

Preface and Acknowledgments

A few years have passed since 2016, when I first had the idea to research Internet development in Lithuania. At the time I had recently finished my MA thesis, in which I critically and theoretically explored the instrumentalization of language and its relation to digitalization. At the same time, I also started visiting the legendary “Stammtisch” at Cafe Buchhandlung on Berlin’s Tucholskystraße, where I was exposed to the critical and empirically visible world of hackers, digital activists, and artists. I began to travel to Chaos Computer Congress as well as other events that dissected what I had previously theoretically perceived as “digitalization” into phenomena of made and lived practices and processes. Thus, what had previously felt like a lofty topic consequentially acquired empirical and grounded qualities.

I began to wonder how I could use my own research practice to go beyond discourses that celebrate media technology developments in abstract terms. I decided to focus on very empirical media technology development, Internet infrastructure, and Lithuania’s telecom industry. I wanted to further a research approach against the backdrop of work done by others in the field of science and technology studies (STS) and infrastructure studies that would make Internet infrastructure in particular, and infrastructures as such, more graspable.

My choice to investigate this infrastructure in Lithuania was prompted by several factors. Not only is Lithuania an interesting research case due to its well-developed Internet access, but, as I noticed through my own experience, it is also ignored in the media technology research, which is still predominantly focused on western experiences. Importantly, I wanted to look into Lithuania’s Internet development, not from a national desire to present an unknown country to the world, but rather to situate and complicate the global narrative of media technology development through a rarely researched place. I thereby target media scholars, students, and the general public as potential readers of a book with a narrative that grounds Internet in a place that many are possibly unfamiliar with. I aim to stimulate their interest in its complexities as well as prod them to learn that global infrastructural and media technology developments are much more complicated and convoluted than they appear because they occur in specific and highly diverse places.

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