<Techno Cultures or Cultural Technologies: The Internet in Germany and Russia>

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Robert Hauser M.A.

Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis (ITAS)

HELMHOLTZ
GEMEINSCHAFT

KIT
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

\<Theory on culture\>

> What is culture?
(referring to K. P. Hansen)

- Culture is when groups of people act differently.

- Culture is when the reasons of different acting can be

  linked to differences in:

  - Language

  - History

  - Institutional settings

- Culture is visible only by comparison.

<Brief Introduction>

> ## Subject of the project

Comparison of the handling of the Internet in two different cultures, Germany and Russia

> ## Research interest:

Description of cultural parameters, that affect handling the Internet in Germany and Russia and therefore are of prevailing relevance for Internet development in both countries

> ## Study design:

Grounded Theory approach, circular research process, explorative setting

> ## Data:

Studies and science publications, 32 expert interviews (12 for Germany and 20 for Russia)

<First results: The Russian Internet>

> Russians call their Internet „Runet"

The term "Runet" first of all means the Russian speaking segment of the Internet.

Attempted Explanations:

1a. passive isolation due to language barrier

1b. active separation from the western (especially the American) Internet rooted in history of Russia (tzarism; Cold War)

2. At the start of Russian Internet development early adopters created the term „Runet". Most of them are still very active and have the status of celebrities (or institutions) in the Runet community.

<First results: The Russian Internet>

> Russian Online Communities I - Moshkov Online Library

- Consists of about 40 projects incl. full-text libraries and other services

- the largest library has about 40.000 full-texts online

- mp3s

- web 2.0 services

- about one million users per month

Attempted Explanations:

1. Russians adore the value of literature and written language in general.

2. Writers have a high social status and some of them became institutions.

3. Tradition of Samizdat („self-publishing") rooted in Russian history.

\<First results: The Russian Internet\>

> Russian Online Communities II – LiveJournal (LJ)

- Blogging platform of the US company "Six Apart" (total of 12 million accounts)

- almost 6 million blogs in LJ are in Russian

Attempted Explanations:

1. From a historical perspective celebrities or opion leaders were early users, the long tail followed.

2. Strong influence of the Russian language at LJ encourages and stimulates the Russian-speaking community.

3. LJ as an institution is a place for freedom of speech in a repressive environment shaped by institutions such as censorship.

\<First results: The German Internet\>

> „The late start"

Compared to the USA and other European countries the common use of the Internet in Germany started rather late. Only after 1992 dissemination of the Internet in Germany increased. The long tail was following from about 1998.

Attempted Explanations:

1. Due to historical experiences of the Nazi regime a technophobic atmosphere was still prevailing in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s.

2. Strong state-owned institutions (e.g. Deutsche Post) pushed competitive technologies (e.g. BTX-service) rather than the Internet.

3. Historically, there was a strong regulation of the communication sector by German governmental institutions.

<First results: The German Internet>

> No official strategy for Internet development

German federal agencies do not intervene into the communication sector. This holds true for Internet development as well. There are no strategic programmes and often a lack of understanding of the technology and its implications for society.

Attempted Explanations:

1. After experiencing the effects of overregulation in the recent history of Internet development German govermental institutions hesitate to regulate at all.

2. With the liberalisation of the communication sector (including privatisation of Deutsche Post and Telekom) there is no clear responsibility for regulation amongst German governmental institutions.

<Conclusion>

> Compared to Russia, Germany does not have:

- Such a term like „Runet" as self-referential description

- Strong opinion leaders which can be called institutions

- Strong and vital online communities

- Huge online libraries

- Governmental programmes

> Compared to Germany, Russia does not have:

- BTX-System or other competitive technologies

- Governmental regulation that delayed the development of the Internet

The end

Thank you for your attention!

Domain development in Germany