

# Political Dividends of Digital Participatory Governance: Evidence from Moscow Pothole Management

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**Abstract:** This study takes advantage of a publicly salient policy sphere – of road quality – in the capital city of Russia to explore the use of digital technologies as means of aggregating information and demonstrating the governmental capacity and effectiveness. It focuses on the potential linkage between the road quality based on citizens' complaints and the electoral outcomes in two rounds of Moscow mayoral elections in 2013 and 2018. The data of more than 200,000 complaints are collected from two online platforms: *rosyama.ru* and *gorod.mos.ru*, and combined with local election data. The causal relationship between these two processes is established, making use of an arguably exogenous variation in the differences across local weather conditions during the heating season that differentially affects pothole creation but is uncorrelated with electoral outcomes. The results indicate that greater use of digital technologies (measured by pothole complaints) result in increased number of votes and higher margin of victory for the incumbent. They highlight the role of digital technologies as a tool to create participatory governance mechanisms and convey to the public an image of a transparent, responsive, and capable government.

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