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Who is advocated by public activists creating Change.org petitions to protect animals

The article presents a comparative analysis of electronic petitions aiming to protect animals. Materials of Change.org were used (22,452 Russian-language petitions from Russia, 1,036 German-language petitions from Germany, 15,887 French-language petitions from France; 2012–2018). There are twice as many petitions for the protection of domestic animals, regardless of the linguacultural discourse, compared to those defending wild animals. Wild animals are protected from murder and violence (during hunting, experiments, exploitation in zoos and circuses) and in some cases are considered in the context of the environmental discourse. Pets are protected from harsh treatment; regulation of relations between pet owners is demanded (responsible possession). It is concluded that the orientation of society towards ecology and the protection of life in general (not only of a person) can be used to develop the ideas of posthumanism in a globalized world. The phenomenon of “imitational posthumanism” was also described, which can be identified by some researchers as antihumanism. Petitions for the protection of animals (outside of environmental discourse) mark those areas of civic activity that look apolitical and do not cause anxiety in the government. These petitions seem to indicate the social activism resources, the energy of which is currently inaccessible to the full even to environmental movement.

Key words: biopolitics, posthumanism, protection of animals, online petition, electronic petitions, Change.org

Acknowledgment. This work was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research 18-011-00140-A.

FOR CITATION: Radina N.K. Who is advocated by public activists creating Change.org petitions to protect animals. *Locus: People, Society, Culture, Meanings*. 2022. Vol. 13. No. 4. Pp. 124–143. DOI: 10.31862/2500-2988-2022-13-4-124-143

DOI: 10.31862/2500-2988-2022-13-4-124-143

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Кого защищают общественные активисты, создающие на Change.org петиции в защиту животных

В статье представлен сравнительный анализ электронных петиций, направленных на защиту животных по материалам сайта Change.org 2012–2018 гг. Были проанализированы 22 452 петиции на русском языке, территориально связанные с Россией, 1036 петиций на немецком языке, связанные с Германией, и 15 887 петиций на французском языке, связанные с Францией. Согласно результатам исследования, петиций в защиту домашних животных, вне зависимости от лингвокультурного дискурса, в два раза больше, чем петиций в защиту диких животных. Дикие животные охраняются от убийства и насилия (во время охоты, экспериментов, эксплуатации в зоопарках и цирках) и в некоторых случаях рассматриваются в контексте экологического дискурса. Животные защищаются от грубого обращения, авторы петиций требуют регулирования отношений между владельцами животных (ответственное владение). Делается вывод о том, что ориентация общества на экологию и защиту жизни в целом (не только человека) может быть использована для развития идей постгуманизма в глобализованном мире. Также описан феномен «подражательного постгуманизма», который некоторыми исследователями может быть идентифицирован как антигуманизм. Петиции в защиту животных (вне экологического дискурса) маркируют те сферы гражданской активности, которые

выглядят аполитичными и не вызывают беспокойства у власти. Эти петиции как бы указывают на ресурсы социальной активности, энергия которой в настоящее время недоступна в полной мере даже экологическому движению.

Ключевые слова: биополитика, постгуманизм, защита животных, электронные петиции, интернет-петиция, Change.org

Благодарности. Исследование выполнено при поддержке Российского фонда фундаментальных исследований, грант 18-011-00140-А.

ДЛЯ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ: Радина Н.К. Кого защищают общественные активисты, создающие на Change.org петиции в защиту животных // Локус: люди, общество, культуры, смыслы. 2022. Т. 13. № 4. С. 124–143. DOI: 10.31862/2500-2988-2022-13-4-124-143

Introduction

Until recently, animals in the Russian Federation were protected by the Constitution of the Russian Federation (article 9 on the protection of natural resources and article 35 on the right of private property), the Civil Code of the Russian Federation (article 230 on stray animals, article 231 on the right of ownership of stray animals, article 232 on expenses and remuneration for the maintenance of stray animals and article 229 on reimbursement of expenses associated with the finding) and the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (section IX, chapter 25, article 245 on cruelty to animals).

In November 2010, in the first reading, the State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted the law “On Responsible Handling of Animals”, and in December 2018 the law was adopted in the third reading and entered into force. The new law prohibits the killing of animals (domestic and wild, living under human supervision) and the promotion of violence against them, as well as defines the rules for their maintenance¹. During the lengthy process of finalizing the law taking years and years, activists of the zoo protection movement, seeking the adoption of the law, protested, picketed and even went hungry².

¹ Scherbak A. In Russia, the first law on the protection of animals was adopted. What is written in IT. TASS. 18.12.2018. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/5925917> (accessed: 07.04.2022). (In Rus.)

² The Duma could not pass a zoo protection law for many years. Lenta.ru. 19.12.2018. URL: <https://lenta.ru/brief/2018/12/19/zivotina/> (accessed: 07.04.2022). (In Rus.)

In the same 2018, the Ministry of Construction of the Russian Federation prepared an order “On the approval of the rules and norms for the maintenance of common property in an apartment building”, called by journalists “a loophole for cats”, which states that by decision of the general meeting of residents, all the ventilation holes of an apartment building can be equipped with nets with a mesh size of 0.5 cm and at least one with a mesh size of 15 cm so that homeless cats can visit city cellars without hindrance³.

The ironic and/or sympathetic texts of Russian and foreign journalists about animals and Russian legislative news mark the “zones of biopolitical activity” of the society and government. Journalists point to the “cat lobby” in the face of Vladimir Burmatov, a deputy of “United Russia” party, chairman of the State Duma Committee on Ecology, who, “standing up for cats”, according to journalists, can achieve success faster than with his initiatives against dangerous industrial emissions⁴.

The legislative activity of society and government, which regulates the life of animals, is characteristic not only of Russia. So, in February 2018, during active discussions related to Brexit, the UK Petition Committee for discussion in the Westminster Hall in response to ongoing campaigns by UK citizens calling for a ban on the export of live animals arriving “for meat”, electronic petition 200 205 was chosen. It concerned the export to slaughter of farm animals after Great Britain leaves the European Union⁵. Society advocates for animals, governments support or ignore public initiatives, but all this social, civic, political activity indicates the importance of biopolitical problems, the role of biopolitics in general political context.

Power and biopolitics

Biopolitics is an “intellectual/scientific program”, a group of theories and concepts, as well as a form of power focused on managing life and population [30].

Historically, biopolitical ideas go back to Aristotle (384–322 BC), who in the “History of Animals” gives the initial definition of a person as a “public (political) animal” and is supported by a number of researchers, including

³ Egorshova N. The Ministry of Construction left a “loophole for cats” in the cellars of high-rise buildings // Russian newspaper (RG). 24.07.18. URL: <https://rg.ru/2018/07/24/minstroj-ostavil-lazejku-dlia-koshek-v-podvalah-mnogoetazhek.html> (accessed: 07.04.2022). (In Rus.)

⁴ Lokshin P. How Moscow cats turned into an instrument of politics. Die Welt. 01.01.2019. URL: <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article185969590/Russland-Wie-Moskaus-Katzen-zum-politischen-Instrument-wurden.html?wtrid=onsite.onsitesearch> (accessed: 07.04.2022).

⁵ Ares E., Webb D., Ward M., Sutherland N. Debate on an e-petition relating to ending the export of live farm animals after the UK leaves the EU. Number CDP 2018/0042, 20 February. 2018. URL: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CDP-2018-0042> (accessed: 07.04.2022).

R. Kjellen (the term “biopolitics” was first used in the 1920s), M. Roberts, who published an essay on biopolitics in 1938, L. Caldwell with a pioneering article, which sets the whole spectrum of further research in biopolitics, M. Foucault who considered the body of a citizen a biopolitical reality and medicine a biopolitical strategy [10; 18; 20; 21; 23; 30].

Currently, there are three main traditions in the study of biopolitics, discursively virtually unrelated:

- Biopolitics as a science of the biological foundations of the political and social;
- Biopolitics as a special power practice, as ‘privatization’ by the authorities of “bare life” or human capital;
- Biopolitics as the intersection of modern biological and political problems, combining biology and political sciences [12].

The theoretical framework of the first tradition, in which a person is regarded as a product of biological evolution and emphasizes an ethological approach to human activities, includes several schools: the American school (L. Caldwell, A. Somit, T. Wiegeler, S. Peterson, R. Masters, P. Corning, W. Anderson et al.), the German school (H. Flohr, W. Tennesmann, P. Mayer et al.) and the Greek school (A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis et al.) [11]. In Russia, promoted by biologists, and since the end of the 80s there has been an active scientific platform at the Faculty of Biology of Lomonosow Moscow State University and is known largely thanks to the works of M.V. Gusev, A.T. Zub, A.V. Oleskin.

The theoretical framework of the second tradition (political privatization of human capital or “bare life”) is based on the work of M. Foucault, who considers biopolitics as a special power practice. M. Foucault thinks of biopower broader (wider than just biotechnology) and directly connects it with the concept of human capital, which is created through pedagogical, psychological and medical practices, including maternal care for the child [18]. As a task of biopolitics, Foucault defines the problematization of all areas of upbringing, culture, education around human capital, while the individual is recommended to be considered as an enterprise, as an investor, since it is living conditions that provide income from the capital.

The traditions of biopolitics as the political privatization of an individual are revealed in the works of J. Agamben, J. Baudrillard, A. Negri, M. Hardt and others. Within the framework of this tradition, J. Agamben proposed the concept of “bare life” (biological life proper), with the help of which he analyzes totalitarian societies where “bare life” is the object of manipulation of the authorities [1].

The third direction of biopolitical ideas (the biological level of modern political problems) is formed on the basis of the need for the authorities to respond to the challenges of modern science, biomedical technologies, etc.

The problems of pediatric and adult euthanasia and transplantology, the cyborgization of the human body, human cloning, genetic engineering and biological weapons are new biopolitical topics that require reflection, analysis and practical action from the authorities both at the level of legislative activity and in general political practice.

When formulating the coordinates of biopolitical strategies not of power, but of society, it turns out that these strategies in scientific papers are not considered in terms of management (biopolitics), but in terms of relationships and ethical regulation (bioethics). Initially, the ethics of human-animal relations were based on economic utility and divine attribution of animals [13]. The basic regulators were religious axioms presented in religious treatises (in Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, etc.) containing descriptions that regulate human behavior towards animals in the context of moral duty and the idea of the value of any life [4]. The rules of domestic ethics in relations with animals were also constituted by folklore, especially in relation to those animals that were directly included in the economic way of human life [2; 16].

Posthumanism and animal rights protection

The scientific rationality of the 19th century complicates the ethical field of relations between humans and animals, offering animals in a reflective field the Other's position, which is used by humans as a reference point for self-understanding, for understanding natural, social and cultural human features (philosophical practices for self-understanding of society [8; 17] as well as forming responsibility for an alive-Other-(non)human in the context of vivisection, animal-involved experiments, in the context of forming animal rights defense [3; 5].

The philosophy of animals for society seems to clarify indications of the identity of the animal-Other (anonymous animal set) as the essence of the collective human unconscious (in the works of Z. Freud, J. Lacan, J. Deleuze and F. Guattari) [17]. Animals in this optics are not the external, but the internal institution of the human self, the embodiment of the wordless and non-reflective side of the human psyche, affirming the ethics of posthumanism, aimed not only at people, but also at the world around.

In addition to theories that interpret the relationship between humans and animals in the context of biopolitics, posthumanist theories are used to understand these relationships. Posthumanism in research appears as a consequence of globalization [25; 26; 33]. Globalization promotes free market, competition and the integration of scientific ideas, determines the speed of development of research, including the development of biotechnology, entails a rethinking of ethical boundaries and humanitarian problems. The result of this development is the decentralization of human

situation in the field of humanitarian ideas. A person in posthumanistic discussions loses its special position, its position is equated with the position of other subjects of the production of knowledge and life experience, which include representatives of the animal world and hybrid creatures (humans and technologies – cyborgs) [22; 27; 31; 35]. Thus, the term “posthumanism” is used by representatives of modern theoretical positions in the subject areas of philosophy, science and technology, literary research, critical theory, theoretical sociology and communication research. It means a new way of understanding the human subject in relation to the natural world as a whole.

For this study, works that focus on animal rights and environmental protection are of particular importance. The posthumanist approach structures legal discussions aimed at analyzing the “anthropocentricity of laws” [33], and also manifests itself in the logic of comparing national and international legal documents on animal rights [7].

Methods and Materials

The aim of the article is a comparison of public and governmental biopolitical practices of Russia and European countries, based on online petition dedicated to animal welfare (Russian-speaking, German-speaking and French-speaking segments of Change.org). Change.org, a digital petition platform, is a product of globalized digital communications, open to use and petition in 12 languages, with offices in 18 countries⁶.

Petitions (in Russian, French and German) were extracted from the digital archives of the international Change.org petition filing platform during the period of 2012–2018 and later they were sorted by territory. As a result, the analysis involved 22 452 petitions in Russian, geographically related to Russia (after rejecting 918 in the analysis of the winning petitions), 1036 petitions in German geographically related to Germany (193 victorious petitions), and 15 887 petitions in French, territorially related to France (after culling due to lack of metadata in the analysis of the winning petitions – 570 texts).

Change.org, the international digital online petition platform for filing online petitions, operates in 196 countries, and petitions are created in 14 languages. Change.org is independent of any government (the petitions created are optional for the authorities, even if there is significant support by online voting), it reflects the activity of society and the features of its interaction with the authorities.

The choice of Change.org is determined by the availability of digital archives and the possibility of obtaining basic information about the petition

⁶ Change.org. URL: <https://www.change.org/ru> (accessed: 07.04.2022).

(time and region of the petition, number of voters supporting, petition result). The effectiveness of the petition on the platform based on the results of the vote is determined by the creator of the petition, guided by the facts about solving the problem formulated in the petition. Since, as a rule, petitions are addressed to authorities at various levels, victorious petitions actually point to those issues, tasks, problems that the authorities solve in dialogue with society more willingly and consistently.

In each language segment petitions about animals were selected based on the methods of corpus and computer linguistics (semantic analysis using AntConc and thematic modeling based on TopicMiner). These petitions were compared in the context of opposing filed and victorious petitions.

In the studied countries, different traditions have developed in the field of animal welfare (both at the level of state legislation and at the level of social movements), therefore, the public interest in animal welfare and the authorities' willingness to support petitions for animal welfare were associated with the sociocultural and political foundations that form the biopolitical optics of society and power.

Results

Among the petitions created on Change.org (regardless of the country), petitions about animals stand out and form quite a noticeable group, without merging with petitions of environmental issues. The authorities are also quite willing to support petitions about animals, without leaving them unattended. Nevertheless, interest in petitions about animals differs in different countries (Fig. 1).

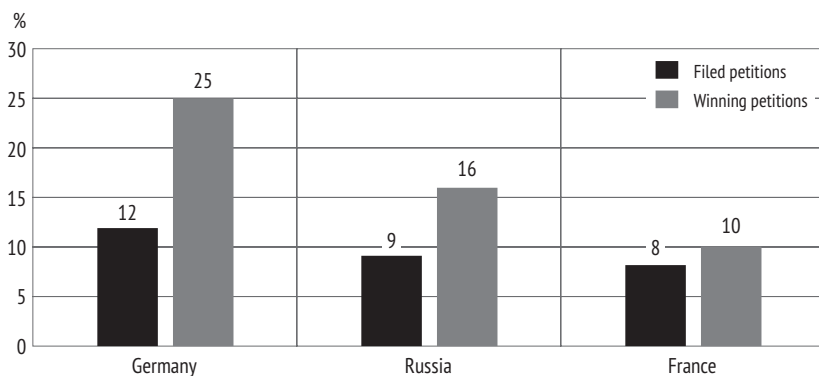


Fig. 1. Correlation between filed and winning petitions on animals: Germany, Russia, France

In relative terms, the highest interest in animal problems (judging by the petitions on Change.org) is in Germany (a total of 1036 petitions were analyzed, 193 of them won). This thematic group included petitions calling for improved animal welfare, preventing harsh treatment, including banning cosmetics that are tested on animals, preserving the natural habitat of orangutans, banning animal violence on Facebook⁷, stopping rat experiments, a ban on the exploitation of wildlife in the circus, and even calling for a ban on horseback riding and ponies in parks.

The authorities to whom petitioners appeal are eager to meet the creators of petitions about animals: among the winners (who solved the problem posed in the petition) a quarter of the petitions are about pet problems (worldwide, not only in Germany).

Sara La Porta (id 11208548) 11208548: “EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety: Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis: Palm oil ban to preserve the natural habitat of the orangutans!” (48 participants).

Lars Lachmann – NABU-Vogelschutzexperte (id 1311565) 23.09.2013: “Stop the massive bird slaughter in Egypt!” (57 732 participants).

Steffi Rink (id 11387318) 27.05.2017: “Tati Neuhaus: Stop doghunting in Ukraine” (693 participants).

Martina Grosse (id 5879470) 07.02.2016: “Please help the bears in Zoo in Kaliningrad!” (56 238 participants).

Animal petitions dominate in seven federal states (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Thuringia). And while in East Germany the protection of animals is one of significant problems, but not the leading ones (at the level of petitions filed), in West Germany it is a leader topic that has squeezed the human rights issue. In West Germany during the study period, in 130 victorious petitions 32 were devoted to animals (25%), and in East Germany, out of 63 winners, 14 were about animal problems (22%). Thus, while the modern ethical system of the western lands of Germany is not anthropocentric, but biocentric and German society in the west strives for the values of posthumanism, German bureaucratic machine throughout Germany works ‘like a machine’ without any special differences in the west and east.

In Russia (a total of 22 452 petitions, of which 918 were analyzed), the tendency towards attention to animal life persists: every tenth petition is about animals, and among the supported petitions there are more than 15% about animals.

Andrey Popov (id 5248778) from Moscow, 23.12.2015: “Stiffen the punishment for cruelty to animals!!!” (577 participants).

⁷ Facebook принадлежит компании Мета, признанной экстремистской организацией и запрещенной в Российской Федерации.

Dinara Skavronskaya (id 9006959) from Murmansk, 25.11.2016: “The Red Book wild deer of the Murmansk region are in danger! We are against the extermination of fauna!” (58 392 participants).

In Russia, the protection of animals at the level of creating petitions does not become leading in any federal district: the values of Russian society are exclusively anthropocentric and humanistic in the classical sense. Nevertheless, in some regions of Russia, petitions for animals are mainly supported. Thus, in the Far Eastern Federal District, petitions filed for animals account for 3.5% of the total number of petitions, but 95% of supported petitions in the region solve animal problems [14]. One gets the impression that posthumanism in this region is inherent only to regional authorities against the background of purely anthropocentric values of the district's society.

In France (a total of 15,887 petitions filed, 570 victorious petitions from the analyzed ones), 8% of petitions filed for animals, and every tenth petition among winning petitions is about animals.

Vanessa Macri (id 12923472) 01.2018: “Minister of agriculture: Stop! prevention of duck killing to obtain higher tax” (864 participants).

Gérald Dossi (id 10565018), 06.03.2017: “End of the dolphin hunt” (14 participants).

Petitions about animals are popular in France, they represent a more significant share than social problems (16%), while problems related to animal welfare compete with problems related to the economy (8%), ecology (8%), terrorism (8%), discrimination (8%), culture (8%), etc. Among the winning petitions, social problems are in the lead (16%), whereas animal welfare, as well as solving environmental problems, is presented in every tenth of the winning petitions.

In order to find out to whom the petitions about animals are devoted, who are considered to be in need of protection, a text analysis was conducted based on corpus linguistics methods using AntConc software (bigrams with keywords were determined).

In the petitions of the German Change.org segment, about 70% of petitions on animals turned out to be devoted to domestic animals and one third to wild animals. As for success, only 12% of initiatives (of the total of petitions on animals) about domestic animals and 6% about wild ones are supported.

Cats, dogs, horses and hamsters act as objects of concern in petitions in Germany on domestic animals, whereas animals in zoos, elephants, bears, wild boars, circus animals, lions, tigers, exotic animals, giraffes represent wild ones (Table 1).

Table 1

Objects of care in petitions on animals in Germany

Wild animals		Domestic animals	
Object of care	Context	Object of care	Context
animals in zoos, elephants, bears, wild boars, circus animals, lions, tigers, exotic animals, giraffes, rats	animal husbandry, animal antibiotics, bear reserves, poaching, animal emoji, circus, stress, zoo, endangered species, danger, death, hunting and etc.	cats, dogs, horses, hamsters	calm, nature, stigma, ban, death, vaccine, friend, dog sport, aggressive, shelter, transportation, pet shops, experiments, work, farm animal, carnival procession, child, money, elite and etc.

Wild animals in petitions were protected from mortal danger (hunting, poaching, animal husbandry) or from use as entertainment (stress, circus, zoo), as well as from use in experiments (laboratory rats).

Daniela Antela (id 1423218), Donzdorf, 29.01.2014: “Close ‘Delfinarium’ in Duisburg straightaway” (15 815 participants).

Pets were protected from the possibility of being abandoned (shelter), or put to death (euthanasia), or used in competitions (dog sport, aggressive, money), or from conditions of improper transportation (transportation) and poor maintenance in pet stores, protected from being able to act as an object of conspicuous consumption (money). Pets were also introduced in the context of close relationships with people (calm, friend, child).

Club der 4 Pforten (id 901253), Marktheidenfeld, 01.12.2012: “Bavarian Interior Affairs Minister Joachim Herrmann (CSU): Kabil police dog must not be euthanized” (220 participants)

The Russian-language segment of petitions on animals on Change.org, like the German-language segment, contained two thirds of petitions about domestic animals and one third about wild animals.

The objects of care and protection in the petitions were wild (tiger, wolf, dolphin, wild boar, bear, zoo, circus, deer, seal, beast) and domestic animals (dogs, cows, cats, horses) (Table 2).

Wild animals were saved from torture in circuses and zoos (trauma, mutilate, starvation, lying in a container, captivity, etc.) and killings (forest, hunting, red book, etc.).

Daria Averkina (id 10250465), Moscow, 2017; “Adopt the law against using wild animals in circus”(123 527 participants)

Table 2

Objects of care in petitions on animals in Russia

Wild animals		Domestic animals	
Object of care	Context	Object of care	Context
tiger, wolf, dolphin, wild boar, bear, zoo, circus, deer, seal, beast	trauma, capture, death, hunger, mutilate, observation, wound; show, trainer, adaptation; touring, abroad, shooting, hunting; rabies, cage, upkeep, poisoning, forest, circus, rehabilitation center, zoo, defense, torturing; killing, slaughter, prey, and etc.	dogs, cows, cats, horses	pet, murder, cruelty, shelter, protection, aggressiveness, paddock, barking, neglected, trauma, hunting, rescue, hunger, poisoning, bait, violence, murder, registration, rescue, deprivation, basement, outbuilding, custody, violation, death, sport and etc.

Pets were protected from poor care (registration, pet, etc.) and neglect (cruelty, shelter, hunger, etc.), from exploitation (skating, maintenance, sports, etc.), as well as from restrictions in freedom (deprivation, basement, death, etc.).

Sergeya Boeva (id 1470171), 2014: “Stop cruel slaughter of dogs in Elets”(3548 participants).

The protection of people from animals may be guessed from some bigrams (barking, street, etc.).

It should be noted that petitions about wild animals in both Russia and Germany are similar on the main problems: wild animals are protected from killing while hunting them, as well as from exploitation in circuses, zoos and other “captive structures”.

A comparative analysis of the social practices related to animals described in the petitions of the Russian and German-language segments of Change.org suggests that it is petitions of domestic animals to a greater extent that reveal the essence of the ethical framework governing society’s relations with animals. This also applies to the variety of threats that accompany the life of pets in a society of people, as well as the description of the nature of the relationship between a person and a pet, which is reflected in the petitions.

Change.org’s French-language animal petition segment maintained the dominance of pet petitions (two thirds of the total of petitions on animals). Dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, a rabbit, hens, horses acted as pets, objects

of protection in petitions. Among the wild animals in the petitions are wolves, foxes, birds, insects, reptiles, tigers, dolphins, mice, deer, wild boars (Table 3).

Table 3

Objects of care in petitions on animals in France

Wild animals		Domestic animals	
Object of care	Context	Object of care	Context
wolves, foxes, birds, insects, reptiles, tigers, dolphins, mice, deer, wild boars	muzzle, sheep skin, angry, howls, mind, kill, circus, save, cubs, albinos, tortured, small, captive, use, talent, hunt, protection, hunting, harm, eat, slaughter, killing, harmful, ecosystem, small, test, extinction, killing, living, disappeared, cutting down, hunting, defenseless, hunting, lost, flight, poisoning, and etc.	dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, rabbits, hens, horses	abandoned, alive, closed, feed, cute, shelter, drink milk, fat, abuse, feed, poison, cruelty, food, sport, gullible, euthanasia, combat, breeding, wounded, save, lovers, tortured, health, suffer, castration, cut, dead, angora, lose, ecosystem, poison, cells, crushed, happiness, responsibility, calm, caring, emotional, guide, shelter, hound, companion, watchdog, thoroughbred, obedient, and etc.

Wild animals, as in Russian and German petitions, were protected from murder during the hunt (hunting, death, slaughter, etc.), from exploitation in circuses and zoos (tortured, captive, etc.) and death during experiments (testing, used, etc.). At the same time, new topics appeared, for example, the rescue of animals as part of a dying ecosystem under the harmful influence of humans (ecosystem, deforestation, stomachs, poisoning, extinction, insecticide, suffocating, nesting, etc.). Also new is the topic of protection from animals (harm), namely from mice.

Tayeb Alexandre (id 12845925), Paris, 13.12.2017: “Do not let wolves in France be killed” (180 participants).

French petitions about wild animals are psychologized, animals in them were described with concretization of ‘psychological features’ (evil, mind, talent, etc.).

Pets in petitions were protected from abuse (abandoned, closed, castration, etc.), killing (euthanasia, slaughter, etc.), competitions, including the work of breeders and breeding of new breeds (breeding, Angora, sports, etc.).

The owners were required to observe the rules of keeping animals (feces, put on a muzzle, on a lead, etc.), and the animals were psychologized and humanized (obedient, affectionate, baby, etc.).

Natacha Desbiens Lavoie (id 12648847), 28.10.2017: “Cruelty to cats and dogs”(137 participants).

As in the German petitions, in the French petitions about pets, there was a theme of close relations between pets and people (happiness, responsibility, caring, etc.).

In general, there were quite a few common characteristics in the petitions of three countries and three animal discourses and, as usual, some specific features that create the uniqueness of the socio-cultural landscape of the material.

Discussion

The most significant number of petitions during the studied period (2012–2017) is in Russian (22 452 texts), the French corpus of petitions (15 887 texts) is also large, the German-language collection is less significant (1036 texts). This volume testifies in favor of a greater or lesser activity of citizens who are constantly creating and posting texts with demands on Change.org.

What do submitted and supported petitions on animal protection created by the inhabitants of Russia, Germany and France reveal? The first results of the analysis of petitional activity suggest that the protection of animals is one of the most important social values: regardless of the country and sociocultural discourse, people try to protect animals in the first place from themselves (society and civilization). In this direction, it is possible to consider both the objective reality of human technogenic invasion and the destruction of natural foundations of life, as well as the attempt to humanize animals living next to humans, forming a disfranchised group of “things and non-human beings” whose rights are violated in human society.

At the same time, the societies in Russia and France, creating petitions on independent digital platforms, operate in humane coordinates and in general are anthropocentric. Animal problems in these territories are significant, but not dominant among the general list of difficulties that need to be addressed. In addition, petitions on animals in Russia seem to “suppress” environmental issues, which is not observed in France (in France, petitions on ecology are no less common on Change.org than petitions on animals). As for Germany (especially western Germany), it is possible to assume that this is the territory of European posthumanism and biocentrism. Petitions for animals are among the leaders in public petition initiatives; they are created

by territorial communities, which are also active in creating petitions for human rights and the environment.

Thus, practical posthumanism in the EU is developing alongside with research posthumanism [34]. Not only university intellectuals advocate the decentration of anthropological problems in society, this tendency can be traced in public practices (for example, in supporting petitions). Critical pluralism and posthuman values are shared by a part of European society oriented towards a new attitude towards animals and ecology [29], and this happens in scientific discussions, social practices and practices of state biopolitics.

Local, regional and federal authorities of the studied countries, which are usually subject to petitions on animals, eagerly respond to calls for help to animals, in some cases more often than calls for help to people. In all the countries studied, the percentage of petitions supported on animals is higher than the number of petitions filed. In some Russian regions, supported petitions on animal protection supplant people's problems.

Such social practice actualizes scientific discussions about whether posthumanism is antihumanism [6; 9]. In socially and economically prosperous societies, posthumanism is perceived as a just action [24]. However, the acceptance of posthumanism is problematic when helping animals is preferred to helping people in need. For example, is it possible to argue that the priority in support of petitions about animals by the Russian executive branch also testifies to the values of posthumanism in Russian society? In this study, the posthumanism of socially and economically vulnerable countries (countries where the standard of living of the population is low) is proposed to be called imitative posthumanism. The goal of imitative posthumanism on the part of the authorities is not justice for all biological beings and hybrid forms of life, but a demonstration of a modern, "advanced" image that contributes to the victory in elections.

As for the objects of care and protection in petitions on animals on Change.org, regardless of countries and linguistic and cultural discourses (in Russia, France and Germany), domestic animals are protected 2 times more often than wild ones. "Urbanism" as a characteristic of the organization of life of the creators of the petitions is manifested in the choice of pets that care and protection in petitions are aimed at: cats, dogs, hamsters (and horses – not as farm animals, but as animals for sport and pleasure). Pets are protected from society (from killing, violence, abandonment and exploitation, including violence by breeders and creators of new breeds), they regulate relations between people in the context of human-animal interaction (regulating the keeping of animals in a society of people), protect

a person from animals (attacks, invasions, etc.). In unique cases, they require regulation of the possibilities for the parallel existence of abandoned pets (as it happened with the “passages for stray cats” in Russian basements).

Wild animals are most often protected from hunting and exploitation in circuses, zoos, dolphinariums, etc. It is noteworthy that in France the requirements in petitions for the protection of wild animals are closely related to the solution of environmental problems, with the classical demands of human rights defenders in the field of animal experiments.

Research in the field of animal welfare in the Russian discourse, as a rule, is concentrated in the legal field [15; 19] or in the field of the history of movements for animal defense [5]. The study shows that the spontaneous and organizationally unformed activity of the population in protecting animals (outside movements and outside legal discussions) can act as a diverse force, the potential of which is underestimated.

Conclusion

The analysis of petitions about animals on the non-governmental international digital platform for petitioning Change.org (archive 2012–2017; French, German and Russian sectors, geographically related to France, Germany and Russia), allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1) bipolitical strategies for managing the population and life in general (including animals) are typical of authorities; the usual social practices, the daily interaction of animals and society is more fully represented by ethical regulation (outside of unambiguous control), determined by religious, everyday, folklore and scientific foundations, including reflective philosophical concepts about the relationship between humans and animals;

2) petitions about animals on independent platforms (in this case Change.org) represent a popular topic that attracts voters and occupies in the studied linguistic and cultural sectors at least 10% of the total petition archive; this testifies to the value of human-animal relations, a value unconditionally shared by different cultures and societies; the orientation of society towards ecology and the protection of life in general (not only humans) can be used to develop the ideas of posthumanism;

3) a significant number of petitions (in percentage terms, more than the number of petitions submitted) may receive the status of “winners” when the authorities solve the problems set forth in the petition for the protection of animals; this phenomenon in the study was called “posthumanism”, which in societies with a high standard of living demonstrates the interest of the authorities in public support, and in societies with a low standard of living a distorted deficient social development (“imitational posthumanism”);

4) more petitions to protect domestic animals are created (according to the results of this study, 2 times more regardless of linguocultural discourse) than to protect wild ones; they humanize domestic animals, psychologize relations with them, fill them with emotional colors;

5) wild animals are protected from killing and violence (during hunting, experiments, exploitation in zoos and circuses) and, in some cases, are considered in the context of environmental discourse; pets protect from harsh treatment, require regulation of relations between people with animals (responsible ownership), in some petitions there are appeals to protect people from animals.

Existing, as a rule, outside of environmental discourse, petitions for the protection of animals mark those areas of civic activity that look apolitical, psychological and do not cause anxiety in the government. These petitions seem to outline the peculiar geological zones of future excavations and minerals, the energy of which is currently inaccessible even to environmental activism.

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The article was received on 14.07.2022, accepted for publication 25.08.2022

Статья поступила в редакцию 14.07.2022, принята к публикации 25.08.2022

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