The purpose of this study is to re-create the story of the development of Livejournal, the most important service of the Russian Internet. The thesis looks at the history of Livejournal from the year 2001 when the service was created and until 2009. The study is focused on the relationships between users of the service, its administration and different actors in society.

The research material consists of three kinds of texts. Firstly, these are articles of the leading news source of the Russian Internet, Lenta.ru that speak about Livejournal. Secondly, the academic works dedicated to Russian blogosphere. Thirdly, interviews with blogosphere experts are included in the empirical material. The articles and the academic papers were obtained on-line, while the interviews were conducted via telephone and with a help of the narrative interview method. The methodology of the thesis consisted of narrative theory and grounded theory.

The result of the research is the story of Russian-speaking Livejournal, where the relationship between blogging and various pillars of Russian society is identified. Livejournal has first appeared in Russian society as communicational tool of the intellectual elite, but soon gained broad popularity and has attracted businesses, media and political actors. Generally blogging has served as a tool which Russians have been using in order to overcome the lack of such institutions of society as free media and safety nets.
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the New Year issue of December 2006 *Time* magazine has praised blogging and other user-generated content tools of the Internet by nominating “You” as the person of the year. Two years later, in November 2008, *The Economist* columnist has announced – blogging is no longer what it was; because it has entered the mainstream (The Economist, 2008).

Of a similar opinion about development of blogging in Russian was Moscow scientist and journalist Ivan Zassoursky. During a seminar in Tampere in spring of 2008 noted that Russian blogosphere has been slowly dying with the arrival of more easy-to-use social networking sites. Now, he said, there is a need for a media equivalent of a forensics examiner, who would give an account on what has happened to the patient and, possibly, why did he or she die. In April of 2009, while the writing of this thesis was ongoing, the president of Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev has opened his blog within Livejournal.com¹, the most prominent service of Russian blogosphere, in order to receive comments to his entries, previously displayed only at the official Kremlin-hosted blog.²

Livejournal is the first, the biggest and the most important blogging platform in the Russian language blogosphere. It has proved to be a significant space of horizontal communication, used by millions of people, including high profile state officials, opposition leaders and pop-culture celebrities. It is present in media, seems to have potential of influencing ‘off-line’ process and recently has been included into semi state-related ownership structures in the same way as many media outlets. I have been involved with Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal for nearly six years and also have conducted a research on discussions within this sphere for my Bachelors thesis. During this time I got very interested in the speculations on the meaning of Livejournal in Russian society, the development of Russian blogging and its stages.

Livejournal is no longer the only blogging platform in the Russian Internet. What is more, other services are as equipped with communicational features as Livejournal and there is no apparent reason to focus my research on this service. Nevertheless Livejournal has a historical significance in the Russian Internet since it gave the first taste of blogging to the Russian society and it was only after

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¹ The address of Livejournal blog of Mr. Medvedev is: http://community.livejournal.com/blog_medvedev
² The official blog of Mr. Medvedev, hosted on the Kremlin server is available at: http://blog.kremlin.ru/
Livejournal that other services appeared. This overall importance alongside with the personal involvement is my motive to focus on Livejournal in this thesis.³

Blogging in general and Livejournal in particular have been approached from many different angles – language, social meaning, and customs have been researched. All of these papers account for different stages and aspects of the development of Livejournal and it is almost impossible to trace back the general picture of the process, a common story that would be useful for a simple historical record. What has started the process, what have followed next, what did it all end with? Or did it? A work, answering these questions would be of a help for future researchers, it would give a general background and help to contextualize any future research. Nevertheless, such task had not been undertaken by anyone previously.

Having developed a personal interest in the topic and noting the lack of consistent research on it, I have decided to devote my Master’s Thesis to the development of the core of Russian-language blogging – the Russian segment of Livejournal service. The research aim of this work is to construct an overview of the processes and changes that Livejournal as a tool and it’s ‘inhabitants’ as community have undergone. The object of study is the story of the development of this segment of the blogosphere. The result of this research is the story of Livejournal that documents the state of arts as it exists in the year 2009 and coins the main developments and transformations that have happened since 2001, when Livejournal has been created.

Development of a blogosphere or a blogging platform can be viewed from different angles. One of the options is to treat it as a social process, which I am doing in this study. For this reason I choose to take the constructivist approach and assume that social reality is mainly constructed by individuals. For this reason I turn to different groups of individuals, melting their perceptions of the process into a general “historical record” in order to create an account of the development of Livejournal blogosphere.

The empirical material of the research represents different groups of individuals that were/are involved in this social process. Firstly, these are journalists who have been reporting the news on the development of Livejournal, assessed thought the most significant on-line publication of Russian Internet – Lenta.ru. Secondly, these are various researchers, who have published works on Livejournal.

³ The rest of the blogging services of the Russian Internet can be viewed at: http://blogs.yandex.ru/services/.
And, thirdly, these are the experts of Russian blogosphere – first users of the service, most prominent bloggers and other specialists. The research design is composed of various elements – the grounded theory is used as way of structuring the research, the theory of narrative helps to approach the experiences of individuals in a consistent way, while the method of narrative interview is used to conduct interviews with the blogging experts.

The second and the third chapter of the thesis include the overview of today’s research on blogosphere and blogging, as well as the description of Russian-language blogosphere and the position of Livejournal in it in accordance to various quantitative criteria. The third chapter also includes the description of the structure of Livejournal service and possible ways of behaviour for its users. The fourth chapter introduces the methodological tools I use to perform the research: the grounded theory, narratology and the narrative interview. In addition, the research design is presented, where I explain the way these tools are used. The next chapter includes the stories of the development of Russian Livejournal, acquired from various sources (articles, academic papers, interviews). The story of each source is presented separately and the chapter is concluded with the summary of the general story of Livejournal and the contextualisation of these developments against the backdrop of the state of Russian society.
2. OVERVIEW OF PRESENT RESEARCH ON BLOGOSPHERE

2.1. Defining blogging and blogosphere

This thesis does not aim to investigate qualities of the phenomenon of blogging, but development of its aspect. For this reason I will only give definitions to concepts, most used in this work – ‘blog’ and ‘blogosphere’. Genres ob blogs, their general meaning from the point of view of communication studies and so on will not be discussed.

Definition of the word ‘blog’ has been a field of competition between social scientists. The most general one and, therefore, most usable for academic purposes, I have spotted in the work of economist Paul Pedley. He defines blog as a form of online diary or regularly updated journal which can take a number of forms and tends to have a number of characteristics in common, such as: being set up to display blog postings in reverse-chronological order or with their content arranged by subject; being updated regularly with new material; and providing a personal viewpoint. (Pedley 2005, pp. 95-100)


Definition of blogosphere varies, dependent on the focus of research paper. Since this study is oriented towards blogging as a social process, I choose to see blogosphere rather as a ‘community of bloggers’, where belonging to this community is defined primarily by the use of particular language – Russian.

2.2. Literature review: approaches to research of blogging practices

Despite the fact that blogging is a very young genre of communication, for the last few years there has been a great volume of papers done on the issue. Blog research is an intermediate field – it attracts academics sociology, journalism, computer science and other backgrounds, which results in a huge variety of different works.
I propose a classification of the approaches into three major groups: ‘uses and impact of blogs’, ‘blogging in relation to other communicational practices’ and ‘network perspective’. Such grouping came into my mind long ago when getting acquainted with various articles related to the issue. While preparing this study I have found similar classification in the work of a senior researcher at the Hans-Bredow-Institute for media research (Hamburg), Jan Schmidt, which helped me to come to a better understanding of blog research. Describing these categories of research direction, I will give a limited number of examples of various works under each category. This chapter helps to place my research in the context of the general academic field.

Huge body of research focuses on uses and impacts of blogs. It employs mainly qualitative research methods, uses statistical as well as sociological terms and answers questions on “who and how” uses blogs. Many papers focus on demography of bloggers and patterns of daily use. For instance, Herring at al. find out that blog users are predominantly male, young adults, residing in USA, while Lenhart and Fox have concluded that weblogs are mostly are treated as personal journals, devoted to personal life experiences and users are less likely to be white then general Internet population while an average blogger is a person who writes under a pseudonym, treats blogging as a ‘hobby’ and spends few hours per week on this activity. (Herring et al 2005, pp. 142–171)

Some attention is devoted to the usage of blogs by males and females. For example, work of Nowson and Oberlander (2006) has resulted in conclusion, that female blog writers are “to have a significantly more contextual style of writing than men” and “have more immediate style of writing, use more pronouns and words reflecting social processes”.

Some other papers in this group, as Scmidt (2007) notes, concentrate on how blogging facilitates interaction with other bloggers and readers and, thus, leads to creation of communities of shared interests. As an example a paper on creation and following of norms in the community blogs devoted to knitting can me mentioned. The latter concludes, that “(…) community designers, such as the administrators of web rings, can create member guidelines, but actual practice by members will also shape these communities. As blog communities emerge, understanding how norms form may help community designers create an environment that satisfies members’ values and cultures” (Wei 2004).
There also exists extensive research on relation between blogs and various different fields of communication, which, mostly, employs qualitative research methods such as case studies, discourse analysis etc. Such papers are more likely to provide some practical suggestions and provisions for the future. This group of research approaches can be divided in three subgroups.

First sub-group focuses on relationship between blogging and journalism. Some of journalism-related papers are focused on how media adapt blogging as a new tool to attract emerging, more and more alienated on-line audiences.

For instance, Matheson (2004, pp. 443-468) has conducted a case study of a weblog produced by British Guardian newspaper. The language of this research includes such terms as online journalism, interactive journalism. Author’s view the interaction between journalism and blogging as a struggle for power between genres, where a new medium, blogging, influences the old medium, the press and try to explain how characteristics of ‘old’ and ‘new’ media are merging in the Guardian blog: hyperlinks, comment and other options available for readers. The general conclusion is that “journalistic products, such as the one explored here provide evidence of journalism’s attempts to rethink its values and relations with its publics in the context of such social change.”

Matheson also creates a very useful classification – he divides three major themes in the academic discussion around relation between blogging and journalism:

1. weblogs as a space for journalistic thinking for which institutional journalism provides little room;
2. weblogs as a challenge to corporate journalism;
3. and weblogs as a democratic, interactive space.

His own research falls into the second group, while many others view the question from the opposite standpoint and try to answer the question whether some blogs can be classified as ‘journalism’ due to the nature of the content their authors produce. (Haas 2004, pp. 387–369)

Second sub-group is on organizational communication (e.g. so-called ‘corporate blogs’). As an example, the work discussing discursive practises of participants of Microsoft Longhorn Blogosphere, in which it is argued, that specific technological feature of weblogs supports the emergence of passionate conversations on knowledge intensive practices. These discursive practices of bloggers closely intertwine with the individual as well as with the collective processes of creative work and software development (Kaiser et al. 2007, pp. 391-412). Slightly different perspective, as Schmidt
(2007) notes, is employed by looking at blogs as channels for expert communication and personal knowledge management, for example with regard to academics.

In the third sub-group of blog research on the connection between this phenomenon and other communicational practices, (possible) relationship of blogging and different knowledge-related practices is very closely researched. Mainly these are libraries, educational and knowledge management issues. Here a blog is mainly viewed as a technological tool for improving performance within a certain sphere. For example, Hyung Nam Kim (2008) from the writes that such research is highly controversial: “some studies have revealed that blogs successfully contribute to students’ online engagement; on the contrary, others have claimed that blog technology has failed to motivate students to become involved in the online activity.”

Some authors view blogs from a network perspective, where, most often, blogs are seen as nodes of the network while hyperlinks from one blog to another, social relation or other kind of connection (for instance, the fact of belonging to a particular blogging platform or service) being understood as ties between nodes. One single blog is viewed as a part of the whole, interconnected with the others and not being able to exist without them. What is more, authors of papers in this group are more likely to emphasize the possibility to leave comments and hyperlinks/blogrolls as crucial distinctive features of a blog as these create ties to other blogs.

The great deal of works of this approach involves analysis of structure of the network and description of its elements, as well as comparison between different networks/elements of networks, often attention is paid to nature of connections between the nodes. Within this group academics also devote their attention to different directions.

As the first one, topical clusters can be named, such as war. One of these works uses network theory to map what is called ‘war blogosphere’ (Treymane et al. 2006). Unlike other papers in the group, in this work a ‘blogosphere’ is not defined by the fact of belonging to either a domain name (e.g. Schlobinski and Siever) or a blogging platform (Gorny), but by two criteria – topic orientation of a blog (in this case – war in Iraq) and connection to blogs with the same topical orientation via hyperlinks.

Blogosphere is viewed is the ‘sub network of the Web’ and as a theoretical standpoint a network theory by Barbasi and Albert, who graphed the network of web pages by the number of link to other web
pages and introduced various law of such networking, was used. An interesting point is, that authors of the research mention, that the network they investigate is actually construction of their own and is partly determined by the purposes of the research. Authors of the paper aimed at describing what they call a war blogosphere according to various criteria: (1) features of a blog, that prescribed their emergence as hubs (nodes of the network with a lot of links to other nodes); (2) the network structure; (3) major differences between different elements of this structure.

The results appeared to be the following. Two features of blog entries as key predictors of incoming links were found – incoming links and reporting posts (i.e. those, where author of the blog is reporting his/her experience, not just expressing opinions). The mapping of the war blogosphere reveals ‘two distinct spheres of influence with some interaction in the middle’ meaning ideological (‘conservative’ or ‘liberal’) views of a blogger. Differences between these to parts of the blogosphere mostly relate to information sources – ‘conservatives’ are more likely to provide links to other blogs, while liberals – to webpages newspapers and other media. This, as Treymane at al. state, correlates with patterns of trust in media among population of the United States, measured by previous papers.

Another similar research was conducted by Adamic and Glance, who have also found different clustering patterns for conservative and liberal blogs and suggested that ideology could be a factor in the blogosphere. (Adamic & Glance 2005, pp. 36-43)

Another direction within a network-oriented approach is a country- or language-specific blogosphere or blog network within certain hosting platforms. A good example would be a compilation of case studies on national (Russian, English, German,) blogospheres made by various papers (Schlobinski & Siever 2005). A research of mainly Chinese and English language users of the hosting platform ‘Wallop’ can also be mentioned, where connections between users of the service are viewed as social ties which may have different level of strength. Authors of the paper claim also that pre-existing social networks tend to reproduce in the blogging platforms. (Lehto et al. 2006)

It is worth noting that researchers on the blogging platform Livejournal, that have been found, are concentrate on the social relations between bloggers and view them as a link between to nodes equal to technicalities of belonging to the same service. This results from the fact, that Livejournal combines elements of social networking site and a blogging platform. Thus, it a network of interconnected blogs, where social relations between bloggers play a very important role. Therefore, research that focus on
Livejournal automatically views it a network, but at the same time concentrate on the distinctive nature of interrelation between bloggers, that the nature of the platform facilitates.

An interesting work was conducted by Lori Kendall (2007), who has investigated identity and information management strategies of individuals, using Livejournal. She concludes, that “the model of a private diary conflicts with the reality of public performance. The convenience of the blended audience on LiveJournal, often consisting of friends, family, and co-workers, conflicts with desires to manage and partition that audience. The desire for control of discourse, interaction, and relationships conflicts with the desire for increased connection and closeness. The desire for autonomy and the belief in discrete, individual selves conflicts with the desire for feedback and approval from others.”

Fono & Rayens-Goldie (2006) have closely investigated one of the links between nodes of Livejournal network. They have conducted a research a connection which within the service is called ‘friending’ – addition of someone to one’s friends list that allows that user to read one’s protected entries. This activity constitutes the core of interconnection between bloggers of Livejournal and, basically, forms the main structure of this blogosphere segment. As authors have noted, “‘friend’ has been integral to building the strong sense of community that exists on LiveJournal.”

Among the conclusions, researchers note that “there are a number of [different] emerging social norms which regulate ‘friending’ on LiveJournal” and “consistent interpretations (…) that cause the social conflict around the articulation of relationships”. According to Fono & Rayens-Goldie, there are two main vectors of attitude towards friendship with the blogging service – one group of users sees it as a social act which had to be performed and maintained according to some criteria and rules while others prefer not to follow any strict guidelines. Mainly these social norms refer to the practise of adding ‘friends’ to one’s friend list within Livejournal or deleting users from that list. They also suggest that the notion of friendship that exists within the blogging platform is somewhat comparable with Baudrillard’s ‘hyperreality’, where “the degradation of existing meanings prompts an exaggeration of signifying characteristics well beyond realistic categories”. They suggest that he same happens with friendship as a concept within Livejournal.

The logical conclusion of a literature review in a thesis is a summary of what the subject is, providing its essence. Nevertheless, it is impossible to reach such a result when reviewing literature on blog research. Blogging is a new communicative practice and language use genre. For this reason the
research is directed in two flows. Firstly, scientists have been either trying to understand how it fits into the already known sphere of knowledge about communication -- blogging as or versus journalism, usage of blogging in certain fields, re-vitalization of certain thought-to-be-dead concepts of normative thinking such as ‘public sphere’ and ‘democracy’. Secondly, they have been describing the process of blogging itself, such as demography of bloggers, their understanding of the activity and such.

Blogs have surely changes the field of communication – this tool has been used thought different disciplines with different level of success. Giving a voice to everyone able to use it, blogging made communication professionals re-think many basic concepts, from ‘journalism’ to ‘friendship’.
3. RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BLOGOSPHERE AND LIVEJOURNAL

In this chapter I introduce my empirical material in various terms. Firstly, I place Livejournal blogging service and its Russian-speaking segment in a context of both Russian and world, i.e. mostly English-speaking, blogosphere, while also finding the connection between the two latter. In the end of the chapter I explain specifics the architecture of Livejournal service which, as many argue, pre-determines the relationships between its users.

3.1. World blogosphere

By 2008 there were 133 millions blogs registered since 2002 with 7.4 millions being updated during the last four month and only 1.5 millions of bloggers having written an entry within the last week. Technoraty.com, the world largest blog search engine, has tracked blogs being updated in 81 languages around 66 countries. (Technoraty report 2009). Given that there are almost seven thousands languages (Ethonologue) and nearly 200 countries (UN data) in the world; blogging proves to be a rare phenomenon on the world scale.

The use of blogs is also quite unevenly distributed. Although Technoraty does not provide the statistic on language use by bloggers, it is known that 75 per cent of them come from North America and Europe, while only one per cent – from Africa. As Technoraty report states, “bloggers are not a homogenous group, but they are an educated and affluent one: three out of four U.S. bloggers are college graduates, and 42 per cent have attended graduate school. They skew male, and more than half has a household income over $75,000”. (ibid.)

3.2. Russian blogosphere and Livejournal

Prior to the description of the current state of Russian blogosphere and the place of Livejournal in it, it is necessary to discuss definitions used in this work. As it is noted in the most recent publication about the Russian blogosphere, neither the blogosphere itself nor so-called Runet⁴ are clear terms. Runet is an ambiguous label for it refers to a blurry combination of the national and geopolitical “Internet in

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⁴ The term “Runet” is an abridgement from a word combination ‘Russian Internet’ and also refers to the ‘.ru’ country-code top level domain.
Russia” and cultural and linguistic spaces of Russians and Russian language. These are two distinct, albeit, overlapping entities. Same applies to the Russian-speaking community of a blog-hosting service Livejournal. (Aleksanyan & Kolsova 2009, pp. 65–85) In this work I use terms ‘Russian Internet’, ‘Runet’, ‘Russian blogosphere’, ‘Russian-speaking blogosphere’, ‘Russian Livejournal’ and ‘Russian-speaking Livejournal’, having in mind both ‘geopolitical/national’ and ‘linguistic/cultural’ meanings of these terms.

According to the latest (dated by spring of 2009) in the regular series of Russian blogosphere analysis by Yandex, the leading search engine of the Russian Internet, blogs in Russian account for nearly five per cent of the world blogosphere. There around 7.4 mil of blogs in the Russian blogosphere, although only 12 per cent of those are regularly updated. Yandex also notes that while the share of “active” bloggers has decreased over the past two years, their absolute number grew from 760 till 890 thousands. (Yandex Report on The state of Blogosphere 2009)

Currently, there are 128 blog hosting services in the Russian blogosphere, while 70 per cent of all blogs in Russian are situated on four biggest platforms – Livejournal, Blogs.Mail.ru, Ya.ru and LiveInternet.ru. According to the amount of registered journals the leader of the top is LiveInternet, although that number is hardly significant in terms of importance – 96 per cent of LiveInternet blogs have not been updated recently. According to the data of TNS, a Russian statistics agency, the blogging platform, most visited by non-registered users, is Livejournal. Its monthly audience is 8.7 millions. Generally, while in the last year audiences of mentioned services have been growing in numbers, growth of registered blogs tends to decrease. (ibid.)

The latest development of Russian Internet in terms of blogging is the growing popularity of Twitter (www.twitter.com), a very simple micro-blogging service, where the length of a message can not exceed 140 symbols. The share of active users there is significantly higher then on other platforms – 80 per cent. Also so-called stand-alone blogs are becoming more popular. In 2009 they amount up to 190 thousands, which is 21 times more then a year ago. Also the share of actively updated blogs is higher there – 28 per cent. (ibid.)

Geographically, Russian bloggers live mostly in the big cities of the post-Soviet Union countries, top ten being Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Minsk, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Samara, Alma-Ata, Odessa, Nizhniy Novgorod. It is worth noticing, that the data on the geographical position is taken...
from the information from a profile page of each blogger, therefore it might not reflect reality in its full shape. Nevertheless, this the only available information, so we have nothing left to do but follow it.

There are several more criteria of the Yandex research, according to which Livejournal stands out among other blogging services. Livejournal bloggers have the highest average amount of “friends” among all services of Russian blogosphere. Users of Livejournal are also more likely to belong to different communities within the service. (ibid.)

According to the data brought by the Yandex research, Russian blogosphere is growing less rapidly then it used to, although the amount of interest from other Internet users is still increasing. The blogging service Livejournal still occupies an important place within the Russian blogosphere and exactly this quality has attracted my scientific attention to this service. If put in the context of the world blogosphere, Livejournal is one of the most popular blogging platforms, although not very embraced by the most popular bloggers, who are more likely to post their entries at so-called ‘stand-alone’ blogs. (ibid.)

### 3.3. Dynamics of relationships within Livejournal service

This thesis speaks about the Russian language segment of the blogging platform Livejournal. As it can be concluded from the information on Russian and world blogospheres, Russian part of Livejournal is an area, where two blogospheres overlap. Livejournal is an initially USA-based service which now is owned by a Russian company and used mainly by the Russian-speaking bloggers. At the same time it is the only foreign blogging service that plays a significant role in the Russian blogosphere.

The terms used in this thesis to describe Livejournal and it’s community of Russian-speaking users, are various: ‘Cyrillic segment of Livejournal’, ‘Russian Livejournal’, ‘RLJ’. These definitions are mostly synonyms.

In my previous research on Livejournal, that has been conducted while acquiring a Bachelors degree, I have assessed the relationships between users of the service. Briefly introduced, the explanation of these relationships will help to understand terms, mentioned in the work further, as well as provide a certain context for the research.
The architecture of Livejournal provides opportunities for linking ones blog with other blogs hosted at the same platform. The main source of ties between Livejournal users is the activity of adding another LJ blogger into a “friend list”. In essence it is an RSS feed, where the updates of “friended” bloggers are displayed in chronological order, which can be viewed when one logs in the service. “Friended” users can see secure entries of one’s blog, which are marked as “friend only” and are not visible for other Livejournal users or visitors of the page. If both users have “friended” each other, it gives them a status of “mutual friends” and a tie is considered to be a stronger one. (Dragileva 2007)

There are two more sources of ties between different users of Livejournal. Firstly, it is the fact of belonging to the same “interest community” (for instance, fans of Michael Jackson, young mothers or writers of Harry Potter gay fan fiction). Secondly, it can be the activity of commenting the same blog. In this case the unifying element is differently motivated interest for the texts, pictures or videos, which the blogger commonly read publishes as well as possible discussions in the comment field. Through such activity different bloggers exist in partially shared informational space. (ibid)

It also should be noted, that in some cases all of these ties, offered by Livejournal architecture, are complemented by ties of “off-line” acquaintance. Some communities of Livejournal users have both “off-line”, “friending” ties and ties regarding belonging to same interest groups/reading the same popular blogger. Despite the fact that the existence of such “mixed” groups is, as it was found out while conducting the empirical research, the result of development of Livejournal (at least within the Russian speaking part of the service), it is still useful to mention it at this stage of the paper. (ibid.)

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5 I have coined this term in order to present more precisely the action of adding another Livejournal user into ones “friendlist”. This English word can be treated as a Russian term “зафрендить” which means the same.
4. METHODOLOGY

As Mills et al. (2006) note, “to ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality”. The methodology chosen to approach the development of the Russian-language segment of the Livejournal blogging platform was born out of my personal sympathy towards the philosophy of constructivism as well as from out of my interest in the history of Livejournal which, it seems, is best approachable from the constructivist perspective.

I have chosen constructivism as a mode of thinking to approach both the relationship between myself as a researcher and the research process itself. “Epistemologically, constructivism emphasizes the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant, and the construction of meaning”. (Millas et al. 2006) I realize that I am a part of the research endeavour rather than an objective observer and the story of Livejournal, constructed by a different individual might be very unlike the one I will produce.

Colin Finns (2002, pp. 1-10), debating the nature of constructivism, defines social reality as being defined by human interaction. It is constituted by the way we think or talk about it, by the way we explain it to each other and by the concepts we use to grasp it. It is an intellectual activity as such, that is thought to generate facts.

I view blogosphere in general and any given segment of it as a part of social reality, while its development is seen as a social process. It is both difficult and perhaps even fruitless to approach the hard data of the blogosphere development since the binary language that constitutes the undeniable facts of the development of this on-line space is inaccessible to me as to social scientist. I have rather chosen to research the development of the Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal through experiences of various individuals and their ways of talking about this development. Narratology and grounded theory are tools to deal methodologically with experiences of individuals for reasons that will be described further in this chapter.
4.1. Narratology

Contemporary Narratology which Volf Schmidt describes as the “theory of story-telling”, was born under the influence of Russian formalists, such as Propp, Bahtin and Voloshinov. Firstly only texts which involved a distant story-teller were regarded as narrative, while later, during the development of structural Narratology, “narrative” pointed at a certain structure of the text. (Shmid 2003, pp. 9-22) According to Czarniawska (2004, pp. 17–31), narrative is the main form of social life since it is the main too with which a meaning can be attached to a social action. At the same time G. Truner wrote that stories offer a simple and meaningful way of constructing one’s perception. (Truner 1987, p. 49)

In this study I turn to one of the most prominent theoreticians – Mieke Bal. The reason for this is the very general, although precise, scope of the approach that she provides in her work “Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative”, as well as the flexible definition of the narrative text and various pre-assumptions on the usage of theory, such as an encouragement to apply it also to texts, having narrative elements, or a permission to use certain parts of narratology, which I am intending to do. Firstly, I will explain what, according to Bal, narratology deals with and, secondly, provide an essence of her approach sufficient for this study.

Narratology is a theory of narratives -narrative texts, images, spectacles, events – in other words, the cultural artefacts that ‘tell a story’. As to the application of the theory, narratology is “a set of tools, as means to express and specify one’s interpretative reactions to a text.” Interpretation, in its turn is regarded as unconstrained while the tools which are provided by the theory, can be used in different ways. The theorist also mentions that usage of this theory does not provide certainty and reading as such is “an activity of subjective nature”. (Bal 1997, pp. 3-16)

In Bal’s theory ‘narrative’ is considered an adjective, a quality of the text or an element of it that makes it accessible for research within narratology. Text is defined as “a finite, structured whole, composed of language signs”. Text being finite means having definable boundaries: “a first and a last word, image, a frame of painting, even if there boundaries (…) are not watertight”. (ibid.)

The defining concept of Bal’s narratology is the distinction between three layers of a narrative text. Those notions are explained below in the way which Bal calls inductive although from the point of view of the reader of a narrative text, the first layer is the most abstract and less obvious (ibid.)
The first layer is the *fabula*, the most abstract level of the narrative text, components of which are called ‘elements’ and are the following: events, actors, time and location. Fabula itself is defined as a series of logically and chronologically related ‘events’ that are caused or experienced by ‘actors’. And ‘event’ is the transition from one state to another. ‘Actors’ are agents that perform ‘actions’ (not necessarily human). ‘To act’ is to cause experience or ‘event’. The rules, according to which fabula is organized, Bal calls ‘logic of events’. ‘Time’ and ‘location’ are the necessary attributes of an ‘event’. (ibid.)

*Story* is the next level. It is defined as elements of fabula organized in a way that would produce a certain aesthetic or emotional effect. Traits which are specific to a given story are named ‘aspects’. These ‘aspects’ are related to the ‘elements’ of the fabula, in essence being more specific and detailed ‘elements’. As Garsia Landa (2005) notes, story is a fabula which has been given shape, and a specific opinion has been introduced.

Thus, ‘aspects’ are as follows: characters (actors with distinct features, individualized), places (locations with distinct characteristics), other relationships between elements (symbolic, allusive etc.), non-chronological sequence of events, focalization (‘point(s) of view’, from which the story is presented).

Character is the most vitally category of the narrative. Actor is a structural position, while character is complex unit, which is individualized, distinct from other characters. Important aspects, that M. Bal mentions in relation to the concept of character and its construction is “repetition” (of characters’ qualities), the collection of data, relationship with other characters and with itself as well as the transformation of the character (change of qualities). As a rule, narrative analysis pays attention to the core characters, which are the most connected with events. (Bal 1997, pp. 42-60)

*Narrative text*, the third layer, “is a text in which an agent relates (‘tells’) a story in a particular medium or a story, converted into signs. Various narrative texts “differ from one another even if the related story is the same”. There are various distinctive features of this level. Firstly, there is a “fictitious spokesperson” – a narrator. Secondly, non-narrative elements should be taken into consideration; parts of text can be descriptive or argumentative as well as narrative. All of these types of texts are, nevertheless, expressed on the part of narrator. In addition, on the level of the narrative text, “he
anthropomorphic figure, called ‘actor’ in the study of fabula and ‘character in the study of story.’” (ibid.)

What distinguishes the narrative text from other, non-narrative, texts is: two types of ‘speakers’, three distinguishable layers of the text and the ‘contents’ being “a series of connected events caused or experienced by actors presented in a specific manner”. “Such a distinction carries with it the assumption, that it is possible to analyze the three layers separately. That does not mean that these layers ‘exist’ separately from one another. Only the text, embodies in the sign system (...) is directly accessible.” (ibid.)

To make the basic concepts of this theory understandable for myself and readers of this study, I have created the following scheme as an illustration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text layer</th>
<th>Fabula</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Narrative text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Specific place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of the layer</th>
<th>Chronological sequence of events</th>
<th>Sequence of events may be other than chronological.</th>
<th>Non-narrative elements (descriptive, argumentative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other relationships between fabula elements exist.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Focaliser</td>
<td>Narrator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illustration 1: *Levels of narrative text according to Narratology, described by Bal, 1997*

**4.2. Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory, introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) belongs to the family of inductive approaches to relationship between theory and research. Such studies should begin with in an open-ended fashion, becoming more focused once research and analysis develop. The notion of
grounded theory refers to “theoretical explanations about the social world that emerge from empirical data”. As Hodkinson quotes the authors of the theory, “preconceived theoretical framework should be avoided at all costs”. (Hodkinson 2008, pp. 80-101)

The core of the methodology of grounded theory is the fusion of data collection and its analysis. The data collection should start in an “open and non-prescriptive manner”, after an initial analysis, the primary outcomes are used to perform a further, more focused data collection which is designed in such a way that would help to investigate emerging concepts. Ultimately, this process leads to the emergence of the theoretical concepts, grounded in the data. During the process of analysis and collection of data, “any new instances should be compared and contrasted with existing examples”.

Data analysis within the given theory is based on the notion of coding as a primary method. “Coding refers to an ongoing process of assigning conceptual labels to different segments of data in order to identify themes, patterns, processes and relationships. In the initial stage of analysis codes should be combined detailed, specific and numerous, but as the integrated process of data analysis and collection continue, these initial codes should be combined in larger more generalised categories.” (ibid.)

The next emerging element of this approach is ‘constant comparison’. Each new instance within a category should be compared with all the previous instances. New instances should be coded only if they demonstrate something different to the previous instances since only in that way do they contribute to the development of the theory. At the point where there is nothing new to a category it should be considered as “theoretically saturated”. (ibid.)

The initial authors of the grounded theory have later introduced more a specific division of the coding process into ‘open’, ‘axial’ and ‘selective’ coding. ‘Open’ coding stands for the first stages of coding, where data is closely examined and as many classifications as possible are produced. With ‘axial’ coding “things are put back together again” – each category is understood as the ‘axis’ and the nature of relationships between sub-categories that is examined. During ‘selective coding’ the researcher “elaborates relationships between the most significant categories in order to develop broader (...) conclusions”. (ibid.)

After coding and analysing the first initial set of data, the targeted collection and coding of the new data follows through theoretical sampling which, according to Hodkinson, is the stage of the process of
data collection when it “shifts from the initial exploratory focus towards something deliberately designed to investigate emerging concepts and possibilities”.

As described by Hodkinson, the process of grounded theory-based research starts by initial data collection and its analysis through coding and is followed by further focused data collection (theoretical sampling) to be coded again, which, in its turn, might lead to “yet more tightly focused collection”. The end of this process takes place when “theoretical saturation” has been achieved.

At some point of the research process, integration of categories should start to take place. During that process “the reduction of the large number of highly specific categories into a smaller number of broader, more overly theoretical concepts, categories that share a particular property (…) may be brought together”. (ibid.)

While using grounded theory approach in her doctoral dissertation, Svetlana Pasti quotes Morse: “If the question concerns an experience and the phenomenon in question is a process, the method of choice for addressing is grounded theory” (Pasti 2007, pp. 102-110). Such definition fits very well to the object of study – the development of Livejournal through descriptions (experiences) of different kinds of participants of the project.

4.3. The narrative interview

As it will be explained later, the main and final stage of the empirical research for the present thesis is the set of interviews with the experts of Russian Livejournal. The ‘narrative interview’6 type chosen for this purpose is a way to access experiences of individuals, alternative to the semi-structured interview.

The narrative interview starts with the ‘generative narrative question’ which is related to the topic of the study and is intended to stimulate an interviewee to produce his/her own narrative. Later when the respondent has exceeded his/her experiences, the set of question aimed to clarify some fragments of the narrative for obtaining more detailed data follows. In the last stage of the interview the respondent is asked questions on the theoretical accounts on what has happened and the ‘meaning’ he/she gives to the narrative in question. (Uwe 2002, pp. 96–112)

6 Here I use the term ‘narrative’ in the way it is used by the author of the literature source, although if to paraphrase the original text in Bals words, the word ‘story’ or ‘fabula’ would be used instead of ‘narrative’.
Ideally narrative interview is used in order to gain biographical data about the respondent, which is not quite the case in the present research. Nevertheless, every blogging expert included in the selection is closely involved with the development of Livejournal in Russia, has achieved personal and career aims with the help of blogging and has contributed to the growth of Russian blogosphere as well. For this reason Livejournal is incorporated in the life of all interviewees and the narrative interview method is perfectly relevant for my research aims.

4.4. Research design

The design of the thesis does not follow precisely the grounded theory approach, nor narratology by Bal. In this work I at the same time go beyond and use only specific elements of both approaches. In this chapter I explain why and how elements of previously described approaches are used and intertwined to find an answer to the research question posed in the introduction to the thesis. I also give a brief description of the empirical field.

According to Bal (1997, pp. 42-60), telling stories is the main way for individuals to make sense of social processes. In this thesis I use narratology as an analytical tool to approach texts produced by individuals and, in my turn, to make sense out of those texts. It is important to note here that I use narratology rather as a tool and it is not in the centre of the research as such.

The empirical material of this thesis consists of three kinds of texts dealing with the development of Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal: articles of the leading Runet news medium Lenta.ru, academic papers dealing with (or mentioning) Russian blogosphere and interviews with ‘experts’ involved in the development of the sphere (‘pioneers’ of Livejournal, employees of the company administrating the field, most popular bloggers in the Russian Blogosphere). Interviewees of the last category are not experts in the traditional meaning of this term; most of them are very experienced users of the service, who due to that quality are to be treated as experts. This selection of materials aims producing a diverse general story of Livejournal. Works of journalists are the reflection of immediate events in the development of the sphere; academic papers are included in order to represent the reflective and theoretical assessment of the process while experts are chosen to enrich the story with personal experiences of people who had a certain role in the development.
All texts, constituting the corpus of empirical material, were treated as narrative texts or texts, having narrative elements. In accordance with narratology, each of those texts has three levels, the two not directly accessible being ‘story’ and ‘fabula’. Approaching texts from this ‘layer’ perspective I make an assumption that in each of those narrative texts about the Russian segment of Livejournal, there are elements of the general story (or fabula – depending on the level approached) of the service. Thus, while being a very diverse in terms of forms of expressions, quality, genre and other criteria, the whole corpus of materials, taken together, shares certain elements of the narrative text as understood by Bal. Extracted from the texts these elements of the narrative level can be put together with the aim of creating the general story of Livejournal. This story (fabula) need not be coherent; it is possible for it to have different ‘branches’ of development if so presented in various texts. What is more, such a result is even favoured from my part since it demonstrates the range of opinions and possible ways of development and makes the historical record that I aim at producing more usable for further interpretations.

To arrive at the point where from the vast numbers of different narrative texts the general story (fabula) is constructed, I use the grounded theory approach. Although presupposed framework exists – the elements of the narrative were searched for, precise choice of the level of the narrative and concrete elements to be included in the end result were left to emerge from the empirical material. Therefore it was decided that grounded theory was the most suitable for the analysis of data and goals of the research.

As Hudkinson (2008, pp. 80-110) notes, it is common for researchers not to follow grounded theory to the letter and adopt selected features of the approach. In this thesis I take the same path as the rules of the grounded theory are not conformed to completely – the theoretical framework (narratology) and the approximate idea of the aim existed before the data was gathered. In addition, unlike the suggested methodology of grounded theory by N. Gilbert proposes, I do look into the existing literature related to the field of inquiry (blogosphere) in advance of the process of data collection and analysis. However, this dimension of the grounded theory could not be followed in any case since I have been previously researching Russian-speaking blogosphere, as well as following research on new media/ blogging and the general dynamics of the field for a long period of time.

Being based on the procedures on grounded theory, this research adapts the approach to data collection and analysis, namely – initial data collection, coding, focused data collection and continuous
comparison of categories. The methodology of grounded theory is an applicable tool in this particular research since before first materials have been approached and analysed, it was not known which level of the narrative text will be taken into consideration – fabula or story and which parts of the level will be extracted from texts analyzed.

During the process of initial data collection in the first stage of empirical research, a set of texts dedicated to the history of the Cyrillic segment of Livejournal has been selected among all the material mentioning the service in the Lenta.ru news portal. Each text (journalistic article, commentary or a press release) is understood as a narrative text with elements of Livejournal’s grand story or fabula as its levels. During the first stage of analysis elements of the story are extracted from all texts.

Next, even more focused data collection follows – academic works are selected on the basis of the story that has been obtained from the Lenta.ru articles. Perspectives and patterns lacking in the results from the first stage of analysis will be searched for in this stage. Narrative text elements of this material are analysed and story/fabula elements are added into the emerging grand story of Livejournal. Although scientific research can hardly be considered a narrative text according to Ball’s criteria, I do include a number of academic papers in this work and approach them as texts with narrative elements. Naturally, only these elements are included in the corpus of empirical material. The reason for inclusion is important insights that researchers are expected to add to the empirical material.

The last stage of analysis consists of interviews with individuals who have been involved in the development of Livejournal. When the research is reaching this stage, a number of elements of the story/fabula is collected, so that both selection of individuals for the interview and formulation of questions are directed to fill the gaps within the grand story that is being created. Each interview is aimed at stimulating the interviewee to tell his story of the Russian Livejournal in accordance with the narrative interview method of inquiry.

This design was created with a purpose to allow creating a story of Livejournal in bottom-up direction, without presumptions preceding the research. At the same time, diverse sources of the narrative text elements ensure that the story of Livejournal is composed with perspectives of different side involved taken into consideration.
5. EMPIRICAL PART

5.1. Articles

The first set of empirical material consists of texts from the most popular news source in the Russian language segment of the Internet, the news portal Lenta.ru. Materials of this particular publication were chosen for several reasons. Firstly, Lenta.ru is the major and most qualitative on-line publication in the Russian internet. Secondly, it is closely related to Livejournal since its early days – the publication was founded by one of the first users of Russian Livejournal, Anton Nossik. For this reason Lenta.ru has always been closely following the development of Livejournal. The selection of the articles has not been limited with a time frame. Since I am interested in the overall history of Russian Livejournal all materials that have included a mentioning of the blogging service, have been considered. Such search produced more than 250 articles, press releases and commentaries. Out of all these texts a number of 84 articles that have Livejournal history itself as their subject, contain a mention of this topic or are dedicated to an event in the development of RLJ have been included in the empirical material of this research. Each text was examined to extract parts of a level of a narrative text.

At this point it is important to consider one specific feature of approaching on-line texts within the theory of narrative. On-line texts often extend beyond the actual writings of the author. In many cases, additional details and important information are provided via the hyperlink which leads the reader to an external source. For instance, writing about a flash-mob, organized by Russian-speaking users of Livejournal, journalist has provided a link to a blog entry written by the organizers of the action, where additional information, which contributed to the story, was provided. In such cases I view both the article and the text under the hyperlink as a whole narrative text. Flexible view on the definition of text, provided by Bal, allows this approach.

Although during the planning of the research it was not clear whether the ‘story’ or the ‘fabula’ level was to be chosen, soon after going through the first articles of Lenta.ru it became clear, that elements of the ‘story’ were to be considered. The reason for this was that many articles provided a specific view on certain parts of the history of Russian segment of Livejournal and actors of stories have been presented in as having specific characteristics and personalities. To be able to include those personalities in the analysis, I made a choice in the favour of the level of the ‘story’ level.
In accordance with the procedures of grounded theory, I coded each piece of the empirical material obtained. Every single article of Lenta.ru has been analysed and, in the words of grounded theory, ‘conceptual labels’ were applied to the material, namely, every identified element of the ‘story’ level of the narrative text was written down. Procedurally, the analysis of each article was written down on what could have been called a ‘card’ in earlier days, but took a shape of a simple ‘Microsoft Word’ table in the modern era. This table with a detailed list of story elements can be found in the Appendix 1 part of the present thesis.

Characters

To begin the description of the data brought by the first stage of empirical analysis, I will describe the most common characters which are present in most of the articles and have a leading role in the story of Livejournal Russian-speaking segment. Features that characters are endowed with are the most commonly repeated in each text. According to Bal, ‘repetition’ is on the main instruments of creating a character. It should be noted as well that characters and events included in the story of Lenta.ru are those commonly repeated in various articles.

Russian-speaking community of Livejournal (RLJ)
This community is meant to constitute of two main groups, the activists and the rest of the bloggers, is the character with most features and the one having the highest degree of personalisation, i.e. having features of a human being. Russian-speaking segment is surely a unified character which acts, reacts, has features and feelings. Russian-speaking community of Livejournal is different from the other, mainly English-speaking communities in many ways.

Firstly, users that constitute this part of the blogosphere are peculiar in their curiosity, eagerness for massive collective action, discussion of evens. At the same time Russian Livejournal community has a tendency to raise panic, provocations and scandals, claim of having knowledge and have predictable opinions. There are two contradictory features of this character – Russian speakers within LJ are described as both important in policy decisions, making society aware of problems and uneducated, not knowledgeable in the domain of issues, important for the society. Secondly, Russian-speaking Livejournal bloggers are specific in their ways of communication which are rude, filled with swearwords and offensive language. Thirdly, RLJ users are different in terms of being more active then
any other community within the service and having a negative attitude towards any changes in Livejournal and its management. These features are responsible for most of conflicts between the community and other characters in the story.

Company ‘SUP FABRIK’
The company that was firstly administrating and later owning Livejournal service. ‘SUP FABRIK’ is a developer that has financial interest in Livejournal and wants to earn money with Russian language blogosphere. This, according to most of the stories analysed, motivates most of actions of the character. ‘SUP FABRIK’ is very unpopular among Russian-speaking bloggers of Livejournal. This is connected to unwillingness of those users to understand changes and features of that character, described previously. ‘SUP FABRIK’ as a character mainly acts in order to change functioning of the service, close financial deals or respond to complains of Russian-speaking bloggers’ community.

In some cases, actions of ‘SUP FABRIK’ are accompanied by actions of its most prominent workers or founders that act as characters – famous bloggers and (from some part of the story) ‘SUP FABRIK’ employees, businessmen A. Mamut and A. Polson and others. Nevertheless, these characters are not rich with features.

Famous RLJ bloggers (‘celebrities’)
Famous bloggers can not be fully called a unified character with human-like features, since they are rarely addressed as one and mostly represented by single bloggers that engage in some interaction with authorities, Livejournal administration, ‘Abuse Team’, authorities of the state and other actors. Mainly, famous bloggers are those that either have vast amounts of other Livejournal users subscribed to their journal or celebrities of the ‘off-line’ reality, maintaining a Livejournal blog. Their features are basically positive features of the whole community, taken to extreme. Nevertheless, I regard them as different characters on the basis of them acting as ones.

Artemy Lebedev is the only character that has very distinct features and can not be regarded as part of the common ‘famous bloggers’, even if I took a decision to treat all of those characters as one. A. Lebedev enters a story of Livejournal development relatively late, but then takes a very active role. He is a famous Russian designer and one of the pioneers of Russian language blogging. Lebedev endowed with features of striving for popularity at any means and for this reason provoking scandals, using swearwords and expressing disrespect towards any authorities. In addition Lebedev is regarded as enjoying extreme popularity (be it accompanied with negative or positive attitude) of the part of
another character – RLJ community. Basically, this character embodies all the negative features of the character of Livejournal’s Russian segment. One could think that Lebedev is a “bad guy” of the story. He does not respect any authority or moral norms, does not follow rules and, at some point of the story, gets what he wants. He could have been a villain if this was a classic unified narrative text, but in the story of Livejournal there are no villains and heroes. The reason is, that the story not created by a single writer, who has his or her aim in manipulating the reader in a certain way. Instead, in this case story is just a way to make sense of events of social reality. Or, in fact, a way of constructing it.

Authorities of Livejournal/Abuse Team
This character is referred to either as ‘Livejournal administration’, ‘Livejournal Inc.’ or ‘Abuse Team’. First two refer to the office of Livejournal in the United States in different periods of the development of Livejournal. ‘Abuse Team’ is a unit of Livejournal administration which observes whether users of the service follow its terms of use. Although in reality these are different entities, so far, in the story of development of particular segment of the blogosphere it plays the same role of introducing new features to the service, engaging in conflicts with RLJ users and being a subject to the action of SUP FABRIK. In certain points of the story, this character has features of being unknowledgeable about the specifics of the Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal.

Other characters
Characters in this category either appear not very often or are not endowed with a vast number of characteristics, but are still important for the general story. In most of the cases many different actors (from the level of fabula) can be merged into same character as the nature of their action as well as characteristics are the same. Official institutions or representatives of the state: courts, parliamentarian Alksnis (do not understand specifics of Internet, blogging, Livejournal, youth culture and so on; engage in conflicts with RLJ users). Companies: Norilsk Nikel, MTS, Alfa Bank (profit-driven, hope to use Livejournal as a successful investment or a PR platform). Kommersant publishing house (is singled out since it has a separate role in one stage of the story). Yandex, the biggest search engine of Russian Internet, cooperation with which is important. Dmitry Medvedev (modern, knowledgeable about blogosphere and the language of blogosphere). Intellectual elite of Russia. NY Times. Company SixApart (big successful American Internet company). Media.
**Events**

The main line of the story of Livejournal, as provided by materials of Lenta.ru is one of a relationship between Russian Livejournal community, e.g. its users and various other characters, such as authorities of Livejournal, SUP FABRIK company and the authorities of the state. All of these relationships, mainly manifesting themselves in the form of conflict, have one feature in common – they are explained as motivated by activity and restlessness on the part of RLJ community and by ignorance towards specifics of RLJ on the part of administration, state authorities or the state.

For the purpose of accessibility by the reader, I have separated the story in different stages, margins of stages being the change of relationship between the main characters of the story. Although, the fact of my own reflections on the story of Livejournal being presented in this division can not be denied. Within each stage of the story, I have looked at relationships between the main characters. To create an overview of this very fragmented story, I have created a timeline, where events that represent different types of relationships, are coloured differently. At the same time actions by character of RLJ community or related characters are situated on the lower part of the scale, while events provoked by other characters – on the upper. It has to be noted, that events have been added in the table not in the detailed way, although I do mention specifics of the events in the description of story and of characters.

The first stage of the story which covers the period between 2001 and 2006 is the development of the segment before SUP FABRIK enters the story. Russian speakers (or, in a different version, the elite of Russian society) enter Livejournal and change the service according to its needs – from a simple personal journal service into a socio-cultural sphere. In this newly changed service the new character with its own specifics that have been described previously, starts operating – Russian-speaking community of Livejournal or RLJ, as it is named in the timeline. All actions of the Russian-speaking community is a negative reaction to the actions by other characters. These are: change of the owner of the Livejournal service, changes in the service introduced by the new owner (American company SixApart) and an action by Abuse Team against some users of the Russian-speaking segment, that have violated the terms of use. At the same time, a different character, a group of famous RLJ bloggers approves changes introduced by SixApart.

In the next stage, in the year 2006, SUP FABRIK company character enters the story with the purchase of the right to manage the Cyrillic segment of the blogging service. SUP FABRIK then employs a
business-like approach to the service, which is shown in its actions of introducing advertisement-sponsored accounts and setting an aim of earning money, cooperating with Yandex, the leading search engine of Russian Internet in order to create an opportunity to perform inquiries within the Russian blogosphere. SUP FABRIK also involves itself in a special relationship with elite of RLJ, hiring them.

From this point in the story, an important conflict between SUP FABRIK and RLJ starts over the so-called ‘monetization’ of the service, which RLJ community tries to prevent. An important point in the relationship between SUP FABRIK and RLJ community are new features that SUP FABRIK tries to bring to Livejournal in order to adapt it to the specific needs of Russian bloggers. For instance, the limit for a single user to be able to “friend” only 700 other users. Most of these developments have been met with the negative reaction from the RLJ community. In some articles, this is a more marginal group, ‘provocateurs among RLJ users’ that try to gain publicity by opposing SUP FABRIK actions.

As to the RLJ community itself, it has continued to change Livejournal as a service and turned it into a popular platform of self-expression, as opposed to the previous stage of development – socio-cultural sphere. In addition, first conflict between RLJ users and representatives of state power emerges – a State Duma deputy and RLJ bloggers Viktor Alksnis filed a case in the court against another blogger who has offended Alksnis. RLJ community has widely supported the bloggers perspective with a wide range of means – from discussions up until hacker-attacks on the blog of Alksnis. This case is important, because later in all similar conflicts between RLJ users and authorities of any kind, RLJ community has been very active in defending its participants.

As a third stage of development of the platform (year 2007), according to the elements of narrative text, provided by Lenta.ru portal, is marked by the purchase of the whole of Livejournal service by SUP FABRIK company. This, again, provokes negative reaction of RLJ users, joined by other users of the platform. In this stage companies and media players start engaging themselves in the RLJ in different ways – Alfa bank agrees to sponsor the service, Norilsk Nickel company uses RLJ as PR-platform, while mobile phone company MTS, Kommersant and Vedomosti newspapers integrate their services into Livejournal. RLJ has also engaged with the characters, belonging to the off-line world, in other ways. Participants of Russian-language segment of Livejournal asked questions to the new president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev during his Internet-conference, started discussions about misgivings in society and provide information for the media.
Mentioning relationship between RLJ and authorities, those two characters became interconnected on one hand and continuously in conflict, on the other. RLJ activists enter the domain of politics, while politicians (which are described as unqualified for the action), try to engage with RLJ community. In addition, a local court has started a case against a RLJ blogger over an entry, containing a negative message towards policemen of the country. In addition to this case, the whole of Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal.com has engaged in the debate, supporting the blogger.

Relationship between SUP FABRIK and RLJ community develops in various dimensions. On one hand, SUP FABRIK collaborates with RLJ community and responds to its needs – it announces the creation of new rules for the Abuse Team in order for it to be more adequate towards the specifics of RLJ. Russian Livejournal users were invited to join the process of “law-making” and contribute with ideas and bloggers have actively responded to this initiative. In addition SUP FABRIK provides RLJ users with discounts and special offers for purchase of some products and entertainment activities. Another action by SUP FABRIK towards cooperation with RLJ community that happens at the same time is the decision of SUP FABRIK to modify a new feature of service that bloggers were complaining against.

However, next action of SUP FABRIK raised severe anger from both RLJ community and the famous RLJ bloggers. In the continuation of the business strategy SUP FABRIK has eliminated the previous scheme of registration under which a new user could choose from three versions of an account: ‘basic’ (few features, no cost), ‘sponsored’ (more features, advertisement appears in the blog) or ‘paid’ (many extra features). After the change ‘basic’ account was not available. RLJ community and its celebrities have reacted with protests and discussion. Remonstrance against the action of SUP FABRIK took a form of a “one-day-boycott” during which Livejournal users were encouraged not to make any blog entries. In addition the discussion on the nature of Livejournal and its true owners emerged from the conflict. Nevertheless, following this event, SUP FABRIK has announced a decision to re-think its action and propose a different solution.

As regards to the activities of RLJ community itself, it involves in both ‘inner’ debates and discussions that are connected to or have an impact on the ‘off-line’ domain. Debates within the blogosphere are on United States economy crisis, controversial performance by a group of visual artists. ‘Off-line’ related activities are: reports on the protest actions in Belarus, bad state of provincial hospital which RLJ users
help to raise money for the institution. Russian Livejournal bloggers also engage in providing false information that is taken up by Russian media.

The next stage of the Russian Livejournal story is marked by increased interconnection between SUP FABRIK and RLJ community. For one thing, SUP FABRIK organizes elections to choose an RLJ representative for an official Livejournal body “Observatory committee” that would have power within the decisions of Livejournal. Next SUP FABRIK introduces new rules for the Abuse Team (previously discussed with RLJ) and in accordance to those rules AT has changed its decision to ban journal of a blogger. Earlier, this ban was condemned by RLJ users as resulting from AT’s incomprehension of RLJ specifics. Then SUP FABRIK has acted in response to the protests over change of account scheme. It had offered RLJ users various scenarios of how to keep ‘basic accounts’, but at the same time increase the role of advertisement within the service. RLJ users were welcome to choose one of the options. In one of the articles, this was marked as a final event that ended a long process of struggle between SUP FABRIK and RLJ community over the advertisement within Livejournal. As a result of this struggle, Russian Livejournal users have succeeded not to allow SUP FABRIK to change the advertisement policy completely. SUP FABRIK continues to provide new features to the service, that are meant to bring it closer to needs of Russian-speaking bloggers. One of them is the increase of a maximum amount of comments one entry can receive. This has previously limited discussions of Russianspeaking users, which tend to be especially long.

At the same time with these developments, another change takes place in Livejournal. SUP FABRIK signs a deal with Kommersant publishing house, within the terms of which Kommersant enters the administration of the company, and, consequently, the blogging service that belongs to it. The first and only action of Kommersant as a character related to the management of Livejournal, documented in story, is invitation of a famous blogger A. Lebedev as a representative of the publishing house into the governing of Livejournal. Right before that decision Lebedev had been involved in a conflict with the AT over content of his blog, were a photograph of a naked underage woman has appeared. After Lebedev’s blog was suspended RLJ community engaged in an active discussion of all elements of the event – discussing whether the person was underage, whether suspension was fair and so on. After that AT has un-suspended Lebedev’s blog which was followed by continuation of the same practise (nude pictures) by the bloggers. This conflict resulted in huge popularity of Lebedev’s journal in which he later, prior to the job invitation by Kommersant, he was publishing ideas on the improvement of the blogging service.
After Lebedev is hired by Kommersant, RLJ community react with discussion on the changed that might await Livejournal when partly governed by this character. As to other conflicts between RLJ and other characters, another court case is described, where blogger Shirinkin is taken to the court on the basis of his entry that was considered a terroristic threat.

In this last stage of Livejournal development, as presented by Lenta.ru, RLJ community engages in the conflict between a commercial channel 2X2 and state authorities that attempt to close it. RLJ stops growing, 100-millionth entry is registered and RLJ changes the nature of the blogging service again. In terms of quantity, un-registered readers that visit RLJ blogs outnumber actual bloggers, who produce content. Russian-speaking Livejournal stopped being a platform of self-expression and was transformed into a “newspaper”-like source of information, where there are more readers then writers and advertisement is placed next to the content. As to the community itself, RLJ stopped being and elitist blogosphere and became and ordinary component of the social life of Russia and merged with the “off-line” world. At the same time media are seen as having failed to pay attention to RLJ community.

**Summary: development of Russian Livejournal story after the first stage of analysis**

In this summary, I describe main patterns of the relationships between the characters of the development as presented in Lenta.ru articles.

After the creation and international success of Livejournal blogging platform, Russian-speakers (or – educated elite of the Russian society) entered this sphere and became the biggest community of the service as well as started having clashes with the management of the platform.

Russian based company SUP FABRIK first acquires rights to manage the Cyrillic segment of Livejournal and later buys the whole service. After gaining control over the service SUP FABRIK performs various activities. Firstly, it integrates RLJ into the rest of Russian segment of the World Wide Web through cooperation with the leading search engine of Russian Internet, Yandex. Secondly, it makes changes both to adapt Livejournal service to the needs of RLJ, which from the very beginning is different from other linguistic LJ communities. Thirdly, it aims at earning money with the activities of RLJ users – placing advertisements in the journals of bloggers and engaging with media and companies. Companies are offered to sponsor Livejournal activities and offer discounts for RLJ
member, while media (such as Kommersant and Vedomosti) intertwine interactive features of their homepages with Livejournal. In addition throughout the story SUP FABRIK engages with RLJ directly – hiring famous bloggers as employees and including representative of RLJ in the Livejournal management.

All of these developments are actively commented upon by RLJ community, which proves it being very active and lacking trust in any authority and especially in the SUP FABRIK. The most radical changes in the functioning of the service are met by very active action, such as boycott. Every time, confronted with such response, SUP FABRIK re-examines its policies and makes changes.

Relationship between SUP FABRIK and RLJ is a process consisting of SUP FABRIK trying to gain trust from RLJ community and change the advertisement policy within Livejournal for the enterprise to gain profit. The first aim fails – RLJ users continue being suspicious towards any SUP FABRIK initiative. At the same time RLJ users prevent with active measures the complete change of advertisement policy and advertisements are only partly introduced in Livejournal.

At the same time with the development of Relationship between SUP FABRIK an RLJ, the community itself has been developing in various dimensions. In the course of time, RLJ have transformed the use of platform according to their needs. At first, Russian bloggers have made it a socio-cultural sphere (opposed to the original purpose, public diary service). Participants of the community were representatives of socio-cultural elite of educated intellectuals.

Then, when the amount of Russian-speaking users of Livejournal increased and other layers of society entered blogosphere (in one of the articles they are referred to as “masses”), the platform became a field of self-expression. In the same time conflicts between RLJ and the state authorities in the form of various trials have started. RLJ became interconnected with the political sphere of Russia as well, with politicians entering Livejournal, and bloggers entering politics.

The scope of discussions and activities that RLJ has initiated is wide: art, political protests, social injustice and so on. As to the relationship with media – Russian press and online editions have reported on main conflicts and ‘scandals’ within the segment of the blogosphere, while they have not truly engaged with Livejournal.
The end of the development is marked by the stop of growth of the community and speeding growth of non-blogger readers. Another transformation takes place – Livejournal becomes a medium-like source of information.

In short, according to Lenta.ru, Russian Livejournal is started by elite of Russian Internet, after which more Russian-speaking users have followed. They have formed an RLJ community that has engaged in conflictual relationships with representatives of power elite, SUP FABRIK and administration of Livejournal platform. With the increase of the amount of RLJ community members, various companies (including media) as well as representatives of political elite have entered the blogging service. At some point growth of the community has stopped and it turned to be a source of information for wider public.
Politicians enter RLJ. Activists enter the domain of politics. RLJ reacted negatively to the purchase. RLJ entered "off-line", "RLJ" transformed into information - more readers that users.

SUP hires famous RLJ bloggers. RLJ users created a 1. Liv ejournal administration adds new features to the service.

Famous RLJ bloggers leave SUP. RLJ users started a discussion - what happens with Lebedev is invited by "Kommersant to be representative". Russian court system engages in conflict with RLJ user Shirinkin. Liv ejournal administration makes changes in LJ (more comments possible). RLJ bloggers support a commercial channel in conflict with authorities.

A T stops conflict with Lebedev. RLJ starts active discussion, advocate in the defence of Lebedev.


RLJ reports the protest actions in Belarus. RLJ ingages in discussing: the state of priv ncial hospital, USA economy crisis, controversial performance. RLJ users provide false information towards media.

SUP responds to the complains of RLJ. Prominent RLJ users join the protests. LRJ users criticize changes in the account structure, organize boycott. SUP changees the account structure of LJ (no free of advert. accounts). RLJ discusses results of Putin Presidency. SUP has created new rules for A T (more responsive to specifics of RLJ), asked RLJ to comment.

Russian companies engage with RLJ. SUP collaborates with NY Times. SUP signs a deal with Kommersant publishing house.

Liv ejournal administration understands that it needs 'basic account users' and finds way to bring them back. SUP integrates LJ into Yandex.

SUP changes back the account scheme. SUP introduces and reforms "My guests" (after protests). SUP introduces discounts for RLJ.

SUP bought the whole Livejournal service. RLJ community stopped growing. RLJ opposed every feature.

SUP organizes election in RLJ for an official position within. SUP failed to gain trust from RLJ community, SUP learned to earn money on LJ, SUP brought many useful features to LJ.

SUP bought Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal from Six Apart.

RLJ community stopped the total change of advertisement policy.

SixApart introduces changes (channel "invitation" scheme, new type of account - advertisement).

RLJ users object action of A T (does not understand specifics). A T suspends some of RLJ bloggers for violent content ("Kill a Nato Soldier" poster).

Provocative famous blogger ‘churkan’ wins.

ILLUSTRATION 2. The timeline of Livejournal story by Lenta.ru

V 3: Livejournal became popular among Russian-speaking users of the Internet. LJ develops into a world blogging platform.

V 2: SUP buys the whole Livejournal service. Livejournal became popular among Russian-speaking users of the Internet.

V 1: Russian intellectual and creative elite enter Livejournal and change its nature (from a personal diary service to a socio-cultural sphere).

V 2: Livejournal became popular among Russian-speaking users of the Internet. LJ develops into a world blogging platform.

V 1: Russian intellectual and creative elite enter Livejournal and change its nature (from a personal diary service to a socio-cultural sphere).

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"Lenta.ru"
5.2. Academic research

After analysing Lenta.ru articles it became clear how to proceed with more focused data collection to reach the fullest story of Livejournal. Most of the articles that were included in the primary data set, featured the ‘newsworthy’ points of development, related to business decisions of Livejournal administration, court cases, changes in policy, etc. The most vital character of the story turned out to be the Russian-speaking community of Livejournal and the most manifested relationship – the conflict between RLJ and SUP FABRIK. Nevertheless, the process of emergence of these actors and their actions are described in very general terms.

Is should be noted, that journalists of Lenta.ru started reporting on Livejournal actively only in the year 2007. Although they have briefly provided the background of the previous events, a deeper insight on what has happened before Russian Livejournal became a centre of media attention is necessary. Consequentially, in this part of analysis I have turned to the academic works, describing Livejournal and its Russian-speaking segment in order to fill the story I have so far with more details on the community – evolution of its characteristics, inner dynamics and a more fragmented view on the community that would possibly split it into different characters.

For this purpose four papers focusing upon Livejournal have been selected. One of works is the first known research on the Russian speaking segment of Livejournal by an Oxford-based scientist Eugene Gorny, who has analysed the development and specifics of Russian Livejournal. The rest are diploma works by students of the Moscow State University, conducted in recent years, when the significance of blogging became self-evident and academic interest towards that subject has boosted. The choice of present papers has been imposed by two factors – focused data collection, aimed at finding certain elements of Russian Livejournal story, as well as by the limited amount of works on Russian Livejournal.

For this part of research I have not created a presentable coding table as such, neither a timeline. The reason is that when analysing academic works, I did not have to deal with a substantial amount of different texts that have to be summarized, but with a one more or less coherent and logical work. In addition, the basis of the story, the timeline of Lenta.ru is created already and another point of reference

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is not needed. Nevertheless, an intermediate and invisible stage of the analyses took place, when I have coded the story elements presented in the academic works.

**Eugene Gorny. Livejournal: National specifics in the development of a virtual community**

In his work Gorny describes the state of Russian segment of Livejournal at that time and explains developments which the community went through mainly with the nature of Russian society and its tendency to communal way of living. Since in this study a contribution by each academic is viewed in terms of the story level of narrative text he/she introduces, I will further describe the characters and events with which Gorny contributes to the story of Livejournal segment of Russian blogosphere. In accordance with grounded theory I look at those elements of the narrative texts that have not been present in the story, previously extracted from the text of Lenta.ru and that enrich it.

**Gorny: characters**

Firstly, Gorny (2004) contributes to already existing characters. Features of RLJ community are expanded. If Lenta.ru story tells us only that RLJ community is different from the rest of the users of the service, here it gains such features as being generally older, more serious in discussions and more ‘communal’ than other users of Livejournal. In addition he compares RLJ community to the general Russian population and in this comparison RLJ gains another features – it is politically more liberal than Russian nation as such. In addition, RLJ differs from Russian population in other ways – some groups of society are not presented, such as people from small towns and manual workers. At the same time RLJ users are considered to behave within the blogosphere in the ways which are considered to be characteristic for Russian culture in general.

In Lenta.ru there exists a second important character, “famous users” of RLJ, who have slightly different characteristics as compared to RLJ community. Gorny divides this character into two different: the “old elite” that, basically, is continuation of the “elite of Runet” character and the “new elite”. The “old elite” consists of Internet professionals, journalists, linguists and scientists. It is curious in exploring Livejournal and is a very interconnected, creative and intelligent community. “New elite” is populist and turns to the means of pornography and political extremism in order to attract readers to their blogs. Compared with the “elites”, RLJ users are less educated, less interested in
current affairs and surely not as creative.

In the story of RLJ by Gorny, SUP FABRIK and other characters are not existent since at the time when the paper has been written, evens that would become a basis for including those characters, did not take place yet. Gorny does describe some conflicts with authorities, but they do not contribute much to the story.

Gorny: events

In the story that has been extracted from Lenta articles RLJ goes through very few stages. After Russian-speaking users and Russian intellectual elite enter Livejournal and change its nature (into a socio-cultural sphere), the next stage of the development of the community itself, it becomes bigger and the nature of RLJ changes again – it becomes a mere platform of self-expression. In general terms, the story told by Gorny fits well into these events, but it adds more details to this transition and explains connections between those stages. Another minor difference is that, according to Gorny, the second change of RLJ nature happens earlier then it happens as to story of Lenta.ru.

In the first stage, RLJ is born, when a member of ‘Runet elite’, a linguist Roman Leibov enters Livejournal and experiments with a new tool of blogging. He then recruits his friends, other members of ‘Runet elite’ to Livejournal. This continues as a chain reaction that results in the existence of an inter-connected community of ‘Runet elite’ within Livejournal, the nature of which has been described in the previous section of this text, devoted to characters introduced by Gorny. Creation of this community refers to the stage, where, according to Lenta.ru, Russian intellectual elite enters Livejournal and transforms it into the “socio-cultural sphere”.

In the next stage, ‘Runet elite’ recruits more Russian-speakers into RLJ. Being journalists, some of “pioneers” have reported about blogging and Livejournal in media, which was followed by reports in major credible newspapers. After these reports, more people enter RLJ. In the result of this process of growth RLJ is separated into two main groups: creative minority of pioneers (‘Runet elite’) and non-creative majority.

New RLJ participants are not representatives of creative professions, they fail to use blogging in the same way and therefore form another, non-elite part of RLJ. They deny the authority of ‘Runet elite’
(through a process of widespread discussion) within Livejournal and choose their own, “new elite”, which consists of users, offering simple entertainment and political extremism.

In third and last stage of the story, introduced by Gorny, RLJ continues growing, gets more and more attention in the media and, due to its own size, gets fragmented. It splits into different networks that are organized by the principle of interest, circle of friends, geographical position of users, etc.

This fragmentation undermines the nature of the RLJ community at the time before large numbers of Russian-speakers have entered. RLJ changes its nature again – it becomes a platform for communication between many different individuals; less a united community that shares same values and practises of blogging. If previously the uniting principle was the shared set of values, now it is the fact of belonging to the language sphere. In addition, community itself becomes less serious and creative, more resembling the rest of Livejournal and loosing its Russian specifics – posts are devoted to personal life topics and observations, rather then discussions on the existential topics or other creative activities. This point in the story of Russian Livejournal corresponds to what in the timeline of Lenta.ru story is marked as “transformation of RLJ into a popular platform of self-expression”.

Shortly, the story Gorny introduces is as follows. The creative elite of Russian Internet has entered Livejournal blogging platform, has used it in a way, different from the initial function of the service. This small community has been very small, interconnected and creative. It has popularised Livejournal within the Russian society, which as lead to the growth of RLJ and fragmentation of the Russian Livejournal into non-creative majority and creative minority (elite). Non-creative majority has rejected authority of the previous elite and changed the nature of RLJ again, turning into a simple tool for self-expression and connection. The ‘Runet elite’ that has started Russian Livejournal, looses its place, but still remains a communicative core of the community.

The main transition that took place during this part of the story is the transition of Livejournal platform into the community that produces creative content (by ‘Runet elite’) and later transition of that community into the fragmented linguistic community that serves as a platform of communication. These events, described by Gorny fit very well into previously explained story elements from Lenta.ru. If in Lenta.ru story the “socio-cultural sphere” remained just a description, Gorny gives more specifics to what did “elite” do with the platform. Same refers to other elements of transition.
Svetlana Ivannikova. Livejournal subculture as phenomena of Russian blogosphere

The next academic work that has been included in this research is a diploma paper from the Moscow State University graduate, Svetlana Ivannikova (Ivannikova 2007, pp. 123-197.). The researcher describes Russian segment of Livejournal from different perspectives, covering all areas of social reality in which Livejournal plays a significant role, such as a relationship between RLJ and Russian media, RLJ and authorities, etc. This feature of the paper has ensured that very diverse elements of Livejournal story have been discovered in that in Ivannikova’s work.

Ivannikova: characters

Ivannikova brings more features to RLJ community, comparing it with a new character – users of other blogging platforms of Runet. The researcher describes RLJ users as being a core of the whole of Russian blogosphere. Compared to other Russian bloggers, RLJ users are more involved into Runet slang and specific Runet subculture concepts, more politicized and interested in current affairs, more pretentious in the intellectual sense, swear less, are more literate, more educated.

RLJ users include celebrities, such as politicians, writers, television stars, pop-singers and so on. S. Ivannikova ads another difference between RLJ bloggers and the rest of world blogosphere – Russian users are more “amateurish”, they largely have no incentive to earn with blogging and mostly lack skills necessary for such activity.

‘Runet elite’ is described as potentially dissident and educated in the culture of ‘Samizdat’ and is an innovative and creative force behind Russian Internet. This has not just shaped the first patterns of use of Livejournal, but has also generally influenced use of Internet by Russian speakers. For instance, the same group of individuals is responsible for the fact that Russian speaking Internet users prefer ICQ to other instant messaging services.

As to new characters, “tysyachniki” (derived from the Russian word tysyacha – a thousand) are introduced. These are users, whom more than a thousand of RLJ bloggers have added into the friends list. These users are considered to be more authoritative then common Russian Livejournal bloggers.
Svetlana Ivannikova in her paper brings more general details to the process of adaptation of Livejournal blogging service by the ‘Runet elite’ — if Gorny has provided a specific persona-related story, Ivannikova introduces a broader explanation. She introduces a very different idea on how RLJ has been transformed throughout the time of its development. Another very significant element, with which Ivannikova contributes to the story of Russian Livejournal, is illustrations of how RLJ involved itself in a relationship with the “off-line” world. She also connects the development of RLJ with the development of Russian Internet.

Ivannikova contributes to the first stage of the story, in which RLJ is born with the pre-history. American creators of Livejournal service intended it as a “keep-in-touch” tool for individuals that are already acquainted “off-line”. Then there was the ‘Runet elite’, which at the same time was unsuccessfully searching for a handy medium of communication. When ‘Runet elite’ has discovered Livejournal, it has “set the tone” of blogging in Russian language, that is – coined the patterns of use that were later replicated by other Russian-speaking adopters of blogging. In this sense, the story of RLJ is a branch of a bigger and longer story of the development of Russian Internet. Livejournal appeared at a point, when within the development on Runet its core or so-called “elite” needed a way of interpersonal communication.

The ‘Runet elite’ has turned RLJ into a tool for discussions and a source of information, which can compete with media and is an alternative to imperfect Internet search engines. This is the first transformation of the sphere, that can be found in Ivannikova’s work. First RLJ users turn platform not in the socio-cultural sphere populated by a dense community of creative individuals, but a source of information and discussion. At the same time with the creation of the first form of RLJ community, its activity started to spread beyond the virtual world – an RLJ-organized music festival “Current Music” (referring to a certain feature of Livejournal posts) has been organized.

In the next stage, when RLJ became more popular and more individuals joined the community (this point of the story can be found in previous stories as well), many developments took place. On one hand, RLJ growth has popularized blogging as an activity to such extent, that other, local, blogging services have appeared in Runet. All of them have been developed according to the functional design and models of use provided by Livejournal and first RLJ bloggers.
On the other hand, many internal changes followed the growth of amount of users. Firstly, ‘tysyachniki’ have gained authority and respect, started to be considered as “better users”. Some RLJ users begin to manipulate public opinion and via provocation, which often involves publication of extreme opinions, try to attract thousands of readers. At the same time, ‘tysyachniki’ are being acknowledged outside RLJ as well – they are given rights of journalists, that is, for example, invited to events and press-conferences. Secondly, popularity was gained by specific RLJ-jargon, to which some parts of RLJ community have reacted actively – a group of users started a popular campaign of protest in order to promote preservation of grammatically correct and pure Russian language. At the same time this jargon has entered the non-RLJ world and started to be used in different spheres of life without relation to RLJ discussion threads.

Ivannikova also introduces some events that are not introduced as consequence of any development in RLJ, but are, nevertheless, important parts of the story. At a point in the RLJ story, when a dense community of interconnected individuals is still existing and the number of Russian Livejournal users have not grown drastically yet (consequently resulting changes did not take place yet), two events took place.

First of all, RLJ followed up various cases of suspension of account by ‘Abuse Team’ and formed an alternative blogging service ljRussia.org, to which all entries from Livejournal can be automatically transferred. This service is meant to be free of censorship and any kind of limitations. If to place this event in the timeline created after the analysis of Lenta.ru materials, it would be positioned at the same time with an event named “AT suspends some RLJ users for a violent poster” in the very beginning of the timeline. At the same time an RLJ blogger admits to have earned money with advertisement for the first time. This has been followed by more bloggers advertising products in texts of their entries.

Ivannikova describes two manifestations of the involvement of RLJ into the “off-line” activities. These are: the launch of a RLJ-organized political debate show ‘Debaty’, the launch of a RLJ poetry evening and a book, written and illustrated collectively by a group of RLJ users.

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7 So-called ‘Yazik podonkov’ or ‘Albanian’ has developed through different co-incidences during the history of Russian-speaking Livejournal and is partly inherited from activists of different Internet communities. The main principle, according to which the words of jargon have been developed, is a deliberate distortion of the spelling or intentional grammatical errors. For instance, аффтар instead of автор. More about this peculiarity of Russian blogosphere one can find in the article by Gaslan Gusejnov which can be found on-line: [http://www.speakrus.ru/gg/microprosa_erratica-1.htm](http://www.speakrus.ru/gg/microprosa_erratica-1.htm)
According to Ivannikova, the main transition of the nature of RLJ platform is not connected to the change of RLJ user’s quantity. It a transformation from an initial design of the platform by its creators into a very different tool, used for various purposes and basically being a system of interconnected personal media. This transformation was possible due to the fact that RLJ users learned to control and manage informational processes within Livejournal. As to general developments, Ivannikova introduces RLJ to have influenced the Russian society in general.

**Other academic works**

Despite expectations, other academic research papers that have been included in the empirical material did not have such a substantial body of narrative text elements, related to subject of the thesis, as two previous papers. For this reason, the new elements of the story, brought by these papers, are not discussed separately, but all together under this subchapter. Anyhow, the significance of the new elements is no less important. Works included in this part of empirical research are “The History of Blogs and Formation of Citizen Journalism” by Nadezhda Podporina (Podporina 2007, pp. 6–58) and “Blogs as an Alternative Source of Information” by Polina Matveeva (Matveeva 2008).

**Other academic works: events**

The events that these two papers have provided the story with are single occasions to illustrate trends noted in previous sources.

By the time of elections to the State Duma in 2007, RLJ becomes a part of the political scene of the country: politicians announce their plans through Russian Livejournal, while the Duma Elections process intertwines with RLJ in many different ways: politicians use RLJ as platform of agitation, journalists follow reports by those RLJ users who are in any way involved in the election process (for instance being observers at a certain electoral station).

Papers analyzed mainly refer to the point of development of Russian Livejournal, where its growth has stopped after a rapid increase in the number of users. Events described next refer to that period, although authors do not connect them in their texts.
Russian Internet users (a character, introduced by other authors) start paying more attention to social networking sites that have at the same time gained huge popularity. The share of active RLJ bloggers (those users that update their journals on a regular basis) decreases. Another development pattern is the relationship between the state authorities and Russian Livejournal. Here the new events are as follows: state legislators wish to take bloggers under control and propose to force authors of those blogs which have more then 1000 readers to register as media with all the legal consequences. In addition a proposition for a “Law on Internet” which has implications for blog users is discussed.

5.3. Interviews

In this last stage of the empirical part of this research, I have conducted six interviews with experts of Russian Livejournal, representing different fields of knowledge. During the previous stages of the research I have coined a story of Russian Livejournal as it is collectively told by Lenta.ru journalists and different university researchers. Not having a united author, the story lacks consistency and links between processes. In addition, certain processes introduced by Lenta.ru and academics, are to be explained or commented upon, such, for instance, as political activities of RLJ users, commercialization of the platform or trial against Livejournal users.

To fill these gaps in the story, I turn to experts. In terms of grounded theory this is the final, most focused data collection, where empirical material is chosen to meet the needs of the research, that have emerged from the previous stages. Each interviewee was selected because of his/her relationship to Russian Livejournal and, consequentially, specific knowledge of a certain sphere or angle of the blogosphere. To give an example, Samson Sholademi was included in the selection in order to enrich the story with an explanation of the advertisement introduction process, while Ilya Peresedov was chosen to shed light on the political activism within Livejournal.

In addition there was a second criterion for choosing interviewees. During the previous parts of analysis I have also discovered that popular RLJ bloggers can be divided into two main categories: “pioneers”, i.e. those who started blogging in Russian language and have a “founder” authority, and, secondly, users that have gained popularity in more recent years, when Livejournal became a widespread phenomena in the Russian Internet. In order to get a fuller picture, I have set an aim to approach
not only experts on different “angles” of Livejournal, but representatives of these two groups as well. Having started the interview process I came to realise that participants of both ‘clusters’ are acquainted with each other. This has led me to design the process of picking interviewees strategically. First, I have entered the network of “new experts” by contacting one representative of the group, Maxim Alekseev\(^8\) and, among other questions, asked to suggest other blogging experts to interview on different perspectives in the history of Livejournal. Later, having their contacts from Alekseev and having approached these people I confronted them with the same question. Most were happy to connect me with specialists knowledgeable on a certain aspect of Russian blogosphere. I have learned that, having once entered this network of contemporary Russian ‘intelligentsia’, one can reach dozens of experts within a short period of time. On the other hand, I have also entered a sphere of personal relationships, which alongside with sympathies and appreciation includes envy and dislike. It is interesting to notice, that all the respondents are more or less wealthy men in their thirties or forties.

As to an overall process of interviews, as a native Russian speaker and RLJ blogger with nearly six years of experience, I have had a significant advantage in conducting interviews, which was ensured by knowledge of the specific RLJ jargon, famous personalities, events, processes and myths. Most of respondents were very eager to share their knowledge and opinions on Russian Livejournal and almost all conversations took longer then one hour.

According to the procedure of a narrative interview that has been described earlier, I have started each interview with an open question intended motivate the interlocutor to start the process of storytelling. The question invited the interviewee to tell the story of his own relationship with the blogging community of Russia and produced very different results. Regardless of how fruitful was the answer to this question it was almost always possible to continue from that point and proceed with further inquiries on particular elements of the story. In most cases the respondents have themselves provided theoretical accounts on the ‘meaning’ of the stories they have presented. During each interview I took the courage to compliment the natural story respondent by asking them to explain certain developments in Russian Livejournal history (such as co-called ‘monetization’). Nevertheless, this step was not intrusive – if a responded had a personal connection the process or event he has included this in his narrative in a natural way, while if he had no relation to the story element, the information provided was not relevant.

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\(^8\) Blog of Alekseev can be found at the address: [www.scandal_max.livejournal.com](http://www.scandal_max.livejournal.com)
Although the aim of all conversations was the same – to help each respondent to tell the story of the development of Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal, for every interviewee, the actual questions and also specific subjects discussed differed. This difference was determined by characteristics of an interviewee, such as profession and relation to Russian blogosphere of a given individual. It has appeared that an open question such as “(…) could you tell a story of Russian Livejournal as you know it” proved to be unsuccessful since different connotations interviewees had had for the word ‘history’. For instance, Samson Sholademi had started mentioning the myths and legends that RLJ had gained through the years. Instead, as I have discovered, it is much more fruitful to start with a question on personal relationship of a interviewee with Livejournal and then continue asking questions of “and what has happened then” kind. What is more, I have found out that explaining my aim of being after ‘a story of Livejournal’ helps interviewees to select particular facts or explanations of the vast amount of knowledge they have on the topic and frame it so that a meaningful conversation of a semi-decent length is possible.

Some findings have been surprising and made me change slightly the setting of my research right in a middle of a conversation with an expert. Firstly, it is the inclusion of predictions about the future of Livejournal. Since the initial aim was to create a history of the process, any kind of speculations were not to be added. Yet many of the interviewees have mentioned possible future developments that are part of the story they have provided. In this case it seemed perfectly reasonable to add this element in to the analysis of the empirical material. Secondly, it is the inclusion of an event, which, at first, was not in the selection of a time period for one obvious reason – it has happened after I have gathered data for the first part of the research. This event is entrance of the President of the Russian Federation into Russian Livejournal in the role of a blogger. I did not intend to include this in my story, nevertheless almost all interviewees have mentioned as an indicator of one or the other process.

All interviews have been recorded to with a help of an audio cassette recorder and later written down on paper. After the material has been transferred into a written form, it has been coded in accordance to the research design in order to determine the Russian Livejournal story elements.

Further in this chapter I provide description and analysis of the story elements found in the information provided by each expert. I also give some background information on the interviewees and the process of interviewing since the selection of experts and actual conversation are a very significant, but, in
many senses, invisible part of the empirical research conducted for this study. The analysis of interviews is presented in a chronological order.

**Samson Sholademi**

The first interview was conducted with a famous ‘tysyachnik’ Samson Sholademi, who runs an RLJ blog by the address [www.sholademi.livejournal.com](http://www.sholademi.livejournal.com) and is ‘friended’ by 3140 users. In accordance with the procedures, provided by grounded theory, he was selected for the interviews on the basis of his professional involvement into the Russian blogosphere. Connected with the advertising and PR-campaigns of RLJ, Sholademi was considered potentially a good interviewee that could enrich the story of Russian segment of Livejournal with details on so-called process of “monetization” which has been a part of a story provided by Lenta.ru. Having joined Livejournal through political interest Sholademi, initially a journalist got interested in becoming a popular blogger and through using various tools of manipulation has gained a status of a ‘tysyachnik’. Later this popularity and ability to manipulate opinions of the blogosphere has brought him an opportunity to work for an advertising company in the position dealing with promotion within the blogosphere.

**Sholademi: characters**

Sholademi enriches the character of RLJ elite – these are people from Moscow, St. Petersburg and classic countries of immigration of Russian intelligentsia – United States and Israel.

Although Sholademi speaks of a changing nature or RLJ and different generation within its development he adds another dimension to RLJ community. In his view this community is a continuation of Internet users, which, in their turn are ‘anarchic’ – they oppose any structure that tries to impose any type of hierarchic system. He mentions that RLJ is a community where one can discuss political news and opinions while these debates are eliminated in bigger media. RLJ is compared the important meme of Soviet reality ‘the kitchen’ – the only place where during the censorship of Soviet Union it was possible to discuss political opinion in the privacy of ones own flat. As to the level of political discussion, Sholademi describes it on two levels. On one hand, RLJ is more political then other language blogospheres. On the other, among RLJ users only five per cent are discussing political issues regularly. Another new character, bloggers that have entered after 2006. They are opposed to the
first ‘inhabitants of the platform’ as having lower moral criteria, being less concerned about the ethical rules of blogging, having different motives and also genres of blogging.

Sholademi: events

All in all, Sholademi brings in more details on how and why advertisement appeared in RLJ and what happened when being ‘tysyachnik’ became a virtue in itself. He ‘melts’ both stages of SUP FABRIK involvement in Livejournal into one event and understands appearance of advertising within RLJ as natural event occurring from both growth of popularity of Livejournal in Russian society and the appearance of SUP FABRIK company. The main idea of the story that Sholademi introduces is the shift of generation, that was clear to happen around 2006, when blogging became fashionable in Russia.

According to Sholademi, the first increase of the amount of bloggers has happened in 2005, when number of ‘tysyachniki’ started to grow rapidly. This was the first indicator of the change in RLJ. 2006 and 2007 are the years when Livejournal has become significantly different. Then it became clear that the generations of RLJ bloggers have changed, with ‘Runet elite’ leaving the service for good and new group of bloggers entering. At that point Livejournal became a popular topic of mass media attention. Television programmes and newspapers have reported on the existence of Livejournal and blogging in general, which has pushed the service into the domain of pop-culture. Many people have started considering it “fashionable” to run an RLJ blog.

The new generation of bloggers that has entered after 2006 was very different from the ‘old elite’. Firstly, they did not know the myths and legends that have surrounded the previous elite group of first RLJ users, had different values in comparison to the previous generation – had nothing against being paid for advertising certain entries in their blog. Secondly, they have started using various techniques to artificially increase the amount of people who have ‘friended’ them and become ‘tysyachniki’. The ‘tysyachniki’ development was described before, but Sholademi adds that this, alongside with developments that will be explained later, has ‘blurred’ the communicational bases of the platform and scared away the old ‘RLJ elite’ who have either left the platform in favour of ‘stand-alone’ blogs or have stopped blogging at all. Old ‘elite’ bloggers have refused to catch up with new ways of popularity gaining, which has led to their disappearance from the scene. They then have been replaced by the new popular bloggers, who have gained popularity through flash-mobs and different populist campaigns.
There is also another crucial difference between the two periods. Before the major shift of 2006 one had to work hard on his/her entries and update a blog for more than one year to reach an amount of one thousand people who have ‘friended’ this user. After, as it was already noted, all sorts of tools have been developed to artificially receive this number.

The first event that has lead to RLJ being ‘monetized’ has been described by Sholademi as follows. In the same period Russia-based company SUP FABRIK has bought (firstly, in 2006 – acquired rights for the Cyrillic segment and then, in 2007, bought the whole platform) the Livejournal service and organized a party, where the founder of Livejournal Brad Fitzpatrik has been brought to from California. This point in time Sholademi marks as the representation of the gap between altruistic and commercial embodiments of RLJ community. Bloggers have realised, that they can gain profit from the activity that previously they have been involved in with no benefit. The process has developed and in the middle of 2007 many bloggers have started receiving offers to write entries that would include advertisement. From the beginning of 2008 this has become a norm. This ‘monetization’ of RLJ has changed the nature of blogging within RLJ – bloggers have stopped to use their creative energy to produce entries that they would not have received money for from a potential advertiser.

An entertaining fact is that one of the first famous bloggers to mention advertising in the context of RLJ was Sholademi himself. He and his friend, another a popular ‘tysyachnik’ Maxim Aleksandrov (interviewed for this research as well) have staged a joke within the RLJ community. Sholademi has published an entry where he complimented Aleksandrov in various ways and on the next day updated the information with a note that the entry was, in fact, an advertisement. He said that fee was $50 and anyone else who also wants to get promoted in this journal can e-mail him. Later he has revealed that the whole thing was a joke aiming at manipulation of the RLJ users. Both Sholademi and Aleksandrov have told me that they did not expect anyone to believe such nonsense. In a short time both have received hundreds of angry comments and, to their surprise, several business offers. Both Aleksandrov and Sholademi note this as a first advertisement-related RLJ scandal and an important point in the development of the ‘monetization’ process.

The next major stage of development takes place in 2008, when RLJ has stopped growing. This has happened because all people that have been potentially interested in blogging have started a Livejournal or any other blogging service account. People who just enter the potential ‘blogger’ age now (fresh school graduates, first year university students) are not drawn to Livejournal anymore; they
have a new ‘hype’ thing on horizon – classic social networking sites such as odnoklassniki.ru or vkontakte.ru. Those who still come to Livejournal do not perform an active role in the life of blogosphere.

Currently, RLJ is used by what Sholademi calls ‘youth politics’. Small, often radical, parties, such as a “Movement Against Illegal Immigration” right after being formed, have developed a high activity in Russian segment of Livejournal. Although RLJ users as a group are not ‘political’, those small parties had managed to create an impression that they have large number of supporters, while in reality all flow of entries and comments, related to the topics important for the party, is often a job of three to four people.

In 2009 Dmitry Medvedev became a blogger, which is an indicator of popularity if Livejournal in Russian society. As to Sholademi, this is a crucial stage in the development of RLJ: “everyone has arrived now; it is a right time to leave and search for a new place”.

During our conversation Sholademi has repeatedly integrated the story of Russian Livejournal into what he has introduced as a typical path that any development of any kind of tool follows. First a tool is a unique artefact that only selected few that belong to the elite can use. Then this tool gets fashionable and suddenly many start using it, bringing it to the mainstream. Then when large numbers of people spend a lot of their time using this tool they try to find ways to gain profit from it and as a result this tool becomes commercialized. At the same time the early users of the tool abandon it, not being able to use it in the same way.

Approaching it from the theory of narrative by Bal this development is, in an essence, a fabula. Basic actors cause events which chrono(logically) follow each other. This is unexpected turn of evens – starting the research I have not predicted that in their own analysis of events experienced, the interviewees would have provided not just the story elements, but the ready-made fabula. On the other hand, this finding is hard to treat as unusual since narratives are believed to be the primary way humans structure their life experiences.
Ilya Peresedov

Ilya Peresedov, who runs a Livejournal blog by the address www.peresedov.livejournal.com and is ‘friended’ by 2515 RLJ users, was included in the ‘experts’ selection in order to enrich the story of Russian Livejournal with the perspective on political activism in RLJ as well as media connections. Peresedov is, like Sholademi, an RLJ blogger who has entered Livejournal quite late, i.e. two years ago when the platform has already become popular. Being interested in politics he was reporting on various events, including the St. Petersburg “March of Descent”. Later he, as well as Sholademi, managed to use it in order to promote his own career. In his own words, he now is “an editor-in-chief of the first on-line television channel in Russia.” Moreover, Peresedov has an experience of involvement in activities of political parties within Livejournal.

Peresedov: characters

As to the character of RLJ, this interviewee divides it into various groups, i.e. different generations of RLJ users and different elites or popular users within those generations. The main transition here is different moral stands in accordance to ethics of blogging that different generations have. The later is the time in the development of Livejournal, the less self-regulatory and more open-minded bloggers are towards paid advertisement entries and political campaigning.

Russian nation

Peresedov mentions, that the RLJ is characteristic only for Russian socio-political culture which is rooted in the peculiarities of the Russian nation. The nation in itself has special relationship to the written word. While in the English-speaking Internet the main focus of interest are very short texts (e.g., “Twitter”), sound or video files, Runet is more concentrated on longer text – even video as a genre of Internet communication is not yet well developed. “The culture itself is like this, they like to chat in Russia”. In this sense Peresedov connects RLJ with the epistolary genre Russian literature in 19th and 20th centuries. Also, Russians are described as lacking the culture of political protest, which is reason for RLJ not having any influence on the political scene of the country.

9 Peresedov is the editor-in-chief of the on-line television channel http://russia.ru/.
Power structures
Unlike in the story by Lenta.ru or other stories, power elite realizes how important is RLJ and Internet overall, tries to do something to participate in this communicational field. On the other hand, it does not know how to approach the on-line world in the correct way and for this reason leaves the sphere unregulated.

Peresedov: events

Peresedov also speaks about the change of generations of RLJ users, but explains it with different processes, for instance, the limited amount of discussion topics. In addition, he presents conflict relationship between different generations. Most importantly, Peresedov again supports the “elite tool-media pays attention- masses enter” story which seems so far to be the only storyline that most of the narrators analysed have in common, enriching it with new details on different kinds of advertisement.

The ‘Runet elite’, according Peresedov, is a ‘first wave’ of RLJ users and is a separate subculture. The way this small community used Livejournal was very peculiar and it was understood as a private tool of communication between the people of this subculture. Already in 2002 the ‘second wave’ appeared – these were people, still interested professionally in the Internet, but lacking same levels of creativity and originality. They have turned Livejournal into the ‘generator of anecdotes and stories’. With the arrival of the ‘second wave’ the political climate RLJ had changed as well. If the early adopters were, as it already has been noticed before, intelligentsia-like: liberal in their views but considered it impolite to quarrel on political topics, the representatives of the next generation were more daring and provocative, they have brought both conservative and radical opinions that were alien to the ‘first wave’. It should be noted here – Peresedov limits the time RLJ was the community of selected few to practically the period of maximum two years.

The ‘third wave’ of RLJ users comes when RLJ enlarges significantly and becomes a very diverse platform which connected everyone. At that point RLJ starts to exist in accordance with principles of the Internet itself – as a set of interconnected clusters, a service for masses. In this context ‘old-timers’ suddenly find themselves as only one of the subcultures of this diverse field while the RLJ community
itself is a large group of very un-sophisticated people. As Peresedov himself puts it, ‘a bunch of housewives; random people, who are not connected to Internet in any way’.

In this new setting people who strive to become popular have to be interesting to large numbers of very different people. This leads to the turn in the development of Livejournal, that other sources of the story have given as well – the heroes of contemporary RLJ are populists, who are ready to please large audiences. Here Peresedov adds another feature of this process of RLJ growth. Previously it has been noted, that ‘first wave’ adopters have left Livejournal when it entered mainstream, but as this expert adds, they have also developed negative opinions against what previously has been labelled as a ‘new elite’: “The speak of us, as of spineless, unprincipled scum who tries to be liked by everyone”.

During the ‘third wave’ various things happened. Firstly, with the gain of popularity of Livejournal in 2006, many Kremlin and opposing structures had entered Russian Livejournal in order to promote their opinions and stands in the blogosphere. In order to achieve this aim they have hired RLJ users (even the popular ones), some have employed individuals to create many different journals and involve in discussions pretending to be different people. Peresedov describes this process in the following way: “If you spend a certain amount of time in Livejournal, write on political topics and are not a complete psychopath, sooner or later you will meet someone who is actually doing politics. If in the course of half a year you will be leaving sensible comments to the Livejournal blog of, let us say, Nemtsov, he or someone of his team will we aware of your existence. Then at some point you will be offered to do the same thing but with an aim of popularizing certain views and opinions, bringing some entries to the ‘Yandex Top’ and so on. As far as I know, everyone who is involved in Livejournal on a regular basis has received such offers. I myself first started receiving offers to work as a columnist for some publications and later – political and commercial advertisement offers”.

The reason for this development is the following. As to the political elite, for a long time it has been actively working in order to make the process of information exchange in the country very predictable and transparent for itself. At that point in time, when RLJ became an important platform of communication with 10 millions of literate people, the power elite could not afford to ignore it, so it chose to enter it. As Peresedov puts it: “if the process can’t be stopped, it should be lead”. As to the representatives of the opposition, the emergence of RLJ as a powerful platform has offered them possibilities to voice opinions, which were not allowed on the biggest (semi)state-controlled channels. This has turned RLJ at its ‘third wave’ stage in the platform for political discussion in
Russian society, the only place to freely share political opinions, by 2006 representatives of all political spectrum have appeared in RLJ. In this sense Peresedov calls Russian Livejournal ‘the heart of Runet’ meaning a centre of all on-line events, the main nod of the Russian Internet. Similarly as Sholademi, Peresedov notes, although hosting representatives of all political forces, large part of RLJ is ignorant about the political content of Russian Livejournal.

The second significant ‘third wave’ development was the introduction of the so-called ‘Yandex Top’ – the top of the most discussed blog entries in the Russian blogosphere. Some have quickly understood the algorithm of indexation – the ‘Yandex Top’ mainly includes entries to which there has been the greatest amount of links. It is quite possible to ‘trick’ the indexation and artificially bring a certain entry into the top. Although advertisement entries have appeared in the ‘Yandex Top’ very soon after the tool was introduced, now the share of entries that were paid for is 50 per cent.

These two developments (entrance of political forces and ‘Yandex Top’) have made RLJ less interesting, it has turned from the platform for un-restricted communication into the space where people ‘are repeating the same things for money’. According to Peresedov, commercialisation and entrance of political forces have destroyed RLJ as it was ‘before’ – free and spontaneous. Generally, growth and expansion of RLJ have lead to the fact that it has lost its peculiarity, merged with the Russian Internet and became, in the end, both a small projection of the whole of Russian Internet and an indicator of the tendencies of Runet.

Peresedov provides a development of the story for the future of RLJ. Politicians of 10-15 years from now will all be present times RLJ active politically-minded users. This will influence their thinking patterns, reasoning manner and gradually change something about the Russian politics.

In addition to the story elements, Peresedov introduces two kinds of fabulas according to which Russian Livejournal develops. The first one refers to the development of the whole service in the course of time: he speaks of development of any phenomenon, which has four stages. Firstly, it is searching for the ways to manifest itself, then it starts to reveal itself, next it systematizes itself and, finally, dies. Currently RLJ is going through the systematization stage.

10 The ‘Yandex Top’ is available at: http://blogs.yandex.ru/entries/
The second fabula is the scenario of public discussion which explains the change of generations of bloggers within Livejournal. A blogger who wants to gain popularity has to discuss (write entries, comment) a certain number of issues that are always popular: gay rights, abortion, the evaluation of the Soviet past, etc. After one an a half year of active discussion a blogger gets tired of these topics and stops being active while the new ones take the baton from him/her. This creates tension between ‘new’ and ‘old’ bloggers are of the opinion that they have already discussed all topics in a better way. On the other hand, bloggers who have the ability to repeatedly discuss the same topics get hired by political forces to promote certain agendas.

There is also a fabula element Peresedov speaks about. In his view, in the process of development of any communicational platform, as soon as it becomes popular, appear people, who are ready to pay for distributing something through it. According to this fabula stories of both television and Russian Livejournal develop.

**Oleg Kozyrev**

Oleg Kozyrev is another blogger in the line of, if to speak in the terms of previous interview analysed, ‘third wave’ RLJ celebrities. A professional journalist, he has entered Livejournal in 2005 and gained huge popularity in 2006 after composing a series of humorous short stories “Notes of a Freezing Muscovite” during an abnormally cold winter of the same year. Later he has found a publisher through RLJ and issued “Notes” as book. This provided him with a career as a professional writer. Initially, Kozyrev was chosen to bring the aspect of the creative elite and its relationship to Livejournal, but, as it has appeared during the course of the interview, he could provide a story of political influence of RLJ and its consequences in the society. Kozyrev runs a Livejournal blog at the address [http://oleg-kozyrev.livejournal.com/](http://oleg-kozyrev.livejournal.com/) and is ‘friended’ by 3247 other users.

**Kozyrev: characters**

Kozyrev adds one seemingly important detail to the character of RLJ users. They, according to the expert, are aware and alarmed about a very uncertain status of their blogs which do not belong to them, but to the Livejournal administration. In case the blog gets suspended for some reason, RLJ users loose an important part of their personality and work, the significance of which is even higher, given the state of media censorship in Russia. This quality is, according to Kozyrev, the main reason for the active
protests of RLJ users in the response to any actions by Livejournal administration – the story element that I have found previously during the first stage of analysis.

All media, power structures and capital actors in realise the potential of Russian blogosphere with RLJ as its core and are quite knowledgeable of this sphere. They wish to maintain the influence and for this reason follow the on-line developments.

Kozyrev: events

Mainly Kozyrev tells the story of the general development of socio-political influence of blogging in Russia. During the interview the expert has mainly spoken of ‘blogosphere’ or ‘Russian blogosphere’, but, at the same time, he admits that Livejournal is the core of the Russian blogosphere which makes it a trendsetter of the Russian Internet. Currently, the final and very significant point of many of the developments Kozyrev describes Dmitry Medvedev running a blog in the Livejournal platform.

Most generally, the idea of Gultung’s triangle can be used to explain how Kozyrev speaks about the influence of the blogosphere. At a certain turning point in time, all three major pillars of, in this case Russian, society (state, capital and the civil society) as well as media floating between the pillars, have realised the influential potential of the blogosphere and had a wish to use it for their aims. Kozyrev speaks of a slightly different turning point, the year 2005, unlike 2006 which is mentioned by other bloggers interviewed. Previous interviewees spoke about the difference being set by entry of big amounts of new users, which has followed the media attention. All together, Kozyrev presents a very optimistic story of the growing influence of Livejournal which empowers individuals and bottom-up movements.

The first users of Livejournal that Kozyrev describes in the same way as previous interviewees (educated, thinking and writing) have from the very beginning formed the core of RLJ and have been attracting there similarly intellectual personalities. This has distinguished Russian Livejournal from other social networks that have later appeared in Runet. On the other hand, the social network component has distinguished RLJ community from English language blogosphere. Nevertheless, before the turning point in the history of RLJ, the influence of the platform was limited only to its bloggers.

According to Kozyrev, things changed for Russian Livejournal in 2005 when the massive protest events during the “Orange Revolution” in Kiev took place. The protests were widely reported in
Russian media and Russians have seen a demonstration of the fact that in response to the actions of politicians, citizens can organise something different with a help of horizontal communication and change something in their lives. The “Orange Revolution” has boosted the interest of different groups towards Livejournal as a medium of communication. First to come were supporters of democratic ideas, later political extremists such as nationalists and Nazis also joined the community. This has turned Russian Livejournal into what “Kozyrev” calls “a milieu that formulates problem questions in the society, reacts to some events or mobilises people to react to the events”. In addition to that RLJ had two very important and positive qualities – it had already quite a large amount of users and, at the same time, was quite qualitative in terms of people presented here.

This influx of young activists has promoted the political and social significance of RLJ. It has continued to increase and has lead to the arrival of professional Kremlin-hired political strategists, who had a wish to promote the ideas of the ruling elite in the Russian blogosphere. Mainly, these were youth branches of the ruling party such as “Nashi” and “The Young Guard”. Kozyrev even says that “in a number of movements freshly recruited activists were strongly advised to start their own Livejournal blog.”

Importance of the platform continued increasing and power structures tried to influence bloggers even more – already during both duma (2007) and presidential (2008) elections most of ‘tysyachniki’ were taken to different camps. For some promotion of a certain party corresponded to their ideological stands while for the others it was just a paid job. In addition at the time of duma election a variety of state structures have opened cooperation with Livejournal users, the first being the Central Election Committee.

Political significance or RLJ has increased even further in the same year, when in august of 2008 RLJ served as a ‘truth meter’ while both Russia and Georgia, engaged in war, have been waging propaganda campaigns. RLJ bloggers were fast to dig in the facts and prove international media right or wrong. Currently there is a number of official contacts between the power structures and RLJ bloggers – invitations to meetings, events, etc. In addition, the semi-state owned company “Rosatom” engages in some sort of interaction with bloggers – invites them to the power plants, tries to promote the benefits of nuclear energy. As a very last event in the story of blogosphere-state relationship, Kozyrev voices an assumption, that people who themselves occupy positions in state structures read blogs and respond with action to what they find there.
Kozyrev himself participated in a similar event, although related to a different political process. He has commented in his RLJ blog on what he thought was an outrageous remark by the journalist of the state television channel “Rossiya”. The journalist had called the assassination of the Serbian vice-premier “deserved”. A Serbian journalist, who was a subscriber of Kozyrev’s blog, has disseminated this information and caused a political scandal in Serbia. When shortly after this incident Medvedev, the first vice-premier at that time, went with an official visit to Serbia and had to apologise for the statement of the journalist.

After political forces have entered Livejournal, it became clear that blogs are a good medium to mobilise people, connect them, influence some processes or just reach certain personal aims. In 2006 the influence and power of blogosphere became obvious and media of the country had to ‘give up’ and start using information provided in Livejournal in many ways. First, these were references to facts disseminated by bloggers. Then, in 2007 (with the stabilizing of the trend in 2008) media started actively use blogosphere processes as an event, e.g. publishing so-called ‘blogosphere reports’, where they would describe the most discussed topics in Livejournal.

At the same time big media companies have entered in blogosphere themselves via different ways of cooperation with Livejournal users. Webpages of newspapers allowed bloggers to leave comments under their Livejournal nickname, incorporated different codes that would make it easier to publish the link to an article, opened their own ‘representative blogs’ within Livejournal. In addition, most of important television channels have created a position of ‘blog editor’ – a person who browses the blogosphere for new ideas and opinions, as well as in search of people to interview. Some of these media-related developments have been found also during the first part of empirical research – analysis of Lenta.ru articles, but the logical connection between that and other events in the story has been found only with the help of interviews.

Another result of the same process of increase of the Livejournal influence is the influx of money, both politics- and business-related. As Kozyrev puts it, “when people saw that blogs can influence things they wanted to pay for it”. It is important to mention, that alongside with media, politics and finance, many famous and important people of Russian society have entered Livejournal after realising that they could in some way benefit from participation in this influential communication platform.
Throughout the development of Livejournal influence in the Russian society, the nature of RLJ itself has changed as well. Kozyrev mentioned four different ways in which RLJ was transforming. Firstly, this initially amateur community has turned into a professional one – some bloggers have developed almost professional blogging skills. Secondly, being firstly a community of individuals RLJ turned into a community of different stronger citizen forces. Thirdly, Russian blogosphere has turned into a field where a single individual can compete with big entities, such as corporations or state structures within the RLJ an individual “can become more noticed and popular then all big and grave”. Fourthly, RLJ is being gradually connected to the other language blogospheres. The engine that had connected RLJ with the world blogosphere was YouTube.

Kozyrev pays big attention to the fact of the opening of a Livejournal blog by Dmitry Medvedev. This is another point in two related processes. Firstly, ‘blog_medvedev’ is the continuation of the intellectual core of RLJ, accumulating the intellectual force of the society. Secondly, it is an important step in the response of power to the amount of influence that RLJ has – after Medvedev more state and local level officials will follow. Russian Livejournal will continue to act as an influential agent in Russian politics even further. For instance, at some point every state structure would have a hired person to take care of representation of that institution in the blogosphere. Moreover, more politicians of local as well as federal level will join Livejournal, as well as famous people of all kinds.

Among other predictions, the story of the future of Livejournal continues with more bloggers having RLJ as their working place and further changing attitude towards money earning in the Russian blogosphere. Although this is possible only if the Livejournal administration changes its policies towards individual advertisement. As to the media direction of Russian blogosphere, Kozyrev predicts the further convergence of media and blogosphere with bloggers being more and more included in the work of traditional media or blogs becoming more media-like themselves.

*Sergey Kuznetsov*

The interview with Sergey Kuznetsov, who runs a blog at the address www.skuzn.livejournal.com and is ‘friended’ by 1 117 other RLJ bloggers, has started a series of interviews with the ‘pioneers’ of Russian Livejournal. He was one of the first people not only in Russian Livejournal, but also in the whole of Runet. Kozyrev had been involved in various content projects of the Russian Internet as early as in 1995-1996 and had been the part of the so-called ‘Runet’ elite that had later started blogging in
Livejournal. For this reason he, as well as other ‘pioneers’, provides a valuable insight into the early days of Russian blogosphere. Kozyrev was one of the first 100 bloggers of RLJ community, has written the first publication about Livejournal in the Russian media. Currently the interviewee is working with the Internet resources, including the advancement of information in the blogosphere. At the same time Kuznetsov has very clear ideological stands on the permissibility of paid blog entries and other such activity. “For a person with this kind of background I have a ridiculously small amount of readers. I perfectly understand what needs to be done to increase it, but don’t want to.”

**Kuznetsov: characters**

Runet elite
According to this interviewee, participants of ‘Runet elite’ are not just the continuation of intelligentsia and the cream of intellectual society of Moscow and originators of many activities of Russian Internet, but also generally pioneers of Moscow city culture. For example, the person who has started the first on-line publication of Runet, Zhurnal.ru portal, where many future RLJ-pioneers have met is also responsible for introducing currently very popular network of clubs and cafes called “OGI”.

State-related characters
Kuznetsov denies the existence of a unified character that can be called ‘the state power’, ‘Kremlin’ or in any other way. Instead, he suggests, there are a lot of different individuals and groups of individuals who have different opinions on the freedom of speech in blogosphere, different level of knowledge about the way new media functions as well as interests in relation to Livejournal. What is more, all of them compete not against opposition parties, but against each other for a limited amount of founding the state offers. As an example of this competition Kuznetsov mentions relationship between the publishing house *Kommersant*, which belongs to businessman Alisher Usmanov, who is believed to have strong Kremlin connections and the youth movement ‘Nashi’. ‘Nashi’ have organized DOS-attacks on the *Kommersant* servers, although in theory both of them can be branded as ‘Kremlin’ structures. Non-existence of the ‘Kremlin’ character explains the lack of consistent relationship or conflict between the state and RLJ or, for that matter, Internet as a whole. What is more, those of state related characters that do enter RLJ and try to act within it become a part of community and act within the same rules and tactics as the rest – there is no substantial difference between the communication patterns of ‘Nashi’ and The Movement Against Illegal Immigration as Livejournal bloggers.
Political power elite

Kuznetsov contradicts to many ‘storytellers’ of this thesis in his assessment of the power elite. “It is not that Soviet Union has suddenly happened in Russia. Those with power today are not the same people as in 1983, they understand that if individuals discuss politics online, it does not mean, that they will go to the streets tomorrow.” They are not paranoid scared of descent, but, at the same time, aware of the ways in which blogosphere can be used. This description of a character explains how the trials against various RLJ users (have been included in the story by Lenta.ru) are completely detached from the attempts to censor blogosphere.

Kuznetsov: events

In explaining the way Livejournal had developed in Russia, Kuznetsov goes even beyond everyone else and explains the success of Livejournal with the background of the creator of the piece of computer code that has defined the ways in which Livejournal has been used, Brad Fitzpatrick and the social structure of Soviet society. Fitzpatrick has subconsciously projected the way in which the society he lived in (California, U.S.A) was organized: “Around silicon valley the society is highly fragmented. That is every person belongs to various groups with which he or she connects his/her identity. On one hand, he is Italian American, on the other programmer and also, let us say, homosexual or transgender. Livejournal is organized in the same way and the existence of this structure enables an individual to present himself not as another person, but as a part of the group. It provides the possibility of social action – individuals can join in the fight for the rights of a particular group, because they are united accordingly.” USA society is structured in itself and citizens do not have to seek for such tools on-line. Whereas in Russia few groups were officially recognised during its Soviet past, such tool was destined for popularity. With this pre-condition of the popularity of Livejournal.com Kuznetsov contributes very precisely to the story of Gorny, who suggests, that ‘Russians have ‘hacked’ Livejournal’. In the present story, Russians have merely uncovered the true structure of this blogging service, undiscovered by its initial audience – young California students.

As well as other sources, Kuznetsov emphasizes the link between Runet pioneers and the beginning of Livejournal in Russia. By the year 2000 all ‘Runet elite’ representatives, who previously, in the early days of Russian Internet, have been producing content voluntarily, have been involved in different commercial projects and paid for their writings. This has limited their ability to freely express opinions and publish any text they wanted to share. According to Kuznetsov, at that point ‘Runet elite’ has been
willing to find a tool for free and un-limited publishing of texts and interpersonal communication. For this reason, when one of the participants of this group, Roman Leibov, has discovered Livejournal, ‘Runet elite’ was happy to “move in” there.

The first 100 Russian-speakers that have arrived in Livejournal were the representatives of this creative, educated elite consisted of people in humanities, social sciences and computing professionals, who shared a virtual space between Moscow and Tartu, where Roman Leibov worked as a professor of Russian philology. Most of them were ambitious, in their early 30s and connected with journalism. The process of enlarging of RLJ at this stage was highly personal: “I helped to start a blog to many friends. We have been hanging around in the city, drinking and chatting and at some point I dragged them into the Internet-café, started a Livejournal blog for them, introduced with the ways to use it”.

Many previously noted that this condensed community of interconnected educated elite has sent the tone of further communication in Russian Livejournal, Kuznetsov explains how did this connection take place. From the very beginning an average RLJ user was ‘friended’ by a lot of other bloggers and had a ‘broadcast’ format of the journal. What is more, his/her audience consisted of members of the same community and blogging itself was a tool of communication in-between a large group of friends. Consequently, the main criteria for an entry would be –what would one like to share with the rest of community. And since this ‘rest of community’ consisted of intelligentsia-like people, only a specific type of entries could have been embraced by the rest of bloggers. Another defining element was the sociability of the first RLJ users – this has set the tradition of having many comments to entries. At the same time the moral climate of RLJ was such that every single blog was felt to be a very private and intimate tool of communication. Generally, all processes, described further, took place in a stage that is very commonly understood by sources analysed so far as the beginning stage of the RLJ story (although Kuznetsov finds the beginning earlier). At this stage Livejournal served as “a platform on which journalists, writers and Internet-figures lived”.

By 2002-2003 the process of Russian Livejournal being accepted by mass media and socio-political influence has started. Nevertheless these developments were clear only to those, who where ‘inside’ the Livejournal. Starting from that period RLJ had been becoming a property of other social groups then its founders and the formation of civil society on a local level took place. This is how the expert explains the growth of RLJ users and the loss of the initial special community of Livejournal: “First, if you meet a person who has a Livejournal blog, you feel him or her socially close to you. Then, you knew – all
people that were more or less like you were a part of RLJ. Now having and RLJ blog means just having an Internet access.”

This third stage was fully in place by 2007. Then extremist politics, opposition and Kremlin entered Russian Livejournal at once. This increase in the political significance of Livejournal has resulted in the purchase of the whole service by the Russian company SUP FABRIK, which then started investing in the development of the service. Here Kuznetsov introduces the version of Russian Livejournal story that resonates with fears voiced by RLJ users who have protested against the purchase of the blogging service by SUP FABRIK and other later activities by the company. That is, the purchase of Livejournal is directly connected with the power institutions of Russia. Generally, all respondents have marked purchase of Livejournal by SUP FABRIK as an important event in the Livejournal story in Russia, but only some had such far-reaching explanations.

This element of the story again incorporates Livejournal into the general story of Russian Internet. According to Kuznetsov, in a given point in time the forces inside Kremlin have felt that Internet is a very powerful force in Russian society and it should not be controlled by forces potentially opposing the state. This was just a fear of a probable turn of events, although nothing would point at that direction. For this reason political power had a wish to secure itself against the revolutionary potential of the Internet by having loyal businessmen involved financially in the Internet business, so if the dangerous moment arrived the control over new media could be established. “This is not for the establishment of censorship, but to be sure that it will not be realized by others.”

Two examples of this are the most popular search engine in Russian Internet, Yandex and Livejournal. The case of Yandex Kuznetsov describes as following: “the head of Yandex has said ‘I will issue a special ‘golden’ asset that does not give any special right to its owner, but the right to block any major purchase deal. This asset I will sell to a governmental structure. This will not allow the state to control Yandex, but give them the guarantee that it will not be bought by their potential enemies’.” The same scenario has been realised with the purchase of Livejournal. Some time later SUP FABRIK has sold part of Livejournal assets to the Kommersant publishing house, partially owned by Kremlin-related businessmen Alisher Usmanov. This deal was presented in the story by Lenta.ru as well, although it did not have a logical connection to other events.
Both state powers related and oppositional political groups as well as business-related advertisers, according to Kuznetsov, have been and are using the same methods of public opinion manipulation which has changed RLJ itself. Mainly, different became ‘the climate of trust’, e.g. on an individual level RLJ users stopped perceiving other RLJ users as trustworthy per se: “its impossible to exist in the community of thousands of people and have the same level of trust as when it consisted of 100 members only”. In a response to such hostile environment RLJ users have organized themselves in smaller communities, where the level of trust, again, is high. This fragmentation of RLJ and its transformation from a united community into the cluster of hundreds of smaller ones has been described by Eugene Gorny in his paper, analysed previously. In this, interview, however, the logical link between the socio-political developments and the nature of RLJ has been introduced.

In the end of the day, the real socio-political influence of Russian Livejournal is a result of a simple practice of blogging combined with the social networking element that Livejournal platform offers. Individuals, who have been actively discussing various issues within Livejournal, grow to have a different kind of consciousness, which gradually will come to change society in one way or another.

Kuznetsov introduces a kind of fabula. In his mind, the development of Livejournal follows the same line of development as the Runet has. First it was the tool for the self-expression of small group of people. Later this group of people grew which has lead to the arrival of political groups and later – businesses. At that point the initial adopters of the tool try to find another way to communicate with each other and leave the platform.

Anton Nossik

Nossik, whose most popular Livejournal blog can be found at the address www.dolboeb.livejournal.com, is ‘friended’ by 14 924 other RLJ users and has a very impressive record as an activist of Runet and Livejournal. He was one of the first participants of the first network of electronic pre-Internet network Fidonet, collaborated with the first Internet provided in Russia, “Cityline”. Nossik is an author of the first blog-like project of Runet: “The Evening Internet”. Later he was the president of once great Runet search engine – “Rambler”, the editor of the Lenta.ru portal and the news site newsru.com. At the time when Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal has reached its peak, Nossik has been hired by the company SUP FABRIK to manage Livejournal-related questions. Currently Nossik is the editor-in-chief of the business news portal bmf.ru. Nossik can be considered the
most knowledgeable interviewee of the selection of this thesis – he is one of the most read RLJ bloggers, has been working for one of the main characters of the story – SUP FABRIK, and at the same time, is a classic representative of ‘Runet elite’ and ‘old RLJ elite’

Nossik: characters

Runet elite
This is a subculture of ‘guide people’, who have been providing the first users of Internet with the information on what is new in the Internet, since back then the indexation of pages by search engines in Russian Internet was extremely slow. These were people whose entries thousands of others were reading in order to realise what was new and interesting in the Internet.

RLJ
This character is viewed by Nossik very differently then by any other expert. In his view, RLJ — is a limitless amount of subcultures, acting on its own terms and which are connected to each other only via belonging to the same platform. These are not just communities of people with shared interests, but also RLJ users with different aims of running a blog, different ethical standards and values. In this setting, the so-called ‘old RLJ elite’ is just one of subcultures, while active bloggers that try to protest against changes in Livejournal or political activists – the other. In this way Nossik denies the existence of any kind of united RLJ community, having shared features. Consequently, all the actions by RLJ users are merely the manifestations of interests of current subculture and not of the RLJ as a whole. “RLJ users are as much un-united as people who are watching ‘Dr. House’ series. They will or have already seen a certain amount of episodes, but it does not mean, that they have a common standpoint in relation to any question.”

Nossik presents new characters as well. First of them he ironically calls ‘new forms of life’ outside Livejournal – these are people who, not being interested in Livejournal as a communicational platform, have in one or the other way involved themselves in the blogosphere in order to achieve own aims. Secondly, there are the early readers of RLJ community blogs, who could not, at first, join Livejournal because of the restricted access to the platform.
Generally, Nossik offers a very different story of Russian Livejournal – driven by chance, business decisions, rules of mere logic and communication tools development fabulas.

In 2000, at the dawn of RLJ the market of computer mediated media was very limited – new tools were rare and most of them suffered from the point of view of usability. For this reason, the ‘early adopters’ were accustomed to try out every single platform that came around to be well informed and stay in the social group. Accordingly, ‘Runet elite’ participants did the same with one of the few new tools for communication – blogging, which first entered Russian language segment of the Internet represented by Livejournal. As Nossik states, neither he, nor the rest of the ‘pioneers’ were interested in a possibility of self-publishing, reaching wider audience or any other quality of Livejournal. Their only motivation was to test a new technology, play around with the tool. Mostly the reason is that all of ‘Runet elite’ at the time member have already been writing for various different Internet publications and didn’t need an extra option of self-expression.

Yet at a certain point in time, when all of ‘Runet elite’ had gathered at Livejournal, without any of them individually having a need for it, they have turned LJ into a common space of communication with each other which appeared to be more comfortable then the previous platforms these individuals have used. More and more ‘Runet elite’ participants have entered and that way RLJ was born to be a set of people, whose writings were interesting to read. Therefore the ‘pioneers’ have developed some kind of routine of reading Livejournal blogs and as a consequence RLJ has became the best of the communication methods and self-publishing tools. “And it was Livejournal where all of them have stayed. Or, rather, us” This formation of a ‘Russian core’ Nossik sees as the first main point of the development of Livejournal.

At the next stage of RLJ development, in the beginning of 2002, ‘pioneers’ started inviting to Livejournal everyone whom they would like to start a blog and become a reader of that blog. This elitist process of selection has created what in the story by Peresedov was labelled as a ‘Second Wave’. It has to be said, then existent system of ‘invites’ contributed to the fact that at the end of this stage RLJ has turned into an ‘elite media club’. By the end of 2002 all the journalistic community has moved to Livejournal.
In 2003 a ‘pre-third wave’ (if to continue comparison with Peresedov) has taken place – Russian Livejournal was a common space where one could find many interesting texts to read. At the same time the sense of social connectivity, which was already mentioned here before, with other RLJ users existed – Livejournal was perceived as a place where the people alike meet. At that stage also print media started mentioning Livejournal and first RLJ-celebrities came to the full shape. At this large numbers of people were just mere readers of interesting blogs.

Another crucial point of development Nossik sees in 2005, when Livejournal service has been brought from its founder, Brad Fitzpatrick, by the commercial company Six Apart. The profit-driven company abolished the restrictive system of registration (so-called ‘invites’) and anyone could register oneself a blog within Livejournal without any restrictions. This has started many significant processes.

Large masses of people, who were just reading interesting blogs, have started their own. This has boosted the size of Russian Livejournal extremely. According to Nossik, the entry of big groups of people into Livejournal did not change the nature of RLJ. The reason is that during the previous years of its development, the elite of RLJ formed a strong core of interesting blogs which remained to supply RLJ with interesting content. Only the ‘moral climate’ of RLJ has changed for with more people the culture of communication has changed, but the function of RLJ as a collection of interesting blogs has not disappeared. The massive growth of RLJ population in 2005/2006 has been noted by many interviewees as an important step in the development of Livejournal, although Nossik has connected it to the business developments made by the company owning Livejournal.

After 2005 the commercialisation of Livejournal has started, which Nossik connects to the new, completely commercial way of governing Livejournal. Nevertheless, neither this, nor the introduction of ‘Yandex Top’ had a significant influence on Livejournal. Unlike many others, Nossik does not connect the introduction of the ‘Yandex Top’ with the strive of RLJ users for popularity or bigger amounts of readers and attempts to popularize certain entries. “This can be compared to the appearance of a score-board in football matches. It did not cause teams to try to score. They have tried to score more goals even when the count was made by referee bending his fingers. Now there is this score-board which can be seen even outside the stadium. New audience has appeared, it is ready to follow the game and even bet some money on it.” Entrance of commerce and ‘Yandex Top’, which, others have said, has changed Russian Livejournal, in the story by Nossik, has just given rise to new “forms of life“
and new related businesses that started using Livejournal in their interests and subcultures of RLJ itself.

The general transformation of Livejournal itself with the arrival of large numbers of users and commercialisation, Nossik sees as one small subculture starting the blogosphere and with the arrival of more participants, the blogosphere gave space to more subcultures. “If you have a popular football club, you have people who assure that the stadium gets tickets bought the evening when the team plays, people who assure the ratings of the channel that shows the match of the team, people who are ready to invest money in that team.” But, in the end, the arrival of none of these subcultures changed the patterns of behaviour of other RLJ bloggers.

The last important point in the story of Livejournal is the involvement of company SUP FABRIK in 2007, which has started the process of ‘cyrillization’ – adoption of Livejournal to the needs of the Russian-speaking audience. However, full understanding of whether this event has led to positive or negative changes in the platform can be obtained in, at least, two years when it will be seen if SUP FABRIK has interrupted the development of RLJ or fostered it.

Nossik gives a different version of events, related to the relationship between SUP FABRIK and RLJ that have been included into stories previously. Firstly, the involvement of the state power elite into the purchase of Livejournal by SUP FABRIK is denied by Nossik. In his version, SixApart was willing to sell Livejournal as a ‘non-specialized’ property and was seeking for the one ready to buy it. By that time SUP FABRIK has already had rights to administrate the Russian language of the platform and was not willing to risk loosing this deal if Livejournal would be sold out to a different owner. For this reason SUP FABRIK has decided to buy the whole of Livejournal itself and since it did not have the necessary funding, had to search for investors. The available investor was Alisher Usmanov, who has already entered the story of Livejournal previously. In the further development of Livejournal after SUP FABRIK becoming its owner, no traces of any kind of ‘Kremlin influence’ have been noticed.

Secondly, Nossik gives his version of an event, included in the Lenta.ru story, when SUP FABRIK has attempted to remove the option to run a ‘basic account’ (no advertisement blocs on the side, no extra functions). In Lenta.ru, this relationship has developed so that the initiative by SUP FABRIK was
prevented by RLJ community who has actively protested against it with means of boycott. In the version of Nossik there was never an intention to remove the ‘basic account’ at all, but slightly change the process of registration, so that this type of account would be only available post factum after registration. SUP FABRIK has made a mistake and wrongly coordinated this change so that RLJ users got the wrong impression of what was happening. As to the boycott, it has been a mere manifestation of a small subculture of active RLJ users, who, for the reasons of self-popularization, organize protests against anything. The action of these users was very small and insignificant, did not affect the most part of RLJ and did not cause any change in the plans of SUP FABRIK which did fulfil its initial plan.

Nossik presents a fabula into the story of Livejournal. According to him, the development and popularity of each technological instrument which does not have its own value depends heavily on chance. In the case of social networks and blogging platforms the chance consists of a big amount of interesting people that use the service in question, which then attracts more and more potential users. In short, the fabula is as follows: the communicational tool is developed; by chance the initial group of users appears to be for some reason interesting to bigger amounts of people, who then start using the service. This starts a kind of dissemination which Nossik call a virus-like – more and more people enter the platform since everyone else they know is using it and the tool becomes a part of their social life. Development of almost all world social networks follows this fabula – MySpace has first attracted independent musicians who were followed by their listeners; the number one social network of the world, Facebook, has spread first through American college students. In this case Livejournal has initially accumulated a core of interesting blogs (by ‘Runet elite’) that has attracted more and more new users until ‘everyone was there’. It should be noted here, that many other stories of Russian Livejournal, presented in this thesis, fall under this fabula and Anton Nossik seem to have introduced a very well-fitting framework to the whole story.

All together Nossik denies Livejournal any specific traces of unique development – according to this expert, everything, that has ever taken place in Livejournal can be traced to a fabula of a normal development of a technological tool of communication. Such things as the famous boycott of Livejournal against the change of the account system, the entry of Medvedev into the Russian blogosphere and many others have its analogues in other language and technical networks as well.

In addition the relationship of both state elite and media to Livejournal falls into a fabula, which develops as follows. A certain portal in accordance with the previously described fabula becomes the
most popular portal in a certain segment of the Internet. This gives it as much influence as the main state channel has and, as a consequence, neither power elite nor individuals can afford to ignore this tool and have to decide on their strategy towards it.

Another fabula that Russian Livejournal development fits into is the entry of creative elite. While introducing this fabula Nossik comments on another previously noticed event in the story – the stop of growth of actively writing RLJ users. In his view, the percentage of people, who really take up the creative activity after trying it once, is very small. “All male population of earth has kicked a football ball once in their childhood. But very few of them have grown to be professional players. Kicking a ball is the same kind of action as writing the first entry in the blog, having registered an account first. But those willing to write entries that would be interesting to a wider audience on a regular basis are a tiny minority.”

The most general fabula introduced by Nossik is the ‘logics of an interesting place’: “If a place is interesting for 10 people, it most likely, can be interesting for 100 people and, consequently, to 10 000 people”.

**Maxim Aleksandrov**

Maxim Aleksandrov runs a blog at the address [www.scandal-max.livejournal.com](http://www.scandal-max.livejournal.com) and is ‘friended’ by 6 680 other RLJ users. Aleksandrov belongs to what in the previous interviews was described as the ‘second wave’ of Livejournal – when ‘Runet elite’ started inviting people capable of writing interesting texts into Livejournal. He has never been connected to journalism, but was advised to start a livejournal blog by a friend and, when having done so, have attracted attention of various publishers and newspaper editors, which resulted in Aleksandrov becoming a popular journalist and columnist, he had also been working in the company SUP FABRIK for a short time.

**Aleksandrov: characters**

RLJ

Aleksandrov adds more details to the contrast between the very first RLJ users – ‘Runet elite’ and their followers. He describes ‘old RLJ elite’ as middle class youngsters: “they were smart people with good education, coming from good, decent families. Hipsters in age interval between 22 and 32, people who
earned good money but did not become amazingly rich. No representative of elite of the society were present, there was one Duma deputy, but everyone kind of laughed at him“.

The ‘new RLJ’ that was formed after the entry of big masses of people, can not be summarized, although Aleksandrov gives examples of some groups that have entered, for example, “people who have just graduated from school, have read two books in their life and have formed an opinion on every single issue”.

**Aleksandrov: events**

Aleksandrov brings in more details on the relationship between media and RLJ, but generally reinforces the story that has been discovered previously. Nevertheless, he describes it in terms of social class – first Russian Livejournal was a domain of specific social group that belonged to the middle class, while later, with the help of media, lower classes of society entered, which has destroyed the previous structure. At the same time through the process of popularization Russian Livejournal transformed from being the platform of communication between the representatives of small social group to the mini-model of Russian society, used by journalists an advertisers.

According to Aleksandrov, the first major point in the history of Livejournal took place in 2003 and 2004, then RLJ first went ‘off-line’ and at the same time turned from the subculture of 100 people into a communicational platform of thousands – first media started using RLJ blogs as news sources, and RLJ celebrities as hosts at programs, while first talented RLJ bloggers have made deals with publishes to issue their writings as books. At this period RLJ users saw each other as a special social group: “some of us could hate each other strongly, but we still saw each other as members of one group and ‘off-line’ as a serious and remote, different sphere”.

Next year, 2005, Aleksandrov describes as ‘death of RLJ the way we knew it’ – “too big” publicity in media, which has lead to the arrival of a large numbers of people, belonging to the different social sphere. Here, Aleksandrov confirms the event of the story, presented before – the ‘old RL elite’ has left Livejournal, annoyed with users, alien to them, joining the discussion they have previously felt as private.
In 2006 the process continued with the arrival of SUP FABRIK. Aleksandrov comments on the involvement of the state into the deal. In his story Kremlin did not instruct Alisher Usmanov to invest, but, instead, was consulted before the purchase and gave the ‘green light’. “When Abramovitch buys ‘Chelsea’ football club he does not plan to recruit its fans in the Russian army. But it is clear that the purchase is made after asking an advice from the Russian government. In the same way Usmanov has called someone and asked ‘Listen, do you think it would be cool to own this painting/blogging service/piece of art’. And the answer was ‘yes’ for the sake of things being organized, not controlled”.

The entry of SUP FABRIK has dramatically changed RLJ – what the first users have considered their own private “cozy diary” was attempted to be turned into the source of income. Members of the RLJ community have not seen the possibility of monetization and have suspected political involvement. Nevertheless, power elite never took any suppressive action, SUP FABRIK has invited popular bloggers as employees, companies started paying for entries, and banner advertisement was introduced. Aleksandrov views these processes as having destroyed RLJ as social group, where all bloggers saw each other as related and trustworthy. In his view this was a positive process since in the previous years the level of trust between the bloggers has not been adequate and has led to some unhappy accidents: “A flock of trusting sheep is always more exposed to dangers then a pack of hyenas that are ready to kill each other anyway”.

Nevertheless, RLJ users felt threatened by SUP FABRIK and saw it as force symbolizing the death of their small socially connected community, caused by advertisement and popularization: “they wanted to keep Livejournal as their small interest group and not allow it to turn into something as popular as mobile phones”. The first bloggers have gone on war against SUP FABRIK, but have lost completely and left Livejournal. It should be added, that according to Aleksandrov SUP FABRIK has managed Livejournal poorly and did not achieve its aim to turn Russian blogosphere into a successful business, although this could have been possible. The mismanagement has angered some RLJ users and motivated them to stand up against the company.

This turn in story – the conflict between SUP FABRIK and RLJ users is also presented in the articles of Lenta.ru, but Aleksandrov has enriched them with a different motivation of RLJ community and different outcome.
As for the later development, Aleksandrov confirms the events that have been introduced earlier – large masses of RLJ users, belonging to different social group then the first adopters have given their preference to more entertaining bloggers: “now ‘tysyachniki’ are those, who publish funny stories and pictures. Before our eyes the “Kultura” channel turned into the “TNT” channel. I don’t see any tragedy in this because this – it was an abnormal situation, when the popular platform is dominated by people who are very different from the general society.” The former ‘old RLJ elite’ has left to communicate in private spaces of professional on-line forums with restricted access.

At the same time with the popularization the new RLJ has turned into an important tool for journalists and advertisers. For journalists as an indicator of public opinion that can be used in order to understand the potential of news and issues. “I have heard myself how at the meeting of a newspaper office the editor comments on a proposition to write about a certain topic that he has checked the RLJ and since no one seems to be discussing it there is no need to devote newspaper space to it.” This has given rise to a certain kind of activity when individuals tried to create blogosphere popularity of some issues with artificial means in order to get publicity in the media. What is more, the massive growth of RLJ (which has started in 2006) has led to the fact that in the extreme situations journalists started searching and finding their sources in RLJ. The first most probable source is bloggers, ‘friended by’ a journalist. “The turning point was in 2007 when first the Russian media and then the whole world was getting information about what was happening in the capital of Kirgizia from the RLJ blog of young girl who sat next to the window and documented what she has seen”.

The advertising agents, RLJ proved to be potentially extremely beneficial market, which, in addition, is very easy subject to targeting. Audience of popular users is quite wide and, sometimes, precise in its views. Advertising in blogs is potentially very cheap as well: “The audience of Natalya Radulova11 is only three times smaller then audience of the Ogonek magazine where she used to work. But its staff consisted of forty people, while in her blog she writes alone. Ogonek was shut down, but Radulova is still running her RLJ blog.”

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11 Natalya Radulova is Moscow-based journalist of once existent Ogonek magazine, which in the 1980s was the mouthpiece of Perestroika. Radulova is ‘friended’ by 10 885 other RLJ users and read by many more.
5.4. The Story of Russian Livejournal: general summary

In this chapter I present the end result of the empirical process – the story of the Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal as it is extracted from articles by Lenta.ru, academic papers and interviews with the experts of Russian blogosphere.

On the whole, the general story of Livejournal does not lack a coherent and strong core upon which all analysed ‘storytellers’ agree. This story is very basic and is introduced in the very first part of the empirical analysis. American Livejournal blogging service is entered by intellectual elite of Russia, then noticed and populated by larger amounts of individuals, which leads to the attention from businesses, media and political agents. At the same time Livejournal is gradually taken over by Russian company SUP FABRIK – process of ‘monetization’ takes place. After this Russian Livejournal stops growing and completely changes its shape if compared to the beginning of the story.

*The birth of Russian Livejournal: 2001*

The story of Russian Livejournal begins with the creation of the service by an American student Brad Fitzpatrick in 1999. The first version of this event in the story is that Fitzpatrick, inspired by the way his home community it structured, designs Livejournal in a way, which allows users to create numerous communities. The second version of the same event is that Fitzpatrick has just created a tool for private communication between him and his peers.

The next event is the discovery of Livejournal by the members of ‘Runet elite’. At this point, there are variants of the motivation of this character. First branch of the event suggests that the ‘Runet elite’ was lacking the medium of interpersonal communication. All the means of communication available, such as different on-line publications and blog-like tools could not be freely used because members of ‘Runet elite’ were hired by owners of the tools to create content. The second version of the motivation is the necessity of early Runet users to try out and test every new communicational tool at their disposal. Tartu University professor Roman Leibov discovers Livejournal by accident and invites his friends of the ‘Runet elite’ to join this service. Those already invited, invite more of their friends to join and gradually create a community of ‘Runet elite’ within Livejournal, most members of which were linguistically oriented and, in their turn, have been inviting those of their friends that would be writing interesting texts.
‘Runet elite’ starts blogging within Livejournal and uses this tool in different way then previous (mainly English-speaking) users of the service. It has possibly ‘uncovered’ the true underlying structure of the Livejournal service and used it to create groups of interests and identities, which was and is not possible in the Russian society. Altogether sources are united on how ‘Runet elite’ has used Livejournal – this character has created a relatively intimate sphere of communication with a small number of bloggers and a culture of writing interesting intellectual texts. At this point the core of Russian Livejournal has been created and the ways the rest of Russian-speaking users would behave in future were coined. Different versions of how to name the role of Livejournal at this point in development exist: socio-cultural sphere, tool of discussions, reliable source of information as an alternative to media and search engines.

Here it is important to mention the features of this ‘Runet elite’/early Livejournal adopters/old Livejournal elite character. None of the sources of the story disagree on its main feature and while descriptions are various, the common denominator is elitism. The first Livejournal users come from the educated, more or less wealthy and ‘decent’ families related to intelligentsia and dissidents and are brought up in the culture of ‘samizdat’. In the social structure of the end of 90s they would not be considered belonging to any of the officially recognized important groups of society, but were still united around the idea of exclusiveness. One of the sources defines this group as a middle class and in this setting it is important to note, that in the Russian society of the time the middle class was virtually non-existent. It was a group of educated professionals, language-or computer-oriented relatively young people. Most of them were located in Moscow, St. Petersburg and capitals and destinations of immigration routes of Russian intelligentsia such as Israel or United States of America. This group of people is heavily interconnected and not very big in number. They actively operate in the Internet and provide other users with updates on what is new in the World Wide Web. They participate in the creation of Russian Internet (e.g., introduce instant messaging tools), shape the Russian Internet culture and also participate in the creation of the ‘off-line’ culture (e.g. café and clubs opening). As to other qualities, culturally they are named ‘hipsters’ – young trendy people with alternative points of view and affection towards alternative culture. Politically, the first users are quite liberal in their views, very critical of the current power elites, but, nevertheless, moderate and polite in on-line discussions on the matter.
After the ‘Runet elite’ has ‘settled’ in the Livejournal and created its own interconnected communicational sphere, Russian Livejournal entered a new phase. This stage of the story is marked as a ‘second wave’, a term borrowed from one of the experts, Ilya Peresedov. At this point of the story some of future trends were set in Russian Livejournal, but no visible and dramatic developments have happened.

Starting with the period of time between the year 2002 and 2003, members of ‘Runet elite’ continued to invite more and more people into the Livejournal blogging service, whose texts they were willing to read. It should be mentioned, that in order to start a Livejournal account at this stage, it was necessary to have an ‘invitation’ from an already registered user. In such a way the dissemination of Livejournal continued and resulted in the fact that almost all journalistic community had entered Livejournal. These journalists (both newly invited and members of ‘Runet elite’) have started to bring Livejournal into the media sphere – use it as sources and also as topics of the articles. This has attracted large amounts of ‘not logged in’ readers to Russian Livejournal as well as promoted the increase in the amount of bloggers. The increase in the amount of users and media presence had given the users of Russian Livejournal means of self-organization and empowerment, which one of the experts labels as ‘civil society’. That is, the RLJ users were at that point able to influence some minor off-line processes and bring change with their actions. Nevertheless these activities were very local and not noticed by anyone not having his/her blog or closely following the blogosphere.

The ‘second wave’ users have appeared to be different from the initial ‘Runet elite’ pioneers. They were as interested in the Internet, but not as creative and intelligent as the first bloggers. The newcomers required more simple entertainment, have not been so keen on appreciating the ‘Runet elite’ members and started the birth of a ‘non-creative minority’, turning ‘Runet elite’ into a separate subculture within the larger RLJ community. The ‘second wave’ users had different political preferences (more extreme in their views, both conservative and radical) and were more daring and provocative in their online discussions. These features of new users have changed the general climate of RLJ community. Specific RLJ-jargon has spread in Russian Livejournal, while the term ‘tysyachnik’ appeared and the fact of being one became a virtue.

Nevertheless, Russian Livejournal has remained to be a place of seemingly intimate communication,
both new bloggers and the members of ‘Runet elite’ still felt themselves being socially close and alike – owning a Livejournal blog meant affiliation with a specific group, separated both from the rest of the Internet and the ‘offline’ reality. At the same time the ‘second wave’ has changed Russian Livejournal – it became the platform of communication for many, not the source of important discussions, but anecdotes and funny stories. Nevertheless the role of blogging as a source of interesting texts has not disappeared.

The Big Change: 2005-2006

After the visible, but not dramatic increase of the amount of users and other ‘second wave’ developments, Russian Livejournal, according to all sources of the story analyzed, enters the most important stage when its nature is changed completely in comparison to the way very first RLJ bloggers have used the platform. All sources agree on the fact that in the time period between 2005 and 2006 Russian Livejournal has critically transformed with commercialisation of the blogosphere, entry of different political forces and a big increase in numbers of bloggers. At the same time (chrono)logical connections between these events differ as well the emphasis on one of them as being the most important.

The first variant of the interconnection between these events is the following. In 2005 Livejournal blogging service is bought by the company Six Apart, which wants to turn the platform into the source of income and for that reason abolishes the system of ‘invites’. This allows individuals, who have not proven their ability to write interesting texts and, therefore, have not been able to get an ‘invitation’ from an existing blogger, enter LJ as writers. Consequentially the major increase in the amount of RLJ bloggers has followed after the change of the ownership of Livejournal.

The second variant of the development in this time period starts with an seemingly un-related political event. In 2005, after the Ukrainian ‘Orange Revolution’ protests, widely reported in Russian media, some of Russian political activists have realized that it is possible for ordinary citizens to unite on the grassroots level and respond to the actions of political elite. Livejournal, an already known blogging service, was chosen as a tool for such purposes and many representatives of marginal political forces have entered RLJ. The presence of these political forces and their supporters have transformed Russian Livejournal into an influential space (in terms of the ‘off-line world’) and attracted media attention. Media attention, in its turn, has boosted the interest of people in RLJ and many more have started heir
blogs within this platform.

The third variant is the exact opposite of the previous one. Television channels and newspapers have started paying a lot of attention to RLJ. Consequently, RLJ blog became a fashionable thing to have and large numbers of people started their own journals. Different political groups, having realised the importance of the communicational platform with such an amount of users, have entered it to use RLJ for popularization of their opinions.

In essence all three versions on how masses and political groups have entered Russian segment of Livejournal are not contradicting, especially given that the features that these characters have are the same. The political forces that start using RLJ as a tool of disseminating their ideas are of two groups. Firstly, these are oppositional forces (both liberal and conservative) including extremist ones, such as “The Movement Against Illegal Immigration” (ДПНИ). Secondly, the Kremlin-related youth movements such as “Nashi” (Наши) were present in Russian Livejournal at the same time. Motivations for these political groups for entering Livejournal have been different – ‘opposition’ had joined RLJ for not being able to get publicity through the main media channels while the ‘Kremlin-related’ groups could not afford to ignore the communicational platform where ‘everyone else’ was already present. Both forces have used the same tactics of ‘conquering’ the blogosphere – advised their members to start an RLJ blog, hired people to promote certain opinions online, etc. It should be noted, though, that the ‘offline influence’ of the blogosphere was not limited by the activity of political groups only – a significant start was given to the local citizen activism including numerous strong charity and self-help initiatives.

In the same way there is no contradiction of what qualities did ‘the masses’ that entered Livejournal in this time period had. If the initial RLJ users were representatives of a certain group and had many common features, the ‘third wave’ of Russian bloggers came from all sorts of background. These were no more educated 20 to 30 years old urban dwellers, but also teenagers, housewives, manual workers and inhabitants of small towns and villages. They had nothing to do with journalism, academia or language; the new users did not have any creative ambitions or a special relationship to the Internet. One of the experts has defined this process as “hamsters had run in”, while in the words of others in the result of changes is that previously “Livejournal as we knew it has died”.

Moreover, the new RLJ users had different ‘moral stands’ on what is good behaviour in the
blogosphere – they did not mind being paid for writing an entry mentioning a product or be involved in dissemination of the ideas of a political party or a producer of goods. ‘Third wave’ users had different ideas on what is interesting and were ignorant about the myths and legends of the ‘Runet elite’ that has been the heart of Russian Livejournal before. They have given their preferences to the different kind of bloggers, who offered a more entertaining and easy-to-understand content. In this setting most of ‘old RLJ elite’ representatives were pushed to the margin for their blogging patterns did not satisfy the majority of now non-creative users. The ‘new elite’, on the other hand, were people who were able to attract attention of tens of thousands of people and, consequently, were much more down to earth, provocative, extreme and populist then previous ‘elite’. The formation of this different kind of elite has already started with the arrival of ‘second wave’ users, but have strengthened in this period.

Altogether in this time period Russian Livejournal has undergone a major transformation – the change of generations as well as of the moral, ethical and communicational climate. From being a space where representatives of a specific exclusive social group have exchanged ideas and creative content, it became a place of self-presentation and communication of tens of thousands of very different people. No two RLJ bloggers would consider themselves ‘socially close’ anymore and the level of trust between Russian-speaking Livejournal bloggers has decreased dramatically. Most generally, at this stage RLJ had transformed from the interconnected dense social group into the network of different smaller groups (within some of them the level of trust and social closeness was still high).

Concurrently, Russian Livejournal with thousands of bloggers and political forces present has turned into the most important platform for political discussion in the country and the core of Russian Internet, where all the major virtual events have been taking place.

It should be also mentioned, that in the same period many other blogging services within Runet were created, such as LiveInternet.ru or Blogs@mail.ru. Many of them have copied and improved features and tools that Livejournal software had to offer, but none have reached the same amount and quality of bloggers. As a reason, the absence of the communicational core, initially formed by the ‘Runet elite’ is mentioned.
The next important event in the Russian Livejournal history is the purchase of the service by the Russian company SUP FABRIK\textsuperscript{12}. First, in 2006 it has acquired rights to administrate the Cyrillic segment of LJ from the company Six Apart. Then, in 2007, it has purchased the whole of the service.

After both deals profit-driven SUP FABRIK has started to launch policies directed at further commercialization, popularization of Livejournal as well as the adapting the service to the needs of its Russian-speaking bloggers, whose patterns of on-line behaviour still remained different from those of English-speaking users. One of the most prominent changes was the change in the registration of an account scheme where the ‘basic account’ (no advertisement banners and no extra options) was taken away from the ‘default’ option. The company did not implement the innovations in a very successful way (according to some sources – rather clumsily).

RLJ bloggers have not responded well to the actions by SUP FABRIK – they have organized protests against the company administrating the Cyrillic segment of the service, against the final purchase and, most prominently, against the change of the account structure. At this point of the story different versions of the event of the protest exist.

Firstly, these are the representatives of the ‘old RLJ elite’, who see SUP FABRIK as an embodiment of the popularisation and commercialisation of Russian Livejournal. They do not want the sphere where only their social group had existed to turn into a popular medium of mass communication. Nevertheless, these users did not manage to oppose the company and, defeated, had to leave Russian Livejournal for they have not been ready to accept the new, changed RLJ.

Second variant of the resistance is an action by a marginal group of bloggers, a specific subculture which formed in RLJ after it grew in the previous stage and all different kinds of individuals entered. This subculture is centred on boosting the popularity of individual bloggers via provocation. They have not managed to achieve anything and SUP FABRIK has implemented the policies it had intended to.

\textsuperscript{12} As it was discovered beyond the frame of this research the actual structure of ownership of Livejournal is more complicated, with it officially belonging to the Cyprus-based company “Primordial Soup”, an affiliate of Russian “SUP FABRIK Fabrik”, as Ivan Zassoursky writes in his contribution to \textit{The Post-Soviet Russian Media}. (Zassousky 2009, pp. 29-42)
Thirdly, there are explanations of more general terms. They refer to RLJ as a whole, which opposes SUP FABRIK because its members are generally not trusting the authorities and any kind of scrutiny; aware about the uncertain status of their accounts; value their blogs as a result of personal creative work and do not wish to lose it.

Most of sources agree on SUP FABRIK strengthening the commercialisation of Livejournal that have been started by Six Apart, who in 2006 has introduced banner advertisements in LJ blogs. SUP FABRIK has showed the RLJ bloggers that writing entries can be beneficial and made a deal with the most popular search engine of Runet, Yandex.ru, about the creation of the ‘Yandex Top’ of the most popular blogosphere entries. The ‘Top’ has motivated many RLJ bloggers to artificially boost popularity of their writings in order to appear in the top and be ‘visible’ outside the borders of the Livejournal space. The consequence of the appearance of ‘Top Yandex’ has two versions too. In the first one it has ‘spoiled’ the RLJ users completely and in the second it has just boosted the creation of another subculture of bloggers, whose main activity was trying to artificially get into the list of ‘Yandex Top’ most popular entries.

Convergence: 2007-2009

In this final stage all the trends in the development of Russian Livejournal become stronger. On the whole, Livejournal comes closer to convergence with media, political structures and the sphere of advertisement.

Politics have entered Russian Livejournal on the institutional level. During State Duma and Presidential elections the big share of political agitation has been happening in Livejournal, most of ‘tysyachniki’ users have been included in one or another political camp (according to their ideology or being paid). In addition, the Central Election Committee of Russia has opened its representative journal within RLJ and communicated with bloggers during the election time. The ordinary bloggers have actively reported on the elections. RLJ bloggers have been officially invited to the state-organized events, while RLJ information was directly approached by the state officials who act upon what they read in the blogs of Russian Livejournal. So far the loudest chord in the relationship between the power elite and RLJ has been the arrival of Dmitry Medvedev as a Livejournal blogger, which signifies the importance
The general assessment of the entry of state structures into the core of Russian blogosphere is the fact that they have realised the potential of Livejournal (but either did not know how to regulate this sphere or did not want to) and preferred to enter it on equal terms with ordinary bloggers. At the same time the period between 2007 and 2009 saw a lot of court trials against individual bloggers, but most of sources connect it rather with the relationship between the state and the Internet as whole and not the blogosphere as such.

Different media have strengthened their connection to Livejournal in this period. On-line services of newspapers have started to merge with Livejournal, representative journals of newspapers and television channels have been opened. Because of the large amount of its users, Russian Livejournal has become a source of news and facts for journalists and a litmus paper for the interests of the audience. The extreme case of this development is the position of ‘blogosphere editor’, an individual specially hired within staff of television talk-shows in order to browse the blogosphere for topics and guests. This increased media attention has given an additional rise to the willingness of some bloggers to use the ‘Yandex Top’ to promote certain issues.

In the same period businesses have entered Russian Livejournal, which has proved to be a very fruitful platform for advertisers – huge and easy-to-target audience; relatively cheap in comparison to such mediums as television. Advertising companies have also converged with RLJ, having bloggers hired in occupations with titles such as ‘the specialist in blogosphere promotion’ and advertisement in blogosphere becoming a usual option in the set of offers. Again, advertisement has appeared in Russian Livejournal earlier, in the period between 2005 and 2006, but then these were individual users offering their writing skills and banner advertisements introduced by SUP FABRIK. At the last stage of the blogosphere development, the involvement of advertisement has been institutionalised.

The only event which can be considered controversial in this period is the commercial deal between the company SUP FABRIK and the publishing house Kommersant in the summer of 2008. The owner of the publishing house is media magnate Alisher Usmanov, whose assets include a number of other online media products. In the result of the deal, Kommersant owns 20 per cent of the shares of SUP FABRIK.
There are two basic versions of this event. In the first one Alisher Usmanov is seen as looking back at some power structures within Kremlin. In this version individuals of the power elite have realised that Livejournal is a very powerful communicational tool and have supported Usmanov’s decision to purchase the blogging platform in order to have a degree of certainty about its ownership. In the second version everything related to the activity of SUP FABRIK is a purely business-driven process with no involvement of any state characters.

All these developments have resulted an even increased change of ‘climate’ within Livejournal as most of them have been connected with the manipulation of bloggers’ opinions, which has led to the further decrease of trust within the Russian Livejournal communicational space. At the present stage of the development Russian Livejournal is believed to have lost its peculiar characteristics of the past and merged with the rest of Runet. The blogging community of Russia has not had a significant political or social influence so far, but the Livejournal as communicational platform remains to be an important space for unlimited political discussion, surely full of speculation with public opinion and advertisement, but still free of any kind of censorship.

Generally, in this period the increase of the amount of bloggers has stopped and the final change of generations happened, with old ‘Runet elite’ bloggers leaving the platform. According to some sources, Russian Livejournal has exceeded the amount of new bloggers it can attract and all the new Runet users prefer to use ordinary social networks for their needs.

Future

According to all sources (predictions have been voiced out by interviewed experts only) most of the trends will become stronger in the future and influence of the Russian blogosphere will grow. Many local and state level officials will enter Russian Livejournal, following Dmitry Medvedev. At the same time people who will share state power in 10-15 years will have a very different opinions and ways of thinking compared to the Russian politicians of today. The reason is – most of them will have a background as active RLJ bloggers.

Media and RLJ will be drawn closer together as well – certain bloggers will be more and more included in the media work, while some blogs will become increasingly similar to professional media. In addition the tendency of professionalization is predicted – increasingly high number of Russian
Livejournal users will have blogging as their main occupation. The most general and bold prediction, made by one of the experts, was that, in the end, the experience of blogging in general and Livejournal in particular will change the Russian society eventually for it, in the first place, changes the way those present in that community think.

5.5. Russian society, media and the story of Livejournal

In accordance with the procedure of grounded theory at this stage of the thesis I am to turn to place my empirical findings within the academic literature, related to the topic of the research. The result of my research is the story of the development of Russian blogosphere’s central service, the main turning points in which is the change of relationship between the blogging platform/community and such pillars of society, as the media, the state and the civil society.

Although in the case of the Livejournal story, presented in the previous chapter, it is not clear which force represents which pillar. SUP FABRIK, Kommersant publishing house, newspapers and television channels are to be included in the ‘media’ pillar. State officials (including Dmitry Medvedev), Kremlin-related political movements and Central election committee are to be seen as ‘the state’, although if to take into consideration different versions of the story both SUP FABRIK and Kommersant can be remotely placed in the state pillar.

Nevertheless, having political and media processes of Russian society included in the outcome of the empirical research, I choose to contextualise the end findings within the latest assessment of Russian society with its media and political developments of recent years taken into consideration. Doing this I do not attempt to search for reason of the Russian Livejournal emergence but rather give the background of the development, which would make the results of my research more meaningful.

First, I would like to place the development of Livejournal in the context of the process that the media and the political sphere of Russia have been undergoing. In a curious coincidence, the story of Livejournal, the core of Russian blogosphere, covered in this work, has almost completely coincided with Vladimir Putin’s presidency. The RLJ community was born during Putin’s first year in the office. The growth of the blogging service in Russia has been reported to have stopped when his successor, Dmitry Medvedev, came to power. For this reason, the books and articles chosen to help contextualise
the story of Russian Livejournal are those, analysing the state of arts and developments of the media, politics and society in what some call “the Putin era”.

By 2000, the post-communist Russian media has undergone a series of changes: from *glasnost*-propaganda of the 80s to the brief ‘golden age’ of freedom in the beginning of 90s followed by the failure to struggle with the financial difficulties and following dependence on business groups, to which media served an important asset in the political and commercial warfare. The later has led to the ‘media wars’ of the second half of the 90s. (Solander 2009, pp.154-179)

The beginning of Putin’s regime saw reconstitution of state authority, accompanied by ever tighter regulation of public life in general and civic activity in particular (Sakwa 2008, pp. 314 -363). As to the business, influential businessmen of the previous epoch opened the way to ‘new oligarchs’, mostly loyal to the regime and gradually acquiring influential media assets, following most of the purchases by change in the media policies (Solander 2009, pp.154-179). Media became increasingly alienated from the public (Zassoursky 2002, pp.155–189), while journalists started experiencing limited access to information on the state activities, which turned into a privilege of elite (Koikkalainen 2009, pp. 56 – 71). Generally, the arrival of Vladimir Putin marked a significant erosion of press freedom with media having an instrumental role in pursuing state interests; this tendency has continued from 2000 onwards (Skillen 2009, pp. 21–37). At the same time general attitudes of the nation are evaluated as “democratic” that clashes with “inadequately democratized institutions” (Sakwa 2008, pp. 314-363).

While the main most influential medium, the television alongside with other important sources of information of the nation are, as Ivan Zassoursky (2001) puts it, ‘defeated’ and the general situation of the state is described as “the centralized political system, weak opposition and controlled media”, the Internet emerges as “a new space for descent”, an alternative, horizontal platform for mass communication (Zassoursky 2002, pp. 73–93). Curiously enough, the development of Internet has accompanied the social and political change in Russia from its most significant point, the dissolution of the Soviet Union for this was the exact time when the Internet has emerged in the country (Aleksanyan & Koltsova 2009, pp. 65–85).

Strictly limited dissemination of information with the Internet as on of the only nation-wide air-hole for the political dissent was the context where Livejournal has appeared as the most important service of Runet, in only few years time developing to attract media and political attention. The way the blogging
platform was first used by the information-striving representatives of ‘Runet elite’ and journalists, then by the wider masses of politically engaged individuals fits perfectly into the description of society with few options of political discussion.

Later years saw the exponential growth in the Internet access, while the state authorities continued to impose the limitations of free speech with the major clampdown dating for 2003-2004. By 2005 already 16.5 per cent of Russian population have gained the permanent Internet access (Zassoursky 2009, pp. 29-42). These developments have preceded the rapid growth of Russian-speaking Livejournal in 2005-2006 and the emergence of its influence on the ‘off-line processes’ reflected in the empirical findings.

As soon as Internet emerged as a visibly important space of self-expression, academics have started a discussion on the possible control of the sphere by the state. Some, such as Ivan Zassoursky, have expressed an opinion that the direct control of the Internet is not and will not be an issue for the Russian authorities, while the others have predicted doom scenarios that are soon to occur.(ibid.) Nevertheless, in 2006, at the hype of its development (the growth estimated at 67 pre cent), the Russian Internet saw the intervention of state authorities only in the role of users sharing the same norms of behaviour, which coincides with the similar activities by state-related political groups, joining the community of Russian-speaking Livejournal users.

As the state continues to practise the “hands-off” policy in relation to Internet and scrutinize the official mass media, by the time of State Duma and Presidential elections of 2007 and 2008, when most important media sources are highly controlled, Russian Livejournal reaches the high point of its political influence (as reported by the sources of empirical material) with RLJ bloggers actively covering the election process.

In addition today the development of Livejournal fits into the general story of the Russian media. Many of the popular, but critical media (such as a newspaper Kommersant and the radio Ekho Moskvi) and influential Internet portals such as Yandex are with a varying degree of closeness related to the so-called ‘loyal’ businessmen such as Alisher Usmanov (Soldner 2009, pp. 154–179). So is Livejournal, even though the physical location of the information bloggers trust it (i.e. the servers) is in California, USA. The same question is posed by academics, assessing the state of Russian democracy and its media sphere, and experts on the blogosphere. Is such situation potentially dangerous or purchase of
these media assets is simply a business profit-driven decision? This speculation is proof less but, at the same time, signifies the importance and special status of blogging in Russia and in Russian.

As a second point of reference, I want to turn to the state of Russian society as such. According to the evaluation of this topic that was gained through personal communication with the Russian Academy of Science professor Mikhail Chernysh, there are various salient features of contemporary Russian urban life. Firstly, it is high individualization with citizens not having a social institution to organize horizontal communication even in order to perform basic daily tasks such as the management of the shared block-house. Secondly, it is a developed society in terms of education. Thirdly, urban Russians face the same problems as as citizens of other developed urban societies: “instrumental relations dominate other social ties, loneliness is common, and alienation is pervasive”. Fourthly, it is the absence of developed public life and impossibility to project ones personality outside the groups of relatives and work colleagues.

In addition, according to Richard Sakwa (2008, pp. 314 -363) even at this point in time, Russian society is still suffering the consequences of the transition period, when “the marketisation of social relations had undermined the whole network of existing social relations and cultural values” when “the very fabric of society was torn and the process of healing will take decades”.

In the kind of setting described, the emergence and following popularity of the communicational tool the very design of which fosters horizontal communication and formation of groups is understandable. At its peak Russian Livejournal was populated by various charity, self-help communities and others which often had an influence on local ‘off-line’ processes. That is, with the help of the blogosphere many were able to accomplish tasks, the help in which was not offered by social and state institutions.

Another question to be posed when discussing blogging in Russia is the Internet penetration in the country. Currently the absolute majority of population (85 per cent) still has state-controlled television as their main source of information (ibid.). Internet as alternative source of dissemination of information and communication is still very unpopular among Russians. The latest research by the “Public Opinion” foundation has revealed surprisingly low involvement of Russians with the World Wide Web. 54 per cent of population older then 12 have never been on-line, while 10 per cent have never heard about Internet and another 10 per cent of respondents have consciously refused to use Internet. 36 per cent of survey participants have never used computer, while only eight per cent of
respondents, who are not using Internet at the moment, plan to connect to it in the coming year (Oprosi “Internet Rossii” 2009). As Russians still watch TV an pay little significance to the Internet at large, it would be delusional to expect revolutionary changes in society from Livejournal as one of communication tools that exist within Runet.

Altogether Russian blogging and Livejournal as its core appeared in society with censored media, lack of social safety nets, unclear system of social relations and strengthening of the state role in all spheres of life. So far, given the low Internet penetration, Livejournal has not visibly changed neither the Russian society nor its media, but has been a very useful communicational tool, while the story of Livejournal development – tightly incorporated into the political and societal processes.

The discussion of Internet in general and blogging in particular in the academia follows the same patterns as the discussion on any new medium there was with technological determinists clashing with those of culture and heaven versus doom scenarios competing. In the same way the evaluation of the rise of Internet and blogging raise the same old battles between Slavophiles and Westernizes. In this contextualisation I deliberately try not to take any of the side but rather show how Russian-speaking Livejournal community seems to play the roles of institutions that are almost inexistent in the present Russian society – free media, social security and horizontal communication.
6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. The design and process of research

The design of this thesis was created after a long period of soul-searching and the overall process can be considered fairly successful for I have reached the aim set in the beginning of the research – to create a story of Russian Livejournal, based on personal experiences of individuals involved in the development of the blogging platform, witnessing or researching it. A combination of the grounded theory, narratology and the narrative interview technique is a creative solution and has both advantages and pitfalls.

The grounded theory was an appropriate methodological framework for this research since I had very little prior knowledge about the events in the development of Livejournal. The three stages of gathering the empirical material have contributed to a better understanding of Livejournal’s development. The analysis of articles from the Lenta.ru portal brought the core events of the story, while the academic papers and interviews with experts enriched it with details, personal opinions and abstract assessments. It was also important to first extract the story of Russian livejournal and to put it into the context of the state of arts in Russian society only later – in this way nothing has pre-defined or biased the selection and analysis of the empirical material. At the same time this sequence made it very complicated to handle the big amount of data that was on my hands in the end.

The next important element of the research design is narratology. This approach towards the empirical material allowed me to combine different versions of the Livejournal story, but forced to leave out many descriptive elements that otherwise might have been useful and interesting to analyse. Narratology, undoubtedly, is not the only approach that can be used in order to assess the experiences of individuals and definitely not the optimal, but, nevertheless, I have used it in a way that produced a certain result.

The narrative interview method has given me a good frame for conducting the interviews with the experts of Russian blogosphere. Although the number of the interviews is not big, they have provided sufficient amount of data and also represented different perspectives on the research topic.
The preceding section 5.5 contains the contextualisation of the Russian Livejournal story into the current state of Russian society and is a short but a very important part of this work. It would be fruitful to create a deeper and more substantial analysis of the Russian Livejournal in relation to the society. Unfortunately, the time frame and other restrictions imposed on me did not allow doing this.

During the research process there have been two most challenging periods. Firstly, it was the lengthy soul-searching, at the time of which I have been trying to find a framework for the research on the story of the blogging service. Secondly, the first part of empirical analysis. Then I had coined first the narrative elements and then the story, presented by journalists of Lenta.ru news portal. On the other hand, the most exciting and stimulating time was the period of two weeks in May 2009, during which I have conducted the interviews for the third part of the empirical research. This was a dive-in involvement with the circle of media professionals, who were personally acquainted with each other and have even expressed both positive and negative opinions about one another. Many of the interviewees enriched the process of data collection with witty metaphors and funny examples of the Livejournal story.

It is hard to put this work in one of the categories of blogging research that I have presented in the literature review in the beginning of the thesis. Unlike many papers overviewed in that chapter, this research does not belong to any specific field of knowledge – it does not look into Livejournal strictly from perspective of journalism, sociology or politics. Instead, it shows the relationship of blogging with subjects of these fields. This is an advantage and, at the same time, a pitfall of my work. On one hand, one might criticize it for not having a substantial basis and link to a theoretical frame. On the other hand, this way the study is detached from any disciplinary bias.

Given all the theoretical and practical misgivings, I am happy with the result of this work – I have fulfilled the aim of creating an interdisciplinary, neutral account of the Livejournal story, being able to balance different opinions and conceptualisations of the process and avoid making any conclusions that would bring one to see Russian blogosphere in a certain light. In the final story all major versions of the process are documented and presented.
6.2. Livejournal: to be continued

Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal blogging platform has developed from a tool of private communication between the members of intellectual elite into an influential platform of horizontal communication for the society at large. The extraordinary position of Livejournal service in Russian blogosphere is a mixture of coincidence, business policies of Livejournal owners and the nature of first users of the platform.

Although different sources used in this research have provided variety explanations and connections between major events in Livejournal’s story, all agree on the same core process. Livejournal has started as hobby of a marginal group of intellectuals. Soon after first Russian bloggers begun to post entries, Livejournal started to enjoy an increasing presence in the media and to include entries of advertising, civil society actors and official political structures. In the last years these connections between the main blogging platform of Runet and the rest of the society pillars became more and more evident and influential as well as increasingly institutionalized. After almost nine years of development Livejournal has grown to be the service that gathers the most ‘serious’ part of the Russian blogosphere and the Internet with president Medvedev leading the parade. It is also hard to deny that compared to the specifics of Livejournal at its earlier stage, today it is a domain which is used by common public – all kinds of social groups are present while the communicational patterns are not much different from those in the global blogosphere.

The growth of influence and scope of Livejournal and the rest of Runet blogosphere took place in a very stimulating setting. After a short period of media freedom and ‘oligarch wars’ the media sphere of the country was gradually becoming less and less diverse. State-related businesses have been acquiring an increasing amount of media assets, which has lead to changes in editorial policies and created room for speculation on possible control. Also the limitation of civil society started to take place. In addition Russia continues to experience a lack of necessary institutions that would provide the citizens with means of self-organization and other types of safety nets.

In the last nine years Russian Livejournal was used as a multi-purpose tool against the backdrop of these developments, for example in order to overcome media censorship and lack of important institutions. In general it is almost impossible to tell what role Livejournal played in the lives of Russian-speakers of the world. Some Livejournal users have been active in charity, self-help groups
and dissemination of opinions within the blogosphere in order to get attention in the media. Some have been involved in political discussions and organized ‘off-line’ demonstrations. Some have turned their blog into the instrument of self-promotion and profit gaining. Some have combined all these while others have just shared their thoughts and emotions with the small circle of friends. This multitude of purposes and the fast path with which the general society was involving itself in blogging suggests that Livejournal was highly needed in the Russian society and, although some of the experts expressed bitterness about the “death of initial community”, the popularisation of Livejournal in Russia can be considered a positive and potentially beneficial process.

The emergence of Livejournal as a first blogging tool in the Runet has boosted two kinds of debate that are, in a way, classic for both discussion on new media and the discussion on Russian society. Regarding the new media debate, the potential of blogging to promote democracy is often speculated on. The difference is that within the so-called ‘Western’ world the debate often resolves around the notion of public sphere and the potential of tools of the horizontal communication as a solution for the crisis of democracy. At the same time in Russia blogs are seen as having a potential to help create democratic thinking and institutions – to push back the Soviet past and resist the neo-authoritarian present. And here the main question is whether the state will try to penetrate and grasp the control over new media tools and if so, will bloggers be able to defend themselves. The debate is fuelled by the speculations on the non-transparent ownership of Livejournal and other main resources of Runet.

Then there is the traditional debate on the position of Russia in its geopolitical surrounding driven by dichotomy between ‘westernizes’ and ‘slavophiles’. The supporters of both camps have been present also in the selection of experts I have interviewed. A ‘westernizer’ Anton Nossik has re-assured me that there is no ‘Russian specifics’ of Livejournal in particular and the blogosphere of Runet in general. According to him, in all other parts of the world one might find similar developments and patterns of use. On the contrary, Eugene Gorny, whose work was also included in the empirical material, emphasizes the sobornost-driven collectivism that can be seen in the way Russians blog.

In the path of the research I have realised that Russian blogging is not only a political but also a politicized topic. It is as non-neutral as many other questions related to media – free speech and communication flows in Russian society. The conclusions that one makes out of the story of Livejournal are often tightly connected to one’s political and ideologically normative stands. Making sense of the Russian Livejournal story becomes a weapon in the battle between conflicting assumptions.
about the state of Russian society and the path it should or should not take. Personally, I believe that the truth, as usual, lies in the middle between two extreme antipodes. At the same time, as a prominent scholar of International Relations Sergey Prozorov has noted once during a lecture, we must leave behind the ‘West versus East’ ping-pong game of normative assumptions and look at what takes place in the reality without trying to fit it in one of the two frameworks. The same, in my mind, should apply to the ‘new media and democracy’ debate. It would be much more fruitful to closely follow the facts of further Russian Livejournal development without the two constant questions that many seem to pose – what is Russian about it and is it going to empower people of the country to democratize the state. Besides democratization and national/geographic identity there are various directions to evaluate the influence and use of blogging.

My research has shown that so far Russian Livejournal has not been used to essentially change the political situation in the country anymore then it has significantly empowered the society. Blogging has not brought revolution, but neither has it been censored. Livejournal stays as a free tool of unlimited horizontal communication to be used by anyone and has been used primarily to ‘fill in the gaps’ that exist in Russian society. At the same time, Russia is at a point of no return – a community enabled with means of horizontal communication will, most likely, find ways of overcoming boundaries imposed in a top-down manner. Even if supposedly Kremlin-related SUP FABRIK will employ any kind of measures to control activity of Russian Livejournal users, the rest of Internet and other new media resources will still remain – mobile phones, e-mails, messengers and many more will be there to link people to each other. Yet here a question of Internet penetration is relevant – as latest surveys show, at the moment Russians are not as keen to adapt new technologies as they were expected to. Whether this will influence the potential significance of blogging remains to be seen.

It should be noted, that the story of Livejournal can and should not be seen and understood as a part the general developments that take place in the Russian Internet. Russian-speaking segment of Livejournal is the centre of Runet blogosphere and Runet itself. For this reason it follows the same patterns of development and should be seen only in the context of these two spheres. This notion has crystallized only after I have completed my research and for this reason I was not able to make substantial use of it. Nevertheless, it is an important result of my work.

At the final stage of this work I have contacted the first RLJ blogger, Roman Leibov. In his opinion it is too early to write a history of Russian Livejournal for it is not “dead” yet and no person can predict the
outcome of many developments that take place at the moment. I prefer to disagree with his opinion on
the relevance of this research, but the fact is clear – although Russian blogosphere no longer has an
enormous increase of bloggers every month as it used to, its development has not stopped and should
be closely followed. Ivan Zassoursky, whose assumption on the death of blogs was quoted in
the Introduction, has admitted that, in fact, they haven not: “they become ubiquitous as a way to
structure sites temporally. This is indeed the bullion in which the new media world and society is being
born.” (Zassoursky 2009a)

There are various directions in which Livejournal and the rest of Russian blogosphere can and should
be approached by social scientists in the future. These directions are based on the patterns and aspects
of the Russian Livejournal story, which I have identified, but was not able to access more substantially
due to time and research design limitations.

First and foremost there definitely is a need to follow-up this research in order too keep the record on
changing relationships between different actors of society and the new media and also the way
individuals use the communicational tools in response to changing conditions in the country.

Secondly, the question of identity-building with the help of Livejournal and other cervices of Russian-
speaking blogosphere is to be regarded. As I have briefly noticed in the begging of this thesis, Russian-
speaking Livejournal is a combination of Russian and Russian-speaking bloggers. During the process
of the empirical research, I have discovered that the first Russian-speaking bloggers were located, as
one of the interviewees has put it, in capitals of the classic directions of Russian emigration. It is
interesting to know how and why Livejournal as pan-Russian network connects emigrants and diaspora
members all around the world to Russian language and Russian realities.

Thirdly, an interesting direction might be a research on how institutions of the Russian society enter
Livejournal: the ways, the strategies and results. This is derived from the current position of
Livejournal with blogosphere being included is a conventional source of media topics, advertisement
revenues and increasingly serving as a channel for self-representation of political actors.

Fourthly, the question of Internet and blogging as another battlefield between different views on the
place of Russia between the East and the West can be addressed. The focus here could be references to
new media in speeches and texts produced by state officials and politicians as a way to frame the path
for Russia in a newly interconnected world. After all, Information Society is an attribute of the developed world and a fruitful research path is provided by the ways its components are conceptualized.

When starting this research I have also had a personal aim of better understanding the communicational tool that has been an important part of my daily routines for the last five years. I wanted to understand what happened to the platform where me and my friends, colleagues and family have been communicating and (re)creating social networks, extending them into the World Wide Web. This research has given me extremely valuable and interesting insights and allowed to place myself in the map of the growing community of Russian-speaking bloggers. It has been a very exciting and, at the same time, complicated task – to study a relatively new tool which is just developing in society, peculiarity of which is widely speculated about. My empirical field was also rapidly changing, for instance, in the middle of the empirical research I have discovered that Dmitry Medvedev has started his own Livejournal blog. Altogether I am happy to have completed this task with a result I have aimed for – a substantial historic record and to see a potential and importance for future research of this sphere.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Chernysh, Mikhail (2009) Personal communication by e-mail, 10.01.2009.


Flick, Uwe (2002) The Introduction To Qualitative Research. London: SAGE.


Zassoursky, Ivan (2009a) Personal communication, 03.07.2009


Data sources

Reference sources and dictionaries

Ethnologue: Introduction to the printed edition


Statistical surveys and reports


Yandex Blogosphere Report
### APPENDIX 1: Elements of the Lenta.ru articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr.</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Elements</th>
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</table>
Event: LJ received the “POTOP-2001” award for the best interactive webpage.                                                                                                          |
Event: LJ received the “POTOP-2001” award for the “Interactive webpage of the year”, “Off-line influence” and “Informational webpage”.                                                                 |
| 2005 | http://lenta.ru/internet/2005/01/05/livejournal/ | Characters:  
- American company SixApart (big successful company)  
- Livejournal  
Events:  
- Livejournal considered various scenarios of fusion.  
- Livejournal has chosen SixApart company for fusion  
- SixApart and Livejournal stated, that no changes in the functioning of the company will be made |
| 2006 | http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/03/09/ljads/ | Characters:  
- Founder of Livejournal Brad Fitzpatrick  
- Russian-speaking bloggers (the most active par of Livejournal bloggers, never like any changes in LJ)  
- Livejournal users  
- Company SixApart  
Events:  
- Russian intellectuals ‘inhabited’ Livejournal  
- Russian intellectuals made Livejournal be a special socio-cultural sphere  
- ‘Abuse Team’ has suspended some Russian-speaking journals over the poster, calling for violence towards a social group  
- Russian activists of Livejournal voiced their complains over censorship and non-understanding specifics of Russian segment of Livejournal.com |
**8** http://lenta.ru/news/2006/07/07/lj/

**Characters:** Livejournal developers

**Events:**
- Livejournal developers introduce instant messaging within Livejournal.com

**9** http://lenta.ru/news/2006/07/21/lj/

**Characters:**
- Russian Livejournal users

**Events:**
- Russian Livejournal user have organized a flash-mob in order to show the developers of Livejournal on their mistakes – an anthem of Russian Federation would sound in the posts.


**CH:**
- Brad Fitzpatrick, the founder of Livejournal
- Livejournal Russian-speaking users

**EV:**
- Brad comes to Russia
- Brad asks Russian Livejournal community to suggest places to visit

**11** http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/10/18/sup/

**CH:**
- SUP company
- Livejournal administration
- SUP manager and famous blogger A. Nosik
- Russian businessmen A. Mamut
- American businessmen A. Polson

**EV:**
- SUP gets a licence from SixApart to manage Cyrillic segment of Livejournal
- SUP promises to raise quality of translation of the interface in Russian, arrange special ‘Abuse Team’
- A. Polson and A. Mamut found company SUP

**12** http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/10/18/sup/

**EV:**
- Russian bloggers became worried for “SUP” buying cyrillic segment of Livejournal.com
- “SUP” and SixApart organise press-conference.
- A. Polson generated the idea of investing in Russian blogosphere
- A. Polson invited popular bloggers and intellectuals to work for “SUP”
- A. Polson presented benefits of the deal: new feature, better service for Russian users of Livejournal
- All participant of the conference justified the deal since Russian bloggers are different from other users and need different things
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<th>#</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>CH:</th>
<th>EV:</th>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2006/10/19/livejournal/">http://lenta.ru/news/2006/10/19/livejournal/</a></td>
<td>“SUP” (Developer)</td>
<td>- Provocateurs among RLJ users</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Russian Livejournal bloggers do not trust SUP</td>
<td>- Russian livejournal bloggers receive a right to choose whether to be administrated by “SUP”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- RLJ enthusiasts created the service LJPlus</td>
<td>- “SUP” developers plan to cancel “not more then 700 friends” regulation</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/10/19/livejournal/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/10/19/livejournal/</a></td>
<td>- Provocateurs among RLJ users</td>
<td>- Yandex</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- RLJ users call to boycott “SUP”</td>
<td>- RLJ users fear censorship and theft of data by SUP</td>
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<td>- RLJ users stopped worrying about the deal of 2005</td>
<td>- RLJ users stopped worrying about the deal of 2005.</td>
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<td>- RLJ provocateurs try to make themselves famous by criticising SUP company</td>
<td>- RLJ provocateurs try to make themselves famous by criticising SUP company</td>
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<td>- RLJ provocateurs threaten to leave Livejournal</td>
<td>- RLJ provocateurs threaten to leave Livejournal</td>
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<td>- Livejournal gives access to Yandex for the indexation blog entries and comments</td>
<td>- Livejournal gives access to Yandex for the indexation blog entries and comments</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/12/29/summary/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/12/29/summary/</a></td>
<td>- “SUP” gets a permission to make profit from Livejournal</td>
<td>- RLJ users accused Fitzpatrick, Polson, Mamut, Nossik of being Jewish.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Nothing happened to Livejournal after the deal of 2005</td>
<td>- After two month SUP has made no changes in RLJ</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2007/02/22/sup/">http://lenta.ru/news/2007/02/22/sup/</a></td>
<td>- Alksinis post an entry in his blog</td>
<td>- “SUP” started earning money with ads in RLJ</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>- ‘tarlith’ accuses Alksnis in lie</td>
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<td>- Blogger ‘tarlith’</td>
<td>- ‘tarlith’ accuses Alksnis in lie</td>
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<td>- RLJ hackers (сетевые подонки)</td>
<td>- Alksnis files a case in the court for ‘offence of the representative of the state’</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- RLJ bloggers raised against Alksnis</td>
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<td>- Alksnis and ‘tarlith’ participated in the tv-show</td>
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<td>- RLJ hackers ‘cracked’ blog of Alksnis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- RLJ administration has reacted very quickly</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2007/03/26/robots/">http://lenta.ru/news/2007/03/26/robots/</a></td>
<td>- RLJ hackers have created a number of “bots”</td>
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<td>- RLJ administration has blocked “bots”</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2007/05/21/zhzh/">http://lenta.ru/news/2007/05/21/zhzh/</a></td>
<td>- Kommersant newspaper</td>
<td>- Kommersant allows only RLJ users to comment its articles on-line</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- SUP opens a web page to serve RLJ users, Livejournal.ru</td>
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<td>- Yandex opens “blog search”</td>
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<td>- SUP and Yandex announced their</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2007/06/19/broken/">http://lenta.ru/news/2007/06/19/broken/</a></td>
<td>Alfa Bank agrees to sponsor activities of RLJ</td>
<td>RLJ celebrities</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news2/2007/07/26/mts/">http://lenta.ru/news2/2007/07/26/mts/</a></td>
<td>mts company</td>
<td>mts company allows Livejournal users to access LJ from their mobile phones</td>
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<td>Masses</td>
<td>Masses inhabited LJ</td>
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<td>Prominent RLJ workers</td>
<td>RLJ transformed from an elite club to a popular platform of self-expression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SUP employed prominent RLJ bloggers as workers</td>
<td>SUP fired most of prominent bloggers</td>
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<td>In the middle of 2007 bloggers stopped worrying about SUP ownership of cyrillic segment</td>
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<td>Fitzpatrick quits Livejournal and goes to Google</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/12/03/soup/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/12/03/soup/</a></td>
<td>RLJ users (different from those in USA)</td>
<td>American administration of RLJ</td>
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<td>Social networking sites</td>
<td>Social networking sites (SNS) became popular (2007)</td>
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<td>Foreign LJ users</td>
<td>Because of SCS, LJ was in danger and became a burden for Six Apart</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>SUP buys the whole of LJ</td>
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<td>SUP plans to: optimize usability, establish new american company Livejournal Inc, establish a council with 2 representatives of LJ users.</td>
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<td>- RLJ bloggers reacted very actively to the purchase (reaction was smaller then the previous one)</td>
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<td>- RLJ bloggers suspected the purchase being connected with a victory of “United Russia” in parliamentary elections, that happened the same day</td>
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<td>- Foreign LJ users did not understand the purchase and suggested the links to KGB and Kremlin</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/12/1">http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/12/1</a></td>
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|   |   | EV: - Medvedev was nominated as Putin's successor  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers reacted actively (for many reasons)  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers actively participated in the internet-conference of Medvedev  
   |   | - Medvedev showed his knowledge of RLJ and its slang and voiced support for RLJ slang  
   |   | - RLJ activists enter politics domain  
| 33 | http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/12/20/runet13/ | EV: RLJ does not need hidden advertisement anymore  
| 2008 |   |   |
| 34 | http://lenta.ru/news/2008/01/14/award/ | CH: - Popular blogger mparker  
   |   | EV: - Mparkers has started sixth internet competition for the best LRJ blog  
   |   | - Mparkers named best bloggers of RLJ  
| 35 | http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/01/21/blogs/ | CH: - RLJ bloggers (curious, suspicious, eager to discuss everything, pretend to be knowledgeable, raise panic easily)  
   |   | - Provocateurs among RLJ bloggers  
   |   | - Nossik  
   |   | - Journalist Bachinsky  
   |   | - Celebrities of Russian media sphere  
   |   | - Russian politicians (not understanding specifics of blogosphere, having old education)  
   |   | - “City without drugs” foundation member  
   |   | - “City without drugs” leader, RLJ blogger Roizman  
|   |   | EV: - Bachinsky dies  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers react actively – posts, comments  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers discuss life and professional qualities of Bachinsky  
   |   | - RLJ provocateurs create a false RLJ blog of dead Bachinsky  
   |   | - Nossik suspends false account  
   |   | - RLJ provocateurs speculate on death of other celebrities (mid Jan 2008)  
   |   | - Russian media  
   |   | - “City without drugs” foundation member publishes a story of trial against a drug consumer  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers start discussing ethical and legal issues around war on drugs  
   |   | - “City without drugs” leader, RLJ blogger Roizman defends “City without drugs”  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers attack Roizman  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers have spread information about a plain crash  
   |   | - Russian media reported information to be false  
   |   | - Russian politicians enter RLJ  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers have posted pictures of Duma deputies during the meeting  
   |   | - RLJ bloggers have criticized the actions of deputies  
| 36 | http://lenta.ru/news/2008/01/25/apple/ | EV: RLJ bloggers wrote an open letter to Apple Inc. with a with a request to reduce prices in Russia  
| 37 | http://lenta.ru/news/2008/01/30/sup/ | EV: SUP announces to enter Ukrainian market  
| 38 | http://lenta.ru/news/2008/02/18 | EV: Sup announces entertainment and shop discounts for RLJ users  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/02/19/letov/">club</a></td>
<td>EV: RLJ user is first to announce the death of a prominent Russian singer Jegor Letov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/02/22/nytimes/">nytimes</a></td>
<td>CH: NY Times&lt;br&gt;EV: NY Times starts cooperation with RLJ – mutual translations of articles and comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/02/22/obvin/">obvin</a></td>
<td>CH: RLJ bloggers Terentjev&lt;br&gt;Russian court commission&lt;br&gt;EV: - RLJ user Terentjev verbally attacks Russian police force in a blog entry&lt;br&gt;- Russian court commission has decided that Terentjev has violated the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/02/25/parker/">parker</a></td>
<td>CH: prominent RLJ blogger mparker&lt;br&gt;EV: - mparker has expressed an opinion that Britain should be bombed and destroyed&lt;br&gt;- Administration of Livejournal.com has suspended the blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/02/29/sup/">sup</a></td>
<td>EV: Sup has announced the creation of “Observation committee” of LJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/10/sup/">sup</a></td>
<td>EV: - Sup has created new rules for Livejournal Abuse Team and asked RLJ users to voice their opinion&lt;br&gt;- RLJ users have reacted actively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/10/blogs/">blogs</a></td>
<td>CH: RLJ bloggers (important creators of policy, bring social issues and events to life, have a tendency for massive collective action. Predictable in their opinions) BBC&lt;br&gt;EV: - Prominent RLJ bloggers distributed information about a bad state of the Tarus hospital&lt;br&gt;- Russian media picked up the story&lt;br&gt;- Another group of bloggers has voiced out suspicions toward the advocated of the hospital renovation&lt;br&gt;- Governor of the area has sorted out the situation&lt;br&gt;- some of RLJ bloggers have voiced out worries, that situation was been solved so easily&lt;br&gt;- Medvedev became president of Russian&lt;br&gt;- Left wing RLJ bloggers criticize results of Putin’s presidency&lt;br&gt;- Right wing RLJ bloggers praise results of Putin’s presidency&lt;br&gt;- ‘The March of descent took place (3rd of March, 2008)&lt;br&gt;- RLJ bloggers have reported on the March of descent with photos and reports&lt;br&gt;- BBC and RLJ bloggers have created a citizenship journalism community journal within LJ ‘live_report’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/12/comment/">comment</a></td>
<td>CH: - RLJ bloggers (have a specific way of communication, rude, full of swearwords and offensive language)&lt;br&gt;EV: - RLJ bloggers have actively reacted to the trial case towards Terentjev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/13/lj/">lj</a></td>
<td>EV: - Sup announces start of elections for RLJ representative in the ‘Observation committee’</td>
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<td>URL</td>
<td>Event/Comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/13/nobasic/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/13/nobasic/</a></td>
<td>EV: Sup takes away opportunity to have a ‘basic account’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/17/blogs/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/17/blogs/</a></td>
<td>CH: LRJ users criticized the disappearance of the ‘basic account’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/18/boycott/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/18/boycott/</a></td>
<td>EV: - LJ users proposed to boycott Livejournal because of ‘basic accounts’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Prominent RLJ users have joined the boycott</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>EV: Livejournal Inc apologized for taking away ‘basic accounts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/21/lj/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/21/lj/</a></td>
<td>CH: LRJ users (do not respect authority in general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/24/blogs/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/24/blogs/</a></td>
<td>CH: LiveInternet community</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>EV: - RLJ bloggers started discussing if LJ truly belongs to them or to SUP (after the boycott)</td>
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<td>- RLJ bloggers try to understand the boycott was successful</td>
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<td>- Celebrities of RLJ (that have previously been loyal to the service) have rebelled against the administration of RLJ</td>
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<td>- (Because of this) Sup failed to present boycott as a marginal initiative</td>
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<td>- Media have covered the scandal (willingly and in detail)</td>
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<td>- LiveInternet community taken up the idea of “content strike”</td>
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<td>- RLJ users comment on the crisis of USA economy</td>
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<td>- RLJ users comment on controversial visual artist performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/26/storchak/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/03/26/storchak/</a></td>
<td>CH: Dmitry Strochak (ex-finance minister of Russia, currently under trial)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>EV: - Dmitry Strochak starts an RLJ blog</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/31/blogs/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/03/31/blogs/</a></td>
<td>CH: - Belarus opposition</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>EV: - Belarus opposition has organized protest actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- RLJ users have reported on protests by Belarus opposition</td>
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<td>- Abuse Team has suspended account of RLJ user, who has created ‘robots’</td>
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<td>- User has protested, saying that the reason was his political views</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- SUP company has denied these claims</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/04/15/blogs/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/04/15/blogs/</a></td>
<td>EV: - RLJ users have created a blog of protest against Nossik</td>
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<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/04/16/nossik/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/04/16/nossik/</a></td>
<td>EV: - Advocate of Terentjev suggested, that Nossik should be considered an expert of Livejournal in the court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/04/19/kib/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/04/19/kib/</a></td>
<td>EV: - RLJ community stopped growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/13/blogs/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/13/blogs/</a></td>
<td>CH: - RLJ bloggers:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- uneducated, not interested in real problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- very different from English-speaking bloggers, take blogging to seriously</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news">http://lenta.ru/news</a></td>
<td>CH:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>2008/05/30</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/30/lj/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/30/lj/</a></td>
<td>RLJ blogger churkan</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EV:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- LRJ bloggers have voted for the representative of RLJ in observation committee”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- RLJ blogger churkan has won the RLJ elections</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/05/30</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/30/lj/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/30/lj/</a></td>
<td>EV:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- SUP has made rules for ‘Abuse Team’ more ‘liberal’ and more suitable for the specifics of RLJ, but at the same time more complicated</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- New representative of RLJ has positively evaluated the new rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/05/30</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/30/lj/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/05/30/lj/</a></td>
<td>EV:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Abuse Team of LJ have ‘un-suspended’ account of mparker</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(after change of rules)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/06/11</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/06/11/tema/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/06/11/tema/</a></td>
<td>CH:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Artemy Lebedev (famous Russian designer, RLG blogger with growing popularity, purposely provoking scandals to increase popularity within RLJ, uses very rude language in his blog).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EV:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lebedev posts picture of naked-breasted young RLJ user, presumably underage</td>
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<td>- RLJ blog of Artemy Lebedev was suspended by Abuse Team</td>
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<td>- RLJ users started a discussion on whether it can be proven that the girl is underage</td>
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<td>- RLJ users have advocated for ‘bringing back’ Lebedev</td>
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<td>- Workers of company SUP defended the action of Abuse Team (rules have to be obeyed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/06/12</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/06/12/tema/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/06/12/tema/</a></td>
<td>EV:</td>
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<td>- ‘Abuse Team’ has ‘un-suspended’ blog of Aretmy Lebedev</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Artemy Lebedev did not stop posting pictures of naked-breasted women</td>
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<td>2008/06/20</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/06/20/captcha/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/06/20/captcha/</a></td>
<td>EV:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Livejournal administration introduces “Captcha service”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Livejournal administration introduces some other minor changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/06/22</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/06/22/sup/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/06/22/sup/</a></td>
<td>CH:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Kommersant publishing house</td>
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<td>EV:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sup and “Kommersant” sign a deal:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SUP buys internet publication “Gazeta.ru” from “Kommersant”, while “Kommersant” received 50% of assets of “SUP” and enters administration of the company</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/07/12</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2008/07/12/livsy/">http://lenta.ru/news/2008/07/12/livsy/</a></td>
<td>CH:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sergey Lukyanenko (famous contemporary Russian sci-fi author)</td>
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<td>EV:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sergey Lukyanenko has an argument with RLJ users</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Lukyanenko decides to abandon RLJ blog</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Livejournal administration brings back ‘basic accounts’</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/07/17</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/07/17/basic/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2008/07/17/basic/</a></td>
<td>CH:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- ‘Basic account users’ (do not pay anything, but are very important, because generate most of content and are very active).</td>
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<td>EV:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- LJ administration understood that it needs ‘basic account’ users</td>
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<td>- LJ administration decided to earn money on ‘BA users’ and at the same time respect interests of BA users</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>LJ administration offers LJ users four types of the advertisement strategy within ‘basic account’&lt;br&gt;- LJ made required users have invitation to register (in the beginning)&lt;br&gt;- LJ is bought by SUP and is developed&lt;br&gt;- LJ involves advertisement model&lt;br&gt;- Total change of advertisement policy was stopped by protests of LJ users</td>
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<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>CH: Livejournal (a normal private company, that wants to make money, makes decisions that generate profit)&lt;br&gt;EV: &lt;br&gt;- LJ changed its business model to the standard interned business model&lt;br&gt;- (When the policy changed), BA accounts were perceived by LJ administration as waste of money&lt;br&gt;- LJ users did not allow Livejournal to take BA accounts away&lt;br&gt;- Livejournal created new way of putting advertisement in BA – it would be seen only by those, not logged in&lt;br&gt;- Livejournal turned into a newspaper – it has more readers than users and advertisement next to content</td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>EV: Nossik leaves company SUP</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>EV: RlJ bloggers supported 2X2 channel in its conflict with authorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>EV: Savva Terentjev was considered guilty for his RLJ blog entry</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>CH: Dmitry Shirinkin, RLJ bloggers&lt;br&gt;EV: &lt;br&gt;- Shirinkin makes a blog entry where he writes to enter a educational institution and kill people&lt;br&gt;- Shirinkin is sentenced in a court</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>EV: &lt;br&gt;- Lebedev was one of the first to join RLJ&lt;br&gt;- Lebedev became one of the most popular RLJ users&lt;br&gt;- Lebedev engaged in various conflicts with SUP&lt;br&gt;- Lebedev has used subscribers to his blog to generate ideas on how to improve LJ&lt;br&gt;- “Kommersant” has invited Lebedev to be its representative in SUP&lt;br&gt;- RLJ users have started a discussion on what happens with LJ when Lebedev comes</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>EV: &lt;br&gt;- Livejournal administration launched a first start page for LJ users&lt;br&gt;- Livejournal administration added new usability issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>CH: Blogosphere&lt;br&gt;- SUP (does not know how to earn money)&lt;br&gt;- NL&lt;br&gt;EV: &lt;br&gt;- Blogosphere stopped being special and elitist and entered the social life of Russia as its ordinary component.&lt;br&gt;- Blogosphere turned from the tool of self-expression into the source of information.</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>- NL and Nossik (most famous SUP workers) have left SUP (in 2008)</td>
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</table>
- SUP failed to become less hated by bloggers and develop relationship with them
- State channels decided to ignore blogosphere
- Blogosphere merged with off-line world

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>URL 1</th>
<th>CH:</th>
<th>EV:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2009/01/28/smi/">http://lenta.ru/news/2009/01/28/smi/</a></td>
<td>- Sergei Muhamedov, RLJ blogger</td>
<td>- Sergei Muhamedov has registered his blog as an official medium (to prove that such action is wrong in its essence)</td>
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<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/articles/2009/01/28/ottenki/">http://lenta.ru/articles/2009/01/28/ottenki/</a></td>
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<td>- Russian government has raised concerns of RLJ bloggers with a new law on media</td>
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<td>- RLJ bloggers have commented on the registration of the blog negatively, saying that this is a huge responsibility</td>
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<td>- Sergei Muhamedov have explained what complications might appear if LJ blog is registered as media</td>
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<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2009/01/30/millions/">http://lenta.ru/news/2009/01/30/millions/</a></td>
<td>EV: Livejournal administration has announced that entry number 100 mlij. Was created in RLJ</td>
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<td><a href="http://lenta.ru/news/2009/02/04/nomedia/">http://lenta.ru/news/2009/02/04/nomedia/</a></td>
<td>EV: Muhamedov has cancelled the registration of his blog as media.</td>
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О. Драгилёва: Расскажите об истории личного взаимодействия с Живым Журналом?

Самсон Шоладеми:

В ЖЖ я пришел 22 Апреля 2005 года. Случайно. После оранжевой революции на Украине мне стало интересно, а есть ли подобное молодежное движение в России. Стал копаться и набрал на тогда только-только появившиеся движения «Оборона», посетил пару их мероприятий, потом стал читать в Интернете, что они пишут и что люди, которые ходят на митинги, ведут обсуждение в ЖЖ. Захотел вступить в дискуссию, пришло технически завести блог. В первые полгода писал раз в месяц, раз в две недели. Начиная с конца августа уже появилось больше осознанного. Дальше в конце августа появилась дискуссионная площадка под названием «Дебаты» в клубах. Я туда пришел и вообще был такой новый формат для Москвы, для ЖЖ, для политизированных блоггеров. Мне стало интересно, и я увлекся политикой, стал много писать на политические темы, взгляды, комментарии. Постепенно стал обрасти контактами, связями. Потом тогда еще был такой тренд, что, жж, элита... Это сейчас тысячников по статистике 1900, а тогда их было 100, может 150... Сложнее как-то тогда туда было попасть и сообщество представляло из себя какую-то целостность. И появился интерес – попробовать тоже стать тысячником. А где-то через год на волне нескольких акций резко подскочило количество читателей.

О.Д.: То есть вы сознательно старались стать тысячником?

С.Ш.: В какой-то момент начал сознательно. Просто я всю жизнь проработал в желтой бульварной прессе под названием «Экспресс Газета» и начал активно писать на всякие такие скандальные темы и народ начал активно комментировать, и началась политическая динамика, заигрывание с читателями. Первые два года это было любопытство, а в какой-то момент понял, что это может стать новой профессией для меня. Потому что в октябре 2007 года я ушел из газеты и когда уходил, запостили у меня в блоге и в сообществе «панарации» объявление, что ищу работу. Буквально за пять дней получил много разных предложения и выбрал самое выгодное – возглавить Интернет-проект, новостной сайт ориентированный на то, что люди пишут в блогах. Переборал там, потом в феврале 2008 года я попал в проект «Рамблера» – «Побег из Москвы», в рамках которого нас отправили в Южную Азию. В рамках этого проекта мы писали историю о наших путешествиях, и так я познакомился с гео-блогерами. Потом меня позвали работать на один туристический сайт, поддерживающий несколько крупными турфирмами. С августа-сентября меня пригласили в одно агентство под названием «Социальная сеть» работать, и в настоящий момент я возглавляю службу по работе с блогерами, веду проекты рекламного характера.

О.Д.: Расскажите больше об элите «ЖЖ»

С.Ш. Когда ЖЖ еще не было попсовым, я еще этого времени не застал, тысячников было около 100 человек, все друг-друга знали, это были люди из Москвы, из Питера, немного Израиль и США. Те, кто сейчас занимается рекламой, какие-то проекты делает, тогда писали просто так. Раньше чтобы тебя читало много народу, надо было много писать – год, полтора, два. А сейчас появилось много технических штучек, когда, прибегая к помощи различных ботов или взаимного «френживания», человек за три или четыре месяца становится тысячником немного нечестным способом.

О.Д.: Почему появились эти «инструменты»?

С.Ш.: Потому что произошла точка кипения, когда какая-то вещь вначале является уделом узких категорий граждан, элитарной, потом друг наступает резкий мода и народ «повелся». И в итоге разыгрывается основа общения. Если еще лет пять назад средний возраст блоггеров составлял лет 27, то теперь это уже 22 года. А если говорить о ли.ру, то там вообще 17-16 лет. Люди, которые были изначально, либо они вообще ушли на сайт-элоун блоги, либо просто закрыли свои жж. Можно сказать, что за 5 лет 2-3 поколения точно сменилось.

О.Д.: То есть те, кто сейчас блоги в жж ведут, это вообще другие люди?

С.Ш.: Если посмотреть на рейтинг ста по «Яндексу», то из этих людей дай бог человек пять старой гвардии. Остальные, это те, кто сделал себе имя на каких-то флеш-mobах, на каких-то рекламах.

О.Д. К главной теме разговора. Расскажите об истории жж.
С.Ш. (...) Есть несколько культовых фигур, которых новички уже не знают. Есть вот например такой «апач», известный своим огромным «банным листом», он был первым, кто исчезал пьяным. Потом, когда жж купил, в кавычках, Носик, «апач» из него ушел. У него был очень хороший блог и он одним из первых стал публично давать в нем рекламу, за что и пострадал – блог закрыли. Он открыл свой отдельный блог, потому уехал в Эквадор, где уже несколько лет живет за счет своего блога. Вот такая легенда. Ну, был еще тема Лебедев. На этих нескольких персонажах строилась мифология жж. Но сейчас о них помнит уже меньшинство.

О.Д. Помнит меньшинство из-за изменения количества юзеров? Или что произошло?

С.Ш. В первую очередь да. Во вторую очередь, старички о себе не напоминают. Для старой гвардии во многом было зазорно писать посты платные рекламные, а для новичков это было нормально.

О.Д. То есть взгляды жж как сообщества изменились?

С.Ш. Этот процесс прошел несколько лет, когда люди говорили: да ни за что, да ни в жизнь я не буду никогда. Стадия вторая, когда человек, как гобулей воришка у Ильфа и Петрова – воровал, но потом краснел. То есть люди тоже как бы отнекивались, но было понятно, что да, дают рекламу. Потом, на стадии третьей, люди уже не стеснялись, но стали, наоборот, бить себя в грудь, называть какие-то совершенно несуществующие гонорары. Такой прошел регресс.

О.Д. Прогресс это или регресс?

С.Ш. С какой точки зрения посмотреть. Коммерциализация контента в блогах так или иначе должна была произойти. С точки зрения коммерциализации это, наверное, прогресс. Когда появляется медиальная площадка, то люди, которые на ней живут, не просто там по два часа проводят, а для них это становится частью жизни, они начинают искать возможность это monetизировать – контент, который они создают или популярность конвертируют во что-то иное. С точки зрения интеллектуальной плохо то, что если раньше писали все, что они хотели, то теперь человек понимает, что мог бы написать о чем-то интересном, но не написал, потому что подумает – а зачем я буду писать просто так, если бы я мог за это что-то получить.

О.Д. Могли бы вы эти этапы «привязать» ко времени или к процессу?

С.Ш. Это случилось, когда СУП купил русскоязычный сегмент жж. Тогда Бреда привезли в первый раз в Москву. Была такая вечеринка в центре Москвы, пригласили тогда тысячников, которых было немного, и для многих была честь – попасть к Бреду, пообщаться с Носиком. И видимо, когда тысячников пригласили, прикормили, дали понять, что можно что-то получить «на халяву», можно дружить и получать какие-то дивиденды. Для кого-то стало это таким щелчком – ага, от собственного журнала можно получить выгоду не только в обновении, но и в каком-то денежном эквиваленте. Потом была такая история, через два месяца я в соавторстве с блогером «scandal_max» устроил провокацию. Написал в какой-то записи, что один из нас готов заплатить другому деньги за собственный пир. Народ откликнулся, появилось много комментариев. Через пару дней я вывесил в своем журнале расценки на свои услуги – могу за такую-то сумму в -такое-то время вывести вас на такое-то место в топе. Это имело большое значение, так как уже вышло 5-6 листов комментариев. Большинство ругались и возмущались. Потом пришло объявление от администрации ЖЖ, которая не поняла шутовского характера поста и потребовала немедленно запись удалить. Я его удалил. Но осадочек то остался. А через пару дней я обнаружил в своей почте три предложения о рекламе. Вот это был такой переломный момент. Потом в течение полугода мне предлагали какие-то темы, я писал за деньги. А потом с середины 2007 года уже многим блогерам стали предлагать. А с прошлого года это превратилось уже в систему.

О.Д. Связано ли это на ваш взгляд с каким-то социальным процессом?

С.Ш. Я провожу параллель с К. Марксом, у него есть в труде «Капитал» пять этапов развития капитализма. У меня теория про я 5 этапов monetизации блогосферы в России. Этап первый: человек что-то пишет и понимает, что может продать это за 100 долларов. 100 долларов это цена его совести. Он готов пойти на сделку или нет?

О.Д. Но с чем связана это monetизация? Она же произошла в какой-то определенный момент?

С.Ш.: На рубеже 2006-2007 года наступила мода на жж. Стало модно быть блогером, на телевидении стали говорить, в газетах вдруг резко начали писать. В последние 3-4 месяца на западе, везде, где только можно пишут о «твиттере». То же самое можно сказать и про жж в России. То есть происходило то, что в США произошло на 3-4 года раньше. Я думаю, что жж будет еще долго модным. Если самый главный блогер теперь Медведев – самый лучший критерий того, что жж моден. Мода еще определяется тем, что у нас очень политизированный жж, в отличие от других стран. Если в США там
домохозяйки, школьники – не так уж много они говорят о политике, там обсуждаются такие более приземленные вещи. А в России обсуждаются темы политического характера. Возможно, потому что при существующей политической системе, для тех кто хотел бы высказаться, жк стал такой отдушиной, некой «кухней». Ну и в то же время жк стал большим мобилизующим фактором, потому что было время, когда с мнением жж считались. К тому, что обсуждалось в жж, присоединялись другие площадки – газеты, телевидение. Создавали некую резонансную волну и с этим приходиться считаться.

О.Д. С чем связаны постоянные протесты в жж?

С.Ш. Ну это такая интеллектанская штука. Интеллект всегда должен быть против власти, искать во всем изъян. Такой интеллектанский подход.

О.Д. То есть жж-исты связаны с советской интеллектуой?

С.Ш. Менталитет. Жж в большинстве своем оппозиционно настроен. Было время, когда один блог – один человек, сейчас уже не понимаешь – с реальным ли человеком общается или это просто очередной персонаж.

О.Д. Изначально я имела ввиду реакцию жж-истов на изменения в сервисе.

С.Ш. Ну это нормальная реакция, и интернетчики это люди немного анархические. Когда существует какая-то структура, которая пытается создать какую-то иерархию, создать, что выстроить, она вызывает сопротивление – а зачем? А нам и так хорошо живется. И всегда найдется, кто скажет, что все отстой и раньше было лучше. Мы еще им будем деньги платить – за что?

О.Д. Многие исследователи пишут об особенности жж...

С.Ш. Насчет англоязычной блогосферы я не скажу, потому что я ее практически не знаю.

В плане сравнения жж с какими-то социальными сетями, жж это площадка для поиска единомышленников. Если «В Контакте» все общения может быть сведено к тому, что люди назначают друг-другу встречу, то жж это дискуссионная площадка – людям нравится спорить. Хотя, опять же, этого больше было раньше.

О.Д. Почему раньше было больше?

С.Ш. Потому что он был менее попсовым.

О.Д. Можете определить дать этому слову?

С.Ш. Такой пример. Есть компания из четырех человек, по 30 лет. Слушают они рок-музыку. Не буянят на сцене, каждое воскресенье ходят в рок-клуб, садятся за столик, слушают спокойно. Потом появляются у этой рок-группы фанаты, которым лет 20, человек 20. Они позже присоединяются к этим четырёх под 30 лет. И эти люди теряются в таком обществе. И в какой-то момент они понимают, что они даже здесь немного чужие. Пример понятен?

О.Д. То есть в какой-то момент «пioneerы» почувствовали себя чужими?

С.Ш. Да.

О.Д. А вы не могли бы определить момент, в который это произошло?

С.Ш. Может быть это было начало 2007 года, когда появилась парочка сообществ, у которых идеология была – давайте поможем друг-другу стать тысячниками. Люди заходили и каруселью друг друга френдили. То есть если раньше френдили друг друга потому что кто-то интересно пишет или потому что кто-то публикует фотографии, а тут – просто общим скопом. То есть меняется понятие о том, что интересно.

О.Д. Как изменился со временем ЖЖ?

С.Ш. Люди стали со временем больше писать под замком. Изначально люди заводили журналы, чтобы делиться своими впечатлениями, мыслями, откровенночать. Но когда количество читателей достигает какого-то определенного порога, Когда у тебя 50 читателей ты можешь писать о многом, о личном, и когда тебя читает 1-2 тысячи человек, начинаешь в своем
журнале «фильтровать базар», как говорится. Ну или начинаешь «писать под замком», для своих. Вот такая обратная сторона медали.

О.Д. Повлияло ли развитие жж на общество в целом?

С.Ш. Часть молодежной политики вертится вокруг жж. Лидеры все возможных партий, движений, заводили жж. Хотя дальше жж партии эти не выплескиваются, и все друг друга знают. И это создает некий виртуальный характер того, что сейчас происходит. Людей, интересующихся политикой, от общего количества блоггеров, да бог там 5 процентов. Но эти пять процентов создают иллюзию, что у нас огромное количество (...). В чем-то жж может оказать влияние на формирование некоторых движений. 5 или больше лет назад появилось Движение Против Нелегальной Иммиграции. Оно стало популярным за счет невероятной активности в Интернете и в частности, в жж. Когда приходил какой-то случай, связанный с иммигрантами, сообщество это создавало 20-30 постов на тему и создавало ощущение у человека несведущего, что у этой организации огромное количество сторонников. А посты, как правило, писались тремя или четырьмя людьми. По такой же схеме стали действовать другие группы. То есть через жж стали «подпитьваться» такие экстремистские маргинальные движения. В плане других вещей... Часто в жж проходят какие-то акции благотворительного характера. ЖЖ становится площадкой для того, чтобы одни люди могли помочь другим людям.

О.Д. Связь между жж и остальным миром?

С.Ш. Обратной связи стало больше. О жж сейчас говорят везде, и Медведев завел блог – это тоже ведь не случайно, дань моде. Точку наивысшего интереса и подъема жж прошел. То, что Медведев завел блог, стало главной точкой. Когда уже пришли все, пора уходить, искать новое место.

О.Д. Почему закончился рост жж?

С.Ш. Потому, что жж вопарился в себя всю ту группу, на которую ориентировался, а люди молодые, подростки, первокурсники, для них более интересны социальные сети. И они уходят туда. Новое поколение интернет-пользователей в жж может приходить, но будет достаточно пассивно.

Ilya Peresedov

О.Д. Расскажите о своей связи с ЖЖ

И.П. По времени он у меня недолго. Где-то года полтора-два. Дал он мне достаточно много. Так получилось, что в короткий срок, месяцев за восемь, я стал в нем достаточно популярен, мой журнал вошел в десятку самых читаемых блогов в России. Это мне дало новый круг общения, возможность заниматься журналистикой на профессиональном уровне. В итоге я переехал жить в Москву и сейчас являюсь директором информационных программ первого российского он-лайн телевидения.

О.Д. Популярен ваш блог стал случайно?

И.П. Я этого специально не планировал, просто в какой-то момент он стал востребован, и, понимая запросы аудитории, я начал им следовать.

О.Д. Как получилось, что из ЖЖ вы перешли в журналистику?

И.П. Одна из тем, которой я постоянно касался, была политика. Очень многие популярные блогеры работают журналистами или агентств. В Петербурге случилось интересное событие, «марш несогласных», которые официальные СМИ замалчивали и я пошел с диктофоном, описывая, что видел и оказался очень востребованным. Ну а дальше, когда пришла популярность... Блогеры периодически просят писать авторские колонки и статьи в разных газетах и журналах.

О.Д. Что вы знаете об истории жж?

И.П. (...) ЖЖ в России появился в 2000 году, сначала это было развлечение узкого круга людей, хорошо образованных, известных в определенных кругах. Изначально жж развивался как субкультура. Это была первая волна, потом приходит вторая волна, люди, которые тоже были заинтересованы в Интернете, но уже не обладали такой же культурой, оригинальностью, что, породило так так называемую «тусовочку». При них жж расширяется и становится своего рода как сейчас «Лепра»,
генератором каких-то анекдотов, историй... А третья волна, это когда жж расширяется и становится крупной платформой, объединяющей всех, и начинает существовать по принципу большого Интернета. Появляются отдельные кластеры людей, которые между собой общаются, оказывается, что ясные старожилы, они лишь отдельный сегмент, а жж это куда домохозяек, каких-то людей с Интернетом на прямую не связанных. То есть это уже получается такой массовый сервис и нынешие популярные юзеры, в том числе и я, смогли пробиться потому, что они смогли быть интересны большому количеству разных людей и с помощью разных средств. Поэтому старожилы, они считают нас мягкотелыми, беспринципными сволочами, старающимися понравится всем.

О.Д. В какое время пришла вторая волна?

И.П. Вторая волна пришла достаточно быстро, где-то в 2002 году.

О.Д. Как на фоне этого происходила трансформация политического активизма в ЖЖ.

И.П. Как я понимаю, первая волна была достаточно либеральна, но, с другой стороны, далека от политики. Как в среде образованных либералов – все понятно, но трудно об этом – моветон. Представители второй волны, которым присуща такая дерзость и резкость, с ними приходит такой консерватизм и, одновременно, радикализм. Что-то начинает выгорать, а потом, когда в жж «набежали хомячки», как выражаются, то есть аудитория расширилась, в достаточно короткий срок жж стал политизирован. Но нужно отдавать отчет, что одновременно в жж существуют тысячи пользователей, которые даже не подозревают о его политической составляющей. На сегодняшний день живой журнал, это такое сердце Интернета, связующее в себе все остальные структуры. Ну, нет в жж другой площадки для открытой дискуссии. Вообще, существует мнение, что жж это единственное место для публичной политики в России. Поэтому в какой-то момент там стали появляться представители всего политического спектра, а потом (...) Я думаю, что это начинает активно проявляться где-то в 2004 году, и где-то к 2006 (...) О.Д. Что сейчас происходит в «политическом жж»?

И.П. По моим ощущениям, жж как политическая среда теряет интерес потому что из него уходит (...) Как стадия оформления любого явления. Оно ищет, как себя проявить, потом начинает раскрываться, а потом систематизироваться. В жж сейчас происходит процесс систематизации, а за ним обычно идет процесс умирания. Есть такой интересный момент. Если люди пишут в живом журнале в расчете быть услышанным большим количеством людей, набор тем ограничен. Он может быть очень большой, но за полтора года может быть исчерпан. Если вы активно пишете в жж, то рано или поздно вы напишите про аборты, про права гомосексуалистов, про тяжелое славное советское прошлое и так далее. Поэтому периодически происходит естественное обновление поколений (...) И, конечно, представители «старых» считают, что они обо всем этом уже отговорили – лучше, правильнее и т.д. Есть люди, которые по 3-4 часа в сутки сидят в жж и готовы годами одно и тоже говорить. Наверное, по разным причинам они так делают, кто-то от неустроенности в личных делах, особенностей психики (ну будто говорить проблем). А для кого-то это становится работой. За последние два года появились как кремлевские, так и оппозиционные структуры, которые готовы просто платить за то, чтобы люди озвучивали и отстаивали их позицию. Это могут быть юзеры известные. Есть при этом подразделения, которые отнимают людей, создающих большое количество журналов и под разными именами оставляющих комментарии. ЖЖ создавался изначально, как площадка свободного общения, но когда люди стали за деньги говорить одно и тоже, уже стало как-то неинтересно. Еще одним важным мотивом к политической роли жж был Топ «Яндекса». Но потом алгоритм индексирования стал понятен, он учитывает количество ссылок, которые ставят на запись в блоге. Оказалось, что намеренно продвигать посты очень просто. И реклама в Топе «Яндекса» появилась практически сразу, но изначально ее процент был мал, а сегодня количество проплаканных постов, которые «протащили» в топ «Яндекса» 50 процентов, в некоторые дни и больше. Мы лишились, по большому счету, двух основных вещей – свободы комментариев и индексации того, что же волнует людей сегодня.

Коммерциализация и политический структурализм лишили жж свободы и спонтанности.

О.Д. Побольше о блоггерах, которые получают деньги за продвижение партий в жж.

И.П. Если вы проводите зное количество часов в день в живом журнале, пишите на политические темы и не полный психопат, то рано или поздно вы познакомитесь с теми, кто политику эту делает. Если в течение полугода будете писать осмысленные комментарии в журнале у Немцова, то если не Немцов, то кто-то из его команды узнает о вашем существовании. В какой-то момент предлагают делать то же самое, но с тем, чтобы протаскивать в топ такие-то темы, разносять какие-то мнения по блогосфере, т.д. Наюсько я понимаю, каждый, кто занимается журналом постоянно в той или иной форме предложение получал. Мне, когда мой блог стал популярным, предложили писать на некоторых сайтах в качестве колумниста. Потом стали поступать предложения как обще-рекламного, так и политического характера. Я не
исключаю, что есть поколение жж юзеров, для которых это норма, есть категория людей, которых это устраивает. ЖЖ это вообще пространство субъективностей.

О.Д. В какой момент во времени началась эта тенденция?
И.П. Примерно года полтора назад, как только жж заметили. Как только какая-то площадка становится заметной, находит людей, готовые платить, чтобы на ней что-то озвучивалось. Та же самая ситуация с телевидением.

О.Д. Есть ли что-то в этом процессе характерное для российского общества?
И.П. Сам жж характерен сугубо для российских политических процессов. Ничего похожего на русскоязычные сообщества в том же живом журнале и вообще англоязычной блогосфере не существует.

О.Д. С чем бы вы это связали?
И.П. Я бы связал в первую очередь со своеобразным пониманием свободы слова. Это своеобразие побуждает многих идти в живой журнал. Здесь есть еще один момент — культура слова, которая присутствует в России. Потому что в чем-то живой журнал это возрождение эпистолярного жанра начала 20го и конца 19го веков. Тенденция англоязычного Интернета это предельно короткие текстовые сообщения («твиттер») и если говорить о большом количестве интересующихся, то это видео и фотографии. В Российском Интернете Видео никак не может заявить о себе, как о полноценной реальности. Картинки важны, но главное — это слово. Если в англоязычном Интернете о событии надо в первую очередь показать фотографии, то в российском Интернете надо его в первую очередь описать. Сама культура такая — побольше любят в России.

О.Д. Появили ли политические силы на развитие жж?
И.П. Они ни появляли, но как бы это сказать... Если процесс нельзя остановить, его надо возглавить. Политическая власть в России несколько лет активно работала на то, чтобы сделать процесс циркуляции информации в России абсолютно для себя прозрачным и предсказуемым. И вдруг у вас оказывается ресурс, в котором тусуется порядка двух-трех миллионов человек в день, о котором знают миллионов десять... Прочем эти 10 миллионов это не абы кто, это самые продвинутые, самые образованные и самые граждански активные. И распространяется там любая информация. Власть это не может не заботить. А с другой стороны, если вы занимаетесь политикой и не можете получить на центральных каналах столько времени, сколько вы, кажется, достойны, вы придете на эту площадку. Так что политика тут постфактум.

О.Д. Эти тенденции появлялись на политическую картину России?
И.П. Нет. Если говорить о формировании политической культуры, то те люди, которые будут делать политику через лет 10-15, они сейчас все в жж. Их взгляды, их убеждения, манера аргументации, она вся оттакивается и формируется в жж. Роль жж в остальном невелика, оповестить и собрать сторонников на политическую акцию. Опыт последних лет показывает, что это, в основном, интересно только сторонникам. Ни того, было в Киеве, ни того, что было в Киишневе у нас нет. И это показатель политической культуры, которую живым журналом так сразу не переломишь. С другой стороны мы знаем, что жж таким потенциалом обладает.

О.Д. Как понимать судебные дела в отношении жж юзеров?
И.П. Нет никакой проблемы Интернета и власти. Все жж юзеры, которых преследовали, либо находились в легком «неадеквате», либо шли на сознательную провокацию. С цензурой эти дела ничего общего не имеют. Скорее это имеет отношение к несовершенству российского законодательства. С другой стороны, это непонимание чиновниками особенностей Интернета. Большинство экспертов приходят к выводу, что рано или поздно придется более активно проявлять себя, в этом есть объективная необходимость. Поскольку людей, в чью компетентность можно было бы поверить, пока нет, и говорят «пусто пока его (контроля) и не будет». Но как в большинстве стран она, форма контроля, есть, это очевидно, а пока никакой цензуры нет.

О.Д. Как бы вы прокомментировали приход Medvedeva?
И.П. Для жж это хорошо. Еще одна гарантия, что с блогерами ничего не будет. Имидж Medvedeva это не улучшило.

О.Д. Трансформация живого журнала в трех предложениях

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И.П. В начале жж был площадкой для общения людей одно культуры, общения самого разностороннего. Это была площадка приватная во многом. ЖЖ стал приобретать статус публичности за счет своего своеобразия. Во времена, начало третьей. Все эксперты сходятся в одном — будущее жж было предопределено теми качествами и личными свойствами, которым обладали его основатели. Сначала это была средства приватного культурного общения. Сейчас уже ни о каком своеобразии живого журнала говорить нельзя, живой журнал разрушен и объединился со всем российским Интернетом. С одной стороны, это маленькая модель всего рунета, а с другой — это просто индексатор, который отражает на себе тенденции, присутствующие в Российском Интернете.

Oleg Kozyrev

О.Д. О себе и личной связи с живым журналом.

О.К. Я по профессии журналист, работал в анимации, на телевидении, в рекламе. В живой журнал я пришел в 2005 году по итогам общения с рядом своих друзей из политической сферы. В начале это был просто дневник, но в 2006 году, когда была очень холода зима, я написал серию миниатюр «дневник замерзающего москвича». Они стали очень популярными, я стал «тысячником» (…) Чуть позже по итогам этих записей вышла книга, хорошо продавалась первый год. Чуть позже я переместился на другие площадки — ю-туб, и стал постить ссылки в жж. Именно писательская часть произошла у меня через блог, даже своего издателя я нашел через блог, сотрудничаю с ним до сих пор.

О.Д. Расскажите историю живого журнала.

О.К. Я был свидетелем влиянию общественно-политическому блогов, которое привело к тому, что блог завел Дмитрий Медведев именно в жж. Именно в 2005 году на всплеске интереса к событиям на Украине, блоги стали местом распространения демократических идей. Потом чуть позже стали экстремисты проникая сюда, националисты, нацисты. Блоги начали оказывать влияние на среду мнений в российской общественной жизни. Отчасти это связано с тем, что среди блогеров есть журналисты, есть много людей влиятельных, есть политики. Таким образом, блоги стали средой, которая формирует проблемные вопросы в обществе, реагирует на какие-то события или мобилизует людей, чтобы отреагировать на какие-то события. И стало видно, что в блоги стали приходить профессиональные полтиттехнологии, и люди, которые используют блоги для решения каких-то задач. И в хорошем, и в плохом смысле использовать — решить практические вопросы… То есть оказалось, что блоги являются такой неплохой социальной средой и стало заметно, что здесь появились молодежные прокремлевские движения — «Наши», «Молодая Гвардия», причем именно целенаправленно — в ряде движений видным активистам было рекомендовано заводить свой блог. Блоги стали влиять и стали туда приходить деньги, и политическое влияние стали пытаться оказывать на блогеров. На думских и президентских часть тысячников была «разобрана» по лагерям. Они поддерживали определенную идею, и некоторые были искренне во взглядах, а некоторые — на зарплате. Особую роль, мне кажется, сыграли блоги во время Российско-Грузинского конфликта, когда в блогах произошла большая часть информационной войны. В то время, когда в медиа было большое количество дезинформации с обоих сторон, блоги уравновешивали информацию, блогеры быстро находили «правду». Блоги становятся инструментом, который помогает выявить «правду».

Мой эпизод небольшой, когда на «России» прозвучал комментарий про сербского вице-премьера, которого убили. Там было сказано, что он получил пулю заслуженно. Я выложил это видео, блогеры возмутились, оказалось, что мой блог читала сербская журналистика, она перевела эту информацию и разместила это на сербском сайте. И тогда еще первый вице-премьер правительства Медведев, прибывший с визитом в Сербию, был вынужден принести извинения за этот факт.

О.Д. Что вы имеете ввиду под словом «блоги»?

О.К. Во многом влияние общественно-политическое оказывают вообще социальные сети, но именно жж является общественно-политической силой/средой. Получилось это, потому что в жж изначально была высокая концентрация интеллектуальных людей, пищущих, думающих людей. Они смогли стать ядром, которые стали отличать жж от других проектов. Эта тенденция будет держаться, потому что именно в жж приходят… Ну вот если уже и Дмитрий Медведев пришел. Значит, появятся и другие, губернаторы или еще кто-нибудь. И влияние жж будет еще долгим, если только сама социальная сеть не станет по какой-то причине неудобной. Как правило, в любой истории доминирующим инструментом влияния будет живой журнал.

О.Д. В какой момент жж стал особенно влиятельным?

О.К. Начиная с 2005 года. Если до этого была больше такая камерная среда, число участников не было велико, его влияние
организовалось людьми, которые в нем прибывали. С 2005 года события в жк приводили иногда к выходу на улицы, приводили к действиям в политике, появлениям в СМИ. С 2007 года стали (а в 2008 году это вообще вошло в правило) появляться отдельные блог-обзоры, на блогеров стали ссылаться в СМИ. Что называется, традиционные СМИ сдались и начали аккуратно брать блогеров в качестве объекта цитирования. Чуть позже появились специальные удобства для блогеров, когда блогер может, не выходя из своего аккаунта, комментировать он-лайн СМИ. Специальные коды для ссылок для блогов — чтобы ссылки на статью вставлять в свой блог. Если 2005 год, это момент проявления общественно-политической значимости блогов, то 2007-2008, это признание блогеров со стороны традиционных СМИ. Например, появились новые должности редактора по богам — человек, который из богам темы, истории, гостей для ток-шоу. Или человек, который делает обзор блогов, он обходит ряд авторитетных блогов и вычитывает интересную информацию, какую-то вставляет в свой обзор.

О.Д. Почему именно в 2005 году произошел «скачок»?

О.Д. В Киеве произошла оранжевая революция, и стало ясно, что в ответ на традиционные действия политиков, люди могут формировать нечто альтернативное через коммуникацию друг с другом. Люди сами могут ответить на что-то неправильное в своей жизни. В результате вначале в России появились молодежные объединения («Оборона»), которые стали информировать о себе через блоги и коммуницировать через блоги. В начале демократы, потом ДНП, националисти… Что-то из этого оставалось, в одних блогах невозможно быть политиком, но стало очевидно, что блоги стали хорошим, удобным инструментом для того, чтобы объединять единомышленников и влиять на какие-то вопросы или меркантильно добиваться своих целей. Уже в 2006-2007 году стало видно, что влияние блогов действительно выросло, количество людей выросло, как следствие — СМИ сдались.

О.Д. Изменил ли 2005 год жк сообщество?

О.К. Во-первых, в блоги пришли деньги. Когда стали видеть, что люди могут что-то влиять, это стали оплачивать. И политические и коммерческие деньги. Во-вторых, в блогах стали открываться представительства официальных СМИ, которые понимают, что одного своего сайта недостаточно. Телепередачи стали открывать свои представительства, компании, партии. Еще появилась методология работы в блогах — люди начинают понимать, что нужно сделать, чтобы конкретная новость вышла в топ. Кстати, появление топа «Яндекса» тоже изменило блоги. То, что поисковая система заметила блог и ввела некий рейтинг, значительно изменило блогосфери. Люди стали предпринимать усилия, чтобы быть видимыми, уже работать не просто на свой блог и своего читателя, но и на огромную аудиторию. Они стали думать, как сделать свой блог или запись интересным для массовой аудитории. – от повышения качества до создания дневников-клонов. Еще появление известных блогеров общественно-политического свойства в Интернете. Многие из них пришли, увидев, что блоги это важно, и способно влиять. И приход Медведева — результат того же.

О.Д. Говорит ли это об уровне «созревания» жк в 2005?

О.К. Количество дневников стало большим и качество живого журнала оказалось высоким – по людям представленным. Это сыграло роль. Тот этап, который сейчас начался, это приход в жк известных людей. Очевидно, будет эта волна. Еще понимание того, как можно зарабатывать деньги. Для многих блог будет становиться местом работы, скорректируется, надеюсь, как-то, политика жк относительно журнала. Третий момент, это создание синтетических СМИ — либо большие СМИ будут в себе включать блогеров, либо сами блоги будут становиться вариантами СМИ.

О.Д. Почему русскоязычный жк все время бунтует против изменений платформы?

О.К. Блогеры ни защищены, есть тревога. Согласно договору аккаунт не принадлежит человеку, его могут закрыть, удалить. Такое подвешенное состояние. Если что, закроют, и труды многих лет пропадут. Люди пытаются контролировать ситуацию через возмещение, внимание дополнительное. Если бы была разработана система, когда человек мог бы сохранять блог в виде архива, то проще было бы. Вторая вещь — в принципе свободы слова в России мало и Интернет выступает одной из немногих площадок. А как водится, когда у человека чего-то мало, он это малое старается сберечь. Даже если в СМИ политическая цензура, это все-таки внешние вещи, а тут это твое. И твою маленькую стенгазетку если отнимут, это более обидно, чем если отняли твой любимый телеканал.

О.Д. Как бы вы определили развитие отношения власти к жк?

О.К. Власти признали блоги как силу, как социальную среду, которая способна влиять на события в стране. Можно заметить некоторые шаги навстречу со стороны некоторых госструктур. ЦИК первым открыл представительство в жк к парламентским выборам. «Росатом», полу частная структура, но взаимодействует с блогерами, водит на станции, пытается доказать преимущества ядерной энергии. Часть госструктур начинает понимающее относиться к блогерам. Не удивлюсь,
если со временем в представительствах и министерствах будут работать с блоггерами, при каждом министерстве будет своя лоббистская группа блоггеров, ну и работа будет какая-то вестись. Итак, стали появляться какие-то официальные контакты с блоггерами – «приглашаем блоггеров на встречу», и так далее, от каких-то ведомств. Второе, на некоторые события реагируют власти под влиянием вопросов блоггеров (алтайская катастрофа с браконьерами). Реакция чиновников на мнение блоггеров и на акции, блогерами организованные. Третье, присутствие в блогах прокремлевских сил – работа с блогами с целью повышения пропагандистского присутствия в blogs.

О.Д. В какое время это произошло?

О.К. Первое началось прокремлевское присутствие пропагандистских структур в блогах. Второе это ЦИК, и только третье, уже создалось такое чувство, что кто-то вроде Медведева читает блог, что-то ему не нравится, и он начинает как-то реагировать. Ощущение, что, помимо прессы, люди во власти стали читать блоги. Чувство, что резонанс идет именно отсюда.

О.Д. В чем причина?

О.К. Количество людей, читающих блоги, возросло, количество узнавающих про событие, про которое говорят в блогах, выросло, пресса стала писать охогнее и персонально большая часть власть имущих стала читать блоги. Власть стала больше сталкиваться с блогами – через СМИ, через сами блоги, читая их.

О.Д. Как бы вы сравнили российскую и западную блогосферы?

О.К. У нас социальные сети имеют значение. Блог припоминается за счет социальной сети. Голос одного становится громче, чтобы докричаться для власти. Если в международных сетях влиятелен голос одинокий, то у нас это такое коллективное действие. Власти реагируют, когда понимают. В Молдавии, например, все через «твиттер» у них случилось.

О.Д. Развитие жж сообщества во времени?

О.К. Первое, от стадии любительской сходит в стадию профессиональную – люди поняли, что такое блог, как писать. Начало складываться на уровне профессии. Для части людей это становится работой в разной степени. Блоги от любительских стали профессиональными. Второе, от сообщества одиноких блоги становятся сообществом, складываются те или иные силы, они пытаются определять людей по каким-то признакам. Не только политика, но и объединения граждан вообще. Третий момент – рост влияния блогов на публичную сферу мнений. Очевидно, что блоги становятся СМИ, но не традиционным, а таким вот своеобразным. Так же я вижу, что блоги стали средой конкуренции одиноких и больших корпораций, под которыми я понимаю все что угодно – это и политическая сила, и телеканал ОРТ и еще все что угодно. Человек при поддержке социальной сети может конкурировать с крупными «лейблами» можно стать более заметным или популярным, чем все серьезное и большое. Четвертое, поднятие мобильности. Один из элементов – начинает развиваться транснациональность, когда люди переводят что-то из западных блогов. Уже были случаи, когда в западных блогах что-то происходило, и туда приходили наши блогеры, что-то писали. Или наоборот, пытались что-то перевести оттуда. Языковой барьер, конечно, присутствует, но, мне кажется, он скоро исчезнет, в большинстве своем. Благодаря автоматическим средствам перевода.

О.Д. В какой момент началась происходит эта интеграция?

О.К. Она происходит все время. Один из транснациональных элементов – YouTube. Видео интетнационально и через блоги оно очень хорошо разрастается. YouTube (который появился в 2006 году) стал мотором, который объединил всех. Это особенность видео, особенно, если они не слишком завязано на тексте.

О.Д. В какой момент произошли переломные изменения.

О.К. С точки зрения профессионализации, знаковой стала история про «Уткиноса», год-полтора назад. У людей стали возникать подозрения – не пишут ли люди платные посты и вот произошел взрыв, и это стало ясным для очень многих и позже уже стали подтвгать различные сервисы, когда платят за размещение поста. Появились рекламные агентства, занимающиеся продвижением в блогах. Появились меню в рекламных агентствах.

О.Д. Когда жж стало сообществом сил?
О.К. Это 2005 год. Явление ДПНИ, «Яблоко» стало активным, «Оборона», Нацибалы, «Тигр» и т.д. С 2005 года началось и до сих пор продолжается. Многие политические силы опираются на социальные сети. Про СМИ. Социальная сеть стала элементом организационного ресурса, средством пропаганды, такой управленческий инструмент

Sergey Kuznetsov

О.Д. Расскажите о себе и о связи с живым журналом.

С.К. Я был одним из первых людей, кто начал работать с Интернетом в России. В 1995-96 году. Интернет состоит и из двух частей, технологическая и контентная. Когда я пришел, вторая часть была в зачаточном состоянии. Тогда возникли группы, которые старались развивать Интернет, и одна из них возникла вокруг сайта журнала.ru. Человек, запустивший его, был тем же, кто открыл сеть клубов ОГИ. Вокруг журнала.ru тусовалось много людей, которые потому стали журналистами в Интернете. Все эти люди физически или не физически в Москве там были. Когда это все начиналось, было много свободы самовыражения. Потом появился московский провайдер, который стал привлекать людей, чтобы они что-то для него делали. Атон Носик делал «Вечерний интернет», я делал проект о культуре «Московский сеновал», по сути, это были типичные блоги. Это всем было удобно. Наши, одни из первых русских блогов стали концентрироваться на «Ситилайнее». Еще те были важными людьми Жена Горненый и Рома Лейбов. И вот все эти люди постепенно к началу 2000-х годов все оказались вовлечены в приносящие деньги проекты, но недостатком было то, что свободы самовыражения стало меньше, когда человек пишет за деньги, существуют определенные ограничения. И когда в 2001 году Миша Вербицкий нашел жж, все туда бросились счастливо – наконец-то все увидели место, где в котором можно свободно писать. Первые 100 людей, которые пришли, была та самая тусовка, о которой я говорю. Люди, которые в старой тусовке общались между собой и порадовались возможности свободно писать. Исторически это предопределило первый этап развития жж – из этих людей было много журналистов, много людей высокого статуса, им всем было около 30-ти, люди с амбициями, в этом числе литераторами. И они задали некоторую планку того, как надо писать в жж, что интересно. Отсюда первые годы в русском жж, среднее количество пользователей в русском жж было примерно на порядок выше, чем у англоязычных пользователей, потому что сразу он возник как вещательный формат, в который сразу пойдет некоторое количество обширных людей. С другой стороны, люди сразу начали писать то, что интересно читать. Это была тусовка, связанная с Москов и с тартусским университетом – филологические круги, Рома Лейбов. Я являюсь автором первой публикации о живом журнале – в своей колонке на «журнале.ru».

Долгое время для всех была важна возможность позиционировать свой «маленький уютный дневничок», который читает 10 000 человек как личный. Так я связан с возникновением жж как культурного феномена. Был одним из первых 100 пользователей, писал публикации про жж. Завел жж некому количеству пользователей (когда еще были инвайты), причем лично, в интернет кафе – гуляя по городу, пили и решили зайти в Интернет кафе. Дальше жж развивался, я никогда не ставил задачей стать популярным блогером, так что для человека с таким бэкграудом, у меня смещенно количество читателей. Я как бы понимаю, что нужно делать, чтобы их было больше, но не хочу. Это первая часть истории, когда журнал устоял как площадка, в которой жили журналисты, писатели и Интернет-деятели.

Дальше начался второй этап, когда количество пользователей начало расти, который достиг своей кульминации, когда СУП купил жж и стал вкладыватьсь в развитие. Сейчас я занимаюсь работой в Интернете и продвижением рекламы в блогах. Я всегда отстаивал позицию недопустимости приглашенных блогеров. Не надо портить место своей жизни. Нужно создавать ценности, а не паразитировать на существующих.

О.Д. Наиболее важные события в истории живого журнала?

С.К. Первый момент, когда появилось ощущение что все в жж – твои знакомые, потом, что все твои знакомые – в жж, третий этап – «это вообще не имеет никакого значения». Если в какой-то момент ты встречаешь человека и узнаешь что у него есть жж, ты воспринимаешь его как социально близкого, потом ты знаешь, что у каждого социально близкого есть жж, а потом ты понимаешь, что жж есть у кого угодно и это ничего не значит. Точна такая же история была с Интернетом. Интернет тоже начался как самовыражение небольшого узкого круга, потом этот круг расширялся, потом туда пришла идеология, за ней – коммерция. Потом все смотрели – ой, где это мы оказались и начали смотреть где бы можно было общаться со своими, чтобы следом не бежала эта огромная толпа. Если говорить социально, был первый этап, когда жж быстро стал площадкой для людей слова, потом следующий этап, когда это было признано СМИ (2002-2003 год). К этому же времени относятся первые истории про общественно-политическое влияние жж (например, Норд Ост). Но это было понятно только тем, кто были «внутри». Дальнейшее развитие – понимание важности жж становилось достоянием всех новых групп людей. Потом жж стало местом, где стало происходить формирование гражданского общества на локальном уровне. Например, история про дворник.
Моя теория заключается в том, что структура ж ж изображает структуру социума в котором он был придуман – Калифорнии. В районе силиконовой долины огромное количество сообществ и каждый человек про себя знает, что с одной стороны он «Italian American»; с другой стороны, он работает в какой-то компании, а с третьей стороны он еще и гей. Таким образом устроена структура ж, каждый человек может себе заявить не просто как о единице, а еще и о своей принадлежности к сообществу. Наличие такой структуры способствует возможности социального действия, мы можем поднять людей на защиту прав своего сообщества, потому что они объединены по этому принципу. В России этого не происходит, потому что Россия – менее структурированное социальное пространство в целом. Появление в этом пространстве ж способствует его структуризации. Новое поколение приходит, у которого вообще немножко по-другому в мозгах, а тут им еще и дают инструмент для структуризации. Мне кажется, что ж ж заточен под американскую систему развития идентичности.

Следующий этап, это когда политические силы пришли в ж, оппозиция (разные формы – и националисти, и либералы) и Кремль одновременно. Все это случилось года два назад. Туда же относятся все истории типа ДОС-атак на сообщество ДПНИ с целью обвалить сообщество и весь жж. Туда же относится история с покупкой всего жж Россией. Кремль хочет быть уверенным, что если дело дойдет до «оранжевой революции», жж можно будет отключить. В какой-то момент возникло внутри Кремля ощущение того, что Интернет – стратегическая отрасль и контроль над ним не должен быть отдан «врагам». Глава «Яндекс» Волошев сказал «я сделал такую специальную золотую акцию», которая не дает никаких прав, кроме права блокировать любую сделку о переходе компании под чей-то контроль и эту акцию отдали, условно говоря, государству – не напрямую государству, а государственной структуре. Владение этой акцией не даст государству возможности определять позицию «Яндекса», но даст уверенность, что «Яндекс» не будет куплен политическими противниками. Посредством людей, которым власть доверяет (на данный момент это Алишер Усманов) она инвестирует в разные проекты русского Интернета и может спать спокойно. Это не для контроля и цензуры, а для уверенности, что их не будут осуществлять другие. Мне кажется, что история с покупкой жж относится туда же. В какой-то момент стало понятно, что Мамут купил жж, чтобы продать его Коммерсанту (то есть Усманову). ЖЖ является важным российским ресурсом, и логично, что российский бизнес старается этот ресурс под себя подобрать, даже если оставить в стороне политику. Это разумное действие, если смотреть на логику бизнеса как такового. С политической точки зрения, люди хотят быть уверенными, что ничего страшного для них там не случится, но что это – они не знают сами. Мне не известно (а мне было) закрытия по политическим мотивам не одного сообщества или пользователя. Те закрытия, которые происходили, случились бы точно так же и в Америке. Люди, которые сейчас у власти, отличаются от тех, кто были в 1983 году и понимают, что если люди разговаривают на политические темы, это не значит, что завтра они выйдут на улицу. Это люди, которые говорят – ребята, мы не позволим, чтобы эта площадка была использована против вас, а вы не будете нам мешать, чтобы она работала.

О.Д. Насколько «Кремль» грамотен относительно Интернета?

С.К. Нет объекта под названием «Кремль», вместо него существуют очень много разных людей, более или менее грамотных. Сошлись между собой группы людей, конкурирующие за ограниченный бюджет. В России не случился СССР. С одной стороны Коммерсант принадлежит дольевому Кремлю Алишеру Усманову, а с другой стороны «Наш» устраивают на Коммерсанте ДОС-атаки. Есть много организаций и сил, называющихся общим словом «Кремль», которые заинтересованы в Интернете. Часть из них ничего в этом не понимает, часть понимает очень хорошо. Поэтому у Кремля нет продуманной политики в области Интернета. Сторонники Кремля и сторонники оппозиции используют одинаковые методы работы. В том, что они делают, есть какая-то доля манипуляции, результатом которой в последние два года стало падение доверия людей к тому, что они читают в жж. История про «Утконос» и политические истории устроены похожим образом и в разной степени приводят к падению доверия. От общения в жж люди теперь не могут узнать, потому что оппонента всегда можно скачать оплаченным противной стороной. Уровень доверия упал. Когда группа становится большой, уровень доверия падает – нельзя жить в пространстве, где два миллиона юзеров, будто это пространство, где их 100 человек. Но это не мешает тому, что можно иметь закрытые сообщества, где сидят единомышленники и где уровень доверия высокий или тому, что я держу друзей своих друзей. Все равно преимущество жж заключается в том, что изначально продуманная структура позволяет создавать близкие круги общения. В какой-то момент на просьбу произвольного жителя пожертвовать денег я прореагировал близко, поэтому, сейчас, я буду считать жуплком, а если это пользователь, которого знает кто-то из моих друзей, то жуплком я его по-прежнему не буду считать.

О.Д. Что такое структурное общество?

С.К. Структура общества возрастает по мере того, как у членов общества возрастает самоидентификация себя как членов той или иной социальной группы. Чем больше в обществе социальных групп, которые себя осознают как таковые, тем более структурировано общество.

О.Д. Ваше мнение немного противоречит мнению того же Горного о том, что русские «хакнули» жж.
С.К. Не совсем. Изначально жж мог быть сколько угодно заточен под формат «мальчик на меня посмотрел, мальчик на меня не посмотрел», а русские взяли и сделали из него медиа-инструмент. То есть он был «закрыт» как в политической самоорганизации, потому что инструментов этих есть достаточно в реальном мире. Фишпатрик перенес в жж то, что он видел вокруг себя. Указание своих интересов, поиск и сообщества по интересам – это механизмы настроенный на объединение по интересам. Фишпатрик живет в мире, где все так организовано.

О.Д. Появился ли жж на общественно-политические процессы?

С.К. Думаю, что жж повлиял на мозг людей, которые в нем сидят. В том числе жж дал возможность людям обсуждать свои новые темы. Все страшно любят обсуждать гендерные темы. Возможность обсуждать такие темы влияет на сознание, а измененное сознание влияет на общество. ЖЖ интересен не как инструмент достижения синхронных политических целей, вместо него можно было бы другой способ придумать. Майдан на Украине случился без всякого жж. А вот изменению сознания было работать и когда-то приведет к каким-то изменениям, особенно за пределами больших городов.

О.Д. То есть жж это не только столичный феномен?

С.К. Не будем забывать о том, что в случае России все смотрят на карту, а не на демографию. В городах-миллионниках живет большая половина населения, это страна где все сконцентрировано.

Anton Nossik

О.Д. Ваша личная связь с живым журналом?

А.Н. Показательная история первого русского пользователя, который в 1999 завёл себе аккаунт и ничего там не написал. Со мной должно было случиться то же самое. В 2001 году рынок CMS был настолько мал, что естественно было человеку, занимающемуся тем, чтобы угодно в Интернете новые предложения на этом рынке знать. Сейчас уже не так, но тогда предложения самопубликации было так немного, и были они так недружественны, что если появлялась какая-то симпатичная игрушка, все хотели узать, что это такое. Как пользователь, мне это было совершенно не нужно. Как главному редактору Lenta.ru, президенту «Рамблера», руководителю того, что сейчас стало www.newsr.ru, место где вести дневник мне не было нужно, кроме того, у меня уже был «Вечерний интернет». Никому из первых русских блогеров она не была нужна. В истории любой технологии есть такое время, когда есть ‘early adopters’, которые считают нужным знать все технологии, которые есть на рынке. Им интересна была ни возможность высказываться, ни площадка, ни аудитория. Им интересна была технология, наконец, идеального самиздата. Как реалист-шуто появилось, хотя никто изначально не собирался его смотреть.

В результате того, что все люди, которые были opinion makers, стали тестировать эту платформу одновременно, образовалась некоторая критическая масса людей, каждому из которых эта площадка была не нужна, потому что у него были свои площадки в большом количестве, но все вместе они породили площадку, которая была более удобна для их общения между собой, чем привычные площадки. И они там все остались. Вернее мы. Вербицкий, Лейбов, Гагин, Давыдов, Данилов, Лебедев – в хронологической последовательности. Никто из нас не собирался там задерживаться, пришли пощупать, как оно работает. Щупали все одновременно, возникла какая-то жизнь, тестирование инструмента привело к тому, что появилась интересная база интересных людей. Соответственно, появилась привычка это постоянно читать, и так слово за слово возникло крыло предпочтительное по сравнению с рядом общалок и предпочитительное по самопубликации по сравнению с рядом мест самопубликации. Естественно люди в среде задержались.

Дальше, поскольку мы говорим о людях, которых тысячи других людей ходили читать, чтобы узнать чего нового есть в Интернете, вокруг этого ядра сложился некоторый круг последователей и подражателей. У меня туда митировал «Вечерний интернет». Люди стали приглашать в жж всех, кого они хотели бы там видеть, в том числе интересных авторов. Была тогда еще система инвайтов, то есть «рученого отбора». Постепенно стал собираться некоторый элитарный медиа-клуб.

О.Д. Что происходило в этом элитарном медиа-клубе?

А.Н. Получилось для кого-то. Для кого-то площадка для бесцензурного высказывания, для кого-то площадка для общения с людьми, с которыми раньше общались на «листах». Если хотелось публично обменяться мнениями между собой, писали
на листах с их странным объединением публичности и приватности – увидеть сообщение могли только подписчики, которых было около 300 человек.

О.Д. В какое время это произошло?

А.Н. Начало 2002г. Однако немного значительная часть медиа профессионалов оказалась там. Пишущих людей. Для журналистов это была очевидная площадка. Журналист пишет в штате, а ему говорят, о чем писать его начальники. А сказать ему всегда больше есть, чем ему заказывают. Поэтому журналистское сообщество на протяжении всего 2002 года переместилось в жж. К 2003 году жж был общим местом, где есть то, что интересно читать. У каждого было ощущение того, что журнал есть у него и в нескольких десятков/сотен его друзей – был закрытый вход, каждый платный akaунт покупал 12 приглашений в год. И это было такое «вирусное» распространение. Потом о нем начала писать пресса. Появились какие-то заметные авторы и пресса начала активно писать, цитировать.

О.Д. И потом пришли массы?

А.Н. Массы пришли одновременно с отменой инвайтов. Массы пришли писать, а до этого массы пришли читать благодаря публикациям в прессе.

О.Д. С чем помимо отмены инвайтов связан приход пишущих масс?

А.Н. Есть логика интересного места. Если место интересно 10 людям, то оно интересно и 100 людям. Если место интересно миллиону человек, то, скорее всего, оно интересно и пяти.

О.Д. Но я так понимаю, что рост пишущих юзеров прекратился...

А.Н. Рост пишущих юзеров прекратился уже очень давно. Это противоестественный, а потому краткий процесс. Это можно сравнить с футболом. Тех, кто вышел хоть раз в жизни во двор и пулей мяч примерно столько же, сколько на планете земля живет мужчин в обществах состоятельных. чтобы у ребенка был доступ к мячу во дворе. Это примерно такое же действие, как и написать один пост в блоге, предварительно зарегистрировавшись. И это действие доступно каждому, в то время как ведение блога, который интересен не только тебе самому и твоим близким, это функция определенных способностей и душевных склонностей человека. Из миллионна попробовавших вести блог, предрасположенных к тому, чтобы вести его долго, хорошо если 10 тыс. Попробовать ударить по мячу приходилось в жизни любому мужчине, а стать профессиональным футболистом довелось меньшинству. То же самое с блогами. Можно говорить о том, что катастрофически сокращается число профессиональных футболистов. Но если нормировать это число от количества ударивших по мячу хотя бы раз в жизни, то да, действительно, все большее количество людей начинает ударять по мячу. А сколько было клубов в премьер-лиге, столько и осталось. Людей, которым интересно самим писать в блоги и писать такие, которые будет интересно читать– ничтожное меньшинство.

О.Д. Количество читателей растет?

А.Н. Естественно. Мы говорим о российской аудитории жж около 10 млн. человек, зарубежную THN не измеряет.

О.Д. Есть ли в развитии жж что-то характерное для России?

А.Н. На русском рынке это хостинг имел особую судьбу. Всегда есть один инструмент, который используется чаще, так всегда исторически складывается. В тот момент, когда в россии приживался блогинг, российским пользователям блогер.ком на глаза не попался. И тогда платформа пришла, позиции уже были заняты жж. В России люди, которые вели блоги, делали это не для того, чтобы заработать. Для них это было развлечением. В американской блогосфере самые читаемые блоги – страницы людей, на которых люди зарабатывают деньги. Они привлекли большую аудиторию, тут же ее монетизировали, начали на эти деньги редакцию, увеличить объем продукции... В топе 10 самых читаемых в мире блогов вы не найдете блогов коллективной платформы. Потому что в коллективной платформе ты пишешь, а слава и деньги уходят «дядя», для российских блогов это в порядке вещей. Для американских блогеров в порядке вещей, что когда ты кому-то интересен, ты будешь на этом зарабатывать. В российской блогосфере лидерами являются блоги на коллективной платформе, и авторы никогда ничего не зарабатывали, и платформа для этого не предусмотрена.

Нас платформа эта заинтересовала потому, что она была средством общения между нами. Почему там оказались миллионы, не потому что нам там было интересно общаться, а потому что кроме нас туда пришло еще 10, 100 тысяч интересных авторов и произошло вирусное распространение. Притянулись они, потому что это не замыкалось на нас. Мы, те, кто начали жж, всю дорогу до этого участвовали в совместных проектах. Блог у каждого из нас был, более или менее. В той или
иной форме альманахи нашего творчества существовали, в газете.ru все писали... Русский журнал был общим проектом... Тогда никто из нас не знал, кого мы там увидим. А поскольку была система инвайтов, то никаких идiotов и троллей не было, были интересные авторы.

О.Д. С отменой инвайтов жж превратился во что-то другое?

А.Н. Превратился бы, если бы отмена случилась в 2002 или 2003 году. А поскольку это произошло позже, вокруг него сформировалось некое прочное ядро, которое с отменой инвайтов никак не делось. С отменой изменился моральный климат, потому что упал уровень общения. Но понятие о жж как о собрании интересных дневников не изменилось с отменой инвайтов притом, что неинтересных дневников стало сразу в два раза больше.

О.Д. Изменили ли моральный климат топ «Яндекса» и монетизация?

А.Н. Появилось большое количество форм жизни вокруг жж в связи с монетизацией, которых изначально не предполагалось. Топ «Яндекса» этот просто способ фиксировать популярность или раскручивание публичных выступлений. При этом и до того, как он появился в 2002 году, попытки раскручивать те или иные публичные выступления были. Это как если на стадионе повесили турнирное табло, это не значит, что в результате команды стараются забить. Когда судья загибал пальцы, они все равно старались забить, просто на табло не отражался счет. Вот появилось такое табло, которое стало видно за пределами стадиона. Появилась дополнительная публика, готовая на эти соревнования смотреть и вкладывать в них деньги. Но это не отразилось никак на жизни тех, кому жж был изначально интересен. Жж это бесконечное количество субкультур и появление рейтинга «Яндекса» и соревнование в этом рейтинге породило новые субкультуры, новые сопряженные бизнесы и т.д. Но это никак не отразилось на тех людях и том, как они вели жж в 2001-2002 году.

О.Д. А началось все с одной субкультуры...

А.Н. Была одна субкультура, вокруг которой собралась большая масса публики, то внутри нее возникают всякие разные сообщества. Если у вас есть футбольный клуб, то у вас появляется публика, которая обеспечивает стадиону продажу билетов, отдельно, которая обеспечивает каналу рейтинга в тот вечер, когда клуб играет, отдельно, которая покупает билеты, когда клуб играет в другом городе, отдельно, которая обеспечивает производство и продажу маек. То есть в большой толпе народа образовываются подмножества, которые могут совершенно не пересекаться.

О.Д. Как бы вы назвали изначальную культуру создателей живого журнала?

А.Н. Это были люди-проводники, от которых тогдашние пользователи Интернета узнавали о том, что в Интернете нового (из так называемых интернет-обозрений). Тогда поисковики были еще не развиты и индексирование нового сайта уходило по полгода.

О.Д. То есть популярность жж в России – случайность?

А.Н. Естественно. В популярности любого инструмента есть очень большая доля случая. Особенно, если мы говорим об инструменте, который не имеет собственной ценности, который интересен тем людям, которые им пользуются. Например, MySpace. Это сотни миллионов людей. Конечно, есть другие подобные сервисы. В какой-то момент администрация MySpaces привела туда независимых музыкантов. Музыканты привели туда своих фанатов. Потом сайт оказался настолько большим, что он перетянул на себя пользователей других аналогичных систем – потому что люди идут к тому, что больше. В российской блогосфере сейчас 123 блога, и если поищите по списку – во всех есть те же инструменты, что и в жж. Включая li.ru, который всегда был прогрессивнее жж. Но в жж подоблялся коллектив, который никогда не подоблялся на li.ru. И вот наличие этих интересных авторов, это та самая пресловутая случайность.

О.Д. Но сообщество жж считается уникальным в истории мировой блогосферы.

А.Н. Ну почему. MySpace является таким же сообществом. Любой успех коллективной платформы в удачно подобранным вирусом ядре. В Facebook удачным ядром были ВУЗы.

О.Д. А как же жж-шный бойкот и прочие коллективные мероприятия?

А.Н. Бойкоты и на «Одноклассниках» есть. А для того, чтобы создать ощущение активности нужно очень мало народу. Если мы посмотрим на такую историю, как бойкот жж в ответ на отмену базовых аккаунтов. Если посмотреть в цифрах по исследованию «Яндекса», там видно, что в предыдущую пятницу обносилось 28 000 журналов, а в эту – 25 000. То есть из...
двух миллионов зарегистрированных русских журналов в акции участвовали 3 тысяч.

О.Д. Ну это же сработал?

А.Н. Изначально весь фокус отмены был результатом того, что компания, за три месяца до этого купленная, управлялась, как дракон из анекдота — головы между собой были в плохой координации. Базовые аккаунты никто не собирался отменять. Просто между Москвой и Калифорнией и техническим отделом координации была такая, что вместо уборания их из рекламного блока, была прекращена их регистрация. Потом поправлена обратно. То, что должны были сделать, учитывая статистику того, что 80 процентов новых создаваемых журналов были «удлученными», пять процентов платных и пятнадцать базовых. То, что можно было из интерфейса создания своего аккаунта убрать базовые как предложение, оставив возможность его регистрации по прямой ссылке. Если бы все это было сделано с первого дня, то ничего бы не было. Это было проблема координации и оповещения. Сначала напортачили, потом исправили. Бойкот как раз показал, что максимальная мощность протеста, это 3 000 человек и двух миллионов.

О.Д. То есть активность и сплоченность жж юзеров, это миф?

А.Н. ЖЖ юзеры никак не сплочены между собой. Так же как никак между собой не сплочены люди, которые смотрят «Доктор Хаус». Все они посмотрели или еще посмотрят 110 серий, но это не значит, что они являются политической силой. Не надо думать, что есть хоть одна позиция, по которой жж юзеры все согласны.

О.Д. Но жж юзеры постоянно протестуют против каких бы то ни было изменений в сервисы со стороны администрации.

А.Н. Естественно, есть и такая субкультура. Это в частности, способ привлечь к себе внимание. Это одна из форм жизни вокруг жж и она, как раз, не отличается между Америкой и Россией вообще. Все изменения, которые администрация жж проводит в Америке, они тоже встречают протест — всегда. Чувство, что мы — сила, а люди, которые платят за наше удовольствие и его создали, они никто, это чувство над- и вненациональное.

О.Д. Так есть ли что-то русское в жж?

А.Н Статус жж по отношению к стране Россия. Но при этом, как только мы начинаем искать аналогии, мы их находим. Например, Медведев завел блог в жж. Не сразу, сначала нужно было приложить толкнуть. Но как только как только утихло, он пришел в жж, где должен был присутствовать изначально, если хочет разговаривать с блоггерами. Ну а Барак Обама? Во время своей кампании предвыборной кампании — то же самое. Медведев и Обама стали юзерами, чей логин и пароль доверен коммерческой компании, посторонней президенту и его штабу. Почему? Потому что это платформа популярна. Магомет идет к горе. Магомет — Обама и Медведев, гора – MySpace, Facebook, Livejournal. Полные аналогии взаимоотношений между властью и популярной площадкой можно и нужно найти. В России это площадкой является жж и «Яндекс», а в Америке — MySpace, Facebook, YouTube и Google, при этом MySpace Googleлой принадлежит. Мног сказать, что – Google, Рунет Меридок и Facebook. Ничего уникально русского в том, что когда у тебя десятки процентов населения в Интернете, что Интернет-площадка становится значимым феноменом общественного сознания в Интернете, нет. Это так всегда и везде будет. Самый посещаемый портал, это как один из крупнейших в стране телеканалов. Не иметь с ним отношений не может себе позволить никакая власть и никакой живой человек. Даже человек никогда не включает «первый канал», то он о нем имеет какое-то мнение и причину, по которой он его не смотрит. Если русский человек никогда не ищет «Яндексом», это не потому что он никогда не слышал о его существовании. То же самое про человека читающего и не читающего жж.

О.Д. Опишите главные основные этапы развития жж.

А.Н. Думаю, что существенным этапом стало появление какого-то русского ядра в 2001 году. Другим этапом стала покупка сервиса компанией Six Apart, в 2005 году. Вдруг, жж, который был организацией публичного блогера, стал ориентированным на коммерческую компанию. И система инвайтов не могла ужиться. Мера, направленная на ограничение численности зарегистрированных пользователей, стала историей. Вся неизбежная коммерциализация началась в 2005 году. А дальше октябрь 2006 или декабрь 2007, первый приход СУПа и покупка сервиса СУПом, определенная веха, про которую, думаю, через пару лет только нам будет сказать. Существовала определенная динамика роста но момент покупки СУПом и мы не можем сказать насколько благодаря появлению СУПа что-то улучшилось, ухудшилось или не изменилось. Если через год-полтора жж достигнет качественных драматических скачков, можно будет сказать, что покупка СУПом была хороша, если закроется в связи с экономической невыгодно, можно будет сказать, что жалко, что его купил СУП. Отмечу это как веху можно, конечно, но о последствиях судить не сейчас. Три таких события в истории русскоязычного жж. Six Apart – это отмена базовых аккаунтов и появление рекламы, все, что связано с
О.Д. Как вы прокомментировали мнение, что покупка жж СУПом связана с Кремлем?

А.Н. Это в чистом виде теория заговора. Неприлично взрослому человеку иметь подобные мнения, если он не популистский политик, не Жириновский, который публично имитирует сумасшествие. Идея Six Apart – продавать жж как непрофильный актив, возникла в этой компании. Об этом известно всем, кто с этим связан. Эта идея шла от обстоятельств компании и была бы реализована независимо от того, был бы там СУП. Есть у вас съемная квартира с предоплатой. И вот хозяин квартиры решет ее продать третьему лицу. И в этом случае ваша предоплата, которую вы считали очень выгодной сделкой, перестает выглядеть такой выгодной и вообще появляется угроза вашей инвестиции. Можно сказать «ладно, продавай, посмотрим, что хозяин скажет про нового жильца». Или есть такая договоренность о праве первого выкупа. И это произошло с компанией Six Apart. Когда Six Apart обозвали, что они хотят расстаться с этим сервисом и что у них есть потенциальные покупатели, то в этой ситуации выбор был простой. Списать всю свою стратегию и ждать пока придёт какой-нибудь Yahoo и выкупит или реализовать право выкупа, которые было частью первоначальной сделки. Поэтому для того, чтобы видеть в этой ситуации кремлевские проиоци, надо постараться. В реальности СУП для того, чтобы купить этот актив, для чего в его смете не было денег, побегал по рынку и нашел инвестора. Инвестор нашелся, Алишер Усманов, и на его деньги покупка была совершена. Вещь, которую очень не хотелось делать, но пришлось. За два с половиной года обсуждения кровавой кремлевской цензуры, связанной с появлением компании СУП, ничего не случилось. Никто по этому поводу не покраснел, но в этом и есть особенность параноидов и политиков типа Жириновского – они никогда не извиняются.

Maxim Aleksandrov

О.Д. Как вы пришли в жж?

М.А. В 2003 году я жил в Санкт-Петербурге, я был честным бизнесменом, у меня была сеть по продаже газет. В компании друзей мы ходили играть в покер в один кабачок, и я все время всех отвлекал историями о том, что со мной произошло за последнюю неделю. Мои друзья мне говорили – заведи себе жж и отстань от нас, у тебя там будут всегда слушатели. Там действительно были тысячи людей, которые готовы были меня слушать, отвечать, цитировать. Весной 2004 года я регулярно публиковал рецензии о посещенных кинофильмах. Один человек ко мне поступил в почту из Москвы, редактор престижного журнала, который пригласил меня в журнал. Быть журналистом была моя мечта еще со школьного возраста. Я продал свой бизнес в Петербурге, остался в Москве и через жж познакомился с множеством работодателей – поработал на выборах, в различных изданиях и так далее. Благодаря жж я стал путешествовать, ЖЖ помог мне отточить мое журналистское перо. ЖЖ даёт возможность оттакивать мнения за счет чтения текстов людей, которые с тобой не согласны.

О.Д. На протяжении этого времени, как менялся жж?

М.А. В 2003 году жж находился на низке успешности. Именно тогда жж превратился из субкультуры 100 человек в движение десятка тысяч человек. Все они обладали высоким в сравнении с средним российским уровне образования и интеллекта, многие были журналистами. И когда я пришел в жж, он впервые стал вырываться в офлайнов. В журнале «Гайм-аут» появилась рубрика «Что пишут в жж», и тем временем было революционно. Тогда впервые люди стали узнавать новости из блогов. Тогда людей из жж стали приглашать писать рассказы в газеты. Прощел год и куча издательств стали издавать книжки в жж. Блоггеры от этого испытывали восторг. То есть даже если Алмата Малатова терпеть не могли очень многие, при этом все блоггеры испытали патриотический экстаз оттого, что его книжку издало настоящее издательство. Сейчас у нас не то, что никого этим не удивить. Сейчас найти жж в человек, который издавал книгу жж. В 2003 году было только самое начало этого, а в 2004-2005 настал пик, когда таланты блоггеров стали выходить наружу в офлайнов. Тогда мы еще очень увлеченно относились к офлайнов как к чему-то отдельно стоящему, к чему-то более важному, тогда как у нас – маленький клуб по интересам. В 2005 году произошло то, что погубило жж в старом его виде. В СМИ стали слишком часто публиковать жж, в 2006 году пришла компания СУП. Огромное количество народу вломилось в жж и стало там активно вести блоги, вступать в дискуссии. Некоторая часть блоггеров воспринимала жж как закрытый клуб. Они все могли друг друга лгать и ненавидеть, но при этом они все воспринимали друг друга как один круг общения. Умные люди, с хорошей подготовкой, из хороших семей. Но тогда в их разговоры стали массово влезать люди только что закончившие школу, прочитавшие две книги и при этом имеющие своё мнение по всем вопросам. Выяснилось, что всех этих пионеров выдержки не хватает, чтобы общаться с такой публикой. И многие стали сворачивать свои журналы – уходить вообще или уходить в глухие «подзамки», уходят на стэнд-эвоны.
Второе, на жж обратили внимание бизнесмены, произошло это в 2006 году. После покупки жж СУПом, блогеры впервые всерьез заговорили о том, что жж-то воспринимается и как маленькие уютненькие дневнички, а как коммерческую некую житью. И сначала все думали, что денег будет немного и вообще непонятно, кому и для чего это надо. И тогда заговорили о политических целях, с которыми эта покупка проводится. Совершенно понятно, что все наше КГБ читало при желании все и раньше. Во-вторых, понятно что деньги на кону стоят серьезные и именно коммерческие. Тогда же началась разработка рекламного рынка в жж – впервые появилась баннерная реклама. Тогда и впервые блогеров стали впервые нанимать на работу, связанную с блогами. За то, что люди раньше делали просто так, им стали платить деньги. Тогда впервые фермы стали обращаться к юзерам с предложениями о рекламе. А начал все это я. Осенью 2006 года с Самсоном Шоладеми мы устроили флеш-моб. Самсон написал про меня текст хвалебный, а на следующий день, что поет был оплачен (5 долларов) и что все, кто хочет, за такую же плату получить рекламу. Мы планировали потом всем рассказать, что мы пощутили и думали, что в такую глупость никто не поверит. Несколько суть человек сообщили ему, какой он негодяй. А еще пять человек написали с предложением за 50 долларов что-то прорекламировать. Он принес ко мне с вопросом, а что теперь делать? Я говорю: погоды, не соглашайся, сдается мне, что можно брать денег больше. За считанные дни появился термин «шоладемизация», извлечение прибыли из того, что тебя много читают в жж. За месяц это превратилось из намешки в суперпопулярную «движуху», которой сейчас занимается половина жж. Именно тогда все поняли, что «ва деньги можно».


О.Д. Как вы бы прокомментировали связь покупки жж СУПом и властных структур?

М.А. Идея о попытке жж отключить «если что» -- глупая. Потому что в случае революции легко жж отключить не при помощи хозяев ресурса, а снаружи. В день «Русского Марша» по всей планете не работал жж, была популярная версия связи между этими событиями. Уверен, что это совпадение. Если кому-то понадобится отключить жж, то это сделают «на границе». Связь Интернета российского и Западного – это конкретное количество проводов и кабелей и для отключения жж легче подойти к ним, чем к начальнику сайта. Но, безусловно, покупка была произведена не без совета кого-то из властей. Но когда Абрамович покупает футбольный клуб «Челси», никто не думает, что покупает его для того, чтобы вербовать в российскую армию английских болельщиков. Но понятно, что покупка эта была произведена, посветившись с кем-то из российских властей. Точно так же, когда Алишер Усманов покупает картины. Он же покупал не только потому, что ему захотелось, но и потому что посветился: «А как вы думаете, прикольно будет России иметь это?» Покупка жж российским бизнешем и структурой, связанной с российскими чиновничими структурами, это было решение совместное. Не то, что для чего-то надо, но на всякий случай может для чего-то пригодиться. Сделано это для порядка. Скоро для организованности, а не для контролируемости. СУП с компанией не справляется и убыточная, но это проблема уже самого руководства. Извлекать миллионы прибыли из такого рода ресурса вполне можно. И на рекламе, в том числе.

О.Д. Чем интересны блоги рекламодателям?

М.А. В это страшно поверить, но аудитория журнала Наташи Радуловой раза в 3 уступает аудитории журнала «Огонек». Журнал закрылся, а блог Радуля продолжает работать. Аудитория там в три раза меньше, но зато там работает один человек вместо сорока. В какой-то момент стало понятно, что это очень дешевый рекламный рынок. При этом охват аудитории тоже не маленький. Какое-то время говорили об уровне доверия, который дают блоги. Но это очень быстро потерялось. Важно то, что это намного дешевле, тяжелее контролировать (поэтому блоги уступают как рекламный формат) – нужны люди, которые умеют в этом работать – как сделать так чтобы в блогах не опорочится, как сделать так, чтобы информация распространилась. Еще гораздо проще проводить таргетинг в блогах, чем в СМИ.
Данные сейчас такова, что о том, о каких событиях стоит писать, журналисты узнают из своих собственных френдлент. ЖЖ – это место для вброса какой-то информации. О рейтинге «Яндекса». Неоднократно сталкивался с тем, что в серьезных изданиях главный редактор отвечает на идею о теме: «да я посмотрел, в жж отзывов нет на это, этого тема не интересует». ЖЖ стал индикатором тому, что обсуждаемо. Поэтому развивался целая армия людей, которая занимается тем, что им имитирует активность – показать, что осуждаемо и чтобы СМИ об этом писались. Если бы в СМИ специально не инспирировались посты о Евровидении, возможно информация о Евровидении было бы намного меньше. Если бы гей парад не был в жж, его бы никто не замечал. Шумо о нем в жж столько, и столько об этом, в итоге, пишут СМИ, что ощущение такое, что гей парад состоялся.

В этом процессе был два важных этапа. Первый, это 2004 год, когда о жж стали писать, как об источнике талантов – первые книжки стали писать блогеры, когда простых людей стали брать в журналисты. Вторая волна, это 2005/2006 год, когда в жж хлынула масса людей потом что все эти «приглашенные звезды» рассказывали на телевидении и в прочих СМИ: «да какая я вообще звезда, я так, из жж». Именно тогда произошел резкий скачок массовости. Именно тогда жж стали восприниматься как коммерческую площадку и как источник информации. Самый знаковый момент в истории информационного влияния жж – весна 2007 года., когда в Киргизии были беспорядки, в столице отключили все СМИ и местный Интернет. Я четко помню, как все СМИ мира получали информацию о том, что происходит в течение суток от девочки, у которой было 80 читателей, которая жила в этом городе и у которой был нормальный Интернет. Она сидела и целый день писала по посту – что происходит вокруг города из своей квартиры в центре. В течение суток все мировые информационные агентства получали информацию только от нее, потому что всех журналистов высылали, все СМИ отключили и что происходит ни кто не знал. Ходили адские слухи. Выяснилось, что даже туда, когда можно только вертолетом долететь, а блогер уже сидит там – живет он там. Когда были беспорядки в Париже все кинулись к парижским блогерам. Сейчас, когда где-то происходят беспорядки, чуть не первое, что приходит в голову новостникам и журналистам: «а у меня там никто из френдов не живет?». Это произошло в 2006 году, когда жж рос настолько массово, что даже на тактической станции Блюстаймзен есть блоггер. И если что-то произойдет, то читатели сначала пойдут туда, а потом уже только смотреть новости на Lenta.ru. Так что есть две важные точки. Первая, когда блогеры стали пробиваться в СМИ, а вторая, когда жж рвануло в СМИ и резко выросла массовость из-за этого.

О.Д. Объясните процесс перенятия жж компанией СУП?

М.А. Это коммерческое решение с целью извлечения прибыли. Но в России нет ни одного крупного дела без того, чтобы не поставить в известность партию власти. Сурков наверняка дал благословение – надо, чтобы за жж кто-то смотрел. Это не значит, что он отдал узк, но он не был против.

О.Д. Какими были и стали жж юзеры?


О.Д. Как развивались отношения жж властных структур?

М.А. Два года назад начали проводиться рекламы политических партий. Полтора года назад представители партий выяснили, что им всем нужно срочно завести жж-шку. В итоге Медведев завел себе жж. Все эти скучные жж, напоминающие официальные сайты, в которых пишут тексты представители. История Терентьева не имеет никакого отношения к жж. Если бы он написал это на форуме, случилось бы то же самое. Тогда надо вести речь об отношениях власть держащих с Интернетом вообще. А тут как во всем мире, есть обидчивые люди во власти, которым неприятно то, что, что о них говорят, и они стараются с этим бороться. Обычно это выглядит довольно глупо, но они стараются. Рано или поздно появятся нормативы об Интернете, где будет прописано, что можно и что нельзя делать.
О.Д. Как вы объясните особенность русскоязычного жж?

М.А. В силу очень случайных и личных факторов в России жж исполнил роль, которую на западе занимают другие площадки. Если бы Антон Носик открыл бы для себя не жж, а blogger – сидели бы все там.

О.Д. Как бы вы объяснили острую реакцию жж юзеров на любые изменения сервиса?

М.А. История борьбы с СУПом, это история борьбы не с СУПом, а с массостью. Люди, которые привыкли себя считать элитой и особыми: «Вот мы, социальная группа!». Это была попытка превратить жж в нечто настолько массовое, что это не было отличным от телефона мобильного. Людям это не нравилось, им хотелось продолжать быть особенными, чтобы к ним продолжали приходить только интересные собеседники их уровня. Люди хотели, чтобы в жж был свой клуб по интересам. А СУП в данном случае был символом того, что в жж привлекала толпа людей, которые к этому клубу не относились. И боролись с символом этим. Дело еще и в том, что в компании СУП сидят криворукие дебилы, как известно. И даже когда я там работал, они такие были и я сам еще тот человечище. Было много технических ошибок, к которым можно было предъявить претензии. И платные услуги вводили криво, и много что вводили плохо и через задницу. Но это история любой компании, много у кого что работает через задницу.

Борьба была проиграна начисто. В итоге из авторитетов в жж остались только те, кому это было нужно по работе и самые приспособляемые, типа меня, и самые толстокожие, типа того же Носика, человека рожденного для жж. А сейчас авторитеты в жж, это люди, которые перепощивают смешные картинки и анекдоты. Картина в жж изменилась очень сильно – на смену интеллектуальным тусовщикам пришли тусовщики развлекательные. На наших глазах нала культура плавно превратился в канал ТНТ. Я не вижу никакой трагедии, потому что бредовая ситуация, когда на популярный ресурс пишут люди, совсем не такие как обычный народ. Популярный ресурс должен быть популярен у простого народа, а для «старой гвардии»... не пока еще ничего нового не придумали. Сейчас снова пошло расслоение интеллектуалов по тематическим форумам. Компьютерщики сидят на своём «хабре-хабре», у филологов тоже, наверное, что-то есть, у историков тоже.

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