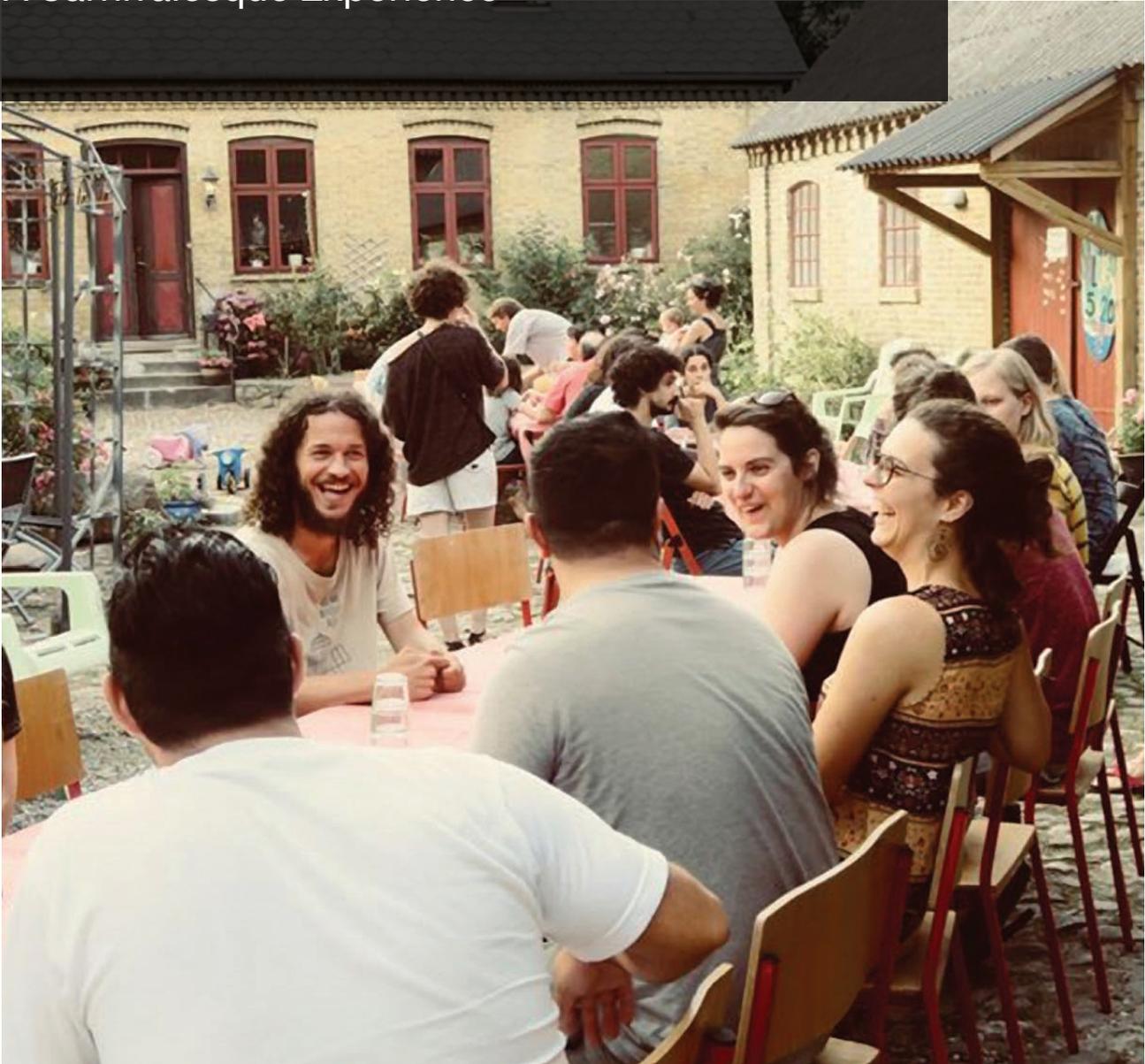


# Case Study: Ethno Denmark

A Carnavalesque Experience



Author: **Lisandra Roosioja**

**ETHNO**  
RESEARCH

  
International  
Centre for  
Community  
Music

Est.  
**1841**

**YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY**

# Pilot Case Studies

## July–August 2019

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During July to August 2019, Ethno Research commissioned seven ethnographic case studies at camps located in Europe and the Nordic countries. The purpose was:

1. to ascertain an approach to the fieldwork that would produce discrete stand-alone documents reflecting the uniqueness of each site whilst providing a format to extract, analyze, and understand key themes across multiple sites;
2. to construct an appropriate ethics procedure;
3. to publish and disseminate seven individual case studies and one meta-analysis.

Reflective of the Ethno Camps, the researchers were multicultural in their representation hailing from Croatia, Estonia, France, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, and the UK. The final reports have gone through a light touch editing process and are conceived as a collective work that reflects different languages and different styles of expression. In December 2019, all the researchers met in York, UK, to discuss the experience and to help the core team with planning the next phase. The reports were used as a springboard to determine future strategies surrounding approaches to research methodologies, key questioning, and thematic analysis.

The 3-year Ethno Research project, led by the International Centre for Community Music (ICCM) at York St John University in collaboration with JM International (JMI), is made possible through a grant from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.



Author: **Lisandra Roosioja**  
Editor: **Lee Higgins**  
Sub-editor: **Millie Raw Mackenzie**  
Design: **HBA Graphic Design**  
Cover page image: **Richard Holzmann**

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**Figure 1:** Ethno Connections in Ethno Denmark 2019

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Drawing on ethnographic research methods, this study unpacks the experiences and personal impacts of the participants. Ethno camps provide their participants with liminal space, which can be understood as a means for self-growth and intercultural learning and represent some of the key factors in participants' desires to attend further camps. Such environments however, can also be a struggle, especially for the first-timers. Ways of learning within the camp can be understood as the combined result of ritualesque and carnivalesque characteristics that the participants experience through transformative individual changes and play.

# Ethno Denmark: A Carnavalesque Experience

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## INTRODUCTION

This case study report considers the history of Ethno Denmark, from its beginnings in 2010, to the present day. It has particular focus on the journeys and experiences of those that participated in Ethno Denmark 2019 and how this has connected to experiences with Ethnos over the years, for example how they experienced their first Ethno and which are the common underlying themes that have had long-lasting impacts on them.

## CAMP OVERVIEW

Ethno Denmark is one of the more mature of the Ethno music camps, having first occurred in 2010. This Ethno has arguably had one of the most captivating and colourful histories of all Ethnos to date, having undergone several locational and structural changes. The organisers believe that despite these difficulties, the organisation has been held together by a strong belief in the wisdom of the Ethno movement.

The first Ethno Denmark took place in Fanøe Island's Nordby school from 26–31 July 2010. After this, the organisation spent another six years looking for a place to settle and a team that would provide it with stable foundations. After moving various locations in Denmark, the organisation has been based at the Kulturhuset CulturArte in the village of Kong since 2016. It seems that Ethno Denmark has now reached safer waters, with the current organising team putting a clear focus on the goal of sustaining the annual operation of the event.

The first camp had thirty participants, with eight countries represented. These were Belgium, Denmark, Ecuador, England, Germany, India, Tanzania, and Uganda. The leaders for the first edition were the Danish fiddler Peter Uhrbrand and the Belgian guitarist Maarten Decombel. The camp was run by Jeunesses Musicales Denmark and supported by FolkeMusikSammenslutningen, Musik & Ungdom, the Danish Center for Culture and Development, Fanøe Kommune, and Dansk Musiker Forbund. Concerts were performed in Strien and Rindby. After moving to Roskilde in 2013 and Aarhus in 2014, Ethno Denmark did not take place in 2015 due to internal turmoil within the team. This led to the current leader Simon Voigt to decide to take over the running of the Ethno and ensure the continuation of the camps. According to him, the constant changes and poorly worked transitions between personnel led to a lot of lost knowledge.

Simon Voigt officially took over the project leader's role in 2016. Fifteen participants took part in that year's camp, which was supported by the Government Art Fund, Knud Højgaards Fond, Spar Nord and the Danish Youth Council. That year saw the mutual exchange of four participants between Ethno Denmark and their new partner in Palestine. This exchange secured crucial additional funding from the Danish Youth Council, which was timely as state cuts had led to the withdrawal of funding from the Center of Culture and Development – an organisation that the organisers had relied on to secure participants from Uganda by finding the organisations and supporting the visa procedures. When the Palestine-Denmark exchange project finished in 2017, there was a significant drop in participant attendance.

Currently, Ethno Denmark relies on funding for the camp from private foundations; the Endowment for the Arts, the local municipality, the Centre for Culture and Development, Tuborg's social project's programme and the participants' fees. The camp is currently held at the Danish-Brazilian culture house CulturArte, which functions as a local event hub and provides music education in the area. This creative community-focused centre is run by the Danish-Brazilian husband and wife Stenia and Jorge Degas, for whom it is also their family's home. CulturArte considers itself a different and alternative centre that values closeness, flexibility, community feeling, time for reflection and personal commitment. Throughout the year, there are music, dance, theatre, and martial arts classes that are each visited by about 200 people, and a festival in June (Culturarte, n.d.). Ethno Denmark organisers highly value the venue and believe that CulturArte offers an alternative and opposite to how the 'normal' Danish society is and should be like, which benefits them with freedom.

This year's Ethno Denmark took place from 26th July until 4th August 2019. The team consisted of a project leader Simon Voigt, alongside support from Bodil Frimodt Rønnow, Richard Holzmann and Heidi Dorow with Ari Freedman. The camp had two artistic leaders – Elisabeth Dichmann and Dunja Bahtijarevic, and two assistant artistic leaders – Prabhat Das and Yasamin Shahhosseini. It is the team that chooses the leaders, and by default, they have one leader who they know either directly or indirectly, but whose personality and abilities can be vouched for. Ethno Denmark also seeks to give opportunities for young people to gain leadership experience. Besides this, they aim to create an open atmosphere where the participants are welcome and have the space to share their ideas.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The 2019 edition of Ethno Denmark had 29 participants of 18 different nationalities, excluding the two researchers of the camp and some informal participants who joined some sessions but who were not officially part of the camp. Additionally, the children of the leaders and Stenia and Jorge Degas were happy to enjoy the camp, either playing within it or joining sessions. This created a unique atmosphere compared to other Ethno camps.

The multicultural nature of the camp, created by the range of participants' nationalities created a great diversity of cultures and sharing ideas, but also provided a challenge within the music workshops, as most participants were keen to present the tunes from their countries. Altogether, thirteen tunes were taught throughout the Ethno. The biggest delegation at the camp, with seven participants, was from Belgium. Only six of the participants were at Ethno for the first time, with a few of those attending at the invitation of other participants. The 23 experienced participants had been to a vast range of Ethnos in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Flanders, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, Catalunya, India, Slovenia, Croatia, Palestine, Algeria, Cyprus, and Portugal. Additionally, some had attended several spin-off projects such as EthnoFonik, Rila Music Exchange, the mini Ethno Tübingen, Vethno, an Ethno leader meeting in Germany, Folk Marathon, FOD and some non-defined similar camps in Poland and Italy. Even though participants were asked to list previous Ethnos that they had attended, they inherently also included the spin-off camps and similar folk music events, which signifies the importance of the spin-offs to the participants, as well as the blurred lines between such events.

The average age of the participants at Ethno Denmark 2019 was just over 26, with the oldest participant being 35 and the youngest being 18 years old. Even though JMI has set a limit for the Ethno programme of 30 years of age, it seems that Ethno Denmark did not follow this guideline, with the limit not written on the information letter nor Facebook page for the camp. There was a slight gender imbalance of 13 male participants versus 16 females.

Registration for the camp was opened on 2nd January 2019, with some signing up that day, whereas the last participant registered only three days before the camp began. There were 28 cancellations, and almost half of these were applicants from African countries.

In terms of alternative or more conscious food choices, 18 of the 29 participants specified a requirement for vegetarian food and two for a vegan diet.

## METHOD

The primary research method for conducting this study was field-based ethnographic research. Conquergood (1991) states that 'ethnography is an *embodied practice*; it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing. The embodied researcher is the instrument.' In this way, it arguably provides the strongest possibility to understand the essence of how Ethno is experienced and what wider impact this phenomenon has.

Using ethnography as the research 'instrument' at an Ethno camp is a great balancing act. It is necessary to assimilate oneself with the participants and 'become one of them' by creating bonds, whilst maintaining the distance required to be able to objectively observe as a bystander and reduce participant performance bias. Kapchan (1995) found that 'embracing the bodily dispositions – the gestures and postures – of others, we provoke emotions in ourselves that give us a better understanding of a different kind of lived experience'. If the participants feel that there has been an established trust between the researcher and them and that the researcher somehow understands them, then they are more likely to open up and share their thoughts.

Throughout the study, I kept a field journal by writing down observations during rehearsals and free time. I conducted individual half structured interviews with the participants and organisers, and an unstructured focus group interview with participants. The interviews were partially transcribed. I also documented the project by taking photographs and videos. Post-camp, I did follow-ups via email and social media. Also, I used registration data and the official camp feedback questionnaire (circulated online after the project) from the organisers. The sleeping facilities of the camp were not ideal for me, as the researcher. I struggled to sleep, as I was provided with a mattress in a room next to the only female showers, and many of the participants were ill. Fortunately, I was invited by locals to stay with them from the fourth night, which greatly assisted the remainder of my work.

## LITERATURE

The ideas that have guided my investigation came from the notions of 'ritualesque' and 'carnavalesque' by the American folklorist Santino, which were rooted in the ideas of 'communitas' and 'liminality' (Turner, 1967, 1974). Whereas carnivalesque refers to the joyful festivity of an event such as an Ethno camp, the ritualesque dimension speaks of the transformative societal effect that occurs on the attitudes and behaviours of the participants taking part within an event. Santino (2011, 2017) argues that several public events appear to be characteristically the former, but are designed to have an agenda of the latter within them. He finds that the ritualesque dimension can even be found in

seemingly all carnivalesque events, as one does not oppose the other, but it has been fundamentally misread by other scholars. Indeed, many rituals and events provide 'an experiment in alternative visions of the world' (Santino, J, 2011).

Music has the power of bringing people together and can also change ways of thinking and behaviour. However, this can only occur if it is acknowledged and accepted. Teaching and learning music from representatives of different cultures enables the participants to learn the music and musical message in great depth. This intimate sharing of cultures provides the music with a context that is appreciated, understood and ultimately accepted. Separatist attitudes that culture can lose its most valuable qualities when mixed with another culture, and cannot be fully understood by members of another culture, do not belong to Ethno. Craig, (1971) claims that 'if we can understand and love each separate music, and by inference each separate culture, for itself – for what only that music or culture does so perfectly – we begin to be mature', suggesting that by attending Ethnos and exposing themselves to very different kinds of world music, the individual experiences self-growth. Through the playing of traditional music, continuity with traditions are ensured, whilst simultaneously being reimagined or modified. This may be one of the key values that Ethno brings to the continuation of folk music; traditions should not be the antithesis to change but rather the opposite, as it belongs to the daily life full of frequent adaptations (Shukla, 2015).

Festivals were seen as an inversion of everyday life (Fournier, 2017). Niekrenz (2014) recognises that 'even today the cyclical festivity with its effervescence, irrationality, and liminality makes everyday life so much more worth living.' Festivals have often been seen through the archetypes of carnival and reversal by opposing everyday life and dominant cultural standards, signifying a place where the usual laws of the economy are rejected (Fournier, 2017). Fournier believes that the carnivalesque or the ritualesque can help to escape positivism and show that in the postmodern world these notions can appear outside festivals, as they are based on subjective feelings. He sees the carnivalesque and ritualesque as qualities that events may contain and not something which is one or the other.

## **NARRATIVES**

The following section follows three participants from Ethno Denmark with different backgrounds, countries, ages, with the connecting point that they are all involved in music in their current lives outside of Ethno. These narratives will introduce how these participants got to hear about Ethno, what their first experiences of Ethno were, and what have been the elements of Ethnos that have stood out for them. Their identities have been hidden. Extra emphasis is given to the participant quotations that help explain how Ethno is perceived by different characters.

## Participant A

Participant A was introduced to the concept of Ethno through a friend they made when attending folk sessions in the capital of their country of residence. After researching which Ethno to attend, they decided to apply to their first Ethno based on personal interest in the country, their availability, the attractiveness of the programme and perhaps most importantly, an invitation from a friend who was also attending the camp. Indeed, their motivation to attend Ethnos is directly connected to having an extensive contact base of friends abroad, and with it, the possibility to broaden their horizons and to learn diverse ranges of music from different cultures. In their everyday routine, they are mostly involved in jazz and blues, and they say it is easy to get stuck in those genres without realising all of the other available opportunities. Ethnos are benefits because they act as introductions to people of their own age who often share their interests, as well as the opportunity to travel and push personal boundaries.

Participant A's first experience in Ethno took them directly out of the comfort zone and into a seemingly very different reality from what they were accustomed to:

**If I think of [Ethno X] where everyone was so cuddly and touchy-feely and I thought, there were some really young people there as well. I had some moments when I thought I don't know if I think this is ok, because you can be like open-minded and relaxed about everything but some people are really young and don't realise exactly what is going on. Nothing happened, nothing bad happened, no abuse of boundaries or something but I do try to stay aware of that I am at an Ethno and not just anywhere. And I need to think of what boundaries I have because it is very easy to give in to this euphoria and then you are at home and you think what did I, am I happy I did this? I don't know, does it sound very strange or?**

It is tricky for participant A to understand and explain community in Ethnos, but with each camp they attend, they re-meet acquaintances and as such feel more involved with the movement. They feel a sense of a community forming, but it is still difficult to put the finger on this abstract concept.

**I guess the thing that holds me back from saying I'm part of an Ethno community is because I don't see the people enough during the year. Of course, in a sense of participating in Ethno's, being at the workshops during the week and having group activities felt like being in a community, and it is not at all as if I didn't feel included, but I'm talking about a community that is always present (like places where you live or take part in for a longer amount of time).**

Ethno often makes the participants think about life and pushes their boundaries.

**I would say sometimes it is hard to mentally for me at least, I am meeting all these new people, but when I go home, how many of these people will I still know, will I still see and it makes me think about my life in general as well. What am I doing? I am a guitar teacher. Is this what I want to do in my life? Can't I just go to Ethnos all my life, you know? And then trying to tell myself this is not what people do, they don't go to Ethno all their lives, even though it seems like that sometimes.**

For participant A, there has been a clear path of personal development during their Ethno journey, which can be partly measured by their involvement in presenting and teaching a tune from their country; something they were unsure about doing until they forced themselves during the second Ethno. By their third Ethno in Denmark, it was clear from the beginning that they would teach, as they were asked to do so by the artistic leaders at the start of the camp.

**I learn about myself how I react in situations where I don't know anybody or I learn to cope with insecurities when you don't know people. If I teach something, I practice presenting myself and leading something. [...] I genuinely don't like working with big groups because I am trained as a professional musician, I have to do stuff like that with bigger groups of people and give workshops. I genuinely did not like that, felt too much pressure, nervous, anxious, so I like to be part of the group. The first Ethno I went to, I didn't teach a tune and then in [Ethno X] I doubted if I wanted to, and then, in the end, I decided ok, I will teach. In here from the start it was like bam, here they asked in the beginning, what tune are you going to play.**

## **Participant B**

Participant B was introduced to Ethno through a friend in Denmark. They had visited the country before and wanted to return. Their main motivation was to gain friends through attending the camp, as they would like to relocate to Scandinavia in the future.

Participant B's first experience in Ethno was uneasy, as there was friction between them and one of the artistic leaders, resulting in them leaving the camp on the second day.

**There was a leader who was so bossy. For example, I had to teach a song from my country. I arrived one day earlier to the camp, and he started to ask me what I teach all the time. Maybe he is a perfectionist and wants to**

**do his job very well but I didn't feel comfortable as I hadn't decided yet what I will teach but he wanted to learn it and make it really fast. He was not so kind. You have to, you have to.. No, I don't have to do anything. And I tried to tolerate him for 2 days because before the camp started and 2nd day I realised I cannot tolerate it any more as it wasn't fun. This camp should be for fun, this is not a professional camp. It was not meaningful for me to stay any longer, so I left. But I didn't say anything to him because it would make nervous ambience, I told the story about him only to the organiser.**

Despite this experience, they were willing to attend another camp and were advised by the Ethno organiser to reapply.

Feeling part of an Ethno community is difficult for participant B, although they do sometimes feel this when playing in a group. They conclude that they do not feel overly comfortable with everyone but the idea of spending their whole life by going to Ethnos does sound appealing, even though a utopia.

Participant B found the language barrier something that made it difficult for them to connect to the group. At one of the previous Ethnos, this barrier with their English skills made them feel outside of the group as the participants were shy to interact with them, and participant B pondered it was due to the thought that the participants assumed participant B could not understand and perhaps due to that did not wish to explain more. However, if someone tries to explain more and paraphrase if they do not understand, it makes them feel more a part of the group. They are also motivated in improving their English skills due to this.

Participant B enjoys the freedom that is given in Ethno and that they do not need to think about any of their everyday obligations. Besides, there is also this acknowledgement that there is an end to this period and they know that they will depart from the camp one day, but it does not come to mind until the last day in Ethno. This lets them fully immerse themselves into music and being in lunch on time which, according to them, is a very nice feeling.

**Nobody is a teacher, and nobody is a great musician, or maybe they are, but it is not about this. If you know a melody and can play or sing it, it is easy to teach it in Ethno because leaders support you to teach it. If you do something wrong, they direct you. If they are great leaders, they do it very kindly. If you know the melody, leaders show you how to teach.**

Participant B also feels Ethno contributing to their professional development, as they do not often get challenged enough when playing their folk instrument but different kinds of folk music with new melodies and scales push them to try and invent fresh ways on their instrument. This leads them to have new perspectives and opens new doors in music by improving their instrumental and composing skills.

Connections made in Ethno are very valuable for participant B, as they find it a perfect place for networking, gaining friends around the world and new homes to stay in, stating: 'I am planning to travel around Europe by playing concerts and I think when I ask people, they can show me places to play. Big chance.'

### Participant C

Participant C's path towards Ethno started when they began taking part in folk and jazz courses between the age of 13–17. Through these courses, they got introduced to learning by ear, one of the foundations of how learning takes place in Ethno. However, they stopped attending these courses when they were about 17, made a decision on their main focus for the future and began their studies in classical music at the conservatory. During their studies, they found out that:

**I lacked something but didn't really know what – it was this learning, playing and jamming together by hearing. Some friends of mine who went to Ethno, said, you should do this. I think it took me two years before I first really did it and that is how I became in contact with Ethno. [...] It surprised me completely, not from the playing part. I knew the idea of playing by hearing, learning tunes and arranging them. Although meeting so many different countries and cultures was new to me. For example, a tune from Uganda, a tune from Congo, or Iranian one. I had never played this music, so it was a very good new experience for me. When I think the thing that touched me the most was getting in contact with other people and such a deep personal bond, personal feeling with these people. Bonding with people I didn't know the week before. It is so intense with each other.**

Participant C concluded that bonding with some of the participants happens more naturally than others, as it inherently happens with unlike personalities.

**It is not uncommon, I think I am not the only one, that at a certain point, you get frustrated about something, or someone whose habits are not what you are used to. What I find nice is that there is never an escalation of something. There seldom happens a bad thing, like a fight or something. I never saw that happen in an Ethno.**

It is complicated to explain how participant C experiences community in Ethnos. They acknowledged that the more they participate, the more they feel part of the Ethno family; however, the notion of community remains fuzzy as it is not something clearly defined. Moreover, the community in Ethnos greatly differs from the usual definition of community which is assigned to a specific place. Even though the feeling of being part of the Ethno family was there in their first Ethno as well, they did not realise it at the time, yet with attending more Ethnos, the feeling of connectedness to others solidified. Participant C also experienced personal growth by becoming more aware of themselves through participation:

**Normally I am quite closed, and for example, on Ethnos I experience the feeling of being more open is nice. Don't let the other person make the first step... Maybe I should be the person who makes the first one to get to know someone else? In real life, not always be the person to wait to get in contact with people that you don't know, being the person who makes the first step to for example to a neighbour trying to get in contact with him. [...] courage to do some things that are in your personality but you think you are not really good at them. I think this is not particularly for Ethno, other kinds of courses also have this effect, but Ethno had this effect on me.**

Ethno also contributed to Participant C's professional growth:

**Studying classical music has this tendency to become very closed off and strict on yourself. Everything needs to be perfect and right. Correct. Not only Ethno but playing world music out of Ethno with friends who went to Ethnos and came together again later in Belgium have helped me a lot to feel free again. To see music in another way, more basic way probably. That helped my professional career as well. Study with less stressed feeling, go and just play music. Also, my teaching, I try to teach in a different way.**

Participant C would explain Ethno to an outsider with the following:

**Playing by ear is a way to really get to know the music, to understand music much better than playing it by score. You get the feeling of melody, harmony, tempo, rhythm. You get to know different music styles. You remember them way better than playing by score. Everybody who play the melody by hearing, if they get a little bit of a melody and hear it later for example, they can remember the melody, and they can play it. Someone playing a melody from a score, remembering it, maybe they will remember it for half a year, but then it will be gone from their minds forever.**

Experiencing the liminoid:

**I think there are other good places if you can find it yourself, but Ethno creates some kind very intense short period where you can get a lot of information, a lot of feelings as well and that is something unique. I think the most important thing about Ethno is it sets a very closed environment for the week where only music can exist.**

Ethno does not necessarily create a safe place for all the participants:

**I have seen people struggle a lot in Ethnos. [...] certainly, if they really don't speak the language. It is not difficult to communicate without language; you can do it. But if there is only one person who doesn't speak English at all and all the others speak English, it is very easy to be left out.**

Your real-life friends do not understand your experience in Ethnos, and you cannot invite them either to attend:

**For example, I have met some people of this Ethno right now, and we know for sure have a plan to come together again and play some music because we found a mutual interest in a musical experience that we want to explore more. I think this is for me the most important thing. Meeting people and love of music at Ethno because now I meet people from other countries whom otherwise I would have never met and suddenly you realise that they are the most amazing people.[...] We share the same passion, same mission and goals which you don't really have in our own environment at home. I also have very good friends there, but they all have their own and their own missions. That people really want just to play and share, and actually go wild with music. And now I have met these people. [...] Something missing, some kind of people missing in your life or... People with the same ideas.**

## **THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Ethno is clearly carnivalesque, but there are questions about whether it can also be considered ritualesque. Ritualesque elements can certainly be found in the music that people bring with them to the camps, such as the songs played from Turkey and the Netherlands with lyrics about interpersonal connectedness and peacebuilding. These align with Jeunesses Musicales International's primary aim to 'enable young

people to develop through music across all boundaries' (JMI.net, n.d.). Likewise, Estonia's lullaby *Uni Tule Uiken* has the chorus 'Villakombalii', which is not native Estonian but has connections to *Vive la Compagnie*, the old popular song with different world translations. The spread of this song symbolises the connectedness of all nationalities as it shows how folk music in the past also connected countries and languages and people. Although there was no example of this at Ethno Denmark, I have witnessed contentious religious music being rejected by the group at another camp. That such songs are played at Ethnos and others are not, does provide an example of considered ritualesque management.

When Ethno participants speak of their impressions of the camp, they tend to speak positively about the fun they had and the significant impact the camp has had on them. However, an attempt to go deeper into such experiences has proven difficult, as participants often struggle to pin down what specific elements have left an impression on them. Ethno is an immersive emotional experience, and it appears to be difficult for the participants to convey these feelings. Even though Ethno camps are all different to an extent, the movement has become a well-known brand on the folk scene, and the camps are rather pre-packaged, meaning that participants have come to know roughly what structure and ideology to expect. The brand recognition is thanks to the extensive network's snowball-effect of positive recommendations, and Ethno World's marketing drive.

Given the positive culture, hype, formative and transformative experiences of the participants, it is difficult to find interviewee answers that discuss the downsides of the Ethno experience. When participants were asked about their bad or negative experiences, they often said that they did not have any. When I labelled something in such a manner, they immediately corrected me, explaining that they would not consider it a bad experience. Through more in-depth conversations and interviews, it turned out that participants can have a tough time in Ethnos and struggle a lot for various reasons. There may be clashes with the artistic leaders, a language barrier or some participants feel uncomfortable about the level of affection shown and tactile behaviour at the camps. The post-camp feedback form provided some insights to this, such as the lack of showers (two gender-separated showers for the group), sleeping arrangements and the lack of individual reflection time because of the camp's intense schedule. However, the negative feedback was often downplayed, with additions such as 'but it wasn't such a big issue' or 'I wished the showering was more unstructured, but it was only scheduled because there were a lot of people wanting to shower, which is understandable.' This may be due to the fun experiences overweighting the negative experiences, or that the participants were not keen to share their thoughts, or negate such experiences to themselves. This somewhat protective attitude towards Ethno could be related to the fact that the camp is a place where people are supposed to have fun and have a positive experience

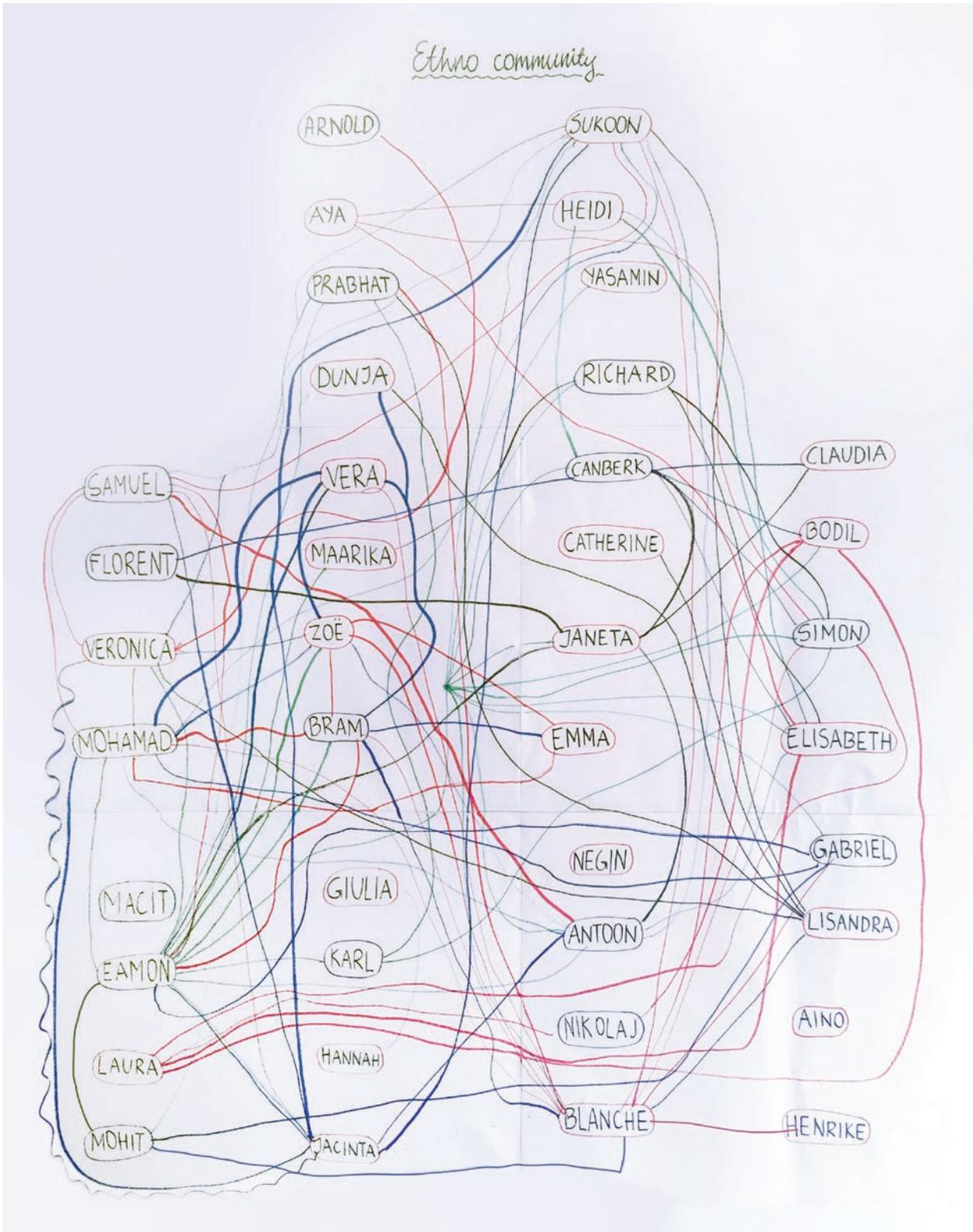
within the liminoid space. Thus, even when negative things happen, they are often not focused on and are overlooked, as these are not part of the core of the experience and it may dampen the fun aim of it.

Ethno can be a shock for the first-timer, and there are a considerable number of participants who have a negative first experience at Ethno. These can result in the participants even leaving the camp early, such as the case of participant A in 2018 and one participant at this year's Ethno Denmark. However, whereas participant A returned to another Ethno, this year's participant stated that they did not plan to do so when interviewed. The intensity of the tightly-packed schedule, which exposes participants to a week of only playing, listening and learning music through practice, rehearsals and after schedule jams, along with little and poor sleep unaided by the dormitory accommodation, does not necessarily help some participants who are dealing with personal issues. However, for many, Ethno provides a good setting of shared common space and the chance to self-develop mentally. Indeed, there is a cultured depth to Ethno where participants are subliminally encouraged to start to think about their own life choices, journeys, and relationships. Even though the camp is intense in its structure, it still takes the participants away from their everyday life and helps give them another perspective.

'Ethno blues' is a feeling that participants can experience after an intense Ethno camp. It might be described as feeling low for about a week after returning home, with the sense that nothing in the world can compare to the previous week's experiences. Indeed, one solution is to return to another Ethno or an alternative event to attempt to relive it or continue the festivities. Festivals and Ethno are extraordinary forms of contemporary reality, where one congregates and lives with a group of strangers in an organised camp, in which menial tasks and basic needs are taken care of. The freedom from everyday errands presents the free time and focus on playing music, share conversations and other leisurely activities, thereby creating connections with people that would otherwise be uncommon in most people's everyday life. Ethno can easily signify a modern ritual in today's world, where joy and struggles meet, geographically-loose communitas is formed, and space for personal development is provided. It is something to look forward to; a light at the tunnel of the working calendar.

Ethno can provide a dramatic change to the current life, by being both positively transformative and saddening at the same time. Ethno can make the participant reconsider their life decisions, country of residence, and wonder why they might feel more connected to people at Ethno than to their friends at home. It almost always seems that the positive experiences outweigh the struggles that one may encounter at Ethnos. It may also make the participant analyse how they can alter their normal life to be more similar to that of Ethno, or even to make the feeling of Ethno their normality thenceforth.

I Figure 1: Ethno Connections in Ethno Denmark 2019.



Ethno is often a place where reunions take place, and Ethno Denmark served as a solid proof for this. All but six of the participants had been to an Ethno before, and some of them were familiar faces to one another. Having this idea in mind, I decided to create a name map on the fourth day, where I asked all the participants to draw connections to people they knew before that Ethno. The participants took to the task with great enthusiasm and co-created an unexpectedly densely colourful map. The Ethno Connections map symbolises the vast network these participants have from participation and therefore, how likely are these people to meet again, which relates to the notion of portable communities. With four exceptions, all the other Ethno participants already had some connections. Those who are new were not involved in the reunion hugs at the beginning of the camp and might have felt they needed to put in more effort to form connections. This proved to be very difficult for one of the introverted first time Ethno participants, who felt that due to this they became less connected to others and Ethno 'became more of a dry summer course you take than a warm exchange you have with other music lovers.' (L. Roosioja, personal communication, 23/09/2019)

What separates Ethno from other youth exchanges is the sharing of the common and acquired knowledge of folk music, which, as players, provides the participants with a sense of identity. The function of the liminoid is to provide a reflexive environment for the participants without the normal constraints of social structures. The environment, where the participants can enter and exit activities as they please, assists them in their personal choices to tackle the inner and outer conflicts with themselves, the world and communities around them. Even though participants have the freedom not to take part in activities, they often still feel the pressure to do so, for fear of missing out. As being in an Ethno means being in a closed community, the setting discourages arguments and conflicts despite the differences between the characters at play. If and when these do arise, they need to be handled calmly on the spot.

I deliberately asked the participants questions about community and how they perceive it in Ethnos. It turned out that the word community often confused the participants, as it was not something they necessarily saw in Ethnos, as despite the close-quartered communal living space, the camp only lasted a week and there was always the possibility that these people would not meet again. However, all the interviewed participants agreed that the intense bonding and connections made in Ethnos are one of the most valuable gains from the camp. Therefore, rather than seeing Ethno as a community, I propose seeing it as *communitas* which signifies bonding but is not tied to a traditional place of community.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Carnavalesque by its nature, Ethno seemingly brings the ritualesque into the camp's space. Such ritualesque elements can be found in the imported song selections and the values that the camp inherently cultivates.

It came out from the interviews that often the first Ethno is when the participant has the most struggles, and this determines whether the participant will return to Ethno or not. The intensity that Ethno provides is not for those unprepared. Also, living in a very closed space with strangers with their specific habits, heightened due to them being from other cultures, therefore likely with different customs, and accepting this. However, once participants are either prepared or overcome this, they are exposed to a week full of play and creation with other fellow musicians.

It is through participation in several Ethnos where the participants create their networks of Ethno people, and which is one of the things they have found most valuable about taking part in the camps. Therefore, several Ethno participants go to Ethnos even annually, to meet again with their network to experience *communitas* and experience the alternative life opposing to the reality with creating bonds with other people and play.

For future research, I would propose discussing what participants take back to their quotidian lives after Ethno ends.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am very grateful to the Ethno Denmark team and Simon Voigt, who was my primary contact. In addition, a heartfelt thank you goes to all the participants who shared their stories and what they found important, the venue and its hosts in CulturArte, and the host family who ensured I could sleep in the village of Kong.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Lisandra Roosioja completed her Masters in Cultural Management at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in May 2019 focusing her thesis on Ethnos. She has her background in Folk Music performance, research and teaching, specialised in accordion and kantele. Due to her keen interest in music rights and advocacy, she used to be part of the Youth Committee of the International Music Council of UNESCO between 2012–2013. In addition, she has been supporting different music festivals in Estonia with organising, such as Jazzkaar, Viljandi Folk Music Festival, Tallinn Music Week over the years, and worked for the Arvo Pärt Centre and the Ukrainian Culture Centre.

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