Russian e-Petitions Portal: Exploring Regional Variance in Use

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www.roi.ru

• Launched in 2013 as a part of President Putin’s election program;
• Status of the official (legal and legitimate) e-petitions platform (unlike Change.org etc.);
  • Needs official registration via Unified Identification and Authentication System – USIA (legal adults & passport data);
  • Needs 100,000 votes or 5% of regional (municipal) population to be considered;
  • Pre- and post-moderation (by GONGO and special Committee);
• No petitions have been considered by the State Duma yet;
• Different regional dynamics.
RPI: National & Regional Dynamics

Number of Petitions, 2013-16

Number of Votes for Petitions, 2014-16
RPI: National & Regional Dynamics

Number of petitions per region, as of 3.09.2016
Research Question

What factors can explain the difference in e-petitioning and voting among the regions of Russia?

Rationale

1) Testing theories of (online) civic engagement in a new context;
2) Possibility of a quantitative comparative research (83 cases);
3) Analysis both socio-economic and institutional environment.
Theories and Literature Review:

① Socio-economic status (income, education etc.):

♦ Resource model [Verba et. al, 1995]: time, money and civic skills;
♦ Post-materialist values [Ingleheart et. al, 2005].
♦ Social capital and trust [Putnam].

⇒ persistence of digital participation divides: age, gender, income, education, skills [Best, Krueger 2005; Linder, Riehm 2011; Escher, Riehm 2016; Saglie, Vabo 2009].

② New Institutionalism and Rational Choice:

♦ Collective action problem [Olson 1971]: incentives vs. costs;
♦ Political efficacy [Finkel 1985];
♦ Institutions [Hall, Taylor 1996] and institutional design [Goodin]

=> Incentives, costs, efficacy and institutional environment determine the level of online engagement [Phang et. al 2014]
Implications for the Russian Case

① Socio-economic status:
- High level of socio-economic disproportion among Russian regions;
- Unequal Internet penetration.

② New Institutionalism and Rational Choice:
- Low interest in engagement; political efficacy and institutional trust.
- National authoritarian regime – subnational variations;
- Disproportions in e-government development in the regions;
- Institutional design of RPI: USIA effect (Votes needed / Accounts in the USIA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Accounts in the USIA, 2015</th>
<th>Votes needed for regional petition</th>
<th>Index of the regional USIA effect</th>
<th>Index of the federal USIA effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>2 793 113</td>
<td>100 000</td>
<td>27.93</td>
<td>27.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>1 415 858.4</td>
<td>100 000</td>
<td>14.16</td>
<td>14.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmansk Region</td>
<td>201 381.4</td>
<td>38 300</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novgorod Region</td>
<td>62 457.1</td>
<td>30 950</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ingushetia</td>
<td>19 998.4</td>
<td>23 200</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypotheses:

- Education
- Income
- Internet Use
- Social Well-Being

More Democratic Regime
More Open Government
Better eGov Policy
Lower USIA Effect

RPI Petitioning
RPI Voting
**Research Design**

- **Number of cases**: 83;
- **Research period**: 2013 – 2015 (average figures);
- **Methods**: correlation and regression analysis

**Dependent Variables** [ITMO’s automated monitoring system, http://analytics.prior.nw.ru):
- **RPI_PET**: number of petitions submitted via RPI in a region;
- **RPI_VOTE**: number of votes cast in a region;

**Independent Variables**:  
- **EDU**: percentage of people with a higher education in a region [GKS]  
- **INCOME**: middle income in a region [GKS];  
- **UNEMP**: unemployment rate in a region [GKS];  
- **URBAN, RURAL**: share of urban/rural population [GKS];  
- **INTERNET**: number of Internet users in a region [GKS];  
- **REGIME**: regional political regime [HSE];  
- **eGOV**: quality of regional eGovernment policy performance [E-Readiness Index, IRIO];  
- **OPEN**: information openness of the regional governmental web-site [Infometer];  
- **USIA_REG, USIA_FED**: effects of USIA registration [AMS – authors’ calculations]
### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>RPI_PET</th>
<th>RPI_VOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPI_PET</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI_VOTE</td>
<td>0.607**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>0.692**</td>
<td>0.426**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td>0.427**</td>
<td>0.273*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEMP</td>
<td>-0.383**</td>
<td>-0.419**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>0.563**</td>
<td>0.504**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>-0.563**</td>
<td>-0.504**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNET</td>
<td>0.391**</td>
<td>0.347**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGIME</td>
<td>0.408**</td>
<td>0.322**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eGOV</td>
<td>0.597**</td>
<td>0.402**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>-0.158</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIA_REG</td>
<td>0.845**</td>
<td>0.497**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIA_FED</td>
<td>0.887**</td>
<td>0.548**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>0.435**</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEMP</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>-0.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>-0.183</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.251</td>
<td>-0.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNET</td>
<td>-0.135</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGIME</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eGOV</td>
<td>0.385**</td>
<td>0.161*</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIA_FED</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.745**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.473**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>0.809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Std. Error | 1.77211 | 1.36486 | 1.68089 | 1.57207 |
Discussion and Next Steps

1) More civic online-engagement via RPI is expected in more Internet-developed, urbanized and wealthy regions [Resource model, digital divide].

2) A relatively democratic subnational regime positively correlates with RPI usage [Institutions].

3) Regions with better eGov policies are more active in RPI usage [political efficacy, Internet skills, registration via USIA].

4) However, the relationship between RPI use and other variables seem to be moderated by USIA effect [institutional design, costs vs. incentives].

5) The rules of authentication deepen the digital divide and impose costs on collective action, since USIA effect is less important in developed regions [institutional design].
Thank you!

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