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SERAVIN Alexander Igorevich

**DIGITALIZATION AS A FACTOR OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND
VECTORS OF DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE OF
DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN MODERN POLITICAL THEORY**

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Scientific adviser:

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor,
candidate of Political Sciences

S.G. Ereemeev

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Content

Introduction	3
CHAPTER I. THE PLACE OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN MODERN POLITICAL THEORY	20
1.1. The concept of digital democracy and its contribution to the development of democratic theory	20
1.2. The concept of digital democracy and modern concepts of political participation	29
1.3. The concept of electronic electoral politics and its special place in the discourse of digital democracy	39
1.4. Results of a sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting	49
CHAPTER II . DIGITALIZATION AS A FACTOR OF DEMOCRATIZATION	70
2.1. Digitalization processes and fundamental changes in the public sphere	70
2.2. Dialectical relationship between digitalization and democratization	75
CHAPTER III . VECTORS OF DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY	85
3.1. The role of ideas in politics and the meaning of the “ideological” (idealistic) turn	85
3.2. Discourse research in political science Institutional constructivism and its possibilities in conceptualizing digital democracy	89
3.3. The genesis of the scientific discourse of digital democracy, its current state and directions of development	94
Conclusion	104
Literature	112

Introduction

The relevance of research.

In modern conditions, digital technologies have a significant impact on political systems and structures.

Scientific discourse about digitalization (including its relationship with the central category of political science - democracy) is similar to other major transformational discourses of recent decades. Digitalization is transforming politics, society and democracy. It has been suggested that digital democracy is indispensable to the future of democracy. In this regard, the question of how democracy itself is changing in the digital age is becoming relevant. However, assessing this impact is not an easy task. It is obvious, at the same time, that whatever the actual impact of digital technologies on the development of democracy, the digitalization of everyday life increases the demands on democracy.

The enormous potential of digital technologies involuntarily leads us to the conclusion that these technologies have something inherently democratic in their essence. In this context, the scientific literature analyzes digital opportunities for the development and promotion of democracy. It is concluded that the use of digital platforms in democratic governance significantly increases citizen participation and interest in politics and governance.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable turn in research orientations devoted to the relationship between digital technologies and democracy. This turn is characterized by a much greater focus on the threats that technology and social media pose to democracy. In this regard, the question is increasingly being raised: are technological developments neutral or do they hide political preferences ¹?

An analysis of the scientific literature on digital democracy clearly demonstrates a clear tendency to supplant fundamental and theoretical works with

¹Winner L. Upon Opening the Black Box and Finding It Empty: Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Technology. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 1993. No. 18 (3): 362-378.

a reductionist approach to digital democracy, reducing it to instrumental functions (in particular, the development of electronic voting means).

Attempts to conceptualize digital democracy as a set of practices, such as electronic voting or digital participation, have rightly been criticized for limiting the understanding of democracy to individual acts of short-term interaction through simple mouse clicks. This focus has led to an understanding of digital democracy in terms of clicktivism, and sometimes its more pejorative version, “slacktivism².”

Any attempts to give an adequate definition of digital democracy inevitably give rise to problems and contradictions of various kinds and levels (the binary between online interaction and physical conditions that supposedly limit such interaction; the physicality of the material “real world” is opposed to cyberspace as a sphere of democratic practice; the problem of subjectivity in the context digital democracy, etc.). These contradictions, from our point of view, should be the subject of research in different disciplines, primarily political science.

One such attempt to conceptualize digital democracy is carried out by the dissertation author by revealing the fundamental contradiction underlying digital democracy and concerning the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democracy.

The vast majority of works dedicated to digital democracy, explore the development of digital democracy in European countries and the United States. At the same time, Asian countries are fertile ground for the development of digital democracy due to the availability of technology and widespread access to the Internet. Many Asian countries have highly developed digital technologies. In addition, Asian governments are actively promoting digitalization efforts. Asian countries have seen significant growth in digital participation over the past few decades. At the local level, citizens participate in politics and policymaking through digital platforms. The use of digital platforms in democratic governance

²Halupka, M. The Legitimization of Clicktivism. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 2018. No. 53 (1), 130–141.

has significantly increased citizen participation and interest in governance. In this regard, it is argued that the obstacle preventing Asian countries from actively participating in discussions on the formation of digital democracy is the Eurocentric and American-centric view of what the so-called digital democracy should be. "correct" practice of democracy ³.

It is important to emphasize that Asian democracy differs from Western democracy due to differences in political structures, cultural norms, historical characteristics, and the interpretation and implementation of democratic principles. In this sense, it is important to take into account cultural differences when studying examples of the implementation of the concept of digital democracy in different regions.

It is known that any actions that are considered significant in the social world cannot be perceived without interpretation, that is, without understanding the meaning that is attached to them ⁴.

Scientists note the turn to the study of ideas that has emerged in the social sciences in recent decades and which is evidenced by the appearance of works that raise the issue of ideas and discourse and emphasize their determining nature in relation to political institutions. In this work, the author attempts to study the academic discourse dedicated to the development of digital democracy and, necessarily, including representatives of "non-Western knowledge". Currently, non-Western descriptions and interpretations of democracy in general and digital democracy in particular remain virtually unexplored.

It is obvious that the task of developing a relevant concept of digital democracy that would adequately describe and interpret the experience of different countries and regions, as well as analyzing the academic discourse of digital democracy, which necessarily includes, as already indicated, the

³Halupka, M. The Legitimization of Clicktivism. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 2018. No. 53(1), 130–141.

⁴Weber M. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck). [1922] 1988

description and interpretation of digital democracy also in the non-Western world, are impossible without expanding the concept of democracy in general, and digital democracy in particular.

Degree of scientific development of the topic

A number of research works by domestic and foreign political scientists are devoted to the essence, specifics and features of digital democracy and digital policy. Works revealing the features of digital technologies and their implementation in the existing Russian political system are presented by studies by D. A. Budko, G. V. Alekseev, V. P. Kirilenko, A. N. Kuryukhina, D. V. Chizhova, A. Yu. Shutov, Khabrieva T.Ya. and others.⁵ Research that reveals the problems of digital technologies in the system of reproduction of power institutions, the introduction of digital technologies into political practice are presented in the works of Borisov I.B., Konkov A.E., Leontyev G.D. and others.⁶ Research questions devoted to digital technologies in the context of digital democracy, recursiveness of the public sphere and the emerging “digital community” are revealed in the works of Ereemeev S.G., Nikushkin A.B., Pshizova S.N., Rasskazov S.V., Semenova L.N. and others.⁷ The significance of

⁵Budko, D. A. Digital democracy in Moscow: politics vs. Everyday life / D. A. Budko // Russian political process in the regional dimension: history, theory, practice. – 2023. – No. 15. – P. 21-26; Kuryukhin, A. N. Digital technologies in election processes as a challenge to the prospects of democracy / A. N. Kuryukhin // Power. – 2019. – T. 27, No. 3. – P. 63-67; Kirilenko, V.P. Electronic democracy and humanistic principles / V.P. Kirilenko, G.V. Alekseev // Management consulting. – 2019. – No. 6(126). – P. 19-31; Chizhov, D. V. Vectors of development of electronic electoral democracy / D. V. Chizhov // Information Society. – 2019. – No. 3. – P. 11-22; Shutov A.Yu. Political process. M.: Moscow University Publishing House, 1994. 80 pp. Khabrieva T.Ya. Law before the challenges of digital reality // Journal of Russian Law. 2018. No. 9(261). pp. 5–16;

⁶Borisov, I. B. On the way to electronic democracy. Digital technologies in the system of democratic reproduction of government institutions / I. B. Borisov // Electoral legislation and practice. – 2019. – No. 3. – P. 3-10; Borisov, I. B. The end of the pre-digital era of political processes / I. B. Borisov // Citizen. Elections. Power. – 2021. – No. 1(19). – pp. 124-139; Konkov, A. E. Digitalization of political relations: facets of knowledge and mechanisms of transformation / A. E. Konkov // Contours of global transformations: politics, economics, law. – 2019. – T. 12, No. 6. – P. 6-28; Leontiev, G. D. Digital techno-democracy as a post-non-classical practopia / G. D. Leontiev, L. S. Leontieva // Sociodynamics. – 2023. – No. 4. – P. 1-10.

⁷Ereemeev S. G. The concept of “joint production” in the context of urban management // Power. 2019. Volume 27. No. 4. P. 101-105; Ereemeev S. G. Smart-city: in search of conceptualization // Power. 2019. Volume 27. No. 1. P. 147-153; Ereemeev S.G. Strategic planning in the implementation of the smart city concept // Power. 2021. Volume 29. No. 2. P. 53-61; Nikushkin, A. B. Concepts of “electronic democracy” in modern research / A. B. Nikushkin // Questions of political science. – 2020. – T. 10, No. 2(54). – P. 374-381; Rasskazov, S.V. Recursivity in digital cooperation platforms / S.V. Rasskazov // Political expertise: POLITEX. – 2022. – T. 18, No. 1. – P. 39-55; Pshizova, S. N. Digitally mediated political participation in comparative perspective. Article 1

issues related to the use of the potential of digitalization for political mobilization and the formation of new formats of civil and political participation is substantiated in the works of Baikov K.A., Glukhova V.A., Dyakin E.O., Nikovskaya O.I., Slinko A. A., Chekunova M. A. and etc.⁸

Research raising issues of electronic electoral politics in different aspects and different countries is revealed in the studies of Alekseev R.A., Kranzeeva E.A., Malkevich A.A., Osipov A.V., Smorgunov L.V. and etc.⁹

It is worth highlighting the authors of studies devoted to the process of digitalization of politics, changes that have occurred in the public sphere: Karimova E.R., Kotlyarova M.V., Nazarova V.S., Samarina Y.V., etc.¹⁰,

/ S. N. Pshizova // Social sciences and modernity. – 2019. – No. 5. – P. 47-59; Semenova, L. N. Prospects for digitalization of politics / L. N. Semenova // Scientific works of the Republican Institute of Higher School. Philosophical and humanities. – 2022. – No. 21-1. – pp. 203-211

⁸Baykov, K. A. Technologies of political mobilization through the introduction and development of digital platforms / K. A. Baykov // Political Consultant. – 2021. – T. 1, No. 1; Glukhova, A. V. New formats of civil participation: consultative democracy / A. V. Glukhova // Public administration of the Russian Federation: challenges and prospects: Proceedings of the 15th International Conference, Moscow, May 25, 2017. – Moscow: “KDU”, “University Book”, 2018. – P. 597-602; Nikovskaya L.I. Civil identity as a factor in the consolidation of Russian society: political and managerial aspect // Public administration of the Russian Federation: challenges and prospects // Materials of the 15th International Conference Public administration in the 21st century: collection, electronic publication of network distribution / Team of authors. – M.: “KDU”, “University Book”, 2018. – 856 p. pp. 647-653; Slinko, A. A. Searches for a new model of political participation in the regions: primaries of “United Russia” and political processes in Europe / A. A. Slinko, E. O. Dyakina // Region: systems, economics, management. – 2021. – No. 2(53). – P. 87-92; Smorgunov, L. V. Factors of civil participation on electronic platforms / L. V. Smorgunov, O. A. Ignatieva // Sociological studies. – 2021. – No. 7. – P. 101-112; Chekunova, M. A. New power-social communication and political consequences of the digital transformation of society // Central Russian Bulletin of Social Sciences. – 2021. – T. 16, No. 2. – P. 125-138;

⁹Alekseev, R. A. Approbation and prospects for the use of blockchain technology in elections abroad and in Russia / R. A. Alekseev // Journal of Political Research. – 2018. – T. 2, No. 3. – P. 41-48; Malkevich, A. A. Elections of new times: the use of electronic electoral politics techniques as a guarantee of victory (on the example of the campaigns of US presidential candidates in 2016) / A. A. Malkevich // Information–Communication–Society. – 2017. – T. 1. – P. 156-162; Kranzeeva, E. A. Changes in the political consciousness and behavior of Russian women: challenges of digitalization // Bulletin of the Russian State University for the Humanities. Series: Philosophy. Sociology. Art history. – 2021. – No. 1-2(25). – P. 258-266; Osipov, A.V. Socio-political monitoring and socio-media predictive analytics as tools and technologies for consolidating political power // Questions of Political Science. – 2021. – T. 11, No. 11(75). – pp. 3138-3145; Smorgunov, L. From electronic state to electronic government: a paradigm shift // Political Science. – 2007. – No. 4. – P. 20-49; Smorgunov, L.V. Electronic government 2.0: from portals to platforms // Caspian region: politics, economics, culture. – 2014. – No. 2(39). – P. 66-75.

¹⁰Karimov, E. R. Technologies for digitalization of modern public policy / E. R. Karimov // Modern TASKS and PERSPECTIVE DIRECTIONS OF INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT of science: Collection of articles of the International Scientific and Practical Conference, Kaluga, October 05, 2023. – UFA: Limited Liability Company “Aeterna”, 2023. – P. 73-78; Kotlyarov, M.V. Technologies for analysis and management of communications as an indicator of changes in the public sphere in Russia // Analysis and Forecast. Journal of

emphasizing the value of digital tools in implementation of the democratic process. Of particular theoretical and methodological importance in the context of analyzing the academic discourse of digital democracy and, accordingly, in revealing the topic of the dissertation research is the substantiation of the role of ideas in politics. The works of Abramyan A.S., Vilisov M.V., Zinoviev A.O., Kapitsyn V.M., Perevezentsev S.V., Sulimina A.N., Chesnokov A.S. are devoted to this issue. and etc.¹¹

The ideas of discursive institutionalism, the fourth branch of new institutionalism, which acts as a theoretical and methodological basis for the study, are revealed and substantiated in the works of V. Schmit, S. Hay and others.¹²

In Russia, the ideas of discursive institutionalism were developed in the works of O.Yu. Malinova, L.V. Smorgunov and others¹³.

MEMO RAS. – 2019. – No. 2. – P. 75-82; Nazarova, V. S. “A new structural change in the public sphere...” by J. Habermas in modern public and philosophical discourse / V. S. Nazarova // South Pole. Studies in the history of modern Western philosophy. – 2023. – T. 9, No. 1. – P. 65-70; Samarin, Y. V. Democracy in a network society: problems and prospects / Y. V. Samarin // Political expertise: POLITEX. – 2020. – T. 16, No. 2. – P. 251-262;

¹¹Vilisov, M. V. “Thought factories” or “idea forges”? The value agenda of analytical centers of the EAEU countries in the context of public policy / M. V. Vilisov // Political science. – 2023. – No. 2. – P. 203-233; Zinoviev, A. O. The role of ideas in the context of the historical and philosophical understanding of politics / A. O. Zinoviev // Time of great changes: politics and politicians: materials of the All-Russian scientific conference RAPN, Moscow, November 24–25, 2017 / Peoples' Friendship University of Russia ; Edited by O. V. Gaman-Golutvina, L. V. Smorgunov, L. N. Timofeeva. – Moscow: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN), 2017. – P. 146-147; Chesnokov, A. S. “Ideology-oriented” approaches in modern studies of international relations (Review) / A. S. Chesnokov // Political science. – 2009. – No. 4. – P. 115-125; Kapitsyn, V. M. Ideological and symbolic politics and national interests of Russia // Russia and the modern world. – 2012. – No. 2(75). – P. 58-70; Perevezentsev, S.V. Ideological origins of the formation of the concepts of messianism in European socio-political thought / S.V. Perevezentsev, A.S. Abramyan // Dialogue with time. – 2020. – No. 71. – P. 105-114; Sulimin, A. N. The role of social ideas in the organization of political order in Western and non-Western societies // Politics and Society. – 2016. – No. 4(136). – pp. 480-485.

¹²Hay, C. Political analysis. A critical introduction. Palgrave Macmillan.2002; Schmidt, V.A. (2008) 'Discursive institutionalism: the explanatory power of ideas and discourse', Annual Review of Political Science 11 : 303–26.

¹³Malinova O.Yu. Constructing meanings: A study of symbolic politics in modern Russia: Monograph. M., 2013.- 421 pp.; Malinova O.Yu. Why do ideas matter? Modern discussions about the role of “ideal” factors in political research // Political science: ideas and symbols in politics: Methodological problems and modern research: Sat. scientific tr. /RAN INION; Ed.-status.issue O.Yu. Malinova. – M., 2009. - No. 4. - p. 5-24; Smorgunov L.V. Comparative politics in search of new methodological orientations: do ideas mean anything for explaining politics? // Policy. – M., 2009. - No. 1 – P. 118-129.

The main ideas of the political theory of constellation, which, according to the dissertation author, is a promising research program for the study of digital democracy and reflects the necessary level of complexity inherent in modern society, are revealed in the works of N. Kersting, J. Hofmann, T. Torstna, S. Berg and others.¹⁴

The purpose of the dissertation research is to conceptualize digital democracy by revealing the fundamental contradiction that underlies it and concerns the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democracy, as well as to analyze the academic discourse of digital democracy, its current state and directions of development.

Objectives of the dissertation research:

1. Justification of discursive institutionalism as a promising methodology for studying digital democracy;
2. Analysis of the academic discourse of digital democracy, its current state and direction of development;
3. Analysis of the dialectical relationship between digital technologies and the development of democracy;
4. Justification of the “ideological turn” in the study of public policy and identification of the reasons for updating the study of the scientific discourse of digital democracy;
5. Identifying the place of digital technologies in the crisis of modern democracies;
6. Justification of the need to expand the discourse of digital democracy through the rejection of universalization, “American-centricity” and

¹⁴Hofmann, Jeanette. Mediated democracy-linking digital technology to political agency. *Internet Policy Review* ; Hofmann, Jeanette, Norbert Kersting, Claudia Ritzi, Wolf J. Schünemann.. *Politik in der digitalen Gesellschaft: Zentrale Problemfelder und Forschungsperspektiven* . Bielefeld: transcript. 2019; Berg, Sebastian, Niklas Rakowski, Thorsten Thiel. *The digital constellation*. WI-Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society. 2020; Thiel, Thorsten. Anonymität und Demokratie. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 2017. No. 30. pp. 152–161.

“Eurocentricity” in the development of democracy in general and digital democracy in particular.

7. Analysis of the concept of electronic electoral politics and justification of its special place in the concept of digital democracy; explaining the contradictory results of empirical studies of electronic voting in the context of the development of digital democracy;
8. Conducting a sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting
9. Justification for the turn that has taken place in the scientific discourse of digital democracy and manifested itself in the rejection of simple explanatory models of the relationship between digitalization and democracy and turning to philosophical concepts and theories that allow analyzing digital democracy at the required level of complexity, thus achieving the necessary correspondence between the complexity inherent in what is being studied object and the complexity of the methodology used.
10. Justification of the need to study digital democracy as a research program and a turn in its study from empirical research to theorization of digital democracy based on existing theoretical bodies.
11. Justification of the prospects of the political theory of constellation as a research program for the study of digital democracy.

Methodology and methods

The conceptual framework of the dissertation is an integration of discursive institutionalism and poststructuralism. The work uses elements of comparative analysis.

Discursive approaches to public policy analysis have gained prominence in recent decades. However, despite the fact that the amount of scientific literature on discourse research and discourse analysis is growing, various concepts of the “discourse” dimension and its potential have not yet been sufficiently explored.

Discursive institutionalist research focuses on the analysis of the actual practices through which global ideas are incorporated into local contexts, as well as on discourses. In 2012, V. Schmidt introduced the term “discursive institutionalism” as an umbrella for theoretical approaches that are associated with interactive communicative processes of discourse and politics. Rather than focusing on analyzing the outcomes of the political process, this new set of approaches examines how social reality is shaped by language; how actors differ in their normative interpretation of the problem; and how they try to develop policies in the light of different conceptions of reality, that is, discourses ¹⁵.

Hay S. points out that the strategies of actors cannot do without the interpretation of the world in which they find themselves ¹⁶. We understand discourses as categorizations and concepts that give meaning to physical phenomena and social realities ¹⁷. There are various discursive approaches, and some of these approaches argue that there is nothing outside discourse, ¹⁸while others distinguish between "discursive" and "non-discursive" elements ¹⁹.

At the same time, discourses, on the one hand, are recognized as structures that influence how actors perceive reality; in this sense, they limit the behavior and actions of actors. On the other hand, in language, symbols, categories, political concepts, in other words, in discursive practices, actors can act and reflect on their own position when they encounter alternative discourses and subsequently change their environment and structures. Discourses and institutions are very closely related to each other. Discourses constitute and constrain (patterns of) behavior and are thus materialized in ways of acting and thinking, these ways can be thought of as “institutions” in the broader sociological sense of

¹⁵Fischer, F., Forester, J. The argumentative turn in Political analysis and planning edited by.1993

¹⁶Hay, C. Political analysis. A critical introduction. Palgrave Macmillan.2002. r.141

¹⁷Hajer, M.. The politics of environmental discourse. Ecological modernization and the policy process. Oxford University Press.1995. R . 44

¹⁸Laclau, E., Mouffe, C. Hegemony and socialist strategy. Towards a radical democratic politics. Verso.1985

¹⁹Hajer, M. The politics of environmental discourse. Ecological modernization and the policy process. Oxford University Press.1995

institutions. Institutions can be characterized as established discourses ²⁰or temporary stabilization of discourses ²¹.

Hajer M. ²²makes a distinction between discourse structuration, namely when discourses become widely accepted and influence how a wide range of actors understand specific issues, and discourse institutionalization, where structured discourses become increasingly stabilized, routinized and, ultimately, completely embedded and institutionalized in rules.

In Russia, the ideas of discursive institutionalism were developed in the works of O.Yu. Malinova, L.V. Smorgunov and others. Exploring the relationship between the transformation of the public sphere in Russia after the collapse of the USSR and changes in the conditions of production and competition of public ideas, O.Yu. Malinova warns against viewing the ideas underlying discourse as a “magic ball”. The dissertation author shares the scientist’s point of view, emphasizing the promise of considering the idea-oriented approach as a research program that accumulates knowledge about the social mechanisms that mediate the production, distribution and competition of ideas.

Smorgunov L.V. interprets discursive institutionalism as a branch of constructivism. When describing public policy, the scientist substantiates the concept of “liminality,” emphasizing that supporters of the discursive approach believe that the position of liminality is constructed by the actors themselves ²³. It seems to us that the concept of “liminality” can be used to describe and interpret the processes of development of digital democracy. Note that this concept is indeed often used in the context of the development of digital technologies.

²⁰Philips, N., Jorgensen, M. W. Discourse analysis as theory and method. Sage.2002. r.62

²¹Arts, B., Van Tatenhove, JPM, Leroy, P. Policy arrangements/ In JPM Van Tatenhove, B. Arts, P. Leroy (Eds.)/ Political modernization and the environment. Kluwer Academic Publishers. 2000. pp. 53–69

²²Hajer, M.The politics of environmental discourse. Ecological modernization and the policy process. Oxford University Press.1995.

²³ <https://www.politstudies.ru/files/File/2012/5/15.pdf> R . 5 [date visits 11/11/2023]

Digital transformation is often characterized as a threshold process of transition from established practices to new practices enabled by digital technologies.

Existing research offers two contrasting views on the nature of the edge of digital transformation. Henfridsson, O., and Yu. Yu ²⁴emphasize that threshold processes of digital innovation involve discrete transitions from one set of organizational practices to another. Orlikowski V. and Scott S., ²⁵on the other hand, characterize the threshold significance of digital transformation from the point of view of ongoing continuous sociomaterial practices. Building on these two contrasting views of the marginality of digital transformation, some researchers ²⁶propose a third approach that suggests that the threshold degree of digital transformation is both discrete and continuous, following a discontinuous form. The key to understanding this periodic boundary of digital transformation is its multi-layered nature ²⁷.

Poststructuralism denotes theoretical and political debates in the social sciences and humanities that have made a decisive contribution to the growing interdisciplinary interest in the problem of discourse since the 1970s . Poststructuralism can be said to have placed discourse at the center of interdisciplinary theoretical discourse in the social sciences and humanities.

The question of who is the subject of digital democracy was developed extensively in early poststructuralist concepts of cyberdemocracy in the 1990s. Inspired by early enthusiasm for the possibilities of digital communication, poststructuralist thinkers conceptualized the democratic subject as a disembodied being who exists only through the words he speaks. The textuality of online

²⁴Henfridsson, O., Yoo, Y. The Liminality of Trajectory Shifts in Institutional Entrepreneurship,” *Organization Science INFORMS*, 2014. No. 25:3. pp. 932–950.

²⁵Orlikowski, W., Scott, S. Liminal Innovation in Practice: Understanding the Reconfiguration of Digital Work in Crisis // *Information and Organization Pergamon*, 2021. No. 31:1, p. 100336

²⁶Thomas Haskamp, Christian Dreme, Nicholas Berente, Youngjin Yoo Falk Punctuated Multi-Layered Liminality in Digital Transformation: The Case of an Automotive Platform // *ICIS. 2022. Proceedings* . No. 4.

²⁷https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365355305_Punctuated_Multi-Layered_Liminality_in_Digital_Transformation_The_Case_of_an_Automotive_Platform

communication realized poststructuralist notions of self constructed through discourse. The anonymity of online communication was seen as an opportunity to leave behind the burden of a body tainted by isolation, hierarchy and discrimination. It is this understanding of democratic subjectivity that is also reflected in the current definition of digital democracy, which focuses on disembodied cliques and treats physical conditions as a constraint rather than an opportunity for online interaction. Inspired by the concepts of the construction of linguistic reality, the realization of identity, and the discursive power of knowledge, online text-based communication, separating the speaker's body from the spoken word, became a realization of post-structuralist thought.

Regarding comparative methodology, it is important to note the following. Discussing the results of comparative political science by the end of the 20th century, Smorgunov L.V. rightly speaks about the transformation of methodological research models and the transfer of interest from the search for similarities and common dependencies to showing differences and creating new, more diverse classifications²⁸. It seems to us that it is in this direction that research in the field of digital democracy is currently developing. Such a transformation of methodological research models and a refusal to search for general patterns is likely associated with contradictory results of empirical studies of the development of digital democracy, which cannot be “fitted” into a single concept of digital democracy.

The next stage, which represents a higher level of knowledge, should be the theorization of digital democracy on the basis of already formed theoretical bodies.

The object of the dissertation research is digital democracy.

²⁸Smorgunov L.V. Comparative political science: results of development at the end of the 20th century //Principles and practice of political research. Collection of materials from conferences and events held by RAPN in 2001. Moscow, 2002. P. 181.

The subject of the study is the problems of conceptualizing digital democracy and academic discourse devoted to the development of digital democracy.

The theoretical significance of the dissertation research is:

- in an attempt to conceptualize digital democracy through revealing the complex (dialectical) nature of the interaction of digital technologies and democracy;

- in the study of the academic discourse of digital democracy, its current state and main development trends.

The practical significance of the study lies in obtaining new knowledge that can be used in the work of public authorities and administration, providing the necessary level of scientific validity when making decisions in the field of development of digital democracy, as well as conducting a sociological assessment of the positions of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting, the results of which can be used in developing practical recommendations regarding electronic electoral policy in Russia.

The scientific novelty of the dissertation research lies in:

- the conceptualization of digital democracy carried out in the work through the interpretation of the fundamental contradiction that underlies digital democracy and which is associated with the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democracy, as well as the uncertain role of socio-political factors in the development of digital technologies themselves.

- study of the academic discourse of digital democracy, identifying its current state and direction of development, which reflects the current level of knowledge about digital democracy.

- conducting a sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting, the results of which can be used in developing practical recommendations regarding electronic electoral politics in Russia.

Main scientific results

1. The approaches to the conceptualization of digital democracy existing in scientific discourse were examined [276, p.512], [284, p. 3868], which not only did not lead to the creation of a coherent concept, but also did not bring the necessary clarity regarding the definition of digital democracy. The dissertation author has proposed a new approach to the conceptualization of digital democracy [286, p. 4407], which is based on the interpretation of the fundamental contradiction associated with the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democracy, and the equally uncertain role of socio-political factors in the development of digital technologies themselves [275, p.275], [283, p.172].

2. The current state of the academic discourse of digital democracy has been studied [281, p. 26], which is characterized by recognition of the role of values, ideas, beliefs underlying politics (the concept of digital democracy is not neutral) [279,p.22], [280, p.277]. The modern discourse of digital democracy necessarily includes a dynamic dimension (the study of the dynamic interaction of democracy and digital technologies) [278, p.38], [282, p.178]. The future of digital democracy remains open, the rapidly increasing complexity of socio-political life is becoming an urgent problem that requires serious theoretical reflection, while the role of the academic discourse of digital democracy in shaping the ideas and beliefs of political actors is increasing [285, p. 3457]. Developing a relevant concept of digital democracy involves expanding the scientific discourse, including the description and interpretation of digital democracy in the non-Western world and expanding the concept of democracy in general and digital democracy in particular [283, p. 171].

3. A sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting was carried out, the results of which can be used in developing practical recommendations regarding electronic electoral politics in Russia [277, p.270], [280, p. 215].

Provisions for defense

1. Any attempts to give an adequate definition of digital democracy inevitably give rise to problems and contradictions of various kinds and levels. Resolving these contradictions should be the subject of research in various disciplines, primarily political science. However, research on digital democracy is often carried out outside of political science: in the field of communication and media, technology and computer science, thus unduly emphasizing the predominant importance of digital technologies over the very idea of democracy.

2. Fulfilling the task of developing a relevant concept of digital democracy involves expanding the scientific discourse of digital democracy, including the description and interpretation of digital democracy also in the non-Western world and expanding the concept of democracy in general, and digital democracy in particular.

3. The main contradiction that underlies digital democracy is associated with the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democratic institutions and the practice of political participation, as well as the role of socio-political factors in the development of digital technologies themselves.

4. The complex of complex problems and contradictions of digital democracy is innate for it, naturally acquired by it from democracy, many problems and contradictions in the development of which remained unresolved. Thus, digital democracy is a dynamically developing phenomenon that incorporates two developing areas: democracy and digital technologies (the use of digital technologies in public policy and management). Digital democracy is a term loaded with political aspirations.

5. Attempts to describe and interpret the interdependence between changes in the public sphere, changes in democratic practices and the use of digital technologies in terms of causality, which emphasizes the genetic connection of one phenomenon with another (considered in this context as its consequence) turn out to be untenable.

6. Electronic participation initiatives are viewed (and then implemented) as a technological rather than a socio-political project. A meaningful study of e-

participation in different socio-political contexts requires going beyond technical or technological aspects. The effectiveness of digital participation and its impact on the relationship between citizens and public authorities depends on the prevailing values underlying the political system in a particular country.

7. The introduction and consolidation of the institution of electronic voting necessarily involves a complex process of institutional building, which cannot be reduced to the formal introduction of electronic voting.

8. The results of a sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting, conducted by the author, shows that the expert community on electronic electoral politics in Russia connects citizens' trust in electronic voting with personal trust in political leaders holding public positions (President, Chairman of the Government, Chairman of the State Duma). In this sense, the acceptance of electronic voting by citizens will, to a large extent, be determined by the attitude of these individuals towards electronic voting, expressed in political discourse. This gives some optimism to citizens' support for electronic electoral politics in Russia.

8. Digital technologies do not have a deterministic impact on democracy. Digitalization is not an external factor in relation to democracy. It is necessary to explore how socio-political and technological processes are formed in constant interaction. At the same time, the influence and significance of digital technologies cannot be explained by the special (democratizing) properties of digital technologies themselves. By themselves, they are, in this sense, absolutely neutral, acquiring democratic or, on the contrary, anti-democratic properties only in the socio-political system in which they are built.

9. The scientific discourse on digital democracy is in constant change and evolution, reflecting a shift from reductionist and deterministic concepts to recognition of the complex dialectical relationship between digital technologies and democracy.

10. A promising methodology for studying digital democracy is discursive institutionalism, as one of the areas of institutional theory. The concept of digital

democracy is not neutral (digital technologies are neutral), it is politically and value-laden, therefore an adequate methodology for its study will be a methodology that allows us to understand the role of values, ideas, beliefs that underlie politics. This requirement is met by discursive institutionalism, which is a modern, dynamically developing direction of institutionalism.

11. Modern academic discourse on digital democracy is based on the belief that both digital technologies and democracy are in a relationship of constant development and mutual influence. Thus, the study of digital democracy must necessarily include a dynamic dimension; the research program of digital democracy must be aimed at studying the dynamic interaction of democracy and digital technologies.

12. Modern scientific discourse of digital democracy emphasizes that the future of digital democracy remains open, the ever-increasing complexity of social life is becoming an urgent problem requiring serious theoretical and philosophical reflection, while the role of the academic discourse of digital democracy in shaping the ideas and beliefs of political actors is noticeably increasing.

Structure of the dissertation research. The work consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references.

Approbation of the results of the dissertation research. The provisions and conclusions of the study were presented by the dissertation candidate at all-Russian and international conferences, round tables held in leading educational and scientific organizations: Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov, St. Petersburg State University, North Caucasus State University, ANO "Expert Institute of Social Research" and others. The results of the study are also reflected in the author's publications: 5 monographs with a total volume of 78 pp., including the author's 39 pp. .1., articles of the recommended list of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation .

CHAPTER I. THE PLACE OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN MODERN POLITICAL THEORY

1.1. The concept of digital democracy and its contribution to the development of democratic theory

Technologies play an important role in various aspects of life in modern society, including its political dimension. Moreover, the use of digital technologies is no longer a subject of debate (which was the case in the early stages of the development of digital technologies) and is considered as a fact. At the same time, researchers are concerned with assessing the impact of new technologies on various aspects of social life, including politics as its integral part²⁹.

Digital technologies open up new opportunities for different forms of political activity and participation. Therefore, many researchers are currently focusing their attention on studying the relationship between digital technologies and politics. Some researchers believe that democracy will strengthen and develop through digital technologies³⁰. Other researchers insist that there is little evidence that digital technologies stimulate interest in politics and governance and improve the quality of political participation and democracy in general³¹. " However, more and more examples of the use of digital tools can be found in different areas of public policy. The term "digital democracy" has become the most frequently used by researchers who study the impact of digital technologies on the political process . Digital democracy is one of the concepts in which the relationship

²⁹ Nowina Konopka , M. Trzy p ł aszczyzny relacji Internetu z demokracj ą na tle rozwoju spo ł ecze Ń stwainformacyjnego . [In:] Musiał-Karg [Ed.]. Demokracja w obliczu nowych Mediów. Elektroniczna demokracja wybory przez Internet, kampania w sieci. Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek:Toruń. 2013. r . 12

³⁰Hoven, J.. E-democracy, E-contestation and the Monitorial Citizen. Ethics and Information Technology.2005. No. 7. pp. 51-59. Page 51.

³¹Hoven, J. E-democracy, E-contestation and the Monitorial Citizen. Ethics and Information Technology. 2005. No. pp.51-59. Page 51.

between politics and new technologies is recognized and becomes the object of scientific interest and related theoretical and applied research.

As the processes of digitalization develop and deepen and the implementation of various initiatives of digital democracy, awareness of their wide instrumental capabilities, the study of the fundamental foundations of digital democracy and its connection with the central theoretical principles of democracy unreasonably fades into the background.

In this context, it seems particularly important to examine the relationship between new technologies and democracy from a theoretical perspective. It is necessary to analyze, in particular, fundamental democratic processes such as participation, electronic voting, which are mediated by digital technologies. The concept of digital democracy contributes both to democratic theory and to the understanding of the functioning of a democratic political system in the digital age.

Exploring the issues of correlation between democracy and digital democracy in the EU, F. Schmitter³² emphasizes that neither one nor the other actually exists yet. His use of the word “yet” implies that there is potential for further democratization of the EU and that perhaps such democratization will involve extensive use of digital technologies.

It seems important to us to point out here what is, from our point of view, a fundamental difference. If the ideal of democracy, as a kind of ideal theoretical construct, can be described, this does not yet seem to be possible for digital democracy. The rapid development of digital technologies does not allow us to even hypothetically formulate the potential of their influence on democracy, as well as the potential for reverse influence (which is very rarely the object of scientific reflection). Analysis of empirical data on the impact of digital technologies on democracy leads to contradictory results.

³²Schmitter, PC E-voting, E-democracy and EU-democracy: A thought experiment/ In A. Trechsel & F. Mendez (Eds.)/ *The European Union and e-voting: addressing the European Parliament's internet voting challenge*. London: Routledge. 2005

In recent years, as both the great potential of digital technologies for the development of democracy and the high risks of their use have become apparent, questions related to the impact of digital technologies on the development of democracy have been reduced to questions of whether democracies can survive digital technologies and whether they can survive without them.

Note that determining which political areas are included in the concept of “digital democracy” raises many problems and discussions. Despite the fact that in recent years digital democracy has increasingly become the object of research by political scientists, sociologists, and philosophers, the concept itself is not strict and complete, and there is still no consensus on the definition of digital democracy.

The term “digital democracy”, in its most general form, presupposes the potential of digital technologies in the development and strengthening of democracy. It generally covers electronic voting and digital participation. Thus, K. Hacker and van Dijk conceptualize digital democracy as “a set of attempts to practice democracy without the limitations of time, space and other physical conditions, using information and communication technologies ³³. ” With this approach to interpreting digital democracy, it [digital democracy] actually comes down to short-term actions. This has contributed greatly to simplifying and devaluing the idea of digital democracy and understanding it as clicktivism (mouse click) ³⁴. Thus, the often-criticized “clicktivism” reduces political participation to the minimal effort of a few clicks. However, small acts of participation also go a long way because lowering the threshold for political action expands the pool of people willing to contribute.

Moreover, there is an implicit assumption of a binary nature (the mutually exclusive nature between online and offline practices) between online interaction

³³Hacker, K., van Dijk, J. What is Digital Democracy? / Hacker, K. & van Dijk, J. (eds)/ Digital Democracy: Issues of Theory and Practice. 1st edn. London: Sage, 2000. pp . 1-9. Page 1.

³⁴Halupka, M. The Legitimization of Clicktivism. Australian Journal of Political Science. 2018. No. 53(1). R . 130–141.

and the physical conditions that supposedly limit such interaction. The physicality of the material “real world” is unreasonably opposed to cyberspace as a sphere of democratic practice.

Regarding political processes, including participation, which are analyzed within the framework of the concept of digital democracy, L. Porembski limits the scope of the discussion, referring to the work of K. Kakabadse, who identifies four main areas³⁵. The first area concerns electronic bureaucracy and involves all types of actions aimed at solving administrative issues. The second area is related to the provision of information. The third area examines the procedures of direct democracy, including, for example, online deliberation, electronic voting and online referendums. The final aspect of e-democracy relates to the creation, maintenance and strengthening of communities and civil society.

From our point of view, the main contradiction that underlies digital democracy is related to the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democratic institutions and the practice of political participation and the equally uncertain role of democracy in the development of digital technologies.

The task of conceptualizing digital democracy is also greatly complicated by the fact that democracy itself is an open system, in a process of constant development and change. Its dynamics, on the one hand, are determined by the contradictory principles, interpretations and aspirations inherent in the democratic idea itself, the democratic ideal; on the other hand, this dynamics is influenced by new opportunities and practices provided by the use of digital technologies. Thus, we can say that the complex of complex problems and contradictions of digital democracy turned out to be innate for it, naturally acquired by it from democracy, many problems and contradictions in the development of which have still not been resolved.

³⁵Porebski, L. Obywatel-konsument-observator. Główne wymiary wykorzystania Internetu w polityce. Nowe Media. 2010. No. 1. pp . 159-179. Page 189.

Thus, digital democracy is a dynamically developing phenomenon that includes two developing areas: the development of democracy and digital technologies (the use of digital technologies in public policy and management). Digital democracy is a concept laden with political aspirations. From a historical point of view, this is the latest model, replacing electronic democracy or teledemocracy.

Areas of democratic change enabled by the use of digital technologies tend to involve changes in the roles of public authorities and citizens; changes taking place in the public sphere; changes in political participation processes; changes in rights.

Digital democracy initiatives aim to make political processes more responsive and transparent. Providing citizens with the opportunity to directly interact with public authorities and government through the use of digital technologies, simplifying and optimizing this interaction due to their use, makes it possible to achieve greater sensitivity of policy and management to the needs of citizens. Reimagining government as a digital platform ³⁶aims to achieve horizontal forms of civic cooperation to realize the common good. In most of these projects, citizens are no longer seen as mere voters. They become co-subjects of public administration, taking an active part in decision-making processes ³⁷.

Some scholars conceptualize e-government as a path to digital democracy. The key question regarding the relationship between e-government and digital democracy essentially boils down to the question of whether e-government and digital democracy are directly related or not.

Various terms such as e-government, e-governance and digital democracy have been introduced to describe the changing relationship between citizens and public authorities. At the same time, in many cases, the concepts of “electronic

³⁶O'Reilly, T. Government as a Platform. *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization*. 2011. No. 6(1). Rr . 13-40. Page 13.

³⁷Deseriis, M. Two Variants of the Digital Party: The Platform Party and the Networked Party (1.0).2020.

government” and “digital democracy” are used rather vaguely, capturing only the impact of digital technologies on the relationship between public authorities and citizens. E-government is the use of information and communication technologies in all aspects of a government organization ³⁸. K. Gronlund defines digital democracy as “the use of information technology in democratic processes ³⁹. ” This broad interpretation is used to show that the use of digital technologies does not imply any particular form of democracy. Let us note that definitions in the scientific literature vary from as broad as this definition to very specific ones, implying a direct connection with a specific form of democracy, usually direct democracy.

When defining e-government and digital democracy, we usually encounter four groups of definitions.

The first group of researchers defines e-government as the delivery of government services through information and communication technologies, allowing traditional services to be delivered in new and more efficient ways.

The second group of researchers expanded the definition of e-government, which actually means digital democracy. E-government is “a way for governments to use the most innovative information and communications technologies to provide citizens and businesses with better access to government information and services, improve the quality of those services, and provide greater opportunities to participate in democratic institutions and processes ⁴⁰. ” Some scholars in this group have defined digital democracy as a stage of e-government.

The third group of scientists has identified e-government as a path to digital democracy. According to researchers, one of the positive results of e-government

³⁸ Curato N, Farrell D, Geissel B, Kimmo Grönlund, André Bächtiger and Maija Setälä et al. *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Core Design Features* . Bristol University Press. 2021. RUR 255

³⁹ Grönlund Kimmo, Curato N, Farrell D, Geissel B, André Bächtiger and Maija Setälä et al. *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Core Design Features* . Bristol University Press; 2021. RUR 255

⁴⁰ Z. Fang E-government in the digital era: Concept, practice, and development *International Journal of the Computer, the Internet and Management*. 2002

is the promotion of digital democracy. The provision of local services can be a mechanism for community participation, and e-government can be a means of promoting e-participation ⁴¹.

Finally, the fourth group of scholars formulates a broader concept of digital democracy compared to e-government. With this approach, e-government and digital democracy are fused together, being “one piece of the digital democracy puzzle ⁴².” In addition to the social, political, and technological arguments for e-government, scholars often discuss e-government as a means of enhancing the democratic process. E-government initiatives can improve the extent and quality of citizen participation. From a gradual evolution perspective, e-government influences participatory democracy ⁴³.

Sometimes the intersection of concepts and related concepts is explained by the ambiguity of the term “participation” itself, which covers both “minimalist” concepts of political participation (for example, voting) and “maximalist” concepts ⁴⁴. In this sense, the concept of participation by itself is not sufficient to conceptualize digital democracy.

Many states that have relied on the rapid and comprehensive implementation of e-government, at the same time, have encountered serious difficulties in communicating with citizens. Focusing on digital communication alone does not lead to digital democracy. Moreover, in many cases this process is accompanied by disappointment and resistance on the part of citizens.

It is necessary to point out that there is a correlation between changes in the public sphere, changes in democratic practices and the use of digital technologies. At the same time, attempts in the scientific literature to describe and interpret this

⁴¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0740624X11000578#preview-section-references> [date of visit 11/12/2023]

⁴² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0740624X11000578#preview-section-references> [date of visit 11/12/2023]

⁴³Lewandowsky S, Pomerantsev P. Technology and democracy: a paradox wrapped in a contradiction inside an irony. *Memory, Mind & Media* . 2022. No. 1. R.5 . doi:10.1017/mem.2021.7

⁴⁴Carpentier N. *Media and Participation: A Site of Ideological-Democratic Struggle*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.2011.

interdependence in terms of causality, which emphasizes the genetic connection of one phenomenon with another (considered in this context as its consequence), face serious difficulties.

As citizens acquire greater subjectivity, the social and legal boundaries between the production, distribution and consumption of news are blurred and become quite arbitrary. Traditional media outlets are losing control of their social media channels ⁴⁵. Personalization and horizontal distribution of information flows contribute to a significant pluralization of the public sphere.

Digital democracy is emerging at a time when “traditional forms of political action are in decline: political parties suffer from loss of membership, the emancipatory aura of suffrage fades, and audiences of passive citizens transform into active audiences ⁴⁶.” There is a “redistribution” between the public sphere as a space for debate and the sphere of institutional decision-making, as a result of which the first sphere acquires relevance compared to the latter.

At the “democratic interface” ⁴⁷between the institutionalized and non-institutionalized spheres of political action, we observe significant changes, exploration of new types of interaction and influence on representative institutions. However, not all of these experiments can be considered democratizing. Some of them may violate constitutional boundaries, be manipulative or anti-democratic in nature. Digital campaign platforms enable mobilization to address socio-political issues, which support the idea of more directly expressing the will of citizens. In a normative sense, emerging technology citizen activism is creating digital infrastructures to “facilitate citizen interaction and improve communication and feedback between governments and citizens ⁴⁸.”

⁴⁵Kleis Nielsen, R., Fletcher, R. Democratic Creative Destruction? The Effect of a Changing Media Landscape on Democracy/ In N. Persily & J. A. Tucker (Eds.) // *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108890960>

⁴⁶Ritzer, G., Jurgenson, N. Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital 'prosumer.' *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 2010. No. 10(1). Pp. 13–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540509354673>

⁴⁷Bennett, W. L., Pfetsch, B. Rethinking Political Communication in a Time of Disrupted Public Spheres. *Journal of Communication*, 2018. No. 68(2). pp. 243–253. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqx017>

⁴⁸Schrock, A. *Civic tech: Making technology work for people*. 2018.

” At the same time, this leads to risks of disruption of organizational ties with decision-making institutions (parliaments and parties).

Thus, digital activism does not automatically become more inclusive or gain greater political recognition.

In the processes of political participation, there is a turn from long-term participation (in political parties or associations) to short-term, transitory participation, focused on solving specific problems. V. Bennett V. and A. Segerberg in this regard talk about the transition from collective actions to unifying actions ⁴⁹.

At the same time, the unstable and transient nature of most digital movements does not allow them to be considered as a full-fledged replacement for traditional forms of political participation.

Researchers of digital democracy emphasize that the accumulation of big data and its systematic collection currently acts as a new form of power, domination ⁵⁰, structuring the possibilities of democratization of digital governance.

Digital platforms act as monopolists collecting and analyzing data. In this way, digital democracy facilitates the emergence of new sources of power. At the same time, the relationship between public authorities and digital platforms is determined by a set of contradictions in terms of attempts to implement mutual control, use of information and databases, which has a significant impact on the democratic process, undermining its essence.

Despite the fact that the rights and opportunities of citizens through digital technologies are significantly expanding, in practice they come under pressure from digital platforms based on data, in addition, there is a great temptation for

⁴⁹Bennett, W. L., Segerberg, A. THE LOGIC OF CONNECTIVE ACTION: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*. 2012. No. 15(5). Rr . 739–768. [http s://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661](http://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661)

⁵⁰Zuboff, S. *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. Profile books. 2019.

public authorities to manipulate digital technologies, expanding the supervisory powers of the state.

1.2.The concept of digital democracy and modern concepts of political participation

One of the problems facing political science is related to the study of the political behavior of citizens in the context of a new political reality, characterized, in particular, by the development and deepening of digital technologies, their rapid penetration into various spheres of social life.

Digital society has brought with it new forms of political participation, in which different types of participation create new morphologies, where online and offline modes coexist, thus giving rise to new patterns of behavior. “An adequate public sphere for a democratic state depends on both the quality of discourse and the quantity of participation .”⁵¹

In order to achieve scientific rigor, the concept of digital democracy must be distinguished from the concept of electronic participation. While digital democracy focuses on the macro level of politics, e-participation focuses on the micro level. Of course, both levels are related to each other, since e-participation largely depends on the participation opportunities provided by the respective models of digital democracy.

A common definition of digital participation found in the scientific literature is the use of information and communication technologies to involve citizens in decision-making and the provision of public services ⁵². We mentioned earlier that sometimes e-participation is considered as an area of e-government (involving citizens in deliberative processes and decision-making).

⁵¹Calhoun, Craig (ed.) Habermas and the Public Sphere. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1992. P. 2.

⁵²Medaglia, R.. eParticipation research: Moving characterization forward (2006-2011). Government Information Quarterly. 2012. No. 29. pp . 346-360.

Sæbø, Ø., Rose, J., Skiftenes Flak, L., The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area. Government Information Quarterly. 2008. No. 25. pp . 400-428

At the heart of e-participation is social action, social activity mediated by digital technologies and involving interaction between three actors and key stakeholders: citizens, governments and politicians ⁵³.

Let us note here that electronic participation does not include citizen initiatives, discussions of political issues that do not involve government participation (initiator, moderator, recipient).

Let us note at the same time that their spread has actualized the problem of their connection with formal institutional processes.

The high importance that is attached to electronic participation is largely related to the function of strengthening the legitimacy of government institutions and ensuring the confidence of citizens in the institutions of the state, which this participation provides, increasing the responsiveness of public services to the needs of citizens and improving the quality of politics and governance in general.

The technological dimension of e-participation includes the consideration of e-participation in the context of the transition to a digital society and the improvement of digital governance.

The vast majority of scientific works that raise the problems of e-participation are devoted to the study of e-government. Thus, much of the e-government literature focuses on the electronic delivery of government services. E-participation is generally considered a part of e-government.

Digital participation can be visually represented as a continuum (from the construction of political discourse and citizen participation in political programs to policy development and the provision of public services). Of course, the boundaries between the points of this continuum and the categories corresponding to them are quite arbitrary. At the same time, e-participation mechanisms may vary depending on where we are on the continuum.

It is also obvious that public authorities pay different attention to the processes of constructing political discourse, creating policies, and providing

⁵³Sæbø, Ø., Rose, J., Skiftenes Flak, L., 2008. The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area. *Government Information Quarterly*. 2008. No. 25. pp . 400–428.

public services, depending on political regimes and prevailing values in public administration ⁵⁴. This point is important for understanding the potential and limitations of e-participation initiatives ⁵⁵.



Fig. 1 Spectrum of electronic participation depending on the level of participation

Digital technologies simplify the implementation of existing participation mechanisms and provide alternative, cheaper ways for citizens to participate. Consequently, in the same legal and institutional context, they create additional opportunities for interaction between public authorities and citizens. However, many e-participation mechanisms are digital versions of pre-existing mechanisms or processes. On the other hand, digital technologies have opened up truly new ways of participation, both in terms of channels of participation and in terms of the outcomes of participatory processes. At the same time, the boundary between “old” and “new” instruments of participation is not always clearly articulated.

⁵⁴Rose, J., Persson, JS, Heeager, LT, Irani, Z.. Managing e-Government: value positions and relationships: Value paradigms for e-Government. Information Systems. 2015. No. 25. pp.531–571 .

⁵⁵ file:///C:/Users/HewlettPackard/Downloads/wp163_2020.pdf page 6 [date visit 12/16/2023]

In Europe at the beginning of the 21st century, electronic participation was seen as a way to increase trust in government institutions, a way to increase their legitimacy, and overcome the growing alienation of citizens from formal political processes ⁵⁶.

In other countries, the reasons for adopting e-participation varied depending on the country in question. These include initiatives on good governance, e-government, as well as open government and open data ⁵⁷.

Initially, public authorities and experts had high hopes for e-participation, believing that the use of digital technologies, in itself, would lead to greater citizen participation in politics and governance, strengthening government legitimacy and increasing citizen trust in public institutions, thereby promoting thus, “the transition from thin democracy to deep democracy ⁵⁸. ”

Such positivistic expectations, which, generally speaking, often accompanied the development of e-government, were generally not confirmed by the results of comparative researchers in specific countries. However, recent research has shown that such expectations still exist today, including in rapidly modernizing countries where the number of e-participation initiatives has grown rapidly over the past decade ⁵⁹.

Comparative empirical studies find a correlation between the success of e-participation initiatives and attention to offline activities to support e-participation ⁶⁰. Combining online and offline activities is a widespread practice.

⁵⁶Kalampokis, E., Tambouris, E., Tarabanis, K., A Domain Model for eParticipation/ in: Third International Conference on Internet and Web Applications and Services, 2008. pp. 25–30.

⁵⁷Picazo-Vela, S., Gutiérrez-Martínez, I., Luna-Reyes, L.F., Understanding risks, benefits, and strategic alternatives of social media applications in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly* 2012. No. 29 pp. 504–511.

⁵⁸Tai, K.-T., Porumbescu, G., Shon, J., 2019. Can e-participation stimulate offline citizen participation: an empirical test with practical implications. *Public Management Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1584233>

⁵⁹Peixoto, T., Fox, JA, When does ICT-enabled citizen voice lead to government responsiveness? Digital dividends: background paper for the World Development Report. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.19088/1968-2016.104>

⁶⁰Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E., Tarabanis, K., eParticipation Initiatives in Europe: Learning from Practitioners, in: Tambouris, E., Macintosh, A., Glassey, O. (Eds.), *Electronic Participation, Lecture Notes in Computer Science*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2010. pp. 54-65.

The results of empirical studies show a sufficient conditionality and blurred boundaries between public and private initiatives in the field of digital citizen participation. E-participation platforms increasingly rely on components developed by the private sector to deliver their functions. The private sector and non-profit organizations have created platforms for citizen action and user feedback. In many countries, citizen-focused platforms that are not moderated by the government aim to generate ideas that citizens would like to see on the political agenda ⁶¹. These platforms typically attract more traffic than government participation platforms ⁶², putting them in a competitive relationship with official platforms ⁶³.

The interest of citizens themselves in electronic participation is likely to vary greatly depending on many factors: country, institutional conditions, the nature of participation itself, etc.

A comparative analysis of electronic participation of citizens is complicated by the lack of such data in most countries and the lack of uniform methodological approaches to assessing the effectiveness of electronic participation. In these conditions, real trends in the development of electronic voting have to be judged on the basis of unofficial and rather fragmentary data. As for European countries, data for which is open and presented most fully, in the European Union in the period from 2014 to 2019. levels of citizen participation in (national or local) e-consultation and voting have remained essentially the same, despite the rapid growth in the availability of online services. Researchers explain the current situation by the formal, ostentatious desire of countries for digital technologies, which form the basis of Europe's digital strategy. Even those countries that have made significant progress in the use of digital technologies in public policy and

⁶¹Päivärinta, T., Sæbø, Ø., Models of E-Democracy. Communications of the Association for Information Systems, 2006. pp. 818-840. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.01737>

⁶²Bohman, S., Hansson, H., Mobini, P., Online Participation in Higher Education Decision-making. Journal of eDemocracy and open government 2014. No. 6. Rr. 267–285.

⁶³Vidiasova, L., Vidiasov, E., The Effectiveness of E-Participation Tools in Russia: Analysis of E-Petition Portals and Sites with Solutions for Urban Problems, in: Sgem 2016, Bk 2: Political Sciences, Law, Finance, Economics and Tourism Conference Proceedings. Technology Ltd, Sofia, Vol I. No. 92. pp. 621-628

management in general have noted problems and failures in e-participation projects.

For example, M. Toots assesses the electronic participation platform Osale.ee as a failure, supporting his own conclusion with various data from official reports, the analysis of which leads to similar conclusions ⁶⁴.

It must be recognized that an objective assessment of e-participation, even in a single, specific country, is a complex task that requires not only an analysis of political discourse, but also an analysis of the actual practice of e-participation, the institutional conditions that ensure this participation, and an assessment of the depth of participation. Existing studies document the existence of a discrepancy between political discourse and the declared value of citizen participation and involvement in politics and governance and the real desire to expand this participation. This discrepancy varies by country.

Indeed, in the vast majority of countries, citizen participation in politics and governance occupies an important place in the declared goals of public authorities.

In modernizing countries, the electronic participation of citizens in politics and governance is associated with hopes for increasing the efficiency of politics and governance and improving the quality of democracy and its institutions ⁶⁵.

As for the countries of the European Union, the analysis of political discourse shows a fairly clearly expressed turn from techno-optimism (associated with improving the quality of democracy through the digital participation of citizens in politics and governance) to a more cautious optimism.

⁶⁴Toots, M. Why E-participation systems fail: The case of Estonia's Osale.ee. *Government Information Quarterly*, forthcoming. 2019.

⁶⁵Peixoto, T., Fox, JA, When does ICT-enabled citizen voice lead to government responsiveness? *Digital dividends: background paper for the World Development Report*. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.19088/1968-2016.104>

Even though the European Union was an early promoter of e-participation⁶⁶, "funding for e-participation has been minimal in recent years"⁶⁷.

Thus, the high expectations associated with e-participation have not been fully realized even in those countries that aspired to be leaders in the field of digitalization of politics and governance. Moreover, the optimistic expectations of researchers and public authorities associated with the use of digital technologies turned out to be more justified in terms of the joint production of public services than electronic political participation.

It should further be noted that the vast majority of problems that are found in the field of e-participation are characteristic of political participation in general. Research shows that these problems (for the most part) are not overcome by the use of digital technologies.

These include: the formal nature of participation, the problem of symbolic participation, the dominance of elite initiatives, ignorance and low level of participation of marginal groups of society, disappointment due to inefficiency and lack of feedback, objectively high costs of maintaining participation processes, disproportionate to the achieved results of this participation.

Another group of problems facing electronic participation concerns the direct use of digital technologies. We are talking about the so-called. the problem of the digital divide. Initially (with the introduction of e-government) this problem was described in the context of access to technology, then, as such access was provided, it began to be understood as a problem of excluding entire social groups from participation in digital policy and governance.

While there is recognition that digital technologies have the potential to broaden and level participation opportunities, researchers emphasize that they can also deepen existing divisions and thus test democracies.

⁶⁶Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E., Tarabanis, K., eParticipation Initiatives in Europe: Learning from Practitioners, in: Tambouris, E., Macintosh, A., Glassey, O. (Eds.), *Electronic Participation, Lecture Notes in Computer Science*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2010. pp. 54-65.

⁶⁷Le Blanc D. *Electronic participation: a brief overview of recent qualitative trends*. New York . UN . Report No. 163. 2020. P.33

At the same time, it remains indisputable that digital technologies open up fundamentally new opportunities for a large number of people to express their opinions and participate in political decision-making processes.

From the very beginning, e-participation initiatives were viewed (and then implemented) as a technological rather than a socio-political project. Of course, the technological side is of significant importance here. At the same time, hypertrophied attention to technological aspects, the clear priority that was given to solving technological issues to the detriment of socio-political, cultural, and value factors is currently associated with failed attempts at initiatives and projects of electronic participation.

At the same time, in contrast to other components of e-government, in particular e-services, an assessment of the implementation of e-participation projects in different countries clearly demonstrates the fallacy of this approach (the creation of platforms for e-participation is clearly insufficient to stimulate participation).

Consolidation and acceptance of digital participation technologies by citizens are largely determined by the existing level of trust in public institutions, digital technologies, as well as specific components of participation platforms.

The issue of identity (anonymity) in e-participation arises in a variety of contexts, such as e-petitions ⁶⁸, e-rulemaking ⁶⁹, living labs ⁷⁰, citizen feedback, and crowdsourcing. Additionally, there has recently been increased awareness that social media can be used to spread misinformation and polarize public debate. Two decades of experience have shown the importance of linking e-participation initiatives to formal institutional processes. For example, in a 2010 review of European e-participation initiatives, participants consistently expressed concerns

⁶⁸Obersteller, H. Anonymous ePetitions – Another Step Towards eDemocracy, in: Camenisch, J., Fischer-Hübner, S., Hansen, M. (Eds.), *Privacy and Identity Management for the Future Internet in the Age of Globalization*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2015. pp. 110–124

⁶⁹Epstein, D., Newhart, M., Vernon, R., Not by technology alone: The “analog” aspects of online public engagement in policymaking. *Government Information Quarterly* 2014. No. 31. R . 337–344.

⁷⁰Thiel, S.-K., Larsen-Ledet, I., The Role of Pseudonymity in Mobile e-Participation, in: *Proceedings of the 52nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. HICSS, Hawaii. 2019., pp. 2880–2889

that “the whole process may come to nothing” and demanded a clear commitment to integrating the results of the initiative into the policy process, feedback on the overall results of participation, and guidance about how they will be used in the future. The study, however, showed that many initiatives did not provide such feedback ⁷¹.

In the area of policy development, this means clearly defining the process by which citizens' views will be taken into account in decision-making; in the area of participatory service delivery, this means creating mechanisms through which public authorities can respond to citizen feedback and force service providers to respond. on them ⁷².

Research on digital platforms for citizen expression in modernizing countries ⁷³highlights the distinction between platforms that provide individual feedback and those that aggregate input or feedback. Many platforms provide both of these processes. Research highlights the key role of providing feedback for citizen acceptance of e-participation. At the same time, an analysis of comparative studies indicates that there is no clear correlation between the level/degree of use of e-participation platforms by citizens and the presence of feedback from public authorities (moreover, in some cases, some digital platforms with a high level of use were positively associated with the actual absence feedback from public authorities and vice versa).

Evaluating and measuring e-participation outcomes arguably remains the most unexplored area of e-participation. This is largely due to the vague and often poorly articulated goals of e-participation (the existence of broader goals that are difficult to measure), and the lack of performance indicators for specific e-participation initiatives.

⁷¹Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E., Tarabanis, K., eParticipation Initiatives in Europe: Learning from Practitioners, in: Tambouris, E., Macintosh, A., Glassey, O. (Eds.), *Electronic Participation, Lecture Notes in Computer Science*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2010. pp. 54–65

⁷²Peixoto, T., Fox, JA, When does ICT-enabled citizen voice lead to government responsiveness? Digital dividends: background paper for the World Development Report 2016.

⁷³Peixoto, T., Fox, J.A. When does ICT-enabled citizen voice lead to government responsiveness? Digital dividends: background paper for the World Development Report 2016.

Typically, when studying the effectiveness and efficiency of e-participation, questions such as: who participates are analyzed; whether digital channels allow you to reach groups that would not be reached through offline means, what is the quality and depth of participation, etc. Project proponents rarely systematically examine how participation affects the outcomes of the process or service in question and what it brings to participants.

There are virtually no systematic attempts to collect and interpret data on participation rates in different countries (even at the level of survey studies). There are also no clear criteria for what constitutes a “good” level of participation, which again may be due to the lack of clear objectives of e-participation initiatives. Clearly, measuring the use of e-participation opportunities is not sufficient to assess success; however, performance indicators based on improvements in policy and decision-making, as well as improvements in the quality of public services, are rare, and available evidence on the impact of e-participation on them is mixed.

Thus, there is a need for more research on the outcomes of e-participation initiatives in different countries, including modernizing countries that are actively promoting digitalization efforts and that have seen significant growth in digital participation.

A meaningful study of e-participation in different socio-political contexts requires going beyond technical or technological aspects. The success of e-government initiatives largely depends on the values prevailing in politics and public administration. The effectiveness of e-participation and its impact on the relationship between citizens and the state depend on the prevailing values underlying the political system in a particular country .

Should e-participation be primarily aimed at improving institutional performance, or should it serve broader democratic goals (e.g., public education and increased civic engagement)?

To some extent, the problems observed in the field of e-participation may be due to significant differences between e-participation and other areas of e-government. Participation is fundamentally more difficult to manage than

standard administrative operations because participants are expected to provide individual feedback as well as signals that their contributions are being taken into account. Because participation is voluntary rather than mandatory, as is the case with digital government services, trust in government and public institutions plays a more important role in citizen engagement. In turn, trust in government institutions can quickly decline if citizens perceive that their participation in political decision-making is lacking. This highlights the need for careful analysis of the broader political and administrative context in which e-participation occurs, as well as the needs and motivations of all stakeholders.

1.3.The concept of electronic electoral politics and its special place in the discourse of digital democracy

In this section we address an area that has been largely unexplored, namely electronic voting in digital democracy. At the same time, the dissertation author himself does not intentionally take the position of a supporter or opponent of electronic voting. It is also important to emphasize that this area of research covers a wide range of technological, regulatory, political, economic and social aspects. Moreover, the context of electronic voting in digital democracy includes aspects of globalization, technical issues related to interoperability, data standardization and security. At the same time, we note that electronic voting is a very controversial topic in electoral studies, at the same time being the most innovative, but at the same time controversial “event” in the global movement towards e-government and digital democracy. Since electronic voting involves innovative methods that differ from traditional voting methods, the question of whether moving elections online is a factor that increases the democratic nature of elections or, on the contrary, a factor that creates additional risks and threats to democracy, has become a pressing subject of scientific debate. As you know, elections are one of the most important functions of democracy.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence and related innovations are expanding the boundaries of digitalization. The outbreak of the pandemic has made issues related to electronic voting even more urgent, considering it [electronic voting] in the current conditions as the only opportunity to exercise the right to vote.

Interest in electronic voting is explained by interest in rapidly developing related issues and areas, such as e-government, digital democracy, e-government, e-participation, etc., which also require understanding and conceptualization.

It should be noted that the special research and practical interest in electronic voting is due to the problems of traditional electoral systems, especially evident in Western countries (lack of interest, low level of trust in public authorities, political parties, lack of faith in the legitimacy of elections, lack of worthy candidates, in the opinion of the voter, low level of civic consciousness, etc.).

The content of the concept of “electronic voting” varies widely: “from voting using electronic means to appealing to the Internet community to express its political opinion, from counting votes using electronic means to integrated electronic systems, from registering voters and candidates to publishing results elections”⁷⁴. In order to achieve scientific rigor, the concept of “electronic voting” is currently limited to political elections and referendums. Initiatives or public opinion polls, as well as selective participation of citizens between elections or referendums, are generally not included in this concept⁷⁵.

Various scenarios for the development of electronic voting are being developed in the scientific literature. Some researchers consider electronic voting

⁷⁴ Buchsbaum TM “E-voting: International Developments and Lessons Learnt”. Proceedings of Workshop on Electronic Voting in Europe –Technology, Law, Politics and Society, Austria, at www.subs.emis.de/LNI/Proceedings/Proceedings47/ 2004. [Proceeding.GI.47-4.pdf](#). [date visits 11/01/2023]

⁷⁵ ⁷⁵ Buchsbaum TM “E-voting: International Developments and Lessons Learnt”. Proceedings of Workshop on Electronic Voting in Europe –Technology, Law, Politics and Society, Austria, at www.subs.emis.de/LNI/Proceedings/Proceedings47/ 2004. [Proceeding.GI.47-4.pdf](#). [date visits 11/01/2023]

a “magic ballot”⁷⁶. By reducing the physical cost of voting and minimizing barriers to participation, electronic voting will make the process of political choice more accessible and convenient, thereby attracting more people, especially young people, to participate⁷⁷, helping to address the problem of declining voter turnout, which is a major concern in Western countries. Electronic voting also provides protection against electoral fraud⁷⁸.

On the other hand, the potential dangers of technological failures and security issues are highlighted, and it is often argued that connecting digital technology and voting is a dangerous idea⁷⁹. The ease of hacking into personal computers and election commission servers, as well as weak encryption of electronic votes during online voting, make it difficult to ensure the integrity of ballots and maintain voter privacy. In addition, the issue of ensuring the fairness of online voting is a concern. Thus, the potential benefits and inevitable risks associated with electronic voting have generated a wide variety of responses from nation states. Individual countries have experimented with electronic voting in an effort to reduce election costs, reduce voting errors and increase voter turnout. The experiments themselves differ significantly not only in scale and effectiveness, but also in their response to existing security problems.

Electronic voting implies a reduction in the time spent by voters. Compared to mail-in voting, which requires voters to mail in their ballots several days before Election Day to ensure they are counted on time, online votes are delivered immediately. Secondly, as already indicated, electronic voting increases accessibility. In addition to the barriers mentioned above, citizens (especially voters with health conditions and disabilities) may experience difficulty getting

⁷⁶ Germann, M., Serdült, U. 'Internet voting and turnout: Evidence from Switzerland// Electoral Studies. 2017. No. 47. pp.1-12.

⁷⁷ Gronke, P. et al. 'Convenience voting.' Annual Review of Political Science. 2008. No. 11. pp.437-455.

⁷⁸ Schryen, G. 'Security aspects of Internet voting.' Proceedings of the 37th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Science. Hawaii, USA. 2004. pp.1-9.

⁷⁹ Parks, M. In 2020, some Americans will vote on their phones. Is that the future? 2019// <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/07/776403310/in-2020-some-americans-will-vote-on-their-phones-is-that-the-future> [date visit 09/11/2023]

to their polling stations on Election Day. Digital voting technologies can enable these groups to overcome such barriers to participation and thus increase voter confidence and willingness to participate in elections. Electronic voting can also benefit people living in remote areas and attract those temporarily outside their own country. Thus, electronic voting corresponds to the modern mobile lifestyle. Electronic voting has a particular appeal for young people. As R. Gibson notes, traditional forms of voting using paper and pen are becoming outdated, conflicting with modern trends in the development of technology, and thus alienating young people ⁸⁰.

Indeed, for young people, forms of political articulation mediated by digital technologies are increasingly replacing familiar, traditional forms.

Thus, it is expected that moving elections online will increase the attractiveness of voting and create a positive turnout effect. Finally, electronic voting can have a transformative impact on the administration of elections. With electronic voting, the government will have less need to deploy and operate physical voting infrastructure and provide voters with the necessary equipment ⁸¹. Fewer staff will be needed to conduct absentee voting and count votes. Thus, electronic voting can reduce the costs of election authorities. Additionally, digital voting technologies can speed up and improve the accuracy of counting and reporting election results ⁸². The software helps reduce potential voting errors and overcome other common shortcomings. Other researchers point out that although digital technologies can trigger greater participation in elections, the expectation of mass turnout is often exaggerated and has not actually been realized in practice ⁸³. Moreover, it is noted that digital technologies can act as an additional barrier

⁸⁰ Gibson, R. K. 'Internet voting and the European Parliament elections' in F. Mendez and A. H. Trechsel (ed.) // *The European Union and E-Voting (Electronic Voting)*. London: Routledge. 2005. pp.29-59.

⁸¹ Goodman, N.J., Spicer, Z.'Administering elections in a digital age: Online voting in Ontario municipalities // *Canadian Public Administration*, 2019. No. 62(3). pp.369-392

⁸² Goodman, N. J., Pammett, J. H., and DeBardleben, J. (2010) 'A comparative assessment of electronic voting'. Available at: https://www.elections.ca/res/rec/tech/ivote/comp/ivote_e.pdf [date visits 05/06/2023]

⁸³ Bochsler, D. Can Internet voting increase political participation? Remote electronic and voting turnout in

for already disadvantaged groups ⁸⁴. This view is based on the fact that many people will face difficulties in using new technologies, which negates any promise presented in the theory. P. Norris ⁸⁵ and P. Sciarini ⁸⁶ compare the benefits of electronic voting and voting by mail and conclude that the additional benefit associated with electronic voting is minimal and may not be enough to attract additional voters to participate in elections. Separate studies show that in the context of local elections, in some cases, postal voting has been very effective in increasing turnout, while electronic voting has been less preferable in this situation. R. Gibson in this regard emphasizes that curiosity and a high level of media attention play a decisive role in increasing participation in elections only at the initial stage, when electronic voting was introduced ⁸⁷. However, such effects are unlikely to persist in the long term. In this sense, electronic voting may not have a lasting impact on voter turnout (in other words, a significant effect of electronic voting on voter turnout will only occur during the early stages of introducing electronic voting).

Researchers' skepticism about electronic voting has more fundamental reasons. Citizens' decisions to participate in elections depend on much more complex factors. Political discontent and disappointment, for example, are an unresolved problem. A divided and alienated population is often uninterested in participating in politics and is especially resistant to any change ⁸⁸. Thus, changes

the Estonian 2007 parliamentary elections. 2010. [Conference presentation]. The 'Internet and Voting' Conference. 3-4 June. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1456827 [date visits 05/06/2023]

⁸⁴ Berinsky, A. J. 'The perverse consequences of electoral reform in the United States.' *American Politics Research*. 2005. No. 33(4): pp.471-491

⁸⁵ Norris, P. E-voting as the magic ballot for European Parliamentary elections?// in F. Mendez and A. H. Trechsel (ed.) *The European Union and E-Voting (Electronic Voting)*. London: Routledge. 2005. pp.60-90

⁸⁶ Sciarini, P. (et al.) Etude du vote par internet dans le canton de Genève. 2013 // <https://cdc-ge.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/evotingrapportunige0.pdf> [accessed 05/06/2023]

⁸⁷ Gibson, R. K. 'Internet voting and the European Parliament elections', in F. Mendez and A. H. Trechsel (ed.) *The European Union and E-Voting (Electronic Voting)*. London: Routledge. 2005. pp.29-59.

⁸⁸ Y amamoto, M. and Kushin, M. J. 'More harm than good? Online media use and political disaffection among college students in the 2008 election.' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 2014. № 19(3). Pp..430-445.

Vassil, K. et al. The diffusion of Internet voting: Usage patterns of Internet voting in Estonia between 2005 and 2015.' *Government Information Quarterly*. 2016. № 33(3). pp.453-459.

in election technology do not in any way affect interest in participation in politics and governance. In this sense, electronic voting can increase the turnout of that group of voters who refused to participate in elections due to inconvenience and mobility problems (but do not have difficulties using digital technologies). Thus, electronic voting, while acting exclusively as a technological solution, in principle cannot “be a solution to deep political and socio-economic problems that go beyond technological reasons ⁸⁹. ”

The complex relationship between electronic voting and electoral participation has been demonstrated in several empirical studies in different national contexts, resulting in conflicting results that require further interpretation and understanding. For example, Brazil's 2000 budget referendum concluded that an experiment with electronic voting had significantly increased voter turnout. However, this effect has not been observed in other countries, and where the effect of increased voter turnout due to the use of electronic voting did occur, it was often not long-lasting.

The researchers also highlight that moving elections online may risk turning voting rituals into yet another isolated individual activity (like other social media activities), reducing the effect of collective democratic participation and jeopardizing the social nature of voting, reducing the sense of social responsibility and civic duty ⁹⁰.

Researchers' positions also vary regarding the security risks associated with electronic voting.

Concerns about maintaining the principles of secret voting and the absence of fraud in vote counting tend to top the list of counterarguments against electronic voting ⁹¹. According to studies, the risks are primarily associated with weakening

⁸⁹ Sharma, S. Can't change my political disaffection! The role of political disaffection, trust, and resistance to change in internet voting.' Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance. 2020.No 22(2): pp.71-91

⁹⁰ Unt, T., Solvak, M. and Vassil K. Does Internet voting make elections less social? Group voting patterns in Estonian e-voting log files (2013-2015) // PLoS One, 2017. No. 12(5). pp.1-13

⁹¹ Scott, T. Why electronic voting is still a bad idea. 2020. Av . at : <https://www.markpack.org.uk/160622/why-electronic-voting-is-still-a-bad-idea-tom-scott/> [date of visit 05/06/2023]

control over the voting environment. Moving elections online means that election authorities can only provide voters with a voting solution, but cannot always control the environment itself.

There is currently a consensus among researchers that electronic voting cannot fully guarantee a secure voting environment. Voter privacy may also be compromised. However, these problems are not unique to electronic voting. As shown in the work of R. Krimmer, D. Duenas-Sid and I. Krivosov⁹², traditional voting can also lead to similar problems. Based on the notion that no system in the world is completely secure, scholars who maintain high hopes for the digitalization of elections believe it is necessary to focus efforts on minimizing the risks of electronic voting. Thus, research into electronic voting moves to the development of fundamental principles necessary for secure electronic voting⁹³. J. Helm⁹⁴ proposes a comprehensive systems approach to electronic voting, including voter registration, the voting process, and vote counting. There have also been international efforts to define standards for electronic voting. Other work on technological innovation explores how digital technology developments can minimize security risks and thereby increase voter confidence and commitment to electronic voting. Researchers are developing a cloud computing architecture to identify risks and protect electronic government services, analyze various cryptographic tools when developing modern electronic voting systems, and are looking for opportunities to create a more secure online voting system by using blockchain-enabled technologies.

An analysis of the practice of electronic voting in different countries shows that the introduction and dissemination of an electronic voting system necessarily

Vicens, AJ Online voting is a really, really bad idea. Available at: <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2019/11/online-voting-problems/> [date visits 05/06/2023]

⁹² Krimmer, R., Duenas-Cid, D. and Krivosova, I. Debate: safeguarding democracy during pandemics. Social distancing, postal, or internet voting- the good, the bad or the ugly? // Public Money & Management, 2020. No. 41. pp.8-10.

⁹³ Alvarez, R. M. Hall, T. E. Building secure and transparent elections through standard operating procedures // Public Administration Review. 2008. No. 68(5). pp.828-838.

⁹⁴ Helm, JE Distributed Internet voting architecture: A thin client approach to Internet voting // Journal of Information Technology. 2021. No. 36(2). pp.128-153.

involves a complex process of institutional building, which cannot be reduced to the formal introduction of electronic voting. Of course, its formation takes time and patience. Thus, one should not expect immediate results after the introduction of new voting technologies; electronic voting is not a quick solution to existing problems. The spread of electronic voting systems necessarily requires administrative, legal and political innovations ⁹⁵.

Undoubtedly, addressing security issues in the context of electronic voting is of great importance. However, as an analysis of the academic discourse devoted to digital democracy and electronic voting, as an important component of it, shows, it is public trust in the institutions of public power that is the most important prerequisite for the adoption of electronic voting against the backdrop of growing security problems.

This public trust arises not only and not so much due to the capabilities of digital technologies, which provide, in particular, a technological solution to the problems of security of electronic voting, but as a result of the institutionalization and routinization of real practices in the context of a broader socio-political-technological system.

Rutinization always involves the formation of new forms of knowledge. Routine actions ensure the achievement of the necessary stability and automaticity in the development of the political process. It is important to emphasize that routinization processes are a complex task involving both cognitive and political mechanisms. Rutinization can be considered successful when a new state of trust is established that helps overcome the socio-emotional problems arising from the changes taking place. The slow pace of routinization is objectively determined by cognitive mechanisms, in particular, the difficulty of creating new knowledge in a situation where changes are significant.

⁹⁵ Krivonosova I. () 'The forgotten election administrator of Internet voting: Lessons from Estonia// Political Studies, 2022. No. 43. pp.1254-1276.

Analysis of comparative and case studies on electronic voting shows that in a number of countries, electronic voting never moves beyond the experimental stage of small pilot projects without public trust in the digital capabilities of the state and society (as is the case in the United States).

Scientists agree that in conditions of low public trust in public authorities, the introduction of electronic voting (despite all the objectively existing instrumental advantages) can do more harm than good, undermining the very foundations of democracy.

Without strong democratic institutions, electronic voting may be unreliable and illegitimate. Small changes in parties' vote shares can lead to large differences in the distribution of legislative seats, leading to lengthy legal and political battles over election results ⁹⁶.

Despite the existing, although not shared by everyone, optimism regarding electronic voting and its advantages, an analysis of the dynamics of the development of electronic voting in different countries shows that the number of countries that have introduced electronic voting has recently tended to decrease and abandon from electronic voting. At the same time, although some European countries (for example, the UK, the Netherlands and Norway) have abandoned electronic voting, other countries, particularly Asian countries (for example, Jordan, the Philippines and India) have transformed their national electoral systems by adopting electronic voting as a whole or its individual elements. Overall, the number of countries that have implemented electronic voting has decreased from 43 countries in 2010 ⁹⁷ to 33 countries in 2019 ⁹⁸.

At the same time, the number of scientific publications devoted to electronic voting is rapidly growing. The parallel existence of these two trends

⁹⁶ Lust, A. (2015) 'Online voting: Boon or bane for democracy?' *Information Policy*, 20(4): pp.313-323.
Lust, A. (2018) 'I-vote, therefore I am? Internet voting in Switzerland and Estonia.' *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 38(1): pp.65-79.

⁹⁷ Darmawan I, Nurhandjati N and Kartini E (2014) *Memahami E-Voting: Berkaca Dari Pengalaman Jembrana dan Negara-Negara Lain*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia

⁹⁸ International IDEA (2019) *Electronic election database*. Available at: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/questionview/742> (accessed 29 May 2021).

clearly shows the need for a more thorough understanding and conceptualization of electronic voting, explaining the contradictory results of empirical studies.

Analysis of the scientific literature allows us to conclude that at present there is no clear understanding of the processes of institutionalization of electronic voting, taking into account the contextual characteristics of different countries. There is a lack of basic research that would contribute to a better understanding of electronic voting and explain the conflicting results of empirical studies and the trend away from digital voting that is taking place in different countries.

The scientific literature on electronic voting is currently dominated by studies analyzing electronic voting processes in European countries and the United States; electronic voting in Asian countries, where digitalization processes are rapidly developing, is increasingly becoming an object of research interest.

From the point of view of philosophical traditions, the positivist approach dominates in most studies; electronic voting itself acts as an independent or dependent variable.

As part of the characterization of the scientific discourse devoted to electronic voting, we will formulate a range of research questions in the context of electronic voting, which, in different combinations, are found in studies and answers to which, as already emphasized, often lead to contradictory results.

- the impact of the introduction of electronic voting (independent variable) on other factors, such as voter turnout, strengthening and development of democracy (dependent variables) ⁹⁹.
- analysis of various factors influencing electronic voting (which acts as a dependent variable).
- Issues related to the perception and acceptance of electronic voting.
- a set of issues related to the implementation of electronic voting.

⁹⁹Roseman GH Jr and Stephenson EF. The effect of voting technology on voter turnout: Do computers scare the elderly? *Public Choice* 2005, 123(1/2): 39–47.

- Issues related to comparison of processes of institutionalization of electronic voting in different countries.
- issues related to the role of political elites in making decisions on the introduction of electronic voting (formal political elites).

1.4. Results of a sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting

In accordance with the accepted methodology, the dissertation author developed methodological tools for conducting a sociological study aimed at identifying the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia towards electronic voting.

The purpose of the empirical research (interviewing) is to obtain answers from expert respondents to questions related to their attitude towards electronic voting in general, as well as the advantages and risks of its widespread introduction into Russian electoral practice. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, informally and formally, with experts who agreed to be interviewed for the purpose of scientific research. As part of the interview, respondents were asked several questions, including both closed and open questions.

The study sample includes 50 people - experts of the Russian Association of Electoral Politics.

Public discussions about the need to introduce an electronic voting system are due to the rapid development of technology and global digitalization processes. In general, the growth of access to digital services and the popularity of public participation (elements of digital democracy) are aimed at improving democratic governance institutions.

Modern digital technologies of social communication objectively represent a certain “window of opportunity” for promoting ideas that can ensure the openness and quality of the Russian model of democratic governance.

Digital democracy as an innovative form of democratic participation presupposes the active and voluntary participation of citizens in the political process based on the latest digital technologies.

The main advantages of digital democracy include the breadth of coverage and ease of use of networked social communication in interactions between public authorities and citizens. Recently, the issue related to the direct introduction of digital technologies into the process of organizing elections has become of particular importance and relevance ¹⁰⁰.

The demand for electronic voting at the national federal level and the regional level of government is due to the possibility of nominating candidates and conducting competitive political campaigns, the ability of each candidate to organize widespread informing of the electorate regarding the ideas, theses and election program put forward and to ensure transparency of the voting process and calculation of results ¹⁰¹.

Modern research suggests that the use of digital technologies and social networks is positively correlated with the growth of political participation and significantly reduces the level of political absenteeism in society ¹⁰².

For the first time, an experiment in the use of electronic voting was carried out in the Tula region in 2008 during municipal elections, during which it was possible to resolve the main doubts and contradictions of society in terms of ensuring the secrecy of voting, the reliability of information transfer, the

¹⁰⁰Bulavchenkova, L. Internet voting: fears and psychological barriers / L. Bulavchenkova, A. Klimenko // Elections: theory and practice. – 2019. – No. 4(52). – pp. 42-43.

¹⁰¹Malkevich, A. A. From electronic voting to protest mobilization: how the Internet transforms political participation / A. A. Malkevich // Management consulting. – 2019. – No. 11(131). – pp. 39-46. – DOI 10.22394/1726-1139-2019-11-39-46.

¹⁰²Davydov, D. A. Internet voting as an electoral political technology / D. A. Davydov // Bulletin of Perm University. Series: History and Political Science. – 2010. – No. 1 (9 Political Science - 12 History). – pp. 59-63.

organization and identification of individuals who participated in voting, and so on¹⁰³.

In many foreign countries, digital technologies for organizing election campaigns are widely used. Political scientists are aware of a wide practice that is used in Estonia, Great Britain, Switzerland, and France. For example, in Estonia, in 2005, voting was conducted via the Internet for the first time, in which 1.8% of the total number of voters took part, and already in 2019, more than 42% of voters voted via the Internet¹⁰⁴.

The technical organization of the electronic voting process in the Republic of Estonia is carried out on the basis of citizen identification cards, which have completely replaced traditional paper passports. The social card has a built-in chip that contains complete electronic information, the electronic digital signature of a citizen of the republic, which allows for the identification of voters on the site where voting takes place.

The use of digital technologies in the election campaign offers citizens new opportunities to obtain political information and expands the opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process.

Digital technologies and their use in the electoral process not only contribute to the political self-expression of citizens, but also cover possible forms of conventional political participation: protest activity, interaction with public authorities, familiarization with political information, formation of an individual news agenda, discussions, expression of one's own social and political positions.

¹⁰³ Vershitskaya, E. R. Digital technologies and Internet voting in the field of electronic democracy / E. R. Vershitskaya, N. A. Vershitskaya // Trends in the development of the Internet and digital economy: Proceedings of the III All-Russian scientific-practical conference with international participation, Simferopol- Alushta, June 04–06, 2020. – Simferopol-Alushta: IP Zueva T.V., 2020. – P. 193-200

¹⁰⁴ Mashina, Yu. D. Alternative voting methods: mail, Internet / Yu. D. Mashina // My professional career. – 2019. – T. 1, No. 4. – P. 111-116; Mityaeva, Yu. V. Experience of conducting Internet voting in elections and referendums in Russia and abroad / Yu. V. Mityaeva // Elections: theory and practice. – 2013. – No. 2(26). – pp. 13-18; Zhilkin, A. I. Foreign experience of voting using the Internet / A. I. Zhilkin // Modern Science. – 2021. – No. 5-3. – pp. 201-205

The use of digital democracy tools makes it possible to mobilize the electorate and attract a much larger number of voters. Voting in a remote format allows the state to significantly reduce the costs of conducting an election campaign in the shortest possible time.

At the same time, researchers note a certain difficulty in organizing the use of digital technologies, which lies in the risks of unauthorized intervention and hacker attacks on the website of election commissions and government bodies ¹⁰⁵. High risks are associated with the lack of guarantees against manipulation of software algorithms and digital technologies that provide electronic voting ¹⁰⁶. Researchers also identify a problem such as the potential for a large-scale failure of the digital platform of the election commission when organizing elections and disruption of the automated system, when in the absence of paper backup copies of data the system for organizing the election process can be completely destabilized ¹⁰⁷.

For researchers, of particular importance is not just the use of digital technologies in the voting process, which includes the use of digital devices or machines on the territory of the election commission, but the organization of remote voting using the Internet based on blockchain technology, that is, distributed data processing ¹⁰⁸.

The main goal pursued by the use of digital technologies in electoral processes is seen to be increasing voter turnout during the voting period, since at

¹⁰⁵Reut, O. Ch. Moscow experiment on Internet voting: arguments and discourses / O. Ch. Reut // Trajectories of political development of Russia: institutions, projects, actors: materials of the All-Russian scientific conference of RAPN with international participation, Moscow, December 06–07 2019 / Moscow Pedagogical State University. – Moscow: Moscow Pedagogical State University, 2019. – P. 333.

¹⁰⁶Current issues of ensuring information security during online voting for amendments to the Constitution of Russia / K. O. Burkova, E. A. Lazareva, N. S. Gleiberman, A. V. Kalach // Bulletin of the Voronezh Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia. – 2020. – No. 3. – P. 15-19

¹⁰⁷Apatenko, D. V. Internet voting: a discussion around expediency / D. V. Apatenko // Law and state in the modern world: state, problems, development trends: Proceedings of the international scientific and theoretical conference - V International "Maltsev Readings", Belgorod, April 28, 2018 / Executive editor Markhheim M.V. - Belgorod: LLC GiK, 2018. - P. 171-175.

¹⁰⁸Koroleva, L.V. Electronic voting in the political process of modern Russia: problems and conclusions / L.V. Koroleva // Bulletin of the Moscow State Pedagogical University. Series : Philosophical Sciences . – 2021. – No. 2(38). - WITH . 32-39. – DOI 10.25688/2078-9238.2021.38.2.04.

all levels of organizing elections, turnout among young people is traditionally one of the lowest, as demonstrated by statistical data from many countries.

The results of a study carried out in 28 EU countries in 2019 showed that the majority of Europeans aged 18 to 39 took part in elections to the European Parliament - 51%, while almost half - 49% - of young Europeans abstained from voting in European Parliament ¹⁰⁹.

The study showed that in the 2019 European Parliament elections, turnout was the highest since 1994 and amounted to 50.6%.

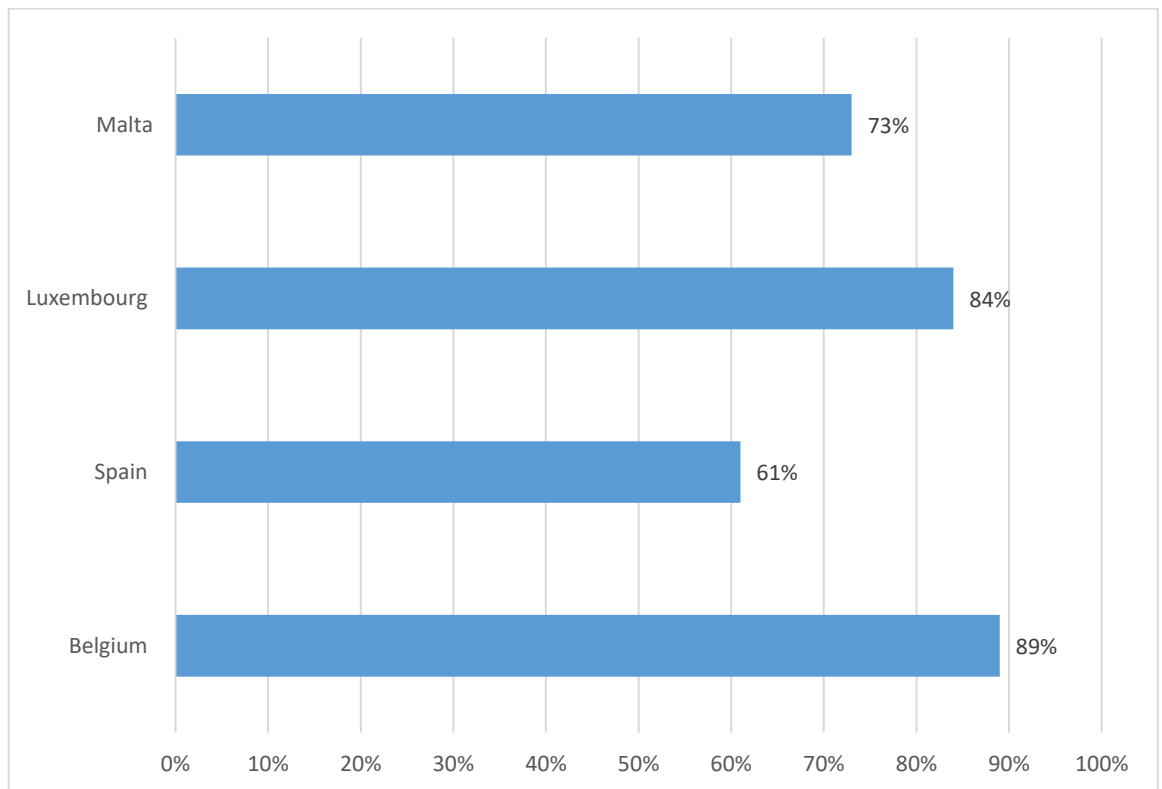


Fig. 2 “Did you take part in the elections to the European Parliament” countries - EU leaders “YES, I DID”, 2019¹¹⁰

The majority of respondents from European countries aged 18 to 39 noted that they took part and voted in the elections to the European Parliament: Spain - 61%, Belgium -89%, Luxembourg -84%, Malta - 73%. It should be noted that the

¹⁰⁹THE 2019 POST-ELECTORAL SURVEY HAVE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS ENTERED A NEW DIMENSION? Eurobarometer Survey 91.5 of the European Parliament A Public Opinion Monitoring Study Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament. September 2019 - PE 640.156

¹¹⁰europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2312 [date visit 09/23/2023]

significantly higher turnout in countries such as Belgium and Luxembourg is due to the fact that the legislation of these countries requires compulsory voting.

The lowest percentage of young people who came to the elections was observed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe - Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, and the Czech Republic.

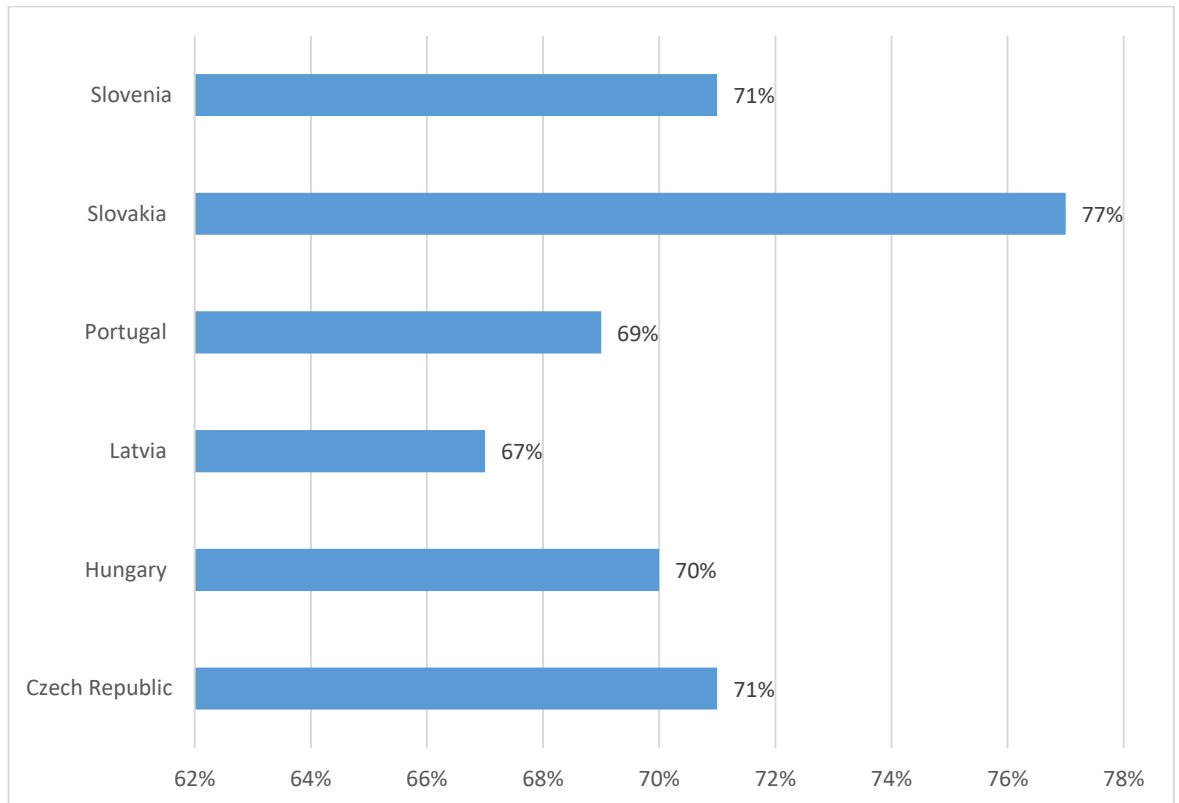


Fig. 3 “Did you take part in the elections to the European Parliament” EU leading countries “NO DID NOT”, 2019¹¹¹

The results of a sociological survey among young Europeans showed a decrease in interest in elections, so in eight EU countries there is a disregard for political participation in elections (Poland, Romania, Spain, Austria, Hungary and Germany, Slovakia and the Czech Republic).

At the same time, voting rates for a particular party in the European Parliament were higher among young people, as young people were more informed thanks to the media and social networks.

¹¹¹europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2312 [date visit 09/23/2023]

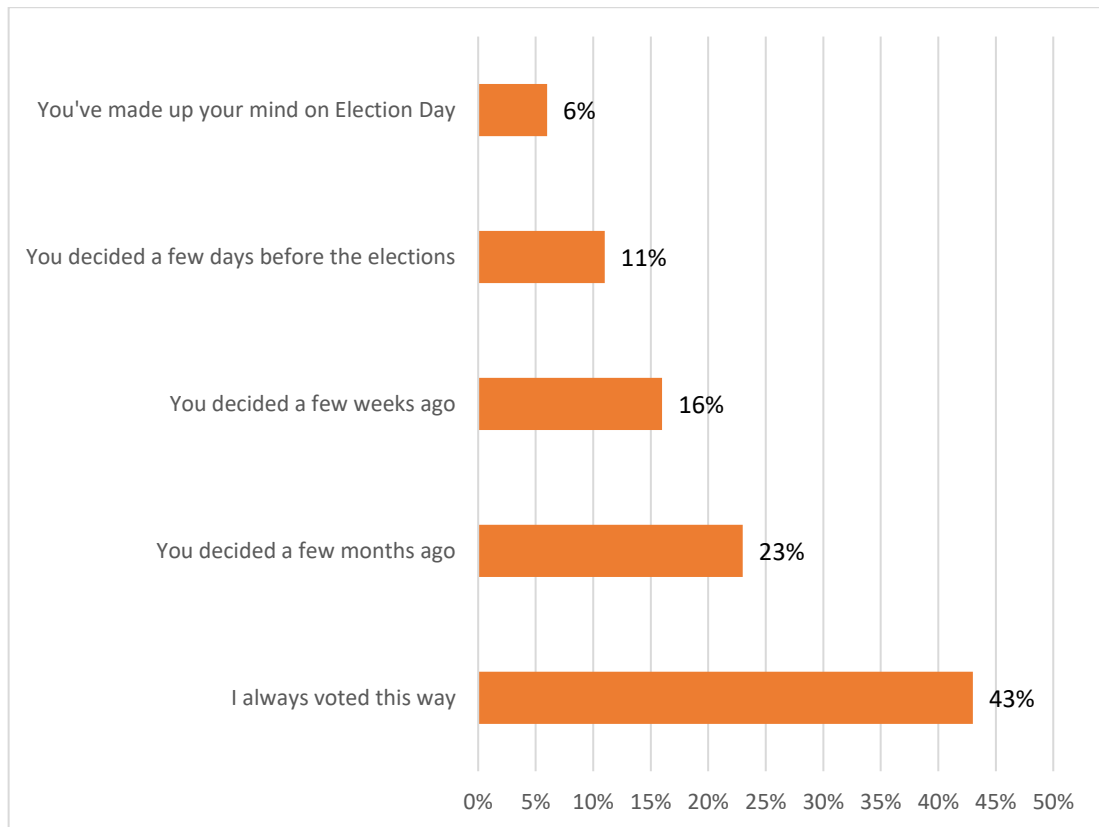


Fig. 4 “QG5 When did you decide to vote for the political party or candidate for whom you voted in the recent elections to the European Parliament?”, 2019¹¹²

For many young people, social media is their first point of contact with friends, family, news, research and political information. It is a way for young people to build new connections and demonstrate the possibility of political participation.

To involve young people in political processes, targeted approaches are needed to influence this segment of the target audience of the electorate in electoral processes. This is becoming increasingly important due to the increasing processes of disinformation and hate speech circulating in the online space.

With youth engagement with social media likely to increase for the foreseeable future, digital platforms have the potential to become a more valuable and effective tool for informing youth about all aspects of elections, including in real time.

¹¹²europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2312 [date visit 09/23/2023]

In this context, we consider it important to note that the possibility of a citizen taking part in voting, regardless of his location, is determined not only and not so much by considerations of convenience, but by a guarantee of compliance with the electoral right for those citizens who cannot come to the polling station on voting day.

As the results of an expert survey conducted by the dissertation student among members of the Association for Electoral Politics show, the majority of respondents note the presence of some difficulties and certain risks associated with ensuring the necessary security when conducting electronic voting.

In the Russian Federation, a corresponding experiment has been carried out for many years in terms of the use of remote digital technologies in organizing voting, for example, ensuring the operation of an information kiosk and voting based on social cards. Every year, the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation tests new methods, institutionalizes the legal regulation of remote voting, and improves the mechanisms for conducting elections using digital technologies.

Researchers also note the presence of socio-psychological problems in the adoption of electronic voting, which are associated with citizens' insufficient understanding of the meaning and purpose of Internet voting, the low level of digital literacy of citizens and the uncomfortable use of electronic digital signatures and Internet communications for the majority of voters ¹¹³.

Research shows that a high level of demand for the development of electronic voting comes from young people (the so-called "social order" from young people), while the greatest prejudices and skepticism are expressed by older people.

¹¹³Analysis of the opinions of Russian Internet users about online voting (2022) / A. A. Vershinina, M. A. Zabusova, L. A. Kozaeva [etc.] // Transformation of the social structure of modern Russian society: state, dynamics, trends: Sociological almanac. Materials of the XIV Orel Sociological Readings, Orel, December 02, 2022 / Under the general editorship of P.A. Merkulova, A.A. Alekseenok. Volume Issue 15. – Orel: Central Russian Institute of Management - branch of RANEPa, 2022. – P. 182-186.

In this context, it is very important for public authorities, when gradually introducing digital technologies into the electoral process, to ensure citizens' trust in the election procedure, since this is the basis for the legitimacy of the political system.

The key objective of electronic voting is to increase public interest in elections and increase confidence in the electoral process.

The results of an expert survey conducted by the dissertation student among members of the Association of Electoral Politics allow us to judge the interest in conducting electoral processes in electronic format, which is more typical for the youth audience, which can probably be explained by the high level of digital literacy and mastery of the digital environment and technology from early childhood.

Table 1*Advantages and disadvantages of digital technologies in politics, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

No.	Advantages	IN %	Disadvantages (risks)	IN %
1	increase confidence in election campaign procedures	65.4	the difficulty of ensuring information security of digital platforms	47.3
2	convenience of political action for citizens	61.3	discomfort of voters using electronic digital signatures	56.7
3	expansion of the target audience, electorate	68.2	low level of digital competencies among citizens	55.4
4	increasing public interest in elections	82.2	complexity of processes of organization and implementation of digital technologies	51.1
5	maintaining high turnout in elections	71.0	low level of trust in authorities and digitalization of electoral procedures	68.6
6	attracting youth to participate in elections	70.8	the ability to manipulate public opinion	45.6
7	Widely informing society about elections, parties, political programs	82.1	reduction of citizens' control over authorities	47.3

8	comfort in the implementation of political functions by the state	68.4	difficulty in ensuring public observation of the use of digital technologies in elections	55.4
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Descriptive statistics, namely the calculation of a system of variation indicators - Table 2, will allow us to assess the degree of accuracy and homogeneity of the obtained values from the expert survey on the “advantages and disadvantages of digital technologies in politics” presented in Table 1.

Table 2* - System of variation indicators calculated from empirical data of the values of the ratings of respondents in an expert survey compiled by the author

Index	Sign "Advantages"	Sign "Disadvantages (risks)"
Average value	71.18	53.43
Range of variation (R)	20.9	23.0
Standard deviation (σ)	7.01	6.98
Dispersion (σ^2)	48.56	48.8
Variation coefficient (V), %	9.8	13.1

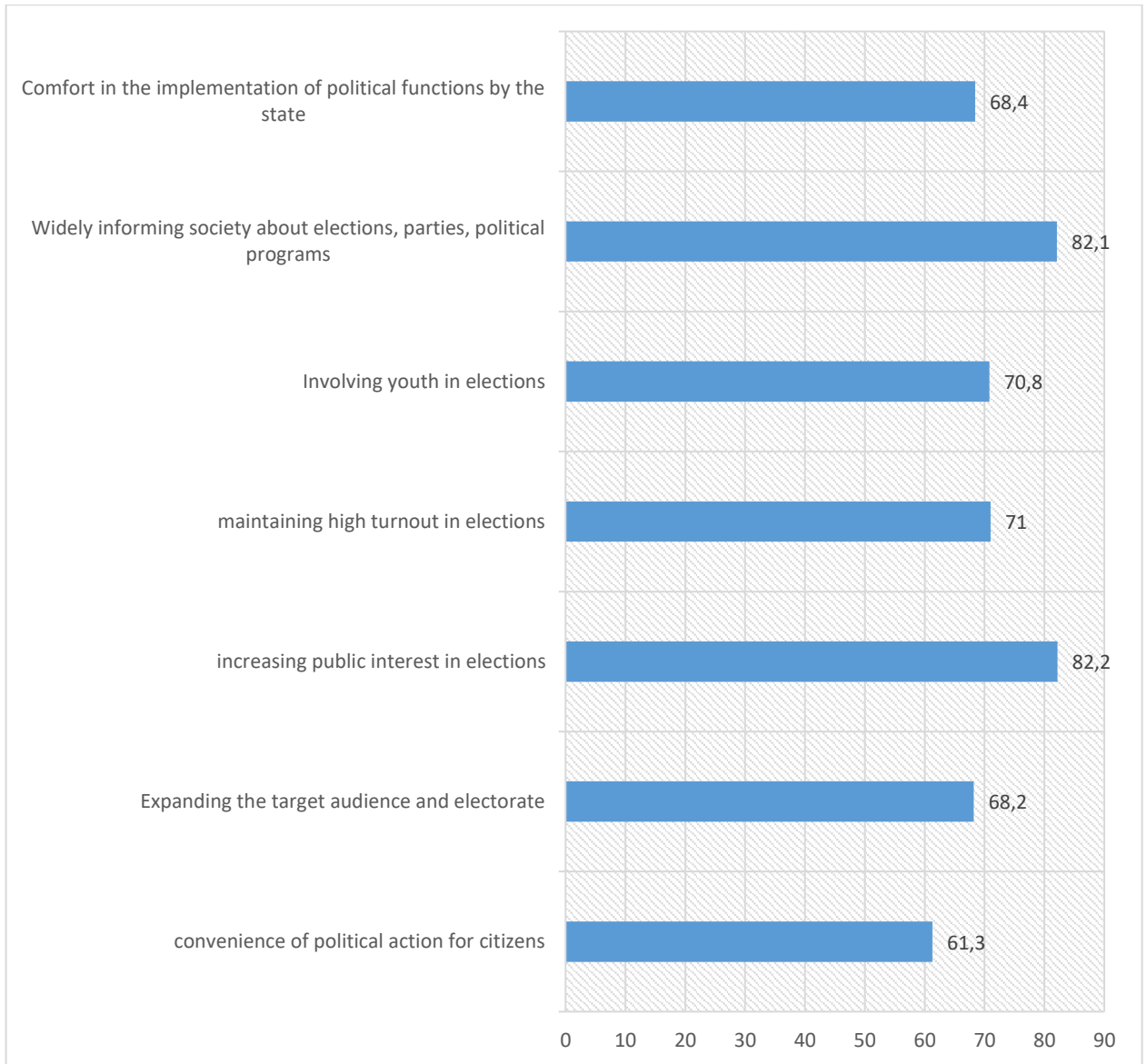
The calculated system of variation indicators for the two analyzed characteristics “advantages” and “disadvantages” allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- the answers of expert respondents are uniform both in terms of describing the advantages of using digital technologies in politics and in terms of their disadvantages. This conclusion is based on the obtained values of the coefficients of variation of 9.8% and 13.1%, respectively. Consequently, the obtained expert assessments have low variation, so the coefficient of variation for each analyzed characteristic is less than 30%.

- the results of an expert survey on the topic “evaluate the advantages of digital technologies in politics” are more accurate than in the direction “assessing the disadvantages of digital technologies in politics.” So the range of variation in the first case is 20.9 percentage points, and in the second - 23.0 percentage points.

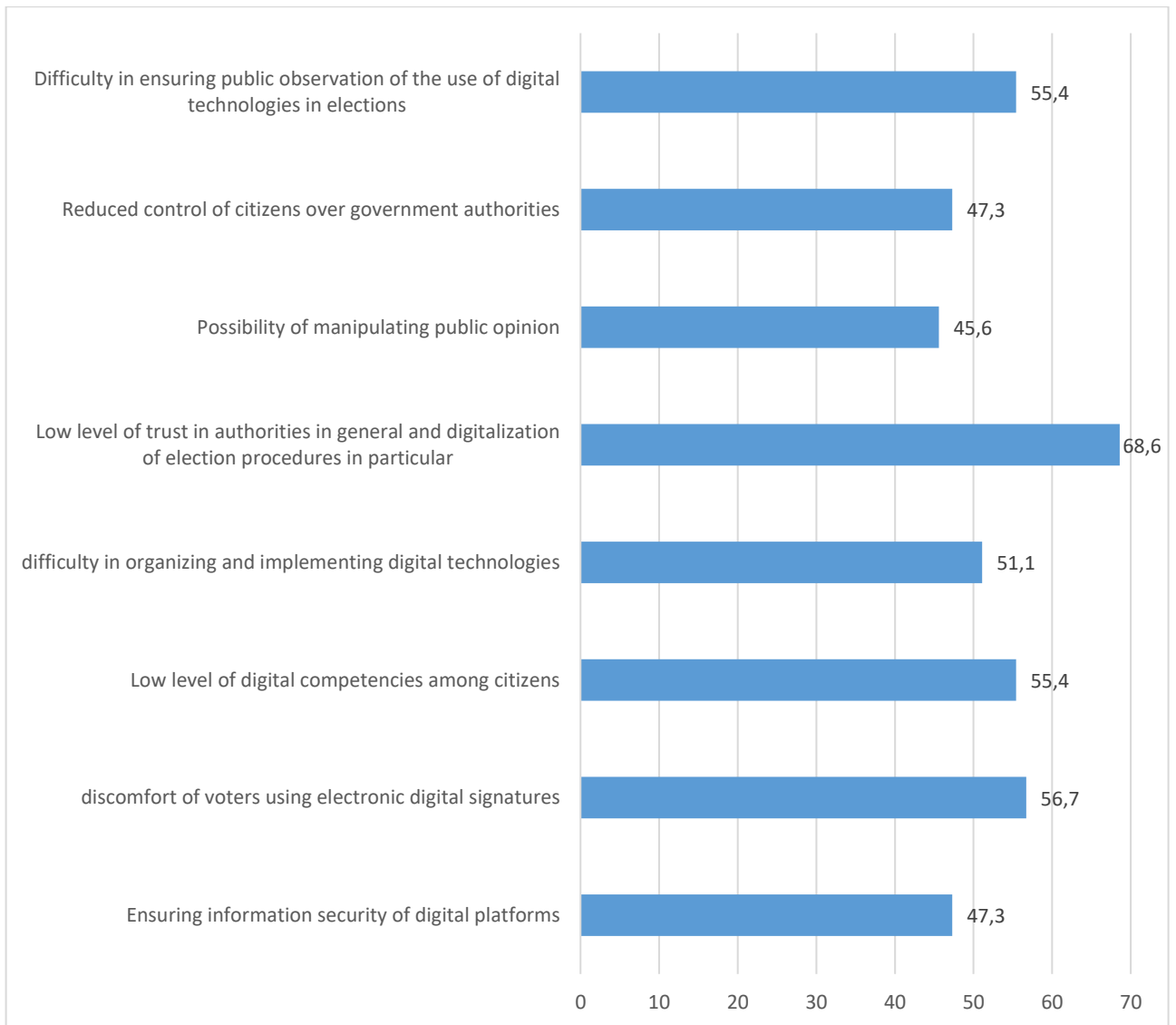
The expert assessments obtained and presented in Table 1 can be accepted as significant, reflecting patterns in the area under study.

As can be seen from the results of the study, the majority of experts hold rather optimistic views on the process of digitalization of electoral processes, for example, the vast majority of respondents, 82.1%, are of the opinion that digitalization and informatization of political processes, in general, contributes to broad public awareness of political processes, elections, parties, political programs; 82.2% of respondents also note that it is the digitalization of the political life of society that will help increase public interest in elections and support high turnout in elections, including attracting young people - 71% and 20.8%, respectively.



Rice. 5. Advantages of digital technologies in politics, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

At the same time, noting the undeniable advantages of the digitalization of electoral politics and political processes in general, experts also note certain risks that need to be taken into account, so the most consistent position among experts is the opinion regarding the impact of the indicator of low level of trust in authorities in general and the digitalization of electoral procedures , in particular - 68.8%, more than half of the experts (55.4%) note a low level of digital competencies among citizens, and, first of all, among the older electorate, the elderly population.



Rice. 6. Limitations of using the potential of digital technologies in politics, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

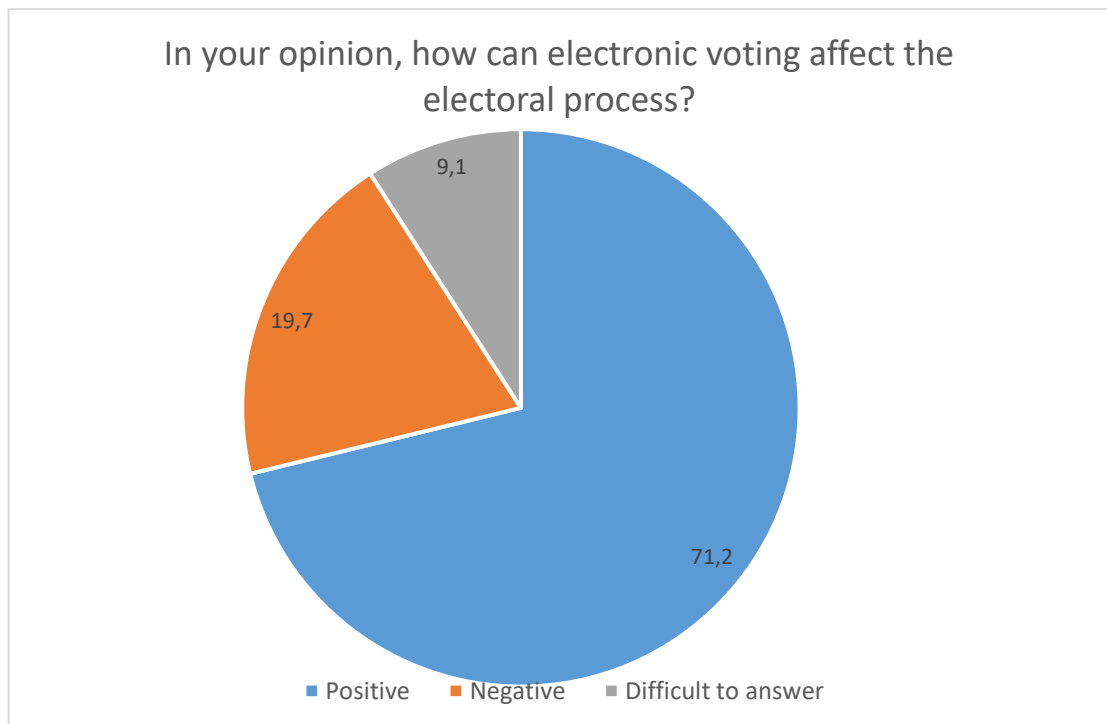
Analysis of data received from experts shows that half of the respondents, 55.4%, highlight the difficulty of ensuring the necessary public monitoring of the use of digital technologies in elections as risks of electronic voting. The majority of respondents note the accompanying risks of digitalization of electoral politics (less than half of the experts noted the following positions): ensuring information security of digital platforms - 47.3%, the possibility of manipulating public opinion 45.6%.

Most experts are positive and generally favor the expansion of electronic voting practices as an alternative to the traditional use of paper ballots.

These data may indicate growing confidence in the expert community in digital technologies, platforms and databases that can ensure the security of government information systems.

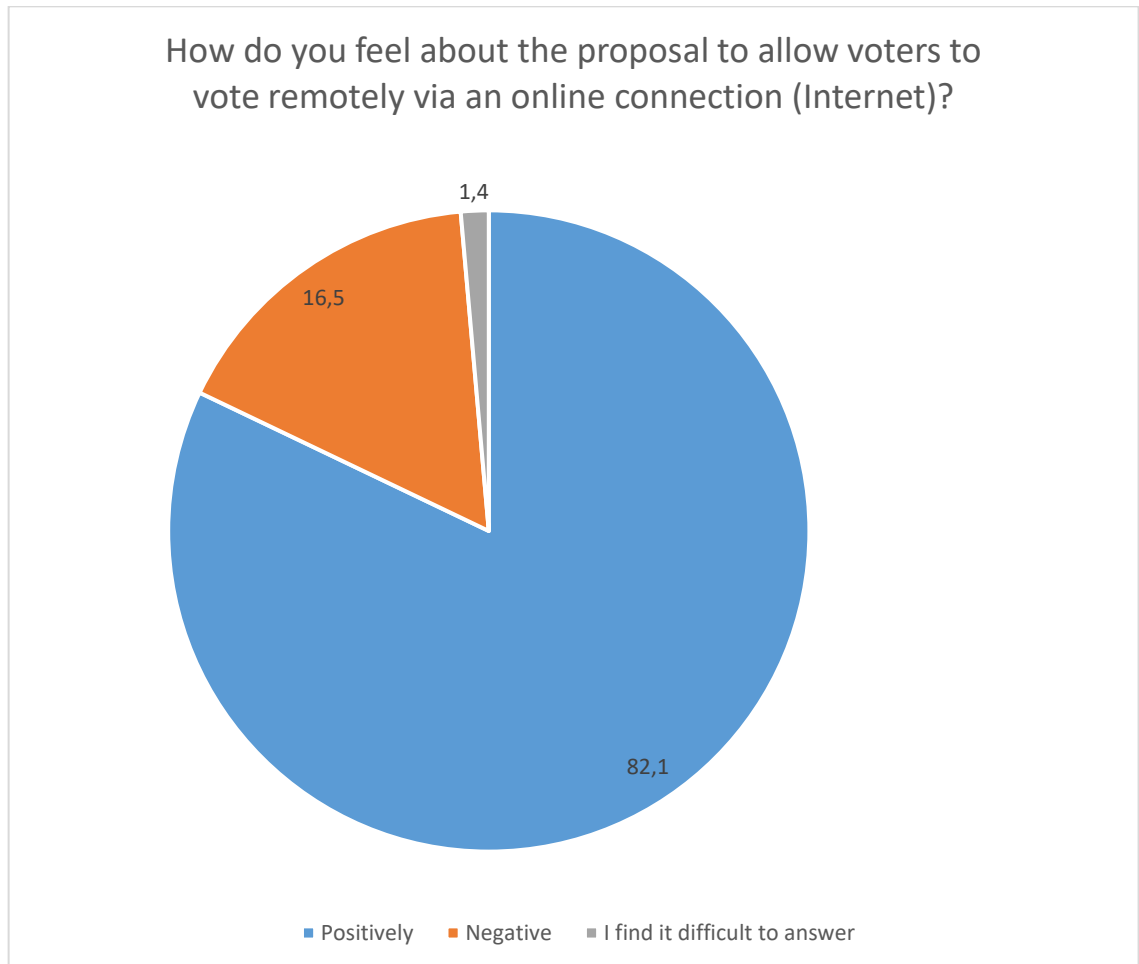
According to experts, it is among the target audience under the age of 24 that requests for electronic appeals, petitions, and collection of signatures for candidates as a form of civic and political participation are most in demand (more than 65% of experts agree with this opinion).

Let us also note that, according to experts, it is young people and the youth environment that are most acutely aware of the possible risks when using electronic voting technology. The rapid increase in the pace of electronic voting in order to increase the transparency of elections and the desire of authorities to increase confidence in the electoral process, can have the opposite effect and reduce confidence indicators, without giving citizens sufficient time to internally accept electronic voting.



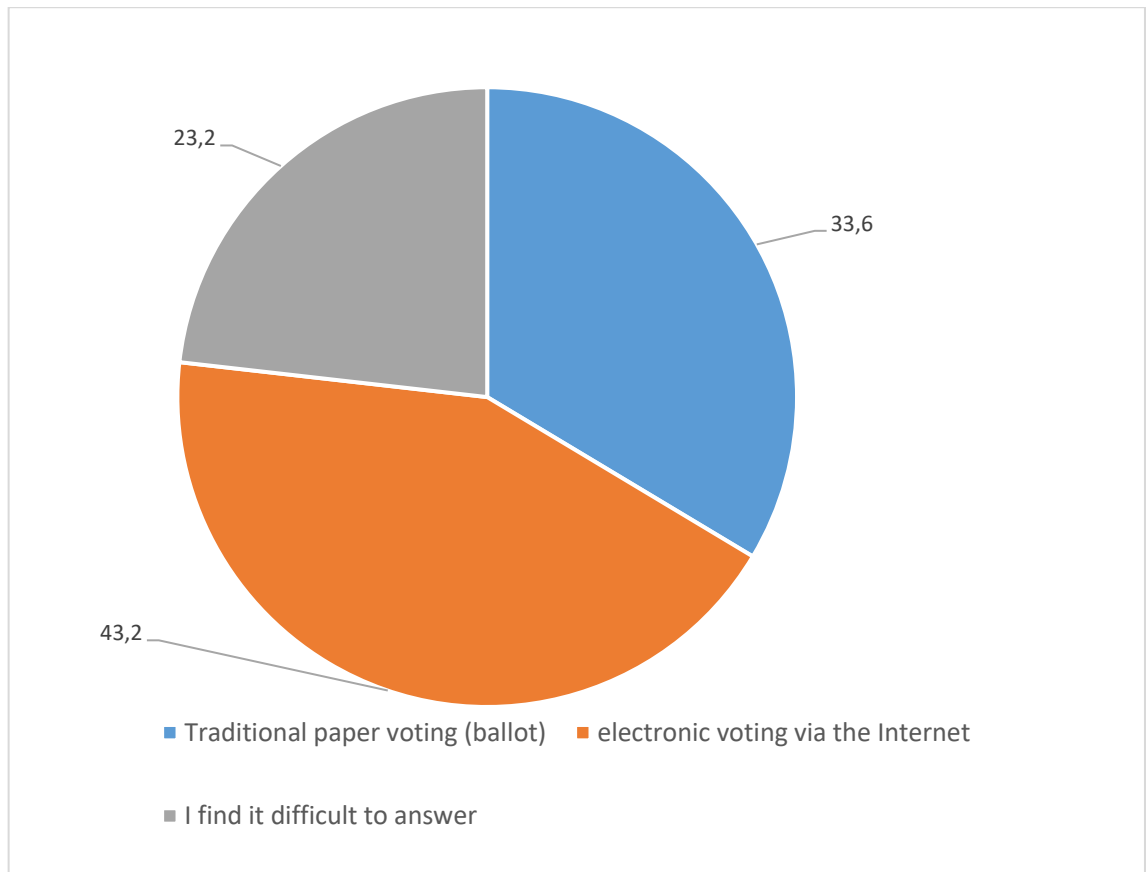
Rice. 7 “In your opinion, how can electronic voting affect the electoral process?”, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

As can be seen from the above figure, the majority of experts support the opinion that electronic voting has a positive impact on the electoral process (71.2%) and 19.7% of experts believe that the introduction of an electronic voting system may negatively affect the quality of the electoral process.



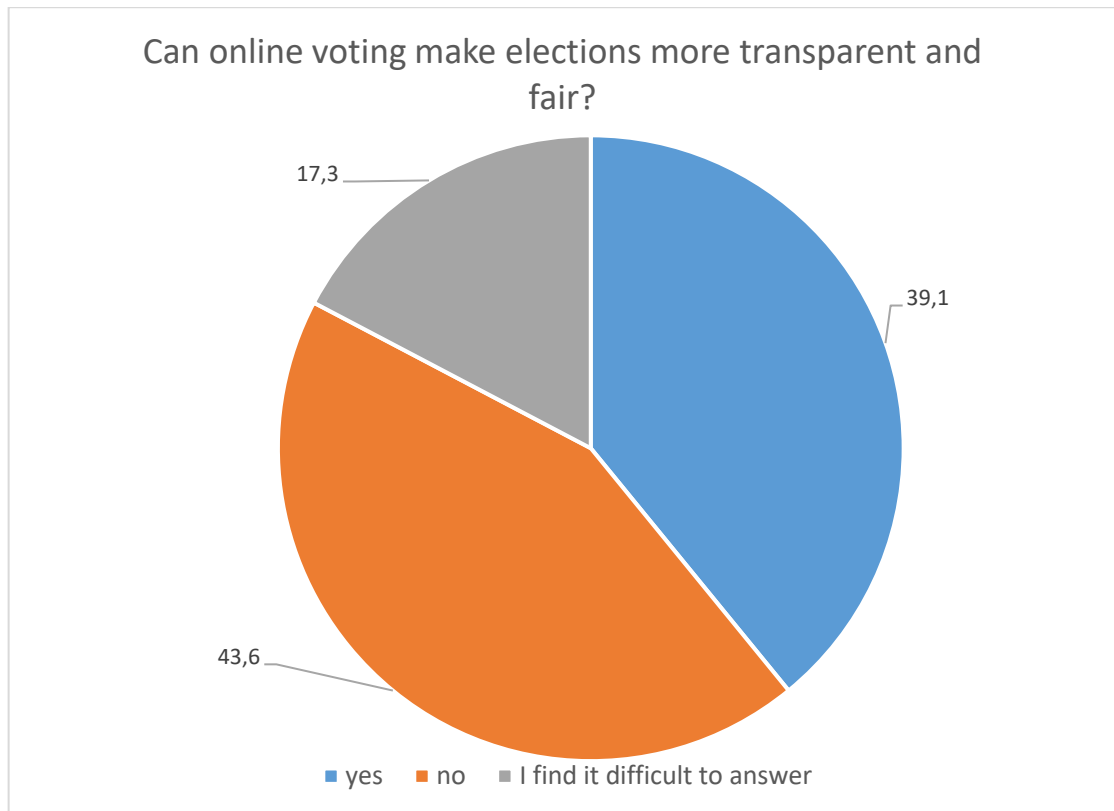
Rice. 8 “How do you feel about the proposal to allow voters to vote remotely via an online connection (Internet)?”, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

The results of the study show that the vast majority of experts are in favor of allowing voters to vote remotely via an online connection (Internet) - (82%), 16.5% of respondents have a negative attitude towards this initiative, emphasizing the existence of certain risks associated with the use of digital technologies.



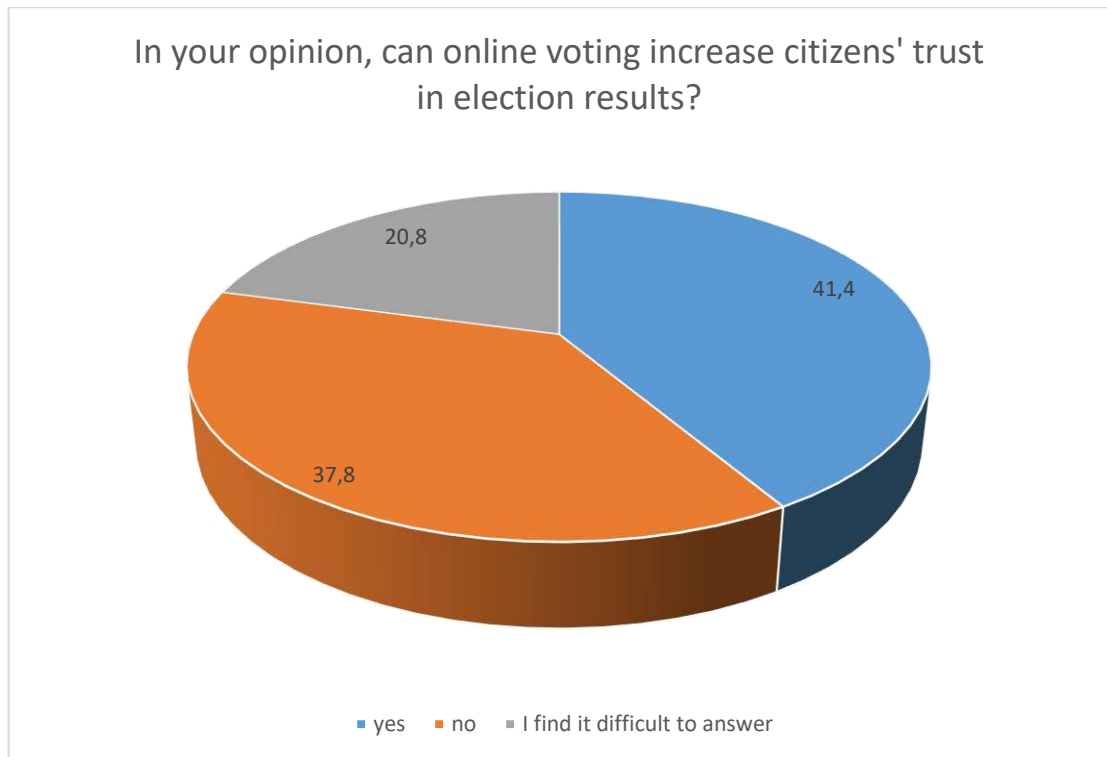
Rice. 9 “If at the next elections citizens are officially asked to choose a voting method, which method do you think will be most in demand by citizens?”, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

The results of the study show the ambivalence of experts' positions regarding the opinion on the preferred method of voting in the event that at the next (next) elections citizens are officially asked to choose a voting method, breaking up almost equally into 3 stable groups: traditional paper voting (ballot), according to respondents , 33.6% would prefer, electronic voting via the Internet - 43.2% of respondents and 33.6% of experts found it difficult to answer.



Rice. 10 “Can online voting make elections more transparent and fair?”, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

Analysis of the research results shows that the majority of experts do not share the confidence that electronic voting is an opportunity to make elections and voting more transparent and fair (43.6%), while at the same time, the group of experts is almost the same in size (39.1 %) is of the opinion about the positive impact of electronic voting on ensuring the fairness and transparency of elections.



Rice. 11 “In your opinion, can online voting increase citizens’ trust in election results?”, compiled by the author based on the results of an expert survey, 2023

The results of the study show the ambivalence of experts’ positions regarding the opinion on whether electronic voting can increase citizens’ trust in election results. The respondents’ answers to this question fell into 3 stable groups: 41.4 percent of respondents believe that electronic voting, in general, can increase citizens' confidence in the election results; 37.8 percent of respondents do not share this opinion; every fifth respondent (20.8%) found it difficult to answer.

We also note that the results of expert respondents’ answers to this question predictably correlate with their answers to the previous question about the impact of electronic voting on ensuring the fairness and transparency of elections.

An analysis of expert respondents’ answers to open-ended questions (“On what factors does citizens’ acceptance of electronic voting in Russia largely depend?”) shows that most experts associate citizens’ trust in electronic voting with personal trust in political leaders holding public office (President, Chairman

of the Government, Chairman of the State Duma). In this sense, the acceptance of electronic voting by citizens will, to a large extent, be determined by the attitude of these individuals towards electronic voting, expressed in political discourse. This gives some optimism to citizens' support for electronic electoral politics in Russia.

Let us group the answers received and illustrated in Figures 5-11 to the questions posed in the study, allowing us to assess the attitude of expert respondents to the use of digital technologies in electoral processes. The information presented in Table 3 will allow us to assess the degree of consistency of expert opinions.

Table 3 Grouping of answers from expert respondents in terms of the use of digital technologies in electoral processes

Question	Positive Yes	Negative No	I'm at a loss
“In your opinion, how can electronic voting affect the electoral process?”	71.2	19.7	9.1
“How do you feel about the proposal to allow voters to vote remotely via an online (Internet) connection?”	83.1	16.5	1.4
“Can online voting make elections more transparent and fair?”	39.1	43.6	17.3
“In your opinion, can online voting increase citizens' confidence in the election results?”	41.4	37.8	20.8

In order to assess the consistency of respondents' opinions, it is proposed to use the concordance coefficient, calculated by the formula:

$$W = \frac{S}{\frac{1}{12} \cdot [m^2 \cdot (n^3 - n)]}$$

where S is the sum of squared deviations of the sum of ranks of each object from the average sum of ranks;

n – sample size (number of respondents);

m – number of ordinal variables (number of evaluation criteria).

Substituting the necessary values, we get:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{12 \cdot S}{m \cdot n \cdot (n - 1)}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{12 \cdot 60913,1}{3 \cdot 50 \cdot (50 - 1)} = 99,4$$

which indicates a fairly high degree of consistency in the opinions of respondents.

To make sure that the obtained concordance coefficient, which characterizes the average degree of agreement between the opinions of respondents, is not a random value, its significance was checked using the criterion of agreement - the Pearson criterion (χ^2):

The calculated value $\chi^2=99.4$ is compared with the table value $\chi^2=55.76$, taking into account the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ and the number of degrees of freedom 49.

Since $\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} > \chi^2_{\text{table}}$, the resulting value of the concordance coefficient equal to 0.65 is not a random value, therefore the results of a survey to study the attitude of experts towards electronic voting can be used to develop recommendations for the introduction and adaptation of digital technologies in electoral processes Russia.

In conclusion, we will analyze the existence of a relationship in the context of the issue under study based on empirical information generated on the basis of the answers of expert respondents, and confirm or refute the assumption of the existence of a relationship and the impact of electronic voting on ensuring the fairness and transparency of elections.

To confirm the hypothesis put forward, we will draw up a contingency table of respondents' answers – Table 4.

Table 4 Distribution of respondents in relation to the use of digital voting tools and the reliability of the results obtained

Trust in digital voting tools	Beliefs about the reliability of election results		Total
	Below the average	Above average	
Below the average	9 (a)	8 (b)	17 (a + b)
Above average	7 (c)	26 (d)	33 (c+d)
Total	16 (a +c)	34 (b+d)	50 (a +b+d+c)

Next, let's calculate K. Pearson's contingent coefficient:

$$K_k = \frac{ad - bc}{\sqrt{(a+b) \times (b+d) \times (a+c) \times (c+d)}}$$

Substituting the values into the formula we get:

$$K_k = 198/552 = 0.43$$

Since the calculated value of the contingent coefficient ($K_k=0.43$) is greater than the critical value of 0.3, it can be argued that between the studied qualitative categories (attributes): “experts' trust in digital voting instruments” and “perception of the degree of reliability of election results” there is close correlation.

Thus, the conducted research (survey) should be considered reliable, determining the existence of a connection between the level of trust in digital technologies and the degree of transparency of elections, which can be taken into account when developing practical recommendations for the use of digital technologies in the electoral process of Russia.

CHAPTER II DIGITALIZATION AS A FACTOR OF DEMOCRATIZATION

2.1. Digitalization processes and fundamental changes in the public sphere

Several decades after the advent of the Internet, it became clear that the public sphere was facing fundamental changes as a result of digitalization. In addition to the press and radio, a communications infrastructure has emerged, characterized by a variety of digital platforms, online media, social networks, instant messengers and search engines. The new conditions of public communication challenge the forms and functions of institutions and processes for obtaining information, forming opinions, and participating in representative democracy.

Significant advances in digital technology have had a profound impact on political processes. Social media and the Internet in general are playing an increasingly important role in shaping political processes ¹¹⁴, with far-reaching consequences for the functioning of democracy.

The development of the political public sphere is of paramount importance for democratic politics, although it is not the only guarantee of democracy.

According to Habermas Yu, society can be characterized as a network that serves for the exchange of information and points of view. It is characterized by various forms of citizen participation. Citizens participate in the processes of public opinion formation and decision-making in a democracy primarily because political decisions ultimately affect them. The impact of digital technologies on changing the public sphere is closely related to the interactive nature of the Internet. It provides space for more deliberative forms of communication.

Classical mass communication is a style of political communication in which large organizations and the media, as senders, exert a one-way influence on the audience, which is seen as a passive recipient. The paradigm of this

¹¹⁴ Farrell , Henry . The consequences of the internet for politics // Annual Review of Political Science. 2012. No. 15. 35–52.

understanding of mass communication was the so-called. “spectator democracy” in the face of a “large television audience”¹¹⁵.

Mutual communication of political interests and arguments through new media acquires its important quality, providing qualified feedback. The creation of back channels at different but important points in the political system is the starting point for modernizing democratic processes.

The concept of a general public is now complemented by the conceptualization of partial publics, which are formed, for example, around a particular topic, a regional location or a specific social group. The Internet offers many opportunities for intense discussions within certain communities through the dissemination of information and communication, and thereby contributes to the building of communities. In this regard, the Internet facilitates the creation of networks within such subgroups.

In deliberative democracy, democratic space is seen as a discursive space, relatively free from domination, in which power is achieved primarily through the validity, credibility, and persuasiveness of arguments.

Under certain conditions and on certain issues, online deliberation improves both the quality of policy outcomes and their legitimacy compared to traditional decision-making procedures.

Online media offer the opportunity to organize discourses between distant and temporally delayed participants. Citizens' meetings, mediations, civil forums and expert hearings can also be held online.

Scientists analyze the mechanisms by which digital technologies have contributed to the emergence of a new type of communication between people, which is characterized by its quasi-anonymity, disembodied nature, ability to facilitate access to large volumes of information, emphasizing its ability to

¹¹⁵ Luhmann N. Die Soziologie und der Mensch. - Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.

provide many-to-many dialogue, in contrast to the hierarchical forms of communication characteristic of for television and radio ¹¹⁶.

Digitalization brings with it a significant increase in complexity, with numerous producers and sources providing huge volumes of information that can be disseminated quickly, widely and at low cost, for example through platforms or search engines. This growing complexity is also reflected in the dynamics of public discourse. In addition to the increasing complexity of information culture and the dynamics of discourse, the possibilities of communication are significantly expanding.

An analysis of contemporary uses of digital technologies shows that initial expectations for rapid and comprehensive changes in the practice of political communications and the public sphere were excessive. What is new is, above all, that information, communication and participation have become much easier, faster and more economical. Networking of people in the sense of community occurs not only where they actually come together, but is also possible wherever they are “logged into the system.” The technical capabilities of the Internet are used by public authorities to more effectively perform their functions and provide an improved information base in general. As highlighted earlier, for some time the most important key focus in the use of information and communication technologies to improve the efficiency of the political system has been e-government in the sense of e-governance. This approach does not directly relate to hopes of transforming the public sphere and revitalizing democracy through interactivity and participation, but is primarily aimed at managing internal and external administrative processes through the Internet with greater speed and interactivity. The focus is not on processes of political opinion formation, but rather on administrative processes and their internal and external aspects.

¹¹⁶Papacharissi, Z. The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere // *New media & society*. 2002. No. 4(1), 9-27

Since the beginning of digital policy research, proponents of the so-called “normalization” hypothesis ¹¹⁷ have argued that the Internet will not fundamentally change key aspects of public policy and governance. Even more nuanced empirical analyzes of the limits of the Internet's transformative potential emerged at the turn of the millennium, focusing on its tendency to concentrate power ¹¹⁸, the limited democratizing effects of the information it provides ¹¹⁹, its ability to increase rather than reduce inequality, and finally its limited ability to promote coherent, inclusive and transformative public dialogue ¹²⁰, the reluctance of political parties to exploit its participatory potential ¹²¹ and the risk that politicians will use digital tools to collect unprecedented amounts of individual-level data that will allow them to segment, manipulate and disempower citizens ¹²². Detailed reviews of the digital policy field have emphasized the need to find the necessary balance between technological determinism (attributing transformative and socially beneficial powers to the Internet) and social constructivism, which emphasizes the role of long-term social structure and power imbalances in shaping any effects of technology ¹²³. Note that most scholars who have studied the relationship between digital technologies and public policy since the 1990s have not unconditionally shared most utopian positions. However, most empirical studies have emphasized that digital technologies may indeed have the potential to change public policy, democratic potential, and that the very possibility of them having such potential is worthy of empirical study and

¹¹⁷Margolis, M., Resnick, D. *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace “Revolution”*. SAGE Publications. 2000

¹¹⁸Hindman, M. *The myth of digital democracy*. Princeton University Press. 2008

¹¹⁹Bimber, B., Davis, R. *Campaigning online: The Internet in US elections*. Oxford University Press. 2003

¹²⁰Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere. *New media & society*. 2002. No. 4(1). Rr . 9-27.

¹²¹Gibson, R. K., Nixon, P. G., & Ward, S. J. (Eds.). (2003). *Political parties and the Internet: net gain?*. Routledge.

¹²²Howard, P. N. (2006). *New media campaigns and the managed citizen*. Cambridge University Press.

¹²³Chadwick, A. (2006). *Internet politics: States, citizens, and new communication technologies*. Oxford University Press. Chadwick, A. (2009). *Web 2.0: New Challenges for the Study of E-Democracy in an Era of Informational Exuberance*. *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, 5(1), 9-41.

theoretical understanding. At the same time, the technological determinism of the first wave of digital policy theories did not form scientific concepts ¹²⁴.

From our point of view, the impact of digitalization on changes in the public sphere can be presented as a continuum without a clear starting and ending point. Assessing the impact of digitalization on changes in public policy and management is a difficult task. Effects of influence may vary over time and intended effects may take time to occur. Therefore, it must be taken into account that impact measurement is always a snapshot of a specific point in time, and the impact effects of digitalization need to be assessed continuously to obtain a more realistic picture of short-term and long-term effects.

Digital democracy implies the possibility of strengthening communication between citizens, as well as between citizens and the political system, however, it does not imply an immediate solution to the main problems of democracies.

Digital democracy in this sense does not aim at direct democracy, but rather at greater communication and reducing the distance between politicians and citizens. This has the potential to give rise to new modes and forms of citizen participation in which online and offline communications are used to enable or promote evidence-based deliberative discussions about political opinion and decision-making processes.

As an interactive medium, the Internet offers fundamental communication possibilities and is therefore also relevant to democratic theory. This applies primarily to opportunities for information, discussion and participation. It is important to note that potential does not become real on its own, and its implementation requires appropriate institutional conditions and targeted political design.

One of the features of the modern development of the scientific discourse of digital democracy is the increased attention to empirical studies of the real political use of digital technologies.

¹²⁴<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/323304542.pdf>

Modern concepts are characterized by a different view of the role of digital technologies in changing the public sphere. Moving beyond the phase of disillusionment, they trace traces of real changes in political communication and highlight the possibility of intensifying communication between citizens, and between citizens and the political system, without expecting an immediate solution to the basic problems of democracy.

Ensuring the functioning of a democratic public sphere today requires active democratic design of a digital information and communication ecology. The goal is to enable them to cope with their complexity, promote pluralism, and counter fake news, polarization and violence.

2.2. Dialectical relationship between digitalization and democratization

Assessing the impact of digital technologies on democracy has become one of the most pressing issues for both academic researchers and politicians.

However, research into digital democracy is often carried out outside political science: in the fields of communication and media, technology and computer science, thus unduly emphasizing the primacy of digital technologies over the very idea of democracy.

Indeed, despite the fact that the problem of the relationship between democracy and digital technologies is at the intersection of social sciences and, in this sense, requires an interdisciplinary approach, most research still comes from studies in the field of communication and media, while political research on this problem are rare.

Perhaps it is for this reason that academic attention, including political science, primarily focuses on the role of the means of communication as a driving force of social and political change.

However, the opposite point of view, according to which the development of digital technologies and the media is seen as a consequence, and not the driving force of the evolution of modern democracies, has also been insufficiently studied.

Moreover, although the relationship between digitalization and democracy has increasingly become the object of scientific research, substantiating the complex nature of this relationship is rarely an independent goal of scientific research. The very influence of digitalization on democracy is limited to the traditional elements of democracy, while deeper changes in norms, institutions, and values are ignored, which for objective reasons are more difficult to study and measure.

To complicate matters further, there are competing conceptions of democracy. For example, three alternative theories of "radical democracy"—deliberative, agonistic, and autonomist—have been used to describe various digital practices ¹²⁵. Thus, addressing the question of whether digital technologies have an impact on the political system necessarily required reference to a specific concept of democracy.

In recent years, empirical approaches to digitalization have gained increasing acceptance in political science.

Many researchers have tried to study the relationship between digital technologies and democracy empirically, using a positivist methodology, focusing on individual countries or groups of countries.

Despite the fact that these studies used data from different countries or the same country, the methodological framework used, which, as a rule, was the philosophy and methodology of positivism, was found to be insufficient to interpret and explain the contradictory results.

The result of such attempts was the realization of the need for a theoretical analysis of the impact of digital technologies on the development of democracy and a comparison of the role that digital technologies play in different political systems. East Asia has shown significant progress in economic development and democracy, but the level of democracy, according to existing research, varies

¹²⁵Dahlberg L and Siapera E (eds). *Radical Democracy and the Internet: Interrogating Theory and Practice*. New York: Palgrave.2007

among countries. Rapid economic growth in East Asia has led to greater adoption of digital technologies, leading to political openness.

With the development of digital technologies, expectations were associated with the democratization of communication, the reduction of barriers between public authorities and citizens through the establishment of new ways of civic participation ¹²⁶. At the local level, online consultation platforms have gradually become part of governance structures in cities around the world.

Another important issue in this context concerns the processes of modernization and democratization itself and the role of digital technologies in ensuring these processes. Although the processes of modernization and democratization may overlap, many scholars emphasize that the two processes are governed by different logics. While modernization involves updating, including through digital technologies, a set of management procedures, democratization indicates a transformation of the relationship between public authorities and citizens. It is clear that digital democracy can contribute to both processes, since modernization and democratization are not mutually exclusive processes. However, as part of modernization, digital democracy (digital technologies) is used primarily to achieve efficiency, reduce management costs and rationalize policy and management ¹²⁷, that is, they are reduced to instrumental functions. As for the democratization process, digital technologies are aimed at increasing the subjectivity of citizens in making political decisions.

If the first studies of the impact of digital technologies on democracy focused on the opportunities that digital technologies can bring for the development and strengthening of democracy, already in the early 2000s the so-called A critical turn in the conceptualization of digital democracy, it emphasizes, in particular, that digital media, in addition to their democratizing effect, can be used to exercise control. The risks of digitalization (of various types and

¹²⁶Ess, C. Democracy and the Internet: A Retrospective // *Javnost - The Public*, 2018. No. 25 (1-2). PP 93 -101.

¹²⁷De Blasio E. *Democrazia Digitale: Una Piccola Introduzione*. Roma: LUISS University Press. 2014

considered at different levels) are increasingly becoming the object of scientific research.

One of the most controversial issues in contemporary academic discourse on digital democracy is whether the global spread of digital technologies is associated with a crisis of democracy.

We have previously emphasized that the ongoing debate about the impact of digitalization on the development of democracy is constantly supported by fragmentary and contradictory results of empirical studies, which, at the same time, do not add anything new in terms of theoretical understanding and interpretation, often multiplying only the number of cases requiring analytical explanation. Moreover, we can say that throughout the history of the development of digital technologies, the source of discussions is the so-called. a dual-use dilemma, that is, a fairly obvious conclusion that digital technologies can be used both for the development and strengthening of democracy, and for the opposite purposes, undermining its foundations and values.

The main difficulty that researchers face is that most studies on the impact of digital technologies on democracy are correlational in nature, in that sense, researchers rely on observational data that usually provide only correlational data. Indeed, the direct link between digitalization and democracy demonstrates high intuitive plausibility.

We note that the causal impact of digital technologies on political variables is difficult to determine empirically due to multiple complexities and contextual factors, as well as rapidly evolving technological developments.

The theoretical and methodological difficulties of conceptualizing digital democracy through identifying and interpreting cause-and-effect relationships can be explained by the following circumstances:

- when analyzing the impact of digitalization on democracy, it is always assigned a subjective role, while, firstly, the reverse impact is almost not considered;

- secondly, the influence itself seems to be much more complex and multifaceted, but this complexity and multifacetedness cannot be described in the category of cause and effect.

Academic discourse on digital democracy thus objectively reflects the philosophy of technological determinism.

However, digital technologies do not have a deterministic impact on democracy. Digitalization does not act as an external force in relation to democracy. It is necessary to explore how socio-political and technological processes are formed in constant interaction. At the same time, the influence and significance of digital technologies cannot be explained by the special properties of digital technologies themselves. By themselves, according to the dissertation author, they are absolutely neutral in this sense, acquiring democratic or, on the contrary, anti-democratizing properties only in the socio-political system in which they are built.

- the need to conceptualize digital processes and the variability of their development are ignored. In other words, digital technologies are presented as a black box, while technologies should be studied in the context of the development of socio-political processes.
- Finally, argumentation in terms of cause and effect implicitly assumes that digital technologies and democracy need to be considered as independent independent fields, while digital democracy, as follows from the definition, is rather an organic unity, a symbiosis of digital technologies and democracy.

It seems to us that digitalization and democracy are in an inextricable dialectical relationship. However, the impact of digitalization on democracy depends on how digital tools are used. They can promote citizen participation and real interaction between citizens and public authorities, thereby strengthening democracy. On the other hand, they can undermine the legitimacy of democracy by threatening a free and autonomous public sphere.

Note that highlighting two opposing points of view, the so-called dichotomies (in such an exaggerated form, which actually have no place in real public policy) do not allow us to see the complex, contradictory, dialectical relationships between digitalization and democracy.

It seems to the dissertation author that a promising direction of research is the rejection of these dichotomies, as they do not reflect the real picture of the influence of digital technologies on democracy, conducting diverse empirical studies of the impact of digitalization on the strengthening and development of democracy and its institutions in different contexts and subsequent comprehension of the results of these empirical studies using a method adequate to the object of study methodology. The dissertation author believes that such an adequate methodology for studying digital democracy is discursive institutionalism as one of the areas of institutional theory. The next chapter of the dissertation will reveal the main provisions of discursive institutionalism, and also show its potential for the study of digital democracy. Here we note that the concept of digital democracy is not neutral (digital technologies are neutral), it is politically and value-laden, therefore an adequate methodology for its study will be a methodology that allows us to understand the role of values, ideas, and beliefs that underlie politics. This requirement is met by discursive institutionalism, which is a modern, dynamically developing direction of institutionalism.

In modern conditions, democracy requires technical mediation, thus, the development of modern democracy and digital technologies are objectively closely intertwined. Therefore, digital democracy does not represent a new type of democracy; in modern scientific discourse it is conceptualized as a research program.

Digital technologies represent a certain potential that is taking on its contours, its specific form, not least thanks to the ongoing transformation of democracy. In this sense, services are digital technologies, digital services are used and shaped by experimenting with new modes of political expression.

Both democracy and digital technologies are extremely complex and rather abstract topics and trends that lack strict definitions, in part because these definitions are themselves the subject of ongoing theoretical debate. Both democracy and digital technologies come in different forms and are in constant evolution. Democracy is evolving and changing, digital technology is a rapidly developing field. Thus, research on digital democracy must necessarily assume a dynamic dimension; the research program on digital democracy must be aimed at studying the dynamic interaction between democracy and digital technologies.

In this regard, the relationship between democracy and digital technologies cannot and should not be viewed as a cause-and-effect relationship.

Instead of viewing the influence of digital technologies as a determining factor in the development and strengthening of democracy, it is necessary to conceptualize digital democracy as democracy mediated by digital technologies, which implies a set of conditions that provide opportunities for political action without determining them. Thus, mediated democracy does not denote a particular type of democracy, but a specific research program that should focus on the relationship between democracy and digital technologies, understood in a broad spectrum between the co-development (evolution) and co-production of both the new quality of democracy and the new quality of digital technologies.

Within the framework of the described logic, studies have recently appeared that conceptualize digital democracy in terms of constellation. Next, we will analyze the main ideas and provisions that underlie the constellation theory, especially since they are quite consistent with the dissertation author's general ideas about the dialectical relationship between digital technologies and democracy (the need for fundamental theoretical research, the need to develop a research program for the study of digital democracy, refusal to interpret the influence digitalization on democracy in terms of determination and cause-effect, the need for interdisciplinary research, emphasizing the special significance and

potential of political science in the study of digital democracy, the dialectical nature of the relationship between digital technologies and democracy, etc.).

The digital constellation serves as an epistemological framework within which a theoretical analysis of the relationship between digitalization and democracy can be carried out. Constellation theory is a research program for studying digital democracy. First of all, we note that the constellation theory criticizes existing approaches to studying the mutual influence of digitalization and democracy. This criticism is actually based on three points: an unreasonably narrow understanding of digitalization (digital structural changes go far beyond changes in (societal) communication structures and practices), ignoring the analysis of the nature of digital technologies, failure to recognize the socio-political aspects of digital technologies (ignoring the study of the relationship between technical infrastructures and political actions). The special importance of political research in the study of digital technologies is emphasized, because they [digital technologies] affect the basic concepts of political science: democracy, public sphere, etc. The concept of constellation assumes that digitalization not only changes politics, there is also a reverse influence, politics also shapes digitalization. The technological determinism of early digitalization discourse has been heavily criticized. Authors and followers of the constellation concept emphasize that it should not be understood as an elaborate research program or even an independent theory. In this regard, the digital constellation offers an epistemological model for understanding and studying the contexts and dynamics of digital transformation. Within the framework of this concept, digital technologies are not interpreted as a positive or negative force for the development of democracy. Instead, their existence in a sociotechnical context must be explored.

Constellation theory takes as its starting point the co-construction of technology and society and, for this purpose, also uses the categories and approaches of such scientific disciplines as philosophy, sociology of technology ,

cultural studies, which have long been interested in technology as an integral aspect of the procedures and institutions of political order.

The concept of constellation helps to overcome the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of digitalization research in political science and formulate a program that is consistent and justified ¹²⁸.

The concept of digital constellation offers an epistemological model for understanding and studying the dynamics of digital transformation. It aims to study the conditions under which political processes take place in a society characterized by the use of digital technologies. This does not involve the construction of a new theory of digital society, but a refusal to simply replicate empirical studies based on the philosophy of positivism, which have become widespread in political science, and a subsequent appeal to a higher level of theoretical and methodological conceptualization.

In the logic of the constellation concept, digitalization is interpreted as a complex, multifaceted process in which society and technology continuously interact, so that any attempts to separate the two areas or point to a one-way causal relationship are untenable ¹²⁹.

The concept of constellation emphasizes the need for reflection on the basic tenets of social theory, as well as understanding how digital technologies, as part of the process of collective socialization, determine any processes and how they, in turn, themselves are formed and conditioned.

Thus, the range of research questions that the concept of constellation raises is as follows: what technical factors have a formative significance and through what mechanisms it is carried out; what spaces of opportunity are being formed; how politics, in turn, influences technology, its development and social

¹²⁸Hofmann, Jeanette. Mediated democracy – linking digital technology to political agency // Internet Policy Review 2019.No8(2).

¹²⁹Berg, Sebastian, Rakowski, Niklas, Thiel, Thorsten () : The Digital Constellation // Weizenbaum Series, Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society - The German Internet Institute, Berlin. 2020.No. 14,

implementation; and finally, what social or political practices prevail and become self-evident in light of the sociotechnical environment ¹³⁰.

¹³⁰ <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/228715/1/Full-text-paper-Berg-et-al-The-digital-constellation.pdf> [accessed 10/17/2023]

CHAPTER III VECTORS OF DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

3.1. The role of ideas in politics and the meaning of the “ideological” (idealistic) turn

In recent years, in political research there has been a so-called "ideological turn"

Justifying the relatively late appeal to ideas in domestic political science, O.Yu. Malinova considers the current situation (priority in socio-political research of the material aspects of the existence of the individual and society over the study of ideal structures) to be quite natural, logically following from the dominance of Marxism in domestic political science ¹³¹.

The ideological turn, as the name suggests, means a turn to the study of ideas, which has emerged in the social sciences in recent decades and which is evidenced by the appearance of works that raise the problematic of ideas and discourse and emphasize their determining nature in relation to political institutions.

The turn was associated with the recognition of not only the explanatory capabilities of ideas, but also their determining role in the formation of institutions and the development of political processes ¹³².

This turn was called the “ideological turn” ¹³³ in the social sciences. It seems to us that the term “idealistic turn” is more successful, which, from our point of view, seems more visual and very accurately captures the essence and refers us to the long-standing debate about whether being is determined by consciousness

¹³¹Malinova O.Yu. Why do ideas matter? Modern discussions about the role of “ideal” factors in political research // Political science. 2009. No. 4. P. 5-24. Page 5.

¹³² <http://publishing-vak.ru/file/archive-philosophy-2022-1/c9-ravochkin.pdf> [date of visit 03.12.2023]

¹³³ <http://publishing-vak.ru/file/archive-philosophy-2022-1/c9-ravochkin.pdf> [date of visit 03.12.2023]

(Marx) or being is determined by consciousness (Hegel). As L.V. Smorgunov emphasizes, the novelty of this turn lies not in the recognition of the banal fact of the influence of ideas, but in the consideration of “ideas as significant explanatory causes of political processes and events.... Ideas needed to be explained, but they themselves rarely acted as explanatory factors”¹³⁴.

Attention to ideas and values has allowed researchers to understand the content of political changes and how such changes occur. A growing body of research shows that ideas are an important variable driving policy-making processes. At the same time, research conceptualizing the role of ideas, values, and beliefs (ideational factors) in policy is scattered across subdisciplines, and a systematic review of relevant research questions, findings, and methods is currently lacking.

Analyzing the influence of ideas on policy is hampered by the lack of a rigorous definition of what ideas are, where they come from, when and how they change, and how to study them.

Scientists have proposed classifications of different types of ideas, as well as different ways of thinking about ideas (from positivist to constructivist approaches). The result of the use of the theory of ideas in various disciplines is that it has been expanded to include a variety of phenomena and concepts, with the result that it has become almost impossible to distinguish what can be classified as ideas and what cannot.

Using idea as change in policy research involves answering the following questions: What is an idea? where do ideas come from, what are the dynamics and driving forces of ideological change? what methodology can be used to explore ideas? Answering these questions will help researchers determine the meaning that ideas have in policy. Based on these questions, several general requirements for the study of ideas in politics can be formulated:

- taking micro-level cognitive dynamics seriously;

¹³⁴Smorgunov L.V. Comparative politics in search of new methodological orientations: do ideas mean anything for explaining politics. *Polis* 2009. No. 1. WITH . 118-129. From 120.

- theorizing about the relationships between different types of ideas;
 - determining the conditions, mechanisms and sequence of processes of changing ideas;
 - expansion of methodological tools;
 - the study of how ideas matter in different policy areas and settings.
- Defining the concept of ideas in politics.

The relationship between ideas and policy outcomes takes different forms and depends on the precise specification of ideas. Ideas can be broadly defined as "beliefs of individuals that influence their actions and attitudes", but the definition of "ideas" can range from specific policy ideas to more general philosophies, in other words, there are different approaches to defining what they are ideas. Thus, interpreting ideas as beliefs is ontologically different from viewing ideas as entities embedded in institutions. Depending on the perspective taken, the impact of ideas on policy outcomes may vary, and these effects may be driven by very different mechanisms.

The emergence of discursive institutionalism as the fourth institutionalism in political science was based on the recognition that "ideas matter"¹³⁵. The first generations of discursive institutionalists sought to theorize the role of ideas in politics by developing interpretive frameworks that define values and preferences¹³⁶.

Since power is one of the central concepts of political science, it is not surprising that, in claiming the centrality of ideas in political analysis, representatives of discursive institutionalism justify the idea that ideas are somehow related to the practices of power¹³⁷. The paradox, however, is that most scholars of discursive institutionalism talk about the political power of ideas

¹³⁵ Schmidt, V.A. Discursive institutionalism: the explanatory power of ideas and discourse', Annual Review of Political Science. 2008. No. eleven . Rr. 303–26

¹³⁶ Béland, D. Cox RH Introduction: ideas and politics/in D. Béland and RH Cox (eds) // Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research , New York: Oxford University Press. 2011. pp. 3–20; Parsons, C. How to Map Arguments in Political Science , Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007; Schmidt, V.A. The Futures of European Capitalism , Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002

¹³⁷ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13501763.2015.1115534> [date visits 11/21/2023]

without further theorizing. M. Blyth ¹³⁸, for example, argues that the dissemination of ideas that serve to define and design institutional forms that would resolve the existing crisis becomes "the most important resource of power", while R. Cox ¹³⁹ analyzes the "powerful legitimizing effect" of ideas on proposals on reform. There are many more examples of scholars who link the promotion of political ideas with the more general concept of political or social power ¹⁴⁰. Thus, it can be concluded that the concept of ideas brought power to the fore, but did so without the necessary theorizing about what exactly the power of ideas is and how it relates to other forms of power. At the same time, researchers argue that the power of ideas can be interpreted as an independent analytical category, comparable to other types of power. Thus, the potential of ideas can be explained as the ability of actors (individual or collective) to influence the normative and cognitive beliefs of other actors through the use of ideas and their derivatives ¹⁴¹.

To determine the potential of ideas in politics, it is not enough to take into account the now well-known general statement that "ideas matter." The concept of the power of ideas can be better understood as the production of certain types of effects, namely effects on the ability of actors to determine the conditions of their existence ¹⁴². At the same time, the statement about the power of ideas seems more justified than the statement that ideas have a causal, determinative effect on politics. In justifying the already mentioned thesis that "ideas matter," researchers have given various reasons why ideas are of particular importance in politics: ideas give meaning to the experiences of actors ¹⁴³, allow actors to cope with information complexity or situations of uncertainty, offering interpretations of

¹³⁸ Blyth, M. The transformation of the Swedish model: economic ideas, distributional conflict, and institutional change // *World Politics*. 2011.No. 54 (1). Rr . 1-26

¹³⁹ Cox, RH The social construction of an imperative: why welfare reform happened in Denmark and the Netherlands but not in Germany // *World Politics*. 2001. No. 55 (3). PP .463-98. Page 485.

¹⁴⁰ Béland, D. "The idea of power and the role of ideas// *Political Studies Review* . 2010. No. 8 . pp.145–54 ; Campbell, JL Institutional analysis and the role of ideas in political economy // *Theory and Society*. 1998. No. 27 (3). PP .377-409.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13501763.2015.1115534> [date visits 11/20/2023]

¹⁴² Barnett, M., Duvall, R. Power in international politics // *International Organization*. 2005. No. 59(4). Rr . 39–75.

¹⁴³ Wendt, A. *Social Theory of International Politics* , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999

problems and contradictions and ways to solve them. resolutions ¹⁴⁴, initiating discourses that can justify political programs in both cognitive and normative terms ¹⁴⁵. The unifying point of these justifications is the recognition that people interpret politics through certain ideas ¹⁴⁶.

The ideas themselves are constantly evolving through their use.

Currently, it is customary to distinguish three types of ideas:

- power through ideas (the ability to convince others of the cognitive validity and/or normative value of one's worldview through the use of ideas);
- the ability to control and dominate the meaning of ideas (implies more coercive forms of power, since the beliefs of others are directly ignored).
- power in ideas (assumes that ideas have authority in structuring thinking or institutionalizing some ideas at the expense of other ideas).

3.2. Discourse Research in Political Science. Institutional constructivism (discursive institutionalism) and its possibilities in conceptualizing digital democracy

Discourse is a concept currently used in different semantic contexts. Let us define the main meanings of the concept "discourse", specifying in what sense this concept is used in this study.

The concept of "discourse" is used in different meanings: in a narrower etymological sense, "discourse" simply means "speech", a narrative; on a broader semantic level, "discourse" is usually used in the sense of a comprehensive scientific theory or discussion that represents, for example, a specific scientific school. It is in this sense that the concept of "discourse" is used in this dissertation. Discourses are not formed outside of practices, norms and institutions. They are

¹⁴⁴ Blyth, M. *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002

¹⁴⁵ Schmidt, V.A. *The Futures of European Capitalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002

¹⁴⁶ Parsons, C. *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007

always in a cultural context. Thus, the practice of discursive communication does not simply involve the search for scientifically based, that is, objectively viable solutions achieved by scientific communities, it clearly involves relational and life-world contexts that evade scientific objectification¹⁴⁷.

The discourse of plurality, of pluralism, gives value to differences and calls into question the goal of achieving unanimity and homogeneity, which always turns out to be fictitious and based on acts of exclusion. The challenge for contemporary democratic politics, then, is to conceptualize a democracy that allows for such expressions of social pluralism and difference¹⁴⁸. Discourse theories that aim at final, universal standards (this applies to both the model of democracy and the model of digital democracy) in order to theorize the democratic project in terms of a final, comprehensive consensus¹⁴⁹ are currently recognized as unviable. Constructivism stands on the side of those theories that reject all forms of rational universalism (not to impose patterns or principles on practice in order to fill it with content, but to start with practice and try to deconstruct general patterns anew).

The turn to the study of ideas and discourse in political science led to the emergence of yet another “new institutionalism” (the so-called fourth new institutionalism after rational choice theory, historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism). Taking into account its basic principles, this new direction was also called “discursive institutionalism”. Discursive institutionalism, as its definition suggests, emphasizes the study of ideas and discourse. At the same time, there is no consensus among the followers of this scientific direction regarding the content of these concepts. Discursive institutionalists place ideas and discourse in an institutional context.

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.uni-koeln.de/hf/konstrukt/texte/download/constructivist%20discourse.pdf>
[date of visit 03.12.2023] c. 5

¹⁴⁸ Mouffe S. Towards an agonistic model of democracy.//Logos. - 2004.–№2(42).

¹⁴⁹ Mouffe S. Towards an agonistic model of democracy.//Logos. - 2004.–№2(42).

Although political scientists have been exploring the explanatory power of ideas and discourse for some time ¹⁵⁰, the term used to define this approach, discursive institutionalism, is relatively new ¹⁵¹. Other researchers, emphasizing the special role of discourse, used terms such as ideological institutionalism, constructivist institutionalism, strategic constructivism, etc. As V. Schmit emphasizes ¹⁵², not all scientists who turn to ideas and discourse go so far as to postulate a fourth new institutionalism. This is because their goal is to blur the boundaries between all three old institutionalisms and show how ideas and discourse can contribute to the development of knowledge in the social sciences through methodological approaches ¹⁵³.

Within the framework of discursive institutionalism, discourse refers not only to the theorization and construction of ideas, but also to the discursive processes through which ideas are formed and transmitted ¹⁵⁴. Moreover, the institutionalism of the name emphasizes the importance of viewing both ideas and discourse in an institutional context, a context of meaning, in the context of formal institutions and informal rules and everyday practices ¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁰Smorgunov L.V. Comparative politics in search of new methodological orientations: do ideas mean anything for explaining politics? // Policy. – M., 2009. - No. 1. – pp. 118-129.

¹⁵¹ Schmidt Vivien Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse June 2008 Annual Review of Political Science 11(1) // Theorizing Ideas and Discourse in Political Science: Intersubjectivity, Neo-Institutionalisms, and the Power of Ideas September 2017 Critical Review. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228283584_Discursive_Institutionalism_The_Explanatory_Power_of_Ideas_and_Discourse [accessed 11/17/2023]

¹⁵² Schmidt Vivien Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse June 2008 Annual Review of Political Science 11(1) // Theorizing Ideas and Discourse in Political Science: Intersubjectivity, Neo-Institutionalisms, and the Power of Ideas September 2017 Critical Review https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228283584_Discursive_Institutionalism_The_Explanatory_Power_of_Ideas_and_Discourse [date visit 11/17/2023]

¹⁵³ Schmidt Vivien Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse June 2008 Annual Review of Political Science 11(1) // Theorizing Ideas and Discourse in Political Science: Intersubjectivity, Neo-Institutionalisms, and the Power of Ideas September 2017 Critical Review https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228283584_Discursive_Institutionalism_The_Explanatory_Power_of_Ideas_and_Discourse [date visit 11/17/2023]

¹⁵⁵ Schmidt Vivien Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse June 2008 Annual Review of Political Science 11(1) // Theorizing Ideas and Discourse in Political Science: Intersubjectivity, Neo-Institutionalisms, and the Power of Ideas September 2017 Critical Review

It is important to emphasize that discourse in constructive institutionalism is stripped of postmodernist baggage and serves as a more general term encompassing not only the substantive content of ideas, but also the interactive processes through which ideas are transmitted. In other words, discourse refers not only to what is said (ideas), but also to who, what, to whom, where, when, how and why it was said (discursive interactions).

Constructive institutionalism recognizes the possibility that there are many variations of ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies that can be built into the conceptualization of discursive institutionalism, it is a unifying concept that represents a broad field that includes many different approaches to ideas and discourse.

By examining what ideas serve what functions, how different types of ideas interact with each other, how ideas change over time, and how ideas are shaped and changed by the choices of actors, scholars can determine what role ideas themselves play in politics and governance. However, determining how ideas matter remains a major challenge. Ideas, in a broad sense, play a central role in issues of policy choice, conceptual categories underlying policies, and institutional change.

Representatives of discursive institutionalism emphasize that not only the concept of a problem limits political alternatives, but also that the fate of specific political decisions can influence definitions of problems or even broader philosophical ideas ¹⁵⁶.

Idea selection processes vary depending on the problem itself, time and space. Research shows differences in how national traditions or past collective experiences influence how nations interpret spreading ideas ¹⁵⁷. Cross-national differences (national differences in how expert knowledge is processed and

¹⁵⁶The Varied Roles of Ideas in Politics
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283930445> The Varied Roles of Ideas in Politics [accessed 02/10/2023]

¹⁵⁷Katzenstein, Peter. Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and the Military in Postwar Japan. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1996.

integrated) are also likely to exist in how and where expert knowledge is produced, what types of expert knowledge are produced, and in the relationships between these knowledge producers and public authorities ¹⁵⁸.

Representatives of constructive institutionalism point out that there is a bias in the analysis of ideas that ultimately become policy, while it is important to identify the reasons why some ideas were more successful than others and to think more broadly about why some ideas were implemented while others are excluded.

We can say that constructive institutionalism follows the logic of interpretivism, opposing the positivist reduction of action. He argues that the very action that is considered significant in the social world cannot be perceived without interpretation, that is, without understanding the meaning that is attached to it ¹⁵⁹. Even if two actors act in the same way, they may act that way for different reasons—and these reasons are often critical to making sense of those actions. The same idea can have completely different meanings in different cultural contexts.

Poststructural institutionalism analyzes discourse as knowledge claims through the concept of constitutive causation, analytically identified in relation to institutions, such that the content of ideas/discourse provides ideological force and generates immanent change ¹⁶⁰.

Analysis of discourse processes helps explain why some ideas become meaningful and others do not, depending on how they are communicated, by which actors, and in what context. Discursive institutionalism analyzes how new ideas, including those from scientists (academic discourse), spread and what impact they have on policy.

¹⁵⁸Schmidt, Vivien A. Does Discourse Matter in the Politics of Welfare State Adjustment? // *Comparative Political Studies*. 2001. No. 35 (2). pp. 168-193.

¹⁵⁹Weber, Max (1988 [1922]) *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

¹⁶⁰<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1373046/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [accessed 12/12/2023]

Discursive institutionalism thus represents a distinctive approach that contributes to our understanding of political action in ways that the three previous institutionalisms cannot. Moreover, it provides insight into an area of political action that has long been neglected by political scientists, largely because they have been unable to account for it within their own methodological approaches.

The concept of digital democracy is not neutral (digital technologies are neutral), it is politically and value-laden, therefore an adequate methodology for its study will be a methodology that allows us to understand the role of values, ideas, beliefs that underlie politics. This requirement is met by discursive institutionalism, which is a modern, dynamically developing direction of institutionalism.

3.3.Genesis of the scientific discourse of digital democracy, its current state and directions of development

The relationship between the development of democracy and digital transformation in complex modern societies has become one of the most significant topics in the social sciences. It can be said that from the very beginning of the discourse of digital democracy, optimistic tendencies have been accompanied and overshadowed by an understanding of existing risks and dangers.

Despite the extreme heterogeneity of its constituent concepts, the political discourse of digital democracy has now developed into some semblance of unity, which makes it possible not only to trace the main stages of its evolution (as a reflection of real processes in the development of digital technologies and their influence on democratic practices), but also to identify its modern features and directions, this means the possibility of conceptualizing digital democracy, reflecting the current level of knowledge and ideas about this phenomenon.

Of course, the scientific discourse itself is in constant change and development, reflecting the general trend towards a deeper understanding of digital democracy.

First of all, we note that the academic discourse on digital democracy goes beyond the dichotomous discourse that assumes the existence of a choice between democracy and digital democracy. Digital technologies are considered as a natural environment for development, a way of existence of democracy in modern conditions.

Contemporary academic discourse on digital democracy emphasizes the need to study the diversity of models of digital democracy, emphasizing that each country has its own distinct political system and history, reflecting the diversity of relationships between society, public authorities and digital technologies. At the same time, it is recognized that research in the field of digital democracy has so far focused mainly on European countries. In this sense, the obstacle preventing Asian countries from actively participating in discussions on the formation of digital democracy is the Eurocentric and American-centric view of what the “correct” practice of democracy should be ¹⁶¹. It is recognized that the production and promotion of knowledge about democracy in general and digital democracy in particular is impossible without the involvement of non-Western science. There is a growing desire to understand non-Western cultures and their scientific reflection on digital democracy, thus enriching the latter. Achieving complex, multidimensional knowledge is becoming a necessity of modern science, in which the presence of diverse approaches can enrich the concept of digital democracy.

¹⁶¹ Trisha Ray and Jan Hornat, “Policy paper: Global Cooperation of Democracies in the Digital Realm”, Forum 2000, October 2021, <https://www.forum2000.cz/files/policy-paper-global-cooperation-of-democracies-in-the-digital-realm.pdf> [date visits 12/03/2023]; Gonzalez Hernando, Marcos, Williams, Kate, Examining the Link Between Funding and Intellectual Interventions Across Universities and Think Tanks: a Theoretical Framework (International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society volume 31, pages 193–206, 2018), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10767-018-9281-2> [] date visits 12/03/2023]; Clarke Laurie, Williams Oscar, Swindells, How Google quietly funds Europe's leading tech policy institutes

(NewStatesman , 2021), <https://www.newstatesman.com/business/sectors/2021/07/how-google-quietly-funds-europe-s-leading-tech-policy-institutes> [date of visit 08.12.2023]

Researchers are turning to the philosophy of relativism, which denies the existence of a single or universal interpretation of digital democracy. Rejecting the absolutist idea of the development of knowledge, proponents of relativism accept contradictory and varied explanations of ideas ¹⁶².

Growing uncertainty about the stability and future of Western democracies is giving rise to old and new narratives that seek to link the transformation of the political landscape to the influence of digital technologies.

Research on Western democracies is often framed by a set of unrealistic democratic ideals and is overly focused on the impact of digital technologies on democratic development. This ignores the growing empirical evidence of the serious problems underlying modern Western democracies. The resolution of these problems and contradictions is currently seen in greater attention to issues of conceptualization and reconceptualization of democracy itself. It is necessary both to resolve the contradictions between the ideas and values of democracy and to understand the place of digital technologies and the extent to which they have influenced the problems of modern democracies. A growing body of political research has concluded that many of the challenges facing democracy do not stem from digital technologies, but rather reflect deeper problems and contradictions in the development of democracies themselves in modern societies. At the same time, an adequate determination of cause-and-effect relationships (if the latter are proven) is an important prerequisite for solving the main problems of democracy. At the same time, digital democracy cannot be reduced to the strengthening or weakening of individual elements; researchers come to the conclusion that current changes in democracy do not lend themselves to a mono-causal explanation and require interpretations that pay attention to the contingent interaction of political aspirations, digital opportunities and their social context .

A feature of the modern scientific discourse of digital democracy, one might say, one of its paradoxes is the analysis of digital democracy without a

¹⁶²Grady, P. O. *Relativism*. Routledge. 2014

relative level of governance: local, national or transnational. This approach implicitly assumes the universality of digital democracy tools (what is applicable at the national level will be equally true at other levels). At the same time, in recent research we see an attempt to introduce a spatial dimension into the discourse of digital democracy. In this sense, scale (of governance) becomes a new significant element in the conceptualization of digital democracy ¹⁶³. The contradiction (paradox) is that, on the one hand, there are numerous studies proving the existence of a correlation between the size and quality of democracy (these issues are thoroughly studied in classic works devoted to democratization processes), on the other hand, the spatial dimension of digital democracy is often ignored. The few studies analyzing the relationship between spatial factors (as an indicator of access to digital technologies) ¹⁶⁴ and the quality of e-democracy do not change anything in essence.

Thus, a spatial perspective (dimension) can bring an innovative approach to the concept of digital democracy ¹⁶⁵. In part, of course, the frequent neglect of the spatial dimension of digital democracy is due to the assumption that with the advent of digital technologies, physical location, or rather distance, will lose its meaning (cyberspace replacing physical space). Few researchers attempt to connect the physical and digital worlds; more often they are viewed as binary categories. The study of the spatial dimension is now more often focused on regional differences in access to digital technologies, which is one aspect of the popular concept of digital inequality (“place matters”).

The idea that the digital environment is becoming an objective reality of the existence of democracy, having become its natural environment, remains

Kneuer, M., Datts, M. E-democracy and the Matter of Scale. Revisiting the Democratic Promises of the Internet in Terms of the Spatial Dimension. *Polit Vierteljahresschr* **61**, 285–308 (2020). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11615-020-00250-6> [date visit 12.12.2023]

¹⁶⁴Sylvester, Dari E., and Adam J. McGlynn. 2010. The digital divide, political participation, and place. *Social Science Computer Review*. 2010. No. 28. pp. 64–74. Page 64

¹⁶⁵E-democracy and the Matter of Scale. Revisiting the Democratic Promises of the Internet in Terms of the Spatial Dimension Marianne Kneuer · Mario Datts <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11615-020-00250-6>

unchanged. Thus, the focus of researchers' attention moves from discussing the relationship between the advantages of digital technologies in the development and strengthening of democracy and real potential problems that can undermine the very foundations of democracy to the issues of managing the risks of digital democracy and minimizing these risks. Thus, the question is no longer how and to what extent digital technologies can influence democratic processes, but how the digital sphere itself is transformed by politics and governance. Digital technologies are no longer viewed solely as a tool for the development of democracy. They are becoming something more than just a tool and are increasingly considered as a way of self-determination, identity, a way of cognition, acquiring value traits.

After nearly two decades of vacillating between binary hypotheses to explain the potential of digital technologies, digital democracy scholars have taken a more pragmatic approach based on case studies. This approach had the advantage of allowing valuable contextual factors to be taken into account, but at the same time, it did not allow us to capture patterns and relationships at a higher level of abstraction and formulate a theory of digital democracy.

It is important to note here that conceptualization and theorizing based on research and generalization of socio-political practice is losing its dominant position, and, on the contrary, theorizing is developing based on operating with already created ideal models, regulation of knowledge from existing theoretical arrays ¹⁶⁶. An indicator of the scientific nature of a theory/concept is “the level of theorization of knowledge associated with the reflection of its foundations ¹⁶⁷. ”

We trace these general trends in the development of scientific knowledge in the modern scientific discourse of digital democracy.

Researchers agree that digital technologies that mediate democracy can develop much faster than the institutional mechanisms in which they can be used.

¹⁶⁶Tikhonov A.V. Sociology of management. Theoretical basis. M., 2009, 427 pp. 187.

¹⁶⁷Tikhonov A.V. Sociology of management. Theoretical basis. M., 2009, 427 pp. 187.

While there are expectations associated with digital technologies to renew concepts of democracy and transform democratic practices ¹⁶⁸, there is a growing understanding that only modest democratic gains can be achieved with digital tools alone unless the concept of democracy itself is rethought, no matter how sophisticated the institutional and technology projects, they are missing the heart of democracy ¹⁶⁹. In this sense, digital democracy should be assessed in terms of its defining processes, rather than the extent to which digital technology artifacts are used.

Modern academic discourse on digital democracy is based on the belief that both digital technologies and democracy are in a relationship of constant development and mutual influence. Such mutual influence forms a tight web, from which it is difficult to untangle cause and effect. An attempt to analyze these connections is all the more difficult because neither digitalization nor democracy are clearly defined concepts and have a value dimension.

The modern scientific discourse of digital democracy emphasizes that the future of digital democracy remains open, the ever-increasing complexity of social life will become an urgent problem requiring serious theoretical and philosophical reflection, and the significant role of the academic discourse of digital democracy in shaping the ideas and beliefs of political actors is emphasized.

This perhaps explains the increasing turn to philosophy as researchers try to understand the complex relationship between digital technology and democracy. Based on the philosophy of the technological school of thought, researchers seek to draw attention to the randomness and indeterminacy of the process of development of digital technologies, strive to overcome the duality between society and technology, emphasizing the importance of social technology. Society and digital technologies are thus considered not as separate

¹⁶⁸Becker, T. Slaton, CD *The Future of Teledemocracy*. Praeger, Westport, CT, 2000

¹⁶⁹Building Strong E-Democracy—The Role of Technology in Developing Democracy for the Information Age Ari-Veikko Anttiroiko

entities, but as interdependent entities; technological mediation in modern conditions is a significant part and feature of human existence.

Despite the clearly expressed academic interest in the study of the complex relationship between digital technologies and democracy, the theory of digital democracy itself has not developed; political and theoretical studies of technology-mediated democracy (digital technologies are intermediaries for the functioning of democracy in modern conditions) are fragmented and insufficient attract related fields of knowledge in the field of studying society as a whole and technology, fundamental theoretical interdisciplinary studies of the deep dialectical relationship between digital technologies and democracy are missing.

Such theoretical uncertainty has very practical consequences, having a negative impact on the development of digital democracy.

It is clear, at the same time, that fundamental interdisciplinary theoretical research would greatly contribute to the rejection of the simplistic view of digitalization as an opportunity or danger, which is common in contemporary scientific discourse on digital democracy, thus providing a deeper understanding of digital democracy .

At the current level of development of science, “it is not individual theories that work, but scientific disciplines that connect all levels of knowledge acquired about an object and the process of cognition, and reflection on this connection is the key to the prospects of a scientific discipline ¹⁷⁰. ”

A relatively new trend in conceptualizing digital democracy, reflecting a general desire for a deeper understanding of it, is the idea of digitalization and democratization as a co-evolutionary process towards a new order ¹⁷¹.

Note that, in general, the interpretation of phenomena in terms of coevolution is determined by the dynamics of changes in social cognition

¹⁷⁰Tikhonov A.V. Sociology of management. Theoretical basis. M., 2009., 472 pp. 197.

¹⁷¹Überblick Ein, Borucki Isabelle, Michels Dennis, · Marschall Stefan Die digitalisierte Demokratie. 2020. No. 30. pp. 163–169. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41358-020-00224-5>

associated with neoclassical rationality in science ¹⁷². Coevolution involves “joint, coupled, interdependent, mutually adaptive changes in developing systems (processes, elements) interacting within the supersystem ¹⁷³. ”

This approach also recognizes that digital technologies have an impact on the development of democracy, while at the same time socio-political events determine the further direction of changes in digitalization processes. The content of this complex process is now only beginning to be recognized, forming the theoretical and methodological contours of further research. The main attention is thus paid to the analysis of the content of phenomena (digitalization and democratization), which together form a research program for the study of digital democracy.

In the previous paragraph, we touched upon the political theory of the digital constellation, revealing its potential in understanding digital democracy and emphasizing its commonality with the concept of a complex dialectical relationship between digital technologies and democracy, which, according to the dissertation author, reflects the essence of digital democracy. At the same time, according to the author, the concept of dialectical interconnection is more visual, understandable and fits more organically into domestic political science.

We also emphasized that political constellation theory is today seen as a research program that provides a general vector, a direction for the political theoretical study of digital democracy. Thus, the scientific research program for the study of digital democracy is a set of fundamental ideas shared by scientists, as well as methodological foundations that provide a general approach (at the metatheory level) to the construction and justification of the theory of digital democracy.

¹⁷²Shayakhmetova L. A. Co-evolutionary approach as a philosophical and methodological basis for interdisciplinary connections in modern social cognition. Abstract on the dissertation. Ph.D. Permian. 2019. P. 3. <https://diss.utmn.ru/upload/iblock/ab3/SHayakhmetova.pdf> [date of visit 12/14/2023]

¹⁷³Slivitsky A.B. CO-EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: PROBLEM ISSUES. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/koevoluyutsiya-tehniki-i-obschestva-v-tsifrovuyu-epohu-problemnye-voprosy/viewer> [date of visit 12/14/2023]

At the same time, the digital constellation is a relatively new approach to the study of digital democracy; it is not in the full sense a theory, claiming the status of a research program, although it is not yet one. Rather, it acts as a guide indicating the general direction of theorization and conceptualization of digital democracy.

It is important to emphasize the openness of the constellation to various theoretical schools, which is why it is the guiding vector of scientific reflection on digital democracy. It can be said that digitalization is a cross-cutting problem that can be studied within the framework of various political-theoretical approaches and in different research traditions.

According to the digital constellation, any social relationship is always a technically mediated relationship (mediated by technology). The research program emphasizes that digital technologies acquire their meaning and dynamics in their diversity as infrastructures, media, artifacts, etc., primarily in relation to social and political practices.

Constellation, as a research program for the study of digital democracy, identifies three levels of analysis ¹⁷⁴that are fundamental to understanding the complex relationship between digital technologies and democracy.

- I - reflection on the fundamental properties of digital technologies.
- II – analysis of the potential opportunities for mutual influence of digital technologies and democracy.
- III – study of the socio-political configuration.

Moreover, if the properties of digital technologies are located at the micro level of specific technological applications, then socio-political configurations already affect the macro level ¹⁷⁵. The second or middle level is of particular importance precisely because it is ignored in most work in political science,

¹⁷⁴Pistor K. Statehood in the digital age. *Constellations*. 2020. No. 27. pp. 3-18; Berg S., Staemmler D., Thiel T. Political Theory of the Digital Constellation., *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*. 2022. № 32(2). pp . 1-15

¹⁷⁵Lenk, Klaus. Die neuen Instrumente der weltweiten digitalen Governance // *Verwaltung & Management*. 2016. No. 22. Rr. 227-240.

although it serves a central function. The constellation program attaches special importance to the second level, since it performs a central function, but does not receive due attention within the framework of political science.

Conclusion

This dissertation research focuses on the conceptualization of digital democracy. The dissertation proves that any attempts to give an adequate definition of digital democracy inevitably give rise to problems and contradictions of various kinds and levels. According to the dissertation author, these problems and contradictions should become the subject of research in various disciplines, primarily political science.

The author's analysis shows that research into digital democracy is often carried out outside of political science: in the fields of communication and media, technology and computer science, thus unreasonably emphasizing the predominant importance of digital technologies over the very idea of democracy. At the same time, at the current level of development of scientific knowledge, not individual theories, but the so-called ones, are becoming increasingly important. general, connected knowledge (of different scientific disciplines and fields) and reflection on this connection.

The paper concludes that with the development and deepening of digitalization processes and the implementation of various “digital democracy” initiatives, the fascination with their instrumental capabilities, the study of the fundamental foundations of digital democracy and its connection with the central theoretical principles of democracy unreasonably fades into the background.

The task of conceptualizing digital democracy is also greatly complicated by the fact that democracy itself is an open system, in a process of constant development and change. Its dynamics, on the one hand, are determined by the contradictory principles, interpretations and aspirations inherent in the democratic idea itself, the democratic ideal; on the other hand, this dynamics is influenced by new opportunities and practices provided by the use of digital technologies. Thus, we can say that the complex of complex problems and contradictions of digital democracy turned out to be innate for it, naturally acquired by it from democracy,

many problems and contradictions in the development of which remained unresolved.

The resolution of these problems and contradictions is currently seen in greater attention to issues of conceptualization and reconceptualization of democracy itself. It is necessary both to resolve the contradictions between the ideas and values of democracy and to understand the place of digital technologies and the extent to which they have influenced the problems of modern democracies. A growing body of political research has concluded that many of the challenges facing democracy do not stem from digital technologies, but rather reflect deeper problems and contradictions in the development of democracies themselves in modern societies.

In the dissertation research, the author attempted to conceptualize digital democracy by revealing the fundamental contradiction that underlies it and concerns the uncertain role of digital technologies in the development of democracy.

The dissertation proves that digital technologies and democracy are in an inextricable dialectical relationship. The dissertation shows that most studies on the impact of digital technologies on democracy are correlational in nature; researchers rely on observational data, which usually provide only correlational data. Indeed, the direct link between digitalization and democracy demonstrates high intuitive plausibility. However, digital technologies do not have a deterministic impact on democracy. Digitalization does not act as an external force in relation to democracy. Thus, as part of the study of digital democracy as a research program, it is necessary to examine how socio-political and technological processes are shaped in constant interaction. At the same time, the influence and significance of digital technologies cannot be explained by the special properties of digital technologies themselves. By themselves, according to the dissertation author, they are, in this sense, absolutely neutral, acquiring democratic or anti-democratic properties only in the socio-political system in which they are built. In modern academic discourse on digital democracy, the

need to conceptualize digital processes and the variability of their development are often unreasonably ignored. In other words, digital technologies are presented as a black box when they should be studied in the context of the development of socio-political processes.

Arguing the impact of digitalization on democracy in terms of cause and effect implicitly assumes that digital technologies and democracy need to be considered as independent independent areas, while digital democracy, as follows from the definition, is rather an organic unity, a symbiosis of digital technologies and democracy .

The dissertation substantiates the need to conduct diverse empirical studies of the impact of digitalization on the development of democracy and its institutions in different contexts and subsequent comprehension of the results of these empirical studies in order to construct a theory of digital democracy.

The dissertation author identifies the features and state of the modern academic discourse of digital democracy. It is important to note here that the scientific discourse on digitalization (including its relationship with the central category of political science - democracy) is similar to other major transformational discourses of recent decades. The dissertation shows the genesis of the academic discourse of digital democracy, which was characterized by the rejection of reductionist concepts that explain the relationship of digital technologies in terms of determination and categories of cause-and-effect relationships and an appeal to more complex and multifaceted theoretical constructs and the development of appropriate research programs for the study of digital democracy.

The dissertation emphasizes the need to expand the academic discourse of digital democracy. In this regard, it is argued that the obstacle preventing Asian countries from actively participating in discussions on the formation of digital democracy is the Eurocentric and American-centric view of what the “correct”

practice of democracy should be ¹⁷⁶. Asian democracy differs from Western democracy due to differences in political structures, cultural norms, historical background, and interpretation and implementation of democratic principles. It is important to take into account cultural differences when examining examples of the implementation of the concept of digital democracy in different regions. Non-Western descriptions and interpretations of democracy in general and e-democracy in particular remain poorly researched.

Currently, digital democracy is a dynamically developing phenomenon that includes two developing areas: the development of democracy and digital technologies (the use of digital technologies in public policy and management).

The author emphasizes that digital democracy is a term loaded with political aspirations . The concept of digital democracy is not neutral (digital technologies are neutral), it is politically and value-laden, therefore, an adequate methodology for its study, in the author's opinion, would be a methodology that allows us to understand the role of values, ideas, beliefs that underlie politics. This requirement is met by discursive institutionalism, which is a modern, dynamically developing direction of institutionalism.

The dissertation author concludes that despite the fact that the relationship between digitalization and democracy is increasingly becoming the object of scientific research, substantiating the complex nature of this relationship is rarely an independent goal of scientific research. The very influence of digitalization on democracy is limited to the traditional elements of democracy, while deeper changes in norms, institutions, and values are ignored, which for objective reasons are more difficult to study and measure.

The author shows that many researchers have tried to study the relationship between digital technologies and democracy empirically, from the position of positivist methodology, focusing on individual countries or groups of countries.

¹⁷⁶Halupka, M. The Legitimization of Clicktivism. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 2018. No. 53(1), 130–141.

Despite the fact that these studies used data from different countries or the same country, the methodological framework used, which, as a rule, was the philosophy and methodology of positivism, was found to be insufficient to interpret and explain the contradictory results. Accordingly, the result of such attempts was the recognition of the need for a serious theoretical analysis of the impact of digital technologies on the development of democracy and a comparative analysis of the role that digital technologies play in various political systems.

The dissertation analyzes digital participation and electronic voting as the main components of digital democracy.

The dissertation shows that in the processes of political participation there is a turn from long-term participation (in political parties or associations) to short-term, transitory participation, focused on solving specific problems; in this regard, it is customary to talk about the transition from collective actions to unifying actions. At the same time, the unstable and transient nature of most digital movements does not allow them to be considered as a full-fledged replacement for traditional forms of political participation.

Digital participation can be visualized as a continuum. Of course, the boundaries between the points of this continuum and the categories corresponding to them are quite arbitrary. At the same time, e-participation mechanisms may vary depending on where we are on the continuum.

Initially, public authorities and experts had high hopes for e-participation, believing that the use of digital technologies, in itself, would lead to greater citizen participation in politics and governance, strengthening government legitimacy and increasing citizen trust in public institutions, thereby promoting thus, the transition from thin democracy to deep democracy.

Such expectations, characteristic of positivism, in general, have not been confirmed by the results of comparative researchers in specific countries. However, research has shown that such expectations still exist today, including in

rapidly modernizing countries where the number of e-participation initiatives has grown rapidly over the past decade.

Thus, the dissertation concludes that the high expectations associated with digital participation have not been fully realized even in those countries that have claimed to be leaders in the field of digitalization of politics and governance. Moreover, the optimistic expectations of researchers and public authorities associated with the use of digital technologies turned out to be more justified in terms of co-production of public services than digital political participation.

The author shows that the vast majority of problems that are found in the field of electronic participation are characteristic of political participation in general. From the very beginning, digital participation initiatives were viewed (and then implemented) as a technological rather than a socio-political project. The work shows that the consolidation and acceptance of digital participation technologies by citizens is largely determined by the existing level of trust in the institutions of public authority, digital technologies, as well as specific components of participation platforms.

The author's analysis of the scientific literature led to the conclusion that there are practically no systematic attempts to collect and interpret data on participation rates in different countries (even at the level of survey studies). Thus, there is a need for more research on the effects of e-participation initiatives in different countries, including modernizing countries that are actively promoting digitalization efforts and which have seen significant growth in digital participation. At the same time, a full-fledged study of e-participation in different socio-political contexts requires going beyond technical or technological aspects. The effectiveness of e-participation and its impact on the relationship between citizens and the state depend on the prevailing values underlying the political system in a particular country.

An analysis of the practice of electronic voting in different countries shows that the introduction and dissemination of an electronic voting system necessarily involves a complex process of institutional building, which cannot be reduced to

the formal introduction of electronic voting. Of course, its formation takes time and patience. Undoubtedly, addressing security issues in the context of electronic voting is of great importance. However, as an analysis of the academic discourse devoted to digital democracy and electronic voting as an important component shows, it is public trust in the institutions of public power that is the most important prerequisite for the adoption of electronic voting against the backdrop of growing security problems. This public trust arises not only and not so much due to the capabilities of digital technologies, which provide, in particular, a technological solution to the problems of security of electronic voting, but as a result of the institutionalization and routinization of real practices in the context of a broader socio-political-technological system.

The results of a sociological analysis of the attitude of experts in the field of electoral politics in Russia to electronic voting, conducted by the author, show that the expert community on electronic electoral politics in Russia connects citizens' trust in electronic voting with personal trust in political leaders holding public positions (President, Chairman of the Government, Chairman of the State Duma). In this sense, the acceptance of electronic voting by citizens will, to a large extent, be determined by the attitude of these individuals towards electronic voting, expressed in political discourse. This gives some optimism to citizens' support for electronic electoral politics in Russia.

Analysis of the scientific literature allows us to conclude that at present there is no clear understanding of the processes of institutionalization of electronic voting, taking into account the contextual characteristics of different countries. There is a lack of basic research that would contribute to a better understanding of electronic voting and explain the conflicting results of empirical studies and the trend away from digital voting that is taking place in different countries.

The scientific literature on electronic voting is currently dominated by studies analyzing electronic voting processes in European countries and the United States, while electronic voting in Asian countries, where digitalization

processes are rapidly developing, are increasingly becoming the object of research interest.

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