

THE NATION THAT SINGS: CHOIRS AND SOCIAL ACTION IN SOVIET LATVIA

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Introduction

Nationalism sociologist Ieva Zaķe argues that, when comparing the political, cultural and ethnic aspects of Latvian nationalism, the Latvian ideologists are much more interested in the cultural, rather than the political dimension (Zaķe 2008: 153–159). On the contrary, musicologists and cultural sociologists mention the strong political implications of culture, particularly of the Song Celebration. They argue that the choir singing tradition plays a paramount role in the organization of society and this tradition is firmly rooted in the people's consciousness (Grauzdiņa, Grāvītis 1990: 5; Klotiņš 1998: 13–14, 20). The song attained its special status in the age of Romanticism when it was understood as an older, pre-literate textual form that recalled a nation's origins (Wright 2012: 270). Johan Gottfried Herder outlined the political importance of national songs in his concept of a cultural nation, which linked culture, language and nation discursively. In 1834, the magazine *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* edited by Robert Schumann suggested that choir singing could foster a spiritual unity of the German people (quoted in Klotiņš 1990: 14). Baltic Germans responded to the idea in 1857 when they held a song celebration in Tallinn. Latvians emulated the example by organizing small-scale celebrations in the following decade. In 1873, more than one thousand singers came to Riga to hold the first-ever Song Celebration. Latvian nationalist intellectuals borrowed the Romantic ideas about defining a nation by a shared culture only found among the common people. More specifically, folksongs became a form of cultural identity, with which the Latvian nation had to be created (Bula 2000: 8–9, 138; Zaķe 2008: 40–42). Nowadays the government sponsored Latvian Cultural Canon asserts that choir singing “carried Latvia to independence and through the occupation to the restoration of its nationhood” (Ikstena n.d.). “The nation that sings” has become a common collective self-identification.

This paper attempts to understand how choirs contributed to political change. Margaret Archer's (1996) theory of social morphogenesis provides a conceptual link between culture and action. Archer analytically distinguishes a cultural system from sociocultural interaction. A cultural system consists of logical propositions which can be complementary or contradictory; a sociocultural system is made of interpersonal relations. The balance between two systems determines

whether morphogenesis or morphostasis, i.e. elaboration or maintenance of the existing model will prevail. Offering a set of ideas, the cultural system creates a situational logic for agents; whether these ideas would have an effect on agency depends on sociocultural interaction, i.e. how agents use their power to implement the ideas. Agency itself is dynamic, and this is analyzed on three levels: agents understood as collectivities with similar life chances, actors understood as individual persons filling their given roles, and persons understood as people with a personal and social self (Archer 1995: 276–281). Furthermore, Archer distinguishes between corporate agents possessing power and influence, and primary agents devoid of them. Corporate agents invent new rules for new games containing roles in which social actors can be themselves (Archer 2000: 287). In the final account morphogenesis of agency or of agents depends on the persons who make choices.

Italian choral societies analysed by Robert Putnam (Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993) qualify as corporate agents. Choral societies created networks of civic engagement which possessed a great potential to develop and reinforce trust and solidarity. These voluntary associations produce two kinds of social effects:

- external effects on the larger polity imply that associations allow individuals to express their interests and demands on government;
- internal effects on participants mean that associations develop habits of cooperation, public-spiritedness and practical skills necessary to partake in public life (Putnam 2000: 367).

When individuals build up interpersonal networks, they augment their social capital by enabling cooperative relations. In other words, the choir is a corporate agent translating cultural meaning into the necessary skills and facilitating acquisition of social roles required for social action. Latvian scholars conceptualize the link between the cultural and the social in terms of group identity and emotions (Gale Carpenter 1996; Bula 2000; Tisenkopfs et al. 1995, 2002, 2008; Šmidchens 2014). Scholars agree that the Song Celebration is a resource of national identity and this is reinforced as singers and their audiences experience an emotional sense of commonality. However, why and how does this identification with others produce tremendous political transformations? Roger Brubaker (2004) contends that the identification with a group is a compound process including different modalities of attachment. He mentions three elements constituting groupness:

- a category – sharing some common attribute,
- a feeling of belonging together – particular events, their encoding in narratives, prevailing discursive frames etc.,
- a network – relational connectedness.

Latvian scholars discern two elements of groupness – categorization and the feeling of belonging together. The choir as a regular meeting place of peers pursuing a common goal – the Song Celebration – satisfies the principle of networking but from this perspective it has been studied only once in the early 1980s (Pavlovs 1984). Otherwise scholars were mostly interested in the emotions experienced by singers during the Celebration. In order to understand the political implications of singing together, this paper reviews the empirical evidence for internal and external effects. The former refers to the choir related activities of its members: setting up a choir, selecting repertoire, planning and carrying out rehearsals and concerts. These events are arranged by concrete actors and, as a matter of principle, they should have been documented. I suppose that choirs as corporate agents develop social interaction skills which actors can use when maintaining their choir and organizing other social actions beyond the concert stage. These external effects are documented by government and municipal institutions; I also expect that certain cases of choirs acting socially have been described and analyzed by historians, sociologists and political scientists. Thus, methodologically, the causal link between culture and society can be demonstrated by discerning agents and their actions as well as reactions of public institutions on these actions.

This paper analyses the experience of maintaining the Song Celebration tradition in Soviet Latvia. Sources used in this study are archival documents (1947–1985) of the government and eight of 26 Latvia’s municipal regions, as well as scholarly papers and press articles. Here I have to introduce clarity into the name of this cultural event. Folk dances were added to the concert programme in 1948 in order to allow singers to rest during the long open-air gala performance. From 1965 on, the event is called the ‘Nationwide Latvian Song and Dance Celebration’. In this paper the designations are used interchangeably.

Song and Dance Celebrations in Soviet Latvia

The archival documents disprove the homogenous acceptance of choir singing tradition: it was not a habit integrated into daily life. Right after the Nationwide Celebration, attendance at rehearsals decreased and many choirs disbanded. Singers used to get mobilized 1–1.5 years before the upcoming Nationwide Celebration and, owing to that, they lacked time to practice the complicated repertoire. In 1954, 85% of the participants of the 1950 Celebration applied for the 1955 Celebration (LVA, 270-2-2144: 152–153)¹. Only 112 of 650 singers registered in the Jelgava region attended the joint rehearsal five months prior to the 1960 Celebration (LVA, 678-2-89: 13). While in the Dobele region, the number of singers decreased by half compared with the previous Celebration, and the state of affairs in the Preiļi region was ‘disastrous’, according

¹LVA – Latvijas Valsts arhīvs (State Archives of Latvia). Henceforth, the first number in references to archived documents designates the fund, the second number stands for the series, the third number stands for the file, the numbers after the colon are the page numbers (if any).

to an official (LVA, 270-3-626: 10; 270-3-626: 25). The Talsi region municipality complained of similar absenteeism: three communities ignored the regional celebration, another three sent incomplete groups; in many more communities choirs were not established at all due to the lack of conductors. In 1965 the joint rehearsals in Talsi were poorly attended again: only half of the singers came to the event. The following figures illustrate the scale of the preparations. Almost 3,000 of the nearly 45,000 residents of the Talsi region prepared for the upcoming centennial Song and Dance Celebration in 1973:

- 550 singers of 11 choirs,
- 1350 singers of 33 school choirs,
- 115 musicians of 5 brass orchestras,
- 548 dancers of 27 folk dance and 4 ball-room dancing groups,
- 300 dancers of 9 junior and 3 senior dance groups (Ventspils ZVA², 133-1-533: 5–9).

² ZVA – Zonālais Valsts arhīvs (Regional State Archive).

In the view of the local authorities it was not sufficient: some collectives had incomplete membership, some secondary schools missed a choir or a dance group. The same happened in 1984 when, just half a year before the Celebration, the regional municipality demanded its department of culture to revive the inactive folk groups and ensure that the repertoire be learnt in time (Ventspils ZVA, 133-1-1336: 18–19).

Conductors admitted that only managerial pressure and material stimuli were able to compel people to join choirs. “If the municipality had provided moral and material aid then people would have sung and danced readily. The facts support this thesis. In the past, cultural activities languished in Staicele. However, when a new mayor was appointed the conditions improved sharply,” reported a municipal culture worker in 1972 (Valmieras ZVA, 693-1-1006: 9). The government created a complex structure of administering the Celebration. The overall responsibility was delegated to the government-appointed Managing Committee, which, in turn, oversaw the Arts Council and the Steering Committee comprising 26 sections. Another government-funded institution, the Folk Art Centre, published notes, brochures, and arranged training courses for choir leaders, vocal pedagogues and managers. On the local level, the activities were supervised by the municipal departments of culture whose employees held seminars, arranged regional folk parades and inspected institutions running a choir or a folk dance group (Ventspils ZVA, 133-1-474: 13–15). The regional folk parade was introduced after World War II in order to facilitate the preparation to the quinquennial Celebrations: the spirit of competition motivated choirs to hold regular rehearsals. The aim of the Song and Dance Celebration for Youth, established in 1960, was the involvement of students and schoolchildren in cultural activities.

The overall cultural policy requested setting up a choir in every club, community and large enterprise.

Managers of culture relied on some direct and indirect material stimuli to motivate singers and conductors. The government touted industrial and agricultural enterprises to contribute financially to maintenance of their choirs. In 1960, the law obliged employers to grant singers paid leave during the Nationwide Celebrations lasting nine days. From 1965 on, outstanding choirs were eligible for the status of People's Choir, which – besides being a great honour – yielded material benefits to conductors and accompanists: the Ministry of Culture hired artists as staff to pay their salaries from the state budget. Small remote municipalities with their modest resources had difficulties to maintain a choir because professionally-educated conductors refused to work without remuneration. "In Staicele the conductor rarely attends rehearsals. As long as the local administration cannot reward her, there will be no folk-group," reported a regional inspector in 1979 (Valmieras ZVA, 79-1-274: 27). The performance tradition depended so much on material support that the deputy prime-minister, Matīss Plūdonis, rhetorically exclaimed at a government session in 1960: "Should one sing for free or for a fee?" (LVA, 270-3-367: 114).

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Why did individuals avoid collective cultural activities? Why could choirs not perform without expensive professional conductors? And, most of all, why did the authorities want to have a choir and a dance group at every institution, whatever the cost? A peculiar characteristic of the Latvian Song Celebration is *a cappella* singing which requires laborious regular rehearsals. The large number of amateur performers allowed for selectivity when choosing the best ones for the Nationwide Celebration, thereby improving the artistic quality of the gala concerts. In 1960, Latvia had 575 choirs with 23,950 singers, 510 dance groups with 7,450 dancers, and 155 brass orchestras with 2,050 performers. At regional competitions, the jury selected 12,700 singers, 1,500 dancers and 300 instrumentalists for the Song and Dance Celebration (LVA, 270-3-383: 93–95; 270-3-45: 189–192). In addition, 10,000 children took part in the First Youth Song and Dance Celebration. In 1973, the Composers' Union suggested to toughen the competition criteria by dividing choirs into leagues according to their skills. Ordinary choirs fell behind the ones bearing the People's Choir title, and the difference between the capital city and provinces was notable (LVA, 270-3-9195: 235).

The availability of performers trained at the expense of municipalities and enterprises allowed composers to write rather complex scores. Under the pretext of setting contemporary communism-praising verses to music, composers secured regular state commissions for themselves (LVA, 678-1-103: 135–141). The arduous *a cappella* repertoire can only be learned under the baton of a skilled conductor. Seven music colleges

and the Latvian State Conservatory³ trained choir leaders, and the number of students almost doubled during Soviet years. In 1980, 27% of music college students studied in choir-conducting departments; ten percent of Conservatory students studied choir-conducting as their future profession. In the post-Soviet years their number decreased sharply (Table 1).

³Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music is the current name of the institution.

Table 1. Professional music education in Latvia

Year	1953	1980	2010
Music colleges	6	7	9
number of students	423	1185+40*	686
<i>incl. Department of choir conducting</i>	183	321+5*	115
%	43%	27%	17%
Latvian State Conservatory	1	1	1
number of students	235	582+270*	432+103**
<i>incl. Department of choir conducting</i>	41	58+29*	25
%	17%	10%	5%

* Part-time studies

** Paid tuition

Sources: LVA, 678-2-638; LVA, 678-4-292; Latvian National Centre for Culture; Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music

The rush for high performance quality satisfied the artistic ambitions of professional musicians and managers of culture, and helped them secure jobs and material rewards. A large share of the Celebration's budget went to cover their salaries. In 1960, the leading artists, consultants and vocal pedagogues received 11.4% of the budget in fees, which amounted to 0.9 million rubles (LVA, 236-2-63). As for ordinary citizens, a *cappella* singing was not a part of their daily cultural life. Audience ranked theatre performances, variety shows, cinema, reading, the circus and dance as the most popular pastimes (Pavlovs, Mikuda 1987: 57). Accompanied singing in small bands enjoyed more attention than choirs. Light music was demanded on dance floors, at festivities and parties sponsored by industrial and agricultural enterprises. Culture centres responsible for arranging leisure time performed their duties with the help of bands, which, in addition to providing entertainment, made some profit. Sentimental verses sung to unpretentious popular tunes by small ensembles of amateur musicians –'schlager' and 'ziņģes'⁴ – were frowned upon by the cultural elite; ever since then the cultural elite has feared that these easily sung tunes would endanger a *cappella* choirs⁵. After the Song Celebrations, some choirs would turn into bands; managers of culture described this trend as harmful to choir singing culture (Liepājas ZVA, 293-1-979: 31–33; LVA, 270-3-626: 10). Shortly before the upcoming Celebration, singers were pressured to join choirs.

⁴ The term 'ziņģes' (derived from German word 'singen') was introduced by Baltic German Lutheran pastor Gotthard Friedrich Stender to designate popular songs borrowed from Germans as well as vernacular folk songs (Vikсна 1995). However, over the course of time, the latter were excluded from this notion, and in contemporary conversational language (as opposed to scholarly language) the term 'ziņģes' is frequently used as a synonym of 'schlager'.

⁵ A *cappella* part-singing was assigned the political function of overcoming regional identities whereas 'schlager' was a more potent stimulus to self-organization and creative activity. The state owned Latvian Radio preferred these and other entertaining genre songs in the early years of broadcasting, but they were sidelined in the program under the dictatorship in 1934–1940 (Kruks 2001: 52–53, 60–62). Throughout the Soviet years, academic musicians discouraged the use of these tunes in contemporary songs; they condemned the popular solo and ensemble singing practices for having simple vocal technique, as well as banal and emotionally shallow texts. The 'schlager' format radio station *Latvijas Radio-2* achieved enormous success since being founded in 1998 (Kruks 2004: 206). The genre has pretensions of being a basis of ethnic identity: "Despite the official ban during the occupation, our songs helped to maintain the ethnic spirit and gave hope of the independent Latvia's resurrection," claimed the founder of this radio station (Duka 2005). Unlike choir singing, 'schlager' is indeed a grassroots artistic activity: amateurs write songs, produce recordings, and organize concerts and festivals.

Choir singing epitomized the perception of national collective identity. Meanwhile, the population sought to strengthen local and personal identities. Local patriotism and corporatism prevented the merger of smaller groups, as choir members were reluctant to admit outsiders from a neighbouring community, another institution or social milieu. With difficulty, managers met the government regulations stipulating that a choir should have at least 24 singers representing voices proportionally and performing *a cappella* (Ventpils ZVA, 300-1-287: 1-3; Valmieras ZVA, 489-1-188: 46; 489-1-379: 73; LVA, 236-1-40: 198). “We could involve school girls as singers but, at this rate, the teachers threatened to abandon the choir,” a manager explained to municipal authorities in 1984 (Ventpils ZVA, 300-1-287: 2). Incomplete collectives jeopardized mastering the repertoire. The municipality of Valmiera formulated the organizational problems succinctly in a report edited in 1969:

“On the whole our choirs are weak and poorly trained [...]. Ensembles should merge into choirs. More radical changes are needed. Communities should co-operate setting up choirs. Managers of enterprises should have a talk with people, a heart-to heart talk. Administration by mere injunction cannot bring results. School teachers and children are particularly concerned. Otherwise, in ten years we will have only choirs of pensioners in this region.” (Valmieras ZVA, 489-1-188: 16)

Soviet sociologists were aware that the performance tradition depended on external pressure rather than on grassroots self-organization (Pavlovs 1984). Among the discouraging factors was the rush for professionalization. The skills of amateur singers were insufficient for the mandated complex repertoire and did not meet the interests of the audience, nevertheless, singers used to accept the program as a duty which was not to be questioned (Pavlovs, Mikuda 1987: 129; Rasa 2008: 174). Musicologists maintain that choir singing was promoted as a duty and the work of every individual from the early 20th century, and this ethos is still alive among singers today. Ilma Grauzdiņa appreciates the elitist music policy: for her the 1980s was the “golden age of amateur choirs” (Grauzdiņa 2013: 427; see also Klotiņš 1998: 26, 30). The rapid increase of the professional level was secured by new forms of artistic competitions among amateurs and the training of conductors. Additionally, easy to perform songs, which might have been attractive for less skilled singers, were not accepted in the repertoire. Tālis Tisenkopfs, Signe Āboltiņa, and Ieva Miežīte (1995: 43) trace the professionalization trend back to the 1960s, however, it had been already set in interwar Latvia. The organization of the Song Celebration in 1926, the first one in independent Latvia, was the responsibility of the Association of Composers (*Skaņražu kopa*) founded in 1923 by ambitious composers residing in Riga. The organizers motivated their colleagues to write new complex scores. The Association of Latvian Choral Conductors (*Latvijas koru diriģentu*

biedriba) rated these songs too difficult to perform by amateurs, and denounced the composers for ignoring the modest performance skills of the provincial choirs. Indeed, the singers complained about long, exhausting rehearsals (Sproģis 1930: 27–31; Grauzdiņa 2013: 420). In the final account, the elite artists won the dispute with the provincials. In an effort to increase vocal performance skills, quality control of choirs was put in place in 1931. Furthermore, the cultural workers of Soviet Latvia developed it further into a three stage inspection of skills at regional parades, regional celebrations, and inter-regional parades. The juries of these competitions evaluated the eligibility of choirs for the gala concert in the year prior to the quinquennial Celebration. Eventually, with state support, the artistic elite proved that amateurs can get excellent training and a choir of 16,000 singers can give a brilliant performance.

Government and municipality archives provide strong evidence of the professionalization of the singing tradition beginning already in the 1920s, and this trend undermined the grassroots activity. While reading the archived files of the Communist Party, the Government, as well as regional administrations, neither I, nor historian Inga Upaciere (2008), discovered any circumspect strategy of ideological indoctrination prescribed to choir managers. The ‘Classified files’ (“Īpašā mape”) of the bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party is a reliable source of information on public mood. In these files containing reports on counter-ideological activities, I have not found documents on disloyal activities of choirs. The authorities were far more troubled by the ‘uncultured’ practices of citizens. Alcohol consumption, truancy and negligence at work, the black market for Western consumer goods and commercial culture discredited communist morals and undermined economy.

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Culture and Social Action: Scholarly Paradigms

Scholarly analysis of the Song Celebration in Soviet Latvia reveals several methodological and epistemological shortcomings. The most ambitious book on singing tradition in the three Baltic countries – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – written by Guntis Šmidchens (2014) neglects the professionalization strategy implemented by the Latvian cultural elite. Estonians and Lithuanians (as well as Latvians in the diaspora) maintained their Celebrations open to all amateurs without special training, thus fostering the grassroots activity of singers organizing the cultural events. The book discusses the first and the last Soviet Celebration mostly but there is little information about the ones held between 1960 and 1985. Nevertheless, the author uses two particular cases of Stalinist cultural policy and ‘perestroika’ to make generalizations about the supposedly homogeneous Soviet cultural policy and cultural resistance. Another shortcoming of the book is the

reliance on secondary sources and memories of elite persons while archived materials are neglected.

Scholars discussing the choir singing tradition propose emotions as a mediating phenomenon between the text of songs and social action. For example, it is argued that the singers and the audience exchanged hidden meanings and codes of interpretation so that everyone experienced a pronounced emotional feeling of ethnic belonging (Tisenkopfs et al. 1995: 43, 45; 2002: 9, 43). Šmidchens argues that “singing offered a meeting place for free people” (2014: 326). However, it is not clear why the educated censors, who belonged to the same cultural tradition, skimmed over some verses which allowed for the public performance of counter-ideological songs and the repressive state administration neglected the circulation of subversive emotions.

If text causes emotions then the ideological songs commissioned by the communist authorities and performed by the choirs should have strengthened loyalty to the regime. Scholars do not reflect on this issue explicitly. Some authors argue that the absenteeism was an act of resistance: amateurs sought to evade the Celebration because they were aware of its ideological misuse; the state apparatus had to apply administrative pressure in order to place the tradition at the service of ideology (Boiko 2001: 10; Klotiņš 1998: 34; Lapiņa 2002: 117). Some musicologists justify such pressure because it helped to maintain the choir singing tradition while the ideological admixture (e.g., the scenario of the ritual and inclusion of the Soviet political repertoire) was an empty ritual permitting the performance tradition (Grauzdiņa, Grāvītis 1990: 79). “The orchestrated songs of Soviet Stalinism are not evidence of the singers’ true feelings,” Šmidchens declares (Šmidchens 2014: 311). However, the author does not explain why the causality ‘text – emotion’ is missing in this case, as he earlier compared communist texts with Pavlovian response conditioning aimed at changing social conduct (Šmidchens 2014: 137). Tālis Tisenkopfs, Signe Āboltiņa, and Ieva Miezīte (1995) express contradictory statements. In one paragraph they contend that, since the 1960s, a gap between the official and popular meanings assigned to the Song Celebration deepened (Tisenkopfs et al. 1995: 43); but, by the end of the article, they come to the conclusion that “to a certain degree” the Celebration achieved the Communist Party objective to gather individual support for socialist ideology and institutions (Tisenkopfs et al. 1995: 48).

When introducing emotions as a key mediator between text and social action, scholars are missing a substantial theory of emotions. Theories of the effects of music on emotional response and social conduct overviewed by Šmidchens (2014: 321–325) give contradictory explanations. Šmidchens himself abandons music related arguments preferring ideological ones. In his opinion, Soviet songs failed to arouse

emotional response while ethnic singing “moves and transforms people rationally and emotionally, intellectually and viscerally” (Šmidchens 2014: 49). His claim that music aroused emotions supporting social action against Soviet military power is based on selective choice of political episodes: in a key moment for the independence movement, during the *coup d'état* in August 1991, people remained passive. In another fragments Šmidchens nevertheless admits that the institutional transformation comes before the emotions evoked by singing together. Thus, performing true songs came after the rights of assembly: “[...] after Balts seized the freedoms of speech and assembly in 1987, it is safe to assume that publicly performed songs expressed the singers’ ideologies” (Šmidchens 2014: 312).

The regime change in 1988–1991, which was dubbed ‘The Singing Revolution’, is considered the ultimate proof of the Song Celebration’s agential force. “When the opportunity arose, Balts drew on their national singing traditions and stepped forward [...] to declare their independence non-violently, disarming Soviet power in a singing revolution,” argues Šmidchens (2014: 326). “A song to kill a giant: Latvian revolution and the Soviet empire’s fall” – that is the title of the memoirs by Latvian politician Sandra Kalniete (2013). A scholar explains that throughout the Soviet years the cultural practice preserved true values, which were translated into political action by conductors, musicians, and music pedagogues who became the standard-bearers of ‘The Singing Revolution’ (Anspaks 2004: 41). Nevertheless, historians and political scientists do not cite examples of choirs enabling self-organization and political action (e.g. Bleiere et al. 2005; Jundzis 2010; Karklins 1994; Lieven 1994; Škapars 2005). Informants interviewed by sociologists provided no details attesting to the agential force of choirs (Tisenkopfs et al. 2002; 2008). Does singing songs during mass rallies qualify as an agency transforming the political institutions? Šmidchens explains that singing only had a supportive role: an emotional bond created by singing together encouraged the political elite to act (Šmidchens 2014: 318). However, the sequence of events was the exact opposite: “the opportunity” mentioned by Šmidchens (2014: 326) arose when Mikhail Gorbachev launched political reforms known as ‘perestroika’, and the mass rallies in Latvia were organized by the local political elite. When the conservative communists deposed Mikhail Gorbachev in August 1991, only Muscovites went on streets to defend democracy. In Latvia, during the time these decisive events led to independence, no grassroots activity inspired by singing was observed.

Conclusion

In this paper the political implications of choir singing were operationalized as internal and external effects of choirs as associations with voluntary membership. Internally, choirs sustain top-down relations of authority rather than horizontal relations of cooperation: amateur artists depend on external professional management and provisions of infrastructure to secure a high standard of *a cappella* singing. As to the external effects, there are no explicit proofs of choirs acting socially. Scholars take the causality culture – agency for granted but they do not provide evidence of social action undertaken by choirs. Scholars argue that emotions mediate between cultural texts and social action, however, they do not develop a theory of emotions which could explain a) how texts evoke emotions, b) how emotional experience inspires social action. Latvian researchers consider only two elements constituting groupness identified by Brubaker (2004): traditional songs as a common attribute and a feeling of belonging together. The third element – relational connectedness – is omitted from the discussion. The cultural activity is limited to the refinement of persons but there is no evidence of choirs acting as a corporate agency distributing social roles and enabling actors to act in support of the values communicated by cultural texts. Currently, a few authors discuss the Celebration as a singular professionally organised cultural event while avoiding speculation on its social and political effects (Silabriedis 2013; Matīsa 2008).

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⁶ Sociālās rīcības (jeb sociālās uzvedības) jēdziens izriet no Maksa Vēbera formulējuma: "Rīcība ir sociāla, ja indivīds rīkojas, ņemot vērā citu [indivīdu] rīcību un tādējādi ir orientēts uz to." (Weber [1922] 1968: 4)

DZIEDĀTĀJTAUTA: KORI UN SOCIĀLĀ RĪCĪBA⁶ PADOMJU LATVIJĀ

Sergejs Kruks

Kopsavilkums

Atslēgvārdi: kordziedāšana, kultūras nacionālisms, Dziesmu svētki, kolektīvā identitāte, sociālā rīcībaspēja

Rakstā tiek analizēti Latvijas PSR valdības, Kultūras ministrijas un dažu administratīvo rajonu izpildvaras dokumenti, kas skar kordziedāšanas praksi 1947.–1985. gadā. Dokumenti norāda uz mākslas elites centieniem veicināt dziedāšanas augsto profesionālo līmeni un iekļaut repertuārā sarežģītas kompozīcijas. Šī tendence iezīmējās jau 20. gadsimta 20.–30. gadu Latvijas Republikā. Arī Padomju Latvijā uzņēmumi, rajonu vadība un republikas varas iestādes ieguldīja ievērojamus materiālos un organizatoriskos resursus, lai motivētu indivīdus dziedāt kori un regulāri apmeklēt mēģinājumus. Liels koru skaits bija nepieciešams, lai nodrošinātu iespēju atlasīt labākos no tiem Vispārējo latviešu Dziesmu svētku koncertiem. Arhīvu materiāli tādējādi liecina,

ka indivīdu pašiniciatīva nav bijusi vispārizplatīta prakse kordziedāšanas tradīcijas uzturēšanā. Arhīvos nav atrodami arī dokumenti par koru pārstāvju sociālo rīcību aplūkotajā periodā (1947–1985).

Tālis Tisenkopfs, Signe Āboltiņa un Ieva Miezīte (Tisenkopfs et al. 1995), kā arī Guntis Šmidchens (2014) min emocijas kā vidutāju starp kultūras tekstu (dziesmu) un sociālo rīcību. Taču viņu spriedumi nav balstīti emociju teorijā, tāpēc ne vienmēr šķiet pamatoti. Pirmkārt, šie pētnieki pieņem, ka kultūras kopienas locekļi lieto vienotu tekstu interpretācijas praksi (tomēr, ja tā, tad nav saprotams, kāpēc šai pašai kopienai piederošie ideologi un cenzori daudzos gadījumos nav pamanījuši tekstu daudznozīmību). Otrkārt, autori implicē sociālo rīcību kā homogēnu vienību – individuālu psiholoģisko stāvokļu kopumu.

Margareta Ārčere (Archer 1995, 1996, 2000) savā socioloģiskajā teorijā piešķir nozīmīgu lomu indivīda emocionalitātei un ķermenim. Taču kolektīvā rīcība prasa zināmu organizētību jau korporatīvā aģenta līmenī. Roberts Patnems (Putnam 1993) secinājis, ka itāļu kora biedrības ir darbojušās kā šādi korporatīvie aģenti, radot mijiedarbes tīklus, kas veicina savstarpēju uzticību un solidaritāti. Rodžersa Brūbeikera (Brubaker 2004) grupas veidošanās koncepcija savukārt vedina uz pieņēmumu, ka Padomju Latvijas Dziesmu svētku prakse nodrošinājusi indivīdu to vai citu kategorizāciju (balstoties uz kopīgām īpašībām) un sajūtu par piederību grupai; tomēr arhīvu dokumenti neapliecina, ka kolektīvā kultūras prakse būtu noteikti veicinājusi indivīdu tīklošanos, kas ir nepieciešama sociālajai mijiedarbei ārpus koncertvides.

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