

**Beyond the Field:
Fieldwork
in the 21st Century**

The 12th International Conference of Young Folklorists
September 13–15, 2023, Riga, Latvia



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Organizers

Archives of Latvian Folklore of Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia

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Archives of Latvian Folklore

The Archives of Latvian Folklore (Latviešu folkloras krātuve) were established in 1924 in Riga, following the initiative of Anna Bērzkalne (1891–1956), a folklorist and school teacher. Based on international standards, the Archives were developed as the central institution for the collection and study of folklore in Latvia. It is a department within the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia. Along with documenting and preserving intangible cultural heritage, the Archives of Latvian Folklore carry out research and publish their studies. The main areas of research are currently: digital humanities, cultural heritage studies, history of folkloristics, narrative studies, and research of mythology and traditional music.

Being the largest center for collection of Latvian oral traditions, the holdings of the Archives of Latvian Folklore contain approximately 3 million folklore items. The main body is constituted by Latvian folklore, but there are also collections of Livonian, Russian, German, Belarusian, Jewish, Lithuanian, Estonian and Roma folklore as well. The collections represent the culture of different social groups, since folklore has been collected from peasants, schoolchildren, soldiers, informants in old people's homes, in prisons, etc. A major part of the depository is made up of handwritten manuscripts. However, there are also sound and video recordings, notations, and drawings and photographs from different decades in the holdings of the Archives.



A significant treasure of the Archives of Latvian Folklore is the Dainu skapis—the Cabinet of Folksongs. It is a filing cabinet of Latvian folksongs, containing the original manuscripts of the texts published in the edition “Latvju dainas” (1894–1915, in 6 volumes). The Dainu skapis was built in Moscow in 1880 according to the design of Krišjānis Barons (1835–1923), the compiler and editor of the aforementioned edition. The folksong manuscripts in the cabinet are arranged in 70 drawers, there are 268,815 paper slips (sized 3 x 11 cm) with folksong texts handwritten by hundreds of collectors. In 2001, the Dainu skapis was recognised as a cultural heritage item of international regard and inscribed on the UNESCO “Memory of the World” Register. In 2014, the Archives of Latvian Folklore moved from its former home at the Latvian Academy of Sciences to the newly built Latvian National Library (in Riga, Mūkusalas iela 3; located on the 5th floor). The holdings are available online on the Digital Archives of Latvian Folklore, garamantas.lv (in English: folklore.lv). The digitised content of the Dainu skapis is available online also on the site dainuskapis.lv.

Science for Ukraine

#ScienceForUkraine is a community group of volunteer researchers and students from academic institutions in Europe and around the world. Our mission is to support the Ukrainian academic community in surviving the Russia's war and to help ensure the continuity of Ukraine's science and strengthen its presence in the international science arena.

Mission Statement

#ScienceForUkraine started as a grass-root initiative run by an international community of volunteer scholars and students since the beginning of Russia's war in Ukraine. Our mission is to support the Ukrainian academic community in surviving the war and to help ensure the continuity of Ukraine's science and strengthen its presence in the international science arena.

The NGO works in several directions with the following objectives:

First, to collect and disseminate information about support opportunities at the university, national, and international level for Ukrainian researchers and students. Second, to monitor the current situation of Ukrainian research, higher education institutions, and scholars and students (both those in Ukraine and those who have fled), to closely follow decisions taken by governments and funding agencies, announced support mechanisms and general funding schemes. Third, to raise awareness among the international academic community, national governments, funding bodies, and international organisations of the need to support Ukrainian scientists and students. Fourth, to build partnerships with Ukrainian and international academic institutions, research organisations, and initiatives supporting scholars at risk in order to leverage impact, exchange information, and implement joint efforts in support of the Ukrainian academic community. As well, to liaise with national and European funders and organisations to provide targeted support for Ukraine's academic community.



The 12th International Conference of Young Folklorists

Beyond the Field: Fieldwork in the 21st Century

September 13–15, 2023, Riga, Latvia

Folklore studies have relied on first-hand encounters as a source of data since the 19th century when the first folklorists set out to collect oral lore from European peasantry. Since then, the discipline and the ways of human communication have changed tremendously; however, even in today's digital environment, communication between folklore scholars and their informants has not lost its importance. Reflexivity has become an integral part of the discipline and the ethical principles of fieldwork have advanced considerably. The power relations in fieldwork have been transformed by applying collaborative ethnography as a methodological framework. Thus, folk performers are not seen as a mere source of information, but rather as fieldwork collaborators and co-creators of knowledge. The practical aspect of fieldwork has developed alongside technological advancements allowing the folklore collectors to capture their informants on various media.

Moreover, the proliferation of digital technologies, social media platforms, and other virtual spaces of the 21st century have inevitably modified how we define 'the field' itself. The global Covid-19 pandemic made researchers adapt to online interactions as the key form of communication, since the mobility of researchers was limited. The devastating Russian invasion of Ukraine has suspended fieldwork, disrupted research, and brought the future into uncertainty and precariousness for many. This poses the challenges of fieldwork during warfare and socio-political crises while questioning the ethical responsibilities that come with it.

Despite the constantly changing world around us, folklore scholars still prefer the first-hand observation of informants and communities in their habitats and documentation of their knowledge as the main research method. The 12th International Conference of Young Folklorists welcomes proposals for papers on various fieldwork-related topics. Potential themes include but are not limited to the following subject areas:

- Historical perspectives and contexts of the fieldwork-based data collection;
- Fieldwork materials in folklore archives;
- Emotions, body, and fieldwork;
- Fieldwork at the time of crisis and unstable political contexts;
- Landscape and fieldwork: cultural heritage and the Anthropocene;
- Posthuman approaches and other-than-human interaction in the field;
- Feminist and queer ethnography;
- Ethical challenges of documenting sensitive and controversial data;
- Professional responsibility: informed consent and representation;
- Challenges and opportunities of digital ethnography and working in the virtual field;
- Managing intersectional identities in at-home ethnography;
- Scholars and community: the power dynamics of the fieldwork.

Wednesday, September 13

National Library of Latvia, Conference centre hall D, Mūkusalas iela 3

- 10.00–10.15 **Registration and coffee**
10.15–10.30 **Opening words**
- 10.30–11.30 **KEYNOTE LECTURE**
Klāvs Sedlenieks (Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of Communication, Latvia):
In Search for Unknown Unknowns – Why Fieldwork is Still the Way!
- 11.30–11.50 **Coffee**
- SESSION 1**
- 11.50–12.15 **Jason S. Cordova** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
Indigenous Star Lore and the Creation of Community:
The Cultural Landscape of Mexicayotl Astronomy and Belonging
- 12.15–12.40 **Robertho Miguel Paredes** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
“Entre pájaros y árboles”. Visual Narratives of the Forest:
Research About Trees, Birds, and the People of the Amazon Forest
- 12.40–13.05 **Elvīra Žvarte** (Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature,
Folklore, and Art, University of Latvia, Latvia):
Writing Old Age: Literary Gerontology in Co-Creation
- 13.05–13.30 **Danila Rygovskiy** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
Writing as a Self-Transformative Spiritual Practice in a Female Old Believer Monastery
- 13.30–14.30 **Lunch**
- SESSION 2**
- 14.30–14.55 **Ágnes Eitler** (Institute of Ethnography, Eötvös Loránd University / Institute of Ethnology,
Research Centre for the Humanities Eötvös Loránd Research Network, Hungary):
Rethinking Collaboration in Studying Sideways
- 14.55–15.20 **Raminta Jakucevičienė** (The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, Lithuania):
Ethical Challenges: Giving and Taking During Fieldwork
- 15.20–15.45 **Saara Mildeberg** (Tallinn University, Estonia):
When the Sun Rises from the East: Navigating through Necessary Evils
with Scavenger Ethnography
- 15.45–16.10 **Anna Elizabete Griķe** (University of Latvia, Latvia):
“Why Does it Interest You?” Negotiating Research with Informants
- 16.30–17.30 **Visit to the Archives of Latvian folklore** (National Library of Latvia, 5th floor)
- 18.30 **OPENING EVENING**
Music & drinks at the Cider Bar SIDRĒRIJA (Peldu iela 24)

Thursday, September 14

National Library of Latvia, Conference centre hall D, Mūkusalas iela 3

- SESSION 3**
- 10.00–10.25 **Alina Oprelianska** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
To Believe or Not to Believe: Some Notes on Gender Assignment
in Ukrainian Folklore of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Century
- 10.25–10.50 **Kinga Horváth** (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary):
Manuscripts of Hungarian Volunteer Ethnographic Collectors
from the 1950s and 1960s. Research Problems and Possibilities
- 10.50–11.15 **Gabriella Vámos** (Eötvös Loránd University Institute of Ethnography
and Folklore Department of Material Ethnography / MNM Semmelweis Museum
of Medical History, Hungary):
Fieldwork Under Political Pressure in Hungary in the 1950s
- 11.15–11.40 **Laura Suszta** (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary):
When the Field is on Paper: Modern-day Problems with Historical Texts
Based on Samuel Hearne (1745–1792)
- 11.40–12.00 **Coffee**
- SESSION 4**
- 12.00–12.25 **Quentin “Vassa” Swaryczewski** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
Rethinking the Role of Empathy as Ethical Responsibility in Fieldwork
- 12.25–12.50 **Siarhiej Makarevich** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
Interwoven Identities: Safeguarding the Local Weaving Tradition
of the Hancavičy District (Belarus) by Doing an Academic Project
- 12.50–13.15 **Parishmita Kashyap** (Sikkim University, India):
Puppetry as a Material Culture
- 13.15–13.40 **Stefka Budakova** (Shumen University, Bulgaria):
Music Pedagogy and Folklore Transmission at Preschool Period.
Observations from Bulgaria
- 13.40–14.40 **Lunch**
- SESSION 5**
- 14.40–15.05 **Eglė Gelaziūtė-Pranevičienė** (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, Lithuania):
Archival Folk Song Records in Contemporary Music or Creative Process as a Fieldwork
- 15.05–15.30 **Rafał Miśta** (University of Warsaw, Poland):
Layers of Historical Folklore Data— from Big Uncertainties to the Big Picture
- 15.30–15.55 **Elina Gailīte** (Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art,
University of Latvia):
Do You Also Dance?

Program

CINEMA KINO BIZE

Elizabetes iela 37-2

- 17.30–18.30 **KEYNOTE LECTURE**
Ulla Savolainen (University of Helsinki, Department of Cultures, Folklore Studies, Finland):
The Field of Memory Culture: Ingrian Finns' Historical Experiences through Multiple Media and Times
- 18.30–18.45 **Coffee**
- 18.45–21.00 **FILM SCREENING**
Terje Toomistu "SOVIET HIPPIES" (2017)

Friday, September 15

National Library of Latvia, conference centre hall D, Mūkusalas iela 3

SESSION 6

- 10.00–10.25 **Justīne Jaudzema** (Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art, University of Latvia / Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia):
Fieldwork Expedition Materials of Archives of Latvian folklore: 1986–1991
- 10.25–10.50 **Garima Thakuria** (Sikkim University, India):
Longtsaok Tradition and Associated Beliefs Among the Lepcha Community of Sikkim
- 10.50–11.15 **Kitija Balcare** (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia / Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia, Latvia):
Folklore Motifs in Site-specific Theatre in Latvia: Reconstructing a Lost Language
- 11.15–11.40 **Ilga Vālodze Ābele** (INITIUM, Latvia):
Theatre from Interviews: "Dickens Street – The Other"
- 11.40–12.00 **Coffee**

SESSION 7

- 12.00–12.25 **Reina Ghoroghchian** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
Confronting Challenges: Lessons from Fieldwork Amidst Political Upheaval
- 12.25–12.50 **Savannah-Rivka Powell** (University of Tartu, Estonia / Europaem Scholar, University of Oxford):
Trauma Informed Approaches to Fieldwork and Intragroup Identity Dysphoria: Shifting Dynamics of Representation and Visibility of Compounded Marginalization

- 12.50–13.15 **Paolo Riccardo Oliva** (Trento University, Italy):
A Single Memory, a Double and Different Narration.
Can the Purpose of a Publication and the Social Role of an Interviewer Change the Memory of a Story?
- 13.15–13.40 **Šarūnas Rinkevičius** (Vilnius University, Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies, Lithuania):
Collective Memory and Modern Maronite Identity in the 21st Century: An Empirical Approach
- 13.40–14.40 **Lunch**
- SESSION 8**
- 14.40–15.05 **Andrus Tins** (Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia):
Stories and Narrations about Artificial Intelligence: An Estonian Case Study
- 15.05–15.30 **Elizabete Grinblate** (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia, Latvia):
Betwixt and Between: Navigating a Dark Virtual Reality Experience and Methodological Limitations
- 15.30–15.55 **Uģis Nastevičs** (Latvian Academy of Culture / University of Latvia, Latvia):
The Pagan Map of the Holy Places of European Ethnic Religions: Newbuilt and Vandalized
- 15.55–16.20 **Michele Tita** (University of Tartu, Estonia):
Readjusting to "Normality" During Fieldwork in the Italian Alps during COVID-19 Times
- 16.20 **Closing words**



Ulla Savolainen

Dr., Title of Docent
University Lecturer of Folklore Studies
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BIO

Ulla Savolainen works as University Lecturer of Folklore Studies at the University of Helsinki. She is a folklorist specializing in memory studies, oral history, and narrative research, with an interest in experiences and expressions related to (forced) migration, transnationality, and materiality. Savolainen's current research project focuses on memories and experiences of Stalinist repression and displacement of Ingrian Finns. She has analysed the mnemonic capacities of memoirs, fiction, museum exhibitions, and photographs while exploring the political and aesthetic values and ideologies related to memory in culture more broadly. Previously, Savolainen researched the oral histories of internments of German and Hungarian citizens in Finland from 1944–1946. Her doctoral dissertation (2015) focused on the life writings of former Karelian child evacuees in Finland. Savolainen's recent publications include an edited collection *The Legacies of Soviet Repression and Displacement: The Multiple and Mobile Lives of Memories* (with Samira Saramo, Routledge 2023) and a popular non-fiction book *Sodan ja karkotuksen lapset: Inkeriläisiä elämäntarinoita* ('Children of War and Deportations: Ingrian Life Stories', with Maiju Korte, Into 2023). She has published her research in *Memory Studies*, *Narrative Inquiry*, *the Journal of American Folklore*, *Oral History*, *Ethnologia Europaea*, and *Poetics Today*.

LECTURE

The Field of Memory Culture: Ingrian Finns' Historical Experiences through Multiple Media and Times

Ingria was a historically multicultural border area surrounding the present-day city of Saint Petersburg in Russia inhabited by several ethnic groups including the Ingrian Finns. During the 20th century, the Ingrian Finns suffered from Stalinist repression and multiple displacements. Although the repressive policies of the Stalin-era effected the population of the Soviet Union widely, ethnic and national minorities bore disproportioned burden of the state violence. In the case of the Ingrian Finns, the repressive policies led to a significant loss of life and the drastic dispersion of the Ingrian Finnish communities. Although this history has arguably become the cornerstone of the memory culture, history narrative, and collective identity of the Ingrian Finns, the broader public acknowledgement, societal, and political relevance, as well as perceived significance of the Ingrian Finns' history and experiences of oppression has fluctuated several times over the course of decades in Finland. Public reactions to this history and experiences have alternated between indifference, acknowledgement, and their instrumental use.

In this presentation, I will focus on exploring the nature of my field, that is, memory cultures around the Ingrian Finns' historical experiences. By analysing versatile articulations and changing roles of the Ingrian Finns' pasts through an exploration of literary testimonies, memorabilia, and museum exhibition as well as the multiple temporalities, scales, and actors involved, I will propose that the field of memory culture is an ever-evolving assemblage through which the role and relevance ascribed to historical memories and experiences as well as creative expressions are being constantly negotiated. Furthermore, I will suggest that seeing the field of memory culture as an assemblage may promote better understanding of the highly selective, exclusive, and affective processes connected to cultural memory that both generate and reflect cultural value, visibility, and agency.



Klāvs Sedlenieks

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BIO

Klāvs Sedlenieks is a social anthropologist who has done research in Montenegro and in Latvia. His research interests range from peaceful societies to informal economics to the state and kinship. Klāvs Sedlenieks has been one of the pioneering social anthropologists in Latvia, being among the founders of the Latvian Association of Anthropologists and establishing the first academic study programme of the field in Latvia. He is also an active participant in public discussions, often commenting on actual social developments in Latvian mass media.

LECTURE

In Search for Unknown Unknowns – Why Fieldwork is still the Way!

According to “The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity” “research is the quest for knowledge obtained through systematic study, thinking, observation, and experimentation” while fieldwork can be defined as any kind of research activity that is done outside the laboratory. Still, in this speech I want to discuss the idea that the (perhaps—the only) way to discover the world in the proper sense of the word is through fieldwork, that is—working directly with the world as it is. In the title of this presentation, I refer to a famous distinction between the “known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns” made by US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld back in 2002. Researchers often work in the field of “known unknowns”, that is they know that they do not know something and are looking for answers. However, the true discovery (or—intellectually the most rewarding one) lies in the fields that we even do not know exist. Or at least so it has been in my experience—the premeditated research questions have often not led to answers that I liked. Instead, while looking for these answers, other problems, questions, and answers popped up and lead the train of thought in a different, more rewarding direction; this was enabled by the fieldwork information and experience. To illustrate this idea, I will refer to my fieldwork in a small village in Montenegro and a research project in Latvia. In the first case, I initially wanted to explore informal forms of governance, but discovered the importance of fantoms in the way we understand and enact the state. In the other case, our research team was looking for information flows explaining why elderly people were hesitant to vaccinate against Covid-19 but discovered that the most likely reason was that they were cut out from the system of medical care already before the pandemic struck and that information as such was of little importance.

Terje Toomistu

“Soviet hippies” (2017)

The hippie movement that captivated hundreds of thousands of young people in the West had a profound impact on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In the Soviet Union, a colourful crowd of artists, musicians, freaks, vagabonds, and other long-haired dropouts created their own system, which connected those who believed in peace, love, and freedom. More than 40 years later, a group of eccentric hippies from Estonia take a road trip to Moscow where the hippies still gather annually on the 1st of June for a celebration that is related to the tragic event in 1971, when thousands of Soviet hippies were arrested by the KGB while attempting to protest against the war in Vietnam. The documentary shifts between observational material of the main protagonists today and the historical narrative in a creative combination of oral history, music from the era, photographs, Soviet animations, newly-created animations, and rich archival footage create a pathbreaking journey to the little-known world of the Soviet hippies in which these people strove for freedom.

More info and trailer: www.soviethippies.com

Before the screening, Terje Toomistu will introduce the film both from a historical and artistic angle and explain the process of research and production, paying particular reverence to the usage of oral history and archival material, its possibilities and limitations. These deliberations are continued after the screening for a question-and-answer session.



Terje Toomistu

www.terjetoomistu.com

BIO

Terje Toomistu is an anthropologist from Estonia, currently employed as a Research Fellow at the University of Tartu. Having conducted extensive field research in Russia and Indonesia, she was a Fulbright scholar at the University of California Berkeley (2013-2014) and a visiting researcher at the University of Amsterdam (2017-2018). She is also a recognized documentary filmmaker and often deploys artistic methods in her research.

Ilga Vālodze Ābele

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Theatre from Interviews: “Dickens Street – The Other”

As a result of World War II, in the 1940s, around 200,000 people fled Latvia and formed significant communities on different continents worldwide. About 70 years later, more than 20,000 people in Australia are confirmed to have Latvian ethnicity (LU Diasporas un migrācijas pētījumu centrs, 2020). In 2021, Ilga Vālodze Ābele started an unconventional field research about the Latvian diaspora in Melbourne, Australia, one of the most significant Latvian communities outside Latvia. The research is based on a collection of life-story interviews of the elderly Melbourne Latvians (first-generation or exiled Latvians and second-generation or already Australia-born Latvians) and was started with the main aim of creating a content base for the community theatre production “Dickens Street – The Other” in the Melbourne Latvian House. More than 20 hours of interview material was gathered and used in close collaboration with the dramaturg and director to create material for the production. This project is an example of the life-history research method being applied to a post-dramatic Latvian theatre production telling stories documented by folklorists. This presentation will be focused on applied theatre methods (community and documentary theatre, site-specific, verbatim and others) that had strong examples in Latvian professional theatre over the last 20 years but have spiked in popularity since 2018 when the foundation INITIUM started to organize yearly masterclasses and training courses in applied theatre for Latvian theatre professionals, educators, and amateurs. Although the artistic process of “Dickens Street – The Other” is still ongoing, and the premiere is planned for 2024, Ābele's research has already enriched the National Oral History (NOH) Archive of Latvia and is bearing scientific fruits. This case study illustrates how scientific research can enhance and strengthen the continuance and sustainability of international art projects involving work with a community.

BIO

Mg. philol. Ilga Vālodze Ābele is currently studying in the Language and Culture Studies doctoral programme (University of Latvia) and working on a research project “Folklore Revival in Latvia: Resources, Ideologies and Practices” (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia). She is interested in life-story interviews and likes to use research methods in artistic work. She is participating in the conference representing the foundation INITIUM (Riga, Latvia).

Kitija Balcare

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Folklore Motifs in Site-specific Theatre in Latvia: Reconstructing a Lost Language

As environmental issues grow, so does the desire of theatre practitioners to shed light on the relationship between humans and nature. When it comes to environmental issues being represented in ecodramaturgy, theatre practitioners in Latvia are increasingly turning to site-specific forms of theatre. This not only allows them to focus on environmental issues, but also to deepen the ecological identity of the spectator through the purposeful choice of a performance site in nature. This approach provides an opportunity to engage not only the spectator's mind in the co-experience, but also the spectator's senses in the natural setting, fostering an emotional connection to the place. Ecotheatre performances increasingly incorporate indigenous folklore motifs from ancient tales and folk songs, anthropomorphising nature while emphasising an ecocentric worldview. Folklore elements not only recall a former world view based on a reverence for nature, but also seek to renew the ability to understand it in a language that in ancient times was one between human and nature. The aim of this research is to focus on how ecotheatre practitioners Krista Burāne, Valters Silis, and Jānis Balodis have been using Latvian folklore themes and elements to raise environmental issues in their original works set outside of conventional theatre spaces.

BIO

Kitija Balcare, Mg.sc.hum, theatre critic, research assistant at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia, PhD student at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Latvia. Her research interests include environmental humanities, posthumanism and ecocriticism, with a particular focus on the relationship between human and nature in theatre, aspects of sustainability and environmental activism in the performing arts. Outside academia she writes popular science publications on the environment, nature and sustainability.

Stefka Budakova

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Music Pedagogy and Folklore Transmission in Preschool. Observations from Bulgaria

During this study, attention is turned to specific ways in which various folklore elements are applied in preschool education in Bulgaria. This research is focused on the trajectories of Music Education and Ethnomusicology, and it provides some reflections on integrative research in these two areas. The present-day music pedagogy faces new challenges as it strives to align the traditional educational systems with global teacher competency requirements, the digitalization of education, and dynamics of a rapidly changing environment. In the Bulgarian education system, music education is part of the general educational preparation of preschool children and school students, and often, apart from narrow specialists — music pedagogues, the training is conducted by general pedagogues.

The research employed a survey methodology to collect data from 565 preschool teachers in Bulgaria. The survey encompassed questions related to the inclusion of folklore components, such as dance, vocal repertoire, and narratives within the preschool educational process. Additionally, the survey aimed to identify challenges faced by children in understanding dialects of oral folklore, participating in traditional rituals, engaging with dances in irregular meters characteristic of Bulgarian tradition, and singing in traditional styles. The data obtained from the survey were analysed to discern patterns and trends, providing valuable insights into the perceived gaps and challenges of integrating folklore into music pedagogy. While these trends are not definitive, they raise concerns about a complex situation that demands the attention of experts in the field of folklore, as well as educational administrators responsible for teacher qualifications.

BIO

Stefka Budakova is a PhD student in Shumen University, Bulgaria. Her program is in Methodology of music but her love and life is Bulgarian folklore. She is a singer in the Abagar Quartet.

Jason S. Cordova

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Indigenous Star Lore and the Creation of Community: the Cultural Landscape of Mexicayotl Astronomy and Belonging

The traditional way of life for contemporary Indigenous Mexicayotl groups of North America, typically referred to as walking the good road, is guided by ancestral star knowledge. Mexicayotl is a religious tradition that includes practices, beliefs, and rituals rooted in ancient Mesoamerica. Mexicayotl represents a distinct historical and contemporary cosmovision adopted by Indigenous peoples of North America (including Chicano/a/x peoples) in response to colonization. Theoretical concepts such as representations of traditions, the construction of minoritized identities, vernacular expressions, assimilation, acculturation, delinking/decolonial thinking, and being can be applied to investigate how astronomy contributes to community and identity creation for Mexicayotl groups. Adaptive fieldwork consisting of participant observation, interviews, and autoethnography shows how Mexicayotl communities living in what is now the state of New Mexico in the United States engage with cultural astronomy practices to build community and identity. Using the examples of calendar teachings, calendric celebrations, the sacred movement of the universe, celestial connections to Ullamalitzli (the Mesoamerican Ball game), and Danza Azteca (a traditional dance) I will show how star knowledge is woven into the fabric of being and belonging in contemporary Mexicayotl society.

BIO

Jason Cordova is a master's student in the Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies program at the university of Tartu in Estonia. He has served for two years as board member for the Society for Cultural Astronomy in the American Southwest. Jason is a member of the Calmecahtlan Institute of Indigenous scholarship and Praxis.

Ágnes Eitler

Institute of Ethnography, Eötvös Loránd University; Institute of Ethnology, Research Centre for the Humanities Eötvös Loránd Research Network, Budapest, Hungary | eitler.agnes@btk.elte.hu

Rethinking Collaboration in Studying Sideways

While working on my PhD thesis over the last six years, I have been conducting fieldwork in multiple locations in rural Hungary where I focused on the activity of associations for local traditions. These contemporary local actors feel responsible for organising and carrying out activities that fall into the category of tradition. I chose rural settlements and villages to conduct my ethnological fieldwork because I was able to observe strong attachments to some phenomena performed on the stage, the history of which dates back to the period between the two World Wars, and which are at present highlighted as the essence of local tradition. I defined the associations I have investigated as tradition-based projects of the locality. After giving a short description about the results of my research, I turn to the epistemological and methodological concerns I faced in the process of “studying sideways”. In this special context, the researcher should be aware of the growing interest of local actors in the making of ethnographic knowledge and its outcomes. This situation has multiple consequences. On one hand it means the continuous presence of local actors in the research process, or it can even gain the aspiration for having control over research design. On the other hand, it can also be an opportunity: it ensures conditions for joint ethnographical knowledge-making, and to reach the real collaboration in ethnographic research. The following concepts will be discussed: studying sideways, collaborative and collaborative research, and ethnographical exit.

BIO

As an assistant lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University Ágnes Eitler provides courses in social history, social anthropology, and ethnographic research methods, and she is a junior research fellow at the Research Centre for the Humanities. While completing her doctorate course in the European Ethnology Doctoral Program (2017–2021), she has conducted fieldwork in rural areas of Hungary, Romania, and the Republic of Serbia. She defended her PhD thesis in June 2023 at Eötvös Loránd University.

Elina Gailite

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Do you also dance?

The relationship between researcher and informant in fieldwork is not always straightforward. While ensuring that the researcher is not in a position of power, that both participants in the fieldwork are equal, the researcher must also be able to look at the field from the outside. However, one must understand the subject well enough to ask the right questions, to understand what the informant is saying. In this presentation I will talk about my experience as a researcher, interviewing people involved in the folk dance and the staged folk dance environments, mostly dance teachers. The three-year project, “Urban Experiences: Narratives, Memories and Place Heritage,” is coming to an end, during which I interviewed dancers and dance teachers about their experiences in the city, where they danced, how they danced, what it's like to lead a dance group, and what challenges they have faced while organising dance life in the city. I performed online interviews (during the Covid-19 pandemic) and we also met in real life—in their safe spaces. In every interview where I interviewed dance teachers, I was asked—do you also dance? I used to dance for almost twenty years, so I always think about how to separate the experience of the dancer and the perspective of the researcher. How can I answer this question so that what is taken for granted in a practitioner setting still comes out in the interview in a way so that other researchers can use the material? In this presentation, I will problematize this researcher's perspective by providing insights from fieldwork conducted in Riga and from my experience interviewing members of the dance community.

BIO

Elina Gailite works at the ILFA, Archives of Latvian Folklore and is a PhD candidate at the Latvian Academy of Culture. She researches Latvian folk dance and cultural heritage.

Eglė Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė

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Archival Folk Song Records in Contemporary Music or Creative Process as a Fieldwork

One of the ways for traditional local cultures to appear in contemporary music is the fusion of archival folk records with different current genres. However, while doing research, it is impossible to reduce the music to the sources of diverse cultural origins, since it is always a question of correspondence—an active coexistence. Is it possible to cooperate with people who are no longer alive or are approachable only in a partial way of their Being, such as their voice and the act of singing were captured on the record? What parts of their life-world (Lebenswelt) are revealable for a contemporary music artist that belongs to another life-world? How do these parts of different life-worlds meet and interact during the creative process? These and related questions will be discussed using the approach of phenomenological anthropology while considering the music artist as a field researcher and the creative process itself as fieldwork. It will be referred not only to the music itself but also to the interviews and memories of the two people that coexist in the act of Being and Becoming through this new music. A case of Lithuanian “contemporized” folklore by Saulius Labanauskas and Petras Zalanskas will be given as an example.

BIO

Eglė Gelažiūtė-Pranevičienė is a PhD student and a music artist working in the fields of musicology and phenomenological anthropology. While using various interdisciplinary measures she focuses on the live continuity of traditional Lithuanian culture in different contemporary musical forms, assessing both musical and experiential shifts.

Reyhaneh Ghoroghchian

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Confronting Challenges: Lessons from Fieldwork Amidst Political Upheaval

Using the author’s experiences conducting fieldwork in their home country of Iran, this paper explores the challenges of conducting research during times of crisis and political volatility. While all fieldwork comes with its own set of difficulties, humanities research faces particular hurdles during periods of political and social upheaval. Against the backdrop of the widespread protests in Iran during the autumn of 2022, the author conducted fieldwork among the nomadic *Qashqai* people. Due to political and social instability, the initial research was cut short. Subsequent research has not fared much better. Despite these difficulties, crisis affected regions “are not always to be avoided, as the heightened atmosphere can intensify affiliations and understandings” (Davies 2010). Instead, these areas require deeper considerations, preparation, and adaptability. Drawing on the author’s experiences of conducting research during a period of political upheaval, the paper investigates the implications and complexities encountered during fieldwork in such contexts. It delves into the uncertainties and unpredictability that pervade these circumstances, wherein access to information becomes severely limited. Additional emphasis will be placed on the obstacles faced when working with an under-voiced minority group during these periods. The paper focuses on the author’s fieldwork project in Iran, emphasizing the challenges arising from the country’s political dynamics and unstable environment. Through this analysis, the paper aims to shed light on the unique aspects of conducting fieldwork in crisis-stricken and politically unstable regions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities and implications of such research endeavours.

BIO

Reyhaneh Ghoroghchian (Reina) is a second year Master student in Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies at the University of Tartu. Her focus is the Mena region in her home country Iran.

Anna Elizabete Griķe

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“Why Does it Interest You?” Negotiating Research with Informants

Reflexivity has become a constitutive part of fieldwork and ethnographic writing, where the researcher is perceived as an active and subjective participant (Bauman 1989, Rosaldo 1994). In contemporary folkloristics, reflexive turn reveals the impact on the politics of knowledge production (Bula 2011, 77). Reflexivity aims researcher's personal traits, positionality, and evaluation of the socio-cultural context of the encounter with the informants' (Malkki 2007). It also addresses a researcher's ability to inform or receive consent. While reflecting about fieldwork experience after researching emptiness in Latvian rural areas, anthropologist Dace Dzenovska shares a sense of deception among her informants: “Some hoped that I would enrich their archives, others—that I would carry the name of their parishes or hamlets to the world, while telling people about their traditions” (2012, 30). The encounter with a researcher was expected to happen within the scope of traditional research to which rural inhabitants would be more accustomed. It reveals a gap of associating fieldwork with anthropological research which is a relatively recent arrival in Latvia. The situation is different in tradition research, which has been systematically carried out in Latvia since the mid-19th century. After reviewing folkloric research in Latvia, I did not come across reflections about the difficulty of access in the field. Reflexivity touched upon such matters as positionality (Tihovska 2017) or strong emotional context (Reinsone 2015). In some research, besides the fieldwork itself, reflexivity and positionality could also be absent (e.g., Ančevska 2020). It reveals an almost indisputable acceptance of tradition research from both researchers and informants. However, during fieldwork on Catholic traditions in the Latvian southeastern borderlands, I had to negotiate about the object of my research: “But we don't do anything special. And after all, why does it interest you?” It was constitutive to argue about the normalization of some practices. But it could also be interpreted as perception of a particular set of traditions which fell out of scope of widely accepted tradition research.

BIO

Anna Griķe is a research assistant at the Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia, and a lecturer at the University of Latvia. Her research interests include traditions, migration, kinship, and borders. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis “Popular Piety in Roman Catholic Parishes of the Latgalian Borderland”. She teaches study courses related to anthropology at the University of Latvia, as well as assists in the Economic Anthropology course SSE Riga. She is a member of the Latvian Association of Anthropologists (since 2022 as the Chairperson of the Board).

Elizabete Grinblate

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Betwixt and Between: Navigating Dark Virtual Reality Experience and Methodological Limitations

Studying virtual reality (VR) adheres to various factors that influence the way how the researcher approaches the researched. For VR, as opposed to physical reality, has the inherent nature of being mediated and simulated, “going into the field” poses unique methodological challenges. Furthermore, historically “the field” in anthropological studies primarily referred to the physical locations where cultural and social communities reside, but the rise of digital technologies has blurred the boundaries between the physical and virtual realms. Such advancement has necessitated a re-evaluation of what constitutes “the field”, thus making it imperative for anthropologists to expand their understanding of the fieldwork itself to encompass these virtual spaces and approaches to them. Since “the digital is always approached in context” (Miller, 2018), the study looks at the pioneering work of the Žanis Lipke Memorial virtual reality experience “Lipke VR bunker”. This VR explores the story from Žanis Lipke's son, Zigi's (real name Zigfrīds Lipke), perspective. As the Second World War raged and anti-semitism deepened, Lipke's family sacrificed their own safety by creating a 3 x 3 meter hole in the ground as a shelter. This bunker, hidden under the family's woodshed, was one of the hiding spots, saving the lives of many politically repressed. In this way, one could consider digitality as a *means* and not an *end* to communicating about the dark past. This grassroots VR initiative can be accounted as a virtual heritage case, which is an emerging field within cultural heritage studies. The presentation focuses on the “Lipke VR bunker” case, stuck at the crossroads of disciplines and methodologies. By adopting a user experience approach, the author navigates through fieldwork, which stands in betwixt and between—both physical and virtual, natural and simulated. Moreover, the study reflects on the lack of a standardized methodological approach for virtual heritage fieldwork, calling out the possibilities of using user-experience principles in anthropological inquiry.

BIO

Elizabete Grinblate, Mg. hum., graduated from the University of Latvia's bachelor's degree program in Cultural and Social Anthropology and holds a Master's degree in Baltic Sea Region Studies. Her main study focus is the sub-discipline of digital anthropology, whereby she studies video game communities, the dichotomy between online and offline worlds, user experience, and virtual reality. She has participated in several research projects, including the project “Difficult Heritage: Between the Memorisation and Contemporary Tourism Production and Consumption. The Case of Holocaust Sites In Latvia”. She is a recipient of the Mundheim Family Excellence Scholarship.

Raminta Jakucevičienė

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Ethical Challenges: Giving and Taking During Fieldwork

There are numerous challenges when beginning a fieldwork study, starting from the difficulties of entering the field, then positioning yourself, gaining trust, keeping the ties, and doing no harm. My research in the field of forced migration required building relationships, finding gatekeepers and also required a lot of time and efforts to gain trust—both of the employees of the integration centres and refugee Muslim women. By agreeing to participate in the research, women (those who did) had their own agenda or understanding as to what purpose this research or their participation could serve; these included changing integration policies, answering questions, and solving different problems they faced while navigating Lithuanian society and even meeting or accommodating their friends or relatives. As a researcher I had to answer questions myself such as how to balance giving and taking while encouraging reciprocity in the field of my research, how to keep relationships but not to become a “wish granter”—for when friendship with a participant begins, then the researcher goes—how can one maintain professionalism and friendship? These ethical dilemmas needed reflexivity as well as time and distance to settle emotions. Being in the field and performing participant observation as well as having interviews may feel intrusive into peoples’ everyday lives. There is always a wish to compensate, to give something back in return, otherwise one may feel guilty. When acknowledging power disproportion and the vulnerability of the target group, one considers reciprocity or resource sharing, thinking about a socially just research setting (Gupta 2014). Partly because of this, as a way to enter the field I chose to volunteer in NGO’s that provide activities for women and children in refugee reception and integration centres. After gaining the trust of my research subjects, I offer help, share knowledge and dedicate time to maintaining contacts. So far this got me into writing reports, protocols, going to kids’ birthdays, applying for a Schengen visa, searching different kinds of information, looking for medicine, etc. Also, it required efforts to build a strategy for setting limits of solving and helping, which also came with guilt and considerations wondering what is the right way.

BIO

I am a PhD student at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, Ethnology program. Currently I am carrying out my ethnographic research under the working title of “Gender in the ethnography of asylum: Muslim women and their bonding practices”. For more than seven years now, I have been engaged in the field of migration—first as a volunteer at various NGO’s working with refugees and asylum seekers, then as an employee at the Lithuanian Red Cross organization, and now as a researcher.

Justīne Jaudzema

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Fieldwork Expedition Materials of the Archives of Latvian folklore: 1986–1991

Researchers and staff members of the Latvian Archives of Folklore have been organizing fieldwork expeditions since the 1940s with the aim of collecting and preserving traditions as well as folklore materials. During the period of Soviet occupation starting in 1947 these were annual summer events. Normally one location or region of Latvia was chosen where the participants of the fieldwork interviewed local people. On some occasions fieldwork took place in several locations during the same summer. In Latvia during the time of national awakening and the Singing Revolution (1986–1991), folklore revival was a significant component and the so-called folklore movement emerged. The importance of folklore materials in the eyes of participants of the movement grew because of the need for the knowledge of folklore customs as well as song repertoire that had been mostly forgotten and not inherited from the older generation during the time of Soviet occupation (1940–1942, 1944–1991). As a part of the project “Folklore Revival in Latvia: Resources, Ideologies and Practices,” this paper will examine a fieldwork expedition organized by the Archives of Latvian folklore (at the time the Folklore department of the Institute of Language and Literature) that took place from 1986 to 1991 and discuss the materials that have been gathered during this time in comparison with previous expeditions. As well as discussing the significance of the gathered materials during the time of awakening, focusing on the songs and other music materials and its impact on folklore movement and the development of folklore group repertoire at the time.

BIO

Justīne Jaudzema is a research assistant at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art, University of Latvia, and is a PhD student at the Latvian Academy of Culture. Her research focuses on repertoire development of folklore groups as well as the folklore movement in Latvia in general.

Kinga Horváth

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Manuscripts of Hungarian Volunteer Ethnographic Collectors from the 1950s and 1960s. Research Problems and Possibilities

In my presentation, I will discuss the research possibilities of manuscripts submitted to the National Ethnography and Dialect Collection Competitions, which started in 1952 and were jointly organized by the Museum of Ethnography (Hungary) and the Institute of Linguistics. The National Ethnography Collection Competitions were organized on the Soviet model, and their target audience was mainly teachers and students. Still, among the applicants were high school or university students majoring in ethnography—several of whom later became key figures in Hungarian ethnography—as well as the works of amateur volunteer collectors. The Museum of Ethnography launched a separate journal, the Archive Bulletin of the Museum of Ethnography, with an average of 4 issues per year, to promote the competition, in which methodological, reading, and topic selection advice was given to volunteer collectors. Today, more than 12,000 tender manuscripts from the competitions are in the Ethnological Archives of the Museum of Ethnography. The number is constantly increasing because, although the competition has been transferred to the (amateur/volunteer) Ethnographic Collectors department of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society, the manuscripts will be included in the Ethnological Archives of the Museum of Ethnography. Who were these amateur collectors, and why, what, and how did they collect? What was their relationship with the Museum of Ethnography? What impact did they have on ethnographic research at the time? How can these manuscripts be used today? What about the volunteer ethnographic collectors today? In my presentation, I will introduce Nándor Tilesch, an average collector, and through his career, I will try to answer these questions. Between 1952 and 1964, he participated in all The National Ethnography and Linguistic competitions with 40 manuscripts and always won 5th place. In addition, he constantly published his results in newspapers. His manuscripts are reliable sources for the research of other researchers to this day.

BIO

Kinga Horváth, Eötvös Loránd University, is at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies in the Hungarian and Comparative Folklore Program. She is a third-year doctoral student, and her main research topic is the online corona/COVID-19 diaries.

Parishmita Kashyap

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Puppetry as a Material Culture

Folk culture has generally been classified into broad categories such as oral folk culture, social folk customs, performing arts, and material culture. Material culture explores the devised bond between nature and culture. It can be summed up as any object that an individual utilizes to survive, form social relations, symbolize aspects of identity or peoples' states of mind, and social or economic standing. It is the creation of a symbolic culture that consists of social structures, non-material symbols and beliefs. According to recent thinking in Anthropology, material culture is an outcome or effect that emerges from the performance of material things, bodies and spaces (Kim, 2017). The discipline of anthropology has always been interested to study the material culture of society. Therefore, the study of Puppetry is an important part of the holistic approach of this discipline. Puppetry can be understood through various aspects such as a part of material culture, as symbolic and interpretative view, as a performance, and as oral traditions using different approaches of anthropological theories. It is one of the most vibrant cultures in the world. Puppetry is a form of theatre or performance that involves the manipulation of puppets, which are inanimate objects that frequently resemble some type of human or animal figure and are controlled by a person referred to as a puppeteer. A puppet is an element of a puppet theatre that tells a story about a historical, mythological, or folkloric event with speech and music. It is a repository of traditional wisdom, knowledge, and social practices. This paper will attempt to understand puppetry as a part of material culture and how it identifies Assamese society with the help of anthropology and ethnographical methods. For collecting the data, both primary and secondary sources will be used.

BIO

I am Parishmita Kashyap, a pre-doctoral scholar at Sikkim University, Gangtok, doing research on puppetry in Assam state for a year. My areas of research interest are religion, food, and oral tradition.

Siarhiej Makarevich

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Interwoven Identities: Safeguarding the Local Weaving Tradition of the Hancavičy District (Belarus) Through an Academic Project

Since its adoption in 2003, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage has been continuously changing the framework for dealing with living cultural practices. Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) reaches far beyond the cultural domain and among other aspects includes education and research with universities being one of the important actors actively facilitating not only learning about ICH itself but also training those involved in its safeguarding and management. As part of my Master's project in "Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies" at the University of Tartu, I explored the possibility of practical application of new heritage policies focusing on the example of the local weaving tradition of the Hancavičy district (Belarus) on the national ICH Inventory. Conducting multi-sited fieldwork for the project put me in a challenging position of both participant and observer in an academic setting that required acute reflexivity. In order to negotiate these intersectional identities, I utilised a critical autoethnographic approach to better understand the roles of different stakeholders involved in the process and interrelations between them and to examine the practices and the field itself. By reflecting on the project's design and outcomes, I will try to explore how the broader context affected its various aspects and contributed to its (un)achieved results.

BIO

Siarhiej Makarevich is a PhD student in ethnology at the University of Tartu. His research focuses on the study of the contribution of project-based activities toward the safeguarding of living heritage in the Baltic Sea region.

Saara Mildeberg

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When the Sun Rises from the East: Navigating through Necessary Evils with Scavenger Ethnography

This presentation is based on ongoing fieldwork in Ida-Virumaa located in Northeast Estonia. This region is known for its coastal resort villages in the North, vast forests in the South, but also oil shale mining that once satisfied the energy cravings of the Western part of the Soviet Union. While oil shale is still being produced in Estonia in large quantities, its limited reserves and the impact of mining on the environment have forced the country to explore alternative energy production methods and land use. As a border zone between Europe and Russia, Ida-Virumaa is also inevitably characterised by an often almost toxic resilience to necessary evils. In recent years, its shrinking towns, (post)industrial landscapes, and marginalised inhabitants have inspired many scholars, artists, and tourism entrepreneurs in their work. However, the Covid-19 pandemic, transition from oil shale, and the war in Ukraine have posed challenges that were unimaginable before, pushing researchers to digital, illegal and/or political domains, all also present in my fieldwork among the local tourism entrepreneurs and international visitors. The presentation follows my work through the crises that have shaped society ever since 2020 when I started researching the possibilities and restrictions for cultural tourism through interviews, participant observation, and photography. Framed by conflicting thoughts on oil shale mining, restrictions imposed during the pandemic, and the fear created by war in Europe, I reflect on myself as a critical tourist, and describe my fieldwork as a young researcher as scavenger ethnography (Blackman 2020).

BIO

Saara Mildeberg is a doctoral student of Studies of Cultures at Tallinn University where she also works as a junior research fellow at the Centre for Landscape and Culture. From 2020–2022, she was a researcher for the Horizon 2020 funded project "Social and Innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its Potential Towards Deepening Europeanisation" (SPOT), focusing on communities that make use of Soviet-era heritage and industrial landscapes in cultural tourism. Her current research is a continuation of these topics.

Rafał Miśta

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Layers of Historical Folklore Data – From Big Uncertainties to the Big Picture

It is easy to forget how much fieldwork has been conducted so far. The information obtained in this way is accumulated in tons of archives and books, competing for attention with ever newer research material. From the Polish perspective, a lot of folklore data was collected in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Information was collected in a way that was often unsatisfactory when it comes to modern requirements; however, it describes the state of folklore of the past. The poor quality and ambiguity of the material are therefore balanced by its weight. Moreover, when data are analysed not as individual pieces of information, but as a whole, using statistical and computational tools, the uncertainties associated with them can be partially ignored in order to achieve something inaccessible even with most scrupulous single field studies—a vast landscape of similarities and differences from a wide geographical area. One of the tools that tries to deal with this aspect is ethnogeography is the application of cartographic methods to ethnographic data. In my presentation, I will discuss the challenges of analysing early folklore research in an ethnogeographic way. I want to compare three approaches: first, of Oskar Kolberg (a great 19th century collector of folklore); second, of Kazimierz Moszyński (who inaugurated the idea of the Polish ethnographic atlas); and third, of the post-war research team related to the Polish Ethnographic Atlas project. These three cases were characterized by various methodological approaches and by different modes of fieldwork. As I want to demonstrate, the differences are noticeable, relevant, and problematic when the data is analysed using modern tools, but each historical layer of ethnogeographic research is an important building block in a new look at the so-called “big picture”.

BIO

Rafał Miśta has an MA in econometrics but is now preparing a doctoral dissertation in social geography on the statistical and cartographic analysis of Oskar Kolberg’s collection of musical folklore. His research interest focuses on the use of quantitative methods in cultural anthropology, a proponent of the four-field approach in anthropology.

Uģis Nastevičs

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The Pagan Map of the Holy Places of European Ethnic Religions: New Built and Vandalized

Within the last 30 years, more than 80 holy places of European ethnic, autochthonous, and native religions have been built, and some have already been vandalized; and therefore, some of these unveiled places, due to fear of vandalism, are still kept secret. “The Pagan Map” addresses the issue. A study project called “The Pagan Map” commenced in 2020 with the purpose of gaining insight into the dynamics, distribution, architecture, and issues of the new built (since 1990) sacred sites of European ethnic religions. The overt interim result of this study is an updatable map and a list, intermittently published on a Facebook page of the same name, indicating how many and where such places are located across the World. However, it soon emerged that the established holy places were getting desecrated, vandalized, or even destroyed, and that their keepers face discrimination or persecution. Consequently, several groups choose to keep their places secret. The initial focus of the study was extended in 2023 by adding a survey to assess and raise awareness of the overall environment of well-being of so-called pagans and the status quo of rights these communities enjoy in their respective countries.

BIO

Uģis Nastevičs has a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Pedagogy with distinction, and a PhD in Theory of Culture obtained by comparing aspects of Japanese and Latvian culture—particularly, Shintō and Dievturība. In addition he has more than 11 years of professional experience as a Japanese interpreter, translator, tour guide, and lecturer, conducting both courses in Latvia and guest lectures in universities of Japan. After Shintō Studies at Kōgakkan University, he continues Japanology and Latvistics-related research in the field of Theory of Culture, Ethnology, and Folkloristics in Latvia.

Paolo Riccardo Oliva

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A Single Memory, a Double and Different Narration. Can the Purpose of a Publication and the Social Role of an Interviewer Change the Memory of a Story?

If the aims of research change, can the narration of the individual, family and collective memory of a specific event also change? What if the interviewers change, and consequently the social role they play within a community is altered? The intervention that I will deal with concerns the varying narration of the facts of a painful event that took place in a small village in the Venetian area of Gruaro back in 1933, when 28 children aged between 1 and 8 died after the inoculation of the diphtheria vaccine. The culprit was discovered although the newspapers hinted at the responsibility of the Serotherapy Institute of Naples which supplied the batch of vaccines. For over 80 years the memory of that painful event remained in the homes of the families involved, with nothing keeping the public memory alive, at least officially, through commemorations or publications aimed at studying that misfortune. A silence that actually helped to further fuel a different reconstruction of that story. It was only in April 2014 that a publication came out commissioned by the Municipality, edited by the local historian, Dario Bigattin, *La maledetta puntura del 1933. L'incredibile strage dei bambini di Gruaro, vittime dell'antidifterica*, following a brief and superficial journalistic investigation that began a few months earlier. Bigattin devoted a chapter to the testimonies of those who were children at the time, or of family members of the children who died following the inoculation of the vaccine. Unaware that this publication was being published, just a month earlier I too began researching to better study this story in Gruaro, a place with which I had never had anything to do until then. At the end of my field research period, comparing my interviews with those collected by Bigattin, I ascertained how some of the same informants had in some cases given very different information between the version given to me and the one reported by Bigattin. A publication would have allowed for greater visibility than a simple degree thesis, but at the same time it would have prevented me from collecting specific memories that were too private or embarrassing, which could instead emerge with my thesis. What are the factors that may have influenced these choices? How can one tell these important differences in the story?

BIO

Paolo Riccardo Oliva (1990) graduated with a degree in History from the Middle Ages to the Contemporary Age at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2015. He has curated various exhibitions of a historical nature on abandoned childhood, Italian colonial racism, and Aktion T4. He is currently a PhD candidate in archival science at the University of Trento.

Alina Oprelianska

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To Believe or Not to Believe: Some Notes on Gender Assignment in Ukrainian Folklore of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Gender performance in folk narratives occurs in a close relation to one's social status, age, and job. Regardless, we tend to classify one's gender as female, male, or transgender, and as a marker of "deviated" sexuality—concentrating on LGBTQ+ topics, while heterosexuality, if applicable, is not worth mentioning because it is automatically implied. Meanwhile, regardless of sexuality, gender in folk narratives and perhaps in traditional societies of the 19th century are addressed in a way that define "proper" women and "proper" men, while other categories beyond fertile age or legal marriage are surrounded by beliefs and supernatural powers in one way or another. Though those categories might remain heterosexual and keep acting in a paradigm of heteronormativity, the ways they are thought of and referred to in belief narratives are different from binary gender division. The paper aims to deconstruct gender assignment in Ukrainian peasantry culture of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries from the scope of folk beliefs. The paper considers folk beliefs as a part of vernacular knowledge produced by people as a source of understanding, knowing, and co-existing with the official imperial discourse. As a tool for deconstruction, current research uses queer theory and post-colonial optics that allow one to look beyond binarity and the naturalization of knowledge constructed by authorities. Meanwhile, the theoretical frame of vernacular knowledge facilitates an exploration of the concepts of marginalization and liminality both through the scope and as a source of beliefs. As a research focus, the paper concentrates on childhood, widowhood and ageing as social statutes that entail procreative marginalization which is followed by a fertile soil for beliefs. These beliefs are caused by and, concurrently, shape the everyday performance of marginalized individuals and social groups, impacting and explaining them at the same time.

BIO

Alina Oprelianska is a Junior Research Fellow and a PhD student at the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu, specializing in the field of Fairy Tale Studies, with a focus on gender aspects, customary law, and belief narratives. Her latest article "Marriage is Not Required: A Ukrainian Tale about 'The Mare's Head' and Customary Law in Tale Type ATU 480 D" was awarded Elis-Kõngas Maranda Graduate Prize.

Robertho Miguel Paredes

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“Entre pájaros y árboles”. Visual Narratives of the Forest: Research about Trees, Birds and the People of the Amazon Forest

This research explores ways to empower Amazonian communities to use images to raise awareness about the impact of climate change and the disappearance of natural forests in the Amazonian region of Madre de Dios, Peru. The communities have an intimate relationship with the forest, perceived not merely as a geographical entity but as an integral component of their identity and spirituality. The forest is the home of the Amazonian communities of Peru and a place where nature and humanity have coexisted in harmony. The forest is where the Amazonian imagination has flourished. However, it is also one of the places where climate change and the extraction of natural resources are making the forest disappear. The Amazonian communities have witnessed the loss of their surrounding forests, threatening their territory, culture, and existence, for they consider the forest a living entity entwined with their history and heritage. This research will discuss the theories of autoethnography and Amazonian cosmovision (worldview), exploring how visual narratives can effectively portray the devastating effects of environmental degradation on Amazonian communities and their heritage. Images become a vessel representing connections between the spiritual world, nature, and the forest. This creation of knowledge is critical in defining the Amazonian lived experiences and disseminating their narratives to a global audience. Finally, the research will critically examine the connection between place within the context of cultural heritage and the Anthropocene. It aims to highlight how these visual narratives can explore these communities' rich cultural heritage and the urgent need to understand the forest in the face of the Anthropocene. The research will take an in-depth look at the forest of the Peruvian Amazon region, as seen from the perspective of its inhabitants, and how images can be used as an effective tool in their journey to conserve their heritage and protect the forest.

BIO

Robertho Miguel Paredes is a photographer and researcher from Puerto Maldonado (Peru), addressing environmental issues in the Amazon. His visual artwork reveals the devastating impact of the Anthropocene on the Amazon Forest and its heritage. He is also a member of the Guardians Worldwide Network and has participated in forums and presentations focusing on Amazonian Forest fragility.

Savannah-Rivka Powell

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Trauma Informed Approaches to Fieldwork and Intragroup Identity Dysphoria: Shifting Dynamics of Representation and Visibility of Compounded Marginalization

Despite our best efforts, researchers cannot act in isolation of our own identities and experiences. Unless we conduct research within a community to which we are members, we may, through the process of fieldwork, find ourselves a minority among our collaborators. Being minoritized does not in any way entitle one to access other minoritized communities. Likewise, experiences of minoritization and oppression are individualized and should not be imposed onto others. Ultimately, a researcher's background, experiences, and identity will unquestionably inform their state of mind and naturally, by proxy, this will have an impact on their work and analysis despite their best efforts to avoid any bias. In my experience and positioning as an individual, I typically pass as white, Christian, straight, and cisgender, when, in reality, I represent a minority within a minoritized group creating layers of complex social terrain to be navigated. This means that these normative societal beliefs, result in me being read in ways that allot certain privileges while simultaneously rendering my identities invisible. In the course of fieldwork, I have to decide if and when it might be safe or appropriate to share my background knowing this in turn will impact the final outcome of my work. These lived realities allow me to conduct trauma-informed research. That is not to imply that my experience can be equated to those of other minoritized groups, but rather that I have a baseline awareness with many similar historical patterns embedded within my family and community of origin. I approach narratives of oppressed identities beyond my own by utilizing personal experiences to inform and enrich my understanding as has been outlined by Michael Rothberg in what he framed as multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009). My fieldwork is conducted among minorities within already minoritized groups, further intensifying their experiences of marginalization. Through these experiences and observations, I have developed the concept of "intragroup identity dysphoria" to describe the acute discontent felt by those who do not always feel fully represented or integrated into their own communities.

BIO

Savannah-Rivka Powell is a PhD student in the Institute of Cultural Research at the University of Tartu and a Europaeum Scholar with the University of Oxford. She researches how minoritized identities are constructed through the expression of traditional music and the role of nostalgia for the loss of a cohesive and geographically centred community in creating and holding contemporary space while simultaneously aspiring for an imagined future.

The Collective Memory and the Modern Maronite Identity in the 21st century: an Empirical Approach

Collective memory is one of the key aspects in modern collective identity construction; therefore, in each modern collective identity vision we will find references to it. The Maronite community since the beginning of the formation of its modern identity (along with other domains as well) has focused on past motives by elaborating the Lebanese Phoenician legacy in the twentieth century. Yet in the twenty-first century very few works have been prepared about the topic. Based on a fieldwork trip to Lebanon in December 2022, the paper analyses the modern Maronite collective identity. The questions asked to the research participants, consisting of the secular, influential, and active part of the community, willing to speak, share and spread their ideas, included perceptions of both the golden and worst ages of Lebanese history, the origin of the Maronite community, the ancestors of Lebanese people, and differences between Lebanon and other entities in the region. The paper suggests that the predominant majority of the research participants consider the golden age of Lebanon to be the years between 1940–70 with the worst age coming subsequently; apart from that, the Phoenician legacy is not as important as it used to be in the twentieth century, while the most actively shared historical perceptions of Lebanese history combine the historical and cultural diversity of Lebanon also elaborating Maronite attachment to Lebanon, its mountains, and the land.

BIO

Šarūnas Rinkevičius is both a PhD student and teaching assistant at the Vilnius University Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies, working in the fields of Turkish history, identity construction in the Middle East, preparing his thesis about the modern Maronite identity in the twenty-first century.

Writing as a Self-Transformative Spiritual Practice in a Female Old Believer Monastery

The literary tradition of Russian Old Believers is one of the most well-studied areas that informs the scholarly understanding of the group. However, writing as a spiritual and transformative practice has been less observed. In this presentation, I focus on writing practices established in Dubches monasteries, an important spiritual centre of the Chasovenyye faction of Russian Old Belief. This place is situated on the banks of tributaries of the Podkamennaia Tunguska river in Eastern Siberia, such as the eponymous river Dubches. The Dubches community was founded by fugitive monks and nuns of the said group. They are now established as a network of separate female and male monasteries also known as *skity* or *obiteli* (hermitages, cloisters), whose number is not known. Soon upon arrival in the vicinity, the monastic community started collecting oral and written sources about their predecessors, gradually compiling a volume of *A Tale of Miraculous Events*, which has been discovered and published by academician Nikolai Pokrivskii and his team. Later, some other works were composed, including the recently discovered *A Genealogy of a Cloister Novoselie*. I will mostly discuss the latter work because it gives us a clue on how writing becomes a transformative practice in the community that provides a transition from the laity to monasticism. It is also a rare example of female writing as it is dedicated to a female monastery and has highly likely been composed by women.

BIO

Danila Rygovskiy is a PhD candidate in Folkloristics at the University of Tartu, Estonia. His thesis is focused on women's roles in spiritual leadership in communities of Russian Old Believers in Estonia and Siberia.

Laura Suszta

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When the Field is on Paper: Modern-day Problems with Historical Texts Based on Samuel Hearne (1745-1792)

When the British explorer Samuel Hearne (1745-1792) reached the shoreline of the Arctic Ocean at the mouth of the Coppermine River in 1772, he considered the voyage itself to be his greatest achievement. He spent the rest of his life working on journeys from the Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean in the years 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 (1795, posthumously) to record his own brave and heroic deeds, and when he died he could not have known that he had left much more for exploration than that. His journey marked the end of an era in the history of exploration, but he also described, in detail, the culture and customs of the Denesuline people during the 18th century. His work and its literary value were soon recognised and considered one of the most sophisticated accounts of his time, but his research as an anthropological source was not universally acclaimed. Even among his contemporaries, there were voices critical of his work and its veracity—some even attempted to deny his discoveries—and this tendency is present throughout any research on the author or his work. This situation is further nuanced because Hearne took stands throughout the text, that were in keeping with 18th century perspectives, but objective data collection was not achieved. His observations are coloured by his value judgements and value system, which makes researching the text even more difficult. In my presentation, I will seek, through Hearne's example, to answer questions of how a modern-day scholar can navigate and adjust within a halo of criticism. How can we reconstruct, from the text, the customs and traditions of the group of people he was observing? Based on the text, I will try to show how, with a modern critical approach, it is possible and worthwhile to deal with a text whose truthfulness is under attack, and, treating it as a source, how, in addition, to extract factual data from it without questioning its integrity.

BIO

Laura Suszta is currently studying in the Doctoral School of Literary Studies at Eötvös Loránd University. She finished her BA degree at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in liberal arts, with art history and religious studies specialisations in 2018. She received her MA degree in religious studies at the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in 2020.

Quentin "Vassa" Swaryczewski

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Rethinking the Role of Empathy as Ethical Responsibility in Fieldwork

With an increasing scholarly interest in the ethical responsibilities necessary for research, it is imperative that the discussion also turn to these considerations when conducting fieldwork during times of conflict. While the traditional scholarly practice has been to maintain objectivity in the field, as originally argued by Fenno (1978), this paper counters that empathy plays a significant role in ethical responsibilities when conducting fieldwork during times of upheaval. More specifically, it is argued here that utilizing empathy during such times enables researchers to both understand the lives of their informants more fully and to legitimize the voices of their informants. This discussion on empathy will be presented through a case study of life in Western Ukraine during the current war. In considering these matters, this paper will draw upon both fieldwork and scholarly works published within the last decade. The relevant fieldwork for this paper was conducted in July 2023 in Western Ukraine in the form of both participant observation and qualitative interviews with three local textile experts. Recently published scholarly works dealing with both feminist ethnography and fieldwork at times of socio-political upheaval will be drawn upon to further inform the significance of empathy in fieldwork. By presenting on the significant role that empathy can play in fieldwork during times of upheaval, it is hoped that this paper will continue the conversation on what ethical responsibilities we hold as researchers.

BIO

Combining their background in Eastern European area studies and folkloristics with their love of textile arts, Vassa focuses on the significance that creating has in identity-formation through postcolonial and feminist theory. This is, of course, when they are not busy feeding and heaping adoration on their cats, Lali and Laila, and venturing off to salvage Walkmans.

Garima Thakuria

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Longtsaok Tradition and Associated Beliefs Among the Lepcha Community of Sikkim

The Lepchas are an indigenous community living in Sikkim of north-eastern region of India who call themselves *Rong*, derived from the Lepcha word *Rongkup* or *Rumkup* meaning "the children of the snowy peak/the children of God". The *Konchen Kongchlo* or the Kanchenjunga, is revered by the Lepchas since they have known it as the "original big stone" or the source of their origin. Thus, stones have been considered as an essential part of the Lepcha tradition since time immemorial. They have a culture of erecting upright stones known as *longtsaoks*, derived from the Lepcha words, *long* meaning "stone" and *tsaok* meaning "hard" on different occasions, which are also known as megaliths in archaeology. This tradition of erecting *longtsaoks* among the Lepchas resembles the megalithic tradition practiced by communities like the Karbis of Assam, the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya, various Naga communities of Manipur and Nagaland, the Hrussos of Arunachal Pradesh as well as the Mizos of Mizoram in India among others. These *longtsaoks*, either standing as a single stone or in clusters of three, seven or more stones, have been considered as sacred symbols among the Lepchas and are associated with some important life events and erected as markers to commemorate those special occasions. The divinity of these stones lies in every act of venerating, worshipping, and invoking the gods, in appeasing the devils and demons as well as in sanctifying the worldly acts of the Lepchas. The contemporary Lepcha society in celebration of festivals and events like Lho Rum Faat erect a *longtsaok* and worship the *Konchen Kongchlo* in spite of facing numerous challenges by the community such as the influence of other religions on their traditional religion. This paper is a humble attempt to understand the tradition of megalithic culture among the Lepchas from an ethno-archaeological perspective while also examining the folk beliefs associated with the *longtsaoks*.

BIO

Dr. Garima Thakuria is working in the Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University, Sikkim, India. She is interested in folklore studies, ethnography, archaeological anthropology, and has conducted anthropological research among different communities living in Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya.

Andrus Tins

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Stories and Narrations about Artificial Intelligence: An Estonian Case Study

Many studies have been conducted on various aspects of technology (Bausinger, 1990, on the role of folklore in the modern technical world; Boatright, 1963, on the oil industry). Today, technology plays a more central role in culture than ever before. In the spring of 2023, a discussion about the roles and possibilities of AI took place in Estonian media and on social networks. It was a good opportunity to map the folklorization of stories related to the emergence of artificial intelligence in people's lives. The narrower focus of the collected material was set on stories related to ChatGPT. Regarding the launch of ChatGPT for public use at the end of the 2022, there is a very hot ongoing discussion about AI throughout Estonian society at the present time. In connection to this discussion, we can see emerging stories and narratives about Artificial Intelligence. I began collecting online and offline data in May 2023 about how people talk about AI according to their personal experience and/or understanding; One question was what beliefs do Estonian people have about AI? We can say according to the data that there are many attitudes toward AI including fear, hope, and fascination. There are many universal reaction mechanisms to the subject under discussion. Fears are instigated by lack of transparency. Other people got new hope for giant leap of innovations. We can observe the folklorization process of the AI in people's lives with examples from Estonian people. I will also discuss of preliminary typology of AI folklore.

BIO

Andrus Tins is a Junior Research Fellow at the Estonian Literary Museum and a PhD student at University of Tartu. His main research field is technology folklore. He has a background of sociology (sociology MA) and his special interest is folklorization of contemporary social and cultural phenomena.

Michele Tita

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Re-adjusting to “Normality” During Fieldwork in the Italian Alps in COVID-19 Times

This presentation is going to be a personal and auto-ethnographic account about my two-week fieldwork experience in Italy during July and August of 2021. Besides the professional goals that I was pursuing, the time spent in the field was crucial for my emotional re-adjustment and return to “normality” after a period of intense distress and fear. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people's lives in ways that nobody could have imagined beforehand. In addition to the social and economic consequences of the pandemic, the disease posed a threat to the individuals' health. In fact, COVID-19 led to increased hospitalisations and deaths, and occasionally long-lasting consequences for some who experienced infection. For those who did not get sick, the indirect consequences of COVID-19 were still perceivable through lockdowns, restrictions, increased poverty, and/or psychological and emotional distress. During the first two years of the pandemic, I experienced an intense and almost blocking fear of contracting COVID-19, until the completion of the vaccination cycle in July 2021. By that time, my phobia of infection had prevented my comeback to a normal social life, even during periods of a significant decrease in COVID-19 cases. However, as I was finally vaccinated, I decided to re-embrace a “normal” lifestyle and environment while doing fieldwork in the Italian Alps. During my two weeks in the field, I had to travel, use public transport, and meet people in different circumstances, as I was used to before the pandemic. At the same time, I could easily re-adjust to these activities due to the reduced presence of people in the environment of the Italian Alps, quite isolated and distant from larger cities and tourist tracks. In this sense, fieldwork has been a “liminal” stage of the process that led me to cope with the risks and odds of the pandemic, and re-embrace older habits that I had abandoned in my professional and personal sphere.

BIO

Currently Michele Tita is a PhD student in the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu (Estonia). His research revolves around folkloric figures of wild men and the image of wilderness in different areas of the world. Previously, he obtained a BA in Anthropology in his native country (Italy) and an MA in Folkloristics at the University of Tartu.

Gabriella Vámos

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Fieldwork Under Political Pressure in Hungary in the 1950s

After World War II, the political system changed in Hungary and a new government was established by the Communists who wanted to radically reform the country's cultural life. New institutions, and periodicals were founded and the new regime began to expropriate the language and folklore genres. Because of the waves of collectivization, industrialization, and serious secularization, people's traditional life underwent a transformation and the folklorists tried to collect every “live” tradition and text as well. Parallel with the above-mentioned changes, the circumstances and the aims of scientific research and fieldwork also changed; they gained political meanings, and the researchable topics were limited. There were topics which became politically accepted like workers' folklore, the new accommodation of the fieldwork such as the workers' hostel and the city also came to light. The methodology of the previous decades could be modified also. If we consider these years in the history of Hungarian folklorists, there were some successful ideas which had an impact on later fieldwork. However, the possibility of the fieldwork was not ideal, the people were distrusted, and there were occasions when they did not talk to researchers. In this paper, the author focuses on the possibility of fieldwork in Hungary in the 1950s, reflecting on the researchers' methods, and examines how the collectors and the informants were talking about political and social changes. During this research, many diaries and recalls are used, and the collected texts are considered chronicles of Hungarian folkloristics in the early decades of socialism.

BIO

Gabriella Vámos is an ethnographer and museologist at the Semmelweis Medical History Museum and a lecturer at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore Department of Material Ethnography in Budapest, Hungary.

Elvīra Žvarte

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Writing Old Age: Literary Gerontology in Co-Creation

The ageing of the world's population is considered one of the three most serious challenges of the 21st century, alongside global climate change, global energy production, and conservation. In Latvia as well, the population is ageing rapidly. Most of the western societies not only live till old age, but probably will find themselves in long-term care institutions, while modern man's turbulent sense of the world tends to push the idea of ageing as far into the depths of consciousness as possible. What do we really know about ageing and growing old in institutions before we start to experience it for ourselves, and is there anything we really want to know about it? What do the humanities see differently in the ageing process, or from which angles can we approach essential knowledge that can contribute to the understanding of ageing consciously, without stigmatising the topic? Although many researchers have been building meaningful links between the humanities and gerontology since 1975, so far in Latvia we have associated gerontology mainly with the field of medicine. Despite this, the contribution of the humanities is also needed in our research space, as ageing can be better understood in a complex way: not only as a biological state of being, but as a lived, embodied and mediated experience that takes place under specific material and social conditions. The theoretical part of the paper focuses on exploring literary gerontology and co-creation as a methodological approach, while the empirical part offers a version of how literary gerontology and co-creation can be put into practice, focusing on the formation process of senior's autobiographical texts in a long-term care institution. This approach not only provides a unique and at the same time temporally rooted and shared cognitive material about ageing in a very personal scope, but also includes the author's own reflections on what has been narrated, documented, and researched.

BIO

Elvīra Žvarte is a research assistant at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia.



HUMMA is a digital platform for humanities and arts. Its development began in 2020, and it continues to evolve, taking into account the interests and needs of HUMMA developers, researchers, and collaborating partners. The mission of HUMMA is to collect, popularize, and make accessible various types of information related to Latvia's and Latvian diaspora cultural expressions and processes, as well as research and general knowledge in the field of humanities and arts. HUMMA serves as a digital platform for researchers, students, and other interested individuals in the field of humanities and arts, providing structured information on various cultural and art-related topics. The goal of HUMMA is to create preconditions for conducting extensive and large-scale research in a vast dataset. HUMMA not only facilitates data storage but also provides data representation, selection, publicly available data downloads, and data analysis tools for research projects. Based on the HUMMA platform, associated digital resources and specialized tools for information processing, analysis, and visualization are being developed. Depending on the needs, HUMMA provides unified user registration and management, a unified data editor environment, a unified database for biographical data, published works, theatre data, locations, and folklore archive collections.

The following resources have been developed based on the HUMMA platform, using APIs and other solutions:

garamantas.lv

literatura.lv

iesasties.lv

womage.lv

folkeforsk.no

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