

# Case Study: Ethno Estonia

Bridging Borders Between Communities



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# 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.



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# Contents

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<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Ethno Estonia – historical and contemporary context</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Ethno Estonia 2019 – Ethno connecting (g)local people</b>	<b>9</b>
Participants	9
Organizers team	10
Artistic leaders	11
Volunteers	11
<b>Method</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Theoretical Background</b>	<b>13</b>
World Music Pedagogy	14
Community Music	16
Experiential Learning	16
<b>Narratives</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Author Biography</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>27</b>

## List of Figures

**Figure 1:** Ethno-ecosystem

**Image 1:** Inês playing a double bass

**Image 2:** Learning to put a turban

**Video 1:** Mexican Guapango song Mi querétaro lindo

**Video 2:** Teaching and learning Chinese lullaby

**Video 3:** Meeting of Mexican and Indian culture at Open Stage

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ethno Estonia youth music camp has for more than two decades built a (g)local community, successfully bridging borders between formal, non-formal and informal education in the country. The camp itself links all Estonian institutions and NGOs connected with the folk music with Viljandi Folk Music Festival and gathers people of diverse ages, cultural, musical and educational backgrounds. The purpose of this pilot case study is to explore the significance and impact of the Ethno Estonia experience for participants and volunteers-participants, as well as for the local community. The report is based on the historical background, people's experiences and theoretical insights from democratic music pedagogies, community music and service-learning. Using qualitative methodological approach, the research examines the impact that Ethno has on the local community, participants' musical, personal and social development, as well as on the participant-volunteers' development, who through service-learning connect organizers and artistic leaders' teams with the group of participants. Besides connection between folk music university and music schools which send their students to the Ethno Estonia camp (and vice versa), this report presents narratives of four participants. As trained classical musicians with different cultural identities, each participant challenges themselves by entering the Ethno world of experiment, curiosity and sharing. The data is collected through participant observation, individual and group semi-structured interviews, audio-visual documentation (July 2019) and follow-up evaluation after the camp (September/October 2019). The research suggests that Ethno Estonia is an example of good practice, pointing towards the positive development of 'ethno-ecosystems' in the local communities.

**Keywords:** community, democratic music pedagogies, *Ethno*, ethno-ecosystem, youth.

# Ethno Estonia: Bridging Borders Between Communities

## INTRODUCTION

Music and art have a valuable role in society. According to the conclusions from the first *World Conference on Arts Education: Building Creative Capacities for the 21st Century* in Lisbon (UNESCO, 2006), the aims of arts education are:

- a) upholding the human rights for education and cultural participation;
- b) developing individual capabilities;
- c) improving the quality of education;
- d) promoting the expression of cultural diversity;
- e) education of audience.

In 2010, the *Seoul Agenda* (UNESCO, 2010) approved these conclusions, adding a vision of arts education as a platform for balanced, creative, cognitive, aesthetic and social development of children, youth and life-long learners. This holistic approach to arts education includes high-quality programmes, research, collaborations, partnerships and community-based learning. According to the Agenda, arts education principles and practices can and should contribute to resolving the social and cultural challenges in contemporary society, which emphasizes the recognition of the learner-specific context, intercultural dialogue and peace education. In this sense, more than ever, it is crucial to consider formal, non-formal and informal contexts as interactive approaches (Folkstead, 2006).

Youth work, devoted to the most heterogeneous group in society, covering the period between childhood and adulthood, gathers a broad range of activities, both from the formal sector (education) to the non-formal sector which is mostly concentrated on leisure activities, inclusion, empowerment, etc. Ethno<sup>1</sup> is Jeunesses Musicales International's program of folk and world music, which happens annually in the form of youth music camps. The programme exists since 1990, and today it gathers numerous editions all over the world, that usually occur during the summer. Based on the non-formal pedagogical approaches of peer-to-peer learning and learning by ear, its main aim is to keep the traditional musical heritage alive amongst youth, to foster international dialogue and development of participants' musical, personal, social and cultural identities in a safe

and encouraging environment. Based on the Ethno Estonia camp, this paper explores all of the forms<sup>2</sup> of the youth work, showing that Ethno youth camps can be a good platform for the empowerment of youth growth and development, as well as for active involvement and participation in society, based on the co-creation of the process and collaborative community work.

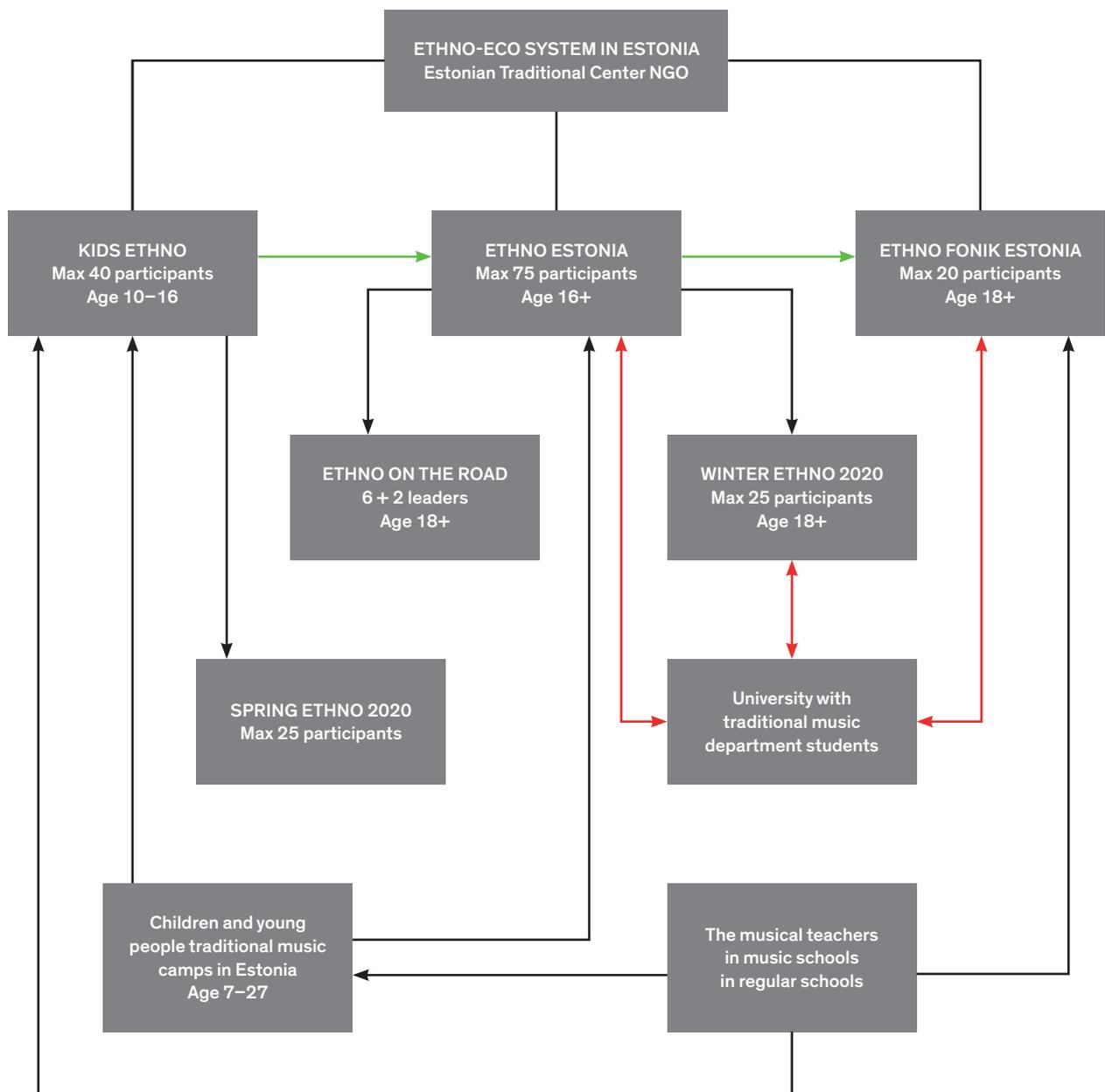
## **ETHNO ESTONIA – HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT**

Ethno Estonia has a long history and covers almost the whole period of Ethno camps history. It can be divided into two phases: (1) Creating context phase (from 1997 to 2013) and (2) Ethno Estonia concept (from 2014 to today). The first Ethno Estonia took place in 1997, shortly after two Estonian folk musicians, Tuulikki Bartosik and Krista Sildoja, took part in an Ethno camp in Falun (Sweden). The link between the Falun camp and Estonia was Ando Kiviberg, the head of Viljandi Traditional Music Festival, who himself visited that camp before sending Bartosik and Sildoja there. Inspired by the Swedish experience, they organised a camp only for Estonian youth. From 1997 until 2014, the camp was made as any other folk music camps, where teachers taught the tunes because, as one of the organisers said, they ‘didn’t have any young musicians who could play traditional music well enough to teach’ (M. Paberits, interview, October 14, 2019). Because Ethno music camps lie on the concepts of intercultural exchange and peer-to-peer learning, the first period served a preparation (creation) of the context for the ‘real’ Ethno camp, as well as for the local community, because it prepared the ground for traditional music education. If we want to go deeper, in the historical sense, we need to be aware that Estonian living music tradition was almost dead at the end of the 1980s, so there was a high need to revive it. The revival was possible only with specialised musicians who will know how to do that, so the first step towards this goal was creating the traditional music curriculum at Viljandi Culture Academy in 1990. The Ethno Estonia camp officially started in 1997 and for years it was the only opportunity for musicians to gain this kind of knowledge before going to study traditional music in Viljandi, as well as for the students from Viljandi Academy to lead the camps, transmit the methodology of teaching folk music at the university, meet and motivate potential students. In that sense, Ethno camps served as a good example of an existing university curriculum.

Still, there were no possibilities to study traditional music before university level, so at the beginning of the 2000s, the need to make a vertical folk music educational system came out. The folk music school curriculum was made in 2005, so today 2–3 elementary music schools in Estonia offer folk music programs. Since 2014 there has been one secondary music school that provides the folk music program, so basically, the circle closed and

the whole vertical folk music education system was established in the past 25 years. The Ethno Estonia camp certainly had and still has an immense role in the entire system. The camp even evolved in its own micro-system and now includes KidsEthno (for Estonian children from 10 to 16 years old), Ethno Tour (for several outstanding camp participants who meet again after the summer camp) and Etno juhendajate koolitus, training for Ethno artistic leaders (since 2018). The so-called 'Ethno-ecosystem' made by the Ethno Estonia organizers team can be seen here:

**Figure 1: Ethno-ecosystem (by Margit Kuhi)**



The popularity and role of the Ethno Estonia camp and the meaning of it for local children, camp participants and students from the Academy can be seen in one of the organisers quotations:

**But still half of the students who apply to the university have Ethno camp background. So we need to keep it going. Need for Kids Ethno came from the age limit we have in Ethno Estonia (from the age 16 you can go there). There were so many children under 16 years who wrote to us to take part in Ethno, and we decided that Kids Ethno have to happen. It was also a good practice and challenge for those Ethno veterans in Estonia who were studying now in university and dreamt about becoming a leader. So, we made children happy and university student also. Tour is a promotion for the Ethno camp itself, to keep this going also, to have new applicants every year. For that, the tour gives many school concerts. To keep the tradition alive. For that, we have to infect as many young people at an early age. (M. Paberits, interview, October 14, 2019)**

As it can be seen here, there is a significant impact the Ethno Estonia camp itself had on the whole educational, cultural community, both on the local and national level. Although it has carried the name Ethno Estonia since 2000, on the global level, the internationalisation of the camp happened in 2014, when Ethno Estonia took the form of a typical Ethno camp, but it started gathering international participants from 2006. Since then every camp has a numerous group of participants. However, the number of Estonians in the group still stayed quite big, comparing to the other Ethno camps in the world, but it is reasonable considering the whole idea of vertical connection with the community and education system. In that sense, the Ethno Estonia camp has much broader purpose than just enabling international young musicians to come and exchange their cultures, also giving the local young musicians a fruitful ground to grow their own culture within the national community.

Since the very beginning of the camp in 1997, in the community development sense, there has been a significant connection with the Viljandi Folk Music Festival<sup>3</sup>, where the camp always ends, as well as with the Estonian Traditional Music Center, which organises both the camp and the festival. According to the official website<sup>4</sup>, it is an 'open and innovative non-government organisation which supports and organises traditional music hobby education and promotes live traditional music performances across the country'. Except for the library and performance places, the centre hosts August Pulst School which organises Ethno Estonia and offers diverse educational courses, instrument lessons, workshops, sources for teachers, etc. It is supported by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Council of Gambling Tax and European Social Fund,

and their partners are Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association, Estonian Society for Music Education, Estonian National Folklore Council and the UT Viljandi Culture Academy. The excellent national network and support in the local context allow the Ethno Estonia camp to grow. As all Ethno camps, Ethno Estonia is a member of Jeunesses Musicales International (*JMI*).

## **ETHNO ESTONIA 2019: ETHNO CONNECTING (G)LOCAL PEOPLE**

One of the specificities of the Ethno Estonia camps is that it gathers participants, volunteers, artistic leaders and organizers whose backgrounds join both formal with non-formal educational systems, which has benefits for both, Ethno and folk studies. Building a community of Ethno people through the years on the local level makes an impressive folk music scene that is recognized on the global level and has helped build audiences interested in cultural activities. The next sub-sections present groups of people involved in the programme.

### **Participants**

The Ethno Estonia 2019 camp gathered a large group of young musicians from all over the world in Kõpu, a small village near Viljandi, one of the UNESCO-s 'creative cities' which places creative economy<sup>5</sup> at the core of its urban development. The camp started on 16th July and lasted until 28th July 2019, which included four last days at the Viljandi Folk Festival. Besides two concerts at the festival in Viljandi, there were two concerts organised at the Võru Folklore Festival, as well as one in Kõpu, near the historic manor house (school) where the participants sleep and have rehearsals, right before leaving to Viljandi.

This year's edition gathered 62 participants from 16 countries; apart from the majority of Estonian participants, participants came from Algeria, Australia, Belgium, China, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, Russia (Udmurt and Karelia) and Sweden. In total, from 62 participants, 36 were Estonians, which is more than a half. The average age in the camp was 19.77, which means that it mostly consisted of participants of a younger age. Although the age limit was from 16 to 30 years old, five participants in the camp went beyond the rule – four 15-year-old musicians and one 31-year-old musician. It is interesting to notice that more than half of participants (36) did not go beyond the teenage age. Although the number of teenagers was the same as the number of Estonians in the group, there were seven Estonians older than 19. In general, the group was quite young, and there were only 10 participants older than 25. Regarding gender balance, there were 43 females and 19 male participants in the camp.

In terms of choosing instruments in the orchestra, there was a combination of classical, popular and traditional instruments. Besides violins (21), in the classical strings section, it was interesting to see three double basses, which happens quite rarely in the Ethno camp setting, so one of them played the bass guitar. In the percussion section, there were mostly traditional percussions, such as bodhran, darbuka and tabla. Apart from guitars, flutes, diatonic accordions, melodicas and guitars, which usually can be found in Ethno camps, the specificities of the camp were mandolins, Estonian bagpipes and kannel, 39-strings zither and whistles. The group had a voice section made of 9 singers, but most of them had multiple roles because they played some instruments (guitar, accordion, etc.).

As we could see in the demographic data, there are no clear criteria for choosing participants. According to the organisers, there is no clear systemic approach to it, and the festival is open to accept everyone who can learn music by ear:

**We accept all those participants who can learn music by ear. Almost all Estonian who apply get accepted. Foreigners also. The only part where we think more are the ones that need our help with visas. But this is easy also: we help those who can cooperate and communicate with us (M. Paberits, interview, October 2019).**

However, in the official call on the webpage<sup>6</sup> it is written that 'participants will be selected according to availability of places in different instrument groups and the level of playing skills.' It is written that there is also a possibility for the participants who have already been to Ethno Estonia three times in a row not to be accepted with an explanation that the priority will be given to participants with less experience. Also, there is a sentence of encouragement to apply in any case.

## Organizers team

Ethno Estonia 2019 had a team of organizers consisting of three musicians who were all connected with Viljandi Culture Academy in their initial music education. Margit Kuhi, known as 'mama Margit' because of her enthusiasm, care and devotion to the Ethno idea, is the main organizer of all Ethno events since 2011 (Ethno Estonia, Kids Ethno, Ethno Estonia Tour and the training for Ethno artistic leaders). Her colleague, flautist and instrumental teacher Merike Paberits, has a double role – as a programme coordinator and one of the artistic leaders (in charge of the wind instruments). Apart from organizational and artistic leading role, she enriched the whole camp experience with her performances in bands/shows both in the camp and at Viljandi Folk Music Festival. Her multiple roles in the camp have a particular history. She started as an organiser in 2012,

but before that, she was an artistic leader for three years. There was a point of tiredness in this continual ‘organizer-artistic leader’ path when Paberits wanted to leave the artistic leader role and come to the 2018 edition only as an organizer. It was surprisingly boring for her because she ‘felt so left out’, ‘bored’ and didn’t feel the ‘Ethno vibe’ at all. Then she decided to come back in both roles, but they involved a volunteer to help with organizational tasks – a volunteer called Kertu.

## Artistic leaders team

Apart from the organizing team, the main strength of Ethno Estonia 2019 was an artistic leaders team. The main reason why the teamwork functioned so well was that the team was chosen by Paberits, who got the idea to connect people who she met at EthnoFonik AllStars, the training for Ethno artistic leaders, which happened in Paris in December 2017. Besides Paberits, in charge of wind instruments, the chosen team consisted of four more artistic leaders: Maarja Soomre (Estonian singer, melodica player and music teacher), Jonas Malflied (Belgian accordionist, pianist and composer), Lauren Spiceley (English violinist) and Sam Karkar (French-Tunisian multi-instrumentalist and scientist).

## Volunteers

The organizers and artistic leaders team in the Ethno Estonia 2019 camp had several volunteers who successfully connected both the organizers and artistic leaders team with the participants. Luukas, a storyteller, and Maria, a musician, were in charge of morning wake-up activities, energizers, evening open stage performances, and many more interactions. In the same time, they managed to participate in the orchestra and play the concerts, which certainly was meaningful for their musical path (again, connected to the folk music education). As one of the organizers said, their role is the most important and the hardest one in the whole camp:

**They were our eyes and ears there where we didn’t reach. Volunteers, this year, did a lot of leading in games and ice-breaking. In Ethno Estonia, one of the volunteers is always like a shrink, the one who will look for the shy and modest ones and help them, if needed. In the past, we didn’t have volunteers and then I and Margit had to do all that work that the volunteers did this year. We had a shrink-guy though, who did some games and looked after the shy ones. So, volunteers are my heroes. I think they have the most important and hardest role in the camp. This year we had perfect volunteers. And I think all the leaders were amazed about them this year (M. Paberits, interview, October 2019).**

Besides Luukas and Maria, who were slowly integrated into the organizers and artistic leaders team, there was a volunteer who transcribed all the tunes learned in the camp. The above-mentioned volunteer Kertu, so-called 'right hand' in the organizer's team, is a young student from the Viljandi Culture Academy. It is interesting to notice that in just three years of Ethno Estonia experiences she passed three roles in the camp: from the participant in the first year, then to volunteer, artistic leaders' training participant, and this year she is helping with the organization as a volunteer, as she says, like a 'second mum, second Margit'. Before the 2019 edition of the Ethno Estonia camp, she participated in Ethno New Zealand, Ethno Catalonia, as well as the Estonian camp for artistic leaders (Etno juhendajate koolitus), which gave her a motivation to continue her work:

**The reason why Margit did it was because EthnoFonik didn't happen last year and we have really, really many Estonians who want to become artistic leaders, because we have been to many Ethnos already and we kind of have the Ethno way of living, and Margit saw that...and she saw the opportunity to do the course. [...] And, like, teaching folk tunes by ear to a symphony orchestra...yeah, Viljandi youth symphony orchestra... and, teaching them the tunes by ear, that was the biggest thing that I've ever done, I guess, because they always...you know, they always have sheets and scores. [...] That gave me maybe confidence that I want to do it, that I can do it, and if someone ever wants to, you know, invite me to be an artistic leader, then I will go, and I know that I can do it, you know (Kertu, interview, July, 2019).**

For sure, it is an example of a good internship and 'learning by doing' all aspects of quality Ethno camp leadership from more experienced colleagues. Also, it is an example of good practice of how to make outstanding camp participants grow 'from the bottom up' and possibly even prepare them for the labour market. The fact that volunteers can help the organizers team, as well as the artistic leaders team and participants, and still participate in the process and play concerts, are highly valuable preparations for life itself.

## METHOD

Three questions are used to guide the Ethno Estonia exploration:

- 1) What are the specificities of Ethno Estonia?;
- 2) in which ways does Ethno Estonia connect peoples' identities and communities?;
- 3) how do the participants understand the music transmission process in the Ethno camps and what kind of impact does it make on them?

For this research report, a qualitative methodology was used. More precisely, there are 11 semi-structured (individual and group) interviews held with the participants from 15 to 30-years-old, as well as interviews with the four volunteers and one organizer (for the historical context) during the Ethno Estonia 2019 camp in July 2019.

Questions for participants (and volunteer-participants) were gathered around several themes:

- 1) narrative – a story of their life connected to music and Ethno;
- 2) pedagogical process;
- 3) personal and professional development;
- 4) impact.

All the participants and volunteers were asked to give written feedback based on the several questions made after the camp (September–October, 2019). To answer the research questions, a detailed socio-cultural context of Ethno Estonia is given in the first part of the paper. Qualitative data is analyzed through thematic coding. The data about the structure of the group of participants were gathered from the participants' application forms and constructed with the help of basic statistical analysis. To support the conclusions more precisely, the visual and audio-visual data analysis is done, gathered in the participant observation process. There are pseudonyms used in the text to keep the anonymity of the participants. However, names of organizers and artistic leaders are left in the original form because their names are accessible on official webpages of the camp.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Observation of any kind of education in the 21st century, including music education, should be regarded through lenses of multiculturalism and interculturalism, as well as through inseparable connection between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Instability of democratic systems demands a need of lifelong learning and education for democratic and active citizenship, which implies numerous changes in the educational contexts, reconsideration of fundamental values, and collaboration of youngsters, teachers, institutions and local communities. It includes peace education, civic and citizenship literacy, human rights education and community education (Dürr, Spajić-Vrkaš & Ferreira-Martins, 2002). Parekh (1986) says that 'multicultural education is an education for freedom that is essential in today's ethnically polarized and troubled world' (cited in Banks, 2002). Resistance to everything that is 'other and different', conflicts and lack of tolerance lead us to question the purpose of education, as well as to think about the connection between society and vertical education system which should embrace

intercultural dimension as it's an important part. Bartulović and Kušević (2016) believe that the core of intercultural education is a deep understanding of culture in a way that we can critically review our own culture and endeavour to understand different cultures and their complex interactions. According to Piršl (2016), when we talk about intercultural education, we mainly refer to pedagogy (although it is not an exclusive discipline) – its objectives, contents, teaching process and methods, curriculum, materials and evaluation that contribute to developing intercultural competence to everyone in society as a basis of dialogue and life in the community.

There are many different directions in pedagogical literature connected to the cultural democracy, social justice and processes of transformation and empowerment, as well as to both formal and non-formal educational systems. Schippers (2010) notices that from a global perspective, music teaching and learning are now on the crossroads because of the challenges cultural diversity brings to the society in general. However, he says that in music 'with a little effort and sensitivity, there is the opportunity to explore, celebrate, and help sustain this diversity' (Schippers, 2010, p. 169). Referring to the Freire's foundations of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1971) and artistic citizenship (Elliott, Silverman & Bowman, 2016), Hess (2019) explains that music education can contribute to changing the social climate. Calling it 'activist music education', she describes it as an opportunity for youth to trust their voices and assert them in their communities by telling stories, sharing contexts and experiences through music. Also, she writes about the 'bottom-up' relational approach to community engagement in which youth shape the program initiatives, as a good example of a community-driven approach based on love, care, optimism, hope and peace (not to the opposition, as an ingrained attribute of the word 'activism'). Thus, activist music education offers a community-based approach based on relationships between people and contexts, as well as widening perspectives to create social harmony. In that sense, the best learning for real-life happens in the community itself, it is based on experience, and it is open to all aspects of cultural diversity, without any border. In the next few sections, the notions of world music pedagogy, community music and experiential learning will be explored.

## **World Music Pedagogy**

The accessibility of music and growth of commercial music genres in the globalized world affected a lot of music education in terms of the inclusive engagement and active music-making in the educational contexts. The formal music education curriculums across the world are filling with world music and this impacted developing pedagogy, which, in turn, support the cultural transmission of practices from all over the world. As the focus of the world music pedagogy is not the curriculum itself, but the specific

techniques of musical transmission through which students learn how to appreciate deeply, care about other people and music and prepare for life. That's why Krüger describes world music pedagogy as 'democratic pedagogy' that 'involves teaching strategies that lead students toward deeper appreciation, care and compassion for all people and their music' (Krüger, 2011, p. 286). This approach to the pedagogy puts 'identity formation' in the centre of education, because it values not only musical but also music-cultural (extra-musical) practices. Valuing the meaning, context specificities, and diversity of perspectives, it personally and socially transforms the people involved in the process, making them autonomous critical thinkers.

World music pedagogy 'pays tribute to the critical importance of learning by listening and of repeated listening in increasingly active and interactive ways. It underscores the logic of making sense of music as an aural art, a channel of creative practice, and a means of personal and communal human expression' (Campbell, 2018, p. 113). The process of teaching music globally is based on the listening process, and it consists of five phases (Campbell, 2004):

1. attentive listening – multiple directed listening experiences focused on structures;
2. engaged listening – active participation while listening (by some way of music-making – singing a melody, patting a rhythm, moving to a dance pattern, etc.);
3. enactive listening – continued listening to performance level (aural learning of a song – oral transmission);
4. creating world music – inventions to extensions, improvisations, compositions;
5. integrating world music – critical connections of music to life.

It can be seen that these phases help learners to connect and understand sound, behaviour and value. In that way, the traditional music is transmitted in its 'natural historical' way, but that doesn't mean that it can't refer to the Western classical music; oral traditions are familiar to Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze methods, as well as contemporary musical practices, which became more aural than visual (Johnson, 2009). However, in the Ethno context, the question is how deep we can go into the sound and context of each song within the described process, since there is always very limited time for transmission of the tune/song, as well as arranging. Furthermore, is there a need to go deep into context and meaning, or it's enough to share and technically learn the tune/song with some basic introduction?

## Community music

The term *community music*, an emerging field in the music education literature, is described as an open, fluent, constantly changing process which includes many different musical practices of participatory style, and emphasizes the importance of changing the context of musical activity (Higgins, 2012a; Elliott, 1995; Silverman, 2005). It is a complex and fluid term related to various music pedagogical contexts, both formal and informal. It includes a wide range of aims, processes and people in local, regional, national and international circumstances. Considering numerous possibilities connected to the flexibility of these kinds of practices makes community music 'marvellously adaptable, permeable, plastic, pliable, and absorbent' (Silverman & Elliott, 2018, p. 366). Taking different forms of musicking, communication, pedagogy and social impact, it is adaptable to speak to various groups of people in society, making an impact on the betterment of their individual and collective life. Elliott, Higgins and Veblen (2008, p. 3–4) suggest that community music has numerous forms and meanings, which depends on a range of variables including: (1) the people, communities and institutions involved in the program, (2) aims, purposes and needs that a community music program intends to achieve, (3) financial support and (4) the relationship between a given community music program and its geographical, social, economic, religious, cultural and/or historical circumstances (cited in Silverman & Elliott, 2018, p. 367). In spite of numerous possibilities and forms of community music-making, according to Koopman (2007, p. 153), all of these programs incorporate 'collaborative music-making, community development and personal growth'. The importance of safe, supportive and 'welcoming' (Higgins, 2012a) environment is crucial in achieving empowerment and transformation through the collaborative and participatory process of community music-making, with the strong emphasis on making meaningful relationships and values. Seeing the community as hospitality, Higgins (2012b) writes about an open and welcoming invitation vital in every socially interactive musical experience and context. A hospitable community is exactly one of the biggest assets of the Ethno Estonia context – meaning not only the local community which connects the whole 'ethno-ecosystem', but the Ethno itself, which connects people no matter their ethnicity, religion, gender, class or politics, as well as their musical background.

## Experiential learning

Described as learning through the reflection of doing, experiential learning refers to 'direct sense experience and in-context action as the primary source of learning' (Kolb, 2015, xviii). It means that a learner is in direct contact with the people/realities being studied, very often in an outdoor, natural setting. Experiential learning, as a holistic process of learning, can be easily transferred to various contexts. Immersion in the

experience, an emphasis on all the senses and inner impressions of the experience and emotional intelligence are highly crucial in the process of experiential learning, as well as a communal experience of sharing (Beard & Wilson, 2013).

One of the models of experiential learning is service-learning, a process of active, practical and direct application of existing resources that community-based educational institutions offer to respond to recognized community needs, whereby students learn from their own experience (Ćulum & Ledić, 2010). It gathers academic and civic engagement, contributing both to the professional development of learners and to the community development. In combination with peer-to-peer learning, this type of learning is connecting the whole network of stakeholders in the specific community, which can be seen in the Ethno Estonia 'Ethno-ecosystem', as well as in some of the stories of Estonian participants and volunteers reported in this research.

## NARRATIVES

Amongst 62 participants from all over the world with fascinating stories and backgrounds, there were several people whose stories emerged as the most inspirational because they describe possibilities of breaking barriers through Ethno. One of the most experienced participants in the group, in terms of music education and broadness of interests, is Inês, a 29-year-old musician from Portugal, with roots from Cape Verde and Brazil. She is a piano teacher who studies music, languages and cultures, as well as working in an NGO on social projects with teenagers who come from vulnerable backgrounds, to promote their personal and social development. Inês went to her first Ethno in 2018. The story of her connection with Ethno is quite interesting: starting as a classical pianist, after finishing conservatory in Portugal she didn't feel 'part of that musical culture', but she wanted to continue music, so she enrolled in jazz studies.

**It really gave me another perspective on music, being in this jazz school. For me, it was a new beginning almost, 'cos I felt that...first of all, that you have a lot of freedom, because they give you chords, but they don't give you everything [...] And my first question was: How do I play it? The way you want it to sound – just figure it out. You know these chords, so find out the way that sounds right for you in this context, in this music, in this moment. [...] Also, I felt that the way I was learning music was better for me, meaning that it was more about listening than anything else, so listening a lot, and then, after having it in me, the music, then I would translate it to my instrument. [...] The rational side was a little bit more off' (Inês, interview, July 2019).**

I Image 1: Inês playing the double bass. Photo, Ana Čorić.



In the jazz school she started to play the double bass as a second instrument, and the instruments she usually plays at Ethno camps. At the end of her jazz studies, she got a hand injury and it was frustrating for her because she had to stop playing, but, on the other hand, it was an opportunity to make a big decision and go abroad to meet different cultures and to live independently. So, she went to Belgium and did an internship in an NGO called Music Crossroads (a 'sister' organization of Ethno in JMI) and that's where she heard of Ethno and, of all offered camps, she chose to come to Ethno Estonia in 2018. The main motivation for coming was connected with the world of classical music, more precisely, to the music of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, as well as to the curiosity of something different:

**First time I came because this is very different for me. I feel very connected to this place in terms of sharing music, in terms of being within nature, you know. [...] I think I was enchanted a bit with this place' (Inês, interview, July 2019).**

After her first Ethno Estonia in 2018, she got an opportunity to join an Ethno Estonia Tour. These experiences gave her motivation to do some more Ethnos before she broke the age limit for admission, so in 2019 she went to Ethno France, Ethno Finland, again to Ethno Estonia, and then to Ethno Flanders. It is really interesting to notice that, as the one Portuguese representative in the camp, she didn't choose to present a Portuguese tune, but she chose *Sangue de Beirona* (Beirona's Blood), a song popularized by Cesária Évora (from her album *Cabo Verde*). It is a song from Capeverdean folklore with lyrics in creole language. Inês chose this song as an homage to her uncle who taught her so much about music without even knowing it. For the occasion of presenting the song, she got out from her comfort 'instrumental' zone and sang in front of people accompanying herself on the ukulele, an instrument she didn't play before but decided to learn some chords because she 'wanted to explain the groove on a string instrument'.

Another exit from the comfort zone was presented by Carlos, an 18-year-old student of classical composition from Mexico. He wants to be a classical singer, but his main goal is to write his own opera – and now he is interested in bringing Ethno to his country, too. He came to Europe for his uncle's wedding and then, as he said, he met some 'folk music people' from Estonia who told him about the Ethno Estonia camp. It was his first Ethno camp (and folk music camp in general), but he emphasized that he had been to some classical music camps where he had some very different experiences from the Ethno setting:

**I went to classical camps, but they are so different yet so similar. The passion for music is there, but the ambience and how do people behave is way different. Here they have a very nice attitude, and they have connections with one another. It's less strict; it's more chill. And in classical camp basically, you have to learn what you have to**

**learn. You go there, you practice together and there is this passion, these great times together...but, it's a different way of behaving. Like, if you miss something and you don't have all the liberties to experiment, but while you don't have to experiment, you are learning technique (Carlos, interview, July 2019).**

Although he initially has a classical background, the task to prepare a folk tune/song from the culture you identify with wasn't a big problem to him in the very beginning. To be more precise, Mexican folk music is sung by classical singers, so it was easy for him to represent his culture in terms of the authenticity of the singing voice. What was very interesting to see was the process of his preparation for coming to the camp. As a classical musician, he faced his biggest challenge – to teach the tune by ear – although he is used to making arrangements via written scores. However, his workshop was a true performance with sombrero and traditional clothes. His choice of the song was very well prepared and studied together with PhD specialists from his country:

**The genre I came with is called Guapango, which means 'dancing on the table' in Mexican. [...] And I chose this song because, thanks to the studies of many, many doctorates in Mexico, they managed to find out that there are five ethnic regions of Mexico and with all those 5 regions, what they all have in common is that they dance Guapango. So, it's like a dance in common. Because, Mexico is so big [...] that's why it was difficult, but a great task, to summarize my entire culture in just one song (Carlos, interview, July 2019).**

**Link to Video 1: Mexican Guapango song *Mi querétaro lindo* (Video, Ana Čorić)  
[www.ethnoresearch.org/coric-video-1-mexican-guapango](http://www.ethnoresearch.org/coric-video-1-mexican-guapango)**

Speaking about cultures from various continents, in the European context, it was particularly interesting to meet people from the East, who brought the essence of their cultures to the western context. Ravi (29), a singer, songwriter and percussionist (tabla, darbuka, etc.) from the Indian region Punjab, is a full-time musician who is playing in a Sufi-rock band. Although his initial higher education and vocation was in the IT sector, his decision to quit that profession and devote his life to music was influenced by his rich musical path. He started to study Indian classical music in the Sikh temple where he went as a child with his grandmother. He even did some school and interschool competitions and performances within the classical setting but started to experiment with popular music the moment he joined the band. Except for the Indian edition and the Estonian one, his experiences with Ethno camps are supported by scholarships, so he went to Ethno England 2018 and Ethno Flanders 2019, too. During the camp, Ravi was very active on social media, where he posted a lot of interesting things about his European experiences, not only related to the music but also the different aspects of culture

and life in general. One of these moments was when he posted the Indian tune he presented to the group, performed at the main stage of Viljandi festival and broadcasted live on Estonian television<sup>7</sup>. His first criteria for choosing the song was 'to give a happy song which has good vibes, so everyone can connect to it'. It was important to him to make participants feel and connect to the culture although he knew most of them couldn't understand the lyrics and meaning of the song, which is for Indian people very important. The second criteria was to choose a tune he connects to, so he chose a song called *Mele Nuu Chal Mere Naal*, originally sang by Asa Singh Mastana, a veteran folk artist from Punjab. Doing this song was a tribute to the artist, who is today underrated and forgotten by many musicians, although he was a legend of his time. In this way, Ravi tried to keep his music alive.

Niu (26), another participant from the Eastern culture, came from China. A polyglot and a PhD student in cultural anthropology, she left her home a couple of years ago and moved to the Netherlands, and recently started to explore Estonian folk music because of the influence it has in the country. The research interest brought her to Ethno Estonia with some different expectations and assumptions about Estonia. But, the camp opened some new insights for her research:

**At the beginning my expectation is, ok, this is weird, but I can find out something about Estonians, new ways they're doing traditional music, [...] For me I see a little bit of Estonian style in there, so I really liked just in a sense that it's all so, it becomes a mirror for me to see how Estonia seeing themselves and is being seen by the others, and it's very crystal moment with different culture contact, I think. [...] But, there is also a very un-Estonian moment for me, because too see Estonian kids are spontaneously making a first step of getting to know each other, this is unusual since I saw in my research here (Niu, interview, July 2019).**

Besides seeing Estonian culture, in the Ethno camp Niu, in a way, started to 'forget about herself being Chinese' and very soon she felt that the camp encouraged her to ask herself questions: Who am I? Who am I being seen as? As a Chinese citizen, what are they curious about me? Although Niu is not a musician, she has played the piano since she was four, and she feels that music has always been a part of her, as well as feeling that her roots are a bit everywhere she goes in the world. It was interesting that at the beginning she didn't have a plan to present the tune from her country, because she is not a practical musician and her 'aim is to know Estonia', but later, when the other participants encouraged her to present something from China, she realized 'ok, this is not just Estonia, it's a cultural exchange', so she chose a Cantonese lullaby from her childhood, a song which is very close to her heart. She presented it by singing the lyrics, written both in Chinese and in Latin letters.

**Link to Video 2: Teaching and learning Chinese lullaby (Video, Ana Čorić)**  
[www.ethnoresearch.org/coric-video-2-chinese-lullaby](http://www.ethnoresearch.org/coric-video-2-chinese-lullaby)

With understanding that the main point is not about learning language ('it's not a linguistic workshop') and that the song has to be learned in only 30–45 minutes, it was quite challenging for her to teach it to the group, but the process was successful and the essence of the song was felt. After all, the point of Ethno, in general, is to share.

## THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis of the interviews with participants, organizers and volunteers, based on the theoretical background, showed that the Estonian 'ethno-ecosystem' has a unique impact in making connections within the community (formal and non-formal system), between cultures, as well as the worlds of classical and non-classical music and their transmission. The two key verbs raised from the thematic analysis were *sharing* and *stretching*. Both of the processes can be seen in forming the identity of the local community, as well as in empowering peoples' musical, cultural, personal and social identities. Stretching refers to growth that happens in the process of crossing the borders of (classical and non-classical) musical worlds, pedagogical approaches, formal and non-formal educational contexts, as well as in crossing participants' individual borders and challenges, which could be seen in the presented narratives. Seeing the growth of the Ethno Estonia 'Ethno-ecosystem' as a platform that constantly stretches by listening to the needs of its communities, gives a new light on this topic.

Besides service-based learning, which can be seen in the description of the Estonian connection with the Viljandi festival, folk music schools and university, organization of the camp and its influences, as well as overlapping of roles (for ex. from participants to volunteers), the connection with the democratic pedagogies can be seen in the main music activities in the camp. The process of sharing songs and tunes from various countries represented by the participants, as the main activity in Ethno camps, lead the participants towards the deeper appreciation of their own, as well as other participants' identities. Inês describes it very well in this quotation:

**Musically, it's a whole new world because you are confronted with very different ways of playing, very different instruments, very different ways of singing, so you're all the time stretching. [...] It's scary sometimes because you don't know if you can do it, singing this language, or playing this rhythm, or this groove...but, you feel like you grow musically and it's beautiful. Also, musically, for me, it forced me to understand my musical identity, to go back to understand what was this, like these songs I grew up with, this culture that I have. [...] And it almost forced me to look at that,**

**to listen to that differently and then to dig, you know, to go deep. And, it's beautiful because, when you have to share something, you also have to... before you share that, you really need to understand it yourself, so then you can share it with others. [...] I think that people that play music, like their personal identity is so linked with this musical identity, I don't know if there is a difference. I feel that I know myself better and I really feel myself when I'm here because I don't have other kinds of pressure or...I'm just sharing what I have to give in a most honest way. With all my flaws, and all my, you know, skills (Inês, interview, July 2019).**

However, the process of sharing the tune/song, which happens through oral transmission and peer-to-peer learning, is not the only point of sharing. After listening and learning music by ear, musicians go into creating arrangements. Tunes learned in the camp stop having the adjective related to the country of origin – ‘they all become our tunes’ – as one of the participants said. To see the importance of this particular stage, there is a ‘fruit-tree’ metaphor given by Ravi which elaborates stretching of the musical context:

**You give them the melody, and then the rhythm section comes in, and then the ideas come in. And, you know, you give them just a seed and we make it like a big tree that is giving fruits to the audience. It's just like that. The process of making the song is more beautiful by adding the colours from different nationalities and cultures.’ (Ravi, interview, July 2019).**

As it could be seen in the interviews with participants, the seed they give to the group is carefully chosen melodies that have specific stories emotionally connected to their life. Also, besides the tunes some of them had the opportunity to share in the rehearsals, there was one more space where participants could, as participants see it, share the tunes, express themselves personally and let the feelings out, as well as to connect with other participants and play together. The platform was simply called ‘open stage’ and it happened almost every night, consisting of six different acts. The performances varied from sharing their composed music, then sharing folk or popular music in numerous combinations of people playing together, ambient music with a therapeutic aim, as well as with folk dances which a lot of participants enjoyed very much and said that it was the biggest revelation of the camp for them. One of the specific combinations was the crossroads between Indian and Mexican musical culture.

**Link to Video 3: Meeting of Mexican, Estonian and Indian culture at Open Stage (Video, Ana Čorić) [www.ethnoresearch.org/coric-video-3-open-stage](http://www.ethnoresearch.org/coric-video-3-open-stage)**

Tunes and songs are not just connected to the emotional life of the participants and their performances; they lead them into the interest to dig in deep into other cultures. Seeing the tunes as a trigger for curiosity about the cultures, Elina (17), an Estonian participant who waited for eight years to become ‘old enough’ to come to Ethno, explains it like this:

I think the tunes are gateways into the culture. So, it's like, I understand the basics, because if you hear the language, you, like, hear different scales from the tune. You already gather some information from that. But, if you're interested in the culture, you have the people to ask it because usually, you go to the Internet to look up [for] something, but the Internet is not like a real person from that country. And I think Ethno is the best Google, in a way (Elina, interview, July 2019).

However, besides music, languages and stories, participants were sharing much more from their cultures, stretching themselves out of their comfort zones. One of the examples could be seen in this photo, where Ravi shared the art of making a turban with other participants.

**Image 2: Learning to put a turban. Photo, Ana Čorić.**



Ellstrom (2016, p. 74) in his master thesis done in Ethno Sweden confirms that 'the main ingredients of Ethno is how these (social, musical, cultural) aspects intertwine and function together'. Furthermore, he emphasizes that sharing cultures with music as a medium through social interactions means also an interplay between different musical genres. In that sense, one thing that went out from the interviews with participants and volunteers was the connection between the worlds of classical and non-classical music. All of them somehow lost the joy of playing in the classical setting. Non-classical contexts, such as Ethno, made them open to improvisation and experiment, in a musical, personal and social way. However, although they got a lot of freedom when starting to play non-classical music, they all appreciate the roots they got through the classical education: 'If your classical roots are strong, then it's easier to adapt other forms of music.' In terms of the Estonian local context, collaborations between the educational institutions and non-formal programs and festivals both offered for both worlds, giving (Estonian) youth the opportunity to grow in the freedom of choice.

## CONCLUSION

The Ethno Estonia 'umbrella', a historically and structurally well organized 'Ethno-ecosystem', is one of the best-connected local communities in terms of folk music education. It offers a wide range of activities, starting from formal music education to a non-formal program that gathers around the main Ethno Estonia camp, providing a strong platform and a hospitable community for intercultural encounters gathered around creative impulse. The dialectic between global and local (Sklad et al., 2016) appears as the main asset of the whole programme which could not be possible without the enthusiastic organizers of the camp, who were slowly, over decades, building connections of the camp within the community throughout the year, gathering people from different ages and backgrounds, places, active participation, inclusion (it can be seen in the camp selection criteria) and diversity of experiences, backgrounds and cultures. Continual building of interest and joy in the (g)local community through Ethno transforms not only the people involved in the activities but the community itself. As one of the participants said, 'the borders are only imaginary', so it will be interesting to see the further growth of Ethno Estonia. Furthermore, for future research it might be useful to find other examples of Ethno camps that show examples of good impact of Ethno or Ethno-inspired programs in the local community that are building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal education, as well as to measure the impact of Ethno in Estonia in the past 20 years in the whole community. Until then, the measure of the good practice will be joyful Ethno musicians and numerous dancing people gathering together at Viljandi Folk Festival – where the whole story started.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The data is taken from: <http://www.ethno-world.org/info/> (access: 15.09.2019.).

<sup>2</sup>According to Ćulum and Kovačić (2015), there are two types of youth work: (1) youth work in the broader sense (any kind of interaction between youth and a youth worker (includes both formal institution and non-formal sector) and (2) youth work in the narrow sense, as planned and organized process of empowerment of the youth based on partnership and co-creation of the process, fostering active participation in the society and personal development (non-formal sector).

<sup>3</sup>Viljandi Folk Music Festival is one of the largest summer folk festivals in Nordic and Baltic countries. Its mission is to keep the Estonian tradition alive. It gathers more than 800 musicians performing 110 concerts in 9 stages, 26000 visitors, instrument playing, singing and dancing workshops, handcrafts and exhibitions, and many more events specifically related to the traditional music all over the Viljandi. Since its beginning in the 1990s, it has had 27 editions. (<https://www.viljandifolk.ee/festival/festival-2019/introduction>, access: 15.10.2019.)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.folk.ee/en/about-us/epmk> (access: 25.10.2019.)

<sup>5</sup> <https://estonianworld.com/life/estonian-town-viljandi-is-designated-as-a-creative-city-by-unesco/> (access: 3.11.2019.)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.viljandifolk.ee/festival/get-involved/estonian-ethno> (access: 15.10.2019.)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QajjGCuMKBE> (access: 5.10.2019.)

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