

# The Ecosystem of Culture and Arts

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This volume of the journal includes articles that address a topical issue in cultural research — namely, the ecosystem of culture and arts, its boundaries, uniqueness, and diversity. The articles have been developed within the framework of several sub-projects of the National Research Program *Cultural Capital as a Resource for the Sustainable Development of Latvia* (CARD).

The theoretical models of the ecosystem hold the potential to enable a deep analysis of the mutual impact and dynamics of complex phenomena. Scholars from social sciences, humanities, and arts have adjusted these models for the study of development preconditions of the cultural and creative sector. Within the framework of the CARD project, the ecosystem approach elaborates on the idea of culture and creative activity as a dynamic network of mutual connections — productive or hindering — which create and transform the cultural capital as an essential resource for national development. The ecosystem viewpoint enables an open and interpretive stance with regard to both historical and contemporary processes as well as toward value flows. It also allows the identification of boundaries of phenomena and sub-sectors, the functional ties of sub-sectors and actors, and the role of boundaries in interrelations and transformations. CARD was the first time that five Latvian scientific institutions collaborated in the name of joint scholarly, social, and communicative goals; this collaboration was conducive in nurturing the conception of the national academic and scholarly community of culture and the arts as part of the ecosystem of the cultural and creative sector.

The current volume of *Letonica* includes ten articles, which 1) open a discussion on the methodological suitability of the ecosystem concept in research concerning Latvia's cultural and creative sector, including the study of cultural heritage; 2) provide contextual spotlights on the developmental trajectories and dynamics of individual art branches — theatre, film, music, architecture — emphasizing the role of change, connections, and boundaries; 3) provide close-up views of notable phenomena of the cultural and creative ecosystem, highlighting its diversity.

The first section of the volume is entitled Identifying the Ecosystem of Culture; it comprises three articles.

Anda Laķe, Ilona Kunda, and Baiba Tjarve provide a comprehensive analysis of the range of ecosystems' theoretical and methodological approaches and solutions, in order to identify the conditions of practical application of these approaches and solutions in the study of Latvia's national-scale cultural and creative ecosystems. Although the complex nature of the ecosystem concept does not currently lend itself to a conclusive systematization of theoretical postulates and methodological standards, the authors uncover the factors of the political and cultural context that blur the boundaries of the cultural and arts domain, simultaneously hindering a successful identification of the development stimuli and varieties of resources of the ecosystem.

Regional and functional aspects of the ecosystem are the focus of the article by Annette Naudin, Ieva Zemīte, and Agnese Hermane. Their article explores cultural intermediaries,

which act as a part of cultural and creative industries, enhancing relationships and shaping and strengthening the local cultural and creative ecosystems. The authors emphasize that the identification of key local participants in cultural and creative industries may be a decisive precondition in the shaping of local policies and in the advancement of collaboration between state authorities and the sector's actors.

Local community self-initiatives and participation have a special role in the development of the cultural and creative ecosystem. In their article, Rūta Muktupāvela and Ieva Vītola highlight the value of participation and self-organization in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Using as a theoretical background John Holden's theory of the roles of ecosystem participants, the authors analyze the activities of a non-governmental organization, identifying an unclear allocation of responsibilities between the state and the non-governmental sector in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

The second section of the volume, entitled *Shifting the Focus/Paradigm*, comprises scholarly articles from the study of four branches of art: theatre, music, film, and architecture. These articles emphasize the role of radical change and transformation in the development of the ecosystem.

Zane Kreicberga, Edīte Tišheizere, and Līga Ulberte present the results of the study of transformation of contemporary theatre art in three dimensions — from the point of view of the text, the actor and/or performer, and the space and movement. The goal of the article is to identify the characteristic features of 21st century Latvian theatre, exploring these in the context of the key change of focus occurring due to Latvian theatre artists' contextualizing their work through Western theatre processes and moving away from Soviet and post-Soviet expression. Simultaneously, the authors note the epistemological risks that may surface when including diverse and contradictory performative practices in a piece of theatre art. These processes demand an ongoing redefinition of the theoretical and methodological concepts of the scholarly study of theatre, adapting these to the specific conditions of the Latvian theatre ecosystem.

Ilze Liepiņa-Šarkovska uncovers the open nature of the music ecosystem and the transfer of the Western music language to Latvian society, analyzing the musical activities of the Latvian Brethren congregations of the 18th century. The article addresses the adaptation of the Brethren congregations in the Latvian environment at the start of the first missions in Vidzeme in 1729. The author notes that the *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine* teachings became attractive in the Latvian environment owing to the new, contemporary, Sentimentalism-related pre-Classical music language, which became organically integrated in the local cultural space.

The study by Dita Rietuma addresses the transformative role played by international factors in the development of the film art ecosystem. The author analyzes the role of co-production films in the building of the artistic, communicative, financial, and social capacity of the film industry. The author provides an assessment of Latvian co-production experiences within

the context of the transformations of time and ideology; in addition, Rietuma highlights the dominant trends in co-produced films (feature films, documentaries, animation films). The article outlines the challenges of the international reception, distribution, and audience attraction of co-production films, thus explicating the context of network formation of the ecosystem of film art.

The focus of the article by Silvija Grosa and Agnese Tambaka is the role of ornament in architectural decor. The study examines pertinent architectural artifacts from the turn of the 19th/20th centuries. The focus of the study was grounded in assumptions of the paradigm change in ornament studies, the attempts of foreign art scholars to re-interpret theories on ornaments, and the conclusion that these issues often take central position in debates on artistic practice and art history. The scholars conclude that during the period under study, the motifs in tile design were mostly grounded in classical art heritage, and that confirms the assumption that the decorative finish of late Art Nouveau rent house entrance-halls mostly fits the stylistics of freely interpreted neo-Classicism.

The third section of the volume, *Zooming in on Elements of the Ecosystem*, addresses unique cultural phenomena. This is prompted by the close relationship of the complexity of the cultural and creative ecosystem with the role of authenticity of artistic products, with the simultaneousness of the creation of artistic experience and other values linked to uniqueness. In their article, Inese Sirica and Elīna Veilande-Apine address the convergence and interaction processes characteristic of Latvia's professional and amateur art. The study zooms in on the interaction of professional textile art and amateur textile art (*or people's applied art*) in Soviet Latvia. The conclusions emphasize that the People's Applied Art studios, as well as the Department of Textile Art of the Latvian Academy of Art established in 1961, adhered to global contemporary trends of amateur and textile art in the 1960s–80s. The study concludes that people's applied art studios were a legitimate way of using amateur art, or "people's art," to safeguard Latvian traditional practices in a totalitarian system. The authors call for more in-depth studies on amateur art practices, highlighting such practices' role in the formation of trends in contemporary amateur art.

Līga Goldberga's article focuses on photographic postcards as a specific element of culture and heritage. Widely represented in private collections, memory albums, libraries, archives, and museum collections, these can be used in research as documentary heritage, a memory tool, and historical evidence. The article provides insight into examples of researching the materiality of photographs, but also critically assesses the hierarchy-forming processes of collection. The author proposes a view that does not set apart the value of certain collection items over others, but that forms an inclusive, ecosystem model.

In her article, Zane Šiliņa analyzes the artistic features of an outstanding cultural personality — Latvian People's Poet and Playwright Rainis. Rainis created a distinctive ecosystem of ideas, values, and goals in Latvia's culture, which continues to draw scholars of culture and arts to analyze the role played by this cultural leader. Juxtaposing the darkness/light and day/night present in the works of Rainis, the author analyzes how the clash of contrary forces

develop and transform the basic principles of drama. The author concludes that Rainis was interested in the idea of elevating the struggle of contrary forces from the level of relationships between the play's protagonists to a cosmic level.

The articles in the volume — taken separately and viewed together — demonstrate not only the diversity of the cultural and creative ecosystem, but also the variety of approaches in its study and the diversity of scholars as individuals. This continues to highlight the topicality of the question of the integrity of the ecosystem, its inclusive or excluding nature.

The program's shortened title is CARD (or Cultural (C) and Arts (A) Resources (R) for Development (D)). Its implementation partners from October 1, 2020, until October 1, 2022, are five leading higher education and cultural heritage institutions in Latvia — the Latvian Academy of Culture (Lead partner), Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, the Latvian Academy of Art, the National Library of Latvia, and the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art of the University of Latvia. The goal of the program's project is to create an interdisciplinary foundation of human capital and knowledge based on 1) the diversity and value of the cultural capital and 2) the processes forming the vitality of the cultural sector's ecosystem, each as a resource for Latvia's sustainable development.

CARD — as a platform transferring values and experiences — has expanded in both an administrative and human sense the mutual resource-exchange opportunities for scholars, students, and representatives of creative branches. One of the manifestations of this collaboration is the production of this Special Issue of *Letonica*, for which Program participants are especially grateful to the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art of the University of Latvia.