"Seeing that everything which has a beginning has also an end, even this perfect constitution will in time perish and come to dissolution".

Plato, The Republic.

Like human beings social organizations and institutions are mortal. The duration of their existence seems to be finite. At one time-moment an organization emerges as a separate and recognizable collective unity and begins to function as an individuality among thousands of other organizations and institutions. This functioning may be shorter or longer. Sometimes it is so short that the organization dies at its "pre-natal stage" before it emerges. Sometimes the organization lives for a certain length of time, and then, either suddenly or gradually, losing its essential traits, it begins to disintegrate, and becomes more and more unidentifiable, until finally, like a wave which exists for some time and then disappears in the midst of other waves, it dissolves in the ocean of other organizations and institutions.

The beginning and the end of some organizations and institutions is clearly marked and can be established definitely in the terms of a year, a month, sometimes even a day or an hour. Such are for instance most of the organizations whose beginning and end are determined by juridical incorporation and dissolution. Other organizations and institutions, like many States, Religious Organizations, Educational Institutions, sometimes Family, and so on, often do not have such definite marks of their emergence and end, either because they are not recorded and are lost in the grey past, or because they have grown and dissolved, gradually and imperceptibly. In such organizations the life-span either cannot be established at all or can be determined only very approximately, liable to a considerable error.

From the standpoint of theory and practice a more exact knowledge of what is the average life-span of various social organizations

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