

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### THE ANNUAL YOUNG RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE "YOUNG VOICES" 2021

The Young Voices conference is an annual event held in Tartu in spring every year. It is meant for young researchers of all levels of education, including doctoral, undergraduate, graduate, and high school students, whose research interests lie in a broad field of cultural and social studies. In 2021, it took place online. On April 21 and 22, seventeen young researchers shared the results of their own studies. As always, for most of the participants it was a debut in research conferences, where they could give a presentation in front of the experienced, strict, but attentive and welcoming academics. More experienced young cultural researchers, in their turn, gained another great opportunity to present their work. Several academic and student organizations formed an organizing committee of the conference, including the Estonian Literary Museum (the Department of Folkloristics and the Estonian Folklore Archives), the Estonian National Museum, the Tartu NEFA Group, and the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore of the University of Tartu. Working languages of the Young Voices conference were Estonian and English.

Topics, approaches, and areas of research were so diverse that it was not possible to figure out a single direction that would unite all the presentations. However, the organizers skilfully arranged them into several panels. During these two days, the participants of the conference were discussing such research issues as the second life of folklore, digitalization and contemporary culture, transition of experience, gender, nationalism, community building, division between nature and culture, sport, and health. Many panel sessions created intensive, professional discussions – something that is indeed important for the first probes of making their research public.

The panel presentations were preceded by a fascinating keynote lecture by Professor Kristin Kuutma, titled "A Pilgrim's Progress: A Disciplinary Journey Inside/Outside Academia", and were accompanied by a fruitful roundtable "Kultuuriuuriija kujunemine: kust tulevad ja kuhu lähevad (noored) teadlased?" (The formation of a cultural researcher: Where do the (young) researchers come from and where do they go?). Both events can be considered as a career-orienting guidance. Professor Kuutma chose her personal career history to explain how academic and non-academic professional experiences might be combined in a single, meaningful professional pathway. By her personal example, she showed that academic expertise could be useful outside the academia, while the non-academic skills might and should be applied in the research areas. Similarly,

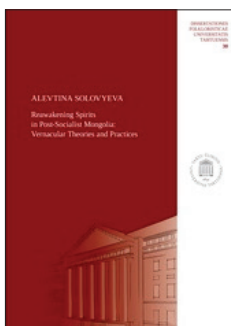
the roundtable provided a number of examples of building a career for young researchers in cultural studies.

Five presentations were recognized by awards from the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (CEES); I would like to name some of them. A paper by Arabella Antons under the heading “Küllalt naiste rikkumisest võistlusspordiga”: Eesti naiste sport 1920–1940 (“Enough of women’s disfigurement in competitive sport”: Estonian women’s sport in 1920–1940) won an award as the best basic school presentation. A nomination for gymnasiums was taken by Valentina Drianichkina and Agnia Andreeva with their presentation of a folklore application that they had developed themselves (Zoomorphisms in the Russian, Estonian and Chinese Languages and the Development of a Thematic Application). The best work by a bachelor’s and a master’s student came from Hildegard Reimann, “Folkloristlik joonistus – alternatiivne viis kogeda ja kirjeldada?” (A folkloristic drawing: An alternative way to learn and describe?) and from Chahal Garg, “Crafting Digital”, respectively.

To conclude, I hope that the 2021 Young Voices conference proved to be a meaningful and useful experience for all the participants, and indeed became the first step towards a successful career as young researchers and professionals.

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## DOCTORAL THESIS ON VERNACULAR THEORIES AND PRACTICES



**Alevtina Solovyeva. *Reawakening Spirits in Post-socialist Mongolia: Vernacular Theories and Practices. Dissertationes Folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis 30.* University of Tartu Press, 2021. 203 pp.**

Alevtina Solovyeva’s PhD thesis, defended on 7 May 2021, provides a detailed and insightful depiction of Mongolian people’s relationships with a host of invisible beings nowadays, in the context of a rapidly changing society experiencing intense urbanisation and post-socialist turbulent deregulation policies. As

the end of a Soviet-inspired and controlled repressive regime gave way to a religious renaissance throughout Mongolia at the beginning of the 1990s, all sorts of previously suppressed or silenced entities started to interfere in people’s daily activities, both in