The Impact of Digitalization on Minority Music

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The Impact of Digitalization on Minority Music: Technological Change and Cultural Belonging among the Swedish-speaking Finns ⓐ

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter looks at the impact of digitalization on minority music. According to an often-recurring optimistic vision, digitalization has led to larger cultural diversification and democratization, whereas critical voices claim that social and industrial structures have not changed radically after all. From a cultural perspective, a key question is to what extent the technological changes have affected cultural belonging and the relationships between identity and music. These questions are discussed by applying theories related to identity and digitalization on the Swedish-speaking population of Finland. Based on the material, it appears that digitalization incorporates both opportunities and limits for preserving and developing cultural practices that are connected to the ethnicity. As a complex aesthetic practice, music also offers a variety of means of negotiating identity, tradition, and locality. Thus, it would be a simplification to expect any single one-way causal connection between digitalization and culture.

Keywords: digitalization, music culture, minority, identity, ethnicity

Introduction

Digitalization has led to a number of major transformations in the production, dissemination, and consumption of culture, and music is no exception. The general changes, which by some scholars have been labeled "the digital turn" (e.g., Westera 2013), have embraced technology and economy, but also social structures and cultural practices. These processes can be divided into "digitization," in other words the technological methods of converting analogue material into digital bits, and "digitalization," referring to the way in which many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and infrastructures (see Brennen and Kreiss 2016). This chapter will focus on the latter, that is, on how digitalization has affected musical practices, social habits, and social alignments.

This includes the ways in which older identity constructions and taste cultures have been reformed, and new belongings have developed.

A recurrent idea in music industry research is that digitalization has led to diversification and democratization, as more and more music is created and distributed more easily and cheaply (e.g., Anderson 2006; Fox 2005; Frost 2007; Lessig 2008). In principle, this should also imply larger opportunities for smaller minority music cultures. However, these diversification hypotheses have been criticized by researchers, who claim that the industrial structures have not changed radically after all (e.g., Galuszka, 2015; Elberse, 2008; Jones, 2002; Rogers, 2013). From a cultural perspective, it is important not only to ask whether this really has happened, but also to examine what consequences digitalization has had for music cultures. This includes pondering, for example, how the changes relate to identity formations and social structures, and what potential technology has to increase the accessibility and democratization of culture.

In this chapter, digitalization and minority popular music is discussed primarily by concentrating on cultural questions within a minority framework. A fundamental issue is what role music plays in the formation of a minority ethnicity, and how the patterns of interaction between music and cultural identity interconnect with the spread of digital technology. In this respect, the discussion not only draws on observations regarding changes within minority music, but also on general debates concerning ethnicity and music, how questions of music and cultural identity have been approached, and what shifts in emphasis the technological development has brought about. When studying music, cultural identity, and technology, it is necessary to reflect on the premises of the argumentation, and on the consequences of the chosen approaches. This includes discussing how these topics have been dealt with in, for example, popular music studies, ethnomusicology, the cultural study of music, and media studies.

The themes are concretized by using one particular minority, the Swedish-speaking population of Finland, as a case study.[1] Swedish is the formally registered mother tongue of around 290,000 people in Finland, that is, approximately 5.3 percent of the total population. The linguistic rights of this population group, usually called "the Finland-Swedes," are protected in the Finnish Constitution, and the minority is well integrated in the society. In general terms, the Swedish-speaking of population has also a relatively high standard of education, and, in comparison with many suppressed minorities, it has always had access to new technology. However, despite its social and economic prosperity, the small size of the population group and a common feeling of linguistic and cultural vulnerability has led to a situation where the Swedish-speaking Finns are conceptualized as a minority. "Finland-Swedishness" is also increasingly conceptualized as an ethnicity, although this is, in social and cultural terms, a relatively heterogeneous group of people, whose lifestyles in many respects resemble those of the majority.

The position of the Swedish speakers in Finland has led to a situation where legislation and political measures have offered some guarantees for Swedish governmental institutions in the country, but they have no effect on, for example, free market popular culture.

The Swedish-speaking population is simply too small and culturally heterogeneous to viably sustain its own profitable niche in the music industry of Finland. It is precisely this combination of, on one hand, a stable formal position and resources, and, on the other hand, a problematic position within, for example, the market-driven poplar music industry, that makes it an interesting case study for the digital developments of the last few decades.

From Essentialist Identities to Fluid Belongings

In a larger perspective, digitalization can be seen as one aspect of a general postmodern or post-industrial development, which is characterized by the growing importance of, for example, human capital, cultural goods, globalization, and telecommunications. These rapid changes have also had consequences for social life, and how people perceive themselves in relation to others. Thus, identity has become a key issue in the humanities and social sciences during the last few decades, and a subject that also has been connected to digitalization.

The interest in identity is often explained as a result of increasing global flows of ideologies, people, finance, and cultural practices. One of the most notable identity theorists of the late twentieth century, Zygmunt Bauman (1998, 205), for example, explains the persistent interest to be the result of the waning of older identity formations. By referring to Hegel's idea of the Owl of Minerva, which spreads its wings at sunset, and Heidegger's claim that one begins to ask "what a hammer is" only when the hammer has broken, Bauman explains the attention given to identity issues to be an indication of how old notions have become highly problematic as a result of increasing bodily, social, and cultural mobility. For Bauman, identity has become a fluid experience that undergoes constant changes.

Bauman's approaches to identity, like many other cultural theorists', are influenced by a fundamental dividing line between essentialist and social constructivist positions (for general descriptions, see, e.g., Lechte, 2003, 111–113; Beard and Gloag, 2005, 87–89; Meer 2014, 38–42; Bolaffi et al. 2003, 141–143). The essentialist position is based on an idea of ethnicities as given, stable entities constituted of socio-culturally or racially similar individuals, whereas the constructivists emphasize how social knowledge, including ideas of the self and ethnic categories, is constructed through interaction with others. It is safe to say that the majority of scholarly cultural analysis during the last few decades have been constructivist readings based on the influential work of anthropologist Fredrik Barth (e.g., Meer 2014, 38–39). Thus, the focus has been on how categorizations and boundaries between groups are born, and how these boundaries become sites of identity maintenance. Seen from an academic perspective, community in late modernity is "adopted" rather than "handed down" (Diamandaki 2003, 3), and it is this flexible quality that makes

it possible for post-traditional communities to define "us" and "them" in relation to new forms of abstraction, globalization, standardization, and atomization.

The perceived fluidity of identity has led scholars to conceptual reformulations. An example of this is Stuart Hall (1996, 2–4), who substitutes identity with "identification" as an anti-essentialist effort to emphasize how identity is nothing fixed or predetermined, but processual and something that proceeds through discourse, and would never exist without discourse. Another revision of established terminology is the concept "multiple identities," which is a neat verbalization of a fact that was observed already in the end of the nineteenth century (Burke and Stets 2009, 131), that is, that every person simultaneously has several identities. In recent years, the concept "belonging," in particular, has received renewed interest across various fields of social and cultural sciences as one way of explaining the human need for a relational state of mind, and how the boundaries of belonging are constructed in different public, formal, and informal discourses. Belonging, in this respect, is also "multi-layered" and its analysis requires an "intersectional" perspective of its relation to various socio-political contexts and related belongings (Yuval-Davis 2011). However, this perspective has been criticized for being both vague and simplistic, leading to new terms such as "multicultural-belonging" (Chin 2019). Despite these conceptual disruptions, it appears that the need for identification and grouping oneself or others has not disappeared; it is only the understanding of this drive that has changed, and the labeling of its results.

A recurring idea in many analyses is that hitherto relatively stable identities are loosening and undergoing transformations because of rapid social change. Especially, the development of media is said to lead to new articulations between local and global, and cultural identities are conceptualized as more decentered, ambivalent, contradictory, provisional, contextual, and de-essentialized than ever before. Mass media and computer-mediated communication, and particularly the spread of the nternet around the turn of millennium, are often referred to as major forces when new forms of identities are born. Cultural groups from multiple host societies are said to maintain and renegotiate collective identities across time and space without relying on face-to-face interaction or physical proximity.

Some writers have described the result of these processes as a birth of "new online ethnicities" (see Marotta 2011, 545). Compared to older offline ethnicities, which are grounded in the materiality of everyday life, these new online ethnicities are believed to epitomize deterritorializing practices, express affinity that extend beyond national borders, and generate novel forms of social belonging that transcend time and place. Other scholars speak of "digital belongings" (Marlowe et al. 2017) when analyzing how new social participation and cohesion interface with older practices, or of "virtual ethnicity" (Poster 2001) when discussing new postmodern ethnicities that are created in the internet's new virtual spaces for social life.

Although some scholars emphasize the groundbreaking character of these new identity formations, there are differences as to where the dividing line between old and new

should be drawn, and to what extent it is possible to assert that there would exist one historical point that would divide identities to one extreme of either side. These questions reflect an issue that is central to all identity studies, that is, whether identity as such has gone through changes, or whether it is merely the way it has been explained and approached in writing. In other words, is it possible to speak of a historical development with consecutive stages, starting with a stable and essential, primordial identity and then moving on to more fluid constructions, finally ending up in a total blur of previous socializations? Alternatively, is identity simply constructed differently during different epochs when the premises and focus of scholarly work have changed? Answering these questions lies outside the scope of this chapter, but they still have a relevance for discussions on the connecting points between identity and music. No matter how the changes are perceived, the issues surrounding identity are still debated and they are often connected to music. Thus, it is worth moving on to discuss how music constructs or reflects Finland-Swedish identity, and to what extent digitalization has changed these processes.

The Musical Construction of "Finland-Swedishness"

It is disputed exactly when Swedish-speaking people moved from present-day Sweden to present-day Finland, but the oldest written records describing such settlement date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The categorization of the population of Finland into two linguistic groups, one Finnish-speaking and one Swedish-speaking, is a reasonably young phenomenon, which can be traced back to the nineteenth century. In line with the National Romantic thinking of the time, intellectuals saw the population groups as culturally separate and distinctive, although both the Finnish and the Swedish speakers living in Finland politically mainly associated themselves with one Finnish nation. Inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder's theory of a "Volksgeist," intellectuals also found homological connections between the mental character of each population group and its folk culture. This homology also manifested itself in folk music, which was said to be a unique expression of the primordial, inherent character of the people that created it.

These essentialist views on Finland-Swedishness have later given way to constructivist theories, which emphasize how ethnicity was born under certain social conditions, and as a result of context specific processes. When Finland finally gained independence in 1917, the heterogeneous Swedish-speaking population felt for the first time a need to see themselves as belonging to one social group (e.g., Lönnqvist 2001). The resulting ethnicity was conceptualized in the 1910s in the Swedish term "finlandssvenskhet" (literally "Finland's Swedishness"), which was launched in order to manifest the specific nature of this population group in relation to the Finnish-speaking majority, but also in relation to Sweden. This ethnicity was built on a linguistic division of the population, but in order for it to function socially, it was said to incorporate also cultural expression, norms, and values. Thus, folk music too became a part of this process of diversification and consolidation.

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From today's perspective, the formation of Finland-Swedishness can be approached in constructivist terms as an example of how music, in political rhetoric, is thought to symbolize or reflect a pre-existing stable ethnicity, when, in fact, the music and the discourses surrounding it actively participate in the construction of ethnicity. In other words, music can create our sense of identity, and cultural activity and aesthetic judgment are a part of how social groups get to know themselves (e.g., Frith 1996; Stokes 1994; DeNora 2000). In the Finnish context, this happened during the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, when folk melodies were ascribed with ethnic meaning, and used to conceptualize dissimilarities between the different groups of people. The Finnish majority population was regarded to be melancholic, and therefore inclined to use minor scales, whereas the Swedish-speaking population was described as more cheerful, and therefore predisposed to use major scales (for a summary, see Brusila 2015, 110–115). This division was manifested when the student choirs of each population group chose, arranged, and published folk melodies for their performances following the same homological idea of what kinds of melodies were thought to express the true character of the own group. These melodies were then spread throughout the country in, for example, school songbooks for children, offering melodies that were perceived to be characteristic of that population group. The same tonal division, where minor tonality signifies the majority population, and major keys signify the minority population, can still be found in most tonal popular and entertainment music today.

The construction of identity in this manner is, of course, relational, which includes a distancing from what is perceived as something different from oneself. Thus, the self-identification of the Finland-Swedish minority is constructed through a positioning of the self in relation to three major "others," that is: Finnish majority culture, the culture of Sweden, and what might be summarized in the concept "international culture," which, in the case of popular music, is often associated with English language (see Brusila, 2009, 2015a). It is these three cultural spheres that are perceived to be different from, and sometimes even a threat to, the so-called Finland-Swedish culture. This becomes evident when musicians are criticized for including linguistic or musical elements, that are associated with, for example, Finnish majority culture, popular music from Sweden, or international trends. By crossing the border between "self" and the "other" in this way, they are artistically challenging the fundaments of ethnicity.

Constructivist descriptions of music's role in creating identity can, of course, be criticized for exaggerating the role of music as a constituent element of a cultural identity. From this perspective, music does not construct, but primarily expresses identity, which has been created in other spheres of social life (for example, in language, schooling, and political actions of various kinds), and at most, music can give such a construct its interactive ethos or feel, and emotional resonance (e.g., Rice 2007, 35). While this criticism is relevant when the constructivist approach is used unreflexively, it is also problematic, as it is at least partly based on the premise, that music is a separate sonic structure outside other cultural activities, norms, and developments. From a historical, processual perspective, it is often hard to draw a clear line between music and culture, or between pre-existing and constructed identities. Music can both actively participate in creating emergent

identifications in a constructivist sense and reproduce existing cultural identities, so to say, in a homological way (see, e.g., Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, 35–36). If we accept the constructivist idea that identity is processual and in constant flux, then as it is reconstructed in changing contexts, the connection between music and identity becomes a chicken-and-egg type of question, which makes it hard to state what comes first; does music reflect a pre-existing identity, or does everything start, once and for all, from a certain fixed point when an identity becomes constructed through music? The former option appears to be too narrow, whereas the latter sounds illogical if identities really are explained to be fluid, and of a processual nature. Seen from this perspective, it is not necessarily consistent to see the options as mutually exclusive, but rather historically characterized by a reciprocal constitution.

As an aesthetic practice, music often provides a variety of different forms of cultural identifications, which are influenced by social, historical, and cultural contexts. Although the core of Finland-Swedish ethnicity is based on the positioning of a self in relation to Finnish majority culture, the culture of Sweden, and "international culture," this formation is a process, and subject to continuous negotiations. An individual musician's professional self can be positioned in many different ways. The market potential of Finland-Swedish music has always been so small, that most professional Swedish-speaking musicians have made a career singing in Finnish or English for the majority population, or have immigrated to Sweden. As a result, both Swedish-speaking musicians and entrepreneurs have been important intermediaries of international influences, and influential in the creation of Finnish popular music styles and industry structures.

An obvious risk in the study of music and identity is that the relationship between the two is given a disproportionately large significance at the expense of their music's and identity's other traits and qualities. To use the wording of Keith Negus and Patria Román Velázquez (2002, 40): "Music is surely something else besides or other than identities, and identities are something more (or less) than music." Music can also become an integral part of, or be used to produce, consciously or unintentionally, a lack of belonging. Thus, it can also include experiences of distance and estrangement from values of others, and a feeling of non-identifying with those, who are thought to belong to a particular category of people, or who are, or are not, "into" a certain music.

Thus, at the level of the individual, we are talking about processes where multiple identities are negotiated. These identities are partly linguistic, musical, and ethnic, but they are also professional and social, and all these dimensions interact in complex ways. We can speak about multiple ideologies, that offer differing interpretive and experiential frames with regard to music. It is within this field of multiple identities and multiple frameworks, that musicians and listeners, thanks to the creative potential offered by art, can both stabilize and critically study the varying cultural positions present in society.

Traditionality and Digitalization

Although constructivist ideas of fluid and processual identities have been dominant in cultural analysis during the last few decades, the essentialist and primordialist thoughts have not disappeared. They seem to endure in institutions and formal statements, not to mention growing nationalist sentiments and populist political rhetoric. Cultural elements that signify long tradition and distinctive characteristics of a culture are still explained to continue some kind of unaltered custom, which has always been transmitted without interference by modern media's diluting outside influences. However, the idea that today's communities would have been defined, once and for all, by face-to-face interaction has been challenged by scholars, who have analyzed the development of nationalism (e.g., Anderson 1983) and transnationalism (Hannerz 1996). Print and broadcast media have, for a long time, influenced interactions and social grouping, and it is fruitful to nuance simple dichotomies of mediated and non-mediated cultures also when studying the effects of the internet on identity formations (Wilson and Peterson 2002, 456).

A case in point is traditional folk music and styles that derive from it. These have possibly originally developed in face-to-face interaction, and signify the longstanding traditions of a culture, but they have also been influenced by the development of various media during the last few centuries. In discussions with contemporary musicians, it became evident that written music, recordings, and mass media have been used in the dissemination of the music for a very long time, and digital technology is only seen as one step further. By adapting the seminal orality theories of Walter Ong (1982), it is possible to say that musical transmission was for a long time characterized by aural transmission, or "primary orality," after which literacy introduced "second orality." The introduction of digital media has offered new models for socialization, and the transmission of both music and discourses surrounding it, which can be called "tertiary" or "digital orality" (Logan 2010; Ward 2016). This is, in a way, an unspoken form of orality, but at the same time resembles in many ways the first form of orality, and blurs former simplified dichotomies between the different forms of mediation.

Fieldwork among Swedish-speaking musicians in Finland, who work within traditional music, shows how the practices can change fast when new technologies and elements of digital orality are adapted in the recreation of a tradition, whereas the norms and ideologies seem to transform slower. Most folk musicians, for example, emphasize the importance of face-to-face aural transmission and community rootedness, and appreciate recordings prior to fixed scores. At the same time, they can use modern technology to transmit their own music, and engage in transnational communication over the internet, use written music, and do not reflect over the fixed character of recordings. They can also value analogue technology because of aesthetic reasons, at the same time as ending up using digital technology in their productions. In some cases, it also becomes evident that, although face-to-face music making in a community setting is highly appreciated, the time used for that is far less than what is used on internet-related music activities. Thus, a paradoxical tension between means and aims emerges, where the new media are seen as

means to achieve the main goal of traditional music making, which, however, becomes a minor undertaking.

The use of new technology in folk music shows how digitalization offers both opportunities and limits for preserving and developing cultural practices connected to ethnicities. Older institutionalized forms of ethnicity and established organizations can be under severe pressure from new forms of communication without being able to renew their own structures. Digitalization has made it easier for musicians to produce and distribute their music, but the industrial structures have not changed, and the small size and heterogeneity of a minority such as the Finland-Swedes makes it hard to create versatile markets or extensive internet fora, which would strengthen a traditional minority identification. On the other hand, although the internet has created possibilities for new forms of virtual ethnicities by, for example, transgressing older limits, supporting new communication formations, and enabling dislocating global contacts (Poster 2001, 16), it is interesting to note how older belongings can persist. In fact, it is counterproductive to see digitalization as a major shift that has replaced former social associations and musical practices. An online/offline conceptual dichotomy easily disregards the multiple and negotiated identities individuals have had for a long time within different socio-political and cultural contexts (Wilson and Peterson 2002, 456). It also easily subsumes an idea of premodern immediacy as somehow authentic, and current forms of mediated identifications as less true (Poster 2001, 159–160). Instead, digitally mediatized musical practices should be understood as one among many articulations of identity, and as actual as any previous forms of articulation.

Negotiating the Local and Global

Anxieties relating to the future of older identifications have increased, especially after the spread of the internet. These concerns are often based on the deterritorializing effect of digital communication platforms, and of redefinitions of the universal and particular, which transform earlier forms of affiliation. For example, Manuel Castells (2010, 407–499) has discussed how common understandings of space and time have become inconsistent and flexible, when digital media has allowed for communication over large geographical distances. The debates about the renegotiation of what locality means are often polarized in binaries, where digitalization is seen either to diminish or to increase the significance of the local (Virani 2016).

Digital technology has not only increased the international flows of music, but the social fora and music-sharing platforms of the internet have also offered new systems of identification that supersede former borders. For musicians, this can mean new possibilities, and some Finland-Swedish artists have managed to transcend the limitations of performing for their own small minority audience in Finland, and even succeed further than the majority audiences in Finland or Sweden. For example, the band Le Corps Mince De Françoise (later LMDCF) and synthesizer artist Kebu managed to break through on their respective international electronic pop scenes by using the opportunities offered by the

internet. Although their local, Finnish origins are sometimes brought up in the media, their Finland-Swedish background is seldom mentioned. Their career is thus descriptive of the "transnational connections" (Hannerz 1996) and "cosmopolitan fluidity" (Urry 2003) that has helped the electronic music practitioners to operate and connect with music scenes, both locally and internationally (Mjøs 2012, 116). The networks offered by digital media have allowed these forms of decentralized subcultural and transnational communities to emerge.

While print and broadcast media were crucial in the building of national belonging, digital media have enabled new opportunities to outline political configurations and express opposition. This offers ways to undermine long-held notions of social belonging, and allow, for example, minority communities to sidestep national media, and transform the public sphere (for indigenous communities, see Hilder et al. 2017). This includes not only finding new ways of mobilizing a minority to voice resistance towards national majority institutions, but also offering opportunities to engage in local activism and phrase critical opinions against the established, common views within the minority community. In the Finland-Swedish context, an example of this is the use of YouTube videos in expressing criticism against the Swedish People's Party of Finland, which is the main political party of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. When the Party supported the merging of the Swedish-speaking rural archipelago municipality of Korsholm with the neighboring bilingual city of Vasa, a movement against the merging was formed in Korsholm. The antimerger movement expressed its sentiments in independently produced music videos, such as 'Korsholmskoralen' ('The Korsholm Chorale'), which utilize musical and other cultural elements that signify locality and tradition. The use of digital technology and social media has, in other words, offered meeting places and techniques for social interaction, that not only transgresses borders but also offers new ways of constructing local belonging.

The internet has possibly contributed in diminishing the importance asserted to physical place in favor of socially molded, more abstract formations. However, it is worth bearing in mind that these features can also be found in predigital understandings of locality, and the relationship between the concrete limitations of physical place, and the constructions of social space have preoccupied ethnomusicologists for a long time (e.g., Stokes 1994). In fact, when the heterogeneous Swedish-speaking population of Finland was conceptualized as one group called the Finland-Swedes in the 1910s, the construction also involved a spatial dimension. The separate regions along the coast of Finland, where most of the Swedish-speaking population lived, was conceptualized as one region called "Svenskfinland" (literally "Swedish Finland"), offering a spatial basis for the ethnic identification. However, within this general construction, different regional and local identities were upheld. Thus, in practice, the overall ethno-geographical construction has always been heterogeneous and marked by features of music and dialect that signify local belonging.

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The sense of locality has not vanished because of the deterritorializing effect of the internet. Instead, digitalization has offered new forms and practices of manifesting local belonging, even in geographically dispersed settings. An example of this is the heavy metal band 1G3B, that was formed at the end of the 1990s by members who originated from the small municipality of Närpes and the surrounding rural areas on the western coast of Finland (Brusila 2010). The members decided from the start to write lyrics in their local Swedish dialect, which is more or less incomprehensible, even for Swedish speakers from other parts of Finland, and makes the music's market potential very small. The basic idea was to utilize digital technology to produce and disseminate the music on a high level without even trying to earn a living through it, or to "achieve maximum output for minimum input," as the members put it. The members, who had moved out from their home region, and rarely met to rehearse or play gigs, could produce the music by sending sound files back and forth over the internet. The music was then offered for free on the band's website, which developed via a fan forum to contain song lyrics, questions and answers, absurd stories, proverbial sayings written by the musicians, fan polls, ring tones, tablatures, and not least video clips made on the newly launched Macromedia Flash software. The website became a huge success with, at most, 18,000 visits per month, which is impressive, considering that the population who lives in the Närpes region amounts to roughly 10,000.

1G3B participated in the reterritorialization of the Närpes identity during a period of urbanization and migration. This accomplishment was based on a deliberate provincialism, which simultaneously functioned as both a key to the success of the project and a predefinition of its limitations. Although the disintermediated media structures offered by the internet made the material on the webpage, at least in principle, technically accessible to the whole world, it is obvious that it was meaningful for only a narrow audience. These forms of dissemination and consumption offered a way of efficiently reaching a scattered, small audience, and passing by existing industry structures, but it never offered, nor did the band try to find, a viable economic solution for marginal markets such as this. For the band, digital technology offered inexpensive ways of achieving its main production goals. From an aesthetic perspective, it is also possible to argue that digital sound processing and distribution opened up unforeseen opportunities for new sounds and compositional forms. However, for the most part, 1G3B followed the conventional aesthetic norms of metal, and used the technology to efficiently recreate and develop an existing sound ideal, rather than to question or totally abandon it. Thus, 1G3B is an example of how digitalization can participate in subverting former structures of center-periphery, and contribute to both preserving local identity and significantly renegotiating what it means (Virani 2016, 102). However, often it is primarily merely a faster, cheaper, and more efficient technology for celebrating existing cultural formations.

New Technologies of Expression

During the twenty-first century, many Finland-Swedish artists have continued to use digital technology to create and distribute their productions (for more details, see Brusila and Ramstedt 2019). At the same time, new forms of audio-visual expressions have been developed to articulate and negotiate cultural identity. Many artists, as for example the comic duo Pleppo, entertainment artist Alfred Backa, and "humor ensemble" KAJ, have combined their musical and comedic skills in sketches and shows that include musical numbers. Typical of these performers is that they originate from the west coast of Finland, where a revue tradition has flourished for several decades within the local youth associations. The young artists combined this tradition with their media knowledge and technical expertise in publishing material on the internet.. Most of the artists started by forming their own websites, and then moved into various forms of video and podcast productions.

Digital audio-visual technology has made it possible to recreate belonging in aesthetic form, but also to express the complex relationships between different identifications. Many of the projects draw on the technical and aesthetic ideals of mashup culture; they are based on modification of existing digital works to create a derivative work (cf. Tough 2010, 206). Often, the humorous effect derives from the tension between imitation and originality, and the apparent incongruity of the ingredients being mixed. Elements of the original are borrowed but simultaneously also inscribed with new meanings when framed in a new context. The tension is reinforced by the fact that the originals are professionally produced, whereas the covers often both technically and artistically resemble DIY products.

A key feature in many of the numbers is musical parody, moving in between repetition and difference. The productions represent a form of mimicry marked by a critical distance from the text they refer to (cf., e.g., Hutcheon 2000; Boxman-Shabtai 2019, 7). This is particularly typical in KAJ's pastiche-like parodic videos and use of musical clichés that signify different population groups. In other cases, the videos are basically cover versions, which are based on impersonation and a subversive play with identities. This is often created with the help of an incongruent tension between a fictitious, humorous, often dorky, rural, elderly, or student character presenting a cover version of an international, professional video. Thus, hits such as, for example, Psy's 'Gangnam Style,' and memes based on them, can become localized through the use of dialect and characters known to the minority audience.

The mashups often employ shocking incongruity humor similar to earlier do-it-yourself subcultural aesthetics of the punks (compare Ellis 2012, 58, 73). Pleppo's breakthrough productions, a series of controversial, parodic remakes of Moomin children's videos entitled *Mumin visar allt* (Moomin reveals everything), is an example of this. The videos became immensely successful, reaching tens of thousands of views in a short period during the winter of 2004–2005. In the videos, the characters speak teenage slang and curse, misbehave, and are involved in various perverted actions. In this case, the mixing of es-

tablished media products with teenage humor led to judicial problems when Moomin Characters Ltd., which controls the copyright to the Moomins, demanded the videos to be immediately removed from the internet.

The success of many musical videos relies largely on their capability of combining international elements, and features that are strongly anchored in the Finland-Swedish context in a humoristic way. The satire is often, but not exclusively, directed toward conservative nationalism; it can also include self-irony and target the Finland-Swedish minority. For example, Alfred Backa's song 'När Svenskfinland dog' ('When Swedish Finland died'), which is based on American singer-songwriter Don McLean's hit 'American Pie,' can be interpreted as describing the current social climate in Finland, where many minorities feel threatened by the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism. On the other hand, the lyrics and visual imagery of the video for 'När Svenskfinland dog' also ridicules the self-conceited Finland-Swedish cultural and political establishment because of its incompetence in solving the problems. As an established Finland-Swedish artist, Backa also directs his wit against himself, and thereby also on the Finland-Swedish cultural workers, whose own feebleness is suggested to be a cause of the degeneration of Finland-Swedishness. This creates a self-ironic commentary on the Finland-Swedish cultural context of the parodies, and displays an ambiguous double-sidedness, which both adds to the humoristic effect at the same time as it forces the listener to ponder on what she or he is laughing at.

The cultural significance of these productions is a result of their humoristic, parodic character. The jokes often deal with the daily life of the Swedish-speaking population, phenomena relating to cultural belonging, and sometimes, in an explicit form, with Finland-Swedish identity as such. Thanks to its ambiguous nature, humor of this kind makes it possible to negotiate minority ethnicity and personal relationships with society, but this negotiation also has its limitations (Brusila and Ramstedt 2019). A digital recoding of material from the international entertainment industry can assign these cultural elements new meanings, but they can also re-disseminate existing meanings and reaffirm their importance (Joo 2011), or simply function as blank postmodern pastiche (Jameson 1990), rather than empowering or confirming a minority identity. In many instances, the humorous effect is simply based on the pleasure of recognizing the reference to original material, making the cover more a pastiche than a parody. However, at times, it is possible to speak about a parodic subverting of societal and artistic norms (Bakhtin 1982). This can also include disrupting commentary on minority issues in a way that forces the audience to review many of the stereotypical concepts and presumptions of social groups.

Institutions and Subjects Redefined

The threats and possibilities offered by digital media often lead to increasingly complex relationships between established institutions that have an explicit ethnic objective, artists whose creative career is based on expressing the variety of human belonging, and the audience that consists of a magnitude of identifications and multiple identities. In this situation, digitalization can enhance belonging, but also generate counter movements

that draw young people into constrained online social networks (Marlowe 2017). The new online ethnicities can contain both residual features of an ethnicity as it has existed through time, and emergent elements that are specific to the new communication conditions (Diamandaki 2003). For the established institutions, this poses a challenge, which they must adapt themselves to in order not to become obsolete.

For minorities, such as the Swedish-speaking population of Finland, which in economic terms could be termed a tiny niche market, national public service broadcasting has traditionally been of major importance, both as an upholder of ethnicity and as music media. Thus, artists who try to create a career by using their mother tongue have relied largely upon the media publicity and even production support of the Swedish-language radio channels of Finland's public service broadcasting company YLE. Although new internet-based dissemination platforms and social media have emerged, they have only rarely been formed around a Finland-Swedish identity, which has increased the pressure on the national broadcasting company to serve the minority.

As a reaction to the changing media situation, YLE's Swedish youth channel Radio X3M was already after its establishment in 1997 at the forefront of digital radio development in Finland, and it chose to develop this sector resolutely (for more details, see Brusila and Ramstedt 2019). It started streaming programs and web TV inserts, created a chat forum that generated a large online community, and finally formulated a basic production idea that was summarized in the words "the web first." This included producing sketch programs with musical numbers and their own music videos, which were uploaded to the internet, packaging all productions in an internet-friendly format, and actively using social media. As it proved to be hard for YLE to attract listeners to its online service platform, the broadcasting company started using external web services, such as YouTube, to lead the audience to its own online service. This shows how even a relatively small, minority-media institution must continuously renegotiate its position in relation to both transnational operators and small-scale actors in order to retain its national cultural significance. In a wider perspective, this is also an example of how digitalization has led to a complex process of media reintermediation, rather than a complete disintermediation (see, e.g., Jones 2002).

The optimistic depictions of a new participatory culture (Jenkins 2006), which would restructure the relationship between the established media corporations and their audiences, have merely partly become true. Only now and then are radio listeners' or video viewers' own productions included in the activities and output of the broadcasting corporation, which has its own quality, legal, and economic standards. A general obstacle for loosening up the rigid practices of older established institutions is that the new digital operational environment often includes a countercultural idea of doing it yourself and creating their own social platform. As a result, the institutions, which have an explicit aim to unite, institutionalize, support, represent, and stand for a particular minority, can feel outmoded in a changing framework. For the younger generation, for example, new social media can represent an alternative to the establishment's top-down approach and a way of negotiating new, diverging ethnic subject positions. Thus, different forms of "contextu-

alized identities" (Wilson and Peterson 2002, 458) are born, and they reflect the internet's multiple participatory frames and belongings, including both previous offline and new online identities.

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the impact of digitalization on minority music. This includes asking not only how technological changes have influenced production, distribution, and aesthetics, but also, on a more general level, what impact the changes have had on minority identity. Studying the various forms of cultural belonging raises a fundamental question: has there occurred a change in what cultural identity is due to societal and technological changes, or is it only people's ideas of what identity is that have changed? When approaching these topics from the perspective of cultural analysis, it is hard to draw an exact line between a factual identity and its conceptualization, because identity is, in this view, to such an extent understood through social interaction. This does not mean that an identity would not have certain elements that can be very firm and concrete for those who experience it, but the focus is directed on its social character. Thus, digitalization has probably had an impact on the character of cultural identity, but both identity in general and its transformation are topics that are most fruitfully studied as part of a contextualized, social framework.

The conceptualization of a Finland-Swedish identity was born as a result of social changes in Finland, and music was a building brick in the construction, offering structural elements that came to signify ethnicity. However, it is important to remember that cultural belonging among the Swedish population can be described as fluid, processual, and even ambivalent and contradictory, both before and after this point in history. In fact, it is questionable to what extent there ever has existed one stable, monolithic Finland-Swedish music culture. Music is a complex aesthetic expression, and much more than just an element of identity, and correspondingly, an identity is not only about music. Therefore, it would also be pointless to try to find one stable homogeneous Finland-Swedish reaction to digitalization, and its impact on music as reality is simply too heterogeneous and complex.

In the case of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland, digitalization has offered both opportunities and confines for preserving and developing cultural practices that are connected to ethnicity. It has made it easier for the musicians to produce and distribute their music, but the industrial structures have not changed in any significant way, which means that no viable solutions have emerged to support a minority niche market or wide-ranging economic activities on the internet. In industrial and economic terms, digitalization can, to some extent, offer means of disintegrating old structures of center-periphery. However, what is perhaps more important from a cultural perspective is that it can participate in renegotiating what locality means. New dissemination methods, social networking, and aesthetic practices offer innovative ways of circulating, confirming, and subverting cultural meanings. This includes addressing minority issues and reviewing both external and

internal ethnic stereotypes. It also offers multiple participatory frames and identities, which can combine older offline and online belongings in new ways.

In general, digitalization has had a large impact on the musical practices of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland, and on the cultural belonging of the minority. However, it is important to avoid simplifying the internal causal relationships between these elements, and, not least, bearing in mind the risks of technological determinism. It is not meaningful to approach technology as an outside force, which unilaterally encroaches on culture, and transforms it into something different from before. Technology and culture have always existed and developed in mutual interdependency, and one is always an integral part of the other. New digital technology has also not totally vanquished or subsumed its predecessors, and the practices related to them. Thus, music and identity in a digital context do not form some kind of evolutionary next stage detached from its antecedents. It has lived, and always will live, in a continuous relationship to the rules, norms, and practices of the previous stages. In this sense, the world-shattering visions that have been summarized by the concepts "digital turn" and "digital revolution" should be treated with caution. The technological changes do not automatically lead to large-scale social and cultural changes, since technology also exists in the same shared world of rules and norms that created it. The fast-growing range of new machinery is often primarily merely a faster, cheaper, and more efficient tool for re-creating existing cultural formations and aesthetic practices. However, as such, it can already be of great importance, and due to its versatile nature, even the small-scale uses can be of importance in a minority framework.

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Notes:

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