

Daniel H. Hüdig, *The Vision of a Future Information and Communication Society. Computer-Mediated Communication and Technology Policy in the United States, the European Union and Japan*, Dissertation, University of Trier, 1997, pp. 429.

Abstract (July 2000)

The vision of a future information and communication society has prompted leading politicians in the United States, the European Union and Japan to influence or even lead the economic and social transition in the context of an active technology policy. The technological development of society, however, is a product of a complex interplay of technological, economic and socio-political constraints. These constraints limit the political decision-making and implementation abilities. Moreover, facts and information are continuously changing during a paradigmatic technological, economic and social shift, which limits political decision-making abilities.

This study compares political decision-making to promote computer-mediated communications in the Triad since the beginning of the 1980s, on four levels: the development of a political vision, the long-term aims and strategies, technology policy (e.g. the promotion of technological development and competition policy) and regulatory policy (e.g. universal access, protection of privacy and intellectual property). While technology policy tends to be uncontroversial, during a paradigmatic shift regulatory policy is difficult and lengthy. Nevertheless, the inclusion of interest groups, which rise during this paradigmatic shift and which are close to the technologies and their societal consequences, help to aid decision-making processes. In this context, politics in the United States has been more successful than in the European Union and especially Japan.

Although this study predates the rise of eCommerce over the Internet, it addresses many of the themes underlying it. Of these themes, many remain politically unsettled, both on national, supranational and especially international levels. For example, for encryption and secure payments, which are necessary for eCommerce, no international standards do yet exist. The issue of taxation has hardly been opened for discussions. In sum, this study does not only offer a historical overview of the development of the Internet, but it also discusses issues of continuing present concern.