
THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE FORMING IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGINEERING OF SOCIAL REALITY

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Abstract

The article analyzes the significance of social engineering in the context of the possibilities of using modern information technologies to shape social reality in the interests of the subjects of social reality. It is assumed that social consciousness at the individual and group levels is largely the result of the influence of the social reality in which the target audiences are located. Thus, social consciousness formed with the help of technologies for constructing social reality can be directed both in the interests of society, in line with democratic values and principles of humanism, and vice versa, depending on who shapes social reality and for what purpose. Accordingly, if social engineering is carried out with good (humanistic) intentions, it can contribute to the development of civil society, strengthening social cohesion and promoting democratic principles and ethical norms. In other words, in an open democratic society, the constructed social reality should contribute to the progressive development of humanity in a world without wars.

However, if social reality is constructed with the opposite intentions, its results will be different, aimed at strengthening authoritarian regimes, propaganda of war and ideas of conquering territories that “historically allegedly belong” to these regimes, fighting the rest of the world and forming a set of anti-humanistic values in society.

In view of the above, information confrontation in the field of social reality construction is becoming important in the context of promoting the democratic values of Western civilization and consolidating a progressive society.

Key words: social reality, set of mental values, social engineering, social conscience management psychology, group behavior model, personal behavior model, type of thinking.

Introduction

Formation of social consciousness. In today's world, where virtual reality, information technology and social media play a key role in shaping public attitudes and opinions, the issue of shaping social consciousness is becoming increasingly relevant in view of the expediency of forming certain beliefs and consolidating values in society that meet the interests of the ruling elites.

Individual and group social consciousness is a product of social reality in specific historical conditions in all social clusters and strata. Students, prisoners of war, unemployed, clergy, artists, general workers, scientists and other clustered social formations have their own group and individual manifestations of social consciousness, which are in a dynamic diffuse state in the conditions created for them by the subjects of social reality construction (by which we will understand in this article educational institutions, state authorities, non-governmental and religious centers, which, together with other socially significant institutions, form mental values in the target audience). The tools of constructing social reality in this context are the historical and cultural heritage of the material and intangible world, printed periodicals, high-tech media, social networks

and various kinds of agents of influence and opinion leaders who bring certain information to the target audiences, interpret its content and reveal the main ideas.

In order to understand how this all works from a historical perspective, it is worth turning to the historical past and noting that under certain conditions (to varying degrees) destructive ideas, value systems, and forms of thinking directed against humanity, humanism, and peace emerged and spread in states, social and religious centers.

The Crusades, the ideas of fascism and socialist utopia in this context sufficiently reveal the historical significance of social reality for our civilization. These examples from human history demonstrate how the engineering of social reality leads to serious negative consequences.

Totalitarian regimes, extremist movements, and religious cults have always used social engineering technologies to formulate and disseminate ideas that justify violence, discrimination, and aggression. But countries with developed democracies (full-fledged democracies) also use social engineering technologies to construct a social reality that meets the interests of the ruling elites and society as a whole.

The basic element of the construction of social reality is always the division into “friends” and “enemies” who threaten and force them to be ready for war in order to preserve their values and the future of their children (progressive humanity), etc.

For the target groups, such common concepts as interest, threat, fear, hope, assumption, faith, and other feelings inherent in the collective consciousness that are easy to manipulate through the media are always significant components of social reality.

In support of this thesis, it is worth noting that in the context of modern globalization, the above-mentioned manifestations of emotions are widespread and can reach mass hysteria. In this context, let us recall some threats perceived by the mass target audience: the Year 2000 problem (Y2K problem), the formation of the ozone hole (reduction of the ozone layer), melting glaciers (rise in sea levels), climate change, the global economic crisis, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the migration crisis, Covid-19 and other emotional stressors affected social reality.

As can be seen from these examples, social reality is constantly evolving and being shaped by various stressors that the media direct at the material and social components of society. Accordingly, social reality changes and adapts, creating new conditions for social consciousness.

Thus, the topicality of this article is due to the expediency of developing, in the interests of humanity, theoretical approaches to the construction of social reality for the formation of social consciousness of society with basic democratic principles and European values.

Analysis of recent research and publications

Studying social reality at the level of philosophical analysis, N. Humak [1] in her article examines certain scientific approaches to understanding the essence of social reality. Based on the leading scholars of the Western school, the author draws attention to the dependence of the perception of social reality on the cultural and historical background.

Harshita Choukikar and Smita Athanere Parte from the Madhav Gwalior Institute of Technology (India) in their late 2023 article Transformative Realities: The Social Impact of Virtual Reality [2] describes and reveals the results of the virtual world's impact on social reality. The authors draw attention to how virtual reality has changed social reality and what psychological changes have occurred (dependence on technology, access to knowledge, changes in interpersonal communication, and risks associated with possible personal data leakage).

In the context of the article, it was advisable to study the work of E. Kuznetsova Media Reality of The Digital Age: Challenges Of Visuality, which reveals the component of social reality in the digital age [3]. Giles Crouch Human in his article Reality in the Digital Age [4] analyzes the subjectivity of the world perception of objective human existence. The lectures of Dr. Dennis Hiebert from

Providence University in Canada, in particular his presentation “What does ‘The Social Construction of Reality’ Mean?”, which is available on YouTube, were particularly useful in writing this article [5].

Setting objective

This article aims to explore the process of forming social consciousness in the context of social reality engineering, to study the methods and approaches that contribute to this process, and to consider practical examples of the application of these methods.

The article pays special attention to the methodology of social engineering, in particular, such concepts as the Overton Window, the Spiral of Silence, Pluralistic ignorance, and other technologies for shaping social reality. The main scientific significance of the article lies in the development of theoretical approaches to the study of social reality.

Methodology

At the empirical level, the author analyzes the possibilities of using social engineering technologies to construct a social reality that will determine and shape a given social consciousness in the interests of the governing elites.

At the scientific level, the above statement complements the well-known quote from the preface to Karl Marx's “To the Critique of Political Economy”: “It is not the consciousness of people that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.”

Thus, the study is aimed at establishing the causal relationships and patterns between social reality and social consciousness.

Result and Discussion

In this article, the concept of social reality will be understood as a set of mental, imaginary and real values that have been historically formed in a society as basic, but evolve and determine (to varying degrees) the consciousness of all social clusters belonging to that society. According to N. Husak, social reality is constructed by the subject on the basis of meanings and values that exist in the society where the consciousness of the subjects of cognition is formed. That is, the understanding of social reality is historically and socially conditioned [1].

Having revealed the content of social reality and taking into account the axiomatic statement that being (in our case, social reality) determines consciousness, it should be noted that modern social engineering technologies allow creating a social reality in which the interests of most social groups at all levels of society will meet the interests of the ruling elites in both democratic and totalitarian regimes.

In this context, the scientific problem is to develop effective approaches to the use of social engineering technologies to shape the orientation of social consciousness at both the individual and group levels. It should be emphasized that the formation of social consciousness should meet the interests of civilized society and humanity at the global level. However, from the point of view of the ruling elites, the engineering of social reality, i.e. the process of targeted influence on social processes to shape social consciousness, may have other goals.

Social reality engineering involves the use of various methods and tools to construct social relations and realities that influence the behavior and thinking of individuals at the individual and group levels. In this context, the cognitive interest formed as a result of social reality engineering determines the direction and evolution of social consciousness, filling it with appropriate content. In other words, the content and orientation of social consciousness largely depend on the cognitive interest that is formed through the media, social networks and other social engineering tools.

Cognitive interest, as a cognitive process, has a social aspect and is a natural human property aimed at cognition of social reality and determination of one's role in social processes. The result of this cognitive activity is knowledge (social experience), which forms certain ideas of a person about the principles of social relations, in particular in the context of achieving the desired social position in society.

Thus, the results of the realization of cognitive interest in specific conditions of social reality form consciousness, which is characterized by orientation and interest.

Knowledge and social experience largely depend on the social reality in which the individual's consciousness is located. Therefore, social consciousness arises as a result of reflection on this reality, which, in turn, is "constructed" with the help of social engineering tools.

The engineering of social reality involves the use of various methods and tools to construct social relations and realities that influence the behavior and thinking of individuals at the individual and group levels. In this context, the cognitive interest formed as a result of social reality engineering determines the direction and evolution of social consciousness, filling it with appropriate content.

The content and orientation of social consciousness largely depend on cognitive interest, which is formed through the media, social networks, and other social engineering tools. Cognitive interest as a cognitive process has a social aspect and is a natural human property aimed at cognition of social reality and determination of one's role in social processes. The result of this cognitive activity is knowledge (social experience), which forms certain ideas of a person about the principles of social relations, in particular in the context of achieving the desired social position in society.

Thus, the results of the realization of cognitive interest in specific conditions of social reality form consciousness, which is characterized by focus and interest. At the same time, knowledge and social experience largely depend on the social reality in which the individual's consciousness is located.

Summarizing the above, we can conclude that social consciousness is focused and largely driven by cognitive interest. At the same time, social consciousness is the result of reflection of social reality by an individual, which is formed with the help of social engineering tools.

Social reality, built with the help of social engineering technologies, not only determines the choice of social values in society, giving them meaning and importance, but also significantly affects the consciousness of the individual, forming his or her basic values and beliefs. Thus, it can be affirmed that social engineering technologies shape the reality that determines consciousness.

Hereinafter in the article, we will understand social space engineering technologies as a wide range of tools that mentally influence the value judgments and actions of the object of social environment influence in the relevant conditions. Social engineering technologies include:

Social media: platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others are used to disseminate information, shape public opinion, and mobilize people for social and political action. They are capable of creating information bubbles where users receive information that confirms their beliefs, which can significantly influence their judgments and actions.

Media: television, radio, print and online media have a huge impact on the formation of public attitudes and values. Through the choice of topics, angles and tone of the news, the media can create a certain narrative that influences the perception of events and phenomena.

Educational systems: schools, universities and other educational institutions are important socialization tools that transmit knowledge, skills and values. They shape young people's worldviews, value judgments, and behavioral patterns.

Political institutions: legislatures, government agencies, political parties, and civil society organizations use a variety of methods to influence public opinion and behavior. This includes legislative initiatives, public speeches, propaganda and other forms of political communication.

Advertising and marketing: these tools are used to shape consumers' needs and desires, influencing their purchasing decisions. Advertising not only informs about products or services, but also creates ideals, behaviors, and lifestyles.

Cultural institutions: Museums, theaters, the film industry, and other cultural institutions form and disseminate certain cultural and aesthetic values that influence people's worldview and behavior.

The social reality built with the help of these technologies not only determines the choice of social values in society, giving them meaning and importance, but also significantly affects the consciousness of an individual, forming his or her basic values and beliefs. Thus, it can be argued that social engineering technologies shape the reality (being) that determines consciousness.

An important aspect of the above-mentioned social engineering technologies is the propaganda of ideas, views and beliefs that shape the behavioral patterns of target audiences in the interests of the elite. The involvement of authoritative opinion leaders in this process and the creation of a direction for topical ideas with the help of the "Overton window" and the "spiral of silence" are complemented by various forms of social coercion. All of this leads to the fact that opposition ideas are "squeezed out" of this social reality and their importance is marginalized.

"The Overton Window describes the range of ideas that a society considers acceptable at a given point in time. This range can be changed by gradually shifting the boundaries of what is acceptable, allowing new, previously unacceptable ideas to be gradually introduced. This is achieved through media discourse, statements by influential figures, and social campaigns that gradually normalize new ideas.

The "spiral of silence" reflects the process by which people, fearing social isolation, refrain from expressing their true views if they perceive these views as less popular or socially unacceptable. This leads to dominant ideas becoming even more widespread and alternative voices becoming even more muted.

In the context of social engineering technologies, these concepts interact in the following way: the "Overton window" gradually expands the boundaries of acceptable discourse, and the "spiral of silence" ensures that opponents of these new ideas remain silent for fear of social rejection. This creates an effect of social coercion, where new ideas and behaviors are not only introduced, but quickly become dominant and generally accepted.

Thus, the "Overton Window" and the "spiral of silence" are becoming powerful tools in the arsenal of social engineering, contributing to the effective formation of social values and behavioral patterns. Thanks to these mechanisms, elites can gradually change the boundaries of acceptability of social ideas, making once radical concepts generally accepted, while suppressing alternative opinions through social pressure and fear of rejection.

In other words, the constructed social reality is shaped by trends that reflect the interests of the elite. Using the "Overton Window," elites manipulate public consciousness, gradually shifting the boundaries of what is acceptable and normal. Meanwhile, the "spiral of silence" ensures that any opposition views remain marginalized and have no impact on the general public.

These processes create the illusion of a broad social consensus on certain ideas and policies, even though they may benefit only a small group of people. Accordingly, the emerging social norms and values largely reflect the interests and priorities of elites, thus shaping their power and control over society.

In this context, it is worth noting that cognitive interest has both individual and collective dimensions, which is especially important in the context of social interaction and competition (confrontation). Given the above, it can be reasonably argued that in order to bring the consciousness and behavior of the target audience to the desired expected results, it is necessary to "construct" a certain social reality that will be accepted both at the individual and group levels.

At the individual level, the social aspect usually reflects a person's personal motivation to achieve the desired social position in society, and it depends on his or her knowledge, experience and ability to realize intentions. In other words, cognitive interest (social aspect) determines the search for opportunities and shapes a person's beliefs about achieving a certain social status in society. The social aspect at the individual level can be hidden or demonstrated depending on the role of the individual in the social environment. In this context, it is worth revealing the phenomenon of “pluralistic ignorance”, which complements the concept of the “Spiral of Silence” and reveals the impact of social reality on personal and group social consciousness. In particular, in the context of social reality, “pluralistic ignorance” reflects a situation where a group of people may refrain from expressing their true views, feelings or beliefs due to social pressure and fear of openly opposing the “correct majority”. Therefore, social reality can lead to tacit consent and decision-making, which is necessary from the point of view of the subjects of social reality.

Thus, it can be argued that the consciousness formed in the conditions of social reality, at the individual and group levels, is always in a state of constant evolution and adaptation to the factors that influence it from the side of the subjects of social reality.

Conclusions

The analysis of the possibilities of using modern information technologies for shaping social reality allows us to assert that the reality formed with the help of the above-mentioned social engineering technologies plays a crucial role in the process of shaping social consciousness at the individual and group levels of target audiences.

The construction of social reality for the formation of a certain social consciousness of target groups of society in the state involves the use of social engineering technologies.

The main tools of social reality construction technologies are printed periodicals, high-tech media, social networks and various kinds of agents of influence and opinion leaders who convey certain information to target audiences, interpret its content and reveal the main ideas.

The main methods of constructing social reality include the concepts of the Overton Window, the Spiral of Silence, and Pluralistic ignorance.

Prospects for further research. In the context of the above, it is considered expedient to further study the problem of the formation of social consciousness in the context of social reality, which is formed by means of social engineering technologies.

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