JOURNAL OF THE RESEARCH CENTRE
AT THE LATVIAN ACADEMY OF CULTURE

CULTURE CROSSROADS

VOLUME 9
2016

Culture Crossroads is an international peer-reviewed journal published by the Research Centre of the Latvian Academy of Culture.

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ISSN 2500-9974

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INTRODUCTION

Culture Crossroads is an international journal published by the Latvian Academy of Culture (LAC). The Latvian Academy of Culture is a state-founded (1990) and accredited institution of higher education and research that realizes academic and professional programmes, conducts scientific research and performs creative work. The goal of the Academy is to ensure studies in the fields of humanities, social sciences, theatre, audio-visual art and choreography, as well as to conduct research and to advance the education of new artists and researchers. Interdisciplinarity is a crucial aspect of the Academy, as it enables to deal with a broad variety of complex issues both in the study process and in the research. It ensures the acquisition of new scientific knowledge, facilitates the design and development of a qualitatively novel approach to the research of culture and art phenomena, and promotes active participation in the research processes in cultural politics. Interdisciplinarity is emphasized as an essential principle of the Academy's activities in the LAC Strategy for 2015–2020, a document, in which we promised to ourselves and to the society that we shall continue to develop not only as a national interdisciplinary art and culture school and a platform for artistic creativity and creative industries, but will also become a strong, dynamic and innovative research centre. One of the tools that helps to implement LAC priority plans is the annual research conference *Culture Crossroads*, organised by the LAC Research Centre.

The title of the conference *Culture Crossroads* appeared in the first years of the Academy's existence. In accordance with the administration's intentions of that time, it was supposed to signify "a centre, a place for meeting and dialogue". Back then, LAC clearly set its sights on the dialogue. Already at the beginning of its work did the conference stand out both due to its democratic attitude and innovative theoretical reasoning about culture, gathering professionals from various disciplines and ensuring the opportunity to share ideas independently of the academic degree or affiliation, the high quality of research, originality and topicality of analysed issues being the main criteria for presentations. Over time, we started to collect the valuable and interesting materials from the conferences and to publish them in a printed edition, so as not to let them perish. Logically, that laid the groundwork for the tradition of making a follow-up publication on the basis of the conference presentations.

Our Academy's journal of research articles has been continuously developing, and also this year's issue displays a variety of topics and a different format, besides, certain steps have been taken to ensure its status as a SCOPUS publication, where SCOPUS is the biggest online data base of internationally reviewed research journals, books and conference proceedings.

The online format is new to the publication; however, the journal will remain loyal to their thematic tradition. In the digital collection of articles, not only do professionals and experts in the domain of culture introduce the reader to the newest achievements and discuss the most topical research issues in the field, they also indicate possible models of collaboration with governmental and international culture policy-making bodies, outline the prospects for culture and art research at the regional and global levels, thus confirming the necessity for an interdisciplinary approach and its importance in the research of culture phenomena as well as their promotion abroad.

I am happy to congratulate everyone on the electronic edition of *Culture Crossroads*. On behalf of the Latvian Academy of Culture I would like to thank the administration and the scientists of the Research Centre, the authors of the articles, the editorial board and particularly the peer reviewers for the generous work that has made the valuable ideas and conclusions accessible to all of us as a new source of knowledge and as an inspiration to ask new research questions, to solve scientific problems, to elaborate on new topics, thus enriching both the local and the global educational, cultural and research space.

Rector of the Latvian Academy of Culture,
Prof., Dr.art. **Rūta Muktupāvela**

CULTURE CROSSROADS IX

The preservation of traditions and intangible cultural heritage has been one of the priority topics for the Research Centre of the Latvian Academy of Culture, alongside the research of interaction of traditions and socially economic innovations. These topics have been analysed both in the CoHERE (Critical Heritages: Performing and Representing Identities in Europe) project, funded by Horizon 2020, which involved working in a consortium of researchers from 12 countries, and within the framework of the state research programme *Sustainability of Latvian Cultural Traditions in an Innovative Environment* (Habitus) (LAC 2014–2017, funded by the Ministry of Education and Research), which implies research in collaboration with the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian governmental organisations, local authorities and NGOs involved in the sustaining of the Song and Dance Festival tradition. We have compiled the most important results of this research in the 9th issue of *Culture Crossroads*, thus introducing a certain focus for the issue. We have included findings from US, Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian researchers, emphasising opportunities for comparative research of national cultural phenomena and manifestations of glocalisation.

Head of the LAC Research Centre,
Prof., Dr.c.soc. **Anda Laķe**

A HERITAGE OF BALTIC SONG CELEBRATION SONGS

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Abstract

This attempt to inventory all 1,964 songs performed at the seventy Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian National Song Celebrations (1869 to 2014) identified twelve songs which are most representative of Song Celebrations tradition as a whole. These are songs which were remembered and repeated across different epochs of Celebration history (Tsarist, Independence, Soviet, and Renewed Independence). Song Celebrations heritage is measurable, in retrospect. At any Song Celebration, the number of songs from previous Celebrations can be counted to assess if the concert is more or less heritage-oriented.

Keywords: *repertoire, songs, Song Celebration history, tradition.*

In heritage traditions, people select things from the past and adapt them for the present, intending to pass them onward to future people. Among these "things" are texts [Wilgus 1971] like the ones counted in this essay. This is an attempt to inventory the Song Celebration traditions that were inscribed in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization n.d.]. Unlike many ICH inventories, which concentrate on living heritage [Velure 2007: 1–2], I attempt to document how active tradition bearers have constructed and preserved their heritages over the past century and a half, identifying "pre-existing structures of valuing cultural pasts and traditions" [Bendix et al. 2012: 15]. A starting point is a corpus of 1,964 songs in the programs of the seventy Baltic national song celebrations that were held from 1869 to 2014 (885 songs at 26 Estonian Celebrations, 643 at 25 Latvian Celebrations, and 434 at 19 Lithuanian Celebrations).[1] On the one

[1] Song titles compiled from books [Bērzkalns 1965; Mikutavičius et al. 2014; Ojaveski 2002], Celebration organizer websites, and printed Celebration programs.

hand, every song in the programs was and is potential heritage, available for future generations to remember. But it is also clear that most songs did not become heritage in practice, because the people of their future, as we now can document, did not repeat them – in Lithuania, for example, 83% were sung at only one Celebration, then relegated to the library shelves. The proportion of songs that were not later repeated, and therefore have not yet been recognized as heritage, is similar in Estonia (82%) and Latvia (73%). The total number of songs that were sung at two or more Celebrations was 171 in Latvia, 155 in Estonia, and 72 in Lithuania. The significance of such repeated songs is sometimes highlighted in printed programs, where a song title may be followed by a list of previous years when it appeared at the Song Celebration.

These 398 songs, each of them sung at two or more Celebrations, are here all called "heritage", because, even if they were not always highlighted as such, somebody nevertheless selected them from the past and the choir sang them again (see table 1). There are different degrees of heritage in the context of four distinct historical epochs as outlined by Brüggeman and Kasekamp [2014]: the Tsarist epoch (Celebrations from 1869 to 1910), Independence (1923–1938), Soviet (1946–1985) and Renewed Independence (1990–2014).

Table 1.

Baltic Song Celebrations songs repeated within and across epochs, 1869–2014
(A. Tsarist; B. Independence; C. Soviet; D. Renewed Independence)

Estonia	**A**	**AB**	**ABC**	**ABCD**	**ABD**	**AC**	**ACD**	**AD**	**B**	**BC**	**BCD**	**BD**	**C**	**CD**	**D**
Epoch	**7**	**6**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**6**	**1**	**16**	**13**	**11**	**44**	**32**	**9**
A. 1869–1910	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■							
B. 1923–1938		■	■	■	■				■	■	■	■			
C. 1947–1985			■	■		■	■			■	■		■	■	
D. 1990–2014				■	■		■	■			■	■		■	■

Latvia	**A**	**AB**	**ABC**	**ABCD**	**ABD**	**AC**	**ACD**	**AD**	**B**	**BC**	**BCD**	**BD**	**C**	**CD**	**D**
Epoch	**11**	**15**	**2**	**6**	**3**	**4**	**0**	**4**	**3**	**5**	**14**	**12**	**40**	**31**	**21**
A. 1873–1910	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■							
B. 1926–1938		■	■	■	■				■	■	■	■			
C. 1948–1985			■	■		■	■			■	■		■	■	
D. 1990–2013				■	■		■	■			■	■		■	■

Lithuania									**B**	**BC**	**BCD**	**BD**	**C**	**CD**	**D**
Epoch									**1**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**19**	**11**	**27**
B. 1924–1930															
C. 1946–1985															
D. 1990–2014															

More than one third of these 398 heritage songs were short-lived hits, repeated as heritage only in the epoch where they premiered (see table 2). So, for example, during the Tsarist period Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God" and Bortniansky's "Holy" were each performed at three Latvian Celebrations, but they were subsequently never repeated again. Numerous Soviet loyalty songs were regularly included in Celebrations from 1946 to 1985, but disappeared into the dustbin of history after the three countries renewed their independence in 1990. Sometimes a hit song entered longer-term heritage; so, for example, Melngailis's *Jāņuvakars* ("Midsummer Eve") premiered in 1931, to be repeated at both of the next Independence-epoch Celebrations (1933 and 1938), and then at 13 of 16 Celebrations spanning the Soviet and Renewed Independence epochs. A multi-epoch heritage song did not necessarily have to be wildly popular hit in its own time; however: In Estonia, for example, "Dawn" premiered in 1923 but was not repeated again until 1960, when it became an anthem to be sung at every Celebration.

Table 2.

Degrees of heritage: "Hit" songs (created and repeated in an epoch), and number remembered and repeated at least once in a later epoch

	Tsarist epoch hits		**Independence epoch hits**		**Soviet epoch hits**		**Renewed Independence**
	"Hits"	**repeated later**	**"Hits"**	**repeated later**	**"Hits"**	**repeated later**	**"Hits"**
Estonia	13	6 (46%)	6	5 (83%)	54	10 (19%)	9
Latvia	19	8 (42%)	10	7 (70%)	56	16 (29%)	21
Lithuania	–	–	7	6 (86%)	24	5 (21%)	27

"Hit" songs may characterize an epoch. But they do not necessarily reveal the spirit of the Song Celebrations over a longer stretch of time. I have argued elsewhere [2016] that only twelve songs are truly representative of the Baltic Song

Celebration tradition as a whole. These are the songs that were repeated in the officially confirmed programs of all four epochs. It is possible that their meanings changed over time, but the basic text and melody have remained unchanged.

The twelve songs which may represent Song Celebrations over their entire history are:

Estonia:

- Aleksander Kunileid, *Sind surmani* (You, until Death), sung in 1869, 1880, 1910 / 1933 / 1969 / 1994, 2009, 2014
- Aleksander Läte, *Laul rõõmule* (Song to Joy): 1891 / 1928, 1938 / 1947, 1950, 1955, 1965, 1969 / 2004

Latvia:

- Jānis Cimze, *Rīga dimd* (Rīga Rings): 1873, 1880, 1888 / 1933 / 1948, 1965, 1973 / 1990, 2008
- Emīls Dārziņš, *Mēness starus stīgo* (Moonbeams): 1910 / 1931, 1938 / 1948, 1965, 1973, 1985 / 2003
- Andrejs Jurjāns, *Pūt, vējiņi* (Oh, Wind): 1910 / 1926, 1933 / 1948, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1973 / 1990, 2003
- Ernests Vīgners, *Strauja upe* (Swift River): 1888 / 1931, 1933 / 1950, 1965, 1973 / 1990
- Jāzeps Vītols, *Beverīnas dziedonis* (Bard of Beverīna): 1895, 1910 / 1926, 1933, 1938 / 1960 / 1990
- Jāzeps Vītols, *Gaismas pils* (Fortress of Light): 1910 / 1926, 1931, 1933, 1938 / 1948, 1950, 1955, 1970, 1973, 1980 / 1990, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013

Lithuania (only three epochs, because Celebrations began in 1924):

- Mikalojus Čiurlionis, *Šėriau žirgelį* (I Saddled My Steed): 1924 / 1950 / 2003
- Vincas Kudirka, *Tautiška giesmė* (National Anthem): 1924, 1928, 1930 / 1946 / 1990, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2014
- Česlovas Sasnauskas, *Kur bėga* Šešupė (Where the Šešupė River Flows): 1928, 1930 / 1970 / 1990, 1994, 1998, 2007, 2009
- Juozas Tallat-Kelpša, *Tris dienas, tris naktis* (Three Days, Three Nights): 1924, 1928 / 1946, 1950 / 2009, 2014

What is perhaps unexpected is that in each country, these most representative (or perhaps most viable) songs were almost never all sung together at the same Celebration. So, for example, the two Estonian songs appeared together only once, in 1969. In Lithuania, only three of the four were sung together in 1924, and a different threesome appeared together in 1928 and 2009. And in Latvia, a maximum of five out of the six songs converged in different groupings in 1933,

1973, and 1990. These songs may represent a heritage of songs repeated in all historical epochs, but they were most definitely not a canon to be repeated at each Celebration.

Some thematic patterns appearing in the twelve representative songs listed above recur elsewhere in the three national Song Celebration traditions, perhaps with different emphases in each of the three countries. So, for example, one of the two Estonian songs, "You, until Death" is an explicitly patriotic declaration of loyalty to Estonia, while the other, an Estonian adaptation of the German poet Schiller's "Ode to Joy," simply expresses a human emotion and does not mention Estonia. This pattern of local/national identity in one song, and global/musical identity in another, is recurrent: When one asks Estonian singers today to name the two most important songs, they will typically answer *Mu isamaa on minu arm* ("My Fatherland is My Beloved"), an explicit song of patriotism, and *Koit* ("Dawn"), a song about singing and hope that, although it mentions that the singing fatherland is blossoming, it does not explicitly speak to Estonia. And two exceptionally poignant moments happened at the 2014 Celebration, when the audience energetically called for encores of two songs – Peep Sarapik's patriotic fatherland song, *Ta lendab mesipuu poole* ("Flying to the Honeytree"), and Pärt Uusberg's *Muusika* ("Music"), a song about music that does not mention Estonia [Šmidchens 2016: 29–30].

In the Lithuanian list, two of four songs explicitly refer to Lithuania: The national anthem by Kudirka (which was briefly also the official anthem of the Lithuanian SSR), and "Where Šešupė Flows," a patriotic landscape song from the early 20th century. The other two texts carry no explicit ideology – one of them describes courtship, and the other a cuckoo-bird's song. Much of their meaning lies not in the words but in the fact that their source is folk tradition, as will be discussed below. The two song categories, "patriotic" and "folksong", re-emerge in comparable proportions in the 2014 Lithuanian Song Celebration repertoire, where slightly under half of the songs were explicit expressions of love for Lithuania and its landscape, and another half (16/35) were folk song arrangements.

In Latvia, patriotism is more subdued in the six representative songs. Two songs do not refer to the nation at all ("Moonbeams" and "Swift River"). Two others include the region of Kurzeme, and one mentions Rīga, place names that have been covert metaphors or euphemisms for the country. Only one explicitly names Latvia ("Bard of Beverīna"). The words of four of the representative songs thus connect to the national territory, but none of them is a pledge of allegiance comparable to the Estonian or Lithuanian patriotic texts listed above. A tradition of subtle patriotism continued at the Celebration of 2013, where only nine of forty songs included the word Latvia; seven more songs contained metaphorical

references to the nation (Latvian place names, "my people"), but the rest (24 of 40 songs, 60%) did not contain explicit political ideology.

In Latvia as in Lithuania, a salient symbolic meaning emerges through genre, not words: three of the six representative songs come from folk tradition. Here, too, similar patterns emerge in the broader tradition, from the 19th century to the 21st century. The very first Latvian Celebration of 1873 featured two concert programs, one of sacred music, and the other mostly of Latvian folksongs. And at the 2013 Celebration, half (20/40) of the repertoire were folksongs. Two additional songs in the Latvian representative list are of literary origin, but the words written by the poet Auseklis are in folksong meter ("Bard of Beverīna" and "Fortress of Light"). This tradition also continued at the most recent Celebration, where the words to *"Saule, Pērkons, Daugava"* and *"Dod Dieviņi"* were written by Jānis Rainis and Nora Ikstena in trochaic tetrameter, evoking the sound of folksongs.

Song Celebration heritage in Latvia as well as Lithuania thus rests firmly on the foundation of an earlier heritage of folksongs (see table 3). Estonian Celebrations have fewer connections to that tradition, as can be shown by counting folksongs in the entire repertoire, or in the list of heritage songs, or in the 2014 program. Elsewhere, too, Estonian folksongs play a smaller, though not insignificant role, for example, in representative music compilations such as the CD, *125 Years of Estonian Song Festivals* (1994) with three of 24 songs, or the four-CD collection *Review of Estonian Music* (2011), where 14 of 95 songs are from folk tradition.

Table 3.

Native folk songs in the National Song Celebration repertoire

	Representative songs (sung in all epochs)	Song Celebrations entire repertoire	Song Celebrations Heritage Songs	2013 or 2014 Song Celebration
Estonia	0/2 (0%)	127/885 (14%)	29/155 (19%)	7/55 (13%)
Latvia	3/6 (50%)	195/643 (30%)	70/171 (41%)	20/40 (50%)
Lithuania	2/4 (50%)	152/434 (35%)	26/72 (40%)	16/35 (46%)

Folk song arrangements or adaptations belong to a particular kind of heritage within the heritage of Song Celebrations songs, a subset that is explicitly marked in programs with the Latvian word *tautasdziesma*, Lithuanian *liaudies daina*, and Estonian *rahvaluule* (folk poetry) or *rahvaviis* (folk melody). The genre designation signifies that their words or melodies originated in the preindustrial oral tradition, long before choirs and Song Celebrations existed. Since the discovery of *Volkslieder* by the German folklorist Johann Gottfied Herder, folksongs have projected modern meanings beyond surface texts: Romantic nationalists have

interpreted them as pure expressions of the nation's soul, as ancestral heritage, and as a nation's unique contribution to humankind. Baltic composers, singers and audiences all know this: folksongs, selected and adapted for choral performance on stage, are received as symbols of current cultural wealth that was inherited from past generations.

During the Soviet epoch, folksongs were framed as culture of the lower classes in the feudal stage of social evolution. A process of "folklorism" aimed to modernize them for current life, and so the composers who arranged new, progressive versions of old folksongs earned honoraria from the Soviet government. But the meanings of these songs also extended outside the reach of Soviet government policy into the earlier epochs when Romantic revivalists saw unique national treasures in them. This may be a reason why folksong arrangements were a relatively insignificant part of song production as a whole during the Soviet epoch, despite Soviet government lip service to their importance. All ten Soviet-epoch Latvian Song Celebrations, for example, premiered only 41 folk song arrangements, in contrast to 50 folksong premieres at four Celebrations of the first independence epoch, and 67 folksongs at six Celebrations of the Renewed Independence. A third, relatively recent meaning attached to folksongs is that of children's culture; the supposedly simple melodies of some folksongs have been perceived to be most suitable for young beginners, and their childish words add a sentimental cuteness factor to Song Celebration concerts.

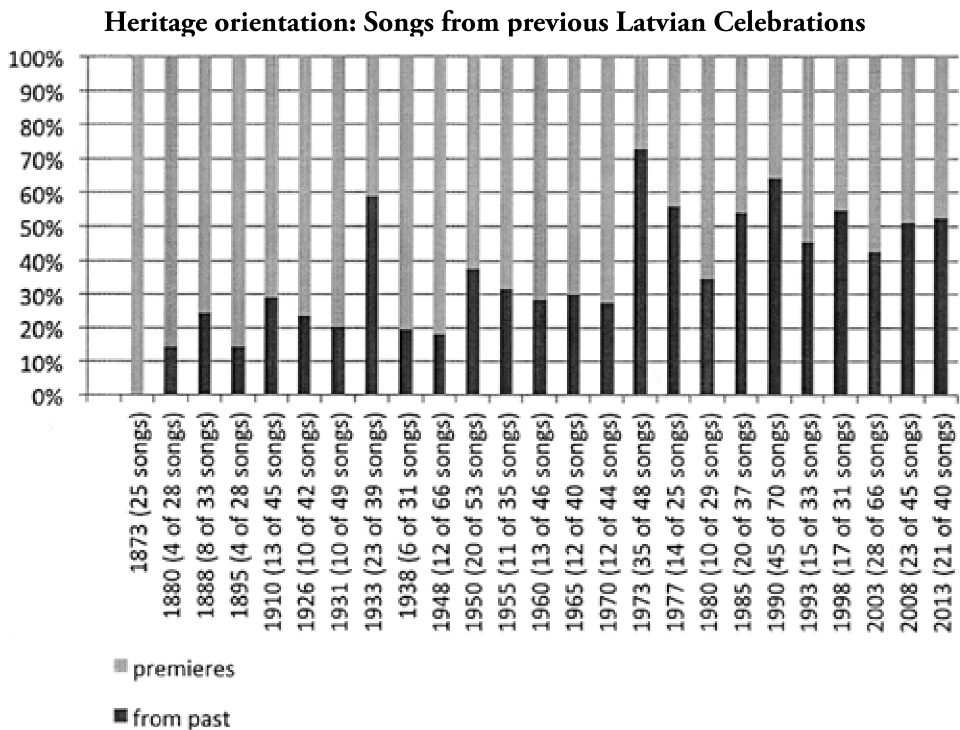
On the other hand, it is a mistake to interpret folksongs as a genre segregated from their words, and to see in them chiefly expressions of nationalism, Soviet ideology, or children's culture. In the songs of living oral tradition, semantic weight lies heavily on words; melodies are vehicles that give singers license to speak and, perhaps, say things that would not or could not be expressed otherwise. Folksongs have explicit meanings, particularly when they are sung by adults. Latvian folksongs about the sun celebrate her motherly warmth and the beauty of sunsets; we note that the sunsets which embrace the outdoor Song Celebration stage during evening concerts *are* truly majestic, warm and nurturing. Latvian Midsummer songs evoke the real-world customs which most Latvians held a week or two before the Song Celebration; and Midsummer night in Latvia *is* a truly magical moment in time, its feelings captured by folksongs with the refrain, *Līgo*. Lithuanian courtship songs conjure up conversations between young men and young women who are in love; and young, singing Lithuanian men *are truly* handsome, brave and witty, and Lithuanian women *are* beautiful and smart, just like their alter-egos conversing in the songs they sing on the great stage. And when Estonians announce the grand arrival of guests with a song that was once chanted to guests at traditional weddings, they *are* truly welcoming a hundred thousand people onto

the Song Celebration grounds. Folksongs thus continue to function in the modern world of technology in ways comparable to earlier preindustrial life.

Heritage processes are measurable, in retrospect. We can count songs in a given year's Song Celebration repertoire to calculate the relative importance of heritage at the time (see table 4). When more songs are repeated from past Celebrations, we can conclude that the concert is more heritage-oriented, and when the proportion of new premieres rises, heritage-orientation recedes. Although heritage-orientation has ebbed and flowed over the past century, there appears to have been some proportional increase in heritage-oriented content since the 1970s.

Table 4.

Heritage orientation: Songs from previous Latvian Celebrations



Songs that premiered in different epochs may also be counted to assess the weight of these epochs as part of contemporary heritage. For example, of the forty songs performed at the Latvian Celebration of 2013, nineteen were premieres, and twenty one were repeated from earlier celebrations. Of these, five originated in the Tsarist period, seven in the Independence period, four in the Soviet epoch, and eight in previous celebrations during the renewed independence. One might thus mathematically calculate that, for example, heritage of the Soviet epoch is gradually fading, decreasing from 32% in 1990 to 10% in 2013 (see table 5).

Table 5.

Heritages of past epochs in Latvian Song Celebrations

Year	1990	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013
Total songs in concert repertoire	70	33	31	66	45	40
Songs premiered in epoch A, 1873–1910	10 (14%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	5 (8%)	4 (9%)	2 (5%)
Songs premiered in epoch B, 1926–1938	12 (17%)	6 (18%)	5 (16%)	7 (11%)	3 (7%)	7 (18%)
Songs premiered in epoch C, 1947–85	23 (32%)	4 (12%)	7 (22%)	9 (14%)	9 (20%)	4 (10%)
Songs premiered earlier in epoch D, 1990–	–	2 (6%)	4 (13%)	7 (11%)	7 (16%)	8 (20%)
Songs premiered at this celebration	25 (36%)	18 (55%)	14 (45%)	38 (58%)	22 (49%)	19 (48%)

Moreover, the Soviet-epoch premieres that continued after renewed independence are not expressions of "Soviet nostalgia" or "retro" [Platt 2013: 449–450] memories that attempt to revive the past. Many of the Soviet-epoch premieres that did continue after renewed independence are folksong arrangements (16 out of 31 in Latvia, 7 of 11 in Lithuania, and 5 of 32 in Estonia). Folksongs are remembered, not as songs that premiered in the Soviet epoch, but rather, as songs that came from the preindustrial (thus pre-Soviet) oral tradition. Songs that Balts explicitly connect to the Soviet epoch recall informal resistance and persistence in spite of, not thanks to the Soviet rule. One Latvian example is *Lauztās priedes* ("Broken Pines"), which was written in 1901, but premiered as a Song Celebration song at the Stalin-era festival of 1948, ostensibly to celebrate the socialist revolution; but it also declared that "you broke us, oh enemy, but the battle is not over yet," in the present tense. Another example is *Manai dzimtenei* ("For My Homeland") composed by Raimonds Pauls in 1973 and under Soviet censorship not allowed into the centennial Song Celebration that year; when it was performed later, audiences stood silently, treating it as an unofficial anthem. Feelings of national unity and common purpose, quietly but powerfully present at Soviet-epoch Song Celebrations despite loudly explicit Soviet culture, were the heritage celebrated when Pauls's song appeared in the concert programs of 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1998 and 2008. In Lithuania as well, two songs that premiered at Soviet-epoch Celebrations became unofficial anthems partly due to their pre-Soviet origins, and

partly because they mentioned forbidden topics such as God, explicitly named in *Lietuva brangi* ("Dear Lithuania") or proud patriots in the forest, reminiscent of the anti-Soviet military resistance in *Kur giria žaliuoja* ("Where the Green Forest Grows"). In Estonia, "My Fatherland is My Beloved" premiered under Soviet rule in 1947, but it was banned from the Song Celebrations in 1950 and 1955; it returned to the stage in 1960 as a result of defiant nonviolent political action. It is these meanings that are revived when the songs of the Soviet epoch are sung today.

Song Celebrations are not past-oriented. Some Baltic Song Celebrations did feature retrospective programs. Heritage was particularly important, for example, at the centennials of the Celebrations in Estonia in 1969 (38 of 58 songs, or 66% were repeated from past celebrations) and Latvia in 1973 (35 of 48 songs, 73%), and at the Celebration marking the thousand-year anniversary of Lithuania in 2009 (21 of 28 songs, 75%) Songs of the past also were in high proportion at the first Celebrations of renewed independence in 1990, where many Soviet-banned songs were revived. But most Celebrations highlighted a tradition of creating and singing new songs. Of the 47 songs at the Estonian Celebration of 1928, for example, only one had ever been sung at an earlier Celebration, and the rest (98%) were premieres. At the 1960 Lithuanian celebration, 34 of 37 songs (92%) were premieres. The Latvian Celebrations of 1931 and 1938 featured 80% new songs (39 of 49 songs, and 25 of 31 songs, respectively).

This creative, innovative tradition depends on the heritage other than repeated song texts. It depends on the heritage of singing, reaching back through many generations of skilled singers along with teachers, conductors and composers, who all together embody a self-tuning national musical instrument. Here, the Baltic singing heritage echoes folk and Protestant church singing customs of the pre-tsarist epoch, and continues secular choral traditions that began in the Tsarist epoch, most dramatically taught at the pedagogical seminar by Jānis Cimze (1814–1881). He started traditions of secular classroom singing to educate many singers, composers and conductors of the first Estonian and Latvian Song Celebrations. Performances today also hearken back to the first wave of creative energy which blossomed and flourished during the first Independence epoch: public musical skills moved to a new level after 1918, when universal public education was established and national singing curricula were cultivated by teachers, composers and performers who themselves were educated at the newly-founded National Conservatories. The Soviet epoch expanded on these earlier foundations, adding music-focused primary- and secondary schools where thousands of children acquired specialized musical literacy and performance skills. Two and a half decades into the epoch of renewed independence, there is little reason to elevate one of these epochs above the others. The truest heritage of the Song Celebrations is not

institutionally based, but rather, it is a heritage of charismatic singers, teachers and creators of songs who have inspired younger generations to continue singing an ever changing and expanding repertoire of songs in all epochs.

This essay began with tables that mathematically calculated past heritage by counting songs repeated from Celebration to Celebration from 1869 to 2014. There is no method for assessing future heritage, of course. "It's tough to make predictions," said Yogi Berra, "especially about the future." Future Song Celebration songs are discussed about two years before a celebration when songs are selected for the program. Debates may emerge over whether a song woud be appropriate: in early 2014, for example, Estonians debated, removed, and then reinstated a premiere by Erkki-Sven Tüür, *Taandujad* ("Retreaters") only a few months before the Celebration [Randlo 2014]. But repertoire plans never extend more than a few years into the future.

Exceptions to this rule may be emerging today. An intensive sociological survey of Estonian singers and public confirmed that they believe two of the Celebration's "most important" songs are "Dawn" and "My Fatherland Is My Beloved" [Lauristin 2014: 42–43]. Once such a question has been asked, answered, and their answers printed in an authoritative scholarly publication, it becomes highly likely that these songs will be sung again at the 2019 Celebration and beyond. In Lithuania as well, a 1980 survey documented that two Lithuanian songs were favored above others: *Lietuva brangi* ("Dear Lithuania") and *Kur giria žaliuoja* ("Where the Green Forest Grows") [Gudelis 2001: 260–261, 291–293]. Both have since been sung at every Celebration, and it therefore seems likely that they will continue indefinitely. I modestly venture to predict that the three Baltic National Anthems, though usually not discussed in analyses of Song Celebrations songs, will also be repeated at all Celebrations for the foreseeable future.

Latvians recently placed three songs into a list of 99 "most important cultural achievements of all time," entitled the Latvian Cultural Canon: "Fortress of Light," "Oh, Wind," and "Midsummer Eve." The Canon also includes three broader categories falling under the umbrella of the Song Celebration repertoire: the *dainas* – folksong poetry; the traditional bourdon (drone) folk singing style, often adapted in folksong arrangements; and songs created by one composer, Raimonds Pauls. Along with the entire Canon, these songs and song categories "should form the basis of cultural experience of every Latvian resident, fostering his or her sense of belonging." It is thus conceivable that they will become a "canonic" refrain to be repeated at every Latvian Song Celebration – or at least intensely discussed if omitted from a future Celebration program. So, for example, nine months before the 2013 Celebration, Latvians heatedly debated whether the Raimonds Pauls song "For my homeland" should be in the program [Veidemane 2012]; it was

excluded, but nevertheless sung informally after the concert. It is notable that in all of the lengthy internet commentaries related to this song, not a single one mentioned the Cultural Canon as an authoritative reason for keeping the most famous song by Pauls in the program. The Canon is a descriptive enterprise, not prescriptive. Culture, and the active bearers of culture act independently of such institutions, beyond the reach of "heritage regimes" [Bendix et al. 2012]. Māra Lāce, leader of the Canon project, cautions us to remember that "The Cultural Canon should not be perceived as a petrified, unchangeable dogma." Its purpose is to incite an exchange of opinions, and it should be "developed creatively." So also with heritage and heritage songs.

Standing on stage in the baritone section at the conclusion of the 2013 Latvian Song Celebration, I noticed one such nearly imperceptible change of recent years. As has been the custom, the choir was informally singing a song that appears in the representative heritage list of this article, a melody whose importance is firmly established in the Latvian Cultural Canon. "Oh wind, blow wind," the folksong arranged by Andrejs Jurjāns in 1884 and premiered at the 1910 Celebration, wafted gently across the Song Celebration grounds. And yet, it was a different song. Where Jurjāns's last stanza once ended, the choir continued to sing another stanza about marriage, as commonly sung in oral tradition; but whereas the oral variant recently had the words, "*tēvam, mātei nezinot*," the singers around me were now singing "*tēvs, māmiņa nezināj*" (both variant lines may be translated as "father and mother didn't know"). A tiny detail, perhaps. And yet, it is significant, because these are the words of a different song with a similar melody, arranged by Imants Ramiņš and premiered in 2008. Earlier that day I had asked my baritone section neighbor which of all songs was his favorite – and he answered with little hesitation that it was the new "Oh, Wind" arranged by Ramiņš. Is this item in the Latvian Cultural Canon transforming? In the future, which song will "form the basis of cultural experience of every Latvian resident"? The answer, my friends, will be sung by future singers, when they recreate and create their heritage of Song Celebration songs.

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THE SONG CELEBRATION AS POWER OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND A MISSION OF MODERNITY

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Abstract

Following the publication of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention in 2003, and its entry into force in 2006, the Song Celebration tradition and symbolism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was added to the intangible cultural property. The tradition of the Song festivals, inspired by the protestant culture, has become an integral part of the Baltic States' identity. The Song festivals were created to demonstrate the diversity of heritage and national history; now they also make efforts to modernise cultural practice, which is passed on from generation to generation, and they still retain the positive, immediate, uniting and mobilising function that is essential for the survival of the nation. Declaring national identity and creativity, the Song and Dance Celebration of the Baltic States reflects their patriotic and historical barriers, ideological conformism, and cultural maturity. What is the common reality of the Song and Dance Celebration as a national cultural priority in all the three Baltic States? It is the programme, the participants, a developed tradition, the creative, ideological and artistic value, the relationship with the media, the role of innovation in the television broadcasts and online communication – all this forms just a small part of topicalities related to the Celebration that requires attention, evaluation and reflection. The article studies the tradition of the Lithuanian Song and Dance Celebration as a multifaceted phenomenon, viewing it through the prism of contemporary cultural discourse. Following the French philosopher Michel de Certeau, the article examines the Lithuanian Song Celebration as a modern cultural phenomenon, which shapes our collective representations of the past and imports our traditional cultural heritage into the cities. The Song Celebration is also defined as a site of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) the significance of which is outlined by the French historian Pierre Nora, and which is used to strengthen the national authority and promote patriotism.

It is also analysed as a practice of cultural memory (*kulturelles Gedächtnis*), which helps to reconstruct cultural identity and foster self-reflexive processes, as the German researchers Jan and Aleida Assmann claim. However, it can be observed that in recent decades many global memory projects integrate similar memory practices in transnational networks around the world. Besides, in the context of globalism, a very intense visual culture has emerged including a multitude of festivals and spectacles requiring revision and updating of the Song Celebration concept, which would allow us speak openly and boldly about the interpretation of the traditional culture and create new models of communication, without turning the Celebration into a commodity product, and finding original ways to discover a deeper meaning of ethnic culture.

Keywords: *the Song Celebration, tradition, place of memory, priorities, modernisation.*

> *Cultural modernisation is an inevitable process, even if it does not always occur simultaneously on all the three levels: modernising – inside an antimodernist division process; in the depth of an archaic restoration programme (this is where not only Europe's* "inner demons" *were supposedly generated); and in exterior space – a postmodern reconfiguration that depends on the curiosity of the experimenters.*
>
> Vytautas Kavolis

At the time of remarkable transformations, endless changes, interaction of cultures, devaluation of identities, migration and mixing of the nations, our traditions, for instance, rituals and sacred acts have been preserved as a mental constant, the incarnation of continuity and formation of modernity. Today our traditions are appreciated more and more, even if they date back barely one hundred years. The Song and Dance Celebrations inspired by the protestant culture have become an integral part of our real identity. Passed on from generation to generation, the Song and Dance Celebrations promote positive, immediate, uniting and significant possibilities of survival for the nation. Declaring a national originality and creative potential, the Song and Dance Celebration of the Baltic States reflects a patriotic rise as well as historical barriers, ideological conformism, cultural maturity and conditional challenges.

After the announcement of the UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003 and its entry into force in 2006, a new intangible heritage conception was prepared: it concentrated on fostering the

development of historical traditions and cultural identity of local communities, based on creativity, mastery and professionalism. In 2003 the Song Celebration tradition and symbolism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was included in the Convention as the non-material culture. The list of verbal and non-material heritage masterpieces bears the name of the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania represent three nations, traditions, heritage and values. The three Song and Dance Celebrations' histories are unified; however, they also differ from each other based on their originality, priorities and choices, dispersion and aspirations for the future.

National cultures, cherishing folk traditions, songs and celebrations – these are the manifestations of nationality, which stimulates an original expression, heritage and innovation, strengthening a communal feeling of unity, and uniting the society that gives a cultural form to the national identity.

In general, in the modern times this connecting tradition of the Baltic States, which appeared with the initiative of the profane (secular) – *profanus* movement, an amateur chorus, has become officially and widely acknowledged as a part of our identity and sanctity. "A human experiences sanctity because it *manifests* and reveals itself as something entirely different than secularism. If we wish to demonstrate how it manifests itself, we suggest the term *hierophany* which is suitable, even if does not have any additional meaning, it means only what lies in its etymology, it means that something sacred reveals itself to us" [Eliade 1997: 8–9].

A specific common feeling and ritualism as a ceremony, sacrifice or hierophany, during the time of the Celebration constitute a sacred space: it demonstrates the national self-expression and political choice to be together with the nation and its existential conditionality. The Song Celebration concept, which is based on a ritualistic canonical image: a tradition is created, transmitted and preserved, affected by changes, modernised, cherished, and continued, developed from the national musical traditions of the Song and Dance Celebration. Therefore the Song Celebration organisers in Latvia tried to develop and to support this unique modern national identity form, and they initiated a proposal to the UNESCO commission in 2002.

Today the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia holds an important value, and it is not just a cultural parade. In the opinion of the Minister for Culture Dace Melbārde, the most important value is the content that we attach to this Celebration, learning from the wisdom of our ancestors and contributing to the creation of our historical narrative. Having appeared as a general singing tradition, the Celebration developed into a political self-determination or a national resurrection movement for the nations seeking to regain their independence. In

the world history this movement is known as "the Singing Revolution in the Baltic States."[1] In the study *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution*, which was published in 2014 by the University of Washington Press, an American professor of Latvian origin Guntis Smidchens has revealed the topical nature of resistance movement in the Baltic States. "Without the songs there would not have been these thousands of people, resisting without arms, and without the people there would not be an independence," he said in a conversation about contemporary values [Smidchens 2012: 150]. Recent Estonian inquiries suggest viewing the Song and Dance Celebration as a political mobilisation ritual [Brüggemann and Kasekamp 2014: 259–276].

What constitutes a common reality of the Song and Dance Celebration as a national cultural priority in all the three Baltic States? The answer is: the programme, the participants, the tradition, creative, political and artistic value, relationship with the media, the role of innovations in the television broadcasts and online communication, however, this is just a small part of topicalities related to the Celebration.

The Realities of the Song Celebration

We are proud of the fact that about 37,000 singers and dancers usually participate in the Song and Dance Celebration in Vilnius. This year the Celebration brought together the participants not only from Lithuania, but also from other places of the world. However, in comparison with Latvia, where the ethnic relations are more complicated than in Lithuania (information of the year 2011: Lithuanians constitute 84.1% of the country's population, Latvians – 62.1%), the Song Celebration of 2013 brought together more than 42,000 performers. The numbers are more eloquent when taking into consideration the population of the Baltic countries: according to the statistics of 2014, in Lithuania there lived 2.94 million, in Latvia – 1.99 million, and in Estonia – 1.32 million inhabitants (69.1% of them have the Estonian nationality). Nevertheless Estonians with the least population have organised the most abundant Song Celebration, with more than 42,000 participants. In 2013 a sociological study accomplished by Professor Marju Lauristin and the media researcher Peeter Vihalemn showed that the Song Celebration is supported by 96% Estonians – it has been confirmed by 2/3 of the 1301 questioned respondents, standard Estonian-speaking citizens, in the group of 15 to 74 year old [Lauristin, Vihalemm 2014]. If the average number of participants in all the three countries is similar, considering their population

[1] Address by the Minister Dace Melbārde at the conference "Cultural and Creative Crossovers", Riga, 11 March 2015, Latvian National Library. Available: www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/.../Runa_CULT_LV_080315opening_ENG.pdf (Viewed 12 Feb. 2015.)

and ethnic groups, Lithuanians rank last. What are the factors that determine it? Is it a worsening demographic situation? Is it a massive migration? Does Lithuania encounter it? Could there be a different reason, for instance, gaps in musical education? How do we have to prepare our children that they would not just be good performers, but also active performers in the future and the present Song Celebrations? One thing is clear, if we do not search for solutions, this non-materialistic value of our culture will become the victim of the sad collision of ideals and reality, the stream of historical and cultural identity tradition will run dry, losing its permanent revitalising source.

Consequently in Kaunas, on the 13th of November 2014 the Lithuanian musicians gathered for a conference, devoted to a discussion of the situation of the Song Celebrations. They were worried that the Song Celebrations were under a rising threat: "Today there is almost none of the mixed children's choruses, children do not sing at schools. If the children do not sing, Lithuania will also not sing. Thus, we will find ourselves near the line of extinction at once. Due to the possibility that folk songs may disappear, though they have always united us, and it is not just a melody and harmony, the spirit of the soul pulsates in our folk songs, the conductor Petras Bingelis said encouraging musicians to turn to the Ministry of Education and Science and draw their attention to the musical education of children, while it is not too late."[1]

On the other hand, the recent Song Celebrations were notable for great and intriguing declarative rhetoric. The Lithuanian slogan: "Here is my home" impresses with its meaningfulness. Estonians had chosen the image of time: "Touch the time and the time will touch you." The Latvian Song Celebration's slogan was "Gaisma līgo Latvijā", even if it is hardly translatable into other languages, it sounds rather poetic in the English language: "Light celebrates Midsummer in Latvia". Without doubt, the slogans, declarations and pathos are inseparable part of the Celebrations, but the rhetoric pomp should not overshadow the appreciation of the situation *de facto*, it is important to seek the idea of being together, understanding and respect through our joint efforts.

The three Song Celebration programmes share many similarities although it is generally recognised that Latvia outdoes the other two Baltic countries with its individuality and originality. Estonia has provided the Song Celebration with an incredible demonstration of the public spirit: participation in the Celebration means an inherent declaration of national identity. "Even if we are not worse than Latvians and Estonians, we will not overtake them, God bless us, if we manage to

[1] V. Miškinis: "Nebūtų Dainų šventės – neturėtume šitiek chorų", Austė Radžiūnaitė, www.lrytas.lt, 27 June 2014. Available: http://kultura.lrytas.lt/scena/v-miskinis-nebutu-dainu-sventes-neturetume-sitiek-choru.htm (Viewed 17 Nov. 2014.)

become equal to them. That is why we have to learn from Latvians and Estonians, we have to go to the Song Celebrations and to observe the Līgo celebrations," Arvydas Juozaitis said in a discussion in the Vilnius Town Hall, presenting the publication dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of the Song Celebration [Tradicija, telkianti tautą 2014: 36). Indeed, it is important to search for a common ground in the Song Celebration modelling opportunities. Is it possible that the profusion of events, days, intentions and ideas creates a new form of the Celebration's industry, thus spreading infinitively and destroying the ritual of the Celebration? If we pay no attention to the reflections and to the features of evaluation, do we not find ourselves on the outside of our culture? If we focus on creating an exceptional Celebration, do we not lose the most important orientation of values, transforming creativity and innovation into a cultural eclecticism?

The Song Celebration as the Living Media of Culture

It may be no coincidence that the Song Celebration tradition has become the centre of attention for contemporary researchers: after seeking to integrate ourselves into the global areas, it becomes apparent that in the face of fatalism of identity loss there reappears the necessity to update and to extensively discuss our national identity, self-consciousness, traditional culture and values. After the euphoria of regained independence abated, Lithuanianness somehow became unfashionable: in the context of populist tendencies it is shown as something that is constructed and illusory. However, in the presence of complete homogeneity, not only the definition of Lithuanianness has become problematical, but also the comprehension, interpretations, expression and affirmation of the self. Globalisation stimulates our feeling of non-safety and non-stability, raising the importance of cultural memory and tradition, stimulating us to turn back to the past and to reveal the sense of existential roots. There has recently appeared a possibility to treat the Song Celebration as an important medium, of cultural memory and cultural strategy, which activates our historical memory, strengthening the structures of self-awareness.

In recent decades, the research of cultural memory has extended incredibly across various countries and disciplines. The German researchers of cultural memory Jan and Aleida Assmann claim that memory depends on the media, which passes over the cultural content [Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann 1994: 120]. Understanding culture as a field of various cultural practices, Assmann suggests that not only written but also verbal (e. g. singing) tradition can be defined as the media of cultural memory. Cultural memory is not static and closed; on the contrary, "cultural heritage is always connected with topicalities and presence" [Assmann 1995: 130].

This cultural discourse is considered to be a turn to the historical memory field. Collective memory of the nation finds itself in the epicentre of research. Comprehension of memory as a national project has entered into the global frames of discourse; the national memory trajectories have led to a net of worldwide memory preservation.

The case of the Song Celebration is not an exception. It can be observed as it is crossing the national culture boundaries by trying to connect the Lithuanian communities in different parts of the world. Its potentiality becomes apparent in the context of the world heritage and global tourism. After all UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which has admitted that the Song Celebration tradition is a masterpiece of the humankind's verbal and intangible cultural heritage, is a part of international network. It operates in a global space of education, science, culture, information and communication, and unites the world countries into a forum, by stimulating and supporting originality of various nations and communities, cultural heritage and memory preservation projects. Therefore, UNESCO considers memory to be the most important concern. Thus, the preservation of cultural heritage is one of the most urgent political questions [Amrith, Sluga 2008: 251–274]. In this way, a national memory enters the international arena. Globalisation process does not confine itself to new communication technologies, mobility of the citizens and migration processes. It defines general frames of discourse, which stimulates to revise our cultural values and traditions, considering our national identity and sociocultural integrity.

The practices of local cultural memory inevitably find echoes from globalisation. At the same time a certain "synchronisation of transnational cultural memory" occurs [Assmann, Conrad 2010: 5]. In the arena of global communication an attempt has been made not only to preserve a national culture and a space of memory, inducing pride in our feeling of culture. A certain competition has also occurred naturally among the countries seeking for attention of the world. In this context various celebrations acquire great importance in culture politics, which originally reflects the local and general processes. In this context the uncomfortable questions continue to arise: Do transnational connections have the influence on the disappearance of national differences? Can a local culture memory become a global memory? This is why theoreticians of culture are asking: what kind of functions does the transnational memory politics really perform [Assmann, Conrad 2010: 8]?

Therefore the regions are not limited to local institutions and agents as important sources of memory. Although, generally speaking, memory and globalisation should work in both directions. Nevertheless, a cultural memory, revealing the

originality of culture and traditions, is fostering collective identity and social union, though it also gets into the traps of globalisation.

The researchers of memory culture recognise that celebrations, ceremonies and rituals have always supported the pillars of cultural memory (the living media). Assmann's research of the ancient civilisation has revealed that shamans, mandarins, priests, rabbis and poets have always been the transmitting source of communicational memory. However, only the forms of institutional memory have ensured the dispersion of cultural memory [Assmann 1995: 129]. In ancient civilisations there were various rituals and celebrations which gave an opportunity for the community to participate in a live cultural memory environment.

Aleida Assmann distinguishes between "preserving memory" (*Speichergedächtnis*), which preserves experience of a culture, and "functional memory" (*Funktionsgedächtnis*), which transmits certain cultural forms through concrete practices for the future generations. The preserving memory is a stream of functional memory, Assmann defines it as memory's memory. The functional memory is active in social space, which directly or emotionally connects the community to its past [Assmann 1999: 134–136]. Changes in the life of a culture determine how our collective memory is transformed into the functional memory. It could be said that the Song Celebration is a form of the functional memory, the media of vital cultural memory, which involves different art ensembles, communities and societies, updating the past and tradition. Without this update the past would simply stop functioning in the present.

This form of functional cultural memory is based on the concrete past and the grounds of ethnic culture, though it not only preserves it, rather it turns culture into symbols and imagery, revealing the profoundness of the past and the modification of the present. That is why this form of memory provides us with the opportunity to merge together a myth, history and presence; to increase our actual imagery, and to stimulate our patriotism and national consciousness. This kind of mission should be carried out by the Song and Dance Celebration.

The Song Celebration as a Memory Place

The term *lieux de mémoire* (place of memory), coined by the French historian Pierre Nora, is also fruitful for the analysis of the Song Celebration [Nora 1984]. This term "memory place" (describing not just concrete places, museums and monuments, but also celebrations, memorable events and other forms of representation) has had wide repercussions in different countries. In a traditional society the "memory place" served as mnemonics – a specific method for recollection. In modern society, according to Nora, it has acquired certain ideological characteristics, and now it is applied to the discourse of nationalism. The majority of

"memory places" and streams were created and invented to serve the Nation state. Hereby it has become a part of identity politics and functions by emphasising the most important national history terms, facts and ideas; reminding and inscribing them into the mentality of the nation.

Memory places bring together communities in the public space, express a collective past-knowing experience, and evoke the integrity of the state and emotional communal feeling. When participating in such actions, the society not only takes over their inherited cultural contents but also supplements it with new meanings. Thus, this ritualistic action becomes not just a memory preservation but also a creation process, originally materialising our national and political identity. By the end of the 20th century, these symbolic ceremonies, rituals, traditions and celebrations have been recognised as important nation-building phenomena, thus they have rightly been called the "invention of a tradition" (conceptualised by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger) [Hobsbawm 1983].

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the reconstruction and strengthening of tradition has once again become one of the most important cultural topics. From 30th October 2000, the continuity of the Lithuanian Song Celebration traditions is protected by the resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, emphasising the need to preserve this unique phenomenon, which has a positive influence on our culture's vital capacity, the dispersion of the culture of regions and consolidation of all the nations. Although, this is an implacable wish to speak openly and to analyse – what is the modern meaning of this tradition and what role does it play today? Is it important only as a form of representation of the past, or is it an educational form of patriotism? How does the interplay of the past and the present manifest itself in the current forms of the tradition? How are the new communication possibilities involved? As Marcelijus Martinaitis accurately observes "every age unlocks literature in its own way" [Martinaitis 2002: 13], as well as folklore, myths and art heritage, which is deciphered and interpreted in its own way.

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In today's totally homogenised world, where the dominating paradigms of consumerism and visual culture enslave our imagination, stimulate alienation and distance us from each other, the Lithuanian Song Celebration is a multiple-meaning act of culture and an important communication channel with the past. Cultural approach to the Song Celebration allows us to explore this phenomenon as a mnemonic cultural and social practice, important in the life of society and state. As a "connecting element" of the nation's Song Celebration, it creates a symbolic space for transformation of identity. As cultural *memory practice*

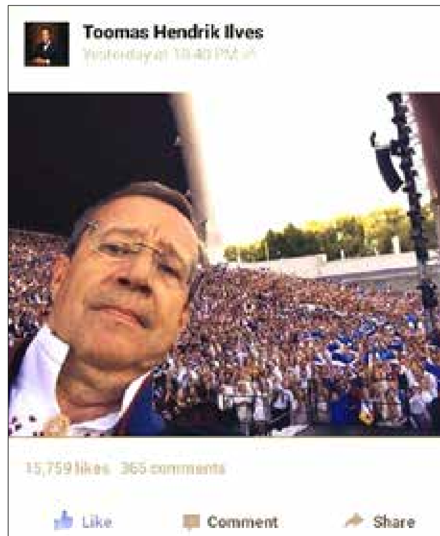
(Assmann) and *memory place* (Nora) the Song Celebration is an exceptional space for the symbolism of the Lithuanian cultural and historical memory, constituting an important part of our contemporary cultural politics.

However, it should be understood that this *memory media*, created by the modern state as a medium of remembrance and revision of the past, has to undergo changes without becoming another "object" of consumerism, the tool of manipulation, disguising emptiness and incapability to find our identity. Finding itself in the contemporary discourse, the Song Celebration should not be comprehended as a formal representative model, but also as a possibility to recognise traditional culture as our own "otherness", to increase the field of self-reflection, to expose the changes of contemporary society and identity, turning to the past in order to think about the present society and about our ideals for the future.

The Song Celebration's Phenomena and the New Communication

As a communal phenomena, the Song Celebration in Estonia demonstrates increasing tendencies of attractiveness. It attracts more and more of those who wish to participate in every festival; it seeks new records, its applications come from the entire world. There were almost 61 000 unregistered participants at the Estonian Song Celebration in 2014.

Usually the Song and Dance Celebration takes place once every five years. The Youth Song and Dance Celebration is organised every year as a foundation



The famous selfie of the Estonian president Toomas H. Ilves, 2014.
This photograph was liked by 37 000 visitors on *Facebook*,
and it became the most popular image of the Celebration.

of the National Song Celebration. From 2010 the Virtual Song Celebrations *(Digi-laulupidu)* are organised, seeking to present the long-lived Song Celebration tradition via IT format, which has made Estonia famous. From 2008 the Song Celebrations (*Öölaulupidu)* are organised during the night, twice a year, in spring and autumn. By the way, it is intended to perpetuate the Song Celebration's heritage in a traditional way, for instance, there is a Song Celebration museum with three permanent exhibitions launched in Tartu, in the classical building designed during the first half of the 19th century; and they have innovative ways how to promote the Song Celebration, for instance, interesting publications in the world press, like the BBC coverage of the Song Celebration in Estonia, called "Estonian lessons for the Arab Spring" or the CNN news "The Song Celebration – more popular than Michael Jackson's last concert in Estonia" and similar intriguing forms.

The Song Celebrations are appreciated as a unique traditional space created by a communal feeling and contemporary communication, reaching out to involve all active citizens. This cultural space is in search of new forms of sustainability and future development. Therefore gathering all forces on all levels of national, Baltic and northern regions, it is expected that we create a monitoring system, which will help us to develop the tradition in all the three Baltic countries. It is intended to apply the sustainability criteria of the Song and Dance Celebration traditions, to evaluate the vitality of other cultural traditions and basis for the national identity, such as Joninės (Dew Holiday), the Day of the Dead, singing traditions, food preparing traditions, etc.

The Lithuanian Song Celebrations excel in their genre diversity. In 2014 the programme was extensive and diverse, and it suggested many options. According to "Spinter research" data, the Song Celebration is first and foremost connected with singing, as the interest in the dance programme has decreased twice. In general, folk art exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts and Design, a traditional craft city for children near the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and the concert of *kanklės "Skambėkite, kanklės"* at the Saint Jonas Church has received the least attention of the participants.

The song day "Here is my home" was selected (by 43 percent) as the most popular event, more popular among women and villagers. The Song Celebration's opening concert at the Cathedral Square was mentioned by the respondents aged 46, the residents having an average income, inhabitants of smaller towns, regional centres and villages. The procession from the Cathedral Square to Vingis Park was mostly appreciated by villagers.

On the one hand, a variety of events have become an exceptional feature of our Song Celebration, on the other hand, by adding a multitude of events under the umbrella of the Song Celebration, we are extending the field of meaningful

events to infinity, therefore we may lose the Celebration's sacral magic. Rituals that are an integral part of every celebration should not be turned into the profane, requesting a dimension of an alleged variety. The secret of the Celebration should be protected and transmitted from generation to generation by carefully choosing the elected inheritors and estimating the attempts "to reform" its meaning.

A new and relevant study *Choral Societies and Nationalism in Europe*, edited by Kristina Lajosi from the University of Amsterdam and Andreas Stynen from Archive and Documentation Centre for Flemish Nationalism (ADVN) appeared in 2015, published by Brill as 9th book of the series *National Cultivation of Culture.* There were many authors from twelve regions – Germany, France, Norway, Scotland, Wales, England, Denmark, Belgium, Catalonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Basque Countries and the Balkans, who examined the connections of choral traditions that emerged during the 19th century and nationalism. As stated by the editors, this is an innovative study, valuing the role of singing communities in the process of forming nations in the 19th century. On a wide scale publication the meaning of organised singing communities is revealed at the national and international level, highlighting the power and originality of the mobilisation phenomena in different European countries. The book is valued as an important contribution to the studies of nationalism and to the research of social history, revealing the importance of music, as well as the choral expression in the 19th century. From Norway to the Basque Countries, from Wales to Bulgaria, the influence of choral associations was studied and compared, reflecting on the development of the national awareness in different political and social circumstances.

"Forgotten" realities

While orientating to the tradition of the Song Celebration in the Baltic States, an important part of this Celebration – symbolism, was forgotten. Based on the traditional comprehension, symbolism could be described as an entirety composed of signs and images that reveals itself and substantiates the origin of the phenomena and the essence of symbolic expression. What kind of symbols is specific to the Song and Dance Celebration? Is it a virtual bird flying through time and space, or the ornamented columns, or playing with lighting in the fountains? Without doubt, time dictates its priorities, though the Celebration's symbolism is described as predetermined by tradition, conservative, real and meaningful heritage. It is no accident that the Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Song Celebration took place on the 28th of June, 2014 in Kaunas. This traditional event did not include meaningless songs and unsuccessful dance choreographies; it had a positive feedback as an attractive "celebration".

In the application of the Song and Dance Celebration prepared by UNESCO it was affirmed that this Celebration and the processes connected with it create a great inestimable value; and they have a symbolic meaning construction for strengthening the communities [Multinational Candidature File 2001: 6]. The Celebration and the traditions are appreciated as heritage, a phenomenon given by culture and history, on the other hand, the symbolic meaning has essential value of the Song and Dance Celebrations.

We should develop the major priorities, respond to challenges and pay attention to threats, which appear to be present for the Celebration; we should embrace the status of the event, appreciate our heritage, traditions and activities connected with nationality, seeking to excel in abundance, variety and "originality", and raise the political awareness of the uniting and strengthening content of the Celebration. Altogether, the meaningful concepts of the Song and Dance Celebration as a *vital tool in nation-building*, as *the most massive and inclusive communal event* and *cultural expression*, joining together all the three Baltic countries, reveal the true nature of distinctiveness [Multinational Candidature File 2001: 5]. General historical repertoire in all the countries is valued as a guarantee of immutability (ritualism). Enlarging the visual, ideological and factual inventory for the Celebration, we lose our conceptual purity, and we find ourselves in an abundant infinity, in constant changes and in eclectic traps. Maybe it is worth to devote more restraint, modesty, simplicity and thrift for this Celebration that is protected by UNESCO and cherished in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. "Let us divide this weight of the Celebration among ourselves: let us solemnly celebrate our National Day not every four years, but every year. One year – to enjoy amateur theatres, folk ensembles, folk art exhibitions, in another year we will not miss the ensembles' evening, *kanklės* (Lithuanian stringed instrument) performance, in the third year let us go to see a dance day, in the fourth year let us meet in the most important part of the Celebration under guardianship of UNESCO – in the Song Day" [Nakienė 2014: 67]. In this way the Song Celebration will not become a burden, and it will stimulate congregating of the people and experiencing the ritualistic alliance.

The Estonian society have given a sacral status to the Song Celebration. A "Singing Nation" is not just a metaphor. In the opinion of the professor Marju Lauristin from the Tartu University, the aim of the Song Celebration is to gather the largest part of the Estonian citizens to celebrate a shared set of sacral values. Of course, there are some people who would say that the Song Festival's time has come to an end. Nevertheless a research done by Estonians demonstrates that the Song Celebration is a celebration by the majority of Estonians, where they gather to experience their main national values together and to feel that they belong

to their own community. The participation in the Festival is very important as a common divergence from our everyday routine to appreciate the values that connect us with our past. It is similar to a religious feeling and perception. A research has also shown that Estonians have a great need for the sacral, and they also have grounds for this tradition.

Uniting and assembling the power of the Celebration, the appearance of the sacred in a *profane* environment, ritualistic experiences, when everything happens here and now, and the tradition that dates back almost one hundred years; and an opportunity is created for a civil choice. All of this oblige us to create meaningful politics, to preserve and stimulate culture, according to Antanas Maceina, the real objectification of a Lithuanian soul is the song, giving it "a form of existence to our life", and believing that "the song is a kind of being together, where everyone present has to participate" [Maceina 1993: 145].

When appreciating our spiritual priorities, should we forget the materialistic side of the Celebration? "It is the saddest thing for me that we are the biggest country from all the three countries but our funding is diametrically opposite in proportion. The smallest country – Estonia receives almost five times more funding for everything – from preparation works to the estimate of the Song Celebration, and for the support of the vitality of ensembles. Latvian funding is three times bigger than ours; we are lagging behind," claims the President of the Lithuanian Choral Union, Artistic Director of the choir "Ąžuoliukas", the professor Vytautas Miškinis in a press conference in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, on the 26th of February, 2015, comparing the Song Celebration's funding in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia[1]. We can generally estimate that the Song Celebration is the cheapest medium for education of patriotism and citizenship, therefore, taking into consideration its importance and popularity, we should increase the financial support for the Song Celebration's moral authority, and then we can create a future for the Celebration together.

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In the trilateral meeting of the Baltic culture committee that took place on the 23–24th of October, 2014 in Tallinn, the trilateral Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian programme for culture cooperation in 2015–2018 has been prepared and signed. It was decided to stimulate the participation and exchange among the countries in all sectors of culture and creativity, sharing information about rule making initiations, culture policy, and to continue collaboration in a multilateral

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[1] Available: http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/laisvalaikis/ivairenybes/kulturos-zmones-baiminasi-del-dainu-sventes-likimo-61-487610 (Viewed 5 March 2015.)

format for the Baltic and Nordic countries, to collaborate in order to implement UNESCO conventions and programmes, focusing on trilateral and international formats, new and relevant documents for all the three countries entering UNESCO's "World's memory" register. In the programme it is also envisaged to restore the structure of the Committee for the Baltic Coordination in order to preserve and revive the Song and Dance Celebration traditions, preparing a collaboration plan for the year 2015–2025.

Mutual culture policy of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, should not remain just a "protocol for good intentions" parallel research, sociological inquiries, instead it could open new perspectives for culture development, preserving and developing national priorities, collective memory and contexts, uniting all the three Baltic countries. Living without determining our culture priorities is the same as living without consciousness and wondering why one is lost in the complicated historical and cultural memory labyrinths. The sacred has to be fostered in mutual and unifying rituals of the Celebration that brings people together.

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THE SONG AND DANCE CELEBRATION IN LITHUANIA: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, THE FESTIVAL'S CONCEPT AND EVALUATION

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Abstract

Even though the Song and Dance Celebration is one of the greatest and most remarkable culture events in Lithuania, the importance of which is recognised both at national and global level, it has to be admitted that it receives rather little attention of social and culture researchers. Therefore a preliminary small-scale Lithuanian representative public opinion survey was conducted shortly after the last Song and Dance Celebration's closing (2014) to examine the socio-cultural integration potential of the Celebration, the prevalence of its concept in public consciousness, the activity of participation in festival's events as well as their evaluation. The data allow me to assess the prospects of continuity of the Song and Dance Celebration tradition in terms of societal attitudes, and also the meaning and viability of the Celebration among various demographic groups.

Keywords: *culture research, Song and Dance Celebration, culture identity.*

The Song and Dance Celebration as a cultural phenomenon

The Song and Dance Celebration is one of the biggest and most massive culture events in Lithuania, which amalgamates the most diverse social groups of the population into the festival whirl every four years: both young and mature people, residents of the capital as well as regional population, etc. Hardly any other holiday in Lithuania can match it in the sense of performers' diversity and audience, massiveness and active participation in the week-long celebration. Its uniqueness and significance is recognized of not only at the national level but also internationally, and its organization is governed by a special Law on the Song Celebrations of the Republic of Lithuania enacted in 2007 to safeguard the tradition.

However, this important phenomenon in Lithuania has been poorly studied. There are some historical studies on the topic, the newest and most comprehensive of which is a book by Juozas Mikutavičius *Lietuvių dainų švenčių tradicija* ("The Tradition of the Lithuanian Song Festivals") published in 2014. It reviews the history of Lithuanian Song Celebration from 1924 to 2014 and contains all the programmes and archival materials illustrated by hundreds of historical photographs [Mikutavičius 2014]. Despite the long history of the cultural tradition that is highly relevant to the persistence of Lithuanian national identity, there is a lack of its assessment from the sociological perspective. The present study is an attempt to fill this vacuum.

In 2014, the Song and Dance Celebration in Lithuania celebrated its 90th anniversary. Its popularity among the public, in terms of attracting visitors to events and ticket sales, shows that the Celebration retains its relevance and remains one of the liveliest contemporary events, cherishing Lithuanian national culture and traditions and the nation's sense of togetherness. It is this aspect of nation-building, in particular, that is emphasised by the state leaders, cultural policy makers and the organisers of the Song and Dance Celebration. Its importance is highlighted by the Law on the Song Celebrations as well. However, repeated concerns are also expressed in the Lithuanian media about the trends of Celebration's commercialisation or threats of losing its true essence because of too daring innovations inspired by the attempts to attract more spectators seeking for pure entertainment.

In order to find out which concept of the Celebration prevails among its performers and spectators in different age groups, how they evaluate the festival events, and to prepare for the launching a large-scale project aimed at comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon, a preliminary small-scale representative public opinion survey was conducted shortly after the closing of the latest Lithuanian Song and Dance Celebration[1] aimed at evaluating important aspects of public engagement in the Celebration. The aim of the current research is to find out the potential of Song and Dance Celebration for socio-cultural integration and the prevailing concept of the celebration in public consciousness. Traditionally, the dominant assumption of culture researchers and cultural policy makers is that the deepest concept of the Celebration is that of the nation's identity consolidation. However, a question arises whether the Celebration which takes place in conditions of free market economy becomes or does not become just another product of

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[1] The survey was conducted on July 16–26, 2014. The survey method – a standardised face-to-face questionnaire interview.

The sample consisted of 1005 respondents from the age of 18 to 75. The location of the survey – 65 sample points were distributed across the whole territory of the country to represent all the regions.

entertainment industry in the eyes of its performers and audience. Therefore the survey focused on two main aspects: a cognitive and normative aspect, and it covered the following issues:

- engagement of Lithuanian society into the events of the Song and Dance Celebration (participation, observation, interest);
- perception of its importance;
- evaluation of the quality of Celebration events.

In the following part of the article I will present the survey results concerning these issues and assess the factors that determine the diversity of activity and opinions among the population.

Engagement into the events of the Song and Dance Celebration

Recognising the importance of participation in cultural events and using cultural production both for personal development and to foster public cultural identity, the opening research questions were intended to determine the population's involvement in the Song and Dance Celebration events both in terms of participation and observation. The respondents were asked:

- Have you ever participated in the Song and Dance Celebration as a performer?
- Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?

The first question was answered positively by 15% of the respondents, of which 8% said they had performed in the festival once, and 7% – more than once. Evaluating these data from the Lithuanian perspective, it must be admitted that it is a very high rate of activity, especially if we take into account the data of the survey ordered by the Ministry of Culture (conducted in 2014) which demonstrate that among the Lithuanian public there are about 30% of the people who are likely to create or to participate in different cultural and artistic activities, and those who are actually involved in these activities amount to only 13% of the population. However, compared to the data of the studies of participation in the Song and Dance Celebrations conducted in Estonia (2013) and Latvia (2007, 2014), the involvement of the Lithuanian society in the celebration events appears to be rather passive. For instance, in the Estonian study, even half of the 15–74 year olds told they had attended the Celebration at least once [Lauristin, Vihalemm 2013]. It is evident that different histories of the tradition have their impact here: in the neighbouring countries the Song and Dance Celebrations originated from their community initiatives at the end of the 19th century, while in Lithuania it was only in the 20th century that this festival was introduced by the decision of the state institutions. Therefore, the public consciousness of neighbouring countries is dominated by a much stronger attitude towards the participation in the festivity as a continuity of cultural ritual and personal prestige.

Speaking about the demographic profile of the performers of Celebration, women declared their participation in the Song and Dance Celebration more often than men (19.2% of women compared to 10.4% of men), the same can be said about the respondents who have a higher level of education, those who have a higher family income, and city residents (see figures 1–3). It should be noted that these categories of the population are more susceptible to active cultural and artistic activities in general, therefore it is not surprising that they also participate more actively in various events of the Song and Dance Celebration.

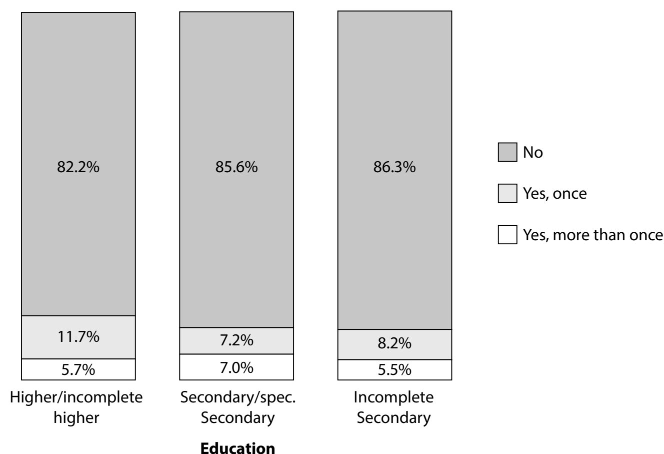

Figure 1. The impact of the level of education on the participation in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Have you ever participated in the Song and Dance Celebration as a performer?*)

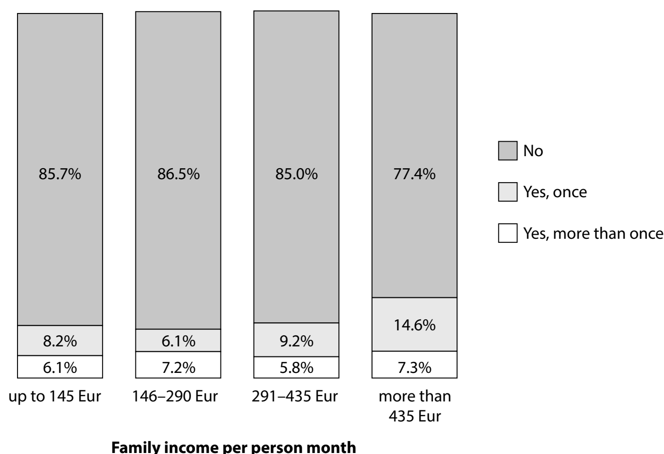

Figure 2. The impact of family income on the participation in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Have you ever participated in the Song and Dance Celebration as a performer?*)

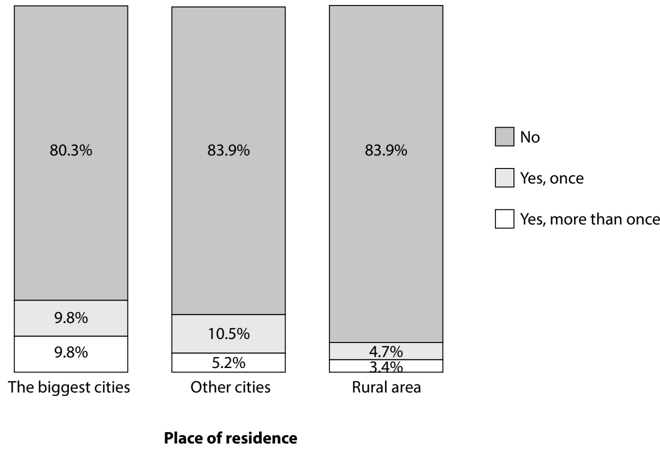

Figure 3. The impact of the place of residence on the participation in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Have you ever participated in the Song and Dance Celebration as a performer?*)

Considering other demographic differences, age is one of the most significant factors which affects participation in the Celebration events as the youngest generation less often than the elderly state that they have participated in the festival as performers (see figure 4). Lower participation rates (as a cumulative indicator) of young people may be partly explained by the life-cycle effect caused by a shorter span of their active conscious life. However, it is likely that these data reflect actual attitudinal differences between generations, as contemporary youth has become

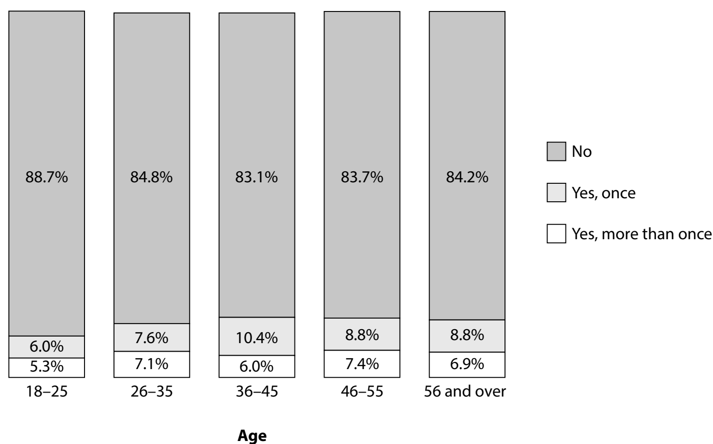

Figure 4. The impact of the age on the participation in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Have you ever participated in the Song and Dance Celebration as a performer?*)

less involved in the traditional cultural activities during the last few decades, and the actual situation can only be disclosed by a longitudinal study.

It is not only the activity and engagement of the participants but also the audience's involvement in the events that matters in assessing the potential of the festival to mobilise society and to strengthen its cultural identity. When asked *Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?* even 62% of the respondents gave a positive answer. The majority of them – even 76% stated they watched the Celebration events on TV, 10% declared their live participation in the events as spectators, others said they followed the media coverage of the Celebration[1].

In terms of demographic differences, the Song and Dance Celebration events are watched on TV more often by women, older respondents (46 years and over) and the residents of smaller cities. The media coverage of the Celebration is followed more frequently by the residents of the biggest cities, and the most frequent spectators of live events are the respondents with the highest level of education as well as the residents of the biggest cities (see figures 5–9). Thus, it can be concluded that the involvement into the Song and Dance Celebration events is influenced both by personal lifestyle factor and opportunity factor since, for instance, women and older people generally spend more time than men or younger people watching the events on television, meanwhile the residents of cities, and especially of the capital, have more opportunities to directly observe the festival events than people who do not live in the capital.

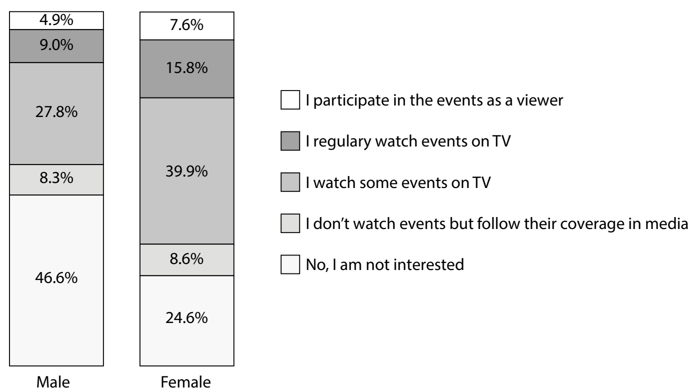

Figure 5. The impact of gender on the engagement in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?*)

[1] According to the data of the beforementioned Estonian survey, as many as two-thirds of the respondents indicated their participation in the events as spectators and 90% stated that they followed TV and radio broadcasts of the events.

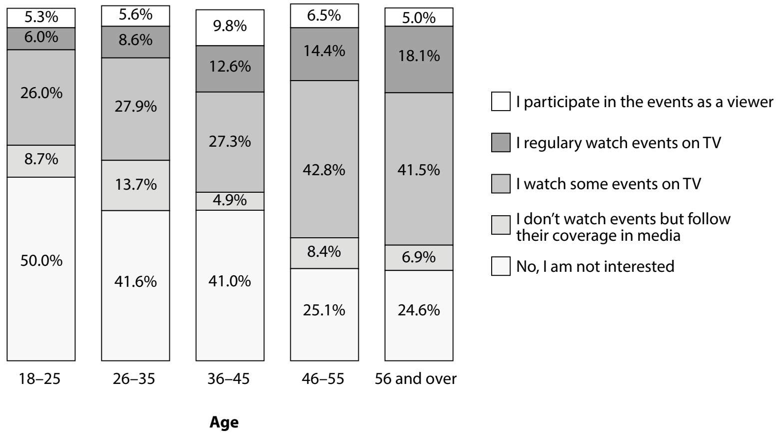

Figure 6. The impact of the age on the engagement in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?*)

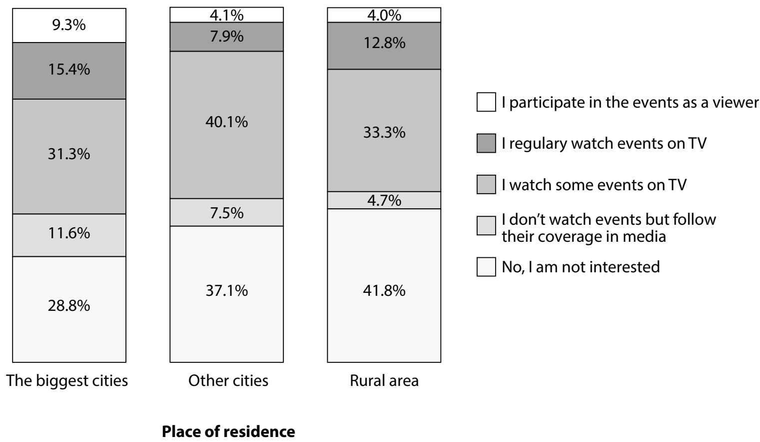

Figure 7. The impact of the place of residence on the engagement in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?*)

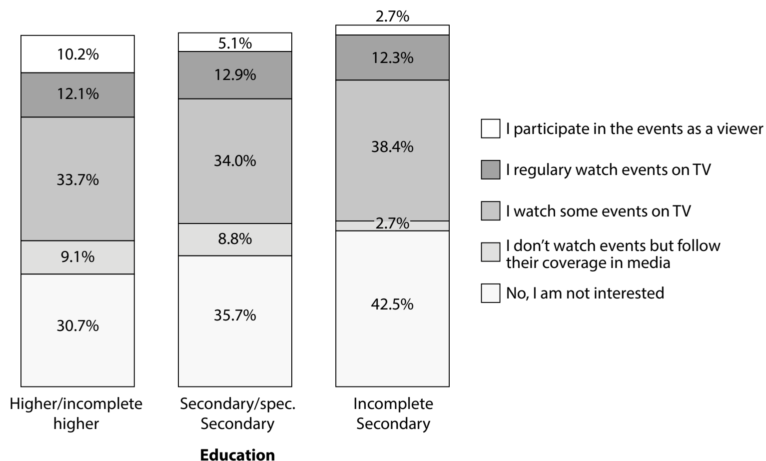

Figure 8. The impact of the level of education on the engagement in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?*)

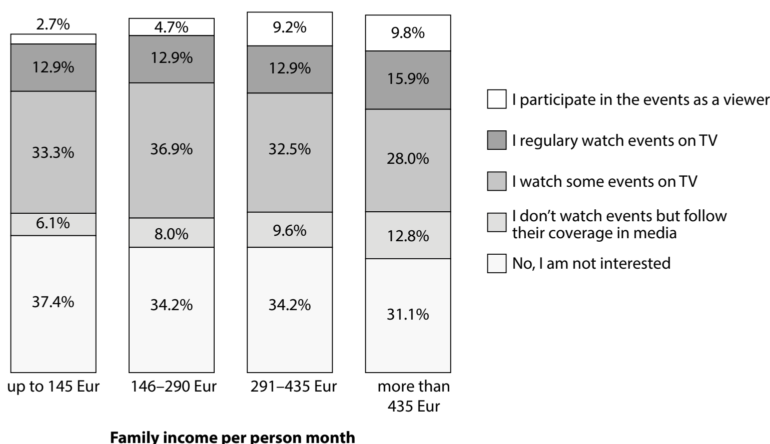

Figure 9. The impact of family income on the engagement in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?*)

The respondents who claimed they were not interested in the Song and Dance Celebration events (there were 350 of them in the sample or almost 35% of all the respondents[1]) were asked about the causes of their disinterest by an open question: *If you are not interested in the Song and Dance Celebration, could you tell us why?* The absolute majority of those who answered indicated a lack of interest (the most

[1] Just to compare, there were only 9% of such respondents in Estonia.

popular answers were *I don't like it*, *I am not fond of folk culture*, *It is boring*, *It is dedicated to an older audience* and other similar answers) and only one fifth of them identified a lack of opportunity (lack of time, long distance, poor health, etc.).

Perception of the importance of the Song and Dance Celebration

Even though the Song and Dance Celebration is one of the greatest and major culture events in Lithuania, it receives scant attention of social and culture researchers. The organisers of the Celebration particularly highlight its functions such as fostering national Lithuanian culture and traditions and strengthening the nation's sense of community. The Law on the Song Celebrations of the Republic of Lithuania also emphasises the links of the festivity tradition with the ethnic upbringing of the society. However, a question arises whether this concept of the Celebration prevails among the general public as well, or rather this festival is just another product of the entertainment industry in the eyes of the viewers. To answer this question, the survey has assessed two aspects of the perception of the Song and Dance Celebration:

- spontaneous associations with the name the *Song and Dance Celebration*;
- the assessment of the Song and Dance Celebration importance for Lithuania.

When asked to spontaneously describe what the first idea is which comes to their minds when thinking of the Song and Dance Celebration (*Q.: What is the first thought, idea or association which comes to your mind when you hear the name of the Song and Dance Celebration?*), the respondents mainly emphasised the aspects of feast (25%) and massiveness (12%). Meanwhile, the aspect of nation-building and fostering Lithuanian cultural heritage and traditions was mentioned spontaneously just by every tenth respondent (see figure 10).

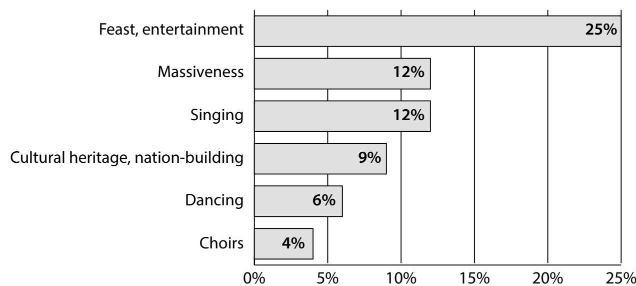

Figure 10. Spontaneous associations with the Song and Dance Celebration (%).

It is noteworthy that when asked about the importance of the Song and Dance Celebration by a closed ended question with different pre-defined answers (*Q.: Why do you think the Song and Dance Celebration is important for Lithuania?*), the

respondents mostly indicated the functions of fostering cultural heritage (65%), encouraging patriotism (42%), and unifying the nation (41%), meanwhile the function of entertainment received secondary attention (see figure 11).

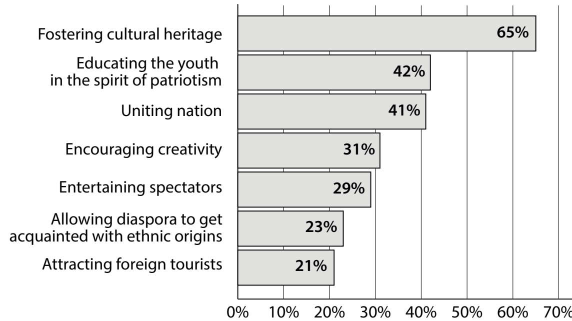

Figure 11. The importance of the Song and Dance Celebration for Lithuania (%) (*multiple answers possible; sum exceeds 100%*).

These results indicate that although the Song and Dance Celebration is perceived mostly as an entertainment and amusement, the society is well aware of its deeper sense and tradition, and they perceive its importance for consolidating the nation and enhancing ethnic identity.

Evaluation of the quality of the Song and Dance Celebration

Continuous and systematic preparation for the Song and Dance Celebrations is safeguarded by a special Law on the Song Celebrations of the Republic of Lithuania (enacted in 2007) regulating their organisation, ensuring state protection of the tradition and its continuity, and defining a variety of institutional responsibilities. To ensure a high artistic level of the events, pre-festival screenings of art groups are organised to combine amateur and professional artistic performers, and every festival's repertoire is formed by an authoritative commission. In order to find out the public opinion whether this goal is achieved, the respondents were asked two questions:

- Evaluate the professionalism of the Song and Dance Celebration's events in the ten-point scale;
- Do you think that Lithuania can be proud of the Song and Dance Celebration in the world?

The evaluation of the professionalism of the Celebration from the perspective of the society (i.e. spectators) is very high: as much as 39% of the respondents gave it ten points, 30% – nine points and only two respondents gave it less than 5 points (an average score – 8.81 points). Although the evaluation of professionalism

is very high in all demographic groups, its direct dependence on the age can be observed: the older the people are, the higher score they give to the level of the Celebration's professionalism (see figure 12).

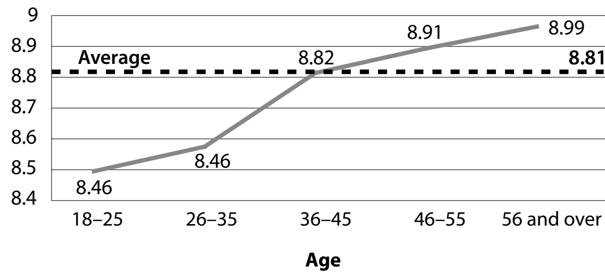

Figure 12. Age influence for the assessment of the professionalism of Song and Dance Celebration. (*Q.: Evaluate the professionalism of the Song and Dance Celebration's events in the ten-point scale*)

The answers to the question whether Lithuania can be proud of the Song and Dance Celebration in the world are explicit: 47% of the respondents gave a definitely positive answer, and another 35% responded rather positively (see figure 13).

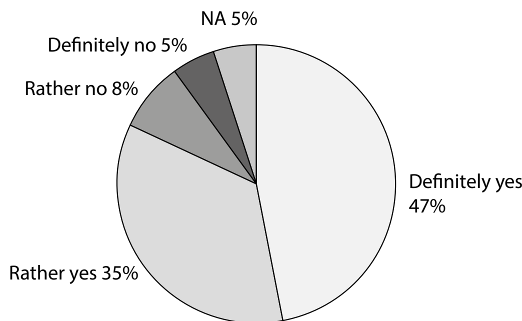

Figure 13. The importance of Song and Dance Celebration for Lithuania. (*Q.: Do you think that Lithuania can be proud of the Song and Dance Celebration in the world?*)

The results are similar for all the demographic groups of the population, also between generations (see figure 14). These data show the potential of sustainability and continuity of the feast since various groups of the population are well aware of its importance and international significance.

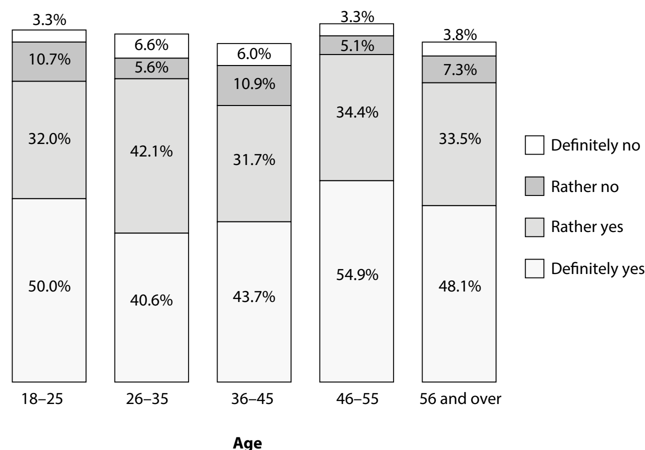

Figure 14. The age influence on the assessment of international significance of the Song and Dance Celebration. (*Q.: Do you think that Lithuania can be proud of the Song and Dance Celebration in the world?*)

Ethnic differences of participation and evaluation of the Song and Dance Celebration events

It is foreseeable that the very nature of the Song and Dance Celebration, its mission to foster the Lithuanian identity and strengthen ethnic consolidation determines that one of the key demographic factors affecting the involvement into the festivity events, knowledge about them, their understanding and evaluation is the respondents' nationality. However, the impact is far from being as significant as one could expect – it turned out that not only Lithuanians, but also people of other nationalities[1] are involved in the festivity as performers (see figure 15), they observe both live and broadcasted events (see figure 16) and consider it to be the phenomenon Lithuania can be proud of on a global scale (see figure 17). It should be noted that the respondents of ethnic minorities said that Lithuania can be proud of the Song and Dance Celebration even more often than Lithuanians. Moreover, they rated the level of its professionalism as very high: an average score for Poles was 8.89, for Russians – 8.31, for the respondents of other nationalities – 8.88 (to compare, an average score for Lithuanians was 8.83).

[1] Since a significant part of Lithuanian population is of mixed ethnic origin, the practice in sociological research prevails to treat the language in which the respondents speak at home as an indicator of their ethnic origin. In our research Lithuanian as the language spoken at home was indicated by 84.1% of the respondents, Polish – by 6.9% of the respondents, Russian – by 5.9% of the respondents, and other languages – by 3.1% of the respondents, which precisely corresponds to the statistical data on ethnic composition of the Lithuanian population.

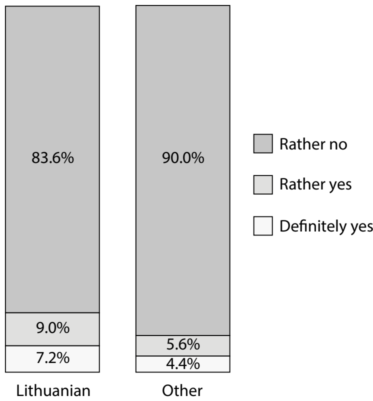

Figure 15. Ethnicity influence on the participation in the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Have you ever participated in the Song and Dance Celebration as a performer?*)

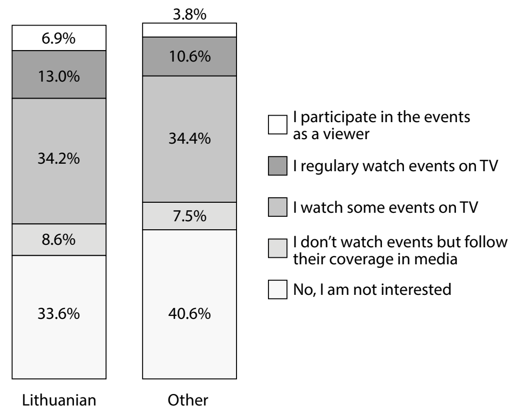

Figure 16. Ethnicity influence on the watching of the Song and Dance Celebration events. (*Q.: Do you personally observe the events of the Song and Dance Celebration?*)

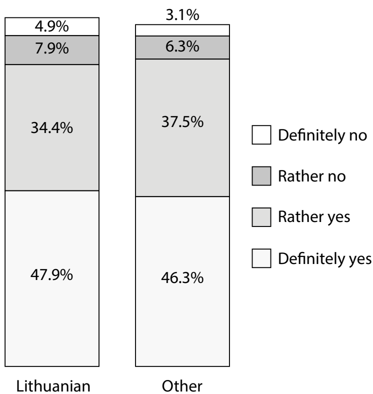

Figure 17. Ethnicity influence on the Song and Dance Celebration evaluation. (*Q.: Do you think that Lithuania can be proud of the Song and Dance Celebration in the world?*)

Conclusion

Despite the recognition of the Song and Dance Celebration as a culturally significant phenomenon both nationally and internationally, no fundamental research has been conducted in Lithuania so far that could lead to a grounded discussion about the public importance of the feast, the assumptions for its sustainability, the direction of tradition shaping and its policies, etc. The data of the present study have evidence of positive prospects for the continuity of the Celebration tradition in terms of societal attitudes. They prove the vitality of the Lithuanian Song and Dance Celebration among various demographic groups, including the population of non-Lithuanian origin. For instance, the data indicate that our residents of non-Lithuanian origin have a very favourable disposition towards the Song and Dance Celebration. They also show a great potential of incorporating all ethnic groups of the population in the Celebration events, if not in terms of active participation, then at least in terms of observing and live interest. At the same time, they signal that attention should be paid to better integration of the youngest generation into the feast because at the moment they are the least active participants and spectators of the Song and Dance Celebration.

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VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS IN THE STUDY OF TRADITION: THE CASE OF THE LATVIAN SONG AND DANCE CELEBRATION

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Abstract

Most researchers, focusing on the study of tradition, admit that the term *tradition* has several meanings that are open to different interpretations. Sociology, anthropology, and ethnology apply different approaches to the study of tradition; yet it has been often researched also interdisciplinary, using various theoretical and empirical tools. The choice of the empirical methods was largely determined by the theoretical approaches to the concept of tradition, especially ethnologist Simon J. Bronner's premise that all the explanations of tradition perceive it as a subjective phenomenon that does not easily yield to reflection and usually manifests itself as an intrinsic and intangible part of everyday life. The specific nature of tradition has encouraged the development of methods suitable to the analysis of symbolic practices which are difficult to read. The above considerations prompt to test the applicability of visual research methods hitherto seldom used in the study of tradition, choosing as the case study the everyday practices of the Song and Dance Celebration movement. The objective of the current research is to establish whether and in what ways the application of visual research methods to the study of tradition advances the understanding of tradition using as the example of tradition the arts groups' everyday practices during the Song and Dance Celebration interim in Latvia. We pose two central research questions: 1) what everyday practices are typical of the arts groups during the Song and Dance Celebration interim; 2) which aspects of tradition can be explored through visual research methods. The data lead to the conclusion that photo-elicitation is the best visual approach for encouraging reflection on the everyday practices and their motivation. It can be used as the only research method, while the visual data acquired by the researcher need supplementary methods, such as the in-depth interview. Visual data reveal the variety of everyday practices and assist in

describing the aspects that are difficult to formulate, e. g., to illustrate emotions and feelings. It is concluded that visual research methods lead to novel and original results, reveal additional everyday practices upholding tradition and open new possibilities for interpreting their significance and symbolism.

Keywords: *tradition, Song and Dance Celebration, visual research methods, visual data, photo-elicitation.*

Introduction

In view of the rapid changes taking place in the values and cultural environment of the 21st-century society, it is crucial to provide such mechanisms for the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions that would correspond to the nature of the current developments. The issue about the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions usually surfaces in the public space over the periods of radical changes, when economically and politically significant decisions concerning reforms and innovations are made. The interest of the academic circles in this phenomenon is upheld by the presence of tradition in individual and collective practices within the context of glocalization processes, which furthers also the development of methodological approaches for studying tradition.

Theoretical sources attest that the explanations of tradition are complex and multi-layered. It has always been challenging to study the phenomenon of tradition due to its intangibility and subjectivity. Folklorist Richard Bauman has described tradition as a symbolic construct creating a connection between the present and the past and imbuing particular cultural forms with value [Bauman 1992: 32]. Although various cultures and trends of thought may treat tradition differently, e.g., it can be perceived as an obstacle to development and innovations or as a renewable future resource, ethnologist Simon J. Bronner considers that all the descriptions of tradition see it as a subjective phenomenon [Bronner 2011: 5]. The high degree of subjectivity is demonstrated by the fact that not only theoreticians but also tradition carriers[1] understand and treat the traditions practised in ambiguous and differentiated ways. S. J. Bronner proposes that even the practitioners of a tradition are unreflective about their tradition [Bronner 2011: 5]; it can be explained not only by the intangibility of tradition and unawareness of its elements but also by its integration into everyday life. Researchers have divided opinions on the issue whether the tradition carriers' attitude towards tradition and their ability to reflect on it are related to its transmission potency: there are researchers who consider that

[1] Although Bronner uses the terms *givers* and *recipients* to describe the practitioners of tradition, the authors of the present paper use the term *tradition carriers* popular also in Latvian.

practicing tradition does not require reflexivity, while others believe that reflexivity is an important instrument for inheriting tradition; for example, S. J. Bronner considers that understanding tradition might ensure one's sense of belonging [Bronner 2011]. Tradition can be perceived as an interdisciplinary phenomenon, which both expands the understanding of tradition and complicates its study, as the methods offered by various disciplines yield contradictory results motivating researchers to seek interdisciplinary approaches to exploring tradition that would comprehensively include the subjective forms of expressing tradition and allow tradition carriers themselves reflect on their tradition.

Over the last decades, the social sciences and humanities have developed visual research methods as an innovative alternative to the conventional empirical data collection methods. In sociology and anthropology these recent developments are known as visual sociology and visual anthropology. However, the similar theoretical models and strategies used in both these disciplines make visual research methods into an interdisciplinary approach. Despite being often used by sociologists and anthropologists, who have developed the theoretical basis and practice, visual research methods still remain largely untried in many areas of the social sciences. Visual research methods constitute a large body of approaches based on the visual data acquired in empirical research and applicable to both data collection and analysis [Margolis&Pauwels 2011]. One of the advantages of visual methods is the capacity of the visual aspect to operate with symbolic potency, which visual sociologist Jason Hughes calls signifying power [Hughes 2012: xxi]. It is an essential argument for selecting visual methods in the study of tradition, which seeks ways how to disclose the implied symbolic meanings. Another advantage offered by visual methods is the possibility to differentiate the sources from which the visual data are acquired, separating the researcher from the subject of research or – in the present paper – from the perspective of tradition carriers, thus opening access to the research subjects' reflection on their tradition [Pauwels 2011: 8].

Taking into account the above-mentioned considerations, it can be proposed that tradition, being a subjective phenomenon, does not always yield sufficiently valid and nuanced explanations if it is researched by the methods of the social sciences and humanities (especially by the means of various questionnaires and interviews), because tradition includes intangible and symbolic aspects, whose significance cannot be always revealed through verbalization. As tradition is intrinsic to everyday practices, it motivates to seek special research methods that would allow tradition carriers to reflect on their traditions. Consequently, it is necessary to find such research methods that would account for the subjective expressions of tradition and allow tradition carriers themselves to reflect on their traditions.

The applicability of visual research methods to the study of tradition has been tested selecting as a case study the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebrations preserved at the national level in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, which includes also the preparations for the celebration. A significant contribution to the documentation and study of the development of the Song and Dance Celebrations as a tradition in the Baltic States was made by the preparation process of the candidature file for the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) list of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In 2003, the tradition and symbolism of the Song and Dance Celebration in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were recognised a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity [UNESCO Latvijas Nacionālā komisija]. This tradition is unique in the world due to its popular appeal, the scale and regularity of celebrations, the repertoire combining traditional and modern music, and the broad participation covering all ages. The Song and Dance Celebrations are a regular and cyclic process culminating in the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration that takes place at specifically created locations once in five years. The tradition is based on a mass amateur movement led by professional conductors and choreographers that includes various forms of art. The Song and Dance Celebrations play a significant part in consolidating society and strengthening the national identity. Until now society and researchers have paid greater attention to the Song and Dance Celebrations as a set of events organized once in five years. There is no doubt that these celebrations demonstrate the artistic potential of people and vividly represent the national identity and patriotism. However, we would like to analyse the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebrations as a set of complex practices involving several hundred thousands of people,[1] who create it contributing incessant and systematic effort over the five-year period between the celebrations or the so-called "celebration interim" [Dziesmu un deju svētku likums 2005]. During the interim the arts groups carry out regular work, implementing various everyday practices. Researching these practices might assist in establishing their relevance for the transmission and preservation of the Dance and Song Celebration tradition.

The objective of the current research is to ascertain whether and in what ways the application of visual research methods to the study of tradition advances the understanding of tradition using as the example of tradition the arts groups' everyday practices during the Song and Dance Celebration interim in Latvia. We pose two central research questions: 1) what everyday practices are typical

[1] In 2015, the community of the Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia consisted of approximately 145,000 members of various arts groups of all the ages [LR Kultūras ministrija 2015: 7].

of the arts groups during the Song and Dance Celebration interim; 2) which aspects of tradition can be explored through visual research methods; 3) what is the most appropriate application of visual research methods. In order to answer these questions, we will briefly characterize the theoretical aspects of analysing the phenomenon of tradition and the possibilities for interdisciplinary approaches to the study of tradition, as well as establish the hitherto typical trends in the application of visual research methods.

Tradition as an interdisciplinary phenomenon

The term *tradition* is widely used in several disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, such as anthropology, folkloristics and sociology, as well as in history and culture studies. Each discipline interprets tradition differently, thus expanding the multi-layered explanation of tradition as an interdisciplinary phenomenon. Therefore, the concept *tradition* does not *belong* to any discipline in particular and the contemporary studies of tradition emphasize precisely its interdisciplinary perspectives [Finnegan 1991; Bula 2011]. The different interpretations of various disciplines have caused lasting problems by constricting the concept of tradition into specific categories instead of offering a comprehensive and essential view; thus, anthropology and folklore have described it as a positive category, while sociology has treated it negatively and has stated that tradition has no place in the studies of modern society, because it does not correspond to modern social structures [Bula 2011]. Only in the 1980s, sociologist Edward Shils's work *Tradition* (1981) introduced changes that marked the interdisciplinary turn in the study of tradition; the author objected to the practice of using tradition in various areas of human activity and describing it in the sources of various disciplines while ignoring the essence of tradition and its contribution to everyday life [Shils 1981; Bula 2011: 143]. Thirty years later was published a book that is one of the most outstanding contemporary works on tradition and treats it as interdisciplinary; it is folklorist Simon J. Bronner's book *Explaining Traditions: Folk Behavior in Modern Culture* (2011) [Bronner 2011]. Most tradition researchers admit that the term *tradition* contains many meanings that are open to different interpretations and covers pronouncedly different phenomena, which complicates the possibility to arrive at an unequivocal definition. Tradition researchers have used various epistemological instruments to specify the scientific interpretation of this phenomenon: they have sought its etymology in different languages, researched its origins in various sciences, offered explanations and descriptions of this phenomenon, compared it to other phenomena and summarised various approaches to it. Yet very few authors have attempted a straightforward definition. One of them is historian David Gross:

The term "tradition" refers to a set of practices, a constellation of beliefs, or a mode of thinking that exists in the present, but was inherited from the past. [..] A tradition, then, can be a set of observances, a collection of doctrines or teachings, a particular type of behavior, a way of thinking about the world or oneself, a way of regarding others or interpreting reality [Gross 1991: 8].

This explanation of tradition shows it as a multi-layered phenomenon that manifests itself as a set of various practices or beliefs but excludes the material forms of the process it transmits. According to Gross, artefacts, symbols, images, or institutions are not traditions but may be grounded in traditional values [Gross 1991:8, 9]. E. Shils, however, considers that in the process of transmission anything can become a tradition: artefacts, natural objects, all accomplished patterns of the human mind, and all patterns of belief or modes of thinking and technical practices. In addition to this, the understanding of tradition can be very narrow, designating some specific tradition, for example, *The Socialist Tradition* or *The Tradition of Modernity,* etc. [Shils 1981: 3; 16]. The divergent, complicated and sometimes contradictory explanations of the term *tradition* found in different disciplines clearly demonstrate that it is impossible to operate with the whole set of meanings within the boundaries of one research, therefore researchers tend to choose one aspect of tradition that is relevant to the specific discipline, theoretical stance or research.

The present research will pay special attention to the tradition carriers' ability or inability to reflect on and communicate their ideas of tradition, because the research will focus on the possibilities to study tradition. This problem is discussed in the works by E. Shils and S. J. Bronner. E. Shils believes that when tradition is accepted, it is vivid and vital to those who accept it; it is the past in the present but it is as much part of the present as any very recent innovation [Shils 1981: 13]. S. J. Bronner continues this theme discussing the argument that tradition carriers who encounter tradition as lived experience are incapable of reflecting on it. This does not imply that the significance of tradition diminishes, because the inability to reflect on the traditions practised only confirms how relevant and sometimes also intrinsic traditions are to their carriers. To reflect on tradition means to speak about such powers and functions that are difficult to explain and, in attempting to do that, one faces the prejudice that tradition should simply be without any rational explanations that might belittle its sacred nature. Such prejudices appear, because one of the explanations of tradition lies in its symbolic nature; by revealing the importance of human interaction in the processes of tradition, it is possible to reveal the symbols it contains, the ways these symbols are transmitted and values that in modern culture are grounded in society and political and psychological influences, for traditions form the basis of religion, as well as law, politics, art

and other areas related to the progress of society. Researchers should not assume that people practice tradition because everybody does it; there should be some reason that people often are unaware of. And understanding the significance of the tradition they participate in would assist tradition carriers in achieving a sense of belonging and finding their bearings in the modern individualized society. It is not accidental that S. J. Bronner equates the ability to reflect on traditions with the preservation of one's social identity [Bronner 2011; 5–10]. This aspect is crucial to the expressions of the Song and Dance Celebration tradition. *The Questionnaire of the Participants of the Song and Dance Celebration* (2014) organized by the Research Centre of the Latvian Academy of Culture indicates that the participants perceive the celebration as a very essential instrument for constructing patriotism and national identity [Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas Zinātniskās pētniecības centrs 2014].

It can be concluded that, due to the diversity of theoretical approaches and the interdisciplinary interpretation, the phenomenon of tradition cannot be adapted to some comprehensive understanding of this term and its definition. When analysing a particular tradition, it is more expedient to use the aspects of tradition mentioned in various theoretical sources. All in all six aspects characterizing tradition have been identified. These are: **continuity, changeability, innovation and creativity, the aspect of time, intangible and symbolic aspect, tradition carrier.** The above-mentioned definitions of tradition cannot be very well applied to its explanation, while the enumerated aspects of tradition can become the basis for a more inclusive analysis. The continuity of tradition is ensured by its uninterrupted transmission from one generation to the next, thus establishing its authority [Bauman 1992: 31; Vaz da Silva 2012: 41]. Understanding tradition is related also to the aspect of time, because tradition, being an uninterrupted transmission process, contains references to the past and consequently to the changes brought by history [Shils 1981; Finnegan 2011: 112; Bula 2011: 124]. Tradition can be inherited if it not only contains the past values but also adapts to the values of a particular society at the present moment, therefore it should include the aspect of changeability [Gross 1991: 10, 21; Bronner 2011: 13; Vaz da Silva 2012: 40]. The sources of changeability and adaptability to modern needs are creativity and innovation [Bronner 2011: 97; Vaz da Silva 2012: 44]. The most important element in the transmission process of tradition is not handing down material values but the copying of symbolic and emotional values from the past into the present [Bauman 1992: 32; Bronner 2011: 31; Vaz da Silva 2012: 45]. Furthermore, tradition cannot be transmitted if there is no subject that transmits it and receives it. S. J. Bronner uses the terms *giver* and *recipient* [Bronner 2011: 27, 28]. The above-identified aspects of tradition will

not be analysed in greater detail, however, they will be the basis for the interpretation of the acquired empirical data.

The theoretical sources analysed discuss how tradition should be studied. Although the authors of these works do not offer precise methodological descriptions, only some case studies, they map out the trends in the modern humanities and social sciences. One of the most useful summaries is offered by the Latvian folklorist Dace Bula: 1) interdisciplinary studies predominate; 2) studies are based on qualitative methodology, for which fieldwork is very relevant; 3) there is no definitive list of methods to be applied to the analysis of the material [Bula 2011; 74]. The good practices in the study of tradition are as follows: to study tradition in the context of social and political processes; to take into account the changeability and transformations of tradition; to take into account the values of tradition carriers and specific circumstances; to focus on the everyday life practices. As the study of tradition permits a certain degree of speculation in order to analyse symbolic practices that are difficult to read, methodological innovations can be introduced. It prompts to attempt a description of the visual research methods that have not been hitherto widely used and to establish their applicability to the study of tradition [Bronner 2011: 10, 30; Finnegan 1991: 110, 114; Bula 2011: 47, 174].

Visual research methods

In difference from conventional research methods, visual research methods have entered the social sciences and humanities quite recently. They are grounded in the idea that valid scientific insight into society can be acquired by observing, analysing and theorizing its visual manifestations, such as human behaviour and material products of culture [Pauwels 2011: 3]. Although visual methods lack a homogeneous theoretical foundation and only few authors have attempted to create a homogeneous methodological basis, the increasing number of visual studies over the last years suggests that researchers are becoming aware of their advantages. Visual materials have had a long and venerable history as one of the major subjects of study in the social sciences and humanities, yet the discussion of visual research methods has gained relevance exactly at this point in time. There is no doubt that visual elements have become central to culture in contemporary Western society, which is proved by the increase of visual information acquired from electronic appliances (television, the Internet, printed materials, etc.), yet, as visual sociologist Gillian Rose notes, it is not valid to attribute the topicality of visual research methods only to the development of technology. It cannot be denied that scientific methods evolve and are influenced by the development

of technology; yet the central argument why researchers are becoming more interested in visual methods is their symbolic significance and narrative potential that is extremely important in cultural studies [Rose 2012]. Visual sociologist Jason Hughes also marks that the visual cannot be taken as something granted and obvious merely because we live in an increasingly visual world, because in reality the power of the visual material lies in its symbolic potency and it is imbued with a signifying power [Hughes 2012: xxi]. It means that with the help of visual methods it is possible to reveal not only the superficial and obvious visual layer but also the deeper symbolic meanings that people attribute to things, events, and decisions. Precisely this symbolic potency of the visual and its interdisciplinary features motivated researchers to apply visual methods to the analysis of tradition.

In research practice, the most often used visual data are photographs, which have been incorporated into social research projects. The most common application of photography in research is twofold: 2) as photo-elicitation, also known as photo-interview, where photography is used as visual stimulus [Hatte, Forin, Adams 2013].

Theoretical sources indicate that photography can be widely applied for scientific purposes, yet, over the history of the development of the social sciences, its use has caused divided responses. One of the central counterarguments is that its use is merely documentary and illustrative [Banks 2001: 115–118]. Therefore, great effort is devoted to developing the scientific foundation of photography, differentiating its uses for scientific and documentary purposes. Although sociologist Howard Becker points out that the purpose of any photograph is to study society [Becker 1974], the use of photography in empirical social inquiry differs, because it is used as part of a clearly defined research design, establishing a logical link between the research questions and the choice of data sources and analytical approach, the boundaries of inquiry are mapped out, the selection is sufficiently extensive and the primary concern is not data representation but data analysis [Wagner 2007]. It should be taken into account that basing a research exclusively on the analysis of photography could be very complicated. Research practice proves that one of the advantages of photo documentation in fieldwork is the co-operation with the subjects of research that can be as beneficial as the analysis of the images. For example, an artisan may be asked to pause in order to register some stage of his work process, at the same time creating a possibility to learn more about the significance of this process [Banks 2012: 122; Gold 2012: 89]. Visual researcher Steven J. Gold admits that photo documentation most often supplements other methods, such as literature reviews, participant observation, in-depth interviews and the inspection of statistics [Gold 2012: 91].

One of such approaches can be derived from visual methods; it is photo-elicitation or photo-interview, where the photographs created by the researcher, the informant or some other person are used as a visual stimulus during the interview. It means that, during a conventional in-depth interview, the researcher shows the informant the photographs and the informant may use them as a basis for reflection on the issues the researcher is interested in. Already during the very first experiments with using photography in interviews, John Collier concluded that the subjects of research may be for various reasons unwilling to answer the questions of an in-depth interview and feel uncomfortable [Collier 1967]; therefore it is essential to break the verbal pattern of questions-answers. Photographs have the advantage of not posing questions but rather initiating a conversation about them, therefore psychologically they are perceived as a third party in the conversation. In difference from in-depth interviews, a relationship between three elements – the researcher (interviewer), the subject of research (informant) and the stimulus (photograph) – is established and the authority in the dialogue shifts from the researcher to the subject of research [Lapenta 2011].

Analysing the experience of researchers, it becomes evident that photo-elicitation is one of the most perspective approaches in visual methods applicable to the interpretation of intangible phenomena and orientated towards the co-operation between the researcher and the subject of research [Hatte, Forin, Adams 2013]. The studies of theoretical sources indicate that, although photo-elicitation has many advantages, its disadvantages should not be ignored. The analysts of visual research methodology [Hurworth, 2003; Hatte, Forin, Adams 2013] have listed several pros and cons in the use of photo-elicitation, which we have integrated and offer as a systematized set of pros and cons (table 1). The pros of photo-elicitation can be divided into three groups: 1) its ability to adapt to various research designs; 2) increasing influence of the subject of research and decreasing authority of the researcher; 3) as a result of reflections it is possible to acquire deeper insight into the phenomenon researched. The cons can also be divided into three groups: 1) due to the close co-operation with the subject of research, the researcher must be open and flexible; 2) it may be complicated to access the data; 3) the need for a specific and sometimes expensive material-technical base. It has been concluded that photo-elicitation approach in visual methods has many essential advantages that are especially relevant in inquiries seeking deeper insight into the research problem, e.g., attempting to interpret and analyse some abstract or intangible phenomenon, such as tradition, which is weakly rationalized and incompletely understood by the subjects of research.

Table 1.

Photo-elicitation: pros and cons

PROS	
Flexibly adapts to the research design	• can be used at any stage of the research (as the pre-research or as the central approach); • can be combined with other methods (in-depth interview, focus group, etc.).
Decreases the authority of the researcher and increases the influence of the subject of research	• diminishes the researcher's control over the choices and interpretations made by the subject of research; • establishes trust between the researcher and the subject of research and expands the possibilities of communication; • allows the subjects of research to reflect on themselves.
The possibility to acquire deeper insight into the phenomenon researched through reflection	• allows to combine the verbal and visual languages, establishing a link between the psychological and physical realities; • allows to visually represent ideas as a unified whole; • opens a possibility to view the phenomenon from the *inside* and see the context; • generates unpredictable information; • elicits conscious and unconscious knowledge that informants evade mentioning or find difficult to mention; • allows the informant to discuss personally significant abstract or complex concepts; • helps to express feelings and values through the psychological and emotional elements and symbols of the visuals.
CONS	
The researcher must be open and flexible	• the approach is time-consuming and requires patience on the researcher's part; • the researcher must intensely communicate with the subject of research, especially in cases when reflexive photographs are necessary; • the research process may diverge from the plan and radical changes may be introduced; • the researcher must be ready to include in the minutes of the interview the photographs, as well as to re-consider whether and how to include the photographs, depending on the agreement with the particular informant, which makes taking minutes more complicated.

Complicated access to the data	• not all the informants can be asked to create reflexive photographs (such as children or people who do not know how to operate even with the basic equipment); • the subjects of research may be for various reasons unwilling to take photographs, e.g., because it is time-consuming or they are not interested in photography; • the researcher may fail to acquire the promised photographs, because the subjects of research may not send them or do not wish to send them, because they, for example, regret taking them; • the subject of research might have chosen to take different photographs if he / she did not have to show them to the researcher.
Need for the material-technical base	• special equipment (camera) that requires larger financial resources; • the necessity to ensure against the possibility that the subject of research may lose or break the equipment.

Methodology

The possibility to apply visual research methods to tradition and the type of information acquired by these methods have been tested in a research focusing on the everyday practices of the arts groups in the Song and Dance Celebration interim. In the introduction of the paper we have already stated the necessity to research these practices, establishing not only the relevance of the Song and Dance Celebration's culmination point but also the part played by the everyday practices of the numerous members of the arts groups in preserving and transmitting tradition.

The research is designed in accordance with the basic principles of qualitative methodology and has six stages (table 2) that are predominantly grounded in two approaches derived from visual methods and are supplemented by an in-depth interview as a method of data collection. The visual data used in the research are photographs acquired using the two approaches in visual research methods described above: 1) the analysis of the visual data created by the researcher during fieldwork; 2) photo-elicitation using the visual materials created by the informant. Applying the first approach, the researcher carries out fieldwork doing observations and taking photographs that register the everyday activities of the arts groups (rehearsals, concerts, etc.), supplementing them with notes and contextual information. The second approach focuses on the participation of the informants in acquiring data; the members of the arts groups were asked to take photographs of their everyday activities, which were later used as a visual stimulus

in the interviews with the very same members of the arts groups. Although the first approach mostly focused on acquiring data for analysis, while the second approach was used as a visual stimulus, it was concluded that the photographs taken by the informants allowed drawing valid conclusions about the everyday practices of the arts groups.

Table 2.

The design of the research: six stages

Stages of the research	
1	Selection of the arts groups, pre-research and communication
2	Fieldwork (observation of the arts groups and acquiring visual data)
3	In-depth interviews with the leader/leaders of the arts groups and other persons involved
4	Acquiring reflexive visual data from the members of the arts groups
5	Photo-elicitation sessions with the members of the arts groups
6	Data analysis

All in all, 14 arts groups participated in the research. All the arts groups involved in the research were studied visually: the researcher did observations and created photographs, but in 9 cases an in-depth research was carried out, organizing in-depth interviews and acquiring the photographs created by the members of the arts groups that were later used in photo-interviews. The overall number of the visual data (photographs) used in the analysis is 1971. 1815 of them were acquired during fieldwork, while 156 were acquired from the members of the arts groups. 13 in-depth interviews and 7 photo-elicitation interviews were acquired.

Methodology and the methods of acquiring data in the present research have a twofold purpose: to provide insight into the phenomenon researched, as well as to test the applicability of visual research methods to studying the everyday practices of arts groups. In the present paper we will not give detailed information about the results obtained in studying the everyday practices of the arts groups but, in accordance with the research questions, focus on the conclusions about the applicability of visual research methods to the study of tradition reached in the course of the research. Data analysis was orientated towards the comparison of the informative and explanatory value of the data acquired during fieldwork and photo-elicitation for studying various aspects of the everyday practices of tradition. The amount of evidence acquired was sufficient to reach the conclusion that the visual and in-depth interview data are mutually supplementary; moreover, the visual

data essentially expand the understanding of the research subject. Although in the course of the research certain conclusions about the goals and motivation of the members of the arts groups were reached, a comparison of the results concerning the identified everyday practices will follow.

Results

The research attests that the most vivid expressions of the everyday practices in the Song and Dance Celebration interim are: 1) rehearsals; 2) concerts; 3) the traditions of the particular groups and other informal practices. The visual data were acquired and systematized in accordance with these expressions of practices and in each case specific aspects of tradition emerging through the visual data were identified.

The main stages of **the rehearsal process,** such as preparing for the rehearsal, physical or vocal warm-ups and trying out the musical instruments, learning new songs, musical pieces, or dances, practicing and preparations for a concert can be identified through observation and the visual data analysis. Likewise it is possible to identify such important elements of the rehearsal process as discipline, the presence or absence of breaks and partially also the suitability of the premises for the rehearsal. The visual data and information acquired by photo-elicitation allow to identify such stages as individual preparations for and planning of the rehearsal that take place, for example, in somebody's home to which the researcher has no access except through the informant himself/herself. On the other hand, with the help of in-depth interviews such factors as the time and frequency of rehearsals can be established. Moreover, it should be taken into account that such stages of the rehearsal process as recruiting, testing and selecting the members of the arts groups happen relatively seldom (usually once a year); therefore, the researcher cannot be always present in person, especially because these decisions are taken by the leader of the arts group. This omission was filled in by an in-depth interview with the leader. A telling example is the observation of creating the right atmosphere before each rehearsal. Figures 1 and 2 show the custom of preparing a cup of coffee for the conductor and lighting a candle to create the ambience practised by a seniors' choir. During the in-depth interview, the conductor of the choir indicated that such a process of preparation for each rehearsal creating the right atmosphere should be encouraged and is especially important for seniors, because the meetings of the arts groups often are one of the most positive events of the week and a possibility to communicate with other people. On the other hand, observations and the acquired visual data imply that youth arts groups do not require such ways of creating a special atmosphere. In this case more important is tuning for serious work and attitude building that the leader of the arts group is largely responsible

Figure 1 and Figure 2. Seniors' choir creates a pleasant atmosphere and ambience before the rehearsal.

for. For example, the assistant of the leader (repetiteur) of the youth dance ensemble from the region considers that before the rehearsal it is very important to deliver a motivational speech reminding of the shared goals and encouraging the dancers to keep high standards of performance. Visual data provide valuable insight into the experiences of creating the emotional atmosphere among tradition carriers during the rehearsals and indicates how everyday practices in this respect vary in the arts groups of different ages, especially concerning the motivation systems.

The concert life of arts groups relatively is one of the most representative everyday practices. The data lead to the conclusion that the arts groups participating in the research perform in at least 13 types of concerts, such as annual or regular events at the state or region level; large projects; anniversary concerts; charity concerts; concerts at private events; competitions. It is possible to visually analyse all these types of concerts if they have been photographed during fieldwork; however, the data demonstrate that some types of concerts do not happen on regular basis, not even every year, which makes it difficult to identify all the types of concerts. The types of concerts can be identified also by asking the leaders of the arts group to submit the schedule of the whole concert season; however, occasionally small minor concerts take place that are not included in the schedules. Unless they are observed in person, the data about them can be acquired only with the help of photo-elicitation and in-depth interviews. It also refers to such important aspects of concert life as the frequency of concerts, the decision to participate in a concert, planning concerts, the most active concert season and demand for concerts. However, it has been established that the best approach to studying concert life is the photographs taken by the researcher, because they not only demonstrate the wide range of concerts but also offer a possibility to understand the relevance of concerts in everyday practice and their part in motivating the members to participate in the arts group. A valid example here is the argument grounded in the researcher's observations and visual data that concerts are an essential factor in motivating the members to join the arts group, because they produce emotions

Figure 3. The leader of a middle-aged dance group from the region encourages a dancer seized with uncharacteristic stage fright before the concert.

seldom found in everyday life – pleasant excitement, pride at being on stage, a sense of unity and the feeling that you are not alone, because the members of the arts groups grow closer exactly during concerts. For example, it was observed that before a concert a member of the middle-aged dance group from the region was seized by uncharacteristic stage fright and the leader of the dance group tried to calm her down and encourage her (figure 3); while a youth dance ensemble from the region performed their good luck ritual before going on stage, thus confirming their belonging to the group and emotionally charging themselves (figure 4).

Figure 4. A youth dance ensemble performs their traditional good luck ritual before the concert.

The data analysis leads to the conclusion that the third and often the most motivating group of everyday practices is **traditions and other informal activities**, here the term *tradition* is not used in its broader sense but with reference to traditions as regularly performed activities, such as common celebrations; birthday greetings; greeting on other important life occasions; the parties of the arts group; camps; events promoting the arts group; charitable initiatives and other informal activities, such as team-building events and trips abroad. In the analysis of traditions and other informal practices, it is possible to visually analyse all those activities captured by the researcher but the limits of fieldwork allowed to identify about a half of the tradition only through the photographs sent in by the informants and photo-elicitation. The researcher also encountered the problem mentioned in the theory, namely, that tradition carriers are not always able to identify and reflect on their traditions. Consequently, it was possible to identify long-standing traditions

and one-time activities only during photo-elicitation and in-depth interviews. In the course of the research, it was concluded that the most appropriate approach, especially for identifying everyday practices, is to ask the informants to send in the photographs from the personal archives accumulated over a longer period of time, not to ask the informants to take new photographs over a particular period of time during the research. A good example here is a member of a youth dance ensemble from the region who sent in the photographs that were not taken during the research but over the period of the last three years. Although in the course of the research it was established that at Christmas the dance ensemble has a tradition to organize the charity event *Labais vairo labo* ("Good Begets Good") in the town's market place, where they share greetings, hot soup, tea, and embraces with the inhabitants of the town (figure 5), only the photographs sent by the informant revealed that an essential part of this tradition was also the preparations for it the day before (figure 6).

Figure 5. The youth dance ensemble's annual Christmas charity event *Labais vairo labo* ("Good Begets Good") in the town's market place (the researcher's photograph).

Figure 6. The photograph showing the preparations for the annual charity event *Labais vairo labo* sent by the informant for photo-elicitation.

Conclusions

Concerning the applicability of visual research methods, it can be generally concluded that the photographs taken by the researcher during observation allow identifying the everyday practices of arts groups and their forms of expression. The visual study of the three types of the arts groups' everyday practices identified in the research – 1) rehearsals; 2) concerts; 3) traditions and other informal practices of the arts group – leads to certain conclusions about the advantages and disadvantages brought by this method to research. Visual data prove the existence of material objects and the occurrence of events that allows describing them; therefore they are useful in explaining and especially in assisting tradition carriers to explain the issues that are difficult to interpret, such as mutual relationships, the atmosphere in the arts group and the emotional ambience. However, the visual data alone do not help to explain purposes and motivation; therefore, supplementary methods should be introduced and photo-elicitation might be one of them, as it combines visual data and in-depth interviews. Photo-elicitation plays an especially significant

part in forming the reflexivity of tradition carriers, for it helps the informants to reflect on emotions and recall the most vivid events of their lives through the medium of documentary and symbolic photographs, adding a broader perspective to the phenomenon under analysis. This method can be used also in cases when the researcher lacks resources and cannot undertake extensive fieldwork. The visual methods applied lead to the conclusion that photo-elicitation can be used as the only research method, while the visual data acquired by the researcher need supplementary methods, such as the in-depth interview. The visual data can also supplement the data of an in-depth interview, e.g., to confirm that the statements are not contradictory and correspond to reality.

It must be admitted that the application of visual research methods in the analysis of tradition can provide essential and irreplaceable information. First of all, visual data allow identifying the different stages of tradition and its practices that take the form of different activities. Secondly, visual data, especially in combination with the conventional research methods, as in the case of photo-elicitation, give tradition carriers more freedom to reflect on their traditions and reveal the aspects that observation or in-depth interviews would not disclose. Thirdly, photo-elicitation's reflection on the visual data helps to reveal the symbolic and intangible aspects of tradition that are difficult to formulate, such as emotions and feelings.

In our opinion, a special feature of acquiring and applying visual data is the possibility to acquire supplementary data for various sets of data formed through observation and interviews. Visual data are essential and valuable as a source for constituting new significances and meanings, analysing and interpreting the sets of data acquired by other means and consequently producing new results. Essential here is also the flexible research design that presupposes a high degree of reflexivity on the parts of the researcher and the subject of research at all the stages of the research from the planning to the interpretation of the data. The relevance of reflexivity manifests itself in the fact that in the course of research the emotions, memories, and judgments activated by the photo-elicitation method influence the tradition carriers' attitude towards various aspects of tradition and helps to rationalize their motivation. The application of the photo-elicitation method encourages the processes of reflexivity that theoretical sources consider to be one of the elements that strengthen tradition. We consider that the interaction between the researcher and the tradition carrier that takes place in the course of acquiring visual data, especially in the case of photo-elicitation, brings the research nearer to the design of participatory researches and indicates an essential aspect why these methods are relevant for the study of tradition.

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STEPS OF THE NATION: LATVIAN DANCE AND IDENTITY IN THE DIASPORA

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Abstract

This research investigates the impact of folk culture and folk dance groups on civic and cultural identity building in the Latvian diaspora. It presents a case study of an American-Latvian folk dance group, using a mixed-methods approach to analyse the historical background, attitudes and preferences of dancers. The author argues that participation in folk culture provides access to the Latvian nation and an element of Latvian identity, regardless of ethno-linguistic background or home country. The ritual of rehearsal, performance and party provide individuals the opportunity to engage together in community building that not only strengthens the relationships of individuals, but also builds the social capital of the community and the ability to develop a cultural appreciation that contributes to the Latvian nation.

Keywords: *folk dance, diaspora, identity, civil society.*

Latvia is well known as "the land that sings" – folk melodies and patriotic songs are key builders of national pride and identity in the Latvian and Baltic context. Yet Latvia is not only a nation of singers, but also a multi-cultural country of dancers. Dance, like song, has played and continues to play a critical role in the development of the nation. In particular, the evolution of folk dance and its performance rituals on local, national and international stages has provided an access point to Latvia beyond the nation's physical and ethnic borders.

Though small in area, Latvia crosses many of these physical and ethnic boundaries. The population is highly diverse, including large minority populations stemming from the legacy of Soviet-era migration policies. Moreover, members of the ethnic Latvian nation have been flung across the globe as a result of war and

economic upheaval. As such, these displaced population groups have, to some extent, developed separately from the Latvian nation, whether as a minority or as a diaspora. But is there a point of overlap? When do these tangentially Latvian populations become subsumed into the larger Latvian nation? I argue that practices and displays of folk culture are a particularly relevant point of overlap for Latvia's minority and diaspora communities, particularly through the institution that is the Song and Dance Celebration, and iterations thereof. Participation in living folk culture provides access to the Latvian nation and an element of Latvian identity, regardless of ethno-linguistic background. I argue this is the case for both minorities within the country (Ekmanis, forthcoming) and the extended diaspora. National cultural expression provides access to a Latvian identity attained through the process of preparation and participation. This article explores this concept using a case study of an amateur folk dance group stemming from World War II-era Latvian émigrés – Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis*.[1]

The Song and Dance Celebration[2] is no small part of an effort to maintain and develop this link to the Latvian Nation. The Celebration is arguably the most externalized display of Latvian national identity, both in the country and abroad. Developed as an adaptation of German festivals and as a culmination of choir activities throughout the 19th century, it has evolved into regional, national, youth and diaspora iterations over the past 150 years, expanding in both size and content. In its modern nationwide form, the Song and Dance Celebration brings together participants and audience members in the hundreds of thousands from Latvia and across the world every five years; other smaller or youth-centered festivals are held in the interim. The folk dance exhibition was formally incorporated into the Celebration only in 1948, but is now a standard element of the mass display of folk culture. For many artistic groups, access to the Song and Dance Celebration is a working goal. However, the process of preparation has also much to tell us about the development of the Latvian Nation, particularly its maintenance in the diaspora. Referring to the multitudes of dancers performing in the folk dance exhibition (*tautas deju skate*), Elga Drulle, author of *Latvija Dejo* ("Latvia Dances"), says,

> "With increasing force, dance as a vital bridge has united generations from antiquity until today and grown into a beautifully ornamented quilt covering the vast arena of the Daugava Stadium, building national awareness and strengthening the dignity of belonging to this nation" [Drulle 2013: 11].

[1] An analysis of civic-cultural identity from the minority population perspective is forthcoming.

[2] The major concert of the Celebration prioritizes groups/collectives practicing national stage dance. I use the term "folk dance" generally, reflecting its use in the diaspora; here, this term does not solely reference the strict ethnographic understanding of folk dance.

For modern folk dance groups in the diaspora, working to earn a spot in the Daugava Stadium is a point of deep national pride, representing a commitment to Latvian heritage identity. This article provides a brief historical background of folk dance trends in Latvia and World War II diaspora communities, and it focuses on an in-depth case study of Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis* surrounding and following their participation in the 2013 Nationwide Dance Celebration.

Historical background

Dance of a nation

Ancient beliefs, foreign invasions, and political awakenings impacted the development of Latvian folk dance in its national form. In the literature on the progress of the Latvian nation, folk dance takes a back seat to the power of song with regard to national awakening and cultural renaissance. However, folk dances were already performed on stage as early as 1888. The father of Latvian folk poetry (*dainas*), Krišjānis Barons, included some choreographic notes in the fifth volume of his publication *Latvju dainas* ("Latvian Dainas") (of six volumes published from 1894 to 1915). Andrejs Jurjāns, best known for his musical contributions to Latvian culture, also collected work-life/folk choreographies starting in the second half of the 19th century. From his collection efforts, he generated two volumes of the series *Latvju tautas mūzikas materiāli* ("Latvian Folk Music Materials"), which contained not only folk tunes, but also included descriptions of dances and games (*rotaļas*) for many melodies. Importantly, these books also reflected the folk dances that remained alive among the Latvian people in the second half of the 19th century, as well as the ways in which performed dances preserved ancient elements and incorporated international influences [Saulīte 2005]. The late 19th century and the early years of the 1900s gave birth to a folk dance movement that would carry on in the century to come.

Following European trends, folk dance culture flourished during the birth of the Latvian state, particularly in the later years of this independence period (until the start of World War II). Johanna Rinka, a physical education teacher turned choreographer, is credited as having one of the largest impacts on the folk dance renaissance in Latvia, along with colleagues Jānis Ošs, a journalist, and Jēkabs Stumbrs, a publisher and Latvia's first professional choreographer. Their work flourished in the 1920s, about a decade into the existence of the first Latvian Republic, as they began gathering folk choreographies and creating their own. In these early years, Johanna Rinka, Jānis Ošs, and colleagues Emīls Melngailis and Elza Siliņa conducted field work in the Latvian countryside, collecting choreographies. These were published in four booklets in the series *Latvju tautas dejas* ("Latvian folk dances") in the 1930s, which included a total of 33 dances,

largely from Courland (Kurzeme) and Vidzeme. Jēkabs Stumbrs' *Dejosim latviski* ("Let's dance Latvian") followed in 1938 and 1940, in which an additional 19 dances were recorded [Šmita-Kalēja 1985]. As the first professional Latvian folk dance choreographer, Stumbrs also recorded his own dances, which were performed in Riga in 1935. Large-scale folk dance performance also took root in this period, often linked with mass gymnastic demonstrations [Saulīte, 2005].

World War II and the subsequent Soviet occupation of the Baltic States greatly changed the trajectory of folk dance development in Latvia. War and occupation pushed many of the first "trailblazers" into exile; however, folk dancing was not erased from the Soviet Latvian landscape. While the debate on what qualified as true "folk dance" was active in the Baltics prior to World War II,[1] during the early Soviet years, dance collectives were founded with the intent of bringing folk dances to the level of performance art (i.e. national stage dance), incorporating a high level of body discipline and an infusion of classical ballet [Kapper 2016; Sūna 1984]. Kapper argues an "especially high technical level of Latvian stage folk dance provided the most pronounced expression of Soviet colonial mimicry" [2016: 99]. However, though clothed in the Soviet mantra of "national in form, socialist in content," folk dance also remained a relevant element of Latvian national expression during the Soviet period. In the Estonian case, Kapper concedes that "hybridity of national stage dance expressed the contradictory situation of folk dance and general cultural reality in Soviet Estonia – the conformity with colonial power, on the one hand, and still a certain portion of national self-pride, on the other" [2016: 100].

Dance was first incorporated as an official part of the Latvian (Soviet Socialist Republic) Nationwide Song Celebration in 1948. This was not only the first festival officially including dance as part of the repertoire, but also the first Latvian song festival in the post-WWII period, in which 920 dancers participated [Saulīte 2005; Sūna 1984]. Following Tsarist strategy, in the Soviet period organizers linked mass celebrations to significant dates in the history of the USSR. Soviet symbols were incorporated into the performance and themes often revolved around the worker, Young Pioneer, and other Soviet motifs. However, Saulīte contends, "festival organisers always knew how to include dances "for the heart" in the programme, through which the dancers and the audience could feel the breath of genuine,

[1] While folklorists argued that "folk dance" could only consist of those choreographies defined in folklore records, choreographers contended that, by bringing folk dances to the stage, they were subject to the rules of theater arts expression [Sūna 1984: 640]. Choreographers such as H. Sūna, I. Saulīte and E. Drulle were authors of national stage dances, as well as principal conductors of Dance Celebrations held during the Soviet period.

living folk art"[1] [2005: 352]. Despite the socialist flavor of the Celebration, it still retained national importance to many Latvians.

Dancing Diaspora

World War II and the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States created 200,000 Latvian refugees, many living, first, in refugee camps in Germany, then spreading to Latvian communities across the world [Plakans 2011]. Though far from home, the tradition of Song Festivals and the interwar interest in folk dances continued to flourish among diaspora populations. Latvian refugees in Germany incorporated folk dancing into school events; they also established dance groups from the early years of exile [interviews 2015; Saulīte 2005]. Displaced persons (DP) camps were an incubator for exile Latvians (*trimdas latvieši*) to maintain their cultural identity. Prevented from organizing politically, DPs – many of whom were artists or members of the intelligentsia – turned their attention to cultural organizations, such as choirs and dance groups [Carpenter 1996]. Immediate post-WWII life in refugee camps was "a time of intense cultural activism, a crucial training ground … for a subsequently viable exile society" [1996: 93]. Latvians recreated the traditions of the homeland in their new environs with a "diaspora consciousness", with the belief that they were preserving authentic Latvian traditions that would be lost in the Soviet occupation [Fishman 1983].

A living folk dance tradition persevered in the diaspora as Latvians settled in communities abroad. One of the first groups, *Diždancis* (dir. Freds Aigars), was founded in Toronto, Canada, in 1948. By 1959, 38 groups were active in the diaspora. In 1971, 66 groups existed in post-WWII exile communities, as compared with 322 groups in Latvia [Šmita-Kalēja 1985]. The Song and Dance Celebration tradition took root in Latvian communities abroad, both as an outlet for folk culture, and as a mechanism for preserving Latvian national identity. In addition to preserving the folk spirit of dance in the Song Celebration tradition, new dances, utilizing historical elements, were continually created. *88 Latviešu tautas dejas un apdares* ("88 Latvian folk dances and variations"), published in 1973, became the "bible" of exile Latvian dancers, containing the 52 original folk dances collected in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as variations and diaspora choreographies already considered to be close to folk dances themselves [Šmita-Kalēja 1985].

Diaspora dancers felt the first waves of renewed Latvian independence euphoria in the 1990 Song and Dance Celebration in Riga. This was the first Celebration

[1] This article does not attempt to delve deeply into the discussion of what is "true" folk art or folk dance, though this debate surrounding folklorists, choreographers and Soviet values is referenced. For a postcolonial perspective of the Soviet influence on Baltic folk dance, see Kapper, 2016.

in which exile Latvians returned to the country to dance. Among the 421 dance groups (1000 participants), 13 were from diaspora communities in England, Canada, Sweden, and the US, including Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis*. "Rejoining" the nation through dance solidified the connection between folk culture and national identity for diaspora Latvians. Observing the Daugava Stadium during the dance finale, Toronto *Diždancis* director Zigurds Miezītis said: "Look, look at these thousands upon thousands in our dance family, we are all dancing in one smooth step. Our work [abroad] has not been in vain" [Dariusa 2011].

Case Study: Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis*

How does the history of Latvian diaspora and identity map onto the folk dance groups still active today? This piece focuses on one diaspora group: Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis*. During the period of study, *Trejdeksnītis* was considered in the upper echelon of diaspora amateur groups in North America, with a comparatively intense practice schedule and consistent attendance.[1] Data for this case study have been collected using multiple methods. The researcher as member has experienced several years of deeply imbedded participation observation. This has included regular rehearsal attendance during the *Trejdeksnītis* season (October through June, on average), participation in around 30 performances in a variety of community-center and public settings over the past several years, and organization of and attendance at many group festivities and informal group gatherings/parties. While not all participation was conducted with a social research process in mind,[2] this deep history has provided the researcher with a strong background in group dynamics and "the necessary 'invisible' dimension of body knowledge, inevitably taken into consideration in dance research" [Kapper 2016]. This has provided an extraordinary insight into the function, social interaction, and meaning that members derive from being part of the *Trejdeksnītis* group. This is data that could not be accessed by an outsider; I argue it is an appropriate case study through which to view the question of Latvian identity and culture in the diaspora.

In addition to this long-term participant observation, I conducted multiple in-depth, open-ended interviews with 13 participants. These were partially structured interviews, primarily conducted in small groups or individually, with both long-time members and relatively new participants. Informants have diverse backgrounds in their relation to the group; several have Latvian heritage on both sides of their family, others on one side, some not at all. They have various levels

[1] This piece reflects in-depth knowledge of *Trejdeksnītis* and comparative knowledge of Latvian dance groups in North America, but does not analyse diaspora activities on other continents.

[2] Formalized in the 2014–2015 season.

of involvement in the local Latvian community (outside of the group), as well as varying levels of Latvian linguistic knowledge, age, marital status and occupation. Informants reflect the diversity of the group in the state it was during 2015.

A quantitative portion of the data comes from a survey of participation, values and attitudes distributed to active[1] and former group members. Survey questions were partially based on the example of the 2013 post-Song and Dance Celebration survey conducted by the Latvian Academy of Culture [Laķe & Grīnberga 2014]. Overall, a survey distributed to 64 former and current members achieved a 58% response rate (37).[2] For active dancers, 17 of 19 returned the survey for an 89% response rate.[3] Given extensive participant observation and in-depth interviews, I argue the survey responses correspond with alternative methodologies and are appropriate reflections of the attitudes and practices of the group in general.

Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis*

Seattle's *Trejdeksnītis* finds its roots in the DP camps of post-WWII West Germany and the Latvian cultural preservation that began in the exile context. The group has been active for more than 50 years under the leadership of several artistic directors and with the participation of about 10 to 30 dancers in each performance season. It was formally founded in 1962 at the University of Washington, though Latvian folk dance had a significant presence in the Seattle community for many years prior, including multiple small groups of young people led by several Latvian women. Irene Beleiciks, a WWII émigré, headed *Trejdeksnītis* in its first formal iteration. A refugee in Germany, Beleiciks studied under Johanna Rinka and was part of the early diaspora cultural consciousness formation. As her daughter remembers, Beleiciks felt deeply connected to her identity as a Latvian from Daugavpils and devoted much of her free time to the Seattle Latvian community [Olsen 2015]. Beleiciks herself was of mixed Latvian and Russian parentage, and was also active in the Seattle Russian community's folk dance group and the Russian Orthodox Church. This was somewhat problematic for her role in the Latvian exile community, a community of largely war refugees who tended to equate the "taboo territory of "Soviet" Latvia" with the ethnic Russian invasion [Carpenter 1996: 94]. Accordingly, Beleiciks sought to separate Russian elements from the Latvian folk dances she taught in *Trejdeksnītis* to maintain a distinct Latvian identity. As her daughter now reflects, "It is interesting to me to see how much [Latvian dance in

[1] Active members refers to individuals who regularly participated in *Trejdeksnītis* during the 2013–2015 seasons.

[2] 9.4% margin of error and a confidence rate of 91%.

[3] 6.46% margin of error and a confidence rate of 86%.

the diaspora] has evolved"– elements from Russian dance (for example, lifts) are now not only accepted as part of the repertoire, but expected [Olsen 2015].

As in many areas, rivalries and rifts between individuals and community group dynamics developed in exile Latvian communities. This is the case in *Trejdeksnītis* as well, which went through several iterations with various group leaders throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Until the 1990s, it was very difficult for American-Latvians with mixed parentage or low Latvian language skills to become involved in Seattle Latvian community events and groups. Many who now dance in *Trejdeksnītis* felt a sense of exile from the community during their youth because of this "language barrier." However, as the barrier began to break down in the 1990s, dancers with low Latvian language skills (both of Latvian heritage and not) began to participate in the group.

By 1990, the choreographer Vilnis Birnbaums, a son of World War II émigrés, had assumed leadership of the group. His tenure fell in line with the crumbling of the Soviet Union, and in 1990 *Trejdeksnītis* became one of the first Latvian diaspora groups to be included in the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia. This "emotionally supercharged" moment was a first opportunity for children of exile Latvians to reconnect with the country whose cultural expressions they had upheld in absentia [Carpenter 1996]. Elga Drulle writes, "Latvian dance groups from the USA, Canada, Australia and Germany brought Latvian dances with them, which had been created during a long and distant exile from their homeland and, nonetheless, vividly expressed Latvian patriotism and a sense of belonging to Latvia" [Drulle 2013: 38–9]. Carpenter, in her analysis of diaspora choir members participating in 1990 writes, "for the exiles, meaning derived from the restoration of the familiar to native soil… Experienced in the homeland, the song festival for exiles also effected a shift in the experience of 'being Latvian'", i.e. shifting the experience of Latvian as "other" to Latvian as dominant [Carpenter 1996: 108].

In 1993, *Trejdeksnītis* participated again in the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration, in which Birnbaums actively took part in the artistic leadership of the festival's XI Dance Celebration exhibition itself. *Trejdeksnītis* returned to the XII Dance Celebration in 1998, this time under the leadership of Inese Raistere, a daughter of WWII émigrés. These early experiences traveling to Latvia as part of a group in the initial stages of transition from Soviet occupation were, among individuals interviewed, some of their most compelling experiences, as dancers, individuals and Latvians. Reflecting on her first Latvian song festival trip in 1990, Raistere said, "It was very special. I'll never forget standing on that far track in *Daugavas Stadions* (Daugava Stadium) waiting to come on when they announced that we were the dancers from outside of Latvia. It was an incredible feeling"

Figure 1. *Trejdeksnītis* group photo for the XX Nationwide Song and X Dance Celebration program. Personal archives of Inese Raistere.

[2015]. One dancer of mixed Latvian and American parentage reflected on the emotional and spiritual connection to Latvia the 1993 experience provided her, "It didn't matter that I didn't speak the language, it didn't matter that my sister [a participant in the choir] couldn't understand it all. There was something that went beyond it" [middle-age female, 2015]. As in Carpenter's analysis of exile singers, participation in the festival "mediates the physical and imagined Latvia" in the act of dance and song, to produce Latvia through movement or as a "song-scape" [Carpenter 1996: 95]. Its place, idea, and experience resonate in the physical movement of people, their closeness and cooperation on the stadium floor. Dance provides access to this "embodied Latvia" in particular to those who do not feel empowered to produce the Latvian language.

Kathrine Young, of mixed Latvian-American parentage, took over group leadership in 2008. During her tenure, the group has moved away from Latvian-language practices, favoring English instead. Guest instructors often revert to Latvian, but a majority of the group functions in English, both formally and conversationally. *Trejdeksnītis* returned to Latvia in 2013 for the most recent Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration; in preparation for this event, the group reached out to former leadership (Birnbaums and Raistere), who also reinstituted some instruction in Latvian to prepare the group for Latvian-language rehearsals in Latvia.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the increased human and artistic exchange between Latvia's Latvians and the diaspora Latvians has increased the presence of artistic stage folk dance in diaspora group repertoires. Though North American diaspora groups are decidedly less formalized than top-ranking Latvian collectives,

Figure 2. 2013 Dance Festival in Riga, Latvia. Photo: Indra Ekmanis.

there has been a push to work towards the current Latvian standard in national stage dance.[1] As an amateur diaspora group, *Trejdeksnītis* increased its rehearsal intensity and attention to detail to qualify for the 2013 Dance Celebration, developing a sense of both national and artistic pride within the group.[2]

For some current group members, many of whom are between 20 and 30 years old, the 2013 Celebration was their first experience dancing in Latvia. For some, it was their first trip to Latvia ever. As one college-aged male reflected on the experience, "I recall running multiple times with a member of our dance group, dodging people left and right with chills running down my spine because I had reached the mecca of dance in Latvia and all our hard work was coming to an amazing crescendo" (20-year-old male, first time in Latvia) [Survey 2015]. Another college-aged male said, "Going to the Latvian song and dance festival in 2013 was an incredible experience. Being one of the few foreign groups invited

[1] See the 2012 North American Song and Dance Celebration in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, program.

[2] *Trejdeksnītis* qualified for the highest placement (B2) in the 2013 Celebration of any North American diaspora dance group.

to dance was really fortunate, as well as being able to dance with 10,000 other dancers. I felt more connected with my Latvian culture than I ever had before" (22-year-old male) [Survey 2015].

Even over a 25-year time span, participation in the Nationwide Latvian Song and Dance Festival has maintained meaning for *Trejdeksnītis* dancers. Sharing in the "mecca of Latvian dance" provides not only a connection to Latvia by participating on native soil, but also a reevaluation of dancers' sense of heritage within the greater Latvian nation. As part of a 15,000-person dance performance, members of this diaspora group become physically connected to other members of the Latvian nation, some for the first time. But what happens when the physical connection no longer exists? Opportunities to dance in the Latvian Celebration are rare – what motivates dancers to participate in the interim?

Motivation

Data collected through the distributed survey and interviews indicate that *Trejdeksnītis* is a critical space for participants to build an identity with a distinct cultural background; particularly as most are generations removed from the experience of Latvia (i.e. parents or grandparents were WWII refugees). However, it is also a critical space for socializing as part of the Latvian community; this builds social capital among members who, while similar in their cultural pursuits and interests, are demographically diverse.

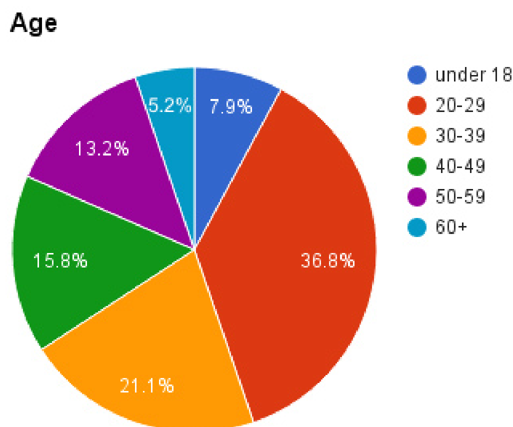

Figure 3. Reported age of *Trejdeksnītis* dancers in 2015 season. (Survey data)

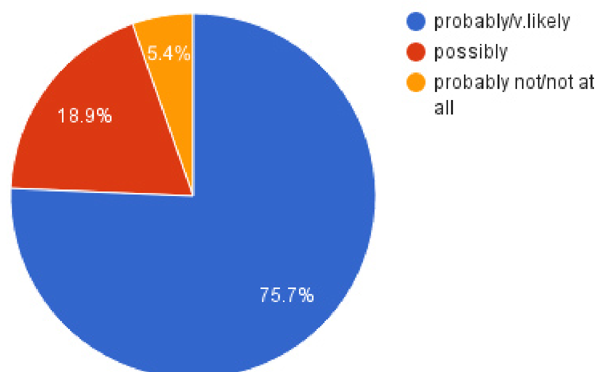

Figure 4. Interest of *Trejdeksnītis* dancers to meet socially outside of practice. (Survey data)

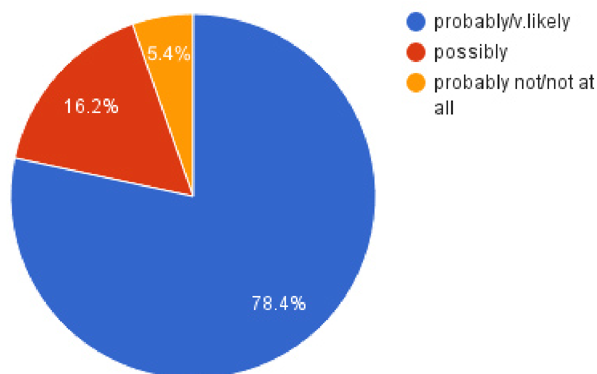

Figure 5. Interest of *Trejdeksnītis* dancers to go out recreationally after performances. (Survey data)

A third of dancers indicate that they are likely or very likely to engage socially with other dancers outside of practice (figures 1, 2 & 3). About another third of dancers say that they are open to doing so. The strongest relationship is in socialization directly after practices or performances, which indicates a sense of camaraderie (indeed, all participants indicated that commitment to the group was important). However, nearly as many individuals also indicate that they are very likely or likely to engage socially outside of group functions.

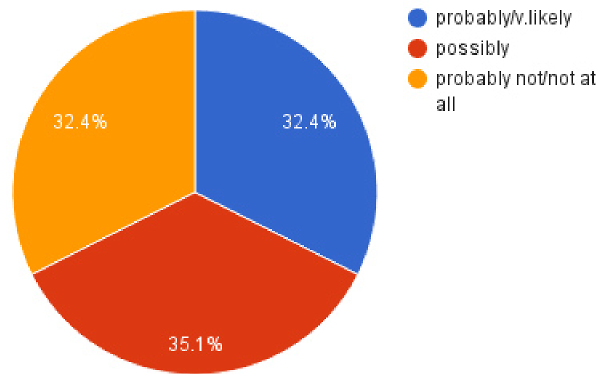

Figure 6. Interest of *Trejdeksnītis* dancers to use a relationship built through dance to contribute to professional goals. (Survey data)

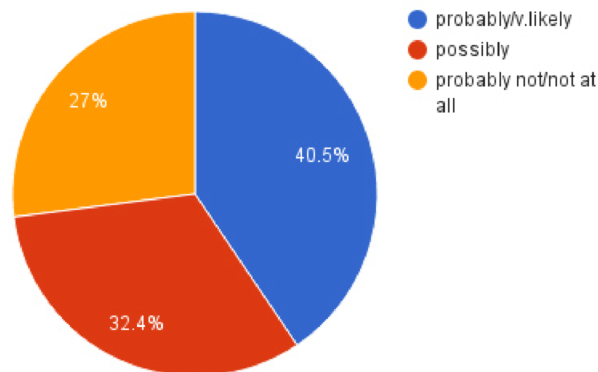

Figure 7. Interest of *Trejeksnītis* dancers to engage in a romantic relationship with a fellow dancer. (Survey data)

Connections formed through participation in the group are deeper than casual friendships. More than two thirds of all dancers indicated that they would possibly or likely engage in a romantic relationship with a dancer – more than half of current dancers said they were likely or very likely to do so (figure 7). As one long-time male dancer put it, "The guys join it because there are girls, cute girls that they get to meet. I don't think there's any doubt about it!" [interview 2015]. Social ties formed at dance practice extend beyond personal relationships; two

thirds indicate the possibility of tapping into these relationships to contribute to career or professional goals (figure 6). Like the bowling leagues to which Putnam points as builders of American civil society, folk dance groups share similar characteristic in forming trust-building relationships that extend beyond casual friendships to meaningful connections [Putnam 2000]. *Trejdeksnītis*, as such, becomes a critical space not only for cultural preservation, but also for civic-cultural identity formation in the Latvian diaspora, providing a regular meeting place and time for socialization. This socialization extends beyond the group, and encourages a stronger connection with individuals in daily life, the local Latvian community, and the Latvian nation in general.

Cultural connections

Through the development of civic-cultural ties to the local community, the folk dance group becomes an unintimidating mechanism for tapping into the Latvian nation from the diaspora. Importantly, it does not require a divorce from other cultural ties. In the early days of *Trejdeksnītis*, the group was a mechanism bridging multi-national identities. Even with mixed Latvian-Russian parentage and cultural awareness at the height of diaspora consciousness, Beleiciks was able to use folk dance as a mechanism to connect with both her Latvian and Russian identities. Similarly, folk dance groups strengthen connections between individuals who have varying levels of investment in other Latvian cultural activities, thereby strengthening the overall cultural identity of the group. A current dancer of mixed Latvian and American heritage said, "The dance group was like the entry point

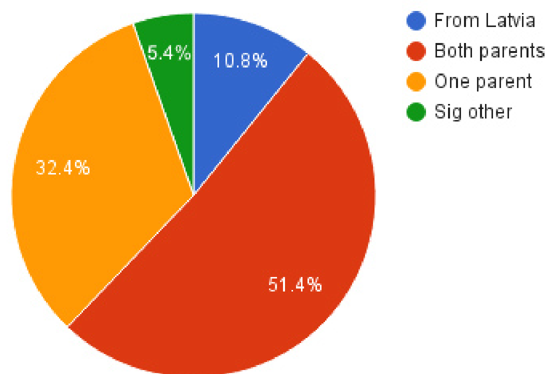

Figure 8. *Trejdeksnītis* dancers' family connection to Latvia. (Survey data)

into the culture for me. It was a way that I felt accepted, because I didn't have so much of the Latvian school. I didn't know the language, but I could dance... It made me feel more comfortable participating in other [Latvian] things" [28-year-old female, 2015].

Very few dancers in *Trejdeksnītis* are directly from Latvia or would identify as solely Latvian (4 out of the 37 surveyed); a slight majority of dancers come from families where both parents are Latvian. However, a third have only one parent of Latvian heritage – two current dancers have no Latvian background at all. For most dancers having a personal connection to Latvia is much less important than having respect for Latvian culture in general (figure 4). Indeed, in-depth interviews with the two Americans who currently dance in the group show that engagement with the culture does not necessarily transform their identity from American to Latvian, but allows them to build a connection to Latvia into their personal identity.[1] One middle-aged male interview respondent noted that being part of the dance group and tapping into Latvian culture, "lets me create 'I am' statements" [2015]. While he does not feel he is Latvian, he feels a connectedness to Latvia. Indeed, he has gone through the effort of co-choreographing a dance for *Trejdeksnītis*. Despite differences in his ethnic background, he is not a passive recipient of a Latvian cultural identity, but has contributed to its formation in the diaspora. While they may not "become Latvian" in the way that individuals with Latvian heritage express their developing connection to the Latvian nation, participation in *Trejdeksnītis* allows ethnic non-Latvians to adopt a civic-cultural identity in the Latvian community.

Conclusions

Connection to the Latvian Nation is not synonymous with a conscious desire to return to the Latvian state. Émigré Latvians and their descendants abroad have not lived in stasis, but have actively developed their own "personal and collective identity through deeply creolized cultural forms" [Carpenter 1996: 96]. However, by participating in displays and rituals of Latvian folk culture, they are able to remain part of the Latvian nation from their position in the post WWII diaspora. Participation in diaspora folk culture groups provides an opportunity to build not only cultural identity, but civic identity as well. The ritual of rehearsal, performance and socialization provides individuals the opportunity to engage together in

[1] Both dancers have been with the group for more than ten years, are married to American-Latvians of mixed heritage (neither of whom speak Latvian or had a comparatively strong Latvian-influenced upbringing). Both of these couples also incorporated Latvian dance as part of their wedding. Both have danced with the group in Latvia at least once; one did so completely without a romantic relationship with his significant other at the time.

community building that not only strengthens the relationships of individuals, but also builds the social capital of the community and the ability to develop a cultural appreciation that contributes to the formation of Latvian identity.

The civic-cultural identity formed through participation in *Trejdeksnītis* does not by definition conflict with individuals' diverse ethnic backgrounds or attachment to an American heritage. Rather, they are able to develop, integrate and contribute to the Latvian nation through civic and cultural involvement. Said a dancer of mixed American-Latvian parentage, "In the act of dancing, I cooperate with other beings, co-creating community and meaning, joy and purpose, embodying something greater than ourselves. The music connects us all, dancers and audience; we blend with the symbols we created out of our own bodies. It is a primal, earthy thing, this participation in the community of Latvian dance" [interview 2015].

Folk dance is not an ancient relic, but a living, breathing element of Latvian culture. It is also one that has been and remains accessible to participants beyond the titular nation, both within Latvia's borders and in the diaspora. It has thus become a site of collaboration between ethnic and non-ethnic Latvians, and an important cultural space for the evaluation and expansion of integration studies. Folk dance has a long history of national development and as an instrument of integration in Latvia, as illustrated by Alfreds Goba in the interwar period:

> "[P]ulled into dance, actively participating, individuals are also more likely to come closer to other Latvian social forms. This, then, also contributes to the return to the Latvian nation of Latvians assimilated [russified] in the times of dependency [Tsarist times], and also contributes to non-Latvians melting into the Latvian element" ([1936] trans.).

Goba's sentiment remains relevant in a modern context, indicating the powerful effect of dance on building an inclusive nation with diverse members. Folk dance, in its traditional and stage iterations, continues to embody patriotism and national identity in the Baltics [Kapper 2016: 102]. It is, therefore, much more than ancient recreation. The ritual of folk dancing has the potential to serve as modern mechanism for cultural integration that not only extends beyond Latvians living in the state, but also broadens the scope of inclusion in national culture. For Latvians in the diaspora, dancing "in Latvian" is a mechanism that develops civic-cultural Latvian identity, and connects them to each other and the cultural movements of the Latvian nation.

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RESTORATION OF THE LINGUISTIC TRADITION OF ETHNIC LIVS: ASPECTS OF MOTIVATION

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Abstract

Livs are one of the Baltic Finnish ethnic groups; their historical location is in the north-western part of Kurzeme and Vidzeme Regions in Latvia. According to the 2011 census in Latvia, 250 individuals defined themselves as Livs. This marks a significant rise in their population, compared to 48 individuals in the 1970s. Linguistically, Livs are Finno-Ugrians, thus differing from Latvians who represent the Indo-European speaking family. Ethnological data of the 19th and 20th century provide evidence that Livs have been predominantly bi-lingual, gradually leaving their own language in the second place and therefore natural inheritance of the language diminished as a result, until it was broken, supposedly in 2013.

Nowadays we can observe a strong tendency to restore Liv culture and linguistic tradition. The present-day statistics indicate about 200 speakers of the Liv language. Field research shows that members of the Liv community recognise the increase of prestige and popularity of their language, nevertheless the main language experts today are researchers and those interested in ethnic identity matters. This might serve as evidence that the language tradition is revived rather than naturally inherited within the Liv community.

What is the motivation to restore the language tradition in the 21st century, if the instrumental linguistic function of ethnic minorities has become clearly marginalised and only symbolic aspects have remained topical? This issue will be examined in the paper.

Keywords: *ethnic Livs, Livonian language, linguistic tradition, language restoration.*

The Livonian language has changed its structure and circumstances of existence throughout centuries. At the end of the 20th century it was considered to have died, but now it is viewed as reviving. Ways of Livonian traditional inheritance and transmission that existed before are not valid anymore and everyday practices have been rather replaced by instrumental mechanisms. Livonian is not essentially necessary for the Liv local community; now it has become an object of interest and a symbolic tool to express Liv ethnic identity. There are vast amount of ways of acquiring and using the language, leaving daily communication (instrumental aspect) as the least important, while bringing the symbolic aspects to the forefront.

A 102 year old Livonian lady Fanija Budovska (b. Rozenfeld)[1] is only one example of diversity of the use of the Livonian language (*Līvõ kēļ*). She can read and speak Livonian fluently, which she learned during her childhood in Kolka, a small town in North Western Latvia on the Baltic Sea shore, inhabited mostly by ethnic Livs in previous times. Fanija Budovska does not use the Livonian language in her daily life anymore, because, in her opinion, there is simply no one to talk to. Nevertheless she still thinks in the Livonian language, especially if she is not disturbed by anyone and is absorbed by her memories:

"And even now, when I go to sleep at night, I do not think in Latvian, but I think in Livonian. And then so many words come back to my memory, which would not come out during daytime, but when I am in darkness and in my bed, and when I start to think about my children and all the rest, then a plenitude of words come to my mind, to my memory. And if someone speaks Livonian now, I can understand absolutely everything that is said (…)" [Muktupāvela 2016].

Livs have traditionally named themselves *rāndalist* (seaside dwellers) or *kalāmīed* (fishermen) [Sīle 2005]. They are one of the Baltic Finnish ethnic groups, historically found in Northern Kurzeme (Western Livs) and North Western Vidzeme (Eastern Livs) of Latvia. Linguistically they belong to the Uralic family together with other Finnic languages, and they have two dialects – Western Livonian (Kurzeme) and Eastern Livonian (Vidzeme).

The Livonian language differs substantially from Latvian – the language of the native people of Latvia, which belongs to the Indo-European language family. The Livonian language is inscribed in the Cultural Canon of Latvia and also into the UNESCO List of Endangered Languages. At present, the community of ethnic Livs is represented by about 200 people, proceeding from the information of the catalogue "Ethnologue: Languages of the World, the 19th edition" [Ethnologue]. There are only 40 fluent speakers (B1 level), and only 20 are ethnic Livs by origin [Latviešu valodas aģentūra 2011]. As the catalogue reports, the last native or L1 speaker Grizelda Kristiņa (born 1910) died in 2013.

[1] Born on May 13, 1914.

Livs were mentioned in historical sources for the first time in 1113, whereas archaeological data bear witness to the formation of Liv cultural space in Latvia starting with the 10th century [Zemītis 2013: 95]. This is a good reason to consider Livs not as a minority, but as one of the original ethnic groups having participated in the formation of the Latvian nation. The period of developed Livonian culture was the 11th–12th century, according to archaeologist Guntis Zemītis, whereas the process of assimilation, especially in the territory of Eastern Livs, started already in the 14th century [Zemītis 2013: 131]. Because of wars, famine and epidemics in the 18th century, the number of Eastern Livs diminished rapidly, whereas the Western Livonian area, though significantly reduced, still continued to exist, evidently as a result of a much more favourable geopolitical situation [1] [Zemītis 2013: 131].

The study of the Livonian language started in the middle of the 19th century. During the first field-work expedition financed by the Russian Geographical Society and Academy of Sciences, the linguist Anders Juhan Sjøgren found only 22 persons in Vidzeme who still spoke the Eastern dialect of Livonian, and yet he drew the conclusion that the process of linguistic enculturation had stopped [Blumberga 2013: 28]. The last L1 speaker of Eastern or Vidzeme Livonian – Mr. Gust Bissneek – died in 1868 [Blumberga 2013: 28]. Since then the research of Livonian as a still living culture and language has been carried out mainly in Kurzeme or in the living space of the Western Livs[2]. It should be noted that Livonian has been considered a rapidly disappearing language since the very beginning of its study[3] [Blumberga 2013: 32]. The ethnological data of the 19th and 20th century testify to the use of Livonian in a very narrow – family or local community – circle. The interest in Livonian culture and language increased in the interwar period; and it was particularly promoted by Estonian and Finnish linguists and ethnologists. As a response to this interest, the level of Livonian

[1] Statistics show, that at the end of 19th century there were still 2374 persons in Kurzeme who spoke Livonian. But the census, held in 1935, showed, that from 2746 people (inhabitants of villages of Kurzeme seaside) only 892 were Livs and only 214 of them spoke Livonian in their families [Kolkas pagasta pārvalde 2012].

[2] The seaside of the Baltic sea – approximately 60 km long and 2–5 km wide territory between Ventspils and the Cape of Kolka, which includes 12 Livonian villages: Lūžņa (*Lūž*), Miķeltornis (*Pizā*), Lielirbe (*Īra*), Jaunciems (*Ūžkilā*), Sīkrags (*Sīkrōg*), Mazirbe (*Irē*), Košrags (*Koštrōg*), Pitrags (*Pitrōg*), Saunags (*Sänag*), Vaide (*Vaid*), Kolka (*Kūolka*), Melnsils (*Mustānum*) [Kolkas pagasta pārvalde 2012].

[3] This community of seamen has never lived such a secluded life which is necessary to maintain customs and beliefs of their ancestors. Their level of education was also very high and comparatively modern [..]. In 1914 the Finnish philologist Emmils Arvi Saarimaa described the reasons for the tendency of assimilation of Livs, pointing out their open-mindedness towards different cultures (including Latvian) and religion (baptism) as the two main aspects that have promoted the assimilation process.

ethnic self-consciousness was raised – social organisations, artistic societies of Livs were formed, Livonian traditional festivities were celebrated, and Livonian, as an option, was taught at school [Blumberga 2006].

The situation changed significantly during the years of Soviet occupation. Though Livs were considered as a "historical ethnic group" [Muktupāvels 2008] and the Livonian language and culture was studied from the linguistic, historical and anthropological perspective, yet the culture bearers themselves experienced hard times because of the assimilation policy practiced by the Soviet authorities. First of all economically: the Baltic sea coast was the westernmost part of the USSR; it was a highly militarised boarder region, and the fishery, having been traditionally the basic economic activity of seaside dwellers, was practically restricted in the area; therefore fishermen were forced to leave their native coastal villages and resettle in other parts of Latvia together with their families. Another aspect is politically ideological: the ethnic and linguistic diversity was considered in the USSR as "an obstacle to progress" in the society, therefore Livonian culture and language were banished – it was not taught at school, nor was it spoken in public space: "It was so in the Soviet period, that they did not speak Livonian. They laughed at those who spoke Livonian at school. They usually spoke it at home, so that the children would not understand, and they did not teach Livonian to their children anymore" [Sadovska 2002]. This affected almost all Liv families: "The story repeats itself and my kin was no exception. In those times parents chose not to teach Livonian to their kids simply because it was forbidden. People were really afraid. My mom was left alone when her parents were deported[1]. She was only 15. Those were such times" [Treimane 2016].

As a result, Livonian, being tended towards assimilation, lost its functionality and prestige even more rapidly; and this was reflected in the ethnic statistics: the biggest demographic downfall of Livs occurred in 1970, when their number shrank from 944 in 1935 to just 48 in 1970 [Blumberga 2006].

After Latvia regained its independence in 1991, the revival of the Livonian language and culture started, it was supported institutionally as the law was adopted granting the status of a special protected original nation to Livs and to their living territory – the Livonian Coast [Augstākā padome 1991: 4. pants]. Simultaneously different non-governmental organisations were formed, and creative artistic groups emerged, aiming their activities at the preservation of Livonian culture and language. The present statistics show 168 persons, who have registered officially as Livs [Lībiešu kultūras un valodas portāls 2006]. It should be mentioned that a significant tendency is manifest towards linguistic revitalisation nowadays, as more

[1] A reference to mass deportations to Siberia during Soviet occupation (Crimes against Humanity. Available: http://lpra.vip.lv/index.htm).

and more young people get involved in these processes. For example, out of 185 officially registered Livs in 1999, 45 persons were born after 1970 [Blumberga 2013: 190]. The young generation acknowledge their roots, and to where they belong, and they consider it as an essential resource, where to gain strength, as well as the possibility to construct a special identity. The Livonian language is part of cultural heritage, and to preserve and maintain it seems to be important for the young generation: "Of course, I would never say that it is impossible to revive the Livonian language. Of course, the language would not be the way it was years ago. But young people see more justification to study Livonian than the older generation, who still remember that Livonian was spoken in their homes; maybe they do not see the reason anymore why do it. We have just started to collect our heritage; we have a different vision, where this can take us" [Treimane 2016].

Since the interest in the language is increasing, many new opportunities are provided. It is possible to study Livonian at the university, in courses, and summer schools now; it is also possible to get acquainted with its basics in internet portals[1] [Ernštreits 2016]. A Livonian-Estonian-Latvian dictionary was published in 2012, and one of its authors the philologist Valts Ernštreits has said: "From the perspective of Livonian, it is not only the event of the century; it is a unique and historical turning point" [Igaunijas vēstniecība Rīgā 2012]. Several textbooks, teaching materials have been written, conferences and workshops are organised, aiming at improving the language and grammar. One of Livonian cultural activists Gundega Blumberga has said the following: "As to me, Livonian has never been so developed as today. It does not matter, who would be ready to carry it on. It is important to prepare something for your suitcase, and there is always someone, who is interested, and he/she can continue all this. [..] We have modern Livonian literature, because, marvellous as it may seem, people write in Livonian!" [Treimane 2016]

Even more – "a concept of a new research field – Livonian Studies (*livonica,* in Latin, or *livonika*, in Latvian) – that is, a research field devoted to the study of the Livs, their history, culture, and language has emerged nowadays" [Ernštreits 2016].

Thus institutionally Livonian has been supported, and it is a positive precondition for its sustainability. Regardless of the decease of the last L1 level Livonian speaker in 2013 (see Ethnologue.liv), the talks about dying of this language, as the bearers of the language consider themselves, are exaggerated, because of the interest in Livonian and because there are people who regard this language as their native language, inherited in their childhood (at least certain elements), very often prom grandparents, not parents because of the above geopolitical situation:

[1] For example, livones.net, *Livō Kēļ* (Facebook), *Lindloul* (Youtube) etc.

"Children didn't know the language anymore not because their parents suddenly became Latvians. Parents did not speak Livonian in front of their children for one reason: so that it would be easier for their children to go to (Latvian) schools as there were only Latvian schools. They knew that their children needed to get basic and higher education; or else it would be hard for them to live without the Latvian language. That is why even the most authentic Liv families switched over to Latvian. Many 70, 80-year olds say that kids were even bullied at school because they were Liv. They did not want to be different. Another aspect was that when a Liv married a Latvian, the main language in the family automatically became Latvian" [Treimane 2016].

On the contrary, the older generation did not have these fears, so most of the time grandparents became the source of information for the young, who wanted to learn Livonian: "I started to learn the language from scratch. Nobody spoke Livonian in my family for a long time, only my great grandmother did, and great grandfather, less though" [Treimane 2016].

At the same time Valts Ernštreits points out, that the mass media declaration about the terminated existence of Livonian is not correct, as there are still persons who have learned the language, and there are such, for whom, just like Grizelda, this is their native language: "The statement that Livonian is a dead language, is actually a joke with a long, long history, since the middle of the 19th century. [..] When it is announced, that the last Liv has deceased, and it seems that really no one has survived, it is always that somebody "turns up". So it was with the story about Grizelda" [Zalāne 2013], as it was declared already in 2009, that the last Liv – Viktors Bertholds (born 1921) – had died.

Moreover, Livonian is studied by such people, who do not necessarily consider themselves as Livs or somehow affiliated to Livs. Sometimes it is promoted by their interest in history or in the specific cultural region and its peculiarities, it might be of interest for Finno-Ugric cultures and peoples, it might be also of interest to discover one's Livonian roots, etc. As an example, we could mention one of the participants of the Livonian children and youth creative action summer camp "*Mierlinkizt*"[1]. She is not of Liv decent, but she is interested in Liv culture because of her love for history matters:

"How did I find out about this summer camp? My godfather was in the same amateur group as the summer camp director. He found out about the summer camp and let me know. I was fascinated by the history and the ancient ethnic groups of Latvia, so he offered me this opportunity. I was interested and so I went.

[1] The Livonian children and youth creative action summer camp *"Mierlinkizt"* has taken place every year in the Mazirbe Village for more than 20 years now. The summer camp provides different activities related to Livs, their culture, language, customs, etc.

[..] Now you can find the Livonian flag with me in different places – I have it on my pencil case, bag... I carry the Livonian flag because it raises questions. It is not like I'm not patriotic; I also wear the ribbon [of Latvian flag] in November[1]. But daily I have little connection with anything Livonian, so at least I carry the flag with me" [Treimane 2016].

The teacher of Livonian Zoja Sīle describes her experience with her students – amateur enthusiasts of the Livonian language: "There have been so many different cases. Mostly they think they have Liv ancestors. But there are people completely unrelated to us. Some stay, some leave. I had one guy Raitis. He was such a weirdo, a hipster maybe. He took Ketunen's Finnish-Livonian-German dictionary and took photos of the pages. That's how he learned. He needed nothing more. Sometimes he still comes to sing with us. He can say basic things, say hello. Every now and then there are some Russian people, who know, they come from Finno-Ugrians. They usually are very special. There was a woman, who researched the influence of Livs in the European context. She developed some schemes. Sometimes she calls, wants me to translate something. She also thinks that certain things mean something very special in Livonian" [Treimane 2016].

This proves that Livonian cannot be perceived as a dead language, because new enthusiasts emerge again and again.

At present, the process of branding of the Livonian language and culture is taking place, influenced by tourism and globalisation; this process might be viewed in the context of general interest about rare, vanishing and minor cultures and languages. We can see certain efforts in Latvia, especially among young people, to revive different supranational identities, languages and life-styles. Separate subcultures[2] are emerging, based on Prussian, Yatvingian, Selonian and other "extinct" cultural heritage of the Baltic peoples. Under such conditions of constructed identities, the instrumental function of a language becomes marginal, whereas its symbolic aspects become more and more significant. It also happens because members of the community admit themselves that they want to learn the language, not to lose it, yet it does not and, probably, will not share the qualities of an everyday instrumental language. This opinion is more expressed by the older generation:

"Well, what does it mean "to learn"? Usually, if you want to know, you just ask – do you speak? But what does it mean "to speak"? The same activist of Livonian

[1] It has become a tradition in Latvia to wear a ribbon in the colours of the Latvian flag during the month of November in honour of the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on the 18th of November, 1918.

[2] See., e.g., activities of the group *"Senzeme"* (http://senzeme.lv/?page_id=10#comment-1781), activities of the Druviena Tribe – *"Druvienas cilts"* (http://www.druviena.lv), their activities regarding Prussian culture (http://www.twanksta.org/lv/).

culture Mrs. Valda Šuvcāne became angry, when she was asked this some 10 to 12 years ago. She said, "Who shall I speak to, to a tree? That's the way it is: the colloquial function of this language disappeared a long time ago. Well, some specialists, our group, who come together, who can come and talk to each other, or the like. But this is not possible… we can read, translate, write in this language" [Treimane 2016].

Also: "The revival of Livonian has no big sense, as it happens artificially. [..] In reality it is so – the Livonian community as such, where the language could be used, does not exist anymore. Therefore the language does not exist as a communication tool in the society anymore. All native speakers, who have been speaking it in their families, have rested in peace. A small community, some 20 persons in Latvia, who know the Livonian more or less, have learned it. [..] I was also considering learning the language, but I understand that I have not got so much time at my disposal at the end of my days. Shall I pray to God in Livonian? What motivation do I have for studying? Maybe I could use it for the work purpose – sometimes I lack ability to read Livonian texts. But, for example, a normal human, who has nothing to do with it, still learns it; and what next? What to do next? There are practically no books in Livonian. There is nobody to speak to, nothing to read" [Treimane 2016].

And similar thoughts: "But the linguistic (aspect) is all around, and the language is taught optionally. Of course, the young ones are more able to grasp it than us. And I will not be pushed to write on my coffin that I know the language" [Treimane 2016].

This is the reason why the symbolic aspects play a bigger role in the case of Livonian: in accordance with the field research data, the representatives of the community admit themselves that the prestige and popularity of the language has increased in society, the wish to learn the language does not decrease, and there are people who would like to know and master the language.

These language-related activities represent the Livonian community in Latvia and abroad as a clear example of a resistant group who recognises, preserves and popularises its own communal values.

The use of language can be considered as a proof of a certain privilege – the knowledge and understanding of Livonian ensures the feeling of a closed, special community. This is communication, enabled only among some individuals; these are keywords, for instance, greetings, catchwords, etc., which are used only by the members of the community. It is the ability to use elements of language, to understand, decipher, that becomes a symbol of "being a Liv", and this is frequently equalled to a special status:

"So it is also with Livs – they are different. When I studied, I noticed that Livs were hiding their language from others. They do not like it that other people come into (their society) and learn Livonian" [Treimane 2016].

This promotes a closed feeling of "us", the language and its elements serve as an identification code and a symbol of belonging (especially to be different from Latvians), even if it does not function as a full-fledged language in everyday life. One of the symbolic aspects is the intention and the possibility to use it as a secret language, "Yes, the Livonian language is very useful as a secret communication tool. For example, there are several persons going by car, and one has a birthday. It is with the help of Livonian that you can discuss when and where to pack the present. If you used Russian or English, it would be clear instantly what is happening. [..] Sometimes my husband and I – we speak Livonian, but our kids eventually crack the code to find out where we have hidden their Christmas presents" [Treimane 2016]. Also: "Why couldn't Livonian exist in parallel to Latvian? A secret language, not to be understood by Latvians" [Treimane 2016].

It is especially important for children and young people to become the "gate keepers" of this mysterious (Liv) world, which is not accessible to everyone. This is one of the main motivational aspects. This knowledge lets them feel extraordinary, special; it offers them a certain power. The young are optimistic and show genuine willingness to learn the language and use it as often as possible in their daily routines. This is also promoted by many initiatives and active popularisation of Liv culture (as stated above), as well as their positive experiences and examples of good practice.

Conclusions

1. The case study of Livonian has revealed that the language skill promotes the processes of ethnic identity construction and simultaneously creates preconditions for the existence of a subculture, which is based on language and traditional culture, thus ensuring inner networking.
2. The instrumental aspects of language may be marginalised; nevertheless it may still keep its vitality because of its symbolic aspects, besides it is just the institutional support that has a strong impact on this.
3. Aiming at revitalisation and sustainability of disappearing languages, state structures should enforce institutional instruments, especially in the sector of non-governmental organisations and education, as their impact is crucial in the formation of the understanding of the significance and place of a concrete culture in the hierarchy of social values.

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"ART BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE!" THE SOVIET CULTURAL POLICY AND ESTONIAN COMMUNITY HOUSES

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Abstract

Estonian community houses were built in towns and the countryside by the local people, who had been joining cultural and other societies since the second half of the 19th century. These cultural centres supported the process of building the Estonian state. The space for culture became basis for the lifelong learning system of informal education, which later was regulated and developed according to the politics of culture and education in the Estonian nation-state (1918–40) and the Soviet Union (1940–91).

After the invasion of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in 1940, extensive restructuring or sovietization of the Estonian public administration, economy and culture began. The article examines the sovietization process of Estonian community houses, i.e., how they were turned into the ideological tools of Soviet totalitarian propaganda.

Keywords: *History of cultural policy; Estonian community houses, sovietization.*

1. Introduction

Estonian community[1] houses, originating in the 19th-century tradition of grass-roots-level social activism, were built by ordinary people[2] in order to offer space for the new type of cultural activities, such as choirs, plays, orchestras, libraries, and the public festivities to the local communities all over the current territory of Estonia during the Tsarist Empire from the 1880s onwards. These cultural hubs became pre-state cultural institutions with civilizing aims (*Bildung*) for Estonian communities, where a wider public sphere evolved in the circumstances of being under the rule of the Baltic German landlords and the restrictive tsarist state. Cultural practices in the community houses contributed to a shared feeling of togetherness, spreading the national consciousness (*nation-building*) among Estonians at the grass-roots level. Thus, community houses played a vital part in the Estonian national awakening in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In general, Estonian national *awakening* (since the 1860s) was driven by the 19th-century economic, social and political modernization, which formed the preconditions for the emergence of Estonian civil society and cultural emancipation [Kulbok-Lattik 2015]. In response to Russian absolutist central power and the socio-economic situation dominated by the Baltic German nobility, the "*awakened peasants*" were highly motivated to build up their cultural and public sphere with the intention of improving the status of Estonians in society, as the following scholars, Jansen 2004, 2007; Laar 2006; Karu 1985; Karjahärm & Sirk 1997; Raun 2009, et.al, have pointed out. Estonian national aspirations (which initially were related to cultural goals) with time became more political, demanding *"equal rights"* with the ruling Baltic-German nobility in regard to participation in the running of local affairs, as several scholars, like Jansen 2007; Karu 1985; Kulbok-Lattik 2015, 2008 et al., have noted. That is why the construction of community

[1] Community normally means a group of people who have something in common, sharing a geographical area (typically a neighborhood), or people brought together by common interests, identities, or some combination of these factors. Communities operate by distinguishing those who belong ("insiders") from those who do not ("outsiders"). Community is an important dimension of *social divisions* as well as *togetherness* because inclusion in community relationships promises benefits (material resources or raised social status) that set its members apart from others. The sense of belonging to communities varies greatly: see Putnam [2000] *Bowling Alone.* The ordinariness of community relationships in people's everyday lives needs to be reinforced periodically by extraordinary gatherings such as festivities to celebrate the purpose, achievements, and memory of the community and thereby strengthen members' attachments to the collectivity [Crow 2007: 617–620]. See also: Daugavietis, Janis (2015). *Amateur Arts in Latvia: Community Development and Cultural Policy.* PhD thesis, University of Latvia, Riga.

[2] Ordinary people are understood as "little people", as opposed to the "great people" or the elite.

houses can be seen as the act of collective will to create a room/space for the cultural activities for Estonians, where a democratic *public* in the Arendtian sense [1958] could appear, and as such, have a social and political dimension in the Arendtian sense.

However, with the construction of community houses, Estonians, as a colonized ethnic group having the lowest status in society, created not only a cultural and political public, but also a new spatial model for their cultural development. From the 1880s onwards with the specific operatic-theatrical room-programmes, with the stage, hall, buffet, library room etc. (see the plan of the community house and cultural practices in Appendix 2) new cultural practices became attainable for everyone (masters, servants, men, and women). The space for culture became basis for the lifelong learning system of informal education, which later was regulated and developed according to the politics of culture and education in the Estonian nation-state (1918–40) as well as in the Soviet Union (1940–91). During the years of the first Estonian independent state (1918–40), the network of community houses was set up by the state [Jansen 2007]. By 1940, there were approximately 500 community houses all over Estonia, which operated as local institutions for the development of Estonian cultural policy, being the expression of the socio-economic and cultural vitality of Estonian rural regions [Kulbok-Lattik 2012, Uljas 1987].

In June 1940, the invasion of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union took place. After that extensive restructuring or *sovietization* of the public administration, economy, including the nationalization of private property, propagandistic land reform and mass deportations began.[1] Sovietization was carried out in all the spheres of life. The sovietization process of community houses meant the importation of the Soviet cultural canon (norms, values) and cultural policy model. Bottom-up initiatives by societies were prohibited, community houses (as well as all other private cultural enterprises) were closed and their property was expropriated. As all the cultural organizations became state-operated and state-guided, the Soviet cultural policy model was fully implemented in Estonia. The network of community houses was filled with the so-called Red Corners[2] and compulsory political training of the population was carried out. The new content of cultural policy came from the manipulative rhetoric of a totalitarian state shaping the

[1] Aigi Rahi-Tamm has mapped Estonian deportations in her PhD dissertation: http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/handle/10062/528/RahiTamm.pdf?sequence=5; http://okupatsioon.ee/en, see also http://www.riigikogu.ee/public/Riigikogu/TheWhiteBook.pdf

[2] Red Corners were special areas (pinboards or table with books) set up by Soviet authorities in public places in Soviet Russia with the aim to disseminate Marxist ideas and promote the Communist classics.

Homo Soveticus, which resulted in strong centralization, guidelines issued to the community houses, and censorship.

Objectives of the article

In this paper I analyse the *sovietization* process of Estonian community houses, i.e., how they were turned into the ideological tools of Soviet propaganda.[1] In order to achieve this objective I examine: (1) the formation of the Soviet cultural canon to identify its targets, features and also the model of the Soviet cultural policy; (2) the process how the free-initiative amateur art and educational activities in community houses were restructured into subordinate cultural institutions.

Empirical data, archival materials, and methodical guidelines (published from 1940 onwards) are used and analysed. In order to contextualize the Soviet state practices, I use the term *sovietization*. The method of the article is the case study on Estonian community houses with the focus on the history of cultural policy. Given the large number of works written on Russia in this context (a long list of references could be given here). I do not directly deal with this topic here.

2. Soviet cultural canon and cultural policy model

Sovietization is conceptualized as the process of exporting the Soviet model of the state. The process of sovietization, as historians Tannberg [2007], Zubkova [2007], Mertelsmann [2012] explain, implied more than a mere political take-over – it also meant social, economic and cultural restructuring. The population had to be "re-educated" and new socialist elite had to be created. According to Mertelsmann [2012: 14–19], the basic model of sovietization consisted of Lenin and Stalin's Cultural Revolution, the forced collectivization of agriculture and the start of the campaign of industrialization and the planned or command economy. In general, Soviet state practices were coercive and violent. As Gerlach and Werth [2009: 133–178] and several other scholars explain: class struggle and terror, oppression of the "enemies" of the Soviet state, (kulaks, priests, bourgeois specialists), attempts to achieve total control over the population, nationalization of private property, strict censorship, political agitation, the provision of a set of canonized cultural norms were some of the key elements of sovietization. While

[1] Propaganda is the dissemination of information–facts, arguments, rumors, half-truths, or lies – to influence public opinion. Propaganda is the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth). Smith, B. L, Lasswell H. D., and Casey, R. D. (1946). *Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion: A Comprehensive Reference Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. vii, 435.

Soviet state practices did change over time (influenced by the development of its own inner policies as well as external pressure through the Cold War), the main structures of the state model of the USSR established in the 1930s persisted until its collapse in 1991.

In terms of culture, censorship and indoctrination[1] of the Soviet values, which the vast majority of population perceived as unfamiliar and odd, were implemented. In order to "re-educate" the population of the occupied territories, the Soviet cultural canon (invented tradition conveying Soviet values)[2] and policy model (organizational structure of state practices in culture) were exported as tools for creating the new socialist reality. By 1940, when the Baltic States were incorporated into the Soviet Union, the Soviet official culture had gone through different phases. The avant-garde and iconoclastic *prolet-cult*, which with the slogans of class struggle and Cultural Revolution aimed to destroy the traditional culture of tsarist Russia, was replaced by neoclassicism and socialist realism during the mid-1930s – the era of Stalinist rule. Socialist realism became the Stalinist canon of official culture. Soviet state practices and formation of cultural norms and values have been described as cultivating masses within the frame of developing Soviet modernity. Civilizing and cultivating masses was the main purpose of state cultural policies in the majority of European nation-states at that time. According to David Hoffmann [2003, 2011], Soviet state practices could be seen as a specific type of coercive modernity

Sheila Fitzpatrick [1999] offers several concepts explaining the modernizing practices of the Soviet state, for example: Soviet society as a prison or a conscript army, or a strict type of school, with the elements of strict discipline within a closed institution with its own strict codes of behaviour, and fear of punishment.

On the other hand, as Fitzpatrick [1999: 226] points out, the Soviet state was moving towards the welfare paternalism, where the state acts with a strong sense of the responsibilities of leadership over the dependent population. The Soviet system with the allocative function of the state created dependents, as Fitzpatrick

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[1] Indoctrination refers to infiltrating (drilling, inculcating etc.) concepts, attitudes, beliefs and theories into a student`s mind bypassing free and critical deliberation. According to Huttunen, the opposite of indoctrination is *communicative teaching*, which is based on *"The Bildung as a human teaching situation"* referring to Schäfer and Schaller [1975: 57], where students are not treated as passive objects but as active leaners. Huttunen explains that communicative teaching is a simulation of democracy and democratic mode of action. See more: http://eepat.net/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=habermas_and_the_problem_of_indoctrination.pdf

[2] Raud defines cultural canon as an outlook on cultural tradition established in the cultural environment by a symbolic authority, a list on texts supporting its development, which is used as the most valuable part of heritage. Raud, R. (2013). *What is Culture? Introduction into the Theories of Culture.* Tallinn University Press, p. 430.

[1999: 225] explains referring to Janos Kornai [1980: 315], who has pointed out that in the Soviet-type systems the population is under the "paternalistic tutelage" and care of the party and state. "All other strata, groups, or individuals in society are children, wards whose minds must be made up for them by their adult guardians." A citizen's natural posture toward a state that controls the distribution of goods and benefits is one of supplication, not resistance. It may also be one of passive dependence; indeed the Soviet officials frequently complained about the "dependent" habits of *Homo Soveticus*, his lack of initiative, and his stubborn expectation that the state would and should provide [Kornai 1980] cited in Fitzpatrick [1990: 226]. Thus, Fitzpatrick offers also the concepts state as the soup kitchen or the relief agency to explain the state's monopoly of distributing goods and services and the paternalistic dominance of the state apparatus as the one of the significant features of the Soviet political system.

Over the same period (1918–1940), a characteristically Western modern social structure had ground in Estonia for the two decades of independence. The state practices of culture in the Estonian Republic (1918–1934) were typical to those nation-states of Western liberal democracies where cultural institutional network originated from the national and cultural emancipation and initiatives of the 19th-century civil society. The Estonian engagement with modernity started in the middle of the 19th century with the growing social activism and continued, as Raun [2009] has described, with the emergence of a new generation of Estonian intellectuals and politicians at the beginning of the 20th century.

In addition to this, the growth of urbanization among Estonians and the educational and cultural level, prosperity and the standard of living of the population improved.[1] Cultural policy developments during the years of Estonian independence (1918–1940) could be described as a gradual movement from the free initiatives of civil society[2] (before 1925) towards systematic and organized state interference.

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[1] Raun presents data and statistics: in 1904, Estonians achieved their first major political breakthrough at the Tallinn municipal elections. In 1913, the percentage of ethnic Estonians had increased in Tallinn to 71.6% and in Tartu to 73.3%, the two largest towns in Estland and Northern Livland. The movement of young Estonian intellectuals called "Young Estonia" and its principal developed a fundamental aim for cultural nation-building in 1905: "More culture! This is the first condition for the emancipation of ideals and goals. More European culture! Let's be Estonians, but let's also become Europeans!" Raun, T. (2009). The Estonian Engagement with Modernity: The Role of Young-Estonia in the Diversification of Political and Social Thought. In: *Tuna,* [*Magazine Past*], Special issue on history of Estonia of National Archives Tartu-Tallinn. http://www.digar.ee/arhiiv/en/download_all/76914

[2] According to the statistics presented by Uljas (1987), in 1929 there were 1385 societies of culture in Estonia, in 1940 there were 2200 organizations of non-formal education in Estonia, 60–70,000 individual members.

The years 1925–1929 are considered those that stabilized the country, when the state supported cultural institutions were established and a democratic arm's length principle[1] was implemented. Estonia lost its young democracy in 1934, when the political-economic turbulence (economic crises and nationalistic ideas) spread in Europe between the world wars. This era brought nationalist ideology,[2] developed by the propaganda office, which was implemented with the support of a nationalist/popular cultural policy. The objective of the state was a homogeneous and strong nation-state. Authoritarian state practices[3] in cultural policy, primarily intended to enhance the national cultural identity, were implemented and a well-developed network of cultural institutions was established in Estonia, as Kulbok-Lattik [2008, 2012] has noted.

From 1940, the Estonian Western modern development was replaced by Soviet state practices. The authoritarian state was replaced with the practices of the totalitarian state. Discussing the classic concepts, trying to formulate the distinctive feature that differentiates a totalitarian society from other nondemocratic societies, Juan J. Linz [2000: 70] points out two important characteristics of totalitarianism – a monistic centre of power and citizen (forced or manipulated) participation in political and social tasks; when active participation is replaced by passive obedience and apathy, society is losing its totalitarian nature and degrading into authoritarianism.

Community houses, which had operated since the second half of the 19th century on the basis of civil society by hosting leisure time and cultural practices of

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[1] In 1925, the law of Cultural Endowment *(Kultuurkapital)* was completed and passed. Kulbok-Lattik, E. (2008). Eesti kultuuripoliitika ajaloolisest periodiseerimisest. [*On the Historical Periodization of Estonian Cultural Policy*]. In: Acta Historica Tallinnensia, 12, p. 120–144.

[2] In the current context, ideology is any broader system of beliefs, ways of thinking and categories which serves as a basis for political and social practices. S. Blackburn. Oxford Lexicon of Philosophy. Oxford University Press, 2002, 177.

[3] Authoritarianism is the principle of blind submission to authority, as opposed to individual freedom of thought and action. In government, authoritarianism denotes any political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people. Authoritarian leaders often exercise power arbitrarily and without regard to the existing bodies of law, and they usually cannot be replaced by citizens choosing freely among various candidates in elections. The freedom to create opposition political parties or other alternative political groupings with which to compete for power with the ruling group is either limited or non-existent in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarianism stands in fundamental contrast to democracy. It also differs from totalitarianism, however, since authoritarian governments usually have no highly developed guiding ideology, tolerate some pluralism in social organization, lack the power to mobilize the entire population in pursuit of national goals, and exercise that power within relatively predictable limits. Linz, J. J. (2000). Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes. Pp. 70.

local people, offer a good example of the sovietization process – demonstrating how the free initiative activities were subjected to the state administration. In the next section, the formation of the Soviet cultural canon and cultural policy model will be briefly examined by concentrating selectively on the aspects which influenced the cultural practices of folk culture and amateur art in the Soviet Union.

2.1. Formation of the Soviet cultural canon

Immediately after the Soviets grasped power in 1940 in Estonia (and in the other Baltic States), constantly repeated slogans on posters appeared in the press and public places, such as *"Soviet Culture is Nationalist in Form and Socialist in Content", "Art Belongs to the People", "Friendship of Brotherly Soviet Nations", "Socialist Realism",* etc. These slogans, expressing new narratives created by authorities, are the key to understanding the Soviet cultural canon and the ideology behind it. The cultural canon was needed to create a system for indoctrination and re-education of people, thus it was a tool of political agitation and propaganda.

With reference to the Soviet practices, the term *"propaganda"* is closely related to the term *"agitation"*. According to Lasswell [1946: 435], these two terms were first used by the Marxist Georgy Plekhanov, who defined *"agitation"* as the use of slogans, parables, and half-truths to exploit the grievances of the uneducated and the unreasonable. Since he regarded both strategies as absolutely essential to political victory, he twinned them in the term *agitprop*, which was later elaborated upon by Lenin in the pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* (1902); Lenin defined *"propaganda"* as the reasoned use of historical and scientific arguments to indoctrinate the educated and enlightened (the attentive and informed public, in the language of today's social sciences).

An examination of how the Soviet cultural canon was formed reveals that the aims, features and model of the Soviet cultural policy were, as Zubkova [2007] has mentioned, situational. It depended on the tasks which were set up in order to solve various structural problems of Soviet Russia that the party leaders were faced with – illiteracy, the general backwardness of Russia, the restructuring of the economy, etc., which reveals the highly instrumental use of culture in the Soviet cultural policy.

a) Cultural Revolution and acculturating the masses

Lenin considered the Cultural Revolution to be the main aim for the party leaders:

> The main aim of the Cultural Revolution was [...] to cultivate a new human being characterized by a harmonious combination of spiritual richness, moral cleanliness and physical perfection. (V. I. Lenin, speaking about the Cultural Revolution, cited in Hoffmann [2003: 150].

However, as Hoffmann [2003: 15] notes, an enormous gulf loomed between the utopian visions of the party leaders and social reality; after the Revolution and Civil War Russia was an undeveloped, agrarian country with an overwhelmingly peasant population. Rates of illiteracy, poverty, disease and infant mortality remained very high. Acculturating the masses was one of the central tasks of the Soviet authorities during the first Five-Year Plan (1928–1932) period. Fighting illiteracy, building up social and health care systems can be seen as part of a revolutionary attempt to achieve a rationalized and modernized society. (ibid)

Another aspect of the Cultural Revolution was its use in class struggle and freeing society from the “illnesses of capitalism” and the heritage of bourgeois culture, as Hoffmann [2003: 150–152][1] explains it. Thus, the conception of culture during the first decade of the Soviet rule, the first Five-Year Plan period (1928–1932), the so-called *Proletkult*, was futuristic, avant-garde, and iconoclastic. The norms and values (culture, religion) of the previous bourgeois society of the Tsarist Empire were to be re-evaluated by the breaking of all boundaries (including heated discussions between the proponents of sexual liberation and proponents of the family).

b) Creating Soviet intelligentsia and socialist realism

The avant-garde culture was no longer needed to destroy bourgeois culture after capitalist remnants had been eliminated (or deported), agriculture had been collectivized, and a planned economy established, as there was no further economic basis for exploitation and no bourgeois mentality. A new and loyal intelligentsia had been created, as Stalin stated in November 1936:

> Our Soviet intelligentsia is a completely new intelligentsia, connected by its roots to the working class and peasantry. It is now a fully-fledged member of Soviet society; together with workers and peasants, as one team, it builds the new classless socialist society [Hoffmann: 2003, 152].

Once socialism had been achieved (Soviet leaders believed they were achieving socialism already at the beginning of the 1930s), the new purpose of Soviet culture was the perpetuation and legitimation of power. The only officially acceptable form in art and literature after 1932 was **socialist realism** that alongside with monumental architecture legitimated the existing order. As Stalin stated in 1932:

> The artist ought to show life truthfully. And if he shows it truthfully, he cannot fail to show it moving towards socialism. This is and will be socialist realism [Hoffmann: 2003: 160–161].

[1] As Vladimir Mayakovsky had declared after the revolution, *“We are shooting the old generals! Why not Pushkin?”* cited in Hoffmann, D. L. Stalinist Values … 2003: 150.

Socialist realism was a “realist” depiction of how life was supposed to be – an attempt by the Soviet cultural establishment to construct a reality that did not actually exist. Boris Groys [1998: 427] has argued that the avant-garde and socialist realism shared several traits: the desire **to transform** rather than merely represent life, the belief in a totalistic, all-encompassing artistic vision and contempt for commercialized culture as part of an overall aesthetic-political project – an attempt to organize society and everyday life according to aesthetic sensibilities and political principles.

c) “Art Belongs to the People!”

According to the official rhetoric, the revolution had done away with the exploitation and suppression of workers. Factories, land, railways, and banks now belonged to the people. Making use of everything that was more worthy and better than the culture of the past by critically selecting from the cultural heritage the Soviet people was to begin building a new, higher kind of socialist culture, led by the Communist Party. As Kalinin expressed it in 1938:

> The Soviet system released the creative powers in people by making culture their own. A dream of the best of science, arts and literature came true: people showed due appreciation of and lifted high their cultural heritage, making it part of the new socialist culture [cited in Medvedjev and Hlõstov 1954: 14].

The party leaders selectively incorporated the cultural heroes of the past into the official cultural canon. Hoffmann [2003: 163] explains that the selective rediscovery and incorporation of Russian classics and pre-revolutionary leading figures of the arts[1] into the canon of Soviet culture fulfilled both the (pre-revolutionary) elite’s long-standing dream of bringing Russian high culture to the masses and the Soviet goal of creating a common culture to be shared by all the members of the population. In 1939, in a speech fixing targets for the gradual transition from socialism to communism, Stalin declared:

> We want all the workers and all the farmers to become cultural and educated, and we will make it happen in time [Medvedjev and Hlõstov 1954: 14].

Stalinist culture and cultural policy entailed a wide range of norms and practices intended to transform people’s behaviour and create a new social order:

[1] Pushkin, Tolstoy, and others were enshrined in the Soviet literary canon, in the music of Glinka and other classical composers of the pre-revolutionary era, particularly the “Russian Five” (Balakirev; Cui, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov) – all famous for their efforts to compose Russian classical music. Also certain political and military leaders from the tsarist past were rehabilitated (Yaroslav the Wise, Ivan the Great, Peter the Great etc). Hoffmann Stalinist Values … 2003: 163.

Soviet society. Hoffmann [2003] claims that the Stalinist use of traditional institutions and culture for modern mobilization purposes reflected the general demands for mass politics in Europe after World War I. Stalinist culture was to become a particular Soviet version or incarnation of the modern mass culture.

d) Folk culture: the pluralistic unity of the USSR, *"Friendship of Peoples"*

In the 1930s, the official Soviet cultural policy emphasized folklore. As Hoffmann [2003: 166–169] describes it, at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Gorky championed folklore as

> "a genuine expression of people's optimism and aspirations" and suggested that "we need to share our knowledge of the past. It is important for all union republics that a Belorussian knows what a Georgian or Turk is like, etc.

This statement marked the beginning of an official campaign to promote folklore. It was related to another important thesis of the Soviet national and cultural policy – "*Friendship of Peoples*" – which required that all the Soviet nationalities be deeply moved by the art of other Soviet nationalities and developed their folk culture as a representation of the Soviet pluralistic unity. As Slezkine [1994: 447] explains it:

> This resulted not only in frenzied translation activity but also in histories of the USSR that were supposed to include all the Soviet peoples, radio shows that introduced Soviet listeners to "Georgian polyphony and Belorussian folk songs", tours by hundreds of "song and dance ensembles", decades of Azerbaijani art in Ukraine, evenings of Armenian poetry in Moscow, exhibits of Turkmen carpets in Kazan, and festivals of national choirs, athletes and Young Pioneers all over the country. From the mid-1930s through the 1980s, this activity was one of the most visible aspects of official Soviet culture.

The government sponsored village expeditions to gather folkloric materials, folk singing competitions, and festivals of national art featuring works produced by various Soviet nationalities. The government established the N. Krupskaya All-Union House of Folk Art in Moscow, as well as institutes of national culture all over the country [Hoffmann 2003: 160–169].[1] Folk culture was used by the party leaders to promote controlled and artificial representation of the Soviet forms of national cultures.

[1] See also: Shay, A. (2002). Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation and Power. Wesleyan University Press.

For an example of the political representation of Estonian folklore, see the figure from 1947.

Figure 1. Evening of Folk Art in Tallinn 1947;
Estonian History Museum, Collection of Posters (F158-1-36).

2.2. Russification and nationalism as the ideological basis for Soviet cultural policy

As a centralized state, the Soviet Union stressed the Russian language and Russian culture – the official propaganda referred to Russians as the "elder brother" of other nationalities or as "the first among equals". Russification was one aspect of the Soviet national and cultural policy. However, the Soviet nationalities policy was based on "national diversity" [1], which was a paradoxical prerequisite for "the ultimate unity" within Soviet Socialism.

As Slezkine [1994: 418] explains it, Lenin's socialists needed native languages, native subjects and teachers ("even for a single Georgian child") in order to "polemicize with "their own" bourgeoisie, to spread anticlerical and antibourgeois ideas among peasantry and burghers" and to "banish the virus of bourgeois

[1] See also: Warshovsky Lapidus, G. (1984). Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case. In: *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Jul., 1984). Cambridge University Press. P. 555–580.

nationalism from their proletarian disciples and their own minds". Mertelsmann [2012: 12] points out that the Soviet nationalities policy, based on the concept of *korenizatsiia* ("taking root"), needed the help of national cadres to build up and secure the central power of the Soviet system. The basic concepts for national and cultural policies were worked out by Lenin and developed by Stalin. The Soviet concept of "national diversity" and "the ultimate unity of nations" under the red flag and leadership of Stalin, has been visualized in figure 2:

Figure 2. Expression of "national diversity" and "ultimate unity";
Estonian History Museum, Collection of Posters (F158-1-23).

In 1948, closely repeating his earlier statement on national rights, Stalin said:

> Every nation, whether large or small, has its own specific qualities and its own peculiarities, which are unique to it and which contribute to what each nation gives to the common treasury of world culture, adding to it and enriching it. In this sense all nations, both small and large, are in the same position and each nation is equal to any other nation [Slezkine 1994: 449].

According to Lenin, national culture was a reality; it was about language and a few "domestic arrangements" – nationality was a "form". National form was acceptable because, as Slezkine [1994: 423] notes, there was no such thing as national content. The content which filled the national form was socialism.

This basic principle for Soviet cultural policy – as set by Lenin and Stalin – was expressed with the main slogan: *"Soviet Culture is Nationalist in Form and Socialist in Content"*, the concept is visualized in figure 3:

Figure 3. "To Develop Soviet Folklore:
Nationalist in Form and Socialist in Content!";
Estonian History Museum, Collection of Posters (F158-1-7).

2.3. State-funded cultural bureaucracy shaping cultural norms and canon

A specific feature of the Soviet cultural policy was its highly bureaucratic nature. As all the cultural organizations were state-funded, they were also guided and controlled by the bureaucracy of state institutions.[1] However, as Hoffmann notes [2003: 5], the party leaders, who retained absolute power in the system, could not dictate the contents of every single propaganda film, hygiene-promoting poster and school textbook produced in the Soviet Union; instead they set up a network

[1] The coercive mechanisms of institutionalized structures and practices as the impact of Soviet institutionalization on Estonian cultural policy can be analyzed referring to the theoretical concepts of institutional isomorphism. See: DiMaggio, P., Powell, W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. In: *American Sociological Review,* Volume 48, Issue 2, 147–160.

of institutions and a control mechanism to oversee cultural production and the promulgation of the official norms and values.

In cultural policy research, such a dominant role of the state has been described in the Hillmann Chartrand and McCaughey's theoretical framework as the "engineer state" model [1989]. The engineer state acts as the owner of all the means of artistic production and supports only the art that meets political standards of excellence. Funding decisions are made by political commissars. Artistic activity (both professional and amateur) is organized into "creative unions" (or methodically-guiding administrative bodies) so as to monitor new works and ensure conformity with the aesthetic principles of the Communist Party [Hillmann Chartrand, Mc Caughey, 1989: 7–8].

To summarize, the aims of the Soviet cultural policy were to control and acculturate the masses, to set a common cultural canon and norms to reform and restructure society, with the ultimate aim of constructing a monolithic society and a new type of human being: the Soviet Person. The Soviet cultural policy was characterized by the following features: the cultural policy was hierarchical in essence, promoting high culture and Russian culture for the arts, yet with a strong inclination to support folklore, which came to be used as the politicized representation of Soviet pluralistic unity. The cultural policy model of the Soviet Union in the period from the mid-1930s to the1990s was carried out according to the *engineer state* model, which was exported and implemented all over the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. The greatest change in the Estonian society was the suppression of bottom-up free initiative of people, which was not tolerated by state in any spheres of life. As Ray [2007: 512] puts it, "This was inevitable in order to repress and hold back one of the most dangerous enemies of the Soviet totalitarian regime – civil society – with its liberal market values and community involvement."

Below, I try to demonstrate the upheaval related to the sovietization of the cultural practices of folk culture, the amateur art of the Estonian population.

3. Sovietization: the exportation of Soviet cultural policy into Estonian community houses

When the Soviet Union seized power in Estonia in 1940, Leninist principles and well-tried scenarios, which the Soviet authorities had used for the purpose of the Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Union, were immediately applied in the reorganization of cultural life.

3.1. Banning manifestations of civil society and free initiatives

For the Estonian societies running the community houses and other free initiative organizations, everything changed on 23 August 1940, when the Act of Nationalization of Private Companies was promulgated by the Council of the People's Commissars [Riigi Teataja 1940: 109]. This dissolved societies, non-governmental organizations (i.e. museums, libraries, theatres, community houses, and cinemas), foundations and private companies. The assets, collections, buildings and inventory of the societies and companies, now without owners, were taken over by the commissaries, nationalized and handed over to the People's Commissariat for Education of the ESSR. On the basis of the acquired material resources, a state network of cultural institutions – community houses (as well as theatres, libraries, cinemas, and museums) – was created.[1]

Citing the regulation of the Council of People's Commissars of the ESSR, adopted on 9 October, community houses were turned into centre for political education. The guidelines, issued a few days later, instructed that the network of community houses was to be set up, and it was to be approved by the People's Commissariat for Education in towns and counties. The new mission of community houses covered the following fields:

> Political education, agriculture, industry and propaganda about the country's defensive capabilities, libraries, artistic expression of people, organization of work with children and youth, and many other spheres [Reference Book …1982, 4–14].

Aleksander Kurvits's[2] account offers a personal perspective on this process. In 1940, the Ministry of Education issued a compendium compiled by Kurvits (19) – *A Systematic Guide to Acts, Regulations, Circular Letters and Guidelines on Estonian National Education and Culture*. The publication contains all the acts and regulations, circular letters and guidelines of the Ministry of Education issued in the Republic of Estonia in the period 1918–1940 on the management of national education, activities of educational organizations, qualifications, youth work, libraries, community houses, science, art, literature, heritage protection, and the education and career of academicians, alongside with respective explanations.

[1] Eesti NSV kultuuriasutuste ajaloo teatmik I osa. [*Reference Book of the History of Estonian Cultural Institutions I part*] Taal, E. (Ed.) Central State Archives of Estonian SSR, Tallinn, 1982, 4–14. (hereinafter: Reference Book …)

[2] Kurvits, Aleksander (1896–1958), state official of the Ministry of Education during 1921–1940, who contributed to the development of Estonian free education and establishment of the network of community houses. See: Kurvits, A. (Ed.) (1938). Eesti rahvaharidus ja kultuuriala korraldus. [*Administration of Estonian Free Education and Culture*] Tallinn: Haridusministeeriumi väljaanne.

Several months later in 1941, Kurvits (1941) had to announce *a completely new view on free education and culture* in the first issue of the Bulletins of the People's Commissariat, which replaced the Bulletin of the Ministry of Education. In the regulation, specific instructions, proceeding from the N. Krupskaya All-Union House of Folk Art in Moscow, on how to commemorate the anniversary of Lenin's death in community houses are provided:

> It is necessary to make proper arrangements for the Memorial Day in community houses, clubs, the Red Corners, libraries, etc. early enough and begin preparation and implementation immediately:
>
> (1) to arrange a solemn memorial meeting in every community house; (2) to arrange various working meetings in different study groups in order to learn about the life and work of V. I. Lenin and the events of the Bloody Sunday; (3) to arrange, also before and after 22 January, at the first available opportunity , public lectures on V. I. Lenin and the events of (9) 22 January 1905 in St. Petersburg; (4) to make respective presentations – speeches, declamations and so on – part of various public Memorial Day meetings and party programmes; (5) to publish special issues of pin-board news in community houses and public libraries etc. [Bulletin…1941].

This is followed by detailed and elaborate guidelines on how Lenin's Memorial Day was to be commemorated in community houses and public libraries, what the programme must look like, which music and declamations are to be selected, how the Red Corners in community houses are to be decorated, see below, photo 1.

How was the situation perceived by people from community organizations, who until August 1940 had operated on free citizen initiatives and now were reading the new rhetoric and guidelines? Per Wiselgrad [1942: 105] has described that many people perceived the hypocritical rhetoric of the new regime as mental oppression. The constitution solemnly promised freedom of the press, speech, association and personal security; in reality none of it was true:

> "Newspapers were day after day filled with detailed announcements about silly and vacuous meetings and of the decisions made, public calls, resolutions, mottos and watchwords thereof. Salutes to comrade Stalin and other party bosses in newspapers were permanent. Also the biographies of Stalin and Lenin were repeated over and over and their portraits were displayed.
>
> The new regime not only censors matters dealing with actual politics but *interferes with the free time of people* (e.g. workers were made to listen to politicians lecturing about Marxism and Leninism four times a week, with participation in meetings and demonstrations carefully documented)."

Photo 1. Wallboard "Red Ray" 1941 (Seinaleht "Punakiir")
to commemorate the anniversary of Lenin's death in 1941;
Estonian History Museum (AM 1480/R F 2569).

Aarelaid [2006: 175] has described how the abrupt reversal in cultural norms and values caused traumatic syndrome and *double-mindedness*[1] in people. People were psychologically not ready to lose their memories of the independent nation state.

As described above, from the very first moments of the new regime, community houses, in addition to the direct administrative subordination, had to follow methodical guidelines, which were labelled as assistance and sharing of experience. These guidelines, which were tied up and subordinated to the Five-Year Plan cycle's directions and plans of the Soviet Communist Party, were compiled in the Soviet Union central institution, the N. Krupskaya All-Union House of Folk Art

[1] Double-mindedness (the emergence of double standards) is a deep socio-psychological mechanism for the adaption of people living under the unfavourable conditions caused by major historical upheavals. The main function of this mechanism is the self-protection of individual identities in the permanent coercive process of switching over from one ideological system to another. Aarelaid-Tart, A. [2006: 192–193].

in Moscow, and shared by the local institutions of Soviet Republics[1] – in the forges of methodological guidelines and mandatory repertoire.

With the same regulation of 9 October 1940, with which societies and unions were dissolved and their assets nationalized in Estonia, the Centre for Folk Arts was established under the Department of Political Education in the People's Commissariat of the ESSR. The Centre for Folk Arts took over the functions of the Estonian Education Association, the Estonian Singers' Union and the National Estonian Youth Organization of the previous era. All the larger choirs, folk dance groups and orchestras, which had operated as part of the dissolved societies, were now subject to the Centre for Folk Arts, whose code of conduct was adopted on 30 October 1940 [Reference Book … 1982: 84–85]. According to the law [ENSV Teataja nr. 37, 1940: 442], the mission of the Centre for Folk Arts was "*to promote and administer amateur arts.*"

In 1940 and 1941, the legal structure for the sovietization of community houses was set but due to the beginning of World War II, there was no time for a full implementation of the system. Archival dossiers[2] show that the existing network of community houses was thoroughly studied by the authorities of the People's Commissariat for Education of the ESSR. Extensive reports with precise data on community houses and the people involved (location of the community house, year of construction, condition of buildings, the number and type of amateur hobby groups, the number of people participating in the activities, the social status, as well as the educational level of the people leading the community houses and amateur art activities) about each Estonian county were compiled [ibid].

By the autumn of 1941, Estonia had been taken over by German troops. During the German occupation, the former state of cultural affairs was re-established and assets, buildings, and collections were returned to societies. An active cultural life in Estonia continued largely as it had during independence. However, the conditions of the occupation cannot be called free: the German occupying

[1] Methodical guidelines from the N. Krupskaya All-Union House of Folk Art in Moscow to Estonian Centre for Folk Art in 1955 ERA.R.-28.2.147; Archival Documents of the People's Commissariat for Education of the ESSR (1940–1941) ERA.R.-14.1.926; ERA.R.-14.1.914; ERA.R.-14.1.556; Archival Documents of the Committee for Organizations of Cultural Education (1945–1953) ERA.R.-1570.1.57; ERA.R.-1570.1.247; ERA.R.-1570.1.179; ERA.R.-1570.1.152; ERA.R.-1570.1.192; ERA.R.-1570.1.262; ERA.R.-1570.1.339; ERA.R.-1570.1.434; ERA.R.-1570.1.131; Archival Documents of the Folk Art House (1940–1959) ERA.R.-28.2.87; ERA.R.-28.2.147; ERA.R.-28.2.151; ERA.R.-28.2.2.3; Archival Documents of the Folk Art House (1966,1967,1973) ERA.R.-28.2.318; ERA.R.-28.2.338; ERA.R.-28.2.314; ERA.R.-28.2.369; ERA.R.-28.2.487.

[2] Archival documents of the People's Commissariat for Education of the ESSR (1940–1941) ERA.R.-14.1.926; ERA.R.-14.1.914; ERA.R.-14.1.556.

troops persecuted and executed Jews and communists or suspected communists, including writers, artists, and socially active people.

During the years of the loss of independent statehood a large part of the cultural and art elite left and the strong nationalist feeling, which had existed, was dispersed into the different worlds of the East and the West. The largest losses of creative people and artists came with the emigration to Germany (1939–1941), the 1941 June deportation and the forced conscription into the Soviet army.[1] Beginning with 1944, when the Red Army took over the Estonian territory once again, the situation was reversed and sovietization continued. After World War II, the Soviet legal structure for administering amateur arts was secured; nonetheless several restructurings took place, until in 1959 the administrative institution for amateur arts was named the Folk Art House of the ESSR, which was subject to the Ministry of Culture [Reference Book … 1982; Kuuli 2007].

3.2. Sovietization of community houses after World War II

In May 1945, the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the ESSR adopted new rules for the administration of community houses [Borkman 1945]. In the same year the regulation was accompanied by instructions and mandatory standard statutes for community houses, which, in Chapter 5, laid down the following: the mission of community houses, the content and form of work, types of community houses, administration and organization of work, rules for the management and dissolution of community houses. According to the document, community houses were categorized according to their duties into the following types: town, central, county, central and local rural municipalities' community houses. The network of community houses was drawn up by the local party organizations in Estonian towns and counties and approved by the People's Commissariat for Education of the ESSR. The *new mission of community houses* was stated to be:

> the cultivation of active and informed builders of the socialist society by politically educating people in the soviet spirit, organizing political, culturally and generally educating mass events and providing quality recreation and entertainment [Reference Book … 1982: 84–85].

Achieving the objectives according to the mission, a community house:

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[1] Karjahärm and Luts [2005] and Kuuli [2007] describe the preparatory steps in re-education the intelligentsia and creating the new cultural elite by the Soviet authorities during the war. See also: Karjahärm, T. and Luts, H-M. (2005). Kultuurigenotsiid Eestis. Kunstnikud ja muusikud 1940–1953. [*Cultural Genocide in Estonia. Artists and musicians from 1940–1953*] Tallinn: Argo; Kuuli, O. (2007). Stalini aja võimukaader ja kultuurijuhid Eesti NSV-s (1940–1954). [*Stalin-era Cadres in Power and Cultural Administrators in the Estonian SSR* (1940–1954)] Tallinn.

> (a) carries out mass agitation in order to explain the decisions of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Soviet Government; helps party and council bodies in organizing masses of workers and officials for the execution of those decisions; (b) helps workers in learning the Marxist-Leninist theory; (c) teaches socialist regard for work and public property, explains and implements measures for increasing productivity, especially in agriculture, by popularizing agricultural engineering; (d) carries out work in masses during the elections of the Councils of Workers' Representatives, public organizations, lay judges, etc., and arranges reporting events for workers' representatives and other publicly elected officials; (e) arranges the explaining of domestic and external policy events of the Soviet Union; (f) organizes mass propagation of military knowledge and helps in preparing the population for the protection of the immunity of the Soviet Union; (g) helps to raise the cultural-technical level of the population and popularizes scientific, technical, literary and artistic achievements; (h) organizes cultural recreation and entertainment. [Reference Book … 1982: 84–85].

As can be seen from the above, the work, activities and functions of community houses were explicitly outlined by the authorities. It was a fully politicized agenda with the central task of ideological work for creating the Soviet person and cultivating the masses in accordance with the ideas of building socialist society, that is, the new reality of Soviet Modernity. In addition to the duties stipulated in the statutes, an institutional system of control and hierarchy was put into effect, with community houses of larger towns or county centres being in charge of coordinating the methodical (ideological) work, as well as the central methodical and administrative bodies.

The legal structure for the sovietization of community houses was set and prepared for the full implementation of the system straight after the war in 1945. In comparison with the mission and objectives given to the community houses by the state during the first Estonian Republic (Law adopted in 1931, see above) and Soviet Estonia (rules adopted in 1945), we can see remarkable differences in the roles given to the community houses by the state: from the *"centres for cultural and free educational activities"* (1931), community houses were turned into *"centres for the cultivation of active and informed builders of the socialist society by politically educating people in the soviet spirit"* (1945).

The examination of the rules and guidelines above shows that the importation of Soviet coercive state practices and the cultural policy model was systematic, starting with an abrupt legal reconstruction of society and proceeding with the building up of a top-down governed network of institutions (including trained personnel and professionals).

4. Conclusion

The example of Estonian community houses demonstrates how people's free time self-expression in the network of cultural organizations of the first Republic of Estonia, with its roots in the 19th-century civil activism of society, was replaced by guided and coordinated cultural practices. The well-developed Estonian network of cultural institutions suited the Soviet authorities, who adopted and sovietized the content and model of cultural policy. Within state-owned and centralized institutions, the Soviet cultural canon with local folklore variations was mediated through community houses to the population of Estonia.

A range of party officials and non-party professionals established norms and routines for the rest of the population to follow. Through the creation of a cultural canon, the Soviet leaders sought to provide a set of shared values and common heritage of Soviet mass culture to form a common way of life – a monolithic Soviet society. The final aim of the Soviet cultural canon and cultural policy entailed a wide range of norms and practices intended to transform people's behaviour and create a new social order, a Soviet society and a Soviet person – a mass-man in an atomized society, as Arendt [1985: 318–323] has described.

This leads to a new question for future research: To what extent did the sovietization of Estonian community houses succeed? How did people cope with propaganda and did they accept the change in cultural practices? Where did the cultural power come from during the days of perestroika and the Singing Revolution?

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THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CULTURE: STUDIES AND EXPERIENCE IN LATVIA

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Abstract

The first economic impact studies in Latvia were done 10 years after the iconic research by John Myerscough [Myerscough 1988]; we lag behind not only in time, but also in the content of such researches. Cultural managers and cultural institutions still do not consider economic impact valuation relevant. The present paper analyses why it is so and whether there any options for stimulating economic impact evaluation practices in Latvia.

The paper evaluates the motivation for performing economic impact research and arguments against such studies together with the general research trends and experiences of foreign researchers. The study shows that currently custom designed calculators with guidelines available in the form of web pages are a successful and useful tool for calculating the economic impact of cultural events.

The paper notes that the economic impact of various cultural phenomena, infrastructure buildings, and the whole field has been analysed by R. Karnīte, R. Ķīlis, I. Strode, I. Rozenberga, K. Goppers, the alumni of the Latvian Academy of Culture, and others. Mostly these studies are detached and accidental, moreover, each study uses a different methodology; consequently, the economic impact studies in the field of culture in Latvia are not regular and constant, and usually they are fuelled by the private interest of the event organizers or researchers. The author has created a template for a calculator, which is adapted to the economic situation of Latvia. It could promote popularity and regularity of the economic impact analysis studies in Latvia.

Keywords: *Economic impact studies, economic impact of culture, economic impact analysis, economic impact calculator.*

Introduction, description of the situation

The studies of economic impact analysis in the field of culture began in the 1980s, and John Myerscough's foundational book "The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain" was published in 1988. The first Latvian economic impact analysis in the field of culture was published 10 years later, when Raita Karnīte with a group of her colleagues published the study "Economic Significance Analysis of the Field of Culture". In general it can be said that Latvia is behind with regard to such studies not only in time, but in content as well; the practice of economic impact evaluation of culture is still not considered as obviously necessary in the daily work of cultural managers and institutions. Why is it so, and is there any way to promote the research of the economic impact analysis of culture in Latvia?

To understand the significance of the studies within the European and world context, the author provides a description of the history of economic impact evaluation studies in culture.

History of research

Since the early 1980s, the arts and culture activities became a significant aspect of city development programmes in the United Kingdom. Cities were searching for solutions of economic restructuring and replacement of traditional manufacturing industries. By following the examples of American and European cities, the largest cities of the United Kingdom – Glasgow, Manchester, and Liverpool – described their ambitious culture development strategies. These strategies were analysed in John Myerscough's study "The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain" (1988), commissioned by the Policy Research Institute. By using a methodology that combined questionnaires, interviews with culture field experts, quality and quantitative data, and multipliers, Myerscough showed that the field of culture is an economically important catalyst for renewal of the urban environment, which improves the image of the region and makes it a better place to live in [Labadi 2008: 14–15]. By use of multipliers Myerscough demonstrated that direct expenditure in the field of culture creates direct expenditure in other sectors of economy, which results in improved well-being and creation of jobs, while cities become more attractive both for residents and businesses. His research had a long-lasting effect on the cultural sector – it reinforced the argument of the economic impact of arts as an honest factor for receiving public financing on a regular basis. This report creates a good foundation for future impact studies and analysis, which were commissioned by local government and other public financing providers [Reeves 2002: 7–8].

During the last decades of the 20th century, the economic impact researches were often used by state and municipal institutions to acquire information to justify

the choice of policy and balance public expenditure for arts and cultural heritage. Some tried to evaluate the economic impact of the whole cultural sector; others were modest and researched the impact of a particular project. Researches that encompassed the whole sector were rejected by the economists as methodologically incorrect, and even when the research was carried out correctly, the policy makers tended to exaggerate results, ignored calculation restrictions and simply stated the desired number. Moreover, there was a tendency to assign benefits and profits to culture projects, which could have been created by a similar project in any other field. As a result, the economic impact studies gained bad publicity and a recent trend was to simply reject these studies as invalid [Towse 2010: 283].

In the 1980s, the economic dimension in culture evaluation studies dominated [Labadi 2008: 15]. However, concerns slowly grew about the fact that in culture field the debates around the value of culture projects and activities centred only on economic benefits, emphasizing the increase of employment and revenue. Many researchers argued that this limited view on influence of arts completely overlooked investments in such spheres as health, education and social inclusion [Reeves 2002: 14]. Thus, in the 1990s, the focus shifted to the social impact of the field, and researchers and policy makers were in conflict about the issue of economic impact being only a part of all benefits provided by culture projects [Labadi 2008: 15].

Nowadays it is more important to show that cultural events promote a cycle of money and interdisciplinary cooperation than to name a particular sum of the economic impact of the event (which is also interesting to know). The focus has shifted to social network researches that study these relationships and interconnections between disciplines. Promotion of cooperation is more important than calculation of a particular sum. Of course, there are plenty of exceptions, and the foreign practice shows that the evaluation of impact (economic, social, political, environmental, etc.) is routinely performed by the organizers of large scale events, and the study subjects are chosen in accordance with the available means and interests. Universal tools are developed, mostly in the form of an online calculator, to help cultural managers perform the economic impact analysis of their events faster and simpler. Usually two forms are used:

– guidelines that provide detailed instructions and advice on performance of such studies,
– online calculators that calculate values in accordance with the entered data [BOP consulting 2012: 29].

The best examples of calculators:

1. West Midlands Cultural Observatory toolkit www.eitoolkit.org.uk (United Kingdom)

2. eventIMPACTS toolkit http://www.eventimpacts.com/ (United Kingdom)
3. CULture CALculator (*Kulturní kalkulačka)* www.culcal.cz (Czech Republic)

The basic data (multipliers) of each of these calculators have been tailored to the economy of each particular country or culture projects. The existence of such calculators simplifies work and makes economic impact research more convenient and accessible, which would be quite essential for cultural project management in Latvia.

Problems with economic impact studies

Over time economic impact researches have faced many critical judgements and even rejections. Those include:

- Lack of interest and a negative attitude towards evaluation among participants of art projects; research is often considered obtrusive and degrading. Data collection is considered an unpleasant homework and not a tool to improve the operation of the organization.
- The primary motivation of organizations for performing analysis is to achieve the goals of the financing provider not to evaluate the impact of the activity on a particular region.
- It is very easy to make mistakes in the calculation of multiplier effects [Reeves 2002: 34–42], and the choice of wrong multipliers significantly affects the results, creating non-objective and exaggerated results.
- Results of various economic impact studies are not comparable to the revenue of other potential projects. Such comparisons are not usually studied in economic impact studies; these studies only evaluate the possibility of art projects without comparison of these projects to, for example, building a new sports facility [Towse 2010: 178]. It is impossible to compare the economic impact of the events of the same type that take place in different cities or countries due to the fact that the multiplier, which is used for the calculation of the total economic impact is different for each economic system, and the event itself has no effect on the multiplier [The eventIMPACTS toolkit]. Thus the economic impact studies are separate, detached and incomparable.
- David Throsby writes: "... Well conducted, with due regard for economic and statistical rigour, such studies can be very useful. However the pitfalls are many. There have been a number of dubious applications of the technique over the years; it seems that poorly-executed studies are particularly likely to arise when the motive is advocacy rather than objective economic analysis" [Throsby 2004: 1].

- If available research exists, it, however, often has significant limitations. Helen Jermyn highlights "small sample surveys, reliance on self-report measures, presentation of case-studies in a generalist way, lack of analysis relating to processes and so on. Often the conclusions drawn from such studies require qualification" as aspects drawing criticism [cited after Reeves 2002: 32].
- "One danger of economic impact studies is that they are frequently undertaken by individual cultural organisations and then aggregated without taking into account the fact that, to some (unknown) extent, these organisations are in competition with each other for local and incoming visitors, though each one cannot expect to attract all "new" visitors. It is also the case that one city or region does not take into account the "substitution" effect of attracting visitors away from neighbouring cities. One city may well benefit at the expense of another but need not take that into account; it is then up to the central government to view the overall Picture within the country" [Towse 2010: 523].

Finally, the economic impact analysis of any cultural event sooner or later will reach a conclusion that it is impossible to restrict the research only to accounting data. "There are also those in the sector who are concerned that social and economic rationales for the arts, with their emphasis on the arts as a means to other ends will serve to devalue arts for its own sake" [Reeves 2002: 36]. To generalize and conclude the discussion of the criticism of economic impact studies "analyses show that the arts, like any other economic activity, have economic effects on the rest of the economy" [Bille, Schulze 2006: 1064]. Although economic impact studies are necessary, it is very important for these studies to be of high quality, otherwise they have no meaning. Latvian researchers have faced several of the above-mentioned problems as well. Further on the author will describe the cultural economic impact studies in Latvia.

Economic impact studies in Latvia

Several economic impact studies have been performed in Latvia to study the impact of various phenomena and economic events such as tourism, immigration and emigration, the introduction of euro, etc. Economic impact studies in the field of culture are less popular, but it cannot be said that they do not exist.

One of the first to study the impact of cultural sector on economy was **Raita Karnīte** and her colleagues (1998, 1999, and 2003). These researches are fundamental and thorough both morally and methodologically, however, over 16 years they have become obsolete.

One of the basic researches to evaluate the economic impact of cultural economy and cultural politics in Latvia was carried out by **Roberts Ķīlis** and his

working group in 2007. This is one of the most cited researches, which for the first time includes the translated descriptions from the most significant European economic impact studies of culture, thus formalizing the terminology in the Latvian language and providing a short and general review of various economic impact study methods. In their research R. Ķīlis and his colleagues used *input–output analysis*, a model for the analysis of the whole industry, – based on an input–output table from year 1998 which was already obsolete at that time –, thus casting doubt on the study results. Also, after study of the primary sources used by R. Ķīlis, it must be said that sometimes translations lack precision, require review and critical analysis. However, this is one of the most fundamental studies about economic impact of culture in Latvia to date.

In the autumn of 2013 "Marketing practitioners ACADEMIA" supervised by Ilze Rozenberga performed a study on the economic impact of mass events, in particular – **a study of the economic impact of the Latvian Song and Dance Festival.** The summary of this study, available on the homepage of the Latvian National Culture Centre web page, provides a very broad general theoretical base in the Latvian language for performing economic impact studies. Unfortunately, the final conclusions indicate that the study has yielded no real results, "Taking into account that several studies about the economic impact of mass cultural events have resulted in ambiguous conclusions, and it is complicated to induce their impact, it is impossible to quantify the economic impact of the Latvian Song and Dance Festival on the economy and tourism of Latvia without a large scale study. The analysis leads to the conclusion that, in order to gain more objective information about the real contribution of the event to the economy, it is advisable to perform analysis both before and after the event" [Rozenberga 2013: 22].

Despite the fact that Juris Žagars is not a researcher and the fact that his position is related to political interests and fundraising, he still is an opinion leader, who speaks publicly about the economic impact of art and culture and the **need for such studies.** The most recent public speech of J. Žagars on this subject took place on 20 February 2015 at the creativity conference *"Subject: Creativity"* in Liepāja, during which **Juris Žagars spoke about the economic impact of Cēsis Art Festival.** In 2014 Cēsis Art Festival was visited by 20,000 people, only 20% of which were residents of Cēsis, and the total economic impact (on the budget of Cēsis municipality) of the art festival in 2014 was 213,000 euros. The municipality investment in the organization of the event was tiny (only 4% of the total 170,000 euro budget). The following additional benefits of the festival were underlined: promoting the image of the town, educating society, stabilizing the prices of real estate [Žagars 2015]. However, the method for the evaluation of the economic impact used by J. Žagars's group is unclear; using his data in any of the

online calculator tools provides a very different result, which leads to scepticism and caution.

The study **"Economic Value and Impact of Latvian Public Libraries"** performed by Ieva Strode and her colleagues in 2012 is a very successful economic impact study in the field of culture. The study is fundamental and massive, encompassing more than 800 Latvian public libraries. Contingent valuation method, which is one of the most complex and scrupulous methods, was used in this study. A large scale poll of public library users was organized to determine their readiness and willingness to pay particular sums for library services (copying, scanning, etc.). No studies of similar scope using this method have been performed in Latvia.

In 2006, when the construction of the new Latvian National Library was doubted, a research about the economic impact of the library building was commissioned. The former Minister of Culture, Helēna Demakova, in her speech during the conference "Economic Contribution of Culture", on 14 December 2005, said, "(..) providing financing to culture is not a subsidy, but an investment. The investment means that there will be return of the investment – if not a direct financial return over an average or long-term period, then definitely a positive, measurable economic effect. During "The First Culture Employees Forum" economist Kārlis Goppers said that studies on the economic return of culture objects, events, or processes are a relatively new sub-field of economics, which is based on modern economic theories. **Currently Goppers is working on the economic impact analysis of the National Library project** (..). It must be said that there are few examples in Latvia that would allow us to evaluate the economic impact of the investments in the field of culture. There are not many such examples since there are not many investments" [Demakova 2005]. The results of the study showed that "Taking into account that the construction of the Latvian National Library, the Riga Concert Hall and the Museum of Contemporary Art are projects of national importance, in which significant amounts of funding from the state budget will be invested, the state agency *"Jaunie "Trīs brāļi""* ("The New Three Brothers") has commissioned a study and analysis of the economic justification and return of the investment in these objects. The author of the research, an authoritative economist working in Sweden, Kārlis Goppers, came to a conclusion that the implementation of all the three projects, including their construction and successful operation, will generate a significant economic activity and in the next 30 years could return 144 million lats to the economy of Latvia, but in 50 years the profits could reach 220 million lats" [State agency *"Jaunie "Trīs brāļi""* 2007]. Due to the fact that the state agency *"Jaunie "Trīs brāļi""* was liquidated in 2009, currently the study by K. Goppers is unavailable to public (previously it was

available on the web page of the agency), thus it is impossible to determine what research method he used for his analysis and what the economic impact of each separate object of the infrastructure is. In any case, the fact of the existence of such a study is positive by itself.

Several alumni of Latvian Academy of Culture have written Bachelor's and Master's Theses on subjects related to the economic impact of culture. In 2008 Ieva Zemīte wrote the Master's Thesis "Economic Impact Study of Event Centre Activity in Latvia". She used economic impact assessment approach to analyse the economic impact of *"Dzintari"* concert hall in detail. In 2014 Līga Grīnberga wrote the Bachelor's Thesis "Use of Social Network Analysis Capabilities to Study Economic Impact of Culture. Example of *"Riga 2014""*, in which she analysed the economic impact, social impact and cooperation networks between culture and economic fields promoted by the project *"Riga 2014"*. In her work she used social network analysis method. The Master's Thesis of the author of the present paper, "Economic Impact of Cultural Events. Example of the World Choir Games", was written in 2015. Using economic impact assessment approach, the author calculated that the total economic impact of the World Choir Games 2014 in Riga amounted to 21.6 million €. From every euro invested in the organization of the World Choir Games in 2014 30% or 0.30 cents were received by companies in other fields.

The most recent event impact analysis in Latvia was performed by Anda Laķe and a group of her colleagues – **a report on the evaluation of the impact of the European Capital of Culture *"Riga 2014"* programme**, which was presented during the international forum *"Riga 2014"* on 13 May 2015. The report analyses the social and economic impact of *"Riga 2014"*. From the economic point of view, this study is an extended and deeper version of the previously mentioned Bachelor's Paper by Līga Grīnberga, and the main conclusion is that 33% of the financing for the European Capital of Culture events[1] was directly received by other economic sectors [Grīnberga 2015].

Conclusions and future development of research

In conclusion, it can be said that only separate, detached and mostly one-time studies about some events or phenomena in the field of culture are available in Latvia, and undertaking these studies is not a common and constant practice. These single studies are mostly promoted by the private interest of the event organizers or researchers. A large number of studies fail to clearly indicate the methodology used, thus the number of qualitative and thorough researches are very small.

[1] 3 out of 6 thematic lines were studied.

In attracting financing for cultural events the project managers need to constantly argument and justify the need for financing, especially if the financing is public. Most often emotional or social benefits are named. It is not popular to say that the investment of funds in cultural events is not beneficial, since the events will have economic impact and state or municipality budget will indirectly gain more funds than the project managers are asking for initially. Commentaries and perplexed questions about the necessity to invest in culture (meaning the entertainment function) at a time when the state lacks funding for healthcare, salaries for teachers or the currently popular defence issues are often voiced in public space. In the context of Latvia the economic impact studies of cultural sector would promote the increase of understanding not only among the providers of financing, but within the society as a whole, and the statements of some enthusiasts about the fact that culture has an economic impact would be finally justified by real numbers and facts. The world context shows that this approach has become somewhat obsolete; however, we have missed this phase in Latvia. The author's Master's Thesis resulted in a template for an economic impact calculator tailored particularly for the economic situation of Latvia. Availability of such a calculator online would benefit the popularity and regular performance of economic impact studies in Latvia.

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INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO DOCUMENTATION OF LATVIAN PERFORMANCE ART

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the debate among the theatre and performance theorists, who have long argued that performance becomes something else whenever it is documented. In fact, performance art historians can be divided into two groups: the first are adamant that a performance must be seen and experienced as a "live" event, the second – that performance art cannot exist without documentation, since it needs a proof of its occurrence. An alternative perspective maintains that documents themselves, however, cannot be (dis)regarded simply as incomplete remains from live events. The process of documentation is essential in performance art, since the documents can help artists to acquire a different perspective on their own work. Similarly, through such documents audiences can remember and visualize the performances they witnessed in person or, if they were not present, have an opportunity to explore the works that would otherwise remain unnoticed. The paper will analyse the role of documents in performance art through focusing on the work of four artists: Andris Grīnbergs, Maija Tabaka, Imants Lancmanis, and Miervaldis Polis. These artists have not only pursued performance art each in their own *écriture*, they can also be credited with making their own contribution to the historiography and genealogy of performance art in Latvia. Due to the documents – paintings and photographs – this legacy can be appreciated by contemporary audiences.

Keywords: *Performance art, documentation, photography, painting, synthesis.*

When we think of the main features of performance art such as the body of the artist as the material, form and content of artwork, the blurred boundaries between art and life, experiential immediacy and the dematerialization of artwork,

the prevalence of the process and human subject over the product, as well as the dominance of presentational modes of action in real time over representational, commodified objects, it can be stated that this kind of process-based art in Latvia emerged only in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[1]

In this period there emerged a number of Latvian artists involved in performance art, although on several occasions the artists admitted that they had not been aware of this genre or discipline, despite the fact that they had been pursuing it. On the one hand, it can be explained by the limited access to the relevant information, since the Communist Party functionaries or the so-called *apparatchiks* deemed anything associated with the West "capitalist" and unacceptable. Art and lifestyle magazines reached Latvia through uncensored and camouflaged channels, yet it was a rather sporadic and inconsistent means of acquiring information. Sometimes the artists only looked at the images in these magazines, since they did not have the command of the foreign language to translate the text. On the other hand, even if performance art had been recognized as an art discipline in its own right, it would have been denied the status of a professional art form and discriminated or neglected by the Soviet art hierarchy. This is clearly manifested by the various amateur activities such as photography clubs or pantomime and movement theatre which were supported and even promoted by the state, yet never considered "serious" enough as academic disciplines.

Performance art that is the subject of this paper can be referred to as the "unnoticed art" or the "other" art. It often existed only within close circles of the artists, their family and friends, thus establishing some form of microenvironment or the second public sphere (*die zweite Öffentlichkeit*)[2] – a paradoxical parallel culture, where the totalitarian body of *Homo Sovieticus* could be subjected to various transformations. It could be painted, dressed and undressed and, consequently, turned into a body free of ideological messages. Such were the first happenings and instances of performance art by Andris Grīnbergs (b. 1946) and the themed balls and carnivals organized by Imants Lancmanis (b. 1941) at Rundāle Palace. In terms of documentation, two equally important forms – photography and painting – can be noted. For the purposes of this paper, the paintings by Maija Tabaka (b. 1939) and Miervaldis Polis (b. 1948) will be examined. These paintings have been selected not only as illustrations of the interdisciplinary approaches to documentation when artists have created something new by crossing boundaries and thinking across them, but also as vivid examples of mutual overlapping or hybridization between performance art, photography, and painting.

[1] In comparison to Japan, the USA and Western Europe, where artists started to practise performance after World War II.

[2] Here I refer to the concept coined by Jürgen Habermas.

Andris Grīnbergs never studied fine arts, such as painting or sculpture, at the Art Academy of Latvia, the bastion of traditional art disciplines, so he cannot be considered a visual artist in the traditional sense. Yet, through his innovativeness and creative spirit he epitomizes a new type of artist in the history of Latvian art. Being inspired and creatively interweaving and appropriating elements from fashion and hippie subculture, as well as incorporating contemporary social and political events in his art, Grīnbergs's *écriture* was that of a bricoleur – a craftsman who creatively uses materials left over from other projects to construct new artefacts. He was not a painter, so he employed new media, invited photographers and used his own body as material for art. He was a tailor, so he dressed himself and other participants of his happenings. He was not a stage designer, yet he always found props and orchestrated mise-en-scène, even if it was manifested just as a piece of thread and some changes in the arrangement of furniture at the apartment.

In August 1972 Grīnbergs organized his first staged happening "The Wedding of Jesus Christ" (see figure 1).[1] Grīnbergs, his wife, friends, and photographers went to Carnikava beach (25 km from Riga), where they engaged in an improvised wedding ritual that lasted for two days. With this happening Grīnbergs wanted to implement an event of life such as a wedding in a poetic, figurative form. The title "The Wedding of Jesus Christ" was appropriated from the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" which was popular at the time with Grīnbergs and his circles and consequently made the performance "more contemporary" [Demakova 2011: 255]. According to Grīnbergs, the title did not have any religious implications, because he was against religion as a dogma and violence against the free spirit, thus Christ in this happening merely served as a decoration and the crucifix as a design [Demakova 2011: 255]. It must be noted that there was another happening on 11 July 1973 dealing with the theme of wedding entitled "The Green Wedding" (with the alternative title "Summertime").[2] Here the green colour was the leading motif; there were green clothes for Grīnbergs and his wife, and a green cab that took them from Old Riga to an outing in the green countryside. Grīnbergs characterizes the setting of this happening as "very romantic and hippie – the horses, swings, a grass wreath, naked bodies" [Demakova 2011: 255]. This happening started as

[1] Participants: Andris Bergmanis, Irēna Birmbauma, Māra Brašmane, Ināra Eglīte, Mudīte Gaiševska, Aija Grīnberga, Andris Grīnbergs, Inta Jaunzema (Grīnberga), Ninuce Kaupuža, Ingvars Leitis, Ināra Podkalne, Sandrs Rīga, Ivars Skanstiņš, Eižens Valpēters. Photos: Atis Ieviņš and Māra Brašmane.

[2] Participants: Irēna Birmbauma, Egīls Blūms, Ināra Eglīte, Ingūna Galviņa, Andris Grīnbergs, Inta Grīnberga, Jānis Kreicbergs, Ināra Podkalne, Jānis Sējāns, Alfrēds Stinkurs. Photos: Jānis Kreicbergs.

Figure 1. The Wedding of Jesus Christ (1972).
Atis Ieviņš.

a post-nuptial procession through the streets of Old Riga following the official wedding ceremony of the Grīnbergs couple at the State Registry Office.

The second example of performance art is another wedding, this time of the painter Imants Lancmanis and his wife Ieva Šmite. Similarly to the wedding of the Grīnbergs couple, this was also a real wedding party after the official ceremony, which took place in May 1971 (see figure 2).[1] The carnivalesque event carried out with scrupulous attention to details was held at Rundāle Palace some months later. It stretched out over three days and each participant was free to play any character they wanted. Similarly to Grīnbergs's wedding, here, too, the participants were dressed up in costumes, for example, the Lancmanis couple wore the attire from the Rococo period. Though similarities with Grīnbergs's happening are really striking, Lancmanis himself states that Grīnbergs's event was a specially planned happening, a work of art, whereas in their case it was essentially a beautifully designed and presented wedding. During the same interview, though, he admits that it was a performance, despite the fact that they were not aware of the term at

[1] Thus predating Grīnbergs's happening "The Green Wedding" (1973) by two years.

Figure 2. Wedding at Rundāle (1971).
Photographer unknown.

the time: "There is no need to look at foreign magazines or to know that it is called performance. It is interesting to do that here in Latvia and only then find out that the same thing has been happening in the rest of the world. It was performance and we felt inspired by it. We perceived it as a motion picture, as a process. We did it in great style" [Demakova 2011: 178].

It must be noted that in the early 1970s the emphasis of environment in art was not an extraordinary phenomenon on both sides of the Cold War divide. In the West such artists as Robert Smithson and Dennis Oppenheim started to create their works of art outdoors with natural materials creating textbook examples of Land Art or Earth Art and contributing towards the terminology of conceptual art. Moving outdoors and shifting emphasis from the object to the process was also essential in happenings. Allan Kaprow described the settings of his early happenings as "environments" or spaces, which entangled spectators in multi-sensory experiences [Kaprow 1966]. For Kaprow, the approach to "site" through

performance closely linked phenomenological enquiries into art-viewing with a testing of the limits of the artwork. For him, performance provided a means through which the geography and events of "found" sites could be approached outside the representational terms of painting and sculpture [Kaye 2000: 105]. Consequently, happenings and performances reflected on relationships between practice and place, and so work and site, facilitating fluid exchanges between the frame of an artwork and its various contexts [Kaye 2000: 105].

According to these definitions, Lancmanis had a very similar creative approach. For him, too, the place and environment played a key role in creating "the feeling" and a world which no longer existed. Moreover, such a mix of genres overlapping the boundaries between a scientific research project, painting and performance allowed Lancmanis, like Kaprow, to extend the limits of mere representational forms: "Rundāle interested me as an opportunity to "re-create" a world which no longer exists, actually this is what I wish to do in my paintings as well: to conjure up a world which either is no longer there or has never existed, except in my mind; to make it so tangible and detailed that people would believe that such a world could exist. Rundāle gives you a chance to "re-create" the palace, the environment and park in total; every room you enter takes you to a different era. That's what I like about Rundāle – the huge installation that it has become. That is indeed the right word. It is a large, but very consistent and conceptually-directed installation. That is at the foundation of what I like about it, that people say that Rundāle is a *living* palace. [..] this palace has been re-created from scratch. I was greatly inspired by the chance to "re-create" it. Not only to fill it with pictures and furniture, but to create the feeling that that's how it is" [Demakova 2011: 176–177].

For Grīnbergs, the environment was not the decisive factor around which to construct his artwork, since he was not re-creating the environment that once had existed. Thus, although the place – Carnikava beach – was not chosen randomly, the change of environment moving away from the centre to the periphery allowed Grīnbergs to escape the control and surveillance of the panoptic KGB sight.[1] Here, where no one was watching, nudity became a self-evident norm, as the totalitarian body needed to be freed from any restrictions and ideological messages, or, to quote Grīnbergs, the body was "the only zone of freedom" [Demakova 2011: 257]. According to Grīnbergs, nudity was a deliberate provocation, used to visualize

[1] It must be noted that in the Eastern Bloc creation of such environments or site-specific art was not without challenges. Despite trumpeting the collective ownership of all resources including space itself, state censorship, surveillance and a paranoid attitude to any form of unlicensed social gathering meant that the creation of works of art, which formed environments – in the sense suggested by Kaprow – always risked official condemnation [Crowley 2014].

the ideas that he had in his mind. Grīnbergs states that he was interested in the body in all its manifestations, both as flesh and soul and as a matrix for one's identity: "As to the naked body, it was not like things that can be seen in magazines today. At that time the body was not a commodity yet. For us it [being naked] was a liberation. They can take everything away from you, but the body belongs only to you" [Demakova 2011: 257]. Consequently, in Grīnbergs's case the environment was a tool for placing greater emphasis on the process-based art and the presentational modes of action in real time as opposed to representational, commodified objects, thus also extending the boundaries of art in the traditional sense, whereas Lancmanis focused on creating a site-specific art reviving a "found" site with props, imagery, and historical figures.

These two performances are also interesting due to the fact that both of them were weddings – a continuation of the official marriage registration act held at the State Registry Office. Consequently, they both mark the boundary between the public and the private laying emphasis on the importance of the second public sphere – the one where the participants could feel free and unrestricted by the laws imposed by the regime. Moreover, it is fascinating to examine the visual evidence of these events. In Grīnbergs's case there were two photographers – Māra Brašmane and Atis Ieviņš – documenting the performance in the snapshot aesthetics, namely, taking photographs of the participants and the events as they unfolded in time. However, Lancmanis's wedding was documented not only in photographs, but also in a large-scale painting made from a photograph in 1974 by Maija Tabaka ("Wedding at Rundāle"; see figure 3). This painting was also crucial in Tabaka's own development as an artist, since she considers it "the beginning of [her] art theatre, system of images and autonomy that was referred to as *the Theatre Of Madame Tabaka*" [original emphasis, Blaua 2010: 85]. As a painter, Tabaka often used models and staged various *tableau-vivants*. Moreover, Tabaka was the contemporary of both Lancmanis and Grīnbergs, and both have appeared in her paintings as models.[1]

Another contemporary artist was Miervaldis Polis, who was active both as a painter and as a performance artist. Polis is an especially interesting case study for the purposes of this paper, since as a painter he was interested in creating illusion and enthusiastically adopted the photorealistic and *trompe l'oeil* manner of painting. He also wrote a manifesto on Photorealism (or Hyperrealism, as it was termed in Latvia) reflecting on the artistic methods applied by Leonardo da

[1] Maija Tabaka and Imants Lancmanis also belonged to the so-called Second French Group (along with Bruno Vasiļevskis, Jānis Krievs, Līga Purmale and Juris Pudāns). This group was established in the 1960s by artists who avidly studied French painting, literature, and culture.

Figure 3. Wedding at Rundāle (1974). Maija Tabaka.

Vinci and Johannes Vermeer [Polis 1983: 6–9]. Polis's declaration "I am painting a photograph" [Traumane 2000: 130] manifests his interest in the synthesis of a photographic image and the principles of painting. Moreover, his painting "Self-Portrait in Bronze" (1988; see figure 4), which is a painting done in the snapshot aesthetics from a photograph is also, in fact, a documentation of Polis's performance "The Bronze Man" (1987), where he had covered his face, hands, hair and suit in bronze paint and strolled around Old Riga finally putting himself on an empty pedestal and becoming a live, breathing sculpture (see figure 5). At the time, when a monument of Lenin was placed in every town of Latvia, eyewitnesses interpreted this performance as a mimetic representation of Lenin, which Polis terms "the narrow understanding of art in the Soviet times" [Brizgela 2015: 151]. However, the photorealistic painting made after the photograph from this performance represents not only synthesis or hybridization of three art disciplines – painting, photography, and performance – but is also intriguing, since the photorealistic painting looks like a photograph, yet, it is not. It can

Figure 4. Self-Portrait in Bronze (1988).
Miervaldis Polis.

be suggested that Polis as a painter and performance artist has "appropriated" photography. Moreover, due to its photorealistic qualities, it is quite impossible to tell which form of documentation prevails – photography or painting. What are the differences and the similarities? Are there any?

In this context, both Tabaka's painting "Wedding at Rundāle" (1974) and Polis's painting "Self-Portrait in Bronze" (1988) are cases of integrated or hybrid performance aesthetics becoming something else and different than at the time of the point of departure. If they are viewed as cases of artistic synthesis and transformation in aesthetics, they provide richer grounds for contextualization, since in the history of art the idea of synthesis and integrated aesthetics is not so recent. Indeed, if we talk about theatrical performance, perhaps the most prominent transformation in the 20th century has come through the hybridisation of traditional disciplines [Klich, Scheer 2011: 20].

The first significant expression of integration in theatre was the Wagnerian idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or Total Artwork, in which Richard Wagner prophetically envisioned the integration of traditional disciplines into a unified work with the

Figure 5. The Bronze Man in Riga (1987).
Miervaldis Polis.

aim of intensifying the audience's experiences of art [Klich, Scheer 2011: 20]. In 1849 Wagner produced the landmark essay, "The Artwork of the Future", in which he declared, "Artistic Man can only fully content himself by uniting every branch of Art into the common Artwork" [Wagner 2001: 4]. In this essay Wagner asked for a fusion or "totalising" of all arts and as such it can arguably be considered the first systematic effort in modern art towards such comprehensive integration [Packer, Jordan 2001: 4].

Another prominent example of fusion of arts is Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who in collaboration with Emilio Settimelli and Bruno Corra wrote the essay "The Futurist Synthetic Theatre" (1915). Their essay articulated a theatre, which would reflect the rapid technological advances of the age and directly oppose the historical "passeist" theatre. In the age of the automobile and the aeroplane they insisted that a new type of art practice was needed to reflect the changes that the industrial revolution had initiated: a new aesthetic for a new mechanised social and industrial infrastructure [Klich, Scheer 2012: 25–26]. The Futurist Theatre was to be "synthetic", "atechnical", "dynamic", "simultaneous", "autonomous",

"alogical", and "unreal" [Marinetti 1998: 177–80]. A significant aspect of their approach was the statement that the theatre should meet the challenges of the new art form of cinema with its "polyexpressiveness towards which all the most modern artistic researches are moving" [Marinetti 2001: 12]. They declared that Futurist cinema "will be painting, architecture, sculpture, words-in-freedom, music of colours, lines, and forms, a jumble of objects and reality thrown together at random" [Marinetti 2001: 13].

And the last example, which is especially crucial in the context of performance art, is the "untitled event" (1952) at the Black Mountain College organised by John Cage. This event not only evidenced the hybridisation of artistic disciplines but also epitomised the shift in emphasis from product to process and from dramatic theatre to performance [Klich, Scheer 2012: 28]. In her article "Performance Art and Ritual: Bodies in Performance", Erika Fischer-Lichte explains that the event challenged the borders between the arts, as it "dissolved the artefact into performance. Texts were recited, music was played, paintings were "painted over" – the artefacts became the actions. [..] Poetry, music and the fine arts ceased to function merely as poetry, music, or fine arts – they were simultaneously realised as performance art" [Fischer-Lichte 1997: 25].

Surely, these are only a few examples illustrating that migration and hybridisation of forms can take place in all directions – both from the object to the action and from the action to the object. In a sense, it is the question of "polyexpressiveness" that the Futurists wrote about and it does not necessarily imply that one or the other form of documentation can be considered more prevalent or "appropriate". Thus, the paintings of Tabaka and Polis integrating performance aesthetics and relying heavily on photography are instances of such an artistic fusion, when the action not only as a performative action, but also as the gesture of the painter – his or her phenomenological experience – has become an artefact. To appreciate these works of art, the viewer does not need to be aware of the ontologically prior event, which has taken place before the act of painting. Moreover, unawareness of these performances will not restrict the viewer's aesthetic experience. By no means can these paintings be regarded only as "supplements" to the "actual" event. Yet, knowing the historical, political, social and personal contexts for a particular performance, can encourage the viewer to look at the document – painting, in this case – in a new light and from a different perspective.

Nevertheless, as regards the role of documentation in performance art, theatre and performance theorists have long argued that performance becomes something else whenever it is documented. In fact, performance art historians can be divided into two groups: the first are adamant that performance must be witnessed in person, because "performance is about the 'real-life' presence of the artist" [Elwes 1985: 165],

the second – that the documents themselves cannot be (dis)regarded simply as incomplete remains from live events. The most frequently quoted theoretician supporting performance as a live event is Peggy Phelan, who 23 years ago declared that "performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" [Phelan 1993: 146]. Whereas, Amelia Jones argues that "there is no possibility of an unmediated relationship to any kind of cultural product, including body art" [Jones 1997: 12] and, moreover, the specifity of knowledge gained from participating in a live performance event should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledge that develops in relation to the documentary traces of such an event [Jones 1997: 12]. This kind of mediated "re-presence" has become the ultimate polemic argument in performance studies [Phelan 1993; Jones 1997; Auslander 1999].

Yet, it cannot be denied that there is definitely a tension between the evanescent quality of a one-off live performance and a need or requirement to leave a trace in the form of a document. Moreover, as stated by Philip Auslander in his earlier writing, certain forms of documentation are higher in the hierarchy than others, "Written descriptions and drawings or paintings of performances are not direct transcriptions through which we can access the performance itself, as aural and visual recording media are […] Whereas drawings, like writing, transforms, performance, audio-visual technologies, like photography "record" it. In everyday usage, we refer to "live" or "recorded" performances but not to "written" performances or "painted" performances, perhaps for this reason" [Auslander 1999: 52].

Thus, Auslander suggests that accessibility to something past is somehow manipulated through "transformation". From here, it can be concluded that Auslander declares the politics of form concerning documentation in which video and photography rank higher due to their capacity to "record" a "performance", whereas writing, painting and drawing are dismissed [Campbell 2014: 36]. This is a discussion concerning the politics of form connected to the document in terms of representation and ideas surrounding "truth" (that is, how different forms of document may be hierarchically placed in their attempt to represent an action that is now absent) [Campbell 2014: 35]. As Amelia Jones proposes, "while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical "truth" of the performance" [Jones 1997: 11].

In the event of photography, surely photographs have been used and still are used as a form of evidence. Portrait photographs, such as passport photographs or photographs from police records, have generally been widely regarded as providing evidence about their subject's outward appearance; sometimes portraits

are also thought of as revealing something about their subject's inner personality. On the other hand, visual objects such as paintings or drawings also have the potential to serve as documents. For example, drawing is a form of document, when the courtroom sketch artist uses drawing to provide access to specific aspects of proceedings in a court of law. Another example can be found in Jill Gibbon's research "Dilemmas of Drawing War" (2011), where the work of an artist and activist is discussed in the context of using drawing as a form of war reportage. Similarly, since there were no other means of documentation available, the drawings and even sculptures done secretly by the inmates of concentration camps can be regarded as a form of witness, as, for example, examined in Mary S. Constanza's book "The Living Witness: Art in Concentration Camps and Ghettos" (1982). Consequently, these can be considered an alternative or "non-traditional" form of documentation, as suggested by Campbell [Campbell 2014].

In conclusion, it must be admitted that this article provides only a partial insight into the on-going discussions on the interdisciplinary approaches in performance documentation. For example, the role of the painting as a document can be further discussed, since art historians and theorists tend to draw a distinction between photography as "straight" and "fast" and painting as "constructed" and "slow". Through examining the works of Andris Grīnbergs, Imants Lancmanis, Maija Tabaka and Miervaldis Polis, the interaction between performance art, painting and photography in the local art scene has been illustrated, yet, surely, the relationship between these three genres can be further examined. Within the scope of this article, it can be suggested that, perhaps, it is essential to focus not on documents as objects but on the processes of documenting as a practice [Sant 2014: 6].

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