained, step-by-step investigative structure integrated with institutional engagement.

STEPINQUEST® differs from these forms in that it does not treat narrative as a means of representing or communicating an investigation, but as an active component of the investigation itself. The process of narration is directly implicated in the production of effects — legal, institutional, and discursive — that become part of the investigative structure.

This distinction can be summarized in terms of orientation:

1. **True crime** recounts events.
2. **Investigative journalism** reveals information.
3. **Documentary narrative** presents and interprets.
4. **Historical nonfiction** reconstructs the past.
5. **Advocacy media** argues and persuades.

**STEPINQUEST®**, by contrast, acts and intervenes.

This difference is not merely stylistic but structural. In STEPINQUEST®, the investigation does not culminate in narrative; it unfolds through it. Narrative is not the endpoint of the process but one of its primary operational mechanisms.

As a result, STEPINQUEST® establishes a distinct category within the broader landscape of investigative and narrative practices. It integrates elements that are distributed across adjacent genres — evidence, analysis, storytelling, and public engagement — into a single framework oriented toward continuous action and institutional interaction.

In this sense, STEPINQUEST® is particularly applicable in contexts where investigations involve unresolved or historically distant events,

incomplete or fragmented evidence, and the necessity of engaging institutional or public frameworks in order to produce effects.

It may be employed by researchers, journalists, writers, documentary practitioners, and independent investigators working with complex cases that require both reconstruction and intervention.

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# Media Independence

STEPINQUEST® is not defined by any specific medium.

It operates as a narrative and investigative framework that can be realized across multiple forms, including text, audio, video, and hybrid media environments.

In conventional practice, narrative genres are often closely associated with particular media formats: journalism with print or digital publication, documentary with film, and serialized storytelling with audio or broadcast platforms. In STEPINQUEST®, however, the medium functions as a carrier rather than a defining structure.

The defining characteristics of the genre — sequential progression, documentary construction, institutional engagement, and narrative as action — remain constant regardless of the format through which the investigation is articulated. These elements constitute the operational core of STEPINQUEST® and are not dependent on the technical or aesthetic properties of a specific medium.

This independence allows STEPINQUEST® to adapt to different communicative environments and to integrate multiple forms within a single investigative process. A case may unfold simultaneously across written analysis, audio narration, visual documentation, and archival publication, with each medium contributing to the overall structure without altering its fundamental logic.

As a result, STEPINQUEST® should be understood as a cross-media framework in which narrative is not bound to a particular form of

expression but is defined by its function within the investigative process. The medium facilitates articulation and dissemination, but the genre itself resides in the structure and operation of the investigation.

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# Ethics and Responsibility

Ethical responsibility is a fundamental condition of STEPINQUEST®.

While the genre does not prescribe a fixed stylistic form, it requires a clear and deliberate ethical orientation that governs the conduct of the investigation and the articulation of its narrative.

The nature of STEPINQUEST® — its engagement with real individuals, institutions, and potentially unresolved or contested events — introduces a high degree of responsibility. The investigation operates within domains where its actions may produce legal, institutional, and public consequences. As a result, ethical considerations are not external to the process but are structurally embedded within it.

STEPINQUEST® does not rely on a universal or predefined ethical code applicable to all cases. Instead, it requires that ethical principles be actively constructed and maintained in relation to the specific conditions of each investigation. These principles must address the treatment of evidence, the representation of individuals, the interaction with institutions, and the potential impact of public articulation.

Central to this ethical framework is a commitment to evidentiary integrity. All claims, interpretations, and conclusions must be grounded in verifiable material, and the limits of available evidence must be explicitly acknowledged. The identification of such limits is not a weakness of the investigation but a necessary component of its rigor and transparency.

Responsibility also extends to the consequences of narrative action. Because STEPINQUEST® operates through public articulation and institutional engagement, it has the capacity to influence perception, generate pressure, and affect reputations and processes. This capacity requires a measured and disciplined approach in which the force of the narrative is aligned with the strength of the evidence.

At the same time, ethical responsibility in STEPINQUEST® includes the obligation to pursue investigation where warranted. The existence of complexity, uncertainty, or institutional resistance does not justify inaction. Rather, ethical practice requires a balance between restraint and determination: restraint in relation to claims that cannot be substantiated, and determination in advancing those that can.

Through this combination of evidentiary rigor, contextual ethical construction, and responsibility for consequences, STEPINQUEST® establishes a framework in which investigative action is both effective and accountable. Ethics, in this sense, is not an auxiliary consideration but a structural requirement that enables the legitimacy and sustainability of the investigative process.

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# Applicability and Open Model

STEPINQUEST® is conceived as a transferable and open investigative narrative model.

While it originates within the specific context of the KARAGODIN® Investigation, its structure is defined in terms that allow for application across a wide range of cases and contexts.

The genre is not limited to a particular historical period, geographic setting, or subject matter. Although it emerges from a criminal investigation, its methodological and narrative framework may be applied to historical, political, institutional, and other forms of inquiry in which complex events require systematic reconstruction and potential reactivation within contemporary conditions.

STEPINQUEST® should not be understood as a proprietary format restricted to a single project or authorial practice. Rather, it articulates a form that corresponds to a specific type of investigation — one that combines documentary evidence, procedural logic, public articulation, and the potential for institutional engagement. As such, its applicability is determined not by authorship, but by the nature of the investigative task.

This openness enables the adoption of STEPINQUEST® by a broad range of practitioners, including researchers, journalists, writers, documentary makers, and independent investigators working in the public interest.

The framework provides a structured approach that can be adapted to different cases while preserving its core principles and operational logic.

At the same time, the application of STEPINQUEST® requires a commitment to its defining conditions: sequential investigation, evidentiary rigor, ethical responsibility, and orientation toward institutional or discursive effect. The genre cannot be reduced to a stylistic imitation; it must be enacted as a coherent process in which narrative and investigation operate in alignment.

In this sense, STEPINQUEST® represents not only a genre but a model of practice. It establishes a framework through which investigations can be structured, articulated, and advanced across different domains, enabling the reconstruction and reactivation of cases that would otherwise remain unresolved or inaccessible.

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# Conclusion

STEPINQUEST® establishes a new form of investigative narrative practice in which storytelling, evidence, and institutional engagement are integrated into a single operational framework.

By redefining the role of narrative as an active component of investigation, the genre moves beyond the conventional separation between representation and action.

Throughout this document, STEPINQUEST® has been defined as an autonomous narrative genre grounded in a step-by-step investigative structure, oriented toward institutional intervention, and capable of producing both direct and indirect effects. Its dual-phase model ensures continuity of action, while its engagement with temporality enables the reactivation of cases that would otherwise remain confined to the past.

The genre introduces a framework in which narrative does not conclude an investigation but participates in its development. Through recursive interaction with public and institutional environments, STEPINQUEST® transforms the conditions under which investigations are conducted, allowing evidence, interpretation, and response to function as interconnected elements of a continuous process.

At the same time, STEPINQUEST® maintains a commitment to evidentiary rigor and ethical responsibility. Its capacity to act within institutional and public domains is grounded in the disciplined construction of its investigative framework and the careful articulation of its narrative.

As an open and transferable model, STEPINQUEST® is not limited to its originating context. It provides a structured approach applicable to a wide range of cases in which complex events require reconstruction, reactivation, and engagement across temporal and institutional boundaries. Its relevance lies not in its origin but in its capacity to address conditions that extend beyond any single investigation.

In this sense, STEPINQUEST® should be understood as both a genre and a method: a form of narrative that operates as an instrument of inquiry and a mode of investigation that is articulated through narrative. By integrating these dimensions, it establishes a framework through which investigations can be conducted as processes of action, capable of producing knowledge, generating effects, and reshaping the environments in which they unfold.

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# Executive Summary

## A consolidated overview of the framework

STEPINQUEST® is introduced as a new investigative narrative genre in which storytelling functions as an active component of the investigative process. Unlike conventional forms that represent or interpret events, STEPINQUEST® integrates narrative, evidence, and institutional engagement into a unified operational framework oriented toward action.

Originating from the methodological development of the KARAGODIN® Investigation, STEPINQUEST® emerged as a response to the limitations of existing investigative and narrative forms. It addresses cases that are historically distant, institutionally unresolved, or considered closed, and reactivates them through a structured combination of documentary evidence, analytical reconstruction, and public articulation.

At its core, STEPINQUEST® is defined by institutional intervention. The investigation is conducted not only as an analytical process but as an engagement with legal, administrative, and political systems. Narrative serves as an instrument within this process, organizing evidence, structuring argumentation, and enabling interaction with both institutional and public environments.

The operational structure of STEPINQUEST® is based on three coordinated mechanisms: sequential progression, documentary

construction, and public articulation. Together, these elements form a dynamic system in which investigation and narration unfold simultaneously. Narrative does not follow the investigation but actively contributes to its development.

A central feature of STEPINQUEST® is its dual-phase model. The first phase is oriented toward producing concrete institutional outcomes through evidentiary rigor and procedural alignment. When such outcomes are constrained, the investigation transitions into a second phase focused on transforming public discourse, generating pressure, and reshaping interpretive frameworks. This structure ensures that the investigative process remains effective and non-terminating.

STEPINQUEST® also operates through the reactivation of temporality. By transforming archival material into active elements of investigation, it reintroduces past events into present conditions of legal reasoning, institutional accountability, and public engagement. In doing so, it challenges conventional assumptions about the closure of historical cases.

Narrative within STEPINQUEST® functions as a mode of action. It generates effects — public, institutional, and discursive — that are incorporated back into the investigation as new material, creating a recursive structure in which the process continuously evolves.

The genre further establishes a distributed narrative field in which multiple actors — including investigators, institutions, and audiences — participate in the unfolding of the investigation. This expands the scope of narrative beyond individual authorship and contributes to shifts in perception and institutional understanding.

STEPINQUEST® is independent of any specific medium and may be realized across text, audio, video, and hybrid formats. It is conceived as an open and transferable model, applicable to a wide range of investigations that require the reconstruction and reactivation of complex events.

At the same time, STEPINQUEST® requires a high degree of ethical responsibility. Its capacity to produce real-world effects demands evidentiary rigor, transparency in acknowledging limitations, and a disciplined alignment between narrative force and the strength of the evidence.

As both a genre and a method, STEPINQUEST® establishes a new form of investigative practice. It provides a framework through which investigations can be conducted as processes of action — capable of producing knowledge, generating institutional and public effects, and redefining the relationship between narrative and reality.

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# Short Formulas

1. STEPINQUEST® is not a narrative about an investigation; it is an investigation conducted through narrative.
2. Narrative in STEPINQUEST® does not represent events — it acts upon them.
3. STEPINQUEST® transforms storytelling from a descriptive form into an operational instrument.
4. The core of STEPINQUEST® is institutional intervention; all narrative elements serve this function.
5. In STEPINQUEST®, evidence is not only collected but activated.
6. STEPINQUEST® operates as a step-by-step construction of a case capable of entering institutional reality.
7. Narrative in STEPINQUEST® produces effects, and those effects become part of the investigation.
8. STEPINQUEST® is a recursive system in which action generates evidence, and evidence generates further action.
9. The genre does not conclude with publication; it continues through its consequences.
10. STEPINQUEST® reactivates cases by transforming the past into an active dimension of the present.
11. Temporality in STEPINQUEST® is not a condition — it is an object of intervention.

12. Where conventional forms reconstruct events, STEPINQUEST® reopens them.
13. STEPINQUEST® does not fail; it shifts from institutional outcome to discursive transformation.
14. The limit of an investigation, when reached, becomes part of its result.
15. STEPINQUEST® operates across institutions and publics as a unified field of action.
16. Narrative authority in STEPINQUEST® is grounded not in style, but in evidentiary rigor.
17. Aesthetics in STEPINQUEST® is not decoration but precision.
18. STEPINQUEST® is independent of medium; its structure resides in process, not format.
19. The genre is not proprietary; it is a necessary form for a specific class of investigations.
20. STEPINQUEST® emerges where investigation requires both reconstruction and intervention.
21. In STEPINQUEST®, the investigator, the institution, and the audience become participants in a shared narrative field.
22. STEPINQUEST® expands the boundaries of what is considered institutionally possible.
23. The genre translates formal legal possibility into public intelligibility.
24. STEPINQUEST® is a method of acting through evidence.

25. It is not a form of storytelling — it is a form of doing.

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# Top 5 Core Formulas

1. STEPINQUEST® is not a narrative about an investigation; it is an investigation conducted through narrative.
2. Narrative in STEPINQUEST® does not represent events — it acts upon them.
3. The core of STEPINQUEST® is institutional intervention; all narrative elements serve this function.
4. STEPINQUEST® reactivates cases by transforming the past into an active dimension of the present.
5. STEPINQUEST® does not conclude with narration; it continues through its consequences.

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