Technologies of the Electoral Process: A Field Study of the Possibility of Informative Communication

Alexander Antonovskiy

AB: The article focuses on the role of social technology in the Russian electoral process. On this basis, the author provides answers to more general questions concerning whether it is possible in the Russian context to combine social stability and informative political communication, whether a conflict-free processing of objective information is possible, whether political communication can extricate itself from self-referential isolation around the issue of social unity and to address the real challenges facing society, and whether the authorities can transition from motivative-integrative social technologies to object-information technologies.

An earlier version of this article was published in Russian as A.Y. Antonovskiy. 2012. "K kommunikativnym tekhnologiiam v Rossii: teoriia, praktika, polevoe issledovanie," *Obshchestvo. Tekhnika. Nauka. Na puti k teorii sotsial'nykh tekhnologii* (Moscow), pp. 172–83.

Communication theory: from motivative solidarity to informative descriptions

In this article, a specific example from the electoral process in Russia will be used to reconstruct the social technologies for avoiding objective descriptions in the political and media sphere. The theory of communicative systems developed by a number of foreign researchers, in particular N. Luhmann and J. Habermas, will serve as the theoretical foundation of the present study of several social technologies present in the electoral process. From this kind of "high theory"[1] a mid-range theory can be derived—a theory of communicative media. On the one hand, this relates to the proliferation of different forms of communication (print, electronic media, etc.), and on the other hand, extends to generalized symbolic communicative success (truth, power, money, faith, property, etc.).

These approaches serve as explanation of real functioning social technologies, which in and of themselves are not developed by theorists, but rather by enlightened members of the ruling class who are familiar with the mechanisms of the formation of public opinion and