

Finno-Ugric Worldviews in the Changing World of Technology

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In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, the intersection of tradition and technology within Finno-Ugric communities presents a unique landscape for ethnological and folkloristic inquiry. This symposium presentation aims to explore the dynamic role of technology in shaping contemporary folk culture, particularly how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) impact the outputs of ethnic identity, traditional storytelling, religious expressions and ritual performances among Finno-Ugric peoples.

The infusion of digital technologies into everyday life has clearly transformed traditional practices, enabling communities to navigate the complexities of modern existence while reinforcing their cultural heritage but facing also yet other complexities brought along by technology. Scholars such as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) have emphasized the importance of "cultural performance" in the digital age, suggesting that technology serves as both a medium and a message, allowing for the recontextualization of folklore. Similarly, the work of John Postill (2010, 2024) highlights the role of social media in fostering community ties and facilitating intercultural dialogue, vital for the preservation of ethnic identity among dispersed populations. Some case studies, such as those by Copp  lie Cocq (2013), further elucidate how digital storytelling practices empower marginalized and displaced communities to assert their place-making practices in the global digital space, highlighting the interplay between technology and cultural resilience.

This presentation calls for paying more attention to the use of digital platforms as well as physical technological gadgets specifically by Finno-Ugric groups to sustain their cultural narratives and religious practices, such as virtual gatherings, online community folklore archives, and social media storytelling but also the use of screens or loudspeakers in a church or on a ceremony. A pertinent example is a case study of Nikolai Anisimov and Galina Glukhova (2021) who bring examples of how Udmurt communities performed certain rituals using digital platforms during Covid-19 lockdowns. By examining such interactions, we aim to unpack the complexities of cultural adaptation and identity reconstruction in the context of globalization and technological change. Our preliminary results reveal a rich tapestry of creativity, resilience and innovation, challenging conventional notions of tradition and modernity.

Literature

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