

DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

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PILLE RUNNEL

The Transformation of the Internet
Usage Practices in Estonia



Institute of Journalism and Communication, University of Tartu, Estonia

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- I Runnel, P. (2001). The Tiger Leap Project and the Toilet Wall. Development of the Internet and IT Consciousness in Estonia. *Nord Nytt*, 51–65.
- II Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. and Runnel, P. (2004). Behind the Digital Divide: Capitals and User Practices. In: Sudweeks, F. and Ess, C. (Eds.), *Cultural Attitudes towards Technology and Communication 2004*. Perth: School of Information Technology, Murdoch University, 282–296.
- III Runnel, P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Reinsalu, K. (2009). Tiger Leap from Post Communism to the European Information Society: E-democracy and Changing Online Civic Practices in Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 40(1), 29–51.
- IV Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Kalmus, V., Runnel, P. (2008). Creating Content or Creating Hype: Practices of Online Content Creation and Consumption in Estonia. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 2(1). Online.
- V Kalmus, V., Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Runnel, P., Siibak, A. Forthcoming (2009). Online Content Creation Practices of Estonian Schoolchildren in Comparative Perspective. The Special Issue of *Journal of Children and Media*, 3(4).
- VI Kalmus, V., Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P., Runnel, P., Siibak, A. (2009). Mapping the Terrain of “Generation C”: Places and Practices of Online Content Creation among Estonian Teenagers. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Special Issue on *Young People, Mediated Discourse and Communication Technologies*, 14(4), 1257–1282.
- VII Kalmus, V., Runnel, P., Siibak, A. (2009). Opportunities and Benefits Online. In: Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (Eds.), *Kids Online*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 71–82.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The defender's contribution to the respective articles is as follows:

Study I: The study was fully initiated and designed by the author. The study was conducted and analysed by the author and the author is fully responsible for the manuscript.

Study II: The study was co-authored. The author participated in the general survey design, compiling the questionnaire and interpreting the findings. The author is equally responsible with the co-author for setting the problem to be considered in the article, developing the theoretical framework and model for understanding the various user practices and user types and their relation to contextual factors.

Study III: The study was co-authored. The author had a responsible role in the article in setting the agenda, analysing the information society documents, building the research on the transition society context, in order to develop a comparative approach to the development of Internet-related democratic practices in Estonia. The author was responsible for developing the theoretical framework, interpreting the research results and developing the discussion.

Study IV: The study was co-authored. The author participated in writing the theoretical overview and the discussion part of the manuscript, and in analysing the empirical findings of the research.

Study V: The study was co-authored. The author participated in writing the theoretical overview and the discussion part of the manuscript, and in analysing the empirical findings of the research.

Study VI: The study was co-authored. The author participated in writing the theoretical overview and the discussion part of the manuscript, and in analysing the empirical findings of the research.

Study VII: The study was co-authored. The author was responsible for writing the theoretical and discussion parts of the manuscript, and participated in discussing the empirical findings of the study.

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INTRODUCTION

From a theoretical standpoint, the aim of the current dissertation is to analyse the case of Estonia as an example of the retreat of post-communist traits in the face of post-industrial developments characteristic of Western civilisation in general. Of the two significant dimensions of this change – developments characteristic of the information society and of the consumer society (Castells 1996 and 1997; Keller 2004; Ritzer 2000; Sassen 2001; Slater 1997; Webster 1995) – the current work focuses on Estonia's shift towards an information society. It asks what role is played by the information and communication technologies in making the structures of the global information society a part of the everyday life of people living in Estonia and how these people are involved in those changes. In what ways are people, especially the younger generation, attached to the new techno-social environment and practices related to it? How have individuals made use of ICTs and how do they make sense of the given situation? Are they adapting to the new technological regime, and are they active agents in the change?

I am also interested in how the new Internet environment is changing practices of social and cultural communication and how these practices contribute to the processes of cultural, social and political participation. The practices under investigation in the first half of the dissertation are consumption and production of online content, and civic participation related to the Internet. The aim is to analyse how user agency is articulated through practices of consumption and production of Internet content. I examine the dynamics of usage patterns and how they are related to social change and interpretations of ICTs in society. The study also looks at the interrelatedness of the various aspects of user agency: their capacity to use and change ICTs and to take advantage of opportunities online within the particular setting of the transformation from post-communism to the information society. The second half of the dissertation moves to the area of user content production, examines opportunities and skills/literacies from the point of view of end users, and is rooted in studies focusing on the practices of content production, which are becoming more and more central to this research field internationally (Bruns 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007; Burgess 2006, 2007; Hasebrink et al 2008; Herring et al 2004; Jenkins 2006; Livingstone and Helsper 2007).

The context of this dissertation is formed by the 'dream' and paradigm of the information society, according to which societal developments are a result of the development of ICT infrastructure. The dissertation does not aim to measure this progress, but rather takes a critical and observatory stance towards the attraction of ICT-related developments and investigates social life in the context of this politically charged paradigm.

The study is theoretically contextualised within the theories of praxis, including the works of such major social theorists as Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979, 1984), followed by second generation practice theorists (Couldry 2004; Ortner 1984, 2006; Postill 2009; Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996, 2001). The umbrella term 'practice theories' offers a way to explain how the

action of individuals recreates the bigger systems/structures in which people act. In his theory of structuration, Anthony Giddens seeks to overcome the notions of structure and agency, understanding the balance between those two as a *duality of structure*, meaning that social structures make social action possible, while social action (the acts of individual agents) reproduces the structure (1984). Thus, people are intrinsically involved with society and actively enter into its structures. To Giddens, the practice approach does not focus either on the individual as an actor or on society, but on “social practices ordered across space and time” (1984: 2). Thus, practice theory is also the way to connect micro-level activities and macro-level processes, and to seek explanations on the basis of both. In his practice theory, Pierre Bourdieu, instead of stressing the rules of a culture, puts actions at the centre. In this approach, the structure of a culture is not so much a limiting force as a playground for competent individuals (Bourdieu 1977).

One of the central concepts in this dissertation is the concept of media literacy. The EC defines media literacy as “the ability to access, analyse and evaluate the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted on a daily basis and which are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as to communicate competently in media available on a personal basis” (European Commission 2007). The issues of media literacy and digital literacy are becoming increasingly central to EU agendas. Digital Literacy Review states that digital literacy is becoming an essential life skill and the inability to access or use ICTs has effectively become a barrier to social integration and personal development (Digital Literacy EC Working Paper 2008).

Media literacy related to the digital environment is also referred to as digital literacy in order to stress the specificity of using and creating digitally mediated content. The concept of digital literacy brings the concept of user creativity to the centre of the debate on literacy, as users are becoming active producers as well as receivers of content, making possible interactivity and participation online. Along with communication and production skills, access to media and media content, and the critical ability to decipher media messages, creativity is seen as a central component of media literacy (Zacchetti and Vardakas 2008: 119).

Based on these theoretical and conceptual standpoints, a common set of research questions has guided studies, included to this dissertation:

- How have Internet content consumption and production practices evolved in the Estonian society and how are people able to use the opportunities of ‘new media’, especially the Internet, to enhance their quality of life?
- Personal creativity and innovativeness in e-environment: to what extent and how are content production practices part of Internet use? How do they contribute to the development of digital literacies?
- Internet-based communication as a form of the participation in political life and the public sphere: how and in what ways are Internet-related participatory practices part of Internet usage and how do they contribute to the democratic potential of ICTs on the grassroots level?

This research project has been carried out through the publication of a series of articles, and thus the specific research questions and levels of analysis have varied throughout these texts. Still, this set of articles is able to answer, to some extent, more general sets of questions: the factors behind Internet use (**Studies II, III, V and VI**), the choices people can make and are making regarding Internet use (**Studies II–VII**), and benefits people have gained from Internet use in specific contexts (**Studies III, IV and VII**).

The studies are constituted around the connections between everyday life, participation and digital literacies. For example, **Study III** discusses participation and user practices in the framework of information society (IS) policies, e-governance and citizenship, while **Studies V and VI** are about how online content creation of children and adolescents leads to issues of cultural citizenship. They contribute to the fields of democracy and civic agency, and its connections to new media, which is not directly the original theoretical foundation of these studies, but which present an important step further to be taken on the basis of that research.

Each study has also had its more specific research questions and objects of analysis, and the study covers a time period of about 10 years, starting in the second half of the 1990s. **Study I** “The Tiger Leap Project and the Toilet Wall. Development of the Internet and IT Consciousness in Estonia” examines how ICTs were perceived in Estonia in the early stages of their appropriation in the late 1990s. **Study II** “Behind the Digital Divide: Capitals and User Practices” goes beyond the traditional socio-demographic factors and looks at Internet users in Estonia from the perspective of capitals – economic, cultural and social – in order to discuss the factors behind Internet use. Internet users are dealt with from three angles: 1) users and non-users; 2) computer adoption periods (early adopters, mid-way adopters and recent adopters); and 3) how Internet use has been split into various categories; based on those, user typologies have been examined. **Study III** “Tiger Leap from Post-Communism to the European Information Society: E-democracy and Changing Online Civic Practices in Estonia” analyses, through combining the analysis of policy documents, examples of online democracy websites and online user behaviour, whether ICTs have realised their acclaimed potential to rebuild democracy. The presented Internet user typologies indicate that usage practices, as well as participation practices in online democratic environments, vary widely among Internet users. **Study III** raises questions related to the relationship between user behaviour and policies: how much do the state initiated plans for enhancing democracy online and particular online environments facilitate democratic participation?

Study IV “Creating content or creating hype: practices of online content creation and consumption in Estonia” departs from the view of the relatively high position of Estonia in various international information society indicators and the optimistic public rhetoric and hype associated with it, and approaches it critically. It looks beyond the general statistics of Internet promotion and usage and asks what usage means in terms of fostering civic and political parti-

icipation. By focusing on practices of online content creation and consumption as a critical part of digital media literacies, the article explores how widespread these activities are among Estonian Internet users and how they are distributed among different socio-demographic groups.

Studies IV and **V** “Online Content Creation Practices of Estonian Schoolchildren in a Comparative Perspective”, **VI** “Mapping the Terrain of “Generation C”: Places and Practices of Online Content Creation Among Estonian Teenagers” and **VII** “Opportunities and Benefits Online” all focus on young Internet users and how they employ their individual agencies and creative skills in online environments. In **Studies V** and **VI**, the objects of analysis are Internet users' practices of online content creation (blogging, making homepages, participating in forums, news portals, and social networking sites) among Estonian schoolchildren (**Study VI**), and among Estonian schoolchildren in the comparative context of Europe (**Study V**). **Studies V** and **VI** make it possible to raise the question of whether the online content creation of children and adolescents as a form of cultural participation might have implications for citizenship. Who are the users engaged in using different online facilities and involved in online content creation? What kind of online environments and formats are used to make oneself seen or heard through different practices of content creation and interaction with the media? How might these practices be related to the possible emergence of citizenship within the framework of participatory culture? It is no longer enough to discuss whose voice is heard in the online participatory process and how it becomes a cultural (and civic) agency. I will elaborate upon the connection between creativity, technological innovation and media literacy as a possible route to cultural citizenship, drawing on social constructionist approaches to technology. **Study VII** gives an overview of the take-up of the opportunities and benefits online taken up by children across Europe.

The studies are based on a variety of methodological approaches. **Study I** combines close reading of texts with ethnographic fieldwork observations. The Institute of Journalism and Communication has conducted the nationwide representative survey “Me. The World. The Media” three times, first in December 2002 – January 2003, and **Study II** is based on that. The second survey took place in November 2005, and **Study IV** is based on that data collection. The third survey was in November 2007, and **Study III** is based on that, combined with an analysis of policy texts, media texts and online environments. **Studies V** and **VI** use as their empirical basis a combination of different sets of data on children’s Internet use: the data of a questionnaire survey of 11- to 18-year-old pupils, carried out in three cities in Estonia in autumn 2007, the MEDIAPPRO¹ survey of pupils of the same age, carried out in eight European countries (including Estonia) in autumn 2005, and various

¹ MEDIAPPRO (2006). *The Appropriation of New Media by Youth*, A European Research Project, Brussels: Chaptal Communication with the Support of the European Commission/Safer Internet Action Plan.

sources from the EU Kids Online Data Repository². **Study VII** combines different sources of data derived from large-scale surveys and various sources from the EU Kids Online Data Repository and MEDIAPPRO.

Despite the fact that a large part of this study deals with the Internet use of young people and children, a separate theoretical framework of childhood studies has not been developed. I approach children, and especially young people, rather as one particular type of user, looking them as one particular group. The study does not involve analysing pre-school children, instead focusing on teens, who can be seen as being in the process of socializing into future citizens. The articles involved in this dissertation have been co-authored and the findings related to children were more directly approached by Andra Siibak in her recent dissertation (Siibak 2009). The dissertation is also related to the works by other co-authors, who approach some of the central issues that arose in particular studies more closely in their dissertations. The wider context of Internet usage is provided by the dissertation of Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2006b) and the relations between Internet usage and Internet democracy is approached by Kristina Reinsalu (Reinsalu 2008) in her dissertation.

In the following introductory article, first the theoretical context and framework is outlined, including Estonia's development in implementing information technologies and the related ideological background. After that, the research questions are introduced, followed by a presentation and analysis of the empirical findings and discussion of the research results.

² EU Kids Online Data Repository: see <http://webdb.lse.ac.uk/eukidsonline/search.asp>

I. SETTING THE CONTEXT

Estonia, similarly to other Eastern and Central-Eastern European societies, has made significant changes in recent decades. This transition has been marked by several parallel processes: democratisation, market liberation, the growth of consumerism etc. (Lauristin and Vihalemm, forthcoming 2010). Those central processes have become part of the new cultural model, but also of the everyday life of people. Part of this transition has been globalisation, bringing with it a new economic-cultural structure, which could be labelled post-modernity, late capitalism or high modernity (Giddens 1991; Jameson 1991). On the level of everyday life, consumerism is particularly visible, bringing with it new social relationships, values and attitudes (Keller 2004).

Central to the ongoing changes is a technological shift – making use of the emergence of the personal computer and the Internet and the omnipresence of information and communication technologies.

This study considers Internet users in Estonian society during the transition and post-transition periods. In the studies on the transition period of Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe, the role of people has been, in some cases, interpreted as a passive resistance to the development. This has been reflected, for example, in the idea of *homo sovieticus*, whose habits and attitudes – passiveness, stagnation, dependency on different social support schemes, bad working habits and a lack of respect for laws – were born during the old regime, throughout the Soviet bloc (Buchowski 2003; Lass 1999). These kinds of behaviours and attitudes also continued in the new society, as characteristics of whole generations do not disappear overnight.

Here a parallel could be drawn to technology studies, where one of the central explanations for the non-use of the Internet has been the fear which holds back the adoption of the technologies. The sociologist Neil Selvyn claims (Selvyn 2003) that in studies the individual's resistance has been approached as almost irrational fear and stress, which comes from the lack of experience.

The Internet is an international technology which intercedes in local contexts. Depending on the general capability for openness of a society, this phenomenon is integrated into the development of the society, or is handled as a potential threat.

In the mid-1990s in Estonia, the Internet bore the image of freedom, as it permitted the distribution of cultural products and ideas. From the individual's point of view, the Internet allowed for mental mobility and the experience of moving in a borderless virtual space. The Internet symbolised, on the one hand, the opportunity to be part of global processes, but on the other hand, it was a threat to society, which might lose its stability and structure as a result of global influence.

The Estonian language Internet came into being in 1992–1994, when the Internet was adopted by academic circles and the media, as Estonian newspapers created their online versions. Opportunities offered by information technologies were soon also noticed by the state, but in the beginning these

opportunities did not lead to usable content. Only since 1996–1997 has the state started a step-by-step offering of web-based services, in order to facilitate the communication between state officials, but also as a means of communicating with citizens (Vengerfeldt and Runnel 2004).

In spring 2000, the first Estonian Internet portal, Delfi.ee, was opened, and it included a commenting option for users. The event was widely covered by the rest of the media, and the “toilet wall” metaphor was introduced, referring to the fact that a majority of the comments by the users of Delfi.ee contained impolite or bad language (**Study I**). The debate has continued ever since, including government proposals to regulate the public debate online through legislation. Court cases dealing with violence and hate online were launched.

The Estonian media started to cover the issues of the Internet and the new media more consistently in 1997. Before that, the image of the Internet in the media was rather distant, foreign and frightening. At the centre of the media coverage was the security of the Internet infrastructure (Vengerfeldt and Runnel 2004). The first victims of cyber attacks were banks, but it soon became evident that all Internet users were potential victims of cyber crime. Thus, the issue of the security of the Internet also influenced the implementation of ICTs in everyday life.

The possibilities of applying new media to the educational system and governance became of greater interest. At the time the main agenda of the country was Estonia’s integration into the West; ICTs came to be seen as a tool which could help a post socialist country ‘catch up’ with the West. Efforts were made by administrative, academic, technological and industrial groups to boost economic development in Estonia through a strong ICT policy. In the research and development strategy adopted by the Estonian parliament in 2001, the information society was proclaimed as the official goal of Estonian development (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009; Runnel et al 2009).

In looking at the development of the Estonian information society, it is important to consider the international context. In international statistics, the fast-paced process of Estonian ICT development could already be seen in the late 1990s, coinciding with the information policy implementation.

Elsewhere (Vengerfeldt and Runnel 2004: 250), computer ownership in the three Baltic states in the mid-1990s has been compared. There one can see that between 1997 and 1999 Estonia “took off” and left the other Baltic countries behind (Figure 1).

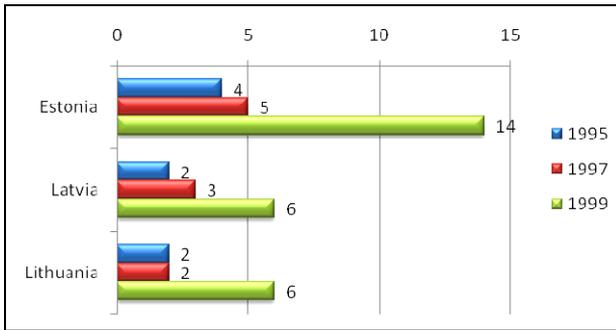


Figure 1. Percentage of the population with computers at home (Vengerfeldt and Runnel 2004: 250)

In 1995 and 1997, home computer ownership grew equally in the three countries (around 1% in two years in all countries), but by 1999 Estonian computer ownership had grown from 5% to 14%, whereas in Latvia and Lithuania only 6% had computers at home.

One of the most important information society related resources at the individual level is access to the Internet. Table 1 compares the dynamics of Internet connection in households across Europe in 2007–2008 (Eurostat).

Table 1. Households³ having access to the Internet, by type of connection (as % of all households)

	2007	2008	2007	2008
	Percentage of households using a broadband connection		Percentage of households using a modem (dial-up access over normal telephone line) or ISDN	
EU (27 countries)	42	48	14	12
Austria	46	54	13	12
Belgium	56	:	6	:
Bulgaria	15	21	3	4
Czech Republic	28	36	7	9
Cyprus	20	33	19	10
Denmark	70	74	8	5
Estonia	48	54	10	4
Finland	63	66	6	7
France	43	57	7	5
Germany	50	55	28	25

³ The access to Internet of households is measured by percentage of households that are connectable to the Internet over a broadband or a dial-up or ISDN connection. Some households may use more than one type of connection to connect to the Internet. It covers all households having at least one member in the age group 16-74 years.

	2007	2008	2007	2008
Greece	7	22	18	9
Hungary	33	:	5	:
Ireland	31	:	24	:
Italy	25	31	16	10
Latvia	32	40	8	8
Lituhania	34	43	3	2
Luxembourg	58	61	19	19
Malta	44	55	9	4
Netherlands	74	74	8	10
Poland	30	38	7	8
Portugal	30	39	9	6
Romania	8	13	14	16
Slovakia	27	35	10	12
Slovenia	44	50	15	10
Spain	39	45	8	7
Sweden	67	71	28	19
United Kingdom	57	62	12	8

: – data not available

Source: Eurostat

The dissemination of Internet use in Estonia has led to high Internet use today. According to the polling company Emor, 69% of 6- to 74-year-old Estonians (806,000 people) used the Internet in 2008. The growth has slowed down but, at the same time, usage has become more intensive: 52% of the users use the Internet at least 5 days per week (*ibid*).

Also, more detailed data indicates Estonia's relative success in achieving the aim of distributing access to information, as well as a comparison of the competitive edge that ICTs give Estonia.

The Lisbon Review of Competitiveness in Europe shows Estonia in 12th place – the highest of the 10 new members who joined the EU in 2004. Estonia has maintained its position since 2004. Lithuania is in 19th position and has risen from the 21st position, and Latvia is in 21st position and has fallen from 16th in 2004 (World Economic Forum 2008). The Information Society sub-index measures how well ICTs are harnessed by various stakeholders through “*variables such as the prioritization of ICT by the government, ICT penetration rates (Internet, PCs), Internet usage by business and the extent to which students have Internet access in school*” (World Economic Forum 2006: 2). In this sub-index, Estonia is ranked fourth among European countries, quite noticeably outperforming its Baltic neighbours (Latvia ranks 21st and Lithuania 19th in this index).

While the Lisbon Review measures the success of Estonian ICT policies on both social spread and competitiveness scales, the Global Competitiveness Report (2009), launched by the World Economic Forum, focuses on the competitiveness of countries worldwide, comparing 133 countries. Here Estonia

ranks 35th, while Lithuania is at 53rd and Latvia at 68th. The Global Competitiveness Index Ninth Pillar Technological Readiness 2009–2010 (World Economic Forum Annual Report 2009–2010) ranks Estonia 16th globally (a score of 5.5), Lithuania at 36th (a score of 4.5) and Latvia at 47th (a score of 4.0).⁴ This shows that Estonia has been relatively successful in comparison with its neighbours and countries with similar backgrounds, managing to integrate ICTs in terms of economic competitiveness and also in terms of the social inclusion of all citizens in the use of the Internet.

ICTs have certainly played a significant part in Estonia's rapid transformation. International success, represented by the high rankings in measurements of infrastructure, has led to euphoric expectations about the offered opportunities and has also fuelled moral anxiety regarding ICTs in terms of global risks (Beck 2005).

In order to better understand Estonia's hope that ICTs will lead to rapid societal transition, one has to place these expectations in a global context. Internationally, ICTs are often perceived as key factors in development and this notion is supported through implementation of international policies. This has led to the emergence of discourses on the digital age/information society, related to the fields of culture, economy, politics and society. A set of significant initiatives has been launched, such as the United Nations Millennium Declaration (UNMD 2000) and the Agenda for the World Summit on the Information Society, which approach information and communication technologies as key tools for global development and state that ICTs, permitting access to knowledge, are also a key to the success of other development (WSIS 2005). Central in the discourse on the information society are questions about distributing resources and the debate on the rhetoric of the digital divide, which calls for *“turning this digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalized”* (WSIS 2005).

More critical voices in the public debate claim that the debate on the digital divide is founded on the myth that plugging poor countries into the Internet will help them to become rich rapidly. For example, The Economist has stated that the digital divide is nothing in itself, but is rather a:

“symptom of deeper, more important divides: of income, development and literacy. Fewer people in poor countries than in rich ones own computers and have access to the Internet simply because they are too poor, are illiterate, or have other more pressing concerns, such as food, health care and security. So even if it were possible to wave a magic wand and cause a computer to appear in every household on earth, it would not achieve very much: a computer is not useful if you have no food or electricity and cannot read ...” (The Economist 2005 online).

⁴ Technological readiness is seen as one of the keys for efficiency driven economies. This pillar measures the ability with which an economy adopts existing technologies to enhance the productivity of its industries and increase national competitiveness (<http://www.weforum.org>).

There are several critical voices among scholars (Servaes and Carpentier 2006; Servaes 2003) who are attempting to move away from the “*technological hurrah*” (Servaes 2003: 6), in order to assess the opportunities and dangers of the information society/digital age/information highway critically. The anthropologist Faye Ginsburg (2007) points out that the public discourse about digital age is characterized by certain key topics and rhetorical devices, even giving a sense of evolutionary inevitability and

“neo-developmental language that assumes that less privileged cultural enclaves with little or no access to digital resources – from the South Bronx to the global South – are simply waiting, endlessly, to catch up to the privileged West” (ibid).

This inevitability as a dominant rhetorical device is applied by industries, international political institutions and national governments planning information society strategies. This rhetoric has been especially visible in the dialogue between Western policy makers and indigenous peoples. Whereas the dominant rhetoric sees the digital age and its key element – knowledge – mostly as an economic force, the indigenous peoples of the world do not follow the rhetoric of the economic infrastructure and technologisation.

They state in their rights declaration that the Information Society and its core elements – knowledge, information, communication and ICTs – are cultural concepts and expressions (Indigenous Position Paper 2003). The rights declaration draws attention to the fact that this kind of rhetoric expresses the technological domination of a particular kind of technological regime which has the capacity to alter all aspects of current daily life, democratic politics and individuals/personhood. This statement refers to the significant issues in the development of technologies, which also matter to Western societies: by applying this rhetoric, we are finally blind to what it implies. As Ginsburg (Ginsburg 2007) points out, this paradigm shift is perhaps most evident in Castells’s 1996 classic, *The Rise of the Network Society*, where Castells talks about the Internet’s capacity to liberate, but also cautions us about its ability to marginalize and exclude (Castells 1996).

The rhetoric regarding Estonian transition, including technological change, has followed the same path of general optimism, being ‘powered’ by the specific context of the country moving from the status of a post-socialist country to an EU-candidate country to a post-accession period faced by current needs and questions. ICTs, as a technology of the information society, have been on the public and political agenda of the Estonian government for more than 10 years.

At the current time, on both the Estonian and European levels, where the information society infrastructure is overwhelming and the majority of the population has ‘caught up’ with the Internet, the “*evolutionary inevitability*” (Ginsburg 2007) is less visible at the level of planning everyday politics, and the dominant level of the information society policies has focused on what

social scientists, working with the issues of information societies, are also pointing out: that instead of the digital divide with its ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, we should approach the situation more as a gradation – a ladder of opportunities and possibilities (Livingstone and Helsper 2008) from the ICT user’s point of view.

On the European level, documents and strategies such as i2010 – A European Information Society for Growth and Employment (2005) and the Lisbon Strategy (2005), aimed at making Europe more dynamic and competitive, have been implemented. Both i2010 and the Lisbon Strategy aim to harness the potential of ICTs to drive innovation and productivity in Europe (Lisbon Strategy and the Information Society 2007). Still, both mostly target institutional and economic frameworks rather than addressing the issue of the population as Internet users. However, a critical concept has been outlined – digital literacy, which is to be promoted through the reform of the school curricula, training, online libraries and knowledge resources (*ibid*). It is clear that, through this key concept, the policies dealing with the European information society have started to focus more on the inclusion of Internet non-users, not only via infrastructure developments, but also through developing different strategies for bringing people online. The level described in the EU policies is empirically also the level where the current dissertation is focused: people’s practices in various fields, such as public service, business environments, public administration, education, media and leisure time, and located within the specific dominant development narrative and context of sociocultural settings.

2. THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The theoretical context of this study includes two theoretical orientations: the framework of grand theories, which seek to explain the changing nature of the social world, and the orientation of theories of everyday life, i.e. ways of explaining the seemingly mundane as thoughts and actions and interactions between people, or between people, communities and society. These orientations come together in theories which seek to overcome the dichotomy of micro and macro levels and focus on their interaction. I propose to base the theoretical contextualisation first on theories of the interrelationship between actors and systems (individuals and structures). For this study, this context is provided by Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. Giddens (1984) seeks in his *theory of structuration* to overcome theoretical dichotomies, such as the notions of structure and agency and explain how they are linked. He understands the balance between these two as a *duality of structure*: social structures make social action possible, while social action – the repetition of the acts of individual agents – reproduces the structure. Social structure is both the outcome and the medium of social action. Thus, people are intrinsically involved with society and actively enter into its constitution (*ibid*). His approach does not focus either on the individual as an actor or on society, but on “*social practices ordered across space and time*” (1984: 2), i.e. the focus is on action.

Also Pierre Bourdieu’s hermeneutic understanding of the ways people live their everyday lives involves understanding the structures which frame, control and influence social life. He argues for the complex interrelationship between the system (rules of the culture) and actions of individuals. Bourdieu’s *theory of practice* puts action at the centre, instead of stressing the system. In this approach, the structure of the culture is not so much a limiting force as a playground for competent individuals who strategically engage in and manipulate the rules of social situations (Bourdieu 1977). In his practice theory, individuals do not create the world anew – individual agency is practised within the existing social system, a *field*. *Field* can be understood as a representation of power relations – a set of relationships/practices in a social domain, where various forms of capital (financial resources, cultural and social capital) and an agent’s *habitus* are at stake and interact with rules, regulations and authorities of the field (*ibid*). Fields interact with each other.

Out of the big strand of everyday life theories, the context for this study has been inspired by theories which elaborate on the everyday as the field of innovation and creativity (de Certeau 2005). Innovation and change do not occur only in the critical turning points in the history, but also as part of continuous change, as the members of a community select, develop and change the existing, often by creatively meandering through structures, as de Certeau in his “The Practice of Everyday Life” calls it (de Certeau 2005). According to de Certeau, everyday life works by a process of poaching on the territory of others, recombining things that already exist in the culture (rules and products). So the

question of the change from the aspect of everyday life is also a question of the interrelationship between institutional and structural change and individuals.

2.1 Transition society and the role of ICTs in change

One of the starting points for this thesis is the context of studies of Eastern European transition and social change. The studies of Eastern European transition have taken shape largely within social and economic sciences, where the explanatory framework seeks to stay at the level of grand theories. Also, the actual analysis has been directed to institutional and structural change: the effects of economic and political reforms and their environment, the space of possibilities rather than individuals as acting agents in these environments, in addition to decision makers and their administrative capacities (Norgaard 2000). The latter represent high politics and their administrative capacities are interpreted as one of the prerequisites for change. The obvious background for measurement has been ‘catching up with the West’, particularly adjusting societies to the main ‘target’ of the ongoing change, the European/EU framework (Runnel 2003). Transition studies have been interested in people mostly in order to estimate the ability and readiness of the population to go along with changes, studying this through the means of public opinion polls, i.e. from the perspective of agreeing or not agreeing and coping or not coping with ongoing changes, rather than from the perspective of interpreting or co-producing meanings of the changes. This approach has found opponents in the same disciplines, involving structural change, for example Lauristin et al (1997), who provide an interesting account of the values and preferences in Estonian society at the time of the transition. Also, the political scientist Henri Vogt (2005: 10) claims that the socio-cultural level of change and the individual have been somehow forgotten, even though, for example, from the political analysis point of view, arguably, politics in the era of even higher reflexive capacities evolves more and more from this level, from below.

Similarly to the trends in transition studies, approaching change from the ‘catching up’ perspective, technological change has been interpreted as Eastern Europe catching up with the West (for example, Lass 1999; Vogt 2005: 9; Wormald 2004). Vogt states that the technological utopia, or rather the information society, was in many ways crucial in provoking the change in Eastern Europe: people wanted to achieve the technological level and opportunities of the West as soon as possible (Vogt 2005). The anthropologist Tom Wormald refers in his study of the Hungarian information society to technological change as part of applying the EU models of statehood (Wormald 2004). As a part of a similar discourse in Estonia, one of the strong themes in ICT-related rhetoric has been ‘catching up with Finland’ technologically in order to become an information society.

One of the most well-known and influential frameworks for interpreting social change from the perspective of individuals implemented into *transition* to the open, democratic, market society of the Western type is the discourse of cultural trauma developed by the Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (2000a), where he approaches change as affecting the *cultural environment of agency* (enriching or diminishing the pool of cultural resources for further change) (Sztompka 2000a: 451). According to Sztompka, the concept of culture appears to be a context of change in the sense of the inherited cultural environment, the socially shared pool of ready-made templates for symbolizing, interpreting, framing and narrating the ongoing social praxis (Sztompka 2000a: 450). Here, though, he has been accused of treating social life as a consequence of political and economic standards imposed upon people, as strategies often cited for dealing with the ‘trauma of change’, such as innovative adaptation, accumulation of capital, escape into apathy or resignation, ceremonial retreat into outmoded ‘socialist’ reactions misplaced in the new context and, last, but not least, criminal adaptation (see Sztompka 2000b: 86–95). This approach cannot do justice to the role of actors in shaping forms of social life. The main line of the critique is thus that actors appear as passive recipients of reality (Buchowski 2003: 117). At the same time, Sztompka’s concept of ‘trauma of change’ is more multidimensional. A parallel could be drawn with his concept, while also conceptualising the implementation of ICTs in the everyday life of people in transition societies, as, according to Sztompka, culture also appears in this change as the “*object of change*, affected by agential praxis” (Sztompka 2000a: 451). Paraphrasing Giddens’s idea of the ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens 1984), one may speak here of the ‘duality of culture’ as not only the means of change but also the product of change, shaping and being shaped, constructing and being constructed /- - -/ at the same time (Sztompka 2000a: 451).

The concept of the information society is not applied in this thesis as a central theoretical concept, but rather as a contextual factor or a discourse, framing the ways we interpret ongoing changes. Several theoreticians, trying to determine what elements make an information society qualify as an information society, have tried to define it through specific aspects (for example, through technologies as a crucial part of it), which has caused an overload of elements in the definition. Theoreticians such as Steinfeld and Salvaggio (1989), Duff (2001) or the central author on the field, Frank Webster (1995), have shown six different major approaches to conceptualising the information society: 1) *critical* 2) *information consumption/information flows – a cultural approach* 3) *technological* 4) *economical (information sector), the latter being divided by Webster into a) labour-oriented and b) economic* 5) *spatial* and 6) *theoretical*. The discourse on the information society, both as part of the academic debate and as actual policy-making, tends to take the existence of the information society for granted (see Pruihlmann-Vengerfeldt 2006b: 12). As Brian D. Loader has pointed out, the most recent formulations of the information society thesis come less from academic circles and increasingly from the manifestos and memoranda of state administration (Loader 1998: 5). The manifestos, which are

largely directed by the euphoria surrounding the advent of the Internet as a means of enabling ‘many-to-many’ communication everywhere in the world, might easily have led one to believe that “if people were not already ‘online’ then they very soon would be” (Loader 1998: 3). The categories involved consider the existence of the information society from the structural point of view, as a number of measures and standards, and discuss transition from macro-level changes. I agree with Loader’s criticism of the deterministic quality of information society rhetoric and link myself rather to the critical approach, where technological development is seen as tightly linked with other factors, such as social, economic or political relations. According to this approach, social action and inaction on the part of different groups play a vital role in the social shaping of technological applications. According to Loader, it makes it possible to “foreground the role of agency in any debates about technological innovation” (Loader 1998: 8–9). The current thesis departs from the latter approach to information society-related debates.

This thesis also needs to be positioned in relation to major approaches to the role of technologies in societal change, starting with technological determinism (Innis 1951; McLuhan 1964), a theoretical approach which sees technology as *the* key governing force which shapes society, no matter whether the change is positive or negative. The other significant approach – social constructivism – claims that technological development does not happen apart from the society, and technological changes are primarily caused by the processes happening within a society and do not cause the latter. Social constructivism also claims that, in order to be acknowledged by a society, the society has to be ready for it (Bijker 1995). The current thesis approaches these two not as opposites, but as a dualistic pair which act together, if we look at their representations in the actual ICT-related processes in society over a longer time period.

The questions of social action and inaction in relation to technologies and the Internet are also questions of why people use or do not use the Internet. The users and gratifications research domain is therefore also significant for contextualising this study, but it does not serve as an explanatory framework in itself. The uses and gratifications tradition, as stated by Katz, Blumler and Gurevich (1974), seeks the social and psychological origins of the needs for media consumption. The needs generate expectations of mass media or other sources which lead to differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratifications and other consequences which might be largely unintended (1974). From the current study’s point of view, I agree with the criticism of the uses and gratifications research approach, which states that it is too *individualistic* and *psychologistic* (Chandler 1994; Morley 1986), and tends therefore to ignore the socio-cultural context. At the same time, the uses and gratifications tradition is relevant in its general humanistic approach to media use, stressing the agency of users.

2.2 Approaching ICT usage through the framework of practice theories

2.2.1 Practice theories

Talking about ICT users and ICT usage means talking about the relationship between individuals and structure, which is theoretically contextualised within the notions of structure and agency. As stated in the introductory part of this chapter, when understood in the Giddensian way (Giddens 1984), structural aspects and individual agency are closely interrelated.

In looking at the approaches to the relationship between individuals and structure, this relationship can be placed on a scale with the individual-centred, liberal approaches on one end, and the collectivist, community-centred ones (Rapport and Overing 2000) on the other end. After the 1950s-1970s, the interest in individuals and structure moved more towards the side of the individual. This change might have been caused by the increasing interest in how individuals are related to changes in society. The current study supports that position. Of the dialectical pair of structure and action, this dissertation focuses on the side of the actor, the agent, being primarily interested not in “*the intentions people have in doing things but in their capability of doing those things in the first place*” (Giddens 1984: 9), i.e. the focus is on *agency*.

As the next step in building this theoretical framework, the notion of agency needs to be operationalised. In order to stress the duality and interconnection of the structural and the agential side, I approach agency in the Giddensian sense, as a self-reflexive action based on intentions, such as motivation or choice, and capabilities, such as skills, initiative or creativity.

Largely, the interest in user agency seems to be connected with an increased interest in the concept of participation and the ways it is related to new digital technologies. The participatory turn is not a claim of only media researchers and social scientists; it is widely acknowledged in business models related to the web, but also in terms of civil society and governments, who see user involvement almost as a necessary imperative in their actions. I approach participation as a form of audience/user engagement in the production process, but also as a certain technique to share power and responsibility. It also has societal value for the development of civil society and is important as such (Runnel et al forthcoming 2010). In the next part of the introductory section, my aim is to elaborate on various concepts forming the background and basis for the participatory turn in relation to ICT usage, in order to frame it analytically and critically. I will look at how ICT user agency is performed through taking advantage of various online opportunities, which form the central axis of the study and are also conceptually interrelated to each other. Online opportunities are interconnected, relying upon user agency (**Study VII**). Of the major domains of ICT-related user agency – participation and civic engagement; education, learning and literacy; creativity; identity and social connection – in the

context of the transition society, content creation and participatory activities stand out as particularly significant.

As I am interested in the interaction of users and ICTs in the context of everyday life, I approach it through the notion of practices – embodied sets of activities that humans perform with varying degrees of regularity, competence and flair (Postill 2009). In asking how ICT's are involved in people's daily practices and how these practices participate in the implementation of ICTs and change in the information society, this approach also places the research into a broader framework of research of knowledge (Couldry 2004), and makes it possible to seek a balance between human, political and institutional factors in societal development.

Theories of praxis, which started developing in the 1970s, also initiated the work of such major social theorists as Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979, 1984), as well as anthropologists (Sahlins 1981). They were followed by second generation practice theorists, such as the anthropologist Ortner (1984, 2006), and the social theorists Schatzki (1996, 2001) and Reckwitz (2002), and by media studies (Couldry 2004; Postill 2009). Practice theories are making their way to the forefront again in various areas of social studies. The umbrella term 'practice theories' offers a way to explain how the action of individuals re-creates larger systems/structures in which people act, what they do and say on a daily basis and, by practising or participating in these events, how people strengthen the system and the system also shapes them.

I agree with one of the contemporary practice theorists, Andreas Reckwitz (2002), who notes that practice theorists have so far largely neglected the individual, although there is actually a very precise place for the individual in these theories: "*as there are diverse social practices, and as every agent carries out a multitude of different social practices, the individual is the unique crossing point of practices, of bodily-mental routines*" (Reckwitz 2002: 256).

In one of the most influential texts, part of the new 'practice turn', the anthropologist Sherry Ortner formulates practice theory as a theory of how social beings, with their diverse motives and their diverse intentions, make and transform the world in which they live:

"It is a theory for answering the simplest-seeming, and yet largest, questions that social science seeks to answer: Why does a given society have a particular form at a particular moment - that form and not some other? And how do people whose very selves are part of that social form nonetheless sometimes transform themselves and their society?" (Ortner 1989:193)

Anthropological research supports this by offering empirical examples of how, in the dialectics of structure and action, the destiny of conventions and innovations is decided – what is being kept and what is being neglected. Individual action can create new structures (for example, a church), which start to influence people's practices (people's religious life) (Vallikivi 2005).

Another empirical parallel could be drawn with the subject of my research, where, in the case of users' online content creation, the content and form of the input are dependent on the norms and expectations of the peer group or community, i.e. they reflect the overall structures inside the cultural and social context. Producing innovative and creative online content, i.e. content which does not obey the norms of the community, can in time lead to changes in the overall structures (Siibak 2009: 20–21).

Thus, practice theory leads to a better understanding of ongoing changes, and of how and if these take place or fail. Practice theory is also an applicable approach because it does not seek to refer to any outcome or the end-point of practices; it is directed to approaching continuous processes. Hence, it is also possible to talk about the 'transformation of practices', which takes place on the structural level of practices. In the case of Internet usage practices, we can follow how the complexity increases from private-oriented practices (such as services and information retrieval) to socially oriented practices (commenting, sharing with peers etc.) to participatory practices, which are directed to participating in public and institutional spheres.

Research on Internet users has changed the early paradigm of Internet research, which approached online and offline as separate worlds: the 'virtual' and the 'real' (see, for example, Wellmann 2004). Current understandings of practices online – whether information search, entertainment or social networking – show that these practices are an extension or modification of needs which are located in the everyday, i.e. not particularly on either side of the 'real'/'virtual' divide. Online can't be simply seen as a consumed product, a particular kind of text or a structure of production; it must be seen as something which is connected to the rest of 'reality' in the most diverse ways. It has become part of the call to advance the theoretical understanding of both our connections with media and new media/the Internet. This is also one of the reasons why the practice theoretical approach has generated new interest among media scholars.

Recent approaches to practice and media call for conceptualising media not as texts or structures of production but, rather, as practice (Couldry 2004), and media study as the study of the "open-ended range of practices focussed directly or indirectly on media" (*ibid*). Thus, I suggest that, instead of talking about practices of Internet usage, the Internet should be regarded as practice or, rather, as a complex set of various practices. In his call for paradigm shift in media research, Nick Couldry saw it as a way to move beyond old debates about media effects and the relative importance of the political economy and audience interpretation, and beyond a narrow concentration on audience practices, to a study of the whole range of practices which are oriented towards media (Couldry 2004). The anthropologist Mark Hobart proposed to replace Couldry's 'media oriented practices' with 'media-related practices', which does not confine us to the seemingly bounded worlds of media organisations. For Hobart, 'media-related practice' can be anything from film- or news-making to cooking in time for the family's favourite soap opera to discussing the purchase of a

domestic media artefact (Hobart 2009: 115). Yet another scholar, the anthropologist Elizabeth Bird, reminds us not to “jettison the key notions of culture and structure” (Bird, quoted in Postill 2009), arguing that a practice approach must hold together both “the constraints of structure and the power of audience agency” (Postill 2009). I think it is important to recognise that practices are tightly interrelated to each other and are located in a broader structural context (society, politics and technology).

2.2.2 Media literacy and online content creation

Online content creation, along with communication and production skills, access to media and media content, and the critical ability to decipher media messages, is seen as a central component of media literacy (Zacchetti and Vardakas 2008: 119). At the same time, in the context of the discussions of media education and media literacy, the concept of ‘creativity’ has been used rather vaguely. Buckingham (2003) has pointed out that this usage of the term in educational programmes often seems to imply a *Romantic* conception of creativity, where creativity is seen in individualistic terms, as the emanation of some kind of ‘personal vision’ – a matter of an authentic ‘self’ finding its ‘expression’ (Buckingham 2003: 127–128). In contrast to that, contemporary media literacy research, rooted in the social constructivist approach, increasingly recognizes the social, collaborative dimensions of creative production. This is in line with the theory of media literacy as a kind of social theory. The social approach to media literacy stresses the complex relationships between ‘creative expression’ and ‘technical skills’, and the importance of reflection and self-evaluation (Buckingham 2003: 127–128). Buckingham argues, on the basis of his studies of young people, that student production is necessarily *social*, both in the sense that it is generally collaborative and in the sense that it uses socially available resources (‘languages’ and genres) to create meaning (Buckingham 2003: 137). Media literacy related to the digital environment is also referred to as digital literacy or Internet literacy in order to stress the specificity of using and creating digitally mediated content. Digital literacy brings the concept of user creativity to the centre of the debates on literacy, referring to the role of the user, who can become an active producer as well as a receiver of content, leading to interactivity and participation online. Along with communication and production skills, access to media and media content, and the critical ability to decipher media messages, creativity is seen as a central component of media literacy (Zacchetti and Vardakas 2008: 119). In theoretical debates on media literacy, there has been a paradigm shift since the 1980s; up until that time, authors dealing with issues of media education were generally critical regarding students’ media production as a part of acquiring media literacy skills (**Study VI**).

In theorizing on the concept of creativity in the context of the current study, it can be done through looking at the relationship between the individual and

structure. According to Rapport and Overing, the approaches to this relationship vary from a more liberal approach (seeing the individual at the centre as an active agent), to more collective and communitarian ones, which argue that structures “are in fact *sui generis* and determine the very nature of individual consciousness and character” (Rapport and Overing 2000: 2). The active role of the individual has become more strongly the focus of the attention of social sciences since the 1950s-1970s. One of the most influential is the practice theory of Bourdieu, which sees structure in culture not as a limited field but as a playground for those who are aware of its rules (Bourdieu 1977). His approach, however, has been criticised for letting structure dominate, and one of the possibilities of balancing it and seeing the individual as an active participant having impact on change, is to focus more on (personal) creativity (de Certeau 2005; Rapport and Overing 2000: 3, 8).

Personal creativity occurs in the interaction with other aspects, such as a person’s thoughts and socio-cultural context, which converge. Therefore creativity is a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon (Csíkszentmihályi 1996). Creativity happening only in the mind of the person would by definition not be a case of cultural creativity. To have any effect, the idea must be couched in terms that are understandable to others, it must pass muster with the experts in the field, and finally it must be included in the cultural domain to which it belongs (Csíkszentmihályi 1996: 27). Csíkszentmihályi’s (1996) approach to creativity can be labelled as a ‘systems’ model, according to which creativity is a result of the interaction of the *individual person*, who uses the symbols of a given domain, has a new idea or sees a new pattern, *domain*, consisting of a set of symbolic rules and procedures, and *field*, which encompasses all individuals who act as gatekeepers to the domain. The individual has the capacity is to transform or extend the obtained information, and creativity can happen when it draws upon available cultural or knowledge resources, which are combined and remixed in innovative ways, so that they are both recognisable because of their familiar elements, but also innovative.

This definition of creativity sees creativity as an essential part of innovation and invention. At the same time, this process is a tool to secure the maintenance of traditions. Creativity is grounded in collaboration and negotiation, and it is always synchronically and diachronically collaborative. Members of a society choose and develop the elements of culture or cultural traditions. A manifestation of creativity as a social process is the folklore process, which depends on a skilful balance between repetition and innovative input in a text, which is a prerequisite for the survival of cultural elements (Briggs 1988).

The critique of the systems model of creativity sees it as an evaluative way of handling creativity, according to which placing creativity in this model means that it is being measured by how much a particular practice or piece of work is culturally valuable in terms of aesthetic or other kinds of innovation (Burgess 2007). Despite this critique, the systems model is useful in that it shows how creativity is something inherently social, emerging from mutual interaction with others. Instead of being born from the creative mind of the

author, creativity is connected to social networks in which cultural products are born and where they circulate. Creativity is part of social communication, a way in which cultural objects or practices come into being. Although creativity has been seen as part of the unusual, along with the turn in the social and cultural sciences, becoming interested in the everyday and ordinary, in anthropologically informed approaches to culture, creativity is not seen as something unusual, connected with unusual personalities or happening at rare moments in time. It is, rather, something which happens constantly, is part of the everyday and mundane, and is practised by everyone.

In the context of creative activities online, there are also other concepts relevant in the current discussion, for example Jean Burgess' concept 'vernacular creativity', which refers to "one *way of looking* [*italics original*] at everyday cultural production that makes sense in the context of contemporary transformations in culture and new media technologies" (2007: 29). According to Burgess, vernacular creativity, i.e. creative content production by 'ordinary' people online, is making a significant contribution to the cultural public sphere. The relevance of this concept stems from the fact that Burgess puts everyday creativity in the service of effective social communication.

The connection between creativity and various content creation environments online is related to the complex relationships between creative expression and technical skills. John Quiggin (2006: 485) points out, in discussing content creation environments such as blogs and wikis, that from the point of view of innovation, although the differences between blogs and static websites are subtle, they are crucial. Blogs have made available to ordinary people with no special skills or capital a vast range of opportunities for publishing all manner of material (*ibid*). Most obviously, the openness of these media allows for innovation in the content and style of the text and other material presented. This, in turn, produces new genres of writing, as models based on pre-existing media turn out to be inadequate.

In summarizing the role of content creation as part of media literacies, I would stress the importance of the everyday and the ordinary in social processes, and emphasise the individual as an agent of change. This is significant, because it changes the user from passive agent to active agent, who also participates in creating and redesigning his/her environment. In terms of media consumption, the user changes from receiver to participant, and from consumer to citizen. By enabling participation, content creation as a part of media literacy should therefore be seen as a prerequisite for participation, being therefore a democratizing tool which reorganizes power relationships.

2.2.3 Participation and civic engagement

The Internet is connected to democratic ideals in different ways: the domain of e-government and e-governance, where the agency is on the side of governments, which try to implement technology for better governance. The second

and much more vague domain is e-democracy, i.e. a way in which the Internet's potential can be realised to transform citizenship and participation in people's everyday lives. According to Coleman (2005), the digital mediation of political processes, when shaped according to the proper recognition of the structural dimensions of new media, might facilitate mutually beneficial communication collaboration in several ways, including by "creating new spaces for public self-representation and experiential reflexivity" (Coleman 2005: 190). The significance of new media lies in the shift from a 'common' cultural public sphere through which individuals in local communities understand the world (as in, for example, the ideal models of public service broadcasting), to everyday *active participation* in a networked, highly heterogeneous and open cultural public sphere (Burgess 2007). This is analogous to the shift from one-to-many to many-to-many models of communication in popular media.

At the same time, political participation and people's everyday participatory activities have become increasingly interconnected. Contemporary theoretical approaches to civic agency and the public sphere see citizenship as moving from 'passive' to 'active' or 'strong' citizenship (Hemingway 1999). The citizen in the framework of participatory democracy is a politically active individual, who is involved in informed communication with fellow citizens and contributes to society (*ibid*). The Internet, in particular, and other new communication technologies are seen as an environment offering new opportunities for citizens to participate in democracy, especially in extra-parliamentarian contexts (Dahlgren 2006: 23). Thus, Dahlgren points out, "to be able to read, write, speak, work a computer and get around on the *Internet* can all be seen as competencies important for democratic practices. Education will thus always play a key role in nurturing democracy" (Dahlgren 2006: 26).

In the many-to-many communication model, participation becomes fragmented. It does not necessarily happen in the context of "excessive rationalism of deliberative democracy" (Dahlgren 2006: 21); rather, engagement and participation of the citizen is predicated on the citizen being connected to others by civic bonds. Studies of leisure time and citizenship claim that participation in informal social gatherings can generate 'democratic social capital' (Hemingway 1999). Via meandering, open-ended and unpredictable talk, the links between the personal and the political can be established, which is indispensable for the vitality of democratic politics (Dahlgren 2006). According to Dahlgren, a messy conversation, as it begins to take on political connotations, activates the weak, non-decision-making public sphere, which is a basis for public participation, as it helps people to generate personal and social meaning for the ideals of democracy.

As was shown before, creative activities are also potentially linked to democratic participation in the public sphere, although the connections are not direct. One possible way to approach the connection of content creation practices with political participation and empowerment is to do it through the domain of 'participatory culture' and the concepts of 'civic culture' and 'cultural citizenship'. 'Civic culture', in Peter Dahlgren's terms (2003), can be

seen as a central concept, seeking to understand people's opportunities to act in the role of citizens and their daily experience of citizenship: civic culture points to those features of the socio-cultural world – dispositions, practices and processes – that constitute pre-conditions for people's actual participation in the public sphere, in civil and political society (Dahlgren 2003: 154–155). In Dahlgren's model, civic culture involves a set of six interlocking processes (values, affinity, knowledge, practices, identities and discussion). Similarly, Ken Plummer (2003: 81–82) identifies five 'generic processes' through which new public spheres can appear: imagining/empathising, vocalising, investing identities through narrative, creating social worlds and communities of support, and creating a culture of public problems.

In British cultural studies, the concept of 'cultural citizenship' is used to describe how the cultural public sphere model acts as a space for the practice of democracy and citizenship in everyday life and attempts to connect culture, citizenship and audiences within the framework of the cultural public sphere (Davila 2000, 2001; Hermes 2005; Mayer 2003; Miller 1993, 1998).

A more recent search for the practices of democracy and citizenship in everyday life appears in the discussions of the similarities in the roles of the active citizen and creative consumer, which some claim are intermingling. Jean Burgess states that both everyday creativity and new media technologies represent spaces of hope for cultural citizenship, and thus radically exceed their traditional domains of interest in the case where active citizenship and consumer co-creation are converging and are no longer separate domains of practice (Burgess 2007). According to Hermes, cultural citizenship can be defined as the process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, which is implied in partaking of the text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticizing offered in the realm of (popular) culture (Hermes 2005: 10). This definition makes it possible to see the connection of cultural citizenship with both active consumption of popular culture and productive practices in everyday life (for example, leading to new and important citizenship practices in new media contexts (see Hermes (2005))). William Uricchio (2004: 140) offers a model of cultural citizenship that incorporates the reconfigured relations between cultural production and consumption in participatory culture. Community, freed from any necessary relationship to the nation-state, and participation, in the sense of active involvement, are two prerequisites for the enactment of cultural citizenship. According to Uricchio (Uricchio 2004), certain forms of participatory culture, in fact, constitute sites of cultural citizenship, particularly sites of collective activity, for example collaborative communities, which exist thanks only to the creative contributions, sharing and active participation of their members.

3. AIM OF THE THESIS

Based on the theoretical framework outlined previously, the aim of this thesis is twofold: firstly, to analyse **how user agency is articulated through practices of consumption and production of Internet content and, secondly, to investigate the relations of user agency with the particular setting of transformation from post-communism to the information society.** On the one hand, the question is connected with the dynamics of usage patterns and how they are related to social change and interpretations of ICTs in society. On the other hand, the study looks at the interrelatedness of the various aspects of user agency: their capacity to use and change ICTs and to take advantage of opportunities online. My particular focus is on content creation practices and participatory practices, which can be seen as a sign of more advanced user engagement with the Internet. In order to fulfil the double aim of this thesis, I have three larger research questions, each with several sub-questions. Each of the individual studies in this thesis helps to provide answers to particular questions.

I How have Internet content consumption and production practices evolved in Estonian society and what are the main factors behind it?

- a) What was the role of the information technologies in the transition period, from the sociocultural processes and everyday life points of view? (**Study I and III**)
- b) What are the main institutional and personal factors which support or hinder the diversity of Internet-related practices? (**Study II**)
- c) How do the social, cultural and economic capitals of individuals affect people's adoption of the Internet? (**Study II**)
- d) How do practices of consumption and production differ among different types of Internet users and how do these usage practices evolve? (**Study II, III, IV, V and VI**)

II To what extent and how are creative content production practices part of Internet use? How are they related to the development of digital literacies?

- a) How is the Internet environment related to expressing creativity? (**Study IV, V and VI**)
- b) What kind of content creation practices are predominant among Internet users and to what extent can they co-exist in people's lives and communication habits? (**Study V and VI**)
- c) How does online content creation differ among different types of young Internet users? (**Study VI**)
- d) What is the role of the different online content creation environments in the communicative practices and development of digital literacy? (**Study VI and VII**);

- e) How do Internet users employ their individual agencies and creative skills in the online environment? (**Study IV, V, VI and VII**)
- f) What factors facilitate or hold back producing content online among children? (**Study IV, V and VII**)

III How and in which ways are Internet-related participatory practices part of Internet usage and how do they contribute to the democratic potential of ICTs on the grassroots level?

- a) In what ways is Internet usage related to the development of civic and political participation? (**Study III and IV**)
- b) How much and in what ways is the Internet used for participatory and democratic practices in Estonia? (**Study III and IV**)

4. DATA AND ANALYSIS

This thesis is based on a combination of different data collection methods which vary in methodological approaches. The studies use nation-wide large-scale surveys (questionnaires and oral interviews), and analysis of texts and ethnographic observation which I have carried out either as part of a research team at the Institute of Journalism and Communication, or independently.

The ethnographic approach, including both text analysis and observation as part of anthropological fieldwork, was implemented in the very first study in 2001 (**Study I**). At this pilot stage of my ICT-related studies, **Study I** was used as a way to approach the main agenda of the formation of information society discourse, and the ways it was expressed at various levels.

Studies II-IV used the results of nation-wide surveys as their main source.

The large-scale survey “Me. The World. The Media” was conducted in December 2002 and January 2003 in Estonia. The survey was based on a large-scale and complex research design. Besides the written survey, oral interviews were conducted, comprised of about 800 variables. The sample of the survey included 967 Estonian-speaking and 497 Russian-speaking inhabitants of Estonia between the ages 18–74. A more detailed overview of the survey methodology is given in the book “Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul” (edited by Kalmus et al 2004), particularly in an overview of Lauristin and Vihalemm (2004) in the introduction to the book. This data was used in **Study II** to discuss the issue of the digital divide, by focusing on the relationship of different user practices with users’ social, cultural and economic capitals.

As a follow-up, a representative population survey, “Me. The World. The Media”, was conducted in November 2005 in Estonia, with the survey design following the same pattern as in the first survey, and including 1475 respondents aged 18–74. It was comprised of a self-administered written questionnaire and follow-up face-to-face interviews, with a total of approximately 800 variables. The results were used in **Study IV** to discuss the practices of online content creation and consumption in Estonia.

Another representative population survey was conducted in February 2007. Eight hundred and three Estonians between the ages of 18–74 participated in the survey. A self-completed survey with a total of 305 variables was used (for a more detailed description of the survey, see **Study III**). In this thesis, **Study III** uses the data in order to analyse how the democratic potential of the Internet is used and tries to assess the usage of participatory activities online.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the Internet consumption and production practices of children and young people in Estonia in a comparative perspective at the European level. The studies combine data from the MEDIAPPRO survey (**Studies V and VII**), the nation-wide survey “Youth and the Internet” (**Studies V, VI and VII**) and various sources from EU KIDS Online Data Repository (**Studies V and VII**).

The MEDIAPPRO survey of 11- to 18-year-old pupils, carried out in eight European countries (including Estonia) in autumn 2005 was selected for compa-

rative analysis. The MEDIAPPRO team, studying the appropriation of new media by youth, developed a common questionnaire that was distributed in schools from September to October 2005 (see MEDIAPPRO, 2006, 9). In most of the countries, the sample consisted of two sub-samples: sample A represented typical schools in the country and covered the whole nation or region, and sample B represented specific populations. For cross-national analysis, only A-samples from the eight countries were used (N=4767).

In **Study V**, the data from the MEDIAPPRO survey was combined with the data from the questionnaire survey “Youth and the Internet” of 11- to 18-year-old pupils, carried out in comprehensive schools in three cities of Estonia (Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu) in autumn 2007 (N=713). The sample represents different types of schools (with Estonian as the language of instruction) in Estonia.

In order to provide a wider empirical basis for analysing the extent of pupils’ engagement in creative online activities, in **Study V** these two sets of data were complemented by looking at various sources from the EU Kids Online Data Repository.

To approach the wider societal and cultural frameworks surrounding actual usage practices, which are the primary focus of this study, the thesis also uses an analysis of various policy texts, media texts and relevant online environments (**Study III**).

In several studies, various user typologies have been introduced in order to have more explanatory power regarding different usage practices on the Internet. For the user types, a factor analysis of the variables (survey questions regarding people’s activities online) was carried out. Indicated factors were used as input data for a two-step cluster analysis. The cluster analysis was used to produce Internet user clusters. Clusters were identified by the factors that they consist of (**Studies II and III**). In **Study VI**, clusters of content creators among young Internet users were identified on the basis of survey data. Using those clusters, different use practices were investigated. For example, **Study II** characterised different Internet users by socio-demographic factors, and **Study III** combined two measures, Internet user typologies and index for local participation, to study people’s participatory activities online and offline. Usually the user types also reflected a range of usage practices from more active, versatile uses to more limited and passive uses.

The studies which are part of this thesis were largely framed by survey data from particular ongoing projects in the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the University of Tartu. In all the studies, I participated as a research team member in developing the research methodology, including the questionnaires for different surveys. **Studies V and VII** were guided by the major European-level research initiative EU Kids Online and MEDIAPPRO, in an effort to gain more knowledge about the actual practices of children and young people online. In this study, different sets of data have been combined with a case study from Estonia, which made it possible to take a more detailed look at the questions that were also relevant on the European level. **Studies IV-**

VII were guided more by the personal research interests of the team members and have thus made it possible to add a more context-sensitive approach. The most independent in its choice of data and methods were **Study I**, which was an outcome of MA studies at the Department of Ethnology at the University of Tartu, and **Study III**, which tried to approach the long-term transformation of ICT usage in Estonia from the perspective of both ICT-related participatory and democratic policies and practices. **Study III** was based on several years of research experience and its starting point was the questions which could not be answered on the basis of a major survey.

As the central interest of this thesis is various social processes in their relation to ICTs and the particular experiences and practices of technology users, it has been essential to try to produce as wide a picture as possible within the limits of a PhD thesis, by combining different methodologies and approaches. As my research experience has shown, the quantitative approach forming the basis of the research (but not limiting it) in the Institute of Journalism and Communication was most fruitful when combined with an even broader understanding of the data available at the global and European levels, and with qualitative research that opened up and enriched the data collected at the country-level, in Estonia.

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In the following section, the empirical findings are presented. The findings are divided into three sub-chapters, following the three main research questions presented earlier. First, I will take a look at Internet content consumption and production: how it evolved in the context of the transition society and the main reasons and factors behind this evolution. Next, I will analyse the users' content creation practices, as part of people's Internet use, with a particular focus on children and young people. I will analyse how these practices contribute to the development of digital literacies. The third sub-chapter looks at participatory practices online and analyses to what extent they contribute to fulfilling the democratic potential of ICTs. This will make it possible to look at the Internet-related practices as they evolved from less complex and mostly structure-bound information and services-related practices to participatory practices related more clearly to the active agency of the user.

5.1 Reasons and factors behind Internet consumption practices

In **Study I**, in which I looked at the early stages of ICT development through specific case studies and the reflections on ICT-related development in the public debates in Estonia's transition society, I outlined how popular attitudes evolved from discussions based on a certain amount of mythologisation, to the point where people gained access to the Internet and obtained personal experience of ICT use (**Study I**). The beginning of Internet and ICT-related developments can be described as a period of self-identification on the state level. A well-functioning state was considered to be an important guarantee not just of socio-economic development, but also of the existence of the Estonian nation. Especially immediately after independence had been regained, questions regarding achieving international competitiveness in Estonia, and being part of the Western cultural space were articulated in different narratives, in which information technology became one of the most important solutions (**Study I**) and great emphasis was placed on building the ICT infrastructure (**Study III**).

ICTs had an important symbolic value in the search for a collective identity. A success story paradigm about the tiny, successful and competitive nation was dominant in both local and international media until 1999. The success story was supported by international data: according to Nya Identity Surveys, the number of Estonian Internet users was remarkably high in comparison with other countries, Estonia being listed 10th, with 10.7% Internet users, following the leaders (Iceland (44.6%), Sweden (40.4%), Norway (36.42%), Denmark (35.5%) and Finland (31.0%) (Eesti Inimarengu aruanne 1999).

It is clear that on the level of the individual, positive attitudes towards ICTs were connected with expectations of increased personal freedom. In Estonia,

which had for decades suffered from oppressive Soviet ideology and its restrictions, the emergence of the Internet as a new medium was connected with access to new kinds of information and extended opportunities and benefits. This included opportunities for self-determination on the personal level: access to information, entertainment, the Internet as a resource of sociability etc. (**Study I**). Moral tensions related to the access to information were especially visible in the early phases of the development of the ICT infrastructure; here the 'old' and 'new' in everyday life were most clearly distinguishable (**Study I**). Access to information and the implementation of ICTs can be seen as attempts to integrate transnational technologies into the local social frameworks in such a way that they started to participate in the change in society. The transnational quality of the technologies also meant that there was no control over either positive or negative aspects at the local level. The moral aspects were also rooted in the ambivalent attitudes of the technology users and the ways in which the technologies were used in everyday life.

In analysing the main reasons and factors which support or hinder Internet use and broaden the diversity of use, it can be claimed that using ICTs depended on the person's available resources. **Study II** used as its theoretical framework Bourdieu's approach, to analyse the mechanisms of reproduction of social hierarchies, and looked at how people's social, economic and cultural capitals were related to their Internet use or non-use at the time the Internet was just becoming widespread in Estonia (survey data from 2002–2003) and the majority had begun using the Internet. As **Study II** demonstrates, individuals with more capital at their disposal were able to begin using the Internet earlier. It is also important to stress that people with more capital used the Internet for a greater variety of different functions. The most visible differences were in the distribution of economic capital, where among those with very little economic capital, less than 10% actually used the Internet at the time of the survey. The analysis showed that among the people who had recently started using the Internet there were more people with lower capital (economic, cultural and social), but among the non-users, there were also people (even if in the minority) whose resources would permit them to use the Internet, but they had made a choice not to do so at that particular point in time.

A parallel can be drawn with **Study VII**, which compared children's Internet usage in various European countries. It demonstrated how children's Internet usage was connected to various resources, not only as a distinguisher of Internet use and non-use, but also among Internet users themselves. The availability of economic resources affected the emergence of different usage patterns. Children with such resources as their own computers and with broadband connections at home potentially had access to a wider variety of applications (**Study VII**).

Several studies dealt with the diversity of Internet use among different socio-demographic groups and also various user types. Internet user typology was first considered in **Study II**, in particular involvement with various online practices and the frequency of using these functions.

In **Study III**, the following Internet user types were found: *Versatile, interactive users*, who use the Internet for everything, although the informational side of the Internet is relatively less significant, whereas other user types are mostly aligned to some particular usage practices (*Multiple information users*, using the Internet mostly for information purposes, bank transactions and submitting government forms; *Communicators*, who are very active in using chat rooms, mailing-lists, instant messengers; *Private-life-centred services users*, who are active in searching private-life and everyday life related information and *Participators*, who, more than others, use the Internet for reading and writing comments in portals, forums and news groups (**Study III**).

Study IV distinguished again six different types of Internet users on the basis of their online practices (survey conducted at 2005), showing the diffusion of various skills and content creation practices of the population. Online activities of the most active user type (*Versatile users*) also included active content creation. A large group of otherwise active Internet users (*Pragmatic work and information users* and *Public and practical information users*) did not create nor consume user-created content (that is, reading and commenting blogs, communicating in forums etc.) very actively. This means that the more pragmatic uses of the Internet were not directly connected to content creation skills (**Study IV**). The youngest age group (15- to 19-year-olds) was most active in all kinds of practices of online content consumption and creation. Thus, on the basis of the two previously outlined user typologies, we might refer to this age group as ‘Generation C’ (cf. Bruns 2005, **Study IV** and **VI**). At the same time, young Internet users in Estonia tended to be predominantly passive content consumers and international research suggests that creative work online of 12- to 18-year-olds is limited (**Study IV**). The results of **Studies V, IV** and **VI** suggest that the label ‘Generation C’ applies to young Internet users more in relation to the rest of the age groups.

Studies IV and **V** showed that the most consistent differences in content creation and consumption were related to age and gender differences. Among the general population, gender did not differentiate usage practices very noticeably, but men tended to engage significantly more in downloading music and movies (**Study IV**). According to the study, younger respondents, particularly 15- to 19-year-olds, were much more frequently involved in most of the practices of online content consumption and creation (**Study IV**). The distribution of different gender and age groups between Internet user types shows that there were significantly more men among *Versatile Internet users* and *Public and practical information users*, whereas women prevailed among *Pragmatic work and information users* and *Entertainment and family information users*. Teenage respondents (15- to 19-year-olds) were mostly *Communication and entertainment oriented users* (**Study IV**). The most common practice among all Internet user types, in both gender and age groups, was communicating in portals and reading commentaries: altogether 69% of Internet users were engaged in that activity. The least popular practices were reading

and commenting on blogs (32%), and updating one's blog or homepage (21%) (**Study IV**).

User typologies suggest once more that various usage practices, whether information search, social networking or participating in the public sphere, correspond, to a vast extent, to people's everyday needs, blurring the boundaries of the 'real' and 'virtual'.

Study VII, on children's Internet use, based on the findings of studies carried out in the EU Kids Online network countries and MEDIAPPRO survey covering eight European countries (MEDIAPPRO 2006), clarified the patterns in the diversity of Internet use in the sense of showing that different usage preferences (taking up online opportunities) among children and young people can be described as evolving from simpler to more complex practices. The first stage can be called 'school-favoured uses'. They are mostly limited to information-seeking and educational use, and are probably related to the fact that the Internet, as a new type of educational medium, also offers stimulating resources to those children who would otherwise remain rather passive users (**Study VII**). The next usage stage can be labelled 'popular uses', including usage practices which are especially valued by children and thus more clearly related to user agency. Popular uses are mostly connected with communication (instant messenger and social networking sites) and entertainment. The third stage, 'resource-bound uses', mainly involves entertainment-related opportunities – watching videos, movies and TV programmes, and playing games online – which place more of a demand on the structural side: the availability of resources such as a high-speed broadband connection and the possibility of spending enough time online. The fourth stage, 'advanced uses', adds in a range of interactive and creative activities, and was practised by less than half of the children (in all MEDIAPPRO countries) (**Study VII**). Interactive and creative activities are tightly connected with users' skills, competencies and literacy. This highlights the issue of user agency, and shows that this is mostly not about people's intentions but their actual "*capability of doing those things in the first place*" (Giddens 1984: 9).

The MEDIAPPRO data, used in **Study VII**, also supports the claim by Livingstone and Helsper (2007) that the take-up of online opportunities by children can be described as climbing a 'ladder of online opportunities'. Advancing experience in Internet use and changing priorities and motivations led to a greater versatility of online activities: most activities online become more common with advancing age; older children were also more versatile Internet users than younger ones (**Study VII**). Taking advantage of online opportunities, thus, can be seen as a gradation in digital inclusion (cf. Livingstone and Helsper 2007), where advancing stages imply increasing user agency.

5.2 Content production practices online

User-generated content creation can be seen as an advanced form of Internet usage, as it has a great potential for individual and group participation and empowerment (**Study V**). Potentially, the Internet makes any computer user an “*author of a new kind*”, who can produce and publish texts, alter texts, write and “*write back*” (Kress 2003: 173). The studies in this section of the discussion examine content creation practices across Internet users in general, but do so with more of a focus on children and young people. Children’s content creation practices were placed in the larger European perspective in **Studies V** and **VII**.

As the studies indicate, the diffusion of content creation practices varies among different users quite strongly, as there are users who do not practice content creation at all. Overall, creative online activities are much less practised than consuming online content – searching for information, communicating and entertainment (**Study V** and **VII**).

The most common Internet related practice overall was communicating in portals and reading commentaries: altogether 69% of Internet users were engaged in that activity every now and then, and 36% of users had at least tried writing online commentaries (**Study IV**). Thus, about half of the readers of commentaries were also engaged in writing them. Also, in studying young people’s frequency of being engaged in various Internet-related activities, activities related to communication, entertainment and searching for information were the most frequent activities online (**Study V**).

The most popular content creation practice was uploading photos (62% of the users) (**Study IV**). Youngsters, in particular, frequently create audio-visual texts in order to publish them online (88% uploaded photos and pictures, 62% uploaded videos). At the same time, verbal texts are significantly less popular: school-related homework was uploaded by less than half of the youngsters and just a quarter of the youngsters uploaded their own poems or stories (**Study VI**). Thus, it can be said that online content creation is biased towards visual and audiovisual content and the audiovisual aspects of multi-modal literacies are becoming more significant in general.

In terms of popularity, audio-visual content creation practices were followed, both in the general sample and among the youngsters, by communicating in forums, reading and commenting on blogs and updating one’s own blog or home page (**Study IV** and **V**).

Studies V and **VI**, based on the survey “Youth and the Internet” (2007), provided deeper insight into the consumption and production habits of the young people in Estonia. The young generation participates actively in the newspaper commenting culture: 82% of the pupils read comments on online news, although less than half of them also commented on the news (**Study VI**). Here they value interaction with other users, as most of them believe that the value of comments lies in the discussion and debate they initiate. Also, in online forums, which are also significantly popular among pupils, 61% commented on the topics raised by others and half of them posed new topics for discussion.

Pupils' experiences with and reasons for participating in forums were related to information and knowledge retrieval and usability (**Study VI**). There were a variety of reasons for belonging to SNS clubs (Rate.ee). Motives which have a distinctly social focus (connecting with friends, and finding new friends and acquaintances) were prevalent among the reasons for creating profiles in Rate.ee (**Study VI**).

The relationship between different online environments (homepages, blogs, community sites, various SNS environments etc.) and users' creativity was complex (**Study VI**). **Study VI** focused on five environments (SNS, forums, news portals, blogs and personal homepages) that differ from each other in terms of the technical interface, the level of skills needed in users, the multi-modality of the content, peer-group pressure regarding content, the author's control over the agenda, the frequency of updating, and the symmetry of communicative exchange. In very broad terms, we can differentiate between more technologically structured environments (such as SNS, forums and news portals) and the respective practices where content creation is more constrained by pre-given formats and limitations on the interface, and less structured environments (such as blogs and homepages) and the respective practices (**Study VI**).

It is clear that the more flexible and usable the software, the more it can be applied to people's communication challenges and the larger number of various genres will be connected to it. Still, as **Study VI** showed, the flexibility of the technical environment does not necessarily trigger creativity, as creativity can also occur in technologically more structured environments. Creativity is not determined by the creative freedom of the individual; rather, the relationship between creativity and technological structures depends on the nature of the interrelationship between the expertise and literacy of the individual user, the norms and expectations deriving from her social environment, and technological structure (**Study VI**).

In terms of activeness of content creation in general, and its relation to different online environments, content creation in more structured online environments, such as SNS sites and forums, is much more widespread than content creation in less structured environments, such as blogs and home pages, which require and enable the users to have greater freedom and demand higher creative skills (**Study V** and **VI**). A minority of the youngsters practicing blogging and web-page creation (**Study V**). Among the reasons for blogging, creative reasons prevail, but blogs are also important as social media – sharing news about their lives with friends is significant especially among the youngest age group (**Study V**).

Differences in online content creation are also visible when looking at different types of Internet users which were distinguished on the basis of being involved with various online practices in **Study IV**. The most active user type (*Versatile users*) was involved in active content creation, whereas some other user groups, otherwise active user types (*Pragmatic work and information users*, and *Public and practical information users*) did not create or consume

user-created content very actively. Their Internet usage is not supported by content creation skills. Study about content creation among children (**Study VI**) indicated that various content creation patterns are developed. Types of content creators were distinguished and ranked according to the scale of activeness and passiveness. Scale was based on the sum index of the frequency of being engaged with seven different content creation activities: updating one's homepage, updating one's blog, commenting blog posts, commenting on news, participating in forum discussions, starting new forum topics, and updating one's SNS account. The differences in the frequency of activities were compared to the sample average.

The cluster analysis indicated that the majority of the young users were of the *forum-centred type* (28% of the sample), who create content mostly in forums and news portals, and the *Indifferent type* (28% of the sample), of whom one third was not engaged in any of the seven content creation activities. For those who created something, the most frequent content creation activity was updating their profiles in the SNS Rate.ee (**Study VI**). Also, the *News comments centred type* (12% of the sample) was considerably less active than the sample average, sometimes commenting on the news, and being somewhat more active than the average in the SNS Rate.ee. These three user types were mostly involved in more structured online environments and significantly less engaged in activities related to less structured environments, such as blogging and creating homepages. The *Forum centred type* and *Indifferent type* were also less active in using social networking sites.

Three other user types were more active in content creating activities, forming altogether about one third of the sample. The *SNS-centred type* (10% of the sample) was distinguished by considerably greater activeness in using the SNS Rate.ee. This type was also quite active in commenting on others' blog postings and updating their own blogs. Also, the activeness of the *Homepage-centred type's* (7% of the sample) activeness exceeds the sample average, being remarkably high in creating home pages, but also being active in commenting in forums and news portals. They are less likely to participate in other online environments. Versatile users (*Versatile, blog-centred user type*) are active in all seven content creation activities, being especially active in keeping blogs (53%) and commenting on the postings of other's blogs (**Study VI**). More active types, thus, are more likely to create content in less structured online environments.

In general, content creation online was not as widespread both among the children and grown-ups as could be expected from the potentiality hype around the phenomenon. Those Internet users, who were involved with online content creation, were most active just in a few of the online environments, more often in structured online environments and less in blogging and making personal home pages.

Study V which analysed the content creation across Internet users in general, indicated that content creation skills were not directly connected to the more pragmatic uses of the Internet, as a large group of otherwise active

Internet users (*Pragmatic work and information users*, and *Public and practical information users*) did not produce content very actively.

Self-evaluated knowledge of the Internet was related to activeness in content creation. The studies of young Internet users (**Study V** and **VI**) indicated that the lack of specific motivation and lack of time prevailed among the reasons for not being engaged in less structured online environments, such as blogging or making home pages. In the case of home pages, a lack of skill was mentioned by some of the pupils as a reason for non-use (**Study V**). Access to the Internet and the intensity of its usage seemed to have some bearing on taking advantage of opportunities for creative online activities; another factor was the influence of peers. The latter was connected with the social nature of the development of literacy (**Study V**). At the same time, parental mediation, and even less so mediation by teachers, seemed to be less related to youngsters' activeness in content creation.

It can be said that the choices regarding the types of environments users are engaged in show that this choice is related to different levels of employing one's agency. Some of the environments (e.g. SNS and forums), although more structured in technical terms, and more closely connected to peer group pressure, enable those with fewer skills and stronger orientation to peer group norms to create multi-modal content. Homepages and blogs, which are very non-restrictive in terms of technical structures and peer group pressure, offer more freedom and individuality, as well as opportunities for self-expression. At the same time, they demand more skills to realize those opportunities (**Study VI**).

Among the most active types of content creators (*Versatile, blog-centred type, Homepage centred-type* and *Forum centred type*), self-evaluation regarding computer and Internet skills was remarkably higher than among the other content creator types. They also differed from the others in having higher English language skills. The *Home-page centred type* tended to claim that they did not need additional assistance in using the Internet. **Study VI** also found that bloggers and personal home page creators, i.e. users active in environments which require more creativity, also had a more responsible attitude towards both their own postings and the content of online comments in general. More active types of content creators tended to be more normative than average, in terms of language and the content of the Internet (**Study VI**).

As the regression analysis showed, a number of socio-demographic variables had no significant effect on the frequency of being or not being involved in online creative activities, especially in not being involved in content creation in less structured online environments (blogs and personal home pages) (**Study VI**). Among the most active content creator types (*Versatile, blog-centred, Homepage-centred, and SNS-centred type*), the proportion of elderly pupils decreased. *The Indifferent type* was most common both among the oldest and the youngest age groups. The most active in content creation were early teens, and the general activeness in content creation decreased as children became older (**Study V** and **VI**). This finding did not support the findings from some

other studies; for example, according to Dutton and Helsper (2007), creative online activities become more common with age, college students being the most active group. This apparent contradiction suggests that the relation between age and activeness in content creation is not linear; rather, motivation in producing content online might be connected to phases in an individual's educational path and life cycle: older pupils grow out of the habit, while they might take it, and perhaps different practices of content creation, up again in college. It is also possible that older pupils had started to use the Internet at a relatively older age and were more self-critical of their usage skills.

Studies V and **VI** showed that young people tend to be engaged mostly in just one or two content creation activities, usually in more structured online environments. Becoming involved in content creation in less structured environments such as blogging and making personal web pages was not predicted by the general versatility of Internet use, but rather by active engagement in more structured creative practices (updating one's profile in SNS, participating in forums and commenting on news and others' blog postings).

This suggests a kind of continuum in online content creation. Creating content in a less structured online environment depends on one's inclination toward creative activities overall, and requires adequate computer and Internet skills (**Study V**). The most complex stage of content creation, which includes blogging and creating homepages, was reached by only a minority of young Internet users (**Study VII**). Many of those interactive and creative opportunities involve participation, potentially leading to civic engagement. These opportunities do not require particular material and technological resources, depending mostly on user agency: motivation, creativity and setting one's priorities.

At the same time, content creation practices tended to be related mostly to the private sphere, and communication and self-representation purposes. User agency, represented by motivation and skills, is most often expressed in blogging and making of personal home pages, which, though also having the dimension of connecting to other persons, are rather individualistic in their current uses.

Therefore, it is questionable to what extent this offers a critical perspective on one's own and other persons' activities beyond these particular practices (**Study V**). This data does not provide sufficient answers about the third layer of literacy – that of institutional management of power, in which obtaining skills and putting them into practice is supposed to be provided to the digitally literate. It is difficult to discuss the nature or uses of digital literacy in this sense. The current pattern of content creation practices does not encourage talking about the manifold multimedia literacies characteristic of 'Generation C', which develops critical skills for successfully acting in the wider social environment. Rather, this pattern highlights online media as a means of practising one's creativity, as a tool for self-expression and as an environment of a rather limited array of cultural consumption (**Study V**).

5.3 Participatory practices online

People's participatory practices online are related to both activities in the private sphere and to the developments of the civic culture and democracy. Participatory practices in the private domain and civic engagement are inter-related in a complex way, but the link between the two still needs to be theoretically elaborated. As researchers have pointed out, the Internet facilitates people's everyday participation in the open, heterogeneous and networked public sphere (Burgess 2007), and thus participatory practices online contribute to fulfilling the democratic potential of ICTs.

Online participatory practices bring to the forefront a person's communicative competencies and digital skills. Through user creativity, i.e. various practices of content creation, online participation is linked to digital literacy. Besides user creativity, which was the subject of the previous sub-chapter (**Studies IV, V and VI**), the studies also explored democratic participatory practices online, their institutional context (**Study III**) and general expectations regarding ICTs.

Study I explored the expectations related to information technologies during Estonia's transition period, which helped to include ICTs in general change as a tool of modernisation. This process was supported by the rapid development of ICTs and the perception of ICTs as a tool which was expected to be able to guarantee democracy. In a very short time, Estonia developed a rather extensive system of web pages representing the structure of the state (local administration, ministries, parliament etc) in order to integrate the state apparatus into the everyday social life. In that period, the founding policy documents, formulating the basic principles of the information society, were created.

Study IV outlined the usage patterns and examined how the usage skills and skills of content creation are related to the layer of literacy, examining how it was connected to a person's successful involvement in the wider social environment. The usage patterns confirmed that the Internet had become an environment for practising one's creativity as a tool for self-expression and cultural consumption, but these practices mostly took place in semi-private environments, potentially open to everybody. User creativity and content creation was primarily used for private life and social relationships. Also, **Study V** showed that youngsters preferred to use the Internet largely for informal socialisation and potentially for forming informal, democratic communities online. It can be claimed that the private-life related creativity observed in this study is linked to the participation in other dimensions of society indirectly, and it is not possible to estimate to what extent these practices foster civic and political participation.

The question of the democratic potential of the participatory practices online, in the framework of the regulations, initiatives and general public perception connected to it in Estonia, was central in **Study III**. It analysed the policy documents in Estonia which were among the first ones that dealt with the information society, set the basic aims and determined the responsible

institutions. As **Study III** states, these documents, representing the regulative framework, legislation and opportunities offered by the state, influenced people's behaviour and attitude towards the role technology played in their everyday life. However, the question is how much people's actual practices shape or reflect the aims set in the documents. As **Study III** indicated, the policy documents regarding the Estonian information society reflect a more or less technologically deterministic viewpoint, which is not surprising, as in the political and economic world, technological determinism still appears as the prevalent ideology in debates concerning general technological change and the information society. In the vein of such a technologically deterministic approach, an analysis of the policy documents indicated that Estonia adopted a very top-down approach to the implementation of ICTs as part of its information society policies, and that, in doing this, Estonia was acting in a similar way to other countries. In the policy texts of the 1990s, the ICT users were considered important actors in the diffusion and acceptance of new technologies, but they were viewed mostly as passive recipients, who were expected to adopt infrastructure step by step (**Study III**). In implementing policies, the supporting actions for better acquisition of technologies were often missing.

In the field of democratic development, which was the focus of **Study III**, policy documents did emphasise the importance of participation and Internet democracy, but real activities and projects were focused mainly on the development of technology. However, it could be said that state initiated projects, following the aims set out in the earlier documents and generally executed in the international political spotlight, were often not that widely used or even recognised by individuals. Providing citizens with tools with which to express their opinions was accompanied neither by education nor willingness to listen (**Study III**).

In examining this question from the user's side, participation is based on the online practices of ICT users and the distribution of different practices among different segments of users. In this respect, the question of whether participatory practices online complement already existing activeness in traditional participation, for example, in communication with the local government, or as an independent phenomenon, becomes important. **Study III** compared activeness in local life in relation to a person's activeness in participation via new media. The analysis was based on the survey data collected in Estonia in 2007, which was combined with the Internet user types (see also Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2006a, and **Studies II** and **IV**), and the diversity of online practices was analysed. A two-dimensional matrix of scales was drawn on the basis of the results on traditional and new media participation scales: active-passive in traditional participation and active-passive in new media participation (on the local level). Internet users and non-users were placed on the scale (see Figure 2 for relative placements). The relative centre point in figure one is established by the average result on both scales.

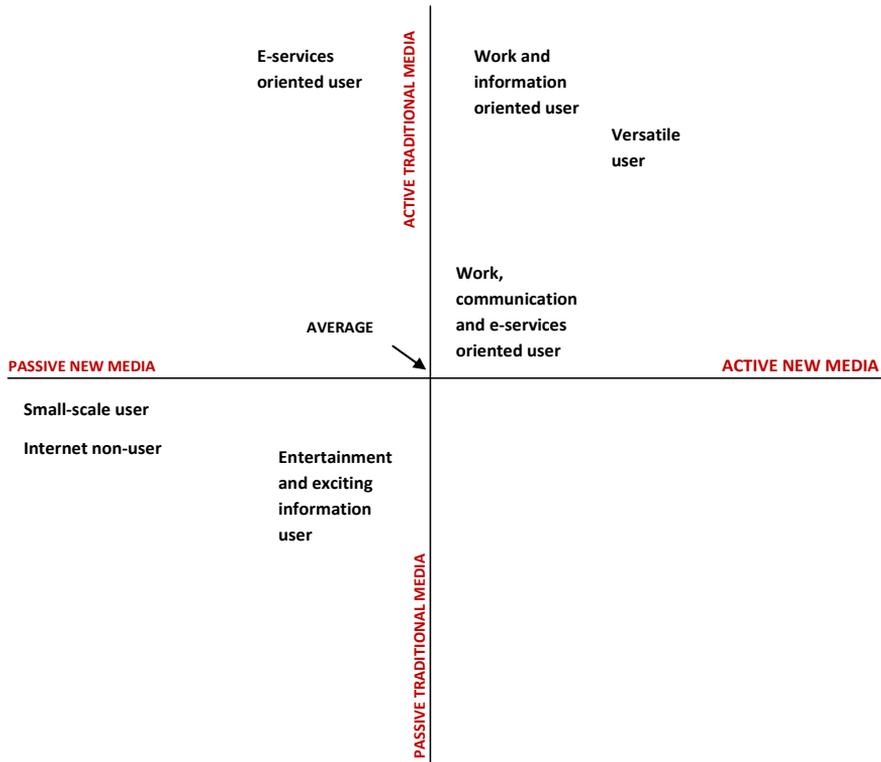


Figure 2. Internet user types and non-users on activity-passivity scales for participation in traditional and new media. The placement is based on mean values and the relative position is in relation to the average for the total population (Study III). Data source: Survey “Me. The World. The Media” 2007.

The figure shows the dynamics of Internet participation. It can be seen that *Versatile Internet users* are most active in both forms of participation, but also *Work and Information oriented Internet users* and *Work, communication and e-services oriented users* were active in both traditional participation and participation via new media. Internet non-users and small-scale users were very passive on both participation scales. Entertainment and exciting information users were marginally more active when it came to e-participation. There were no users who were active on the Internet and passive in traditional participation. The results indicate that the Internet is not taken seriously as a sole participatory medium and it has not replaced other means of participation (**Study III**). It can also be claimed that people who are active in the area of democratic participatory practices offline seek online channels as a complementary channel to their existing practices. The Internet has not created purely online participants. Still, the study shows that the number of active and versatile users increased compared to earlier studies (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt 2006a, 2006b). Despite

their passivity in the fields of participation, active and pragmatic Internet users have developed ways to participate in online environments. These tendencies found in the study have also been confirmed in a study by Kristina Reinsalu, according to whom the use of information technology has changed people's political activity on the local level (Reinsalu 2008). According to Reinsalu, the case of Estonia supports the claim that information technology indeed has an accelerating effect on political activeness (*ibid*). Still, **Study III**, which looked at specific Internet usage practices, showed that the Internet is mainly an alternative channel to people's participatory activities.

6. DISCUSSION

This dissertation focuses on the research area which is becoming increasingly relevant in the field of media and communication studies, providing research on Internet usage and content creation both among the general population and among young people. It is important that different sub-studies in the dissertation can be linked through a timeline, starting from the mid-nineties, when Estonian society was in the transition stage and Internet adoption was in its very early stages, up to the contemporary ICT-rich environment, where the majority of some groups have begun using the Internet. At this stage, the data on Internet usage practices in Estonia can be considered from an international comparative perspective. This dissertation focuses on user agency: how it has been articulated through the practices of consumption and production of Internet content and how it is related to the particular setting of transformation from post-communism to the information society.

In the discussion part of this empirically based study, I will discuss the main findings regarding emerging Internet usage patterns and the theoretical perspectives of the conducted studies: the practice approach to media and new media, the issues of digital literacy and online content creation, and participatory and democratic aspects of Internet usage. Although my research does not aim to locate itself in the area of childhood studies, special attention is paid to children and young people, as understanding their relations with the new media in more depth, and in comparison with other age groups, challenges public understandings of young people as ‘digital natives’ (Prensky 2001), a view which is often limited, and also helps us to understand the potential future of the Internet in relation to democratic developments.

6.1 Practices and everyday life

This dissertation departed from approaching Internet as texts and structures, individuals and interactions, and focused on user agency, as it is manifested in people’s Internet-related practices. For me, the value of the practice approach for discussing and framing research results is that it makes it possible to bring the question about what people actually *do* to the centre of the analysis, but it happens in particular contexts. The practice theoretical approach implies that practices are connected to certain fields (social domains), which according to Schatzki (2001) are:

“the total nexus of interconnected social practices, with components such as meaning, activity, knowledge, power, and the language integral to it. Notion of ‘a field of practice’ [is] the linchpin of the practice approach” (Schatzki 2001: 2).

In my interpretation, in terms of ICT-related practices, the fields (social domains) interacting with each other are the transitional/post-transitional society and the online environment. As was pointed out before, ICT-related developments in the context of the transition society have not been studied sufficiently internationally. In Estonia, ICTs were met with great expectations and the concept of the information society quickly became part of the self-conceptualisation of the society and even part of the national identity. As Leah Lievrouw (2000) argues, the whole notion of the information society is based on an ideological belief in the positive and socially integrating power of technology, along with a prevailing ethic of instrumental rationality and strategically practised self-interest in accruing such benefits. The discourse of the information society has therefore been framed popularly in terms of individuals resorting to their own devices, in the sense of personal agendas, strategies, interests and interpretations, as well as in the form of the technological tools that help realise them. From this perspective, to *not* use ICTs is to choose not to be part of the information society – an irrational and ultimately disadvantageous position to adopt (Selvyn 2003: 106).

In Estonia, the fact that the information society is primarily a concept belonging to the discourses of politics and economic development, but not necessarily corresponding to people's everyday realities, was confirmed in the studies covered in this dissertation. As Studies **III** and **IV** indicated, one of those domains is the interaction of the expectations regarding Estonia's democratic developments and ICTs.

Practice-based analyses of social change and ICTs focus upon daily uses of technologies, examining in what life situations ICTs are relevant (for entertainment, for self-representational practices, for maintaining social relations, for working, for consuming etc) and this makes it possible to see how social change is represented in certain social domains: the domestic sphere, the sphere of cultural production (online content production as a form of cultural production) etc. Thus, when we look at Internet usage practices, they should not be considered directly as Internet-centred. Following Mark Hobart (Hobart, forthcoming), it might be said that these practices should instead be approached as "those recognised, complex forms of social activity and articulation, through which agents set out to maintain or change themselves, others and the world around them under varying conditions". Internet usage practices subtly alter existing practices, rather than replacing them.

While the current study tracked the usage basis through the usage practices of single individuals, it does not support Reckwitz's (2002) theoretical view of single individuals as the 'carriers' of practices. Mostly, these practices are based on various forms of social interaction: practices of learning and knowledge building, managing or solving issues related to work or family and home, are in themselves inherently social. It should also be acknowledged that practices mostly overlap each other and it is not easy to distinguish one from another. Uploading one's photo can be a self-representational practice, but it can also be seen as a way of establishing or maintaining contact with peers.

The other form of interconnection takes place between institutionalised bodies (for example, Internet service providers) and individuals. In particular, this is the aspect of media-related practices which makes it possible to claim, as Antoni Roig et al state, ‘all of us are media’ (Roig 2009). The dissertation outlines a number of user practices which make it possible to think about Internet media as ‘us’: participation, creativity and user content creation are different aspects of how media are increasingly produced together. Figure 3 gives an overview of the different ways users can relate to the new media content and other producers (institutions and individuals).

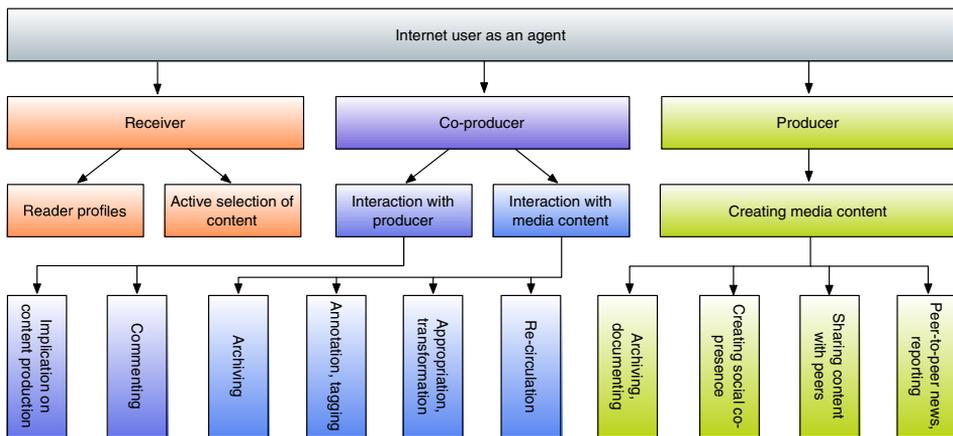


Figure 3. Internet user as agent: ways of engaging with online content and content production.

6.2 Evolving digital literacies and citizenship

The studies of youngsters’ Internet use clearly showed how online practices are creatively embedded in their everyday life, ranging from educational to interpersonal, private and other needs. Different studies (Livingstone and Helsper 2007; **Study VII**) suggest that, in terms of relationships between different practices, one can talk about digital gradation, where being involved in some practices is a prerequisite for getting involved in others. Internet usage experience starts with simpler practices of information seeking, games and interpersonal communication, and progresses to more interactive activities in the next stages, where at the other end of the continuum we can find creative and civic activities. Alan Warde (2005), a practice theorist with a background in consumption studies, has talked about the ‘rewards of practice’, which can be of different kinds: they can be social (referring to Bourdieu’s ‘social recognition’) or psychological (e.g. Csíkszentmihályi’s notion of ‘flow’), but can also take other forms. Csíkszentmihályi’s notion of ‘flow’ (Csíkszentmihályi 2002)

claims that satisfaction depends on continuous, increasing complexity of practice, as the feeling of development offers a stronger sense of well-being than staying involved in simpler practices. At the same time, digital gradation, in terms of widening use and taking advantage of more advanced opportunities, is not an exclusive development pattern in Internet usage. Many children are not much involved in online content creation and, if active at all, they are more likely to stick to online content creation within structured environments, such as social networking sites, rather than creating their own blogs or websites (**Study VI and VII**). The latter require more skills and autonomy of the users from the peer group. Even those blogging or making home pages might give up using those online opportunities, most likely due to changing priorities and life-cycles.

This means that much more work is needed to understand the overlapping of practices and digital gradation. This finding is also supported by the results of the cross-European study EU Kids Online, which points out the existing gaps of evidence for online opportunities and concludes that it can't be expected that users simply follow the general innovation model and move to greater complexity in usage (Livingstone and Haddon 2009). The study states that, while evidence about access and frequency of children's Internet use is fairly plentiful, much less is known about *how* children use the Internet, including the issues of skills of navigation and search, content interpretation and critical evaluation – all important for media literacy (*ibid*).

The issues of media literacy and digital literacy are becoming increasingly central to EU agendas. Digital Literacy Review states that digital literacy is becoming an essential life skill and the inability to access or use ICTs has effectively become a barrier to social integration and personal development (Digital Literacy EC Working Paper 2008). Thus, on the policy level, policies to promote media literacy reflect the widespread sense that the technologically convergent, highly commercial, globalised online environment places considerable demands on individuals to manage competently (see also Livingstone and Haddon 2009). In this dissertation, I used 'digital literacy' in the same sense as 'media literacy', referring to it as a tool for empowerment. The studies in this dissertation confirmed that a more thorough understanding is needed of how digital literacy actually enhances civic and cultural participation. I propose that, to move further toward understanding, we must acknowledge that there is no single mode of 'media literacy' or 'digital literacy' which can be provided for all. Digital literacy as a practice has different meanings and implications in different social domains. Rather than seeing it as a measurable skill, it should be approached as a set of complex social practices, connecting the everyday with the media, as well as the social with the institutional.

As the studies indicated, user-generated content creation, which is increasingly audiovisual and multi-modal, outlines the importance of understanding creativity, one aspect of media literacy. One possible nexus for this, which was not sufficiently studied in this dissertation, might be gaming and playfulness as part of users' collaborative and creative activities online, as they

make it possible to understand the role of playing in our everyday lives. This might enable us to better approach leisure time, which still tends to be a poorly investigated social domain in terms of its relationship to public/civic participation online. According to the empirical findings, playing and entertainment-related practices are an important step in digital gradation patterns in moving to the next, more creative and participatory stages of Internet usage. Playfulness increasingly characterises the ways in which users take on the roles of producers and distributors of new media content.

Researchers studying video games as a media practice (Roig *et al* 2009) even claim that games are one of the key concepts in understanding the current global shift in media production towards user-generated content. They propose that video games introduce a new relationship between subject and representation that goes far beyond the 'spectatorship' position, pointing to a playful relationship with images that may be useful for understanding new forms of media practices (*ibid*).

Study III aimed to look at the relationship between democratic developments and ICTs. Policy documents in Estonia that dealt with the information society held a more or less technologically deterministic viewpoint, and a very top-down approach to the implementation of ICTs was taken in them. In the policy texts of the 1990s, people were considered to be passive recipients, who were expected to adopt infrastructure step by step. In the field of democratic development, policy documents emphasised the importance of participation and Internet democracy, but in reality activities and projects were focused mainly on the development of technological infrastructure. In the first phases of Estonia's transition, during which people would have more eagerly taken advantage of opportunities for participation, only a representative Internet democracy was developed. By the time the more coherent ICT-related participatory democracy projects were launched, Estonian society had entered the post-revolutionary phase of alienation (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009). Subsequent years of radical changes diminished the potential for participatory democracy. Alienation and institutional development in the public sector, which brought with them the consumerist approach of handling citizens as clients, supported the development of consumerist democracy (Bellamy and Taylor 1998; Ridell 2002; Reinsalu 2008). At the same time, these developments hindered participatory democracy based on real mutual communication.

An analysis of actual user practises online indicated that, despite overall passivity in the fields of participation, active and pragmatic Internet users have developed ways to participate in online environments. However, the majority of Internet users are still focused on activities within the private sphere. The youngest user groups are among the most passive in both traditional and electronic participation, which perhaps indicates a lack of civic understanding among them. **Study III**, which looked at participatory practices in new media environment, showed significant results regarding political participation. Despite the findings that the Internet is related to participation at the local level, the

study did not identify users who are active in Internet participation, but passive in traditional local participation. The Internet is not taken seriously as a sole participatory medium and it has not replaced other means of participation (**Study III**). It can also be claimed that people who are active in the area of democratic participatory practices offline seek online channels as a complementary channel to their existing practices, and the Internet has not created purely online participants. This supports once more my understanding that the Internet has primarily amplified or directed already existing practices, but is in itself not the centre of the change.

When looking at the emergence of user practices in the context of transitory processes of society, we can see that, for a long time, structure (policies, developing the ICT infrastructure, institutional efforts for launching content etc) has been carrying forward the rapid development of ICT usage. These fast changes have been especially visible at the macro level. Providing people, by institutional bodies, with Internet access and online content was for a long time sufficient to continue supporting the success story of the 'internetisation' of the country. Structural developments interacted with user agency: new possibilities, coming along with the Internet, were adjusted to the existing everyday life patterns, expectations and perceptions of individuals.

Empirical findings support the belief that infrastructural development brings with it the advancement of usage practices only to a certain extent. Current patterns of Internet usage show that mostly such consumption-oriented opportunities as information search and e-services were picked up by users. This was followed by a stage where usage also incorporated private-life centred communication, entertainment and content creation activities. This stage of more creative and participatory online activities relied on the support of the structure and, more strongly, on user agency, and was part of the usage practices of the minority of users. From this stage, it is possible to move to a higher level, where the agential praxis of users is the main driving factor: this stage encompasses the practices of social networking and community-based initiatives, and represents the new, digitally mediated public space. This stage is a site of cultural citizenship which links democratic and civic participation and empowerment with participatory culture/creative activities online. According to Urichhio (2004: 140), cultural citizenship online is constituted particularly in collaborative communities, "freed from any necessary relationship to the nation-state" and other sites of "collective activity that exist thanks only to the creative contributions, sharing and active participation of their members." If active cultural participation online is based on the practice of online content creation, media/technological/digital literacy is very important. Here researchers from different domains of social scientific research agree. Sonia Livingstone sees content creation as central to literacy and "crucial for the democratic agenda" (2004: 11), and she sees new media users, thus, not only as consumers, but also as citizens. New media user creativity becomes central to (cultural) citizenship. The possibility of cultural citizenship involves inclusion. Not only who gets to speak, but also who gets to participate, and on whose terms, and in

whose interests (Burgess 2007). The relevant questions include whether the Internet, with its current opportunities, fulfils the preconditions for active citizenship, whether people online practice their agency whether they feel they have a voice and a space to express it, and whether the Internet constitutes, in itself, “social worlds and communities of support” and “a culture of public problems” (Plummer 2003: 82).

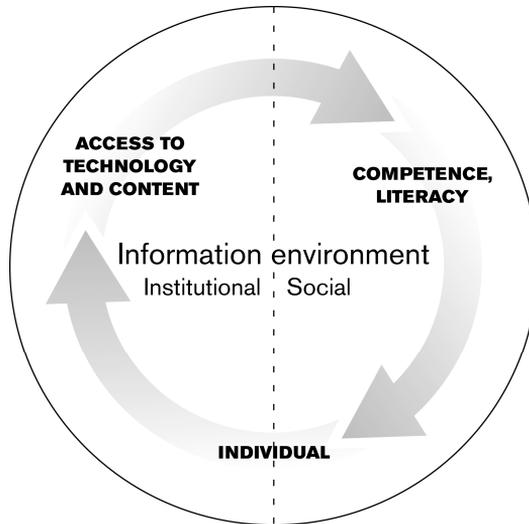


Figure 4. Transformation of Internet practices in the information environment.

Digital literacy can be seen as the interaction both with and between social and institutional layers of the information environment, which becomes visible in the practices of individuals. Internet-related practices and their transformation towards complexity in the transition society context can be outlined as a model, presented in Figure 4. The figure outlines the process of the transformation of Internet practices and their increasing complexity in the context of the transition and post-transition periods of Estonian society. In the early phases of transition, ICTs were introduced by the state in cooperation with other institutional partners, primarily by providing access to the ICT infrastructure and also by offering some content, followed step by step by e-services. Access to ICTs here is thus not defined as the capacity or part of the literacy of individual users, but something which has been triggered by the institutional side. This enabled prospective Internet users to relate to the institutionally created Internet content and ICTs became connected with individual agencies. Here Internet practices entered the social layer of the information environment. Internet usage and diversification of usage practices started to reflect the general stratification of society and access to the Internet. In addition, Internet usage became a part of people’s social status. From that point on, personal motivation and competence

could be seen as the dominant force of growing complexity, including skills, personal usage experience and ability to critically evaluate Internet content. These form parts of digital literacy, which at more advanced stages involves creativity and is the facilitator of participatory practices, which potentially link social and institutional/public layers with each other. This transformation of Internet related practices should not be approached as a causal and linear development but should, rather, be seen as a dynamically evolving 'spiral', where the elements are constantly interacting with each other, leading to increasing complexity. This complexity is not just represented in usage moving from information retrieval to socially-oriented practices to public participation, but also in the change of Internet content from institutionally provided texts to services by content creation and co-creation by multiple producers. Hence, the transformation of practices is based on constant input from both the agential side of individuals and from the structural side, represented by institutional efforts.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aimed to analyse how user agency is articulated through practices of consumption and production of Internet content and how it is related to the particular setting of transformation from post-communism to the information society. In the following, I will draw conclusions on the basis of the main research questions.

I. How have Internet content consumption and production practices evolved in the Estonian society and what are the main factors behind this evolution?

In the early stages of ICT development in the Estonian transition society, information technology was socially constructed as one of the most significant solutions for the country's further development. Institutional support for Internet access primarily targeted schools in order to enable the younger generation to 'catch' up with Western societies. The Internet soon became not only a source for raising personal resourcefulness, but also a status symbol. The capacity for taking advantage of Internet-related opportunities was clearly related to the social and economic stratification of the population, not only in terms of access, but even more in terms of skills and diversification of Internet practices. Diversification of Internet practices suggests that they are, to a vast extent, an extension of people's everyday needs. More advanced creative and participatory Internet practices require support by the institutional and social environment, and a sufficient level of media literacy among the population. Studies of Internet usage preferences among children and youngsters showed that usage evolves from simpler to more complex practices, where advancing stages imply increasing user agency.

- In the early stages of ICT development in the Estonian transition society, institutional support for the access to ICT in all Estonian schools primarily encouraged the younger generation to 'catch up' with the advanced Western societies by developing their Internet practices and skills. Information technology was socially constructed as one of the most important solutions in achieving the country's international competitiveness. On the level of the individual, the Internet was perceived as a tool for access to new opportunities and benefits (**Study I**).
- The Internet has become not only a new source for raising personal resourcefulness, but also a status symbol. The capacity for taking advantage of Internet-related opportunities is related to the social and economic stratification of the population, not only in terms of access but, even more, in terms of skills and diversification of Internet practices. Individuals with more capital at their disposal were able to begin using the Internet earlier and they used it for a greater variety of

different functions. Among those with very little economic capital, less than 10% actually used the Internet at the time of the survey (2003). Among the people who recently started using the Internet, there were more people with lower capital (economic, cultural and social) (**Studies II and VII**).

- Diversification of Internet practices is closely connected with the variety of personal everyday needs and activities. Internet user typology, with six user types, was developed in **Study II**, which revealed universal vs. functionally targeted Internet usage patterns among the different user categories. Especially among the youngest generation of users, the universal usage of Internet represented as *Versatile, interactive user* type seems very common. The other user types are mostly aligned with particular usage practices: *Multiple information users*, who use the Internet mostly for information purposes, bank transactions and submitting government forms, *Communicators*, who are very active in using chat rooms, mailing-lists and instant messengers, *Private-life-centred services users*, who are active in searching for private-life and everyday life related information, and *Participators*, who, more than others, use the Internet for reading and writing comments on portals, forums and news groups. *Small-scale users* use Internet less than other user groups (**Study II**).
- My particular interest was in the creativity of Internet practices. Online activities of the most active user type (*Versatile users*) included active content creation to a larger extent than the other usage patterns. A large group of otherwise active Internet users (*Pragmatic work and information users*, and *Public and practical information users*) did not create or consume user-created content. The youngest age group (15- to 19-year-olds) was most active in all kinds of practices of online content consumption and creation (**Study IV**).
- User typologies suggest once more that various usage practices – whether information search, social networking or participating in the public sphere – are, to a vast extent, an extension or modification of people’s everyday needs, blurring the boundaries of the ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ (**Studies IV and V**). Creative and participatory Internet practices evolve when supported by the institutional and social environment and when a sufficient level of media literacy has spread among the population.
- The distribution of different gender groups between Internet user types shows that there were significantly more men among *Versatile Internet users* and *Public and practical information users*, whereas women prevailed among *Pragmatic work and information users* and *Entertain-*

ment and family information users. The gendered patterns of Internet usage are quite similar to the gendered patterns of other cultural practices in Estonia, indicating the reproduction of the traditional gender roles. The most common practice among all Internet user types as well as in gender and age groups was communicating in the portals and reading commentaries (**Study IV**).

- Different usage preferences (taking advantage of online opportunities) among children and youngsters can be described as evolving from simpler to more complex practices. The first stage, ‘school-favoured uses’, is mostly limited to information-seeking and educational use. The next stage of uses, which can be labelled ‘popular uses’, is mostly connected to communication and entertainment, and is especially valued by children. The third stage, ‘resource-bound uses’, involves watching videos, movies and TV programmes and playing games online. The fourth stage, ‘advanced uses’, adds in a range of interactive and creative activities, and was practised by less than half of the children. The studies supported the finding from earlier studies that children’s Internet use can be described as climbing a ‘ladder of online opportunities’ (cf. Livingstone and Helsper 2007), where advancing stages imply increasing user agency (**Studies V, VI and VII**).

II To what extent and how are creative content production practices a part of Internet use? How are they related to the development of digital literacies?

Overall, creative online activities are much less practised than is consuming online content. Those Internet users who were involved with online content creation were most active in just a few of the online environments, more often in more structured online environments and less in blogging and making personal home pages. The choices regarding the types of environments users are engaged in are related to employing one’s agency: the most complex stage of content creation, which includes blogging and creating homepages, has been reached by only a minority of young Internet users. Creative opportunities are significant in the sense that they potentially lead to civic engagement. The most advanced content creation opportunities do not need particular resources, as they depend mostly on one’s motivation and creativity (**Studies IV, V, VI and VII**).

- The most popular content creation practice was uploading photos. Online content creation and consumption in general are biased towards visual and audiovisual content (**Studies V, IV and VI**).

- The relationship between different online environments and users' creativity is complex. We can differentiate between more technologically structured environments and less structured environments. Among young people, content creation in more structured online environments is much more widespread than content creation in less structured environments. A minority of youngsters practised blogging and web-page creation. The choices regarding the types of environments users are engaged in show that this choice is related to employing one's agency. Some of the environments (e.g. SNS or forums), although more structured in technical terms, and more closely connected to peer group pressure, enable those with fewer skills and stronger orientation to peer group norms to create multi-modal content (**Studies V and VI**).
- The studies distinguished six types of content creators among the young users. The majority of them were of the *Forum-centred type*, who create content mostly in forums and news portals, and the *Indifferent type*, for whom the most frequent content creation activity is updating their profiles in the SNS Rate.ee. More than one-third of the users representing this cluster were not engaged in content creation. Also, the *News comments-centred type* was considerably less active than the sample average. These user types were attached mostly to more structured online environments. The *SNS-centred type* is distinguished by considerably greater activeness in using the SNS Rate.ee, activeness in commenting on others' blog postings and updating their own blogs. Also, the *Homepage-centred type*'s activeness exceeded the sample average, being remarkably high in creating home pages, but also being active in commenting on forums and news portals. Versatile users (*Versatile, blog-centred user type*) are active in all seven content creation activities, being especially active in keeping and commenting on blogs. More active types are more likely to create content in less structured online environments (**Study VI**).
- Self-evaluated knowledge of the Internet is related to activeness in content creation. The studies of young Internet users indicated that young people mentioned skills and the lack of specific motivation and time as the main reasons for not being engaged in content creation. The influence of peers seemed to affect how much users took advantage of the opportunity for creative online activities, which indicates the social nature of the development of literacy. Among the most active types of content creators (*Versatile, blog-centred type, Homepage-centred type* and *Forum-centred type*), self-evaluation regarding computer and Internet skills was remarkably higher than among the other content creator types (**Studies V and VI**).

- Creating content in less structured online environments depended on one's inclination to engage in creative activities overall and required adequate computer and Internet skills. Becoming involved in content creation in less structured environments was predicted by active engagement in more structured creative practices (updating one's profile in SNS, participating in forums and commenting on news and others' blog postings). The most complex stage of content creation, which includes blogging and creating homepages, was reached by only a minority of young Internet users. Many of those interactive and creative opportunities potentially lead to civic engagement. It is important that these opportunities do not require particular resources, depending mostly on user agency: motivation, creativity and setting one's priorities (**Studies V, VI and VII**).

III How and in what ways are Internet-related participatory practices part of Internet usage and how do they contribute to the democratic potential of ICTs on the grassroots level?

In the early phases of Estonia's transition, ICTs were perceived as tools to guarantee democracy. At the same time, more attention was paid to developing ICT infrastructure than to educating and motivating ICT users. The users were considered important actors in the diffusion and acceptance of new technologies, but they were viewed mostly as passive recipients. Several studies showed that online content creation by users was not strongly related to developing critical skills for successfully acting in the wider social environment, but was, rather, directed to private-life purposes. **Study III** showed that there were no users who were active in participatory activities online and passive in traditional participation and, thus, the Internet has not created purely online participants.

- **Study I** explored the expectations related to information technologies during Estonia's transition, which helped to include ICTs in general change as a tool of modernisation. This process was supported by the rapid development of ICTs and the perception of ICTs as tools which were expected to be able to guarantee democracy (**Study I**).
- The policy documents regarding the Estonian information society hold a more or less technologically deterministic viewpoint. In the policy texts of the 1990s, ICT users were considered important actors in the diffusion and acceptance of new technologies, but they were viewed mostly as passive recipients, who were expected to adopt infrastructure step by step. In the field of democratic development, policy documents emphasised the importance of participation and Internet democracy, but real activities and projects were focused mainly on the development of

technology. Providing citizens with tools with which to express their opinions was accompanied neither by education nor willingness to listen (**Study III**).

- Several studies showed usage patterns which confirmed that the Internet had become an environment for practising one's creativity as a tool for self-expression and cultural consumption, but these practices mostly took place in semi-private environments, potentially open to everybody. User content creation practices tended to be related mostly to the private sphere, communication and self-representation purposes. The current pattern of content creation practices does not encourage talking about manifold multimedia literacies, or developing critical skills for successfully acting in the wider social environment. Rather, this pattern indicates that online media are a means for practising one's creativity, as a tool for self-expression and as an environment of a rather limited array of cultural consumption. Private-life related creativity is linked to participation in other dimensions of society indirectly, and it is not possible to estimate to what extent these practices foster civic and political participation (**Studies IV, V and VI**).
- **Study III** compared activeness in local life in relation to a person's activeness in participation via new media. Despite their passivity in the fields of participation, active and pragmatic Internet users have developed ways to participate in online environments. At the same time, there were no users who were active in the Internet and passive in traditional participation. The results indicate that the Internet is not taken seriously as a sole participatory medium and it has not replaced other means of participation. It can also be claimed that people who are active in the area of democratic participatory practices offline seek online channels as a complementary channel to their existing practices. The Internet has not created purely online participants (**Study III**).

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Interneti kasutamise praktikate areng Eestis

Käesoleva doktoritöö eesmärgiks oli uurida, kuidas kasutajate agentsus väljendub Interneti sisu tarbimise ja loomise kaudu ning kuidas see on seotud ühiskondliku arenguga postkommunismist infoühiskonna suunas. Kokkuvõtte tööst järgib peamisi uurimisküsimusi.

Kuidas on Interneti sisu tarbimise ja tootmise praktikad Eesti ühiskonnas arenenud ja mis on peamised seda mõjutavad tegurid?

Eesti transitsiooniühiskonnas info- ja kommunikatsioonitehnoloogiatega (IKT) seotud arengute algusjärgus konstrueeriti info- ja kommunikatsioonitehnoloogiaid kui ühte Eesti edasise arengu võtmelahendustest. Institutsionaalne toetus Internetile juurdepääsu tagamiseks oli suunatud peamiselt koolidele, võimaldamaks nooremal põlvkonnal 'järele jõuda' Lääne ühiskondadele. Internetist sai kiiresti mitte vaid inimeste isikliku arengu võimalusi pakkuv ressurss, vaid ka üks staatussümboleid. Internetiga seotud võimaluste ärakasutamine oli selgelt seotud elanikkonna sotsiaalse ja majandusliku kihistumisega mitte ainult juurdepääsu tasandil, vaid veelgi enam oskuste ja Interneti kasutamise praktikate eristumise tasandil. Interneti kasutamise praktikate mitmekesisustumine näitab, et need on suurel määral laiendus inimeste igapäevaeluga seotud vajadustele. Keerukamad loovad ning osalevad internetipraktikad vajavad institutsionaalse ja sotsiaalse keskkonna tuge ning elanikkonna piisavat meedia-kirjaoskust. Laste ja noorte internetikasutusuuringud näitasid ka seda, et internetikasutus areneb lihtsamatest komplekssemate praktikate suunas, kus edasijõudumatel tasanditel on vaja suuremat kasutaja agentsust.

- Eesti transitsiooniperioodil, info- ja kommunikatsioonitehnoloogiatega (IKT) arengu varasel perioodil, ümbritses neid avalikus arvamuses mõningane müstifitseeriv hoiak, mis kadus peagi, kuna inimesed omandasid IKTdele juurdepääsu ning isikliku kasutuskogemuse. Vahetult peale riikliku iseseisvuse saavutamist tekkisid küsimused riigi rahvusvahelise konkurentsivõime saavutamisest ning infotehnoloogiaid vaadeldi selle arengu ühe põhilise tugitalana, seetõttu pöörati riiklikul tasandil erilist tähelepanu IKT-infrastruktuuri väljaarendamisele. Üksikisikute tasandil pakkus Internet juurdepääsuvõimalusi uut laadi informatsioonile ning pakkus senisest olulisemalt suuremaid võimalusi personaalseks vabaduseks ja enesemääratluseks (juurdepääs infole, meelelahutus, Internet kui suhtlemisvahend jne.).
- IKTde kasutuselevõtt sõltus indiviididele kättesaadavatest ressurssidest. Indiviidid, kelle käsutuses oli enam kapitali (sotsiaalne, kultuuriline, majanduslik), hakkasid Interneti kasutama varem kui teised ning nende Internetikasutus oli rikkalikum kui ülejäänud kasutajatel. Vähese

majandusliku kapitaliga inimestest kasutas uuringu läbiviimise ajal (2003) Interneti vaid vähem kui 10% vastanutest. Nende inimeste hulgas, kes olid hiljuti Interneti kasutama hakanud, oli rohkem inimesi, kel oli vähem sotsiaalset, majanduslikku ja kultuurilist kapitali.

- Uuringus II välja arendatud internetikasutajate tüpologia näitas, et *mitmekülgsed, interaktiivsed kasutajad* kasutasid Interneti kõigeaks, muudest kasutusvaldkondadest pisut vähem oluline oli nende jaoks Interneti tähtsus info pakkujana. Teised kasutajatüübid olid valdavalt keskendunud mõnele konkreetsemale kasutuspraktikale: *mitmekülgsed infokasutajad* kasutasid Interneti peamiselt info otsimiseks, pangatehinguteks ja valitsuse e-vormide täitmiseks; *suhtlejad* olid väga aktiivsed jututubade, meililistide ja kiirsõnumivahetusprogrammide kasutajad; *eraelu-kesksete teenuste kasutajad* olid aktiivsed eraelulise ja igapäevaelu keskse info otsimisel ning *osalejad* kirjutasid ja lugesid teistest enam kommentaare portaalides, foorumites ja uudisgruppides.
- Uuringus IV, kus loodi uus kasutajate tüpologia selgus, et kõige aktiivsema kasutajatüübi (*mitmekülgne kasutaja*) online-praktikad sisaldasid ka sisuloomepraktikaid. Suur rühm muidu aktiivseid internetikasutajaid (*pragmaatilised töö- ja infokasutajad* ja *avaliku ja praktilise info kasutajad*) ei loonud ega tarbinud teiste kasutajate loodud Internetisisu kuigi aktiivselt.
- Kõige levinum praktika kõigi internetikasutajate tüüpide hulgas oli portaalides suhtlemine ning kommentaaride lugemine: seda harrastas 69% internetikasutajaist (Uuring IV).
- Kasutajatüüpidele tuginedes võib väita, et erinevad kasutuspraktikad – olgu see siis infootsing, sotsiaalses võrgustikus või avalikus sfääris osalemine, on suurel määral inimeste igapäeva elust tulenevate vajaduste modifikatsioon või laiendus, mis hägustab piirid ‘reaalse’ ja ‘virtuaalse’ vahel (Uuringud IV, V)
- Erinevad kasutuseelistused laste ja noorte hulgas arenevad lihtsamalt praktikalt keerulisemate suunas. Esimene kasutuspraktikate tasand piirdub peamiselt infootsingu ja kooliga seotud tegevustega. Järgmine kasutustasand, ‘populaarne kasutus’ on seotud peamiselt meelelahutuse ja kommunikatsiooniga ning seda hindavad eriti lapsed ise. Kolmas tasand, ‘ressurssidest sõltuv kasutus’, hõlmab endas peamiselt filmide ja telesaadete vaatamist ja online-mängude mängimist. Need kasutuspraktikad nõuavad rohkem ressursse nagu kiire lairibaühenduse olemasolu ning võimalus veeta palju aega Internetis. Neljas tasand, ‘edasi jõudnud kasutus’, lisab kasutuspraktikatele interaktiivseid ja loovaid kasutusi, mida harrastab vähem kui pool lastest ja noortest. Uuringud toetasid varasemate uuringute tulemusi, mille kohaselt võiks laste Internetikasutust vaadelda kui ‘online-võimaluste redelit’ (Livingstone ja Helsper, 2007), kus edasi liikumine eeldab ka kasutajate kasvavat agentust (Uuringud V, VI ja VII).

Mil määral ja kuidas on Internetikasutuse osaks sisuloome praktikad? Kuidas need aitavad kaasa digitaalse kirjaoskuse kujunemisele?

Loovad online-tegevused on märksa vähem levinud kui online-sisu tarbimine. Need internetikasutajad, kes tegelesid ise ka online-sisu loomisega, olid tavaliselt aktiivsed vaid vähestes online-keskkondades. Nad olid aktiivsed pigem struktureeritumates online keskkondades. See, millised keskkonnad tegutsemiseks valitakse, sõltub ka kasutajate agentsusest – kõige komplekssema sisuloomise tasandini, kuhu kuulub ka blogimine ja kodulehekülgede tegemine, jõuab vaid väike osa noortest internetikasutajatest. Loovad võimalused on olulised seepärast, et nad võivad potentsiaalselt viia ka avalikkuses osalemiseni kodanikena. Kõige edasijõudnumad sisuloome võimalused ei vaja olulisi ressursse, sõltudes peamiselt kasutaja enda motivatsioonist ja loovusest (Uuringud IV, V, VI, VII).

- Kõige populaarsem sisuloomepraktika oli fotode üleslaadimine (62% kasutajaist oli seda teinud) ning sisuloomispraktikate seas tervikuna näib olevat suundumus visuaalse ja audiovisuaalse sisu loomiseks (Uuringud V, IV, VI).
- Kõige selgemad varieeruvused sisu loomisel ja tarbimisel olid seotud vanuseliste ja sooliste erinevustega. Elanikkonnas tervikuna soopõhine erinevus nii suur ei olnud, kuid mehed kaldusid enam tegelema muusika ja filmide allalaadimisega. Nooremad vastajad, eriti 15–19 aastased, olid sagedamini seotud kõigi online-sisu loomise ja tarbimise praktikatega (Uuringud IV, V).
- Erinevate online-keskkondade seos kasutajate loovusega on keerukas. Tehniliselt enam struktureeritud keskkondades (nagu suhtlusportaalid, foorumid ja uudisteportaalid) on sisuloomine levinum vähem kui struktureeritud keskkondades nagu blogid ja koduleheküljed, on sisuloomine vähem levinud. Noorte Internetikasutuse uuringud näitasid, et sisuloome enam struktureeritud *online*-keskkondades on oluliselt levinum kui sisuloome vähem struktureeritutes. Noorte kasutajate seas tegeles blogimise või kodulehekülgede tegemisega väiksem osa. See, mis tüüpi keskkonda kasutama hakatakse, näitab, et valikud on seotud ka kasutaja agentsusega. Mõned keskkonnad, mis on tehnilises mõttes struktureeritumad, ja mida eakaaslased rohkem kontrollivad (suhtlemisele orienteeritud veebiküljed), võimaldavad multimodaalset sisu luua ka väiksemate oskuste ja suurema grupinormi orientatsiooniga kasutajatel.
- Uuringute käigus eristati noorte internetikasutajate seas kuut tüüpi sisuloojaid. Enamik neist esindab *foorumikeskset kasutajatüüpi*, kes loob sisu peamiselt foorumites ja uudisteportaalides ning *väheaktiivset kasutajatüüpi*, kelle kõige sagedasem sisuloomepraktika on nende profiili uuendamine suhtlusportaalil Rate.ee. Enam kui kolmandik kasutajaid, kes *väheaktiivsesse* klastrisse kuulub, ei tegele üldse sisu loomisega. Ka *kommentaaride keskne kasutajatüüp* on valimi keskmisest märksa passiivsem. Need kasutajatüübid olid seotud struktureeritumate online-

keskkondadega. Kolm ülejäänud kasutajatüüpi olid aktiivsemad vähem struktureeritud keskkondades, moodustades omakorda kokku umbes kolmandiku valimist. *Rate'i-keskset kasutajat* eristab olulisest aktiivsem suhtlusportaali Rate.ee kasutamine, teiste blogipostituste kommenteerimine ja oma blogi uuendamine. Ka *kodulehekeskse kasutaja* aktiivsus ületab valimi keskmist, olles eriti kõrge kodulehekülgede loomisel, kuid ka foorumite ja uudisteportaalide kommenteerimisel. Mitmekülgsed kasutajad (*mitmekülgne, blogikeskne kasutaja*) on aktiivsed kõigis seitsmes siinvaadeldud sisuloomise-tegevuses, olles eriti aktiivsed blogi pidamisel ja blogide kommenteerimisel. Aktiivsemad kasutajatüübid loovad sisu pigem vähem struktureeritud online-keskkondades (Uuring VI).

- Tervikuna on loovate *online*-tegevuste harrastus *online*-sisu tarbimisest oluliselt väiksem. Need internetikasutajad, kes tegelesid ka sisuloomega, olid tõenäoliselt aktiivsed vaid vähestes *online*-keskkondades ja seejuures pigem struktureeritud keskkondades. Vähem tegelesid nad blogimise ja personaalsete kodulehekülgede tegemisega (Uuringud IV, V, VI, VII).
- Inimeste enesehinnang oma Interneti-teadmistele on seotud aktiivse sisuloomega. Noorte internetikasutajate uuringust selgus, et noored nimetasid spetsiifilise motivatsiooni puudumist ning ajapuudust peamiste sisu loomisega mitte tegelemise põhjustena. Samuti võivad sisu loomisega tegelejaid mõjutada nende eakaaslased, mis viitab digitaalse kirjaoskuse sotsiaalsele iseloomule. Kõige aktiivsemate sisuloojate (*mitmekülgne, blogikeskne kasutaja, kodulehekeskne kasutaja ja foorumikeskne kasutaja*) enesehinnang oma arvutikasutuse ja internetikasutuse oskustele oli oluliselt kõrgem kui teistel kasutajatüüpidel. Nad eristusid teistest ka parema inglise keele oskuse ja suurema vastutustundlikkuse poolest oma postituste suhtes ja online-kommentaaride sisu suhtes üldiselt (Uuringud V, VI).
- Sugu ei olnud väga oluline üldise sisuloomise-aktiivsuse eristaja, kuid aktiivsete sisuloojate tüüpide hulka kuulus rohkem poisse kui tüdrukuid. Seos vanuse ja sisuloomepraktikate vahel ei ole lineaarne, sest vanemate rühmade seas on neid, kes mitmetest sisuloometegevustest loobuvad. Näib, et motivatsioon sisu loomiseks on seotud ka haridustee ja elukäiguga – vanemad õpilased nõ kasvavad mingitest tegevustest lihtsalt välja. Näib, et siin domineerib agentsus, sh vajadused ning motivatsioon, struktuuriliste aspektide üle.
- Sisu loomine vähem struktureeritud keskkondades sõltub inimese üldisest kalduvusest loovusele ning eeldab piisavaid arvuti ja Interneti kasutamise oskusi. Mitmekesine Internetikasutus iseenesest ei ennusta sisu loomisega tegelema hakkamist vähem struktureeritud keskkondades, pigem ennustab seda just aktiivne seotus struktureeritumate loovate praktikatega (oma profiili uuendamine suhtlusportaalis, foorumites osalemine ning uudiste ja teiste blogipostituste kommenteerimine). Kõige kompleksemale sisuloomise tasandile, mis hõlmab endas ka blogimist ja kodulehekülgede loomist, jõuab vaid väike osa noortest internetikasutajast.

Paljud neist interaktiivsetest ja loovatest tegevustest viivad potentsiaalselt aktiivsemaks kodanikuks kujunemisele.

Kuidas on Internetiga seotud osaluspraktikad Internetikasutuse osaks ja kuidas need toetavad IKT-de demokraatlikku potentsiaali rohujuure tasandil?

Eesti transitsiooniperioodi algusjärgus käsitleti info- ja kommunikatsioonitehnoloogiaid olulise demokraatiat toetava vahendina. Samal ajal pöörati enam tähelepanu IKT infrastruktuuri loomisele kui IKTde kasutajate harimisele ja motiveerimisele. Kasutajaid käsitleti küll olulise difusioonitegurina ja IKTde aktsepteerijatena, kuid neid vaadeldi pigem passiivsete vastuvõtjatena. Mitmed uuringud näitasid, et online-sisu loomine ei ole kuigivõrd seotud sellega, kuidas kujunevad kasutajate kriitilised oskused avaramas sotsiaalses keskkonnas edukalt toime tulemiseks, olles pigem seotud eraeluliste vajadustega. Uuring III näitas, et kasutajad, kes on aktiivsed online-keskkonna vahendusel osalemises ning passiivsed traditsioonilise osaluse mõttes, praktiliselt puudusid, seega ei ole Internet loonud online-osalust.

- Uuring I uuris neid ootusi, mis olid seotud Eesti ühiskonna transitsiooniga, mis aitas võtta suuna IKTde haaramisele üldisesse arengusse uuenudusliku jõuna. Seda protsessi toetas IKTde endi kiire areng ning vaade, mille kohaselt IKTd pidid suutma tugevdada demokraatiat. Väga lühikese aja jooksul arendas Eesti välja üsna ekstensiivse kodulehekülgede süsteemi, mis esindas riigi struktuure (kohalikud omavalitsused, ministriumid, Riigikogu jne.), selleks, et integreerida infotehnoloogiad edukamalt igapäevasesse sotsiaalsesse ellu. Sel perioodil loodi ka esimesed poliitikadokumendid, milles sõnastati infoühiskonna põhiprintsiibid.
- Mitmed uurimused näitasid kasutusmustreid, mis kinnitasid, et Internet oli muutunud keskkonnaks, milles praktiseerida loovust, ning mida sai kasutada eneseväljenduse ja tarbimise eesmärgil. Kõik need tegevused leidsid aga pigem aset poolprivaatsetes keskkondades, mis on potentsiaalselt avatud kõigile. Kasutajate sisuloomepraktikad on seotud pigem privaatsfääriga, kommunikatsiooni ja eneserepresentatsiooni eesmärgil. Praegune sisuloomepraktikate muster ei julgusta rääkima mitmekülgselt multimeediaga seotud kirjaoskusest, mis arendaks kriitilisi oskusi laiemas sotsiaalses keskkonnas toime tulemiseks. Pigem viitab see muster online-meediale kui isikliku loovuse ning üsna piiratud kultuurilise tarbimise keskkonnale. Eraeluga seotud loovus on osalusega ühiskonna teistes dimensioonides seotud pigem kaudselt ning ei ole võimalik hinnata, mil määral need praktikad soodustavad kodanikuosalust.
- Eesti infopoliitikat käsitlevad poliitikadokumendid lähtuvad vähemal või suuremal määral tehnoloogilis-deterministlikust vaatepunktist. 1990ndate aastate poliitikate tekstides olid IKTde kasutajad olulised uute tehnoloogiate leviku ja omaksvõtmise oluliseks teguriks, kuid neid käsitleti pigem passiivsete vastuvõtjatena, kes pidid samm-sammult infra-

struktuuri omaks võtma. Demokraatlikku arengut toetavad poliitika-dokumendid rõhutasid osaluse ja Internetidemokraatia olulisust, kuid tegelik tegevus ja projektid keskendusid pigem tehnoloogia arengule (Uuring III).

- Uuring III võrdles aktiivsust kohalikus elus inimeste aktiivsusega uue meedia vahendusel toimivas osaluses. *Mitmekülgsed internetikasutajad* olid mõlemal juhul kõige aktiivsemad, kuid mõlemal suunal olid suhteliselt aktiivsed ka *tööle ja infole orienteeritud kasutajad* ning *tööle, suhtlemisele ja e-teenustele orienteeritud kasutajad*. Hoolimata oma passiivsest osalusest on aktiivsed ja pragmaatilised internetikasutajad osaluse Interneti kaudu omaks võtnud. Samas puudusid täielikult need kasutajad, kes oleks aktiivsed Interneti vahendusel ja passiivsed traditsioonilises osaluses. See näitab, et inimesed, kes on aktiivsed demokraatlikes osalevates praktikates väljaspool Internetti, käsitlevad online-võimalusi kui täiendavat kanalit juba eksisteerivatele praktikatele. Internet ei ole loonud pelgalt online-keskkonna vahendusel osalejaid (Uuring III).

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

2001 PhD studies, media and communication, University of Tartu
2001 *Magister Artium* (cum laude), ethnology, University of Tartu
1998 *Baccalaureus Artium*, Ethnology and history, University of
Tartu

Additional short non-degree courses in media anthropology, visual anthropology and digital filmmaking (University of Hamburg, University of Tallinn)

Language skills

Estonian	native language
English	excellent in speech and writing
German	medium level in speech and writing
Russian	medium level in speech and writing
Finnish	beginner in speech and writing

Professional employment

2007–present	research director, Estonian National Museum
2007–present	extraordinary researcher, University of Tartu
2004–present	lecturer (infoühiskond, võrguühiskond, etnograafilised meetodid, meedia antropoloogia), University of Tartu
2004–present	festival director, Worldfilm
2004–2007	researcher, Estonian National Museum
2002–2004	research director, Estonian National Museum
2001–2002	extraordinary researcher, University of Tartu, European College
1999–2002	researcher, Estonian National Museum
1999–2000	cultural journalist, <i>Eesti Päevaleht</i>
1998–1999	editor, <i>Raamatukuulutaja</i>
1995–1998	news editor and feature-editor, <i>Postimees</i>

Academic activities

Main research areas:

Information society studies; media sociology; media anthropology; visual anthropology. Sociocultural practices in Estonian information society. Participation in ongoing projects: “Children and young people in the emerging information and consumer society”; “Developing museum communication in the 21st century information environment”; “Actual complexity of cultural communication and methodological challenges of cultural research”

Participation in international research projects:

Participation as a member of the Estonian team in a research initiative supported by the European Commission MEDIAPPRO (2005–2006)

Participation as a member of the Estonian team in EU research network EU Kids Online (2007–2009)

Participation in European network of researchers Making National Museums: comparing institutional arrangements, narrative scope and cultural integration – NaMu (2009)

Scientific-administrative activities and membership in professional organisations:

EASA Media Anthropology Working group (2004–present)

NAFA (Nordic Anthropological Film Association (2004–present)

NEFA (Nordic Ethnological and Folkloristical Workinggroups (1994–2001)

ESA (European Sociological Association (2006–2009)

ECREA – European Communication and Research Association (2006–2009)

Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics (JEF) member of the editorial board

Additional publications, related to the PhD thesis

Runnel, P. (2008). Eesti infoühiskonna meedia- ja tehnoloogiakultuur. Viires, A.; Vunder, E. (toim). Eesti rahvakultuur. Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 580–586.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Ees- ja perekonnanimi: Pille Runnel
Sünniaeg- ja koht: 26.05.1974, Tartu, Eesti
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Haridus

2001 meedia ja kommunikatsiooni doktorantuur, Tartu Ülikool
2001 *Magister Artium* (cum laude), etnoloogia, Tartu Ülikool
1998 *Baccalaureus Artium*, Tartu Ülikool, etnoloogia ja ajalugu
Lisaks lühikursused meedia antropoloogias (Hamburgi Ülikool) ja visuaalses antropoloogias jm.

Keelteoskus

eesi keel	emakeel
inglise keel	kõrgtase nii kõnes kui kirjas
saksa keel	kesktase nii kõnes kui kirjas
vene keel	kesktase nii kõnes kui kirjas
soome keel	algtase nii kõnes kui kirjas

Teenistuskäik

2007–tänaseni teadusdirektor, Eesti Rahva Muuseum
2007–tänaseni erakorraline teadur, Tartu Ülikool
2004–tänaseni õppejõud (infoühiskond, võrguühiskond, etnograafilised meetodid, meedia antropoloogia), Tartu Ülikool
2004–tänaseni festivali direktor, Maailmafilm
2004–2007 teadur, Eesti Rahva Muuseum
2002–2004 teadusdirektor, Eesti Rahva Muuseum
2001–2002 erakorraline teadur, Tartu Ülikooli Eurokolledž
1999–2002 teadur, Eesti Rahva Muuseum
1999–2000 kultuuriajakirjanik, *Eesti Päevaleht*
1998–1999 toimetaja, *Raamatukuulutaja*
1995–1998 uudistetoimetaja ning *feature*-toimetaja, *Postimees*

Akadeemiline tegevus

Peamised uurimisvaldkonnad:

Infoühiskonna uuringud; meediasotsioloogia; meedia antropoloogia; visuaalne antropoloogia. Sotsiokultuurilised praktikad Eesti infoühiskonnas. Osalus käimasolevates projektides: “Lapsed ja noored kujunevas info- ja tarbimisühiskonnas”; “Muuseumi kommunikatsiooni arendamine 21. sajandi infokeskkonnas”; “Kultuurikommunikatsiooni kompleksus ja kultuuriuurimise metodoloogilised väljakutsed”.

Osalemine rahvusvahelistes uurimisprojektides:

Osalemine Eesti töörühma liikmena Euroopa Komisjoni toetatud temaatilises uurimisvõrgustikus MEDIAPPRO (2005–2006)

Osalemine Eesti töörühma liikmena EL temaatilises uurimisvõrgustikus EU Kids Online (2007–2009)

Osalemine Euroopa uurijavõrgustikus Making National Museums: comparing institutional arrangements, narrative scope and cultural integration – NaMu (2009)

Teadusadministratiivne tegevus ja kuulumine erialastesse organisatsioonidesse:

EASA Media Anthropology Working group (2004–tänaeni)

NAFA (Nordic Anthropological Film Association (2004–tänaeni)

NEFA (Nordic Ethnological and Folkloristical Workinggroups (1994–2001)

ESA (European Sociological Association (2006–2009)

ECREA – European Communication and Research Association (2006–2009)

Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics (JEF) toimetuskolleegiumi liige

Doktoritööga seotud täiendavad publikatsioonid

Runnel, P. (2008). Eesti infoühiskonna meedia- ja tehnoloogiakultuur. Viires, A.; Vunder, E. (toim). Eesti rahvakultuur. Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 580–586.

Runnel, P.; Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P.; Keller, M. (2006). Mobile phone isn't a mobile phone any more. In: Neither global village nor homogenizing commodification: diverse cultural, ethnic, gender and economic environments: Cultural Attitudes Towards Technology and Communication (CATaC), 26.06.–01.07.2006, Tartu (Toim.): Sudweeks, F.; Hrachovec, H.; Ess, C. Murdoch: Murdoch University, 2006, 606–621.

Runnel, P.; Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. (2004). Mobiilid, arvutid, internetid: Eesti infoühiskonna künnisel. Kalmus, V.; Lauristin, M.; Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. (toim). Eesti elavik 21. Sajandi algul: ülevaade uurimuse Mina. Maailm. Meedia tulemustest. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 147–162.

- Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P.; Runnel, P. (2004). Uus meedia Eestis. Vihalemm, P. (toim). Meediasüsteem ja meediakasutus Eestis 1965–2004. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 233–256.
- Runnel, P. (2003). Estonia's post-communist turn to Europe: the media and personal experience. Voicu, B. and Rusu, H. (Eds.). Globalization, Integration and Social Development in Central and Eastern Europe. Sibiu: Psihomedias Publishing House, 37–52.
- Runnel, P. (2003). Europe as a measure of Change: Soviet time values and the construction of Estonia's post-communist turn to Europe. *Pro Ethnologia* 26, 113–134.

**DISSERTATIONES
DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS**

1. **Epp Lauk.** Historical and sociological perspectives on the development of Estonian journalism. Tartu, 1997, 184 p.
2. **Triin Vihalemm.** Formation of collective identity among Russophone population of Estonia. Tartu, 1999, 217 p.
3. **Margit Keller.** Representations of consumer culture in Post-Soviet Estonia. Tartu, 2004, 209 p.
4. **Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt.** Information technology users and uses within the different layers of the information environment in Estonia. Tartu, 2006, 213 p.
5. **Anu Masso.** Constitution of personal social space in A transition society. Tartu, 2008, 212 p.
6. **Kristina Reinsalu.** The implementation of Internet democracy in Estonian local governments. Tartu, 2008, 176 p.
7. **Andra Siibak.** Self-presentation of the “Digital Generation“ in Estonia. Tartu, 2009, 257 p.