

# Leading approaches to managing social processes in turbulent conditions

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**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the main trends and leading approaches in the modern development of society in a situation of dynamic changes and turbulent conditions. Particular attention is paid to identifying the differences between management and manageability.

Management is a formalized side of collective activity that has a constructive and focused character. Manageability is a qualitative characteristic of managerial activity. Manageability opens possibilities for determining the degree of readiness of a management subject to achieve its goals and the level of interaction of management entities with each other. Manageability turns out to be an organic part of the creation process and an integral part of the mechanism that holds the dynamic control process within certain limits.

This paper studies and reveals the features of social turbulence that affect the contour of the boundaries of controllability. We show that these include the butterfly effect, the strength of weak ties, the “black swan” effect, as well as the presence of a “ghostly” control subject. At a theoretical level, the heuristic potential of defining control boundaries allows us to identify the differences between uncertainty and stability, unpredictability and predictability. From a practical point of view, the definition of boundaries contributes to the development of measures of manageability at the level of personal competencies, as well as at the level of professional and social mobility.

## 1 Introduction

The subject areas of the problem field of the sociology of management include such topics as the study of social mechanisms of management and self-government of various social communities, the study of management systems and processes in the field of social relations, programming of relations between people using rules and requirements, the interaction of social groups in the process of making managerial decisions (Zarubin and Semenova 2017). Among the urgent problems of sociology is the study of controllability.

In the works of Prigogine (1995), controllability is understood as a qualitative characteristic of the interaction between the controlling and managed subsystems. Manageability means, on the one hand, the degree of control that the controlling subsystem carries out with respect to the managed, on the other hand, the degree of autonomy that the managed subsystem maintains with respect to the controlling.

According to Tikhonov (2009), “*manageability is the degree of influence of relations or relations of management on the social interactions of people in the process of their joint activity; it can be high, medium or low*” (Tikhonov 2009, p. 301). This opens up the possibility of determining the relationship between control and autonomy in the field of management.

In the understanding of Gashkov et al. (2016), controllability turns out to be not only an instrument of the egalitarian method of management and planning, but also a characteristic of a special ethos of relations oriented towards rejecting the dominant management model.

In our opinion, one should pay attention to the difference between the two phenomena - “management” and “controllability”. If management turns out to be a formalized side of collective activity that has a creative, purposeful character, then manageability turns out to be a qualitative characteristic of this activity. Manageability opens up possibilities for determining the degree of readiness of a management subject to achieve its goals and the level of interaction of management entities with each other.

What are the peculiarities inherent in situations of dynamic development changes that affect manageability? The number of collective and individual actors representing various local value constructs has sharply increased, which, unlike social subjects of the recent past, whose actions are determined by the rigid framework of the social structure, are capable of self-reflection and the active transformation of social realities (Granovetter 2009). Self-reflection contributes to the formation of a variety of life strategies which has led to multi-vector and non-linear development.

There was a contradiction between the concept of the natural social order and the hybrid of non-legal war (see Beck 2005). If the first idea is focused on the preservation of traditions, legal regulation and peace, the second is based on a strategy of provocations with the use of threats and force.

This paper focuses on the leading approaches to managing social processes in turbulent conditions. We discuss some relevant novel approaches and provide a synthesis of ideas and concepts in the works of Russian and foreign researchers that tackle these issues.

## **2 Literature review**

One can see that recently in modern sociological science, a rethinking of the nature of “social” has clearly occurred. It is believed that a professional sociologist is only interested in what exists within the social world, namely, social interactions (Keuschnigg et al. 2018). In general, sociology can be described as a branch of science that deals with society and human behavior, including anthropology, communications science, criminology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, social sciences and sociology. As a social science, sociology includes the application of scientific methods to study the human aspects of the world. The social science disciplines include psychology, political science and economics. The use of scientific methods distinguishes the social sciences from the humanities.

Generally, the main criticism of both quantitative sociology and structural functionalism has to do with whether social phenomena can really be studied like the natural phenomena of the natural sciences. Critics question the way social phenomena are viewed as objective social facts (Baskarada and Koronios 2018).

The mainstream of modern sociology can be described as such that seeks to go beyond social constructivism. For example, as many of the social and cultural implications of a new technology in its developmental stage are determined by various processes of social negotiation and interpretation, it is important for philosophical studies on the impact of technology on society and culture to work closer (Pinch and Bijker 1984). Let us look at this developmental phase. Only if the technology develops according to an internal logic and its social and cultural implications depend on this logic, or if the technologies are strictly neutral, would it be justified to ignore this phase of development, since then it would be sufficient to study this logic or the decisions to investigate the companies that meet after a technology has been developed. However, if their models of technological change are correct, socio-constructivist studies could be helpful in demonstrating how the social and cultural implications of a technology correspond to decisions in its developmental phase (Manca and Ranieri 2017). In fact, the empirical reality of integration in these processes of interest and identity formation surpasses the theoretical models in order to understand them. After addressing definitive questions and reviewing the literature on integration, one can argue that social construction, a growing and living literature in contemporary international relations, can help students to theorize these neglected questions of interest and identity empirically.

The sociology of discipline which confronted early empirical constructivist studies, forced constructivists to focus on static norms. In order to gain acceptance and to prove that constructivist ideas are empirically important, constructivists tried to show how their ideal perspective can provide a better understanding and explanation of political phenomena. The simplification of the dynamics of social norms as the basis of the first wave of writing constructivist norms contributed to the meteoric rise of social constructivism in the literature of international relations. For instance, in Latur’s understanding, the usual understanding of the community is being replaced by the awareness of the existence of a bicameral collective, which includes many people (their opinions, desires, interests and values), many things and communities that exist in nature (for example, microbes), as well as scientists, who carry out an expert and mediation mission between these sets (Latur 2018). A new understanding of sociality explains the emergence of a trend towards the sophistication of modernity.

The features inherent in situations of dynamic changes give rise to the effect of social turbulence. The search for the relationship between controllability and uncontrollability allows us to move away from the established characteristics of social turbulence as a negative phenomenon. For example, Yanitsky (2011) draws

attention to the pervasive risk of degradation and destruction of the instability of the global economic and political system (Yanitsky 2011). In turn, Kravchenko (2018) considers turbulence to be a “normal anomie,” which is a product of the “arrow of time” and manifests itself in the form of special nonlinear phenomena that initiate tears and injuries of current life (Kravchenko 2018, p. 7).

### **3 Labels of controllability**

The correlation between controllability and uncontrollability reveals the presence in social turbulence of not only negative, but also positive potential. In modern conditions, there is no direct connection between controllability and subordination, and the emphasis is shifted to the fact that uncontrollability is not only disobedience and non-control, but also something creative, for example autonomy and self-organization. An uncontrollable object, unlike an insubordinate object, is capable of self-organization, autonomy, and creativity. What are the contours of the boundaries of controllability in a turbulence situation?

The first label denoting the contour of controllability is called the “butterfly effect”. This effect occurs in conditions of increasing mobility and chaos in the modern world (Fitzgerald and Van Eijnatten 2002). Local events that are not significant at first glance cause significant, avalanche-like and unpredictable consequences in the future. In this controllability situation, the following features are characteristic for this very process:

- high sensitivity of system behaviour to the initial operating conditions;
- extreme unpredictability of continuous, non-linear and irregular motion that occurs in a dynamic system;
- the external randomness of the decision-making processes which is not random, although unpredictable.

In making management decisions, particular attention should be paid to the relationship between prediction and forecast. If the prediction is a message about some event that will certainly happen in the future, then the forecast is a scientifically sound judgment about the possible states of the control object in the future or about alternative ways and timing of reaching these states (Urry 2016, pp. 115-126). It is impossible to predict the future because of the many errors in the measurements generated by ignorance of all the factors and conditions in which the dynamic system functions. Consequently, controllability cannot be based on predictions, while forecasts that depend on scale and time extent turn out to be movement guidelines in a turbulence situation.

Another label characterizing the contour of the controllability boundary is formed by the "strength of weak ties." The American sociologist Granovetter (2009) believes that strong and weak connections are manifested in interactions between people (Granovetter 2009, pp. 31-50). Strong ties arise as a result of kinship and hierarchical subordination, and weak ties are formed between acquaintances, classmates, colleagues, and work colleagues. A variety of weak bonds are very weak (missing) bonds. An example of missing links is the multitude of network communities operating on the world wide web of the Internet.

Social connections differ in terms of the frequency and duration of social contacts. Why are strong bonds inferior to weak bonds in a turbulent situation? If strong ties based on traditions, habits and rules are static, then weak ties, not limited to close contacts, are dynamic. In a situation of weak connections of controllability, the following features are characteristic:

- utility, leading to information filtering during interpersonal communication between management entities;
- innovation, which is a source of additional information from an extended range of sources;
- dissemination, turning management entities not only into consumers of information, but also into its creators.

The next label is determined by the presence of “black swans” (Taleb 2010). The author of the world-famous bestseller, Taleb (2010) used such a vivid metaphor to refer to an event slipping out of sight of a professional manager. This event has a number of characteristics. First of all, it was anomalous, it would seem that nothing in the past foreshadowed him. In addition, it is fraught with the potential of great power. And finally, our experience forces us to put forward explanations of what happened already after the event happened, turning it first into an unexpected surprise, and then, with the help of explanations, into a trivial and predictable action. Man-made disasters, global economic crises, changes in the labour market - this is an incomplete list of such events.

Manageability, which is carried out taking into account the possibility of the occurrence of anomalous events with tremendous power, is characterized by the following features:

- readiness for any accidents, without reassessing accuracy and specificity, since events in society, in

- business and in science most often happen unexpectedly;
- elimination of the tendency to minimize risks and excessive faith in experts who overestimate their ability to predict;
- avoiding the search for the causes of the events that have occurred, since they are part of the internal system of thinking, while there may be many real causes, and they may not be known to us.

And, finally, the fourth label characterizing the contour of the controllability boundary is related to the fact that not only explicit, but “ghostly” control subjects are acting in this area (see Denisov 2010). Unlike explicit subjects of management, which operate openly, the latter encrypt their real and symbolic participation in the managerial process. Market participants waging unfair competition, newsmakers manipulating public consciousness, make up a cohort of “ghostly” management entities. Manageability must take into account the threats that come from the “ghostly” management entities. The main threats in a situation of dynamic uncertainty include the following:

- resistance to “decryption”, identification, labelling of covert actions;
- the desire to unite into “ghostly” networks, which are conglomerates that can control the resources of real management entities;
- possession of a set of manipulative technologies, thanks to which control over the actions of real management entities is carried out.

## 4 Conclusions

Thus, our results show that at a theoretical level, the heuristic potential of determining the boundaries of controllability allows us to identify the differences between uncertainty and stability, unpredictability and predictability. On the one hand, controllability turns out to be an organic part of the creation process, and on the other, an integral part of the mechanism that keeps the dynamic control process within certain limits.

From a practical point of view, the definition of boundaries contributes to the development of measures of manageability at the level of personal competencies, as well as at the level of professional and social mobility. One would probably agree with the authors of this paper who advocate a view that this statement serves as a hallmark between management and management sociology. We might conclude by saying that if a researcher in the field of management is looking for reasons for controllability in organizational development, then the sociologist is trying to understand the structure of social relations.

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