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Transnational Networks Behind Folk Music Revivals: A Methodological Study of the Latvian Folklore Group *Skandinieki*

Tautas mūzikas atdzimšanas kustību transnacionālie tīkli: metodoloģisks pētījums par folkloras draugu kopu *Skandinieki*

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Summary This article takes the Latvian folklore group *Skandinieki* as a case study to assess the potential of a network approach for researching transnational flows within folk music revivals. Building on *Skandinieki*'s central role in the Latvian ethnomusic scene, the study explores the group's ties to folklore movements abroad during the Soviet era, particularly in Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, and among exiled Latvians in the West. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining qualitative and quantitative inquiry, and using digital tools for data visualization and exploration. These transnational ties are contextualized within the broader political and pragmatic frameworks of the Cold War. Drawing on a print media dataset, the article maps cross-border connections and highlights the media's role in shaping and promoting the revival movement. It also underscores the importance of source criticism when working with materials related to a totalitarian regime. While recognizing the Latvian folklore movement's unique local character, the article expands the previous geopolitical framing of the movement and situates it within broader revivalist currents on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The study demonstrates the value of network analysis for tracing actual transnational routes and influences.

Kopsavilkums Šajā rakstā pētīts latviešu folkloras draugu kopas *Skandinieki* gadījums, lai pārbaudītu tīklu pieejas potenciālu analizēt starpvalstu plūsmas tautas mūzikas atdzimšanas kustībās. Ņemot vērā *Skandinieku* centrālo lomu Latvijas etnomūzikas ainā, pētījumā aplūkotas kopas saites ar folkloras kustībām ārzemēs padomju periodā, īpaši ar Igauniju, Lietuvu, Krieviju un trimdas latviešiem Rietumos. Pētījumā izmantota jauktu metožu pieeja, apvienojot kvalitatīvu un kvantitatīvu pētniecību un lietojot digitālus rīkus datu vizualizācijai un izpētei. Transnacionālās saiknes tiek skatītas plašākā politiskā un pragmatiskā Aukstā kara kontekstā. Analizējot drukāto mediju datu kopu, kartēti *Skandinieku* pārrobežu sakari un izcelta mediju loma atdzimšanas kustību veidošanā un veicināšanā. Uzsvērta arī avotu kritikas nozīme, strādājot ar avotiem, kas saistīti ar totalitāru režīmu. Atzīstot latviešu folkloras kustības unikālo lokālo raksturu, raksts paplašina iepriekšējo ģeopolitisko kustības ietvaru un iekļauj to plašākos atdzimšanas strāvojumos abpus dzelzs priekškaram. Raksts demonstrē tīklu analīzes vērtību, lai izzinātu atdzimšanas kustību faktiskos transnacionālos virzienus un ietekmes.

Introduction

Various concepts, such as sound communities and music ecosystems, have recently been proposed to describe the interconnectedness of musical practices (Titon 2015; Schippers, Grant 2016). Ethnologist Owe Ronström writes about *musical mindscapes* that encompass the physical and mental aspects of folk music phenomena. His definition of musical mindscapes further leads to the notion of *network*: "Mindscapes are institutionalized in 'domains,' large networks of interlinked practices, ideas, artifacts, and institutions. These domains operate in different ways, with different goals, and occupy different niches in time and space" (Ronström 2014: 52).

The network approach, extensively developed and applied in the social sciences since the late 1990s, has also gained traction in a growing number of humanities studies. However, the application of the network concept takes various forms – ranging from figurative mentions to the use of established network theory, to rigorous network analysis based on graph theory and metrics. The authors of the recent book *The Network Turn: Changing Perspectives in the Humanities* (Ahnert et al. 2020) argue that scholars of the arts and humanities have long been engaged with the network concept – well before it was explicitly named – through "examining communities of practitioners, the dissemination of ideas, or the relationships between certain texts, images, or artefacts" (Ahnert et al. 2020: 7). A more explicit network analysis methodology can open new research perspectives and findings.

Studies of folk music revivals have mainly used the word *network* without discussing its methodological implications. Such studies typically refer to local, transnational, global, or online networks of individuals, primarily musicians. Less often, other types of network actors are mentioned, such as performance activities, venues, organizations, and businesses, or, more abstractly, cultural or discursive networks (summarized from Bithell, Hill 2014). However, the noticeable presence of the network metaphor indicates the relevance and potential of network theory for advancing music revival studies. Ronström's definition proposes a broad understanding of networks, including non-human actors. This aligns with the actor-network theory (Law 1992; Latour 1993), highlighting the heterogeneous nature of networks.

This study builds on previous ideas by testing new approaches for researching the interconnectedness of music revivals. In her seminal article, Tamara Livingston mentions the non-territorial nature of revival communities, which cross state and national boundaries (Livingston 1999: 72). Yet detailed studies on the actual ties

Figure 1. Festive procession of folklore groups at the gathering and concert of ethnographic ensembles and folklore revivalist groups in Aizpute on 25 July 1982, with the folklore group *Skandinieki* in the foreground. Photo by Alfrēds Stinkuls. In 1983 or 1984, this photo was printed in Sweden as a postcard and, under the photographer's code name, Juris Svečturis, distributed among Latvians in the West. Archives of Latvian Folklore, LFK 2264, 45.

between local revivals remain rare, often giving the impression of revivals as self-contained systems. In this study on the cross-border contacts of the Latvian folklore movement, I aim to contribute to this less developed research thread. Within the broader subject of transnational flows, I also examine the role of lesser-studied revival actors beyond performers – specifically, the mass media. In Latvia, the folklore movement had a rhizomatic social character, interweaving with media, literature, theatre, art, environmentalism and beyond, thus making a wider perspective on the revival network necessary.

The network studied in this article existed within a non-democratic context. The Latvian folklore group *Skandinieki*, founded in 1976, directly and indirectly opposed the official Soviet regime and everyday reality. *Skandinieki* became the "core revivalists" (Livingston 1999) during the emergence and growth of the Latvian *folklore movement* (a literal translation of *folkloras kustība*). As local authorities in the fields of folklore and political resistance, the group and its leaders were likewise known among folklore revivalists in neighboring countries and among exiled Latvians in the West (see Figure 1).

Network analysts advocate for a precise understanding of the network concept. Digital humanities scholar Scott B. Weingart writes: "Representing information as a network implicitly suggests not only that connections matter, but that they are *required* to understand whatever's going on" (Weingart 2011). The network approach is justified on various levels in this study. Answering Weingart's question, connections are indeed *required* to understand the emergence and growth of the Latvian folklore movement within a non-democratic context. Informal mutual ties – among family members, friends, fellow students, and like-minded individuals – wove and knotted the emerging grassroots movement, especially in its initial phase, before the organization of folklore events was taken over by the official amateur art system. Moreover, developing such a network was a declared goal of *Skandinieki* leaders, which shaped their activities.[1]

The first section of this article situates *Skandinieki* within the broader network of the Latvian and neighboring folk music scenes. In subsequent sections, through an exploration of the *Skandinieki* case, the article places the Latvian folklore movement in a wider geographical context on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Based on traceable encounters and ties, a detailed historical network analysis helps to confirm or challenge the assumptions about the key actors and chains of events, revising previous research and offering new perspectives. A key methodological contribution of this study – alongside highlighting traditional media as revival actors – is the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches with the use of digital tools. The research draws on several sources and methods: semi-structured interviews, coded and analyzed qualitatively; a media text corpus, examined through automated analysis in collaboration with the Digital Development Department of the National Library of Latvia; and the creation, quantification, and visualization of databases in *Grupu Saites* (a digital platform for Latvian popular music data) as well as in the data management and visualization tools *NodeGoat* and *QGIS*. This process embodied my practice of "network thinking" as both a research exercise and perspective.

This study focuses on the rise of the folklore movement during the Soviet Era of Stagnation, before 1987. It was a time when state surveillance and control over public activities in Latvia remained strong, communication with the West was restricted, and the possibility of an open protest movement was unthinkable. Soon after the announcement of glasnost policies by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986, a new social and cultural situation emerged in the Baltics, eventually leading to the Singing Revolution (on this period, see Šmidchens 2014). The non-democratic context of

1 For a parallel networking process in Lithuania and the role of the folklore movement in the nationalist *Sąjūdis* movement, see Kavaliauskaitė, Ramonaitė 2011.

this study made source criticism crucial and shaped the understanding of actor and link types under such socio-political circumstances.

A few final introductory notes on network theory are required to frame the analytical approach. Network analysts focus particularly on *edges* (ties, interactions, relationships), which distinguishes the study of networks from the study of other forms of alliances, such as communities. Historian Claire Lemercier calls for precise description and in-depth analysis of social ties, "describing exactly how, and at which scale, they matter – which ties matter for what, which do not, and how different sorts of ties interact" (Lemercier 2015: 283). She outlines the methodological considerations and concludes that:

> [A formal network analysis can be fruitful] as long as our aim is not to "map social reality" generally but to understand the patterns of precisely defined ties, by deliberately abstracting them in order to carefully consider their effects, their origins (as they are e.g. sometimes dependent on legal constraints, sometimes freely or even strategically constructed), their changes in response to external events and their consequences (Lemercier 2015: 288).

Bearing in mind that a close look at *edges* is key to network analysis, it is probably still not self-evident what the *nodes* (actors, entities) in a network are. Imagining networking individuals may seem the most empowering, reasonable, and human way of seeing networks in a globalized and mediated social world. However, actor-network theorists stress the role of non-human actors – primarily technology and nature – in understanding social processes, organization, and mechanisms of power (Law 1984; Callon 1984; Law 1992; Latour 1993). John Law writes about the heterogeneity and materiality of networks:

> [..] networks are composed not only of people, but also of machines, animals, texts, money, architectures – any material that you care to mention. [..] If human beings form a social network, it is not because they interact with other human beings. It is because they interact with human beings and endless other materials too. [..] And – this is my point – if these materials were to disappear then so too would what we sometimes call the social order. Actor-network theory says, then, that order is an *effect generated by heterogeneous means* (Law 1992: 381–382).

My study will follow the premise of network heterogeneity, also challenging the view of folk music revivals as isolated histories determined by country, ethnicity, or musical style.

***Skandinieki* in the Latvian 'Ethnomusic' Network**

Skandinieki is a Latvian "folklore friends' group" (*folkloras draugu kopa*) established in 1976 in Riga. In Latvia, it is known for having numerous members, unofficially estimated at several hundred, and for its crucial role in initiating and influencing many other folk music groups and individual musicians. Its leaders, Helmī Stalte (1949–2023) and

Figure 2. Dainis Stalts (center) at the *Baltica '88* festival procession in Riga on 13 July 1988. At that time, the carmine red-white-carmine red flag of the independent Republic of Latvia had not yet been legalized. Photo from the Alfrēds Stinkuls Collection, Archives of Latvian Folklore, LFK 2264, 364.

Dainis Stalts (1939–2014), a married couple, were a driving force behind the rise of the folklore movement – shaping its ideology, repertoire, and musical style, organizing events, promoting folklore in the media, and cultivating the movement's anti-Soviet political orientation.

Helmī Stalte had a family background rooted in Livonian culture. She grew up in a nationalistic patriotic milieu and had participated in informal Livonian gatherings in Riga since the 1960s. She received formal training in music, graduating as a choir conductor from the Jāzeps Mediņš Secondary Music School in Riga. Her mother was an accompanying pianist for opera singers. Dainis Stalts (born Grasis) had already drawn the attention of the KGB while studying biology at the Latvian State University and, according to family testimony, was expelled in 1960 because of his nationalist views and contacts with Lithuanian dissidents (interview, Stalte 2022a). Helmī was the musical leader of *Skandinieki*, while Dainis was the ideological and political mover of the group and of the broader folklore movement (see Figure 2).

The leadership and centrality of the Stalts family and *Skandinieki* is a common knowledge in the Latvian folk music community and in its scholarly research (Šmidchens 1996; Boiko 2001; Klotiņš 2002). This section aims to provide a more detailed and data-driven insight into their impact. The network approach is chosen

not only out of methodological interest; it also aligns with the strategic efforts of the Stalts family: to spread the idea of reviving the Latvian local heritage, stand against Russification, and to contribute to the rise of the folklore movement by educating future leaders of folklore groups. Helmī Stalte recalls:

> All of this was indeed politically, culturally politically aimed from the early times on. [..] And we raised them [the group members] so that there are capable soloists and group leaders. [..] All we did was drive around the provinces to the memorial houses for writers and poets. It was wonderful! And it also woke up those people [in provinces], and we always learned the songs of the places we went to (interview, Stalte 2022a).

Becoming a contributor to the Latvian music data visualization platform *Grupu Saites* (Group Links)[2] allowed me to provide measured evidence for the centrality and impact of *Skandinieki*. The 'ethnomusic'[3] network comprises 129 groups out of the 1,683 music groups entered in the database by the end of July 2025. Latvian folklore groups typically have large memberships, often involving entire families. In the Top 10 list of groups by membership size across the entire *Grupu Saites* database, folk music groups form a clear majority, with only three groups from other genres. *Skandinieki*, with 232 members listed to date, is the largest music group in the database. According to Šmidchens (1996: 340–341), during the Soviet period

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2 *Grupu Saites* (Group Links, https://grupusaites.lv), launched on 30 September 2023, was developed as a bottom-up, non-institutionalized data visualization platform by musicians, IT specialists, designers, and data enthusiasts.It swiftly became a hub for Latvian music data aggregation, attracting those interested in contributing to the underdeveloped field of Latvian popular music studies. The *Grupu Saites* database includes data on musicians and music groups: musicians are linked to their groups, and groups are connected through shared members. Several music subfields have been defined based on genre, scene, or locality: hip-hop, ethnomusic, the new punk/hardcore scene, the Latvian diaspora, groups associated with the former indie record label *Tornis*, groups rehearsing in the same locations in Riga, and groups in various towns. Each subfield has its own initiators and "persons on duty" – members or observer-experts of the respective genre or scene. The ethnomusic data are supervised by me and Ilga Vālodze Ābelkina. An ongoing option to fill out a survey for data updates is available on the website, enabling public contributions. Many recent and older groups and their members have been added by harvesting online information, using research interviews, or through direct submissions from musicians. The current data provide a representative overview of the field, though the database is not yet complete for precise quantitative analysis, and for now, the visualization does not include a temporal dimension. As of the completion of this article, the *Grupu Saites* database contains 1,683 groups, 4,522 musicians, and 7,802 group links (data retrieved on July 26, 2025).

3 In consultation with experts involved in folk music research and production, 'ethnomusic' (*etnomūzika*) was chosen as a contemporary umbrella term encompassing both historical and current groups that primarily reference traditional or ethnic heritage in their performances and repertoire. Over time, such groups have been labeled in various ways – e.g., ethnographic ensembles, folklore groups, post-folklore, world music, folk-rock, ethno-pop, folk dance, and others.

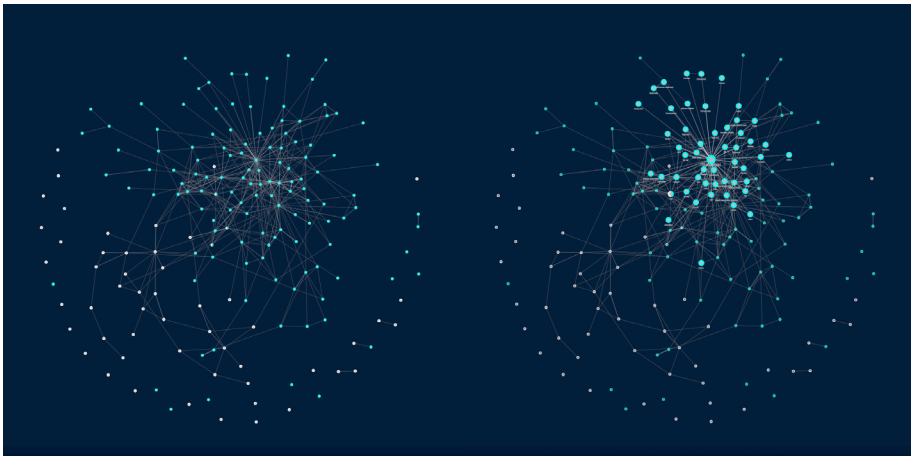

Figure 3. The Latvian 'ethnomusic' network in the data platform *Grupu Saites* (Group Links, https://grupusaites.lv, accessed 21.07.2025.). The left-hand image shows the network without highlighted groups, though clusters are still visible. On the right, *Skandinieki* is highlighted as the largest node in the same network to illustrate group's centrality; medium-sized nodes represent groups linked to *Skandinieki* through shared membership, while the smallest-sized nodes are 'ethnomusic' groups that do not share members with *Skandinieki*.

Skandinieki's internal network reached around 110 members. A more detailed timeline analysis shows that, at any given time, the group had between 15 and 40 members simultaneously.

The centrality of *Skandinieki* was measured by its links to other 'ethnomusic' groups through shared membership. With 50 connections, *Skandinieki* is the most interconnected group within the 'ethnomusic' network. During the Soviet period, at least 13 other folklore groups – including schoolchildren's groups – were founded by *Skandinieki* members. Other remarkable ethno-hubs are the folk-dance club *Rīgas Dančų klubs* (formed in the late 1980s in Riga, 32 links) and the children's folklore group *Kokle* (founded in Riga in 1980, 27 links).

The hub role of *Skandinieki* is evident in the *Grupu Saites* metrics – only two other music groups or projects in the entire database are connected to more groups. Overall, the 'ethnomusic' network is relatively dense and self-contained (see Figure 3), with sparse connections beyond this category. While *Skandinieki* is the most central group within the 'ethnomusic' network, only 25% of its 67 links are to groups whose repertoire and performances do not reference traditional music or ethnic heritage. For comparison, the 'ethnomusic' group with the most outward connections – and thus the greatest integration into Latvian popular music broadly – is *Iļģi*, with 80% of its connections reaching beyond folk music community. Founded in 1981 by former *Skandinieki* member Ilga Reizniece, *Iļģi* pioneered the postfolklore and folk rock genres in Latvia.

Latvia in the Transnational Routes of Folk Music Revivals

Folk music revival studies have primarily focused on analyzing distinct local cases, occasionally expanded geographically to include musical practices within diasporas. The emphasis on the diversity of revival styles and histories underlines that each revival emerged in response to specific local cultural and social circumstances and was primarily meaningful to the local communities. A few studies have taken a comparative approach, examining commonalities and differences and developing cross-revival conclusions (Kartomi 2014; Quigley 2018). Challenging the notion of a clear contrast between revivals in Western democratic and Eastern socialist states, Colin Quigley pointed to the similarities "in their inspiration and at their moments of inception" (Quigley 2018: 365). Still, she observed that the consequences of the different societal contexts "become more clear as they [revivals] mature and become more formally institutionalized within their contrasting political economies" (Quigley 2018: 365).

The various case studies do not make it sufficiently clear that post-Second World War music revivals emerged amid intensified global cultural flows (Appadurai 1990), during a period described as thick globalization (Sweers 2014). Britta Sweers incorporates a globalization paradigm in the discussion:

> Many of these (East and West) postwar European movements were political, yet they were also shaped by the search for musical alternatives outside state-controlled or institutionalized, mass-media–based networks – issues that already hint at the impact of modern thick globalization (Sweers 2014: 468).

Inspired by studies of more recent global developments (Sweers 2014; Bithell 2014), this section steps back to examine the global cultural flows of revival movements that emerged in the Cold War era. Focusing on folk music revival processes in the second half of the 20th century, this study does not consider the impact of earlier revival waves in Latvia and elsewhere in Europe since the late 19th century (the early Latvian folk music revival processes are discussed in this journal issue by Aigars Lielbārdis; see Lielbārdis 2025).

Looking for the post-Second World War "cultural currents" (Milstein 2014) that led to the origins of the Latvian folklore movement in the late 1970s, it can be noticed that researchers' positionality affects their interpretations. Mark Slobin maps a route beginning with the roots-seeking folk revival in the United States in the 1940s–1950s, which then spread to Western Europe and reached Central and Eastern Europe around the 1970s (Slobin 1996: 5). Slobin highlights the motive of cultural and political resistance in the Eastern Bloc revivals:

> Disallowed and regulated, musical diversity sprang up increasingly in the late 1970s in various forms and flowered in the 1980s as part of the breakthrough of grassroots discontent that culminated in song-filled demonstrations stretching from 1970s Poland to regionwide breakthrough demonstrations in the late 1980s (Slobin 1996: 4).

In the same volume, Theodore Levin outlines a different route, pointing to the transition from professionalized folk music performances to the study of "authentic regionalism" in Russia and, subsequently, other Soviet republics during the Khrushchev Thaw (1953–1964). This perspective was later echoed by Britta Sweers (2014: 468). Levin notes the shift from the seminal approach initiated in Russia by Dmitry Pokrovsky toward nationalism-oriented revivals elsewhere:

> It was Pokrovsky's disinterested embrace of authentic regionalism that more politically oriented cultural activists, both in the Russian Federation and in the colonized republics, later transformed and enlisted in the service of movements for the recognition of a range of "national" and ethnic cultural identities (Levin 1996: 25).

Dmitry Pokrovsky himself explained this process as a revival of the Bolshevik idea that the entire population, rather than just professionals, should be regarded as legitimate artists (Levin 1996: 19). What might seem a transcultural feature is that the historians of the folk revivals in the United States have also mentioned early revivalists' references to Bolshevik ideas (Lund, Denisoff 1971: 395). Still, their article demonstrates the full spectrum of political and apolitical motivations throughout the development of various folk music revivals in the United States. The same can be said for many other folk music revivals, which cannot be reduced to a single political agenda.

When looking at Latvia, or more broadly the Soviet Western borderlands, within transnational revival flows, the possible influences from multiple currents must be considered.[4] So far, the written history of the Latvian folklore movement has not extended beyond the borders of the three Baltic republics. The doctoral thesis of Guntis Šmidchens, *A Baltic Music: The Folklore Movement in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, 1968–1991* (1996), offers the most comprehensive historical overview. In a footnote, he remarks that similar revivals also emerged in Eastern Europe around 1968, but this wider context was beyond the scope of his research (Šmidchens 1996: 111). However, concerning transnational revival currents, Šmidchens wrote:

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4 For the nationalistic character of the folklore field in the Soviet Western borderlands, see Ķencis et al. 2024.

> The Lithuanian movement, which strongly influenced those of the Estonians and Latvians, seems to have emerged independently. Of the movement leaders whom I interviewed, none had contacts outside the USSR in the sixties, and none recalled events outside Lithuania which might have inspired them at the time. Even when I asked, for example, if they recalled thinking about the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, none thought that it was an event about which they knew much, or which made them intensify their cultural activities. [Estonian folklorist Ingrid] Rüütel attributes the worldwide revived interest in folklore to large cyclical developments in the history of humanity (Šmidchens 1996: 111).

Active mutual contacts and joint events among Baltic revivalists support the framing of the Baltic region as a unified cultural space. Especially during the Singing Revolution (1986–1991), one can speak of a shared social movement in which folklore revivalists played a significant role (see Ramonaitė 2025 in this issue).

When viewing the Baltic folklore movements through the lens of nationalist aspirations, Šmidchens's analysis gave insufficient attention to the musical interactions with Russian revivalists and experts. This political bias can be explained by the recent independence of the Baltic States at the time of his research. It also served to reinforce his argument about "dissident folklorism" in Latvia and the anti-Russification motivations of Baltic revivalists. Still, also the "fascination with musical diversity" associated by other authors with the Russian revival – and extended by scholars to the histories of other Soviet republics (Levin 1996: 25) – does not provide a sufficient framework for interpreting the Baltic revivals. The Latvian folklore movement emerged from a confluence of wider-ranging aesthetic, cultural, and lifestyle ideologies, combined with strong nationalistic aspirations.

Taking a network approach and identifying actual nodes and ties in the transcultural flows of revivals may help avoid further overgeneralizations. In the next few paragraphs, I will reflect on commonly assumed routes and influences, referring to the interviews with members of *Skandinieki* and other early Latvian revivalists.

In Latvia, the folklore movement arose later than in the neighboring Soviet Baltic Republics of Lithuania and Estonia, as well as Russia. Several *Skandinieki* members emphasized the crucial influence of Estonian revivalists on the formation of their repertoire and performance style. Marga Stalta summarizes it as follows: "It was the Estonians who put *Skandinieki* on the right track. It was a complete revolution. We all realized that this was the way to go. The real folk voice, the real singing, the real dancing" (interview, Stalta 2024). The Estonian connection in the early *Skandinieki* and pre-*Skandinieki* years stemmed from a shared interest in Finno-Ugric heritage, as *Skandinieki* originated from Livonian family heritage, cultural circles, and the Livonian song ensemble *Līvlist* (founded in 1972). Thus, the Latvian folklore movement has its roots in the revival of the identity and culture of a smaller autochthonous ethnic group.

The Estonian folklore groups *Hellero*, *Leegajus*, and *Leigarid*, as well as Igor Tõnurist and Mikk Sarv, are key nodes in the Estonian-Latvian network. Interviewees remembered specific events in Estonia and Latvia involving Estonian revivalists that spurred stylistic innovations. Helmī Stalte, the leader of *Skandinieki*, vividly remembers the encounter with the Estonian folklore group *Hellero*, supposedly in 1978:

> We [*Līvlist*] had a trip to Estonia. [..] The evening took place around a campfire, and there was a folklore group from the University of Tartu called *Hellero*, led by Mikk Sarv. [..] The *Hellero* students were sitting around the fire in their hooded jackets, sitting on the ground, kind of huddled together and singing *regilaul*, those ancient songs. We totally froze, so to say. [..] It really affected us deeply and turned things around for us! [..] We realized that, ooh, this is something real, [..] something like the very salt of the earth. And they sat there without any pretense. The *regilaul*, of course, aren't sung with loud voices, and it was all so spellbinding! [..] And so that made us reflect on a lot of things (interview, Stalte 2022a).

Following this event, *Skandinieki* turned to the repertoire of the oldest Latvian recitative songs and began paying attention to traditional singing styles. Members of early *Skandinieki* also recall adopting the practice of performing in a circle, as well as the fiddling style, from an Estonian ensemble – most likely *Leegajus* – and acquiring bagpipes and guimbardes in Estonia. The Estonians also served as a point of connection between Latvians living in Western Europe and Latvian folk music. Folklorist and revivalist Austris Grasis recalls meeting Igor Tõnurist at a Baltic Studies conference in Stockholm, later receiving vinyl recordings of *Leegajus*, and, inspired by them, beginning a systematic search for traditional Latvian music (interview, Grasis 2024).

Interviews with *Skandinieki* do not indicate such specific turning points arising from contact with the Lithuanian revival. Nevertheless, Lithuania – with its active revivalist scene and large number of folklore groups – was undoubtedly a strong example to follow. As early as the late 1950s, Dainis Stalts was in contact with students involved in the Lithuanian resistance movement. In the 1980s, *Skandinieki* members regularly attended Lithuanian folklore festivals and celebrations, such as the Folklore Festival *Skamba skamba kankliai* (founded in Vilnius in 1973), the *Rasos* (Midsummer) celebrations, winter masking traditions, and folk dance events. *Skandinieki* collaborated with the Lithuanian folklore group *Ratilio* and its leader, musicologist Zita Kelmickaitė, and friendship ties existed between the Stalts family and the Lithuanian singer and revivalist Veronika Povilionienė. The Latvian-Lithuanian network was further reinforced by the shared history of the Balts and the idea of Baltic unity, which also inspired Latvians to participate in the Baltic Prussian revival (Muktupāvels 2023).

The presence of Russian academics and performers in the *Skandinieki* network is inevitable, given Russia's central political role in the Soviet Union. Russian revivalists

organized and participated in major All-Union folklore events in Moscow and Leningrad, which were also attended by Baltic revivalists. They frequently acted as folklore experts, offering methodological lectures and conducting expert visits to Latvia. Helmī Stalte remembered meaningful and empowering contacts with the Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble and Anatolij Mehnecov – an active revivalist, initiator of ethnomusicological education and research in Leningrad (later Saint Petersburg), and leader of the Conservatory's folklore ensemble (interview, Stalte 2022b). Former *Skandinieki* member Ilga Reizniece also mentioned close connections with the Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble, as well as with Vladimir Povetkin from Novgorod, and with Andrey Kotov, the future leader of the *Sirin* Ensemble in Moscow (interview, Reizniece 2022; see also Muktupāvels 2025 in this issue on the revival of traditional instruments, with inspirations from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, and Russia).

However, beyond these few ties of shared interest, the power dynamic with Russian revivalists was often shaped by their roles as legitimizers or paternalistic advisors to the Latvian revivalists. At the same time, Latvian revivalists strategically invoked the "affirmed by Moscow" argument to validate their approach in the eyes of local officials. In 1978, Ģederts Ramans, Chairman of the Latvian Composers' Union, publicly endorsed the need for a folk music revival in Latvia, citing the active promotion of folklore by academic, artistic, and media institutions in Moscow and Leningrad as a model (Ramans 1978). Appealing to the highest authority – the Soviet imperial center – was also a deliberate strategy employed by *Skandinieki*, as recalled by Ilga Reizniece: "With *Skandinieki*, it was typical to travel somewhere, to earn some kind of certificate of honor, to be able to show here [in Latvia] – you see, we are not nationalists, we are recognized in Moscow, we are okay" (interview, Reizniece 2022).

Latvian revivalists, including *Skandinieki*, typically participated in folklore events in the nearest neighboring Soviet republics – Lithuania, Estonia, and Russia. Tours beyond these regions, even to other parts of the Soviet Union, were rare. For folklore groups affiliated with educational institutions (which was not the case with *Skandinieki*), collaboration with twinned institutions in other Soviet republics and even European socialist countries was common. A notable example of trans-republic inspiration was the influence of Armenian children's folklore groups on the rise of the children's folklore movement in Latvia (interview, Spīčs 2022).

The most frequent site of *Skandinieki*'s interaction with foreigners was the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum in Riga, where the group was affiliated during the 1980s. As an official tourist destination, the museum regularly hosted international visitors, including those from countries beyond the Iron Curtain. Both the museum and, more broadly, the public display of the "authentic" and

"traditional" Latvian ethnic identity formed part of the Soviet-era "ethnic tourism" agenda in the 1960s–1980s (Zake 2018).

In the final section of this article, I turn to the connections between the Latvian folklore movement and exiled Latvians in the West. Latvian folklore groups only began traveling to the West in 1988, during perestroika and the final years of the Soviet Union – in the period which lies beyond the timeframe of this study. *Skandinieki*'s first tour beyond the Iron Curtain took place in 1989, with performances in France and West Germany. That same year, a planned tour to the United States was canceled, but the group eventually made the trip in 1990. In 1991, they also visited Latvian exile communities in France and Sweden.

This section shows that *Skandinieki*'s transnational network comprised various traces and influences. Contacts with Estonians were grounded in a shared interest in Finno-Ugric heritage, with Estonian revivalists directly influencing their repertoire and performance style. The Lithuanian connection, rooted in personal friendships and Lithuania's vibrant folklore scene, was strengthened by a sense of historical kinship of Balts. Links with Russia developed largely due to its dominant political role in the Soviet Union but also included a few close cultural associates. Together, these relationships formed a transnational network of varying intensity and impact.

Alongside close friendships, cultural like-mindedness, perceived historical kinships (see Bertran 2025, this issue, on the Baltic family metaphor), institutional collaborations, and power-driven relations, numerous short-term encounters occurred at folklore venues and events – whose long-term impact remains unstudied. Future research could build on this study by reconstructing the full network of performance venues, events, and participants. Such mapping could uncover additional transnational actors and reveal new ties among revival movements.

Print Media as Actors in the Revival Network

Research into the folk music revival can be based on diverse sources, each with distinct strengths and limitations. In the case of Latvia, official archives offer limited insight, as a significant portion of documents is missing or reflects institutional rather than grassroots perspectives. Scholarly literature from the 1970s and 1980s underrepresents the revival and reveals a gap between academic establishments and the community-driven, practice-based revivalist efforts. Contemporary interviews provide valuable firsthand accounts but require critical examination, fact-checking, and broader contextualization. Personal and folklore group archives hold great potential for revealing localized and nuanced histories.

From a network perspective, media coverage – particularly during the formative

years of the revival – emerges as a crucial source and is the focus of the following sub-studies. Public interest in folklore grew significantly in the 1980s, and the media served this interest by documenting events, performances, and debates across radio, film, television, and print. While editorial teams, journalists, and creators were rarely active folklore performers, they played a significant role as documenters, promoters, or critics. In this sense, media actors became the immediate archivists of revivalist events and discourses.

However, interpreting media requires careful source criticism. The Latvian folklore movement developed under a totalitarian regime during the Cold War, in conditions that inevitably shaped media agendas and constraints. Source criticism makes it clear that different media platforms may present divergent perspectives on the revival's history.

Social movement studies provide a strong conceptual basis for analyzing media as revival actors. The relationship between social movements and mainstream media has been a key topic in the field since the late 1960s. However, theoretical models often presuppose an active and strategic cooperation between activists and media as two distinct parties with negotiable interests (Gamson, Wolfsfeld 1993), which is not always the case. More recently, scholars have pointed to gaps in these theories, as they have long focused primarily on democratic systems (Rohlinger, Corrigall-Brown 2019). Even within democratic contexts, scholars have noted that "social movement actors often occupy the role of 'non-official' and 'non-expert' sources, which puts them on the defensive and constrains the amount and type of media access given" (McCurdy 2012: 248), and that "movements often have a distinctive and evolving culture that may, in various ways, conflict with media and mainstream political culture" (Gamson, Wolfsfeld 1993: 115). These issues are even more pronounced in political regimes with relatively closed media systems, where, as Deana A. Rohlinger and Catherine Corrigall-Brown point out, "the state has a great deal of control over what news is covered and how. State actors in these contexts often use mass media to maintain their authority and control over the citizenry, and, as a result, accurate coverage of movements and movement claims is virtually nonexistent" (Rohlinger, Corrigall-Brown 2019: 133).

Early Latvian folklore revivalists did not engage with the media in a strategic manner. Public media, even when sympathetic to the folklore movement, remained instruments of official ideology and authority. Revivalists challenged Soviet ideology, and for them, the focus was more on creating an alternative cultural space, lifestyle, and informal communication networks than on coordinated, full-program activism. In analyses of states with relatively closed media systems, the role of arts as alternative media has been highlighted:

> Since the state uses mass media to control what (and how) information is disseminated to the citizenry, challengers who want to raise collective consciousness about an issue or mobilize supporters to action must use mediums, such as low-powered radio, art, music, poetry, and traveling political theater, which can fly under the radar of authorities (Rohlinger, Corrigall-Brown 2019: 135; see also Kołodziejczyk, Lecke 2020).

Folklore, as a form of communal creative expression, had great potential to become such an alternative medium.

For the analysis of *Skandinieki*'s network in print media, the Digital Research Services of the National Library of Latvia created a corpus of clippings (texts and images) from periodicals issued between 1978 and 1991 that mention *Skandinieki* and its leaders, Dainis Stalts and Helmī Stalte. In the corpus, periodicals were divided into three groups: central Soviet Latvian media, regional Latvian media, and Latvian media in the West. The latter group was distinguished by its clear stand against the Soviet regime and ideology. Regional media were treated as a separate category because reviving regional heritage was a key goal of the folklore movement, and organizing revival events was often easier in the periphery than in Riga – with many significant events taking place outside the capital. The central Soviet Latvian media were organs of power; however, they also included more liberal outlets and authors who allied themselves with the revivalists. Therefore, an automated network analysis was combined with a qualitative, case-by-case inquiry.

At the time of my study, the number of digitized periodicals was 81. Of these, 27 were central media, 31 were regional periodicals, and 23 were published in the West. Absolutely all periodicals contained mentions of *Skandinieki* or their leaders, which proves their public visibility and the general topicality of folklore. The corpus consists of 1,218 unique clippings; the largest number is from the central (45%) and regional press (30%), with Western press clippings making up a smaller proportion – about a quarter of the corpus (25%). Eight periodicals accounted for half (51%) of all the material, making them the most frequent writers about *Skandinieki*. In descending order by the number of clippings, they are: the weekly newspaper *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art), issued by the creative unions of the Latvian SSR to promote and reflect cultural processes; the Western Latvian newspapers *Laiks* (Time) in North America and *Brīvā Latvija* (Free Latvia) in Europe; the Latvian SSR evening newspaper *Rīgas Balss* (Riga Voice); *Dzimtenes Balss* (Homeland Voice), the official Soviet Latvian publication for exile Latvians issued by the Committee for Cultural Contacts with Compatriots Abroad; the regional Madona's newspaper *Stars* (Beam); the daily *Padomju Jaunatne* (Soviet Youth), issued by the Communist Youth Union; and *Cīņa* (Fight), the official Soviet Latvian propaganda newspaper.

In addition to creating the corpus, Named Entity Recognition (NER) was

applied to it, using the Latvian Natural Language Processing tool NLP-PIPE, developed by the AI Lab at the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Latvia (Znotiņš, Cīrule 2018). It provided an automated overview – a so-called distant reading – of the texts by extracting lists of mentioned personal names, organizations, events, and geopolitical entities (GPE data, with 79% precision achieved; Znotiņš, Cīrule 2018: 187). The last data category was used for two further sub-studies. The first study examines how the Iron Curtain could have impacted the transnational perception of the Latvian folklore movement. The second focuses on representations of the Latvian folklore movement in the West, considering the surveilled communication channels between the West and Latvia. For these two sub-studies on the transnational aspects of the Latvian folklore revival, the dataset was divided into two groups: Soviet Latvian media (both central and regional) and Latvian media in the West.

After the Second World War, Latvian society and media existed in two parallel worlds – one in the Latvian SSR and the other across the Iron Curtain. To explore the effect of these two mediascapes, I compared the spatial context of publications about *Skandinieki* on both sides of the Curtain. Arjun Appadurai expanded Benedict Anderson's concept of *imagined community* by adding a spatial dimension and introducing the notion of *imagined worlds* – "the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (Appadurai 1990: 7). In line with the significance of media in Anderson's theory, media have been studied as constructors of imagined worlds in various historical and political settings (Rusciano 1997; Segal 2024; Tamm et al. 2024, 2025). Zef Segal, in his study on "space formation within historical texts" in a 19th-century Hebrew periodical, outlines a conception I followed in studying the Latvian printed press:

> The relationship between "geographical space" and "periodical" is not unidirectional. Just as much as the periodical exists within a geographical space, one must explore the ways in which geographical spaces are within periodicals and, significantly, are crafted by them. [..] geographical spaces emerging from the text are mediated geographical spaces with shapes and topographies different from the "normal" world map. They are influenced by cultural, political, ideological, and economic perceptions of writers and readers, but they also serve to reinforce and legitimize such perceptions (Segal 2024).

To analyze the imagined transnational geographies of the Latvian folklore movement before 1987 (prior to the geographical openness brought about by perestroika), I used the lists of automatically detected geopolitical entities mentioned in media clippings from that period. These mentions do not indicate that *Skandinieki* visited these locations; rather, the links are formed through their co-occurrence in

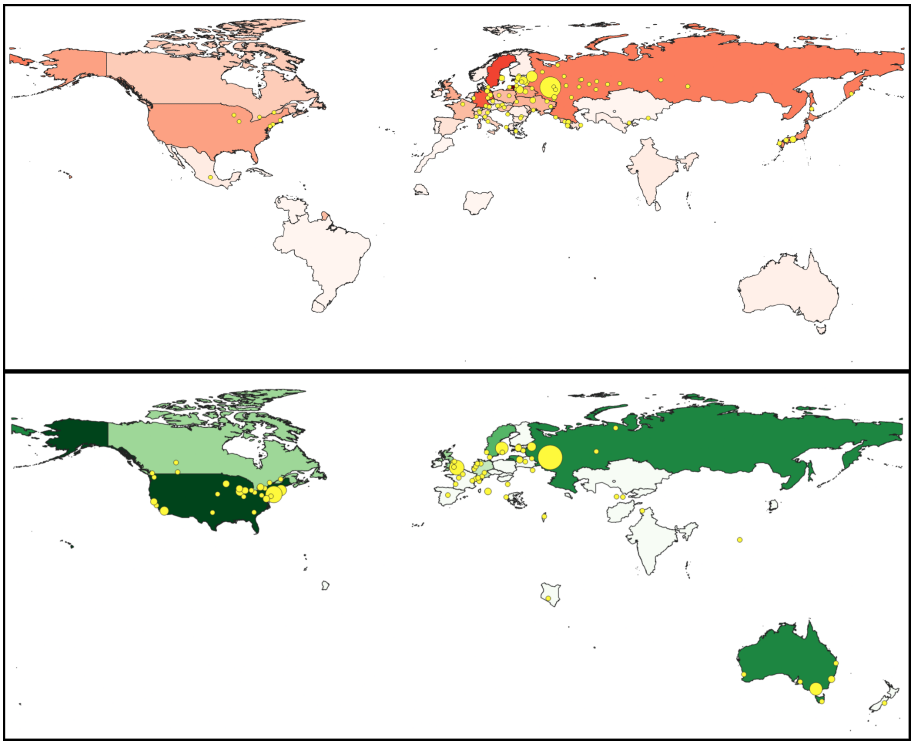


Figure 4. The "world of folklore" as portrayed by the Soviet Latvian press (upper) *versus* the Latvian press in the West (lower). Color intensity (for countries) and circle size (for towns) represent the number of mentions of each place. Darker colors and larger circles indicate higher mention counts, interpreted as greater significance in the media discourse. Countries not visible on the map were not mentioned in the discourse, highlighting the role of media in shaping perceptions of the world. The maps display current national borders to reflect the national framing of revival histories. The maps were created using QGIS-LTR version 3.40.5-Bratislava.

the same texts. In the Soviet Latvian press (517 relevant clippings), 50 states/republics and 91 towns/regions are mentioned; in the Western media (58 clippings), 30 states/republics and 79 towns/regions appeared. Mentions of less specific political entities of that time, such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, were excluded from the data or, when possible, replaced by more specific entities such as individual republics. In analyzing the results, I took into account the quantitative disproportion between the Soviet and Western clippings; nevertheless, the lists of places were comparable, and the mapping revealed several areas of significance.

Counting and mapping the mentions of geopolitical entities exposed two distinct "worlds of folklore" in which *Skandinieki*, as representatives of the Latvian folklore movement, were contextualized (see Figure 4 to Figure 6). In this way, the maps show the broader cultural spaces in which Soviet and Western Latvian media

Soviet Latvian press		Western Latvian press		Soviet Latvian press		Western Latvian press	
Lithuania	37	United States	17	Moscow	78	Moscow	12
Estonia	31	Australia	14	St Petersburg	33	New York	8
Sweden	24	Russia	14	Tartu	19	London	7
Germany	22	Lithuania	13	Vilnius	18	Melbourne	6
Russia	18	Sweden	11	Kobe	12	Stockholm	6
Japan	16	Estonia	9	Kyiv	10	Boston	5
United States	14	Canada	8	Tallinn	10	Chicago	4
Belarus	14	United Kingdom	8	Stockholm	9	Los Angeles	4
United Kingdom	13	Germany	6	Minsk	7	St Petersburg	4
Ukraine	12	Israel	3	Voronezh	7	Kalamazoo	3

Figure 5. Ten most frequently mentioned places (outside Latvia) in the Soviet Latvian and exile Latvian press.

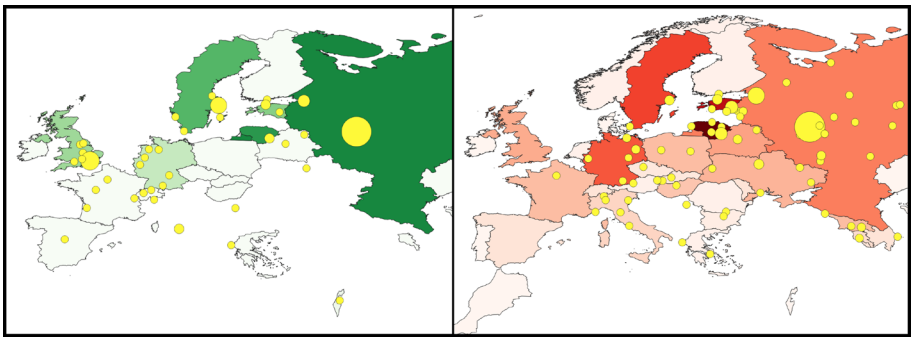


Figure 6. The "Europe of folklore" as pictured by the Soviet Latvian press (right) versus the Latvian press in the West (left). The color intensity (for countries) and the size of circles (for towns) represent the number of mentions of each place. Darker colors and larger circles indicate higher mention counts, interpreted as greater significance in media discourse. Countries not visible on the map were not mentioned in the discourse, highlighting the role of media in shaping our perception of the world. Latvia is excluded here because the focus is on its media-produced connections abroad. The maps display current national borders to reflect the national framing of revival histories. The maps were created using QGIS-LTR version 3.40.5-Bratislava.

situated the Latvian folklore revival. A bird's-eye view (Figure 4) offers initial insights into the spatial hierarchies and highlights sites that cannot be overlooked in a study of Latvian revival history. The dominance – or mandatory presence – of Moscow is evident in both the Soviet and, notably, Western maps. The Western map also highlights the areas where the Latvian diaspora and its media were concentrated, namely, the United States, Australia, Sweden, United Kingdom. In the local Latvian media, Lithuania and Estonia stand out as the countries of greatest significance, confirming the active network of Baltic revivalists (see Figure 5 for a comparative list of the most frequently mentioned places). Still, at the city level, Moscow and former Leningrad hold the leading roles, at least in the media discourse.

The zoomed-in comparative maps of the "Europe of folklore" (see Figure 6) offer more detail on spatial hierarchies, divisions, and overlaps. Both maps provide a

closer look at the significance of Russia – particularly Moscow – and the active revivalist network across the Baltic countries. The Western map focuses on Latvian exile communities in Great Britain, Sweden, and West Germany, as well as the activities in France and Switzerland, while the Soviet Latvian press, predictably, emphasizes events within the Eastern Bloc. The maps also reveal nuanced manifestations of the Iron Curtain, such as the division of Germany and the notably active presence of Italy in the Soviet Latvian network, possibly linked to its Eurocommunist orientation. Further scholarly attention could be directed toward less-discussed points of overlap, such as Sweden's prominent role in both mediascapes and the activities in Belarus. These patterns call for a more detailed qualitative exploration, informed by revival studies and other relevant research on spatial hierarchies – such as the thorough, systematic inquiry into Soviet newsreels that offer broader insights into the Soviet representation of geographical space (Tamm et al. 2024, 2025). The visualized statistics also open new research avenues, such as examining music revivals in the context of cultural diplomacy.

This sub-study demonstrates the formative role of historical media in shaping broader cultural or imagined spaces initiated by folklore events. Alongside reinforcing and refining existing knowledge of spatial hierarchies, divides and overlaps, the statistical evidence also brings to light new points of interest unnoticed or bypassed in previous studies. The created maps invite assessment of the role of specific locations in revival histories and draw attention to the links or communication channels between them. Communication across the Iron Curtain is the focus of the following final section.

Allies and Movements Across the Iron Curtain

Folk revival studies established early on that revivals include political and apolitical claims (Lund, Denisoff 1971). In Latvia, both existed, but political protest could not be expressed openly. However, when analyzing print media – especially Latvian periodicals in the West – the political strand comes to the fore in the context of the Cold War and the maintenance of the idea of an independent Latvia throughout the occupation years. Social movement scholars have emphasized the advocacy role of international audiences, amplifying local voices for political change. Regarding states with relatively closed media systems, Deana A. Rohlinger and Catherine Corrigall-Brown wrote:

> International audiences are important external targets in closed media systems. Movement actors who can use mass media to bring international scrutiny to a political problem can create an opportunity to effect political change (Rohlinger, Corrigall-Brown 2019: 140).

The concept of political opportunity is used in social movement studies to describe such "external resources that an aggrieved group may 'take advantage' of, but that do not 'belong' to them" (McCurdy 2012: 249).

Exiled Latvians maintained a strong idea of independent Latvia and Latvian national identity. Latvian organizations in the West, including the media, played a politically active and explicit role in advocating for Latvia's national interests at a time when this was not possible within Latvia itself. Western Latvian media regularly reported on human rights violations in the USSR, represented the Baltic republics to Western politicians, advocated for dissidents, and collected news about political repression and anti-Soviet manifestations in Latvia. The duty of political activism and international representation of Latvians was repeatedly emphasized in exile publications (Priedkalns 1983; Apinis 1985). This stance fits into the broader context of literary resistance among Eastern European exiles (Kołodziejczyk, Lecke 2020). Personal and institutional contacts in the West, as well as the interest of exiled Latvians in the activities of *Skandinieki* and the Stalts couple, may have been a factor of *Skandinieki*'s successful endeavors.

There was a great interest in Latvian folklore among exiled Latvians. When visiting Latvia, Western Latvians typically attended the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum fair and other folklore events (Austriņa 1985; Rūgtais Apīnis 1985). Interest in folklore was a form of permissible anti-communism, as were local religions in other republics of the USSR. Journalist Frank Gordon wrote: "Nowhere in the laws of the USSR does it state one cannot collect folk songs, play old musical instruments, or restore old farmhouses" (Gordons 1984). The activities of *Skandinieki* and the Stalts couple were frequently covered in the Western Latvian press, such as *Laiks* (Time) in North America and *Brīvā Latvija* (Free Latvia) in Europe. There, the word *skandinieki* became a common noun for folklore revivalists.

Although "cultural" content in the media was typically considered less political (Fidelis 2022: 74), both Soviet Latvian and exile media used the folklore movement as an ideological argument and weapon. In the exile press, the folklore movement was discussed alongside dissidents, KGB campaigns, and the activities of the PEN International and BATUN (*United Baltic Appeal*) (Latvija Šodien 1982). Publications on the folklore movement often mentioned KGB surveillance and restrictions. Meanwhile, the Soviet Latvian press criticized the Latvian exile press for using the folklore movement to oppose socialist ideals (Dambrāns 1984).

In this study, print media network analysis was used to explore folklore-related communication across the Iron Curtain. A specific feature in this case is that such communication cannot be taken for granted, as it was closely surveilled. The slogan and policy of Soviet internationalism and cultural diplomacy provided official

communication channels, but private communication was closely monitored, difficult, and unsafe. KGB agents followed the participants of the folklore movement and reported on their meetings and exchanging packages with exiled Latvians (interview, Muktupāvels 2024). For exiled Latvians, contacting and visiting relatives in Latvia was complicated, even if officially legal (Austriņa 1985; interview, Krēsliņa 2024). For Latvians living in Latvia, arrest and a sentence to a corrective labor camp could be the price for owning literature printed in the West or publishing in the exile press (Latvija Šodien 1982: 117). Still, solutions were found, and a network between the two sides of the Iron Curtain existed.[5]

In this sub-study of the "permeability of the Iron Curtain" (Mattelart 1999), I considered both official and unofficial, direct and indirect sources of information, as well as the security factor. The main actors were identified among print media, editorial offices, and authors, and it was examined how they learned about events in Latvia. Links between the authors and their references were analyzed to determine through which channels information from or about Latvia reached the West. In the period before 1987, 56 publications in the exile press mentioned *Skandinieki* or the Stalts couple. Starting in 1987, the perestroika effect became noticeable: the number of publications significantly increased, participants of the Latvian folklore movement began to visit the West, and the Stalts could give interviews and write for the Western press. This later period is not addressed in this study. The web-based research environment *NodeGoat* was used to create a dynamic database and analytical visualizations. The database supported the subsequent qualitative in-depth research phase, which included close reading of the publications and interviews with the authors of publications.

Before 1987, 14 periodicals with editorial offices in the United States, Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Germany, and Sweden published about *Skandinieki* or the Stalts. The two most active periodicals during this period were the newspaper *Laiks*, distributed in the United States and Canada (14 publications), and the journal *Latvija Šodien*, issued by the World Federation of Free Latvians in the United States (10 publications). Both institutions were associated with public figure and journalist Ilgvars Spilners (1925–2014), who may have been a key ally in promoting such content.

Twenty-six authors could be identified by name, pseudonym (code name), or initials. For one third of the publications, the authors were anonymous and could not be identified – likely for security reasons. Figure 7 shows the geographical relations

5 For a study of the character of Latvian cultural exchange across the Iron Curtain, see Eglāja-Kristsone 2013.

Figure 7. The left image (7a) shows the connections between authors' places of residence (in red) and editorial offices (in blue). The right image (7b) illustrates the relationship between authors' countries of birth (in red) and their countries of residence (in blue). The visualizations were produced using *Nodegoat*.

of authors and editorial offices. Figure 7a demonstrates that most authors were residents of the United States, though several were based in Latvia. Other authors resided in Israel, Australia, Great Britain, Germany, and Sweden. Figure 7b shows that three quarters of the authors were born in Latvia before the Second World War, meaning they were first-generation immigrants with a strong past network in Latvia. They became refugees during the war and settled mainly in the United States or Australia in 1949–1950. There, they became active members of exile communities and promoters of Latvian independence in the West. A smaller but also represented group of authors, editors, and informants were younger Latvians born in the West. Alongside their reflections on what they had read in Soviet Latvian or exile press, their direct observations and visual documentation brought back from Latvia – such as photographs – were disseminated through the media.

A special category was authors living in Latvia or those who managed to emigrate to the West late in the 1970s and 1980s. They had direct experience of life in the Soviet Union and a recent, first-hand connection to events and people in Latvia. This group includes Jews who emigrated to Israel and other countries, opponents of the Soviet regime who were expelled, and those who married residents of Western countries.[6] Only five identified authors were living in Latvia at the time of their publications (see Figure 8). Two authors who addressed their publications directly to the Western press were the craftsman, hippie, and documentalist of the folklore movement Alfrēds Stinkuls (b. 1950) and the ethnomusicologist and member of the folklore movement Valdis Muktupāvels (b. 1958). The latter was published under the code name Māra Vilceniece, with the publication organized by Alfrēds Stinkuls. The works of three other authors were reprinted from the Soviet Latvian press. These were extended articles on the early years of the folklore movement by

6 For an overview of emigration from the Soviet Union in 1948–91, see Heitman 1993.

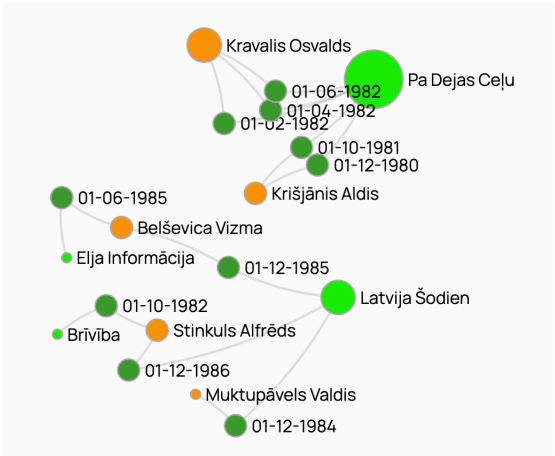


Figure 8. Identified authors residing in Latvia (orange nodes) which had publications about the Latvian folklore movement (dark green nodes) in the Latvian media in the West (bright green nodes) before 1987, i.e., before the effects of perestroika became noticeable. The visualization was produced using *Nodegoat*.

journalist Aldis Krišjānis and poet and literary critic Osvalds Kravalis. A poem dedicated to *Skandinieki* by the poet and writer Vizma Belševica was republished in the West twice.

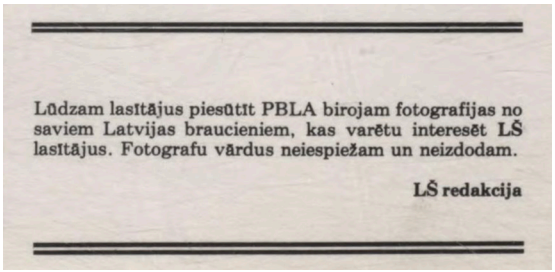
Notably, one-third of the publications were anonymous. Their references indicate that among them were eyewitnesses of Latvian cultural life and folklore events, photo and video documenters, and individuals with detailed information about the resistance movement, dissidents, KGB surveillance, and travel difficulties. Anonymity was a significant concern even in the West. For instance, a review of the magazine *Latvija Šodien* comments on the anonymous authors:

> The vast majority of the contributors [..] are high-caliber specialists in their field, including several authors who have only recently escaped from Latvia and who have been forced to use pseudonyms in their articles as a precaution (Silkalna 1983).

Editorial offices repeatedly reminded readers that the names of those submitting photographs would not be disclosed (see Figure 9).

A closer look at the case of Alfrēds Stinkuls will give an example of networking activities across the Iron Curtain. Alfrēds Stinkuls was not a member of any performing folklore group but was interested in folk crafts and "national aspirations" in society. He was present at many folklore events and documented them on good-quality color slides and audio cassettes which he had acquired through his contacts in the West.

Stinkuls was in contact with the West from 1969 onward. His cousin in California sent him vinyl records; he listened to Western radio stations, knew English, and was involved in the hippie movement. In 1981, he applied for permission to emigrate to Israel but was denied, and a campaign of intimidation and discrediting followed


Lūdzam lasītājus piesūtīt PBLA birojam fotografijas no saviem Latvijas braucieniem, kas varētu interesēt LŠ lasītājus. Fotografu vārdus neiespiežam un neizdodam.

LŠ redakcija

Figure 9. An editorial note in the magazine *Latvija Šodien*: "Readers are kindly asked to send the PBLA office photographs of their Latvian trips that might interest LŠ readers. We do not print or give out the names of the photographers" (1981: 165).

(Stinkuls 2020). He eventually emigrated to the West in early 1986, following his marriage to a Swedish citizen. Both before and after his emigration, he served as an informant to the West, including by publishing on the folklore revival in Western periodicals under his real name and various aliases since at least 1982.

In this section, periodicals in the West are analyzed as a network of editors, authors, and informants who maintained the flow of information about Latvian folklore events across the Iron Curtain. Media coverage of *Skandinieki* and the Stalts couple formed a revival network that extended far beyond the actual folklore performances, engaging a much larger audience in the broader revival-scape. Information and sources obtained from Latvia fueled the interest of exiled Latvians in these folklore events and fostered the development of a parallel heritage revival in the West.

Conclusions

Over the course of this article, the focus shifts from examining the centrality and transnational connections of the folklore group *Skandinieki* to a broader exploration of media coverage of the Latvian folklore revival. Viewing *Skandinieki* as representative of the revival and analyzing media-created revival-scapes reveal a wider network of actors, from performers and event organizers to documentalists and journalists. Geographical mapping also positions spaces themselves as active agents in shaping perceptions of the revival. If folk music revivals can be interpreted as social movements, as Livingston suggested early on (1999), then broader social impact factors and catalysts of change must be considered. One such factor was mass media, which functioned as ideological hubs, provided real-time documentation of revival events, and – through printed copies as impactful non-human actors – disseminated messages among readers. Beyond

expanding the definition of revival actors, the main intention of this study was to "connect the dots" to help explain the transnational power of folk music revivals and their role in larger cultural and sociopolitical changes. These questions extend beyond a conventional ethnomusicological approach and call for engagement with current interdisciplinary methods. For further methodological discussion, I will conclude with some notes on research techniques and perspectives.

The data visualization platform *Grupu Saites* enables further enrichment of data by tracking group links and measuring the centrality and clustering of groups. Adding a temporal dimension to group membership and connections would reveal the dynamics and changes within sub-networks.

In the set of interviews conducted with revivalists, tagging and qualitative analysis of cross-border relationships allowed identifying connections that directly influenced *Skandinieki*. This approach helped avoid assumptions about the impact of generally known influential figures. Further interviews of early revivalists and exploration of their personal and group archives remain of high importance.

Historical print media served as another key source for network analysis, broadening the focus from *Skandinieki* to the wider network of allies and interested audiences across dynamic cultural spaces. One sub-study involved mapping automatically detected geopolitical entities to visualize the media-generated "folklore spaces" in which *Skandinieki* were positioned on both sides of the Iron Curtain. This approach highlighted specific locations (e.g., Moscow, Sweden) that ask for further investigation. Another sub-study explored the network of Western Latvian authors and their connections to Latvia via possible channels of communication. The systematic building and visualization of the database revealed previously overlooked nodes (such as individual authors and editors) and raised new questions for the subsequent qualitative research phase. In both cases, data visualization and the statistical overview of media representations proved to be powerful tools for exploring the field and generating new research directions. This media analysis could be further enriched by compiling a more comprehensive corpus of folklore-related texts and by developing a systematic database of revivalist groups, events, and venues. Contemporary digital technologies make such international-scale investigations increasingly feasible.

This case study of the Latvian folklore group *Skandinieki* was developed to assess the potential of a network approach for analyzing the transnational interconnectedness of folk music revivals. Conceptualizing revivals as actor-networks calls for a meticulous, detail-oriented methodology – one that reveals concrete meeting points and identifies direct actors. As a result, a data-driven analysis can be layered on the more generalized assumptions of influential ideas, territories, and

people. The dynamics of the Cold War and restrictions of the Iron Curtain require more explicit integration into the historiography of cultural revivals. This study shows that, even under the constraints of the Iron Curtain, traceable links existed – between Latvia and Estonia, between Estonia and Sweden, the Latvians in the West and Latvia, and so forth. Alongside individual micro-networks, a broader perspective emerges when considering the decisions, events, and alliances shaped by the cultural diplomacy. While acknowledging the unique local histories, communities, and stylistic variants of revivals, a network approach supports a transnational perspective – one that enables the plotting of the entire "mythical landscape" (Ronström 2014: 52) of folk music.

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