

# **E-participation in Democracy and non-Democracy: Comparative Analysis of the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation**

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## Abstract

With the penetration of new technologies in politics, people have gained more opportunities to influence policymaking. Fast growing interest to e-participation raises the question of the future potential of the idea of public involvement in decision making through the electronic means. This thesis investigates e-participation in democratic and non-democratic state. Recent findings of scholars, experts and UN statistics show a high level of e-participation in non-democratic states. The present research aims to question what explains high level of e-participation in democracy and non-democracy. Comparative analysis of the United Kingdom and Russian Federation shows that there are a number of qualitative differences in two-way interaction between citizens and government. The analysis is focused on government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions in two cases. Little time for e-consultation, limited number of actors allowed to participate, lack of governmental interest in Russia give the impression of “Potemkin e-villages”. Analysis showed that e-participation is superficial and something done just for show. The main argument is that experts measuring e-participation, count electronic tools rather than participation, which leads to a misperception of public participation in policymaking in countries with different political, economic and social environments.

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## Introduction

Can we change social and political realities without living our own home? If we had asked this question about fifteen years ago the answer would certainly be – no. The whole idea of the democratic process is linked to participation in the life of society, to the public sphere. Along with technological evolutions we are witnessing, however, a change of paradigms; more and more scholars are arguing that the public sphere moved to the electronic space.<sup>1</sup> Some argue that lately even revolutions are made through the internet.<sup>2</sup> In this context, can we see the internet and electronic space as possible ways to increase public participation in political life of the state? And by doing that would we be able to increase democratic performance of the state?

Ross and Sanford argue that civic input is important for democracies and it directly influences the efficiency of the government.<sup>3</sup> Going from the minimal definition of democracy formulated by Schumpeter<sup>4</sup> to the extensive one articulated by Dahl<sup>5</sup> we observe participation to be one of the crucial elements of democracy. Even for Schumpeter free and fair elections, the minimal criterion for democracy<sup>6</sup>, cannot exist without public participation. Moving to more extensive definitions the emphasis on participation will increase as well and we will start to look closely not just at electoral participation but also on other kinds of public involvement in decision making (deliberative meetings, public debates, official inquiries, referenda etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Poster. "Cyberdemocracy: Internet and the public sphere." *Internet culture* (1997): 201-218.; Papacharissi, Zizi. "The virtual sphere The internet as a public sphere." *new media & society* 4, no. 1 (2002): 9-27.

<sup>2</sup> Habibul Haque Khondker. "Role of the new media in the Arab Spring." *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (2011): 675-679.; Stepanova, Ekaterina. "The role of information communication technologies in the 'Arab Spring'." *PONARS Eurasia* 15 (2011): 1-6.

<sup>3</sup> Clive Sanford , and Jeremy Rose. "Characterizing eparticipation." *International Journal of Information Management* 27, no. 6 (2007): 406-421. P. 406

<sup>4</sup> Joseph A. Schumpeter. *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. Routledge, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Dahl. *Democracy and its Critics*. Yale University Press, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Schumpeter.

With the introduction of new technology in all spheres of social life, one can observe increasing mobilization capacity and social activism. It is an emerging topic among scholars that the real public sphere can be built on the internet and it is necessary to consider the potential of electronic space for influencing real-life events. In this context a completely new field of study has emerged, which deals mainly with e-participation under the bigger “umbrella”, concept of e-democracy. E-democracy as such refers mainly to the use of information and communication technologies to engage citizens and support democratic decision-making process.<sup>7</sup> At the same time the concept of e-participation is defined by Macintosh and Whyte as the use of the ICT to support public participation.<sup>8</sup> It can be found in the literature well based position that e-participation and e-democracy should be understood as complementary to the democratic process itself. Ross and Sanford found that research done via e-participation was more focused on deliberation and engagement of people that is closely related to the participation in the political process.<sup>9</sup>

It seems quite interesting that the concept of e-participation has strong focus on democracies. By doing so, scholars somehow have narrowed the perspectives of the theory, leaving the possibility to discuss and analyze electronic governance just for the democracies. Even looking at the UN Global E-government Readiness report it is clear that it emphasizes the importance of three factors in measuring e-participation: electronic information, dissemination, electronic consultation and electronic participation in decision making.<sup>10</sup> However, UN data on e-participation index by 2012 shows that a number of non-democratic states were ranked as top

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<sup>7</sup> Ann Macintosh. "Characterizing e-participation in policy-making." In System Sciences, 2004. Proceedings of the 37th Annual Hawaii International Conference on, pp. 10-pp. IEEE, 2004. P. 2

<sup>8</sup> Ann Macintosh, and Angus Whyte. "Towards an evaluation framework for eParticipation." Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy 2, no. 1 (2008): 16-30. P.3

<sup>9</sup> Sanford and Rose. P. 407

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Global E-Government Readiness Report 2005: From E-Government to E-Inclusion. P.19-21

e-participation leaders. It is surprisingly that a country like Bahrain outranks France, Kazakhstan beats Sweden and Malaysia ranks higher than Germany. Moreover, Russia was also among the leaders. Knowing the problems in the areas of access to information, violations of human rights with regard to freedom of the speech, as well as limitations to participate in political life via a practical lack of freedom of assembly, it is quite interesting to observe such success in e-participation. All in all we would expect a non-democratic state to be less eager to promote participation, be it in real life or virtual. E-participation and e-democracy cannot be interpreted outside from the concept of democracy, thus one would not expect many countries with non-democratic regimes perform well in e-participation. The majority of studies on e-participation were primarily focused on democratic states, implying that there is a strong link between democracy and public participation.<sup>11</sup> Astrom argues that democracies are more prone to promote e-participation than non-democratic regimes which seek to suppress political and civil freedoms<sup>12</sup>. But recent findings show that for the last two years non-democratic states have rapidly improved their e-participation performance, and even outperformed democracies. The question to be asked here is why non-democratic regimes perform as well as democratic ones in the e-participation variable? Does e-participation mean the same in democracies and non-democracies? Or two concepts can live separately?

In order to address this puzzle I will conduct a comparative analysis of two countries which are different in many social, political and economic issues but ranked as top leaders in e-

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<sup>11</sup> Ann Macintosh. "E-democracy and e-participation research in Europe." In *Digital Government*, pp. 85-102. Springer US, 2008.; Cho, H., and Sungsoo Hwang. "Government 2.0 in Korea: Focusing on e-participation services." *Politics, Democracy and E-Government: Participation and Service Delivery*, Hershey, PA: IGI Publishing (2010): 94-114.; Ailsa Kolsaker, and Liz Lee-Kelley. "Citizens' attitudes towards e-government and e-governance: a UK study." *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 21, no. 7 (2008): 723-738.

<sup>12</sup> Joachim Åström, Martin Karlsson, Jonas Linde, and Ali Pirannejad. "Understanding the rise of e-participation in non-democracies: Domestic and international factors." *Government Information Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2012): 142-150. P. 144.

participation. The focus of analysis will be on government-led e-consultations that aim to influence policymaking; and citizens-initiated e-petitions that have an objective to influence agenda setting.

In examining the similar performance of democracy and non-democracy in e-participation, I will analyze Russia as a non-democratic example and Great Britain as a democratic case. There are other important differences between the two countries which I will address later. The two cases were chosen in order to go in-depth analysis and address all the important details to find the outstanding features of e-participation in Russia and the UK.

As I will show the comparison of two-way interaction has some crucial differences in e-participation practice in the UK and Russia such as time range, variety of actors engaged in consultations, experience in electronic services and the overall procedure of the government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions. Results emphasize the importance of carrying out not only quantitative but qualitative analysis which is more important while evaluating e-participation in the countries. Taking into consideration all findings it is difficult to say for the Russian case whether public participation has a real impact on policymaking or just exists on paper with each and new act announced by the president. Government does not show interest in cooperating with citizens on policy making issues. This argument is supported by such findings as little time for consultation, limitations in a variety actors that can influence policymaking, lack of governmental cooperation in e-petitioning, and lack of citizens' input evaluation as such. Thus, looking closer it is evident that e-participation in two cases means different things, or at least comparative analysis showed that e-participation in Russia differs from one in the UK. It seems that experts, survey, and scholars simply counted electronic tools [e] rather than participation.



The thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter will review relevant items of previous research, present the methodology of the work, in which I will justify the case selection and build a model, which will be applied on two cases. The second chapter provides background information about e-participation concept that is the main focus of the research. Chapter three is the core of the thesis in which I will present and compare data on the UK's and Russia's e-participation opportunities. In the conclusion I will summarize the findings showing how my research has answered the question. Overall broader implications of the research such as thesis contribution in the field will also be presented.

# Chapter 1: Research Background

## 1.1 Literature Review

E-participation is quite a new concept; now it is a field of e-democracy, but in the future we can expect it to grow in the independent research domain. When it had just emerged, approximately a decade ago, Macintosh was the pioneer of the e-participation analysis. So far she had the most important publications on the topic: analysis of e-democracy, e-participation, e-governance, e-petitioning and other areas of electronic tools implementation in politics.<sup>13</sup> She also explores the role of e-participation in policymaking and citizens' role in it. However, Macintosh points out on important research gaps in this sphere, such as lack of theory on e-participation, the problem of engaging representative stakeholders from all groups of society in e-participation, and some institutional and political resistance to the introduction and use of e-participation applications.<sup>14</sup> There is also quite limited literature on e-participation evaluation. Scholars did not come to agreement how to measure the effectiveness of e-participation and whether it influences policymaking at all.

The majority of studies on e-participation were primarily focused on democratic states, implying that there is a strong link between democracy and public participation. Initially it is reasonable to assume that e-participation will be higher in democratic states than in non-democratic ones. But recent finding of UN survey and scholars caused a doubt in such seemed to be obvious statement. Astrom argues about the influence of domestic and international factors on

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<sup>13</sup> Macintosh, 2008; Macintosh, 2004; Macintosh and Whyte, 2008; Adams, Nicholas J., Ann Macintosh, and Jim Johnston. "e-Petitioning: enabling ground-up participation." In *Challenges of Expanding Internet: E-Commerce, E-Business, and E-Government*, pp. 265-279. Springer US, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Ann Macintosh, Stephen Coleman, and Agnes Schneeberger. "eParticipation: The research gaps." In *Electronic participation*, pp. 1-11. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2009.

development of e-participation in non-democratic states.<sup>15</sup> Ishmatova and Golubeva found rapid e-participation development in non-democratic Russia and explored prospects for this.<sup>16</sup> They analyze the prospects for the state further development in e-participation but taking into account current conditions and historical legacy. It is interesting that Vershinskaya also argues that Russia has moved from off line to online society very fast and e-participation has grown radically for the last couple of years. She explains this with the emergence of ICT and technological development of the country.<sup>17</sup> According to statistics provided in the article, the number of PCs has grown from 13 to 32,4 mln during 2003-2008; level of Internet penetration is about 60% in Moscow, 26% is the average for the country. Considering the lack of freedom of expression according to the Freedom House statistics and high level of censorship in the country<sup>18</sup>, it is interesting that non-democratic state can perform so well in online public participation. McHenry and Borisov faced with the same question. They explore why Russia under Putin administration, which gradually limits freedom association, supports political pluralism and, moreover, expresses its interest in development of opportunities for the “information society”.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the research is focused on analyzing e-participation in democratic and non-democratic countries; and whether any differences in it exist in various political systems.

Starting from democracy it is important to mention that there is a strong link between democracy and participation theory. Classical philosopher Rousseau argued that the individual

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<sup>15</sup> Åström, p. 144-145

<sup>16</sup> Diana Ishmatova and Anastasia Golubeva. “E-Democracy in Russia: Establishing a Habit of Political Awareness and Participation”. Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg State University, Russia. P.4

<sup>17</sup> Olga Vershininskaya. E-participation of Russian Population. Presentation on Joint Meeting of Cost 298. Spain. February 2009

<sup>18</sup> Freedom House. The Russian Federation. Retrived from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/russia> (accessed May 23, 2013)

<sup>19</sup> William McHenry, and Artem Borisov. "E-government and Democracy in Russia." Communications of the Association for Information Systems 17, no. 48 (2006): 1064-1123.

participation of each citizen in political decision-making is essential. He points out that citizens become public citizens through participation.<sup>20</sup> Rowe and Frewer argue that “public participation encompasses a group of procedures designed to consult, involve, and inform the public to allow those affected by a decision to have an input into that decision.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, the concept implies that the public's contribution is able to influence the decision making. Participation is more than voting in elections once in four years. It implies various aspects of civic participation in political decision-making process. Pateman argues that participation should not be limited to the political arena, but should also include various areas of everyday life.<sup>22</sup> John Stuart Mill also stresses the role of participation and arguing that the best place to learn democracy is through participation.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, people feel that they are powerful and can make their common life better.<sup>24</sup> The best definition of the concept can be delineated by Lincoln’s words that democracy is a government by, of, and for the people. Here in order to create an effective participatory democracy the citizens must be informed, active and organized to become a transformative democratic political force.<sup>25</sup> The well-known German sociologist and philosopher Jurgen Habermas has developed the concept of public sphere and he argues for several key features that society should have in order to be considered as active citizenship. Among these crucial points is information shared in an inclusive and public way, where all have equal opportunities and free of external

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Het Maatschappelijk Verdrag of Beginselen der Staatsinrichting (Du Contrat Social)* (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 1988) First published in 1762.

<sup>21</sup> Gene Rowe, and Lynn J. Frewer. "Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation." *Science, technology & human values* 25, no. 1 (2000): 3-29. P.6-7

<sup>22</sup> Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)

<sup>23</sup> John Stuart Mill, 'Representative Government', in *Three Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) First published in 1861

<sup>24</sup> Pateman, p. 110

<sup>25</sup> Douglas Kellner. "Habermas, the public sphere, and democracy: A critical intervention." *Perspectives on Habermas* (2000): 259-288. P. 279

enforcement.<sup>26</sup> All citizens have equal opportunity to be heard, criticize proposals and make contributions. Zittel and Fuchs suggest that the directness of participation by citizens in governing and deliberation in political opinion formation are considered to be the main characteristics of the common ground between participation and democratic theory.<sup>27</sup>

Democratic attitude of the government and public participation are not only closely linked to each other, but, moreover, two concepts are interdependent. Ross and Sanford argue that civic input is important for democracies and it directly influences the efficiency of the government.<sup>28</sup> In addition to this Linz and Stepan argue that even for consolidated democracy the participation has significant importance.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, deriving from the literature we can see that democracy and participation are intertwined concepts that are significant to each other. Another support for this statement comes from the book “Models of Democracy” in which David Held has developed nine models for democracy. The participatory model emphasizes the strong need to engage citizens in policymaking processes.<sup>30</sup> It can be argued based on the literature that e-participation and democratic attitudes are closely interconnected, and public participation is very important for democracy.

We should be clear when differentiating democratic and non-democratic state. Astrom explaining the rise of e-participation in non-democracies refers to hybrid regimes that show outstanding results in the domain. He argues that growing development of e-participation can be explained by hybrid regimes in which they are developing. The hybrid regimes seek to uphold a democratic image in the international arena, thus, more opportunities for public participation are

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<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Habermas. *The inclusion of the other: Studies in political theory*. Edited by Ciaran Cronin, and Pablo De Greiff. Cambridge, MA: Mit Press, 1998.306 p. P. 35

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Zittel, and Dieter Fuchs, eds. *Participatory democracy and political participation: can participatory engineering bring citizens back in?*. Routledge, 2006. P. 39

<sup>28</sup> Sanford and Rose. P. 406-407

<sup>29</sup> Stepan, Alfred C., and Juan José Linz. "Toward consolidated democracies." *Journal of democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996): 14-33. P. 16

<sup>30</sup> David Held. *Models of democracy*. Polity Pr, 2006. P. 245-246

opened.<sup>31</sup> Hybrid regime is defined by Marshall and Jagger as the one that: "...possess a wide mixture of democratic and authoritarian characteristics. The ruling elites generally keep themselves in power, despite the presence of some institutional features of democracy. Elections are often not competitive, and political liberties may be constrained."<sup>32</sup> Jayasuriya suggests the same vision of this political system and provides simpler definition arguing that it is a regime that combines both authoritarian and democratic elements.<sup>33</sup> She argues that a hybrid regime has its own specificity and dynamics in internal politics development and distinct institutional forms. Taking a closer look at the level of participation we can observe weak political opposition in such regimes. Its ineffectiveness is caused mainly by low level of trust in governmental institutions and thus indifference of people to bring changes when they know they will be suppressed.<sup>34</sup> And even if participation occurs it does not make significant changes. For instance, political party pluralism does not show the reality of variety of thoughts in political system, because their opinions are usually either suppressed or they adapt their policy to stay in politics. Ekman argues that citizens are still apathetic and hold the anti-pluralist tendencies toward participation in policymaking. In the research he found that in three types of hybrid regimes the indifference and unwillingness of people to shape the policymaking was considerable. People adjusted to the political environment and do not believe that they are powerful enough to influence decision-making. Ekman analyzes the stability of hybrid regime and the role of ordinary citizens that is important in this context. He argues that stability of hybrid regimes is

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<sup>31</sup> Åström, p. 143

<sup>32</sup> Marshall Monty G. and Keith Jagers, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800 – 2006." College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland. Retrieved from <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm> (accessed April 20, 2013)

<sup>33</sup> Kanishka Jayasuriya, and Garry Rodan. "Beyond hybrid regimes: more participation, less contestation in Southeast Asia." *Democratisation* 14, no. 5 (2007): 773-794. P. 773

<sup>34</sup> Ishmatova and Golubeva, p. 7-8.

related to the politicians' ability to suppress the opposition.<sup>35</sup> It is a strong argument that can explain the sense of apathy among people. Based on the scholars' findings it can be stated that low level of public participation is mainly caused by the feeling to be unable to influence politics.

Habermas argues that democracy and the formal political process are significantly influenced by effective communication and informed decision making about public issues among all stakeholders, who may be impacted by their collective decisions.<sup>36</sup> Van Dijk also supports this statement, arguing that virtual democracy cannot be disconnected from political participation of citizens.<sup>37</sup> Based on these arguments I will present a common ground between two concepts. Studying the topic, one can observe clearly that there are some important common links which could tie together democratic attitudes and e-participation. In the following section I will present some of the most important linkages between two concepts.

### *Public Participation*

First, it is important to emphasize the role of e-participation in policy making. Ross and Sanford found that researches done on e-participation were more focused on deliberation and engagement of people that is closely related to participation in the political process.<sup>38</sup> Thus "e" [electronic] simply broadens the traditional idea of political participation and provides citizens with more tools to shape the policymaking process. Through the literature we can see that public participation "encompasses a group of procedures designed to consult, involve, and inform the

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<sup>35</sup> Joakim Ekman. "Political participation and regime stability: A framework for analyzing hybrid regimes." *International political science review* 30, no. 1 (2009): 7-31.; p.7

<sup>36</sup>Jurgen Habermas. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

<sup>37</sup> van Dijk, J. (2000). *Models of democracy and concepts of communication*. In K. L. Hacker, & J. van Dijk (Eds.), *Digital democracy: Issues of theory and practice* (pp. 30–53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>38</sup> Sanford and Rose, P.407

public to allow those affected by a decision to have an input into that decision.”<sup>39</sup> The concept implies not just simple engagement when people address issues of public concerns, but it emphasizes citizens’ input in decision-making. It can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation, such as directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. An active citizen should have the ability, will and opportunity to make effective decisions. It is argued by Sæbø, Chadwick and May that in order to have a working electronic democracy we need public participation.<sup>40</sup> Even at the simple argumentative logic it is very hard to imagine governance or democracy without civic engagement. Electronic sphere is even more sensitive to the public involvement variable since it is based first of all on the individual decision to engage into an activity which is not legally bounding. Thus, in order to have a basic level of e-participation, the basic level of citizens’ participation should be developed in the society. Given those arguments, the emphasis of Bertot, McClure and Jaeger <sup>41</sup> on public participation variable is very important and cannot be neglected.

The importance of civic engagement for regime type resides in the fact that a vibrant civil society will influence the politics and will become an important part of political dialogue. Zittel and Fuchs argue that without a vibrant public participation we cannot imagine a veritable democracy.<sup>42</sup> However, in this respect that different countries allow different level of civic

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<sup>39</sup> Rowe and Frewer. "Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation." *Science, technology & human values* 25, no. 1 (2000): 3-29. P.6-7

<sup>40</sup> Øystein Sæbø, Jeremy Rose, and Leif Skiftenes Flak. "The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area." *Government Information Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2008): 400-428.; Chadwick, Andrew, and Christopher May. "Interaction between states and citizens in the age of the Internet: "E-government" in the United States, Britain, and the European Union." *Governance* 16, no. 2 (2003): 271-300.

<sup>41</sup> John Carlo Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger, and Charles R. McClure. "Citizen-centered e-government services: benefits, costs, and research needs." In *Proceedings of the 2008 international conference on Digital government research*, pp. 137-142. Digital Government Society of North America, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Zittel and Fuchs, p.9



engagement, and are especially careful toward which kind of civic engagement would they allow.

It is clear that both theories are coming from different directions in arguing about the importance of public participation, but we cannot deny the fact that both of them are roughly talking about the same variable, which is a key linking point between them.

### *Deliberation*

The second important bridging point between the theories I would like to discuss here is the importance of deliberation. Habermas defines it<sup>43</sup> as

...a certain attitude toward social cooperation, namely, that of openness to persuasion by reasons referring to the claims of others as well as one's own. The deliberative medium is a good faith exchange of views – including participants' reports of their own understanding of their respective vital interests - ... in which a vote, if any vote is taken, represents a pooling of judgments.

He argues that in order to evaluate democracies in a meaningful way we have to pay a particular attention to the deliberation. It is very important to see if people have a real opportunity to participate in the public debates, and also if their opinion counts. Certainly, one can argue that deliberation as such can be found probably just in Switzerland, in other countries the democratic process relies first of all on representation. I would like to argue however that the deliberation as such is presented in all democracies to different degrees. And here first of all should be mentioned the culture of listening and accepting the best argument. It is hard to deny that different regimes type are characterized by different public spheres, and deliberation as such is certainly one of the most important component of a public sphere. We can expect that deliberative culture will be more developed in a democracy than in an authoritarian or hybrid

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<sup>43</sup> Habermas, 1998. P. 244

regime, since there are more possibilities to participate and participation by itself is characterized by a tolerant communicative culture.

However, Anttiroiko<sup>44</sup> and Jaeger<sup>45</sup> argue for the fact that e-governance and e-democracy are also strongly linked to the deliberation as such. According to Jaeger deliberation is important for e-democracy because it helps to bring citizens together for better understanding despite their differences.<sup>46</sup> The deliberation therefore constitutes a platform where actors interact based on free, open and rational conditions. It promote reasoned consensus on political issues through accommodation of different views. As in the case of public participation we can observe quite clearly that both theories are accounting for deliberation as an important explanatory variable. That is an important argument which I also accounted for when I have chosen to link both theories.

#### *Freedom of expression*

Freedom of expression is considered as one of the most important variable when evaluating regimes performance toward democratization. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedom of expression is “the right of every individual to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”<sup>47</sup> The notion of freedom of expression is intimately linked to political debate and the concept of democracy. As I have stated previously information provision is a key element for effective implementation of e-participation. In order to be appropriately knowledgeable, there must be no constraints on the free flow of information and ideas. E-

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<sup>44</sup> Anttiroiko, Ari-Veikko. "Building strong e-democracy: the role of technology in developing democracy for the information age." *Communications of the ACM* 46, no. 9 (2003): 121-128. P. 122

<sup>45</sup> Jaeger, Paul T. "Deliberative democracy and the conceptual foundations of electronic government." *Government Information Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (2005): 702-719. P. 705

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* P. 705

<sup>47</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations. December 10, 1948. P. 75

participation cannot be imagined without the freedom to express your own opinion. The whole concept will lose its sense if it will lose the freedom of expression variable. Therefore, one can argue that public participation and regime type are closely correlated with each other. Looking at the country's political environment generally we can assume how public participation is performing.

It is also important to emphasize that with adding “e” to participation we refer to the use of new information and communication technologies in participation (mainly the Internet and its platforms Web 2.0 such as social networks). There is a growing literature supporting that technology has the capacity to change or transform the system. E-participation implies “...the use of ICTs to support information provision and ‘top-down’ engagement which is concerned with support for government-led initiatives, and ‘ground-up’ empowerment which is mainly concerned with the support to enable citizens, civil society organizations and other democratically constituted groups to engage with their elected representatives and officials.”<sup>48</sup> It is normally associated with some form of political deliberation or decision-making: whereas it is formal political process as voting or broader aspects of political activism, for instance, opinion forming, consultation, deliberation etc. Adding “e” to the concept even increase the opportunities for citizens to participate. Reddick argues that Internet revolutionized the idea of participation, providing more opportunities for people to be involved in decision making.<sup>49</sup> Having the same vision, Anttiroiko argues that with increased interdependency, technological progress and ‘partnership governance’ democracy has more options to give people tools to ‘achieve government of the people, by the people, and for the people’.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Macintosh and Whyte, 2008. P.3.

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Reddick. “Public Administration and Information Technology”. Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2012. 258 p. 51

<sup>50</sup> Anttiroiko, p. 125

Therefore, theory identifies strong link between democracy and public participation, emphasizing that democracies are more prone to promote e-participation than non-democratic regimes which seek to suppress political and civil freedoms. However, recent findings of scholars and statistical data about rapid development of e-participation among non-democratic states created a puzzle for the research.

It is quite interesting to see how it became possible to disconnect e-participation from democratic attitudes in the country. The main aim is to explain similar performance of e-participation in democratic and non-democratic state. Therefore, further qualitative comparison is necessary to understand the nature of e-participation high results in two cases.

## **1.2 Methodology**

In this section I will present the methodology of the thesis. First I will outline case selection justification, then the concepts through which e-participation will be measured. In order to conduct the in-depth analysis, e-participation concept will be divided on government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions. The chapter aims to build models that will be applied on two case studies. Evaluation scheme for each type of two-way interaction between citizens and government will be presented.

### **1.2.1 Case selection**

In order to answer the question comparative analysis is needed. Thus, two countries, democratic and non-democratic, need to be considered. Except democratic criteria there might be other crucial differences between them in order to show very different countries. However, two case studies have to be top e-participation leaders in order to fit the puzzle. Thus, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom were chosen for comparative qualitative analysis.

The first and most important indicator that differentiates the countries is democracy index. Economist Intelligence Unit has ranked Russia as “authoritarian regime” and the United Kingdom as “full democracy”. Freedom House ranked Russia in 2012 as not free country where basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically denied. In contrast, the United Kingdom was ranked as absolutely free country with open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media.

In order to strengthen the argument that two cases are very different besides political environment I will turn to other indexes that show that Russia and the United Kingdom are different in a number of spheres that are important when measuring e-participation. Global Innovation Index shows very low index of rule of law in Russia and low level of press freedom compare to the UK. The Global Informational Technology Report 2013 emphasizes other challenges that might hinder development of e-participation in Russia, among which political and regulatory environment, economic, social impacts and others.

However, ICT access is quite high in both countries. According to the InternetWorldStats.com, Russia was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> with 47.7 percent of population using the Internet. The United Kingdom was on the 9<sup>th</sup> place 83.6 percent of the Internet penetration among all population.<sup>51</sup> Vershinskaya shows that the number of PCs in Russian households and the number of mobile phones had increased dramatically since 2002.<sup>52</sup> On the whole technology became more accessibly for the whole population in Russia. Russia and Great Britain have implemented e-governance more than a decade ago. Both states have governmental websites

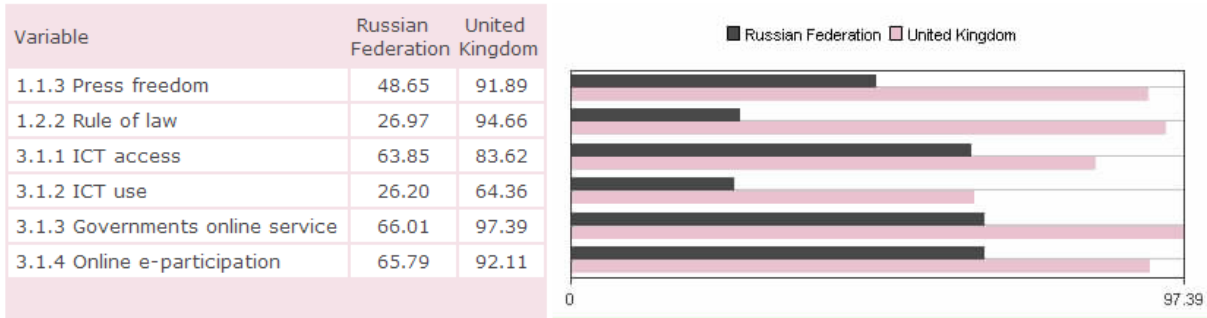
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<sup>51</sup> InternetWorldStats.com. Top 20 Internet Countries, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm> (accessed May 27, 2013)

<sup>52</sup> Vershininskaya, 2009

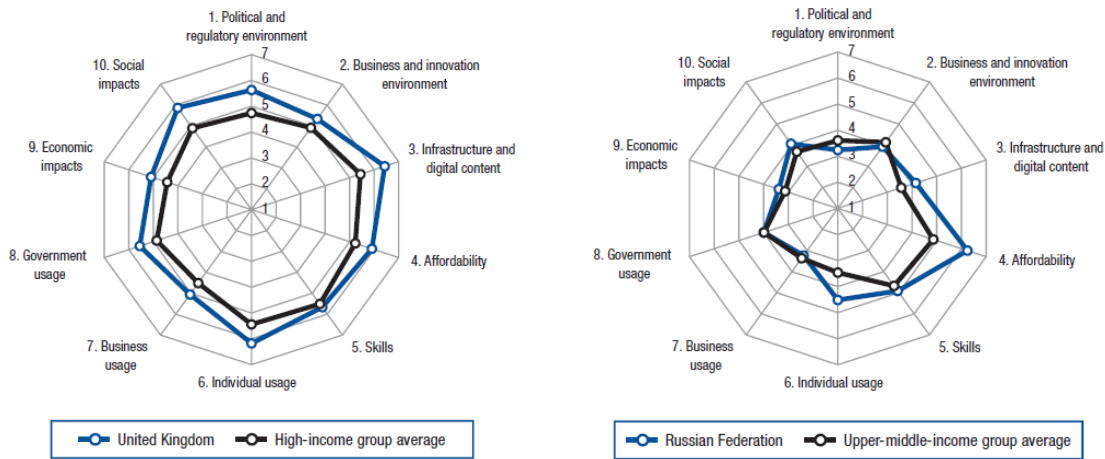
where all information about the government is available and electronic services are introduced. Therefore, it can be stated that quantitatively Russia and the UK have electronic governmental services that gives a start for further qualitative analysis.

**Figure 1: The Russian Federation and the United Kingdom Comparison**



(Source: Global Innovation Index 2012)

**Figure 2: The Russian Federation and the United Kingdom Comparison**



(Source: The Global Informational Technology Report 2013)

**Figure 3: Top E-participation Leaders 2012**

2	Singapore	0.9474
3	United Kingdom	0.9211
	United States	0.9211
4	Israel	0.8947
	Australia	0.7632
5	Estonia	0.7632
	Germany	0.7632
	Colombia	0.7368
	Finland	0.7368
6	Japan	0.7368
	United Arab Emirates	0.7368
	Egypt	0.6842
	Canada	0.6842
7	Norway	0.6842

(Source: UN Global E-Gove

Therefore, two countries that fit to the criteria being very different in a number of indexes, especially democracy index, but having high level of e-participation were chosen: the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. It is also a matter of personal academic interest and language skills to analyze exactly these countries.

### 1.2.2 E-participation

E-participation indicator is aimed at showing how relevant and useful the e-participation features of government websites and how far they are focused on promoting participatory decision making.<sup>53</sup> The score comprises an assessment of e-information, e-consultation, and e-decision making.

In order to evaluate e-participation in two case studies, the research will be based on the participation conceptual framework provided by the United Nations, which consists of three indicators: information provision on policies and programs, budgets, laws and regulations; consultations in which government encourages citizens participate in discussion; and willingness

<sup>53</sup> UN Global E-Government Readiness Report 2005: From E-Government to E-Inclusion. P.93

to take citizens' input in decision making.<sup>54</sup> Overall, e-participation index assesses the quality and usefulness of information and services provided by government to engage citizens in public policymaking through the use of online instruments.

Therefore, in order to evaluate if e-participation is developed in the case we need to analyze two-way interaction processes between citizens and government. Qualitative comparison of government-led e-consultations and citizen-initiated e-petitions was chosen to analyze in the UK and Russia in order to answer the research question.

### 1.2.2.1 Government-led E-consultations

According to a number of scholars, e-consultation is already two-way interaction process between citizens and governments.<sup>55</sup> Macintosh argues that this is a two-way relationship stage in which citizens provide feedback to the government.<sup>56</sup> Governments set the issues for consultation while citizens are invited to contribute their views and opinions. Government-led initiatives can be analyzed through e-consultation which is defined through the literature as “a two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government.”<sup>57</sup> Macintosh argues that e-consultation is a policy instrument that intended to enhance public participation in policy making.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it implies the cooperation of citizens and government about the particular issue in order to influence policymaking.

#### *Operationalization Scheme*

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. P. 20

<sup>55</sup> Saebo, p.16; Reddick, p.50, Macintosh, 2004, Tambouris (2007) Efthimios, Naoum LIOTAS, and Konstantinos Tarabanis. "A framework for assessing eParticipation projects and tools." In System Sciences, 2007. HICSS 2007. 40th Annual Hawaii International Conference on, pp. 90-90. IEEE, 2007. P. 7;

<sup>56</sup> Macintosh, 2004.

<sup>57</sup> Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagement. OECD 2003

<sup>58</sup> Angus Whyte and Ann Macintosh. "Analysis and evaluation of e-consultations." e-Service Journal 2, no. 1 (2002): 9-34. P. 9-10.



The evaluation framework of e-consultations by Macintosh and Whyte was taken as a basis. As they mentioned correctly qualitative features are important for analysis.<sup>59</sup> But quantity of the electronic tools is the first thing that needs to be taken into consideration when analyzing e-participation. Therefore, for both cases it was crucial to take countries with existing e-consultation means. In addition to this the “Consultation Principles Guidelines”<sup>60</sup> provided on the official UK website were taken into consideration. The combination of two frameworks came to be the model to apply on e-consultations.

- a) *Timing of Consultation*
- b) *Subjects and Accessibility of the Relevant Information*
- c) *Feedback and the Evaluation of E-consultation*

Abovementioned variables will be considered while measuring e-consultation in the democratic UK and non-democratic Russia. Each variable will be presented in more details when it comes to applying on case study.

### **1.2.2.2 Citizen-initiated E-petitions**

Citizens-to-government projects can be represented by e-petitioning that is aimed on influencing agenda setting. E-petition is defined by Cruickshank et al “...as a mechanism for making democratic inputs sitting somewhere between pure representative democracy and direct democracy ... where the participation activities are directed towards influencing the decisions of elected representatives, thereby mitigating the risks of weakening existing democratic

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. P. 9

<sup>60</sup> Consultation Principles Guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance> (accessed May 23, 2013)

institutions.”<sup>61</sup> E-petitioning process allows citizens to raise and sign a petition, read background information on the issue, and add comments on it. The whole activity is aimed to engage public in policy making and let them to frame the issue for further consideration in the government.

Therefore it is important to analyze the mechanism of e-participation from both sides: government and citizens. The research aims to go with qualitative comparative analysis of the e-consultations and e-petitions that both indicate interaction between citizens and government but from different directions. For this purpose initially two governmental websites were taken: gov.uk (UK) and government.ru (Russia).

#### *Operationalization Scheme*

The most important variables for evaluating e-petitions were taken from the model offered by Macintosh and Malina.<sup>62</sup> In their research they derived main features for qualitative analysis of e-petitioning based on the petitioning in Scotland. Taking the most important variables and combining those into groups the model for evaluation citizens-initiated e-petitions will look as:

- a) *Actors and the Openness*
- b) *Information and Comments*
- c) *Feedback*

Van Dijk argues that online activism can be impressive and even flourish, but it does not necessarily impact decision making.<sup>63</sup> Bearing in mind this argument I will apply the models on

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<sup>61</sup> Peter Cruickshank, Noella Edelmann, and Colin F. Smith. "Signing an e-petition as a transition from lurking to participation." (2010): 275-282. P. 277

<sup>62</sup> Ann Macintosh, Anna Malina, and Steve Farrell. "Digital democracy through electronic petitioning." *Advances in digital government: technology, human factors, and policy* (2002): 137-148. P. 142-144

<sup>63</sup> Van Dijk, 2012. P. 55

two chosen cases that will help to clarify if e-participation means the same in democracies and non-democracies.

## **Chapter 2: E-participation Concept**

### ***2.1 E-democracy***

In this chapter I will provide an overview of e-participation concept. It is essential to outline the information about the idea of e-participation in order to understand the comparison of two case studies. The e-participation is an area of a larger concept called electronic democracy. It implies different approaches and analysis regarding how new informational technology affect

democracies and what opportunities they offer for the states. Reddick argues that in order to understand e-participation, one must understand the concept of democracy.<sup>64</sup> E-democracy is defined in the literature<sup>65</sup> as

...the use of information and communication technologies to engage citizens, support the democratic decision-making process and strengthen representative democracy. The principal ICT mechanism is the Internet accessed through an increasing variety of channels, including PCs, both in the home and in public locations, mobile phones, and interactive digital TV.

There is a growing interest among governments in using new technology in policymaking process. The institutions political, social and others are also incorporating electronic tools in their work more and more. Macintosh argues that the most promising advantage of the Internet is the opportunity to practice democracy.<sup>66</sup> It provides the platform and tools for bottom-up participation when the governmental institutions lack “official” e-participation mechanisms.<sup>67</sup> Sæbø argues that governments understand the potential of new technologies and promote participation to improve efficiency and legitimacy of political processes.<sup>68</sup> According to the OECD, citizens are partners with government and are actively involved in the development of new policies that can impact overall result.<sup>69</sup>

There can be two subcategories where people can express their will: e-voting and e-participation<sup>70</sup>, both of which are quite new and still underdeveloped. The term “electronic voting” includes “any technology for casting, counting, or tabulating voter’s electoral choice by

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<sup>64</sup> Reddick. P. 50.

<sup>65</sup> Macintosh, 2004. P. 2

<sup>66</sup> Macintosh 2003, Macintosh, A., Robson, E., Smith, E.& Whyte, A. (2003) Electronic Democracy and Young People, Social Science Computer Review, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 43-54.

<sup>67</sup> Ishmatova and Golubeva. P. 17

<sup>68</sup> Sæbø et al, 2008. P.2

<sup>69</sup> OECD report, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Macintosh, 2004. P. 1

electronic means.”<sup>71</sup> E-voting is, perhaps, the most developed and practiced by governments electronic opportunity in policymaking. States are increasingly adopting new technology in elections process. Some cases show big potential for employing e-voting that simplify the elections process and aimed to increase turnout. However, there are still some holes in the mechanism, such as transparency, cryptographic verification, accessibility etc.<sup>72</sup>

## **2.2 E-participation**

The present research is focused on the second area of e-democracy, on e-participation, which is less explored than other related concepts such as e-democracy and e-governance, but looking at the growing studies in this sphere it is reasonable to assume that it may soon emerge as an independent research area with its own particular focus. E-participations defined by Macintosh and Whyte<sup>73</sup> as

...the use of ICTs to support information provision and ‘top-down’ engagement which is concerned with support for government-led initiatives, and ‘ground-up’ empowerment which is mainly concerned with the support to enable citizens, civil society organizations and other democratically constituted groups to engage with their elected representatives and officials.

Lenihan and Tambouris argue that the emerging concept is developed in the context of declining citizen interest in participation in traditional democratic forums, problems with government transparency and accountability, opportunities for bringing together common ideas from all over

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<sup>71</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Discussion Paper in Preparation of Guidelines for the Observation of Electronic Voting. Warsaw 24 October 2008. P. 1-24. P.4.

<sup>72</sup> Donald Moynihan, "Building Secure Elections: E-Voting, Security, and Systems Theory." Public administration review 64, no. 5 (2004): 515-528.

<sup>73</sup> Macintosh and Whyte. 2008. P.3.

the world and compensating for physical disabilities of the citizens.<sup>74</sup> In this context the Internet plays a great role in reviving citizens' engagement. A number of scholars argue that use of ICT in the policymaking is very powerful to revitalize public interest in decision making. Authors such as Kanstrup et al, O'Rourke et al, and Tambouris et al<sup>75</sup> argue that states began to realize importance of ICT in strengthen citizens' interest in political participation. Coglianese also argues that ICT will 'revolutionize' rulemaking from relative obscurity to opening up government to ordinary citizens to participate in regulations.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Sæbø argues that it is reciprocal model of interaction as governments are trying to increase participation in order to increase transparency, efficiency and legitimacy of political processes, and citizens are promoting their own interest through the new tools.<sup>77</sup> E-participation is normally associated with some form of political deliberation or decision-making: whereas it is formal political process as voting or broader aspects of political activism, for instance, opinion forming, consultation, deliberation etc.

Sæbø argues that at different stages we can observe different opportunities for citizens and government. Beside the e-voting, which is considered to be the main and most developed form of e-participation activism, online decision making is a potential option for growing political participation.<sup>78</sup> Citizens are involved directly in policymaking processes through such tools as consultations, discussion forums, deliberation, e-referenda, and online town hall meetings etc. Generally it is the same traditional approaches but with the use of new technology and the Internet. E-participation tools are also used during election campaigns when political

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<sup>74</sup> Lenihan, Tambouris et al.

<sup>75</sup> Anne Marie Kanstrup, Jeremy Rose, and Lars Torpe. "A multi-perspective approach to eparticipation." *Mapping eParticipation* (2006): 3.; O'Rourke, K. C., Helen McQuillan, and Nóirín Hayes. "eParticipation: time to take stock?." *Mapping eParticipation* (2006): 1.; Tambouris et al.

<sup>76</sup> Cary Coglianese. "Weak democracy, strong information: The role of information technology in the rulemaking process." *Public Law Working Paper 07-04* (2007). P. 1-33. P.28.

<sup>77</sup> Sæbø et al. P. 401.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* P. 412-418

elites use Internet technologies to raise money. E-petitioning remains the last and may be the most promising activity from efficient and legal perspective. The petitions system empowers citizens through greater engagement in the parliamentary process. It is aimed to influence agenda setting in policy making. Thus, it is a two-way interaction when citizens frame the issue for government to consider. E-petitioning is one of the activities together with e-consultations that will be analyzed in details in two case studies.

In order to effectively evaluate e-participation and study it in-depth, the political and cultural specificity of the country need to be covered, understanding why people interact and what they do during e-participation activity, insight of what leads people to engage in decision-making process, and finally what the system does when claiming for better involvement of citizenship in policymaking.<sup>79</sup> According to Sæbø the main interested actors are citizens, who are empowered and provided with new opportunities to frame policymaking.<sup>80</sup> It is generally agreed that citizens primarily seek transparency of political processes and accountability of political institutions, the main features that e-participation offers for democratic efficiency. The research is mainly focused on the citizens, but politicians also play an important role in e-participation. Individual officials take an active part in online discussion forums and do not always act as a group. Sæbø also points out on government institution, voluntary organizations, grassroots movements as independent actors in e-participation. And in order to understand the concept the interests of various actors need to be considered.

E-participation is still in the process of development and some pilot versions just have been launched but already some positive effects of the project can be seen. Sæbø suggests three positive outcomes that could be indicated for the short period of time since e-participation has

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<sup>79</sup> Macintosh,2008. P. 96-97.

<sup>80</sup> Sæbø. P. 410-412

been in action.<sup>81</sup> First of all, it is civic engagement effect that arguing for wider scope of engagement activities with the introduction of technology in the process. The second advantage is deliberative effect where discussions are conducted in a fair, egalitarian and factual way. The most important effect of e-participation is on democracy. Sæbø argues that e-participation tools can foster democratic development of society. Nevertheless, it is still unclear how exactly and whether it has already had positive effect on country's democratization.

It is also important to outline which factors can impact the level of e-participation. Macintosh points to several issues that can danger the high participatory level of citizens: political equality, privacy of personal data and trust in democratic processes.<sup>82</sup> To this list can be added education, civic interest, age, and income level. Certainly the lack of institutional engagement hinders the development of e-participation. Moreover, Norris suggests that in analyzing e-participation we should not neglect constraints that burden its further development. One of this challenges that she points out is the 'digital divide'. The term is defined in the literature as "the result of social, environmental, and organizational factors that prevent use of e-government technology."<sup>83</sup> There are two types of digital divide: access divide and skills divide. The first type focuses on the statistics regarding how many people have an access to the Internet and other electronic tools. The second focuses on the ability to use these tools, such as information literacy that play crucial role in involvement of citizens. The ability to read and interpret information can result in better interest and better political involvement of ordinary citizens. Nevertheless, new technology focuses more on intelligent users, where they understand how to get the information and how to use it more efficiently. Another constrain that Shulman

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. P. 422-424.

<sup>82</sup> Macintosh, 2008. P. 88.

<sup>83</sup> Reddick. P. 56.



points out is that citizens simply might be not interested in involvement in policy issues. And a limited number of citizens cannot significantly influence policy decisions.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, this shows the importance of civic interest in decision-making.

In the empirical part of the research I will make an in-depth comparison of government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions based on the governmental websites of the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. However, this part will provide an overview of classification of three stages of e-participation: e-enabling, e-engaging, and e-empowering<sup>85</sup>, so the reader will be able to follow the further analysis. In evaluating e-participation it is important to break it into parts in order to increase efficiency of desired outcome and present more in-depth detailed analysis.

According to Macintosh, Chadwick and May, Medaglia, and OECD report from 2001<sup>86</sup> there are three levels of e-participation: information, consultation and active participation. Each stage has different dimension of e-participation and governments can work in linear way on all levels starting from the lowest information form and going to the highest with most citizens' interaction with government. At the same time the stage can be skipped to reach a higher level of e-participation.

At the first stage or e-enabling as Macintosh defined it, the main focus is on efficiency of service delivery and providing information to citizens, who are viewed as customers. The aim of government here is to provide these information and services to satisfy the demand of their customers. Citizens are very passive, and participation comes down to the fact that individuals

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<sup>84</sup> David Schlosberg, Stephen Zavestoski, and Stuart W. Shulman. "Democracy and e-rulemaking: Web-based technologies, participation, and the potential for deliberation." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 4, no. 1 (2008): 37-55. P. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Macintosh, 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Macintosh, 2004; Chadwick and May; Rony Medaglia. "Measuring the diffusion of eParticipation: A survey on Italian local government." *Information Polity* 12, no. 4 (2007): 265-280.; Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation. OECD PUMA Policy Brief No. 10, 2001. P. 23.

are looking for information provided by government online.<sup>87</sup> Chadwick and May argues that it is a model directed by government therefore information flows in one direction to citizens.<sup>88</sup> This one-way of interaction is the biggest obstacle on information level, because there is no evidence of interaction of government with citizens. The latter can receive information but cannot change service delivery process.<sup>89</sup> In the policymaking process on the informative level technology can be used to make sure the information is easily available and easy to read and interpret effectively. So the lowest level of e-participation even cannot be called full participation, because it is still a one-way top-down approach. It can be, however, a good start for civic engagement and increase citizens' interest in decision-making.

At the consultative level of e-participation the role of authorities directed to better policy decisions with citizens' input.<sup>90</sup> It is a two-way interaction, but still directed by the government.<sup>91</sup> At this stage citizens are able to provide feedback to the government via new media tools such as Facebook and Twitter and at the same time get it through the direct e-mailing to the representative official. According to Macintosh the e-engaging stage implies that government is trying to embrace and analyze information from first hands via citizens' consultations. Still there is no guarantee that citizens' input will be taken into account in the policy making process. However, Macintosh, Sæbø and Reddick<sup>92</sup> evaluate the second stage as the most developed and effective in two-way online interaction between citizens and governments. Governments set the issues for consultation while citizens are invited to contribute their views and opinions. At the same time on this stage citizens can influence agenda setting in

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<sup>87</sup> Medaglia, P. 266.

<sup>88</sup> Chadwick and May. P. 276.

<sup>89</sup> Reddick. P. 48

<sup>90</sup> Macintosh, 2004. P.3.; Anttiroiko. P. 124

<sup>91</sup> Reddick. P. 49.

<sup>92</sup> Sæbø et al. P.416; Reddick. P .50, Macintosh 2004, Tambouris. P. 7;

government initiating electronic petitions. Moreover, one more characteristic of the stage is the opportunity for citizens to ask questions from the government and expect constructive and consistent response.

The stage of active participation indicates two-way interaction between citizens and governments. Here relationships are based on partnership with government where citizens are involved in agenda setting and issue framing of policymaking. Andersen argues that diverse range of actors starting from nonprofit organizations, interest groups, citizens, media and finishing businesses and average citizens is a critical for the development of public policy.<sup>93</sup> At this stage citizens can initiate ideas and shape policy outcomes on this stage. The third level of e-participation is a bottom-up approach and citizens are more information producers than consumers. It is a multidirectional flow of information, therefore we can see the opportunities and processes when citizens cannot just initiate the discussion on the certain issue, but influence the outcome through the various tools: e-voting, e-referenda, online opinion polling, and others.<sup>94</sup> Macintosh argues that the main objective at this stage is democracy enhancement and citizen participation in governance.<sup>95</sup> Taking into account all potential of technology tools, Reddick and Norris point out that on this stage there is a little evidence of active public participation in policymaking.<sup>96</sup> In fact, it is very new area of interconnection between citizens and government. The stage does not include all aspects such as institutional or legal. There are no generally accepted guidelines for countries promoting e-participation on this stage. Macintosh similarly

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<sup>93</sup> Kim Viborg Andersen, Helle Zinner Henriksen, Christine Secher, and Rony Medaglia. "Costs of e-participation: the management challenges." *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy* 1, no. 1 (2007): 29-43. P. 33.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* P. 34

<sup>95</sup> Macintosh and Whyte, 2008. P. 24

<sup>96</sup> Reddick P.50, Donald F. Norris. "Electronic democracy at the American grassroots." *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (IJEGR)* 1, no. 3 (2005): 1-14.

points out on certain institutional resistance to the introduction and use e-participation applications.<sup>97</sup>

The online tools remain just mechanisms and may not be used. Kamal argues that one of the reasons why citizens do not participate in policymaking is ignorance of relevant policies and challenges of policymaking process.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, ideally, analyzing e-participation we need to consider actors who should be engaged and by whom, technologies that consider how and with what to engage citizens and support participation, rules of engagement that define what citizens can and cannot do during the e-participation, duration and sustainability that limit the time initiative last, accessibility, resources and promotion need to be considered in a way to count financial cost of e-participation, evaluation of the results from the initiative on political, social and technical perspective, and certain political, legal, cultural, economic, and technological factors that can be distinct and important in each and every case.

### **Chapter 3: Analyzing the Quality of E-participation by Using E-consultations and E-petitions as Proxies**

E-participation entails the willingness of the citizens to participate in decision making via the government schemes that aim to encourage this engagement. Its goal is to improve citizens' access to information and services. Citizens' involvement in policy making is often channeled via public consultations that are increasingly conducted electronically. This section will analyze comparatively both government-led e-consultations with the qualitative focus on the timing of

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<sup>97</sup> Macintosh et al. 2009. P. 7

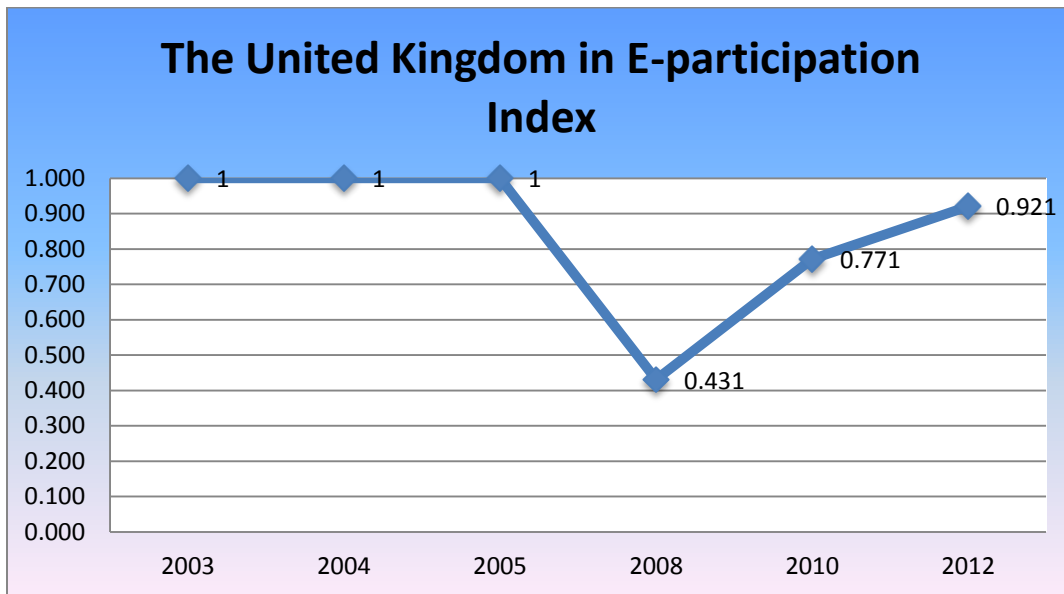
<sup>98</sup> Muhammad Mustafa Kamal, "An analysis of e-participation research: moving from theoretical to pragmatic viewpoint." *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy* 3, no. 4 (2009): 340-354. P. 340.

consultation, subjects and accessibility of relevant materials, and feedback. In case of citizens-initiated e-petitions I considered such variables as actors and openness, information and comments, and feedback.

First I will present data for the UK's and Russian government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions and then I will proceed with comparative analysis of two cases.

### 3.1 Case Study of the United Kingdom

Figure 4: The United Kingdom in E-participation Index



Source: UN E-Government survey 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012

Coleman and Gotze argue that when the internet use rate was just 50 percent in the United Kingdom the government had massively adopted e-consultation.<sup>99</sup> According to the UN data, starting from 2003 the country has been always in the top ten in terms of the e-participation index. Although, the UK's main government portal was redesigned in 2008, which appears to have resulted in a drop in the web measure rankings for the UK. This falling was mainly due to the migration of e-participation products and services from its national portal to local

<sup>99</sup> Stephen Coleman, and John Gotze. *Bowling together: Online public engagement in policy deliberation*. London: Hansard Society, 2001. P. 36-37

government portals. It should be noted that the e-participation survey does not take into account regional and local portals or websites, but only national portals or websites and selected ministries. But the country quickly strengthened its position and in the last survey on e-participation from 2012 the UK was ranked third in this rating. Analyzing UK's e-government Kolsaker and Lee-Kelley remarked the state willingness to promote deliberative, participatory decision making among citizens and reach of its own socially inclusive governance program.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the number of researches done on e-participation indicates high interest of scholars in the online engagement policy of Great Britain.<sup>101</sup> Consistency and efficiency of the country in e-participation development is worth analyzing and extracting positive experience from it.

### 3.1.1 Government-led E-consultations

The analysis will be focused on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – the main governmental website of the United Kingdom. Inside it one can easily find the consultation link, which brings to all open and closed consultations ever existed in any ministry of the UK.

**Figure 5: E-consultations Website in the UK**

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<sup>100</sup> Kolsaker and Lee-Kelley. P. 724-725

<sup>101</sup> Macintosh, 2008. P. 94

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### Protecting the independent press from unfair competition

21 May 2013 DCLG Consultation outcome

### Options to encourage permanent reductions in electricity use (Electricity Demand Reduction)

21 May 2013 DECC Consultation outcome

### Classifying and measuring the creative industries: Consultation on proposed changes

21 May 2013 DCMS Open consultation

### Review of planning practice guidance

21 May 2013 DCLG Consultation outcome

### Energy supply administration cost recovery mechanism

21 May 2013 DECC Consultation outcome

[Visual effects: consultation on providing further support to the visual effects industry](#)

(Source: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?publication\\_filter\\_option=consultations](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?publication_filter_option=consultations))

### *Timing of Consultation*

Engagement should begin early in policymaking when it is still under consideration and views can genuinely be taken into account. Timeframes for consultation should be proportionate and realistic to allow all stakeholders sufficient time to read, analyze and give a considerable response. However, the procedure should not take long (e.g. half-year) because after the consultation stage, government has to process the input and based on evaluation develop a law. Considering the number of all consultations, the whole procedure might take a while.

The time range of the e-consultation is very important because it shows how far the government is ready to go in order to get more people involved. The procedure of the e-consultations in the UK is quite simple and encourages one to express an opinion. The average time for the consultation is three months, which shows that politicians want to get more citizens

involved. Thus, all stakeholders can read and analyze carefully the materials about a consultation and provide balanced idea. But the government suggests no longer than 12 weeks where feasible and sensible.

### *Subjects and Accessibility of Relevant Information*

Subjects of the consultations and accessibility of the relevant materials on the issue are important variables when evaluating e-consultation. It should be a part of strengthening policy making and involve understanding of the policy outcomes for those affected. Information provided for citizens' background to the consulted issue has to be comprehended, so a bigger variety of people can contribute. Here it should be also emphasized who needs to be consulted and ensure that the consultation captures the full range of stakeholders affected. Looking at the variety of topics on which citizens can consult politicians shows if the government fully trusts citizens or wants them to be involved on the specific issues. For instance government might do not want ask people about foreign policy, rather focus on such issues as transport, health, education etc. Moreover, depending on which phase citizens are given the opportunity for an input can show how much the government trust to their citizens' ideas and if they want a comprehensive feedback from them. Input can start on the early stage of agenda setting, when citizens suggest certain ideas for a government; otherwise, it can take place on the last stage of policymaking, when politicians want to get people involved basically for their comment on already developed issue.

The UK's website provides the guidelines for all users that explain how to use e-consultations. All consultations are divided by publication type, topic, department, location and date. Users are invited to comment on the variety of topics that government set. The website has



a very user-friendly interface that allows anyone to access any information regarding consultation without prior authorization. Moreover, anyone can receive any relevant information within twenty working days from a public sector organization. There are no restrictions on age, nationality or place of residence. The guidelines state that contributions are welcomed from individuals, companies, civil society organizations, think-tanks and governments. It is important to mention that the website offers all stakeholders the chance to take part in consultancy within the UK or beyond its borders. This indicates strong governmental interest of input that all people might make to improve the idea of the country. Under each consultation government provides a clear goal why it wants to consult with citizens. The stage of policymaking is important here, because the consultation mainly focuses on a certain idea and encourages citizens to evaluate it according to suggested questions. The response form is convenient because it creates focus on special aspects of the consultation, but not on the abstract new idea on the topic. The government sets specific topics on which it wants to get a response. That corresponds to the developed two-way interaction outlined by Macintosh.<sup>102</sup>

### *Feedback and Evaluation of E-consultation*

Departments should make clear at least in broad terms how they have taken previous feedback into consideration, and what future plans they may have for engagement. Relevant department should publish the evaluation report in which states who was consulted and what

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<sup>102</sup> Macintosh, 2004. P. 2

exact inputs helped for further improvements of the issue. That will help to build trust on the further cooperation in decision making which is one of the main objectives of e-consultations.<sup>103</sup>

According to the guidelines, the government will issue an extensive report evaluating citizens' input and final decision on the consulted topic within half a year after closing the consultation. As an illustration serves the consultation on "Pensions and Growth"<sup>104</sup> which was open for submissions in early 2013 for twelve weeks. The evaluation report, issued two months after the consultation has been closed, indicates which opinions are taken into account and how they helped to shape the outcome on the certain issue. A list of individuals and organizations consulted is also provided. Guidelines state that responses should be analyzed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation. The report shows careful analysis to the processing of the information received. The inclusion of citizens' input in the final outcome indicates the interest of the government in public involvement.

### **3.1.2 Citizens-initiated E-petition**

There are also means for citizens to frame the issue for government. The UK has adopted e-petitioning systems as a way to display a commitment to their constituents and provide greater accessibility into government processes. The petitions system empowers citizens through greater engagement in the parliamentary process. Statistics show that for the first year a total of 36,000 petitions were submitted, attracting 6.4 million signatures.<sup>105</sup>

**Figure 6: E-petitions in the UK**

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<sup>103</sup> Whyte and Macintosh. 2002. P.12

<sup>104</sup> Pensions and Growth: Whether to smooth assets and liabilities in scheme funding valuations. Whether to introduce a new statutory objective for the Pensions Regulator (Government response to the call for evidence). Department for Work and Pensions. May 2013.

<sup>105</sup> What next for E-petitions? Hansard Society. UK, 2012

## All e-petitions

<b>Open</b> (6,018)	<b>Closed</b> (15,275)	<b>Rejected</b> (18,563)
------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------

Listed below are any e-petitions that can be signed.

Previous **1** [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) ... [300](#) [301](#) Next

e-petition name	Signatures	Closing
Stop the badger cull <a href="#">View</a> <span>response</span>	222,168	07/09/2013
Stop mass immigration from Bulgarian and Romanians in 2014, when EU restrictions on immigration are relaxed. <a href="#">View</a> <span>response</span>	147,542	12/11/2013
Save Childrens Cardiac Surgery at the EMCHC at Glenfield Leicester <a href="#">View</a> <span>response</span>	109,142	06/07/2013
Promote cycling by implementing the recommendations in the 'Get Britain Cycling' report. <a href="#">View</a> <span>response</span>	61,921	23/04/2014

(Source: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/>)

### *Actors and the Openness*

The access should be provided for as many people as possible in order to get heard people with different visions. On this stage I will also look at the openness of the procedure for everyone and transparency in the system. Whether it provides a list of the names who signed, along with their countries indicates the transparency of the mechanism.

The guidelines state that petitions are open for one year that gives the time period to promote idea and attract the attention of as many stakeholders as possible. Petition needs to collect 100,000 signatures for further consideration in the House of Commons. All of them are stored on the website and one can easily see the reasons of rejection of certain petitions or vote for open one, although the portal does not provide the information regarding passed petitions. As

it only shows open, closed and rejected ones, we cannot see what kind of citizens' ideas have passed. However, people can initiate an issue on a big variety of topics without any restrictions. From personal information they have to provide name, last name, email, and home address, which does not sound problematic. It explains the fast growing interest of people in e-petitioning. All UK citizens can start a petition without any limitations. Such opportunity and accessibility is likely to bring broad public participation.

### *Information and Comments*

Important additional information that supports the petition is necessary for users to be better informed about the issue. It is important if the users have this extra data rather than just the petition text. The possibility to make comments so everyone can see it either for or against the petition needs to be considered. Having an integrated discussion forum in the petitioning system is important because it makes the process more interactive and allows a constructive debate to occur on the petition issue.

On the e-consultation portal of the UK there is no additional information on e-petitions available. There is a short description of the problem and if it is a matter of a particular governmental department in some cases the link is provided. But according to the UK Freedom of Information act anyone can receive any relevant information within twenty working days from public sector organization. Since petitions can only be signed by British citizens I was not able to check if there is an opportunity for petitioners to comment it. But without signing a petition no comment box is available.

### *Feedback*

Feedback on what was happening to the petition once it had collected a required number of signatures should be provided. Publishing the report with evaluation can be important to ensure that everyone knows what has happened to the petition once it has been closed.

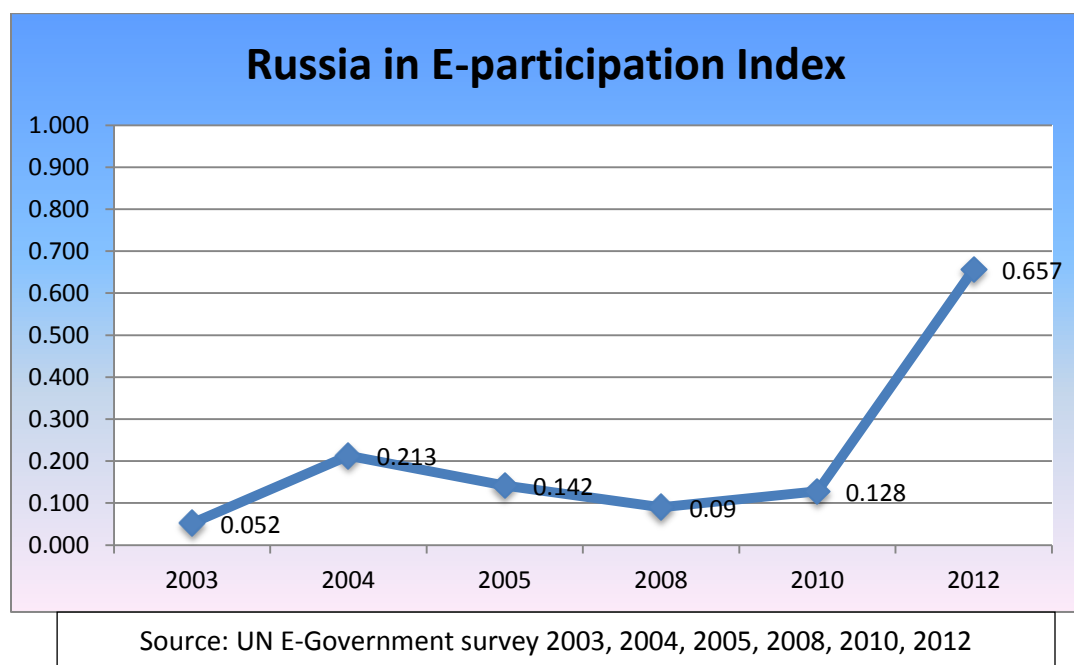
Looking at the data it is reasonable to say that government monitors the whole process and tries to follow the procedure of gathering signatures. In a number of e-petitions the response from government is provided even before the closing date of an initiative. This emphasizes that politicians are tracking petition and if it reaches the desired number of signatures before closing, they provide a response on further steps. In the feedback sometimes there is additional information provided either about further procedure or extra materials about the issue. The mechanism emphasizes the accountability and responsiveness of the UK government in e-petitioning system.

Data gathered on e-consultations and e-petitions in the UK showed the mutual interest of citizens and government to cooperate for better decision making. Publishing reports after consultations and leaving a response on e-petitions characterize government as accountable to their citizens. Based on several factors it can be concluded that consultations and petitions processes are transparent and accessible. One of which is the variety of topic on which citizens can consult and frame the issue through petitions. The second important observation is the variety of actors that can consult government even if they are not UK citizens. Time range for consultation shows an interest of government to attract various stakeholders. In the case of e-petitions, the government shows its interest to the process, constantly monitoring and providing response on the popular initiatives. Accessibility and availability of information give an active citizen the opportunity to analyze the outcomes from previous consultations and has more expertise approach next time, which increases the efficiency of input. In the case citizens-led

petitions, it is also important to mention that government explains all rejected proposals. They are all available on the website and one can find similar petition and see the reason of rejection and to modify own idea in a proper way. It also underlines the idea that previous experience will encourage public involvement and what is more important the efficiency of the input.

### 3.2 Case study of the Russian Federation

Figure 7: Russia in E-participation Index



The world trend in technological development had an important impact on the Russian Federation. Over the last five years the country has dramatically improved its technological performance. The country shows very good results in affordability pillar according to the Global Information Technology Report 2012.<sup>106</sup> Affordability entails the cost of accessing ICTs, either via mobile telephony or fixed broadband Internet, as well as the level of competition in the Internet and telephony sectors that determine this cost. It indicates that generally new

<sup>106</sup> Global Information Technology Report 2012 P. 251

technologies in the country are easily available for all citizens. Geographically speaking Russia is a huge country and it is unevenly developed from one region to the other. However, according to the World Bank Data the number of Internet users (per 100 people) has doubled since 2008; for 2011 it was 49 percent.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, mobile and the Internet affordability have influenced overall technological development in the country. The country launched the program “Russian E-government” (Elektronnaya Rossiya) in 2002. Since then it did not show significant results in e-participation. The UN started to consider Russia from 2003 and we did not observe great achievements till 2012 when the figure has risen sharply.

According to Astrom various domestic and international factors can explain rapid development of e-participation among non-democratic states.<sup>108</sup> In Russian case such domestic factor can be certain technology ambitions of former President Medvedev whose one of the main focuses was on technological modernization of the country. A good example to this is founded by Medvedev “Skolkovo”- Russian Silicon Valley in 2010. Among the international factors it can be stressed Russia’s joining WTO. The country is trying to create an image of open and transparent government to be a worthy member of the international organization. In order to proceed with the main analysis, it is important to remark that both internal and external factors influenced the development.

I will apply the same model in the Russian case dividing e-participation on government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions.

### **3.2.1 Government-led E-consultations**

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<sup>107</sup> The World Bank Data. Internet users (per 100 people) retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2> (accessed May 23, 2013)

<sup>108</sup> Åström, P. 143

There is a link on the official governmental website that redirects to the [www.regulations.gov.ru](http://www.regulations.gov.ru). According to the governmental regulation of the Russian Federation No. 851 from August 25, 2012, all federal executive bodies are obliged to publish information on the preparation of the current legal acts on this portal, and also to promote public discussion. The portal was organized with a view to increasing transparency of the federal executive bodies and the exercise of the constitutional rights of citizens, and to increase public participation in policy making.

Figure 8: E-consultations in Russia

The screenshot shows the 'Единый портал' (Unified Portal) website. At the top, there is a search bar and a 'Ваш личный кабинет' (Your personal account) link. Below the search bar, the portal's name and purpose are displayed: 'Единый портал для размещения информации о разработке федеральными органами исполнительной власти проектов нормативных правовых актов и результатов их публичных обсуждений'. There are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and others.

The main content area is divided into several sections. One section is titled 'Проекты нормативных правовых актов' (Projects of normative legal acts) and includes a search bar for 'Экспертиза действующих актов' (Expertise of existing acts). Below this, there are several categories of projects, such as 'Атомная энергетика' (Nuclear energy), 'Государственная безопасность' (State security), and 'Образование' (Education).

At the bottom, there is a table listing specific projects for public discussion. The table has columns for 'Название' (Name), 'Разработчик' (Developer), 'Категория' (Category), and 'Этап' (Stage).

Название	Разработчик	Категория	Этап
Административный регламент (ведомственный приказ) «Об установлении размера начальной (максимальной) цены контракта при осуществлении закупки товара, работы, услуги, при превышении которого в контракте должна быть указана обязанность поставщика (подрядчика, исполнителя) предоставлять информацию о всех исполнителях, субподрядчиках, заключивших договор или договоры с поставщиком (подрядчиком, исполнителем), цена которого или общая цена которых составляет более чем десять процентов цены контракта»	Министерство экономического развития Российской Федерации	Проект нормативного правового акта	Текст проекта акта
Постановление Правительства Российской Федерации «Об установлении размера начальной (максимальной) цены контракта при осуществлении закупки товара, работы, услуги, при превышении которого в контракте должна быть указана обязанность участника закупки, с которым заключается контракт, предоставить заказчику информацию о своих выгодоприобретателях»	Министерство экономического развития Российской Федерации	Проект нормативного правового акта	Текст проекта акта

(Source: <http://regulation.gov.ru>)

### Timing of Consultation

The guidelines clearly state that the minimum time for the consultation is 15 days and maximum depending on the department is 60 days. Going through a number of consultations I found that government on average sets the minimum time for consultations. This is quite a



limited time for a comprehensive consultation period taking into account that mainly legislation issues are discussed on the portal. Since the system has been launched on April 15, 2013 and it is quite new there is little data available and no statistics about the project at all.

### *Subjects and Accessibility of the Relevant Information*

The citizen has to be registered in the system to take part in the consultation. Moreover, an active citizen has to provide more personal information about his experience and background to be considered an expert. Only in this case can person participate in all types of consultations. Such a limited form of public participation shows that politicians are interested in consulting particular group of people. Meantime, the variety of topics for consultation shows that there are no restrictions for public involvement. The portal offers consultations on the atomic energy as well as transport issues.

The consultation is divided into four stages: announcement, text of the act project, finalization, and adoption of the act. Stakeholders can leave an idea on the first stage of announcement; then when the consultation proceeds to the second stage, one can access the draft of the act and leave the comment on this stage as well. At the third stage of finalization according to the rules, all inputs are considered and at the last stage final act is published. It is interesting that on the first stage of the consultation little information is provided about the topic; one can leave general comment regarding the issue or look for additional information about the topic. Only at the second (and the last for public participation) stage government publishes the policy draft on which it wants to get experts' views.

### *Feedback and the Evaluation of E-consultation*

The government does not publish any report that would analyze citizens' input in e-consultations. Therefore, it is not clear if the suggestions as such were considered when creating an act or left neglected. The whole procedure is carried out through emails, thus, it is unclear whether any public ideas were considered at all. Government does not provide any feedback on e-consultations and it is difficult to judge the outcomes on policymaking because without the draft at the first stage one can only see the text at the second and last stage for public participation.

### **3.2.2 Citizens-initiated E-petitions**

On May 7, 2012 President Putin announced Act No. 601 that addresses accessibility of information to the citizens and formation of new participatory platforms through online means. It is still on the paper, and no new platforms have been developed so far. But the Russian non-profit organization “Information Democracy Foundation” picked up the idea and developed it into the website Russian Public Initiative - [www.roi.ru](http://www.roi.ru). Having no other alternative projects, on March 7, 2013 Putin signed the order for Russian e-petition portal. But it stated that the website maintenance would be handled by the “Information Democracy Foundation”. The new order mandates that Kremlin representatives take part in the review of petitions, along with experts in different subjects.

**Figure 9: E-petitions in Russia**

Регион не определен

Версия для слабовидящих Вход

РОССИЙСКАЯ ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ИНИЦИАТИВА

Как это работает? Обратная связь Интерактивная карта

ОПУБЛИКОВАТЬ ИНИЦИАТИВУ

Всего инициатив: **1085** Поиск инициатив **НАЙТИ**

### Популярные инициативы

**На голосовании**  
Живая лента / [популярные](#) / [все](#) / [последние](#) ● 1085 инициатив

<p><a href="#">Принятие Федерального закона о комплексном за счет федерального бюджета медицинском обслуживании детей, страдающих серьезными заболеваниями, детей-инвалидов, включая проведение операций, обеспечение лекарствами и прочим.</a></p> <p>Уровень инициативы: Федеральный Всего 176 голосов</p>	<p>последний голос в <b>22:08:57</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Возбуждать дела против нарушителей ПДД по видеозаписям</a></p> <p>Уровень инициативы: Федеральный Всего 23383 голоса</p>	<p>последний голос в <b>22:08:55</b></p>
<p><a href="#">Оплата за общедомовое потребление</a></p> <p>Уровень инициативы: Муниципальный Всего 142 голоса</p>	<p>последний голос в <b>22:08:55</b></p>	<p><a href="#">ужесточение уголовной ответственности угонщиков автомобилей</a></p> <p>Уровень инициативы: Федеральный Всего 600 голосов</p>	<p>последний голос в <b>22:08:54</b></p>

(Source: <https://www.roi.ru/>)

### *Actors and the Openness*

All initiatives are open to the public but in order to create a petition one has to register to be able to sign the petitions. One has to provide electronic signature or go to the local post office with passport to ensure the identity and get the activation password for the website. Once received the code citizen is registered in the system and it allows access to all governments' online services. The e-petitions address various topics but the most popular are everyday life ones such as "Transport and Roads" – 241 initiatives in two months. All ideas are divided into three subgroups: voting, in processing, and decision has made. It does not specify passed petitions, mainly because there is a little practice of e-petitioning in the country. The initiative has to gather 100,000 signatures if it is on the federal level, on regional level as well as

municipal no less than 5 percent from total registered population. The voting lasts for a year and then after the legal expertise it will be sent for further consideration to the relevant state authority. In about 1,5 months of its existence 1085 petitions (on May 22, 2013) were initiated. The most popular has already got 50.9 percent.

The guidelines of the Russian Public Initiative, however, place strict limitations on what submissions will be considered. The text bans petitions if they duplicate existing petitions, unconstitutional, profane, extremist, or silent about actual policy suggestions. The “Information Democracy Foundation” has the right to remove any offending proposals before they’re even voted upon. Moreover, expert groups composed of state officials and industry figures will pass judgment on all petitions that collect the minimum support.

#### *Information and Comments*

There is limited information provided under the petitions. It states the problematic aspect of the issue and the information who will benefit and how from the petition. There is no extra data on the issue. Therefore, in order to vote one has to read extra information about the issue of the petition. The discussion panel is also not available. There is no comment box or similar that indicates the interaction about the petition between citizens. Information about who signed the petition is not accessible; we only can see the number of signatures.

#### *Feedback*

The spirit in which the administration responds to these petitions could determine whether the platform becomes a helpful political tool, or ends up dead in the water. Gathering the necessary number of signatures and sending it to the government does not mean that it will pass. The portal was launched on April 2, 2013 and since then there was no government reaction or

response on the e-petitioning. Even those petitions, which already have more than 50 percent from needed number were left without response. Thus, at this time we cannot judge with absolute certainty that government is simply not interested what is going on the portal managed by politically active NGO.

### ***3.3 Comparative analysis of the United Kingdom and Russia***

Presenting empirical evidence from both countries in the first two sections helped to identify the most important features of e-participation in each country. However, in order to address an answer on the research question in comparative analysis I will try to identify the important qualitative differences between the two countries which are overlooked in the previous research.

So, can we explain why Russia and Great Britain are so different in so many aspects, be it economic, social or political are so close on the e-participation index? The explanation is rooted mainly in three factors that are important to look at when evaluating e-participation performance in different countries. These are:

- a. Time range and Rules,
- b. Experience of state institutions in implementing e-participation and
- c. The variety of actors allowed participating.

Each stage is important to pay specific attention, therefore relying on the empirical evidence presented before I will identify qualitative differences between Russia and Great Britain.

### *Time Range and Rules*

The two governments show different approaches to time range in e-consultations. In the UK the consultation lasts on average three months, which indicates the interest of the government to gather more ideas. In contrast, on Russian website [www.regulations.gov.ru](http://www.regulations.gov.ru) two-stage consultation on the average lasts 15 days. Considering the complexity of the process it is very limited time for government to get a comprehensive feedback from public. As for citizens-initiated e-petitions the procedure is similar in both cases.

Regarding the regulations of e-petitioning in the Russian case it is important to mention that the project [www.roi.ru](http://www.roi.ru) was found by non-profit organization that manages the portal. But since government does not have its own yet, Putin signed an order attracting attention of the population to e-petitioning. Thus, it can be a reason why government does not provide responses. Citizens' skepticism toward the issue can be also explained by the ownership and lack of legal bounding procedure with government. In case of e-petitioning in Russia no response from government was found looking through all initiatives. Portal also does not publish rejected petitions as well as reasons for it. Moreover, the project is supervised by NGO that does not inspire legal confidence in future of the petition. In contrast to this, the UK' politicians expressed profound interest to response on the petitions that even did not reach needed number of signatures. Lack of experience and interest of the government in the e-petitioning raise questions on the impact of citizens' initiatives on policymaking in Russia.

### *Experience in implementing e-participation*

It is equally important to look from qualitative side at how states manage to implement e-participation. The single fact that Russia just in two years jumped so many positions on UN

index might be already a warning sign. It is interesting in this context to look at how well managed websites are and what is the procedure of evaluation of citizens' input. Therefore, statistical data about the projects is crucial in the context.

According to the UN Surveys, the United Kingdom has been among top leaders in e-participation since 2003. It showed constantly high results in electronic tools employment. Looking at the data one can see quite developed mechanism of evaluation of citizens' input. Within 6 months the government issues the report in which clearly states the list of consulted persons and evaluation of suggestions from stakeholders. In the case of Russia the situation is very different. Both projects e-consultations and e-petitions are very new such as couple of months in operation. Thus, there is insufficient data available about outcomes of consultations on decision making.

The stage in decision making is another important factor to pay attention when evaluating experience in implementing e-participation. Depending on which stage of decision making a government is allowed to engage citizens indicates the scope within which it wants to encourage e-participation. Both cases give citizens the opportunity to provide the comments on the settled issue, but with small differences. The UK provides the material on consultation and policy draft on the starting point of a consultation, so that one can analyze and make a contribution after. In Russia the government has divided the consultation into four stages in which two are open for citizens' input. At the first stage citizens frame the idea, regarding certain topic set by government, send it to the official email and at the second stage there is a policy draft on which they are welcomed to comment. Generally there is no big difference on this aspect in two cases, except that the policy draft is providing on the different stages. But considering the short time for consultation in Russia, the government did not think over how it wants to involve public.

### *Variety of Actors*

In the last part of the analysis I look closely at what types of actors are allowed to participate on the e-participation websites. It is an important factor since the whole idea of e-participation is related to the broadening of public participation and any limitation to that will represent a clear limitation of e-participation as such.

In case of e-consultations, the UK offers everyone who is concerned about the topic to take part in consultation. It states in the guidelines that suggestions from everyone whether UK citizen or not are welcomed. In stark contrast to it, in Russia, in order to consult the government on the particular issue and have an access to all available consultations one has to be registered as an expert. Such focus on the specific groups is a worrying sign for public involvement idea and e-participation as such. In case of e-petitioning in both countries it is mandatory to be citizen of the country and authorized on the website. The analysis shows that the UK is more open to engage a greater variety of actors to participate and, therefore more interested in citizens' ideas and suggestions that can be beneficial for policymaking.

Summarizing the findings the main differences between Russia and Great Britain are clear, starting with the fact that Russia has little experience in this domain, few fully working initiatives and has serious limitations as regards who can participate. Instead of asking why two countries are so similar in e-participation, it is better to ask whether they are similar at all. Yes, as we observed there is e-participation infrastructure in both countries, in Great Britain a better one and in Russia still evolving. It is clear that both countries undertook serious steps at technological and infrastructure level in order to promote and encourage e-participation. The problem is, however, that e-participation cannot be looked just from a quantitative perspective,



counting the number of initiatives and websites launched. In this respect the present analysis represented a clear improvement to the existing body of research by adding qualitative study to the quantitative result we already have. Although in the theory authors are emphasizing the importance of qualitative aspects of e-participation, empirically no efforts were made to evaluate e-participation qualitatively.

It is, thus, hard to explain why Russia and Great Britain score almost the same on this indicator, being so strikingly different on everything else. As the analysis showed the answer is rooted in the performance as such and not in the infrastructure. Russia has little practice in involving public in broad participation in decision making. There is no transparency toward how many consultations and petitions succeeded. The overall picture does not look promising. Russia has really improved its technological performance and provided online services to the citizens, but taking into consideration all specificity of these opportunities and immaturity of the projects we see that e-participation for mass public involvement is not yet well thought out and developed. The time range for governmental consultations is quite limited. The government is not aimed to gather as many ideas as possible, 15 days are not enough for the whole period of consultation that consists from two stages where public can be involved. A limited number of participants automatically reduce the number of inputs. Also, the lack of statistics does not provide the picture of the impact of citizens' input. In case of e-petitions gathering a desired number of signatures does not mean that the petition will be discussed in the government. Moreover, Russian experience has such cases when the initiative got 100,000 signatures but it did not have any further impact.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, availability of resources does not mean their effectiveness. The term "Potemkin villages" still seems to be very relevant to the Russian case

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<sup>109</sup> Petition on the ban to adopt Russian Children by Americans. Petition was initiated by "Novaya Gazeta". Eventually gathered 100'000 signatures did not have any impact.

even after so many years; it only needs some modifications suggested by Katchanovski and LaPorte such as “e-villages”.<sup>110</sup> Russian availability of electronic services deceives others into thinking that the situation is better than it really is. The country has developed a culture of the e-participation, but immaturity of it and lack of real impact on policymaking make one think about its effectiveness for both citizens and government. Analyzing Russian e-participation it is necessary to gather information bit by bit. Since the whole idea is not systematized, very chaotic and non-structured, it was difficult to comprehend the whole process of public participation. All those factors are important in differentiating qualitatively already between Great Britain and Russia.

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<sup>110</sup> Ivan Katchanovski, and Todd La Porte. "Cyberdemocracy or Potemkin e-villages? Electronic governments in OECD and post-communist countries." *Intl Journal of Public Administration* 28, no. 7-8 (2005): 665-681.

## Conclusions

The studies on e-participation showed that there is a strong link between democracy and public participation. Democratic states will have higher level of citizens' involvement than non-democracies. However, recent findings of scholars and statistical data on e-participation were quite surprising. It came out that such different countries as Russia and Great Britain can perform similarly well in e-participation development. But how does this result occur? The research questioned methodological part of measuring e-participation emphasizing that certain qualitative aspects should be considered. The goal of the present research was to explain the similar high performance in e-participation in democratic and non-democratic states based on the cases of Russia and the United Kingdom. As argued in the literature, democracies are more prone to promote e-participation than non-democratic regimes, which seek to suppress political and civil freedoms.

Comparative analysis of Russia and the UK shows that there is different time range for consultations, variety of actors allowed to participate and the procedure of the feedback from government. It all leads to the argument that in the United Kingdom government takes public participation via electronic tools seriously. The case of consultations showed that the timing corresponds to the reality, such as for three months citizens can provide comprehensive feedback on the issue, for instance looking for extra information about the topic. Providing twelve weeks consultation, government wants to attract more citizens' inputs. Regarding the variety of actors, in the case of Britain there is no restrictions who can consult government, even not UK citizens but aware of the topic are welcomed. Interest of the government is expressed in a way of consultations' evaluation. Extensive report on closed consultation with inputs' analysis indicates about transparency of the procedure and interest from the government to what citizens think

about the issue. The case of e-petitioning demonstrated similar very positive findings showing great level of cooperation between citizens and government. The fact that politicians monitor e-petitions on the website and response on those, which even have not reach required number of signatures, but still popular, indicates the interest of government to the project. At the same time accountability and transparency of the procedure encourage more people to influence agenda setting.

The in-depth analysis of Russia showed that in hybrid regimes there is a misconception of e-participation. The government provides electronic tools, but it offers limited opportunities for public to influence policymaking. The time period for e-consultation in Russia was the minimal stated in guidelines that points on more forced approach of officials to involve public in decision making. Fifteen days are not enough for two-stage participation for public. First, citizens have to suggest the idea and only on the second stage they are provide with policy draft open for consultation. The Russian case showed certain limitations on a variety of actors allowed to participate in e-consultations. Focus on experts rather than active individuals undermines the whole idea of broad involvement of public in decision making. The most important finding was the lack of governmental interest to take seriously the opportunity to cooperate with citizens on policy making issues. Politicians do not publish any evaluation report on how public comments and suggestions were considered, while preparing the policy draft. This vague way of evaluation questions the importance of citizens' input. No visible results in citizens' input might discourage people and question the effectiveness of the whole procedure. Taking into consideration all findings it is difficult to say for the Russian case whether e-consultations have real impact on decision making. Analyzing e-petitioning in Russia, significant differences from the UK's case were found. One of them is that Russia does not even have an official e-petitioning website. The

one taken for the analysis is NGO's managed, but President in the form of a decree expressed great interest to this project. However, government does not show interest in the citizens' initiatives. It does not provide any response under any petitions, and, moreover, poses big limitations regarding what petitions can be considered. The spirit in which the administration responds to these petitions could determine whether the platform becomes a helpful political tool, or citizens will realize inefficiency to influence agenda setting through the e-petitioning.

Based on the main findings it can be argued that a qualitative evaluation of e-participation is required besides quantitative one. Analysis of case studies showed that even though countries have tools for electronic public participation, the nature of government-led e-consultations and citizens-initiated e-petitions is different in each case.

One possible explanation of the puzzle is that evaluating e-participation, UN survey, scholars and other experts counted big variety of emerging electronic tools [e] rather than participation. The UN measures things in a different way, thus, the mechanism should be focused on more qualitative analysis. Existing methodology of e-participation measurement should be changed in a way that UN criteria have to be focused more on the variables that have been analyzed in the present research. Ranking so many non-democratic states as top leaders, the e-participation index risks losing the credibility. As the present research has shown democratic UK and non-democratic Russia have tools for e-participation, but, in fact, the quality of it very different. Appearances are deceptive. Russian e-participation is more as charade, or "Potemkin e-village", implying that something done just for show. Refer to the main idea of e-participation, that it takes government to offer the tools and citizens to use them, it can be argued that if people face with ineffectiveness of e-participation and understand its superficial nature, they will stop using it that eventually will affect public e-participation.

Case study analysis showed that, even though non-democratic Russia was ranked as top leader in e-participation, the real opportunities for citizens to influence policy making and agenda setting are quite limited. The present research showed that a significant part of e-participation effectiveness depends on the efforts of the government. E-consultations and e-petitions practice in Russia are crude and underdeveloped. However, it is interesting to research if other non-democratic top e-participation leaders such as Kazakhstan or Bahrain will show similar results. In order to understand if superficial e-participation is a common trend for all non-democratic states, further research is needed.

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