CULTURE
CROSSROADS

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

The team of the Culture Crossroads authors, reviewers and advisors proudly presents the latest, 17th volume of the international peer-reviewed journal *Culture Crossroads,* which as always offers topical commentary on the linkages and impacts of cultural, artistic and creative processes in national economy, politics and social life.

While the previous volume found its readers and authors trying to adjust to the unprecedented situation of the global pandemic and addressing the crucial human resource of creativity, in this volume we are already a year and a half into the unthinkable, and starting to analyse it.

The papers in the volume present a diverse and heterogeneous body of work falling into roughly three thematic strands: identity and its contestations, decision-making and creation of solutions based on various kinds of data (even fake ones) and processes. Finally, the third strand addresses the challenges and achievements of cultural and arts education, continuously working to keep a constant supply of professionals and amateurs in the cultural sphere.

However, when reflecting on the three sub-sets of themes in the current volume, one cannot avoid thinking about a common theme, which is implicitly present – that of human agency. One feels it both in the articles on amateur art and a notable artist transforming his creative domain, both on new kinds of decisions in the lives of cultural institutions afforded by open data and the efforts to define the Latvianness of exile art. In short, this volume is about the human spirit and its manifold manifestations.

On the level of individual papers, each of the authors in this volume has addressed a unique and noteworthy dimension of cultural, artistic or creative life of individuals and institutions.

Baiba Tjarve, Agnese Hermane, the authors of the first paper "Institutionalisation of Amateur Arts in Latvia: Involvement of Amateur Artists in Decision-Making Process" bring the readers into the domain of amateur art and explore the gaps in the communication and decision-making process between amateur artists, artistic leaders of the amateur art groups and institutionalised decision-making bodies.

Ilona Asare follows with examination of a relatively new phenomenon of co-creation in public governance in her paper "Co-Creation as a Means of Citizen

Engagement in Local Cultural Policy Making". The paper sets to identify the purpose and possible gains of applying the co-creation approach in local cultural policy making.

The paper by **Lolita Ozoliņa** "The Studies of Tangible and Intangible Aspects of Place Brand Identity" takes a comprehensive view of the content of brand identities of Latvian cities and regions, providing a critical view of the current practices of key stakeholders.

Sandis Voldiņš in his paper "Covid-19 and Data: Crisis Mitigation Tools" explores the new avenues for decision making by cultural institutions afforded by the largely unused open data, arguing that these kinds of data have a potential in alleviating the consequences of the crisis (declines in audience numbers and hence revenues, etc.).

The paper by **Sarma Freiberga** "Accessibility of Cultural Education in its Broadest Sense for People with Disabilities in Latvia" advocates for a more inclusive view at cultural participation and thus cultural education. The author strives to emphasize that participation in cultural activities has to be perceived as cultural education in a broader sense, as the participation process brings new cultural knowledge to people.

The volume presents an unusual collective paper by the academic advisor and her students, namely **Iveta Ķešāne, Ketrisa Petkeviča, Ieva Elizabete Ērgle, Nadīna Medne, Elīza Aizpore, Kristīne Šmiukše, Asnāte Kalēja**, "Cooperation Between Artists and Researchers in Producing the Theatre Performance "Fake News" and Why We Share Fake News". This is a many-level examination and reflection on the creative processes and the phenomenon of fake news posting as facilitated by various emotions.

The paper by **Uģis Nastevičs**, "The Image of Latvia and Latvians on Japanese Twitter: Reflections on People" invites the reader to see themselves through the eyes of Japanese people visiting Latvia. The paper makes use of digital humanities methodology.

Māra Simons presents to readers her paper "Problems in the Definition of Diaspora in the Context of Latvia's Diaspora Law" which identifies two approaches to defining diaspora and discusses their consequences, telling a distinctive story of Latvia as a country between the past and the future.

The next contribution to the volume, **by Agnija Lesničenoka** entitled "The Role and Identity of Latvian Exile Art in United States of America: Example of The Student Fraternity "Dzintarzeme" of The Art Academy of Latvia" addresses the efforts to preserve and popularize Latvian national art in the USA until 1973, asking deeply probing questions, including the issue of what Latvianness of art consists of.

And last but not least the volume includes the paper by **Rita Ļegčiļina-Broka**, "Origin of Landscape in Latvian Textile Art. Rūdolfs Heimrāts's School", which offers insight into the work and school created by a uniquely significant figure in Latvia's textile art.

Taken in their entirety, these papers present a broad scene of cultural and artistic processes, each aspect highlighting a significant facet of human agency in the sphere of culture. The Latvian Academy of Culture extends sincere gratitude to all the authors who have engaged in revisions during this challenging time in order to complete this collection. May each of the papers find their committed and enthusiastic readers, and serve as encouragement for further research on the issues presented in the volume.

Ilona Kunda
Deputy Editor-in-chief

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF AMATEUR ARTS IN LATVIA: INVOLVEMENT OF AMATEUR ARTISTS IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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Abstract

There are 69.6 thousand amateur artists in Latvia (3.5% of the population) who take part in various amateur arts groups. Majority of these amateurs sustain the tradition of the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration, a phenomenon which has been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Even though in many countries amateur arts groups are self-governed, in Latvia the process has been institutionalised, mainly due to the organisation of the amateur arts sector during the Soviet period. Groups do not usually operate as civic associations, but are affiliated to municipal cultural centres. Both local and national authorities have a decisive role in the process. The study aims to identify gaps in the communication and decision-making process between amateur artists, artistic leaders of the amateur art groups and institutionalised decision-making bodies. Quantitative and qualitative data have been collected to analyse the governance of the Celebration and to identify the forms of amateur involvement.

Keywords*: amateur arts, participation in arts, Song and Dance Celebration, governance, institutionalisation, decision-making.*

Introduction

The Song and Dance Celebration is the most characteristic cultural tradition of Latvia included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. It is a cultural expression, which in historical perspective has served as a vital tool in the nation-building process celebrating cultural identity. Today the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebration is a continuous process, a

social practice and a system of numerous events [Tradition and Symbolism of the Song and Dance Celebration 2010]. It is a large wide-ranging amateur arts event focusing mainly on amateur *a cappella* choral singing and dance group performances. It has taken place every 5 years since 1873 (with some exceptions), so the last celebration was organised in July 2018 when Latvia celebrated its centenary. It is important to add that this tradition is characteristic for all the three Baltic countries – celebrations take place also in Estonia and Lithuania (similar festivals on a smaller scale are organised also in the Nordic countries). Although the tradition is unique for all the three Baltic States, we have established that there exist quite remarkable differences between the manifestations of the tradition in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

To characterize the scale of this phenomenon in Latvia, here are some data about the last celebration that took place in 2018: in total 43,219 participants took part in the celebration which forms approximately 2% of the total population of Latvia. The Song and Dance Celebration could be called a festival, but for its size and significance, it is designated a nationwide celebration. Vast majority of society, including arts groups in diaspora is involved in the preservation of this tradition at various levels and through various forms of participation. It involves a considerable part of community as voluntary practitioners of song and dance who participate in amateur choirs and amateur dance groups between the events. We are particularly interested in the amateur arts process in general, as the precondition for safeguarding the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebration is amateur arts groups that are active in-between the celebrations.

The tradition of the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia is sustained mainly by amateur artists. Part of them perform a repertoire, which is shared by all the groups wishing to participate in the celebration. They also take part in the competitions that assess the artistic quality of the groups on a regular basis. There are almost 2000 amateur arts groups involved in the process of the celebration. (See Table 1.)

In the article, the authors will focus on those amateur arts groups which perform a shared repertoire (choirs, dance groups, brass bands, *kokle* ensembles). They constitute the largest part of the groups involved in the process of the Song and Dance Celebration.

The study aims to identify communication flows between amateur artists and institutionalised decision-making bodies and the involvement of amateur artists in the decision-making process. The specific objectives are as follows: (1) to identify the procedures how amateurs are involved in the decision-making process and governance of the celebration; (2) to identify strengths and weaknesses of their involvement according to the opinion of the stakeholders; (3) to develop recommendations for the future to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the tradition.

Table 1. Amateur arts groups involved in the process of the Song and Dance Celebration, 2018

Group type	Number of groups	Type of participation
Folk crafts and applied art groups	112	Participate in the Song and Dance Celebration with their own repertoire; take part in various events during the celebration.
Folklore ensembles and ethnographic ensembles	145	
Amateur theatres	53	
Vocal ensembles	28	
Folk music chapels	45	
Ensembles representing ethnic minorities	80	
Choirs	427	Preparing shared repertoire in each of the fields that is collectively performed at special events during the Song and Dance Celebration. During the interim period between the celebrations, the groups in each field are divided in districts. Recurrent common rehearsals are organized at local or regional level. Each district is supervised by a chief leader (professional artist from the field), who is employed by the Latvian National Centre for Culture. Each district has also a coordinator at municipal level.
Dance groups	876	
Brass orchestras	66	
Kokle* ensembles (*Latvian type of zither)	66	
Total number	**1898**	(average number of participants per group 23 persons)

Source: Latvian National Centre for Culture, 2018.

Bottom-up participation is significant, as it is the essence of the amateur arts process and the basis of individual motivation for participation in culture. Even though in many countries amateur arts groups are self-governed, in Latvia the process is rather institutionalised, mainly due to the organisation of the amateur arts sector during the Soviet period [Daugavietis 2015]. Groups do not usually operate as civic associations, but are affiliated to municipality run cultural centres. Moreover, the whole process of the celebration is institutionalised because of the complicated organisational process and involvement of different stakeholders, such as large numbers of amateur artists, professional artists and local authorities. Both local and national authorities have a decisive role in the process.

The study centres around several key notions – the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia, amateur arts, governance and institutionalisation of the amateur arts sector, participation of amateurs in the decision-making process.

Theoretical framework and key terms

In the following section the authors will provide a concise description of these phenomena. Some of these issues are understudied, therefore they offer a great potential for developing an analysis which is beyond the scope of this article.

Amateur arts and amateur artists

Amateur arts for the most part concern individual benefits and satisfaction. It is considered that amateur artists perform or produce mainly for their own satisfaction and quite often that of other members of the local community, while making their living some other way [Elkington and Stebbins 2014]. In general terms, this definition corresponds to the amateur artists in Latvia. Following the concept of serious leisure introduced by the sociologist Robert A. Stebbins, one could also say that amateur artists involved in the celebration movement through singing in choirs or performing in dance groups are engaged in serious leisure activities, which means "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting and fulfilling for the participant to find a (leisure) career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience" [Elkington and Stebbins 2014: 4]. To acquire the repertory of the Song and Dance Celebration, it is necessary to undergo regular and devoted training 1–3 times per week, which demands time, energy and money from participants that according to our and other researchers' [Tjarve, Zemite, Freiberga 2017] observations are above the typical investment in amateur arts.

In this article, the authors understand amateur arts as a performing arts-based activity undertaken by formal groups that work on a regular basis to achieve high artistic standards and constitute the process of the Latvian Song and Dance Celebration. Although the word "amateur" may have connotations of being less "professional", in this study the authors deal with highly skilled amateur arts groups committed to achieving high-level results, as their quality is monitored on a regular basis. Sociologist R. A. Stebbins, who has devoted numerous books to the topic of amateurs, also stresses that amateurs often are oriented on high standards and excellence [Stebbins 1992]. Moreover, the key stakeholders in the development of the Song and Dance Celebration are artistic leaders of amateur arts groups who have professional qualification acquired in formal or vocational training courses and chief leaders – group of highly professional artist from the field, who are employed by the Latvian National Centre for Culture and who supervise the creative process of the celebration.

Governance and institutionalisation of the amateur arts sector

Hobbyist activities are usually performed on individual level and most often they are organised by the private sector or individually. However, the governance of the amateur arts activities related to the Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia is

different. Possibly, one of the reasons is that collective forms of amateur arts activities require a particular model of organisation. Traditionally amateur arts are a community driven process, including community sharing and individual contributions. Yet in Latvia, the vast majority of amateur arts groups are affiliated to municipality-run cultural centres and financially subsidized by public authorities [Tjarve, Zemite and Freiberga 2017].

As regards the governance of the amateur arts sector, at present it is mainly management and governing of civil society organisations or non-governmental organisations, also called the third sector, that have been studied. However, little of that knowledge relates to the community arts sector [Ramsden et al. 2011]. Moreover, little information can be found about institutionalisation of the amateur arts sector. M. D'Angelo in his book "Cultural Policies in Europe: Local Issues" suggests that institutionalisation of people's voluntary cultural activities in Finland has led to profound transformations in the amateur arts sector which has "become part and parcel of the merit ("free-of-charge") public goods system organised financially and administratively along the state/municipal axis" [D'Angelo 2000: 110]. It applies also to the amateur arts process in Latvia, which is largely institutionalised and has become part of the public service. Leisure time activities are also asserted as a public service on a policy level. The main cultural policy document defines the minimum basket of cultural services, setting a task for each municipality to offer leisure time activities and provide access to the process of the Song and Dance Celebration by maintaining cultural centres [LR Kultūras ministrija 2006].

Participation of amateurs in the decision-making process

Arts participation may vary depending on whether it is individual or collective, active or passive [Laķe, Muktupāvela 2017]. There are also various types and levels of participation. Participation patterns can differ, but the importance of involvement in decision-making is widely supported both in management and cultural policy literature. This study focuses on the process of the celebration which can be perceived as part of the public sector (as stated before, majority of collective amateur groups are affiliated to municipal cultural centres and to a great extent funded by municipalities). Therefore, the authors will take a closer look at decision making in the public sector and particularly at the involvement of citizens.

In general, there is an immense amount of literature on the role of civic engagement in the public sector governance, especially concerning different aspects beyond the scope of this article. New public management (or NPM, introduced by Hood 1991) has helped to improve the performance of local and national government in numerous countries over the last decades. However, the critics of NPM argue that NPM efforts have mainly focused on efficiency and effectiveness neglecting

other democratic values. The debate of creating public value has been unfolding over the recent years [see, for example, Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg 2013]. As an international leader in public participation, the International Association of Public Participation Practitioners has developed the "IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation" for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes (IAP2 Core Values n.d.). These principles include the right of the public to be involved in the decision-making process in a meaningful way and the right to be informed about the ways to participate, as well as about the results of their participation in decision making.

While there exists a critique of reducing the role of citizens and excluding them from policy making and administration, it has been argued that participation may not only slow down decision- making processes, it may actually lead to complete inaction. It has been proposed in some cases to leave decision-making to the experts who know all the technical details and political realities and can do the job more quickly [Involve 2005]. Expert-led democracy is the prevailing model in the case of the celebration in Latvia as well. However, with the changes in society and also with the increasing role of new communication tools, such as social media, the existing expert-led governance model is called into question.

The Song and Dance Celebration depends on amateur participation. Moreover, the celebration is a phenomenon of active collective participation. It demands long-term participation, investment of time, energy and money. The involvement in decision-making and management processes is a re-motivational factor upholding the interest in maintaining active collective participation.

The governance process and participation in the decision-making process of the celebration in Latvia is an understudied issue. Some aspects have been discussed in the studies carried out a decade ago: "Song and Dance Celebration and Changing Social Environment" [Tīsenkopfs 2008] and "Song and Dance Celebration in Changing Economic Environment" [Počs 2008]. Yet there exists no in-depth analysis of the management process of this ambitious multidisciplinary mega-event and process.

Methodology

The present article takes a closer look at the governance of the Song and Dance Celebration process and particularly the decision-making process as one of the factors that may influence sustainability of the tradition. The authors presume that participation of amateurs in the decision-making process is a significant factor to ensure the development and safeguarding of the tradition of the celebration in a long term. The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is sufficient involvement of amateur artists in the decision-making process related to the Song and Dance Celebration in Latvia.

In this study the authors have used a mixed research strategy that includes qualitative feasibility study and quantitative data collection, as well as the analysis of legislative regulations and documents. The electronic survey of participants took place after the celebration in 2013 and included 1504 respondents who were selected using the sample quoting approach. Also, two electronic surveys of the leaders of amateur arts group took place. The first survey was performed in 2013 with 574 respondents. The second survey took place at the beginning of 2017 and had 251 respondents. 20 semi-structured interviews with chief leaders and chief conductors, 7 interviews with the employees of the Latvian National Centre for Culture and also the Ministry of Culture of Latvia took place in 2017.

Results

At the beginning of this section, the authors will shortly present the analysis of documents to provide characteristics of the involvement of amateur artists in the decision-making process of the Song and Dance Celebration. After that the authors will present research data that help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their involvement in the decision-making process and governance, and to identify gaps in communication and the decision-making process between amateur artists and institutionalised decision-making bodies.

Involvement of amateurs in the decision-making process

In the context of this study three main stakeholder groups involved in the decision-making process are identified: (1) amateurs (approx. 43,000 members of various amateur arts groups), (2) artistic leaders of amateur arts groups (approx. 1400 professional artists and 63 chief leaders of choirs, orchestras, dance groups and *kokle* ensembles), and (3) organisers (team of the Latvian National Centre for Culture – about 10 employees who are directly involved in the management process of the celebration).

The legislative framework has been set to regulate the process of celebration. Matters related to the safeguarding and development of the tradition in Latvia are governed by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law [Saeima 2016], the Song and Dance Celebration Law [Saeima 2005]; moreover, in 2005 Latvia joined the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage [Saeima 2006]. The first two laws have direct provisions for the organisation of the celebration and the process that takes place between the festivals. Concrete tasks are set for the state and municipal institutions, while the amateur arts community has been mentioned as a tradition carrier. So, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law defines the participation of communities in the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, suggesting that "the community cares for ensuring the sustainability

of its intangible cultural heritage, and it also participates in legal, technical, organisational, administrative and financial measures implemented by the State administrative institutions, including local government institutions" (section 8). The amateurs are planned to have a more well-defined role in the capacity of the advisory board members. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Law defines the purpose and composition of the Council of Intangible Cultural Heritage, where among 14 members there are five representatives of non-governmental organisations which are related to the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and operate in the four regions of Latvia – Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme, Zemgale – and the capital city Riga, invited by the Minister of Culture (section 11). While the Song and Dance Celebration Law describes the composition of the Council of the celebration for the supervision of the safeguarding and development of the Song and Dance Celebration Tradition, where out of 19 members 11 persons may represent amateurs to some extent (section 8 suggests that the Council involves two representatives of the choral sector, two representatives of the folk dance sector, representatives of the brass band sector, the folk applied arts sector, the folk music sector, the traditional culture sector, the professional music, and the representatives of local government culture centres and non-governmental organisations). The members of the Council can be nominated by non-governmental organisations that work in such fields as choir, dance, brass band, crafts, folk music, traditional culture, professional music and cultural centres and have the competency to nominate representatives from the field. In addition to this, the Song and Dance Celebration Law envisages that the Council establishes the Artistic Council of the celebration that is responsible for creative and artistic decisions. There are 11 members in the Artistic Council – two representatives of choirs, two representatives of dance groups, one brass band representative, one representative from the field of crafts and applied arts, one from folk music, one from the field of professional music, one from municipalities, and one representative from the non-governmental sector.

There are also two mid-term planning documents that define the developments in the field. The Plan for the Safeguarding and Development of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2014–2020 [LR Kultūras ministrija 2015] is a national level medium-term development planning document, which determines national targets for ensuring the sustainability of the intangible cultural heritage for a period of seven years by prescribing legal, administrative and organisational measures, as well as their financial resources. The Plan for the Safeguarding and Development of the Song and Dance Celebration Tradition 2016–2018 [LR Ministru kabinets 2016] ensures a cyclic occurrence of the celebration and a timely preparation process thereof. It does not provide a detailed analysis of the governance. It is stated that safeguarding of the tradition can take place only through cooperation between state, municipal

institutions and the non-governmental sector. There are no detailed descriptions or analysis of the involvement of the amateurs and artistic leaders in the governance or in decision-making. Among other sustainability factors of the tradition the Plan mentions a need to develop a well-functioning model of governance, including cooperation between the public institutions, non-governmental sector and community.

To ensure participation of the society and experts in the decision-making process concerning the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage, the Song and Dance Celebration tradition, the development of the folk art and the education in culture and creative industries, 10 advisory boards have been established at the Latvian National Centre for Culture. Each Board has its own regulation that defines the work and procedures of the Board. Representatives of educational institutions, state institutions, the non-governmental sector and leaders of amateur arts groups can be nominated for board membership. At the same time, the non-governmental sector which is a key stakeholder that could represent amateur artists on advisory boards is not well developed. There are a few associations representing certain sectors of amateur arts, however, they carry out few activities and have a limited administrative and financial capacity.

To conclude, participation of amateurs and artistic leaders in the governance and decision-making process related to the Song and Dance Celebration is described in detail neither in the legislation, nor in mid-term policy documents. The role of community (amateurs) is acknowledged in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law. In the legislative and administrative documents related to the celebration, the role of the non-governmental sector is stressed. For the most part, community participation in decision making can take place indirectly, through representatives of non-governmental institutions or leaders of amateur arts groups sitting on the advisory councils or boards. On the whole, the public institutions (both at national and municipal levels) have a decisive role in the governance of the celebration. In decision making, the expert-led model prevails. Meanwhile, communication mechanisms with the community are not regulated and clearly described.

In the following sub-section, the authors will present the results of the empirical research: surveys and interviews. The task is to understand the opinion of the stakeholders about the involvement of the amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process, and to find out strengths and weaknesses of the existing model where mainly experts are involved in the decision-making process.

Involvement of amateurs in the decision-making process

Since the Song and Dance Celebration Law does not define the direct role of amateurs in the decision-making process, their expectations and understanding of

possible instruments and opportunities to influence decision-making are not always apparent. Data show that motivation for participation in amateur arts groups differs. 47% of respondents admit they want to express their artistic skills and creativity, 41% – to socialize with people with similar interests. The wish to participate in the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration is one of the dominant reasons for many members of amateur arts groups (36%). One of the reasons mentioned is also participation in collective activities (29%), which includes communication and decision making to ensure integration in the group (see Figure 1).
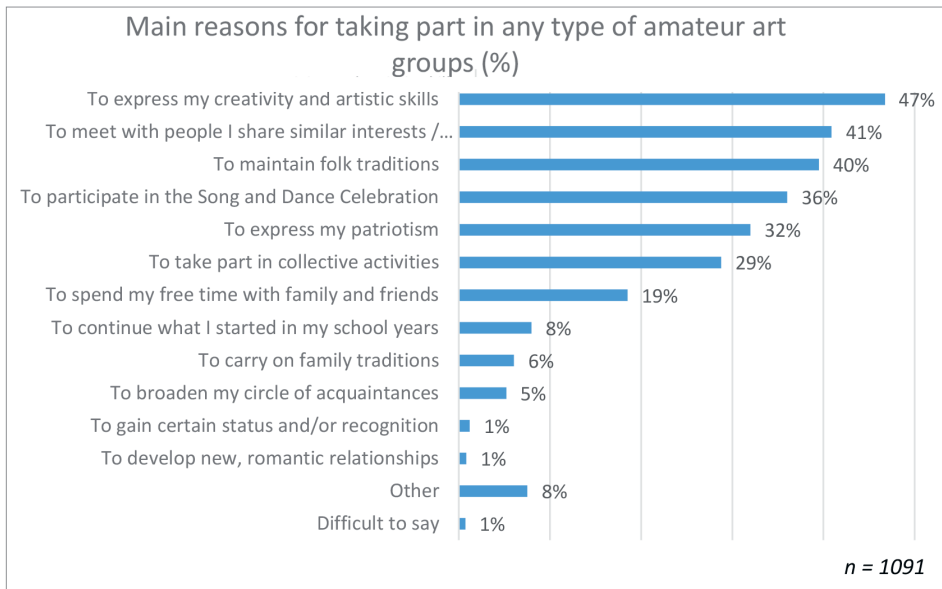
Source: Survey of the Song and Dance Celebration Participants, 2014.

Figure 1. Reasons for taking part in amateur arts groups.

Obviously, motivation mainly relates to individual benefits. In addition to this, the survey data manifestly demonstrate that amateurs do not feel capable of changing or influencing the decision-making process related to the questions that are vital in the context of the celebration. Figure 2 presents the opinion of amateurs about their capacity to influence different decisions. The majority of respondents (83%–90%) indicates that they have no possibilities to influence either the selection of groups taking part in the celebration, or the programming, the selection of chief conductors, the choice of repertoire, and the selection of venues and time of the main events of the celebration (see Figure 2).

Meanwhile, it is important to take into account the fact that huge numbers of amateur artists are involved in the process of the Song and Dance Celebration. Therefore, the organisers of the process emphasize that it is impossible to receive
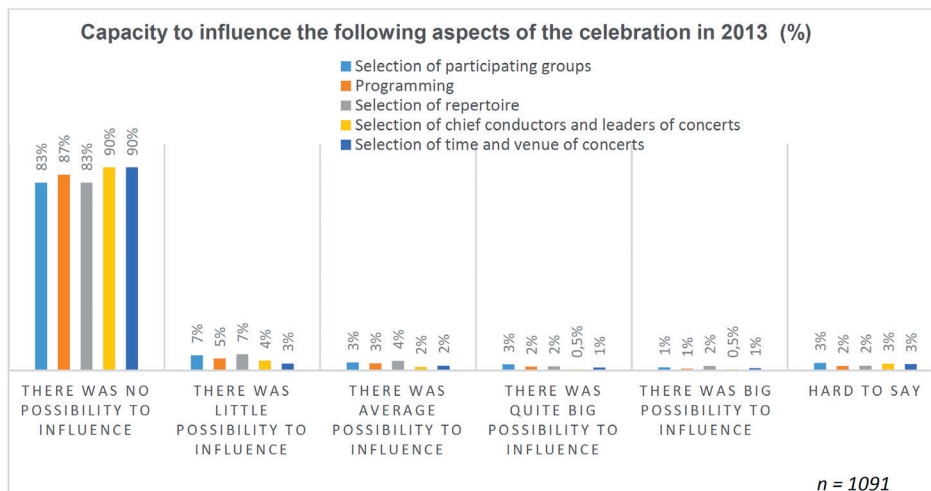
Source: Survey of the Song and Dance Celebration Participants, 2014.

Figure 2. Capacity to influence different aspects of the Song and Dance
Celebration in 2013.

feedback from several tens of thousands of participants, or to respect such a variety of
opinions. It may endanger the basic idea of the celebration. During the semi-structured
interviews, the organisers underline that there is a strong legislative setting that imposes
an obligation to safeguard the celebration and the tradition. One of the employees of
the Latvian National Centre for Culture in the interview admits that sometimes there
is a wrong perception of the term "responsibility" and of the role of the state.

> *There have been several attempts to establish choir associations, various non-
> governmental organisations to take over the responsibility but somehow, they haven't
> succeeded. We as a state institution have taken responsibility for the celebration,
> and people think that we are dictating the rules and we should shoulder the whole
> responsibility. In fact, this is a national movement where state only acts as a safeguard
> of the tradition* (Representative of the Latvian National Centre for Culture).

The choice of the repertoire is a question which has often been debated in
media by amateur artists. 83% of the respondents say they had no possibility to
influence the choice of the repertoire (Figure 2). The selection of the repertoire
for special events during the celebration is organised on the basis of a competition.
Artistic teams can suggest the concept of the event and it includes also the relevant
repertoire. The Council of the Song and Dance Celebration makes the decision
on the concept and accordingly also the repertoire. The discussions of the concept
selected take place also during the advisory board meetings. But still – the artistic
decisions are taken by professionals who have professional training in the field and to

some extent represent the organisers (they are either artistic directors or they are on the advisory councils). In the interviews, artistic directors or chief conductors and chief choreographers admit that there is no clear idea how to ensure participation of amateurs in the decision-making about the repertoire. Moreover, they are not sure of the need for such engagement. Chief leaders believe that an ordinary participant lacks the understanding of the artistic vision of the events, and does not understand the deeper motivation behind the choice of the repertoire.

> *I do not know whether dancers should influence the repertoire. Participants and group leaders can express their opinion through chief leaders. We meet twice a year and we have an opportunity to discuss it all. The dancers are often unhappy while learning, but if you talk to them after the final concert of the celebration, they are happy* (Chief leader, choreographer).

> *It would be interesting to ask the participants what they want to perform. If we put together the programme from what they want... I am afraid that it could be some tasteless compilation without any idea or statement* (Chief leader, choreographer).

> *For any concert there is a certain artistic vision. It seems to me that everyone who arranges concerts tries to balance between the wishes of participants and the artistic statement* (Chief leader, conductor).

> *I don't know any country where art is based on democratic principles* (Chief leader, choreographer).

Despite the fact that there are no particular regulations of amateur involvement in the decision-making process, the organisers indicate that amateurs have possibilities to be part of the decision-making process through the advisory boards of the Latvian National Centre for Culture and various surveys are carried out on a regular basis asking the opinion of participants, there are also possibilities to express their opinion in meetings, discussions and on social networks. However, the organisers have observed a very low activity in using the possibilities to impact the decision-making process.

> *Participants have the possibilities to participate and recently we have experienced some examples where the opinion of participants has impacted decisions. But generally, we have a very bad experience with that. For example, we launched an open competition on our website to apply for the advisory boards – everyone could apply – group leaders, chief leaders, participants. We were hardly able to put the boards together, there were some fields where no one had applied despite the fact there are thousands of actors in the field* (Representative of the Latvian National Centre for Culture).

My observation is that people do not pay attention, miss it all in their everyday rush, but when we arrive at the final stage, they say, why, why, I did not think that way at all. We are always on the swing and I do not want to stand on one side or the other side and say that there are bad artistic leaders or bad participants. I cannot say that. But sometimes when participants come to us with claims and say that they cannot influence anything, we have to point out that they have had the opportunity to speak (Representative of Latvian National Centre for Culture).

When we develop new documents, regulations, we try to organise regional discussions and usually we invite also group leaders and participants. They either join them or don't depending on whether it is topical for them at that moment or not (Representative of the Latvian National Centre for Culture).

Indirectly Figure 3 indicates the low interest of amateurs in taking part in the decision-making process. Questioned about the future of the celebration, more than 80% of the respondents suggest that the main responsibility for the preservation of the celebration should be taken by the state institutions – the Ministry of Culture, the Latvian National Centre for Culture, the government, the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, or the Parliament (see Figure 3). The responses to this
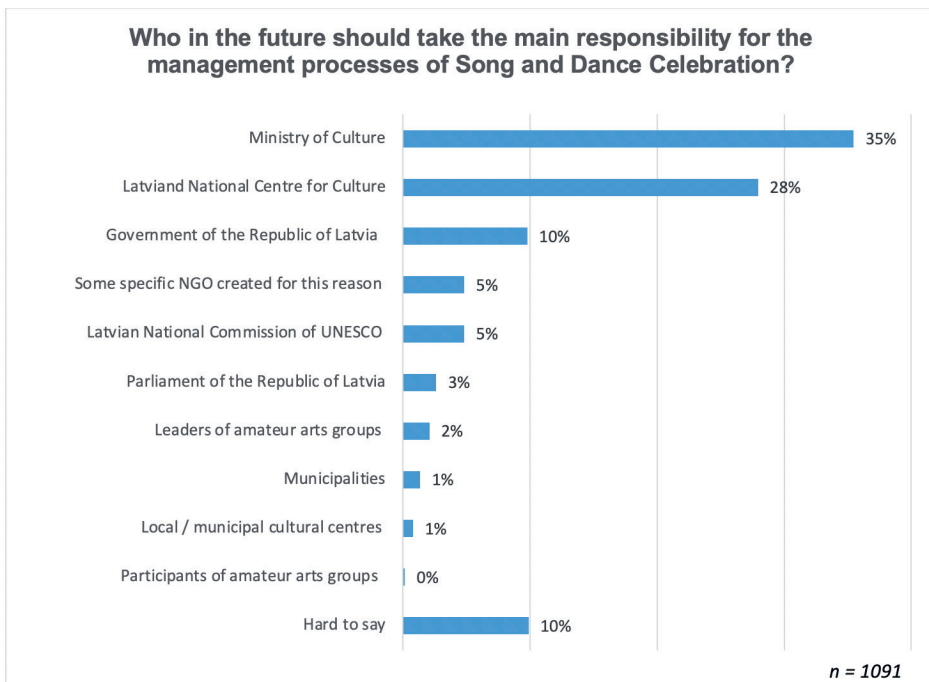
Source: Survey of the Song and Dance Celebration Participants, 2014.

Figure 3. Participants' views on the future of the Song and Dance Celebration.

question reveal that the participants are not willing to take responsibility; they prefer to rely on the decisions made by others. Moreover, they do not perceive themselves as a vital part of the future development of the celebration.

The low interest about participation in decision making may also derive from the comparatively recent experience of living in a democracy. The organisers express the opinion that participation culture is still in its development phase, since Latvia regained its independence only in 1991. Moreover, it depends very much on education and family attitude.

> *Participatory skills and desire for engagement, understanding, are largely dependent on cultural education and upbringing in the family. But, in the context of the Song and Dance celebration, it also depends on the group leaders, chief leaders and on their ability to communicate, to guide. The participation in decision making is part of cultural responsibility, which is important in the context of the preservation of the tradition in general* (Representative of the Ministry of Culture).

Involvement of artistic leaders in the decision-making process

Artistic leaders of the amateur art groups have a key role in communicating the decisions to the amateurs. Moreover, they have more opportunities to get involved in the decision-making process than an average participant of an amateur arts group. They represent their amateur arts group in different meetings and surveys at municipal and national levels, receive information on decisions, and they have a possibility to be elected to advisory councils or boards. Other participatory methods mentioned in the interviews include: voting in meetings, open discussions in the meetings, sending in written recommendations during the meetings, sending e-mails. The website of the Latvian National Centre for Culture also serves as a communication tool for disseminating information. Moreover, the Latvian National Centre for Culture organises special events for every amateur art sector to inform about the news, also offering open discussions. Summer schools and training seminars for the group leaders take place to test the repertoire.

The survey of artistic leaders lets us establish the characteristics of them – they lead on average two amateur arts groups, working with 50–60 participants. They work on average 10 hours per week with each amateur arts group. Majority of them have higher education in the field, however most of them have another full-time job as a principal occupation and the main source of income. They have a long-lasting experience participating in the process of the Song and Dance Celebration, as most of them have participated in several celebrations. Generally, the group of amateur arts group leaders feel socially recognised and appreciated despite the fact that they are dissatisfied financially. The group is quite split internally; often there is also a mutual competition because the results of their amateur arts group performance in

competitions during the preparation process for the celebration might impact the size of their salary from municipality. At the same time, they have a significant role in the preservation of the tradition through intense contact with amateur arts group participants, they are the main motivators, inspirers for participants.

The overall situation with artistic leaders' perception of their possibilities to influence decision making (see Figure 4) differs depending on the decision-making level. The average perception of the ability to influence decision making at municipal level is significantly higher than at national level, where in none of the questions the impact is perceived as significant. The decisions that are made at national level include the repertoire, evaluation criteria of review competitions and management process of the major events during the celebration. More than 60% of the artistic leaders have replied that they have no impact on these decisions; slightly more than 20% suggested that they have a small impact; less than 10% of them have affirmed that they have medium impact, while only 2% have thought that they have big impact on the repertoire selection. Considering decision making at municipal level, the responses show larger potential impact. 43% of artistic leaders think they
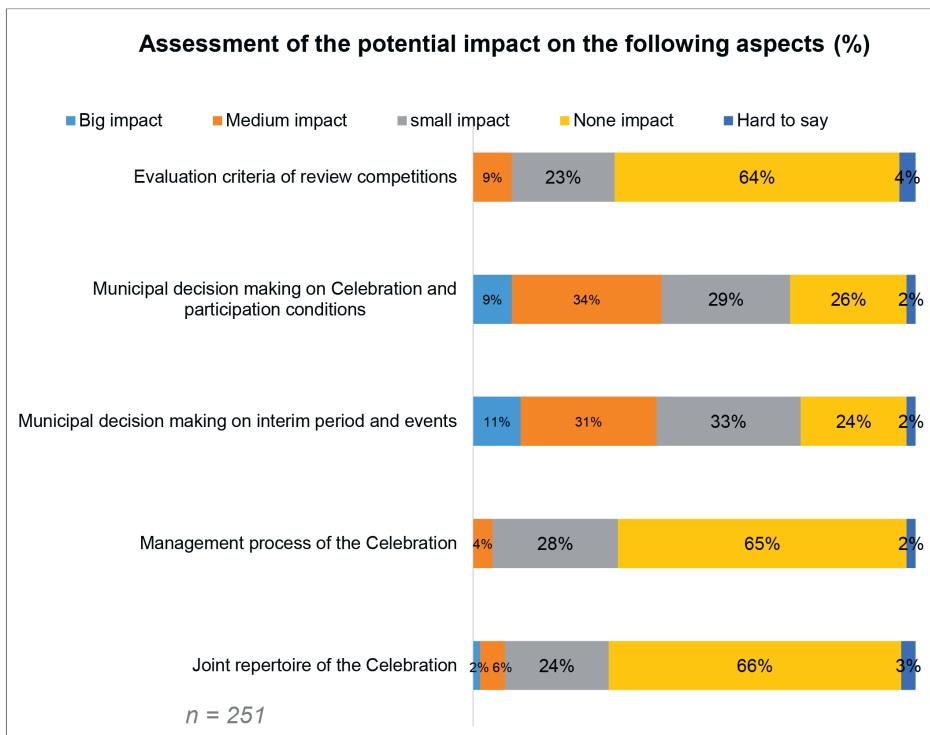
Source: Survey of the Leaders of Amateur Arts Groups 2016–2017.

Figure 4. Group leaders' assessment of their impact on specific aspects
of the celebration.

have significant or medium impact on municipal decisions on the celebration and participation conditions. 42% of the respondents consider they have significant or medium impact on the municipal decisions concerning the interim period and events between the celebrations.

The artistic leaders are key persons in communication with participants. On their willingness to involve participants in discussions, on their motivation to deliver the feedback to organisers and on their individualities depend many aspects of decision making. In the survey, the artistic leaders were asked to write down three main tasks that they perceive as the most important ones, 248 respondents replied to the question. The tasks mentioned by the respondents were categorized in 10 thematic groups (see Figure 5). Data show that respondents see the transfer of knowledge as the most important task. The preservation of Latvian cultural heritage and safeguarding of traditions is the second most significant task in the opinion of the artistic leaders.

The main tasks of the artistic leaders of amateur arts groups in the process of the celebration (%)

Task	%
To transfer the knowledge and prepare the repertoire	77%
To maintain, preserve and transfer Latvian cultural heritage and traditions (including the SDC tradition)	56%
To involve, engage, motivate and inspire participants	33%
To prepare and give an opportunity to participate in the Song and Dance Celebration	21%
To create and promote creative and positive environment	20%
To ensure the work of the group and its management	19%
To develop and to maintain patriotism and Latvianness	19%
To implement personal responsibility and professionalism	15%
To improve the collective as a whole	14%
To support the development of the represented field of culture	4%
Other tasks	9%
Hard to say	2%

n = 248
Possibility to mark 3 tasks, answers exceed 100%

Source: Survey of the Leaders of Amateur Arts Groups 2016–2017.

Figure 5. The main tasks of the leaders of amateur arts groups.

The third most important responsibility is to involve, motivate and inspire amateur participants. Only 4% of responses indicate participation in decision making, wish to influence the developments in the arts sector in a broader sense.

On the one hand, the data indicate the tendency that the artistic leaders concentrate very much on the group they direct and on its achievements, results in review competitions, since this is a way how to demonstrate their own professionalism and the quality of their work. The tendency to think predominantly about the benefits of their own group causes problems also in the context of advisory boards, where some of the artistic leaders are directly involved in decision-making.

This is crazy. They predominantly represent their own arts group. There are very few persons in the field who can represent the interests of the whole field. Unfortunately, it leaves impact on some decisions as well (Representative of the Latvian National Centre for Culture).

Organisers also criticise some artistic leaders for their lack of constructivism, or shortage of ideas. Moreover, some artistic leaders suggest they are unable to influence anything, or they do not dare to express their opinion during the meetings and discussions.

I think that it is easier to do what you are told to do. I have experienced this clamouring from the artistic leaders – nobody listens to us, no one takes us seriously. At the same time, I know several artistic leaders I have asked to express an opinion, to suggest something, to give some ideas. In the end I have understood that this doesn't take us anywhere, they have no suggestions, they have no ideas. They love what they do and what they are used to and they actually love to grumble, instead of doing, changing something themselves (Chief leader, conductor).

Some of them are not brave enough to stand up publicly and to speak. Although I would say that if you are a conductor, you should be able to. Come and say what you think, if you need more time – take it, write an e-mail. But if you do not react, don't do anything – I have no idea how to do it otherwise, how to do it more democratically. How we can push the artistic leaders to listen to participants and to get to know their standpoint, how we can push them to say what they think (Chief leader, conductor).

I imagine that some of them believe that they can't change anything. This is Soviet heritage. It is still alive among some artistic group leaders (Chief leader, conductor).

The formal participation method prescribed also in the legislation, is advisory boards where selected artistic leaders may represent their sector. The data show that neither the participants nor the artistic leaders perceive the advisory boards as an opportunity to express their opinion and the board members as their representatives. Moreover, amateurs and artistic leaders do not believe the advisory boards may have real impact, since they are consultative and the decisions made are not binding. Even the board members themselves do not think that their decisions or opinions are authoritative. There is also some doubt about the objectivity of the decisions of those board members who are also artistic leaders.

> *It's the third meeting we have been talking about this [repertoire], but since we are just an advisory body, we have no right to decide* (Chief leader, choreographer, member of advisory board).

> *I think the advisory board has no impact, I haven't seen it until now* (Chief leader, choreographer).

There are also artistic leaders and chief leaders who value the work on the board and see its significance although they admit that the work sometimes is not efficient.

Data show that the leaders of amateur arts groups are the key persons taking part in the decision-making process of the Song and Dance Celebration on behalf of amateurs. However, their participation is hindered by diverse factors. Therefore, the reciprocal communication flow is a crucial factor that could improve the situation on informal level.

Discussion and conclusions

In the context of the participation of amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process related to the celebration, historical background plays a significant role. State was the main stakeholder and decision-making body during the Soviet period. After the Soviet period, the role of public institutions in safeguarding and developing of the tradition of the Song and Dance Celebration continued to expand. A strong legislative framework has been established; moreover, since 2003 the tradition has been inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. The Latvian National Centre for Culture is a state body responsible for the policy development in the field and it manages many aspects related to the celebration, including coordination, financing and management of the celebration that takes place every five years. Municipalities have a decisive role in funding the network of cultural centres where amateur arts groups perform their activities. The authors have concluded that amateur art sector in Latvia on a great extent operate as a public service.

We started with the presumption that bottom-up participation is significant, as it is the essence of the amateur arts process and the basis of individual motivation for participation in culture. Furthermore, the Song and Dance Celebration depends on amateur participation. To maintain active collective participation, the involvement in the decision-making and management processes is a re-motivational factor upholding the interest in participation. Moreover, the literature on the role of civic engagement in the public sector governance emphasizes both the importance of inclusion of citizens in the policy-making process and the impediment their participation may cause by slowing down the decision-making process. Due to the historically strong role of the public institutions and due to the huge numbers of the amateurs involved, an expert-led democracy is the prevailing model in the case of the Song and Dance Celebration. However, with the changes in society and also with the increasing role of new communication tools the existing expert-led governance model is called into question.

The role of amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process can be defined as indirect since there are advisory council and boards where their opinion can be represented. Theoretically, this could be perceived as an instrument to guarantee participation of amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process but the empirical data show that the gap between amateurs, artistic leaders and the council and boards is quite large. There are also other instruments developed to ensure participation of amateurs and especially of amateur group leaders in the decision-making process. Various surveys are carried out on a regular basis asking the participants' opinion; there are also possibilities to express one's opinion in meetings, discussions and on social networks. Other participatory methods include: voting in meetings, open discussions in the meetings, sending in written recommendations during the meetings, sending e-mails. The website of the Latvian National Centre for Culture also serves as a communication tool for disseminating information. Moreover, the Latvian National Centre for Culture organises special events for every amateur art sector to inform about the news, also offering open discussions. Summer schools and training seminars for the artistic leaders take place to test the repertoire. In the opinion of the organisers there are numerous participatory forms, however, the organisers have observed a very low activity of participants in using the possibilities to impact the decision-making process.

Data suggest that amateurs themselves do not feel capable of changing or influencing the decision-making process related to the questions that are vital in the context of the Song and Dance Celebration. Leaders of amateur arts groups are the key persons in representing amateurs and communicating the decisions. They estimate their ability to influence decision making as more effective in comparison to amateurs. The average perception of the ability to influence decision-making at

municipal level is significantly higher than at national level, where in none of the questions the impact is perceived as significant. However, the actual involvement in the decision-making process can be graded as insignificant. There are several factors that lead to inaction or non-participative in decision making and communication. Leaders of amateur arts groups tend to represent only the interests of their own group; they are often afraid to express their opinion fearing administrative or financial consequences; they think they are unable to influence anything and rely on decisions made by authorities. The non-governmental sector could serve as a representative body of amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process. However, currently the non-governmental sector is underdeveloped and lacks administrative and financial capacity.

Conclusions

- Participation of amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process related to the Song and Dance Celebration is an important tool for safeguarding the tradition and motivating amateurs. The willingness to take part in the decision-making process among amateurs and artistic leaders is not at a significant level. Possibly, they are not aware of participatory measures and of the significance participation could bring. Participation of amateurs and artistic leaders in the decision-making process is neither clearly defined in the legislative and regulative documents, nor participatory forms are clearly communicated to the stakeholders. The public authorities should intensify their efforts to improve communication and involvement of amateur artists and artistic leaders in the currently available participatory forms.

- The huge numbers of the amateurs involved in the process of the celebration encumber and limit a direct involvement of amateurs in the decision-making process. Therefore, an expert-led decision-making model might be an appropriate one. However, the general distrust in experts and their capacity to influence decisions leads to the need to improve the existing model. Transparent nomination and selection of experts is significant in this situation. However, the very low activity of amateurs in nominating representatives weakens the process. The role of the non-governmental sector as mediators and lobbyists should be reconsidered. To empower the non-governmental sector and strengthen its administrative and financial capacity, indirect support incentives may be needed.

- Amateur arts and inheritance of traditions is mainly based on the self-initiative of tradition bearers. In Latvia there is a significant state involvement in regulating and governing the process. The balance between the self-initiative of tradition bearers (amateur artists) and the state is a

crucial factor for the sustainable development of the celebration in the future. This balance should be established, communicated and accepted by all the groups involved. It is evident that a tradition of such a scale and of such significance cannot be solely the responsibility of individuals and be self-organised through numerous amateur arts groups. Moreover, the status of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO requires certain measures and supervision implemented by the public authorities. Regulations and governance versus self-initiative and participation – this is the main issue to be addressed in the nearest future in the context of the sustainability of this nationwide event.

Acknowledgements

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CULTURE CROSSROADS

CO-CREATION AS A MEANS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL CULTURAL POLICY MAKING

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Abstract

We have experienced a shift in local cultural policy making towards a more participative governance during the last decades in a situation when understanding of the meaning of culture in cultural policy has enlarged and cultural policy makers are concerned with more active actors in the field, including cultural prosumers. In the meantime, we can observe in our contemporary cities new creative forms of civic activism trying to build sustainable and livable places with creative professionals engaging as facilitators of these creative change processes in local communities.

Co-creation approach is a recent trend in public governance to ensure the engagement of local citizens as equal partners in developing, implementing and evaluating creative solutions for local problems related to raising the quality of life. The application of co-creation approach in local cultural policy making is still comparatively new and experimental, but one can find multiple good practice case studies in Europe, although the understanding of this new concept varies in different contexts.

The goal of this article is to analyse the available literature in order to clarify the use of co-creation concept in the field of culture in different contexts along with the similar concepts of co-production and co-design, to identify the purpose and possible gains of applying a co-creation approach in local cultural policy making.

Keywords: *co-creation, local cultural policy, participative cultural policy, citizen engagement.*

Introduction: From participation to co-creation

In recent decades local cultural policy making in urban and also rural areas has become more complex. The understanding of the meaning of culture in local cultural policy has enlarged and cultural policy makers are concerned with more active actors in the field besides traditional cultural institutions. As a result during the last decades we have experienced a shift in local cultural policy making towards a

more participative governance [Bonet 2018], which forces us to look for better ways of engagement of all the more or less active stakeholders on the local level – cultural creators, audiences and communities.

We can mention at least four main factors which have contributed to this recent development of steering cultural policy to a participative design approach and creating a need for engagement of more stakeholders.

Firstly, local policy makers have not only been concerned with safeguarding traditional cultural heritage and making an effort to ensure professional art access to local inhabitants, but also with the potential benefits from growing a creative economy and cultural tourism sectors, placing enterprises of creative industries in the scene of cultural policy next to traditional cultural institutions [Warren, Jones 2015].

Secondly, fast growing technologies have eased access to creative expressions, and we can observe a growing sector of prosumers – amalgamated producers and consumers [Toffler 1980, Pistone 2014]. The fast flows of accessible online cultural content create new challenges for traditional cultural and art institutions with a need to form a new dialogue with their audiences, placing the audience in the centre of the organization [Bollo, Da Milano, Gariboldi, Torch 2017] and engaging the audiences more and more in creation of the creative content, thus strengthening relations with cultural visitors and users in order to compete for the attention in the global information flow. That means that there is already a certain experience in the cultural sector on how to engage the public in the creation of cultural content using new engagement methods such as design thinking approach, co-designing cultural events and services with their end-users. This experience could be transferred also to a wider field of local cultural policy making, taking into consideration the needs and wishes of citizens, who are becoming more involved in the creation of cultural values themselves.

Thirdly, we can observe new creative forms of civic activism that are trying to build sustainable and livable places with artists in new roles of artivists (activists pushing political agendas by the means of art) [Nossel 2016] or facilitators of creative change processes in local communities. We see different bottom-up community arts, participative arts, creative placemaking initiatives to cherish and to advance the local identity of the place in contrast to the growing mobility and cosmopolitanism thus strengthening the social capital of local communities.

All these factors combined – dilemmas of local cultural policy makers with expanding cultural policy field and more stakeholders involved (active audiences and inhabitants as cultural content creators, growing field of creative enterprises, creative bottom-up civic initiatives) have contributed to the need for a participative turn in local cultural policy making.

That would mean that public decision makers and municipal planners would need new innovative methods and means to work with a growing sector effectively. Traditional models via e. g. consultative cultural councils or voluntary participation in several specific community events would not be enough. There is a need for new forms of engagement with equal roles between municipal policy makers and civil sectors already in the early stages of cultural policy making – during agenda setting and policy formulation (not only during policy realization), in order to consider all the needs and to use the diverse knowledge of actors involved.

Co-creation approach could be one of solutions to ensure the engagement of local citizens as equal partners in developing, implementing and evaluating creative solutions for local problems, to raise the quality of life. According to Brandsen co-creation is different from classical citizen participation in policy making, as it focuses on the output-side of the policy cycle: the provision of public services, with varying degrees of tangibility. The difference in government-civil society partnerships is that co-creation mainly focuses on the contribution of individual citizens rather than organizations [Brandsen 2018].

The application of co-creation approach in local cultural policy making is still comparatively new and experimental, but one can find multiple good practice case studies in Europe, although the understanding of this new concept varies in different contexts. The goal of this article is to analyse the available literature in order to clarify the use of the co-creation concept in the field of culture in different contexts along with the similar concepts of co-design and co-production, and to identify the purpose and possible gains of applying a co-creation approach to local cultural policy making.

Co-creating cultural values with local communities
Co-creation of common value

Co-creation as an approach comes from the business field, where enterprises have started to form bilateral relations with customers asking them to participate in product and service creation, thus adjusting produced products to the needs of consumers [Bluestone, Carvalho 2012]. Similarly, co-creation in the public sector realm has been conceived as creating new solutions with people, not for them. According to Lund in public settings, co-creation can be seen as a strategy for addressing complex societal problems in the context of strained public budgets, i. e. as a means to solve prevailing problems in new and more effective ways by harnessing the resources of civil society [Lund 2018].

The important aspect is **value creation**. In business world clients and suppliers co-create value of the products and services, suppliers apply their knowledge and skills in the production and branding of the product and the clients apply their knowledge and capacities in their daily utilisation [Vargo et al. 2008]. A product

or service thereby incorporates value of the end-beneficiary. According to Alves, in public field public organisations, through the co-creation of value, may respond to serious problems that societies face as this approach enables the generation of truly innovative solutions capable of responding and dealing with diverse social issues [Alves 2013].

Creation of common cultural values can help strengthening the local community, engaging different groups of the local society in a joint effort to reach a common goal connected with the improvement of a local neighbourhood [Crossick, Kaszynska 2016]. According to Crossick and Kazynska, only in recent decades have identity and belonging, memory and symbol, spiritual meanings and cultural practices come to be seen as a significant part of what is seen as common heritage. Participation of citizens in co-creation of built environment, public art and local traditions would be a necessary precondition to be able to deliver sustainable results that are beneficial for the local community.

Another important aspect of co-creation is **an equal partnership** – citizens need to have a decision-making power. The co-creation process should be collaborative, hierarchy flattening and transparent [Bluestone et al. 2012]. According to Bluestone et al., ideally the co-creation process is neither top-down nor bottom-up, all stakeholders learn and gain value from co-creative processes and outcomes, sharing common knowledge.

Co-creation, co-production and co-design

Alternative concepts of co-creation used in academic literature are *co-production* and *co-design*, both with similar meanings to co-creation.

According to Palumbo and Trocciola, the term "co-production" is used in relation to services (e. g. cultural services) implying a revisited relationship between the providers and the users, both parts being engaged in the generation of value, thus paving the way for enhanced outcomes and increased effectiveness. In this regard the idea behind co-production is rather similar to co-creation, emphasizing the value of creation and the importance of reciprocity and shared commitment between users and providers [Palumbo, Trocciola 2015]. The range of users' engagement varies from an individual co-production (a collaborative task for a single provider and a single user), group co-production (an involvement of homogeneous groups of users) and collective co-production (enhancing the traditional relationship between providers and target population and considering the needs of the local community) [Brudney, England 1983]. This collective co-production with inhabitants as end-users could be used in the development of local cultural policy aimed at public innovation and answering different societal needs.

Compared to co-creation the notion of co-production puts a slightly bigger emphasis on providers of services as the most active and decisive part of a collaboration

(citizens as co-implementers of public services), while in case of co-creation both parts have equal, active roles.

Likewise, *co-design* is considered as a new method for finding solutions to complex problems engaging citizens in a creative way [Blomkamp 2018]. If we understand design as a task in which people seek to understand, interpret and address challenges in present reality by conceptually developing and creating things and processes that could create better future reality, then the prefix '*co*' signals the collaborative, cooperative and collective nature of this engagement [Zamenopoulos, Alexiou 2018].

According to Blomkamp an appropriate definition of co-design as a methodology for policy making would recognize it as a design-led process, involving creative and participatory principles and tools to engage different kinds of people and knowledge in public problem solving [Blomkamp 2018]. Design thinking which forms the ground for this approach is the application of abductive reasoning to reframe an unstable problem situation and create a new object, service, or system [Dorst 2010], following certain stages of the design-thinking process – identifying local issues, generating ideas, testing ideas, refining ideas and implementing ideas [Garry, Goodwin 2015].

It would be possible to co-design both certain cultural products and services, and more complex systems and policies enhancing creation and dissemination of cultural expressions in local communities. Compared to the co-creation approach co-designing focuses on the formulation of a certain problem or issue in the local context trying to find the best solution with diverse knowledge, undertaking testing before the implementation of the solution. Meanwhile, in both cases public bodies and decision-makers are working together with local communities creating new ideas, only in case of co-designing more emphasis is put on following a definite process with concrete steps to be implemented.

In practice all these terms could be used as synonyms characterizing similar processes undertaken by municipal cultural planners or cultural organizations trying to involve the stakeholders, that is, audiences and communities, in improvement of the existing cultural services or enhancing innovations in the current cultural ecosystems.

Contextual levels and aspects of co-creation in culture

If we look closer to the use of the co-creation approach in the field of culture, it is possible to distinguish **three different levels** depending on the aims and context of the processes.

The first level is connected with the co-creation of a certain cultural product (e. g. exhibition, event or festival). It could be initiated by a cultural institution or local cultural association creating a cultural product according to the needs and expectations of prospective audiences. This is the most common co-creation use

and it is comparatively simple, directed to the development of ideas for creation of a concrete product or service similarly as the co-creation is used in the business field to provide products and services more suited to customers' needs, in cultural field that would mean – more suited to the needs of target audiences.

Table 1. The range of contextual levels and aspects of co-creation in culture, developed by Asare, I., 2020

The scope of the process	Context	Goals of co-creation	Participants	Possible motivation of the initiator
1. Product / service level	Artistic programme of a cultural institution or sociocultural programme of local cultural NGO.	Creation of a new cultural product(s) (e. g. exhibition, event, festival).	Cultural managers of the cultural institution or members of a local cultural association / NGO. Specific audience and/or community groups.	The wish of a cultural institution to adjust its product(s) to the needs of its prospective audience. Creative ideas of local communities' actors to be developed and realized in cooperation.
2. Strategy level	Future strategy of a cultural institution or association.	Creation of the strategy/ working programme of a cultural institution or association.	Management of a cultural institution or association; founders of the organization. Target audience groups.	The necessity to adjust the future cultural programme of concrete organization to the needs of target audiences.
3. Policy level	Cultural policy of a certain area.	Designing local cultural policy – defining goals and tasks to be implemented.	Municipal cultural planners. Different stakeholders from a cultural sector (public, private and nongovernmental organizations, artists, creative entrepreneurs). Diverse community groups.	The necessity to consider the cultural needs of diverse groups in local community and to use the local knowledge for creating creative solutions for local challenges in the field of culture.

The second level is connected with the co-creation of a strategy or a working programme of a cultural institution or association to adjust it to the needs of its audience. This is a more complex process and requires deeper engagement of participants, or different participants could take part at different stages of the co-creation process, which should be carefully planned to guide participants towards solutions of defined

challenges. This is a possible way of work how to put the audience in the centre of a cultural organization and to plan the artistic programme according to these needs, finding interactive ways of cooperation with identified target audiences.

The most comprehensive and complex is the third level connected with the design of local cultural policy, defining the goals and activities of future cultural development considering the needs of different groups of the local community while using knowledge resources of diverse participants. If we look to culture under "commons" perspective seeing cultural commons as different forms of cultural expressions produced by various communities [Bertacchini et al. 2012], there is a logical argument that the best governance of these various cultural resources and expressions would be ensured by involvement of all stakeholders with diverse interests and traditions.

Co-creation of a local cultural policy could be characterized as a long-term social innovation process which could involve a change in roles of involved stakeholders crossing organizational boundaries and jurisdictions inventing new communication and collaboration processes with possible long-lasting outcomes [Bekkers et al. 2015]. Co-creation of cultural policy by decision-makers and stakeholders can be mutually beneficial as decision-makers can gain legitimacy by incorporating the expertise of citizens, who in turn can gain a possibility to shape new policies according to their needs.

While it's comparatively easy to experiment on the first level, which is inviting audiences and community members to take part in a co-creation of a certain cultural product or service (e. g. local neighbourhood festival), the complex nature of the policy co-creation requires more knowledge, resources (including a setup of an engagement and communication platform, fostering interactions among stakeholders etc.) and long-term devotion from the planners of these co-creation processes. Co-creation approach would require new skills and attitudes from the public sector employees (e. g. advanced communication and facilitation skills), certain level of trust and readiness to devote time and efforts towards common good from citizens [Vodsgaard 2019]. Mentioning all significant factors necessary to ensure a successful realization of co-creation of cultural policy is beyond the scope of this article, but this would be an important goal for future research in order to find and identify the most efficient management practices, including the beneficial use of new digital technologies.

Co-creation in practice: from experiments to strategies

If we look at three different levels of co-creation mentioned above, we can find several examples mentioned in academic literature in each of co-creation levels. In practice there would be many examples which are not always called co-creation, but could be referred also as audience engagement practices from the perspective of cultural producer or organizer.

On the first level we can see examples of different thematic community festivals co-created by local inhabitants, community theatre events, where artists collaborate closely with local participants working with themes and topics relevant to the local neighbourhood, collaborative public art events etc. Co-created events can be started both as a bottom-up initiative from the active groups in the community or a top-down approach when the municipality or cultural institution invites inhabitants to co-create a certain event of exhibition. For example, Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle has a well-documented, longstanding commitment to co-creative exhibition development. Their co-creation process is based on dedication to empowering community members to tell the stories that are most meaningful to them, and community members are engaged in every step of exhibition development. The exhibition model focuses on oral history and local issues instead of curatorial or authoritative content [Simon 2010].

On the second level, several initiatives during last years have proved feasible in co-creation of future work of cultural institutions. Communities have been asked to help to rethink and co-create an entire cultural institution that helps to make decisions about the necessary content and services of the local museum, library, cultural centre.

For example, in the United Kingdom the reconstruction of the museum of the Derby Silk Mill (named the world's first factory) was primarily organized with the values of co-creation in mind. The relevance of the object to the local people of Derby was of utmost importance. Any ideas about what the mill's space should be used for were given consideration, from maker fairs and exhibitions, to music events and international learning programmes. Community members were closely involved in the design and building processes of the next museum "Inspired by the Makers of the past, Made by the Makers of today, Empowering the Makers of the future", creating strong narratives, connections and greater relevance and resilience as a result [Westen, Dijk 2015].

Another exceptional example is the co-creation or co-designing of Helsinki City Library. As a result of the transformation from information society to knowledge society it has become increasingly necessary to rethink the framework of libraries, and involvement of the community and users is an important path in creating up-to-date library services. According to Mietinen, a well-designed and user-friendly library can reflect a community's character back to itself, crystallizing who it is, in all its multiplicity, and what it stands for. In order to achieve this, staff members of Helsinki library were educated in design awareness and know-how of co-design techniques, being able to work as facilitators in groups of citizens. Participatory planning activities for Helsinki Central Library started with open collection of "library dreams" from citizens, then the opportunity for Helsinki citizens was offered

to collectively decide for what pilot projects €100,000 of its annual development money should be spent. Finally, a developer community called the Central Library's Friends was founded, offering the citizens an opportunity to help design and develop the future library functions, services, and contents from their own perspective. This developer community worked with several themes: a shared library for communities for all sorts of Helsinki residents, services for immigrants and tourists; library as a space for experimenting and learning, the 21st century civic skills; how stories in books, films, games move us. And now Helsinki library serves as multimedia-equipped public living room offering innovative services (3D-printer in makerspace, using a sewing machine, making video-CV in studio etc.) [Miettinen 2018].

On the third – policy level, co-creation practices can be found in European Capitals of Culture – in order to receive this prestigious title, cities have to think about long-term cultural strategies engaging their citizens as it is a necessary precondition to apply for the title. For example, the cultural policy of co-creation was morphed into the development of the Umea European Capital of Culture 2014 programme with the motto "Curiosity and Passion – the Art of Co-Creation". Umea organized its programme for the year 2014 through ideas of collaboration with lead-users, open-source innovation, crowdfunding and crowdsourcing, thus building competence and creative capacity. However, according to Nasholm et al. in case of Umea European Capital of Culture 2014 the co-creation concept shifted from its original meaning of involving the user or consumer towards cooperation and collaboration with local cultural actors in new ways [Nasholm, Blomquist 2015].

Another example comes from Birmingham in the United Kingdom, where Birmingham Culture Co-Design programme was introduced to increase participation in arts and cultural activity within local communities, paying special attention to those groups which are not involved in cultural activities. Each local project was commissioned to follow an overarching model of cultural co-design, mapped against the aims and outcomes of the programme. The coordinators planned a co-design process through which a group of local people would co-manage the project involving: planning; allocating budget; recruiting artists; marketing and recruiting participants/audiences; delivering the activity and evaluation. The community was not always ready to undertake all these tasks, but at least some of the project phases were realized in co-creative way [Garry, Goodwin 2015].

Setting up a dialogue with communities is always the first step, and different innovative methods are practiced and described in different manuals and toolkits for co-designing and co-creation practices (like storytelling, gamestorming etc. – methods, which can be used in interactive experimental workshops). These inter-active methods can help raise an interest, but as co-creation is a long-term process, the motivation of participants is crucial to fulfil different tasks that demand

time and effort from the side of participants and organizers. Participatory budgeting could serve as an additional motivator and in many cases is used in different development projects of municipalities. Another alternative to finance co-creation activities would be crowdfunding – an increasingly popular method of fundraising and community building in cultural and creative sectors enhanced by ICT progress over the last decade.

The "communicative turn" in planning theory, ranging from separate initiatives to long-term neighbourhood development aided by information and communication technologies [Lund 2018] has helped to introduce co-creation approach on a more permanent basis, urging municipalities to seek a dialogue with local activists eager to start creative initiatives aimed at taking care of their neighbourhoods. Planners of local cultural policies in municipalities follow this trend mainly by working with local cultural activists and in some cases by trying to engage inhabitants inactive in culture, thus enlarging the prospective audiences.

Conclusion

We can see that co-creation concept in culture does not have one concrete definition. What can be deduced is that co-creation refers mainly to *innovation and value creation* as a *collaborative process involving different types of actors*. An understanding of co-creation concept in the field of culture can vary from simpler involvement of audiences in creation of certain cultural products or services (community events, festivals, exhibitions) to re-thinking and re-designing of cultural institutions, introducing new services important for local communities (example of Helsinki Library and Derby Museum), or even applying a co-creation approach on a more permanent basis in co-creating long-term cultural programmes (the case of European Capital of Culture in Umea) and local cultural policies.

The result is often defined as a social innovation – introduced new solutions meeting current social needs in an effective way [Bekker et al. 2015], in local cultural policy making that would mean not only innovative cultural forms introduced by diverse local cultural actors, but also better cultural services and possibilities for cultural participation and creative self-expression for different groups of the society, thus ensuring democracy in cultural planning. Or alternatively one can argue that the best governance of these various cultural resources and expressions or cultural commons would be ensured by involvement of all stakeholders in the society.

Co-creation as an open process is rather complex and long, the possible obstacles to realize this process successfully were not discussed in this article and would be an important aspect to research in next studies devoted to co-creation together with the possible use of technological advancements that could engage more stakeholders and improve the communication process with them.

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CULTURE
CROSSROADS

A STUDY OF PLACE AND IDENTITY: THE MAIN FEATURES OF DISTINCTIVE PLACE BRAND IDENTITY

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Abstract

Place branding as an integral part of competitive place development strategy became a relevant topic for urban and rural municipalities in Latvia relatively recently, at the beginning of 2000. In particular, the issue of narrative exploration of place identities in Latvia has become a key subject, linked to sustainable demonstrations of the attractiveness of places, and the listing of their unique benefits in order to increase economic value and improve social welfare for place residents and other stakeholders. The article seeks answers to a range of interdisciplinary research questions related to the topic of place branding: how can a place brand identity be created that is relevant to place residents and expresses the distinctiveness of the place; what are the main features of belonging to place; and what intangible and/or tangible attributes of the place can provide an authentic and convincing identity narratives for place brands? The empirical part of the article is based on a qualitative research methodology, in-depth semi-structured interviews with place branding experts, and analysis of the content of brand identities of Latvian cities and regions. The article reveals how place branding as a strategic marketing process is managed by local municipalities and involved stakeholders, provides a critical view of local practices and strengthens appreciation of one of the most important reference stages of the place-branding development process: cooperation in finding the key narratives for place identities.

Keywords: *place branding, place, identity, narrative, sense of belonging, tangible and intangible attributes.*

Introduction

Place branding is an increasingly relevant topic in academic studies [Ashworth, Kavaratzis and Warnaby 2015: 2] and is a well-established concept that covers some of the hardest philosophical questions one can tackle: the nature of perception and

reality, the relationship between objects and their representation, the phenomena of mass psychology, the mysteries of national identity, leadership, culture and social cohesion, and much more besides [Dinnie 2011: 16]. Place branding is a complex interdisciplinary concept that contains different levels of expression – a sense of belonging to places, and therefore to their own town, municipality and country. Many international academic studies propose that identity is ascribed as interactions developed between people and the surrounding environment [Kavaratzis 2015: 57]. Due to the understanding that people have changing relationships to place in late modern society, a senior lecturer in Psychology and Social Sciences at the Open University, Stephanie Taylor, states that the recognisable, even clichéd belief that there is a connection to place (perhaps one's home, hometown, home country or native land) which is derived from successive generations of family residence and also a long-term personal connection [Taylor 2019: 22]. Taylor emphasises that this personal connection produces a sense of belonging and an identity as a person *of* that place. Taylor relates this idea to Anthony Giddens' discussion of identity in contemporary or "late modern society", explaining that Giddens suggested that such connections were a feature of traditional culture but have largely lost their importance in contemporary society [Taylor 2019: 22]. People are mobile and the local traditions which have bounded and constrained them are fading or acquiring new associations. Taylor names this making of sense of belonging "a reflective identity project" [Taylor 2019: 22]. French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu provides a deeper definition: "*habitus*", *as a socially constituted cognitive capacity, long-lasting symbolic capital in whatever form* [Bourdieu 1986: 27]. Joanna Richardson, Professor of Housing and Social Research at De Montfort University, states that *the relationship between people and place is a circular, self-defining process. I make sense of my place and my place redefines me* [Richardson 2019: 27]. Richardson's opinion is that Bordieu's "habitus" is the link between place and self: home [Richardson 2019: 27]. Richardson emphasis that the "habitus" is our language of home – *it is comprised of ideas, expressions, and possessions: reflections of identity* [Richardson 2019: 21]. In the context of place branding, habitus operates as interactions bringing together the social, natural, and – particularly – the cultural values of the place. These values embedded in the brand identity seek acceptance from the residents of the place. This view is supported by marketing researcher Adriana Campelo, who states that four interconnected components are required for the development of a place brand: recognition from local people, acknowledgement of local cultural values, idiosyncrasies and a sense of place [Campelo 2013: 162]. Therefore, Bourdieu's proposed "habitus" concept is related to a sense of place and others and can reveal meaningful research material for the development of the place brand identity. Mihalis Kavaratzis uses dialogue as a metaphor to describe place branding as leading to active

and equal relationships between stakeholders, as well as residents. However, Simon Anholt, a place branding researcher, has an opposing view that a focus on dialogue creates the wrong impression: cultural relations can hope to achieve a wide range of multiple and diverse conversations between people [Anholt 2010: 32]. Anholt emphasises the notion of place brand purpose, as an idea of uniting groups of people around a common strategic vision can create a powerful dynamic for progress, and that brand management is first and foremost an internal project [Anholt 2010: 12]. Despite the level of understanding of the purpose and development process of place branding, local municipalities must totally rely on a place branding process that includes local stakeholders: the public, private and voluntary sectors, and residents. These are commonly referred to as dominant groups and objects in the place branding research and design process. In addition to other decision-makers, place residents play a major role in providing individual-based or group-based views of the influence of "habitus", and the meanings of place brand identity, moving towards a common collective perspective that all involved parties can agree on. Kavaratzis states that one of the approaches to place brand construction are groups of individuals. Different groups of individuals form different brands as they experience and appropriate a place and its brand in their own particular ways [Kavaratzis 2015: 5]. Therefore, residents are the identity-holders of a place. Residents have views and perceptions about who (or what) they are as a place. This sense of identity, and the representation and communication of identity by individuals expresses ideas of belongingness – that is, what Kavaratzis calls *attachment, to various collectives* [Kavaratzis 2015: 66]. Ideally, the identities held by residents need to be considered as fundamental research sources within place branding strategies. Compared to other academic researchers, Anholt brings the understanding of the concept "place branding strategy" closer to the definition of place identity – who the nation is (who you are) and where it stands today (both in reality and according to internal and external perception); knowing where it wants to get to; and knowing how it is going to get there [Anholt 2010: 13]. Within this statement, a place-branding strategy emphasises aspects of place identity – the narratives of values and meanings by residents as among the most significant reflections on belonging to the place. Therefore, place branding first and foremost includes the detection and evaluation of views on and meanings of place identity, as well as experiences. Place identity is itself social interaction.

The cultural context of place brand identities

Academic studies of the term "identity" include various interdisciplinary definitions. The vast literature on nationalism and national identity examines the concept as the complex and varied means by which nations become aware of themselves [Aronczyk 2013: 15]. Anthony D. Smith, historical sociologist in the

interdisciplinary field of nationalism studies, defines five fundamental features of national identity: an historical territory (homeland); common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members and a common economy with territorial mobility for members [Smith 1991: 14]. Smith states that the nation provides a social bond between individuals and classes by providing repertoires of shared values, symbols and traditions [Smith 1991: 16]. Symbols of national identity such as flags, coinage, anthems, uniforms, monuments, and ceremonies provide a common heritage and cultural kinship, as well as the sense of common identity and belonging. Smith stresses that identity and a sense of belonging to the place are perceived today as a taught and mastered *belonging to culture*; it can be rational and based only on a sense of belonging to a common history and experience in which language plays an important role. Therefore, the past and present culture of the *folk* provides the material for the blueprinting of the *nation-to-be*. From the point of view of folklore studies, Simon Bronner argues that everyone has traditions, and the term "folk" describes modifier signals, expressive forms such as stories, games, rituals, houses and crafts that are learned and transmitted in the unofficial social settings of family, play, work and community [Bronner 2011: 20]. Bronner's understanding of traditions appears to be that they are collective, similarly, to Smith, involving common heritage, continuity in time, and implied social connections and recreation. The term "traditional" in the context of shared values connotes stability, known and familiar features that are often exploited in place brand visual and verbal identity concepts. Bronner defines the use of tradition in "traditional values" as *culturalism*, a belief that social stability is gained by a process of sifting out undesirable trends, as a result of values being handed down from one generation to another [Bronner 2011: 17]. This kind of tradition provides a **s**ense of belonging to a shared experience judged to be preferable to others.

Referring to an approach to place marketing introduced by Philip Kotler in the early 1990s, brand identity was defined as a meaning designing of place to satisfy the needs of the target markets [Kotler 1993: 99]. The concept of brand identity has come to the fore in recent years with an increase in academic work on the subject, as well as growing commercial interest. According to Melissa Aronczyk, the academic discourse of national identity studies has slightly changed to a political and social project of special representation and as a producer of value and values – it has been altered by its conception as a brand [Aronczyk 2013: 14]. Branding expert Jean-Noel Kapferer points out that the concept of brand identity is more complex than it was 10 or 20 years ago due to the constant and increasing pressure of competition. Similarly, Anholt believes that the "logos and slogans" approach can still be effective, but that the "policy-based" approach of competitive identity is far more challenging, since implementation consists of proving a vision, rather than just communicating it

[Anholt 2010: 33]. In practice, brand identity is primarily expressed as a technique of verbal and visual elements; the notion of narrative and belonging to place have come to the fore. Place branding expert Keith Dinnie defines place brand identity as the shared assets of the place, its personality and desirable attributes. Mechanisms and the environment must be conducive to encourage community participation and support of the brand strategy [Dinnie 2011: 13]. Similarly, Hidalgo and Hernandez use a definition of place attachment as *an affective bond or link between people and specific places* [Kavaratzis 2015: 42]. Many aspects of belonging to place as an asset of brand identity are still under-explored in academic literature: how to define the unique meanings and discourses that surround the place and its people, and that can be used as a core of the symbolic and ideological representation of place identity? It is a reference of the beliefs, values and impressions that people associate with a place. According to Kavaratzis, the main resources for place brand identity formation are narrated in the *main story* of the place by all possible stakeholders of storytelling. Due to the social characteristics of place identity, it is necessary to understand the notion of the sense of place. In a commentary paper by Seamon and Sowers there is a reference to Edward Relph's book *Place and Placelessness*, published in 1976, where the author emphasises his research method, *a phenomenology of place* [Seamon 2008: 2]. Seamon and Sowers think that Relph considers a sense of place is based on the relationships between people in a setting created through a variety of experiences. People in general tend to define an individual's identity in the context of a network of affiliation, as part of larger system such as family, group of friends, associates, or fellow residents [Pogorzelski 2018: 172]. The notion of shared identity is crucial to creating an authentic place brand – a summary that captures the true story and uniqueness of a place [Dinnie 2011: 57]. Intangible cultural heritage described as traditional culture, folklore or popular culture is created or practiced in close connection with a place that provides assets for better understanding the place's identity. The definition of intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them – that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognise as being part of their cultural heritage [UNESCO 2003]. According to Bronner, a quality which tradition and authenticity have in common is one of "inherent authority" that comes from being handed down [Bronner 2011: 32]. The use of traditional symbols such as ethnographic patterns is a familiar and common experience in place brand identity, due to the visual attractiveness of the patterns and their meanings and can be defined as transformed authenticity. Similarly, Relph examines ways in which places can be experienced authentically or inauthentically (a term borrowed from phenomenological and existential philosophy). An authentic sense of place is *a direct*

and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places – not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions [Relph 1976: 64]. Professor Walter Fisher highlights the term "the narrative paradigm" [Fisher 2018: 298]. Fisher defines *narration* as *symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them* [Fisher 2018: 299]. The understanding of human beings as fundamentally storytelling creatures, and narration as a form of communication rooted in time and space provides a theoretical framework for capturing a sense of place. The other, more practical understanding of the concept of narrative is articulated in place branding as a research methodology to find out the relationships between the recognisable intangible and/or tangible attributes of a place and the way people define their belonging to place. Taylor provides an approach to narrative as both a resource for talk and a construction in talk. Taylor refers to American psychologist Jerome Bruner and his concept that *the canonical narrative encompasses the narrative or story of belonging to a particular culture and society, told and retold, with variations that also have recognisable aspects* [Taylor 2010: 36]. Meanwhile, it is important to remember that a narrative discourse (the way how the story is conveyed [Abbot 2015: 15]) can be true or false, historical or fictional. The process of developing a place brand identity is a process of self-knowledge and self-awareness, a series of educational activities that progress towards a construction of self-identity. The search for narratives of place identity requires unique and competitive stories, without which the existence of place brands cannot be taught. For the place brand to become a strategic development tool, a narrative must build a bridge of meanings and signifiers of a communal sense of place between the past and the future, to become a living story itself. Although place identities are created through individual interpretations of place, very often in statements of pride or love. Place brands belong to the public; they are not owned by any organizations or groups of shareholders. Therefore, place branding can be considered successful only when residents feel that they have become ambassadors of their place.

Empirical study

To explore the theoretical issues discussed in the article, four in-depth interviews were conducted with Latvian place branding experts. The research questions in the empirical study were related to intangible and tangible attributes of place brand identity, the role and potential of intangible cultural heritage in the development of place brand identity, the possibilities of using narrative to revitalise place brand identities and to describe the most crucial aspects of the place branding process.

As a result of administrative-territorial reform and transition of local government, on 3 January 2011, the Republic of Latvia was divided into 110 counties and

76 towns/cities, of which nine cities were given the status of republican cities: Rīga, Daugavpils, Jelgava, Jūrmala, Jēkabpils, Liepāja, Rēzekne, Valmiera and Ventspils. In total 27 Latvian town and region branding concepts and identities were considered and analysed. In general, place branding is seen as a potential marketing tool for place development in various forms, depending on the defined brand purpose. One of the most common forms is a tourism destination.

As a social and relational concept, place identity can have its roots in various intangible and tangible attributes of a place. The fundamental question is how to define these conceptual and unique place identity attributes and considering the strategic potential of these attributes, taking the residents of the place into consideration. All the interviewed place branding experts agreed that the purpose of place branding is to create a sense of belonging, what does the place want to communicate about itself? How strong is this message, and how convincing?

> *How many places are ready to talk about their uniqueness? These attributes need to check out, because in most cases, the attributes are situational. Local governments are divided into dreamers; we have the beautiful triangle of Cēsis, Kuldīga and Liepāja... Ventspils simply has a lot of money, the rest act pragmatically and functionally. Most often they are shocked by the question: what are your strategic goals? They can be described as having a lack of vision. As far as Valmiera and Cēsis are ambitious; they are strategically sharp. In the others, like Gulbene, only a small proportion of residents want to change things, but the vast majority – seniors want stability, the nostalgia of swans (the symbols in the Gulbene coat of arms); only a small proportion try to understand who we are.* (Branding expert No. 3)

Interdisciplinarity and a confirmation of place branding as being first and foremost an internal process of communication and collaboration is also demonstrated in the responses of branding experts. To understand a place's identity, it is necessary to explore the versatility of the place. Family, roots and home are confirmed as being one of the most common reasons for a sense of belonging to place:

> *To the question of what you are proud of: the vast majority answer – living here is great but I cannot tell you why. They say it is my home, my family is here, or I returned here because it is my grandmother's home. If you can externally provide the place attributes to be proud of why you live here, then residents will think. Geographical and cultural heritage matters: there are places with history, beautiful nature, and destinations, and then there are sad places that need help, which have a hard time finding stories, finding ways forward.* (Branding expert No. 1)

Regarding the involvement of stakeholders in the place-branding process and finding perspectives for a place brand identity requires mutual co-production and an integral meaning-making process between all stakeholders:

First and foremost, place branding is a perfect process of internal therapy for local government and also for place residents. This does not mean that we have to organise residents' forums. But you have to gather together everyone: culture, education, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, seniors, farmers, repatriates, new moms, you must capture what they agree on. (Branding expert No. 1)

Due to different groups of place residents, characterised by their relationships and level of belongingness to place, place identity interpretations may occur as multiple values and meanings. These socially constructed interpretations of place identity can be influenced by sources within and outside the place (image). Place branding has a critical role in providing reflections of attributes co-created by the residents regarding the meaning of the place identity:

The most common problem often occurs within the internal audience: the residents are tired of place stories because they hear them every year, as it seems for eternity. Due to their ethnographic behaviour or their slightly low self-esteem, they need to repeatedly demonstrate that what they see is exceptionally good. (Branding expert No. 2)

To research for the authentic yet traditional values branding experts referred to the strong prioritisation of place-specific natural, architectural, historical, and cultural values and attributes, which resonates with the collective concept of memory and experience. This attitude of place identity can be so strong that it can create a long-lasting opposition and disapproval of created place brand:

Any unofficial brands are bestsellers: for example, RIGA. It was a private initiative. What comes from the people is without resistance and political side-effects. Rēzekne's positioning is as a town that is brave, although at first they categorically did not want to abandon the historical castle ruins. I asked, are you really a town of ruins? Then they wanted a statue of Māra, but it is too narrow for the town's identity. (Branding expert No. 4)

Place branding experts admitted that they do not see strict boundaries between tangible and intangible cultural heritage when it comes to research into the attributes of place identity. It goes without saying that cultural heritage values that are recognised locally and internationally are much more acceptable than the unique values of the place. This acceptance very much correlates with the image of the place

that is promoted for a domestic audience as well as internationally, at the level of the national identity symbols of Latvia:

> *Identity has its roots in dreams and pain! You strive for dreams and you heal pain, but to rationalise, it is very interesting how stable place resident groups want to use their heritage, for example, The Old Town of Kuldīga with its UNESCO heritage – the waterfall of Ventas Rumba, capitalising on cultural heritage, capitalising on Latvian ethnographical patterns.* (The expert is referring to the brand identity of Talsi.) *Then at the next level of place identity symbols, we look for images and elements that describe the national identity.* (Branding expert No. 2)

The use of traditional cultural elements such as ethnographic patterns in place brand identity is a familiar and common experience due to the visual attractiveness of the patterns and the visual attractiveness of the symbols and their meanings:

> *The logo of the Talsi region is the traditional Talsi sun, which has been given a new form and with a new colour scheme. The colour palette for each town and parish is designed with consideration to the history, heraldry, symbols and values of the place. Along with the logo, the basic element of the visual identity of the place is thematic, informative and iconic symbols of cities and parishes, which include the values of the county that already are widely used as decorative symbols. The individual pictograms form the pattern of the county, which refers to the traditional symbol of the county – the Talsi skirt.* (By the author of the article)

The next level, which is more complicated, is the intangible cultural heritage that has a potential of a dominant narrative of place identity. The result very much depends on the *local ambience* – or, in other words, the sense of place. This is an important component, but it is difficult to translate and, highly probably, it will be inclined to be stuck in the past rather than searching for continuation and contemporaneity:

> *Cultural heritage needs a product, such as Beverīna socks or Sigulda walking sticks, which show that those stories are attractive parts of the identity of a place. A place brand can be an educational tool for the residents. To give a reason to find out and be aware of cultural intangible values. The problem is in our own relatively fragile self-confidence: we praise culture at national holidays, in houses of culture, in places specially designed for it; at other times we tremble.* (Branding expert No. 1)

If in a state of uncertainty, traditional cultural values and symbols provide comprehensible, acceptable meanings of the place identity and can be experienced as a legacy known to all. This assumption can be very misleading in terms of the competitive potential:

Elements of intangible cultural heritage in place brand communication appear as experience, not place brand identity. This thesis is challenging in terms of brand concept. Intangible cultural heritage from the 17th or 18th century does not seem the same now as it did then. Latvian ethnographical costumes were everyday fashion then. Now these costumes are expensive holiday wear. It is the same case with so-called authentic ethnographic signs, for example, the auseklis/auseklītis [a Latvian symbol representing the morning star] is used by Latvians, Arabs and Indians. We cannot operate with such symbols in a multicultural space. We do not own these patterns. Is the town of Škaume really the epicentre of the all-Latvian auseklis/ auseklītis? How relevant and unique is this? (Branding expert No. 2)

In many cases, place brand development in Latvia began as a marketing initiative, for example, with "*Sigulda aizrauj*!" (Sigulda excites!) and "*Dobele dara*!" (Dobele does!). Both slogans reflect an active attitude and a call for engagement, and their original purpose of the place brand development was slightly different. In the case of the town of Sigulda the primary aim was to develop an attractive marketing proposition for tourists:

Sigulda is exciting! Sigulda is the most beautiful town in Latvia. There are not many places in the world where nature enters the town in such a beautiful way, becoming an integral part of it. There are no large factories in our town, but there are hills for skiing in winter and winding roads for cycling in summer. Our slogan – "Sigulda excites!" – confirms our mental and physical activity. (By the author of the article)

In the case of branding for the municipality of Dobele, the development of the place brand grew out of an appreciation of the local community, primarily of the local domestic producers and craftsmen:

The origin of the place brand name is related to the promotion of the entrepreneurship movement of domestic producers, craftsmen, and farmers in the region, which is characterised by genuine and creative creators. Thanks to their tireless willingness to develop, their knowledge-inspired entrepreneurship and their generosity with natural resources, we are proud of the Dobele municipality brand – "Dobele does!" (By the author of the article)

A focus on *doing things* highlights proven experience and being in the process of promising growth is also characteristic of other place brands of municipalities in Latvia, for example, "*Ķekava augam*!" (Ķekava county. We are growing!), "*Smiltenē sanāk*!" (Smiltene makes it happen!):

When interviewing people within the project, we saw that Smiltene region is mostly perceived as a quiet and peaceful place. However, an in-depth study showed that the region is full of energy, that people are active, and that the place also has a good reputation for business and sports. The positioning of the Smiltene region as an active and energetic place is expressed in the concept "Smiltene makes it happen!" This concept will also be the basis for the development of a further communication strategy. (By the author of the article)

These previous place branding examples reflect not only a progression from specific place marketing projects to strategic place brands, but also demonstrate broader and ambiguous concepts of place branding including indefinite proof of the success of these places. This brand promise must be an authentic and attractive living identity concept during the implementation of the place brand:

Transferring local stories to a brand identity is a big challenge; the question is about the local capacity for brand implementation. The brand stories of Rēzekne and Talsi have potential, but they should have stronger ideas regarding the power to change. There is a growing awareness of this in the minds of local government and service providers, as we put more emphasis on implementation of the brand than on making it. Otherwise place brands will remain at the level of decoration. (Branding expert No.1)

When it comes to the concept of place branding, it is crucial to understand the capacity of the place and the power of the unique assets of the place earlier described as intangible and tangible attributes of the place:

The fact that the 110 counties in Latvia are making brands for themselves is a horror. It is difficult to imagine all 110 counties being unique place brands. Most of them are to a large degree artificial such as Staicele – "the town of storks". It is not possible to develop a brand platform of place on such a narrow concept. It is highly necessary to be thinking seven moves ahead and to know what you're going to do. Therefore, Sigulda's concept of "excitement" allows a wider range of identity interpretation. (Brand expert No. 2)

Regarding the statement about competitive place brand identity, two conceptual directions can be observed. The first direction is the physical, obvious, generally understood, accepted existing attributes of place belonging that form a directly decorative brand identity structure. Among shared tangible attributes are geographical location, such as nature, landscape and space, which are linked to places' cultural and historical heritage:

Jēkabpils: one town – two riverbanks. Jēkabpils is a unique town due to its history. Its traditions and the twists and turns of the city's destiny have been formed by the two parts of the town on either side of the Daugava. The Daugava has always been the dividing line between the historically significant parts of the town, but now the bridge of the Daugava unites the right bank, historic Krustpils, and the left bank, historic Jēkabpils. (By the author of the article)

The second conceptual direction of place brand identity attributes is place narratives. The place brand identity interactions that occur within physical settings have different degrees of tangibility and could be represented as a communication form through narratives. But place could be regarded as a social construction, and in marketing terms is represented as much through narratives. Indeed, both conceptual directions of place brand identity assets together create the belongingness of place. However, place brand identity narratives are more intangible in terms of emotional bonds and find materiality through habitus, lifestyle, history and the elements of local culture. The search for narratives of place identity requires unique and competitive stories, without which the existence of place brands cannot be taught:

Narrative as the brand's identity story works for all audiences. Often, narrative is more important than visual identity. Local governments tell stories. Creating a narrative is an enormous amount of work, and we pay too little attention to it. An easy and common practice is to create a catchy slogan. One is to write an emotionally involving story about who you are and develop a story, and another is to work with current and external audiences about the messages – who we are. (Branding expert No. 1)

In interviews, branding experts emphasise the professionalism of place brand developers and the ability to offer strategically bold and credible place identity narratives, as well as the local government's confidence and capacity to provide these brand identity messages consistently and regularly:

The shyness of brand implementers appears in applications of place narratives, because it is often easier to create a beautiful logotype. The job of brand consultants and advisors is to teach to nurture the narrative, with self-confidence, to develop further, to reflect this narrative and to stop being shy. We do not know how to conduct a critical dialogue; as soon as there is opposition or criticism, doubts appear. This is the moment when narrative is important. The significance of narrative is high, but it is low in place branding. (Branding expert No. 3)

It does not matter how visible and recognisable place narratives are; it is a matter of purposeful research and a clear vision, where we want to be and how we can transform:

None of the brands have ready-made narratives, but I see them as threads that can be woven into the big identity story of the place. The ornament of the Sigulda walking stick is more symbolic than the walking stick itself. (Branding expert No. 2)

It is quite a common practice to ensure an ongoing and engaging place brand identity: Sigulda excites, Dobele does, Ķekava grows and Valmiera wins. These examples demonstrate narratives of symbolic meaning – places that are transforming and developing and both the place and its inhabitants as mutual beneficiaries on the path to prosperity. The context of place brand narrative is a cluster of cultural ideas and due to living expressions provides a meaning of belonging to a place. It is essentially important to search for not only compelling, but also influential narratives – both authentic and inauthentic:

Marginal stories about storks, rye bread and smooth cakes, they disappear without trace. It is dangerous to toss out stories without any direction, because without thorough research, you cannot realise their true potential. Each story needs to have the power to build marketing and branding and also an attractive series of stories. Sigulda and Ventspils win, because there is consistency, if additional steps are needed are needed, they can be invented. (Branding expert No. 2)

The author of the article investigates the key features and attributes of place identity, focusing on the creation of place brand identity and what makes meaningful connections between people and place. The specific conceptual attributes that combine to construct a place's brand identity, origin, values, personality, residential composition and shared assets such as identity narratives overlap with each other and are reflected in the image of the place. The concept of place brand identity in the majority of cases of place brands in Latvia is demonstrated by visual and verbal decorativeness and a lack of sustainable narration. The term "decorativeness" is understood as expressions of brand identity in the form of a designed logo and slogan, characteristic of consumer communication, which mostly includes interpretations of tangible place attributes, such as the most characteristic natural landscapes of a town. The challenging issue is identifying the necessary place identity attributes and engaging residents in the process of co-creating their place's brand, in order to develop an identity that is credible, competitive and sustainable in the minds of the stakeholders it serves. Therefore, the concept of place brand narrative requires in future an empirical exploration of the relationships and experiences of places and their residents.

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COVID-19 AND DATA: CRISIS MITIGATION TOOLS

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Abstract

The cultural and creative sector (CCS) is one of the hardest-hit sectors due to COVID-19. The rapid decline in audience and revenues makes it impossible to create and offer financially demanding cultural products and services. This will be a long-term effect – it will affect the supply and demand of cultural services for at least two to three years to come. A realistic forecast suggests that this period will be characterized by a narrowed audience market, a decline in the purchasing power of the population and reduced leverage of funding. Decisions about performances, productions and investments in new content can no longer rely on traditional audience behavioural patterns, historical demand data, or an organization's institutional memory. Cultural institutions need to make decisions about the future without being able to predict it even two weeks ahead. The article examines the open data arrays available in Latvia on and the potential of their use in the cultural and creative sector to alleviate the crisis.

Keywords: *cultural and creative sector (CCS), open data, audience, COVID-19.*

Decline of cultural consumption

Arguably the crisis in cultural consumption in Latvia has developed much earlier than in the spring of 2020 when the culture and event industry was closed, following the aggravation of the situation as a result of COVID-19. This is evidenced by the results of several successive studies on cultural consumption as well as the overall results of cultural statistics in various cultural sectors, the conclusions of which are not too flattering for the cultural sector. As early as in 2018, it was concluded that the frequency and regularity of attending cultural events decreased in the long run. The most frequently mentioned reasons by the producers of cultural events were: laziness to attend events (60%), too many different leisure opportunities, too wide choice (56%), lack of interest in culture (55%), lack of finances, high cost of entrance tickets

(51%), lack of time, little free time, busy schedule (51%), distance/getting there, transport problems (49%) [Latvian Academy of Culture, SKDS, Culturelab 2018].

A very simplified visit equation can be expressed by the formula:

$$visit = interest + time + place + price.$$

The first three reasons (laziness, too much content, too much choice, not interested) actually play out somewhere in Bourdieu's fields of socially determined taste and capital theory, and more likely show organizers' own lack of interest and/or ability to understand audience change and choice determinants. The following ones (ticket prices, time, distance) have often been underestimated by cultural sociology research [Brook 2017; Delrieu, Gibson 2017; Swanson and Davis 2012]. However, these are the factors that can be answered by data on citizens and society, the economy and business, transport, regions and municipalities.

It is not common to examine this unfavourable trend while maintaining the narrative of Latvia being a cultural power, but it must be admitted that looking at even older data (for example, comparing 2018 data with 2014 data) this is not a new trend but has continued for a long time.

The cancellation of cultural events added to the already declining consumption trend when the Cabinet of Ministers declared an emergency situation on 13 March 2020. The constantly changing restrictions on the course of cultural events (throughout 2020, they have been changed at least ten times in Latvia) inevitably resulted in both a reduced number of events and number of tickets sold (Figure 1).
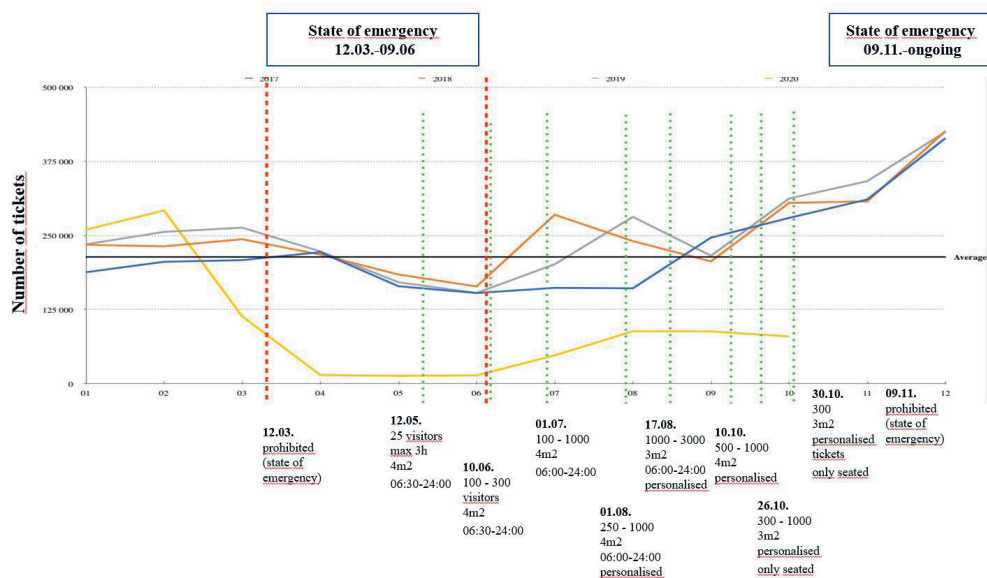

Figure 1. Number of sold tickets.

Data prepared on 30.10.2020, based on the information provided by the ticket-selling platforms Biļešu paradīze*,* Biļešu serviss*,* Bez rindas *and* e-kase*.*

However unpleasant the data for 2020 may seem (the decline in the cultural and creative industries in Latvia is also reflected in other data, such as changes in the added value of the sectors, the decline in taxes paid by the industry etc.), they represent short-term effects only. The real impact on the audience, the compliance of the offered cultural services with their expectations and insufficient funding for investments will only be felt in the following 3 to 5 years. As the OECD also noted in a recent study:

> *"The effects of the crisis on distribution channels and the drop in investment by the sector will affect the production of cultural goods and services and their diversity in the months, if not years, to come. Over the medium term, the anticipated lower levels of international and domestic tourism, drop in purchasing power, and reductions of public and private funding for arts and culture, especially at the local level, could amplify this negative trend even further."*

Inevitably, against the background of a downward trend, another extraordinary shock brought by the "black swan", this time in the form of a virus, creates unprecedented pressure to think intensively and fight for the return of the audience in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment in an uncertain future. It is especially worrying that the challenges posed by COVID-19 in Latvia are playing out in the shadow of several long-term negative trends – a decline in the total population and in overall cultural consumption.

In addition to the traditional motivators for consuming culture, an unpredictably long-term demotivator has come into the force, i. e. the insecurity of the audience and the fear of attending public events. At the time of writing this article, the cultural and creative sector is in fact funded by the state through various support programmes. However, they are limited in time and will not be able to sustain the cultural and event industry in the medium term.

What is open data and what it can bring to the table

Although there are dozens of definitions of "open data", they all seem to have a somewhat tautological explanation in common: open data are data that are open [e. g., Wessels et al. 2014]. It is similarly defined by the International Charter on Open Data: *"Open data is digital data that is made available with the technical and legal characteristics necessary for it to be freely used, reused, and redistributed by anyone, anytime, anywhere."*

The OECD, which was in fact the first influential international organization to start adopting and advancing the idea of open government data, defines it as:

> *"data that can be freely used, re-used and distributed by anyone, only subject to (at the most) the requirement that users attribute the data and that they make their work available to be shared as well"* [Ubaldi 2013].

In addition to the fact that the currently open data arrays have become incomprehensible to human analysis capabilities, these two basic features (freely available and usable) have a third feature, namely, the data is machine readable.

The relationship between cultural consumption and various specific products and socio-economic factors has been studied at least since Bourdieu's "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste" [Bourdieu 1979], in which seemingly individual choices are determined by belonging to specific social and cultural fields. In Latvia, in the cultural and creative sector, a large part of decisions on production policy, repertoire direction, artistic choices and/or schedule of events have been based on individual decisions. They are usually related to artistic settings, institutional memory and the experience of each cultural content producer. Moreover, the dominant aspect is most likely the artistic one, i.e., the producers of cultural content in the public sector basically move in the direction determined by directors, artistic directors etc. It has not always met the expectations and behaviour of the audience, which is often characterized by the simple phrase "somehow it didn't work out…"

Currently, a new situation has emerged in which the usual decision-making algorithms are no longer efficient. The motivation structure of the audience, ticket-buying habits, basic principles of repertoire structure, visitors' expectations from the service have collapsed. Now the organization's decision-making structure has become more significant. What is more, the traditional economic and financial algorithms are no longer of use, which is currently creating additional financial instability.

In recent years, Latvia has made a really impressive leap in developing the availability of open data, currently moving rapidly upwards in various international ratings [e. g., OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index 2019]. Namely, data and its accessibility that until relatively recently was described as a "new form of power" [Andrejevic 2014] are no longer available only to their holders, but increasingly to everyone. Undoubtedly, the public sector and its corporations are the largest subscribers and holders of data, and the data they hold actually includes everything from commercial information, taxes, public procurement, meteorological, socio-economic data, transport information, etc. The use of data in culture balances a very economic approach, which sees the use of data as an almost or magical ability to create added value, for example, by segmenting the audience on the basis of

data; replacement or support for human decisions, innovative business models and services, etc. [a typical data industry optimistic approach is represented, for example, by Beer 2018 or McKinsey Global Institute].

There is a much more sceptical approach in cultural analytics which refers to the use of data in cultural value analysis and audience as being "mythical" [Couldry 2014] or even quite "magical" [Appadurai 2012].

With the increasing availability of open and large data, its potential in cultural research has recently also become an increasingly important issue. More and more research in recent years has highlighted the use of big data, focusing on its dynamics and potential [Atique 2018], while also criticizing the so-called "profiling" users by their choice of cultural products [Cheney-Lippold 2011; Ashton, Gowland-Pryde 2019] and the still unresolved ethical issues related to data acquisition and processing [Boyd and Crawford 2012; Livingstone 2019].

Where we are

It cannot be argued that in Latvia, cultural operators and content producers are extremely passionate about data management and the use of open and large data. However, this seems to be typical not only of Latvia and the approach of the cultural sector to work with data is generally criticized as inadequate and outdated [Lilley, Moore 2013].

This is related to several really long-standing problems. Firstly, detailed audience research at the level of Latvian cultural organizations is still quite rare if not non-existent; secondly, culture-specific data is only partially available for automated processing; thirdly, significant investments in digital culture have been focused on the volume of digital content (a total of EUR 11.9 million has been invested in the ERDF co-financed project "Digitization of Cultural Heritage Content" during this EU funding period), and incomparably little attention has been paid to the needs of users of this digital content which seems to be explained by the simple assumption that "if there is content, someone will need it"; fourthly, the often limited staff capacity of cultural organizations themselves to work with the digital environment and audience. Some development has been observed relatively recently, following the approval of several national research programmes this year, which include both digital content research and re-use of data and solutions [namely: Cultural Capital as a Resource for Latvia's Sustainable Development/CARD No. VPP-KM-LKRVA-2020/1-003; Digital Resources for the Humanities: Integration and Development No. VPP-IZM-DH-2020/1-0001].

Nothing seems to be as obvious about the underestimation of data as the situation in Latvia, where many cultural operators and content producers have voluntarily handed over their data to ticketing platforms, thus largely losing control

over this data and not fully gaining access to it. Only in recent years (mainly for financial reasons) we can see that some large public and private culture sector players are starting to develop their own ticketing and audience involvement platforms, such as the New Riga Theatre and the Latvian National Theatre. A similar trend is taking place in the private sector, for example, the music festival "Riga Jurmala".

The main motivation for working with data is based on the assumption that the data will help cultural content creators to identify patterns of action and to obtain meaningful information to address short- and long-term challenges effectively. From the point of view of the operator of the cultural and creative sector, the information contained in the data is of two types: the audience (the most important source here is the data of each organization about its customer and his/her behaviour), and, even more importantly now, data on what is not an audience, namely, who they are, their working hours, their movements, their place of residence, etc. This way open and large data allows to see audiences again [Livingstone 2019]. On the other hand, the purpose of data-processing factors influencing attendance, such as time, place and price, is focused on the audience and the decisions and offers of the specific consumer of the cultural event/product. The local player in the cultural and creative sector fights for the visitor's free time not only with other leisure alternatives, but also with global platforms and social networks. And they lose in this fight because they do not play with the same tools they play with, since Netflix, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube already base their algorithms for content delivery on user-generated big data.

The use of data from the point of view of the organization of cultural content is mainly motivated and supported by the need to develop demand-driven products, reach new audiences or profile certain types of products for certain types of target audiences. The short end-of-summer season of 2020 clearly showed that it was commercially easier to sell events with a "taste of exclusivity" at a relatively high price than to try to sell a larger number of tickets at a low price.

There is also no doubt that the data are based on organizations' funding systems and grant systems. Looking at the financing agreement of any theatre or concert organization with the Ministry of Culture, it is easy to see that the reporting mechanisms in the standard financing agreement consist of 26 data units in five different data groups (repertoire, audience, international operations, financial, technical and technological stability, others), including the average ticket price and the proportion of invitations to represent). Hence, the traditional data include units produced, consumers, sales volume, which basically do not significantly differ from any manufacturing company.

It is undisputed that data sets in any field are very large or that, due to its volume, it is possible to "benefit" from their automatic processing to determine the

correlations between such data carriers. Such processing is undoubtedly beyond human capacity and there is no doubt that if data is available, it should be studied [Manovich 2017]. It should be noted that relying only on open data results without other sources and methods (such as qualitative research methods) is likely to lead to distorted conclusions [for more on this, see, for example, Livingstone 2019; Couldry, Kallinikos 2017]. However, as mentioned above, time, space and place are objectively existing factors, which can be judged only in relation to the individual and not to society as a whole. Research into the activities of a particular individual in combination with the picture provided by open could provide a more realistic and objective picture. For example, Bail sees in the big data movement an instrument that can radically change the imbalance of cultural sociology between theory and data [Bail 2014].

What is more, the analysis of open data can take place only in the context of a problem, question or specific task. Without human analytical input and, most importantly, the ability to ask a precise question and/or task on the open data itself is of little help. Data are just hundreds of thousands of numbers arranged in spreadsheet columns. A critical component of data usability is its analysis, organization, problem solving and interpretation of results. As long as the data sets are large enough, there are sometimes really surprising features and coincidences [Martinho 2018].

Following the three basic features of open data (freely available, usable, machine readable), it can be concluded that the available "source" data on the open data portals available in Latvia correspond to them. Much of the data are related to specific location, traffic, time, and price-specific factors, which are components of the above "visit equation".

Consider, for example, the venue and timing of the event/other cultural product or service. If "loss of motivation starts around the border one hour away from the place of residence" [Access to culture in Latvia: factors and possible solutions 2020: 27], geospatial data such as "List of intercity and local movements in GTFS format" intersected with the data set "Resident population in 100 × 100 m grid cells in cities and densely populated areas" allow to determine the potential "near-by" audience of the event. The same is valid for the timing and schedule. A natural reasoning behind the timing is to maximize potential audience. How to schedule the starting time of performances? Is it right that all performances start at about the same time – 19:00? Maybe if we play this competitive game, the winner turns out to be the one who determines, say, an hour earlier than the others?

The data-based approach to this question is based on both "closed data" available only to the organization itself and "open data" available to anyone. The "closed data" is indispensable to reveal the trend (correlation between ticket purchases and changes in audience size on different days of the week with different time schedules of the

event). However, if a negative trend is observed on any of the relevant days or times (to put it simple, "timing" obviously does not meet the expectations of the audience and their daily rhythm), "open data" should be used to find a more precise and data-based answer for a better timing.

For example, the least attended performances of the Latvian National Opera and Ballet are on Sunday evenings. This trend is regular regardless of repertoire, genre or artistic content. Obviously, one of the obvious reasons behind poor attendance might be assumption that due to the length of opera/ballet performances (they often tend to end only after 22), the audience does not want to go home so late after the performance, given that the next day – Monday is the beginning of the work (and school) week.

In this case "open data" on "E-ticket validation data in *Rīgas Satiksme* public transport" routes and "Migration of the employed population between the actual place of residence and the place of employment" combined with data array on resident population in 1×1 km grid cells (within walking distance) can reveal much more precise answer based on natural movement of potential audience at any time of the day than a subjective opinion of the event's producer.

Conclusion

The cultural and creative sector is currently facing unprecedented pressure. It is no secret that more and more companies and players in the commercial sector support decision-making and knowledge creation by calculating what is metaphorically called "open and big data".

In Latvia, the cultural sector has traditionally relied on the institutional memory of the organization and the everyday decision-making mechanisms that are no longer in place. Open data can expand accessibility and improve existing cultural services by identifying both potential audiences and service delivery, such as time and place of events. Data-driven future decisions can work in culture to anticipate and build new sales and accessibility patterns.

For this to happen, a fundamental change in thinking is needed. This is not so much a question of investing money as it is a mode of thinking and recognizing that data can and should add a better quality to everyday decisions. Most of the open data is already available for free, or free programmes are available to process it. What it requires, both at the level of internal data generated by the organization and at the level of external open data, is to see the value of the data and build decision-making systems that are based, at least partially, not on individual opinions but also on data, especially audience. This would lead to a better understanding of the place of the products created, not only in space, time and place, but also in the field of cultural/ social capital. In addition, it offers a tool to measure both economic contribution

and non-economic indicators of cultural and social capital growth, which are also directly linked to cultural activity. Ultimately, the use of open data has not only financial benefits, but also the creation of new products and forms of cultural value. Personalized products are becoming more and more the norm, the cultural and creative sector has a unique standing point to gain from this game.

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ACCESSIBILITY OF CULTURAL EDUCATION IN ITS BROADEST SENSE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN LATVIA

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Abstract

Although Latvia can be justifiably proud of its many cultural achievements, there are still problems for people with disabilities to exercise their right to access culture both inside and outside the capital city. The purpose of the research paper is to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the cultural policy of Latvia with a scope on social inclusion. Various documents regulating cultural policy mention the need to ensure access to the cultural environment and to foster cultural diversity. However, those responsible for implementing cultural policy seem to either misinterpret the documents or are unable to implement the planned improvements due to other circumstances. Hence the article will first briefly outline the scope of cultural diversity in order to show that a cultural product created by people with disabilities is part of cultural diversity. The article will focus on the concept of "cultural education", analysing the most common present usage of it by cultural policy actors, and considering whether this concept should not be used on a much broader sense. This would raise the awareness of the necessity of cultural education and thus of the necessity for accessibility to cultural education for people with disabilities in cultural institutions both in cities and in the countryside. The research paper provides an overview of the data collected from surveying cultural institutions of Latvia in 2017 and 2020, with a regard to the availability of cultural processes and cultural education in Latvia. The author strives to emphasize that participation in cultural activities has to be perceived as cultural education in a broader sense, as the participation process brings new cultural knowledge to people.

Probably the reason for the unsatisfactory environment and human resource accessibility is the fact that accessibility has not been emphasized in the currently most significant documents regulating cultural education.

The environment accessibility in the cultural institutions of Latvia is insufficient and does not stimulate the availability of cultural education opportunities for people with disabilities.

Keywords: *people with disabilities, cultural education, environment accessibility.*

Introduction

In the 21ˢᵗ century, cultural education and art are increasingly regarded as societal issues in a broader sense, also viewed from the perspective of social justice as a right to equal access to opportunities.

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity emphasizes that a factor for development is the fact that "Cultural diversity expands the range of opportunities available to everyone; it is one of the key elements of development, not only in terms of economic growth, but also as a means of achieving an acceptable intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence" [UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2001].

This statement is particularly important for people with disabilities, as they are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Culture not only encourages the development of identity and a sense of belonging, but also reflects the diversity of coexistence. Cultural researcher Annamari Laaksonen in her work on cultural accessibility emphasizes that "While culture has increased its importance and presence in economic terms and in relation to the market, it has also manifested itself as an important element of social and economic transformation, social cohesion and education for civic democratic participation" [Laaksonen 2010: 8].

People with disabilities are only slightly different in terms of some aspect of their functional ability, but they crave for the same things as everyone: acceptance, respect, justice. This aspect has also been confirmed by the results of the survey carried out among the participants of the choir *Nāc līdzās!* ("Come along!") after the Centennial Song Festival, where the answer "I felt equal" scored the highest.[1]

There are different definitions of cultural diversity. Most of them name similar components that compose this diversity – ethnic, gender, racial, religious and socio-economic diversity etc. – that must be able to coexist in one social unit. Hereby culture plays a leading role in human life. Through intellectual development and personal growth, it helps to develop various skills for the development of creative activity, furthermore, it encourages not only personal development, but also the sense of first regional, then national identity and belonging.

Methodology

Three methods were used in the methodology of the research. The first method – content analysis of the texts of international and Latvian legal acts, in which a regulation was sought that would refer both to the concept of cultural education and to the implementation of rights to access cultural education for people with

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[1] *Nāc līdzās!* choir survey took place in July 2018 after the XXVI Latvian Song and XVI Dance Festival, 19 choir singers with functional disorders participated in the survey.

disabilities. Two methods have been applied to collect data on the availability of environmental and human resources in Latvian cultural institutions – first, telephone interviews with the management of the cultural institutions located in Riga and, second, an Internet survey by e-mailing to the management of the cultural institutions located outside Riga. These methods were chosen because it was necessary to obtain data from all over Latvia, which is a wide geographical range that makes face-to-face interviews difficult. Both closed and open questions were asked in the survey. Telephone interviews certainly provided more accurate data, as it was possible to clarify questions if necessary. The advantage of the Internet method is the ability to collect as much data as possible. Disadvantage – in the open-ended questions, the interviewees could avoid objective answers if they did not understand the nature of the question.

Discussion

The article provides the analysis of the most important documents regulating the cultural policy of Latvia with regard to the people with special needs, alongside with the implementation practices of these documents. In Latvia the state policy on cultural education is developed by the Ministry of Culture. The document "Creative Latvia" issued by the ministry states the cultural policy guidelines for 2014–2020. Setting priorities for actions in the time period, the document implies the necessity: "to strengthen the existent and to promote the accessibility of **new cultural services** in cultural institutions without any discrimination, including promoting **social inclusion for persons with functional disabilities**" [Cultural policy guidelines 2014–2020 "Creative Latvia" 2014]. This sounds nice in theory, however, in real life the situation concerning people with special needs has not significantly improved as for the second half of 2020[1], although access to culture is a fundamental basic right for all citizens. The direction suggested by the guidelines could not be followed, because from the very beginning there were neither specific action plans, nor tasks set on how to do it. Likewise, it was not indicated which institutions would be responsible for the inclusion of people with disabilities in society in all spheres of life, thus also regarding access to culture and cultural education. The Ministry of Culture should have paid more attention to the environment and human resource accessibility in various cultural institutions in Latvia.

The Guidelines for the Cultural Education Strategy for 2014–2020 state that "cultural education is a component of the education system of Latvia, referring to

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[1] This is factually confirmed by the data of the survey of Latvian cultural centers, cultural houses, community houses, meeting houses and other cultural institutions outside Riga conducted by the author in August 2020.

all the levels of education in the fields of culture and creative industries, including continued education, as well as general education in culture, developing an individual's creativity and talent in a lifelong learning perspective" [Cultural Policy Guidelines for 2014–2020 "Creative Latvia" 2014]. From the aforementioned it is possible to draw a conclusion that cultural education is a broader concept that shall be attributed to educational processes of all levels and duration. Particular attention should be paid to the final part of the statement – "developing an individual's creativity and talent in a lifelong learning perspective". This aspect referred to cultural education should receive more attention on the state policy level in today's ever-changing world, where individual identities may be threatened in the context of globalization. Lifelong learning is very important for the target group consisting of people with disabilities, as it is often not possible for people in this group to obtain a sufficiently high level of formal education.

Society is in the state of constant dynamic development, thus its value system and its attitude towards others is changing – where stereotypes used to prevail, the differences are accepted. With this in mind, the interests and rights of the various groups in society must also be respected, following the principle of equality and eliminating discrimination. Culture shall be applied as one of the tools or transformers that must promote social inclusion for people with disabilities. The right to participate, to get involved, to express one's opinions, help individuals to experience the sense of human dignity. Culture provides people with an opportunity to understand that they are part of a community, and therefore participation in cultural processes should become a high priority in cultural policy.

In the Latvian cultural policy guidelines for 2014–2020 "Creative Latvia", performing a SWID analysis of the situation in the Latvian cultural sector, it has been established that a relatively large part of the society does not participate in cultural activities and processes, remaining outside the positive impact of culture. One of the target groups, which largely remains outside these processes, is people with disabilities, because, according to the data of the survey conducted by the author, the environment and human resource accessibility in the cultural centres of Latvia are poorly developed. Unfortunately, the SWID analysis of the Ministry of Culture does not mention the poor accessibility of cultural centres as a weak point.

In order to study the environment and human resource accessibility in the cultural institutions of Latvia located outside Riga, in August 2020 all types of cultural institutions of Latvia – cultural centres, cultural houses, community houses, clubs and others enlisted by the cultural information site Kulturasdati.lv – were invited to participate in a survey. A total of 420 e-mails were sent out. It should be noted that the database of e-mails of cultural institutions unfortunately contained

mistakes, therefore it was not possible to reach some of the addressees. However, by repeated requests and response clarifications it was possible to obtain answers to the survey questions from 328 respondents. The aim of the survey was to assess the general situation of environment accessibility in cultural institutions, without analysing in detail either regional distribution or the affiliation of the surveyed cultural institutions.

Some of the questions were in closed form so that the exact percentage of environment accessibility could be determined. But questions regarding human resource accessibility and being open to work with people with disabilities as team members were asked in an open form so that the answers could be analysed in detail.

It should be noted that the results of the survey revealed previous hypothetical assumptions. A relatively positive news is that regarding the question about the possibility to enter the cultural institution through the front door, respectively, to enter the building as such – there is a ramp, the door is wide enough, there are no doorsteps – 81% or 267 respondents answered positively. However, it is not possible to enter 19% or 61 cultural institutions at all. It is possible that this number could be slightly higher, considering the number of non-respondents. So almost one fifth of cultural institutions are inaccessible to people with disabilities!

Regarding the answers to the next question, in which the institutions provide answers about the independent access of people with disabilities to the audience halls inside the buildings – whether there are no doorsteps, the door is wide enough, there are elevators in case the hall is located higher than the ground floor, the number of positive answers is already decreasing – in 76% or 250 cultural institutions people with disabilities can enter the hall, but in almost a quarter – 24% or 79 institutions, this is not possible. In this case, if people with disabilities can enter the building independently, they still need help to be able to enter the hall, which is actually the main place of cultural activities in a cultural centre.

Considering that people with disabilities in Latvia have nevertheless shown a desire to be active not only as consumers of a cultural product, but also as its creators, as proven by their participation in the Integrative Art Festival *Nāc līdzās!* (Come along!) organized by the *Nāc līdzās!* Foundation, singing in the choir *Nāc līdzās!* and considering the fact that also on the stage of the Centenary Song and Dance Festival concerts as members of several choirs there were people in wheelchairs, the survey included the question about the possibilities of people with disabilities to access the stage independently. Unfortunately, the answers to these questions were remarkably negative concerning environment access. Only 10% or 34 cultural institutions have the opportunity for people with disabilities to get on stage independently. In 90% or 296 cases this is not possible. These data closely coincide with the research on

the survey data of Riga city cultural institutions. Even in the biggest cultural centres in Riga – *Iļģuciems*, *Ziemeļblāzma*, *Imanta*, *Ritums*, as well as in all the children and youth centres and music and art schools it is not possible to get to the stage without the help of an assistant. Exceptions are VEF Culture Palace, art space *Mākslas Telpa*, the National Library of Latvia, all of which have been recently built or renovated.

To continue, a totally unacceptable fact for the 21st century cultural institutions is posed by the data on the environment accessibility of toilets. For people with disabilities, it seems self-evident that when visiting a cultural institution, toilets are usually also visited. Unfortunately, in 52% or 171 cultural institutions this is not possible for people with special needs. This makes the majority of the surveyed institutions. And, in fact, this answer to a seemingly non-priority question is a possible key to why people with special needs avoid attending cultural events. Because one cannot deal without attendance to their physiological needs while being present at a cultural event or engaging in artistic activities.

This fact can also partly explain why only 11% or 38 cultural institutions in their amateur art groups engage people with special needs. We need to take into consideration that people with disabilities in Latvia are often unemployed because of difficulties in finding a job, which, in turn, means that they have more free time to spend meaningfully if the environment conditions are favourable. Nonetheless, there are no participants with disabilities in creative activities of 290 cultural institutions. Respondents who do not have any special needs participants in amateur art groups have mentioned that there are no people with disabilities in their region. This statement is unbelievable, because the official statistics show that there are people with special needs or disabilities in all the regions of Latvia [VDEĀVK uzskaitē esošās pilngadīgās personas ar invaliditāti pēc invaliditātes smaguma pakāpes un administratīvās teritorijas 2019]. Rather, it addresses the fact that there was no desire to approach these people and invite them to any activities in cultural institutions, or there is no environment access. The question of how intensely local municipalities and cultural centres that do not have environment access have invested or sought financial resources to make the environment accessible, still remains open.

Likewise, the expressed claim that people with disabilities have not expressed a desire to participate in amateur art groups cannot be regarded as a valid excuse, because the data of the survey clearly indicate the extent to which cultural centres are still inaccessible, and it should be clear that a person with disabilities, if he/she does not have an assistant during the day, might not feel the desire to participate in the local cultural life actively if there is a lack of basic facilities in the cultural centre, such as specially equipped toilets, the opportunity to enter both the building and the audience hall.

Responses confirming the participation of people with disabilities in amateur art groups also name the number of participants ranging from 1 to 3; only two responses provide either 8 or 10 participants. Thus, some of the answers to the question "Would your amateur art group leaders be willing to accept and work with people with disabilities – both physical and mental disabilities?" are similar to those of other cultural institution management representative responses: "It depends on the attitude of the rest of the group members. Unfortunately, there are different reactions. Some people would refuse to work together with a special needs person." In Latvia, high goals have been set in amateur art, the achievement of which can be hindered by the people with disabilities: "I think that people with physical disabilities – yes. Of course, given the type of amateur art group involved. If dancing, then it would be difficult, even impossible, because accordingly it is necessary to form such a group with more than one participant. If singing and playing a musical instrument, then it is possible. With mental issues, I do not think it is possible. It may differ in a very specific way. More specified answer can be provided by the leaders of the amateur art groups, who must have the appropriate knowledge and qualifications. In our institution, each group has its own task and goals to be achieved during the season. There are Song Festival groups, for which the achievement of the set tasks requires a lot of input, certain skills, physical fitness, quality, etc., which is not always easy to access, not all the groups meet the selection criteria and can participate in the Song Festival."

Regardless of the difficulties, people with disabilities want to be involved in cultural processes, as proven by the practice of the Foundation *Nāc līdzās!* that has been serving the development of the culture of people with disabilities in Latvia for 24 years. Being aware of the fact that cultural activities of people with disabilities in the country are neglected, the Foundation has for several years expressed a wish to receive a command from the Ministry of Culture to perform this work. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Culture has not supported this request, considering that the functions of cultural education for people with disabilities are already executed in various music and art schools. However, these are only a few distinct cases where teachers are ready to provide tuition for children with special needs, such as in Jugla Music School, which admits blind and visually impaired children because it is located near Strazdumuiža boarding school that grants access to general education for blind and visually impaired children. An individual case is Dace Milzere, a teacher at the Liepāja 2nd Music School, who provides guitar classes for a blind student. Anyway, checking, for example, the accessibility of Riga music and art schools[1], it can be concluded that

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[1] In October 2017 telephone interviews were conducted with leading officials of 40 cultural institutions inside and outside Riga (receiving state or local municipality grants) – concert halls, theatres, cultural centres in Riga, art schools and Children and Youth centres in Riga.

accessibility is weak, because 4 out of 9 music schools cannot even offer people with disabilities a possibility to enter the building, in 8 out of 9 schools, children with disabilities do not have access to the stage, in 6 schools there are no toilets for people with disabilities.

Knowing that the proportion of persons with disabilities among the permanent population is gradually increasing (at the beginning of 2016 it was 8.8%, at the beginning of 2017 it was 9.3%, but at the beginning of 2018 – 9.7%) [Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2020: 107], the survey involved a future development-oriented question regarding readiness of the amateur art group managers to accept in their groups and to work with people with special needs – both physical and mental disabilities. The answers to this question were both ambivalent. In many cases, respondents mentioned that they could accept participants with a physical disability in their groups, but not with a mental disability, as this would require both additional knowledge and an additional person – an assistant to the manager. Some respondents have not thought about this issue at all so far. But in some of the answers there was a misunderstanding how to connect the performance goals set for amateur art groups (shows and competitions where high results are expected) with the participation of people with disabilities in the groups.

These answers suggest that there is difficulty to include people with disabilities in the cultural process, as long as amateur art is only focused on high results. Shouldn't it be rather regarded as a high-quality leisure time and investment in the development and education of one's personality? Is it a cultural education process in the first place?

Conclusion

The involvement of people with disabilities in cultural processes in Latvia is very weak. The explanation for that is the underdeveloped environment access. There is also no initiative from cultural institutions to involve people of this target group, as it requires additional resources – acquisition of new knowledge to work with people with disabilities, possibly additional people – assistants, possibly breaking stereotypes in the minds of the employees of the cultural sector. Involvement in cultural activities as an added value also sustains the development of interpersonal skills, develops feelings of empathy, openness, and ultimately gives feelings of happiness and being recognized as equal regarding the opportunities to participate.

Recommendations

Regarding the cultural processes involving people with disabilities, the Ministry of Culture should acknowledge that the cultural product created by these people has to be considered as equal to others, that the state and local authorities should

think more about the accessibility of culture for this group. There must be examined a closer cooperation with the non-governmental sector, which has been working on developing cultural processes for people with disabilities on its own initiative for many years. The Cultural Policy Guidelines for 2014–2020 also state that "an underused resource in improving governance is the opportunities for cooperation between the state and the non-governmental sector, strengthening self-government and developing effective cooperation models" [Cultural Policy Guidelines for 2014–2020 "Creative Latvia" 2014]. By improving cooperation with the non-governmental sector, the Ministry should improve tools that ensure equal access to cultural education opportunities and cultural product, thus contributing to the achievement of vital goals for individuals and society.

The term "cultural education" is mostly used by the Ministry of Culture to refer to the processes in cultural and art schools that children and young people attend to obtain professional art or music education. In the final report of the study "Cultural Education in Latvia: Accessibility, Demand, Quality" we cannot find information about the accessibility of cultural education for people with disabilities. In fact, the study only analyses professional cultural education at different levels, although the definition says that cultural education is also general education in the fields of culture, the development of each individual's creative abilities and talents from a lifelong learning perspective [Klāsons, Tjarve, Kunda 2018]. Professional orientation could be only one aspect to be taken into account, because this concept should definitely be used in a broader scope today – in the 21st century. Cultural education is part of lifelong learning that receives increasing attention in the world today. In cultural education, too, it occurs in every activity when a person – a child or an adult – participates in a cultural activity by creating a cultural product or participating in the process as a consumer. A user of a cultural product must also be educated in order to be able to perceive, analyse and experience culture emotionally. Emotions are vital to human wellbeing, and music and other creative activities give them. In turn, education would promote the development of cultural understanding and expression competence.

Meanwhile, as a positive recommendation should be regarded the one suggested by the authors of the aforementioned study: "Accredited educational institutions that implement professional cultural education programmes by subordination are in the management of local authorities. Given that all municipalities have both children and adults with disabilities, wouldn't it be time to develop and accredit programmes that are suitable for both children and adults with disabilities?" [Klāsons, Tjarve, Kunda 2018]. This recommendation should be taken into account, as it would change the future situation and the ratio of students with special needs in the total

number of students in arts-oriented and professional secondary cultural education institutions could increase.

In each of these processes, an individual educates oneself in one of the fields of culture. It is in this cultural education process that people with disabilities are especially supported, as they, due to the unavailability of the environment and human resources, do not have access to processional cultural education or have difficulty to follow a high level of education, such as people with intellectual disabilities. The functional impairments or disorders of people with disabilities often slow down their perceptual speed what refers to their vision, hearing, inability to move quickly and involving the whole body, intellectual abilities, often making it difficult to complete various tasks. However, for people with disabilities, participation in various cultural education processes improves their mental health and quality of life in general.

Access to various rights and freedoms – to be able to participate, to join, to express one's opinion – helps us to feel the respect that is important to us as human beings. Culture gives us the opportunity to understand that we are part of a community, and therefore participation in its processes should become a high priority.

"In 2027 Latvia is a country where everyone feels good. People are united by similar values and understanding of the order of things in the world; this is a society in which people care and support each other, and everyone is provided with sufficient living conditions and opportunities to improve them. People are able to maintain their psychological and emotional health, to balance professional and personal life, to enjoy the richness of cultural life and spend their free time to the fullest" [Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2020].

People with disabilities must have basic needs provided, including cultural education and equal participation. A society cannot be united, secure and open without strengthening social inclusion and developing empathy at the societal level.

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WHY WE SHARE FAKE NEWS: COOPERATION BETWEEN ARTISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN PRODUCING THE THEATRE PERFORMANCE "FAKE NEWS"

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Abstract

First, the article gives the analysis of the cooperation between artists and researchers in producing the theatre performance "Fake News". Artists of the theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS invited young researchers of the Latvian Academy of Culture (LAC) to do a sociological study of the phenomenon of fake news, its conceptual borders and its characteristics historically and today. The research served as an informative and educational basis for the transformation of the fake news phenomenon into an artistic phenomenon that seeks to problematize the issue of fake news for a broader audience. Secondly, the article presents the findings of this study, revealing why people share fake news. We find this motivation is emotionally based and is associated with emotional attachment, anxiety, comicality, or trust. People fall for fake news and share the messages that they find to be (i) thematically relevant, interesting and exciting for them; (ii) the messages that concern some emergency or crisis situations; (iii) the messages that seem to be absurd and even comical; (iv) the news distributed by a reliable source of information.

Keywords: *cooperation, research, art, theatre, fake news.*

Collaboration between artists and researchers

The phenomenon of fake news was brought to the foreground both in the public space in Latvia and elsewhere in the world in connection with the election of the US President Donald Trump, as well as the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom. Western media and the elites often linked the outcome of both votes to Russian propaganda. Although the uproar around the phenomenon of fake news seems to

be a contemporary phenomenon, Princeton University historian Anthony Grafton [Grafton 2019] points out that various kinds of deception have been an issue ever since the beginnings of Western civilization. In his book about falsification and deception, the American poet Kevin Young [Young 2017] describes numerous cases where writers have falsely claimed their books to be based on true stories and memoirs, and artists have forged the paintings of ancient artists to claim them to be genuine art findings. According to the art historian Mark Jones, "every society, every generation falsifies the things it wants most" [Jones 2018: 26]. In this way, we could look at the collective myths and folklore (various legends and stories) that exist in societies, as well as at the propaganda, which has been equally relevant at all times and in all societies. However, the difference between collective myths, folklore and propaganda is that myths and folklore symbolically seek to unite a certain community and society, whereas propaganda aims to divide a certain society for the purpose of power sharing. Moreover, truth and how we see seemingly objective facts may look different from different positions determined by different beliefs, socialization (values, norms and worldviews) and experiences. In today's digital capitalism, market communication tools are also an important source of fake news – advertisements, public relations news, as well as various narratives constructed by the clickbait digital business [Tandoc, Lim, & Ling 2017]. Thus, the phenomenon of fake news is extremely diverse both from the historical and today's perspective. The independent theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS wanted to reveal the diversity and multidimensionality of this phenomenon in their performance "Fake News", where the audience is exposed to a constant flow of news, in which the fake alternates with the seemingly true, propaganda with myths, folklore, advertising and fiction.

The performance "Fake News", which premiered in November 2019, was created with the aim to actualize and problematize the phenomenon of fake news currently so topical in society and in public space, revealing its diversity, absurdity and even comicality. The aim of the performance was underpinned to a large extent by the framework within which the theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS created the performance, where the funding of the performance from the Goethe Institute required the communication of the idea of the performance to wider society. To create more resonance in society concerning fake news and the issues associated with it, the playwright Evarts Melnalksnis and the director of the theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS Klāvs Mellis approached the 3rd year students of the bachelor's programme Cultural Sociology and Management of the Latvian Academy of Culture as researchers, with the request to help the creators of the performance research and understand the phenomenon of fake news both from the historical and today's perspective. The study conducted by students of the Latvian Academy of Culture

(LAC) on fake news not only provided "expansion of the idea space"[1] in the creation of the theatre performance, but also served as an informative basis for theatre artists in public and media discussions regarding the premiere of the theatre performance. The production of the performance and the first shows were accompanied both by interviews of the artists in the media and discussions organized by the artists themselves, in which the phenomenon of fake news was explained and problematized to the general public. Thus, the study carried out by the LAC researchers served as an informative and educational basis for the artistic transformation of the phenomenon and its communication to the society.

The collaboration of researchers and theatre artists in the actualization of various social phenomena is nothing new. This has already happened elsewhere in the world in various forms at different times [e. g., Cohen-Cruz 2010; Gallagher, Wessels, & Ntelioglou 2012; Schaefer 2012]. Jan Cohen-Cruz [2010] writes about an "engaging performance", where different actors and professionals, including researchers, are engaged in the creation of the performance to actualize some burning social or political issue. Usually, the interaction between theatre makers and other stakeholders and community representatives interested in the issue that the performance will actualize "happen at various points along the performance process: the early phases, especially research and devising, or perhaps a workshop not intended to lead to anything else; the duration of the play itself; and the period following, whether a talkback conversation, story circles, or more long-term actions that the production supports or inspires" [Cohen-Cruz 2010: 1]. Usually, the aim of such projects is to benefit the wider community and society, to actualize and tackle various social and political issues [ibid: 2]. For instance, Mark Beeson, the artistic director of Manaton and East Dartmoore (MED) Theatre, is a primatologist, who is also developing his theatre with the aim of combining research and art in to actualize painful environmental and climate issues in society in an artistic form [Schaefer 2012]. In this case, Beeson's knowledge as a researcher serves as the basis for the content of the performances. Toronto ethnographers, on the other hand, collaborated with theatre artists to highlight the social and psychological issues related to youth homelessness [Gallagher, Wessels, & Ntelioglou 2012]. In this case, the "*verbatim theatre*"[2] about young homeless people uses ethnographic research in creating a show so as to ensure

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[1] Evarts Melnalksnis. The presentation "Collaboration between researchers and theatre-makers: the case of KVADRIFRONS' performance". The 13th conference "Culture Crossroads", 31 October 2019.

[2] According to Gallagher, Wessels, & Ntelioglou [2012], verbatim theatre is based on the life stories of real people and uses direct dialogues of these people. In her master's thesis, Eva Mežaraupe [2013] defines verbatim theatre as "theatrical aesthetics that uses interviews with real people to create dramatic material".

the authenticity of the stories and thus more strongly highlight the problems of young homeless people in society. Ethnographic research continues even after the performance in discussions about the show with young people from less privileged schools, thus both continuing to research and actualizing the issues of poverty and exclusion among young people [Gallagher, Wessels, & Ntelioglou 2012].

In Latvia, the New Riga Theatre has also chosen the *verbatim theatre* approach in many of its performances, such as "Latvian Stories" and "Grandfather", but in these performances it is primarily actors that become researchers without creating specific forms of collaboration between theatre artists and researchers. The performance "Fake News" by the theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS is different because the production of this performance is characterised by the collaboration of artists and researchers in the process of idea development for the performance. In this case, the specific nature of the collaboration was underpinned not only by the phenomenon of fake news and the need to feel its limits and essence, but also by the production schedule of the performance, which provided a relatively short time for the research. So that the creators of the performance could have faster access to the empirical research material, first the dramatist of the performance, but later also the director and the actors of the performance became researchers, familiarising themselves with and analysing the materials obtained during field research. The transcripts the researchers obtained from various informants (experts, the people who shared fake news and the creator of fake news) allowed the artists to "feel" the empirical material more deeply, thus both "expanding" and deepening the space of ideas in the production of the performance. The following section contains a more detailed description of the research.

The study of fake news
Methodology

The aim set by the authors of the study was to conduct a sociological analysis of the fake news phenomenon. Within the framework of the study, the authors not only theoretically examined the historical genesis and contemporary nature and classification of the fake news phenomenon, but also researched various cases of fake news both in Latvia and in the world as well as carried out some fieldwork[1]. Using the method of semi-structured in-depth interviews, the researchers interviewed six experts (journalists, the representatives of communication and political sciences, media literacy experts) and then, based on the interview material, analysed the experts' views in an integrated way to obtain an in-depth insight into the fake news phenomenon. The researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with five citizens

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[1] The full content of the study is available at the Latvian Academy of Culture.

about their experiences of sharing fake news and carried out an integrated analysis of these views. Besides, the researchers managed to gain a deeper insight in the considerations behind the creation of fake news based on the account of a fake news creator. Even though interviews were conducted with experts, a fake news creator, as well as individuals who have had experience of sharing (knowingly or not) fake news, the paper further will focus only on the latter.

Next, as an example from the study, we offer a unique analysis of the data obtained in the research on the reasons why people engage in the spreading of fake news. An in-depth study of people's experiences related to fake news sharing has not been carried out so far. Although the number of in-depth respondents is small, an integrated analysis of the views of these respondents reveals a range of motivations and considerations that underpin their sharing of fake news. It should be noted that it was not easy for the researchers to recruit people who were ready to tell them why they shared fake news because the phenomenon of fake news is associated with stigma, and people do not always want to talk openly about the reasons why they have shared fake news. Initially, the researchers posted a message on the LAC website and on their own *Facebook* pages with a call for people who had shared fake news. However, only one person responded to the call in that way. Then, the researchers followed their friends' and acquaintances' timelines through their *Facebook* pages and, as soon as they noticed that fake news was being shared, they approached their friends and acquaintances with the request to talk about their motivation and experience related to sharing fake news. There is a concise analysis of these views below. The analysis of such opinions gives the readers of the article an opportunity to look into the dramaturgy of people's everyday choices.

Why we share fake news
Motivation behind sharing fake news
Fake news reflects topics and opinions that are interesting to the informants.

One of the informants had shared a false message claiming that "*never before in history have Christians been subject to such oppression as they are today*".[1] This message is a fabrication because the information supporting the claim is not based on verifiable sources and is partly true. It is stated in the article that "*80% of all discrimination on the grounds of religion is directed against Christians*", but there is no reference in the article to who conducted such a study and obtained these results and when. The article also reflects the explosion in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday 2019,

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[1] The news portal "Focus.lv". "Pasaulē nogalina tūkstošiem kristiešu – kas to dara, un kāpēc Rietumi to neredz?" (14.06.2019.) Available: http://focus.lv/news/pasaule-nogalina-tukstosiem-kristiesu-kas-to-dara-un-kapec-rietumi-to-neredz?26534 (viewed 21.06.2019.)

which was a real event and killed 259 people. The narrative of the article suggests to the reader that the victims were Christians, which is not true, because there were people of different faiths among the victims. Besides, the terrorist suicide bombers blamed for the assault were members of the Sri Lankan Islamist movement, which had previously targeted both Buddhists and Sufis. The motivation behind this event is not perfectly clear, and, accordingly, it cannot be unequivocally confirmed that the explosion was directed against Christians. The portal *focus.lv*, where the fake news was published, presents itself as a news portal, but the low quality of the news reports published on the portal, e. g. articles do not have authors, suggests that the portal has been designed to make a profit for advertising purposes.

The informant stated that he had shared this fake news because the message conveyed by the article resonated with informant's own feelings and observations that people are being oppressed and discriminated against because of their religious beliefs. The informant had shared this news because, in his opinion, the media did not adequately cover this phenomenon. By sharing this article, the informant did not so much want to provoke a discussion about Christians being oppressed, but to support the opinion that people in general may be oppressed because of their religious beliefs.

> *What appealed to me was the fact that I had not seen it, and I had absolutely no doubt that it was true. I really knew that people are being killed for their faith all over the world. It seemed so obvious to me. It seemed very unusual to me that such news never appears anywhere and does not emerge, but this time it appeared, which is why I shared it. That was my motivation.* [..] *It seemed important to me that the fact about people being killed for their faith is brought up. I find that pretty awful.* (Informant No. 1)

Another informant had shared a fake message in which the opinion about the role of women and men in today's society and contemporary social values in general was falsely attributed to actor Keanu Reeves. On 28 July 2019, Uģis Kuģis, a Vedic philosopher, relationship consultant and a lecturer, published a post on his *Facebook* profile with a picture of the American actor Keanu Reeves and a quote about today's world attributed to Reeves:

> *I cannot be part of a world where men dress their wives as prostitutes by showing everything that should be cherished. Where there is no concept of honor and dignity, and one can only rely on those when they say, "I promise." Where women do not want children, and men don't want a family. Where the suckers believe themselves to be successful behind the wheel of their fathers' cars, and a father who has a little bit of power is trying to prove to you that you're a nobody. Where people falsely*

declare that they believe in God with a shot of alcohol in their hands, and the lack of any understanding of their religion. Where the concept of jealousy is considered shameful, and modesty is a disadvantage. Where people forgot about love but are simply looking for the best partner. Where people repair every rustle of their car, not sparing any money nor time, and themselves, they look so poor that only an expensive car can hide it. Where the boys waste their parents' money in nightclubs, aping under the primitive sounds, and girls fall in love with them for this. Where men and women are no longer identifiable, and where all this together is called the freedom of choice, but those who choose a different path get branded as retarded despots. I just can't accept it.

There are articles on the origin of this quotation on various fact-finding sites, explaining how it originated. This text has been travelling on the internet since 2016, and shortly after its publication it was clarified where it came from. An article has been published on the website *politifact*, which deals with the rebuttal of false facts, the author of which has traced the origin of the quotation. It originated on one of the *Facebook* pages of Keanu Reeves' fans (most likely on the fan page *"Keanu Reeves – the actor")* and afterwards appeared on other websites, too. A video was also created with subtitles in Russian that appears to show him saying this text, although in the original video the actor talks about Paul Gaugin's creative work. Keanu Reeves' PR manager has categorically denied that the actor has anything to do with these sites and fan pages and has stated that the text has been fabricated and falsely attributed to the actor.

One of the informants had shared this opinion because the message resonated with informant's own spiritual search and reflections on the order of things in today's world.

Well, most probably, it was because there were included some morals of life, the values of life, because I don't like those posts where everything is bad, where it is contemptuous, everything is negative; in real life, you can encounter it on the street, anyway, but it doesn't make you think, it's just negative. But what I shared is the thing that makes me wonder if I'm where I want to be, whether I have [..] or I like, or whether I have what I want because [..] Okay, I may not know if he really was the author of the article, but at least the text as such attracted me [..] Because it seems to me that the article contained values that people have lost in this world. Well, what was written there is that it's just looks, just material values, just, I don't know, some trophies and so on. Some human values are a rarity. (Informant No. 3)

On the one hand, the informant points out that it was not so important whether the author of the opinion was Keanu Reeves, Uģis Kuģis or someone else. At the same

time, however, she emphasizes that the relevance of the opinion had been reinforced by the fact that it had been shared by Uģis Kuģis, a well-known opinion leader or influencer in Latvia.

> *It didn't change anything for me. I read the post and saw the author's name at the end. I thought, yes, interesting, okay. I thought, well, it could definitely be so that he wrote it, but, if it had been written by Uģis Kuģis himself or written by another actor, I don't know, it wouldn't change anything.* (Informant No. 3)

> *I guess Uģis Kuģis posted it onto his profile, and therefore I also trust him as a person, because, after all, he has his own speciality, all his wisdom. And I follow his posts, and maybe that's why I* [*shared*] *it to make other people think.* (Informant No. 3)

Nevertheless, the informant who had shared the fake news spread by Uģis Kuģis points out that, generally, she tries to pay attention to the credibility of news in her daily life:

> *I would have thought more about it if there had been some fact written there, I don't know, atomic bombs, clashes, accidents, some political decision.* [..] *Because, if I am interested in politics or business, for example, there are websites where you can read it. You know that you will find the truth there – lsm.lv, this is where I read something most often.* [..] *I won't pay any attention to some mystical websites, not to mention sharing or looking into comments and so on. Oh, well it's not worth it, it's not worth spending your time on it at all. Yes, so there were no really specific facts in this post, it was like a review of life, something like that...* (Informant No. 3)

Another informant states that she got caught by some fake news about police inaction. The informant explains that this news report attracted her attention because she had encountered a situation where she was not satisfied with the work of the police and, therefore, focused her attention on *similar* news around her.

> *Let's say, where people are missing or have been killed. Or, let's say, about police inaction, because I myself have suffered from one such thing. And the police didn't solve my case, so I'm very attached to the things I hear, similar* [*things*] *around me.* (Informant No. 4)

It has also been pointed out that at the election time all the news related to election candidates seems to be important, and that there is a greater risk that fake news aimed at defaming a candidate will be perceived as true:

Knowing me, I was only sharing things about politics at that time. It was a pre-election time. For the first time in my life, I had decided to deliberately gather information and understand it, to make a conscious decision for whom I will then cast my vote. So, it could certainly have been about politics, about some Lembergs' ploys or something else. (Informant No. 4)

The informant admits that, generally, she has posted various messages on her *Facebook* page that she found to be interesting or important, but which she did not have time to read immediately. Thus, before publication the informant did not pay attention to whether the respective message was fake news.

But in the past, I both made posts and shared news on Facebook for the sole purpose of building my message board so that I could look back and remind myself what had been interesting to me. I used it as a kind of a warehouse. This is an interesting topic. And later I could go deeper into it. It could be said that this was one of the most important reasons why I shared the news at all, and I was not sure whether this news was fake news or not... (Informant No. 4)

Fake news reflects an emergency or a traumatic event.

One informant, who admits that she occasionally shares some fake news messages on *Facebook,* perceived the fake news about a fire at the *Alfa* shopping centre as true. On 15 July 2018, a fabricated message that the *Alfa* shopping centre had collapsed was published on the Internet site *redzams.net.* In the headline of the article, the name of the shopping centre was written with two letters "f". Several people were reported to have been injured and hundreds killed. The news spread rapidly on the *Facebook* social network. When reading the news, the informant experienced vivid memories and emotions associated with the tragedy of the supermarket *Maxima* in Zolitūde. Although the informant did not share the message, she admits that she regarded it as true.

What I remember very vividly is one particular message that appeared at one point, it said that Alfa had collapsed. The name Alfa was written with two "fs" there, of course, but our subconsciousness works in the way it does, and it generalizes everything quite well. And, of course, it took me a while to realize that there were those two "fs". In the meantime, I was already going through powerful emotions. In fact, those emotions actually stem from the subconscious, and they cannot be controlled. Of course, all those feelings reading this after the tragedy of that Zolitūde Maxima, the emotions were very strong. Oh, my God, it is so unsafe to live in this world! (Informant No. 4)

The content of fake news as a parody to laugh at.

One informant shared an article posted on the portal *izklaidetv.lv* which said that Kristīne Kandere, a well-known businesswoman and the owner of a restaurant (the name of which was not mentioned) had had her car (*Audi Q7*) stolen, together with some important documents, including the restaurant documents[1]. It is mentioned in the article that Kandere appeals to all readers to share the message, and everyone that shares it will be paid 100 euros, but whoever informs her where the car is will get 5000 euros. In addition, when you open the article, a message with a *messenger* image pops up, where Kristīne allegedly writes asking the readers whether they have shared this article and promises to transfer 300 euros for that. At the end of the article, it is also mentioned that there is new information from Kristīne; now everyone who shares the message will get 300 euros, and, to get the latest information about the car, the reader must follow the next article. It is important that the article has several hundred comments; dozens of them saying that the money has been transferred, expressing gratitude for the cooperation and wishing good luck in finding the car, and other comments say that there is no need to transfer the money, what is important is good intentions and good luck in finding the car.

Nobody knows who Kristīne Kandere is and what restaurant she owns. Based on various factors, it can be concluded that the information posted on the portal *izklaidetv.lv* has been fabricated and should be qualified as fake news. Searching for information about Kristīne Kandere, it is not possible to establish in any source that such a person really exists and what restaurant she owns. On the social network *Facebook,* a workplace in a cafe (which was called the cafe *Heilops*) was added to Kristīne's profile on the day when the car was stolen, and the profile for Kristīne's blog was created on the same day. The picture posted on the portal next to the aforementioned article belongs to a woman about whom no information is known, except for what has already been mentioned in the *Facebook* profile, which, most probably, does not belong to Kristīne Kandere herself, if such a person exists at all. The picture is an obvious photoshop, because the hair is long on one side and has been cut short on the other side, where the shoulders touch the man standing next to her in the picture. Moreover, the most important factor is the site that publishes such information and the quality of the information as a whole. No legitimate news portal publishes appeals to share news to earn money. In fact, the car is not described at all; there are no photos of the car or its licence plate; there is only a headline

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[1] The news portal "Izklaidetv.lv".; "Latvijā apzagta visiem zināmā uzņēmēja! Katram par share tiks pārskaitīti 100 eiro (uzreiz)!" (30.06. 2019.) Available: https://izklaidetv.lv/latvija-apzagta-visiem-zinama-uznemeja-katram-par-share-tiek-parskaititi-100-eiro-uzreiz/?fbclid=IwAR29W7xOwu9DeL_FVjR-7KYYqZr-LNxXA2m77FaREdXC5PDA1KBuOhLZoCA (viewed 03.07.2019.)

claiming that the money will be transferred immediately. This website contains many advertisements for fast loans and lottery winnings as well as articles about Kristīne Kandere's car saga and other provocative and false news, e. g., about refugee arrests in Germany or details of Andris Kivičs' intimate life. This is a vivid example of news fabrication to build popularity and bring profit for the aforementioned "news portal". This case perfectly corresponds to the mechanism of creating fake news for the purposes of business and profit – the more views and clicks, the higher the profit.

The informant who shared this post on her *Facebook* page gives the absurdity that such a post had been published as the main reason for sharing it. Basically, the news is so untrue that it's just worth laughing at and not taking it seriously, hoping that other people on *Facebook* will understand it and laugh at it.

> *It was this absurdity and the absolute impossibility that caught my attention, how funny it is that something like this exists, it's like a hoax.* [..] *I know it can't be trusted that you will get the money, so I find it funny in general. I shared it because of the absurdity. I was hoping my friends would catch it as sarcasm, so I didn't comment on that link. Because the joke explained is not so funny.* (Informant No. 2)

The informant admits that, by looking at the published message more closely and analysing it, it is possible to realize that the message is fake news.

> *The headline, the comments and the fact that the car cannot be seen clearly at all; specific details are missing; there is no licence plate, no pictures with the car. There's only one picture with the car, which does not make sense. The car is not the focus of the news at all. I didn't think about that at that moment. I figured it out a bit later. The purpose of the message is not a car, but money and sharing.* (Informant No. 2)

The informant says that she received this message via her *Facebook* news feed from a friend who had shared it, but whose sharing motivation the informant does not know, assuming that the motivation might have been similar to hers. The informant says that she "would never ever have opened" the address where fake news is published "if it had not appeared on [her] *Facebook page.*"

Trust in publicly recognized media.
On April 1, when the world celebrates April Fool's Day, the portal *Satori.lv* shared a prank claiming that a sequel to Alise Zariņa's film "Nearby" was to be made.[1]

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[1] The news portal "Satori.lv". "Taps Alises Zariņas filmas "Blakus" turpinājums." (01.04.2019.) Available: https://www.satori.lv/article/taps-alises-zarinas-filmas-blakus-turpinajums (viewed 02.04.2019.)

Some people working in the film industry, whom one informant was following, had shared this message on her *Twitter* timeline, and she did the same. Just like in the situation of other informants, the sharing of the message took place because it seemed important and interesting to the informant; besides, its distributors were legitimate.

> *The news was on Twitter, and it was shared. [..] By a director if I'm not mistaken. No, it wasn't the director herself, but it was about the film industry, and it was shared by people in the film industry, and the news portal where I saw it was quite serious, in my opinion, and significant, and I didn't expect them to do anything like that. [..] The news report said that the filming of the second part [of Alise Zariņa's film "Nearby"] had started, and it seemed quite interesting to me because that film was really successful, in my opinion, and the fact that yes – they were already filming the sequel so quickly, I found it very interesting and something like that. [..] I shared it because it seemed very cool that finally young Latvian directors could get funding for the second film right away. It seemed like a success story, hah.* (Informant No. 5)

Only after sharing the news did the informant realize that it was the day of jokes, and that the purpose of this message was probably to make fun of people.

> *I didn't notice it at that moment, but, actually, if you look at it with such a critical eye, I understand that the information contained in the article couldn't be put into life so quickly, and the way the message was presented wasn't reliable. [..] It took me a while to realize that.* (Informant No. 5)

Even though this is not a typical instance of fake news, this case shows that people do not evaluate information critically in their daily rush, especially in the situations where it is found in respectable and recognized media. Although respectable media generally do not claim to be the creators of fake news, the experts and journalists interviewed in the study point out that journalists themselves can also create fake news, sometimes without realizing it, and that journalists only try to get closer to the truth but cannot guarantee it.

Reactions revealing that fake news has been shared
nformants' feelings after realizing they had shared a fake message.

The informants point out that they generally felt awkward realizing that they had perceived fake news as true. One of the informants laughed about her awkwardness, while another felt shame that she had not been able to distinguish a true message from a fake one. It is a problem that it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify the truth today.

And then I laughed that I had done it. Well, I laughed with other people. [..] *Well, I felt a little stupid.* [..] *I had fallen for an April Fool's Day's joke.* (Informant No. 5)

I was terribly ashamed to realize that I had shared this fake news. At one point, the information emerged that it was a fake news website. My feeling of shame was really strong. Now I do not understand at all what was reality and what was not reality. At one point, I had even gone so far that I was looking at some Delfi.lv news report and could not understand any longer whether the news could be real or not. (Informant No. 4)

The informants highlight the problem that it is especially difficult to identify a false message in situations where the informant is not interested in the topic, the situation or context and is not an expert in the area.

I do not really distinguish whether it is fake news or non-fake news; for the most part, all of it is something like the yellow press. This case also concerns a person about whom I don't have the slightest idea who she is, just as I have no idea about all those influencers or public figures in Latvia, so can't see how much of it is a lie or not because I'm just not interested in these topics. (Informant No. 2)

Informants' accounts of their friends' reaction to the fake news spread by the informants.

According to the informants, their friends' reactions to the fake messages published by the informants have been different. Some friends have identified these posts as fake news and have asked for them to be removed. Others just tend to press "like" and share the message with other people. In this case, it is difficult to identify whether these friends are aware that it is fake news.

It was very interesting because I have a friend, and he is engaged in the European Youth Parliament, and he has a lot of experience with articles. He immediately told me: "Wait a bit! There are no references here! Respectively, there are no sources at all." And I really hadn't noticed it and hadn't paid any attention. Then we had a little discussion about whether it is good to publish and share such articles. (Informant No. 1)

The informant who is ashamed of having shared fake messages says she would have liked it if her friends had helped her to understand that the messages she had shared, were fake news.

Well, unfortunately [*the Facebook friends*] *didn't react much. There were some who shared it further. I even find it hard to remember. It seems to me that no one*

even commented on such news. But I'm sorry that no one reacted. If someone had warned me, "Listen, this is fake news," I would have been really grateful. (Informant No. 4)

The informant who shared a fake message to laugh about its absurdity also points out that some friends understood the falsehood of the news and laughed together with her, but one friend displayed his anger. However, the informant admits that she cannot tell unequivocally why the friend was angry.

Yes, guy X responded with the angry emoji, which I didn't fully understand. [..] *I didn't understand the angry reaction of guy X and wanted to ask him why he had done it, or whether he had understood me. But the very first reaction of the people was exactly what I wanted – let's laugh about this case, it's so funny that I want to laugh at it, and that's what I wanted to achieve.* (Informant No. 2)

On the other hand, there is an informant who has never paid attention to the fact whether anyone reacts to the news he has shared.

I don't pay any attention to who and how many [*people*] *share or like it.* (Informant No. 3)

Conclusions

The article dealt with the analysis of the collaboration between the theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS and researchers of the Latvian Academy of Culture in developing ideas for the theatre performance "Fake News". During the production of the performance, the LAC researchers carried out a sociological study aimed at analysing the limits and nature of the fake news phenomenon historically and today. The study conducted by the LAC researchers at the initial phase of the performance production served as an informative basis for the artistic transformation of the phenomenon and its communication to the public. At the same time, it should be noted that this collaboration was beneficial not only to the artists of the theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS, but also to the young researchers of the LAC, for whom participation in the creation of a theatre performance served as a strong motivator for doing research work. Their motivation to participate in this project resulted in obtaining unique data.

Based on in-depth study of people's experiences and opinions, the researchers identified a range of reasons why people share fake news and how they feel on discovering that it is fake news. We find this motivation is emotionally based and is associated with emotional attachment, anxiety, comicality, or trust. People fall for fake news and share the messages that they find to be (i) thematically relevant, interesting and exciting for them; (ii) the messages that concern some emergency or

crisis situations; (iii) the messages that seem to be absurd and even comical; (iv) the news distributed by a reliable source of information. Regardless of the motivation for sharing, when discovering that they have shared fake news, the informants have mostly felt ashamed or perceived it as a comical situation.

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CULTURE
CROSSROADS

THE IMAGE OF LATVIA AND LATVIANS ON JAPANESE TWITTER: REFLECTIONS ON PEOPLE

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Abstract

As Japanese tourists to Latvia have quintupled during the last seven years, polarized information regarding Latvians in Japanese on Twitter used by 45 million Japanese has likewise increased and keeps shaping the image of Latvia, affecting the further inbound tourist dynamics. The purpose of this study is to analyze Japanese tweets published from 2006 to 2013 reflecting the characteristics of Latvians. The methodology of acquisition and sentiment analysis of Japanese tweets is provided along with content analysis of tweets collated in five groups – 1) the historical, political and intersocietal view, 2) the bright side of Latvians, 3) the dark side of Latvians, 4) the surprising side of Latvians, and 5) a time-wise dense feed of tweets.

Keywords: *digital humanities, ethnography, social media, tourism, natural language processing.*

Introduction

During the last seven years the number of Japanese tourists to Latvia has quintupled, attracting more than 29.5 thousand visitors in 2018 (CSP 2019). The circulation of the information regarding Latvia and Latvians in Japanese has risen on Twitter used by 45 million Japanese, which is five million more than a year before [Nussey, Ingram 2018], yet the polarization of experiences has been shown likewise. Therefore, the image of the relatively poorly known Latvia is shaped by responses on the open space, i. e., the Internet. It directly affects the further inbound tourist dynamics. A Digital Humanities and Folkloristics research reflecting the Latvianness via Japanese point of view may provide solutions in several sectors, thus eventually propelling economic performances, especially after lifting the travel restrictions necessitated by the *SARS-CoV-2* pandemic outbreak. The purpose of this study is

to analyze tweets published in Japanese reflecting the characteristics of Latvians as people a segment of tweets from year 2006 to 2013 as a part of entire data acquired from the inception of Twitter (2006) until the end of the Centennial Year of the Republic of Latvia (2018).

Cultural Characteristics of Japanese Communication

Edward Hall [Hall 1976] illustrates the implicitness and indirectness of Japanese as a high-context culture: "It is very seldom in Japan that someone will correct you or explain things to you. You are supposed to know, and they get quite upset when you don't." A Japanese "will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Placing it properly – this keystone – is the role of his interlocutor. To do this for him is an insult and a violation of his individuality." Richard Lewis [Lewis 2006] describes Japanese as a reactive culture – courteous, amiable, accommodating, compromisers, and good listeners who avoid confrontation and don't interrupt. Mitsuko and Katsunobu Izutsu [Izutsu Mitsuko, Izutsu Katsunobu 2019] explain the popularity of tweeting among Japanese as "the Twitter nation" due to the fact that Japanese employs ideographs, *kanji*, which can convey much more information within the 140-character limit of message as "a short burst of inconsequential information" than English. Speakers do not always expect to invite joint attention to what they say. They sometimes want to simply murmur their thought with no intention to communicate them to others. On the contrary to other ideographic scripts, Japanese provides rich grammatical devices for monologization to fulfill such a desire, and Twitter is an ideal platform to realize it. Consequently, it is a particularly useful tool for studying the perception of another culture among the members of high-context reactive cultures.

The search for previous studies of Japanese tweets in the Baltic Sea region did not yield the desired results. Tuomo Hiippala et al. [2020] indicate that the distribution of Japanese tweets in Finland corresponds to their tourism preferences, yet the small size of Japanese population in Finland raises the question whether the spatial pattern reflects places of residence or visits. Furthermore, unless a detailed analysis of linguistic content is conducted, the data may be generated also by businesses communicating with Japanese tourists or Finns who study Japanese. Although Sachiko Hatanaka [1998] has studied Lithuania as viewed by Japanese, apart from the ongoing doctoral study which this article is a part of, and comparative studies of Latvian and Japanese cultural aspects by Uģis Nastevičs [Nastevičs 2014, 2017, 2021], and a bachelor's thesis on the adaptation of Japanese in Latvia by Madars Ozoliņš [Ozoliņš 2015], according to publicly available information, there has not been much attention given to studying the image of Latvia and Latvians among Japanese either on Twitter or elsewhere.

Acquisition Of Tweets

Twitter provides its own application programming interface for acquisition of tweets (*Twitter Search API*), which offers 180 queries each 15 minutes acquiring a maximum of a 100 tweets per query; moreover, the access is granted for tweets published only within the last seven day (Twitter 2019). *Google* search results reveal a multitude of tweet acquiring scripts developed by various authors, however, most of them are dependent on the aforementioned *API*, which requires logging in with an authentication code acquired in advance. Among others an open-access tool *twitterscraper* on *GitHub* developed by Ahmet Taşpınar [Taşpınar 2016], a data scientist, *M.Sc.* from Delft University of Technology, proved being the only solution[1] capable to acquire tweets without any of the aforementioned limitations, and hence was selected for this study.

In order to acquire tweets published in Japanese from 2006 to 2018 including the morpheme *Latvia*, and store the data in a file *ratobia.json* using a *Windows 10 Home* workstation with *Python 3.6.2 (32-bit)* software installed, further actions were carried out. First, extract files from the archive *twitterscraper-master.zip* (downloaded from the *GitHub* site) to a certain directory on the workstation's hard drive. In a *command-line interface* (run it by holding the *Shift* key with a mouse right-click on an empty area within the directory) type the text – *python setup.py install* –, and install the tool by clicking the *Enter* key. Then, using a text editor *Notepad++* create, save, close, and run within the directory a *Python* script file *tweet_harvester.pyw* with the following contents, specifying the search query and language within double quotation marks (ラトビア *OR* ラトヴィア *OR* ラトヴィヤ *lang:ja*), the first (*-bd*) and the last (*-ed*) date of the period to harvest, and the file name (*-o*) where to store the acquired data:

```
# -*- coding: utf-8 -*-
#coding: UTF-8
import codecs, json, os
os.system('twitterscraper "ラトビア OR ラトヴィア OR ラトヴィヤ
lang:ja "
-bd 2006-01-01 -ed 2019-01-01 -o ratobia.json')
print "done"
```

[1] As an alternative to the *twitterscraper*, a new solution – *Scweet* developed by Yassine Ait Jeddi [Altimis 2021], a data scientist from Casablanca – became available at the end of 2020. After its installation, this *Python* script compiles the data similarly to a *csv* file:

```
# -*- coding: utf-8 -*-
#coding: UTF-8
from Scweet.scweet import scrap
data=scrap(words=['ラトビア', 'ラトヴィア', 'ラトヴィヤ'], start_
date="2006-01-01",max_date="2019-01-01", lang="ja", display_
type="Latest", headless=True, interval=30)
```

As the acquisition of tweets is completed, a new file *ratobia.json* is created within the directory. In order to proceed to the content analysis of the data with *Microsoft Excel 2016*, the *json* file was converted to a sorted *xlsx* spreadsheet file using an open-access online solution (Data Design Group 2018). This yielded **377,235 tweets**, with a maximum of 140 characters each – a text amount comparable to 1.4 times volume of the Cabinet of Folksongs (*Dainu skapis*), the UNESCO World Heritage monument made in 1880 comprising 268,815 leaflets, each having a Latvian folk song handwritten. A segment of **7521 tweets** (incl. 313 by the author of this article) which contain the Japanese morpheme meaning *Latvian* in the sense of "a person, an individual, or a people" – including 6070 instances of "ラトビア人" and 1451 instances of "ラトヴィア人" – extracted to another file *ratobiajin.json* to be analyzed further in this paper. The spreadsheet contains columns: *row_id*, *root_id*, *fullname* (full name of the Twitter user), *id* (tweet id), *likes* (count of likes), *replies* (count of replies), *retweets* (count of retweets), *text* (text of the tweet), *timestamp* and *user* (as in *@username*).

If geotagged (geolocalized) tweets from within a certain area are required, the query can be modified, specifying the *GPS* coordinates and the radius – *56.7718330451,24.5974875554 within:360km* – corresponding the average center point and the radius encompassing the area of the Baltic States. According to a previous study for the image of Daugavpils, however, there is still a very small share, i. e. no more than 5%, of tweets published with geolocation data enabled [Nastevičs 2018: 335, 343] – this option was available on Twitter from 19 November 2009 to 18 June 2019 [Benton 2019]. This yielded **8600 geotagged tweets** (incl. 18 geotagged tweets by the author of this article) published in Japanese from within this area, where 534 of them contain a morpheme meaning *Latvia*, and among them just 9 geotagged tweets contain a morpheme meaning *Latvian*, e. g.:

> *"They seem to love sweets. Chocolates, candies and jams are extremely sweet! Yesterday, when I was taking a bus ride, a Latvian lad gave me a candy."*[1] [17.01.2014 @ilfbatoam] *"Yesterday there was a birthday party for my Latvian friend, yet the venue was the Museum of the History of Riga! In Latvia which cannot be described as a rich one, cultural facilities also show a little ingenuity in terms of their source of income. They rent out the place for private events as well!"*[2] [12.10.2014 @rina_okumura] *"To sum up yesterday, when I did not tweet at all, straightforward, I got invited to a house of a Latvian high-school girl, whom I had*

---

[1] 甘いものが大好きみたい！チョコとかお菓子とかジャムもすごい甘いよ！昨日バスに乗ってたらラトビア人の兄ちゃんがお菓子くれた^o^笑

[2] 昨日はラトビア人の友人の誕生日会だったけど、会場がリガ歴史博物館！□□□お金持ちとは言えないラトビア。文化施設は、収入源にも一工夫。プライベートのイベントにも場所を貸しちゃう！

met for the first time."¹ [22.03.2015 @nandef] *"The Christmas market of Riga. It was much better than I imagined. Snugly, yet each thing there was a lovely one, and all vendors were very kind. Seems that Latvians are nice."²* *"The Cat House. Well, this is Art Nouveau, too. A wish to become admitted to the Hanseatic League was ignored just because one was a Latvian. So, as a revenge one turned cats' butts towards the adversary. I can relate to this feeling."³* [13.12.2018 @mayulattevino]

These geotagged tweets published from within the area of the Baltic States indicate the diet preference, ingenuity of cultural facilities, and hospitality of Latvians, as well as exceeding visitor's expectations, and the appreciation of wit of the unadmitted to the Great Guild (not the forenamed Hanseatic League).

Sentiment Analysis

The sentiment analysis of tweets in Japanese was originally done by the script *jNLP.jSentiments* in the Japanese Natural Language Processing Libraries *jProcessing* by Pulkit Kathuria [2017] based on the Japanese syntactic parser *Cabocha*, the Japanese Wordnet database *Wordnet-jp*, and the sentiment lexicon *SentiWordnet* for the word sense disambiguation. The script calculates the total positivity score and total negativity score of the words contained in the given text sample, indicating the overall polarity or neutrality of the contents. However, during ongoing study, the Dictionary based Sentiment Analysis module for Japanese *oseti*, developed by Ikegami Yukino (池上有希乃, 2019) in 2019, using the *Japanese Sentiment Polarity Dictionary* (日本語評価極性辞書), and taking into account both grammatical negation and double negative, yielded more reliable results, and hence was chosen for further analysis. Here is a *Python* script *sentiment-calculator.pyw* which has been customized for the purpose of this study, joining lines of multi-lined tweets:

```
# -*- coding: utf-8 -*-
#coding: UTF-8
import oseti, re, json
an = oseti.Analyzer()
stri = json.load(open('ratobiajin.
json','r',encoding='utf-8'))
i = 0
```

---

¹   全くツイートしていなかった昨日1日を端的にまとめると、初対面のラトビア人女子高生の家に招かれた

²   リーガのクリスマスマーケット。想像よりもかなり良かった。こじんまりとしてるけどひとつひとつ可愛らしくて売り子さんがみんなすっごい親切♡□ラトビア人が良いって事なのかしら。

³   猫の家。□これもまぁユーゲントシュティールだね。□ハンザ同盟に入れて欲しかったんだけどラトビア人と言うだけで相手にしてもらえなかったもんだから腹いせに猫のお尻を向けちゃったという。気持ちはわかるw

```
f = open('ratobiajin-oseti.txt','w',encoding='utf-8')
for x in stri:
    stri = re.sub(r"…|｡+|!!+", u"｡", u'
'.join(x["text"].
    splitlines())).rstrip('｡')
    u = an.analyze(stri)
    f.write(str(x["timestamp"])[:-9]+"
¥t@"+str(x["username"])+"¥t"+str(sum(u))+"¥t"+str(stri)+
"¥t"+"¥n")
    print(format(i,'06d'),"OK")
    i += 1
f.close()
```

The results of the sentiment analysis in the graph (Figure 1) show the monthly dynamics of sentiment polarity score, which is primarily positive. Months when more than 50% of sentiment score has been negative have the exact tweet count indicated with a leading minus sign, whereas months when there have been published more than 100 tweets regarding Latvians are indicated underlined.
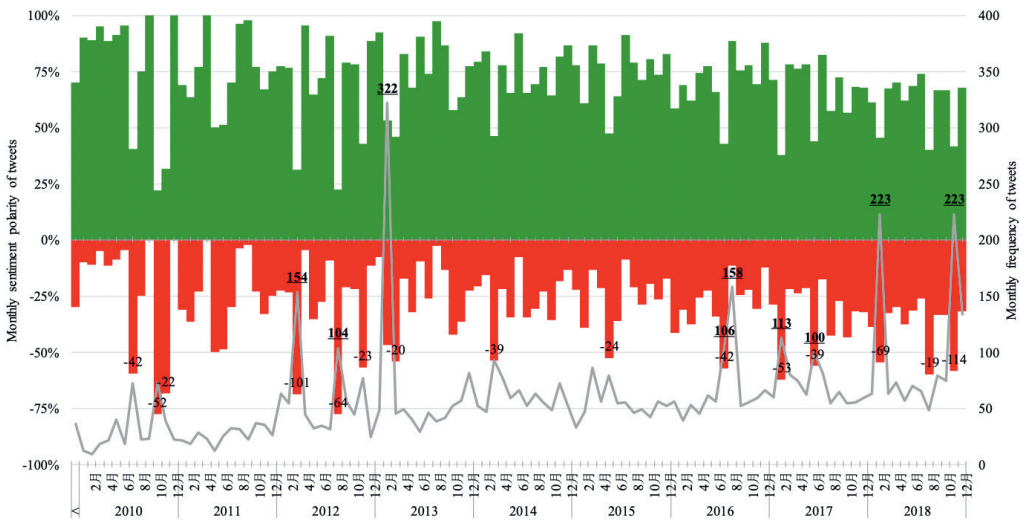

Figure 1. **Monthly sentiment polarity** (exact tweet count shown when monthly sentiment polarity of tweets has been scored as rather negative) **and frequency** (values larger than 100 are shown underlined) **of tweets**.

Content Analysis

In the content analysis tweets were collated in five groups: 1) the historical, political and intersocietal view of Latvians, 2) the bright side of Latvians, 3) the dark side of Latvians (this mostly covers the content published in months of the high ratio of negative sentiment tweets), 4) the surprising side of Latvians, and 5) a time-wise dense feed of tweets due to a particular event happening.

The historical, political and intersocietal view of Latvians. There are several tweets on complicated relationships between Latvians and Russians, topical issues and attitudes regarding their respective languages, characteristics of mentality, and incredible interaction between Latvians and Japanese going through a bad time under the occupation. Among illustrative tweets quoted here, there are some published by a Latvian user *@kinokoyani*, while other tweets are written by Japanese users.

>*"Recently a friend who has a Latvian grandma told that, when she learned that Russian troops are invading, the escape with only clothes she happened to wear made her survive; so, in emergency one should trust one's arbitrary decision. The point is survival instinct, isn't it?"[1]* [16.03.2011 @naomishibata] *"Recently I got to know a Latvian living in Japan. In recent years youth cannot speak Russian anymore. Time flies."[2]* [08.04.2010 @sougakushijin] *"Supporters of Skonto Rīga are all men, about 10 in number. After the game they high-fived with athletes. Their cheering song wasn't in Latvian but in Russian. It was unexpected for I thought that this was a rather Latvian club."[3]* [20.04.2011 @nagatsuka_hrv] "Taking into consideration that when Latvia got its first independence in 1918 a nation-state with unprecedented framework of 'Latvians' established depending on Latvian language, the lately voting whether to make Russian the second state language poses a big challenge adding Russian to Latvian language which is the major premise for statehood of Latvia."[4] [13.01.2012 @noripey] "Just because one moved to Latvia during former Soviet era, you must not recognize two state languages. Latvians who didn't recognize Russian as the official language, Good*

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[1] 最近、ラトビア人の祖母を持つ友達が、ロシア軍が侵攻してきていると分かった時、着の身着のままで逃げて助かった経験を聞かされていて、有事では自分の判断を信じるべき。と強く言っていました。要は生存本能?

[2] 先ごろ、日本に住むラトビア人と知り合いになった。最近の若い人は、もうロシア語を話せないという。時の経つのは早いものだ。

[3] スコント・リガのサポーターは男ばっかりで10人ほど。試合後は選手達とこんな感じでハイタッチをしてました…。彼らの応援歌はラトビア語ではなくてロシア語。ラトビア人寄りのクラブだと思っていただけに意外でした。

[4] ラトビアが1918年第一次独立時、「ラトビア人」という今までになかった外枠をラトビア語に依拠して民族国家を作り上げた歴史をみても、今回のロシア語第二公用語是非に関する投票は、そもそもラトビア国家の大前提であるラトビア語にロシア語が加わるという極めて重大な問題になる。

Job!"[1] [20.02.2012 @eight1002] *"When I said 'I'm Latvian', got a response 'Здравствуйте'* [Hello in Russian]. *Somehow it doesn't make me happy. I've once replied with 'Tere!'* [Hello in Estonian]*"[2]* [12.06.2012 @kinokoyani] *"Lithuanians are fervent with strong spirit of unity, Latvians are calm individualists, Estonians and Latvians share same pragmatic view on things but have less compromising attitude. ... temperament is shared with related countries – Poland, Germany and Finland."[3]* [18.10.2012 @HSDomestas] *"Glasses of a Japanese soldier acquired by a Latvian detainee in Siberia by barter for bread. The name is clearly written on it. As for NHK, they are going to make another documentary seeking for the owner."[4]* [15.01.2013 @yancha7]

The case of glasses bears the name of the former owner Yoshio Shōda (正田好男), a Japanese prisoner of war, who bartered them to a myopic former *Flakhelfer* Alberts Ante (1921–2010), one of more than 4000 Latvian boys drafted into the German Air Force during the World War II, for several bread rations in 1946 at the NKVD filtration camp in Urgal, the Amur Region. A comment on a Japanese blog on 3 June 2007 – a week after the visit of Emperor and Empress of Japan to Latvia, and to the exhibition of the said items – suggests that the glasses case belonged to then 82-year-old father of the commenter Kōichi / Hirokazu Shōda (正田浩一). Yet, further investigation is required to clarify the details of this and other rare evidence of interaction between Japanese and Latvians at Soviet camps – e. g., a poem by Ozare[?] Arumi (1946) as a gift to Alberts Ante, a pair of *kokeshi* wooden dolls as a gift to Alfrēds Liepa (1923–[?]), a Latvian former conscript in the German Army, and a flag of Japan (1949) signed by 41 Japanese as a gift to Bruno Briuks (1914–1971), a Latvian military surgeon, at the NKVD filtration camp in Sakhalin [Ante 2004; Jaunbērziņa 2019; LOM 2019; マキコ 2007].

"They, Latvians, also have the same thoughts towards ethnic Russians [as Japanese have towards Koreans in Japan] – When in Rome, do as the Romans do. If you live in Latvia, do respect Latvia, and do not intervene in the internal

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[1] 旧ソ連時代にラトビアに移住したからって、国に2つの言語を認めるなんてことをしてはいけな。ロシア語を公用語として認めなかったラトビア人! Good Job!…

[2] 「ラトビア人です。」と言うと返信は「ズドラーストブイチェ」です。何か、嬉しくない。一回「テレ!」と言われたけど。

[3] リトアニア人は激しやすく団結志向が強い、ラトビア人は冷静で個人主義、エストニア人もラトビア人動揺現実的な物の見方をするが彼らよりは非妥協的。これは各国と関係の深いポーランド・ドイツ・フィンランドと共有されている気質だ…と書いてたのは『ヨーロッパの百年』だったか?他資料にもあった肝

[4] ラトビアの博物館に、シベリア抑留されていたラトビア人がパンと交換しててに入れた日本兵のメガネ。名前がはっきり書いてある。NHKならその持ち主を探し出してもう一本ドキュメンタリー作るところ。

affairs."[1] [17.04.2013 @m42jp] *"Speaking to Latvian people in Russian is more likely to make them angry than rejoicing. Latvian language has nothing to do with Russian. Maybe that 'Latvian' was just a Russian born in Latvia?"[2]* [24.04.2013 @kinokoyani] *"The message of Tokyo is not necessarily equal to the opinion of Japan as a whole, however in Latvia, there are cases where the message of Riga is the opposite of the general opinion of Latvia. The idea of upgrading Russian to the official language was successfully rejected, but many Latvians even still do speak Russian as a means of compromise."[3]* [09.05.2013 @HSDomestas] *"The prototype of Latvians seems to have been around since the 9th century, but it was only after the 15th century that it was shaped completely. The Latvian people is a type with a long infancy stage... Lithuanians and Estonians shaped as ethnic group around the same time, but because there was the Great nation era, it seems that nowadays Lithuanians are the oldest."[4]* [07.08.2013 @J_M_Tallinn]

These tweets illuminate the issues caused by the "reverse linguistic behavior of indigenous population and minorities, because one minority language – Russian – remains self-sufficient" as a "linguistic consequence of the occupation period of Latvia (1940–1991)" verified by Vineta Poriņa [Poriņa 2019].

The bright side of Latvians. This segment of tweets shares the impression of positive features of Latvians compared to traits of other nations, based on personal interaction and observations.

"'Thank you' in Latvian is 'Paldies'. Latvians are reserved and shy, however, when you become friends, a long-lasting friendship is established."[5] [30.09.2010 @finlandcafe] *"Came back from the church worship which had a time for a prayer for Japan afterwards. People at the Latvian church prayed together. I received a card with a text: 'Now is the most painful time for your country. May Our Lord*

---

[1] 彼らラトビア人もロシア系に対し「郷に入れば郷に従いなさい。ラトビアに住むなら、ラトビアを尊重し、内政干渉はするな」と思うところは同じ。

[2] ラトビア人にロシア語でお話しをしたら喜ぶより怒られる可能性が高いです。ラトビア語なんてロシア語と関係が無いですね。もしかしてそのラトビア人はただのラトビア出身ロシア人だったのかな?

[3] 東京のメッセージも当然日本全体の意思とはイコールではないけれど、ラトビアの場合、リガ市のメッセージが国内で一般的とされる意思意見と真逆なケースもあるわけで。ロシア語を公用語に格上げするって話は無事否決されたが、それでも多くのラトビア人は歩み寄りの手段としてロシア語を話すのさ

[4] 一応ラトビア人の原型は9世紀くらいから居た模様□でも完全にまとまったのは15世紀以降とか□ラトは乳幼児の期間が長かったタイプかな……□リトとエストは民族が今と同じになったのは同時期ごろだけど、大国時代が有ったから現代ではリトが一番歳上なのかな

[5] ラトビア語でありがとうはPaldies(パルディエス)、ラトビア人は内気で恥ずかしがり屋だか友達になると長い友情を築くそう。

and prayers be with you and Japan."[1] [14.03.2011 @love_testimony] *"Thank you! As the Latvian perspective on nature and way of connecting with others are comprehensible to Japanese, I would like to share my thoughts on this further, too.*"[2] [03.09.2011 @tengyo] *"Seems that there are many amusing people in the Baltic states. There are many beautiful and joke-understanding Lithuanian and Latvian girls around the aunt [me]. Much better than prideful Russians. Seems that political corruption is advancing here – it perfectly suits me as I'm interested in suspicious communism.*"[3] [26.07.2012 @ObasamaMadam] *"Both Estonians and Latvians basically lack emotional expression, and I thought: 'Ah, they're Northern Europeans', however I got impression that Latvians are people that both tell jokes and laugh hard... Anyway, handsome men are wonderful creatures.*"[4] [01.09.2012 @HSDomestas] *"As tourists from Western Europe increase in streets, Latvian fineness (subtlety) becomes prominent, and to me Latvians began to seem similar to Japanese.*"[5] [19.04.2012 @tengyo] *"Spent weekend in forest. Latvian girl, I was together with, searched the earth's surface in the night and showed me what she had found. Amidst sound of wind and swaying trees, she said: 'In forest there are many really beautiful things of the Nature. Yet, they are not to be waited for, they are to be found by yourself.'"*[6] [17.06.2012 @tengyo]

These Japanese utterances show the perceived Latvian amity, compassion for the East Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011, similar affection to nature and fineness, beautiful women and handsome men.

The dark side of Latvians. Tweets quoted here have been aggregated mostly in months which have a rather negative sentiment score, especially due to criminal cases featured in media headlines, furthermore some tweets reveal sulkiness, clannishness and other dark traits of Latvian character.

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[1] 今、礼拝からもどりました。礼拝後に日本のための祈りの時をもちました。ラトビア人教会の方々も共に祈ってくださいました。「今が貴国にとって一番苦しいとき。私たちの主、祈りは、あなたと日本の方々と共にあります。」と書かれたカードもいただきました。

[2] ありがとうね！ラトビア人の自然観や人とのふれあい方は日本人に通じるものがあるので、そういったところもこれからシェアしていけたらって思ってるよ〜☆

[3] バルト三国の人達って面白い人が多いのかも？おばさまの周りのリトアニア、ラトビア人の女子は綺麗でギャグのわかる人が多いです。プライドの高いロシア人よりは断然いいわ〜　結構政府の腐敗が進んでるみたいで、怪しげな共産主義に興味あるワタクシにはピッタリ。

[4] エストニア人もラトビア人も基本は無表情っぽくて「あ、北欧人だ」と思ったのですが、ラトビア人は割と冗談も言うし爆笑もする人々な印象ですね…何にせよイケメンは素晴らしい生物です

[5] 街に西ヨーロッパからの観光客が増えてきたら、ラトビア人の繊細さが際立って、余計にラトビア人と日本人が似てるように思えてきた。

[6] 週末を森の中で過ごした。一緒にいたラトビア人の女の子が、夜、森の中で地面を探り探り、色んなものを見つけて見せてくれた。風と、木々の揺れる音だけが響く中、「森の中には自然界の本当に美しいものがたくさんある。でもそれは待っててもだめ、こうして自分で見つけなくちゃね。」と言ってくれた。

"'I'm busy, read it fast!' – got bothered. Called the Consulate of Latvia and solved a Latvian name transcription issue. I thought also when travelling in Latvia that people are good, yet not amiable & seem angry in way of reception. The word I'd like to present is 'smile for 0 yen'."[1] [04.06.2010 @gezkaz] *"After 11 years' absence 10,000 tabs of LSD confiscated – Latvian woman arrested for contraband at the Narita Airport."*[2] [05.07.2010 @jijicom] *"Man arrested by police for leaving a British fancy restaurant without paying 300,000 yen [2500€]. On November 17 police reported that an unemployed man who repeatedly left a fancy restaurant in London without paying got arrested. Suspect is Latvian Janis Nort..."*[3] [18.11.2010 @thumsgo] *"My unamiable Latvian housemate has come over to borrow printer for 3 times, yet the gratitude was just a blunt 'Thank you'. That unfriendly attitude makes me feel being used and I don't want to cooperate anymore. Next time I'll refuse saying – 'I'm sorry it's run out'."*[4] [14.01.2011 @udachop] *"When I take off earphones, I can hear only voices by Latvians who should have been quite far behind me. Their voices are very loud indeed."*[5] [01.11.2011 @mimimo1122] *"When I asked a Latvian: 'Why do you have many suicides?' got answer: 'The weather is bad throughout the year and mood gets gloomy'. Seems that the reason quite differs from that in Japan."*[6] [09.03.2012 @the_taboo_] *"Innocent verdict for a Latvian psychoactive drug smuggler due to 'excessive lack of nervousness as a recipient': at the lawsuit of accused unemployed citizen of Latvia Z. Klepe[c]kis (32) charged with violating the stimulants control law for smuggling 10 kg of stimulants hidden in stone statue..."*[7] [12.03.2012 @007_div] *"The Chiba District Court approved the claim of the Latvian man charged with stimulant trafficking crime: 'I thought those*

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[1] 忙しいのよ、早く読みあげて！　と超迷惑がられたが、ひとまずラトビア領事館に電話して、ラトビア人の名前の表記問題は解決……。ラトビアって、旅行したときも思ったけれど、いい人なんだろうけど、愛想がない、というか、デフォルトが怒ってる対応なのよねぇ。プレゼントしたい言葉、スマイル0円。

[2] 11年ぶり、LSD1万片押収＝密輸容疑でラトビア人逮捕－成田空港

[3] 英高級レストランで30万円分を無銭飲食、警察が男逮捕：［ロンドン17日ロイター］英ロンドンの高級レストランで無銭飲食を繰り返した無職の男が逮捕された。警察当局が17日発表した。それによると、ラトビア人のジャニス・ノルト容疑...

[4] ハウスメイトのラトビア人。無愛想。プリンター3回も借りに来たくせに、お礼は、無愛想なThank　youだけ。□愛想悪いと、利用された感がでて、協力したくなくなる。□次回は、I'm　sorry it's run out.と言って断るわ。

[5] イヤホン外すとかなり後ろにいるはずのラトビア人の声ばかり聞こえる…あいつらやっぱり声でかいんだよ！

[6] ラトビア人に「おたく何で自殺多いの?」って聞いたら「年中天気悪いネー、気持ちウツウツ」って言ってたから、あんまり日本とは理由が違うみてえだな。

[7] 覚醒剤密輸「受け取り役として、あまりに緊張感欠く」ラトビア人に無罪判決：□覚醒（かくせい）剤約10キロを石像に隠し密輸したとして、覚せい剤取締法違反などの罪に問われたラトビア国籍の無職、ザニス・クレペキス被告（32）の裁判...

were diamonds in the rough', rejecting violation of the stimulants control law, and sentencing to 10 months in prison for diamond smuggling attempt."[1] [05.11.2012 @nhk_chiba] *"One day a Latvian farmer sadly slouched around. In front of him God appeared and asked why is he so sad. As Latvian started complaining God said: 'You may make a wish. Yet, whatever you wish, your neighbor will get the same twice as much.' Latvian thought a bit and said: 'Pierce my eye, please.'"[2]* [07.01.2013 @ugisu] *"Latvians arrested on suspicion of fake card use: According to the Tourism Police, two Latvian men (53, 56) were arrested for shopping with a counterfeit credit card."[3]* [11.03.2013 @BangkokBlog] *"In Latvia, English is normally spoken. Latvia has a population of over 2 million people, and there are no particular industries or resources, making it economically difficult. In order to survive, ordinary Latvians have to learn foreign languages, such as English and German, and develop global business with foreigners. // In reality, the Japanese [athletes] team up with each other during team trainings and matches, and there is very little interaction with Latvians. It'd be due to the language. But they are mates of the same team. // This is not a problem for Japanese players only. Two Georgian players were also fixed to their own nationals, so I warned them. I'll snap at them, if Latvian players also would fix only to their own nationals and alienate foreigners. FK Auda (2nd league of Latvia) is fair to all athletes."[4]* [23.03.2013 @ wpscproject]

The drug trafficking by foreigners has been a hot topic on Twitter and other Japanese media causing fervent comments, especially in cases of innocent verdicts for the accused, including those from Latvia. Furthermore, such features as ingratitude,

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[1]【ニュース】覚醒剤密輸の罪に問われたラトビア人の男の裁判員裁判で、千葉地方裁判所は「ダイヤモンドの原石だと思っていた」とする被告の主張を認め、覚醒剤取締法違反の罪にはあたらず、ダイヤの原石を無許可で輸入しようとした罪にとどまるとして懲役10か月の判決を言い渡しました。

[2]【ラトビア民話】ある日悲しげに俯いて歩くラトビア人の農夫の前に翁の姿で神が現れ、なぜ悲しいのかと聞く。愚痴り始める農夫に神は「何でも君の望むものをあげよう。ただ望むものは何であれ、隣人が同時にその倍を受けることになる」と仰る。農夫は暫く考えて「さあ片目を突き刺して貰おう」と言う。

[3]偽カード使用容疑でラトビア人逮捕: 観光警察によれば、偽造クレジットカードを使って買い物をした容疑でラトビア国籍の男2人(53、56)を逮捕した。

[4]ラトビアでは、普通に英語が通じます。ラトビアは人口200万人強で、これといった産業・資源がなく、経済的に厳しいです。一般のラトビア人がサバイバルを生き残っていくためには英語、ドイツ語など外国語を習得し、外国人を相手にグローバルビジネスを展開していかなければなりません。／実際は、チームの練習や試合の際に、日本人同士で固まり、ラトビア人との交流は極めて少ないです。言葉の影響はあるでしょう。しかし、同じチームメイトです。／これは日本人選手だけの問題ではありません。2人のグルジア人選手も自国人だけで固まっており、注意しました。ラトビア人選手も自国人だけで固まり、外国人を疎外するようであればきつく言います。FKアウダ(ラトビア2部)は全ての選手の対してフェアであります。

loudness of speech, depressive mood, envious discontent (*nenovīdība*), and linguistic isolationism have also been attributed to Latvians.

The surprising side of Latvians. This is the most voluminous segment of Japanese tweets regarding Latvians. Diverse cultural discoveries have been made upon getting to know each other, through both direct and indirect interactions and observations about diet, flowers, ingeniousness, polyglotism, sports, drinking and singing habits, women's preferences, stature, closeness to nature, sensibility, mentality, way of doing business, celebrations, elegance, attractiveness, and engageability.

> *"People of the Baltic States and Poland eat the most potatoes in EU. A Latvian eats 274 g a day, Polish 248 g, Lithuanian 234 g, and Estonian 188 g. In whole EU it is 134 g, and the minimum is an Italian having 76 g."¹* [21.09.2010 @ Youtonbaka] *"Latvia is the Land of Flowers – there is even a street of flower shops open 24/7 in Riga! A Latvian would even cancel a visit to someone if he has no flowers to bring there. // Latvians are nature-oriented – they thrust a straw into a birch trunk and drink the tree sap."²* [30.09.2010 @finlandcafe] *"A young Latvian man, I drank with in Russia last month, used the mobile phone as a substitute for the bottle opener. :)"³* [19.10.2010 @mon_emon] *"Lithuanian is objectively the most difficult language in the world. In contrary to this opinion – it is easily learnable for Latvians. Latvian and Lithuanian are closely related languages."⁴* [08.09.2011 @kproject_aulie] *"Invited by a friend I watched a hockey game for the first time. Riga Dinamo vs. a Russian team. Dinamo is the strongest team where fearless fighters summon. Also, most athletes for the Latvian national team are selected from this team. Complete victory for Dinamo 2-0. I felt the Latvian love for hockey. I'll support the soccer pinnacle Skonto tomorrow."⁵* [14.10.2011 @ tengyo] *"A Latvian I became friends with at the hotel is drunk. He drank chacha a lot. 2-meter guy being wasted is a quite intense sight. Staggering while being such*

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¹ バルチック3国とポーランドの人々はEUの中で最もジャガイモを食べる国民。ラトビア人は毎日1人当り274g、ポーランド人248g、リトアニア人234gそしてエストニア人188gを食べている。EU全体で134gそして最少はイタリア人で76gである。

² ラトビアは花の国、リガには何と24時間営業している花屋台通りがある。ラトビア人は花がないと他の人の家に訪問するのを止めてしまうくらいだ。//　ラトビア人は自然志向、白樺の幹にストローのようなものを刺し、樹液を飲みます。

³　先月ロシアで一緒に飲んだラトビア人青年は、何と携帯電話を栓抜き代わりにしてました (^_^;)。

⁴　リトアニア語が客観的には世界一難しい、という意見に反論:ラトビア人には簡単に習得可能。ラトビア語とリトアニア語は近縁関係。

⁵　友達に誘われて初めてホッケーの試合を観た。リガのディナモ対ロシアのチーム。ディナモはラトビア中の猛者達が集う最強集団でラトビア代表選手も殆どこのチームから選出されている。試合は2対0でディナモの完勝。ラトビア人のホッケー愛を感じた。明日はサッカー、崖っぷちのスコントを応援します！

tall is scary."¹ [03.11.2011 @thitomin] *"Once in 5 years Latvians from across the country gather in Riga and enjoy 8-voiced acapella by a chorus of ~12,000 people. Celebration... Yes! Singers are so many. Stunning! Organizing a Baltic states' photo exhibition. I'm in cuisine classroom."²* [09.11.2011 @shoes0ff] *"The Latvian porn actress called Beata (Beata? Beāta?) I noticed recently was very cute. It was the first time I saw a Latvian. What a fortune that the first Latvian I have seen is so cute. Is that so? I don't know. Whatever..."³* [10.02.2012 @rikudou_kaito] *"'Women prefer strong, resolute and healthy men' (Nature Communications) Women prefer men with high levels of testosterone in blood. Higher the testosterone, stronger the immunoreaction to the pneumonia vaccine. It is about Latvians... #biology"⁴* [22.02.2012 @OkuwakiT] *"Accordingly, women's preference to masculine-featured men is substantiated by the higher immune strength. Only the fact that the survey targets were Latvians makes it doubtful."⁵* [27.02.2012 @nassevanor] *"I've seen opinions that songs sung at the Song Celebration don't differ. Estonia: Estonia is beautiful, Estonians are wonderful! Latvia: this is how Latvia has been living! Lithuania: Oh, Lietuva, Lietuva! – I think there is inclination like this."⁶* [04.04.2012 @HSDomestas] *"Why all Russians like Orient so much? While I was wondering, this time it was a Latvian. A Baltic state with population of only 2 million. That's a rare Pokémon!"⁷* [22.04.2012 @zi_] *"Anyway, the Latvian I met yesterday said that he can speak 7 languages. Everyone speaks Russian, Latvian, English. If one doesn't there is no job. When I asked him: 'What is*

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¹ 宿で仲良くなったラトビア人（2m5cm）がべろんべろんに酔っている。チャチャを相当飲んだようだ。2mがべろんべろんになると迫力も結構なものである。長いのでよろよろしてると恐ろしい。

² ラトビア人は、5年に一度、ラトビア全土からリガ（首都）に集結し、約12,000人のコーラスによる8声のアカペラを楽しみます。祭典、、、そう！歌い手がこの人数です。圧巻です。そんなバルト3国の写真展やってます。僕は、料理教室。

³ この間たまたま見掛けたBeata（ベアタ？ベアータ？）っていうラトビア人のポルノ女優が凄く可愛かった。ラトビア人なんて初めて見たけど最初に見たラトビア人があんなに可愛くて幸運だった。そうなのか？ゎゕらんが。まあ良かろう。

⁴ 「女性は強くたくましく健康な男性を好む」（Nature Communications）女性は血中テストステロン量が多い男性を好む。テストステロンが多いと肺炎ワクチンへの免疫反応が強い。ラトビア人はだけど…□#生物

⁵ 故に女性が男らしい顔つきの男性を好むのは高い免疫力の裏付けがあるからだ、というのだが、調査対象がラトビア人というところが微妙。。。

⁶ 歌の祭典、というか祭典の中で歌っている歌は三国間に違いは無い、という説も見かけますがエストニア→エストニアって美しい！エストニア人って素晴らしい！□ラトビア→こんな感じでラトビア人は生きてきたんだよ〜□リトアニア→おおリートーヴァ！リートーヴァ！□…って感じの傾向はある、と思う

⁷ なんでロシア人はみんなそんな東方大好きなの…と思ったら今度はラトビア人だった。これは人口200万くらいしかいないバルト三国だ、レアポケモンだぞ

English for you?', he replied: 'Nothing.' Hmm, is that so? So that's not a sort of communication tool."[1] [16.08.2012 @Oeste773] *"Latvians are people that live in trees and eat mushrooms. Their language is full of magic that is able to invoke rain and wind, and can give orders to animals, too. Ancient Germans wrote this about Latvians."*[2] [20.09.2012 @kinokoyani] *"There's sauna in Latvia, too, they call it pir[t]s. Latvians insist that it is not sauna. Actually, it is pretty much the same."*[3] [27.01.2013 @matkatori] *"Latvians are tall. Especially among Europeans. There are some even taller than 2 meters."*[4] [24.02.2013 @septoss]

Polandball (Countryballs) memes with Latvia starving for potatoes occasionally circulate on Japanese Twitter causing derived content. A scene from the Riga International Airport where many arriving passengers are welcomed by family members with flowers (according to the journalist's interpreter, even if the passenger's absence had lasted just a day) broadcasted repeatedly on a Japanese TV program has had its influence on the image of Latvians to be perceived as excessive flower-givers. Recently, the tall stature of Latvians (world's tallest women), the Song Celebration and *pirts* traditions are getting well known among Japanese famous for singing along *karaoke* and soothing soaks in *onsen*.

"I saw your works. They are all very powerful and amazing. Dievturība is also interesting. For some reason, I thought that Japanese sensibility (sense, emotional feeling) is close to the Latvian one."[5] [29.04.2013 @baroncia] *"The question I wanted to ask the most was the difference in the mentality among the Baltic States. I was told that when someone has to do something, Lithuanians act first, Latvians think and act, Estonians think, think and do not act. It seems, there is such a joke."*[6] [22.05.2013 @Heikki_kyoto] *"The most important annual event for Latvians, the summer solstice festival, is finally here. The festival is on the 23rd and 24th, but before it begins, the most important thing is to go to meadow and pick the flowers*

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[1] それにしても、昨日会った、ラトビア人は7ケ国ができるといってた。誰もがロシア語、ラトビア語、英語はできるという。その位できないと仕事がないみたい。彼にあなたにとっての、英語は何?って聞いたら、nothingだって。ふむ、そうか。コミュニケーションツールとかでないんだ。

[2] ラトビア人は木に暮らしたり茸を食べたり民族である。言葉は全部魔法で雨や風を呼ぶ事を出来ますし動物に命令も出来ます。 昔のドイツ人はラトビア人について書いた事だ。

[3] ラトビアでもサウナがあるが、ピルスと呼びます。ラトビア人はそれはサウナではないと言い張る。実はほとんど同じ。

[4] ラトビア人の背が高い。ヨーロッパの中でも特に。2m越えもある。

[5] 作品を拝見させていただきました。とても力強い作品ばかりで、素晴らしいです。ラトビア神道も興味深いですね。何故か、日本人の感性とラトビア人の感性は近いものがあるのでは、と思いました。

[6] 一番聞いてみたかった質問はバルト三国の性格の違い。教えてくれたのは何かをしなきゃいけない時の例えでリトアニア人はまず「act」する、ラトビア人は「think & act」する、エストニア人は「think, think & not act」っていうジョークがあるらしい。

and herbs. They are used for making crowns and home decorations."[1] [20.06.2013 @Riga_Annai] *"The average height of Latvian men seems to exceed 180. Well, next to Russia, and being North Europeans, it seems natural... So why is Hetalia's Latvia height... [so short]? I wondered and checked that it is due to the [size of the] national land – one sixth of Japan. And the capital Riga, the Baltic Pearl, is too attractive! I have to buy a travel guide book!"[2]* [25.06.2013 @himako08]

The affinity between Latvian and Japanese autochthonous religions – *Dievturība* and *Shintō* – and their traditional rituals have been increasingly appreciated in recent years. In *Hetalia*, the Japanese anime series allegorically portraying political and historical events and international relations between personifications of countries, as a 15-year-old short-statured blonde boy named Raivis Galante wearing a maroon military uniform, Latvia is in friends with other Baltic States, yet often gets bullied by Russia. The stereotypical joke about Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian temperament has leaked to Japanese, too.

"The nearby barber shop children went today seems to be run by a Latvian. For one child it was just £5! Awesome! To come to a foreign country, open a barber shop, speak English, and do business welcoming customers at such a low price. I think he is a skillful merchant on a global scale."[3] [31.08.2013 @kyokob] *"Kurši, one of ancestral tribes of Latvians, was a people that frightened Vikings out as pirates around the 7th to 10th centuries. The Danish Vikings went sailing after having a prayer to the church – God, protect us from Kurši!"[4]* [10.10.2013 @HSDomestas] *"Thunderstorm in Vilnius. Ancient Lithuanians and Latvians placed pork offerings whenever thunder rolled, praying that it wouldn't hit them directly."[5]* [15.10.2013 @HSDomestas] *"The Latvian, whom I met at the concert yesterday, said he lived in England for 9 years, and as a swimmer got 77 medals in 9 years. Next time, I'd*

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[1]　いよいよラトビア人にとって最も重要な年中行事、夏至祭が近づきました。祭りは23, 24日となりますが、夏至祭がはじまる前、もっとも重要なのは草地に行って草花を摘むことです。花冠作り、家の飾りなどに使われています。

[2]　ラトビア人男性の平均身長は180越えらしい。まあロシアのお隣、北欧系だし当然なのか…　じゃあなんでヘタリアのラトビアの身長は…？と思って調べてみたら国土か(°ω°) 日本の六分の一ほどだそう。そして首都のリガ、バルトの真珠が魅力的すぎる…！ 旅行ガイドブック買ってこなくては

[3]　今日子供たちが行った近所の床屋はラトビア人経営らしい。子供一人たった£5! 凄いな。外国来て床屋開いて英語喋ってそんな安さでお客とって経営してるんだから。どんだけグローバルで商売上手なんだろと思う。

[4]　…今のラトビア人のご先祖様にあたる民族の1つであるクルシ人は7〜10世紀頃、海賊としてヴァイキングを恐れさせた民だったのですよ…デンマークのヴァイキング達は当時「神よ、我らをクルシ人から守りたまえ！」って教会に祈ってから航海に出たそうですよ…

[5]　ヴィリニュスの雷雨。昔のリトアニア人やラトビア人は雷が鳴ると豚肉をお供えして直撃しないよう祈ったそうだよ

take a picture of him with medals on his neck. He was an interesting person with a very strong character."[1] [17.11.2013 @tantantango] *"I happened to be at a café in the old town of Riga, where a Latvian teacher gave a private Japanese lesson to Latvian students. I got a phone call from my Latvian friend who is a Japanese interpreter, so I also spoke in Japanese. A rare scene where all the customers speak Japanese."[2]* [18.11.2013 @tengyo] *"Yesterday was Latvian Independence Day. Fireworks held every year in Riga are one of celebrations. The next big fireworks are New Year's. For Latvians, unlike Japanese, fireworks are associated with winter, not summer. Always watching outside, withstanding the cold."[3]* [19.11.2013 @Riga_Annai] *"Daughter of a Latvian, who was my classmate in the Netherlands, recently celebrated her 15th birthday. Her eyebrows and eyeliner were clear, the mascara was perfect, yet the features I knew when she was about 10 were gone... I miss her."[4]* [04.12.2013 @AkaneSaito] *"Latvian women are all beautiful! Gulp, I've a lot of free time."[5]* [10.12.2013 @kind_Dark] *"Women of Latvia, the country with No.1 rate of blonde beautiful women in the world: 'Help! Due to a shortage of men in our country, we have trouble getting married!'... Ukrainians seem to have no interest in Asians like Japanese, yet I hope that Latvians are interested in us."[6]* [10.12.2013 @gurafu_under] *"Latvians kick ass! The level of blonde beautiful women is too high! Let's learn Latvian!"[7]* [11.12.2013 @shunsukepon]

The daring Latvian ancestral tribes, contemporary competitive capacity and diligence abroad, as well as the beauty of women are often praised not only by Japanese.

A time-wise dense feed of tweets. There have been nine occasions when monthly frequency of Japanese tweets regarding Latvians has exceeded a hundred, in

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[1] 昨日のライブで会ったラトビア人は在英9年で水泳の選手で9年間でメダル77個取ったと言っていた。次回はメダルを首に掛けてもらって写真を撮らせてもらう予定。とっても強烈なキャラクターで面白い人だった。

[2] リガの旧市街にあるカフェでラトビア人の先生がラトビア人の生徒に日本語の個人授業をしているところに居合わせた。そこに日本語の通訳をしているラトビア人の友達から電話が入り、僕も日本語で話し出す。客全員が日本語を話しているという珍風景。

[3] 昨日はラトビアの独立記念日でした。毎年リガに行われている花火はこの祭りのひとつです。次の大きな花火はお正月です。ラトビア人にとって、花火は日本人と違って夏ではなくて、冬のイメージです。いつも寒さに負けず外で見ています。

[4] オランダで同級生だったラトビア人の一人娘が最近15歳の誕生日を迎えたのだけれど、アイブロウもアイライナーもくっきり、マスカラもばっちりで、私が知っていた10歳頃の面影が微塵もなくて寂しい。

[5] ラトビア人って、美人さんばっかり!!(゚A゚;)ゴクリ:暇人＼(^o^)／

[6] 金髪美女率世界NO.1のラトビアの女性「助けて！国に男性が少なすぎて結婚できないの(´;;`)」… ウクライナ人は日本人みたいなアジア人には全く興味ないらしいけど、ラトビア人は興味持ってくれるといいね。

[7] ラトビア人ぱねぇ 金髪美女レベル高すぎ ラトビア語勉強しよ

most cases it is due to a particular happening in the given period of time. The greatest number of overall daily tweets containing a Japanese morpheme meaning *Latvia* (23,651 tweets, i. e., 6.27% of entire data; 267 tweets among them contain a Japanese morpheme meaning *Latvians*) were published within 24 hours of 6 February 2013 (UTC), due to a Japan vs. Latvia national football team game which took place in Kōbe that day. The fact that the majority of tweets aggregated during hours of gameplay reveal how prominently here-and-now and spur-of-the-moment reactive utterances without temporal displacement manifest as the soliloquy (*hitorigoto*) in Japanese communication on Twitter. Some of tweets from this occasion:

> *"Tomorrow is a game against Latvia. Taking things easy, but where is Latvia? Checked the information on Latvia at Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There is a Latvian language. Unemployment 16%. 33 Japanese residents there, and 73 Latvian residents [in Japan].* [05.02.2013 @LoveSamuraiBlue]*"1 "Seems that names of Latvians often end with 's'."2* [06.02.2013 @mtt2gw] *"Search results of 'Latvia' return: Hetalia Latvia, Latvian military uniforms, Latvians, Latvian beautiful women."3* [06.02.2013 @bobbyindahouse] *"Latvians are too handsome."4* [06.02.2013 @hayatefrancisco] *"Are Latvians also resistant to cold? They are short-sleeved!"5* [06.02.2013 @KDojho] *"Latvians are gigantic!"6* [06.02.2013 @ami_nya] *"Latvians. They have faces I have never seen before. Not like Germans, nor like Russians. I know almost nothing about Latvia."7* [06.02.2013 @mototagawa] *"The opponent of the Japan national football team, Latvia, has the most beautiful women in the world, whereas women ratio largely surpasses men, very many of such beauties are unmarried. Just in case if you have a chance to get to know Latvian women passing by in the city."8* [06.02.2013 @kogiasgtdfs] *"A set of Latvian handsome guys."9* [06.02.2013 @cherrycube] *"Are Japanese small? Or are Latvians big? If I got surrounded by Latvians, no doubt*

1 　明日はラトビア戦。余裕で構えてましたが、？ラトビアって？どこ？というわけで外務省のラトビア情報調べてみました。ラトビア語というのがあるんですね。失業率16％。在留邦人33人、在留ラトビア人73人。

2 (*・ω・*)ラトビア人の名前は〜スで終わることが多いのかな

3 ラトビアの検索結果→ヘタリア ラトビア、ラトビア 軍服、ラトビア人、ラトビア 美人（∵）

4 ラトビア人イケメンすぎ

5 ラトビア人も寒さに強いのか？半袖だぞ(°°;)

6 ラトビア人でけぇな。

7 　ラトビア人。いままで見た事のない顔をしている。ゲルマンっぽくもないし、ロシア系でもない。ラトビアについてぼくはほとんど何も知らない。

8 　サッカー日本代表の対戦国ラトビアは世界一美人が多い上に男女比では女性が大きく勝る為、こんな美人でも未婚者がとても多いそうだ。街で通りすがりのラトビア人女性と知り合う機会があれば

9 ラトビア人イケメン揃いだな

I'd look like a dwarf."[1] [06.02.2013 @k_kumo] *"Sukitokimekitokis – a name like this would be nothing strange for a Latvian, I began wondering."*[2] [06.02.2013 @846hashimu] *"Latvians have difficult names."*[3] [06.02.2013 @rihei_i] *"Latvians have very beautiful eye color."*[4] [06.02.2013 @p_yama_san] *"At any rate, the impression of Hetalia made me think of Latvia as a little one, however actually Latvians are big indeed."*[5] [06.02.2013 @Aoi_marumayu12] *"I like the positivity of Latvians!"*[6] [06.02.2013 @maccha_maccha] *"I see, Latvians are humble/modest!"*[7] [06.02.2013 @tezukazu]

These tweets cast light on the stream of consciousness, i. e., the flow of thoughts, of game spectators noteworthy enough to be tweeted right away on the spot. The broad scope of focus points of attention and associative network of observant Japanese tweeters unfolding the series of serendipities exceeds the boundaries of a sports event reaching into the realm of ethnology.

Conclusion

This article provides the methodology of acquisition and sentiment analysis of Japanese tweets, and a first-time insight into a segment of reflections of the multifaceted image of Latvian people through 81 illustrative tweets published from the inception of Twitter until the end of 2013. The spontaneous nature of the majority of Japanese reactive utterances in a soliloquy on Twitter suggests them to be free of self-censorship, and hence authentic and genuine sources of perception of another culture. Apart from seldom negative experiences, Japanese perceive Latvians in a rather positive and surprising way, providing room for new discoveries to reflect on ourselves through the perspective of others shared online.

Twitter is a platform where most users publish their thoughts in an open-access environment, and thus provide broad Digital Humanities fieldwork opportunities for Ethnography and Folkloristics scholars. Furthermore, the geotagged tweet acquisition, and the development of sentiment analysis for Baltic languages, too, are particularly interesting topics to elaborate on. As there is an article size limit, results of analysis of Japanese tweets published from 2014 to 2018 and later would follow in further publications.

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[1] 日本人が小さいの？ラトビア人が大きいの？私がラトビア人に囲まれたらきっと小人。
[2] スキトキメキトキスって名前のラトビア人がいても不思議じゃない気になってきた。
[3] ラトビア人なまえむずかしい
[4] ラトビア人の瞳はとても綺麗な色をしているね
[5] どうしてもへたりあのイメージでラトビアが小さい感じがしてたんだけどラトビア人大きいね
[6] ラトビア人のポジティブさ好きだわw
[7] ラトビア人って謙虚やな〜

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CULTURE
CROSSROADS

PROBLEMS IN THE DEFINITION OF DIASPORA IN THE CONTEXT OF LATVIA'S DIASPORA LAW

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Abstract

Latvia's Diaspora Law entered into force on 1 January 2019, regulating Latvia's relationship with its diaspora abroad. The process of creation of the law was not a smooth and easy as the main problem and debate arose from arriving to a common definition of the term "diaspora". There were two main broad approaches offered: wide and inclusive definition would allow for self-identification, but narrow one would exclude non-citizens seeing them as potential threat to the Latvian state. Two different views of the definitions reveal two distinctive views about identities and tell the story of Latvia that is caught between the past and the future.

Keywords: *diaspora, law, identity, Latvia.*

Introduction

There are many ways to define *diaspora*. Definitions differ between researchers and different legislative systems. Diaspora of Latvia or as it is also commonly referred to as Latvian diaspora is a valuable case study of different dilemmas the legislation system faced in the process of creating the Diaspora Law. Views expressed publicly by different members of the Latvian Parliament (*Saeima*), ministries, members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) directly connected to diaspora, mirror not only their different political views, but their understanding about national and cultural identities, and feeling of belonging and home.

In order to understand the initial necessity for the creation of a Diaspora Law, one can look into some population statistics, which confirms the increasing emigration processes which has been happening since Latvia gained back its independence in 1991, but even more so after entering European Union in 2004 and the financial crisis in 2008–2009.

According to public information on the website of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia no date given], there were 1.9 million

people living in Latvia at the beginning of 2019. In 1990 there were 2.6 million. The population of Latvia has decreased by nearly 10% between 2010 and 2019 [United Nations 2019]. According to United Nations prognoses it is going to decrease by approximately another 25% between 2019 and 2050, taking the third place in the World with the most rapidly decreasing population after Lithuania and Bulgaria [United Nations 2019].

Re-emigration has been a catch phrase in Latvia for a while now. In 2016, the Latvian Institute organised a campaign named *I want you back* in order to bring back citizens to Latvia [Eng.lsm.lv 2016]. There have been some other activities towards the diaspora of Latvia, involving financial support for different cultural activities and education, but it is impossible to claim that campaigns and activities have brought back desired number of people to Latvia [Helmane 2018]. In order to gather all those activities under the one *roof* – the Diaspora Law was initiated so that all activities and support mechanisms would be more purposeful and organised.

The Diaspora Law entered into force on 1 January 2019. The question about the definition of the diaspora of Latvia still lingers unresolved even though the final and the present version, which invites everybody, who has a tie with Latvia, be a part of Latvia's diaspora, is valid now.

This article analyses the struggles to define diaspora and identity in general, and Latvia's diaspora particularly as the arguments around the definition in the Diaspora Law have been the most crucial in the creation of the law. A specific research question was posed – why has it been so difficult to agree upon a common definition of diaspora in the Diaspora Law in Latvia? The intention is to investigate and analyse the underlying factors, which caused prolonged discussions about the definition of diaspora. In order to do so, content analysis of different newspapers, internet sources and documentation and audio recordings[1] from meetings of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs have been used to analyse the views of members of the Parliament, ministries and representatives of NGOs. Two separate sections have been dedicated to the theoretical frame in order to look into term *diaspora* and formation of the diasporic identity. The main theoretical basis has been used from such authors as James Clifford [Clifford 1994], who talks about diaspora developing in a transnational network, William Safran [Safran 1991], who defines diasporic characteristics, Martin Sökefeld [Sökefeld 2006], who analyses diaspora as imagined transnational community, Stuart Hall [Hall 1994], who talks about divided identities and the creation of the national identity, and Martin Ehala [Ehala 2018], analysing a way of performing in different identities.

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[1] Audio recordings from the Parliament´s Committee on Foreign Affairs meetings on 5 September, 21 September, 26 September, 19 October 2018, were obtained via downloading on USB device in the Archive of Parliament.

Defining diaspora

The term *diaspora* has been derived from Greek, meaning dispersal or scattering of seeds [Carment, Sadjed 2017: 2]. First the term was used only in describing the Jewish diaspora, with Greek, Armenian, African and Irish diasporas subsequently being included starting from the 1960s and 1970s [Cohen 2008: 20].

Safran defined diaspora without naming any certain nationality, but instead finding common characteristic signs. He wrote that diaspora are expatriate minority communities that have dispersed from an original *center* to at least two *peripheral* places; that maintain a *memory, vision or myth about their original homeland*; that believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host country; that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are *importantly defined* by this continuing relationship with the homeland [Safran 1991: 83–84].

Clifford suggests looking on diaspora's borders rather than locating its essentials features as it is important to understand what it defines itself against. According to Clifford diasporas are developed in transnational networks and built from diverse attachments, therefore they cannot be in practice nationalist [Clifford 1994].

The term *diaspora* has been used more and more in different contexts, becoming a term of self-identification among different groups who migrated, or whose ancestors migrated from one place to another [Carment, Sadjed 2017]. Roger Brubaker remarks [Brubaker 2005] that the term *diaspora* has become a catchword in the social and cultural sciences. The proliferation and popularization of a concept frequently results in a loss of precise meaning and analytic power and this has happened to diaspora. He suggests, rather than speak of *a diaspora* or *the diaspora* as entity, a bounded group, and ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on.

Although the meaning of diaspora is broad and definitions disputed, there appears to be a relatively common core understanding of what it is about. For example, nobody would question that diaspora has to do with *dislocation,* with having left particular places and living elsewhere, or with simply being *out of place*. Therefore, it can be suggested that there can be no diaspora community without a consciousness of diaspora, in other words, without an idea of shared identity, of common belonging to that group [Sökefeld 2006: 267].

The puzzle of definition of term *diaspora* has been analyzed by Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin. They claim that diasporic cultural identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from *mixing* but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing. According to them cultures, as well

as identities, are constantly being remade [Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 721]. That might explain why it is so difficult to maintain one certain idea and definition about the content of the term *diaspora* as diasporic groups can be fluid as entity or consist of some or many members who are experiencing constant fluidity between different identities.

The idea of fluidity between different identities somewhat contradicts the claim of the idea of shared identity and consciousness of the group as the significant element of the diaspora, but it makes sense if one explains diaspora as transnational community or even *imagined transnational community*, as imaginations of community that unite segment of people that live in territorially separated locations. Sökefeld refers to the formation of diasporas as a special case of ethnicity [Sökefeld 2006]. This approach is considering diversity and fluidity and characterizing nowadays approach to the research of diaspora.

Diasporic identity

Diaspora consciousness is tightly connected to the collective and individual identity. The term *identity* like *diaspora* has risked losing acuity as it becomes a vague byword for individual or group characteristics [Brubaker, Cooper 2000]. Fluidity and change can be fully applied to the term *identity* and its content. Stuart Hall calls it *de-centered identities* [Hall 1994], because people are not sure about their identity, as they may carry sometimes diverse, unresolved and contradictory identities. Hall writes that the subject previously, experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities [Hall 1994].

Martin Ehala suggests that individuals are socialized from the birth to match some of the signs of identities [Ehala 2018]. They socialize themselves further to claim some identities that they see as desirable. As a linguist he likes to compare identity with a language, saying, that performing an identity is like speaking a language. If one performs an identity authentically, he is like a native speaker; if not quite authentically, he is like a speaker of a foreign language. One can seldom become authentic in an identity which is adopted later in the life than in the childhood years.

One can also wonder if it is possible to perform authentically in a few identities. There are more and more people in the world who grow up surrounded by a few languages, and most likely – by a couple of cultures and identities too. Are they able to perform on the same level in all the identities? Ehala writes that one may have a strong emotional attachment to a particular identity, which has a very low level of manifestation, for example, a young exile Estonian, born in a mixed-race family and speaking Estonian poorly would display very few features of Estonian collective identity, yet because of his or her family upbringing he or she may still have a strong

emotional attachment to Estonian identity. The trouble with this situation is that despite emotional attachment, many fellow Estonians would not categorize the person as a *true* Estonian and therefore wouldn't accept him/her as an authentic group member. The same may be experienced by many immigrants who try hard to become full members of society but, as they are still easily recognized as not authentic, they are not accepted [Ehala 2018]. It is quite often that authenticity lacks in both – host and home country, even though in some cases where refusion, based on the lack of authenticity occurs in both – host and home countries, one might feel at home in neither of them.

Markers of identity can sometimes be invisible, intangible and unconscious [Story, Walker 2017]. That would explain why the exclusion can happen in certain cases without an obvious reason or explanation. Most often the markers of identity are quite obvious – like language, material culture, patterns of behaviour, and those markers are usually following in diasporic communities, even though with some possible revision and recreation in some cases [Story, Walker 2017].

Jerzy J. Smolicz suggested [Smolicz 1980] that there is no neutral cultural space. He argued that each ethnic group has a set of core values, that are absolutely central to the group's self-definition and therefore also to its existence. Core values are closely connected to ethnocentrism. Ehala argues that widely popular aversion to ethnocentrism overlooks the fact that it is not only unavoidable, but in reasonable quantities it is healthy aspect of every form of belonging. Sharing core values makes people with the same identity trust each other and it is the glue that makes social capital possible [Ehala 2018: 10–11].

Hall admits as well that in the modern world, the national cultures into which we are born are one of the principal sources of cultural identity. These identities are not literally imprinted in our genes. However, we do think of them as if they are part of our essential natures [Hall 1994].

Besides ethnocentrism ethno-symbolism is another term to consider thinking about construction of the national identity either collectively or individually. According to Ehala ethno-symbolism is when national identities are constructed from the elements of myths, collective memories, symbols, traditions and hopes for the future. It is not the actual common ancestry or actual territory that counts, but a myth about common ancestry and the concept of a historical homeland [Ehala 2018]. Some parts in ethno-symbolism are historical, some – *rediscovered*.

As well as mentioned by Hall there is narrative of the nation, as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture [Hall 1994]. It can be a real or invented. There is the emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness. Invented traditions are set of practices, even a ritual or have a symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition

[Hall 1994]. Characteristics of ethno-symbolism are visible, for example, in the post-soviet space, when, in order to rebuild the state, it was somewhat crucial to recreate the unity through previously lost symbols like flags, national anthems, national days together with some newly created symbols.

As an example, for such brand-new symbolism and invented tradition could serve The White Tablecloth Day in Latvia on May 4, celebrating the Restoration of Independence [Collier 2016]. The idea came from the Latvian Institute a couple of years before Latvia's centenary, encouraging people to gather with families, friends and neighbours around the table with white tablecloth in order to celebrate the restoration of the independence.

Attempts to define diaspora in Latvia's Diaspora Law

Argument about the exact definition of diaspora and its borders in the Latvian context has been on-going in the process of the law creation and even after it came into force in January 2019. Who can be considered to belong to the Latvian diaspora? Are they just ethnic Latvians? Are there ethnic Latvians at all? Are they all people who consider themselves to belong to the Latvian diaspora? Or those *others*, who speak another language as their mother tongue should be denied? All those questions arise in regards to Latvia's historical situation as a post-soviet state and all the controversies and arguments between Latvians and non-Latvians who reside in Latvia. After the renewal of the independence the division between those who speak Latvian and those, whose mother tongue was not Latvian, was wide. Many people happened to live in completely different information spaces – one was the Latvian side and mass media in Latvian and another one was Russian and mass media in Russian either from Latvia or Russia [Golubovs 2003]. It was a *two-community* society, living parallelly one to each other. Political debates about citizenship and naturalization process of non-citizens were harsh. There has been much more widespread awareness of citizenship in Latvia than may be the case in other societies, and citizenship, due to the historical situation in Latvia and the Soviet occupation, has been unusually emotional issue for many in Latvia [Kehris-Brands no date given]. The situation has somewhat changed nowadays as many non-Latvians speak Latvian and have gained citizenship, which was not the case just after the renewal of the independence. Problems with different information spaces still remain though, but for possibly different reasons, for example, reliability of sources either from Western media or Russian media [Gulbe 2018].

After long discussions and arguments in the Parliament of Latvia – the 12th *Saeima* voted on 1 November 2018, for the final edition of the law which includes a wider definition of diaspora, saying that diaspora are Latvian citizens permanently residing outside Latvia, Latvians and others with ties to Latvia, as well

as their family members [Diaspora Law 2018]. Debaters refer to this as the wide and inclusive definitions of diaspora as it allows self-identification with Latvia's or Latvian diaspora as it is referred to in different cases.

Supporters of the wide definitions were Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, majority of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, lawyer, former judge of the European Court of Justice and then Latvia's president to be Egils Levits, diasporic NGOs.

World Federation of Free Latvians (*Pasaules Brīvo latviešu apvienība* – PBLA), which acts as a parent organization of a few smaller NGOs was supporting the wider definition in their congress [PBLA.lv 2018], but the chairman of the board of PBLA Kristine Saulīte expressed a few doubts in the process of the law making and afterwards about the wide definition. She thinks that definition is too wide, and one can put almost everything under such an inclusive definition. According to Saulīte Diaspora law cannot fix all problems of Latvia including situation with non-citizens [Timofejeva 2018]. Saulīte says that she does not like the term *diaspora*:

> *It does not encourage the feeling that we are one nation. It does not matter where we are, we are all united in belonging to Latvia and being Latvians. We do not need to distinct – diaspora, Latvians here and there. We all contribute to Latvia. We need each other* [Brikmane 2019].

Saulīte suggests that diaspora does not need to be defined as something special, deserving extra attention and benefits. She thinks that inhabitants of Latvia are the ones who need to be lifted up and their income level too, therefore PBLA did not support the idea that pensions which are earned abroad are submitted to the laws of that country who issues it, and therefore non-taxable minimum can be much higher than in Latvia, for example. Diaspora Law was created and discussed in the pre-election time, so it was a tempting to try to earn some votes from the voters abroad, says Saulīte [Brikmane 2019].

In the Foreign Affairs Committee, representatives from Legal Bureau of Parliament, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of the Culture and Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments were against the wide definition.

Rihards Kols, member of the Parliament from National Alliance, who voted for the final version of the Diaspora Law, including the wide definition, made sure to express his wish to change and narrow down the definition as soon as possible. He considers that there is a problem in that part of the definition of Latvian diaspora, which mentions others, who have a lasting social connection with Latvia. Kols says that the connection or tie according to the wide definition can be subjective, when somebody chooses to be part of the diaspora, for example, just on the grounds that one likes Latvia's basketball team or Latvian nature. Even more – the objective tie

can be for the person who has received refugee travel document, or the person with permit to live in Latvia, the person who has been in the prison in Latvia or theoretically – all military personnel who in Soviet times were in Latvia. Kols does not want to conceive the above mentioned as *our diaspora* [Timofejeva 2018].

According to Kols it is important to define clearly what is diaspora, so that all support measures are received by those who should receive them and not by those who do not. It is not about discriminating or to exclude somebody, but existing definition is leading to absurd situations [Timofejeva 2018].

Kols has published the letter from PBLA on his Facebook page[1] to the President of Latvia and the other highest officials inviting to change the definition of diaspora in the law. PBLA writes that Diaspora Law was prepared in the light of coming up parliament elections and therefore PBLA had to put an effort to remain neutral and to listen to both sides of the definition supporters. PBLA thinks that non-citizens and possibly disloyal people to Latvia should not be included in the definition of the diaspora. PBLA supports the definition formulated by the Legal Bureau of Parliament, which defines diaspora as citizens of Latvia residing outside Latvia, Livs (Livonians) and persons whose ascending relatives are Latvians or Livs.[2]

The Parliament of Latvia rejected a call to see amendments to the Diaspora Law that narrow the definition of diaspora on 13 December 2018 [Lsm.lv 2018]. It might remain untouched until the next Parliament will be elected as it does not seem to be having enough supporters in the Parliament for the time being in the 13th *Saeima*.

Discussions regarding wide or narrow definitions remind of two different discursive approaches towards ethnic identity as defining diaspora in the Diaspora Law is to define the identity of a group of people as well as identity of the individual. Anthony Smith [Smith 2000] mentions approach of primordialists, who consider that ethnic identity derives almost naturally from experiences of belonging in primordial communities like the family or other congregations. Primordialism considers identity as largely stable and continuous in given cultural traditions. Sökefeld writes that constructionism, the theoretically dominant perspective today, argues in contrast that ethnic identity is the result of processes of attribution [Sökefeld 2006]. Those supporting the wide definition of the diaspora in the Latvia's Diaspora Law, have been backing up their ideas coming from constructionism as well as transnationalism, which excludes a binary approach and allows identifications, for example, with two different national groups [Jurkāne-Hobein, Kļave 2015]. The wide definition of the diaspora welcomes non-Latvians and non-citizens to be part

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[1] Rihards Kols Facebook page (11.12.2018). Available: https://www.facebook.com/960297957323800/posts/2137352772951640/ (viewed 05.05.2020.)

[2] Ibid.

of the diaspora, as the case of another, newly created, imagined and special ethnicity, where all that matters are ties with Latvia, no matter how fluid they might be at times.

The narrow definition, on the other hand, has the approach which is close to primordialism, even though not excluding non-Latvians from the definition of the diaspora if they hold the citizenship of Latvia. In this regard one can think about the narrow definition as somewhat including as it does not exclude Latvia's citizens with another ethnicity. They are included, at least *on paper*, in this *imagined community* which is national identity according to such authors as Sökefeld [2006] and Anderson [1983]. Another question remains if they would be acknowledged as authentic while *performing* in this identity [Ehala 2018].

According to supporters of the wide definition, justifications for the wide definition are based in the international and national law. Active supporter in the public discussion about the definition of the diaspora Elīna Pinto, the current chair of presidium of European Latvian Association (*Eiropas Latviešu apvienība* – ELA) and former adviser to the Latvia's President on Modern State and Sustainability, mentions that Levits says that term *genuine link* is used in international law and therefore is a valid term in a Diaspora Law and in the definitions of diaspora [Pinto 2018]. The term has been named as invalid by Legal Bureau of Parliament. The representative of the Legal Bureau of Parliament in meetings of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs[1] repeatedly expressed that there is need for a tool, which would recognize the tie with Latvia in order to be acknowledged as a part of diaspora, because the wide definition, without this tool, is not legally correct. The representative from the Foreign Ministry[2] expressed that it was surprising that Legal Bureau of the Parliament thought that they were superior in the interpretation of the legal terms over the judge of the European Court of Justice Egils Levits. It was called an arrogant attitude from the Legal Bureau of Parliament.

The tie, genuine link or belonging to diaspora, according to Pinto [Pinto 2018], is characterized as a person's lasting social connection, which is determined by evaluating the objective activity of the person in achieving the goals of the Diaspora law and his or her subjective attitude or desire to be associated with Latvia.

Pinto's explanation resonates with Joanna Story and Iain Walker [Story, Walker 2017], who write that the cultures are neither bounded nor unchanging, so too *identity* has become a term to describe a set of characteristics to which individuals

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[1] Audio recordings from the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs meetings on 5 September, 21 September, 26 September, 19 October 2018, were obtained via downloading on USB device in the Archive of Parliament.

[2] Ibid.

and groups may differentially subscribe but which are neither fixed (either per se or in their relations with the individuals or groups they are intended to characterize) not subscribed to universally.

Another aspect to be kept in mind is that the Diaspora Law was prepared in the time Latvia was celebrating centenary, so symbolical value was attached to the Law automatically. Pinto from ELA speaks about it too, saying that Diaspora Law in the light of Latvia's centenary had to be the uniting force for all Latvia's people in Latvia and abroad [Pinto 2018]. The final definition, according to her, adds additional and wider meaning to the commonly known *Latvians* and *Latvian citizens*. Pinto says that most of people who participate in different activities in diaspora are Latvians or Latvian citizens, but there are people who are not fitting in the official frame, even though they are devoted and in a meaningful way related to Latvia. They can be, for example, children of non-citizens from Latvia, who study Latvian abroad and plan to return to Latvia to gain the citizenship or partners of gay people who are not seen legally as partners in the light of Latvian laws. There are former citizens of Latvia – Lithuanians, Poles, Russians – who had to refuse Latvian citizenship after gaining their residence country's citizenship, when double citizenship was not allowed yet, and many other cases [Pinto 2018].

The representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the meeting of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs[1] stressed that Latvians have never been just Latvians but community and mixture of different nationalities including Poles, Jews, Russians, Estonians etc. This is the reason why it is not possible to define diaspora narrowly.

Nowadays diaspora most likely cannot be exclusively nationalistic due to identity shifts and various family constellations. Diasporic culture has developed in transnational networks and built from diverse attachments, encoding practises of accommodation with, as well resistance to, host countries and their norms [Clifford 1994]. It is not only about the transnationalism which stops diasporas from being nationalistic. Hall says that modern nations are all cultural hybrids, because there is no nation in Western Europe, which are composed of only one people, one culture or ethnicity [Hall 1994]. The same can be said about the population of Latvia, which historically has been diverse, with ethnic minorities representing approximately a quarter of the citizens in the pre-war period [Kehris-Brands no date given].

Another argument from the supporters of the narrow diaspora definition was related with concern that there would be people who would try to demand rights to

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[1] Audio recordings from the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs meetings on 5 September, 21 September, 26 September, 19 October 2018, were obtained via downloading on USB device in the Archive of Parliament.

reside in Latvia and to obtain some practical opportunities and privileges or possibly affect the political situation. According to Pinto, the Diaspora Law does not define any kind of new rights regarding residency, citizenship or election rights. There are still other laws which regulate those areas such as Immigration Law, Citizenship Law and Parliament Election Law. Therefore, it should not be seen as threat in any way, thinks Pinto [Pinto 2018].

Excluding definition might be seen as a threat instead as it would alienate non-citizens of Latvia from the diaspora. Instead of building walls, it is better to destroy them, suggests Pinto [Zvirbulis 2018].

Conclusions

Arguments arising around the definition of diaspora illustrate complexity of the global times we are living in. Fluidity and postmodernity have influenced previously known concepts and definitions, leaving free space for new content and translation.

Problems to define diaspora in the Diaspora Law in Latvia have discovered two different aspects about concepts concerning identity: 1) transnational and fluid, when letting self-identification occur, 2) ethno-centred, keeping at bay all possible unknown external intrusion as outsiders are seen as a threat.

The supporters of the narrow definition seem to be trying to maintain the core values, which Ehala [2018] considers as being crucial for the formation of a healthy identity. Supporters of the wide definition, on the other hand, are aware of the global tendencies that affect the modern Latvian family, for example, global movement and migration and different family constellations which arise from it and were unthinkable around 20 years ago. Therefore, the wide and inclusive definition might fit better in the nowadays world situation as it does not exclude anybody who wants to be connected and related to Latvia and its culture, but for different reasons does not hold the rights to be a citizen of Latvia. The wide definition does not exclude the possibility to maintain core values which are characteristic to Latvian culture or recreated (imagined) as Latvian, therefore identity markers are there, just opened for a wider audience to take part in and self-identify with. The wide definition benefits re-emigration plans, opening possibilities of bringing back more people to the shrinking population of Latvia, as including all possible people with ties with Latvia, the Latvian officials sending out signals of welcome to them as potential returnees and others who possibly have never lived in Latvia. It might be a very symbolic gesture, but it is an important one for state policy.

Opponents of the wide definition have suggested that this gesture of invitation for everyone to join in might be a threat to the identity and even – the Latvian state. It is possible to recognize the archetype of fear, which Latvian mentality have been

carrying around for a while as stateless and threatened nation. This would answer the research question, why it has been so difficult to define diaspora in the Diaspora Law. There is a wish to move forward and let others in, but at the same time it is not so easy as baggage of the past seems to be still too heavy to handle.

Even with the feeling of threat, supporters of the narrow definition were somewhat opened to the idea to include the wider understanding in their draft of the definition, the citizens of Latvia, who do not identify themselves as ethnic Latvians. But the obvious problem with the narrow definition still remains as there are people abroad who identify themselves as having Latvian ancestry but are not citizens and have problems to prove their ancestry. Excluding this group might not be in the interests of the supporters of the narrow definition of diaspora.

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THE ROLE AND IDENTITY OF LATVIAN EXILE ART IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: EXAMPLE OF THE STUDENT FRATERNITY "DZINTARZEME" OF THE ART ACADEMY OF LATVIA

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Abstract

The year 1944/45 is inscribed on the pages of Latvia's history as the time of the second occupation by the USSR, as a result hundreds of thousands of Latvian citizens left Latvia as refugees. Since the 1945 the development of contemporary Latvian art was tragically divided between the occupied native land and the free world. The period in exile from 1945 to 1952 can be called the "restoration period", or the period of preservation of Latvian national values and art, when the continuation of the form of artistic expression during the period of Latvia's independence took place in refugee camps in Germany. The issue of national art became more problematic after 1952, when the exile lasted and Latvian artists were scattered on several continents of the world, the question of the fate of the expression of Latvian national art became more topical.

In November 1958, with an art exhibition in New York (USA), the Art Academy of Latvia student fraternity *"Dzintarzeme"* ("Amberland"), which was banned in July 1940 by the USSR, was renewed. There is reason to assume that *"Dzintarzeme"* can be called as one of the most purposeful associations of Latvian artists in exile in the efforts to preserve and popularize Latvian national art in the USA until 1973. The main purpose of this research is through the example of student fraternity *"Dzintarzeme"* to clarify the concept – what is Latvian national art in exile, what we can define as Latvianness in Latvian exile art, and also look at art development and its role in the society of exile Latvians in the United States of America where the most active community of *"Dzintarzeme"* was located.

Keywords: *Latvian national art, exile, the United States of America, fraternity "Dzintarzeme".*

Introduction

As the Soviet Red Army approached the eastern borders of Latvia, in the summer of 1944, an extensive movement of Latvian refugees to the west began. Between them were many notable social workers, also artists. Most of the Latvian refugees, called *Displaced Persons,* were accommodated in German refugee camps. At the beginning of 1946, the Art Agency of the Latvian Central Committee identified the creative potential of refugees, finding that between refugees were 142 painters, graphic artists and sculptors [The National Archives of Latvia 2014].

The period in exile from 1946 to 1949 is called the "Little Latvia" [Latvija un latvieši pasaulē 1993: 302], but artist and art historian Juris Soikans has called it as "restoration period", or in other words, a preservation period of Latvian national values and art [Soikans 1983: 84]. During this period, the new conditions in the German refugee camps were not an obstacle to maintaining cultural and art life – the form of expression of independent Latvian art continued. The Union of Latvian Artists and the Union of Latvian Craftsmen were established in Esslingen, also various artisan groups and workshops operated in about 10 refugee camps which organized regular exhibitions, took care of the preservation of national traditions, educated artisans, supported the search for creativity and promoted commercial activities (salons, markets).

Figure 1. Latvian artist and member of "*Dzintarzeme*" Maksimilians Mitrēvics (1901–1989) in Esslingen, during the Latvian art exhibition, 1947.
Source: National History Museum of Latvia (LKMD 3452).

However, the issue of national art became more problematic after 1952, when the exile lasted and Latvian artists were scattered in several continents, and the question of the fate of the expression of Latvian national art became more topical. And it was not only in the field of art – all the Latvian cultural workers in exile were clearly aware of their mission to preserve, promote and further develop national cultural values.

The older and middle generation of exile Latvian artists mostly participated in the maintenance of Latvian national art traditions. The older generation consisted of artists with art education obtained and completed in the Russian Empire at the end of 19th century and interwar Latvia. They had preserved their heritage, peculiarities of European schools and national art. Trends, for example, in American post-war modern art were mostly unfamiliar and unattractive, even incomprehensible. The middle generation consisted of artists whose art education began in Latvia from 1920s to 1940s, but they did not finish studies, or they continued them outside it due to the Second World war – in West Germany and the new emigration countries. Although the features of European and national art were still alive in their spiritual world, this generation was able to understand and adapt to new directions of art and means of expression in exile. The new generation of Latvian artists was mainly formed in their new homelands and was under the absolute influence of the post-war modern art trends that prevailed there. This generation is the most unfamiliar for the old Latvian ethnic group. Mostly they do not have any national artistic features or traditions.

This research is dedicated to student fraternity of the Art Academy of Latvia "*Dzintarzeme*" ("Amberland"), which consisted from older and middle generation of exile Latvian artists and was a part of the maintenance of Latvian national art traditions in the United States of America and Australia. The main purpose of this research is through the example of student fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*" to clarify the concept what is Latvian national art in exile, what we can define as Latvianness in Latvian exile art, and also look at art development and its role in the society of exile Latvians in United States of America where the most active community of "*Dzintarzeme*" was located.

Several research methods have been used in the research. With the help of genesis or descriptive method, the activity of the "*Dzintarzeme*" is considered and analysed, thus determining the causes and consequences of various processes, contradictions, regularities, and characteristics of the studied phenomena. With the help of the formal method, the research identifies visual elements, composition, colours, and interpretation of the work of art. With the help of iconography, also called the semiotic method, the symbols and meaning included in works of art are identified.

Both published and unpublished sources have been used in the research. The publications of Juris Soikans [Soikans 1983] and Niklāvs Strunke [Strunke 1971] have been used to focus on historiography, which reflects the mentioned problems of exile art in general. The main base of used sources were documents from the State Archives of Latvia. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Verners Dukurs fund LNA LVA 2061 ("Dukurs Verner (b. 1914), skulptors, Austrālija") contains materials dated from 1960 to 1997, including materials from "*Dzintarzeme*" activities in exile – statute, protocols, letters etc. Next is the artist and "*Dzintarzeme*" member Arnolds Sildegs fund LNA LVA 2652 ("Sildegs Arnolds (1915–2003), mākslinieks, žurnāla "Latvju Māksla" redaktors (ASV)"), which has not yet been sorted and systematized completely, but contains valuable documents of "*Dzintarzeme*" – historical descriptions, member biographies, letters, protocols, photographs etc. The third "*Dzintarzeme*" member, whose documents about "*Dzintarzeme*" and artistic work are stored at State Archives of Latvia is Jānis Cīrulis fund LNA LVA 2313 ("Cīrulis Jānis (1908–1995), mākslinieks (ASV)"). Author has also included periodicals. The newspaper "*Laiks*" can be considered as one of the most fundamental witnesses to the cultural life of Latvians in exile. "*Laiks*" has also documented the activities of "*Dzintarzeme*", which includes descriptions and critiques of art exhibitions.

The value and content of Latvian exile art

Fine arts in the United States of America had a few problems and conditions that failed to fully develop the expressions and essential of Latvian national art, and the author has clarified three factors. First, it is thematic sentiment as almost the only content and goal of the artwork. Latvian exile artist Niklāvs Strunke at the end of the 1950s considered – *Latvians in emigration understand art as a national ethnographic expression. They do not understand that today it is not necessary to paint only national skirts and ornamentation to express Latvianness, but it is enough and much deeper to be national if the painter seeks and shows his Latvianness in a flower, composition and in his Latvian sense of the world. Such painting can only elevate and deepen our national culture – so the theme is not the main thing* [Strunke 1971: 25]. And it was true, in the United States till the 1970s there were almost no Latvian exhibitions, in which you would not see beautiful landscapes or portraits with a taste of sentiment about lost Latvia. The paintings mostly showed sweet landscapes of the homeland, bath houses, towers of Riga, lovely folk girls, which were admired by many exiled Latvian spectators. Latvian exile art historian Eleonora Šturma has also emphasized that thematic sentiment has no place next to professional, seriously valued works of art, but she has also mentioned some strong and significant influence which come from interwar Latvia – *Exile Latvian artists all changed in their own way in artistic expressions, however, they always went back to the topics of Latvian nature*

and countryside, because we have to take into account the Kārlis Ulmanis authoritarian regime (1934–1940). *It was a time that glorified Latvian antiquity, the prosperous present of Latvians, and rural people, that Latvians are farmers, that we must live and support agriculture with it, that is our source of profit. Artists who wanted to earn, felt it immediately and many rushed away from Cubism and began to paint in national way fishermen and rural people again. The Art Academy of Latvia also had a great influence. All academy artist technique was good, they were not allowed to be careless, and the conservative foundation that the academy laid was a rule for everyone, and all the professors were like gods* [Šturma 2020].

The second factor was artwork as object of purchase and sale. As the material base of members and organizations of the Latvian exile society grew, the demand for works of art for decorating new houses, apartments and public property increased significantly. Until the beginning of the 1970s, the taste of the art public was quite conservative and the sensitivity to art was not very high. There was no pursuit of the extremes of avant-garde. Only the well-known and the usual were accepted. Among Latvians, there was often a misunderstanding of the essence of art, considering art only as a means of entertainment, pleasing the eyes and the heart with romanticized and sentimental paintings which reminded Latvia. There was a lack of a more art-educated audience. Consequently, a large part of Latvian artists in exile, instead of developing, adapted more to the taste of the audience and its needs. It was difficult and almost impossible to claim recognition in the wider American community in this direction. Also E. Šturma has claimed – *The artist could not get out of his frames. He felt that way and he was free to speak, and they had no desire to leave. And since there was an audience who wanted it, why should I break into other fields if I can live well and have my own audience* [Šturma 2020]. More progressive view can be observed among the middle generation – there were artists who were not afraid to move in search of new forms of expression.

The third factor was material difficulties of artists and focus on commercial art. This factor is more applicable to the older generation of artists who found it more difficult to adapt to the new conditions. How to fit in and exist without losing themselves was a difficult problem, especially in professional existence and job opportunities. In Latvia they had gained recognition and success, but in the new home countries, everything had to be started from the beginning. This meant that they had to think about living first and about art only in their free time. Only a few exceptions had the opportunity to continue working in the field of professional art. Most artists worked in non-artistic works, or created designs for consumer goods, books, or made decorations for local theatres. For examples, Sigismunds Vidbergs initially could only make a living by illustrating stories for American magazines and making designs of tie fabrics. After stabilizing, Vidbergs found a job at the company

"M. Lowenstein" in New York, where he was one of the fabric design artists, whose task was to provide the company with designs of men's pajamas and shirt fabric patterns. A great incentive to devote old Latvian artists to art was mostly being in Latvian society and paint custom work, adapting to the Latvian customers' wishes.

Restoration and standing of fraternity *"Dzintarzeme"*

An important circumstance that strengthened the viability of Latvian national art in the United States were the artists' organizations or special art sections, for example, American Latvian Artists' Association, art section of *Daugavas Vanagi* in New York, art field of American Latvian Association and the World Federation of Free Latvians, which formed various collective exhibitions of artists. A wider demonstration of national culture was provided by the Song Festival in America, which shared not only song but also art. Art shows during the Song Festival became an inalienable part of the festival.

In the history of Latvian exile art, until recently almost no attention was paid to the student fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*", and most of fraternity's emigrated members-artists in Latvia are unknown or little known. The only exceptions are the Latvian art evaluators in exile, who have mentioned the fraternity in various contexts in their publications. Between them were Juris Soikans and Eleonora Šturma. But from 2018 a few publications have been made by A. Lesničenoka, which have changed the research situation[1].

"*Dzintarzeme*" was the first academic art student organization in Latvia and even the Baltic States, founded in 1923. The aim of "*Dzintarzeme*" was to unite nationally-minded students of the Art Academy of Latvia and to promote the development of national art and self-education [LNA LVA 2061-1v-1, 2]. In the interwar period and later in exile, the fraternity in its ideology leaned towards Latvian old masters and Latvian national art. This is particularly important, because the majority of "*Dzintarzeme*" members developed in the interwar period at the same time when Latvian national painting traditions were strengthened. An organized movement of

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[1] 1) Lesničenoka, A. (2018). Latvijas Mākslas akadēmijas akadēmiskās studentu organizācijas (1923–1940): to loma sabiedrībā un jauno mākslinieku profesionālajā izaugsmē. In: I. Boldāne-Zeļenkova, A. Rokpelnis (eds.). *Jauno vēsturnieku zinātniskie lasījumi III: Starpdisciplināri pētījumi Latvijas vēsturē*. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, pp. 53–66.

2) Lesničenoka, A. (2019). Student Fraternity of the Art Academy of Latvia "Dzintarzeme": Latvian National Art Conservation Policy in Exile (1958–1987). *Art History & Criticism / Meno istorija ir kritika* 15, pp. 57–70. DOI: 10.2478/mik-2019-0004.

3) Lesničenoka, A. (2020). Mākslinieka Jāņa Cīruļa (1908–1995) daiļrade trimdā. In: A. Lesničenoka (ed.), *Acta Academiae Artium: Latvijas Mākslas akadēmijas Doktora studiju programmas zinātnisko rakstu krājums III*, Rīga: Latvijas Mākslas akadēmija, pp. 131–147.

Latvian national art appeared only at the beginning of the 1890s. It was initiated by a group of enthusiastic art students at the Academy of Arts and Stiglitz school of design, both in St. Petersburg, the capital of the tsarist Russia. The foremost representatives of that generation of National Romanticists were Latvians Adams Alksnis (1864–1897), Rihards Zariņš (1869–1937), Vilhelms Purvītis (1872–1945), Janis Rozentāls (1866–1916) and Jānis Valters (1869–1932). Rozentāls, but particularly Purvītis have been influential for growth of younger artists. They all opened new aesthetic horizons by creating images of the national scene. In the beginning it was plein-air realism, later impressionism. Then came the tragic years of the First World War, of the miseries of refugees, the heroic fights of Latvian Riflemen, of new hopes and political activities and struggle for national independence followed in 1918. During this period of suffering and idealistic aspirations formed and fermented a young generation of artists, striving for new art forms within the lines of expressionism and constructivism. Born around the 1890s, they revolted against the academic art. French Fauves and cubists were the mainsprings for their enthusiasm. Most recognized representatives were Jāzeps Grosvalds (1890–1920), Jēkabs Kazaks (1895–1920), Valdemārs Tone (1892–1958) and others. Already in 1925, the revolting had lost its momentum. Years of calmer development and reappraisal of different artistic tendencies began, and a meaningful influential role was played by the Art Academy of Lavia (founded in 1919) and its teachers – Vilhelms Purvītis, Rihards Zariņš, Ludolfs Liberts (1895–1958), Kārlis Miesnieks (1887–1977), Jānis Kuga (1878–1969) and others. Art trends in the 1920s and 1930s had a particularly strong impact in which realism and traditionalism became more noticeable. It was a retrospectively oriented art dominated by romanticized landscapes and folklore themes. These art trends of the last twenty years were taken to exile by the teachers and students of the Art Academy of Latvia, including members of "*Dzintarzeme*". The Soviet (1940–1941, 1944/45–1991) and German occupation (1941–1945) put an end to independent development of Latvian art and culture.

In June 1940, when Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union, fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*", just like other Latvian student organizations, was banned. But the year 1944/45 was more fatal for "*Dzintarzeme*", when fraternity started to separate into two parts – "*Dzintarzeme*" members who stayed in Latvian SSR and who had to keep the name of the fraternity alive only in their memories, and "*Dzintarzeme*" members, who went as refugees to West to escape from the Soviet regime and were able to restore its activity. At the second General Latvian Song Festival on 6 July 1958 in New York, USA, for the first time, some of "*Dzintarzeme*" members managed to meet. "*Dzintarzeme*" member and artist Jānis Audriņš has written – *I announced the meeting through a loudspeaker and after some time artists Otto Grunde, Kārlis Šaumanis, Jānis Vecrumba and Fridrihs Vīksne came* [LNA LVA 2652]. During this

Figure 2. Fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*" members at the one-year anniversary celebration, 1925.
Source: State Archives of Latvia (LNA LVA F. 1601, A.1, L.54, P.2).

Figure 3. General Latvian Song Festival in New York, 1958. Photo of Alise Zīverte.
Source: State Archives of Latvia (LNA LVA, F. 1996, A.1v, L.1, p.15).

small meeting, the idea of a joint art exhibition was expressed and future plans were outlined.

On 19 November 1958, the fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*" was officially restored with an art exhibition in New York, French Art Center, which was dedicated to fraternity's 35th anniversary and Proclamation of the 40th anniversary of the Republic of Latvia [Laiks 1958: 3]. Under the new circumstances, which were mostly due to the large dispersion of members, "*Dzintarzeme*" changed its profile. Although "*Dzintarzeme*" retained the status of a fraternity, it transformed more as an artists' association located in New York and Adelaide (Australia). The new purpose was to gather "*Dzintarzeme*" members to maintain contacts with them on all continents in order to exchange thoughts and ideas to continue, nurture and further develop Latvian art traditions [LNA LVA 2652]. Literary evenings and academic fencing were replaced by less frequent meetings, discussions of artistic phenomena, articles in exile periodicals, where art and artistic life was viewed and evaluated, and joint art exhibitions in the United States, Canada and Australia (Table 1). Mostly they were anniversary and travelling exhibitions, and the most active period was from 1958 to 1973, when the last exhibition in honor to the 50th anniversary was organized in New York.

Table 1

Year	Place	Meaning
1958	New York (USA)	35th anniversary exhibition
1959	Boston (USA)	Guest exhibition
1960	New York (USA)	Local exhibition
1961	Melbourne – Sydney (Australia)	Travelling exhibition
1963	New York (USA)	40th anniversary exhibition
1965	Cleveland – Detroit – Chicago (USA)	Travelling exhibition
1966	Philadelphia, Washington (USA)	Guest exhibition
1967	Toronto (Canada) – Boston (USA)	Travelling exhibition in honor to the 45th anniversary in 1968
1968	New York (USA)	45th anniversary exhibition
1969	Philadelphia (USA)	Guest exhibition
1973	New York (USA)	50th anniversary exhibition

Figure 4. "*Dzintarzeme*" members at their 40th anniversary exhibition in New York, 16.03.1963. From the left: Pēteris Kārkliņš, Otto Grunde, Jānis Audriņš, Francis Ernests Bange, Jānis Cīrulis, Kārlis Šaumanis, Maksimilians Mitrēvics. Source: State Archives of Latvia (LNA LVA F. 1996, A. 1v, L. 149, p. 22).

Fraternity *"Dzintarzeme"* comprehension of national art

One of the most significant problems in Latvian exile art is the comprehension, what was understood as national art. The cultural core of Latvian identity means that the "world art mosaic map" must show the place of belonging of Latvian artists to it, which, like other colored stones of this mosaic, also has its own place, its own form, and its own color. There is a statement that what a Latvian artist creates is already Latvian art because every Latvian artist also has a Latvian feeling. Others think that Latvian art is reflected in the theme of the work. The answer in several essays was proposed by Latvian exile artist and art historian Juris Soikans – *Many questions must be answered: what spiritual currents of a time or age are reflected in it which might give at least some more detailed indication and a greater common sense of belonging or something that becomes understandable only in a very exact connection with a certain place, time and people. Such art, which arises in such a constellation, should be called art identical only to that human community (nation)* [ZA FB RK 11048: 5]. He also claims that the concepts, which should characterize only the character traits typical of

Latvians, were expressed in vastly different ways in various stages of the history, nature and intensity of the Latvian people, so they are of a variable nature. Consequently, there cannot be any "formula" that would typify Latvian "Latvianness" in the art and be identical with the Latvian people at all stages of its history. Art historian Jānis Siliņš believes that more than a theme or style, it is the sense of Latvian life in a work of art that includes Latvian national identity. According to Siliņš's observations, art for the best Latvian masters has not only been a subjectively free play with color, form and decoration elements, but has heralded something important about the fate of the Latvian people, ideal struggles and dreams. Neither the directions that come and disappear over time, nor a specific genre, style, or even a generation of artists is decisive in reflecting Latvian national identity. It is important to seek the expression of the spirit of himself and his people as adequately as possible within the age [LNA LVA 2123-3v-118, 6].

The exhibited works of "*Dzintarzeme*" were mostly realistic, or close to them with the features of the academy's traditions. The themes were often Latvian, which "*Dzintarzeme*" members consider to be a particularly important circumstance to remind Latvians in exile about their homeland, people, their lives and history, including the most popular theme between exile Latvians – folkgirls. For example, "*Dzintarzeme*" member Otto Grunde (1907–1982) painting "Latvian Folk girl" [Figure 5]. Grunde was an excellent figuralist with a strong tonal sense in a well-worked technique. In his figural compositions he has paid great attention to Latvian motifs with precise accents of character, and all that can be seen in this painting. "*Dzintarzeme*" members also has tried to build a monument – with their works, to the 20th century tragedy brought by the World war I and II to Latvian land and people. This monumental thinking was the way how they revealed their inner emotions because they experienced it with their own eyes and feelings, especially leaving Latvia affected by the war as refugees in 1944/45. It can be seen in Jānis Audriņš (1898–1994) paintings, for example, in "Refugees" (Figure 6). In his art, he always focused on historical themes of the Latvian everyday traditions of Latvian ancestors, as well as painted struggles of Latvian soldiers and refugees, basing them both on his own youth experiences or studying history. One of the most significant examples is also artist Jānis Cīrulis's (1908–1995) series of paintings "My homeland in the flames of war" with 50 paintings in the manner of expressionism created from 1945–1947. Visions for paintings were created in memories from Kurzeme (Courland – one of the historical Latvian lands) in 1945. In these paintings, he identifies himself as an emotionally touched witness of a tragic historical era with a certain sense of sentimentality. J. Cīrulis through this series of paintings speaks in symbolic language. The author sees 5 main symbols and characters that dominate

Figure 5. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Otto Grunde's (1907–1982) painting with Latvian folk girl, 1960s–1970s. Source: private art collection of Andris Grunde, Quakertown, Pennsylvania, USA.

Figure 6. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Jānis Audriņš's painting "Refugees", 1960. Source: Aizpute local history museum (Pal.f. 4157 (102)).

Figure 7. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Jānis Cīrulis's painting "Mother saves her baby from the burning cradle" from the series of painting "My homeland in the flames of war" 1945–1947. Source: State Archives of Latvia (LNA LVA F.2313, A.1, L.9).

in several paintings: mother with child, Latvian soldier, Latvian folk girl, cross, Latvian flag or its color combination (Figure 7).

Through its ideas, "*Dzintarzeme*" has expressed that by studying the sources of Latvianness ideas regardless of the direction and styles of art, the concept of Latvianness ideas in art should be gradually nurtured, which could then become a common denominator for all expressions, styles and Latvian artists from all countries. One Latvian national art language for all. In their active stage, "*Dzintarzeme*" did not deny or fight against the most topical modern phenomena in Latvian exile art, but to imitate them according to convenient examples for "*Dzintarzeme*" members meant artistic assimilation, and that was not their way. Not all "*Dzintarzeme*" members have adhered to the conservative path. Some "*Dzintarzeme*" members pursued search for new means and development of expression and styles. One of them was painter-mariner Jānis Gailis (1903–1975). He was a seeker of new pictorial expression in both abstract and semi-abstract directions, but at the same time he preserved his Latvian sense (Figure 8). In this case, the Latvian sense can be

Figure 8. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Jānis Gailis's (1903–1975) painting "Sunny day near the sea", 1970. Source: Latvian National Museum of Art (AG-4005).

seen in the theme and sea views that dominate his art – Kurzeme (Latvian province) beach with steep shores, fishermen's huts, winding dune pines, stormy sea and storm. Latvian art historian Jānis Siliņš has written about Gailis's Latvian identity in his sea landscapes – *"Jānis Gailis is among those who recognize the importance of their Latvian roots and try to include the Latvian core in their works through the might of nature"* [LNA LVA, 1996]. One more example is artist Maksimilians Mitrēvics (1901–1989). Until the 1960s, there was a slight tendency towards the old masters' realism in the artist's works, but for the most part Mitrēvics began to detach himself from academic traditions. He had fundamental knowledge, a good understanding of modern painting and a fairly fine sense of tone. Although his manner of painting became much more open to new means of expression, Mitrēvics was still able to include features of Latvian art, such as themes, for example, in the painting "Spirit boat", depicting ancient Latvians (Figure 9).

Figure 9. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Maksimilians Mitrēvics's (1901–1989) painting "Spirit boat". Source: State Archives of Latvia (LNA LVA F.1638, A.1v, l.90, 43. lp.).

In "*Dzintarzeme*" opinion, each artist could have their own technique, theme, color, but above all there had to be a Latvian view and feeling. The view expressed by "*Dzintarzeme*" was that National in Latvian painting means: 1) the art works which are made in the traditions of the Latvian school of painting, 2) the art works which include Latvian themes. For example, all both these factors can be seen in Jānis Audriņš's painting "Māra in the bath house" (Figure 10) – it shows Latvian girl in the bath house, which is an important and traditional element in Latvian folklore, but in the manner of painting we can see skills and traits from professor Jānis Tillbergs's figural painting workshop of Art Academy of Latvia.

For such paintings "*Dzintarzeme*" has often been criticized by progressive Latvian exile art critics. For example, Eleonora Šturma about "*Dzintarzeme*" 40th anniversary exhibition in 1963 has written – *They seek inspiration from natural motifs, in its variety of colors and moods, and most of them belong to the conservative wing of Latvian painting. In this case, conservatism, with a few exceptions, is understood in the most direct sense of the word – for several decades, there have been no significant changes in the translation of the essence of their paintings, in the solution of problems, or in the technical plane. Experimentation and change do not in themselves guarantee qualitative benefits, but sometimes it seems incomprehensible to be stubborn in the*

Figure 10. "*Dzintarzeme*" member Jānis Audriņš's (1898–1994) painting "Māra in the bath house". Source: Aizpute local history museum (Paf Fa 2536).

stands of the past [Šturma, 1963: 3]. However, criticism used to be overshadowed by Latvians in exile, which was the main audience of "*Dzintarzeme*". Exhibitions were usually well attended; paintings were purchased by Latvians and Latvian public organizations – Latvian gathering houses and Latvian congregations. The majority of paintings have been received by organizations as a gift from artists after exhibitions held in the organization's event rooms.

Conclusion

An important circumstance that strengthened the viability of Latvian national art in United States were the artists' organizations. Fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*" can be called one of the most purposeful organizations of Latvian artists in exile in the efforts to preserve and popularize Latvian national art in the USA from 1958 to 1973. Fraternity has given some examples how we can identify Latvian national art in exile, and also see the role of Latvian exile art among exile Latvians in the United States of America.

Fraternity "*Dzintarzeme*" comprehension of national art includes four main points. First, they claimed and supported the search for new means and styles of artistic expression, but with the condition that in the art work Latvian sense – must be preserved. Studying the sources of Latvianness ideas regardless of the direction and styles of art, the concept of Latvianness ideas in art must become a common

denominator for all expressions, styles and Latvian artists from all the countries. Second, the art works must be made in the traditions of the Latvian school of painting, which mostly means influence of the Art Academy of Latvia. Third, the art works must include Latvian themes, which reminds about Latvian homeland, people, their lives and history. Fourth, artistic activity should not be intended as a source of material income, but as a pure cultural achievement for the Latvian people in exile.

A large part of Latvian artists in exile, instead of developing, adapted more to the taste of the audience and its needs. There was often a misunderstanding of the essence of art, considering art only as a means of entertainment, pleasing the eyes and the heart with romanticized and sentimental paintings which reminded Latvia. As a result, fine arts in the United States of America were like luxury items which pleased sentiment and longings after the lost homeland Latvia and so thematic sentiment was almost the only content and goal of the artwork. Sweet landscapes of the homeland, bath houses, towers of Riga and lovely folk girls were admired by many exile Latvian spectators. But for "*Dzintarzeme*" it all had somewhat different meaning. Art was not the opportunity to earn money, it was the way to preserve Latvian national and cultural values, and to build a monument to the 20th century tragedies which were brought to Latvian land and people during the World war I and II.

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THE ORIGIN OF LANDSCAPE IN LATVIAN TEXTILE ART. RŪDOLFS HEIMRĀTS'S SCHOOL

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Abstract

The article provides insight into development processes related to professional education in Latvian textile art. Special attention was made to the textile artist Rūdolfs Heimrāts and his crucial role in the history of Latvian textile art. He was permanently leading the Textile art department at the State Academy of Arts of Latvian SSR for more than thirty years. Heimrāts established his original educational model based on a deep understanding of Latvian textile culture heritage. The new generation of artists educated by Heimrāts completely changed visual content and technical capabilities of textile artwork. It raised the Latvian textile art to an unprecedented level of artistic expression. Heimrāts's unique personality, creative interests, and set goals influenced Latvian textile art development for several decades. Textile artists who had acquired education under the leadership of Rūdolfs Heimrāts created their special contribution to Latvian textile art known as Heimrāts's School. One of the unifying features of Heimrāts's School became the predominance of landscape theme in artists' oeuvre.

The article aims to analyse the phenomenon of Heimrāts's personality, his educational method, and his contribution to the development of Latvian textile art. Special attention was paid to determine the circumstances that affected the topic selection of weavings. Research methods include the study of archival material and publications, formal analysis of the artwork, biographical analysis, interviews, historical research, and field notes.

Keywords: *Latvian textile art, fibre art, Heimrāts's School, landscape, art education.*

Rūdolfs Heimrāts. Nature of personality

As stated by human geographer David Lowenthal, personal as well as geographical knowledge is a form of sequent occupancy. Like a landscape or a living being, each private world has had a career in time, a history of its own. Since personality is formed mainly in the earliest years, we are simultaneously determined by what we were as children and by what we are experiencing now [Lowenthal 1961: 258].

Rūdolfs Heimrāts (1926–1992) spent his childhood in Zemgale. The artist was born in 1926 in Bēne. His parents worked a variety of ancillary works at Bēne Manor but later held a shop on Stacijas Street, next to the first home of Heimrāts [Heimrāts 1987]. Father died early when the boy was only seven years old. At about eight years, Heimrāts had to start the shepherd's work, which lasted every summer up to fourteen years of age. The artist remembered this period to get to know job responsibilities and natural hardiness because he was always employed, even on Sundays. On the one hand, shepherd's experience means a strict attachment to the child's day-to-day duties without holiday and idling about; on the other hand, it is a long-standing stay-alone with nature [Heimrāts, Kalniete 1986].

Referring to Nancy M. Wells and Kristi S. Lekies' research, participation with "wild nature" in childhood has a significant, positive association with adult environmental attitudes and behaviours. In general, the result linking childhood nature experiences with later life outcomes is consistent with research findings connecting childhood participation with nature and various adulthood outcomes [Wells, Lekies 2006:13]. For instance, Heimrāts's contemporary, the most notable Lithuanian textile artist of the time, Jousas Balcikonis's (1924–2010) artwork indicates clear links with childhood experience in rural environment materialized in numerous works dedicated to peasant lifestyle and serenity of local nature [Пинкус 1974]. Similarly, Heimrāts's long shepherd's days, in close connection with the natural environment, formed exceptional poetic, realistic images filled with nature's sound, characteristic of Heimrāts's art, which once appeared, passed through the whole creative work of the artist.

Along with the shepherd's passages, Heimrāts in his childhood memories also highlights Bēne Watermill [Oša 1986]. The mill was located next to the house where the family lived after moving from Stacijas Street. The Bēne Manor complex was nearby, with extensive barns and farm buildings. The watermill was built on the dam of the Auce River, creating a vast mill pond. It was an impressive three-storey structure made of red bricks, distinguished in the rural matter of the surroundings. At the time, the mill was run by weaving workshops, yarn spinning, and dyeing. Every precious spare moment, the boy raced there to engage in this world of colours, patterns, smell, and visual impressions. Considering the diversity between the everyday rural environment and the mechanized atmosphere of the plant, which was also filled with

Figure 1. Bēne Watermill today. Author: Rita Ļegčiļina-Broka (2020).

various fabrics and colourful yarns, it becomes clear why this experience has had such a profound effect on Heimrāts's memories. The multiple patterns of dyed yarns stock have been particularly encouraging. In later years dyeing had been one of the most exciting textile handling processes for the artist [Oša 1986]. When the time came to choose the direction of further education, the captivating image of the mill weaver was the determinant factor in Heimrāts's subsequent choice of profession.

Education in Textile Art in Latvia before 1961

By 1961, several secondary education-level institutions provided education in textile art in Latvia. Rīga and Liepāja Secondary Schools of Applied Arts were the main opportunities for applicants. Both schools were established at the time of the Latvian Free State. Liepāja Secondary School of Applied Art was initially established in 1926 as a private arts school, while Rīga Secondary School of Applied Arts (Riga State School of Art Crafts) was founded in 1931 on the basis of earlier arts workshops and traditional crafts courses [Rinka 2016: 583]. Special attention was paid to preserving national traditions by following the once established appropriate samples in the educational process.

Rūdolfs Heimrāts began his artistic education at Rīga Secondary School of Applied Arts, joining the Textiles department in 1941. According to the periodization

of school history researcher Brigita Sturme (1940), the training of Heimrāts from 1941 to 1948 took place during a period which the researcher refers to as the yoke of Stalinist ideology [Sturme 2009: 27]. The content and training methods applied to the new uniformity scale had to be learned to work for both permanent school teachers and students. Remembering the education process, Heimrāts highlighted the role of the teachers' personalities and their educational methods. In some cases, they created doubts and resistance, but in general, they have laid the grounds for the basic principles of creative work that Heimrāts has kept for all his creative life. Among the educators, Heimrāts highlights Kārlis Sūniņš (1907–1979) and Herta Stepe, as those who have given the most not only during school but also afterwards [Heimrāts, Kalniete 1986].

For the first few years, Heimrāts learned composition with the founder and principal of the school, Arvīds Dzērvītis (1897–1942), whom he describes as a very strict educator who always made firm remarks about the work of learners. After his death, the composition was taught by Jēkabs Bīne (1895–1955). He was clinging to his colour-breaking and compositing system and left to his mind with his spot tasks, where a tone, like *LAU*, was asked to create a colour composition, then, through complicated formulas, had to find the right shade and blend it with pencil colours [Heimrāts, Kalniete 1986]. In the last two years, Heimrāts learned to create textiles within special requirements, including the school's preferred selection of colours, which were described by the artist as beige-brown-green, inevitably led to uniformity and grey perception of works. The textiles had to be very accurate and neatly executed, and Heimrāts himself acknowledged that the subtlety and thoroughness of his works had come along from school. After finishing school, he tried to do something that had not yet been done, but the feeling that he could not get rid of what he had learned had not particularly allowed it [Kalniete 1986].

After completing his education with the qualifications of the textile artist-performer, Heimrāts continued his studies at the Ceramic department at Latvian State Academy of Arts, as it was the only opportunity at the time to continue his education in the field of applied art. In parallel to his studies, Heimrāts began his pedagogical work in the Textile department of Rīga Secondary School of Applied Arts. At that time, Heimrāts started his independent research of Folk-Art collections in repositories at both the National History Museum and the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum in Rīga. The world of colours turned out to be surprising and captivating outside the means of the School of Applied Arts opinion he had learned before. Remembering this period, Heimrāts mentioned with gratitude the History Museum staff member, Mērija Grīnberga (1909–1975), who had urged him to look at the legacy of the masters of folk art more broadly, without attaching to any particular biases or assumed samples of so-called good practice [Kalniete 1986].

Figure 2. Rūdolfs Heimrāts and his colleagues at Rīga Secondary school of Applied Arts, 1957. Photo from Heimrāts's personnel file in Art Academy of Latvia Information Centre.

Heimrāts began his pedagogical work during Stalin's regime. In the arts, the method of Socialist Realism was the only appropriate, which determined that artwork had to be national by form but socialist by content [Ansone 2019: 45]. With the changes initiated by Khrushchev's Thaw after 1954, the new state's pace of production and construction updated the necessity for highly educated specialists in the applied arts field. Thus, in the late 1950s, attention was drawn to the education of professionals in applied-arts industries at the academic level.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Rūdolfs Heimrāts had been teaching for more than a decade. From 1955 he consequently participated in exhibitions with textile and ceramic works. The changed political situation caused by Khrushchev's Thaw allowed some freedom of information in the media, arts, and culture; therefore, it was possible to get insight into processes in art beyond the local scene [Knāviņa 2019: 63]. Meanwhile, in the late 1950s, Heimrāts had turned to the weaving technique used in the Royal tapestry workshops in France and Belgium, the most famous of which is the Gobelins tapestry manufactory. The classic tapestry technique, which allows the weaver to create an alternative painting in the fibre, became a novelty in post-war Europe. The idea that tapestry can be an independent artwork, rather

than a secondary reproduction of a painting in fibre, launched an ambitious process of reviving textile art [Ginsburg 1995: 105]. It can be assumed that, influenced by ideas accented by European tapestry revival, Heimrāts turned to tapestry weaving. In 1960 he created his first large-scale tapestry "To the Song Festival". Monumental weaving (170 × 300) represented realistic, multi-figure composition. This weaving emerged as a kind of revelation in contemporary Latvian textile art, where artistic expression was reduced to creating interior objects for practical needs like small-sized textiles, decorative wall hangings, curtains, and pile rugs made within the formal ornamental tradition. Specialists educated at the secondary level were prepared as skilful masters of their profession, ready to continue to work in manufacturing and mass consumption, but could not provide the support for the increasing demand of ambitious, monumental decorations for representative needs in various public interiors of the Soviet state. Consequently, the question arose about the necessity to reorganize the higher education in arts.

Academic Textile Art. Heimrāts's School

In the summer of 1961, a session of the USSR Academy of Arts was held in Moscow, dedicated to the theory, practice, and propaganda of Soviet Art during the construction period of communism. By the presidency of the USSR Academy of Arts, the establishment of a Decorative and Applied Arts department was particularly discussed [Rīgas Balss 1961]. The decision facilitated implementing centralized introduction of the missing departments of Applied Arts in state universities.

Heimrāts was already an educator with thirteen years of experience and the most prominent artist in textile art. He was acknowledged with his personality charm, enormous work capabilities, creativity, the desire to give textiles the depth of the artistic expression besides interior-decorating values. Consequently, in 1961, he was invited to take the lead of the established Textile art department in the Art Academy of Latvia. Heimrāts himself admits that taking on these duties did not allure him because he had already considered abandoning pedagogy and focusing more on creative work. By then, he had successfully rejected the offer to become director of the Rīga Secondary School of Applied Arts [Sturme 2009]. In addition, he was critical of his abilities and did not feel comfortable with higher education. Heimrāts himself acknowledged that the crucial circumstance for the positive decision was the proposed opportunity to stay in Belgium for a year and so agreed to take on the new commitments [Heimrāts 1986].

On 2 October 1961, the rector of the Art Academy of Latvia, Leo Svemps (1897–1975), announced opening of three new departments in a formal act. Along with the textile art department, artistic metalwork and pedagogical departments were opened [Dzimtenes Balss 1961].

In remembering the department's initials, Heimrāts notes that the first year was the toughest. There was no suitable space, no material, no equipment. All that was needed, including the curriculum, had to be done by Heimrāts himself [Heimrāts, Kalniete 1986]. It was remarkable that the loose attention of governing institutions allowed Heimrāts to proceed relatively freely [Bankovskis, Heimrāts 1989]. Meanwhile, one could gain the textile art education in Moscow and Leningrad universities; however, the curriculum there was based mainly on developing industrial work skills. Looking back at the department's 25 years of work, Heimrāts had summarized the goal of his programme: *I decided to focus on preparing artists with high professional thinking and skills. On this principle, the department has been holding to all these years. However, not once have various commissions accused us of teaching too little about special, industrial-related items, such as desinatur and jacquard technology. I'm sure if the artist has excellent taste and original ideas, he will quickly learn these special conditions when he goes to the textile factory. The main thing is for him to be a creative personality* [Heimrāts, Kalniete 1986].

According to this statement, one of the essential components of education was the colour culture, technical performance, and author's innovative thinking. Heimrāts advanced the development of artistic imagination, the ability to execute well-structured compositions in the fibre material, as well as figurative motifs and natural scenery.

Figure 3. Ethnographic blankets from collection of National History Museum of Latvia.
CVVM 7816, CVVM 11176, CVVM 10918, CVVM 171113.
Author: Rita Ļegčiļina-Broka (2021).

The Information Centre of the Art Academy of Latvia has been keeping a curriculum of composition written by Heimrāts, the conformity of which, according to the attached protocol, was used in 1985/1986 academic year [Heimrāts 1985]. By examining it closer, the educational guidelines of Heimrāts can be clearly detected. First of all, extensive investigation of colours was required throughout the first year of studies, including research and practical analysis of the Latvian folk art heritage. (Figure 3)

Secondly, the textile artist had to delve into long-term nature studies. Adapting the structure of natural forms, colours, and textures to the specific conditions of textile expression yield the basic knowledge of textile education. The third-year followed with in-depth research of natural shapes and textures, studying nature's landscapes and colour scale. The fourth year of training developed the ability to compose a narrative scene expressed in tapestry practiced in various topics. A significant number of lectures were intended for studies of international textile art. Heimrāts paid particular attention to the development of textile art in Poland and other Eastern bloc countries. For these purposes, Heimrāts carefully collected materials on relatively frequent overseas trips. In general, these foreign tokens and photographs provided by Heimrāts awarded students an unusual initiative. Thus, they generated a way of thinking significantly more modern than it was at the time, for example, in the fine arts departments [Eglīte 2020: 38]. Along with narrative tasks, Heimrāts encouraged the development of specific haptic thinking in colour and abstract shapes. In the final year, students learned textile in connection with interior and finally executed diploma work.

Heimrāts himself did not deny that the development of the curriculum was influenced by other universities' practices, mainly the Prague Art Institute in the Czech Republic [Bankovičs 2010]. It was not an entirely original model of the training plan; however, taking into account Heimrāts's contribution in creating the brand-new education from the zero point and its further success in the textile art field, he can be appreciated as outstanding reformer.

Perceptions of environment. Landscape in Latvian Textile Art

In the coming years, the success of textile art reached an unprecedented level of appreciation and demand. Moving towards the synthesis of textile artwork with architecture as well as the application of the expression features related to fine arts has enabled textile artwork to revolutionize from ordinary things of narrow functional significance into unique environmental objects whose decorative value was based on the artist's individual performance, the specific materiality of the fibre, the colours, ornamentation, texture, thematic content, and variety of shapes. Despite being educated on the priority of realistic figurative compositions, only a few artists practiced this method in their further creative work. State-commissioned figurative

weavings were also more valued in terms of compensation, but despite this, such attempts decreased with every year. On close analysis and appraisal, it is possible to assume that targeted research of Latvian folk art, particularly the aesthetics of its geometric patterns and colour combination principles, the purposeful observation of nature, and manifesting the materiality and fibre values in different types of weaving techniques, the available knowledge of the trends in modern European art, directed textile artists away from the expected monumental figurativeness and industrial-oriented thinking to other forms of visual expression where local nature and landscapes increasingly strengthened as the leading theme.

The majority of Heimrāts's students have, over time, abandoned the need for figural compositions in favour of the use of motifs of nature, landscape, and abstract-captured images, experiments in new fibre materials, and spatial plastic forms. Justification for this assumption could be detected in the oeuvre of numerous representatives of Heimrāts's School. The following overview is considered some notable examples from the first generation of textile artists educated under Heimrāts's method.

Textile artist Aija Baumane (1943–2019) must be mentioned first. The artist had been Heimrāts's student from the time of Rīga Applied Art Secondary School, and she was one of the first four students in the department of Textile Art. In the early works of Baumane, such as *Bāleliņi/*"Brothers" (1970), *Rumulēšanās/*"Shepherd ritual" (1975), *Rūtoja saule/*"Folk motif" (1988), presence of figures is notable and plays an essential role in the narrative meaning, whereas the following range of works of the author is entirely related to the depiction of generalized landscape motives, arrangements of colours and symbols. The necessity to use the figural scene to support narrative meaning was replaced by perceived elements of the significant surroundings, reflections, and signs. The need for the literal interpretation of the image becomes minor, possibly redundant. The close connection with the environment of the ancestral home, the native nature of the native area, and its typical landscapes became the primary imagery source for all Baumane's artworks. The conditional images of these sites were considered to contain much more personally relevant information to be transmitted to the viewer than in a depiction modelled in figures.

Ilma Austriņa (1940), along with Baumane, was among the first ten Heimrāts's students who acquired education at Art Academy of Latvia, and she is one of those textile artists who, despite the long and relatively successful career, never created figural images. However, this fact does not diminish the presence of interpretative content. A considerable example is a weaved triptych *Pirmās vagas, Sējējs nāk, Zelmenis/*"The First Furrows, The Sower Comes, Greenness" (1977). Aligned composition consists of three woven pictures representing a rural landscape, where the central part is dedicated to sowing how it was practiced in ancient times. Two
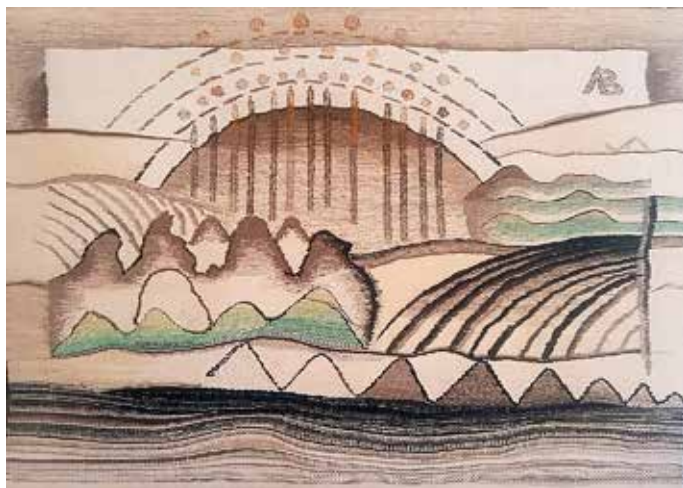
Figure 4. A. Baumane. Eventide. Wool, flax, mixed technique.
160 × 193 (1994). Photo from Baumane's family archive.

Figure 5. I. Austriņa. The First Furrows. The Sower Comes. Greenness.
Tryptych. Wool, flax, mixed technique. 260 ×135, 260 × 112, 136 × 255 (1977).
Author: Māris Kundziņš, Museum of Decorative Artsand Design collection.

others depict the fertile fields before and after the sowing. The central part represents sowing in the circular shape of the round ancient sowing tool, also interpreted as the sun from which seeds fall into processed land. The sower included in the work's title reveals as a symbolically articulated process, which in this way does not exclude the literal understanding of this activity, as the sower itself though remaining in the associative image, significantly expands the capacity of meaning. The laconic abstract composition broadens the time of the event from historical maturity to the reality of the current time much more successful than if it would be depicted in figural images. The absence of figurately expressed narrative provides an opportunity to interpret the work in a much wider meaning, linking it to the lyrics of the Latvian folk songs, literary prose, annual customs, or the viewer's personal experience. Thus, sensibly captured Latvian nature and attitude to traditional culture, revives in specific colours of organic materiality as the palpable sense of native place. This poetic textile symphony is just one of numerous artworks Austriņa has created; however, the lyrical content of her compositions and continuous reluctance to figurative scenes diminished the attention of critics, and today her name is nearly unknown.

In respect of successful textile artist carrier, the illustrative example is Heimrāts's student Edīte Pauls-Vīgnere (1939). The author is recognizable with her enormous working capacity, technical skills, and free treatment of figural expression in tapestries. However, there is a significant ammount of textiles where pure colour and plain landscape are dominant. A considerable illustration here can be the tapestry *Raža/Harvest* (1972). On the large-sized weaving the field of cereals is depicted, upon which the summer sun shines. The blue sky reflects in mature ears of corn and some buckled-down flowers from surrounding meadows. Despite the impression of abstract decoratively arranged composition, the source of this weaving has a powerful personal story. It is a memory landscape from the artist's childhood years when the summers had been spent in Vidriži village located in Limbaži district [Vīgnere 2020]. The experienced vast precious cereal fields became the guiding theme of the textile artwork dedicated to the native land. The composition intended to show the hardiness of peasants' life is not proceeding as a figuratively treated scene. The perennial essence of engagement between nature and human, the eternity of growing power becomes visible in the mature beauty of the upcoming harvest.

Conclusions

Following his childhood dream to be a weaver, Rūdolfs Heimrāts became the best-known artist in Latvian textile art. His contribution to the development of Latvian professional textile art is exceptional. Textile artists educated within Heimrāts's established teaching system have still made the most remarkable proportion of practicing textile artists today. Putting folk art and nature's studies in the core of

education let him develop the specific vision through textile material possibilities, which, alongside with obtained technical skills, formed the new experience of the creation process, encouraging experiments and improvisation. Developed through knowledge of ancient tradition, practical methods of work concentrated the whole creative process in the hands of the artist executor. They made the basis of the new textile language in which it became possible to communicate in an imaginative way using symbols, abstract images, and metaphors. Despite the demand for narrative figural tapestry, many textile artists have chosen to think and reflect in the categories of fibre's features. They preferably obtained visual content from perceptions of the natural environment, landscapes, seasonal changes and emphasized the union of yarn and colour, tactile exposure, and intimate essence. Forms and motifs experienced in everyday life, local nature, and personal relationships with the place expressed in the weavings became the common theme in the contribution of Heimrāts's school. Heimrāts's established model of education no longer exists in its original performance. Due to followed changes of the educational system mainly proposed by the replacing of teaching staff, textile artists in Latvia are divided into generations educated by Rūdolfs Heimrāts and after.

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