

# *Comparative Analysis of Cases of Technocratic Governance and Deliberative-Democratic Self-Rule in Internet Sphere*

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**Abstract**—In this study, two approaches to the formation of the Internet sphere, compared with each other, are analyzed. The first technocratic approach is approved in cybernetic-system methodology, bases on technocratic management of the society and implies the total control of the Internet sphere in the interests of the state system, suppression of the individual personality through “programming” one’s consciousness. In this approach, “the system of social credit” in China serves as the case under analysis. The second deliberative-democratic approach originates from phenomenology and substantiates an egalitarian model of democracy, which implies a universal discussion and importance of the meanings, communicated by each person in the Internet sphere. The author analyzes the case of online-deliberative forums, serving to reveal the opinions of the citizens themselves and to define the genuine public opinion. The advantages of the second approach are pointed out analytically.

**Keywords**—*cybernetic-system approach; phenomenological approach; technocracy; deliberative democracy; public sphere*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In general, the main question of our study is how the genuine saving and development of the human personality in the present Internet sphere can be possible?

In the modern social sciences, two fundamental schools can be distinguished and, in many respects, they are opposed to each other: the first school is holistic, **system-functional**, which is based on “exact” sciences; and the second school is individualistic, **phenomenological** and bases on philosophy, an “understanding”<sup>1</sup>. It is important to note that the main representatives of the system-functional approach, such as T. Parsons, D. Easton, N. Luhmann and others, were grounded on the cybernetic methodology [2], developed by N. Wiener in mathematics, U. Maturana, F. Varela – in natural sciences, etc. Therefore, it will be more convenient for us in this case to call

<sup>1</sup> In its essence, the system-functional and phenomenological schools present by themselves two opposite directions of understanding of society generally. The contradistinction of their approaches to communication is naturally and has been presented in several publications. See, for example [1]. We exert ourselves to continue the distinction of these schools in the areas of political communication, the realization of governance and public policy, etc.

the system-functional school as “**the cybernetic-system school**”.

In several previous studies, we carried out a detailed comparative analysis of these schools using their main provisions and contradictions between them [3]. Some advantages of the phenomenological school were also presented from spiritual, normative-value, scientific research points of view.

Also, we separately conducted a comparative analysis of these schools from the point of view of their application to two different approaches to public administration. From the point of view of the differences between these two schools in the principles, normative bases and methodology, attitudes towards the human personality, it was determined that the cybernetic-systems approach is associated with impersonal technocratic management, and the phenomenological approach is associated with the deliberative democracy, coming from a personality.

It is important that, on the basis of the cybernetic-systemic and phenomenological schools, two most opposite models of the development of the Internet sphere may be formed in the future.

Therefore, **the purpose of this study** is to analyze in a comparison, the basis of technocracy, a cybernetic approach to regulation of the Internet sphere, reproducing the system of technocracy, and, justifying deliberative democracy, a phenomenological approach to establishing free, equitable and rational democratic deliberative discussions, serving the development of personality.

To achieve this purpose, **the first task** is, guided by the cybernetic-systemic approach, to analyze the case when authoritarian regulation of the human personality is approved by means of the state cybernetic-systemic regulation of the Internet. Therefore, own views and interests of people are replaced by means of various manipulation technologies.

The next, **second task** is, drawing up a study using a phenomenological-sociological approach, to show how in the Internet sphere in an equitable dialogue between people as individual personalities, their own meanings are clarified and then articulated at a political level.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study of the theoretical and methodological foundations of governance and its application in the Internet sphere is also of importance. The cybernetic-technocratic approach and the phenomenological-deliberative approach are not just scientific constructs, but their certain principles, attitudes, and way of thinking exist in the minds of people: decision makers and ordinary citizens. Then cybernetic or phenomenological principles and attitudes determine a particular vision, perception of political reality. In the end, this forces political leaders, in accordance with the scientific principles they profess, to find certain ways of interacting with reality and its transforming. Thus, let us differ the types of state administration, which are guided by cybernetic-systemic methodology, or, on the contrary, which are perceived as the principles of deliberative democracy and public policy.

On the one hand, precisely in the Internet sphere one can realize the following:

1. Universal expression of will through direct participation of users in Internet discussions.
2. The mediatorial function is eliminated, in which technocrats can effect the alienation of power from society, and the principles of direct opinion formation, discussion between the participants are realized.
3. Internet communication meets the horizontal, subject-subject structure of communication. On the Internet, as opposed to classic media (newspapers, television), horizontal rather than vertical communication is possible - when information is transmitted from the source of information to the recipient. In Internet communication, each participant can be a subject - concurrently as a source and as a recipient of messages.

On the other hand, in modern times, the greater development of information, Internet technologies allows for the subjects of governance to develop various methods of "communication impact" [4] by imposing "virtual images, ideas and meanings ... mass preferences, ideas, stereotypes" [4]. In effecting the society, the authority pursues the goal to limit the norms of "reaction, evaluation and behavior patterns of representatives of civil society" [4]. And such development of the impact approach reflects the desire of political elites to "construct the perception of social reality by society" [4].

From our point of view, this is directly interrelated with the definition of the principles of cybernetic-holistic and phenomenological-personal schools and the subsequent institutionalization of these principles on the level of governance.

Let us define what the application of these schools and, based on them, the models of governance to the development of the Internet sphere are.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Cybernetic-system approach to technocratic governance of the Internet-sphere

Now, at first consider the understanding of the technocratic governance of the Internet sphere, which has developed in the cybernetic-systems approach.

#### 3.1.1. Theoretic-philosophical level

Thus, in cybernetics N. Wiener proposed the scientific-technical concept of a "self-reproduction, autopoietic system", adopted by T. Parsons in social theory for analyzing society as a whole and the personality in the society. The "system" is defined by N. Wiener as follows: in a mechanistic technique or a natural individual organism at a higher level of development, the elements are able to form a common system that has the feature of emergence — the irreducibility of new features of the resulting system to the features of its individual elements. Therefore, the processes in the system are combined into a common, consistent, "synergistic activity" [5], gradually developing into "one organ" [5]. But it is obvious that a society that is only at an early stage of development and more complex, post-industrial societies, cannot be defined as simply some kind of a single biosystem or as the life of a system-anthill, etc.

Thus, in the system analysis of society, understood as an emergent complex of elements in a joint, consistent activity, the role of an individual personality is not precisely defined. Presumably, it will be understood only as an element of the general system, which contradicts the philosophical, personal principles of "personalism" and the principles of the democratic ideal. Rather, such systematic approach will lead to a centrist, **technocratic, authoritarian subject-object governance** of society. Therefore, that also speaks of the desire of state technocrats for the entire control of the society.

In the cybernetic school, the system determines the norms and values, according to which the individual himself must sincerely act. In a system approach, it is in principle excluded that a personality is capable of performing an individual action, based on subjective, personal norms and notions. It is the system itself that determines how an individual should perform his action, namely "in pursuance of common norms and values" [6], artificially created by the technical constructors of the system<sup>2</sup>.

In the cybernetic-systemic school, not the single personality himself, but the general technocratic system as a whole determines the norms of the development of the personality, seeks to technically reproduce the type of personality, defined by it. Therefore, the revelation of the deep human "I" is impossible due to its existential understanding of life. The development of technocratic authority leads to the technicalization of the human personality itself and one's consciousness, which have become only a mechanical element of the general system.

<sup>2</sup> In this regard, the key problem of modern post-industrial societies is being artificially created, J. Habermas notes: the natural, immediate "lifeworld" of people collides with the aspiration to be managed by the mechanical system of automated control of the personalities [7].

Consequently, the personality itself does not develop on the basis of its mental outlook, aspirations and dreams. Therefore, in fact, there is a forced programming of certain norms and values in the consciousness of people, in connection with the goals set by the technocracy, by the state bodies of the whole society. In this approach to the technocratic management of the Internet sphere, their own human notions, deep views, existential notions are not taken into account. On the contrary, in a democratic approach, the existential feelings of people should be discussed, and the public policy must be formulated.

It is important that representatives of the cybernetic-systemic approach, in principle, do not imply civil society and certain social groups capable of forming a rational opinion and communicating with the authorities. So, N. Luhmann argued that it was impossible to define, reveal the real-life opinions of social groups on the issues affecting them. "It's impossible to know which school reform the peasants will prefer, which experimental system will prefer the housewives, what working conditions will prefer the secondary school teachers" [8]<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it is assumed that only the government should form direct communication, determine the correct and deviating opinion and implement the "correct" in the society. But, proceeding from the value of the human personality, the deep, complex and diverse life of the whole society cannot be built simply on the model of administration of a corporation – "corporatism".

Thus, the development in practice of the principles of the cybernetic-systemic approach creates the danger of the formation of a totalitarian regime, on the basis of the universal regulation of people's lives due to the total cybernetic programming of their consciousness.

So, N. Wiener himself criticizes the conduct of the governance by the principles of cybernetic technology when a person or an individual group of people with the aim of "domination ... political leaders can ... control their people through political technology .... The weakness of the machine ... is that it cannot yet take into account ... the area of probability that characterizes the human situation. The domination of the machine presupposes a society that has attained increasing entropy, where... statistical differences between individuals are zero" [5]. Such approach leads to the technocratic rule of the elite, "which is anti-democratic" [9].

### 3.1.2. Practical level

Let us determine the value of cybernetic-systemic total management of the Internet sphere by analyzing the corresponding case – the "System of social credit" in China. [10].

In China, for the first time in the world generally, is taking place the establishment of total governmental cybernetic-system administration, by means of the Internet system of social credit. It collects information about the social activities of citizens with the help of the Big data system – analysis of large streams of information data [11]. In general, it is

<sup>3</sup> "Therefore, it is necessary to make a realistic assumption and recognize that such opinions do not exist and they cannot be produced, and that now can be made only institutional fiction of opinions" [10].

completely built on the principles and purposes of the cybernetic-systems approach, leading to the technocratic administration of the Internet sphere, and through the Internet to the aspiring control of the whole society.

This system of social credit began to take shape in China in the mid-2000s. Nevertheless, it acquired its present character – the system of total tracking of people's activities – only after it was transformed by the administration of Xi Jinping, the general secretary of the Communist Party since 2014.

Thus, the "State Council of China in 2014 published a new document – "The program of creating a system of social credit (2014–2020) "... From the program it follows that ... not only every company, but every citizen... of China will be... evaluated ... by the system in real time-regime. The trust-credit rating of individuals will be tied to ... a passport... and published in the centralized database on the Internet in free access" [10].

This system involves the regulation of all spheres of people's lives: not only professional life, but also relationships in marriage and with children, in the family, in personal communication with familiar people and with accidentally met, unfamiliar citizens, and even in the personal sphere. Thus, in fact, every private action of a person is determined by the external social system, and not by the subjective opinion of the person himself.

Such system involves the regulation of people by embedding them in a certain rating hierarchy, which itself is the same cybernetic control system.

This system has already started to work in 30 major cities of China. In the city of Rongcheng, "a single information center analyzes ... 160 thousand different parameters from 142 institutions ... a citizen's rating ... increases, or decreases ... if ... the rating is more than 1050 points, then you are an exemplary citizen ... If ... below 849 – you will be dismissed from job in state structures ... who have 599 points and below ... they are blacklisted ... they are not taken on almost any work" [10].

For example, it is estimated how often a person visits his parents, whether he spends a lot of time not at work, but on the Internet, if he politely behaves with colleagues, unfamiliar people, if he communicates with people with low ratings, etc.

In accordance with the principles of the cybernetic approach, the norms and values, by which society lives, are determined by the governmental system - the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, the state committee for development and reforms, etc. And the collection and distribution of information is carried out both by state security forces and by the largest corporations (Alibaba, Tencent, etc.), ordinary citizens also may collect information about others and thus increase their rating.

In general, "The main task, and this is directly indicated in the" Program of the State Council", so that "those who justified the trust would enjoy all the benefits, and those who lost trust could not take a single step" [10].

Thus, the personality is fully regulated, created and reproduced by the cybernetic system of state-administrative governance. A person cannot display his own convictions, he has absolutely no influence on the content of the external, formal norms according to which his own personal life and relationships with other people in society are artificially created. Hence, sincere ideas and beliefs are not displayed, and the state system acts simply as an automated technique.

As a result, the implementation of such system of social control through the Internet sphere can lead to a model of total technocratic governance of the whole society, simply “automated” people – the threat that N. Wiener wrote about.

It is important that in such technocratic approach it is impossible for a personality’s to develop, based on his world perception, set goals in life, self-reflection. On the contrary, through the Internet sphere a cybernetic network of constant assessment and control of the personality is formed, which defines the value of each person’s action as noble or malign. At the same time, the morality of actions is not determined by God, but is programmed by the technocrat – functionary of the system constructed by the “demiurge”-ruler.

It is important that such experience can be applied not only by the administration of China. It cannot be said that the system of cybernetic control has never been applied in the world generally<sup>4</sup>. Thus, philosopher G. Deleuze argued that in modern informational societies, the regulation of all spheres of people’s lives begins to develop through information control, thus, gradually, in European societies and other countries are establishing “societies of control”. But, in Europe, such regulation methods have been established only partially and they are not formal, legally proclaimed. And in China, this system totally regulates all spheres of human life and is proclaimed at the legal and highest official – ideological levels. The threat is the taking over of such experience of the administration of society and a personality by other state administrations.

In fact, a person and his actions are then fully programmed by the system, the possibility of personal understanding by a person of his actions, personal choice and making a thoughtful, rational decision is excluded. In general, this can lead to the complete destruction of an autonomous, natural human personality. Therefore, this model of technocratic governance of society is completely unacceptable for normal human life and the development of another model, based on independent human choice and development of the human personality is required. But the person has an independent, sovereign significance, and is not just a dependent variable of the society that reproduces the governmental system.

### *3.2. Phenomenological approach to democratic online deliberation in the Internet-sphere*

<sup>4</sup> So, N. Wiener argues that the methods of cybernetic-technical administration have already been used in human societies: in organizations governed by bureaucratic-technocratic principles, for example, in state corporations, in the army, etc. By their nature, these organizations imply the regulation of life of a human and reduction of his personality, reducing the individual to the part of the organized controlled technique: “That what is used as an element in a machine is indeed an element of a machine”. [5].

From our point of view, these humanistic requirements are met by **the model of deliberative democracy**, including in the Internet sphere, the developed model of online deliberation of the citizens themselves.

#### *3.2. 1. Theoretical-philosophical level*

In phenomenological sociology, on the contrary, the personal meaning in the individual human consciousness and intersubjective meanings that are familiar to several social groups have been interpreted. Therefore, this approach is closer to clarifying the ideas of citizens themselves and various groups of civil society, and corresponds to the egalitarian models of democracy, which broadly understand the role of civil society (including models of deliberative democracy).

Let us consider this problem in more detail. In phenomenological sociology, it has been proven that, by its nature, human consciousness is not simply a product, constructed by existing structures of power, language, etc., or external conditions and one-sidedly directed information. Consciousness has a personal, inalienable essence and has a sovereign significance.

The founder of phenomenology E. Husserl stated that before man’s cognition of the surrounding reality precedes the “lifeworld” developing in his mind. It is important that the lifeworld originates from the consciousness of an individual person or from the intersubjective consciousness of social groups. The lifeworld constitutes a set of unaffected notions of people about themselves and the world around them, not objectively given, but subjective norms, values, religious preferences, shaped in everyday life experience. Through the “prism” of the values of the lifeworld, a personality perceives reality, these norms and values do not depend on “scientific statements” [12].

It is important that H. Garfinkel, who developed the ideas of phenomenology at the applied level, proved in several experiments that a person in his life always acts intelligently and proceeds from some deep meaning. Thus, in a series of studies, the scientist proved that the individual himself performs personal social (including political) action, based on human common sense<sup>5</sup>. Thus, we consider that in his practical research H. Garfinkel was able to refute the conception of a system approach, that the personal (even perfect sincere in intentions) human action “always proceeds in the execution of common norms and values” [6], defined by the cybernetic system.

In contrary to the system approach, phenomenology sets individual senses and personality consciousness as the primary object of micro-level research. The humanism of this approach is also realized in the fact that communication serves mutual understanding between citizens, when the other is “perceived not as an organism, but as an equal human, his behavior is perceived as the actions of the equal human as we are” [13]. This, in general, serves for the revelation of the “I” of individuals, their “selves”.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 3 “Common sense knowledge of social structures...” in [14].

Then, phenomenology was actually connected with political studies on citizens presenting their opinions in democracy. The first scientist who combined the phenomenological studies and the theory of democracy in the new conception was German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. It was he who showed, relying on the notion of the “lifeworld”, how personal convictions, ideas, opinions of citizens should be articulated and direct the actions of governmental authority. This is necessary to preserve the especially valuable sovereignty of the human personality and its “lifeworld”. These ideas were presented by J. Habermas in his original conception of “deliberative democracy”, which defined the principles of the conversations between citizens and the demand for the influence of civil society on governance.

Deliberative democracy is a special approach to a democratic regime, according to which in order to preserve the original principles of democracy, it is necessary to expand the power of civil society and its influence on the governmental apparatus, by means of a rational discussion procedure. Deliberative democracy implies “competence in polemics, the use of public intelligence in public affairs, and impartiality in finding the truth” [9]. Democratic discussion should be “informed, balanced, conscious, independent and comprehensive” [15].

### 3.2.2. Practical level

Let us consider in particular the case of experiments on democratic online deliberation [16].

The principles of deliberative democracy were transferred to the practical field in certain democratic innovations and studies, the most important research of which is made by J. Fishkin.

J. Fishkin writes about held forums, deliberative polls with an equal selection among the people [14]. Already in the 90s, experiments were conducted in the real life in the cities of the United States, Australia, Japan and other countries. Then, the experiments were repeated in the 2000s, with the same conditions, but not in real life, in online discussions. These results of both experiments in real life and in online mode also mostly coincided [17].

Initially, the purpose of these experiments was to satisfy the two normative requirements of democracy for people's opinions: the “reasonableness” of statements in discussions and “equal” representation of all statements in discussions. On the one hand, these opinions must be rational, reflective. On the other hand, these should be the real opinions, representing the citizens themselves and all citizens. That excludes artificial manipulative statements, constructed from the outside by the technocratic system and judgments of only the elitist part of the population. Only satisfaction of these conditions corresponds to the basic normative requirements of classical egalitarian democracy.

After successful implementation, these experiments can also lay the foundations of the institutions of online deliberation. Now, let us consider the conditions and results of these experiments. The experimental conditions were generally as follows:

1. An equal selection of citizens was produced among the people.

2. On the first day of the experiment, a discussion was held between citizens on a concrete political problem. Discussion was accompanied by providing citizens with factual information about political problems, qualitative information about the attitude of parties to a particular ideological direction. It seems that this partially corresponds to the requirement of J. Habermas on the dissemination of information in society. The discussion was followed by a vote of all participants, the results presented their first, non-reflected opinions on the issues of discussion.

3. The discussion was accompanied by the regulation of the moderators.

4. The discussion itself lasted for a week. At the end of the experiment, a second discussion was held and a second vote was taken on political issues. The results were presented by the already reflected, slightly changed opinions of citizens on the issues of discussion.

As a result of the research, the scientists came to the following conclusions:

- “1. Participants are representative to the people; 2. Opinions often change (during the discussion – auth.); 3. Aspirations to vote often change; 4. Participants acquire information; 5. Changes in opinions and votes and acquisitions of information are correlated; 6. Changes in opinions and voting do not correlate with the social situation; 7. Preferences are not necessarily “polarized” among discussion groups; 8. Preferences do not necessarily become homogeneous in discussion groups; 9. Balanced deliberation-discussion guides the advancement of balanced learning” [15].

D. Held writes that the results of deliberative forums differ significantly from ordinary population polls. Participation in the forum allows one to develop a “reflected” point of view of citizens, formed on the basis of the information received and debates with representatives of other points of view. At the same time, the ordinary opinion polls are presented by the less informed men, who did not take into account the opposite point of view of citizens of a democratic state.

The studies of J. Fishkin demonstrated that during the “deliberative” forums, the opinions of the polarized sides of the discussion change become more reflected, thoughtful, dependent on normative rather than on “emotional” criteria. And between the debating sides there is no polarization, convergence of the views on different issues

Let us consider how this model relates to social norms and values. In the model of deliberative democracy, the ethics of norms and notions is not proclaimed by the ruling governing elite and is not embedded in human consciousness, but is freely perceived by the person himself. Therefore, unlike the cybernetic approach, a genuinely humanistic approach, striving for the development of the personality, is based on the notion of a creative person, who is leading to the development of the whole society and democracy.

Actually, in contrast to the approach of technocratic “demiurges”, these norms are not simply personally,

monologically accepted by the individual. These norms and values should also be reflected by the person himself. Also in the public sphere there should be a space for a free ethical dialogue in which citizens themselves mutually perceive, discuss and mutually approve ethical norms and values. It also contributes to the preservation and development of the human personality. Thus, based on the results of this experiment, it can be said that the application of the principles of deliberative democracy in the Internet sphere is possible in reality.

This means that the realization of the spiritual principles of a sovereign personality, its development and influence on the political process is possible. But for this it is necessary to develop the institutes of democratic online deliberation, which contribute to the development of dialogic communication and the achievement of mutual understanding between people in all modern societies.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, based on the analysis, the following conclusions are made:

1. The cybernetic-systems approach to governance, when held in the Internet sphere, leads only to the programming of consciousness of the citizens with the help of Internet technologies, emasculation of the human personality itself, gradual formation, according to the approach of G. Deleuze, of societies of control. The "system of social credit", worked out in China, leads to the dilution of the individual.

2. On the contrary, originating from the phenomenology, the realization of one's own deepest meanings of personality in Internet discussions may allow citizens to equally reveal their personalities and articulate their own meanings at the political level. This is illustrated by the example of deliberative online discussions, based on the normative principles of phenomenological sociology. The main goal of these discussions is to create conditions in which each person can justify the significance of his ideas.

3. Thus, the implementation of the principles of phenomenology in Internet discussions, while maintaining and reproducing them, can help to realize realizing deliberative democracy: first, at the "bottom" civil society level, and then at the public administration level.

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