

THE CONCEPTUAL SCHEME OF THE FORMATION OF SOCIAL CAPACITY OF INTERNET COMMUNITIES



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Abstract The author of the article has analyzed the contemporary approaches to understanding the content of the category of «social capacity of communities». The author has emphasized that online communities are based on «tertiary relationships». The author has focused much attention on the analysis of scientific sources that consider social capacity as a characteristic of social interaction of participants of online communities. The social capacity of communities is represented as characteristic of growth and aggregate qualities and abilities that contribute to the effective social interaction of participants. The research shows that the formation of social capacity takes place in conditions of three basic resources: trust, social interaction and information-communicative competences.

Keywords: *social capacity, online community, trust, social interaction, information-communicative competences.*

Introduction

Theories of social structures give us an idea of what any social formation is not sustainable and resilient to, of internal and external influences on it. In the 20th century the invention of the Internet made a noticeable impact on communities transformation. Communities are increasingly acquiring

special organizational forms – the network. Spanish expert on the sociology of information society M.Castells describes the network as an open structure that can expand indefinitely, combining new units as long as they share some codes of communication (e.g., value or purpose of the activity) [2].

F.Tönnies' concept of two-type community distribution (Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft community) has dominated for a long time in sociology. After the shift from primary relationship (personified by families and communities) to secondary relationship (personified by associations), now it seems to have created a new dominant structure, based on so-called «tertiary relationships» or in B.Wellman' terminology «personalized communities», which are the embodiment of egocentric networks involving the privatization of sociality [7].

This individualized relationship with society is a specific form of social but not a psychological attribute. Primarily, this form of social is based on individualized relationship between capital and labour, between workers and labour process within the enterprise network.

Specific form of social is generated by patriarchy crisis and subsequent collapse of the traditional nuclear family that existed from the late 19th century. Individualized ties with society supported (but not made) new models of urbanization because the suburbs and suburban settlements sprawled in all directions, and breaking the link between the function and meaning in the districts of the city, promote individualization and disintegration of the spatial life context. New social order was maintained by the crisis of political legitimacy, because the increased distance between citizens and the state had affected the mechanisms of representation, promoting the individualism withdrawal from the public sphere. The new model of social in our society is characterized by the network individualism.

Social capacity is the aggregate of voluntary relationships between individuals, groups and/or organizations that create the ability to act positively for the sake of mutual benefit and a larger common purpose. It features trust, co-operative behaviour, inclusiveness and openness, and is driven by the sense of equity and justice [6].

The analysis of scientific sources and social practice shows that social capacity of communities are characterised by the growth and aggregate qualities and abilities that contribute to effective social interaction of participants. The starting unit, the bearer of social capacity, is the community participant that has a number of certain qualities, partly inherent in his/her personality, but largely formed as a result of interaction with various public institutions and phenomena (population strata, classes, etc.). In this context, the

social capacity of community expresses the existence form and the level of the output unit of analysis.

Social capacity is a category that characterizes unrealized social opportunities and social resources. Implementing social capacity causes certain effects and various kinds of changes, not only social, but also economic, political, cultural and others. Community as a social system is a kind of collective form of joint ventures, complex mechanism, whose task is to reach the goal, to mobilize resources. Obviously, online community puts its task of finding ways and methods of effective use of scarce (rare) resources under uncertainty. Internet users are most numerous strata of creative class society, who by their mass largely determine the cultural, social and economic level of development. Internet users due to their life quality and social position belong to the majority, both as producers and consumers of relevant information. Flexibility and adaptability allows to react sensitively to any changes.

Thus, the social capacity of communities is a combination of resources that has additional advantages through the synergy effect. In this regard, increasing social capacity does not lie in the plane simply increasing intensification and deep structural component of complementarity, the possibility of better use of each component to improve social management.

Matrix system factors can provide social capacity as a system in multidimensional space depending on various parameters. Social capacity as a meta-system includes three parts: natural, cultural-historical and social. In the context of the current study the social unit and social capacity factors include the following factors: social security of communities; social focus, cultural and economic development; priorities of social management of communities; overall quality of life; the degree of infrastructure

development; relationship of solidarity in communities.

Accumulation, implementation and reproduction of social capacity in modern societies depend on the network configuration of relations between actors of their objectives, level of mutual trust, features of self-behaviour strategies, information and communication skills. However, the formation of social capacity in society can not be completely reduced to the activities of social actors. Organizational infrastructure of the network community has played an important role in this process creating the conditions for the effective communication and building of trusting relationship.

Community capacity is a necessary and sufficient condition for a community to form, continue to grow, and sustain itself in order to achieve its common goals. Community capacity is a comprehensive construct to be understood in multiple dimensions.

Community capacity has been treated as a single-dimension construct in the Internet research area, particularly regarding the sense of community and social networks. Community capacity is mostly focused on the motivation of online community participation, usage patterns, user satisfaction. Scientists have made attempts to investigate social and cultural implications of the blog phenomenon, but have not explained the dynamics in blog community development. Anecdotal cases of Internet community activism have been reported in the news media about political supporters, apartment complex residents, and consumers. However, no links have been made between such instances of community activity and community capacity [3].

The formation of social capacity occurs in the availability of three basic resources: trust, social interaction and information-communicative competence.

Trust is a basic resource that is particularly important in conditions of physical distance and anonymity of participants in the Internet communities. Trust is the integrator, which forms the social complexity of the Internet community. Resource of trust display past experience in social interactions, recreating tradition, structure and rules of relationship. Trust is the manifestation of faith compliance and implementation of the principle of equivalence sacralization consciousness. In addition, trust can be defined as instrument for adaptation to the functioning of the

Internet community through intragroup and intergroup consolidation; symbolic credit, which is a prerequisite for the empowerment of social interaction.

Social interaction as part of social capacity is the activity of members of communities based on the technical possibilities of the Internet, and is based on the voluntary inclusion of a social structure. Interaction between Internet users has its own specifics. To indicate this interaction scientists use a special term – Internet communication. Internet communication is an interactive phenomenon of interpersonal interaction that is mediated by the technological possibilities of communication outside the constraints of physical space. Social interaction in the Internet involves full or partial integration of an individual in the process of communication. Each individual has a certain quantity of information and communication competencies, which affects the amount of Internet communication. There are two ways of structuring information-communicative competence of an individual – wide and narrow. Wide or complex method involves the use of all elements of social interaction that are relevant to the determination of the merits of information-communication competence. These elements operate as a part of habilitation, resource-cognitive operational units of characteristics of communicative personality. A narrow approach or operational characteristics focuses only on operational unit – unit of skills.

Both approaches to the structure of information-communicative competence of an individual have practical usage – to assess the information-communicative competence of participant, moderator or administrator of the Internet communities. However, due to simple analyses researchers often use operational approach. An integrated approach can help in particularly difficult communicative situations – to elaborate behaviour rules of social networks, blogs, forums, etc.; to select the key communicator; to solve particularly demanding applications; to apply rewards or sanctions during online interactions etc.

The formation of the social capacity of Internet communities involves the implementation of several successive steps. They are in some ways consistent with the steps of the United Nations Development Program (1965) [1] and describe the capacity building of local communities:

1. Involve participants in the formation of the social capacity of Internet communities
An effective capacity-building process should encourage all actors to participate. If members of Internet communities with different statuses (moderator, writer, follower, etc.) are involved in the communication process and realize the ultimate goal of the community, then they will feel more responsible for the result and sustainability of the development.
2. Assessment of capacity building needs and resources
Assessing opportunities through interactions with Internet community members allows community coordinators to see which issues require additional training, which areas should be prioritized, which ways to build capacity can be aimed at creating short-term and long-term development strategies. Formation of the capacity that is not rooted in the comprehensive study and assessment of available opportunities will become one-sided, which will not contribute to the sustainability of the results.
3. Estimation of the possible results of forming the social capacity of Internet communities
After completing the assessment of opportunities, it is necessary to outline the possible implications of capacity building in four areas:
 - Organizational mechanisms - An assessment often reveals that the community is ineffective because of bad or weak contacts between participants, poor management of resources, violations of rules of conduct within the Internet communities. In order to address the organizational mechanisms, it is necessary to standardize the use of individual capacity of the participants, covering the procedures for the entry of participants into the community, the introduction of a system of incentives, skills development, systems for assessing effectiveness, as well as ethics and values.
 - Coordination - successful management and control by the community coordinators catalyze the achievement of the goals of the development of the Internet community. Strong coordination makes it easier to adapt to change, strong leaders can also influence people. Coordinators can use coaching and mentoring for new

entrants to help stimulate the development of the necessary skills.

- Knowledge - they are the basis of the capacity. The main efforts of community members should be aimed at obtaining the necessary competencies that form a stable knowledge system. Community coordinators should contribute to this process.
 - Feedback - the constant response to the requests of participants contributes to higher productivity and efficiency. Lack of feedback in communities worsens communication, leads to a decline in the community.
4. Activities to continually build the social capacity of Internet communities
Community coordinators must continuously re-evaluate the effectiveness of the community, react to the expectations of the participants, and anticipate changes in the community's activities. It is important to develop appropriate evaluation criteria.
 5. Assessment of the formation of social capacity of Internet communities
An assessment of capacity building contributes to increased accountability. Estimates should be based on performance changes in four main areas: organizational mechanisms, coordination, knowledge and feedback.
Considering the emergent properties of the social capacity of Internet communities, we highlight the main of these properties - collective action. Under the main features of collective activities are understood the distinctive features, properties that allow to determine the specifics of collective activity as a holistic and relatively independent phenomenon. These include:
 1. Availability of common goals for the various participants included in the activities. Collective activity, like any form of cooperation, is caused by the need to achieve such goals that are not accessible to an individual or are only partially available.
 2. Participants in collective activities, besides individual motives, should have an incentive to work together, that is, a general motivation must be formed that allows one to achieve individual goals and objectives that are significant for some groups or for society as a whole. The only goals and general motivation create the initial conditions for the formation of

separate members of some of their community (collective subject).

3. It is necessary to divide the common process of achieving a certain common goal for some components (parts), that is, on separate, but functionally related sets of actions, operations (parts of activities) and their distribution among the participants in this process. Distribution of components (parts) of joint activity in the group of participants leads to the formation of the functional structure of this group. The distribution of functions is not purely random, but is characterized by their mutual complement and determines the activity (functional) mutual dependence of participants in collective activity.
4. Combining (or combining) an individual activities, which is understood as the formation of the integrity of collective activity, leads to the development of relationships and interdependencies defined by the activities of the participants in the collective (joint) activity. Such an association generates a phenomenon of community as a special quality of activity of the group.
5. Coordinated, coordinated implementation of distributed and united individual activities of all participants in collective activities. Harmonization of individual activities involves a strict sequence of operations in accordance with a specific program that takes into account the individual activities of each participant. Harmonization usually refers to numerous performance characteristics: volumetric and qualitative, spatial and temporal, tempo and intensity, rhythm, etc.
6. The need for management - a need inherent in collective activities. It is the latter that inevitably generates administrative activity, the most characteristic feature of which is the direct focus on the participants in the joint activity, and through them - indirect influence on the subject of collaborative work.
7. The presence of a single final result, common to the participants in the joint activity, involves the achievement of its (so-called aggregate product), in a shorter time and more efficiently or qualitatively. The correlation of a single final result with the general objectives of the joint activity can determine its purposefulness, with its

overall costs - its effectiveness, with individual costs and outcomes - the individual contributions of the participants in the joint activity.

8. The only spatial-temporal functioning of the participants is one of the most elementary but necessary conditions for the implementation of joint activities [4].

Another problem in initiating collective actions is related to the organization. M. Olson, one of the authors of the traditional theory, introduced the term "latent group" to refer to those communities with common interests in the collective blessing that did not build an organizational structure for solving communication and coordination tasks. In his view, only a formalized organization can cope with the cost of solving these problems. In the case of group action based on group interest, the formalized organization corresponds to the Weber type, with a vertically integrated structure, with decision-making above, with clearly differentiated roles, and installation in support of institutional order. In the case of public movements, the organization may be less formal, but with leadership structures, with centres where resources are accumulated and decisions are made [5, p.28].

With the development of technology, the evolution of the theory of collective action took place. The use of e-mails, chats, networks, PCs, mobile phones in collective actions many times reduced the cost of communication and coordination, and also freed from the need to build a formal structure. The problem of free riding also ceased to be acute. In a situation where socially useful information is posted on the Internet when discussions are held on forums, participants contribute to the process of interaction, not to achieve the goal. Thus, the two key principles of the traditional theory of collective action were non-universal.

The development of technologies has led to saturation of the human environment with information and communications. In this regard, community (communality) is now formed on the basis of information resources that are stored and used within this community. The public good in the form of information depends on how many participants have decided to contribute, so the problem of free riding is a key threat to the realization of this good. Building a community requires a wide network of participants who are familiar with each other, whose actions

should be coordinated, especially at an early stage in the development of databases.

However, some types of collective action do not fall under these characteristics. Modern technologies significantly reduce the number of requirements for building communities and create secondary community (second-order communality). Participants can contribute to increasing the information resource, not knowing about other participants and not knowing about the consequences of its actions as a public information resource with public access to it. An example of a secondary community is the placement of information on a website, forum, etc. Communities of network friends are formed on the basis of common interests. Secondary communities, unlike communal information good, do not require organization costs, although there, and there, collective action depends on an individual contribution. Members of international non-governmental organizations make extensive use of such benefits.

Due to the fact that the first contribution of the participants is almost costly from them and is not perceived as a contribution, even the least interested members of the community can participate in the collective action. Thus, the creation of secondary goods, such as publicly accessible databases, on-line archives that can subsequently be used to organize collective action, can not be explained by the theoretical construct of free riding. Instead of the problem of non-participation, the problem of maintaining personal information security comes to the fore. Filling in the network space with anonymous messages makes the actual problem of trust.

The formation of Internet communities is a staged process (in the dissertation work justifies the selection of five stages), influenced not only by the direct activity of social actors, their information and communication competences, but also the organizational infrastructure of one or another network community. An important aspect in understanding the formation of social capacity of Internet communities is the indicator of trust. Absolute distrust is capable of blocking the process of forming communities at an early stage and is evidence of the absence of the formation of the collective "We" as such.

With regard to the organizational aspect, the new forms of collective action are a combination of formal and informal, flexible structures. But the traditional theory is undoubtedly correct in that it emphasizes the importance of information, communication and coordination in collective action.

Any collective action implies crossing the boundary between the private and public spheres of two or more people for the sake of the public good. Collective actions lie in the public sphere. In the context of clearly delineated boundaries between private and public transition from one sphere to another, it entails certain costs, which causes each participant to wonder if he is ready to bear costs in order to achieve the public good. In such cases, a traditional theory dealing with problems of non-participation and building a formal organization works. When the boundary between private and public is easy to cross, participants do not need to take a particular initiative and count on the necessary expenses. The intersection of the border may be unconscious and represent a long process of movement in the direction of one or the other.

The social capacity of the Internet community is not a mere sum of personal social capacity. In this case, it is advisable to speak of the evolutionary properties of the social capacity, that is, those properties that characterize all social formation, and not its separate components. Emergency properties include a certain amount of resources of individuals and the number of links between members of the Internet community, the duration and nature of online interactions, quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the collective action of participants.

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