

## Subject information sheet (Tutkimustiedote)

### Research Project: Digital ethnographic observation on TikTok and content analysis of TikTok videos

#### **Research topic and goals**

This research project investigates the relationship between TikTok and democracy in today's Finland. In our current digital society, it is crucial to understand TikTok's growing importance and role in people's everyday lives, understandings about democracy, as well as cultural and political expressions.

The research analyzes videos and comments posted on the TikTok platform. Analysis of the short videos explores the way young adults express themselves on TikTok and how those expressions affect and transform democracy in Finland. Moreover, the project examines what kind of audio-visual, embodied, and aesthetic political language the short video form creates and how TikTok videos influence political engagements.

The research contributes, on the one hand, sustainability of democracy in Finland through examining the role of TikTok in democratic process and learning about young people's and young adults' needs, struggles and wishes that they articulate using TikTok videos. On the other hand, the research tackles the short audio-visual form as a specific language used for public communication.

The research project is part of a larger research project *TikTok (Anti)Democracies: Self-making, Skepticism, and Political Expression among Young People (TIKTOKCRACY)* (2025-2028). The researchers of the project are Dr. Heta Mulari and Dr. Nadezhda Vasileva, both based at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Finland.

#### **Methods for collecting research data**

The researchers collect and analyze videos (around 50-80 videos in total) and comments on TikTok, by first observing the content on TikTok, making notes, collecting selected videos and comments as a data set and then analyzing the content and visual elements of the videos and comments. Researchers collect videos and comments only from public accounts.

The search and selection will be targeted at the following topics: municipal election (2025) in Finland, narratives of immigrants, living in Finland, feminist expressions and movements, and youth culture (such as fan culture) expressions.

Informing about the research will be carefully evaluated. In the case of campaign videos published by politicians or well-known influencers, the videos will be treated as public texts, comparable to newspaper articles, and the content creators will not be informed. In the case of content posted by not widely known content creators, each video will be considered case-by-case. Especially in the case of sensitive topics, information about

the research as well as a link to the information sheet (on the project website) will be delivered via TikTok's private messages. The content creators are then given the possibility to prevent the use of videos in research.

### ***Risks and benefits***

The research does not include any health-related or economic risks. Risks related to social risks (such as in the form of becoming recognized in the research publications and receiving unwanted attention) or processing of personal data will be minimized by careful pseudonymization in the research publications so that the content creators or commentators cannot be traced. The research does not include any benefits.

### ***Confidentiality, data procession and data storage***

The researchers find it extremely important to process all data collected in the research carefully and confidentially. The project follows EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as well as the Finnish Data Protection Act at all stages of the research.

Only the researchers working on the project will have access to the data and it will not be given to anyone outside the research project. However, other researchers or graduate/postgraduate students may be included in the project and analyze the data under the supervision of the research team.

All research data will be stored safely on a password-protected drive according to the Tampere University data processing protocols. Further information on processing personal data can be found in the Privacy Notice for Research (see the project website).

The data will be used only for the purposes described on this information sheet. The data will not be archived, and it will be destroyed after the project has ended and final research outputs have been released in 2029.

### ***Dissemination and privacy of personal data***

The results of the research will be published in scientific journals and article collections as well as popular articles, including blog posts.

In general, the researchers will pseudonymize the data in a way that that the original videos, content creators or commentators cannot be directly recognized or traced. The researchers will not use any usernames or identifiable personal information (such as face or voice). However, especially known politicians or influencers may still be recognizable based on the context, especially in the case of wide popularity on the platform. This is why complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

In a few carefully selected cases the researchers might use screenshots or excerpts from the videos in research articles. In this case the researchers will contact each content creator separately and ask for permission to use the content in a specified context.

### ***Copyright of videos***

The research leans on the right of citation, meaning that the researchers may cite the videos by using screenshots or excerpts in public presentations when the analysis requires it. However, this will be done only after careful compliance with research ethics. Videos including sensitive themes and the potential to result in negative consequences to the content creators will not be cited publicly in presentations without the content creators' permission.

The research acknowledges that copyrights and rights to use videos belong to TikTok content creators, therefore whole videos will not be displayed in any public presentations without the content creators' permission.

In the case of using screenshots, video excerpts or whole videos in academic articles, agreements specifying the copyright and right to use the videos will be made with the content creators. The content creators will retain their copyright and right to use the videos while the research project will have right to use the videos in the context carefully described in the agreement.

### ***Funding***

The research is funded by the Kone Foundation.

### ***Further use and archiving of the research data***

The data will not be archived for further use.

### ***Ethical principles***

At all stages of research (collecting, processing, and analyzing research data and disseminating the results) the researchers will respect the participants' human rights, self-determination, and constitutional rights (including the right to life and personal liberty and security, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and the right to privacy). The research subjects will not be predisposed to any major harm or risks.

The researchers acknowledge the complex ethical issues related to doing research on social media platforms such as TikTok. Throughout the research, the researchers are mindful about possible additional visibility to the research subject that the academic analysis may cause. This is why considerations and reflections on ethical issues and careful pseudonymization are present at all stages of research.

Further information on ethical guidelines can be found on the webpage of The Finnish National Board for Research Integrity (TENK) <https://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials>

In case of any further questions or concerns about the research, please contact us.

### ***Contact information of the Principal Investigator***

Name: Heta Mulari, Youth Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University

Telephone: 050 305 8410

Email: [heta.mulari@tuni.fi](mailto:heta.mulari@tuni.fi)

## Privacy notice for research (Tietosuojailmoitus)

EU General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679), art. 12, 13, 14

### 1. Title, nature and duration of research

#### ***Sub-study: Digital ethnographic observation on TikTok and content analysis of TikTok videos***

Part of research project: TikTok (Anti)Democracies: Self-making, Skepticism, and Political Expression among Young People (TIKTOKCRACY) (1/2025-9/2028)

☒ Case study

Duration of research: 4/2025-9/2028. (data collection and analysis in this sub-study)

Duration of data processing: 4/2025-12/2029. (until the last research outputs have been published)

### 2. Data Controller

The research project is funded by the Kone Foundation. The researchers are grant researchers and not employed by Tampere University. The data controller of the project is principal investigator, project leader, dr. Heta Mulari.

### 3. Principal investigator or research group

Name: Heta Mulari, Youth Research, Unit of Social Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University

Telephone: 050 305 8410

Email: [heta.mulari@tuni.fi](mailto:heta.mulari@tuni.fi)

### 4. Researchers

Name: Heta Mulari, Youth Research, Unit of Social Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University

Address: Kalevantie 4, 33014 Tampere University

Telephone: 050 305 8410

Email: [heta.mulari@tuni.fi](mailto:heta.mulari@tuni.fi)

Research activities and procession of personal data: data collection, storing, pseudonymisation, analysis, dissemination, destroying the data, project management

Name: Nadezhda Vasileva, Youth Research, Unit of Social Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University

Address: Kalevantie 4, 33014 Tampere University

Telephone: 050 478 4715

Email: [nadezhda.vasileva@tuni.fi](mailto:nadezhda.vasileva@tuni.fi)

Research activities and procession of personal data: data collection, storing, pseudonymisation, analysis, dissemination, destroying the data

## **5. Content of research records**

The data set includes 1) publicly published videos (n=50-80) on TikTok platform, collected by the researchers as a data set, 2) screenshots of selected comments posted on the comments section of the videos, 3) research diaries, in which researchers describe their observations 3) agreement forms collected from those content creators whose videos are used in public presentations and/or publications (including names, email addresses)

The personal data includes: 1) usernames of the content creators, 2) voice (some videos), 3) face (some videos).

Special categories of personal data (sensitive personal data), potentially present in the videos includes: 1) racial or ethnic origin, 2) political opinions, 3) religious or political beliefs, 4) sexuality.

## **6. Sources of personal data**

The data is collected from public accounts on TikTok platform in the form of videos and comments. The data is collected by using separate mobile phones that do not have access to any Tampere University services (email, intra etc.).

## **7. Purpose of processing personal data**

This research tackles the growing importance of TikTok in terms of audio-visual political expression, and transformation in the understandings of democracy, especially for young people and young adults (18-29 y.o.). The key purpose of the research is to investigate the complex relationship between TikTok and democracy. The analysis of the short videos aims to reveal the way young adults express themselves on TikTok and how those expressions affect and transform the implementation and manifestation of democracy in Finland. Moreover, the project examines what kind of audio-visual, embodied, and aesthetic political language the short video form creates and how TikTok videos influence emotional-political engagements. Research such as this would not be possible without collecting and analyzing videos and the comments.

## **8. Lawful basis for processing personal data**

The lawful basis for processing is the EU General Data Protection Regulation Article 6 Paragraph 1 and the Data Protection Act (1050/2018) 4 §:

- ☒ Public interest or the exercise of official authority
  - ☒ Scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes

### 9. Sensitive personal data (special categories of data and criminal records)

☒ The following types of sensitive personal data will be processed during the research project:

- ☒ Racial or ethnic origin (will be carefully considered case-by-case and not used in the analysis if not absolutely necessary for the analysis)
- ☒ Political opinions (will be carefully considered case-by-case and not used in the analysis if not absolutely necessary for the analysis)
- ☒ Religious or political beliefs (will be carefully considered case-by-case and not used in the analysis if not absolutely necessary for the analysis)
- ☒ Data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation (will be carefully considered case-by-case and not used in the analysis if not absolutely necessary for the analysis)

Will personal data concerning criminal convictions and offences be processed during the research project?

☒ No

### Lawful basis for processing of sensitive personal data:

The lawful basis for processing is EU General Data Protection Regulation, Articles 9 (special categories of personal data) and 10 (personal data relating to criminal convictions and offences), and the Data Protection Act (1050/2018) 6§ and 7§.

☒ The processing activities are conducted for the purpose of scientific or historical research in the public interest, for statistical purposes, or in connection with the exercise of official authority

### 10. Transfer of data to external parties (Transfer means that some other party will process personal data and return the results to data controller)

Data will not be transferred to external parties.

### 11. Transfer or disclosure of data outside the EU/EEA

Will data stored in the research records be transferred to a country or an international organisation that is located outside the EU/EEA?

☒ No

### 12. Protecting personal data

All personal data will be protected using appropriate technical and organizational measures. We will protect the data through technical measures, including antivirus software, firewalls and regular software updates. Users who can access personal data

are required to log in with a username and password or, in some cases, with multi-factor authentication.

We will also protect your data through organizational measures. Our staff are obligated to maintain confidentiality, and access to data is restricted. If necessary, we will implement additional safeguards to protect data, such as separate storage locations.

Any physical documents will be safeguarded by storing them in locked facilities.

Materials containing personal data will be:

☒ stored with personally identifiable information, which is necessary for the following reasons: The materials will be analysed without removing directly identifiable data, because it is impossible to remove identifiable data (such as face, voice and username) from the research data, the videos. However, the videos (apart from a few carefully selected cases) will be carefully pseudonymized in all analysis and dissemination.

Protecting data in transit:

☒ secure transmission, please specify: The videos will be collected from TikTok by using separate mobile phones that do not have access to any TUNI services (email, intra etc.). From these mobile phones the data will be transferred to a password-protected external drive with consultation from Tampere University IT services. Only researchers working on the project (Mulari and Vasileva) will have access to the drive. The comments will be recorded as screenshots (.jpg, without capturing the username and user photo) from TikTok by using separate phones that do not have access to any TUNI services (email, intra etc.). The screenshots are then transferred to the password-protected external drive.

### **13. Processing of personal data after the research project has been concluded**

☒ The research records will be destroyed

### **14. Data subjects' rights and possible restriction thereof**

Data subjects have the following rights under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):

- Right of access
  - o Data subjects are entitled to find out what information the University holds about them or to receive confirmation that their personal data is not processed by the University.
- Right to rectification
  - o Data subjects have the right to have any incorrect, inaccurate or incomplete personal details held by the University revised or supplemented without undue delay. In addition, data subjects are entitled to have any unnecessary personal data deleted from the University's systems.
- Right to erasure
  - o In exceptional circumstances, data subjects have the right to have their personal data erased from the Data Controller's records ('right to be forgotten').

- Right to restrict processing:
  - o In certain circumstances, data subjects have the right to request the University to restrict processing their personal data until the accuracy of their data, or the basis for processing their data, has been appropriately reviewed and potentially revised or supplemented.
- Right to object
  - o In certain circumstances, data subjects may at any time object to the processing of their personal data for compelling personal reasons.
- Right to data portability
  - o Data subjects have the right to obtain a copy of the personal data that they have submitted to the University in a commonly used, machine-readable format and transfer the data to another Data Controller.
- Right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority
  - o Data subjects have the right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority in their permanent place of residence or place of work, if they consider the processing of their personal data to violate the provisions of the GDPR (EU 2016/679). In addition, data subjects may follow other administrative procedures to appeal against a decision made by a supervisory authority or seek a judicial remedy.

Contact information:

**Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman**

Street address: Lintulahdenkuja 4, 00530 Helsinki, Finland

Postal address: PO Box 800, FI-00531 Helsinki, Finland

Switchboard: tel. +358 29 56 66700