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## **SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PUBLIC OPINION MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIZING**

It is alleged that, despite the long existing idea about the public opinion and practical experience of its management, the real possibility of developing research-based technology of its formation appeared relatively recently. The main stages of technology development are described. Creating the technology suggests decomposition of activity into separate components, their separation from exploiting the technology in the form of relevant awareness of what should be done, in which sequence and in which way in order to achieve the desired result. It is shown that the development of technologies of creating a consolidated public opinion must be based on the socio-psychological understanding of public opinion, which, in particular, stipulates distinguishing between individual and public opinion within individual consciousness, and clarification of community members' ideas about the nature of differences between speakers of different opinions, the characteristics of the relationship between them etc.

*Key words:* social psychology, public opinion, consolidation, technologies of management.

People were aware of the role of public opinion management for a long time before the term of "*public opinion*" appeared [3; 5; 6]. It is considered to be used for the first time by D. Salsberi, the English writer and statesman of the XII-th century, to denote people's moral support to the parliament. The very same problem of public opinion determination and interpretation arisen for the first time there in the ancient philosophy. However, that social psychological phenomenon had different name, the one of "*public opinion*".

Ideas about technologies shaping public opinion appeared quite recently [14, 17], although some of them were used in ancient times. Egypt priests and pharaohs could have use of rumors; there were wall newspapers to explain to the citizens government's actions in the Ancient Rome. And a brother of the famous rhetor Cicero in his letter to him said: "Different innate virtues of the candidate can be important, but artificially created image rather than a natural behavior will lead to victory in the election campaign that lasts only a few months". Speaking modern language, he insisted on the image of the candidate as a key factor of the victory. Machiavelli wrote that "the Emperor has no need to possess all the virtues, but there is a direct need to look as the one having them".

The word "technology" is very old as well. It is mentioned in the culture of the 5th century BC. A German scientist Johann Beckmann (1739-

1811) used it in 1777 as a special term to name a separate scientific discipline.

It is evident that some knowledge about the public opinion and its management technologies existed long ago. However, only nowadays when there was a request for the conscious development of technologies shaping public opinion, they “met”. Let’s try to find out why it happened and what problems we face because of this “meeting”.

What is technology? What is technologization? One of the possible meanings of the word “technology” is the amount of knowledge and skills enabling creating any tangible and intangible objects from existing resources. Other meaning is that technology is the method of processing power, information or materials for achieving a particular goal (usually for creating certain product). Technology combines methods, procedures, techniques, various operations etc. and is based on the technical equipment, tools, material.

Perception of technology and art by modern person is as meaningful opposition although etymological analysis of the word indicates these words to be synonyms for a long time. The word “technology” (Greek *techne* “Art” + *logos* “word” ) is often translated as “*mastership doctrine*”. On the one hand the mastership itself is regarded as a craft, skills in a particular area, and on the other hand as high performance art of doing something. That is why a real skill can’t be identified with any clearly defined amount of available professional knowledge and skills and it is defined as a high and constantly improving art. Recently it was finally divided into “technology” and “art”. For instance, in the XVIII-th century the metallurgy was related to the field of “arts”.

In my opinion the main three stages can be distinguished in the development of any technology. Those are as described below.

**The first stage in technologizing** any process enabling appearing of the technology, is an individual mastership. It is based on a synthesis of the individual empirical experience, which often can’t be verbalized or fixed in paper (documented) in some other way. So perhaps it was not a coincidence that an individual craft was called mysteries (secrets) up to the XVIII century. Only a person of many years’ experience in the relevant field was able to use them. It was very often that individual secrets of great artists died along with them because they were unable to transfer knowledge to their students.

**The second stage** in appearing technologies can be determined as the stage of certain activities “technologizing”. Peter Shchedrovyskiy introduced the term of “technologization” to name conscious activity aiming at creating a range of procedures and actions necessary for achieving applied goals, and rebuilding patterns of such chains. The technology is ge-

netically “built in” certain activity. Technologization “separates, alienate” technology as a certain amount of knowledge and skills in a particular activity from the process of its implementation. And it also allows getting back to the technology as a sequence of actions and operations after certain period of time.

But technologization enables technology separation as a certain amount of knowledge and skills in a particular activity from the process of its implementation as well as also allows and even involves constructing units (modules) having the property of creating different systems and breaking down into pieces, utilizing, and integrating into other systems, including other technological chains. Some elements and chains can be replaced by others during this process.

Originally technologization is strictly applied activity. However, even in a hidden, implicit form it enables exclusion of certain methods or actions of the individual performing them, and their replication. Technologization is aiming at experience transfer from one person to other (or others). This implicitly assumes that one (those) receiving the broadcast experience are interested in its reproduction and seeks to learn the way of doing activity the way leading to the desirable result.

The simplest form of technologization is imitation. Technologization owing to imitation can stay unfixed by consciousness. Embryo forms of technologization activity can be seen in animals’ activity.

Rituals, ceremonies and traditions were also a means of fixing a certain idea, useful experience, as well as a kind of “tool” for mastering by the human man's own mental processes.

Another way of technologization is an instruction “do as I do”. It can be done by other person (student) when identical tools are used and similar effect will be achieved if individual steps and actions are made.

Activity “subjectification” has accelerated when human language appeared and reflection was used. Its decomposition into constituent “elements” and “blocks” had been accelerating from ancient civilizations to the present day. Activity is decomposed into its constituent elements, as well as it is distributed among different people. Different people or mechanisms, technical devices are assigned to perform certain actions. Actions’ sequence and certain activities and operations duration are of great importance. Mystery of production process disappears, resulting in individual mastership to lose its significance to some extent. At that moment several apprentices are able to do what was previously done by great master only. However, at this stage it is generally known WHAT and how and in what sequence should to be done to achieve the result desired. But often it remains unknown WHY it is necessary to do exactly this and not otherwise to achieve the goal. Science is supposed to answer the question “Why?” It is not surprising that the

following chain should be created during discussing innovations i.e. shaping new knowledge; its transformation into the new technology of producing new product or service; technology commercialization. However, exactly this order of sections in this chain has set recently, though it seems evident to many people. This evidence is based on the widespread misconception that science had acquired its current high status in XVII-XIX centuries because of its “self-evident usefulness”. However, even a brief excursion into the history of science proves that this is not so. The success of science were “by its own”, and the success of technology “by itself”. Invention of steam engine, locomotive, ship, loom ... Was that invented by one of the scientists? No! Self-taught inventors made that. Science and technology have been developing almost independently of each other up to the early XX century. Natural Science does not develop in order to “serve” for technology. Methodology, theory, experiment and own knowledge in the Natural Science are used first of all for empirical studies of the same natural objects in the same subject area, but on the new level or in wider scientific angle. Technology and technical creativity are not always based on natural scientific knowledge. If, for example, there is no relevant natural scientific knowledge available on the certain subject of technology, the technology provides “tunneling” through the barrier of Natural Science ignorance owing to its theoretical settings, empirical and intuitive methods. This is the thing it is alike art. Some groups of scientists were engaged in science and others in technology. Probably these two branches got together for the first time in Los Alamos in 1943, when the efforts of scientists and technologists were united within the frames of the single project. It is from the mid-twentieth century, when science and technology began to merge together into technologies and consequently the world started talking about the “scientific and technological revolution”. Integration of psychology into the public practice also occurs by means of involving of project and technological methodology that has proved its advantages in the election process, in the field of public relations, advertising, social and psychological assistance and rehabilitation, certain sectors of public administration and other areas [15].

**The third stage**, “technology” itself starts from the moment when laws and regularities of some processes are known involved and there appears the possibility of managing and using them control to achieve goals. These technologies are based rather on theoretical knowledge reflecting the internal logic process than on practical experience. Relevant knowledge should be so high and detailed to enable understanding general patterns and trends, as well as their detailed description, up to every practical action, phase, form, means and methods of practical activity. It is possible not only to forecast but also realize forecast data by means of gradual solving a

number of individual tasks. This allows “intervening” in the course of objective processes, changing their order, and establishing sequence and speed of procedures and operations depending on changing circumstances for achieving the goals early and the most complete.

Improving “interference” method is closely related to the development of conceptual ideas of the phenomena that are the object of management. Fundamental science change radically the basic ideas of these objects and open the way to developing totally new really revolutionary “break-through” technologies.

In general we can say that due to the development of science and improving technology the balance between the objective and subjective gets shifted toward the subjective. For example, some modern technologies (crystals producing in particular) allow to get in few days or hours materials that nature had been creating for years or even centuries. The same refers to the biogenetic technologies (for ex. cloning). Psychological and social technologies have the same possibilities to “squeeze” social time. Perhaps many people are aware of speed-reading technology based on the removing the stage of internal articulation from the analysis of readable text, which slows significantly the processing information received. So today technologization is the fate of many spheres. And at this stage technologization is regarded as a way of technology transformation as a certain amount of knowledge and skills in a particular activity to the technology as a certain sequence of real actions. The latter gives possibility of using objective processes for one’s own purposes and even subordinating these processes to one’s own will to some extent.

What can social psychologists offer to technology developers of public opinion management today? What social and psychological ideas about its nature can be a starting point for developing and improving relevant technologies?

Analysis of scientific works proves long time interest to the phenomenon of “public opinion” from Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Social Psychology, Education and many other sciences. Public opinion is studied in the most active way by sociologists. In social psychology, as mentioned by [1, 70], such studies are, unfortunately, very limited. This is one of the reasons why social psychologists have to borrow the definition of *public opinion* from sociologists. It is clear that the specific features of social and psychological understanding of this phenomenon are inevitably lost.

Researchers have different opinions about evaluating the level of public opinion issues. O.K. Uledov considers public opinion to be studied extensively in recent years and many of its features are clarified in detail [21, 215]. V.S. Korobyeynikov as opponent believes public opinion to

be one of the most interesting and little studied manifestations of the human spirit [11, 52]. B.A.Hrushyn is categorical in his statement: "... *it is unlikely that today there is a different concept in sociology so unclear and contradictory in contents*" [6, 7].

Disputes about the category of the "public opinion" are increasing and it remains one of the most controversial scientific concepts.

Multiple attempts of giving universally accepted definition of this phenomenon resulted ineffective. That's why it became the stake in the game between social groups. P. Champagne believes it to be "intangible and vague", K. Popper calls it "a well-grounded illusion". P. Champagne is convinced that actually "public opinion does not exist" itself (P.Bourduie) and proper scientific definition (in the positivistic sense) can't be given.

Phenomenon of public opinion in Social Psychology is traditionally considered Psychology of Large Groups [12; 18]. Although many sociologists believe that public opinion phenomenon can be studied at the level of large social groups such as the population of the country, of the region, of any social demographic or professional group as well as at the level of groups of enterprises and organizations [4, 184], which sometimes can be attributed to small groups (by the number). The term of "collective opinion" is usually used in case when it comes to public opinion of the particular group [20]. However, some experts believe "*Social opinion shaped in small groups and public opinion emerging from the world community are similar in the nature despite some differences*" [20, 89]. Some sociologists consider important and even necessary to analyze public opinion at the level of the individual [13, 11]. Once defined "funnel" is totally consistent with the logic of the transition from sociological approach to public opinion analysis as a subject of social psychology to psychological, because it shifts focus from "external" to "internal". We should be aware of dangers that from such a shift. We consider these dangers to be first of all in the loss of social content, "social withdrawal" of individual psyche, its "fall out" the frames of social and psychological space and its reality.

What is public opinion as a social and psychological reality? What criteria and indicators can be used for identifying it and thus for distinguishing public opinion from the individual one?

We consider discussions about the subject of public opinion to be starting point in answering these questions. At first glance it is self-evident: the subject of "public" opinion is the community. Community is viewed in the Sociology as a vast majority of socially active society.

The phenomenon of Social Communication enables existing of the public as a whole. Free spreading of information flows gives possibility to every individual to have own opinion about the events in the society as well

as correlating, comparing one's own opinion with others, to meet real and potential adherers, find a reference group [9].

Community means "group of people united into some organization" [19]. So these communities should be considered subjects of public opinion. But there is a question *what communities are subject of public opinion?* Can any group of people be public opinion carrier (subject)? If not, so what are conditions and properties allowing the group to become such a subject? Scientists' points of view differ essentially in this regard.

Adherers of so-called elite concept (started from Plato), consider public opinion subjects only communities whose members have the appropriate level of knowledge, competence, and are able to understanding existing problems. Others consider public opinion to be determined by the number of its adherers. In ancient times, Protagoras regarded public opinion as the one of simple arithmetic majority. Nowadays it is often defined as "opinion of the majority of people concerning socially important problems", "guidelines regarding arguable points are wide spread" [7]. A quantitative criterion is the basis of definitions that "large social groups are classes, nations and peoples are the subject of public opinion", and its highest form is that "the thought is nation-wide" [16]. According to other above mentioned definitions large social groups as well as small ones, and even an individual are suggested to be considered the subject of public opinion [4, 184].

Such striking differences in the scientists' views to understanding the subject of public opinion raise the question of finding its single subject. If not it should be admitted that the amount of public opinions is the same as the number of groups and communities, or it should be defined what social group to be considered public.

Recognizing the fact that "there have never been and can't be the single interest as well as assessment and values in the society" [16], some scientists are convinced that "*the subject i.e. the society can't have a single opinion (author's italics)* because it appears like this in abstraction only, and it is a different in real life because of the range of elements, each one differs in interests, needs, values, estimation etc." [16].

Adherers of the alternative point of view agree that "communities of different levels: population of the country or the one of the whole planet or representatives of some settlements can be the subject of public opinion" [2, 17]. They emphasize that "*the key subject is all the population as a whole*" [2, 21] (*author's italics*). This approach seems to be the most rational because the diversity of public opinion subjects is recognized, and opinion of the most people is defined as the main subject [2]. Thus, the structure of public opinion can be monistic, unanimous and pluralist i.e. to consist of different views.

The problem is only in finding out the way of creating national public opinion from the one of various social, economic, demographic and territorial groups. It is said in some Sociology textbooks that such opinion “is arithmetical average” reflecting estimations, judgments and ideas of various elements of social structure” [16]. But in reality we still have vague idea about this abstract “average temperature in the hospital”. In fact, researchers face another dilemma. What is public opinion? Is it an idea of certain real people representing certain social class, subculture, or it is an abstraction resulting from the generalization of their statements? If this is reality and not an abstraction or epiphenomenon, so what is it in social and psychological terms? What are the ways of its appearing? What criteria and indicators it can be used to identify it?

In search of answering these questions existing experience in Sociology regarding the notion of “the public opinion” will be of great use for us. A well-known is the thesis that public opinion can’t be reduced to the sum of individual opinions. But what social and psychological reality is behind this statement about public opinion non-addictiveness? F. Allport stated in his methodological postulate that “existence of public opinion involves understanding it as a bearer of that the others react in an object the same way as the bearer does”<sup>11</sup> [citation 13]. In other words, public opinion is what people think about what people think. We don’t mean specific people but unknown ones. This approach to understanding public opinion causes an urgent need for distinguishing individual and public opinion in the frames of every individual’s consciousness. V. Ossowski [13, 7-16] made rather detailed analysis of possible relationship between individual and public opinion on the intra-subjective level. Developing an idea about the need of distinguishing individual and public opinion in the frames of individual consciousness it is easy to show that a person can have not one but several “public opinion”. The latter can be just opposite and mutually exclusive. These differences depend on the subjective nature and consequently people consider them to be significant and characterizing people’s capabilities and resources. That much is considered the probability of different views coordination, etc., chance for developing common, unique, consolidated community opinion increase or decrease.

In summary, we can state that public opinion as a super-individual formation exists in two forms: the objective and the subjective ones. In the first case it is a materialized community opinion, expressed by means of

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<sup>1</sup> An aphorism as follows is similar in content: “Public opinion is no more that this: what people think that other people think. And “Community is made of people whom we never have known about”.

verbal and non-verbal tools, recorded in signs, texts, and results of public opinion polls. These forms of public opinion are traditional subject of social scientists analysis. Content analysis and various interviews are methods for studying these forms. But public opinion can be expressed as well as unexpressed and it can exist on inter-subjective and intra-subjective levels. That is why it becomes a specific subject of social psychological research in subjective terms. Researchers have to analyze reflected and understood kinds of public opinion as well as those who are just beginning to be realized, are at the level of feelings, common action, body contact etc.

Answering questions about social and psychological mechanisms contributing to the consolidation of individual and public opinion is an important direction of scientific research. Usually, the means for harmonization the existing ideas are sought in the frames of such investigations. An alternative approach comes from understanding the consolidated opinion as a common thought from the beginning, i.e. one that is born in the social group in the communication process between them and it becomes the basis of uniting and consolidating the community. One of the key conditions ensuring existence of the community as a social whole is to individual choice restriction. It can be conditioned by the range of cognitive, emotional and motivation reasons. Choice restriction by the internal factors leads to formation community that can be defined as a collective entity and by external ones as a collective agent.

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