RPTSS 2017

International Conference on Research Paradigms Transformation in Social Sciences

TECHNOLOGIES OF POLITICAL SYSTEM MODERNIZATION IN NEW COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

L.I. Evseeva (a)*, A.A. Bashkarev (b), E.G. Pozdeeva (c), T.S. Tarakanova (d)
*Corresponding author

(a) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytekhnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, l.evseeva@mail.ru, 89219708175
(b) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytekhnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, bashkarev@mail.ru 89219043474
(c) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytekhnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, elepozd@mail.ru, 89219510011
(d) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytekhnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, toma-tarakanova@rambler.ru 89817258424

Abstract

The relevance of this research is proved by political processes change under the influence of information and communication environment factors and technologies. This change is worth studying since it directly affects involving great mass of general public into political communication, and determines the framework of human interaction with social environment. This article analyzes the communicative resources and tools for maintaining political system legitimacy. The political system stability based on authorities' credibility and recognition in the conditions of information pressure from media seems to be very difficult to obtain. The research rests upon the methodology of political system analysis by D. Easton and G. Almond, examining up-to-date methods of political interactions modernization. Following M. Castells, the authors acknowledge the increasing potential of network technologies in politics, and so does their role in public space. Under the influence of new information and communication tools, the horizontal hierarchy of socio-political interaction consolidates. On the other hand, information technologies facilitate individuals' free expression and act both as the basis of action for all the participants in political process, and as the powerful resource for interactions beyond established political institutions. The article draws on crowdsourcing platforms analysis, and leads to the conclusion that there are growing opportunities for citizens to display their active position and desire to participate in public life, whether expressing support of the government or implementing their right of "feedback". Crowdsourcing projects allow participants of the political process to collaborate in solving common problems, what meets the essential parameters of society democratization.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Political system, modernization, legitimacy, information technologies, crowdsourcing.

1. Introduction

The problem of the information technologies and means of communication influence directing processes of political administration legitimation, and stabilization seems to be quite important and relevant. The importance of these processes increases under the conditions of globalization and rapid development of media network technologies. Integration and the digital revolution not only have an impact on the changes in public and individual consciousness, generating new images of reality, but also affect the parameters of communicative environment for political interactions. Well-directed contacts between people possessing diverse knowledge and information connect different levels of the political system and enable the government institutions to perform their specific functions of public administration. In politics, information is an important prerequisite and a resource of action for political actors that can influence the effectiveness of interactions in the service of their aims. The network technologies role and range of means used in public space formation are obviously increasing (Castells, 1996/2009), opening opportunities for political communication development and personal isolation overcoming. Electronic technologies contribute to greater responsibility of the government to society and allow citizens to operate on decisions making and their implementation monitoring. The means of communication transformation affects power distribution in society. This leads to an increase of non-state actors in the political process, formation of the media infrastructure of network society, and emergence of self-organizing practices of civil initiatives (Petukhov & Petukhov, 2015). Dependence of political participation at the level and the scale of citizens' involvement into the communicative space can be observed. Mobile Internet technologies and network communication environment constitute the basis of the institutionalization of new forms of direct democracy - in particular, crowdsourcing platforms. Communication type and development features can be a guiding factor in the development of society.

2. Problem Statement

Information exchanges, which constitute a communicative space of interaction regarding relations of power, represent the basic prerequisites for stable political system formation. Modern information and communication technologies drive the political system transformation, along with emergence of electronic media power structures. The traditional political system still keeps its effect, but to a certain extent shows its institutional inefficiency, since it supports a centralized hierarchical type of the communication network (Shaulova, 2016). At the same time, the value of civil society institutions and organizations in people's lives decreases; they progressively lose their "legitimate identity" (Castells, 1996/2009).

The current process of political communication "networkization" and perspective of future switching to fully network politics create a platform, where established political channels of information and forms of influence remain rather effective (for example, print and television media), and they are complemented with new network resources, Internet sites, blogs and groups in social media. Youth and adolescents are more likely to use network resources, and the adult population use well-established information channels (Bode et al., 2014). Today, under the influence of innovative transformations, relationships between people change and new images of the real world are formed, modifying the content and direction of human value consciousness. Moreover, most of these images are built not on the basis of one's personal observations, but rely upon information messages already provided in the global network.

Modern information and communication environment opens up new opportunities for civic participation and civil control. This, in turn, stimulates the formation of more intensive social environment that facilitates, on the one hand, active participation of actors with different ideological orientation in public and political processes, and on the other - society democratization. Possibility of electronic interaction for large groups of interests in key decision making in the public sector causes a

phenomenon of so-called "network crowd", increasingly drawing attention of researchers. Informational power exists in order to shape the main objectives and priorities, to determine the direction of social development (modernization), to identify the factors influencing the subject to management.

Political system stability can be achieved on the basis of self-legitimation of its structuring principles. In this process, the balance of the trust and loyalty system is quite important. Loyalty itself is founded on observation of value relations of the institutional order (Lepsius, 2017) and is associated with the possibility to exercise civil rights built on the legislative framework. The only source of legitimacy is the will of the people, their preferences and opinion in the form of votes in the elections. State manipulation of the people's will in the processes of requirements realization, decisions making and other actions contrasts with democracy (Paulo & Bublitz, 2016). There is an opinion that the level and base of state legitimacy can be also influenced by international organizations, emerging political regime, etc. (Haunss, Schmidtke, & Schneide, 2015).

Information and communication technologies and media determine the framework of the emerging socio-political structure, where the vertical hierarchy of connections is being erased, and there is a trend for fixing the horizontal hierarchy of social interaction as the most effective system of political relations regulation (Shipunova, Timermanis, & Evseeva, 2014). Development of horizontally integrated communication systems enables a wide range of the public to participate in politics. In practice, exactly with the help of horizontal communication, many politicians manage to instate themselves in favour of the Internet audience which critically perceives the content brought to them via traditional media.

The ability to generate political decisions that get broad public approval, even in spite of strong disagreement of some minority, should lead to a compromise between legitimacy "input" and "output" (Caluwaerts, & Reuchamps, 2015). The political system, operating under the conditions of constantly changing balance of power and interests, solves the problem of providing public dynamics within the framework of stability, law and order. This makes it possible to modernize existing traditional forms of dialogue between power structures and citizens, and enables emergence of a qualitatively new type of power relations with the use of electronic technologies. Society needs new institutionalized tools that are capable of creating the space for cooperation and dialogue.

3. Research Questions

Internet communications use in politics offers many opportunities for actors and represent an important element of political institutions' democratization and legitimation. The Internet gives citizens an access to information, what reduces the costs of cooperation and participation, as well as expands the opportunity and ability to express their will, to state their problems and influence policy (Tanova, 2016). Power structures should provide mechanisms for public debate and cooperation, and ensure cycles of social feedback that would accelerate institutional change (Mancini, 2015, p. 69).

Mass communication helps the individual to structure and justify his opinion and belief, to accumulate social experience. It stimulates the formation of more intensive social environment that facilitates, on the one hand, active participation of actors with different ideological orientation in public and political processes, and on the other, society democratization. Political system stability can be achieved through legitimation of its structuring principles.

State government legitimacy is built on three communication conditions: firstly, formation of the agenda of power structures activity; secondly, the presence of communication on the decision-making procedure; thirdly, the presence of feedback, i.e. communication regarding the progress of decisions made. One should note that the levels of "input legitimacy" and "output legitimacy" of the political system are different. Economic problems, cuts in social system, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, elites and citizens, jeopardize social system stability and political process legitimacy (Pausch,

2014). With the help of proper monitoring, authority is able to promptly react to citizens' dissatisfaction and growing protest activity.

Technology of joint elaboration of political decisions by the government and society can be implemented through the practice of crowdsourcing, which is characteristic of using the public resource as an expert identifying effective management practices. Crowdsourcing has become widely used (Evseeva, 2016). In Iceland in 2012, users of social media Facebook and Twitter have created the draft Constitution. In the same year, Finland has launched a crowdsourcing platform Open Ministry (www.openministry.info) for citizens to be able to submit new bills to the parliamentary vote. A similar service have been also implemented in Great Britain. Politics has become a social network for lobbyists, which completely copies the work of the British Parliament (plans of this resource development call for discussion of local issues, as well as expansion abroad). In the USA, citizens' participation in lawmaking is performed via the platform PopVox (www.popvox.com), where citizens can discuss, evaluate and make suggestions for the bills under the U.S. Congress consideration.

Nowadays, one of the largest Russian political crowdsourcing platforms is "Russian public initiative" (www.roi.ru), the resource where citizens of Russia (those authorized through the United system of identification and authentication of ESIA) can nominate various civil initiatives and vote for them. If the initiative ranks as the federal one, it must score at least a hundred thousand votes in order to be considered by an appropriate expert group. For example, the Information Democracy Foundation in May 2014 implemented a project for the election of 43 members of the Public chamber of the Russian Federation, who had been elected according to the results of the Internet voting.

Today one of the most important areas of Russian national policy is fighting corruption. The project "Fair procurement" is organized in the form of an open Internet platform for fighting corruption, wasteful and inefficient use of budget funds in the sphere of public procurement. This is the crowdsourcing project, which involves voluntary online participation of citizens in searching at the electronic platforms for alleged tenders, causing material damage to the state, and professional work of lawyers nationwide in these tenders analysis, adjustment or cancellation. This project is a vivid example of successful platform for political crowdsourcing, aimed at ensuring public control over national law execution by public authorities.

According to the regional research, the Russians are willing to take part in crowdsourcing projects: approximately 50% of respondents are ready to offer ideas and enter expert teams; around 70% would vote for initiatives (Shapovalova, 2014). Besides, there is a real discussion on running pilot online elections at the national level for the State Duma in 2021. The continued practice of crowdsourcing in the political sphere facilitates reorganization of public administration in Russia to meet new realities.

On the positive side of the crowdsourcing methods use, there is citizens' interest in politics increase and development of innovative potential in the field of public administration. As previously mentioned, new information technologies and capabilities allow democratic participation in discussing draft laws, what enhances the transparency of law acceptance or provides the opportunity for joint discussion and creation of state and municipal projects and services, and also promotes collective decision making. Representatives of civil society improve their ability to interact with state administration, thereby increasing the level of civic culture.

4. Purpose of the Study

The authors aim at examining the influence of information technologies on the political system and searching for ways of this system modernization. In recent years, due to new information technologies, citizens have become more politically involved, and used to interact with state institutions and local authorities through modern network media mechanisms.

The development of innovative Internet technologies gave rise to discussions on political processes modernization. In this regard, systematic analysis of mechanisms and methods of ensuring political system effectiveness and legitimacy in the new information and communication environment turns out to be a topical area of research in political practice. In modern societies, the possibility of public assessment for power structures' activity results is of considerable importance, as well as the opportunity to initiate particular decisions, correcting activities of those structures.

5. Research Methods

The authors apply system and structural-functional approaches in the study of social processes. Methodology of political studies by D. Easton, G. Almond still remains one of the leading algorithms to identify common elements, relations and functions in political process, combining all of these in the concept of political system. In the theory of D. Easton, the political system is a constantly changing, functioning, dynamic system, directed from input to output, and closed-loop with stabilizing feedback. According to the idea of "direct" and "inverse" relations between the political system and its internal and external environment, the political system acts as a mechanism of converting social impulses coming from society (requirements or support) into political decisions and actions. Feedback is one of the mechanisms for eliminating crisis or pre-crisis situations (Easton, 1986).

In the model of G. Almond, the political system appears as a set of political positions and responses to certain political situations, also inclusive of interests' multiplicity. An important indicator of the system is its capability to develop popular beliefs, attitudes and even myths, to create symbols and slogans and to maneuver them in order to maintain and strengthen the necessary legitimacy and to perform its functions effectively. The condition of the political system stability is the agreement between individuals and groups of individuals that constitute society (Almond, 1966).

System conception of D. Easton allows evaluating the effectiveness and identifying the parameters of stability of the political system, but the issues and problems of perception, methods and mechanisms of citizens' response behavior to the authorities' decisions and actions, the possibility of adequate monitoring of the political elite activities by civil society are still relevant for analysis.

Within the study, authors have conducted literature review, used secondary sources, examined primary sources and carried out synthesis of the literature. References to preliminary sources help to draw up a comprehensive list of primary material relevant to the topic, which being assembled and processed with critical approach, allows a deeper insight into the subject and its broader understanding.

6. Findings

Thus, modern information and communication environment determines the trends of political system legitimation processes and acts as a contributing factor to the need for socio-political interactions, institutions and processes modernization. The emerging infrastructure of the network society affects power distribution, strengthens civil activism, offers opportunity to control political elite activity by the broad masses of general public.

The Internet community gets unprecedented opportunities for democracy development, and especially direct democracy. Thanks to the electronic media, there are now extensive opportunities to disclose the facts of corruption and illegal behavior of officials; society is now able to observe and to openly criticize those authorities' actions going against the public interest. Using the Internet communication, any active player in the Internet community can promptly enter into political counter-elites. Internet communications are an important means of the political system democratization, which worth paying great attention from authorities and political parties. In modern conditions, the Internet is not only a means of communication with citizens, but also a special virtual space, where political

institutions of modern society might move in the future. But it should be noted that globalization is not a strong enough factor to overcome local interests. It can encourage the adoption of some common corporate governance standards, but there is little evidence that those standards have been implemented (Sahin, 2015).

With the help of new information technologies, citizens have become more politically involved, and use to interact with state institutions and local authorities through modern information mechanisms. The study leads to the conclusion that modern communicative environment changes the features of political dialogue, which specifies strengthening of horizontal social ties both in real and virtual space, what may lead to unpredictable social processes. Interaction density between different sectors of society in politics obviously increases. Organizing political crowdsourcing projects would intensify the process of public initiatives collecting and engage citizens to participate in government decision-making. In Russia, there is no uniform crowdsourcing platform yet, and most initiatives go not "bottom-up", and not even from business structures, but "top-down" (Parfenova, 2016). Some other authors believe that crowdsourcing as the institute of electronic democracy in Russia has developed to a considerable extent (Feldman, 2014) and it holds promise. Organizing political crowdsourcing projects would intensify the process of public initiatives collecting and engage citizens to participate in government decision-making; this will allow the state to withdraw from some areas where transaction costs are high and bureaucratic machine efforts exceed the result of social activity (Maslanov et al., 2016).

7.   Conclusion

Nowadays, the growing influence mobile information technologies and structures in the political sphere is clearly felt, especially on the individual consciousness and his civil and political positions formation that puts a network format on the base of personal choice declaration. Traditional media lose their monopoly on forming public opinion, social initiatives, and protests become widespread. At the same time, it is possible to manipulate public consciousness exactly via new technologies to which people feel confidence. In modern conditions, the Internet is not only a means of communication with citizens, but also a special virtual space, where political institutions of modern society might move in the future.

Using modern mobile technologies, ordinary citizens become increasingly involved into the political process, which makes it possible to improve public organizations activity and increase their influence on a national scale. In this respect, information acts as a prerequisite for the action of any political entity, as well as the most important resource to effectively engage in the political sphere to achieve one's goals. Internet-projects addressing a wide range of municipal and state issues can attract enough amount of active public. Losing interest in politics among broad public, on the one hand, is a kind of trouble for authorities, since citizens' participation rules the processes of political authority formation, political regime legitimation and functioning. On the other hand, this situation may meet views of power structures and the political elite, because the tacit consent of the population majority, not interested in politics, allows them to make decisions independently without taking into account the feedback and public interests. The political elite controls modern informational resources and is able to handle information in its aims, or to conceal relevant information from the public. Thus, this is massive manipulation of the public opinion, through information managing and its dissemination control.

New information technologies and capabilities allow democratic participation in discussing draft laws, what enhances the transparency of law acceptance and provides the opportunity for joint discussion and creation of a broad platform for their implementation monitoring, and promotes making crowdsourcing decisions. In this regard, comprehensive analysis of the technologies ensuring the political processes stability becomes quite relevant. But in the future, information and communication technologies may have a negative impact on the traditional democratic mechanisms of citizens'

participation. Moreover, a new gap emerges between those who use these technologies and those who do not, having a diffuse impact on society. Participation in crowdsourcing projects allows citizens to demonstrate their civic position, to participate actively in public life, to express support of the authorities and to realize their protest potential. This creates a situation when the project participant and the state government collaborate to resolve common problems.

References

Almond, G. (1966). Political Theory and Political Science. *American Political Science Review, 60(4),* 869-879. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/1953762

Bode, L., Vraga, E.K., Borah, P. & Shah, D. (2014). A New Space for Political Behavior: Political Social Networking and its Democratic Consequences. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 19,* 414–429. doi: 10.1111/jcc4.12048

Caluwaerts, D. & Reuchamps, M. (2015). Strengthening democracy through bottom-up deliberation: An assessment of the internal legitimacy of the G1000 project. *Acta Politica, 50,* 151–170. doi:10.1057/ap.2014.2

Castells, M. (1996, second edition, 2009). The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell. ISBN 978-0-631-22140-1

Easton, D. (1986) Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems. In I. Kabashima & L. White III (Eds). A world politics reader*: Political System and Change* (pp. 23-40). Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Evseeva, L.I. (2016). Crowdsourcing technology in political practice. In O.D. Shipunova (Eds). *International scientific-theoretical Conference. October 28 - 29, 2016. Saint Petersburg. Communication environments of the information society: Trends and traditions* (pp. 219-220). Publishing House of Polytechnic University. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.18720/SPBPU/2/k16-23

Feldman, P. (2014). Political crowdsourcing as an institution of e-democracy: problems of formation and development. *Vlast', 6,* 21-26.

Haunss, S., Schmidtke, H. & Schneide, S. (2015). Internationalization and the Discursive Legitimation of the Democratic Nation State. *State Transformations in OECD Countries.* Part IV. Publisher Palgrave Macmillan UK. (pp. 167-185). doi: 10.1057/9781137012425_9

Lepsius, M.R. (2017). The Legacy of Two Dictatorships for the Political Culture of a United Germany. In Claus Wendt (Ed), *Max Weber and Institutional Theory* (pp. 191-201). Springer International Publishing Switzerland. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-44708-7_12

Mancini, P. (2015). Why it is time to redesign our political system. *European View*, *14,* 69-75. doi:10.1007/s12290-015-0343-9

Maslanov, E.V., Maslanov, Dm.V. & Podsevatkin, Il.S. (2016). Crowdsourcing projects: the space of interaction between society and authorities. *Vlast', 4,* 29-34.

Parfenova, Iu.V. (2016). New forms of political participation in a society based on knowledge. *Vestnik of St Petersburg University. Series 6. Political science. International relations*, *2,* 63–71. doi: 10.21638/11701/spbu06.2016.206

Paulo, N. & Bublitz, C. (2016). Pow(d)er to the People? Voter Manipulation, Legitimacy, and the Relevance of Moral Psychology for Democratic Theory. *Neuroethics*, *12152,* 1-17. doi:10.1007/s12152-016-9266-7

Pausch, M. (2014). Democratization and elitism in the EU: two opposing trends (Guest-Editor's introduction to the topical collection on "The Future of Europe"). *European Journal of Futures Research*, *2,* 56. doi: 10.1007/s40309-014-0056-3

Petukhov, V.V. & Petukhov, R.V. (2015). Participatory democracy: institutional crisis and new perspectives. *Polis. Political Studies*, *5,* 25-48. doi: https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2015.05.04

Sahin, Kader. (2015). The legitimacy of codes of corporate governance: perspectives from developed and emerging economies. *Journal of Management & Governance*, 19, 687–708. doi:10.1007/s10997-014-9289-6

Shapovalova, I.S. (2014). Organizational and technological model risk minimization in crowdsourcing technologies. *Vlast', 7,* 14-22.

Shaulova, T.V. (2016). The relationship between the Federal and regional levels of the state management system of the Russian Federation: peculiarities of the type of communication network. In O.D. Shipunova (Eds). *International scientific-theoretical Conference. October 28 - 29, 2016. Saint Petersburg. Communication environments of the information society: Trends and traditions* (pp. 171-172). Publishing House of Polytechnic University. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.18720/SPBPU/2/k16-23

Shipunova, O.D., Timermanis, I.E. & Evseeva L.I. (2014). Political System Legitimation in Network Society. *Review of European Studies*, *6 (4),* 69-73. ISSN 1918-7173 E-ISSN 1918-7181. doi:10.5539/res.v6n4p69

Tanova, A.G. (2016). Modern information technology as a way of political activism mobilization. In O.D. Shipunova (Eds). *International scientific-theoretical Conference. October 28 - 29, 2016. Saint Petersburg. Communication environments of the information society: Trends and traditions* (pp. 185-187). Publishing House of Polytechnic University. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.18720/SPBPU/2/k16-23