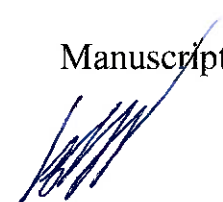


**Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education
RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Manuscript Rights



Vasekin Artem Sergeevich

**DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL: A SOCIOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS**

Specialty: 5.4.4 Social Structure, Social Institutions and Processes

**ANNOTATION
of the dissertation
for the degree of Candidate of Sociological Sciences**

Scientific Supervisor:

Litvintseva Elena Ananyevna, Head of the Department of Organizational Design of Management Systems, Institute of Public Service and Management, RANEPa, Honored Worker of Education of the Russian Federation, Scientific Secretary of the Academic Council of the Institute of Public Service and Management, RANEPa, Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor

Moscow 2025

Relevance of the Research. Currently, the problem of forming an individual's digital sovereignty in the context of global social changes is acquiring special significance and coming to the forefront of humanitarian science research. This is facilitated by the nature of human activity in modern conditions, which involves a significant degree of interaction and interdependence in a rapidly developing digital environment.

Digitalization, virtualization, and networkization processes significantly increase the openness of social institutions, impact personal and social group adaptation in the digital environment, and influence information data regulation and management. Network infrastructure is actively developing, the sphere of online services is expanding, and virtual spaces such as social networks and online platforms are becoming primary communication and free expression venues. The principles of communicative processes are undergoing serious transformation.

The digitalization process has legalized information as a commodity, thereby involving personal data and private life information into such exchange. The formation of a digital economy, which involves not only financial institutions but all spheres of public activity (healthcare, education, social security, etc.), leads to significant acceleration of socio-economic communications, production globalization, new forms of employment, and simultaneously to inequity in resource distribution, loss of social identity, and dependence on large technological companies.

A potential danger of total internet control emerges, where social and psychological pressure on internet users occurs, with instances of «digital discrimination» of individuals being noted. Information security problems multiply, often rooted in the specifics of ownership rights to information platforms and servers, many of which belong to foreign companies. The overwhelming majority of virtual tools and resources used by modern humans represent someone else's property or are objects of exclusive rights of transnational corporations, which can lead to potential loss (or transfer) of citizens' personal data not only to direct participants of legal relations but also to third parties.

It appears that insufficient theoretical elaboration of various elements of an individual's digital sovereignty can lead to such practical consequences as: increased digital inequality, loss of personal autonomy, increased risks of personal data leakage, involvement of citizens in destructive activities, undermining traditional values.

Thus, the research topic's relevance is determined by the following circumstances:

First, the Impact of Global Digitalization on Identity and Social Relations. Digital sovereignty of an individual includes aspects related to preserving cultural and social identity under digitalization conditions, allowing people to maintain their uniqueness and protect their values in virtual space.

Second, the Need to Reduce Digital Inequality. Digital sovereignty involves creating conditions for equal access to digital services and resources, contributing to social justice and reducing the gap between different population groups.

Third, Increasing Societal Dependence on Digital Technologies. In conditions where personal data becomes an object of commercial exploitation, digital sovereignty can serve as a mechanism enabling citizens to maintain control over personal and sensitive information.

Fourth, Protecting Individual Rights in Digital Space. Digital sovereignty implies creating social and ethical norms that ensure citizen rights protection and foster responsible attitudes toward personal data.

Therefore, researching an individual's digital sovereignty in the context of global social changes is a crucial step toward understanding and addressing contemporary challenges associated with digitalization and its societal consequences.

Degree of Scientific Development of the Problem

The general complex of research on the digital sovereignty of an individual can be divided into five groups of works.

First Group of Research. The first group consists of works dedicated to studying the emerging digital reality and the formation of digital society from a sociological

perspective. In the perspective of studying digital reality, the topic was analyzed in works by V.I. Arshinov, A.V. Komarova, D. Cohen, J. Habermas, K. Schwab, M. Castells, S.A. Kravchenko, and others. Communicative processes in digital reality were examined in works by M. Castells, A.V. Ageeva, S.V. Devyatova, A.G. Kapustina, E.A. Lazinina, and others. Socio-political aspects of digital reality formation are revealed in studies by P. Drucker, B.B. Slavin, F. Heyling, and others. Understanding digital reality as identical to digital society was studied by T. Adorno, D. Bell, J. Naisbitt, E. Toffler, M. Horkheimer, and others. A prognostic (futuristic) approach to digital reality research was applied in works by A.V. Turchin, Yu.N. Harari, and other authors. The technocratic approach to digital reality analysis was reflected in works by V.I. Arshinov, D.V. Kravtsov, and others. We also note the significance of L.A. Vasilenko's research, which explores the formation and development of digital society.

Second Group of Research . The second group of works reveals changes occurring in social institutions under the influence of digital information and communication technologies (ICT). We highlight theoretical approaches to understanding the "electronic (or 'digital') state" (R.F. Azizov, A.A. Bochkov, A.A. Vasiliev, V.D. Zorkin, A.S. Kiselev, I.A. Konyukhova, D.A. Lovtsov, L.S. Mamut, T.L. Rovinskaya, A.M. Tarasov, L.N. Timofeeva, and others); studies revealing changes in the nature of power relations, digitalization processes of state functions, and problems of state sovereignty formation in digital reality (works by F. Bannister, A.L. Bredikhin, A.V. Danilenkov, A.A. Efremov, A.E. Karpova, T.S. Maslovskaya, G.B. Romanovsky, L.V. Terentyeva, S.V. Khmelevsky).

Third Group of Research. The third group of works investigates the problems of civil society development in digital reality. These works analyze changes in social relations under the influence of digital ICT and reveal new aspects of conducting democratic procedures (election campaigns, voting, etc.) in electronic format (R.V. Amelin, Ya.V. Antonov, A. Zhuzhlov, M.M. Kuryachaya, T.M. Makhmatov, Yu.G. Fedotova, D. Horgan). Of interest are also works devoted to studying changes in civil society institutions under the influence of digital ICT (electronic mass media,

bloggers, etc.) (M.V. Zhizhina, T.L. Kaminskaya, A.G. Kapustina, E.A. Kozhemyakin, P.Yu. Narusheva, and others).

Fourth Group of Research. The fourth group of works is dedicated to studying citizens' status in digital society, the formation of digital rights and obligations, and focuses on the concepts of "digital citizen" and "digital citizenship" (E.S. Anichkin, A.A. Bogucharsky, E.V. Brodovskaya, G.V. Gradoselskaya, N.V. Deeva, A.I. Kovler, V.V. Nevinsky, A.V. Nesterov, E.V. Talapina, A.M. Erdelevsky).

Fifth Group of Research. The fifth group includes studies devoted to ensuring citizens' safety in digital space through the formation of individual digital sovereignty (E.O. Gavrilova, I. Ashmanova, A. Chernikova, L.Yu. Chernyak, A.A. Efremov, I.M. Konobeevskaya). Many works emphasize creating and managing one's digital identities in digital space (W. Der, S. Yenichen, Y. Sürmeli, K. Leong, T. Chi-hang, and others). Some studies (A. Fraes, M. Greiner, et al.) present attempts to form a concept and model of digital sovereignty both within the technological approach through data sovereignty, technological sovereignty, and by highlighting its various levels (physical level, code level, etc.).

Despite the relatively extensive theoretical exploration of issues related to digitalization in all spheres of society, the analysis of individual digital sovereignty remains fragmentary in sociological science and not fully comprehended by society. Several key areas remain insufficiently investigated: conceptual underdevelopment (incomplete theoretical framework for digital sovereignty), structural limitations (insufficient research into the formation mechanisms of individual digital sovereignty).

Research Object

The research object is the individual as a subject of social relations and interactions in the digital environment.

Research Subject

The research subject is the digital sovereignty of an individual in sociological discourse.

Research Objective

The research goal is to analyze the formation of individual digital sovereignty, reveal its levels and structure, with the aim of developing an effective mechanism to ensure the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of an individual in digital space.

Research Tasks

- Reveal methodological research approaches to defining the essence of individual digital sovereignty
- Substantiate sovereign identity as a condition for forming individual digital sovereignty
- Examine and analyze risks and threats to individual digital sovereignty and social self-determination of citizens in the digital environment
- Characterize the digital status of an individual as the basis of their digital sovereignty
- Identify the levels and structure of individual digital sovereignty
- Substantiate a conceptual model of individual digital sovereignty and Propose recommendations for its practical application

Research Hypothesis

The scientific research hypothesis posits that:

Digitalization, virtualization, and networkization processes create new opportunities for citizens' digital sovereignty formation and necessitate protecting individual rights and freedoms in modern digital society. Such an understanding encompasses not only the individual level as the ability and opportunity to consciously manage one's data and protect privacy, but also the organizational and state levels, which play a key role in ensuring the digital sovereignty of the individual. Studying digital sovereignty through identifying levels will create an opportunity to foresee organizational and state measures in a constantly changing digital environment. Substantiating sovereign identity, developing the structure of digital sovereignty is aimed at developing adaptive ability for responsible self-determination and the individual's ability to make independent and informed decisions, controlling their identity.

Scientific Research Novelty

1. New Concept of Individual Digital Sovereignty. A new concept of "digital sovereignty of the individual" is proposed, which is understood as the ability and opportunity of an individual to undertake conscious, deliberate, and independent actions, make independent decisions regarding all elements of digital life (personal data, digital profiles in social networks and Internet services, hardware and software, digital processes, electronic services and hybrid infrastructure), as well as a set of rights, obligations, and responsibilities arising from the implementation of such an ability. The innovation of this approach is the emphasis on awareness and self-controllability of actions in the digital space, the responsibility and obligations of the individual, who not only has the right to control their data and digital profiles, but also bears responsibility for their actions.

2. Sovereign Identity Essence. The essence is revealed and the main principles of forming sovereign identity are highlighted as a state in which an individual is aware of and controls their social identification, acts and interacts independently in the digital environment, maintains legitimate control over their identity, autonomously manages personal data in various information services and bears responsibility for their actions. The concept of sovereign identity emphasizes the active role of the individual in forming and managing their identity as a special type of identification behavior in the context of digital interaction, which increases conscious adaptive opportunities for self-expression and interaction, but also imposes responsibility for self-controlled ensuring of one's privacy and security in the digital space.

3. Risks and Threats to Digital Sovereignty. The main risks and threats to the individual's digital sovereignty are identified, which can lead to violations of identity, human rights and freedoms in the digital space and loss of control over confidential, private and sensitive information. It is concluded that forced involvement of citizens in the digital environment, reduction of legal protection on the Internet, emergence of digital inequality, social and psychological pressure become important conflict-generating factors affecting the norms and rules of interaction in the digital space.

4. *Digital Status Components.* The basic components of digital status are identified as the basis of the individual's adaptive potential and digital sovereignty. The digital status of an individual is a set of relationships, rights, obligations, and responsibilities arising from actions and interactions in the digital space, as well as from implementing Internet access through free, open, equal, and non-discriminatory exchange of information, communication, and culture. The importance of the human right to protect their digital status is emphasized, and the role of personal responsibility as a key factor in ensuring digital sovereignty is noted.

5. *Digital Sovereignty Structure and Levels.* The structure and levels of individual digital sovereignty have been identified. The identification of three levels of individual digital sovereignty formation: state, organizational, and individual, defines the possibilities and methods of its protection, based on which a conceptual model of individual digital sovereignty has been developed, comprising three basic levels (state, organization, and individual) with their own elements. The key idea of the presented model is the principle of synergistic interaction between the individual, the organization, and the state in the digital environment, which fundamentally influences the formation, dynamics, and regulation of social relations in the conditions of the digital environment. Each level of digital sovereignty includes corresponding formation mechanisms: the state level aims at developing state policy in the information sphere, ensuring civil rights and freedoms in the digital space, protecting personal data, etc.; the organizational level ensures the implementation of data sovereignty policy within the organization, the introduction of technological standards, training of the organization's employees in new technologies, etc.; the individual level is based on free self-determination in the digital space, independent regulation of one's own privacy, security, and rights in the digital space, etc.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the dissertation research was composed of the ideas, concepts, and theories of researchers related to the object and subject of the work, which reflect the methodology of scientific knowledge and the comprehension of social processes: S.A. Kravchenko, I. Lakatos, G.V. Osipov, related to the development of digital reality and digital space.

Fundamental for the dissertation research on individual digital sovereignty were Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "social capital," which allows for identifying the influence of social capital on the ability of individuals to determine the quality of social connections in the digital space; Manuel Castells' theory of the "network society" about the ways network structures impact access to information and people's self-expression in the digital space; the ideas of S.A. Kravchenko on the formation of a new "socio-digital-natural reality," which allowed for revealing the risks and threats of social activity in the digital space. The justification of the impact of digitalization on public consciousness and social relations is based on the ideas of L.A. Vasilenko on the formation of a digital society. The author in their research relies on the following main theoretical and methodological approaches: interdisciplinary, sociological, socio-psychological, philosophical, legal.

The source base of the research is represented by legislative and regulatory legal acts of the Russian Federation: the Constitution of the Russian Federation; federal laws of the Russian Federation; decrees of the President of the Russian Federation; resolutions of the Government of the Russian Federation; materials and results of the implementation of state programs, national and federal projects of national projects, federal programs and projects ("Digital Economy", "Digital Transformation", "Development of Science, Industry and Technology", etc.).

To substantiate the theses of the dissertation research, as well as the conclusions, inferences, and hypotheses made, data from the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (hereinafter referred to as VCIOM) were used, along with materials from scientific and practical conferences, dissertation research, monographs and articles, other documents and materials dedicated to the research problem.

The empirical base of the dissertation.

The following methods were used in the scientific work: sociological survey, focus group, secondary analysis of sociological research data.

Research conducted directly by the author of the dissertation:

"Personal Digital Sovereignty". Research method – expert survey; timeframe - May-September 2024. The experts were: employees of IT structures (36% of the total

number), higher education institutions (19%), financial organizations (21%), civil servants of state and municipal bodies (14%), public organizations (6%), representatives of private business (4%). A total of 217 experts were surveyed. Project head: Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor E.A. Litvintseva. Index in the dissertation: EO TsSL-2024.

"Personal Digital Sovereignty". Timeframe: February – March 2024. Research method: focus group discussion. Participants: first group (9 people) – professors and teachers of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), teaching disciplines "Sociology", "Digital Law", "Sociology of Digital Society", "Information and Communication Technologies in State and Municipal Administration"; second group (10 people) – specialists in the field of information technology and personal data protection from state structures, business organizations, as well as from organizations leading digital transformation in the Russian Federation (Sberbank PJSC, VTB PJSC, Megafon PJSC, the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation). Project head: Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor E.A. Litvintseva. Index in the dissertation: FG TsSL-1, FG TsSL-2.

For secondary analysis, materials from sociological studies reflecting the issues of personal digital sovereignty were used:

"On the perception of the Internet by Russians and the possibility of its restriction". Conducted by the All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Research on April 6, 2021. Survey method — telephone interview using a stratified two-base random sample of landline and mobile numbers. 1600 Russians aged 18 and over participated in the survey. The study analyzed the respondents' attitudes towards the perception of the Internet, the potential of information distributed on the Internet, and attitudes towards control on the Internet.

"Digital Detox – 2023: about Internet use and taking a break from it". Conducted by the All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Research on May 13, 2023. Survey method — telephone interview using a stratified random sample drawn from the complete list of mobile phone numbers used in the Russian Federation. 1600 Russians

participated in the survey. The results of a survey of Russians about their Internet use are presented.

"Internet without Danger". Conducted by the All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Research on April 26, 2024. Survey method — telephone interview using a stratified random sample drawn from the complete list of mobile phone numbers used in the Russian Federation. 1600 Russians aged 18 and over participated in the survey. The results of a monitoring survey of Russians dedicated to Internet safety are presented.

Main Provisions of the Dissertation Research to be Defended:

- The content of the concept of "digital sovereignty of the individual" has been revealed as the ability and opportunity of an individual to undertake conscious, deliberate, and independent actions, make independent decisions regarding all elements of digital life, as well as the set of rights, obligations, and responsibilities arising from the implementation of such an ability;

- The significance and principles of sovereign identity have been substantiated as a state in which an individual is aware of and controls their social identification, acts and interacts independently in the digital environment, maintaining legitimate control over their identity;

- Risks and threats to the individual's digital sovereignty have been formulated and systematized. Such systematization can serve as a foundation for practical assessment of individual digital sovereignty and development of specific directions for its formation, where the individual as a data owner must be provided with the opportunity to realize their rights and bear responsibility for the use and exchange of personal data with a high level of security;

- The basic components of digital status have been identified as the basis for the individual's adaptive potential and digital sovereignty, particularly the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of an individual arising from actions and interactions in the digital space, as well as from implementing access to technologies and the Internet through free, open, equal, and non-discriminatory exchange of information, communication, and culture;

– Levels of individual digital sovereignty have been revealed, existing in synergetic interaction. Digital sovereignty is formed by an individual with their motives and needs, knowledge and skills in IT technologies, supported (or not supported) by organizations with their technological capabilities, and depends on the state's information policy that implements the protection of citizens' rights in the digital space and ensures national security and technological sovereignty;

– A conceptual model for forming individual digital sovereignty has been developed with the identification of three basic levels (state, organization, and individual) with their elements and representation in corresponding relational structures. To represent and describe the model, a graphical notation in the form of a Venn diagram has been developed, helping to identify common features and differences between these levels of individual digital sovereignty formation;

– Recommendations for practical use of the conceptual model have been proposed at each level of the model and in inter-level interaction, such as: Improving national digital infrastructure, Developing state digital platforms for secure information exchange and provision of public services, Developing mechanisms to ensure transparency in processing and storing personal data of employees and clients, Conscious individual behavior in the digital environment through regular auditing of personal digital footprints, Developing a system of indicators for monitoring the level of digital sovereignty at each of the three levels and etc.

The theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation research lies in developing sociological knowledge about the digital sovereignty of the individual. The author's proposed conclusions and recommendations contribute to the theory of digital society sociology by offering original definitions of the concepts of "individual digital sovereignty", "sovereign identity", "individual digital status" and their structural elements. These definitions expand the existing theoretical framework and contribute to a deeper understanding of the interaction between the individual and the digital environment, as well as open new horizons for sociological research in the fields of sociology, social psychology, and sociology of law related to identity and self-awareness in the digital context. The development of a

conceptual model of individual digital sovereignty with three levels (state, organizational, and individual) creates a basis for further practical research aimed at studying the interaction between these levels and their impact on citizens' safety and rights in the digital space.

The identified structure of an individual's digital status can be used to develop educational programs and initiatives aimed at increasing citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the digital space. The research results can serve as a basis for:

- Improving state policy in the field of digitalization
- Protecting personal data
- Creating a secure digital infrastructure
- Supporting citizens' rights on the Internet

The conceptual model of individual digital sovereignty can be used by organizations to implement best practices in data management, improve information protection levels, and train employees.

The research topic corresponds to the requirements of the **passport of scientific specialty 5.4.4. "Social Structure, Social Institutions and Processes"**, field of science: 5 Social Sciences and Humanities, group of scientific specialties: 5.4. Sociology. Research directions: 6. Dynamics and adaptation of social groups and strata in a transforming society; 8. Social relations, their formation, dynamics, regulation. Social conflicts; 27. Processes of digitalization, virtualization, and networking in modern society; 29. Social identification. Types of identification behavior.

Research Approbation. The main provisions and conclusions of the dissertation research were presented by the author at:

- Meetings and methodological seminars of the Department of Organizational Design of Management Systems at the Institute of Public Service and Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration
- International conferences:

- "Public Administration and Development of Russia: Global Trends and National Perspectives" (Moscow, 18.05.2022)
- "Public Administration and Development of Russia: Civilizational Challenges and National Interests" (Moscow, 15.05.2023)
- "Public Administration and Development of Russia: New Horizons and Image of the Future" (Moscow, 20.05.2024)
- XXII International Conference "Afanasyev Readings" on "Personality, Family, Society: Value Environment of Development in the Context of Modern Technologies" (Moscow, 20.02.2025)
- All-Russian conferences, including the XVII All-Russian Interuniversity Scientific Conference "Science and Education in the Development of Industrial, Social, and Economic Spheres of Russian Regions" (Murom, 31.01.2025)

Research Materials were Approbated in the Following Forms:

- 6 scientific articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, including three in leading journals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission (VAK)
- Direct practical application in a federal state body overseeing information and digital security

The dissertation was discussed at a meeting of the Department of Organizational Design of Management Systems at the Faculty of Personnel Management and Public Service of the Institute of Public Service and Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

The structure of the dissertation is determined by the general purpose and objectives of the research. This dissertation consists of an introduction, two chapters, six paragraphs in the main body, a conclusion, 150 used sources and references, including 5 monographs, 62 foreign studies. Over 40 scientific works published in the last 5 years, since 2020, were used in this dissertation research.