SELF-GOVERNING SOCIETY:
Social Credit System in China

210104-1 BAK18: Bachelorseminar
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2020SS

01

INTRODUCTION

- What is Chinese Social Credit System?
- Place in political debate
- Problem stating

SOCIAL CREDIT SYSTEM: THE MAIN CONCEPT

2002 — Emerging of a grid-style social management

2013 — First documents issued, *"trust-keeping should be glorious and trust-breaking should be disgraceful"*

2015 — 8 companies are licensed to begin a semi-voluntary trial of SCS

2020 — Planned mandatory implementation across the country

unified record system for individuals and businesses to be tracked and evaluated for **trustworthiness**

mass surveillance systems (Skynet: 600 million cameras by the end of 2020), facial recognition system, big data analysis technologies

providing social goods for compliance with rules and regulations

disobedience leads to sanctions

EXAMPLES

Actions considered socially beneficial: donating blood, taking care of the family, charity activities, paying bills on time, praising the government on/offline

Actions considered socially harmful: reckless driving behavior, not separating waste, bills overdue, handling a pet in inappropriate way, saying/posting negative things about the government, jaywalking

Rewards: easier access to financial credits, priority in job and schools assignments, shorter waiting periods in hospitals, financial annual support, reduced activities fees (sport, entertainment, public transport), tax relieves

Punishments: Public transport exclusion (trains and flights), exclusion from jobs in public service, no access to private schools, temporary pet deprivation, public shame (publicly available blacklist)

A CITIZEN

AGE: 27
GENDER: Male
OCCUPATION: Teacher
LOCATION: Beijing

LEVEL OF TRUSTWORTHINESS: High
INCOME RANGE: $1500 - 2000
FAMILY STATUS: Married, two children
PERSONAL SCORE: 1000 points

- Motivations
- Behavior
- Rewards history
- Punishments history

SOCIAL CREDIT SYSTEMS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

- credit scores in the United States and “Schufa” in Germany;
- “carnet de la patria” in Venezuela;
- Russian Digital Economy Program planned to be implemented by 2024

PLACE IN POLITICAL DEBATE

Nudge theory

Social engineering

Mass surveillance

“Orwellian dystopia”

DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM

Governmentality (government + rationality)

Subjectivity

Panopticism

DISCIPLINARY POWER

Self-control

Autonomy

Discipline

SELF-GOVERNANCE

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PROBLEM STATING

01

The system generates intentions among citizens to act in the desired manner

02

No direct intervention of the state BUT determining the basic parameters of evaluation of citizen's behaviour

03

Citizens are willing to self-censor their own behaviour

04

Therefore, they internalize the instruments of the state and thus become to a *self-governing society*

RESEARCH QUESTION:

How does the Social Credit System contribute to building a self-governing society in China?

02

THEORY

- SCS through the ontological lens of Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power (Discipline and Punish, 1977)

FOUCAULT'S THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

DISCIPLINE

GOVERNMENTALITY

PANOPTICON

SELF-GOVERNANCE

FOUCAULT'S THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

DISCIPLINE

is a mechanism of power which regulates the behaviour of individuals in the social body through subtle means. In contrast to the brute, sovereign force discipline works by regulating the organisation of space, time and people's activity and behaviour. It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance. Creates "docile bodies"

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PANOPTICON

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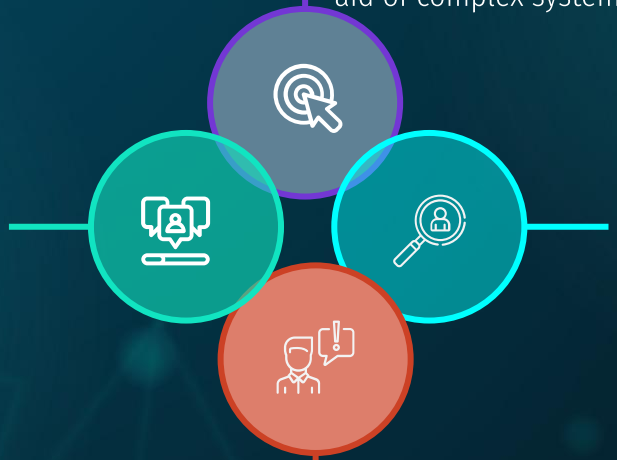
GOVERNMENTALITY

the "art of government" in a wide sense, i.e. with an idea of "government" that is not limited to state politics alone, but includes a wide range of control techniques, and applies to a variety of objects, from one's control of the self to the "biopolitical" control of populations.



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THEORETICAL APPLICATION ON SCS

SCS techniques create a "rational self-control"

Disciplinary power is internalized

Constructing docility and utility in the system

Creation of “docile citizens”

Citizens self-monitor themselves without any presence of authorities

IMPORTANT:

- Foucault's theoretical considerations are referring primarily to the Western societies, and therefore cannot be considered as an ultimate approach

03

METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative content analysis
- Foucauldian discourse analysis

METHODOLOGY: CONTENT ANALYSIS

- Literature review:
  - Allen, Amy (2002): Power and Subjectivity: Between Arendt and Foucault. International Journal of Philosophical Studies. 10 (2): 131–49
  - Bart, Simon (2005): The Return of Panopticism: Supervision, subjection and the New Surveillance". Surveillance & Society 3(1) 1-20
  - Foucault, Michel (1977): Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. New York: Pantheon Books.
  - Kostka, Genia, Antoine, Lukas (2018): Fostering Model Citizenship: Behavioral Responses to China's Emerging Social Credit System.
  - Luxon, N. (2008). Ethics and Subjectivity: Practices of Self-Governance in the Late Lectures of Michel Foucault. Political Theory, 36(3), 377–402.
  - Nica, Elvira (2017): Foucault on Managerial Governmentality, Biopolitical Neoliberalism and Self-governance. Journal on Self-governance and Management Economics. 5(1) 80-96.
  - Zhen, Simon (2015): An Explanation of Self-Censorship in China: The Enforcement of Social Control Through a Panoptic Infrastructure." Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse, 7(09)

- **Goal**: a thorough exploration of the concepts of self-governance, panopticon, disciplinary power, governmentality and subjectivity

METHODOLOGY: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- Documents review:
  - Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System (2014-2020), issued by State Council in June, 2014
  - State Council Guiding Opinions concerning Establishing and Perfecting Incentives for Promise-Keeping and Joint Punishment Systems for Trust-Breaking, and Accelerating the Construction of Social Sincerity, published in May 2016
  - Guiding Opinion on Accelerating the Advancement of the Establishment of the Social Credit System with New Forms of Credit-based Regulatory Mechanisms, published in September, 2019

- Goal: determination of techniques deployed by construction of self-governing society
  - the context of SCS initiative (historical background, stakeholders involved)
  - design/interface of the system (structuring, points calculation, awarding and deduction criteria, etc.)
  - implementation of the notions of collective symbolism and the use of ideological statements (vocabulary used when the SCS is discussed, building the image of a good citizen and society, debates on the future and technology)

*English translations of the documents provided - no language barrier

04

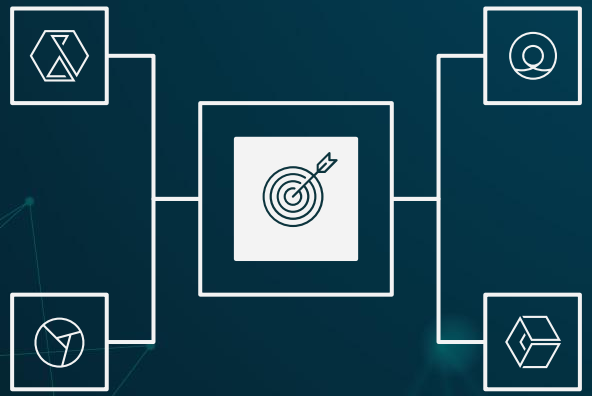
CONCLUSIONS

- Aim of the paper
- Time-plan

THE AIM OF THE PAPER

Identify the means of establishing the System and collate them with theoretical considerations

Identify techniques of SCS which are being applied as methods of constructing a self-governing society



Contribute to the discussion of power relations and governmentality established in modern societies

Contribute to the discussion of the use of digital technologies in public administration and policy

TIME PLAN

Until 30/06	Until 15/07	Until 31/07	Until 07/08
Literature review, working on the introduction, thesis statement and theoretical part	Documents review, analysis of the results and findings	Conclusions and review of the paper	Submitting the paper

THANKS!

QUESTIONS?