



www.jpis.az

13 (1)
2022

Digitalization of law communication in the information society

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ARTICLE INFO

<http://doi.org/10.25045/jpis.v13.i1.05>

Article history:

Received 01 September 2021

Received in revised form

05 November 2021

Accepted 13 January 2022

Keywords:

Cyber law

Digitalization

Information society

Law communication

Law discourse

Virtual reality

Law reality

Conventionality of law

Social law

Individual law

ABSTRACT

The article examines the digitalization of law communication as the most important feature of the development of the law reality of the information society. On the basis of the discursive-communicative methodology, the communicative nature of virtual reality and the role of law means in ensuring conflict-free interaction of its subjects are analyzed. It is concluded that the manifestation of digitalization of law reality is the construction of cyber law, which simultaneously acts as a form of virtual law discourse and an institution of digital law. Cyber law is a set of rules conventionally formed in the process of law communication that regulate relations between two or more persons regarding virtual property and personal non-property benefits. The construction of cyber law is carried out in the process of law communication and is a conventional result of interaction that ensures conflict-free coexistence of virtual communities based on value orientations. The polyphonic nature of virtual law communication determines that cyber law is a fragmented set of relatively independent normative arrays of separate virtual communities that have only minimally common features that can be designated as the principles of cyber law (anonymity, conventionality, inviolability of private property, publicity).

1. Introduction

The modern world is characterized by the processes of globalization, trans-communicative and value transformations due to the formation of a new social reality generated by the information and computer revolution. The technological basis of the new reality is not industrial technologies, but information technologies that enhance the performance, symbolism and interpretability of all spheres of public life. A new type of society, that is informational society [1] (digital, virtual, cyber-) is being formed, which is characterized by a change in the sense of social interaction as a means of conventional construction of reality. Due to the expansion of data circulation, the integration of social interaction, which is increasingly becoming poly-subjective, and the viability of the information society is ensured. However, it refers not only to the ontological level of reality, but also the axiological one. Affected by the process of informatization of all aspects of human life, the value of human

consciousness and behavior is changing, traditional forms of communication are transforming, and systemic connections of social subjects are becoming more complicated. The change in the nature of social communication is accompanied by the transformation of the system of values [2], which later determines the worldview attitudes of the interaction subjects towards the evaluation of both their own actions and the behavior and statements of others. This is represented in the legal discourse, which is increasingly becoming virtual (digital).

The research interest in legal communication is associated with the linguistic turn in the humanities, which began in the 1960s. O'Barr V.M. [3] and Mellinkoff D. [4] were the first to pose the problem of discursiveness of law and the role of language in the formation and content of the legal array.

However, the problem of the interaction of subjects in the legal reality, including in the process of its construction, was set only in the 1980s-1990s during the development of communicative [5, 6] and argumentative theories of law [7, 8].

In Russia, the problem of discursiveness of law and legal communication was addressed only in the 2000s. [9-15]. Following the analysis of the role of language in legal reality, Russian scientists concluded that it is communicative and may affect the consciousness and behavior of the subject of law through language. Collection of articles by Russian and foreign authors *The Pragmatic Turn in Law: Inference and Interpretation in Legal Discourse* [16], which analyzes the interpretative possibilities of legal discourse and outlines its decisive role in the development and functioning of legal reality, is a peculiar result of discursive reflection.

However, these studies mainly deal with the legal communication in the social space, with an emphasis on ontological aspects. This does not take into account the digitalization and virtualization of legal communication, the strengthening of the simulativity and conventionality of legal reality, and the need to shift research interest to axiological problems. Only recent studies are devoted to certain aspects of social communication in the virtual space, affecting legal problems as well [17].

The goal of this article is to explore the features of legal communication in the virtual space in the context of the information society development.

The methodological basis of the study is the postclassical paradigm, focused on the interdisciplinary philosophical and legal exploration of legal phenomena in a broad historical and sociocultural context, primarily the discursive and communicative theory offered by Habermas J. [18], which considers the legal phenomena through the prism of their interpretation, which is represented in legal texts and behavior of the subjects of legal communication. Adaptation of these ideas to the Russian legal reality is implemented in the works by Polyakov A.V. [19] and Chestnov I.L. [20]. These methodological guidelines determined the development of a comprehensive discourse-legal analysis [21], which studies the principles, foundations and patterns of legal activity based on the study of verbal and non-verbal means of legal communication not only in social environment, but also in virtual space.

2. Virtual reality in the communicative context

The most important manifestation of the information society is the emergence of virtual reality (virtual space, cyberspace). This is mediated

by the strengthening of the role of social networks and other means of virtual interaction in social communication [22].

In virtual reality, a fundamentally different person is formed, whose social and legal needs are divided into socially mediated and individually mediated. In the first case, the individual acts as a member of a certain community (society, social group) and demonstrates the legal behavior necessary for social identification [25]. In the second case, the legal behavior of a person is determined exclusively by subjective aspirations and aimed at the realization of individual interests, often socially neutral or even asocial interests. Moreover, new values may arise, the content of which is determined mainly by the horizontal orientation of virtual legal communication. Unlike the social system of legal values, individual values are more subjective and interpretive, mediated by individual legal experience and situational vision (interpretation) of a communicative act. The boundaries of virtual and real world are becoming blur, as a result of which the familiar and traditional aspects of human essence shift into the digitalization plane.

Realizing individually mediated needs in the process of virtual legal communication, a person acts as the creator of a new reality (cybernetic), which for him/her is increasingly becoming primary in relation to the physical world considered only as one of the possible and/or constructed worlds. Informational publicity, a person's will to reveal himself/herself in the external environment as much as possible [26] play an important role in this. However, it does not refer to the transmission of one's real "I", but only to the transmission of one's avatar (visual image), whose behavior is mediated by the conditions of virtual reality rather than the social one. Moreover, the legal burden of an avatar can be determined both by the involvement of an individual in legal communication in the virtual space (especially in online games) [27], and by exclusively representative strategies [28] based on the individual right of a particular person.

If an individual right in the real world is "a set of rules and guidelines for performing certain actions beneficial and pleasing to an individual and not contradicting the social law of the group with which he identifies himself" [29], then, in the virtual space, it can act as a situationally determined human reaction to the satisfaction of individual needs, value-wise not necessarily associated with real and nominal communities with which the individual identifies himself.

The sociocultural realities of the virtual space are ambivalent and contain existential uncertainty, giving rise to the lack of value orientations and weakening the social orientation of a person, including setting up the need to achieve conventional consent in virtual legal interaction. The absence of strictly defined axiological markers in the virtual space determines the fact that the reflection of a particular communicative act can be implemented by an individual plurally, without taking into account potential legal sanctions.

To a large extent, the content of an individual right depends on a person's value attitudes to participate in legal communication, as well as on his choice of a certain social role. However, unlike such actions in the social space, the choice of a virtual model of behavior is more situational and often determined not only by a person's value attitudes, but also by his involvement in social communication in the virtual space.

In this case, it refers to the possibility of simultaneous participation of an individual in various communicative acts, each of which requires the choice of its own model and strategy of behavior. The polymodality of virtual legal communication gives rise to a fundamentally different attitude of a person to the content and consequences of his behavior. The actions effective in one communicative act may have the opposite effect in another. Deviant behavior in the conditions of one value-normative space can be an innovation or even the norm in another.

Furthermore, this choice is influenced by the technical capabilities of a person. Therefore, the passion for new gadgets can be considered not only as a tribute to fashion, but also as a condition for maintaining one's position (or even raising one's status) in the virtual legal space. The presence of technical capabilities particularly affects the choice of a social role and a model of legal behavior in multiplayer online games enabling a person to construct his image without taking into account cultural and existential experience, guided solely by situational needs [30]. However, such an approach to legal communication has far-reaching consequences, since it provides a person confidence that the satisfaction of individual needs, based on individual law without regard to their legal consequences, is an acceptable (and often necessary) option for legal behavior. In terms of legal interaction in social reality, such attitudes of the subject determine the initially conflicting nature of legal communication and give rise not only to cognitive dissonance, but also to frustration,

the way out of which is possible only when a conventional agreement is reached between all participants in the communicative act.

The more a person is involved and/or value-oriented in social interaction in the virtual space, the more his individual right is determined by social norms, although adapted to meet individual needs in the course of reflection. In this situation, the individual strives for the most successful integration into society (not only a virtual, but also a real community) by systematically managing the impression of others about himself [31], constructing an avatar best corresponding not only to the "I" of a person, but also to the value orientations of the community, with which he identifies himself. This allows not only to simplify identification and legal behavior in the virtual space, but also facilitates the legal socialization of a person in the real world.

In the opposite situation, a person is focused mainly on the representation of his image (both verbally and visually) [32], and for him, the positive representation of the avatar and/or his involvement in legal communication does not have a value. The instability of his position in the structure of society felt by the individual leads to avoiding the social ties, moving away or quitting from society. Thus, a person becomes a self-determined subject, whose value orientations are not mediated by the value orientations of any community. The direct connection of a person with a source of information in the process of legal communication in the virtual space enhances the process of personalization, in which the individual becomes less and less dependent on the generally accepted analysis and interpretation of the legal text. Meanwhile, a person simultaneously acts as a subject of constructing a new reality (individually or communicatively as a part of community) and an object. In the latter case, the individual performs self-construction, seeking to create not just a visual image and identify himself with a certain community, but also to represent his poly-identical "I" [33]. J. Habermas mentions "A person's perception of himself depends not only on how he describes himself, but also on the patterns that he follows. The self-identity of "I" is determined simultaneously by how people see themselves and how they would like to see themselves, how they find themselves in reality and according to what ideals they try to design themselves and their lives" [34]. In this case, the visualization of the representation is enhanced [35].

The desire to transfer this largely visual image from virtual reality to physical one, which is

characteristic of modern TikTokers, indicates that even in the context of predominantly representative strategies, legal communication is conventional [36]. It refers to using the comments not only to discuss the image, but also to develop a conventional value attitude towards it. However, in reality, conventionality is achieved here vertically rather than horizontally (intersubjectively). On the one hand, the popularity of the TikTok image ensures its predominant perception as an addressee of legal communication. On the other hand, the use of chatbots or other technical forms of shaping value position of a TikToker allows him to strengthen the addressing of his role. Due to this, the constructed image of a TikToker's behavior becomes not just an object of imitation, but acquires the features of social law.

Despite the apparent expansion of the communicative field, virtual reality is only a simulacrum, i.e., a symbolic reality characterized by fragmentation (mosaic) and consisting of only individual moments of the subject's life. Since an individual can simultaneously act in different images in the virtual space, these separate fragments of the subject's life, including those of a legal nature (both in the legal and social aspects), are not always possible to integrate. Although it does not refer to complete retreat into the "matrix", the virtual reality is acquiring axiological articulation.

A person of the information society is immersed in the virtual reality of simulations and increasingly perceives the world as a game environment, realizing its conventionality, controllability of its parameters and the possibility of getting out of it. Although the term "Homo ludens" (a playing person) [37] introduced by J. Huizinga seems excessive in this case; the gaming nature of the attitude to the world and one's behavior not only in the virtual, but also in the social space is often decisive when choosing behavior in this or another situation [38].

A feature of virtual legal communication is its superficial nature, due not only to the lack of real interaction, but also to ever-expanding opportunities for obtaining information, and to electronic means. Moreover, the availability of information becomes more important for a person, rather than its representation. Providing the availability of diverse information, communicative competence acquires a formal character. The choice of information, and even its transformation into behavioral regulations, is increasingly situational. Human behavior becomes fractal, i.e., in different situations, the individual responds to the same fact

not only differently, but also with different values.

3. Cyber-law as a regulator of virtual relations

Having created a virtual space as a new communicative environment, where computers (or other electronic communication devices) are the main communication tool, a person seeks to simultaneously form appropriate norms of behavior, which are not just an adaptation or transfer of positive law, but represents a fundamentally new set of rules focused on regulating relations exclusively in the virtual space. In this case, it refers to the regulation of communicative relations, the subject of which is only a person. Relations with the participation of chatbots or other forms of artificial intelligence are largely regulated by technical tools, although with the human participation, such acts can be considered as a specific form of communication [39] (including legal), which is one-sided.

Virtual reality as a space of legal communication stimulates fundamentally new social relations, which are not just a continuation of relations existing in the real world, but also represent the new communication capabilities of the Internet. An analysis of the essence and content of these relationships motivates the need to identify an independent form of legal relations, i.e., virtual legal relations, which refer to relations in the virtual space, the participants of which are bearers of subjective rights and obligations on the Internet.

The spatial, temporal and subjective uncertainty of virtual legal relations does not allow them to be regulated by the norms of positive law, which has a strictly defined addressee and regulation subject. This determines the need for the formation of a fundamentally new legal array, which can be called "cyber-law" and its definition cannot be approached through traditional positivist criteria for the law system.

Cyber-law is viewed here as a set of rules governing the relations of two or more persons regarding property and personal non-property benefits, which are generated by the circumstances of the emergence and existence in the virtual space as a result of communication and data exchange in electronic digital form. Cyber-law can be viewed as an institution of digital law. If the latter synthesizes the rules governing the legal communication of subjects regarding the use of virtual space, both, in fact, on the Internet and in social reality [40], then

the former covers only the rules of virtual legal communication.

The subject of cyber-law regulation may include any phenomena influenced by the subjects in the virtual space. Depending on the nature and types of relations in the virtual space, the subject of cyberlaw may include: the behavior of different subjects, various kinds of information services and their results, products of spiritual creativity, including works of literature, art, music, etc., securities, contracts, official documents, honor, dignity, human security, things, objects and other values. The criterion for attributing one or another subject to the jurisdiction of cyber-law is determined not by the content of the subject, but by its functioning in virtual reality.

The expansion of the virtual space and the emergence of augmented reality technologies potentially suggest that potentially cyberlaw will not be limited to relations only on the Internet, but will also spread to associated relations intersecting with virtual ones in some way.

Cyber-law acts as one of the forms of social law representing a set of legal values and rules of behavior shaped in a particular community (society, real and nominal group) and aimed at maintaining conflict-free coexistence within the community [41]. Unlike other forms of social law, cyber law is global, not limited territorially and temporally. The main criteria for its action are its recognition as a subject and the readiness of a person not only to accept, but also to obey to it. The personalized nature of the operation of cyber-law brings it closer to religious law, albeit with a significant weakening of the institutionalized forms of application. Due to the global nature of cyberlaw and the conventionality of its formation, its principles are universal, although their action is not objective, but subjective, i.e., the legal behavior of an individual based on the principles of cyber-law, depends, first of all, on the readiness and desire to comply with them, and not only on formal membership in a particular community.

Cyber-law is a specific form of informal (social) legal system, which is fragmented and represents an unarranged set of rules functioning in separate virtual communities, fixing the norms and value orientations of real and nominal communities. The poly-identity and fragmentation of legal communication in the virtual space do not enable the cyber-law to be viewed as a single system of rules of behavior. It refers to a set of relatively independent normative systems, each of which applies only to a certain community. However,

there are a number of universal legal values and rules acting as a kind of convention of intergroup communication in virtual reality.

The following principles of cyber-law determining the features of legal communication in the virtual space can be formulated: the principles of anonymity, conventionality, inviolability of private property, publicity.

The principle of anonymity [42] is associated with a person's right to autonomy and freedom of his private life, as well as the right to be protected from intrusion by other people, including representatives of public authorities. The publicity of information that an individual brings to other persons in the communication process is determined by the person's will and the goal he pursues. In this case, information acts as a tool to achieve the goal, even if it is not clearly articulated by the subject. It is the implementation of the anonymity principle that considers the cyberlaw not only in an objective, but also in a subjective sense, as a set of human rights formed and implemented in the process of virtual legal communication [43].

The principle of conventionality provides for the need to construct value-determined norms that determine the rights and obligations of the subjects of legal communication in relation to each other and other subjects and the readiness of a person to follow these norms, his socially responsible attitude to other people's rights and own duties [44]. The rules of behavior of the Internet community comprise the conventional result of legal communication and are aimed at maintaining conflict-free coexistence, development and functioning of the community. In this case, it refers both intra-group communication and inter-group communication. In the latter case, behavior rules are constructed claiming to be global and universal, but not denying or even conflicting with group norms.

The principle of inviolability of private property focuses not only on non-use of virtual communication tools to encroach on property in the real world, but also on non-abuse of both virtual property (for example, in online games) and blockchain technologies (for example, in relation to cryptocurrency). This implies not only the application of the legal regulation mechanism formed within the framework of positive law, but also the construction of fundamentally new rules that meet the needs of interaction exclusively in virtual reality.

The principle of publicity as the most important principle of the information society not only defines a person's right to possess information (including access to information technology and the Internet),

but also suggests that a person should not limit other persons in communication within the limits and possibilities determined by technical means and the values of cyber-law and/or the community with which the individual identifies himself. The increasing importance of virtual communication and the ever-increasing transformation of virtual reality into a primary one in relation to the social world are accompanied by the boundary blurring between private and public [45]. The representation of the private in the process of legal communication is increasingly transforming it into the public.

Based on this, cyber-law can be represented as a complex social system, the elements of which are interrelated in terms of the subject rather than the regulation subject. Simultaneously, the subject composition of cyber-law is determined exclusively subjectively, due to the self-identification of an individual at a particular moment, and may change under the influence of situational factors of a technical and/or sociocultural nature.

Cyber-law forms conventionally. In the process of legal communication, virtual communities construct the interaction rules ensuring the conflict-free existence, development and functioning of this community. However, it does not refer to the material nature of design, but the procedural one. In the process of legal communication, the behavior chosen not only situationally, but also value-wise, allows to overcome or prevent a conflict situation. It is the value orientation of such rule considered as a norm, the effect of which applies to all members of this group (subjects who identify themselves as members of this virtual community).

4. Conclusion

Thus, a feature of modern legal and social reality is becoming increasingly digitalization accompanied by the creation of a new form of legal discourse, which can be called “virtual legal discourse”. The specificity of this form of discourse is mediated by its virtuality manifested in the conventionality of construction of both individual legal texts and discourse as a whole. Acting as the result of legal communication, virtual legal discourse significantly affects the consciousness and behavior of a person, although a person’s participation in this process is largely determined by his value orientations and the representative strategies used. The most important manifestation of this discourse is cyber-law, which acts as an institution of digital law and is a set of rules

conventionally formed in the process of legal communication regulating the relationship of two or more persons regarding the virtual property and personal non-property benefits. The objective of cyber-law is to ensure the conflict-free coexistence, development and functioning of virtual communities. The versatility of virtual legal communication determines the cyber-law as a fragmented set of rules of individual communities with only minimal features in common designated as the principles of cyber-law (anonymity, conventionality, inviolability of private property, publicity).

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