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## New Communications in the Arctic (Taimyr Case Study)

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**Abstract.** The article examines the effect of network communications, in particular cyberspeed, on the life of the indigenous population of Taimyr. Internet plays a dominant role in the general communications networks of the local population. In Taimyr, this innovation became an essential part of the traditional way of life and, moreover, it developed at a sweeping rate immediately embracing the most advanced technological communication platforms, including WhatsApp, and bypassing the older, less socially mobile ones. With new methods and forms of information exchange, the speed of its circulation has become incomparably higher. These changes inevitably caused a transformation of certain social institutions. Cyberspeed significantly exceeds the speed of the previous routine types of communication. A striking example of this was the speed of breaking news about the oil spill at Thermoelectric Plant-3 near Norilsk. Most residents of Taimyr learned about the spill from the Internet almost in the first hours after the accident. This effect, as well as the constant monitoring of events, influenced the speed of decision-making and the quality of decisions. While earlier the first to learn about the major incidents were the officials, the heads of a particular city, region, or country, in that case the first to know were the Internet users. On-the-spot photos and videos became so “viral” that even the top state officials also learned about the accident from the Internet. The “firing rate” of the chats in addition to igniting and intensifying emotions also helps in addressing the vital problems of the local population of Taimyr.

**Keywords:** indigenous peoples of Taimyr, cyberspeed, new communications, Internet, spill.

Research area: ethnography.

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## Новые коммуникации в Арктике (опыт Таймыра)

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается проявление сетевых эффектов, в частности киберскорости, в жизни коренного населения Таймыра. Интернет-коммуникация занимает доминирующее место в общей сети коммуникаций местного населения. На Таймыре это новшество не просто нашло себе место в прежнем укладе отношений, но и обрело размах бурной стихии (более того, киберсфера Таймыра сразу стала развиваться на самых современных сетевых технологиях вроде WhatsApp, минуя прежние, менее социально мобильные). Появились новые способы и формы передачи информации, и скорость ее распространения стала несопоставимо выше. В силу этих изменений произошли трансформации некоторых социальных институтов. Киберскорость стала значительно выше скорости прежней обыденной коммуникации. Ярким примером этого стала скорость распространения информации о разливе нефтепродуктов на ТЭЦ-3 вблизи Норильска. Большинство жителей Таймыра узнали о разливе из интернета в первые часы после аварии. Этот эффект, как и постоянный мониторинг происходящего, повлиял на скорость принятия решений и их качество. Если прежде о таких масштабных происшествиях первыми узнавали должностные лица, руководители города, региона, страны, то на этот раз первыми были пользователи сети. Фото и видео с места событий «завирусались» настолько, что первые лица государства узнали об аварии тоже из интернета. Скорострельность чатов не только включает и накаляет эмоции, но и помогает в решении актуальных проблем местного населения Таймыра.

**Ключевые слова:** коренные малочисленные народы Таймыра, киберскорость, новые коммуникации, интернет, разлив.

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The cybersphere is actively penetrating into all spheres of human life. The Web serves as a substitute of knowledge and a source of new information. The speed of this information spread often exceeds reality. In general, the relevant speed should be the one that is adequate to human thoughts, reactions, gestures, and actions. The cyberworld is becoming almost more of a reality than reality itself. As a cyberspeed theoretician, A. V. Golovnev once said, “the cyberspeed exposes and exaggerates

what is usually hidden by the ethics of mutual containment and the rule of ‘the morning is wiser than the evening’. The cyberworld has neither evening, nor morning; in it, as in the summer Arctic, there is an eternal cyberday. If anyone would like to respond, it should be done immediately” (Golovnev 2020a: 6, 15). Cyberspeed is as attractive as it is dangerous, because it does not provide for speculation, or grasping the full meaning of the information flow.

Cyberspeeds have their own range, matching a relevant set of virtual scenarios. In the first approximation, it is apparent that an average cyberspeed is much higher than any real-life speed: where before it would have taken a whole life to implement a plan, today it takes only a brief act of communication. At the same time, the effect of such an act is as short-lived as it is quick to achieve. The hypes, viral videos, interest groups have become the springs of the new mechanics of popularization, social lifts, expression of opinions, ideological protests, and organized actions. The notions of “on time” and “appropriate” have shifted from the real life to a virtual environment assuming the form of reposts, comments, and likes. Cyberspeed allows gigantic spaces and arrays of time to be compressed into instants and micro-particles. This new world seemingly has no space or time, only their avatars. The cyber-idea is often perceived as a death sentence of time and space. In reality, this is a new merged time-space that lives by its own rules and rhythms (Golovnev 2020a: 15).

Speed is no plaything to be enjoyed in one situation, and neglected in another. Given its “magic of transformation” (Golovnev 2020b: 74–75), it seems apparent that one of the ways to transform human nature is the humanization of inhuman speeds. A “network person” is a new reality both anthropologically and biologically. This person works in the networks, feeds from networks, makes friends and quarrels in networks, sees network dreams, seeks pleasure, happiness and immortality also in networks. The network has become its whole world, a virtual home, a protective shell. It is only through a network that one may reach or influence network persons (Golovnev 2020a:8, Golovnev 2021; 8).

Active involvement in the life of the Internet and its cyberspeed has become the driver for the emergence of a new communication system, including in the Arctic regions, a good example of which is the case of Taimyr. There, this innovation became an essential part of the traditional way of life and, moreover, it developed at a sweeping rate immediately embracing the most advanced technological communication platforms, including WhatsApp, and

bypassing the older, less socially mobile ones. Despite all the difficulties, the spread of new types of correspondence and personal relations has significantly affected communication in every sense. With new methods and forms of information exchange, the speed of its circulation has become incomparably higher. These changes inevitably caused transformation of certain social institutions. For instance, the politicians and administrators now often communicate with the population directly via the Internet. Social networks have become a way of mobilization and a tool for managing big groups of the population. In addition, the Internet has become a space for inter cultural communication (Golovnev, Belorussova, Kisser 2021; 61–63).

### Internet on Taimyr

Until recently, the cyberworld was inaccessible to the indigenous people of Taimyr due to the lack of technological capability. While for most of Russia both high-speed Internet and high-quality communications have long since become an ordinary routine, in the Middle Siberian Arctic regions their use is still quite limited owing to the remoteness of the territory, long distances and the high cost of these types of communication. The difficult geographical and climatic conditions of the Arctic form a significant obstacle to providing high-quality Internet and communication access to a significant part of the population.

Owing to the fiber-optic communication line (FCL) project which started in Taimyr in 2014, broadband Internet access became available to the residents of the peninsula already in 2016 (the first over 200 km long line extended to Vankor, the intermediate point on the route). The permafrost conditions required the use of special technologies to build communications facilities<sup>1</sup>. Norilsk received broadband Internet access in September 2017. The line to Taimyr was extended from Novy Urengoy. When it became clear that none of the Russian communication companies, including the “big three” federal telecom operators, was

<sup>1</sup> Na Taimyr provodyat shirokopolosny internet // Pravda. ru URL: <https://www.pravda.ru/news/districts/1224628-inet/> (access date: 30.05.2021).

planning to invest in the fiber-optic facilities, Norilsk Nickel took over the financing of the large-scale project. The project cost the company 2.5 billion rubles. The 956 km long line crosses the territory of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Krasnoyarsk region. For the purposes of project administration Norilsk Nickel set up a subsidiary company “Edinstvo” (Unity)<sup>2</sup>.

In 2019, 203 communities in the Krasnoyarsk region, including the Taimyr villages, received a high-speed Internet connection. ER-Telecom Holding was the leading operator implementing the federal Elimination of Digital Inequality project in the region. Taking into account the geography of the region, the technical solution involved the use of several telecom technologies, including “last mile”, satellite signal and radio bridge in the hard-to-reach areas. In total, it was planned to provide communications to 2,209 critical social infrastructure objects, including 942 educational institutions, 612 medical, 401 local administrations, and 161 Emergency Ministry facilities (fire stations and posts). The Ministry of Communications allocated 2.1 billion rubles for the implementation of the project in the Krasnoyarsk region. “Over 400 facilities to be connected are located in the regions of the Far North and hard-to-reach areas, without any surface road or accessible only by water. Of course, for us this is an ambitious project and an absolute challenge, since at the moment 827 social facilities do not have any Internet connection at all,” said Ivan Pichugin, CEO of the Krasnoyarsk branch of JSC ER-Telecom Holding<sup>3</sup>. The Krasnoyarsk Digital Inequality Elimination project was split into eight stages. The target completion date was December 2021.

The most remote Arctic community of Ust-Avam was connected to the Internet and mobile phone communications in 2020. It took several flights by helicopter to deliver the equipment from Dudinka. Specialists arrived separately with the necessary tools for installation. The

project required installation of special-purpose equipment capable of withstanding harsh sub-zero temperatures. Similar equipment had already been used before in the Norilsk industrial district known for its extreme climatic conditions<sup>4</sup>. The population received access to communications as part of the regional state program “Development of the Information Society”. The community became the northernmost of the project’s participants<sup>5</sup>.

In the village of Syndassko, free Internet access became available in March 2020 as part of the federal program “Elimination of Digital Inequality”. The community with the population of almost 500 people is located on the Khatanga Bay coast. Most of the Syndassko inhabitants lead a nomadic lifestyle; a quarter of the population is engaged in reindeer husbandry. The telecom specialists set up a public wi-fi access point in the village using a satellite technology. To do this, Rostelecom laid more than 3.5 thousand km of communication lines and connected 238 communities in the region to the Internet<sup>6</sup>.

According to the Taimyr administration, in 2020, residents of 13 communities in the municipal district received access to Internet services under the subsidized tariff plan, including free access to 40 official federal websites, via wi-fi connection. One community received access to mobile (cellular) phone communication services based on digital technologies. Access to mobile Internet and cellular phone services are expected in the villages of Volochanka and Novorybnaya in 2021. Base stations for providing communication services will be built in September-October, the construction costs will be covered from the regional budget. Providing the Internet access in remote communities is part of the regional state program “Develop-

<sup>2</sup> Poselki Taimyra podklyuchat k vysokoskorostnomu internetu // Taimyrskij telegraph. URL: <https://www.ttelegraf.ru/news/poselki-tajmyira-podklyuchat-k-vyisokoskorostnomu-internetu/> (access date: 30.05.2021).

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> V poselke na Taimyre v pervye poyavilas mobilnaya svyaz // Sibir. Realii. URL: <https://www.sibreal.org/a/30896646.html> (access date: 30.05.2021).

<sup>5</sup> V otdalennyj arkticheskiy poselok na Taimyre provely internet i mobilnuyu svyaz // LENTA.RU URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2020/10/16/connect/> (access date: 30.05.2021).

<sup>6</sup> Na Taimyre poyavilsya besplatnyj internet... // Kapital Strany. Federal Internet Media. URL: [https://kapital-rus.ru/uznai/news/na\\_tajmre\\_poiavilsia\\_besplatnyj\\_internet\\_v\\_odnom\\_iz\\_samh\\_severnh\\_naseleennh\\_punktov\\_mira/](https://kapital-rus.ru/uznai/news/na_tajmre_poiavilsia_besplatnyj_internet_v_odnom_iz_samh_severnh_naseleennh_punktov_mira/) (access date: 30.05.2021).

ment of the Information Society”. Over the next three years, the program will facilitate creating conditions for the development of communications in various remote and small communities in the region. For these purposes, Taimyr was allocated over 17 million rubles in 2021<sup>7</sup>.

The website of the Taimyr Dolgan-Nenets district reports that in 2023 high-speed Internet will come to Taimyr by a line laid under the Arctic Ocean. In early August, the Arctic Connect project began laying an almost 14 thousand km long high-speed communication line from Helsinki to Tokyo under the waters of the Arctic Ocean. The developers of the transpolar digital high-speed line promise that the link speed for those who connect to the “northern cable” will be several times faster compared to other communication lines. The project is being implemented by Finnish and Russian operators Cinia Oy and Megafon together with Rosgeology. The project developers have already announced building at least 11 auxiliary branches to the mainland along the entire length of the line between Murmansk and Anadyr in order to supply electric power to the channel and provide high-speed communications to the northern regions. The branches will connect to the city of Norilsk and the Khatanga community. The laying of the Trans-Arctic cable has great significance both for the local population and for the Taimyr energy companies<sup>8</sup>.

The indigenous people of Taimyr highly appreciate the importance of the Internet and mobile communications, while noting the existing problems – accessibility, price, quality and speed:

“Today the Internet and mobile communications are most important. Now the next generation is growing on gadgets. I even show and explain to herders how they can quickly fix their location using their phones and drop a message with the exact coor-

dinates. Many even didn’t know that such functions were available, it’s just so convenient. I insisted that all herders were issued satellite phones with GPS, with an SOS button, so that they could call for assistance (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021).”

“With the Internet, I get in contact directly with the countries that I am interested in, we hold video-conferences with the indigenous peoples” (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021).

“We have Internet in the tundra, our children play and watch cartoons on YouTube, we have several phones, we rarely use them, but we can check the weather, a map, although the Internet connection is weak” (PMA, Nenets, Dudinka, 2021).

“Unfortunately, we don’t have the Internet yet in the villages, at least not to say that the people began to use it actively; we can’t get through to some villages by phone for hours, but they seem to be planning to make it better with the Internet, promise us something” (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021).

*From WhatsApp-chat “Dolgans”:*

“In Khatanga wi-fi is 4,400 rubles per month, but only WhatsApp works, photos upload, forward. For Sberbank online you need to wait until it loads”;

“WhatsApp link in Khatanga itself is quite low, rarely anyone connects, from other villages people connect more often, although videos are still extremely slow to load”;

“In Popigai connection is very bad, it is impossible to talk normally on the phone, the connection breaks off, you have to call back several times”;

“Taimyr is different and the problems are different. Here, in Khatanga we do not have mobile Internet, since there are no 3–4G towers, it takes an overland or under water cable, and satellite Internet is expensive, unlimited tariff from 4,000 rubles.”;

<sup>7</sup> V dva poselka na Taimyre v pervye provedut sotovuyu svyaz i mobilnyj internet // LENTA.RU. URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2021/04/27/connect/> (access date: 30.05.2021).

<sup>8</sup> Vysokoskorostnoy internet pridet na Taimyr so storony Severnogo Ledovitogo Okeana // Krasnoyarskiy rabochij. URL: <https://krasrab.ru/news/media/9889> (access date: 30.05.2021).

“In Khatanga, good connection and Internet may be only in the remote future. As for now it would be great to talk on the phone normally”.

### Cyberspeed

A striking example of new communication technologies importance in the life of the indigenous peoples of Taimyr was the spread of the news about the largest man-made accident in the Arctic in recent decades – the spill of oil products at Thermoelectric Plant-3 near Norilsk. While earlier the first to learn about major incidents were the officials, the heads of a particular city, region, or country, in that case the first to know were the Internet users. On-the-spot photos and videos became so “viral” that even the country’s President also learned about the accident from the Internet. The people split into different groups – those who used the accident as a hype, as opposed to those who tried to use the network for immediate information and response. Similar incidents already happened at Norilsk Nickel before, but in the absence of Internet or mobile communication, many accidents were never made public. According to our survey, 95 % of respondents learned about the spill from the Web:

“We learned everything from social networks. An employee of Rosprirodnadzor shared photos, and it all became known. That person did well, she distributed the information everywhere, even though she lost her job in the end, but that was a cry of the heart” (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021);

“In the afternoon of May 29, we received some videos, first of a car burning, and then, already on the 30th the guys shared a video from the place of the accident itself” (PMA, Dolgans, Norilsk, 2021);

“I learned practically at once, the accident occurred, and they immediately sent me a video on WhatsApp. I didn’t get it first hand. Those who made the videos shared with friends, and they forwarded them to me. I don’t know this person, but we had his

video 20 minutes after the accident. I didn’t watch the video right away, but I distributed it in WhatsApp chat “KMNS”, in V Kontakte “Overheard in Dudinka” (we have an agreement with the administration that we send them materials). I was sent those videos because I can quickly spread information on the Web. When it became clear that it was an accident, a catastrophe, the authorities immediately began plotting, looking for contacts. We saw that they tried to cover it up completely. I also dropped it at the same to “Mobile Reporter” on Rossiya TV channel, but they remained silent, though before they always posted my videos quickly. At first, they still tried to hide it, but there were enough frames, there was no way to keep the information in the Web under cover. I believe they could have still kept this information secret. All information was received mainly from the Web. The reports were regularly updated in “Overheard in Dudinka” group” (PMA, Nenets, Dudinka, 2021);

“At the time of the accident, I already knew, they sent me a video. I sent a message via the Internet portal to the President and the Minister of Natural Resources “ (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021);

“I found out about the spill on the 2nd day after the accident, from a WhatsApp group” (Survey data);

“We learned about the accident from photos in social networks before it was reported in the official media” (Survey data);

“I found out via WhatsApp chat Dolgans” (Survey data);

“From the chat KMNS. Politics. IP”, later the information appeared on central TV channels” (Survey data);

Main sites where information accumulated were WhatsApp chat “KMNS. IP. Politics” (the most mobile communication channel) and a public page in V Kontakte “Overheard in

Dudinka” (PVD)<sup>9</sup>. That was where all the most up-to-date information was published, a kind of the events time-line update. That triggered a public discussion in the comments, which is still available in Vkontakte:

“The sources were the media, common WhatsApp messages in Norilsk and Dudinka. And then, a week later it was shown on central television” (Survey data);

“All information about the spill was available on the Internet” (Survey data);

“Media, WhatsApp chats “Dolgans”, “Family”, Vkontakte group “Overheard in Dudinka” (Survey data).

### Cyber-Chronicle of Events

On May 29, 2020, the head of Rosprirodnadzor S.G. Radionova published in her Instagram a post about a car igniting in the territory of Power Plant-3 of JSC “NTEK” in Norilsk after hitting a fuel tank with a resulting tank rupture. It was noted, that the territory was contaminated with oil products, and that Rosprirodnadzor intended to perform a verification check and take soil samples.

The public page “Overheard in Dudinka” posted first news about the accident on May 31, 2020. “Norilsk suffered a shocking ecological disaster unparalleled in scale in the Arctic region. 20,000 tons of diesel fuel spilled into the river. Owing to the high fluidity of the fuel, there is a danger that boom containment would not prevent poisoning Lake Pyasino; the Pyasina River along its entire length, and the spill would reach the Arctic Ocean and contaminate the coast. The official Russian media say nothing on the subject”<sup>10</sup>.

The post quoted a letter from Norilsk city prosecutor V.A. Bolshunov addressed to the acting district prosecutor of the Krasnoyarsk region A.G. Bloshkin of May 31, 2020. It stat-

ed that on May 29, 2020, the city prosecutor’s office received information from the duty officer of the Public Safety Answering Point of Norilsk about the spill of diesel fuel (oil products) onto the driveway of the access road of the industrial site of Thermolectric Plant-3. The letter further stated that the situation was qualified as a local emergency. A video file and 4 photo tables attached to the letter were also included in the publication.

As of today, the post has been viewed by 70,198 people; there are 280 comments to it, 404 likes and 47 reposts. In the comments, the author of the post indicated that the information was received through third parties. Immediately, links to other sources about the accident followed. In the first hours, people who left comments under the post did not believe the scale of the disaster: “where did the author of the post get the figure of 20,000 tons? It says 20 tons”; “somehow this information does not match the inspection results, stamped and signed by the city prosecutor; the inspection report stated that the water bodies were contaminated, and this site does not say so, nor are there any references to the inspection papers...”

By June 1, almost no one doubted the reliability of information or the scale of the tragedy, which was confirmed by numerous references to eyewitnesses’ or those familiar with the situation evidence, as well as the publication of several open letters to the President of the Russian Federation. On the same day, the information about the spill was confirmed in the media by the Deputy Head of the regional government Anatoly Tsykalov, which was immediately broadcasted online.

In the following days, the events timeline was published in “Overheard in Dudinka”. The people of Taimyr used the social networks actively to spread information about the accident, there were numerous messages inviting people to do so:

“Dear Northerners, we can’t afford a hands-off approach in the case of spilled fuel, let’s try to air the issue as much as possible on the Internet, its our children’s land, let us protect their future. Sign to the Instagram,

<sup>9</sup> Overheard in Dudinka. URL: <https://vk.com/pvdinddk> (access date: 25.05.2021). The chronicle of the spill can be viewed from page 109 in the news feed.

<sup>10</sup> Here and further on quoted by posts and comments from “Overheard in Dudinka” Vkontakte.

Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki, etc., let's save our region”;

“Yes, the Internet is already full with it. It remains to go out into the streets with banners”

“Quite right – let the whole country see, the entire world”;

“It's not that easy to make a noise in social networks, they may delete comments, block a profile in groups; against the background of news about riots in the United States, the news of this catastrophe is not considered a ratings-booster, and thus the administrators are not too willing to post, I receive lots of answers like this from social networks communities.”

On June 3, 2020, Vladimir Putin held a meeting on the spill at Thermoelectric Plant-3 and imposed an emergency mode. The president harshly addressed the CEO of the company Sergey Lipin: “Are we going to find out about the situation from social networks? Is everything all right with your health there?” The news was immediately published in the PVD, and in the comments the users noted the key role of social networks in the fact that the information reached the first person:

“Finally they heard us; we will continue to follow the situation closely. Apparently, everything is quite serious, since the President knows already. Many thanks to everyone who distributed this information in various media, after all, we are a force together, keep it up! Lots of pride in consolidation!”

“If it weren't for social networks, when would they have found out about it and what scale the catastrophe would have acquired?”

“The news might have spread faster if the local media had worked properly.”

“Apparently, the Prime Minister visits the “Overheard in Dudinka” regularly. If it weren't for us, he wouldn't have known.”

On June 4, 2020, the administrators of the PVD site published a summary of events by the hour from the day of the spill. The administrators analyzed the entire time-line, starting from the accident and the burnt-out car. At the same time, a publication was posted on the website of the Main Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Krasnoyarsk region with information about the beginning of pre-investigation check in relation to the fact of oil products spill. On the same day, the head of Rosprirodnadzor S. Radionova published information about the accident in her Instagram account: “...The Diesel fuel spilled outside the industrial site of the facility. So far, we are talking about 20 thousand tons of spilled petroleum products. The fuel got into the stream, and then into the river Daldykan – in the photo you can see the water from the river. The scale of the damage to the soil and the water body will be known in the near future. Currently, the spill is being liquidated. Our inspectors continue the examination, although the security guards do not allow us access directly to the place of emergency. An administrative investigation will be initiated.” An hour later, NTEK gave an official comment, and from May 31, a constantly updated news feed was set up on the Norilsk Nickel website.

In the comments, the users, on the one hand, thanked for the review, and, on the other, noted that too much attention was paid to the event – so much so, that all other citywide and local news of Taimyr disappeared from the content:

“Respect to the author of the post! Tracked it perfectly. Remember, it takes some effort to put it together. That's how the media and PR people should work.”

“Scroll down, it's all the same. Is there anything about our city? I don't read it anyway; I saw it all in the news today”;

“Norilsk Nickel reported everything in the prescribed manner; do not be naive, it is impossible to conceal spills of that scale,



especially when they are visible even from a satellite. An interview with one of the directors of Norilsk Nickel confirms this.”

On June 5, 2020, satellite photos of the mouth of the Ambarneya River with the intercepted tail of an oil slick and a photo of the southern part of Lake Pyasino were published. In addition, data on the progress of the elimination of the accident were also published: “According to the latest data, almost 300 tons of oil have already been collected, over 26 tons have been disposed of. An area of 4.6 thousand square meters was treated with sorbent; it was also used for the disposal of collected fuel. In addition, more than 3 thousand tons of contaminated soil were removed to an industrial dump in the territory of Thermoelectric Plant-3 for further disposal.” On the same day, the media published Vladimir Putin’s speech at a meeting on the accident damage control. After that, the frequency of the posts about the event diminished: while there were 3–4 posts daily in the first days of the accident, by June 7, the public interest in the event decreased, and the number of views fell down to 4 thousand.

All subsequent posts contained mostly visual material (photos or videos from the scene). For instance, a spectral satellite photo of the spill was published. One photo shows the booms with the fuel accumulated in front of them, noticeable by the yellow color. Interestingly, the two lakes nearby are also visible in yellow; and in another photo on the shallows near the rivers Ambarneya and Volochanka some yellow spots may also be seen.

On June 10, 2020, the media published information about the visit of indigenous people’s representatives and community leaders to the site of the accident, where they performed a rite of water purification and made offerings to the spirits. Some of the comments were rather ironic: “The spirits, of course, must be appeased, but when it all began, I mean worship of the spirits, the elements of nature, no one knew anything about oil spills yet!” On June 17, 2020, a post about the outcomes of the emergency response actions produced the following comments among others: “Are you not tired of the subject yet... it’s all already un-

der control! The guilty are punished! Why you keep sticking your nose where it is not worth doing!”, “Stop making noise, and everything will die away quickly.”

One of the specific features of Internet communications and the lightning-fast spread of information are the inevitable fakes and dumps. Thus, on June 30, 2020 Vkontakte posted a fake about fish:

“And here are the consequences... Photos and videos presumably of the southern shore of Lake Pyasino, the consequences of the spill. Unfortunately, the author did not indicate where he shot them, nor did he or she give any name.”

The photos showed a small green fish washed up to the shore. The author of the post decided to exploit the topic of fish poisoning in the Pyasino basin and the consequences of the accident for fishing and the condition of fish, provoking subscribers to a discussion. Despite the fact that the post collected 129 likes, 85 reposts and 8,500 views, subscribers were quite skeptical of this information and did not believe in the reliability of the materials provided, they demanded facts that would confirm that this fish was from Pyasino:

“Who is this wretched fake bullshit designed for?”

“I need objectivity, not gossip, which can only once again mislead the people already disoriented in the flow of chaotic information.”

On July 12, 2020, when pumping jet fuel from a barge to a production warehouse located near the village of Tukhard, a pipe was depressurized. The incident caused the spillage of aviation fuel. Over 44 tons of fuel ended up on the ground of the helipad territory. Information about the aviation fuel spill spread instantly across the network and via mobile communications:

“I got a call from Tukhard, they said there was an accident – kerosene spilled, 44.5

tons. I started asking the FSB, they knew about it, but said it was about 10 tons, maybe even a little less. I wrote them that it was 44.5 tons. They were surprised, asked where I got the information from. I don't disclose my sources, I told them to find out from the company, and half an hour later I texted them again on WhatsApp, and they replied that the company confirmed the information" (PMA, Nenets, Dudinka, 2021).

Thanks to the extensive coverage of this accident in the Web, the rapid spread of relevant information through all possible channels, the management of Norilsk Nickel acted promptly both in terms of damage control response, and in relation to communications with the indigenous population and the development of a program to support local residents who were directly affected by the accident. Today, the indigenous people and the company are building a dialogue, implementing joint ethnic projects and conducting open monitoring of the consequences, largely due to the influence of the cyberspeed.

### **The Firing Rate of the Chats**

WhatsApp chat "KMNS, IP, politics" was set up to accelerate the speed of the distribution of information and improving communications in Taimyr. The subscribers are the representatives of five indigenous peoples (Dolgans, Nenets, Nganasans, Ents, and Evenks), members of local administrations and entrepreneurs, as well as the employees of Norilsk Nickel. In cases like this, the messengers and social networks serve as the place of inter-ethnic dialogue and communication. No wonder they say that "WhatsApp is very popular in Taimyr, and in Yakutia, for example, Viber (Ya. Ya. Yaptune)".

"Thanks to such chats, we can communicate with our home people, feel their support and unity. For instance, about 300 people live in my native village of Syndassko, and there are 242 of us in the chat, it is clear that there are many people in it who were born in the village, but now they do not live there, but thanks to this they still have a connection with the motherland" (A. Eske).

This chat was set up in January 2016 on the initiative of the district administration as part of a program to communicate with the people (the idea came from Moscow). However, the administration did not have the opportunity to control the chat; hence, it was suggested to create a parallel chat and hand over its administration to the members of the public.

"I added the words "Politics", and "IP (individual proprietor)" to the title, it was our joint decision in the chat. Members of the chat are entrepreneurs, politicians, local Duma members, fishermen, reindeer herders, and ordinary people. I know personally about 60 % of the members. We also tried to add the head of the administration, E. V. Vershinin, but he unsubscribed after 20 minutes, it seems the officials are afraid to be in the chat, so as not to become the opposition. I am the main administrator, and I have all the rights, but I also may give administrator rights to other people on request, and they may add whoever they want to the chat. The maximum number of subscriptions in our chat is 280 people, sometimes I delete those who are silent or whom I do not know at all. The most active in the chat are the Dolgan women. I come up with the content for the chat myself so that it doesn't become boring, sometimes I give a few days to rest, I don't write anything, but people write themselves, they share news, and discussions begin immediately. The topics are quite varied – from Lenin to fish in some lake, literally to small fry" (Ya. Yaptune)".

Since April 29, 2021, I am also a member of the Taimyr WhatsApp chat "KMNS, IP, politics", with 256 people, and 7 administrators. In order to become a member, it is necessary to be personally acquainted with one of the admins, who must "approve" you, then introduce you to all the participants, after that you become a full member. There is also another way – "by recommendation", in my case both applied, first I was recommended by one of the Dolgan community leaders, one of the administrators (Gennady Shchukin), then I personally met the

administrator and the chief moderator Yakov Yaptune during an expedition on Taimyr, and he added me to the chat. This is what Yakov's message looked like: "Tatiana Kisser, PhD in History, a researcher, works in St. Petersburg, in the Russian Academy of Sciences, an ethnographer, works with the indigenous peoples. Just added", in 3 minutes a new message in the chat "Oooh... I have her business card."

Getting to know the chat administrators helped in organizing the field work on Taimyr. First, the administrators know almost all the local population and can give contacts of a potential informant, it turns out that today the chat administrators have more information than the local administration or the Department for the Indigenous Peoples affairs; second, they know the general situation in the area, are aware of the main problems and discussions of the indigenous population, what are their concerns; are knowledgeable in many topics, and can give answers to any questions. Of course, we took advantage of their contacts in conducting our research, many of our interlocutors were participants in this chat, with many others we arranged meetings on WhatsApp. Many people in the chat knew about our expedition, some of the messages read: "Hi, Yakov! Explain to me now, what should I tell Tatiana Kisser, that is, since you gave her my phone number?"

For six months, I observed the life of the indigenous people of Taimyr using their chat, in a way, it was a kind of web-based station. The daily flow of messages (at least 60 messages per day), the dynamics and intensity of information exchange highlighted one important property of such communication, namely the "firing rate" of the chats. The rate of the chats and the dialogues in the web is so high, that it turns on and heats up emotions. A person does not always cope well with the hurricane nature of information in the Web, or with its rate of fire (without a chance for a "second thought", or "the morning is wiser than the evening" approach). A person is defenseless against the informational and emotional cyber-shells and cyber-explosions. Quite often, the loss of control over the flow of events and emotions brings a person to a nonplus, or even makes him/her a victim of a cyber-crowd (cases of cyberbul-

lying have become more frequent recently). (Golovnev 2020a: 15.16).

Typically, all messages could be arranged in several groups. Most of the content is taken up by news (federal, regional, and local), the speed of the coverage at that is comparable to the most popular information portals, thus, whenever anything happens on Taimyr, one of the chat participants would be reporting it online both as text messages and photos. Discussions of the indigenous population and Taimyr problems (from the environmental to social, ethno-cultural and economic) are often quite intensive and emotional:

And there's another thing, for those who think they live too far away from Norilsk and the environmental problems of that city do not "reach out" to them. For instance, the people living in the remote communities. Last year we often discussed Kayerkan coal, practically the only imported solid fuel for local communities, this coal has a very high sulfur content. Just imagine hundreds of ovens in villages, smoke settles directly over the territory, covering the snow, puddles, and ground. Mixed with water, it turns into, as we found out yesterday, an unstable sulfuric acid compound. Soil in the villages is covered with a thick layer of slag from the same coal. And all this gets with the meltwater into rivers, and with air and dust gets into the living organisms.

The Enets language has no 100 % chance of survival. The language survives well only in remote areas, in the tundra. It is impossible to force the children to learn a language.

I don't believe anyone has any plans to revive reindeer husbandry. I think there are plans to relocate people from the loss-making villages; that, I think, may be true, yes.

Pastures are spoiling because reindeer herders are not moving along the set routes, as it used to be. In just 4 years, the pastures have been ruined in our tundra. Just think, how many years before did our ancestors

roam these territories. Each reindeer herder had his own route.

Have you ever been a herder yourself? It is they, who slaughter the deer, if you did not know. But these are their private deer and it's up to them to decide whether to do it or not, and not the people who sit in the chat rooms.

Who are you to teach the herders whether they should slaughter the deer! Some people live in cities and are still trying to teach the reindeer herders.

It's just infuriating, people who have no idea how to herd deer, still want to think up laws. It's just that I grew up in the tundra. My parents have been herders all their life, and still are.

Observations show that the chat's speed of response is most pronounced in emotions, discussions and actions. For instance, ordinary news publications trigger no emotions or disputes, reactions are minimal or reduced to zero, the participants take note of the information, but do not react actively. At the same time, if an event or a message provokes an emotional, often poorly controlled flow of messages, not only the response rate is high, but also a group of people involved in the discussion is much larger. Examples of this type of high response triggers are any reports about oil spills, or about the consequences of previous accidents:

Traces of oil were found in the area of last year's fuel spill in Norilsk – the head of Rosprirodnadzor Radionova. Right now, we are trying to verify the news.

Of course, they would be found.

The water is high again now, the fuel will be washed down from the shores again into the lake and the poisoning will be repeated. Norilsk Nickel was wildly lucky last year because of the wind.

Please, share a link to Radionova. Just if its oil, it must be something else.

Just tell me, whom to believe, some are still talking about the consequences of the ac-

cident, others say that there are more fish in the river. Or maybe those areas were not affected by the accident?

Ahaha, more than 20 thousand tons of diesel fuel, that would be about 7 train tanks, just disappeared in the waters of Pyasino, damn, are they sick in the head?

Quite right. They've been crying and still cry for help, beg for advice. But the pictures are different. How can one understand their duplicity? "every frog praises its swamp", a "mutual admiration society". So they play hide-and-seek among themselves. Shame!!! It's first time I hear that diesel fuel stimulates fish spawning.

The diesel decomposed into molecules.

It appears that since the amount of fish increased, the accident was only to advantage.

Yes, now I know for sure that my community, I'm told, caught a lot of fish... Horrors!...

The speed of response grows when discussions involve the most pressing hot topics, and these discussions, as a rule, are not limited to just one day, but stretch over several days in time. The latest and striking example was the discussion about the construction of a new village of Tukhard on the site of the current one and the relocation of its residents to other Taimyr villages for the period of construction.

Norilsk Nickel started the procedure of free, prior and informed consent (SPOS) for the indigenous peoples of the north in the Russian Arctic and invited them to choose a pattern of the Tukhard villagers' relocation. Despite the fact that the SPOS procedure is not directly required by the Russian law, Norilsk Nickel voluntarily recognized the international standards and, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, was ready to follow the SPOS rules<sup>11</sup>.

The village of Tukhard is located 76 km away from the Arctic port of Dudinka at the

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<sup>11</sup> "Normickel" obsudil s zhitelyami poselka Tukhard stroitelstvo novogo zhil'ya. URL: <https://www.normickel.ru/news-and-media/press-releases-and-news/nornickel-obsudil-s-zhitelyami-poselka-tukhard-stroitelstvo-novogo-zhilya/> (access date: 14.03.2021).

base of the Taimyr Peninsula. Tukhard was founded in the 1970s for the builders of Norilskgazprom near the Nenets settlement and therefore turned out to be located in the sanitary protection zone of the production facility, however, according to the Russian laws, no permanent residence in such zones is allowed.

Norilsk Nickel offered several solutions to the problem of relocation based on informed prior consent, including moving into new homes. At the same time, the indigenous population would not have been torn away from their traditional environment, the fishing and hunting estates and their lifestyle, since the New Tukhard would be located only 1.5 km away. They also offered some alternative options, including the purchase of housing in other villages of Taimyr or in Dudinka. The company planned to complete the construction of the infrastructure and the houses of the new village agreed with the residents, as well as the purchase of apartments in 2026.

All these events triggered a heated discussion in the chat both among the residents of Tukhard and among the entire indigenous population of Taimyr. The discussion lasted several days. A meeting of the representatives of the company with the Association of Indigenous Peoples took place on October 13, and the discussion is still in progress.

How did the meeting in Tukhard on the new village go?

The assembly is still in progress.

What did they talk about?

You may choose where to move.

A new village, Dudinka or to other communities to your relatives.

Your opinion is important to us, so that everything would be according to the SPOS procedure. This is for the first time in Russia.

Initially, surveys for any construction should be carried out, during which the required depth of laying pile foundations is determined. I don't remember any surveys there.

New village must be connected to gas pipes extensions for heating and gas burners, hot and cold water pipelines, also there must

be a kindergarten, a small school, a store, and warehouses; the houses should meet the Arctic requirements, instead of the sandwich panels, also there should be power lines to residential buildings, a stable Internet and mobile phone connections.

Fix everything on paper and then start negotiations.

A school and kindergarten should be equipped with everything necessary to provide all educational services and assistance. If these items are not included, then there is no point in meeting.

They will not be able to move everyone to Dudinka or to Karaul. There are also the herders' families.

And who will be collecting information on the construction of a new Tukhard?

Well, in terms of landscaping, choosing location for a new village, etc.

It is important that the indigenous people of the village are involved in the process of collecting signatures. We all saw how difficult it was to collect documents for payment of compensations from Norilsk Nickel after the fuel spill, all because it was a girl from Moscow who was responsible; she knew nothing either about the local people or the conditions they live in, who could not tell the Dolgan from the Nganasan, or the Nenets.

The discussion still goes on, there are representatives of the local administration and companies in the chat, all opinions are monitored, in today's situation, it is difficult to imagine that Internet sites are not used to collect the public opinions and measure the degree of tension. The representatives of the administration and the company rarely take part in discussions, more often they are invisible observers, although sometimes they show signs of life in short messages Local deputies are a lot more active in the chat, and they do not hesitate to react.

Another important manifestation of the "firing rate" of the chats is the activism component. It was thanks to the activism in the chat that it was possible to solve many problems that required immediate, quick action. For example,

in October 2021, all Taimyr chat rooms shared information about two people who left the village of Nosok in a motor boat to go home by the river Huriha; a day later they reported that they got lost, ran out of gas, and went ashore. A call was sent through the chats to assist in the search.

Wow. We should hurry up to find them.  
 Now the channels will freeze and there will be no way to get to them, either by snowmobile, or by boat.  
 Only helicopter. Also, they are both sick, the woman barely walks at all.  
 It's good if they sit in a hut at some campsite.  
 Not found yet? No news?  
 I don't get it somehow... Is it not possible to get there by boat? From the villages, production sites? Everyone is complaining that the helicopter didn't fly! And what about moving their own asses? Remember, in winter, how long the Ust-Avam fellows searched for a guy who got lost in the tundra, knee-deep in the muddy snow, on their drowning snowmobiles? What was the distance from the village? Or, maybe on the left bank the people different?

Such emotional appeals had their effect, and many made independent attempts to search for the missing: "My brother searched, tried at least, but he is alone, the ice is freezing in front of his eyes, there is only his wife with small children at home, and a lot of gas is needed. Their son-in-law was also looking alone, they are staying at different camps." In addition, people started sharing maps with the indication of a possible location to limit the search area. From 10 a.m. the chat began to fill with the messages like "we also discussed with my husband early in the morning, he showed me the maps where they could be," literally 10 minutes later a message appeared in the chat that a helicopter was sent to search for the missing. Reports were received every hour "no news from Emergency Team yet", "information on the search: a helicopter of the civil defense and emergency department flew to Dudinka, with O. L. and G. P., "the missing have been found".

In addition, the chat rooms and social networks are used to influence the authorities, for example, in the autumn of 2021, there was a food shortage in the Arctic. Back in August, a video of the empty shelves in local stores was posted on Instagram by a local Duma member Mikhail Ivanitsky. According to him, there were no fruits, vegetables, sausages, or dairy products in the stores<sup>12</sup>. Similar situation occurred in the neighboring Yakutia and in Chukotka<sup>13</sup>.

The people of Taimyr decided to use the chats to share information about the lack of products: "It's all over the chats. Now we are posting collective appeals from the residents of Syndassko and Popigai, an emergency regime will be introduced. There are no essential food products in the villages, we will take all necessary measures to organize food products delivery by helicopter." The problem with the products delivery was closed for a while, helicopters were sent. Many people believe that the administration's quick response was due to the activism of the people, who actively shared messages about the problem and the need for help via the networks.

Similar chats were set up one after another by each of the five indigenous peoples: "the Nganasan Association has its own chat where we communicate, young people have split off, they have their own chat" (V. Bolgova), "the Dolgans gave a chat in WhatsApp" (A. Eske); every village has, "our village Syndassko joined in a chat, there are both those who live here, and those who have already left" (A. Eske); "I know that in Volochanka people communicate in a WhatsApp chat" (O. Porotova); and each family also tries to create its own virtual group for communication; "I started the 'Kinship' chat, but I myself have already left it, let them now use it on their own" (O. Porotova).

<sup>12</sup> V Taimyrskom sele zhiteli stolknulis s defitsytom produktov v magazinakh. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4947750> (access date: 01.10.2021).

<sup>13</sup> Zhitelyam Yakutii nachali sbrasyvat edu s samoletov. Ver-tolety chinovniki poschitali dorogimi. URL: [https://fn-volga.ru/news/view/id/173127?utm\\_source=yxnews&utm\\_medium=desktop&utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fyandex.ru%2Fnews%2Fsearch%3Ftext%3D](https://fn-volga.ru/news/view/id/173127?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fyandex.ru%2Fnews%2Fsearch%3Ftext%3D) (access date: 12.10.2021); Na Chukotke vznik defitsyt produktov. URL: <https://www.bfm.ru/news/484359> (access date: 24.10.2021)

The idea to set up a WhatsApp chat “Dolgans” came to Olga Porotova (Dudinka) and Nadezhda Kudryakova (Khatanga). As O. Porotova, recalls Nadezhda suggested: “Olya, look here, see how many chats people have opened, we have “KMNS” here, but why don’t we have our own?” (the Nganasan and the Nenets already had their chat groups).

“We have 10 administrators from different districts and villages. We take an admin from each village so that everyone could add their own people, we wouldn’t get anywhere without it. And today we are really very proud that we have this chat, we communicate here in the Dolgan language, no need to be shy about it. Today I sent everyone Easter greetings in Dolgan. In response, people happily wrote back to my personal account in Dolgan, they are still shy to use it in the chat: “Olechka, you are so wonderful, you write in Dolgan, thank you for that” (O. Porotova).

The main topics cover the Taimyr news, a lot was written about the oil spill. People discuss the history of the Dolgans, many young people check back – they know almost nothing about their people. They write: “Are we the Dolgans? And why are we not the Yakut? Seems we were the Sakha”. Those who know their people well explain it in the chat, describe the Dolgans history.

Saving the language in the chat is one of the main topics. The chat was set up largely in order to revive our native language. The idea of preserving the language with the help of WhatsApp has developed into a separate project where adults learn the language in an interactive format with their children – this is a kind of family project:

“We often say to young people: “Let’s try writing in Dolgan, don’t worry about mistakes, so much for talking only Russian.” They say: “But you will make fun of us”. But we ourselves didn’t learn the language before, we’ve just started since 1995 or so to study the Dolgan as a foreign language at school, and then only one hour a week. I of-

ten post copies of pages from a dictionary in the chat, and share them with everyone, let them learn that at least. In response I get: “Look forward to a next page”. One of our leaders wrote: “Olga Gavrilovna, please, send me the dictionary pages to my personal account to avoid public embarrassment in the chat.” But it’s no shame, we are reviving the native language, we want to speak it” (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021).

Moreover, the chat, in addition to reviving ethnic identity, also makes it possible to search for relatives: “My friends and I are working as a search team in the chat, helping to find relatives. One Dolgan woman married a Yakut and wrote to us: “I’m from Khatanga district, please, help me to find relatives.” We posted information in the chat, looked for and found her relatives” (PMA, Dolgans, Dudinka, 2021).

The chat has its own rules, for example, only Dolgans or those with the Dolgan roots may be members:

For me, the Internet is an assistant in the promotion and popularization of the Dolgan language and culture. A lot of people write to me, respond to my messages, thank me and say: “Thank you very much, thanks to you we learned who the Dolgans are, who we are.”

The chat is also interesting because here one can have the latest political news, get information about all kinds of projects, contests, creative people, about various events, the lives of the indigenous people; get mutual assistance in difficult life situations, or in translating words into the Dolgan language and much more.

The Dolgans chat is useful, interesting to me, there’s a lot about the legislative framework, the customs of our people, the Dolgan songs also. Many friends. There are other chats also – “Syndassko Fraternity”, “Relatives”.

To be honest, the Dolgans chat is very useful, first of all we learn the latest Taimyr

news, people often write about the revival of the Dolgans, the customs of their ancestors, you can hear nice Dolgan songs, poems, there are a lot of both older and younger generations in the chat, there are old Dolgan recipes, how to cook Dolgan dishes... it's so cool. There are many more chats, for example, "Syndassko", where we talk with our home people.

The development of new communications and networks has led to the actualization of the topic of the indigenous peoples of Taimyr in the media, at the same time, the format of the media has changed, there are Internet publications and portals (they captured a huge audience), the usual paper newspapers have also moved online, and television has faded into the background. As a result, the speed of the spread of information about Taimyr and its inhabitants has dramatically increased.

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The system of communication and the speed of information exchange in the Arctic have changed due to the advent of the Internet and mobile communications. Not all residents of the Arctic region can take advantage of these new means of communication yet due to the difficult climatic and geographical conditions. However, even today the Internet holds a dominant position in the general communication network of the indigenous peoples of the North. Because of this, the speed and the chan-

nels of information exchange have changed. Cyberspeed significantly exceeds the speed of the real life. A striking example of this was the speed of breaking news about the oil spill at Thermoelectric Plant-3 near Norilsk. Most residents of Taimyr learned about the spill from the Internet almost in the first hours. This effect, as well as the constant monitoring of events, influenced the speed of decision-making and the quality of decisions. Thanks to the extensive online coverage of this accident in the Web, the rapid spread of relevant information through all possible channels, the management of Norilsk Nickel acted promptly both in terms of damage control response, and in relation to communications with the indigenous population and the development of a program to support local residents who were directly affected by the accident. Today, the indigenous people and the company are building a dialogue, implementing joint ethnic projects and conducting open monitoring of the consequences. Taimyr continues to actively use all kinds of information exchange channels, including WhatsApp chats, social networks, Internet publications, which, in addition to helping in quick resolution of everyday problems of the Arctic residents in dialogue with the authorities and the oil and gas companies, also assists in promoting the development of the ethno-cultural initiatives in cyberspace. The "firing rate" of the chats in addition to igniting and intensifying emotions also helps in addressing the vital problems of the local population of Taimyr.

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