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CONTENT

HERITAGE AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION: TOWARDS VIABLE LOCAL CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS IN POLAND AND FRANCE

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Abstract

The overarching aim of this research was to conduct a comparative analysis of the Polish and French approaches to the interpretation and management of cultural heritage. It also explores the perceptions of the legacy associated with venues that have transitioned from their original purposes to new forms of activities aimed at heritage preservation. Key aspects of this study encompass the preservation of the memory of these sites, the strategic development of the locales, the values and goals upheld by these transformed facilities, capacity building, and the roles played by private entities in organizing cultural activities and commemorating cultural heritage within the region.

Keywords: *heritage of sanatoria, participatory governance, community transformations, local challenges, culture-led development.*

Introduction

The object of the study presented in the article focuses on cultural heritage revitalization, adopting an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of management, art, and social participation and in particular on the significance, value, and the evolution of former French and Polish sanatoria and abbeys, transformed

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into vibrant cultural centres. This text derives from the research proceedings of the project titled "French and Polish Heritage of Former Hospitals, Sanatoriums, Abbeys, and Schools Transformed into Public or Private Arts and Culture Centers: A Comparative Analysis". The research encompasses several in-situ case studies, the findings of which are drawn from a comparative analysis. The consortium, consisting of five partners, includes the Institute of European Studies of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, the Institute of European Studies at University Paris 8, Université de Franche-Comté, the ENCC (European Network of Cultural Centres) network in Brussels, and the ACCR (*Association des Centres culturels de rencontre*) network in Paris.

This research, implemented in between March and November 2023, has been made possible through the support of a grant from the Faculty of International and Political Studies under the Strategic Programme Excellence Initiative at Jagiellonian University.

Our research question was formulated as follows, *How can the heritage sites be well transitioning to new functions and highlight successful preservation efforts, keeping historical memory and fostering local cultural education?*

Our research aims to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of participatory governance models in the revitalization of cultural heritage, focusing on the case studies of Sokołowsko in Poland and the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region in France. The study seeks to determine how the engagement of local communities and the application of participatory management methods contribute to the preservation and revitalization of cultural heritage sites, and what factors influence the success of these initiatives. It hypothesizes that participatory governance enhances the effectiveness of cultural heritage revitalization by strengthening social bonds and involving local stakeholders in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it posits that differences in institutional and historical contexts between Poland and France affect the approaches and outcomes of heritage revitalization. The study also explores the hypothesis that sustainable cultural heritage revitalization through participatory models requires financial support from diverse sources. To address these objectives, the research will undertake a comparative analysis of the management and revitalization processes in Sokołowsko and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, examining participatory, financial, and institutional aspects. Additionally, the study aims to identify key success factors and barriers in the cultural heritage revitalization process in both cases, providing insights into the strategies and practices that contribute to the long-term sustainability of such initiatives.

A case study methodology was employed, analyzing specific examples of heritage revitalization in Poland (Sokołowsko) and France (the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region), including the desk search, literature review, comparative study

analysis, critical review of the materials provided by the promoters of the subjected projects organized in France and in Poland, and this methodology included document analysis, interviews with key stakeholders, and field observations. A critical aspect of the study was examining how heritage management approaches can support local communities and contribute to sustainable cultural development. The study's data included qualitative and quantitative information derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis. These data were subsequently coded and analyzed using a thematic approach, allowing for the identification of key themes related to participatory heritage management, adaptive reuse of spaces, and local community engagement. The collected data were stored on the Jagiellonian University servers, following data protection guidelines and safeguarded against unauthorized access. Ethical considerations were paramount in conducting this research. All interviews were conducted with the participants' consent, who were informed about the purpose of the study and how the data would be used. Participant anonymity, as the research was specifically highlighting the work of prominent cultural professionals in their regions, was not maintained. Those professionals were mentioned explicitly in the acknowledgement section of the text, while the data were processed in compliance with applicable data protection regulations. The study aimed not only to analyze current practices but also to support the communities studied by providing recommendations for sustainable heritage management and promoting local culture.

Heritage Management: Evolving Approaches to Temporal Interpretation

Heritage management has gained recognition as an increasingly intricate field of research. The evolution of heritage management practices over the years mirrors the

shifting relationship of society with heritage [Hall, McArthur 1998] and changing perspectives on what constitutes heritage. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Jean-Philippe Lecat, the French Minister for Culture and Communication, proposed a comprehensive approach to heritage.[1] He articulated that cultural heritage encompasses all remnants of human endeavours throughout history, positioning the human being as the central figure rather than the object, place, tradition, or language. Heritage management has also evolved in tandem with changes in the temporal interpretation of heritage.

Today, cultural heritage is regarded as a temporal phenomenon [Smolarkiewicz 2012: 71], seen through the lens of three temporal dimensions: it makes the past present and is intended to serve the future. Heritage is no longer confined to the past; it acts as a conduit for shaping the future [Herzfeld 1991]. Consequently, when discussing heritage, one is referring to the values, attitudes, stories, and histories that past generations have celebrated and left behind. These elements bear witness to the authenticity of the past, but they also address contemporary questions: What does heritage mean today? How significant is it? How does it influence the present, and how can it benefit the current generation? What lessons can it impart to them? Furthermore, there is a consideration of the long-term advantages that heritage can offer to the present generation while preserving its potential to fulfil the needs and aspirations of future generations [Kobylinski 2011: 40].

Therefore, when examining the paradigm of multivocality and heritage interpretation [Gaweł 2016] or the management of heritage, it is crucial to consider the functions it performs in the present, as well as the role it will play in the future [Ashworth 2015]. This perspective assesses the extent to which heritage can serve contemporary society and how it can be harnessed and cultivated for the benefit of future generations. This tri-temporality framework remains a contemporary key to describing and managing heritage. It has evolved beyond being a mere testament to the past and has become a resource that serves the needs of both the present and the future.

By assuming responsibility for the safeguarding of heritage, individuals are essentially safeguarding memory about themselves – preserving their history, identity, values, and attitudes. In this manner, they function as conduits or intergenerational transmitters and become active participants in the process of inheritance [Ashworth 2015; 13].

UNESCO's evolving paradigms, exemplified by initiatives like the UNESCO Culture 2030 indicators[2], emphasize integrating environmental policies and fostering civic engagement in heritage preservation. This commitment stems from

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[1] https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00628926/document (viewed 24.01.2025.)
[2] https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators/ (viewed 24.01.2025.)

earlier discussions within UNESCO and aligns with the concept of sustainable development. The Budapest Declaration on World Heritage in 2002 marked a significant moment, introducing objectives such as credibility, conservation, capacity-building, communication, while the focus on the communities was integrated in this approach in 2007, at the moment of the 31st session of the World Heritage Committee held in New Zealand. This expansion of strategic objectives anticipated the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. The "Voices of Culture" report in 2015 focused on participatory governance in cultural heritage, offering recommendations to empower heritage in various policy domains. In 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage highlighted inclusivity and participation as key pillars, reflected in both policy and practice. Community-led local development is gaining traction, emphasizing a redefined civic participation that addresses social responsibility for cultural heritage within specific communities.

Considering the fact that cultural heritage is fundamentally a social construct [Gilmour 2006], it becomes evident that effective heritage management adopts a humanistic and participatory approach. This approach places individuals at the core of the process, harnessing their actions and creativity [Kostera 2015: 60; Barańska 2013]. It takes into account the needs of those referred to as recipient-stakeholders [Purchla 2005: 22], denoting any individual interested in the management and transmission of heritage, who resides in and interacts with the locale [Szmygin 2008: 268]. Such individuals are individuals for whom heritage carries intrinsic value and significance [Oevermann 2015: 10], including both current and former residents. They form part of a community that identifies specific heritage as the source and embodiment of values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions that hold profound importance for that particular community.

Our research underscores that the participatory management of cultural heritage is the most effective approach. In a similar vein, Zbigniew Kobylinski [2011: 12] contends that participatory management, involving local communities in development strategy and heritage management, is imperative for sustainable development-based management. This management approach is founded on principles of co-operation and interdependence, emphasizing learning and embracing responsibility [Obłój 2010] for the preservation of places and heritage. It fosters a supportive environment for the care of the past, creating safe zones where heritage is safeguarded. Furthermore, it adopts a multi-perspectival stance, showing respect for diversity and embracing a dialogical nature that acknowledges the central values of local society and its heritage: the subjectivity and dignity.

Community participation can take on both indirect and direct forms. What is essential is that the local community exerts influence on the site or the organization responsible for its management, while concurrently, the site itself holds the potential

to impact the community. Moreover, the primary recipients of transformations within a heritage site are the members of the local community. Consequently, it becomes the prerogative of the local community to delineate the concept of heritage and actively engage in its social rejuvenation and transformation.

Participatory Governance and the Revival of Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of the Brehmer Sanatorium in Rural Poland

Participatory governance of cultural heritage has the potential to become a pressing concern, particularly in the context of rescuing and preserving heritage sites. This issue is especially relevant in rural areas of Poland, where a notable number of abandoned and demolished heritage sites are in need of revitalization. These sites are in search of dedicated artists and cultural stakeholders who can breathe new life into them. An illustrative example is the "Sokołowsko International Laboratory of Culture",[1] situated in the mountainous and rural region of Lower Silesia, Poland, within the premises of the former Brehmer Sanatorium.

The town now known as Sokołowsko traces its history back to around 1400 when it was named Görbersdorf. In 1855, it became home to the world's first specialized tuberculosis sanatorium, pioneering innovative treatment methods. Dr. Brehmer led efforts to expand the hydrotherapy facility, constructing key buildings like the spa and guesthouses, while architect Edwin Oppler designed them. Dr. Brehmer's residence underwent expansion in the mid-1870s, and a new addition, the *New Kurhaus*, was built in the late 1870s. The entire sanatorium complex underwent interior renovations in 1882, modernizing facilities and preparing 303 rooms for guests. Dr. Brehmer collaborated closely with Professor Alfred Sokołowski, and in 1945, the town was officially renamed in his honor. In 2007, the former Brehmer Sanatorium changed ownership, leading to the establishment of the In Situ Contemporary Art Foundation. This foundation aimed to raise funds for the comprehensive restoration of the sanatorium complex following a fire in 2005, to revitalize it as an International Cultural Laboratory.

The foundation's name, "In Situ", meaning "in place" in Latin, reflects its philosophy of organizing events and exhibitions to transform spaces into art venues and hubs for social engagement. Led by founders Bożena Biskupska and Zuzanna Fogtt, the foundation combines high-quality artistic activities with a commitment to preserving heritage, including the Brehmer Sanatorium complex and the historic theater building in Sokołowsko. It also houses an extensive repository of materials related to Polish film director Krzysztof Kieślowski (who used to live in Sokołowsko for ca. 10 years), further demonstrating its dedication to preserving cultural heritage

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[1] http://www.sokolowsko.org/pl/ (viewed 24.01.2025.)

and promoting artistic endeavors. The In Situ Foundation organizes participatory activities, including the "Sanatorium of Sound" and a film festival called "Hommage à Kieślowski" film festival, attracting artists and engaging audiences while facilitating knowledge exchange among institutions and NGOs in Sokołowsko. However, sustaining these efforts requires significant financial support. While private donors, NGOs, and local stakeholders are passionate, their voluntary involvement often leads to burnout and dependence on public funding, making the management model non-self-sufficient and prone to delays.

To ensure the preservation and restoration of heritage sites, new funding streams and business models must be identified promptly to address the urgency of the situation, as underlined by both managers. One positive step forward has been the Foundation's declaration of intent to establish a hotel with a commercial orientation within a portion of the Sanatorium, as according to Zuzanna Fogtt, this would immensely support the development of the site. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that this measure, on its own, may not be sufficient to sustain the entire project, to function as the Art-house, by the vision of Bożena Biskupska. Therefore, careful consideration of diversifying funding sources and devising innovative business models should be a central focus for the continued success of this heritage site.

The update to the story about Sokołowsko comes in one year after the completion of the study, in September 2024, when the disastrous flood have devastated a newly renovated building of the "Kino Zdrowie" cinema, and affected the main sanatorium building.[1] Therefore, as those new challenges have been facing the promoters and owners of the site, they have decided to run a fundraising campaign to rescue and recover the damages. The business model including e. g. the hotel discussed previously in the text, would also support the financial stability of this very demanding heritage site.

Cases in France: Creative Ecosystem in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region

The comparative research field, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region in France, provides an insightful illustration of both similarities and distinctions with regions that share urban, rural, and mountainous characteristics, such as Lower Silesia in Poland. Furthermore, the construction of sanatoria in remote mountainous areas in both regions, facilitated by the presence of fresh and therapeutic air, adds another layer of commonality. In both cases, the overarching concept of art as a unifying force within society holds true.

The first case study, *Le Bon Attrait*, a two-story house built in 1949 in Hauteville-Lompnes, was acquired by artist Raphaël Charpentié's family in 2022. Initially

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[1] https://www.instagram.com/fundacjainsitu (viewed 24.01.2025.)

serving as accommodations for hospital staff and tuberculosis patients in long-term remission, it currently functions as both a residence and a small art gallery on the second floor, with plans for a future Bed & Breakfast facility. Raphael and his family embrace principles of slow and sustainable living while promoting community engagement through the arts. Their aim is to foster participatory governance of cultural heritage, encouraging discussions and activities that draw people away from mainstream entertainment platforms toward meaningful interactions centered on local heritage and volunteering. In discussing the societal gaps, sensitivities, and fundamental competencies, Raphael underscored the deficiency in comprehensive education, particularly in the domains of arts, culture, and values. He emphasized that only through a well-rounded education can we actively counteract the encroaching tide of ignorance.

Within this local ecosystem, which encompasses Hauteville, *La Montagne Magique* art space, and the *Centre d'Art Contemporain de Lacoux*, a striking synergy emerges. Artists and curators within this network exhibit a deep mutual understanding and offer steadfast support to one another. The magnetic allure of the locale, as elucidated by Raphael, prompted his establishment of *Le Bon Attrait* as an Art Villa, fully aware that he would be surrounded by a community of creative, open-minded individuals, creating a harmonious coexistence with the rhythms of local life. Raphael is committed to further refining the business model of *La Montagne Magique*, with the aim of increasing visibility and sales opportunities for the artists working there.

A short drive up the hills in Hauteville, located approximately one hundred kilometers from Lyon, reveals the presence of the final building nestled amidst a lush forest – *La Montagne Magique*, a private cultural project in the process of development. This edifice, formerly utilized as both a sanatorium and a nursery school, is situated within the renowned mountain resort of Hauteville-Lompnes. Positioned on the elevated Plateau d'Hauteville within the Bugey massif, its nomenclature is borrowed from the famous novel by Thomas Mann. *La Montagne Magique* has become an integral part of the local historical landscape, operating as a cultural hub that synergistically fosters the convergence of contemporary art, creative expression, and craftsmanship. The property was acquired by a consortium of professionals in April 2019 for the establishment of their artistic workshops. This collective comprises four contemporary artists, a craft brewer, a metal enameller, a textile designer, and a comic book author-illustrator.

The formal inauguration of these spaces took place during the European Heritage Days on September 17, 2022, attracting over 600 visitors[1] and marking a significant

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[1] https://montagnemagique.fr/ (viewed 24.01.2025.)

milestone in the project's development. Through various studios and initiatives, including exhibitions and residencies, the venue revitalizes local heritage through cultural means. This model, exemplified by *La Montagne Magique*, offers valuable insights for international knowledge exchange, as detailed to us by cultural advisor, Nicolas Bertrand, who supported the organization of the onsite research in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region in France. Similarly, the *Centre d'Art Contemporain de Lacoux* (CACL), founded in 1971, thrives in the Plateau d'Hauteville despite its small population. Director Sophie Pouille emphasizes CACL's engagement with territorial issues and the natural environment, leveraging its unique setting to foster artistic expression.

Another example and case study analyzed is the Ambronay Cultural Centre (ACC)[1], situated in Ambronay and a member of the ACCR network since 2004, resides within the historic confines of the former Ambronay Abbey, founded in the early 9th century by Barnard, a former military officer under Charlemagne, the Abbey of Ambronay was attached to the Rule of St Benedict.

Following reforms in the 17th century, the abbey transitioned to the jurisdiction of the Congregation of the Benedictines of Saint-Maur, embracing stricter monastic practices. Post-French Revolution, the abbey underwent various transformations, serving as a parish church and assuming roles such as barns, barracks, and social housing.

Originating from the 1980 Festival of Early Music, the ACC has evolved into the *Ambronay Centre Culturel de Rencontre*. It facilitates interactions between artists, the public, and partners, promoting creativity, innovation, and knowledge transfer locally and internationally. Initiatives like the "European Emerging Ensembles" project support young artists' professional integration and public engagement with culture. The Festival's audience comprises mostly regional attendees, with strong participation from neighboring communities. The ACC maintains ties with local schools, particularly during the Annual Festival, despite the suboptimal timing. The upcoming 50th anniversary of the Festival in 2028 promises a special edition crafted in collaboration with audiences and the local community.

The visionary leadership of Isabelle Battioni, the current Director of ACC, who previously headed the ACCR network in Paris, aligns the institution with the core values of the network. ACC aims to be a model of community-engaged cultural entity, where both programming and heritage hold equal significance. While emphasizing the community involvement over isolated activities, the ACC collaborates with satellite initiatives through participatory practices, incorporating NGOs, inhabitants and especially local leaders, who may organize smaller festivals to

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[1] https://www.accr-europe.org/en/network/Members/ambronay-ccr/ (viewed 24.01.2025.)

promote cultural activities of the ACC and exchange audience feedback. Dynamic territorial mapping ensures continual updates, fostering a collaborative environment. With a locally rooted team of 19 professionals, ACC's shift to a community-centric approach underscores its commitment to supporting regional economy through promotion of local products.

In conclusion, the ACC represents an intriguing model of community development through the lens of heritage, where society finds a strong reference point. Looking ahead, the ACC may consider the possibility of introducing programs designed to engage with young professionals. The provision of a co-working space within the venue is a prospective venture. Additionally, given that art residencies are conducted periodically, there is potential to make more regular use of the available rooms by establishing a Bed & Breakfast facility, further enhancing the institution's offerings and resource utilization.

Connections between the cases from Poland and France – comparative analysis

The relationship between the Polish example of Sokołowsko and the French case studies in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, such as *La Montagne Magique* and the Ambronay Cultural Centre, reveals both commonalities and differences in approaches to heritage revitalization. Both cases underscore the importance of culture as a driving force in the revitalization of heritage sites. In Sokołowsko, the In Situ Foundation has successfully transformed the former Brehmer Sanatorium into a vibrant cultural hub, paralleling the transformation of "La Montagne Magique" from a former sanatorium into an artistic space and the integration of cultural activities within the historic Ambronay Abbey. A significant aspect of the Polish and French examples is the emphasis on community engagement and participatory governance. In Sokołowsko, the involvement of local and international participants in festivals and art events fosters a strong connection between the community and the revitalized site. Similarly, in the French cases, cultural events and educational initiatives are crucial in fostering local community involvement, thereby promoting a sense of ownership and participation in heritage preservation.

However, these projects also face challenges related to sustainability, particularly in securing long-term funding. Both Sokołowsko and the French sites rely on private donors, NGOs, and local stakeholders to support their initiatives, highlighting the necessity of diversifying and innovating funding strategies to ensure the continued success of these heritage projects. Despite these commonalities, there are notable differences between the Polish and French examples. The French cases, particularly the Ambronay Cultural Centre, benefit from more substantial institutional support

and are often integrated into larger networks, such as the *Association des Centres Culturels de Rencontre* (ACCR). This level of support contrasts with the more localized and grassroots-driven efforts seen in Sokołowsko, where the revitalization is led by a smaller group of dedicated stakeholders.

Additionally, the historical context and cultural significance of these sites differ. Sokołowsko's heritage is closely tied to its pioneering role in tuberculosis treatment and its subsequent transformation into a cultural center, while the French sites often possess a broader historical context, such as the medieval origins of the Ambronay Abbey, which adds another layer of cultural significance. The approaches to adaptive reuse also vary between the sites. In Sokołowsko, the focus is on creating an international cultural laboratory, whereas the future sustainable financial model is foreseen to be based on the boutique hotel in the premises of the sanatorium. The same considerations are present in the French examples, which often integrate commercial activities, such as establishing a Bed & Breakfast or hosting broader public events, which helps generate revenue and contribute to the sites' sustainability. The relationship between the Polish and French examples of heritage revitalization illustrates that, while there are shared principles, such as the central role of culture and the importance of community engagement, the specific historical, cultural, and institutional contexts significantly shape the approaches and outcomes. By comparing these cases, valuable insights can be gained into how different regions can learn from each other's experiences to enhance the sustainability and impact of their heritage projects.

Summary

This study has explored the critical role of participatory governance in the revitalization of cultural heritage sites, focusing on the case studies of Sokołowsko in Poland and the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region in France. Through a detailed examination of these sites, the research highlights how cultural heritage can catalyze local development, social cohesion, and sustainable cultural practices and as referred to the temporal interpretation of the heritage, all of the presented cases, while deeply rooted in the heritage of the past, are conduit for shaping the future. The findings indicate that successful heritage revitalization requires a multifaceted approach that integrates cultural, social, and economic strategies. The study underscores the importance of involving local communities in the preservation and management of heritage sites. It reveals that when communities are actively engaged, they develop a stronger sense of ownership, which is crucial for the sustainability of these projects. The research also identifies the challenges faced by heritage sites, including financial constraints, limited institutional support, and the need for specialized training and

cooperation among stakeholders. The authors of the text have been elaborating the following recommendations: 1) to ensure the long-term success of heritage revitalization projects, it is essential to foster greater community involvement. This can be achieved through participatory governance models that empower local residents to take an active role in decision-making processes; 2) given the financial challenges often associated with heritage preservation, it is recommended to explore diverse funding streams. This could include public-private partnerships, crowdfunding, and the development of revenue-generating activities such as cultural tourism and creative industries; 3) heritage sites should be adapted for contemporary uses that respect their historical significance while making them relevant to today's communities. This could involve transforming these sites into cultural hubs, educational centers, or community spaces; 4) to address the gap in specialized knowledge and skills, it is crucial to provide training and resources for local stakeholders. This will enhance their ability to manage heritage sites effectively and sustainably; 5) establishing networks among similar heritage sites, both regionally and internationally, can facilitate knowledge exchange, foster synergies, and contribute to revitalization efforts. Collaboration with NGOs, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders should be encouraged to share the best practices and innovative approaches; 6) it is important to raise awareness among local policymakers about the value of cultural heritage in regional development. Incentives should be provided to encourage the integration of heritage preservation into broader development strategies.

Heritage revitalization is not merely about preserving the past; it is about building a sustainable future where culture plays a central role in community life. By adopting participatory governance models, diversifying funding sources, and promoting adaptive reuse, heritage sites can become vibrant centers of cultural and social activity. The insights gained from this study offer valuable guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and communities engaged in the challenging yet rewarding task of heritage preservation and revitalization. Addressing contemporary challenges like climate change and societal transformations now requires participatory processes, innovative heritage preservation approaches, and scholarly research to engage audiences. International partnerships enhance this effort, fostering knowledge exchange and improving cultural activities' quality. Overall, community-led development and heritage preservation are vital in addressing present challenges and shaping future societal progress.

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GASTRONOMIC CODE OF LATGALE JEWS IN THE 1970s–1990s

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to demonstrate the specifics of the gastronomic code as a phenomenon of cultural model and as a particular element of the formation of Jewish identity during the Soviet period using the example of the situation of Jews in Latgale. The study is part of a research project focusing on the Jewish text in Latgale, a region in south-eastern Latvia, during the 1970s–1990s. Within the project, a field study – semi-structured interviews – was carried out. The informants interviewed were representatives of Jewish ethnicity, born in the 1960s–1970s, who currently reside in Latvia and Israel.

During the research, the key components of the gastronomic code were identified: remarkable dishes, awareness of the ethnic tradition, understanding of religion, model of knowledge transmission from generation to generation.

Considering the specifics of the field study material, the following conclusion has been drawn. The gastronomic code of the Jewish community in Latgale during the Soviet period reflects a blend of Ashkenazi Jewish traditions and the norms of Soviet household practices.

Keywords: *Gastronomic code, Jews, memory, food.*

Introduction

The gastronomic code is an integral part of any cultural model. Moreover, it is the gastronomic code that has a symbolic bidirectionality: on the one hand, it is a crucial component of the internal cultural model, which allows discussing its influence on the formation of cultural, ethnic, and national identity; on the other hand, it is the gastronomic code that is included in the process of presenting a certain cultural model to other cultures – often individuals become acquainted with another culture exactly through its gastronomic code (hence the rising popularity of gastronomic tourism in the contemporary world). The presence of an ethnic marker of the gastronomic code implies the inclusion of a comparative or evaluative characteristic. Consequently, the gastronomic code has long been an object of cultural analysis [Certeau and Giard 2008]. Being part of everyday culture, the gastronomic code encompasses several aspects: the culture of cooking, the culture of food consumption and perceptions related to culinary practices [Ermolaev 2022: 36].

In the Jewish tradition, the gastronomic code takes on particular significance, since Judaism does not highlight the culture of everyday life as a separate sphere – the whole life of a Jew is a fact of service to the Almighty. The *Kashrut*[1] laws are a multifaceted set of prohibitions based on the rules defined in the Torah. These rules concern food products that are considered appropriate for consumption, the principles of their preparation and consumption. The set of these rules is based on the position of Judaism that the Almighty wants His people to be in a state of holiness and purity.

The present study focuses on the gastronomic code of the Jews residing in Latgale during the Soviet period. Thus, the study addresses several aspects: 1) the gastronomic code as a component of the cultural model; 2) the particularities of Jewish gastronomy, its impact on religious and secular consciousness, and its role in shaping ethnic identity; 3) the specifics of the existence of the Jewish cultural model and the formation of ethnic identity during the Soviet period.

The novelty of this study lies in the chosen historical period, which is least considered in works devoted to the Jews of Latvia and Latgale in particular. This study enables a discussion on the specifics of the gastronomic code within Jewish culture while also considering the context of everyday life during the Soviet era.

Methodology and research design

This study is part of a research project focused on the Jewish text in Latgale during the period of the 1970s–1990s. The definition of the "Jewish text" is based

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[1] The Kashrut – the Jewish dietary laws, regulating foods allowed for consumption, their compatibility, and rules of preparation.

on a semiotic understanding of the text as an original, structured system of signs, characterized by a complete structure, including numerous individual relationships that engage in dialogic interactions. The concept of the "Jewish text" is extensively explored in E. Vasiljeva's monograph "*Ebreju teksts latviešu literatūrā*" [Vasiljeva 2018].

The theoretical framework is based on Yuri Lotman's theory [Lotman 1990] of the notion of text within the framework of semiotics. Lotman outlines the main functions of the text as communicative (transmission of information) and conceptual (creation of new meanings). In Lotman's theory, reconstruction is proposed as an analytical method: the process of understanding involves the reconstruction of codes according to some (verbal or visual) text. Umberto Eco defines a code as a system in which a set of signs and their meanings, along with rules for combinations of signs, are specified (that is, agreed upon by prior agreement) [Eco 1978]. Evidence of the existence of Jewish culture can be found in various historical sources such as maps, memoirs, memories, documents. The analysis of the signs and codes present in these texts enables the reconstruction of the picture of the past. Lotman's theory has served as a methodological foundation in numerous studies addressing the gastronomic code and the symbolic significance of food within cultural models. Semiotics of food aims to develop and validate a social theory of food, examining it as a primary modelling system. In cultural contexts, different types of food, culinary techniques, eating events, and rituals are "signs and texts that are part of culture's overarching network of meanings" [Danesi 2006: 533]. Fabio Parasecoli explores the semiotics of food within the realm of intercultural communication, where the markers of "another culture are traditional dishes of national cuisine" [Parasecoli 2011].

The empirical material was primarily derived from the field study. Semi-structured interviews were used as a method of data collection. From a methodological perspective, field study involves the researchers immersing themselves in the environment of a particular culture [Burgess 1982]. Furthermore, the temporal context of the fieldwork enables researchers to become integrated into the cultural model under study, facilitating the interpretation of narratives. The analysis of the data collected from the interviews was conducted through a combination of thematic analysis, as proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark, and narrative analysis discussed by Michael Murray. Thematic analysis allows for the examination of the entire data set to identify recurring patterns of meaning, as well as the analysis of specific aspects within an individual interview [Braun, Clark 2006]. This approach provides a framework for isolating elements related to identity models:

> "*The telling of narratives is closely intertwined with the shaping and maintenance of personal identity. We tell stories to ourselves and others about our lives. In this way our lives are represented in narrative form*" [Murray 2003: 100].

The groups of informants interviewed comprised representatives of Jewish ethnicity, born in the 1960s–1970s, currently living in Latvia and Israel. The interview questions were designed to distinguish groups of individual memories: the distinction of Jewish culture among other cultures, and the nurturing of traditions in the family. The interviewing process focused on defining core concepts, which allowed for the assessment of ingroup identity and individual parameters of identity congruence or incongruence with the ingroup. Gender balance was maintained in the selection of informants, who were chosen to represent diverse attitudes towards the Jewish world: individuals from Jewish and mixed families, those who remained in Latvia and those who migrated to Israel, and individuals with varying levels of observance of gender sensitization. The field study was conducted between 2022 and 2024, during which a total of 39 interviews were collected and transcribed (21 women, 18 men). The interviews were conducted in Russian. All interviews assumed anonymity; accordingly, the names of the interviewees were coded in Latin letters. In the text, quotes from the structured interviews are presented in italics, accompanied by the code letter, the time of the interview and the mode of personal communication – an interview.

Contents of the gastronomic code: dishes, preparation, meals

In the model of Jewish culture that existed in the Soviet times, the cuisine and the gastronomic code occupied a special place. It is by means of the gastronomic code that a distinct world is recreated in memories, portraying the Jewish family as a separate world that differs from the outside world. However, there is no single concept of "Jewish cuisine":

> "*The phrase "Jewish cuisine", strictly speaking, is meaningless. In fact, the only thing that unites all this incredible variety of recipes is the Kashrut, a set of rules that divide food into permitted (kosher) food and the one that is prohibited for consumption. The cuisines of Jews from different parts of the world are more similar to the cuisines of the surrounding local population than to each other. Another thing is the cuisine of the Ashkenazi Jews, a subethnic group of Jews who in the Middle Ages lived in the territory of medieval Germany and later settled in various territories of Eastern Europe*" [Vedenyapina 2018: 322].

Several field studies have highlighted the distinctive features of Jewish cuisine in Latgale [Vedenyapina 2016]. However, Jewish cuisine is a universal and comprehensive code. Even those who do not strictly adhere to the rules, the Jewish tradition, and even the *Kashrut*, emphasize the presence of traditional Jewish dishes, the process of their preparation, and their presence at festive meals. The second generation of parents is faced with the problem of defining their relationship to the Jewish tradition, yet they are familiar with and capable of cooking Jewish dishes.

I learned about the holidays through food. But we never prayed, etc. Stuffed fish, tzimmes, forshmak, something from horseradish. Grandfather baked wonderful buns of different shapes (L, 2022, interview).

Gefilte fish[1] had a distinct status. Mentioning it in the narratives is almost always accompanied by the statement "of course". *Gefilte fish* was undoubtedly a dish for festive occasions, and all informants emphasize a special, laborious method of its cooking. In a modern standard (non-Jewish) banquet, stuffed fish is always present in the menu (in most cases it is stuffed pike), but it is prepared whole – the skin is removed and then filled with fish mince. However, in the preparation of Jewish *gefilte fish*, it is always emphasized that true Jewish fish is cooked in separate pieces, with the flesh near the bone removed and filled with fish mince.

The specifics of cooking *gefilte fish* in Daugavpils during the Soviet period deserves a special mention. The informants speak about *gefilte fish* as the most important holiday dish, but upon further inquiry, it turns out that this dish was not served very frequently. It mainly appeared on the Jewish New Year, which was associated with seasonal sales of products in stores. For the preparation of *gefilte fish*, carp was used, and carps were on sale at the end of September. There was a single but large fish store in the city, located on Sovetskaya Street (now *Ģimnāzijas* street). The store was a typical Soviet shop, where the assortment mainly consisted of canned food and thawed fish products. Fresh fish was a rarity, making the annual import of fresh carp an event of urban significance, with people lining up in lengthy queues to purchase carp. For Jewish housewives, the purchase of carp was mandatory. A certain everyday mythology developed in the city: if a queue lined up at the fish store in the morning, it meant that carp would be sold that day; and if carp was sold, it signalled the approach of the Jewish New Year.

In most narratives, the fish is mentioned as an obligatory holiday dish, aside from the September trade event, no one can recall where it was purchased. This might be an instance of memory interference, when a very bright (in this case, gastronomic) event leaves such an imprint in the memory that it acquires the status of a universal, often recurring event.

In all the interviews, the informants mention *teiglach*[2]. All informants name a fairly standard set of Jewish dishes, but *teiglach* is given a special place. This could be attributed to its delicious taste, which left a lasting impression on children's memories, or perhaps because the process of preparing this dish was considered the most demanding and painstaking one. In this regard, the informants describe

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[1] Gefilte fish is a special version of stuffed fish, most often – a carp; Jewish stuffed fish differed from the traditional one in that separate pieces of fish (rather than the whole fish) were stuffed.

[2] Teiglach – a sweet dish, a version of cookies that were boiled in honey.

a certain ritualism surrounding the process of cooking *teiglach*: during the preparation of the dough, children are necessarily sent out of the kitchen, and lifting the lid during cooking is strictly prohibited. Additionally, opening doors or windows is forbidden:

> *It is forbidden to open the door. It is forbidden to take off the pot lid. It is an entire ritual. If you open the lid at the wrong time, the dough will fall. That's it. That's the end. Doors, windows, everything affects the dough. There is only soda. There is no yeast. It will fall and that's it! All you have will be just a load of tosh* (R, 2023, interview).

Despite the laboriousness of preparing *teiglach*, detailed recipes have not been preserved. The housewives who knew how to cook it wrote down the recipe approximately and cooked more by intuition. It should be noted that *teiglach* today is one of the most exotic dishes that is rarely cooked and not everyone is able to cook it, as if that mythology of childhood is in effect.

> *My grandmother cooked teiglach. This is a dish that I'm unable to repeat* (B, 2023, interview).

The significance of sweets in childhood memories is logical, making homemade Jewish sweets an integral part of the gastronomic code. Sweets frequently emerge in the narratives as a collective image associated either with the holidays (sweets for *Hanukkah*) or simply as a means for grandmothers to indulge their grandchildren. If the preparation of *teiglach* is presented as an exceptional process, then *lekach*[1] was baked more frequently:

> *We always baked lekach. Mom's lekach was like a gingerbread, but my dad's cousin – what lekach she baked! It was something wonderful. Just, I remember now – I have a recipe for lekach, which I have chosen from many, that is something! I've been looking for it for a very long time* (R, 2023, interview).

Mentions of *imberlach* are less frequent [2]. It appears either as part of general enumerations, or belongs to the category of those dishes that were not very popular among children:

> *I ate it, of course, my grandmother kept saying that those were carrot candies. But I cannot say I liked them very much. They looked beautiful – such orange diamonds, but their taste still was not that of candies* (E, 2023, interview).

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[1] Lekach – a sweet dish, a version of a gingerbread or cake.
[2] Imberlach – a sweet dish made from carrots and ginger.

The frequent preparation of *imberlach* was most likely related to the availability of carrots, the main ingredient. For the same reason, in Jewish families *tzimmes* was often cooked as a side dish for dinner. The emphasis is on the availability and affordability of the ingredients:

> *Tzimmes was often cooked. Those were just carrots. Tzimmes – Simple, thick and dull!* (L, 2023, interview).

It is characteristic that in the informants' memories there does not appear sweet *tzimmes* with dried fruits; instead, the informants mention *tzimmes* with dumplings, although it is sweet *tzimmes* – a dessert-like dish – that is considered a traditional dish of Jewish cuisine. The informants emphasize that it was an unloved dish and they were forced to eat it (due to its perceived health benefits), but they did not like it:

> *But what I didn't like was the tzimmes, I couldn't eat it. Boiled carrots caused me to … That was a disaster. They forced me to eat it, I picked out that dumpling, tried to wash it off everything that was there* (B, 2023, interview).

At the same time, among the delicious, favourite dishes in the Jewish children's gastronomic code, there often appear dishes that children traditionally do not enjoy. For example, liver dishes are commonly rejected by children in public catering today (parents often talk about this observation, it appears in the reports of preschool and school institutions). Nevertheless, one of the favourite Jewish dishes of childhood is the liver pâté:

> *She (my grandmother) made some incredible chicken pâté!* (B, 2023, interview).

It is the pâté that turns out to be a frequent dish on the traditional festive tables, not necessarily Jewish ones. As a similar dish is also present in European cuisine, non-Jews are often treated to pâté. In the memories, the delight of non-Jewish friends who tried the pâté prepared by the grandmother is often mentioned:

> *My cousin (a non-Jew) came to visit us, my grandmother, as always, fed us everything. There was a pâté there, I don't remember whether it was made specially or it happened to be made before. So, he then returned to his home and told everyone: "There, Baba Vera cooked such delicious crap"* (E, 2023, interview).

In addition to pâté, savoury dishes and those deemed healthy for children but unpopular among them, there appear soups. These include various modifications of chicken soup as dishes prepared from chicken are common in Jewish cuisine, suggesting a predominance of chicken meat in their diet. The most frequently

mentioned soup is chicken soup with *kneidlach*[1] – dumplings made from *matzah*[2] flour, typically prepared during the *Pesach*[3] *(Passover)* and serving as one of the main dishes of the Easter week, acting as a gastronomic marker of the *Pesach* celebration in the family. Furthermore, in children's perception, in addition to being associated with *Pesach*, it is also seen as a snack. It is often referred to as biscuits, and the informants recall "crunching it" or crumbling it into chicken broth instead of croutons. Additionally, although less frequently mentioned, soups with flour dumplings are also noted:

> *And grandma's soup. From chicken. She called it triphalah. Those were boiled dumplings (dumplings from choux pastry). It was flour, water, and an egg. The dough was rather thick, like sour cream and boiling broth. That was the dish I loved* (B, 2023, interview).

Among savoury Jewish dishes, a special delicacy appears to be stuffed chicken neck – the skin of a chicken neck stuffed with flour fried with chicken cracklings. Children often observed the process, sometimes assisting in sewing or taking out the thread. Perhaps this is why the recipe for preparing neck is one that was passed down through generations: the neck, like many other dishes, is part of the grandmother's cuisine, but it is also cooked by mothers, fathers, and the informants themselves, who then pass on the recipe to their children, thus ensuring its continuity. For those currently living in Latvia, cooking the neck is associated with one challenge – buying a sufficient amount of chicken fat. The informants recall that at that time, it was essential to have a jar of rendered chicken fat in the refrigerator, because it was that type of fat that was indispensable for cooking dishes of Jewish cuisine; it had to be prepared in advance and kept in a certain supply.

Context of the gastronomic code: food shortages, the Kashrut

During the Soviet period, one of the defining aspects of the gastronomic land-scape was food shortages: the absence of certain products in free sale, the challenges in obtaining them, and the issue of long queues. These shortages significantly stand-ardized the diet and gastronomic code of the era. In the 1970s, the situation was no longer critical, however, certain products were available only during specific season,

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[1] Kneidlach – dumplings, which were prepared from special matzah flour and chicken fat, mainly served with soup.

[2] Matzah is an unleavened flatbread, an obligatory attribute of the Passover holiday, when all leavened goods were removed from the house for the entire period of the holiday, and matzah was consumed instead.

[3] The Pesach is one of the most important holidays of the Jewish calendar, dedicated to the release of Jews from the Egyptian slavery, chronologically compatible with Christian Passover.

with limited access to fruits, vegetables, and meat products. In addition, one should remember the separation of store (state) and market (private) trade. The reconstruction of the Jewish model of the world during the Soviet period underscores the central importance of the gastronomic code: holidays – it means that there is always a meal, at the heart of grandmother's care for her grandchildren is the understanding of a satiated, well-fed child. In the interviews, the mentions of the shortages in Soviet trade include a narrative that indicates that in a Jewish family a lot of attention was paid to the gastronomic component – the informants remember a lot about food, meals, certain products:

> We always had food at home. We always had everything prepared, everything was cooked. I even managed to feed children in the yard (R, 2023, interview).

Having food at home means cooking it. In the mind of a Jewish grandmother, the purchase of semi-manufactured products or ready-to-cook products is evidence of the absence of a dedicated housewife in the household. If a grandmother lived with the family, then she was the one who cooked; if she lived separately, she helped with cooking, brought treats, or regularly invited her grandchildren for meals. Memories of how and where the food was obtained are fragmentary. For instance, one informant (L, 2022) recounts a story about buying chickens in the market, and in these memories the process of plucking chickens is often mentioned. Another informant mentions relatives who worked in trade and helped to get food products, yet another recalls a relative, a war veteran, who bought goods in a specialized store, and his wife helped with the products.

On considering the Jewish life in the city, special attention is drawn to certain catering establishments associated with Jewish tradition. In a number of memories, when speaking about celebrating dates related to a human life cycle, the informants mention the canteen "Riga", located in the Gayok micro-district near the city centre. It was there that most Jewish weddings were celebrated. Additionally, the premises of the sports school, which had housed the city's choral synagogue before World War II, were often rented for events. For such occasions, special Jewish cooks, specializing in Yiddish cuisine, were hired to prepare meals. It is noteworthy that ordering dishes for family holidays was very rare; in fact, only one informant (D, 2023, interview) told during the interview that after her grandmother had left for Israel (the informant was seven years old at that time), her mother ceased cooking and instead ordered Jewish dishes from women who were practicing that. In stories about city cooks, the image of Aunt Sonya (Sonya Kit) is mentioned most frequently. She cooked special Jewish dishes and particularly specialized in cooking sweets. Aunt Sonya had been a legendary figure in the Jewish world of the city for many years, and stories about her baking pretzels for eight hours overnight, dozing at the kitchen table, became part of the city's Jewish folklore.

The presence of product shortages undoubtedly influenced the fundamental component of the Jewish tradition – the observance of the *Kashrut* laws. The common atheistic ideology of the Soviet era undoubtedly had an impact on the Jewish tradition – most families positioned themselves as non-religious. This trend was particularly pronounced among families where parents had higher education or held leadership positions. It particularly referred to the category of teachers and doctors. Those were people of an older generation who attended the synagogue and observed, as far as possible, the traditions. In most families, the *Kashrut* laws were not observed.

> *Oh no, of course not. Although my mom, according to her recollections, my grandfather was a very pious person, he prayed all the time, and of course he observed the Kashrut laws. And my grandmother kept Kashrut* (R, 2023, interview).

The non-observance of the *Kashrut* traditions by the younger generation became universal in the space of the Soviet Union and was documented in numerous field studies, including the series of expeditions conducted by the "Sefer" Center in Latgale in 2011–2012: "*Here we can see that along with the traditional Jewish dish, such as tsimes, which consists generally of cooked vegetables, the older generation of Jews tried to preserve the purity of the tradition at least during certain sacred calendar periods: on Saturdays, pork was thrown out of the refrigerator. The tsimes is mentioned here as a marker of the true Jewishness of the informant's mother as well as her practice to clean the house from the forbidden products on holidays*" [Kaspina 2024: 53]. In fact, the older generation could only adhere to the basic *Kashrut* laws, such as avoiding pork and refraining from mixing dairy with meat. The laws of *shechita*[1] were rarely observed and concerned only the preparation of poultry. In the 1970s, a *shohet*[2] worked at the synagogue. His place of work was located on the street in the backyard of the synagogue. Modern Jewish folklore includes stories of how representatives of the sanitary and epidemiological service regularly visited the synagogue, every time they stated absolutely unsanitary conditions there, then the service workers were given a bribe, it was promised that everything would be tidied up, and that repeated several times a year.

There is no definition of the *Kashrut* either in children's vocabulary, or in family conversations.

> *Jewish traditions – well, very, very minimally, because the family was not religious. As to food – no restrictions, oh, yes, that folk tradition – some teiglach, grandmother made it, some fish, forshmak. Ours was an absolutely Soviet family* (G, 2023, interview).

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[1] Shechita – ritual slaughter.
[2] A specially trained individual who performs ritual slaughter.

There is a common attitude that grandmothers used to explain their behaviour – the Jews have to have it that way. There is only a contemporary understanding of the situation of the past. What concerns the process of cooking, the informants recall the process of salting the liver. Besides, there is a grandmother's explanation why she did not use pork liver:

> *Pork liver is bitter, it has to be soaked for a long time. But chicken liver is soft. I still live with the fact that pork liver is bitter* (B, 2023, interview).

The object world of the gastronomic code

The object world of a Soviet Jewish family did not bear ethnic markers. First of all, it was the absence of objects of ritual worship. On considering the gastronomic code and the concept of the *Kashrut*, the availability of specific tableware becomes relevant. In the object world of Soviet people, tableware was given a separate place. Despite general shortages, tableware was one of the most purchased and abundant goods. Dishes were given as presents, ordered, people queued for them (especially for porcelain and dinner sets), they were bought and stocked up. The Jewish household was no exception, featuring various items of tableware ranging from beautiful dishes that performed an aesthetic function, to absolutely functional, various kinds of jars kept in the kitchen. They were mentioned in the narratives of the majority of informants. Given the minimized religiosity, however, there were no separate utensils for cooking meat and dairy, there was no *Passover* tableware (Jewish tradition requires separate consumption of meat and dairy products, and different kitchen utensils were used for their preparation. In religious households, there had to be a separate (clean) set of utensils for preparing Passover dishes). Indeed, while there may not have been specific utensils designated for Jewish dishes, each housewife often had her favourite cookware for preparing certain dishes, such as a pan for *gefilte fish*, a pot for cooking *teiglach*, or particular utensils (most often a bowl) for making pâté:

> *There were no special utensils for Jewish dishes, but my mother had her favourite bowls and jars in which she cooked those dishes. That tableware was also used for other dishes, but my mother cooked pâté or fish only in particular cookware* (B, 2023, interview).

Taking into account all the conventions of the Jewish gastronomic code, this code is one of the foundations for understanding Jewish identity:

> *We have always had Jewish food* (L, 2023, interview).

It is the gastronomic code that is the key marker of Jewish holidays, which, in the form of special festive dishes, has passed also into the system of celebrating non-

Jewish secular holidays. And finally, in Jewish and mixed families alike, it has become part of everyday life culture – those were special dishes that appeared on holidays and weekdays.

Conclusions

The gastronomic code is an indivisible part of childhood memories. All the informants remember their childhood as indisputably happy time; and an obligatory component of that happy childhood is exactly the gastronomic code, in the narrative of all informants stated by a recurring phrase (in relation to different dishes) – the taste of childhood.

At the same time, it is the gastronomic code that becomes a sign of the lost, inherent only in the world of childhood. A very frequent is the narrative related to the fact that "I never succeed in cooking one or another dish as my mother (grandmother) did". In this regard, there are recipes that are lost or impossible to cook in one's already conscious Jewish present.

Connection with the secular model. In the presence of a division into festive and daily meals, the Jewish gastronomic tradition becomes one of the first markers of the ethnic identity. Taking into account the unconditional everyday anti-Semitism, especially in the school environment, Jewish dishes are perceived as something to be proud of. With the predominance of festivity (particularity) in the preparation of Jewish dishes, a general positive attitude appears in the awareness of the specifics of Jewish culture and one's belonging to this culture.

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CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH WELLBEING: AN EXAMPLE OF THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF EDUARDS VEIDENBAUMS "KALĀČI"

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Abstract

In recent years, the field of social science research has increasingly sought to explain the role of cultural participation in promoting social and individual wellbeing. It has been studied in different cultural and artistic subsectors, including museums [Daykin et al. 2020]. The focus of this paper is on young people's participation in cultural activities, specifically museum activities, and the impact of this participation on young people's wellbeing. Fieldwork was carried out in the Memorial Museum of Eduards Veidenbaums "Kalāči" during the research project "Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET), meeting young people (n=12) and finding out what their experience was of participating in the creation of the museum's permanent exhibition and by organising events like "Veindenfest" ("*Veidenfests*") and "More Light" ("*Vairāk gaismas*"). Paper reveals how participation in these activities has contributed to young people's wellbeing.

Keywords: *cultural participation, museum, youth, wellbeing, participatory research*.

CULTURE CROSSROADS

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in how participation in arts and cultural activities can improve individuals' wellbeing. Although the concept of wellbeing is very fluid and it is difficult to find one clear and concrete definition for it, there is an assumption among researchers that wellbeing is enhanced when people are able to fulfil their potential, to achieve a sense of purpose in society [Jensen 2013: 205]. An innovative approach that can improve wellbeing is participation in arts and cultural activities. There are a number of intrinsic benefits, such as increased empathy and stronger social bonds [Hand 2017: 273], vitality, rejuvenation, resilience, purpose and increased quality of life, that can result from participation in arts activities [Fancourt & Finn 2019: 21].

When considering participation in cultural and artistic activities and their potential contribution to the wellbeing of those involved, it is important to also take into account the context in which the activities occur. Following the International Council of Museums (ICOM) adoption of a new definition of museums in 2022, which includes community engagement in museum activities, participation in cultural and artistic activities within museums has become increasingly significant [ICOM 2022].

The aim of the article is to identify how the participation in cultural and artistic activities offered by a museum can contribute to the wellbeing of young people. As the concept of wellbeing is fluid and encompasses subjectivity, it is difficult to measure. This paper proposes a holistic analytical model to identify how participation in museum activities can enhance the wellbeing of those involved. As part of the research project "Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET)", fieldwork was conducted at the Memorial Museum of Eduards Veidenbaums "Kalāči" (hereafter referred to as "Kalāči"). The purpose of the fieldwork was to gather information from young people (n=12) about their experience participating in the creation of the museum's permanent exhibition through participatory arts practice and independently organising the festival "Veidenfest". The participatory research approach employed in this study involved the use of a timeline mapping method to gather data on the contribution of involvement in these activities to the wellbeing of young people. The use of a participatory research approach enables the development of a contextualised understanding of wellbeing for a specific group, in this case, young people who participated in the activities of the museum. This approach can facilitate a holistic understanding of wellbeing, moving beyond the limitations of unidimensional understandings of wellbeing [Sollis 2023: 173].

Clarification of concepts – wellbeing and participation in cultural and artistic activities

As previously stated, defining wellbeing can be challenging as it involves subjective judgements. Various studies that explore the correlation between cultural and artistic participation and wellbeing offer different interpretations of the concept. Wellbeing is referred to as "broader concept than health, suggesting a positive state shaped by subjective feelings as well as social experiences" [Daykin et al. 2021: 134]. In 2008, the Government Office for Science in England conducted the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. The final report of this project is intended for those engaged in policy-related activities, as well as a diverse array of professionals and researchers whose work is aligned with the domains of mental capital and wellbeing, and it suggests that wellbeing "is a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society" [The Government Office for Science, London. Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project 2008]. Positive wellbeing is associated with feelings of excitement, nostalgia, and pleasure, a sense of freedom, kinship, security, support, and being valued, a positive sense of identity, agency, and autonomy [Mansfield et al. 2020: 3].

It is also important to clarify what is meant by participation in cultural and artistic activities in the context of this article. In light of the case study described later in this article, participation in cultural and artistic activities is viewed through the lens of participatory arts and arts engagement. Participatory arts-based activities encompass a form of art (including visual arts, storytelling, poetry) that involves active engagement and collaboration with those taking part during the creative process [Williams et al. 2023: 1735]. Australian researcher Christina Davis, whose research focuses on the interdisciplinary areas of arts-health, health promotion, and mental wellbeing, and her colleagues differentiate between two forms of arts engagement: passive (e. g. visiting, attending, listening, viewing and discussing art) and active (e. g. making, creating, writing and teaching art) [Davies et al. 2012: 208].

The link between participation in cultural and arts activities and wellbeing

In order to characterise the link between participation in cultural and artistic activities and wellbeing, researchers have used two main approaches: the analysis of specific cases where this link has been observed, and systematic reviews and analyses of literature that examine these various cases. The authors will first look at how

systematic literature reviews describe the link between wellbeing and participation in cultural and artistic activities, as they offer more general categories.

In several literature reviews, the most commonly reported wellbeing benefits of participation in cultural and arts activities are increased self-confidence and self-esteem [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 341; Bungay, Vella-Burrows 2013: 51; Pesata et al. 2022: 7]. Increased confidence for young people who are engaging in arts and cultural activities can come from feeling valued, being treated like an adult, overcoming challenges and having a purpose. It can also be associated with the opportunities to perform and engage in communication with other like-minded people [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 345]. If engagement in arts is achieved through the form of performing arts, then the immediate positive validation received from other participants who view the performance can generate a sense of pride and accomplishment, which can be linked to increased self-confidence [Williams et al. 2023: 1758].

Participation in arts and cultural activities can also result in such social benefits, that are connected with wellbeing, as social connectedness, social support, developed interpersonal skills [O'Donnell et al. 2021: 7; Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 345]. Participating in cultural and arts activities can lead to positive social contact and friendships that elicit a sense of belonging, acceptance, social confidence, which can be facilitated by a non-judgmental, friendly, and relaxed environment [O'Donnell et al. 2017: 8]. Important elements of providing an accepting, non-judgmental atmosphere are the personal attitudes and qualities of artists and facilitators [Hui et al. 2019: 296].

There can be several other benefits to wellbeing from participating in cultural and arts activities. Active engagement in arts activities can play a role in identity development as the activities give participants an opportunity to explore and learn about themselves. Identity can be linked with a sense of belonging, that is facilitated by meeting like-minded people and exposure to different people and experiences [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 341]. Such activities can also enable individuals to make small manageable decisions, to be self-resourceful, perform familiar tasks [O'Donnell et al. 2017: 10].

Case studies describing the link between wellbeing and participation in cultural and artistic activities tend to reveal some additional elements that contribute to wellbeing. In one of the case studies ("Hear and Now" project, United Kingdom, 2019), participants reported many positive emotions, including happiness, inspiration, pride and excitement [Jenkins, Farrer and Aulja 2020: 123]. Another case study within the "eARTh" project (United Kingdom), a program offering weekly group arts activities for individuals utilising mental health services, identified how participation in cultural and artistic activities enables participants to explore their identity. By working together as artists, people can perceive themselves more

positively and develop a sense of belonging through artistic activities. Participation in cultural and artistic activities can help people to develop a new belief system about themselves, based on value and worth. Some participants may begin to call themselves artists, which can lead to a transformation of their identity [Hui et al. 2019: 297].

Analytical models for identifying wellbeing enhancement in the context of cultural and artistic activities

While there's no universally accepted metric for measuring wellbeing, it is not measurable against quantifiable criteria and is largely subjective [Fenton 2013: 5], most assessments consider both hedonic aspects like happiness and anxiety, and eudemonic aspects concerning one's sense of purpose and meaning in life [Daykin et al. 2021: 134]. There have been various case studies [Jenkins et al. 2020; Fenton 2013; Kovich et al. 2023)] that examine the link between cultural participation and wellbeing, using mainly two analytical models: the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model developed by the New Economics Foundation (United Kingdom) and the PERMA model developed by Martin E. P. Seligman (United States of America).

The "Five Ways to Wellbeing" developed by The New Economics Foundation encompasses day-to-day actions that are important for an individual's wellbeing – connect; be active; take notice; keep learning; give [Aked et al. 2008: 3]. Researcher Marsaili Cameron and his colleagues noted that these five actions correspond to behaviours that can emerge in participatory arts projects. "People can form close relationships by engaging in a common creative task (connect). Physical activity is intrinsic to art forms like dance but applies equally to the making of material things (be active). Creating art encourages people to reflect on their world and their experiences in it (take notice)" [Cameron et al. 2013: 55]. "Participants in arts projects can develop new skills and learn about new things, acquire knowledge (keep learning). And art is a powerful tool of communication, self-expression, participation in arts and cultural activities can build self-esteem and empathy (give)" [Cameron et al. 2013: 56].

One study employed the PERMA model to identify and analyse the benefits to wellbeing from the "Hear and Now" project, which took place in 2019 in the United Kingdom. Musicians and dancers from the Philharmonia Orchestra and University of Bedfordshire facilitated the project and performed alongside older adults living with a diagnosis of dementia and young people. These groups collaborated over four weeks to devise a music and dance piece, which was performed at the University Theatre [Jenkins, Farrer and Aulja 2020: 122].

The PERMA model, developed by Martin E. P. Seligman in 2011, comprises five elements that collectively constitute the concept of wellbeing. These five elements of wellbeing are positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and

accomplishment [Seligman 2011: 16]. Positive emotion encompasses subjective wellbeing variables: pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, warmth, etc. [Seligman 2011: 17]. Engagement, like positive emotion, is assessed only subjectively and retrospectively. This element is characterised by subjective experiences, such as a sense of timelessness, complete focus on the task, and a loss of self-consciousness [Seligman 2011: 16]. Meaning is the third element of wellbeing; it can be explained as belonging to and serving something that one believes is bigger than the self. Meaning is not solely a subjective state as more objective judgement of history, logic, and coherence can contradict a subjective judgement [Seligman 2011: 17]. Fourth element of wellbeing is accomplishment in its momentary form. It is included in this model to better describe what individuals, when free of coercion, choose to do for its own sake. This element can be described by sense of winning, accomplishing something for its own sake [Seligman, 2011: 19]. The fifth element is positive relationships. It simply means that positive and pleasant communication and engagement with other people makes one's life richer and happier [Seligman 2011: 20].

In conclusion, while wellbeing remains a largely subjective and multifaceted concept that resists quantifiable measurement, two analytical models – the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" and the PERMA model – offer valuable frameworks for understanding how cultural activities can enhance wellbeing. The "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model outlines daily actions crucial for individual wellbeing, such as connecting, being active, taking notice, keeping learning, and giving, all of which can be fostered through participatory arts projects. Similarly, the PERMA model identifies five elements of wellbeing: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment. These models provide structured approaches to analysing and promoting wellbeing, underscoring the significant potential of cultural participation in enhancing individual and collective wellbeing.

Research design

The study is part of the project "Striving Towards Participatory Engagement in Museums: Inquiry into Museum Education Practice in Latvia (MEET)", which aims to explore the determinants, patterns and consequences of participatory engagement dynamics in the museum sector through the prism of museum education. The project aims to take a closer look at four cases where participatory community engagement in museum activities can be observed. One of the cases is the participatory involvement of the youth community in the Memorial Museum of Eduards Veidenbaums "Kalāči". The project "More Light" (in Latvian: "*Vairāk gaismas*") was launched in 2022 with the aim of involving young people in the creation of a new exhibition, as well as addressing issues of young people's mental health. Museum representatives organised two consecutive years of *Sansusī* Social Wellbeing Residencies, where Latvian and

Norwegian artists worked with young people to explore the museum's collection and create artworks reflecting on mental health and wellbeing in the 19th century and today. When the "More Light" project ended, those who were involved in the project did not want to stop working with the museum, so the young people initiated a new project, "Veidenfest", which took place in August 2023 in the open-air territory of the "Kalāči".

The study employs a participatory research approach and utilises the timeline mapping [Hurtubise 2023] method for the collection of data. Participatory research can be generally described as systematic inquiry conducted in collaboration with those impacted by the issue under study, aimed at education and driving action or change. One of the main strengths of participatory research is its ability to combine researchers' theoretical and methodological expertise with the real-world knowledge and experiences of non-academic participants, creating a mutually beneficial partnership [Cargo et al. 2008: 327]. Timeline mapping is a visual art-based method derived from the broader framework of graphic elicitation. It involves participants organising their life events in a self-selected chronological order, each with attached significance. This method can help reduce traditional interview hierarchies, fostering rapport between interviewer and interviewee, and allowing the participant to guide the interview agenda. Additionally, timelines facilitate participants' reflection on specific life periods and enhance the comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Timeline mapping method can also be used to focus on specific periods of participants' lives [Hurtubise et al. 2023]. In this study, the timeline mapping method was employed to explore the experiences of participants during a specific temporal period in which they were engaged with the activities of the museum "Kalāči".

The fieldwork took place from July 4 to August 30, 2023. Initially, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with museum representatives: the director, the museum educator, and the project manager of the project "More Light". On August 18, the researchers met with the young people involved in the museum's activities to explain the purpose and process of the research. On August 30, 2023, the young participants were given approximately one hour to visualise their museum engagement journey, tracing its inception from their initial involvement in museum activities. The young people could do this with all possible materials – paint on sheets, draw, create a path from magazines, newspaper clippings, etc. Afterwards, the young people were asked to talk about the path – either in public, with everyone involved, or in more intimate settings such as small group discussions or peer to peer interviews – whichever was more convenient. The conversations were audio-recorded, then transcribed, and along with them, the important milestones, emotions, insights, etc. of the young people's museum participation experience were highlighted.

In total, 12 young people aged 15 to 19 shared their experiences. Initially, a general thematic analysis was used to process the data in order to understand the benefits for wellbeing identified by young people. Subsequently, the authors identified the relationships of the thematic blocks of the data with the two models discussed in the theoretical section above – "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model and PERMA model.

Results

The general thematic analysis of the data showed that it was possible to identify a number of categories from both models (coloured pink in Figure 1), but not categories such as "meaning" (PERMA model) and "give" (Five Ways to Wellbeing) (coloured grey in Figure 1). Several young people stated that participating in museum activities helped them to understand themselves and to explore themselves (self-exploration – added category), which is in line with the case study of the eARTh project described above, where it was found that participation in cultural and artistic activities allows participants to explore their identity. Although neither the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" nor the PERMA model explicitly refer to self-exploration, in theoretical materials various authors [Davies 2012: 1; Zarobe 2017: 341; Bungay 2013: 51; Pesata 2022: 7] explain that cultural and artistic participation contributes to the progress of a person's self-worth and self-confidence – both of the elements contribute to participant's self-exploration.

The authors developed a comprehensive analytical model to identify the enhancement of wellbeing through cultural and artistic activities. The model integrates the categories of the PERMA and "Five Ways to Wellbeing" models identified in the empirical data and adds the category of Self-exploration (coloured yellow in Figure 1). By integrating these two models, their categories were merged and given new keywords. "Connect" and "Positive relationship" are integrated into the "Community" category. Both connections and positive relationships enable the creation of strong social bonds, a sense of belonging, and community. The category "Involvement" integrates "Be active", which is characterised by the creation of material things, and "Engagement", which is characterised by full focus on the task. Similarly, the category "Knowledge" combines "Keep learning" with "Accomplishment", based on the idea that the acquisition of new skills leads to the achievement of new results, contributing to an individual and collective sense of achievement and winning. "Take notice" has been included in the "Emotions" category alongside "Positive emotion". This is because both categories describe emotions that arise from participating in activities and reflecting through art. However, based on the empirical data collected, no situations were identified that correspond to the "Give" category of the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model and the "Meaning" category of the PERMA model (coloured grey in Figure 1).
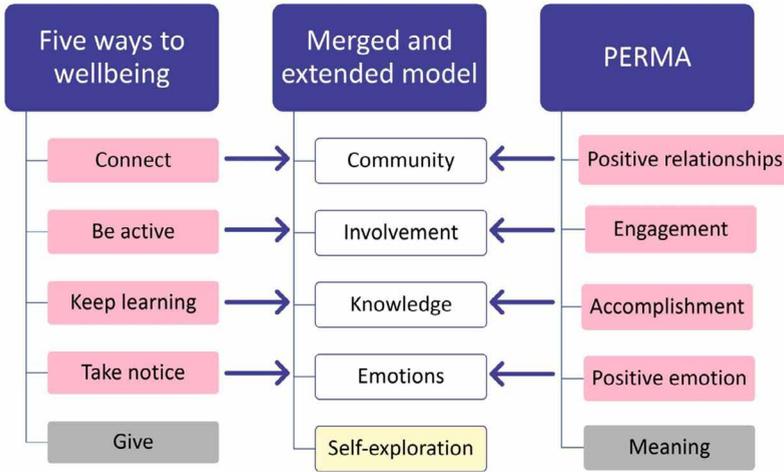
Figure 1. Analytical model for identifying enhanced wellbeing through cultural participation (created by the authors based on the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model and PERMA model categories).

In order to gain a deeper insight into the analysis of the results and the relationship between cultural and artistic participation and young people's wellbeing, a second (merged and extended model) figure has been created. The figure demonstrates the keywords and attributes that define each category of the newly developed analytical

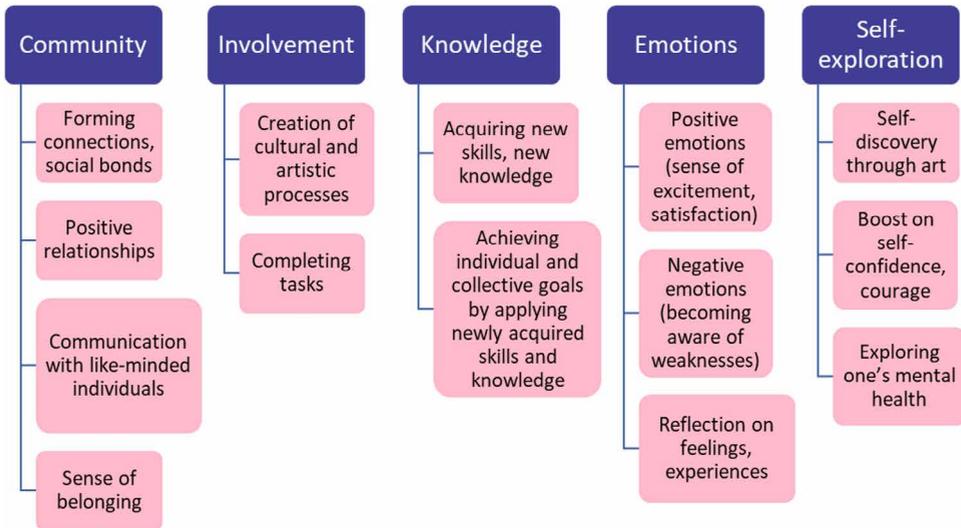Figure 2. Merged and extended analytical model for identifying enhanced wellbeing through cultural participation, together with the keywords and attributes which describe them (created by the authors based on the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model and PERMA model categories).

model. The keywords and attributes for each category are primarily selected based on the models previously mentioned (the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model and PERMA model). However, the category of emotions, derived from the findings of the fieldwork, has been complemented with the attribute "negative emotions", which, in turn, enables the stakeholders involved in the artistic and cultural processes to enhance their understanding of their weaknesses. The analysis of the results then proceeds to describe in greater detail how cultural and artistic participation contributes to the wellbeing of young people.

Following this, the authors will describe the results in depth, based on the merged and extended analytical model categories: community, involvement, knowledge, emotions and self-exploration.

Community

As stated in this article, the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" model identifies connection as a constituent element of wellbeing within the domain of cultural and arts engagements. Similarly, the PERMA model accentuates human interaction, conceptualized as "positive relationships". Empirical observations from fieldwork underscore that engaging in communication with like-minded individuals and cultivating bonds of friendship constitutes a pivotal benefit of cultural involvement. One informant explains that through this participation s/he has gained "*the confidence that maybe some of my thoughts are purely normal. Communication with young people is important, which also improved my mental health a lot, and the realisation that I am not alone. It's a very cool feeling that you can resonate with someone.*" Another informant added that this interaction between participants fosters collaborative skills and drives these positive relationships with each other: "*And then there's that collaboration and being able to understand each other, rather than just saying 'oh, you don't understand me?– then we don't need to work together, then just go away, I'll manage here!'*" In other words, the data show that the participation of young individuals in the "Kalāči" museum has strengthened strong social bonds and a sense of belonging. This experience shows a community that provides support and solidarity, and for young people it serves as a network where they will be understood, supported and helped in times of need.

Involvement

Alongside the building of the community and friendship bonds described above, the empirical evidence of the study shows that young people are actively involved in the creation of cultural and artistic processes. This involvement contributes in a positive way to the development of new cooperation skills and to the learning of cultural and artistic processes. Consequently, young people feel being a part of the

cultural field and involved in cultural processes. One of the informants describes his/her experience: "*I wanted to try something new, I wanted to try some bigger, formal volunteering. Because before this I was not active anywhere. And I don't know why I suddenly became active like that. I would say that the first "More Light" residency triggered something in me, I just wanted to try something new, I want to understand the world better, to get an insight into how it works in reality.*" Moreover, the young people explain that this participation in the activities of the "Kalāči" requires in itself continuous work and involvement. This has been a challenge for many at the beginning – participants admit that they were not confident in their own abilities and did not want to take responsibility for specific tasks to be carried out. However, this experience has taught them to overcome their fears and barriers related to communication and work management activities.

Knowledge

Knowledge is one of the key benefits highlighted in the context of cultural and artistic participation. "The Five Ways to Wellbeing" model explicitly explains that individuals acquire new skills and knowledge through participation. The PERMA model, on the other hand, places more emphasis on the individual's achievements. The empirical data show that the young people have achieved their individual and collective goals by applying their newly acquired skills and knowledge to the activities of "Kalāči". The interviews reveal that the young people have gained experience in managing events – experiencing the steps of organising an event from start to finish, including budget planning, communicating with the artists involved, decorating stages, setting up tents, running events and discussions. By organising "Veidenfest", the young people also gained knowledge and experience on various copyright issues, which they see as a benefit. The young people emphasise that organising such a festival at the museum has helped them to develop their cooperation and communication skills, and that these skills are best developed through action, through interaction with each other. It is mentioned that during the organisation of the "Veidenfest" they learnt and realised that conflict resolution and trying to find common ground, to understand each other, are valuable skills that need to be further developed. One of the informants explains it as follows: "*To see, to learn about copyright, things that we definitely wouldn't just learn every day. Because we had different outside experts – from communication field, psychologists, etc. – and they really sort of taught us a lot of things. As I also wrote on my Facebook about "Veidenfest" – we have actually graduated from the school of communication and responsibility.*" Accordingly, there is a causal relationship here, where learning contributes to the personal and collective success of young people.

Emotions

Young people attach particular importance to the emotional benefits when talking about their experiences. With the implementation of "More Light" and "Veidenfest", young people reveal that, although they have had some tense moments during the preparatory process, at the end they have felt a sense of excitement, satisfaction for the work they have done, for the teamwork and for having been able to be part of it. For example, one informant was particularly expressive and emotional about how thrilled s/he felt on the final evening of the "Veidenfest", saying that "*I just looked straight into the hall and I'm overwhelmed by feelings. And that was the moment when I think I said that if the stage collapsed, if lightning started to strike, I wouldn't care, because it has all worked so well.*" Overall, the young people describe this experience of cultural participation at the "Kalāči" with positive emotions: "*Then the next day was the opening of "More Light", which was on October 3. It was such a warm event, a unity that we have done a lot of work. Although minimalistic compared to the whole organising team, we were part of it.*" In contrast, although the PERMA model focuses only on positive emotions, young people in the interviews also mention negative emotions that have made them aware of their weaknesses, grow and develop in terms of controlling their reactions in certain escalating situations. In other words, it is also evident during the interviews that along these wide range of emotions stimulated by the museum's participatory activities young people have learned to reflect on their feelings, on the benefits of both positive and negative emotions, and how they perceive events around them. In the interviews, young people reflect on the activities they have experienced in the museum by directly describing the emotions they have felt. Accordingly, it can be seen that these emotions resonate with a person's reflection on its experiences as it was mentioned in "The Five Ways to Wellbeing" model.

Self-exploration

The empirical data from the fieldwork suggest that one of the most frequently cited benefits for young people alongside this participation in museum activities has been self-discovery. Young people referred to an inner stirring, a getting to know themselves: "*At that moment I felt like I was getting to know myself again, or I was adding to myself in some way.*" One young participant explains that through the art residencies, the "Veidenfest" she has explored her mental health more: "*We experienced a lot, we wrote poetry, we discovered ourselves through art, we talked to psychologists, it was very, very interesting.*" Young people mentioned that their self-confidence and sense of courage had been boosted – many had previously struggled with the fear of talking to strangers, approaching sponsors, but now felt more confident about it. They also say that psychologically, these strengthened, new-found characteristics help them to move on with their lives.

Conclusions

The theory of the relationship between cultural participation and wellbeing and the empirical data summarised in this paper have a number of similarities and some additions. For example, Mansfield et al. [2020: 3] write that positive wellbeing is associated with feelings of excitement, nostalgia and pleasure. The authors' study found that young people's participation in cultural activities allowed them to feel not only positive emotions (feelings of excitement, satisfaction) but also negative emotions, which allowed young people to learn to reflect on their feelings. Through reflection on their feelings, young people can get to know themselves better, which is an important aspect of identity exploration. This observation leads to Zarobe's and Bungay's [2017: 341] suggestion that active engagement in arts activities can play a role in identity development, as the activities allow participants to explore and learn more about themselves. The empirical data from the research conducted confirm that involvement in arts and cultural activities enables young people to gain a deeper understanding of themselves, to explore their mental health and to reflect on their emotions and feelings.

Several literature reviews suggest that participation in arts and cultural activities contributes to the wellbeing of those involved, increasing their self-esteem and confidence [Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 341; Bungay, Vella-Burrows 2013: 51; Pesata et al. 2022: 7]. The young people who participated in the "Kalāči" activities overcame their fears on several occasions, and by successfully carrying out different tasks for the first time with their newly acquired knowledge, they gained confidence in their abilities, which also increased their sense of wellbeing. The empirical data also show that the engagement of young individuals in "Kalāči" initiatives has had a positive impact on their wellbeing through communication with like-minded people, the development of friendships and cooperation skills. Other researchers have also acknowledged that participation in cultural activities can lead to such social benefits associated with wellbeing, as social connectedness, developed interpersonal skills [O'Donnell et al. 2021: 7; Zarobe, Bungay 2017: 345].

Synthesizing empirical findings, authors have proposed an analytical model integrating elements from both described analytical models in this article (PERMA and "Five Ways to Wellbeing"), identifying the key elements in the context of cultural participation and wellbeing: community, involvement, knowledge, emotions and self-exploration. Accordingly, in referring to the category "community", young individuals' experiences show that cultural participation activities have helped them build connections, social bonds, developed their communication with like-minded individuals and sense of belonging. The empirical data suggest that these participatory activities have given young people the opportunity to create cultural and artistic processes and complete different tasks. In particular, young people were

allowed to actively engage in these activities, which in this case refers to the category of "involvement" in the analytical model. The category "knowledge" indicates how young people develop new skills, new knowledge and are achieving individual and collective goals by applying newly acquired skills and knowledge. The category of "emotions" is of great importance: the interviews reveal that cultural participation has given young people positive emotions, a sense of excitement, satisfaction, but at the same time it has given them the opportunity to work on their negative emotions, being aware of weaknesses and reflecting on feelings, experiences. The category of "self-exploration" is also important. The results of the study show that young people who take part in cultural activities find them useful. These activities can help them learn more about themselves, feel more confident and courageous, and also explore their mental health.

An examination of the categories put forward by the authors shows that they are interlinked. For example, the sense of belonging created by the community has created positive emotions in young people and the involvement in the cultural event has created new knowledge. Whilst the conversations with young people seem to indicate that emotions and self-exploration are among the most important benefits of participating in cultural activities, a more in-depth, focused analysis of the data is needed in order to discover what the dynamics of these categories are. The authors foresee that in the future there is the potential to create a more concrete hierarchy of these categories.

It can be concluded that participation in cultural and artistic activities can contribute to the wellbeing of those involved, taking into account the aforementioned and the main benefits of participation in cultural activities for young people described in this article. The main benefits of participation in cultural activities that contribute to wellbeing are closely related to the holistic analytical model developed by the authors.

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AN EXAMINATION OF PERCEIVED RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SONG AND DANCE CELEBRATION 2023: PARTICIPANTS' AND ORGANIZERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The management of mega-events requires careful consideration of various risks such as crowding, weather conditions, and terrorist threats, determined by continuous changes in the non-ergodic world. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on risk management in the context of cultural mega-events. This study aims to address this gap by examining the perceived risks associated with the Latvian Song and Dance Celebration 2023 from the perspectives of both organizers and participants. The study identified challenges related to communication, fund utilization transparency, and time management. These challenges were investigated through interviews with organizers representing different management levels and through questionnaires distributed to participants. Participants expressed concerns about safety, weather, catering, and force majeure situations. The study found that the perceived risks vary between organizers and participants, as well as among organizers based on their management levels.

Keywords: *mega-events, risks, risk perception, Latvian Song and Dance Celebration.*

Introduction

Despite the essential role of risk management in event planning, research on the adoption of risk management strategies in events remains sparse [Robson 2009; Khir 2014; Ashwin 2020]. Most existing studies focus on sports mega-events like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Championship, which, although significant, represent only a fraction of the broader events landscape [Boo, Gu 2010: 139–166; Toohey, Taylor 2008: 451–469]. Although the comprehensive study of mega-events has gained attention since the 2000s, the literature still lacks an examination of stakeholders' roles related to risks [Girgin, Edizel 2019: 254]. As Silvers noted, risk management is a core competency of event management [Silvers 2008], while, as highlighted by a fire safety representative at the London Olympics 2016, "*in such big events, however, absolute safety is not possible*" [Girgin, Edizel 2019: 257; Khir 2014: 55].

The Latvian Song and Dance Celebration 2023 (further in the text – The Celebration), originating from 19th-century a cappella traditions in Europe, is now held every 5 years during summer exclusively in the Baltic States, serving as a vital cultural expression and affirmation of Latvia's identity in the 21st century [UNESCO 2023]. Since its inception in Latvia in 1873, when it attracted 1,000 singers and over 20,000 visitors, the Celebration has evolved into a multidisciplinary mega-event, drawing about 500,000 attendees, over 40,000 participants, 600 dance groups, and 400 choirs [XXVII Nationwide Latvian Song and XVII Dance Celebration 2024]. For 5 years organizers and participants engage in systematic preparation, including rehearsals, repertoire preparation, competitions, planning and communication, culminating in a vibrant gathering in Riga that is legislated under the Song and Dance Celebration Law and coordinated by the Latvian National Culture Center (LNCC).

Risks inherent to the Celebration, involving 40,000 of participants and nearly half a million visitors, can stem from various sources such as severe weather, attendee misconduct, or technical failures. Mega-events such as Milan EXPO and London Olympic Games, have reported challenges like flooding, abandoned bags, and blockage of the railway systems [Girgin, Edizel 2019: 259], while the Celebration has faced its own issues, including children fainting during the Scholar Celebration in 2015, a ticketing system crash in 2018, and insufficient catering process for choirs in 2023 [LSM 2015, 2018; Vasiļjeva 2023].

This research is prompted by the limited studies on risk management in cultural mega-events and the unpredictability of event risks in a non-ergodic world. As the Celebration is an event with numerous challenges and risks, it is crucial to analyze past occurrences from the perspective of different stakeholders. Therefore, the study has conducted an examination of risks associated with the Latvian Song and Dance Celebration 2023 from the perspectives of both organizers and participants and outlined the most significant challenges.

The tasks of this paper are to:

1) identify and examine perceived risks associated with the Celebration 2023 from the perspectives of both organizers and participants;

2) explore the role-specific challenges faced by organizers of the Celebration 2023;

3) conduct a comparative analysis of risk perceptions between organizers and participants, for a comprehensive understanding of risk management in mega-events.

The central research questions are: How do risk perceptions differ between the various levels of organizers and participants at the Celebration 2023, and what specific challenges do these groups identify in management of this mega-event?

To address these questions, the authors employed both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys in their research methodology.

Study limitations include a restricted research period from October to mid-December 2023. A total of 311 participants were surveyed, with 252 valid responses, and interviews were conducted with 7 representatives from the organizational team. Due to confidentiality, emergency service representatives and external stakeholders were not interviewed.

Theoretical framework

This study is based on the theoretical framework of event management, addressing the planning and execution of mega-events. It aims to analyze risk management at a unique mega-event from a sociocultural perspective, revising risk assessments based on prior knowledge, personal based experience, and discussions [Ashwin 2020].

Mega-event characteristics

Organizing mega-events is a complex task in modern event management. Due to their wide range and scope, it is difficult to provide a single definition for a mega-event. The categorization and definition of a mega-event may vary depending on its rationale, frequency, and location [Edizel 2014; Mazzeo 2008; Smith et al. 2012]. According to Getz, mega-events are events with a global reputation that attract visitors to the host city to participate in sporting, cultural, religious, and political activities [Getz 1991]. Some scholars primarily consider sports events as mega-events [Horne, Manzenreiter 2006; Maennig, Zimbalist 2012], while others emphasize the number of tickets sold as the main criterion for mega-events [Smith et al. 2012]. The most commonly mentioned criteria to classify mega-events include duration, size, scale, volume of visitors, and prestige [Girgin, Edizel 2019: 251]. However, as argued by Muller, mega-events can vary in different aspects, and not all mega-events are "mega" to the same extent in all dimensions [Muller 2015: 627].

In this paper, the authors will adopt Martin Muller's definition of mega-events: "*Mega-events are ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that (a) attract a large number of visitors, (b) have a wide media reach, (c) come with substantial costs, and (d) have significant impacts on the built environment and the population*" [Muller 2015: 638]. Following this concept, The Celebration qualifies as a mega-event, subject to all the associated risks.

Risk types and their specifics at mega-events

Mega-events, which involve a wide range of activities and resources, inherently carry significant potential for risks and crises [Elbe 2009: 227–239]. The scale and diversity of mega-events, along with the presence of attendees unfamiliar with local hazards, highlight the need for robust risk management planning.

Risk in the context of events refers to "*any condition or occurrence that might affect the outcome of an event or event activities and might expose an event organization to loss measured in terms of probability and consequences*" [Silvers 2008: 35]. Different events face different risk factors, varying in different contexts [Silvers 2008], internal – like crowding [Earl et al. 2005: 38], or external, which may range from the pandemics to the war in Ukraine.

The emergence of new risk factors, including terrorism, pandemics, military conflicts, and unpredictable weather, has added complexity to management decisions at all levels. Furthermore, effective risk management for mega-events requires a balance between raising awareness about security and avoiding causing alarm, as illustrated by a military officer involved in the London 2016 Olympic Games [Girgin, Edizel 2019: 258].

The analysis of various event management resources led to an overview of general event risks and specific risks associated with mega-events, as shown in Table 1.

The risks associated with mega-events and general events share common categories, such as project, business, strategic, operational, technological, reputational, climate, and communication risks. However, mega-events magnify these risks due to the larger scale and higher stakes. Mega-events also face specific risks that are less pronounced in regular events. Health and safety risks are more critical due to larger crowds; venue and transport management risks are more complex due to the size and logistics involved. Additionally, mega-events encounter significant risks related to alcohol and drugs, fire safety, crowd management, and catering, all of which require more robust protocols and planning.

Event organizers base their risk assessments on insights from actual experiences and collective industry knowledge, rather than just calculations and facts used in other industries [Ashwin 2020: 6], and the act of planning and organizing an event

itself is a risk-taking effort [Khir 2015: 54]. Understanding the different aspects of risk perception among participants and organizers at various levels is therefore crucial.

Table 1
Risk types in event planning. (Compiled by the authors based on: [Aswin 2020; Shone, Parry 2013; Pielichaty et al. 2016; Tarlow 2002; Earl et al. 2005; Girgin, Edizel 2019; Khir 2015; Wynn-Moylan 2018].)

General risks	Specific risks at mega-events
Project risks: a series of project tasks (e. g. covering time, quality, costs)	Health and safety risks: timely response to health emergencies, safety protocols; epi- and pandemics, VIPs safety; terrorism
Business risks: lack of financial risk management strategy and reserves	Electrical installations and pyrotechnics risks: electrical malfunctions, pyrotechnic misfires, etc.
Strategic risks: affect events in the long term (e. g. financial, political, environmental, etc.)	Venue and location: issues related to the venue, accessibility, emergency procedures, noise, missing children
Operational risks: all the risks, associated with running an event	Transport management risks: safe transportation logistics, addressing traffic congestion
Technological risks: technological failure; construction risks	Alcohol and drug risks: responsible handling with a focus on participant safety, safety protocols
Reputational risks: negative publicity, lack of transparency; corruption risks	Fire safety risks: measures, fire-resistant materials, emergency response procedures
Climate risks: extreme weather conditions such as strong rain, hurricanes, hotness	Crowding: safe crowd management, control, emergency evacuation plans; riots
Communication risks: miscommunication, missing crises communication, wrong communication channels	Catering risks: food safety, allergy management, logistics, speed of service
Personnel risks: employee errors, insufficient qualifications, excessive workload, irrational work organization.	

Stakeholders' and organizers' perspective on risk management

Stakeholders in event management encompass a diverse array of individuals and groups, each playing vital roles in planning and executing mega-events, including event owners, host governments, promoters, sponsors, the community, media, and participants [Yamakita et al. 2024: 135]. Different stakeholders perceive risks differently, influenced by their organizational roles and professional backgrounds, leading to varying risk perceptions within and across organizations. This can strain relationships and lead to unintended consequences, such as financial shortfalls and cost overruns [Børve, Thøring 2022].

By organizing events, individual perceptions of actual risks often differ, even when the organization as a whole operates safely: top and middle-level management tends to have a narrower view of present risks compared to operational management, whose broader perspective is informed by their hands-on experiences [Marynissen et al. 2024]. Disparities in risk perception within the event industry, particularly between top management and subordinate managers are shown in a survey targeting CEOs and executive directors in the events industry, which revealed notable gaps in the way how the CEOs see the preparedness of their teams for the implementation of mega events and a disconnect between perceived and actual risks [Blerter & ERMS 2019]. Organizers must possess comprehensive knowledge about the event, its management system, resources, organizational culture, and stakeholders, as well as its unique national significance and cultural attributes, to understand the potential risks associated with such events [Allen et al. 2008].

There is a scientific gap in examining the nuances of risk management in cultural mega-events of national importance and understanding the diverse risk perceptions across different organizational levels is crucial for mitigating these risks.

Research methodology

To collect data, the authors conducted interviews with the organizers, with the purpose of clarifying risk management issues from different management levels. The participants' survey made it possible to look at the identification of risks from the participants' side and to compare whether the risks important to the organizers coincide with those important to the participants.

The study employed **semi-structured interviews** with representatives of the Celebration organizers at different management levels, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2
Interviewed professionals by management level and functions. (Compiled by the authors, based on the management levels of [Poff, Skripak 2023: 194].)

Nr.	Level of the interviewed person	Professional experience in the context of the Celebration 2023
1.	Top-level	Politician, former Minister of Culture, chairman of the Celebration Council
2.	Top-level	The executive producer of the Celebrations
3.	Middle-level	Project manager of the Celebration, expert in jury commissions, coordinator
4.	Middle-level	Expert at LNCC for choirs and vocal ensembles, artistic planning and implemetation of 2 biggest concerts
5.	Middle-level	Author of musical projects, regional organizer of the Celebrations
6.	First-line level	Actress and the moderator of the Celebration
7.	First-line level	Event organizer and producer, volunteering during the Celebration

The goal was to represent all management levels and to capture diverse perspectives on risk management. To ensure the efficacy of the interviews, the authors prepared a set of questions, addressing pivotal aspects of risk management, listed in Table 4. Transcriptions of the interviews were prepared to facilitate in-depth analyses.

To expand the perspective on the possibilities and risks of the mega-event, the author conducted a survey primarily focused on the risks encountered by participants. The decision to conduct an **online survey** was informed by the statistical data indicating that 91% of Latvian households have Internet access [OSP 2023]. To ensure representation from participants of the Celebration, the authors disseminated information about the survey on social media like Facebook and LinkedIn, publishing questionnaire on the official accounts of various choirs as well as on youth, culture managers, music and film people of interest groups; direct mailing to choir members, resulting in 311 responses. In light of the primary screening for participation in Celebration 2023, 252 respondents who actively engaged in the event were chosen for subsequent analysis from an estimated total of 40,000 Celebration participants.

Table 3
Respondents' profile. (Source: results of survey conducted by the authors.)

Female	74%
Male	25%
Average age	32,5 years
Living in Riga or its neighborhood (Pierīga)	84%
Living in big cities (Jelgava, Valmiera, Ventspils etc.)	8%
Living in small cities	7%
Living on countryside	2%
Encountered any risks during the mega-events	24%
Not encountered any risks during the mega-events	76%

The survey structure included thematic sections for gathering data: Demographic Information (3Q), Experience with the Celebration (2Q), Participant Risks and Perception (3Q), and Risk Communication (2Q). The authors used closed and open-ended questions, as well as Likert scales in their questionnaire.

Research results

In the **interviews**, the organizers presented individual viewpoints on risks and their processes, as each of them was involved in organizational aspects at different levels of the mega-event. The analysis of answers to interview questions is shown in Table 4. The table compiles interview findings from mega-event organizers at different levels.

The answers highlight communication and safety challenges, catering quality, transportation complexities, and external factors such as COVID-19, war in Ukraine and weather conditions, also covering emergency management, highlighting emergency presence at venues, as well as protocols for addressing adverse weather. Communication strategies for managing risks and program changes involve diverse tools, channels, and a crisis communication plan, with instructions provided to volunteers.

Table 4

Challenges, risks and emergency management – findings from interviews with organizers. (Source: compiled by the authors.)

Questions	Answers
Challenges and risks encountered by interviewed persons	– communication issues (insufficient communication (organizers to volunteers and stakeholders), crisis communication) – low quality of catering versus costs – complex transportation coordination – external factors (planning during the Covid 19, economic crisis from the war in Ukraine) – too tight scheduling of rehearsals and concerts – ticket procurement and sales – security issues (lack of qualified personnel)
Risks associated with organizing events	– safety risks (including children getting lost) – need for clear instructions and responsible individuals for safety – various communication tools and channels used
Experiences with emergencies during the project	– publicly discussed safety issues in a special press conference before the event – providing volunteers with raincoats, but no decision for strong wind conditions
Climatic risks, adverse weather conditions	– program changes and communication facilitated by the LNCC – various communication tools and channels used – publicly discussed safety issues in a special press conference before the event – providing volunteers with raincoats, but no decision for strong wind conditions
Communication regarding risks and program changes	–program changes and communication facilitated by the LNCC – various communication tools and channels used – crisis communication plan distributed among all groups and teams – instructions for volunteers before each event

The interviewees shared their recommendations for improving risk management at the next Celebration, which varied based on their roles in the organizational system. The top management representatives underscored the significance of stakeholders' surveys and comprehensive risks assessment. Additionally, they proposed enhancing the regulations governing participants' competitions to mitigate reputation, as well as reduce the number of events and develop a specialized module for participant catering tailored to mega-events. Middle-level coordinators highlighted the imperative of transparency, advocating for the public release of budgetary information and outcomes of procurement competitions, specifically related to technical equipment, catering, and security services. Finally, first-line coordinators emphasized the need for enhanced communication coherence and expediency, augmented provision of on-site event information, and improved organization of catering services.

To expand the perspective on the risks of the mega-event, the authors conducted a **survey** primarily on the risks faced by participants. In total, the responses of 252 participants of the Celebration 2023 were analyzed.

First, the authors aimed to discern the participants' experiences at the Celebration. Responding to this inquiry, 56% of the participants indicated a positive experience, while 28% provided a rating of a highly positive experience and 16% mentioned that their experience in participating in the mega-event was neutral.

In subsequent questions, the authors sought to ascertain respondents' perceived opinions on prioritizing and informing about safety and risks from organizational party.
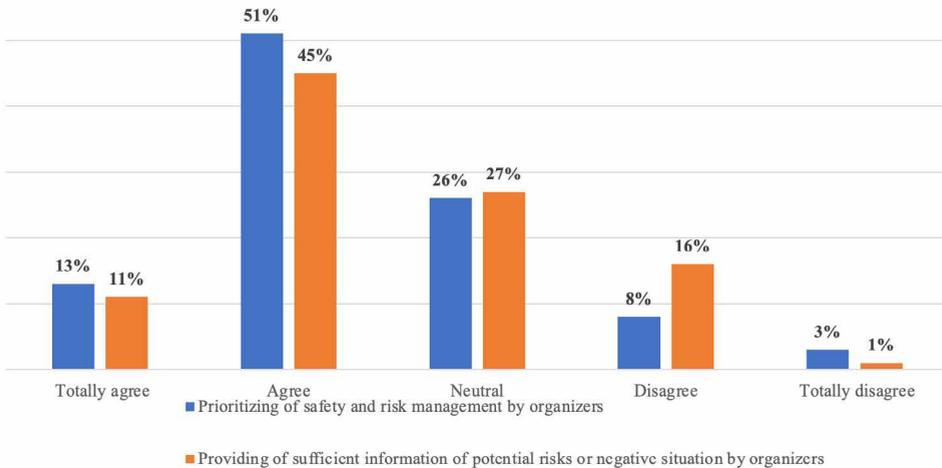
Figure 1. Prioritizing and providing information about safety by organizers, n=252. (Source: compiled by the authors.)

The results show, that while in common participants do agree, that organizers are prioritizing and providing sufficient information about risks and safety, comparing

both aspects of prioritizing and providing information, the last one has a smaller number of agree.

Answering the question regarding participants' thoughts about the most common risks at mega-events, 23% mentioned health problems, while 21% – inappropriate weather conditions.
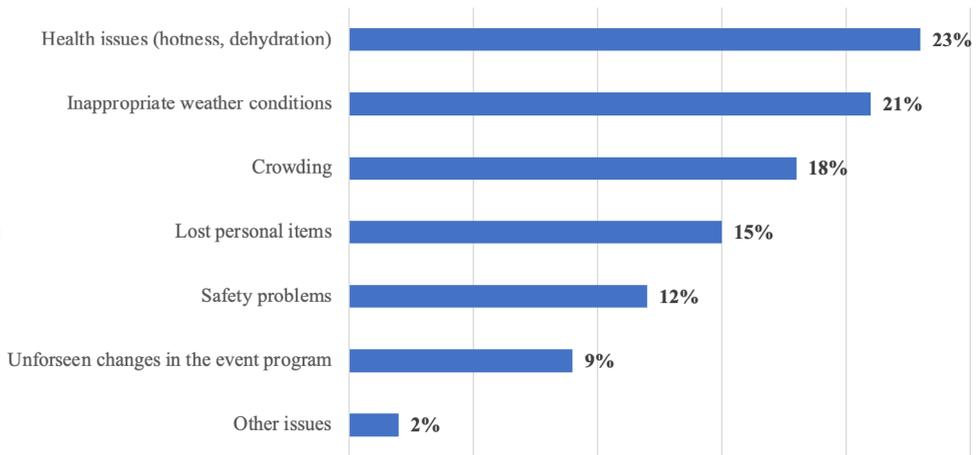
Figure 2. Risks faced by participants during the Celebration, n=252.
(Source: compiled by the authors.)

The results demonstrate that the participants expressed a low perception of risks, aligning with the accident statistics cited by the executive producer of Celebration in the interview.

Answering the question, which safety measures respondents would like to see at further Celebrations, 32% mentioned more information stands with risks/negative
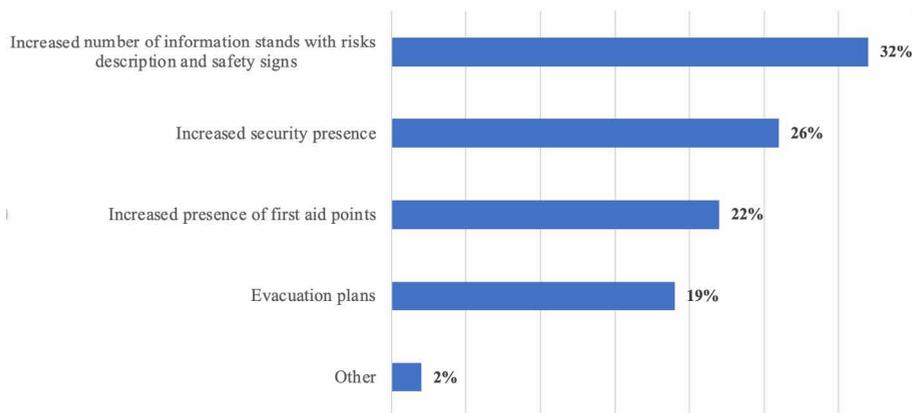
Figure 3. Information regarding the safety issues, participants would like to see in the future, n=252. (Source: compiled by the authors.)

situations descriptions and safety signs, which was rated as most important followed by increased security presence (26%), and the presence of first aid points (22%). More evacuation plans were important for 19% of participants.

The overarching participants' perceptions of risks and safety measures were positive, with notable apprehensions arising around health-related issues and weather conditions. While prioritizing safety from organizers was acknowledged by participants, the dissemination of information concerning potential risks should be more comprehensive. Furthermore, the survey underscored the necessity for additional information stands and safety signage, alongside heightened security and first aid provisions.

To facilitate a better understanding of risks and their perceptions from the participants and organizers, the authors have compiled them in the next table.

Table 5
Risks of the culture mega-event, identified by organizers and participants.
(Source: The results of interviews and survey conducted by the authors.)

Risks	Organizer's perspective	Participant's perspective
Communication risk	Insufficient communication between organizers and volunteers; more critical perspective as by participant's	Information inaccessibility, unclear communication between participants and organizers
Reputation risks	Information getting stuck or a problem of misinterpretation; connected to communication risks	Negative experience in disrespect from participants or attendees.
Financial risks	Inflation, problems in realizing the artistic idea within a given budget; connected to the budgeting process	Expensive tickets and food
Operative risks	Schedule not fitting the plan, volunteers or employers falling ill or can't continue their duties	Queues by entrance, difficulties for disabled attendees, unclear concert program
Product or service quality risks	Lack of information, missed language in the signs, Braille language	Transportation problems, small venue, low-quality cover
Catering risks	Low catering quality compared to the published costs	Poor-quality food, inadequate prices for food
Regulatory risks	Analysis and updating of security-related restrictions, reduction of bureaucracy	Theft and loss of property occur at the mega-event
Sales and ticket risks	Improvement of the participant ticket reservation algorithm	Some attendees use unofficial ticket purchase options
Personal risks	Staff gap for security service	Overloaded participants

The table outlines the common and differing risks perceived by organizers and participants of a cultural mega-event. Both groups are concerned about communication issues, financial constraints, low-quality catering, and operational challenges. Organizers specifically emphasize insufficient communication, budgeting problems, and the need for updated security measures. Participants focused on unclear information, high ticket and food prices, entrance queues, and theft. While both groups are worried about the quality and catering, their specific concerns differ – organizers are identifying tactical risks, while participants struggle with operative hazards.

Discussion and conclusions

This study examines the challenges and risks employed by organizers and participants of Celebration 2023.

The findings reveal significant concerns regarding communication and transparency of fund usage among organizers, emphasizing the pivotal role of effective communication in risk management [Robson 2009; Ashwin 2020] and the importance of financial transparency [Silvers 2008]. The risk management of mega-events is further complicated by media attention, which tends to spotlight negative aspects without acknowledging efforts to alleviate severe scenarios [Zrnic, Susnjar 2010]. Therefore, the public communication of risk scenarios through press conferences at Celebration 2023 is cited as a good practice.

Conversely, participants highlighted safety concerns related to weather conditions, catering issues, and insufficient information about force majeure situations, consistent with findings on the heightened safety risks at mega-events [Toohey, Taylor 2008; Girgin, Edizel 2019; Khir 2014; Elbe 2009]. Specific incidents, such as the ticketing system crash in 2018 and catering problems in 2023, underscore the need for improved risk management practices that correspond to the specifics of mega-events.

The comparative analysis reveals differences in risk perception between organizers and participants, enabling the conclusion that certain risks perceived as serious by organizers (such as communication issues) may not be viewed the same way by participants – and vice versa. Moreover, risks that may seem statistically insignificant (administrative violations, calling for medical assistance) are perceived as highly significant by participants. Organizers predominantly focus on tactical risks, such as communication and financial transparency, whilst participants are more concerned with operative risks such as safety issues, weather conditions, and catering. This discrepancy aligns with surveys showing gaps between perceived and actual risks in the event industry and differences in risk perception between executive and operational managers [Blerter & ERMS 2019; Marynissen et al. 2013]. Neither organizers nor participants have articulated crowd factors as a significant risk,

supporting findings that crowding risk depends on the music style [Earl et al. 2005].

Top managers illuminate the importance of high-level collaboration and structured risk management for successful event implementation and reputation maintenance – both, of organizers and the hosting state [Girgin, Edizel 2019; Ashwin 2020; Wynn-Moylan 2018] and the bureaucratic burdens [Khir 2014], leading to the recommendation to evaluate the policy for exceptional cases for the management of mega-events to reduce organizational burdens and participants' workload.

The contribution of this study is a comprehensive analysis of risk perception by mega-event organizers of different management levels, aiding in minimizing self-consciousness and subjective evaluations that can lead to erroneous decisions, particularly among experienced organizers [Zrnic, Susnjar 2010; Khir 2014]. The study confirms that risk assessment is based on managerial roles and responsibilities: while top managers highlight planning challenges within the external contexts, which distinctly manifested in financial and security planning, first-line managers focused more on operational risks and issues, ranging from weather conditions and catering to communication inaccuracies.

As Khir outlined, a significant portion of risks remains invisible and unreported, necessitating a thorough understanding of the risks "iceberg" from different perspectives [Khir 2014], as exemplified in this study, and can be used for improving risk management at mega-events.

Future research should focus on conducting comparative analyses of mega-events regarded as examples of best practices, and on examining risk management approaches that are well-suited to the context of mega-events [Tarlow 2002]. Subsequent studies should seek to elicit the perspectives of various stakeholders to facilitate effective risk management planning, including the influence of prior experiences and institutional memory [Ashwin 2020; Earl et al. 2005].

The findings reveal an intresting contadiction: participants generally perceive a high level of risk associated with mega-events, expressing a desire for enhanced security measures. However, when questioned about the risks they personally encountered during the Celebration, they reported encountering relatively few. This phenomenon may be attributable to well-known inicdents during mega-events, including some sport events, which influence prevailing perceptions of potential hazards. However, these perceptions may not necessarily align with the reality, at least at this Celebration, as indicated by interviews with event organizers and participant survey findings.

The findings of this study align with existing literature on risk management in mega-events, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of risks and their specifics in cultural mega-events. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the specific risks faced by mega-event organizers and participants, revealing differing

risk perceptions based on their organizational roles. A key contribution of this study is the comparison of risk perceptions and their significance between organizers and participants of mega-events, underscoring the importance of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to risk management.

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VISUAL AND VERBAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PLAY METAPHOR IN LATVIAN POLITICAL CARTOONS

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Abstract

The article's theoretical framework is set in cognitive linguistics and stylistics. It explores the progressing domain of metaphor research, which has expanded substantially since the 1970s, notably in investigating visual and multimodal metaphors in the last twenty years.

The article aims to study the visual and verbal representation of the PLAY metaphor in Latvian political cartoons, applying conceptual metaphor theory. The need for this study arises from the limited understanding of the metaphorical thought of PLAY in the Latvian language and culture.

The main research question studies the formation of the PLAY metaphor by distinguishing the conceptual mappings of game categories described by Roger Caillois – Agon, Alea, and Mimicry.

The metaphor identification procedure of four stages – recognition, verification, comprehension, and interpretation – proposed by Anita Naciscione in 2001, is applied in case studies.

The main findings highlight the cultural significance of the PLAY metaphor in Latvian thought, language and culture. The main conclusions demonstrate that every type of game category forms a distinct group of conceptual mappings, illustrating the sustainable nature of the metaphorical thought of PLAY. The original contribution

of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the PLAY metaphor, providing insights into metaphorical thought in human perception and understanding in cognitive linguistics.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor, cognitive linguistics, cognitive stylistics, game categories, visual representation.*

Introduction

Cognitive linguistics and **cognitive stylistics** are interdisciplinary fields that draw on cognitive science, philosophy, psychology, and linguistics to understand cognition and provide insights into the human mind. Cognitive linguistics focuses on understanding language's cognitive and neural basis and the role of general cognitive principles and mechanisms in shaping linguistic structures and meaning. Meanwhile, cognitive stylistics is the study of style from a cognitive perspective, examining how readers and authors engage with literary and other texts, including visual material, and how style and stylistic techniques are used to construct and convey meaning. Cognitive stylistics is influenced by **conceptual metaphor theory**[1], stating that metaphors are not just figures of speech but patterns of thought reflecting the embodied nature of human cognition. Cognitive linguistics is a broader field that generally examines the cognitive basis of language, including, for instance, cognitive grammar or cognitive semantics. Often viewed as a branch of traditional stylistics, cognitive stylistics employs a cognitive linguistic approach to the study of style, comprising stylistic techniques. However, it seeks to determine the cognitive foundations of metaphors, metonymies, hyperboles, puns, and other stylistic techniques.

Since the 1970s, the intersection of cognitive science, linguistics and stylistics has given rise to a quickly growing field of metaphor research, where the exploration of mental processes intertwines with the analysis of linguistic and visual expressions. In the last 20 years, there has been a noteworthy rise in scholarship focused on visual metaphors and multimodal metaphors [see Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003; Gibbs [1994] 2002; Gibbs 2016; Forceville, Urios-Aparisi 2009; Forceville 2020].

Metaphors serve as powerful tools for shaping human perception and understanding. Metaphors often go beyond linguistic expressions, extending into the visual domain. Hence, the objective of this article is to analyse three categories of

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[1] Conceptual metaphor as a pattern of thought was first put forward by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980 [see Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003].

the culturally significant metaphor of PLAY[1]: Agon, Alea, and Mimicry in Latvian political cartoons.

Political cartoons portray politicians satirically and thus deride their folly or wickedness, which is especially topical when discussing current politics and raising other recent concerns.

As the scholar of communication and media studies Thomas Knieper states, "*Political cartoon, a drawing (often including caricature) made for the purpose of conveying editorial commentary on politics, politicians, and current events. Such cartoons play a role in the political discourse of a society that provides for freedom of speech and of the press. (..) A political cartoon is also an artistic vehicle characterized by both metaphorical and satirical language. (..) When successful, political cartoons can fulfill an important criticizing and controlling function in society*" [Knieper 2023].

The aim of this study is to explore the intricate connection between verbal and visual conceptual metaphor representations in Latvian political cartoons and identify the conceptual mappings of the PLAY metaphor. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set:

1) collect the empirical material containing stylistically significant political cartoons and select the most salient examples for case studies;

2) review the relevant fields of study – cognitive linguistics, philosophy, psychology, culture theory and multimodal analysis, and choose appropriate methodology;

3) study the visual and verbal representation of the PLAY metaphor;

4) identify the source and target domains of game categories described by Roger Caillois, including Agon, Alea, and Mimicry, and describe the mappings between them;

5) seek to demonstrate the sustainability of figurative thought by examining how the PLAY metaphor is conceived and functions in the visual and verbal representation of Latvian political cartoons.

Research question and methodology

Methodology in metaphor analysis is often a complicated issue mainly because of the interdisciplinary nature of metaphor. The Pragglejaz Group[2] came up with

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[1] Conceptual metaphors are represented by using all capital letters to distinguish them from linguistic metaphors and indicate that they are not just a matter of language but rather concepts that belong to the realm of human thought. This convention is commonly used in cognitive metaphor theory to highlight the underlying conceptual structures used to understand and describe various conceptual domains of experience.

[2] "*The original members of Pragglejaz were Peter Crisp (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Raymond Gibbs (University of California, Santa Cruz), Alice Deignan (University of Leeds), Graham Low (University of York), Gerard Steen (Vrije University of Amsterdam), Lynne Cameron (University of Leeds/The Open University), Elena Semino (Lancaster University), Joe Grady (Cultural Logics), Alan Cienki (Emory University), and Zoltán Kövecses (Loránd Eötvös University)*" [Pragglejaz Group 2007: 37].

the idea of the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) method in 2007. Since then, Gerard Steen and his colleagues at Amsterdam University have been working on advancing this methodology. Methods called MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure VU (*Vrije Universiteit*) University Amsterdam) and VISMIP (Visual Metaphor Identification Procedure) have been created. MIP involves comparing the contextual meaning of a word with its most basic meaning as found in a dictionary, and a word is considered metaphorical if its contextual meaning contrasts with its basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it. MIPVU is an expanded and refined version of MIP, developed at VU University Amsterdam, and it identifies units that have the potential to be realised as metaphors in people's minds. It includes direct, implicit, and borderline cases of metaphor, as well as metaphor signals and metaphor due to personification. VISMIP was developed by Ester Šorm and Gerard Steen, and it focuses on visual metaphors. [See Pragglejaz Group 2007; Steen, Dorst, Herrmann, Kaal, Krennmayr and Pasma 2010; Steen 2018].

These methods are designed to provide systematic and transparent procedures for identifying metaphors in different forms of discourse, including linguistic and visual metaphors. They are logical and functional, and they serve the purpose of safeguarding objectivity. As Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., an American scholar of experimental psycholinguistics and cognitive science, has stated, "*Even though people may rarely experience words or phrases in a conscious manner as "metaphors," we still need some way of demarking what is metaphorical and then use this as the basis for drawing further conclusions about the nature of metaphorical thought and experience*" [Gibbs 2017: 61].

A procedure chosen for this article's purposes is conceptually similar to MIP; however, it predates MIP and could have been its basis. The procedure consists of four stages – **recognition, verification, comprehension** and **interpretation**. It was offered by Anita Naciscione in 2001 [see Naciscione 2001: 33–46; Naciscione 2010: 43–55]. The procedure describes what happens when a human being processes the information when perceiving a verbal or visual example, recognises it as something they have seen or learned before, makes sure it is metaphorical, checks dictionaries and other reference books, and analyses and interprets it. This procedure ensures objectivity by a systematic approach, ensuring that each stage is followed logically and consistently. The verification stage ensures that the metaphorical expression is correctly identified and understood, reducing the risk of subjective interpretation. The comprehension stage ensures that the researcher has a deep understanding of the metaphorical expression and its context, which helps avoid misinterpretation. The interpretation stage ensures that the researcher provides a clear and logical explanation of the metaphorical expression, which helps maintain objectivity.

Political cartoons from the Latvian printed press or online media platforms have been manually collected and saved in our personal database from 2010 to 2022, the database currently comprises 728 Latvian political cartoons that contain stylistically significant examples. For this article, three most salient and representative cartoons have been selected for closer examination using qualitative analysis.

It is necessary to emphasise that visual representations can be analysed via several methods and approaches – cognitive linguistic, psychological or social semiotic. Different techniques are employed to highlight the key characteristics of each visual representation.

The main research question of the article is to study how the PLAY metaphor is construed via visual and verbal components, thus identifying the source and target domains of the conceptual metaphors and verifying the universal character of this metaphor in Latvian language and culture based on political cartoons. The novelty of this study lies in its expansion of the application of conceptual metaphors to different languages and cultures, namely, the examination of the PLAY metaphor in the Latvian language and culture. This expansion is significant for conceptual metaphor theory, as it seeks to demonstrate the universality of conceptual metaphors, a key aspect of our research. Researchers can identify common patterns and structures that transcend individual languages by studying multiple languages. Cognitive linguistics acknowledges the close relationship between language and culture. By studying multiple languages, researchers can better understand how language reflects and shapes culture and how cultural differences influence language use and cognition.

Visual Representation

Visual representation has been crucial for Western Culture since ancient Greeks began theorising about rhetoric. Aristotle, known for his focus on the visual aspect, discussed the concept of metaphorical visualisation or **bringing-before-the-eyes** in his work *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* [See Aristotle 2007: 237].

Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007), a Gestalt psychologist and aesthetician, investigated the theory of visual perception. He contributed significantly to the exploration of human cognitive processes. Arnheim proposed that the essence of life and the world could be observed through the patterns, shapes, and colours present in the world. Consequently, he argued that examining these patterns and deciphering their significance is essential. The cognitive capacity of visual perception closely resembles thinking, with the cognitive processes and thought patterns in visual perception mirroring each other. Humans inherently possess the capability to comprehend things through visual perception. The fundamental concept of composition is ingrained in human nature, stemming from the inherent structure of the human nervous system [see Arnheim 2004a; Arnheim 2004b; Arnheim 2009]. Cartoons are essential

for drawing people's attention to different social and political problems via visual representation. Visual representations in cartoons include images, drawings, and other visual components that convey meaning. The composition of the entire image is crucial, as it combines all the elements into a coherent and meaningful whole.

Social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen contend that visual compositions are not universally comprehensible, for instance, spatial organisation – left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin. Different societies utilise these dimensions and attribute specific meanings and values to them in alternative ways. Western culture used to favour the reading direction from left to right. However, centre-margin compositions have recently become significantly more prevalent [see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2020: 4–5]. In interpreting cartoons, the visual elements can be examined in a left-to-right sequence and centre-margin composition. Kress and Van Leeuwen also point out that it is essential to consider the composition of the entire image, how all the elements are connected, and how they are combined into a coherent and meaningful whole [see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2020: 179].

Zoltán Kövecses – a linguist who has contributed substantially to the development of cognitive linguistics, believes that metaphorical thinking extends beyond language and is present in various forms of expression, including gestures, visual representations, and visual arts: "*(..) metaphor is part of the conceptual system, it follows that conceptual metaphors will also occur in any mode of expression of that system. Research indicates that the conceptual metaphors identified in language also occur in gestures, visual representations (such as cartoons), visual arts (such as painting), and others*" [Kövecses 2020: 7–8].

Charles Forceville has been writing about visual or pictorial and multimodal metaphors since 1996 [see Forceville [1996] 2002]. In his recent book *Visual and Multimodal Communication: Applying the Relevance Principle*, he stresses that multimodal communication is based on humans' evolutionary inclination to cooperate. Forceville rigorously discusses multimodality, its definition issues, and how many semiotic modes are necessary to call it a multimodal discourse. He also criticises it as an ill-defined concept, concluding that many discourses are multimodal in practice [Forceville 2020: 64–68]. Cartoons are multimodal because they combine verbal semiotic modes (text) and visual semiotic modes (picture).

The concept of PLAY

The concept of PLAY has been embedded in Western society's thinking since the time of ancient Greece. Cultural history shows that games of all kinds, for instance, the Olympic Games, play an important role in the formation and functioning of society. Johan Huizinga, a historian and cultural theorist, in his work *Homo Ludens*, explores the history and importance of play in Western culture and points out that

even today, the various elements of play are an integral part of culture. Forms of play are unconscious and conscious and are used in all situations of life, for example, in courtrooms, where each participant is assigned a role, and the rules of the game are known to everyone [Huizinga [1949] 1980]. It is, therefore, not surprising that knowledge about the concept of PLAY helps to structure knowledge. The metaphorical idea of PLAY content and form is attributed to everyday experience.

The French philosopher and writer Roger Caillois's division of games: **Agon, Alea, Mimicry**, and the study of game categories can help to answer the question of whether PLAY metaphors are sustainable. The French scholar builds on Huizinga's ideas by classifying games, exploring their types, and pointing out that many social phenomena are derived from play [Caillois 2001: 11–36]. Caillois classifies games according to their characteristics and similarities, which can be matched with metaphors of PLAY. In the theory of conceptual metaphor, the target domain of PLAY forms a whole group of conceptual mappings[1].

The first category of game is **Agon**[2], a concept with a long history. It refers to games based on competition and rivalry. Individual or team competitions have existed in primitive cultures and even characterised certain cultures and traits; their content is considered to form the basis of the ideas of individuals or entire societies [Caillois 2001: 14]. **Agon** metaphors refer to all situations involving confrontation, winning a prize, asserting oneself in the ranks of a team, defeating an opponent, etc. Since rivalry is not only observed in sports, it is reasonable to speak of **Agon** traits attributed to non-sporting domains. One of the most obvious areas in which **Agon** metaphors are used is politics because it is similar to a game with winners and losers. Boxing, chess and football metaphors can be considered pervasive, with rules and principles attributed to different situations in life.

The themes of politics and elections are always present in mass media discourse. The following cartoon depicts the politics before the elections as a chess game featuring well-known Latvian politicians (Figure 1).

Gatis Šlūka's cartoon "To the Elections" shows a confused voter playing chess with leaders of the main parties. The subtitle "Choosing who to vote for is like a game of chess where you have to think at least a couple of moves ahead" compares political choice to the need to think a few moves ahead in a chess game. The chess metaphor has a cohesive force because it holds together the basic idea of the image. Considering the image, alongside the chess metaphor, one can observe several allusions to the statements, political beliefs and public image of the politicians depicted. The fact

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[1] Conceptual metaphor represents interaction of two cognitive domains: the source domain and the target domain. The target domain is structured similarly to the source domain, therefore metaphorical mappings are established between them.

[2] **Agon** – rivalry, competition (Greek).

Figure 1. To the Elections [Šļūka 2010a, Šļūka 2010b].

that Tatjana Ždanoka is playing with chess pieces imitating the Moscow Kremlin points to the politician's views aligned with Russia's political position towards Latvia: Kremlin is a visual metonymy[1] for Moscow's policy in Russia, while the cap placed next to her is very reminiscent of the former Moscow mayor. Augusts Brigmanis is holding a mask of Aivars Lembergs at the chess board, a metonymic reference to the notoriously corrupt mayor of Ventspils as the true leader of the party and the game. The game of Jānis Urbanovičs is characterised by his threat to repeat the events in

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[1] Metonymy is a stylistic pattern operating within one conceptual domain (a semantically connected domain of experience) on the contiguity principle. In metonymy, one entity stands for another entity; for instance, A PART STANDS FOR A WHOLE (An FBI official says, "We need **eyes** everywhere"*:* eyes ⇨ people, police force) or A WHOLE STANDS FOR A PART (A sports commentator says, "**England** has won the World Cup": England ⇨ England national football team). All capital letters indicate conceptual metonymy as a structure in one's mind.

Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, in Latvia, if he is not taken into account as a partner in the game. This is a metonymic allusion to the events in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. Raivis Dzintars participates in the game only with horses, "young foals", as he calls them, recalling the protest action of half-naked young people in front of the *Saeima* (Latvian Parliament) building, led by Dzintars. At the same time, the image of Ainārs Šlesers, one of the corrupt oligarchs (grabbing the money from the state as a corrupt minister or here: clutching all the chess pieces to himself), is accompanied by the pre-election slogan "Be Hard". The political move of then Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis was coordinated with the International Monetary Fund, which can be seen as part of the chosen course of action and dependent on the decisions of the International Monetary Fund and other European institutions. Although the image is based on a visual pun[1], the image as a whole, forms a web of figurative strands[2] based on the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS A CHESS GAME and its subordinate conceptual metonymy A PART FOR A WHOLE.

Describing such complicated images, Naciscione has stated that "*Metaphor is not alone in figurative meaning construction. Apart from metonymy, extended metaphor may incorporate other figurative modes (pun, allusion, personification, euphemism, hyperbole, irony), forming figurative networks and representing a process and a result of human thought and a conceptualisation of experience*" [Naciscione 2016: 241].

In 2024, the same conceptualisations of thinking a few moves ahead in a chess game can be observed as Latvia faces elections for the European Parliament.

Given that **Agon's** metaphors are systematic, the metaphor generates the following series of mappings (Table 1):

Table 1[3]

Mappings of Agon's metaphor.

Source	Target
sports	a person in a particular life situation
the athletes	the rivals
a sports game	a real-life situation
the way the athlete/participant plays	human behaviour during life
the rules of the game	the laws that must be followed
the end of a game	the result of a specific action

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[1] Pun is a foregrounded lexical ambiguity [Leech 1969]. Puns are usually created when a polysemous word is used to suggest two or more meanings (commonly literal vs figurative) or the use of homonyms [Wales 2011: 349]. In this cartoon, the effect of a pun is achieved via the literal meaning in visual semiotic mode and figurative meaning in verbal semiotic mode.

[2] For the use of this term, see Naciscione [2010: 162, 254].

[3] The tables have been created by the authors of the article unless indicated differently.

The choice of the **Agon** metaphors is not random but motivated by a deep-rooted tradition of competition that indicates diachronicity and sustainability.

Caillois names **Alea**[1] as another type of game, the outcome of which cannot be predicted because it is determined by chance and luck rather than by the individual's ability [Caillois 2001: 17]. There are several forms of gambling – card games, roulette, dice, betting, etc. Gambling, which can be found practically all over the world, has a long history and tradition, which is undoubtedly reflected in its linguistic and visual manifestations. In addition to linguists, the phenomenon of gambling is also studied by medical scientists, sociologists and psychologists since this type of gambling influences individual health, thinking and behaviour, as well as the values prevailing in society. Gambling has a fundamental place in people's lives, as evidenced not only by the rich array of positively charged emotions (the desire to win, gambling zeal, the joy of taking risks, the joy of winning, the sorrow of losing, disappointment, etc.) but also by morbid manifestations such as panicky fear of losing, pathological gambling cravings and gambling addiction. This type of game is a convenient tool for metaphorical comparisons involving other different life experiences.

The range of these situations is so broad as to allow conceptualisation. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS GAMBLING was identified by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. In the discourse of cognitive linguistics, this conceptual metaphor is construed via mapping an abstract domain onto a concrete domain. Scholars argue that this metaphor is based on an experiential comparison [Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003: 51]. An example from a Latvian media text mentions political poker:

"*Vēsture zina daudz šādu politisku blefu. Vai valdošās koalīcijas politiķi ir sākuši mācīties spēlēt politisko pokeru?*[2]" [Burvis 2010.].

The example concerns a political act described as a poker game in which one of the techniques is to deceive or mislead the opponent. Politicians are compared to card players, and politics itself is compared to a card game.

The next image further highlights the presence of the metaphor of **Alea's** game category. At important and decisive moments, the decision is entrusted to the wheel of fortune, to mere chance (Figure 2).

Cartoonist Ēriks Ošs, in his cartoon "A Wheel of Fortune", depicts the voter's choice in the extraordinary elections on 17 September 2011, representing it as a gambling game. The verbal text reads, "Well, what shall we vote for?"

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[1] **Alea** is Latin for dice, risk, and gamble.

[2] History is full of such political bluffs. Have the politicians in the ruling coalition started to learn how to play political poker?

Figure 2. A Wheel of Fortune [Ošs 2011b].

The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS GAMBLING usually presents a series of mappings that include all the qualities that characterise gambling and the nature of gamblers (Table 2):

Table 2
Mappings of LIFE IS GAMBLING metaphor.

Source	Target
players	the people in different situations
the way the player plays or reacts during the game	human behaviour during life
the games	certain game-like situations
the rules of the game	societal norms and laws
a move	a decision in a specific situation
the game outcome – win or lose	the result of a particular situation

Caillois's classification indicates that games are not only competitive and exciting but also illusory. This is what he calls **mimicry**[1]. Caillois includes in this category all the elements that are characteristic of theatre, such as the portrayal of certain roles and choosing the most comfortable model of behaviour or a role model [Caillois 2001: 19–23]. Given that the principles of theatrical play are rooted in culture, its

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[1] **Mimicry** – imitation.

characteristics appear in metaphors that reflect the understanding of life. They can be seen as potentially universal metaphors since a tradition of stage and imitation exists in many cultures, and their principles have been compared to different situations in life.

In cognitive linguistics, PLAY has been put forward as a source domain that includes a whole range of knowledge. It has been most extensively studied by Kövecses, who discusses the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PLAY, common in American culture, pointing out that this metaphor best describes American thinking [Kövecses 2005: 185–186]. However, given the history of theatre and the widespread use of the metaphor, there is a reason to believe that it is representative of many cultures. Every day people are in the public space, and in order to comprehend it, it is metaphorically perceived as a stage, while the actions people take and the postures they assume, are similar to the roles played on this stage. Kövecses has developed a series of mappings that reflect the essence of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PLAY (Table 3):

Table 3

Mappings of LIFE IS A PLAY metaphor[1].

Source	Target
an actor	a person
the actors	the people with whom the person interacts
the actor's manner of acting	human behaviour
characters	the roles in life

These mappings show that for conceptual metaphors based on the source domains GAME/PLAY, the target domain is LIFE and its derivatives, such as public, social, political, economic, and private life. In the press, political commentators often use metaphors to describe what is going on, clearly indicating the presence of key elements of theatre – imagery, role-playing and what is going on behind the scenes.

The image "Changing the Protagonist" illustrates the metaphor of THEATRE PERFORMANCE, which accurately describes politics (Figure 3).

It can be assumed that the public is the spectators, metonymically represented by the rows of chairs (a chair ⇨ a spectator occupying the chair); the presidential candidate, Valdis Zatlers, who hopes to be elected for a second presidential term, has come on stage. The stagehands are backstage, one of whom is Brigmanis of the ZZS (the Latvian Farmers' Union) party. They have prepared a pit into which the

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[1] This table is based on LIFE IS A PLAY mappings recorded by Kövecses [see Kövecses 2005: 185–186].
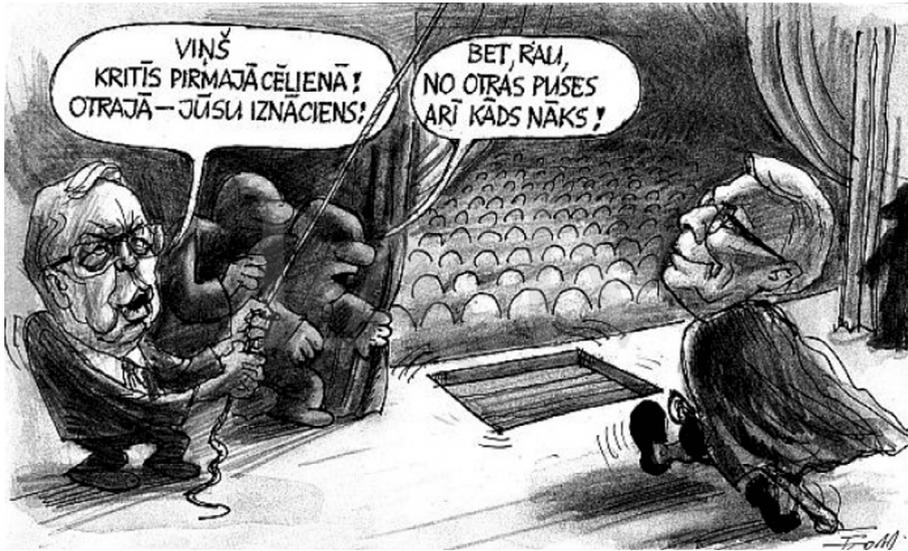
Figure 3. Changing the Protagonist [Ošs 2011a].

protagonist will fall. Metaphorically, they wish to eliminate their political opponent as they have their own presidential candidate. Brigmanis says, "He will fall in the next act! Your entrance!" The stagehands comment, "But, look, someone is coming from the other side, too!" The appearance of new political opponents can be unpredictable.

Caillois's classification of the game systematises knowledge and experience and divides the source domain PLAY into three subgroups – **Agon, Alea** and **Mimicry** (Table 4).

Table 4
PLAY is Agon, Alea and Mimicry.

Target	Source
LIFE	PLAY
PUBLIC	
POLITICS	
ECONOMICS	Agon Alea Mimicry

The target and source domains attest to the sustainability of the metaphorical thought of PLAY that is present in the Latvian language and thought. The metaphorical idea of PLAY is expressed by various metaphors, which can differ considerably in their

visual and linguistic manifestations. Cartoons usually employ visual representations and verbal texts. Anita Naciscione discusses the sustainability of figurative thought brought about by visual and verbal interaction: "*Visual representation is a non-verbal mode of expression perceivable by sight. (..) Visual expression of text usually goes together with the verbal. In visual representation, the process of creating a mental picture in one's mind relies on close ties between the visual and the verbal, and knowledge of the political, socio-cultural, and semiotic implications. Visual representation creates new meaning, stretches our imagination, and sustains figurative thought*" [Naciscione 2010: 175].

Knowledge of the metaphorical nature of abstract concepts helps uncover different socio-cultural patterns and explore in depth the value systems that shape these patterns. Two domains of experience are compared; the source domain concerns experiences related to the play experience.

Conclusion

This article has explored the intricate connection between verbal and visual conceptual metaphor representations in Latvian political cartoons, focusing on the metaphor of PLAY through the categories of Agon, Alea, and Mimicry proposed by Caillois. By examining political cartoons, this article aimed to identify the conceptual mappings of the PLAY metaphor and demonstrate the sustainability of figurative thought in the Latvian language and thought.

Each conceptual metaphor is based on one type of game as a source domain, and life, politics, and economics as a target domain form a separate group of conceptual mappings. Target domains and source domains testify to the sustainability and salience of the metaphorical thought of PLAY. The knowledge about PLAY is deeply rooted, and the metaphorical thought of PLAY is conveyed by various metaphors that may have visually and linguistically distinctive expressions. The analysed examples highlight how the idea of play is consistently represented through metaphors.

Political cartoons use satire to critique politicians, making them relevant to current political and social issues. By examining these cartoons, the article emphasises how PLAY metaphors are used to critique political figures, underlining their importance in Latvian visual and verbal discourse. The analysed cartoons demonstrate that the metaphor of PLAY is a significant part of the Latvian language and thought expressed through a variety of visual and verbal elements.

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