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Russian e-Petitions Portal: Exploring Regional Variance in Use

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Russian Public Initiative

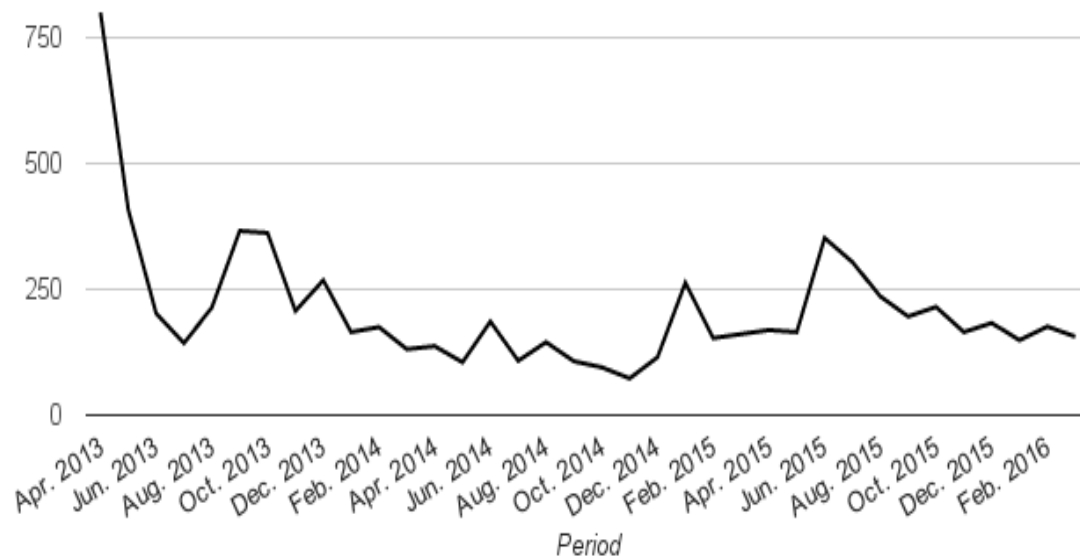
www.roi.ru

- 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.

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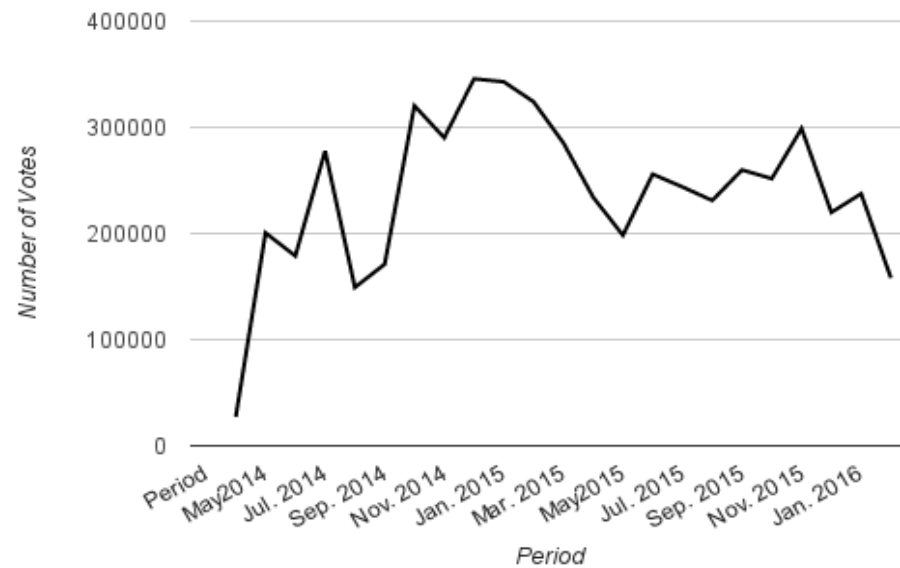
RPI: National & Regional Dynamics

Number of Petitions Submitted

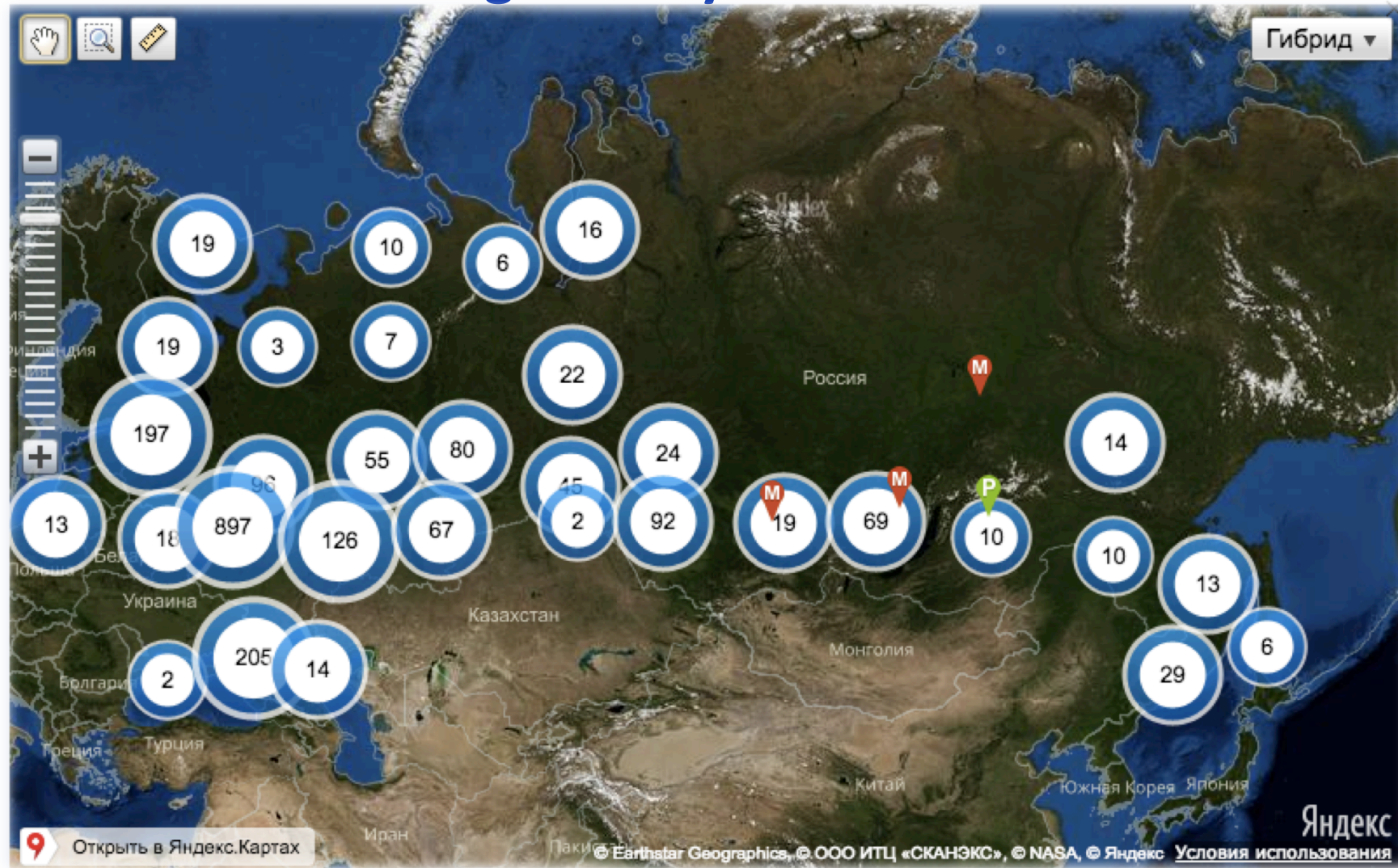


Number of Petitions, 2013-16

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 :

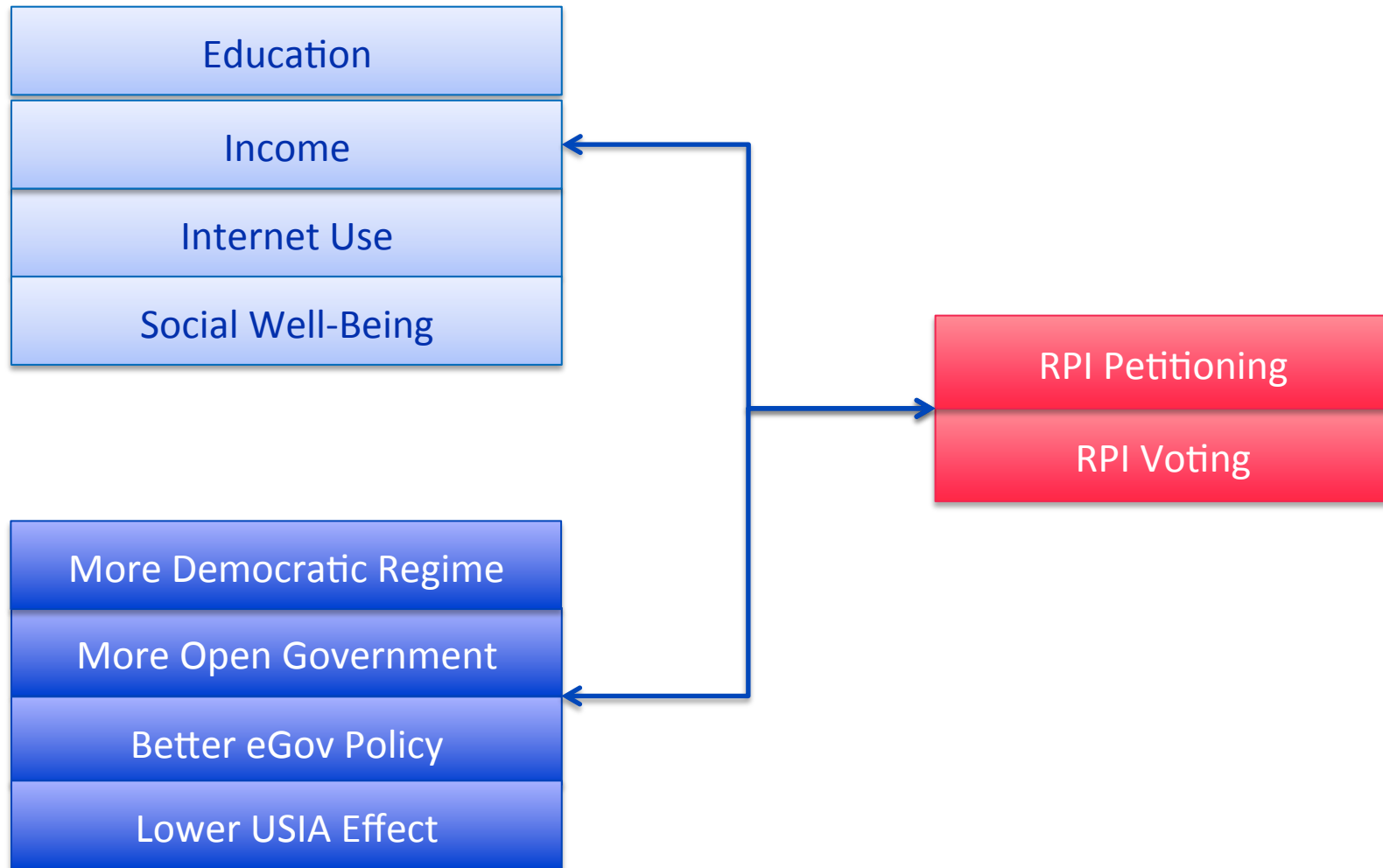
- ◆ High level of socio-economic disproportion among Russian regions;
- ◆ Unequal Internet penetration.

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)**

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

Hypotheses:



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]

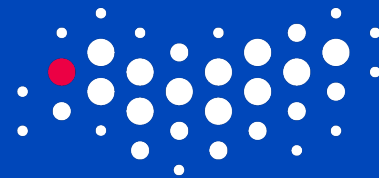
Results

Region	RPI_PET	RPI_VOTE
RPI_PET	1	,607**
RPI_VOTE	,607**	1
EDU	,692**	,426**
INCOME	,427**	,273*
UNEMP	-,383**	-,419**
URBAN	,563**	,504**
RURAL	-,563**	-,504**
INTERNET	,391**	,347**
REGIME	,408**	,322**
eGOV	,597**	,402**
OPEN	-,158	-,097
USIA_REG	,845**	,497**
USIA_FED	,887**	,548**

Models	Std. Beta – Coefficients			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
EDU	,435**	,083	,118	-,126
INCOME	-,041	-	-	-
UNEMP	-,023	-	-,120	-,148
RURAL	-,183	-	-,251	-,220
INTERNET	-,135	-	,020	-,004
REGIME	,082	-	,042	,040
eGOV	,385**	,161*	,098	,034
USIA_FED	-	,745**	-	,473**
Adjusted R – square	,578	,809	,188	,290
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].



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Thank you!

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Conference Name