A MECHANISM TO UNDERPIN STATE PATRONAGE OF NOVEL PUBLIC GOODS: REVISITING THE THEORY OF EFFECTIVE MANIPULATION

Tatyana MELNIKOVA

Candidate of Political Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of History, Philosophy and Political Science, Saratov Social-Economic Institute (branch) of Plekhanov Russian Economic University
tatyana.s.melnikova@mail.ru

Nataliya MITYAEVA

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor, Head of the Department of Economic Theory, Saratov Social-Economic Institute (branch) of Plekhanov Russian Economic University
natasha.mityaeva@inbox.ru

Anton PETROV

Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of National Economics and State and Municipal Governance, Saratov Social-Economic Institute (branch) of Plekhanov Russian Economic University
petron_anton.m@list.ru

Arina BOBKOVA

Master of Economics, Postgraduate Student, Department of Economic Theory, Saratov Social-Economic Institute (branch) of Plekhanov Russian Economic University
arina_bobkova@list.ru

Abstract

This paper examines the issue of the development of electronic government and electronic democracy in Russia in terms of fostering the public need for the everyday use of electronic services. The authors unfold the essence of E-government and E-democracy through some economic theory concepts. The purpose of this work is to bring to light the characteristics of effective state patronage of these public goods with the use of special manipulation technology. The authors share the results of an expert survey, 'Topical Issues in the Development of Electronic Government and Electronic Democracy in Saratov Oblast: The Public Need Aspect'. The paper describes the concept of a state mechanism for fostering public demand based on the use of manipulation technology – PR, propaganda, and advertising. The authors draw the conclusion about effective manipulation being possible only if the process of cultivating specific mindsets to shape and drive human behavior has an all-encompassing nature.

Keywords: electronic government, electronic democracy, Authorities–Society OEI (open electronic interaction) system, propaganda, political socialization

JEL classification:

1. Introduction

The Information Age is characterized by not only the mass use of information and computer technology and the emergence of new forms of financial-economic relations, the interaction between business entities, and control and accounting within any social-economic system. The current stage in the development of our information-driven society is also distinguished by the emergence of new patronized goods, i.e. public goods the demand for which is trailing that desired by society. New phenomena in society, in turn, are also engendering new subjects of scientific research and facilitating the development of new hypotheses and theories.

There are two clear-cut interdependent trends that can be traced in present-day society: firstly, it is the active development of the foundations of civil society, and, secondly, it is the development of electronic forms of interaction between the authorities and the public. The

development of a new model for the relationship between the government and society is, above all, attested to by the state's current information policy. The concept of electronic government and electronic democracy are not new in Russia. Starting in the 2000s, these systems have been developing quite actively, although the nation has yet to remediate the mismatch between the targets set out on paper and the actual results of these transformations of the authorities-society interaction system. The failed experience of the 'Electronic Russia 2002–2010' federal target program led to the need to reconsider some of the program's key provisions, methods, technology, and effectiveness and result assessment indicators. As a result, a new state program was adopted, 'Information Society 2011–2020'.

Starting in 2011, the nation has worked out and adopted numerous laws and regulations aimed at regulating the area of open interaction between citizens and bodies of authority. Specialists in the area of technological support for the operation of electronic authorities-society interaction systems have achieved notable success in their endeavors: the nation now has a sound e-government infrastructure in place, with quite a serious effort put into mechanisms underlying the infrastructure's key components (EPGU ('Single Portal for Government Services'), SMEV ('Interagency Electronic Interaction System'), ESIA ('Single Identification and Authentication System'), and ESNSI ('Single Regulatory-Reference Information System')).

Thus, there is no doubt that Russia is focused on bolstering and further developing the foundations of its information society, which incorporates all systems of open electronic interaction between the authorities and society (hereinafter 'Authorities–Society OEI system'). Of course, there still remain many unresolved issues, weaknesses, and imperfections in the way of both regulatory and technological support for the nation's e-government and Authorities–Society OEI systems.

No matter how many laws and regulations a nation may adopt, the actual level of employing information-communication technology in state governance may still be quite low. Experts have identified a number of issues currently faced by Russia in its implementation of the electronic government project [13, 14, 16, 22, 26, 29, 30, 33, 36, 42]. Thus, for instance, scholars M.V. Danilina and K.Yu. Bagratuni have noted that "beneath the fabric of the development of technology and implementation of e-government projects lies a huge layer of all kinds of information issues. Currently, there is one issue that the nation has particularly struggled with – a lack of public trust in the new way of communicating, which may be due to a number of factors, like a lack of trust in the traditional work of public officials, as well as "information inequality" among the population, especially in smaller populated areas. Right now, there is a lack of qualified specialists in the area of information technology, as well as a lack of individuals capable of explaining to people the way websites and portals work and convincing them of the need to convert the services into electronic form. A problem that remains topical today is the issue of budget funding for projects on the development of electronic government [6, p. 150].

2.   **Materials and methods**

In looking into issues in the study of the major aspects of the development of e-government and e-democracy, one must not ignore the methodology of economic science, particularly the concept of public goods. The concept is about equal access to goods for all citizens. According to P. Samuelson, "a public good is one that enters two or more persons' utility" [44, p. 108]. D. Bell notes that "social goods are not "divisible" into individual items of possession, but are a communal service – national defense, police and fire protection, public parks, water resources, highways, and the like. These goods and services are not sold to individual consumers and are not adjusted to individual tastes. The nature and amounts of these goods must be set by a single decision, applicable jointly to all persons" [2, pp. 410–411].

An individual has to "double up": on the one hand, the need for public goods cannot be revealed in a market manner due to the "free rider effect", while, on the other hand, it can in a political manner, since people vote for the production of these goods in full measure. So it turns out that people possess several systems of preferences, i.e. standards of assessment, and these systems may, under certain circumstances, exclude each other [43, p.116].

According to the principle of methodological individualism (mainstream economics), if a person has no need for a public good, then society as a whole may not need it either [43, p. 387]. It is all about the actions of an individual being fundamental to the interpretation of such social macroeconomic phenomena as inflation, unemployment, organizational changes, and the evolution of cultural foundations. To help resolve these contradictions, neoclassical scholars are proposing an algorithm of their own: a condition by Margolis [39]. The scholar mitigates the self-interest factor and introduces altruism and a sense of social responsibility into theoretical notions. In other words, altruism turns into a component of rational behavior. Just as is the case with game theory, a competitive edge is with those who have the ability to reach a compromise between individual and group interests.

Of importance in the context of this study is the concept of merit goods [40]. To American economist R. Musgrave, merit goods are goods and services that are "considered so meritorious that their satisfaction is provided for through the public budget, over and above what is provided for through the market and paid for by private buyers" [41, p. 452-453], with demand for these goods on the part of individual buyers trailing that desired by society. "Desired" demand implies individuals' "correct" preferences. "Correct", or "genuine", needs with respect to the production and/or consumption of a certain good, which are different from individual preferences, transform, in turn, this good into a merit one and make it a contender to be a "patronized good". Patronized goods are goods or areas in which the state has a close interest and whose development it finances (science, education, and healthcare).

Merit goods are social goods and are factors in the development of society. Qualitative and quantitative boosts in the sphere of their provision will always be aligned with fundamental social interests, whose major mouthpiece is the present-day state.

3.   Literature review

The project on the creation of electronic government became topical thanks to the development of information technology. The first to speak of the technological benefits of the postindustrial era were American researchers D. Bell, J. Naisbitt, and A. Toffler [2, 23, 32]. A. Toffler suggested that "technological innovation consists of three stages, linked together into a self-reinforcing cycle. First, there is the creative, feasible idea. Second, its practical application. Third, its diffusion through society" [32, p. 40]. Today, the implementation of electronic government is expected to help free the public from red tape, optimize state governance, and boost the extent of participation of citizens in the processes of state governance.

In Russia, the electronic government became the subject of comprehensive research after the adoption of 'Electronic Russia 2002–2010' federal target program. For the most part, the views of Russian and foreign researchers on the subject overlap. Thus, for instance, Russian scholar M.Yu. Pavlyutenkova believes that Russia has yet to attain the required level of scientific-technological development to be able to make optimum decisions on electronic government [26, p. 95]. Danish researcher L.-F. Pau suggests that Russia should direct a considerable amount of effort toward bolstering its telecommunications services [42, p. 79]. Both L.-F. Pau and M.Yu. Pavlyutenkova have noted considerable differences in access to the latest information technology among Russia's constituent regions.

There are many scholars engaged in the research into issues related to the development of electronic government and electronic democracy in Russia who have investigated a number of various aspects of this scholarly subject. In particular, the role of electronic government in the system of state governance and its place in the system of public policymaking as a factor in the fight against corruption and bureaucratization has been discussed by researchers E.A. Kashina, K.A. Nemets, S.V. Ponomarev, E.G. Inshakova, R.I. Khabibullin, D.M. Zhuravlev, M.S. Shustova, V.V. Solodov, and others [13, 14, 16, 22, 28, 33, 10, 36, 30, p. 51].

The works of E.A. Kashina, S.V. Ponomarev, and K.A. Nemets look into both the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the 'electronic government' project [16, 22, 28]. E.A. Kashina suggests that electronic government is the formula for the "successful operation of the state", as it helps cultivate an electronic interrelationship between society and public authorities [16, p. 12]. Having said that, the expert also points out some of the key issues currently facing Russia in its implementation of the 'electronic government', like a lack

of coordination between the nation's laws and regulations related to the area. Researcher S.V. Ponomarev has also identified some of the major barriers impeding the project's successful implementation, including organizational, political, HR-related, and technological ones [28, p. 15]. K.A. Nemets suggests that e-government may help offset our traditional stereotypes of the government and develop a relationship of trust between the nation's government authorities and citizens through electronic interaction [22].

According to E.G. Inshakova, to achieve the efficient operation of its electronic government, the nation ought to, above all, enhance its regulatory and legal framework. In particular, it pays to "work out statutes aimed at regulating electronic document flow, put together special rules for the use of electronic document archives, intended to eliminate the need for issuing and storing paper documentation" [14, p. 15].

R.I. Khabibullin points out the lack of a universal concept on "regulating social relations developing in the information environment" [33, c. 112].

D.M. Zhuravlev proposes an economic scheme for the development of electronic government and an algorithm for assessing its efficiency [10].

Some of the issues of an organizational, political, and psychological nature impeding the comprehensive assimilation of e-government have been identified by M.S. Shustova [36].

Information technologies have also brought about a certain amount of electronic corruption, which has been examined in the works of V.V. Solodov [30].

Scholars N.S. Vinogradova and O.A. Moiseeva are convinced that e-government will help create in Russia an open platform for dialogue between the government and society, suppress the resistance of bureaucracy, and minimize corruption – but this requires developing a proper material and technical infrastructure with a view to utilizing cutting-edge software tools [46]. The above authors have also noted that the Russian nation is currently divided between those who support the implementation of the e-government project and those who are against it. Those for it believe that implementing the project will help boost Russia's economic potential and investment attractiveness. While those against the idea are worried that Russia may eventually turn into a part of the system whose decision-making center is based in Washington, for it is in the US that the idea of "open government" first originated.

Research has also been conducted into the interrelationship between electronic government and electronic democracy, the essence of post-industrialism as a new phenomenon, and the prospects for the development of electronic democracy as a service in the Internet space, with some researchers regarding the system as a purely political project and tagging e-democracy (as a concept) as a "remedy" for all the "diseases" that have afflicted the present-day political system, comparing electronic democracy to ancient Athenian democracy [11, 1, 24, 3]. Further, for obvious reasons, some researchers and opposing critics come to the conclusion that electronic democracy in Russia is more of a project that is sham and decorative [28, 29].

M.D. Zemskov views e-government in the context of conceptualizing the information society, laying most of the emphasis on the democratic features of electronic government – not as solely the product of technological modernization [11].

E.V. Baryshev points to the need for enhancing the democratic process through cutting-edge information technology, as online democracy makes it possible for citizens to openly express their will [1]. This view is shared by N.O. Obrykova, who believes that information-communication technology will enable citizens to take an active part in political decision-making [24].

L.M. Volkov regards electronic democracy as the opportunity to implement electronic voting through an Internet platform, which will contribute toward compliance with the "one person, one vote" principle [3].

M.Yu. Pavlyutenkova devotes in her study a sizable amount of attention to the history of the creation of the e-government project, the international experience of installing an electronic government, and some of the ways to achieve success in this area. Among the standard-bearers of successful electronic government, implementation is South Korea, which has a well-organized system of government websites that are perfectly accessible to everyone. The use of the 'Government for Citizens' program has made it much easier for bodies of authority and private individuals to communicate with each other: "the financial reports of legal persons and tax returns of natural persons are submitted in electronic form, with

professional advice provided to taxpayers in online mode" [26, p. 95]. In 2014, South Korea ranked 1st on the E-Government Development Index. But in 2016 the palm was taken by Great Britain. In analyzing the experience of Western European nations, a group of researchers has found that to facilitate the successful development of electronic government in Great Britain they have appointed a designated responsible person, the e-Envoy, who answers to the Prime Minister. The e-Envoy's primary job is to eliminate the barriers between government institutions and society, his duties including making sure all members of the Parliament respond to letters sent by citizens to their special email addresses set up by the Office of the e-Envoy [51].

Of interest is the experience of Kazakhstan, where there have been several stages in the development of e-government [8]. It can be asserted today that the republic has achieved impressive success in the area, which may be illustrated by the following results: 1) all the key components of electronic government infrastructure are in place; 2) there is a well-organized regulatory and legal framework in place; 3) there are a variety of electronic services being offered by the nation's government agencies; 4) there have been major gains in improving the nation's computer literacy levels.

Canadian researcher M. Zherebtsov asserts that Russia has reached significant heights in the area of IT development and has all the potential necessary to successfully implement its electronic government project [47]. However, there are a number of systemic factors impeding this process, one such factor being a lack of political will to undertake such reform.

Some foreign researchers are of the opinion that Russia has done well in terms of the development of the latest telecommunication systems, which appears to have facilitated its economic rejuvenation [48, 49, 50]. Yet, against that backdrop of success, there are certain areas that need work, like the uneven development of processes of informatization across Russia's regions [42]. In this regard, of interest is a work by Yu.V. Irkhin that is focused on the issue of information inequality – a problem that Russia may face if it implements its electronic government project in a hasty fashion [15].

The authors are convinced that most of the issues in the interaction between the authorities and citizens are of relevance for many countries, including Russia, and, with the development of the information society, despite the fact that the latter is intended to ensure the transparency of government operations and "all-in" civil participation, they are not likely to go away but may just migrate to a different area of existence instead.

In parallel with the development of electronic democracy, there may emerge all kinds of risks and threats in the form of cyber attacks. Summarizing the experience of international experts, S.E. Grishin comes to the conclusion that in order to resolve these issues the scientific community may need to work out a special conceptual approach, while the authorities ought to operate in a proactive mode in the area [5].

When considering the prospects for the development of electronic government in Russia, one may need to factor in the likelihood that once it is implemented successfully there may arise the problem of excessive politicization of issues related to social life. An example of this possibility is the current situation in the US, where the electronic government has been around for several decades now. Researcher Zh. Chen has analyzed headlines on 160 American government websites and come to the conclusion that they are too politicized: "…the headings signify the core political values of the idealized democracy, equality, liberty in the USA, refreshing the American Dream in the digital age" [38, p. 34].

Forecasts for the development of electronic government in Russia made by A.Yu. Tsaplin sound quite pessimistic. The expert is convinced that "electronic government is a new colorful, eye-catching electronic "bundle" of traditional institutions of state government" [35, p. 82] and it is, therefore, unlikely that electronic government will enhance the quality of state government going forward, as the nature of Russian authority is unlikely to change so easily.

Thus, in exploring electronic government and electronic democracy as new phenomena of the information society, scholars are addressing a variety of aspects: issues related to improving the efficiency of public officials, remediating technical imperfections and glitches, ensuring the accessibility of technology and services, streamlining the regulatory and legal framework, and enhancing the various facets of a philosophical nature. However, one has yet to thoroughly explore the interrelationship between the degree to which these systems are developed and the public demand for them.

4. Results

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the nature of effective government patronage of e-government and e-democracy through the instrumentality of the technology of political manipulation. The authors have conducted an analysis of the dynamics of the development of e-government and e-democracy in Russia (through the example of Saratov Oblast). In Russia, the process of informatization of society remains one of the top items on the government's agenda. It, however, is worth identifying a set of major issues impeding the proper implementation of said project: a lack of a uniform regulatory and legal framework, limited access to the Internet in some of Russia's constituent regions, and a lack of information-technological knowledge among a significant portion of the population. As a result, Russia has dropped 8 spots in the e-government development rankings. In 2016, Russia was ranked 35th, compared with 2014, when it ranked 27th.

A key issue is a lack of public demand for the services of electronic government and electronic democracy due to people's information incompetence. The state can artificially create demand for e-government and e-democracy by relying on the use of manipulation techniques. Yet, as these systems develop, the role of the state may eventually tone down when there is a benign social-political state of affairs in the country.

Right now, the Russian government's priority number one is creating the right conditions for every citizen with a view to boosting their information literacy levels. Timely and thorough work in this area is the formula for the sustainable development of the nation.

5. Discussion

In the authors' view, Authorities–Society OEI systems match the attributes of merit goods, as they are intended for individual consumption but possess a pronounced secondary consumer effect that is delayed in time, i.e. social utility. The thing is there is no objectively formed demand for e-democracy and e-government. The development of Authorities–Society OEI systems requires cultivating public demand for these services. Under economic theory, it is a demand that begets supply [21].

It is worth admitting that the area under examination may witness a reverse effect as well: a robust supply of all kinds of elements in the Authorities–Society OEI system may beget some demand for e-democracy and e-government, and, going forward, this artificially formed demand may create the preconditions for a more intensive development of all Authorities–Society OEI systems.

The problem is that the relatively insignificant costs of production of goods that make up the Authorities–Society OEI system may cause consumers to be unwilling to pay for these goods, a phenomenon known as the "free rider" effect. On the other hand, the absence of a positive price may result in the reluctance of business entities to produce such goods. The above reasons force the state to take on the supply of these goods and resort to its taxation mechanisms so as to cover the costs of producing them.

It is obvious that there is a contradiction between current individual and long-term social interests in relation to production of this type of merit goods, and this contradiction is governed by various laws and mechanisms underlying the formation and detection of real demand: individual interests are detected through the market, and social interests are shaped by the institutions of the political system [18]. Here, it is worth keeping in mind that in the area under review the government's activity levels have nothing to do with failures in the market – they change under the influence of various political and social factors in the context of the history of a specific nation.

It may be stated that production of the elements of the Authorities–Society OEI system is appreciably dependent on the degree of government intervention: when government intervention is insufficient, production of the system's elements shrinks, which naturally causes additional government demand for them. It is required that the state takes an active part in furthering the process of production of these special goods in volumes that are needed by society. This activity is aligned with national interests and serves as one of the conditions for boosting the economic potential and efficiency of the national economic system.

In accordance with the postulates of economic sociodynamics, every market participant engaged in the exchange process, including the state, tends to pursue interests of its own, while the cumulative demand for merit goods forms based on individual and social utility [4].

The authors venture the assertion that as the systems of e-government and e-democracy develop and become more sophisticated the need for government intervention may go away (or lessen) under certain social-economic and political circumstances – in the event there gain a foothold sustainable norms of individual behavior that will ensure the consumption of these goods in volumes desired by society. In this regard, it is at this stage in the process of cultivating sustainable public demand for e-democracy and e-government that the state may need to make an extra effort, an effort that may have a significant social effect in the near future.

Inherent to the process of production and provision of e-government and e-democracy goods is the so-called "public goods paradox", whereby social goods, on the one hand, possess a null social value, but, on the other, public goods, as an object of state activity, must possess a non-null social value. In the authors' view, in the case of Authorities–Society OEI systems the useful effect is predicated on the social contract. In other words, the useful effect of goods is geared toward groups of people and is expected to gain a foothold in public consciousness. Such, for instance, is the effect of legislation, social stability, and public order. It would be useless for a particular person if it were not simultaneously directed toward all other members of the community.

This angle to the study of e-government and e-democracy is utilized by the authors in their scientific-research work funded through a grant from the Russian Humanities Research Foundation, 'Cultivating the Public Need for the Development of the System of Electronic Government and Electronic Democracy' (Research Project No. 15-33-01234). The hypothesis underlying the above work implies cultivating demand for socially useful goods by way of a system of manipulating public consciousness, with these manipulation activities (carried out as part of the process of development of the Authorities–Society OEI system) obviously regarded not as a means of infringing upon the legitimate interests of citizens but as a means of "guiding" them.

It is worth noting that the findings of an expert survey [1] conducted as part of the research study also substantiated the viability and relevance of the authors' hypothesis. Below are some of the results of the expert survey 'Topical Issues in the Development of Electronic Government and Electronic Democracy in Saratov Oblast: The Public Need Aspect'.

The experts were asked to evaluate the activity of the federal authorities in the area of electronic government in the period 2011–2015 across the following areas:
• overall,
• in the way of shifting to the provision of services in electronic form,
• in the way of organizing interagency electronic interaction,
• in the way of streamlining the methodological and regulatory and legal framework,
• in the way of cultivating public demand (popularizing the benefits of) for receiving government services in electronic form.

The answer 'Yes – there are meaningful results' was given on the first item by 95.6%, second – 93.3%, third – 86.7%, fourth – 75.6%, and fifth – 71.1% of respondents. Just 28.9%

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[1] The expert survey was conducted December 10 through December 27, 2015, by the Department of History, Philosophy, and Political Science at the Saratov Social-Economic Institute (branch) of Plekhanov Russian Economic University among members of the regional bodies of authority and local self-governing authorities, researchers, and members of nonprofit organizations and government agencies within Saratov Oblast. All in all, the survey engaged 46 people. It was conducted based on a formalized questionnaire developed by associate professor T.S. Melnikova. Data were gathered via the analysis of filled-out questionnaires involving the calculation of a percentage of all survey respondents.

Eksperty SSEI REU im. Plekhanova otsenili elektronnoe pravitel'stvo [Experts at the Saratov Social-Economic Institute of Plekhanov Russian Economic University evaluate electronic government]. (2016, February 16). (in Russian). Retrieved from http://www.vzsar.ru/news/2016/02/16/eksperty-ssei-rey-im-plehanova-ocenili-elektronnoe-pravitelstvo.html

of experts said nothing significant has been done in the way of cultivating public demand for e-government in Russia.

When asked to evaluate the federal authorities' performance in the area of development of electronic democracy in the period from 2011 to 2015, the experts gave a lower number of high grades. 60% of respondents answered 'Yes – there are meaningful results' regarding the authorities' overall performance in the area, 55.6% – the performance of the 'Russian Social Initiative' portal, 51.1% – streamlining the methodological and regulatory and legal framework, and 53.3% – cultivating public demand (popularizing the benefits of) for the use of the mechanisms of electronic democracy.

All in all, the experts could choose from 3 variants of the answer. Based on the survey results, none of the experts gave a negative answer ('No – things have only gotten worse') to both the first and second questions, which inquired whether the respondent liked the job the federal authorities had done in the area or not.

The most popular answers to the question "What do you think is the main reason behind the creation of an electronic government in Russia?" were the following:
• 'Boosting the accessibility of government services' – 84.8%,
• 'Boosting the openness of information about the work of government agencies' – 65.2%,
• 'Encouraging the social-political participation of citizens in the life of the nation' – 45.7%.

In the experts' view, the most significant benefits offered by electronic government to the population are the possibility of receiving government services in electronic form (91.3%), the possibility of receiving the latest information on bodies of authority, both state and municipal (65.2%), and the possibility of submitting a complaint or a proposal to bodies of authority in electronic form (50%). Of the greatest value for citizens are the following mechanisms of electronic democracy: the possibility of taking part in the discussion of legislative initiatives (67.4%), the possibility of submitting an initiative of one's own (56.5%), and the possibility of tracking the progress of work performed by bodies of authority (54.3%).

Regarding the major factors impeding the development of electronic government in Saratov Oblast, there was the following distribution of expert answers (3 variants of the answer to choose from):
1. The insufficient degree of activity among the population and the lack of demand for electronic government services – 66.7%;
2. Insufficient incidence of Internet access and the lack of liability for failure of government officials to provide a quality electronic service – 26.7% each factor;
3. The poor level of political support for the project – 24.4%;
4. The low number of services available through the portal (services one can use without direct in-person contact with a government employee) – 20%;
5. The lack of functionality for citizens to evaluate services provided in electronic form – 15.6%;
6. The lack/imperfect condition of the regulatory framework – 11.1 %;
7. Other: the lack of functionality for citizens to obtain the result of a service in electronic form – 2.2%.

As per respondents, the major factors inhibiting the development and spread of electronic democracy in Saratov Oblast are: the insufficient degree of activity among the population and the lack of demand for electronic democracy services (71.1%), the poor level of political support for the project (40.0%); insufficient incidence of Internet access (26.7%), the lack of the regulatory framework (22.2%), and some other factors (2.2%).

In the experts' view, among the factors that may help boost citizens' levels of activity in terms of using the electronic government system are the following (5 variants of the answer to choose from): citizens being personally interested in doing it/the prospects of deriving worthwhile personal gain doing it (54.3%), effective technical support for the system's operation (remediation of glitches in the operation of portals, websites, and applications) (52.2%), citizens having the necessary resources (material resources, unrestricted access to the Internet, spare time) (47.8%), citizens being well-educated, proficient, and well-informed about the benefits of electronic interaction (43.5%), raising a new generation of active citizens of the information society (28.3%), stimulating and incentivizing citizens to use e-government services (26.1%), the openness and transparency of the activity of bodies of authority (23.9%), and high levels of trust in bodies of authority (10.9%).

The respondents were also asked which factors could help boost citizens' level of activity in the use of the electronic democracy system on a daily basis. The results were as follows: citizens having the necessary resources (material resources, unrestricted access to the Internet,

spare time) (56.8%), effective technical support for the system's operation (remediation of glitches in the operation of portals, websites, and applications) (54.5%), citizens being well-educated, proficient, and well-informed about the benefits of electronic interaction (45.5%), citizens being personally interested in doing it/the prospects of deriving worthwhile personal gain doing it (38.6%), stimulating and incentivizing citizens to use e-democracy services (20.5%), the openness and transparency of the activity of bodies of authority (18.2%), raising a new generation of active citizens of the information society (15.9%), patriotism, a sense of being part of one's nation's, town's, village's destiny (15.9%), there being individual leaders, activists among citizens (11.4%), and other factors (11,4%).

The advisability of more active information coverage of the results and more active promotion of the benefits of the electronic government and electronic democracy projects was pointed up by 80.4% of experts, who picked the need to inform the population already now (without waiting until the 'Information Society 2011–2020' program is over). Also, 82.6% of experts said that it is advisable and necessary to start today already work on teaching citizens and cultivating in them the major competencies and culture of interacting with bodies of authority by way of electronic services.

At the end of the survey, the experts shared their views concerning the advisability of developing and implementing a special document, 'The Concept on Cultivating the Public Need for Developing of the System of Electronic Government and Electronic Democracy Through to 2020'. 56.5% of respondents said it is advisable to do so at the federal level (developing a single concept for the entire nation), with 32.6% opting for doing so at the regional level (developing an individual concept for each region), 6.5% not finding it advisable deadline-wise and stating that a period longer than through to 2010 may be required, 2.2% not finding it advisable on the whole, and 2.2% providing other suggestions.

As key initiators of the development of electronic forms of interaction between bodies of authority and citizens, as well as commercial and non-commercial organizations, the experts picked (3 variants of the answer to choose from) bodies of authority (95.7%), nonprofit organizations (47.8%), the scientific community (37%), and commercial organizations (10.9%).

Thus, based on the survey findings, the experts acknowledged the need for cultivating the public need for the everyday use of the e-government and e-democracy systems, as well as the existence of an interrelationship between the public need for and the pace of development of the Authorities–Society OEI system. Most of the survey participants deemed it necessary to conduct more active information-propaganda work on popularizing electronic government and electronic democracy, while acknowledging, on top of that, the need for outreach and awareness-raising activities aimed at teaching citizens and cultivating in them the necessary competencies and culture of interacting with bodies of authority via electronic services. These views are shared by many a researcher. M.Yu. Pavlyutenkova suggests that one of the key barriers impeding the implementation of the e-government project is "a lack of educational programs for providing instruction to public officials and citizens on how to provide and use government services, respectively, and utilize the technology of electronic government in practice" [26, p. 10]. Researchers N.S. Vinogradova and O.A. Moiseeva assert that computer literacy is indispensable to the successful development of electronic government. It is also noted that public officials themselves lack the special competencies required in the area and are significantly lagging behind in terms of knowledge of the latest information technology [46, p. 8].

Electronic government and electronic democracy are the elements of information policy which should be analyzed through the prism of philosophical, politological, sociological, and economic concepts. In a general philosophical context, it is state policy that acts as the basis for information policy. The integrity of the state and its ability to stay democratic and secure sustainable development depend on efficient information interaction between the authorities and society. The fundamental concepts of information policy are communication and information, i.e. interpersonal communication and its content side. Thus, the state's information policy is aimed at meeting the information needs of society using the latest information-communication technology.

The authors' scientific-research project brings forward a state mechanism for cultivating public demand for electronic government and electronic democracy [20]. Each of the

mechanism's components matches a certain manipulation technology – PR, propaganda, or advertising.

The mechanism's first component corresponds to the technology of PR and is represented by a program that captures the objectives of PR campaigns, everything that has to do with planning, arranging, and implementing PR activities on popularizing and cultivating public trust in Authorities–Society OEI systems.

The second component could be represented by a special government program (subprogram), 'Improving the Competence Level of Citizens of the Information Society'. This document, which brings to light, both concept- and content-wise, and factors in all the characteristics of the system of consumption of these "patronized" goods intended for an "electronic" citizen (issues related to teaching one the ethics of the Information Age citizen, the basics of information security, the latest technology of electronic government and electronic democracy (that is intended for everyday use), cultivating in Russian people the judicious conduct of the citizen of the electronic society, and much more), matches the technology of propaganda, as the instrumentarium of learning and mundane interpersonal communication (being part of a group and being engaged in the common process of cognition), supplemented by the administrative resource, has always been a powerful means of propaganda [31].

The third component of the state mechanism is an advertising activity program that will set out the goals and objectives for the development and conduct of advertising activities, including posting information of an advertising nature on the various carriers that can be accessed by the public on a daily basis (billboards, utility bills, public transit tickets, Internet banners, radio and TV commercials).

The above state mechanism for cultivating public demand for electronic government and electronic democracy is illustrated in schematic form in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The mechanism for cultivating public demand for electronic democracy and electronic government
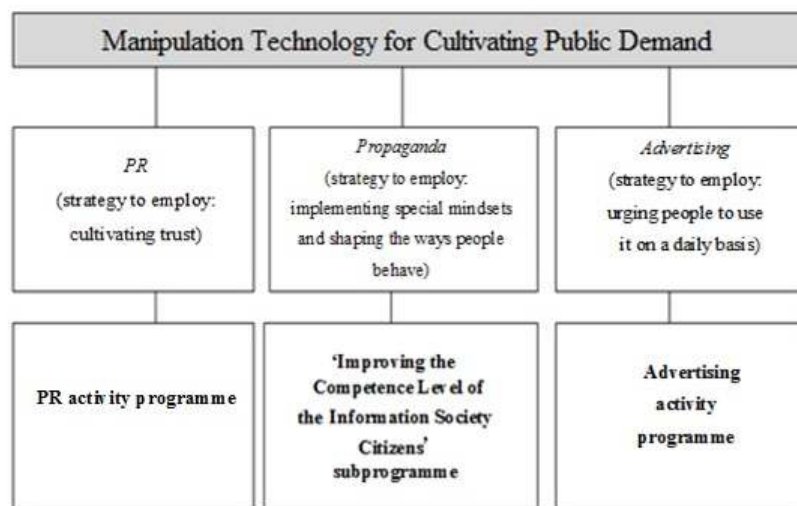
Source: Own

Altogether, this mechanism may require being captured in a regulatory-institutional manner in the form of a special document which the authors would designate as 'The 2017–2020 Strategy for Cultivating the Public Need for Open Electronic Authorities–Society Interaction'. The authors believe it is advisable to adopt a strategy of this kind at the federal level; it is also worth having it implemented prior to the expiration of the government program 'Information Society 2011–2020'. It pays to capture in the document the characteristics of conducting advertising activity, promoting the advantages of electronic interaction between citizens and the authorities, citizens and various organizations and institutions, and propagandizing the 'active citizen of the Information Age' behavior model.

After they adopt the Strategy, it pays for regions to develop and implement regional programs in the area.

It pays to conduct an advanced analysis of issues and solutions related to the development of the Strategy as part of a separate scholarly work, while for purposes of the present paper it may suffice to focus on the characteristics of the implementation of one specific component of the mechanism underlying the cultivation of the public need for electronic democracy and electronic government – the technology of propaganda, the most powerful means of manipulating the minds of people.

Note that right now there are various strategies and programs for the development of the information society that have been implemented at the federal and regional levels, like 'The Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation' No. Pr–212 of February 7, 2008, the Government Program of the Russian Federation 'Information Society 2011–2020', and the Government Program of Saratov Oblast 'The 2014–2017 Information Society'. Most of the subprograms are, however, not very clear in their objectives about the actual cultivation of public demand for e-government and e-democracy and have yet to properly address the need for stimulating this demand through government intervention.

In this regard, it appears advisable to develop and implement relevant subprograms within regions' government programs on all criteria (identifying a social problem, assessing existing managerial potential and implementation experience, and measuring efficiency, i.e. the ratio between the resources expended and the results achieved). Subprograms of this kind are already being implemented in Russia. For instance, the federal project 'Furthering Improvement in People's Financial Literacy and the Development of Financial Education in the Russian Federation' has been implemented as Subprogram 7 within the Government Program of Saratov Oblast 'The Development of Education in Saratov Oblast Through to 2020'.

The authors feel that the 'Improving the Competence Level of Citizens of the Information Society' subprogram should have the following special objectives: boosting the efficiency of interaction between citizens and bodies of authority; boosting the level of protection of the citizens' interests in their interaction with the authorities; boosting citizens' level of proficiency necessary to engage in open electronic Authorities–Society interaction. That being said, the functions of the executive agent ought to be performed by the region's line ministry/committee on informatization, while the roster of co-executive agents for the subprogram ought to include, by all means, the region's Ministry of Education.

Altogether, the subprogram must involve the implementation of specific activities for various target (age) groups, which it is advisable to set apart from each other by reference to the stages of political socialization. In construing political socialization, it is customary to invoke the general concept of "socialization" of a person, which, in the broadest sense, signifies that an individual turns into a social being through the assimilation of an accepted system of social roles. Political socialization is justly regarded as the process of interaction between the individual and the political system, the purpose whereof is getting the individual adapted to the system and turning him into a citizen [25, p. 65].

The stages of political socialization are closely linked to the stages in the making of a person and his cognitive development. In present-day society, the first stage begins quite early – at the age of 3–4. At this age already, through the family and the media, the child acquires his first knowledge of politics in forms that he can access it in – information that goes on to have a meaningful effect on the child's subconscious. "School is where a new stage of political socialization commences. Under the influence of socializing institutions, there occurs the quantitative accumulation of knowledge about politics and their qualitative modification. It is at school age onwards that one starts to develop a conscious attitude towards politics. The next, youth, the stage is characterized by the introduction of new elements of the conveyance of political values. Here, one encounters new tools of political socialization – informal youth groups, an entire youth subculture as a whole. In some cases, they may play an alternative role in relation to former institutions of political socialization, actively familiarizing the individual with alternative political (or apolitical) notions" [25, p. 66].

Projections of the stages of political socialization may be extended to the process of formation of an Information Age person as well. It is worth keeping in mind the continuous nature of the process of political socialization and the process of resocialization. Political

consciousness is subject to changes throughout a person's life; it stands to reason that the outcomes of these changes may be almost unnoticeable in adults compared with changes that occur in childhood or youth.

The activities carried out under the subprogram may be divided into age groups:

1) activities for 11–16-year-old teens. By degree of propaganda effect, these are the most powerful, as they shape the way in which people behave and think based on specific mindsets being cultivated. This includes educational programs on the ethics and culture of citizens of the electronic society, the fundamentals of interacting with the authorities, other citizens, and various organizations, the basics of information security, etc.;

2) activities for 16–23-year-olds are, mostly, aimed at expanding their knowledge and skills related to the electronic interaction between the authorities and society. Here it pays to set up special interest clubs (e.g., clubs for high-schoolers) that would organize various outreach and awareness-raising activities, contests, fairs, etc. Additionally, it could be elective courses at institutions of mid-tier and higher vocational learning. This kind of activities is aimed at cultivating a higher level of competencies in Information Age citizens and may offer potential in the way of inducing one to develop one's personal notions of how to enhance an electronic interaction system;

3) activities for individuals older than 55 are aimed at boosting the computer literacy of retired persons, helping them master the skills necessary to utilize the latest digital technology in everyday life and use personal computers for searching for information, communicating online, sending and receiving electronic messages, as well as helping them master the skills necessary to use online portals related to the provision of state and municipal services.

In most regions across the nation, activities of this kind geared to senior citizens are normally implemented as a public project funded by grants. As an example, there is the 'All-Russian Retired Citizen Computer Literacy Project', implemented by the all-Russian nonprofit organization 'The Union of Russia's Retired Citizens' jointly with Russia's constituent regions. Another project is the 'Timurians of the Information Society' movement, implemented by the Russian Agency for the Development of the Information Society (RARIO) .[2] The movement's mission is to conduct computer literacy workshops to, above all, help senior citizens master the skills necessary to use the various goods offered by the information society.

There is one more project that is worthy of mention – the 'Gubernatorial Plan on Eliminating Digital Inequality in Yaroslavl Oblast' [3] In 2010, with support from the Department of Informatization and Communications of Yaroslavl Oblast, the region's authorities opened up the first computer consulting center, and in 2013 the project received the status of a "gubernatorial project" (following the passage of the Decree of the Governor of Yaroslavl Oblast No. 136-r on Adopting a Roster of Assignments). The project's target audience is comprised of retired citizens, people with disabilities, and high school students, and its indirect audience is represented by specialists and instructors, employees of municipal institutions, members of the business community and general public. The results of the implementation of the above project have been quite impressive and may serve as a positive example of the use of technology for popularizing the benefits of the information society and teaching citizens the basics of electronic interaction;

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[2] Rossiiskoe agentstvo razvitiya informatsionnogo obshchestva [Russian Agency for the Development of the Information Society]. (n.d.). Vserossiiskoe detsko-yunosheskoe i molodezhnoe timurovskoe (dobrovol'cheskoe) dvizhenie. Napravlenie: Timurovtsy informatsionnogo obshchestva [The All-Russian Children's, Youth, and Junior Timurian (Volunteer) Movement. Strand: Timurians of the Information Society]. (in Russian). Retrieved from http://rario.ru/projects/timurovci.php

[3] Government of Yaroslavl Oblast. (2015). Realizatsiya Gubernatorskogo proekta po likvidatsii tsifrovogo neravenstva v Yaroslavskoi oblasti [Implementation of the Gubernatorial Plan on Eliminating Digital Inequality in Yaroslavl Oblast]. (in Russian). Retrieved from http://media.wix.com/ugd/ff6341_9d463c9aac694e0b8a67df5474c7c782.pdf

4) citizens aged from 24 to 45–50 years old who are already characterized by a relevant mindset and type of conduct in the information society; a key role in fostering this group's public need for the Authorities–Society OEI system will be played by advertising and PR.

Altogether, the results obtained through the authors' study are expected to facilitate the enrichment of existing knowledge in the area of electronic government and electronic democracy. What makes its contribution special is its interdisciplinary orientation, as the subject under study may not be the subject of study of just one sole science.

6. <u>Conclusion</u>

Summing up, it is worth noting that certain regions of the Russian Federation have been quite active in popularizing the latest technology related to the interaction of citizens with each other, the authorities, and various organizations, with outreach and awareness-raising work being conducted regarding the use of the advantages of the latest electronic services. However, these practices are pretty much local, as every region has its own target audience, a different understanding of project objectives, not to exclude the sham component.

Considering the historical and political and social context, it is the all-encompassing nature of the process of cultivating various mindsets to shape and drive human behavior by way of manipulation techniques that has made it effective and "fool-proof". It pays to carry out propaganda activities for all population age groups and across all regions concurrently. In addition, taking into account Russia's extensive experience using "classic" manipulation technology in politics [7, 12, 17, 27], it is worth noting that it is only through the use of all 3 the manipulation technologies (PR, propaganda, and advertising) that manipulation may be effective and major results may be achieved.

The significance of this study lies in that it brings to light the potential of using manipulation technology in the process of cultivating public demand for patronized goods. The state patronage mechanism proposed by the authors makes the process of cultivating the public need for the everyday use of e-government and e-democracy services integrated.

Altogether, the new angle to the study of e-government and e-democracy offered by the authors may help take to a whole new level the way man resolves issues in the interaction of the authorities and the public, as well as remediate the effects of the initially one-sided bureaucratic approach to the concept of electronic interaction services, by putting a primary focus on a managerial approach to state governance [9, p. 128] and an orientation toward the citizen (the consumer of government services), his rights and needs, which should enable Russia's information society to keep in step with the global trend of cultivating "digital", "smart" government.

Citizens' growing individual need for everyday use of open electronic authorities-society interaction systems will, eventually, take public demand to a new level, inducing thereby the streamlining of the legal and infrastructural components, citizens ultimately being the ones who will facilitate the development of electronic interaction services and the evolution of open dialogue in a modern democratic state.

7. <u>Acknowledgements</u>

8. <u>References</u>

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