

# THE MANIFESTATIONS OF LIVONIAN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ACROSS THE LATVIAN AND ESTONIAN BORDER: FRAMING EARLY FIELD NOTES FROM RESEARCH SITES

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**Abstract.** Today the Livonian core area includes 14 coastal villages on the northern Courland peninsula in the northwest of Latvia. Yet, the manifestations of Livonian intangible heritage can be observed in several cultural landscapes as Livonians once inhabited territories along the Gulf of Rīga, extending into modern Estonian lands and the lower course of the Gauja and Daugava Rivers. Despite the indigenous origin of Livonian culture, these manifestations are often marginalised and not immediately visible.

This paper seeks to describe the first comparative findings from the international research project “Re-voicing cultural landscapes: narratives, perspectives, and performances of marginalised intangible cultural heritage”, which brings together researchers from four European universities, incl. the University of Latvia and the University of Tartu.

**Keywords:** intangible cultural heritage, cultural landscape, linguistic landscape, place identity, Livonian

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2022.13.1.09>

## 1. Introduction

From June 2021 to May 2023, the University of Latvia Livonian Institute, in cooperation with the University of Tartu Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics, is involved in the international research project “Re-voicing cultural landscapes: narratives, perspectives, and

performances of marginalised intangible cultural heritage” (hereafter, Re:voice) in collaboration with the University of Groningen (Netherlands) and the University of Falmouth (UK). This project is devoted to studying the manifestations of the intangible cultural heritage (hereafter ICH) of traditional and indigenous minorities such as the Livonians, Frisians, Cornish, and its significance for those minorities. One of the tasks of the project is to understand how to make the ICH of marginalised cultures or minorities more visible in the cultural landscape and to promote its sustainability by also making recommendations for international, national, and local policy makers beyond academic circles. The research consortium of Re:voice has to find answers to the questions: What is the function of ICH in general – and language specifically – in the performance of marginalised identities, in particular in cultural live events such as festivals and theatre? How is ICH accessed and engaged with by minority and majority individuals and organisations, and how does the idea of the ‘other’ manifest itself? How can we develop greater synergy and understanding between majority and minority to make ICH more resilient, without compromising minority culture ownership and identity?

As part of Re:voice, two research teams – one from the Livonian Institute (UL), the other from the Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics (UT) – are conducting research into two Livonian historical territories on opposite sides of the Gulf of Rīga: the Livonian Coast in the northwest of Latvia and the Salaca Livonian settlement. During the ethnographic research, the evidence of ICH in the cultural landscape is documented and analysed, the significance and potential of Livonian heritage for the revitalisation of elements of ICH in the formation and maintenance of the place identity is highlighted. In this article, we present the early observations from these sites in the Livonian areas to provide the groundwork for further research within Re:voice. We also compare the manifestations of the Livonian ICH on the Livonian Coast and across the Estonian-Latvian border.

Therefore, we position the target area and communities, and review and discuss the main theoretical concepts – cultural landscape and place identity – which help to understand the significance of the ICH in the narratives of Livonianness, manifestations of ICH, and practices in local communities. Further on, we briefly outline the methodological underpinnings of the research and the ethnographic methods, which

researchers must keep in mind when they enter and return to a site. Finally, we discuss the early findings and draw the first conclusions for the further research process.

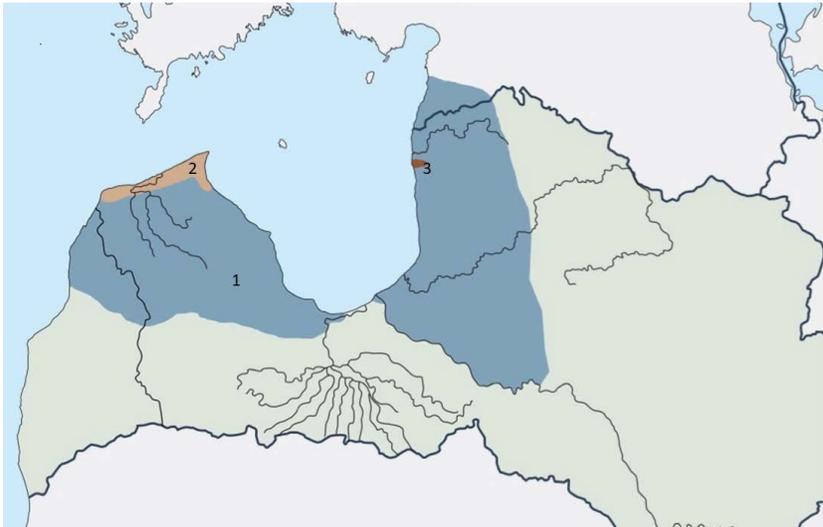
## 2. Livonian areas in the past and present

Livonian culture is indigenous to Latvia and southwestern Estonia. The first known historical record where Livonians were mentioned is the early 12th century chronicle “The Tale of Bygone Years” (aka the Primary Chronicle) by Nestor the Chronicler. According to archaeological excavations, chronicles, historical documents, and language data, Livonians lived in large areas of present-day Latvia and southwestern Estonia in the 10th–13th centuries (see Figure 1). Archaeologists have identified five Livonian-inhabited areas: northern Courland, the lower reaches of the Daugava River, the lower reaches of the Gauja River, Idumea (on the lower course of the Brasla River, on the right bank of the Gauja), and Metsepole (the western part of Latvia’s present-day region of Vidzeme as well as southwestern Estonia) (Zemītis 2013: 95). Once residing in a considerable part of the territory of modern Latvia and a small part of Estonia, by the mid-19th century, the Livonians remained in two isolated areas on both ends of the Gulf of Rīga: the Salaca Livonians across the Latvian-Estonian border and the Courland Livonians on the Courland peninsula. The region presently known as the Livonian Coast refers to the 14 sparsely inhabited villages on the northern shore of Courland. The Livonian Coast was the homeland of the Livonians until they were exiled in the course of the two world wars and the Soviet occupation.

At present, there are two groups of people who can be associated directly with Livonian heritage: (1) Courland Livonians and their descendants and (2) Vidzeme Livonians. The Courland Livonians, despite the fact that most of their descendants live in exile, have a sense of belonging to the Livonian Coast. This community consists of those identifying themselves as Livonians and the larger community of Courland Livonian descendants who may not identify themselves as Livonians, but are also a part of the Livonian ICH community. The Vidzeme Livonians (aka the Salaca Livonians or the Svētciems Livonians) are mainly identifiable as local residents; some of them are

the descendants of the Metsepole Livonians who assimilated into the Latvians by the 19th century (Wiedemann 1861, Cimermanis 2003: 11–27). According to the latest census data in 2011, 250 people identified themselves as Livonians in Latvia, almost all of them from the Courland Livonian community. The Courland (and also Vidzeme) Livonians and their descendants in Latvia today reside mainly in the cities of Rīga, Ventspils, and partially also on the Livonian Coast (Ernštreits 2019: 105).

In addition to Livonian ICH communities, there are different cultural landscapes involved (see Section 3 for definitions). Those on the western side of the Gulf of Rīga include the Livonian Coast – located in Ventspils and Talsi municipalities and inhabited by less than 1000 people (up to ~1500 in the summer season) – and on the eastern side of the Gulf of Rīga is the former Livonian Metsepole region, which is divided among Limbaži, Saulkrasti, Sigulda, Valmiera counties in Latvia (largest settlements: Salacgrīva, Staicele, Aloja, Mazsalaca, Lēdurga) and Pärnu county in Estonia (seaside villages: Häädemeeste, Ikla, Treimani) (Figure 1). This area is home to ~15 000 inhabitants.



**Figure 1.** Map of Livonian areas: 1 – area inhabited by Livonians in the 10th–13th century; 2 – area in Courland inhabited by Livonians until ~ the 1950s; 3 – area in Vidzeme inhabited by Livonians until ~ the 1850s. (Lībīeši 2019: 9).

Although the Livonian community in Latvia is small and territorially dispersed, it is active and closely connected to the Livonian Coast in its everyday activities but also by its sense of belonging. Many community members have either a permanent or seasonal residence in the area. The main traditional events of the Livonian community (see below) as well as the acquisition of Livonian language and cultural heritage take place on the Livonian Coast, for example, at the Children's and Youth Summer School "Mierlinkizt" and at the International Livonian Summer University. However, the connection with the Livonian Coast is more spiritual, emotional, and symbolic (Pašāne 2022), as in reality, the Livonian villages are sparsely populated and most members of the Livonian community live elsewhere. In addition, the permanent population of the Livonian Coast has changed over time. For example, during the Soviet era many houses abandoned by Livonian fishermen were purchased by Rīga intellectuals. Especially today, when the seaside attracts new residents, properties on the Courland coast are in high demand and the Livonian Coast is a booming tourism destination.

A different situation can be observed in northern Vidzeme. The residents aware of their Livonian roots live mainly on the banks of the Svētupe and Salaca Rivers in Pāle, Svētdciems, Salacgrīva, and Staicele. The genealogical research by historian Rasma Noriņa confirmed that the Livonian families of Vidzeme consider their Vidzeme Livonian ancestry to be important (Noriņa 2018). The descendants of these families are regarded as the core of the Vidzeme Livonian community as far as cultural heritage is concerned. They use elements of the Vidzeme Livonian-influenced dialect of Latvian in their daily language (Rudzīte 1994: 289).

In the area where the 13th-century Metsepole region extends into southwestern Estonia, Livonian ICH attracts different people with varying motivations: some may look for their roots and answers regarding their identity and speech, e.g., why did their grandparents use the dialect they did, others may feel uneasy with the knowledge that an ethnic minority may have been quickly assimilated into the majority without anyone noticing it, still others may see it as a unique selling point and branding opportunity for a peripheral area, which is usually passed by or attracts visitors for only short seasonal periods. Below, in Section 4, we describe what we observed, mapped, and whom we met, when visiting these sites or otherwise in the course of our research.

### **3. Intangible cultural heritage: its relationship to cultural landscapes and place identity**

In order to frame the manifestations of ICH theoretically, we review and discuss the concepts of cultural landscape and place identity as these are central to most traditional (i.e., non-virtual) interpretations and equally crucial for the majority and minority communities, the demarcation of which, however, is difficult to make because of the Livonians' multiple identities. Yet we emphasise the paradoxical and self-reflective character of the concept 'heritage' as "the discursive construction of heritage is itself part of the cultural and social processes that are heritage" (Smith 2006: 13). Nevertheless, local communities may benefit from the understanding of cultural heritage as a variety of (often competing) discourses as it provides them narratives to (re) imagine and experience ICH.

#### **3.1. The imagined character of the cultural landscape**

The socio-spatial associations of a cultural landscape may persist over time, conditioned by social relations. There are two perspectives for defining these relations: (1) a geographic perspective, space – 'real', 'represented' and (2) the 'imagined' – a foundational concept in the understanding of world constituents, either collective (community, nation, ethnic group) or self-based (gender, identity, ethnicity, culture) (Christou 2006: 34). Both the geographical location and narratives of the self-consciousness as well as the social environment are connected to the concept of 'cultural landscape', i.e., "a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment" (Harrison 2013: 125). There are four types of cultural landscapes: organically evolved, relict, continuing, and associated landscapes (Fowler 2003). An organically evolved landscape emerges from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious practice and has evolved to its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. A relict landscape is characterised by evolutionary geographical and other visible tangible features. The Livonian Coast is a narrow coastal strip of land between the sea and forest, and can be regarded as an example of a relict landscape. The geographic character of the coast creates an enclosed environment for its inhabitants as

well as shapes their place identity. A continuing landscape maintains an active social role in contemporary society as well as influences the traditional lifeways of local communities. And, finally, the associated cultural landscape manifests a chain of different connotations: religious, aesthetic, or cultural notions of inherent and imagined elements. These various features of the cultural landscape may be linked to different narratives of the sense of place. In addition, cultural landscapes do not exist without the people who create them. People tend to position themselves, imagine, recall, and transform their associations within their habitat as if their region existed on its own, forgetting or not noticing that it is actually constructed and narrated (Christou 2006: 34). This is also one of the reasons why a researcher's stance and positionality is so important to mapping narratives and other elements of ICH; these may influence the recognition of one's place identity and surge local communities' interest in re-voicing their cultural heritage. As the renowned cultural geographer Gregory J. Ashworth observed: "heritage does not exist as a resource waiting to be recognised, preserved and valued. It is a contemporary cultural construction whose values are as ascribed and therefore, mutable" (Ashworth 2011: 26).

### **3.2. Place identity as a product of cultural experiences**

The concept of identity involves dual contradictory meanings. Firstly, it refers to something or somebody that is uniquely different and, secondly, to something or somebody that is the same (Ashworth 2011: 23). Human mobility also has consequences for place identity awareness and can raise the discussion of substantive identity. Given the complexity of the identity formation process, it is important to have the 'doing' features such as experiences as well as the symbolic meanings of identity as an outcome which may be described as "practice-based thinking" (Taylor 2010: 41). The process of identifying oneself is also a process of self-construction. For instance, cultural performances such as events or festivals can be described as self-reflective experiences. Cultures work as self-presentations and offer interpretations through stories, comments, portrayals, and mirrors (Kaminsky & Weiss 2007). Therefore, a culture is both the stage and the reflection. The processes of constructing place identity within a particular culture include many layers and forms starting from the spontaneous and cognitive to the

more socially-conditioned: experiences, emotions, meanings, values, and memories that vary over time and interaction with the community. Therefore, also the narration, as the process of sequences and meanings of symbolic actions of self-presentation, representation, and interpretation within the place identity can be understood as essential practices re-voicing past and contemporary manifestations of cultural heritage. ICH mostly is place bound and experienced by the local community. Therefore, people may identify with physical locations as well as with specific cultural groups and their mentalities. Their cultural associations can be beneficial for shaping a cultural landscape to re-voice the elements of ICH to the extent that the specific location becomes a significant representation of the community itself.

### **3.3. Ethnographic methods for understanding intangible cultural heritage comparatively**

Ethnography can be seen both as a product and as a process, but first of all, it is a “way of seeing” or “way of looking” (Wolcott 2008). As a process it involves the maximum presence of a researcher (cf. (participant) observation) supported by other known research methods: formal/structured and less formal/structured interviews, the study of documents and artefacts (e.g., linguistic landscapes). Most importantly, a researcher is expected to have relationships with, respect, display reciprocity and responsibility towards his/her research subjects (Brayboy et al. 2012). However, using ethnographic methods comparatively can be a challenge as research settings vary and so do researchers. In this section, we briefly outline research methods. Given the constructionist approach in ICH research described in the above sections of the article, secondary and primary data are collected from several sources by desk-based research (websites, newspapers, etc.), by documenting linguistic landscapes, and by observing and interviewing people. Those data collection methods build on each other and form a sort of ethnographic research, which is informed more by research subjects and less by researchers.

One of our research interests was narratives used in the acts of cultural performance (e.g., events), but also the dominant and emerging discourse embedded in policy documents and promotional materials at local and national levels. We also kept in mind the cross-border nature of events as Estonia and Latvia participated in several joint projects. We

have started mapping local and national stakeholders. For interviews, we use the format of 1:1 semi-structured interviews. Individual informants will be targeted especially during the events where they might have a role of participant, organiser, visitor/tourist, or other. Additionally, stakeholders – the representatives of cultural bodies, municipality boards, state offices (e.g., tourism), and local entrepreneurs – are selected via purposive sampling and interviewed. Therefore, the research consortium has developed an interview protocol, which can be adjusted to local contexts, but will also allow comparison. Both interview protocols include questions about place identity, majority and minority, the functions of and access to ICH. For informants, we have prepared informed consent forms which will ensure their autonomous participation in the project. The interviews are recorded, transcribed, and anonymised, tagged according to open coding, and analysed thematically. The data are first stored in password protected computers and at the end of the project forwarded to repositories at the University of Latvia and University of Tartu.

Furthermore, by studying linguistic landscapes, we observed whether and how Livonian instrumentally is used in signage (see also Kļava & Ernštreits 2022 in this volume).<sup>1</sup> Our research is also informed by cultural mapping (Longley & Duxbury 2016), which is used as a tool in urban planning and community development, and is defined as “a process of collecting, recording, analysing and synthesising information in order to describe the cultural resources, networks, links and patterns of usage of a given community or group” (Stewart 2007: 8). Besides data collection, cultural mapping is vital for disseminating information and ideas. Since autumn 2021, we already have completed some field trips, mapped individual informants and organisations, and started collecting primary and secondary data (for details see Section 4 below).

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1 The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration. The linguistic landscape of a territory can serve two basic functions: an informational function and a symbolic function (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25).

#### **4. Fieldwork in the Livonian Coast and Salaca Livonian areas**

Within the Re:voice project, the Livonian Institute research team has done several field trips both to the Livonian Coast and to Mazsalaca, Pāle, Staicele, and Alojā in northern Vidzeme. During the research, the Livonian areas were visited and the manifestations of Livonian ICH in the landscape were documented. The team has conducted 9 interviews (totalling 20 hours) with 16 people so far – both 1:1 interviews and online interviews, due to pandemic restrictions. The interview questions are structured differently for each target group of respondents, who are (a) members of the Livonian community, (b) residents of Livonian historical territories, including newcomers or people who have acquired property or started businesses in recent years, (c) policy makers and stakeholders – incl. employees of municipalities, museums, tourism information centres. In the summer of 2021, several Livonian cultural performances were also attended (see below).

The UT research team started site visits in southwestern Estonia when the general methodological framework of Re:voice was being developed. The site visits to the coastal villages, incl. Treimani and Ikla, were primarily meant to observe Livonian ICH by documenting the Livonian language and mentions of Livonian in the landscape (aka linguistic landscapes). In addition, the team identified potential research subjects-stakeholders and piloted the draft interview protocol, but also kept an eye on events, where further primary data on ICH could be collected. Altogether, we have done five site visits to the area; one in July 2021, one in September 2021, two in October 2021, and one in January 2022. Observations from the visits, desk research, and two interviews are briefly presented and discussed below.

##### **4.1. Documenting intangible cultural heritage in the Courland Livonian area**

One of the manifestations of ICH is oral tradition, which includes language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO 2020). Livonian is an indigenous language of Latvia, which is now spoken as a second language by about 20 people around the world (Ernštreits 2019: 105). Livonian is one of the most endangered languages in

the world today (Moseley 2010), mainly due to the small number of language speakers and thus the limited transfer of the language to the next generations. Nowadays, Livonian maintains vitality because of its symbolic rather than instrumental functions (Muktupāvela & Treimane 2016). Although the use of Livonian in Latvia has its own legal framework and thus legal protection, for instance, the State Language Law (1999), the Law “On the Free Development of Latvian National and Ethnic Groups and the Right to Cultural Autonomy” (1991), the Latvian Historical Lands Law (2021), use of language is still limited by the lack of public initiatives and general knowledge and understanding (Kļava & Ernštreits 2022). Nevertheless, Livonian is the most central element of Livonian ICH,<sup>2</sup> which, on the one hand, with its Finnic origins, clearly and convincingly distinguishes it from other manifestations of intangible cultural heritage in Latvia, while on the other hand, is the unifying element with symbolic function in the Livonian community.

Nowadays, Livonian is most often heard in Courland, especially at cultural events organised by the Livonian community, e.g., at the Livonian Festival, on Livonian Flag Day, at the Children’s and Youth Summer School “Mierlinkizt”, etc. Almost every event that takes place on the Livonian Coast includes singing in Livonian. Traditional songs are a part of the repertoire of several folklore groups, ensembles, and choirs, for example, the folk ensemble “Laula” in Kolka, the ensemble “Līvlist” in Rīga, the ensemble “Kāndla” in Ventspils, and the choir “Lōja” in Salaspils, etc. Despite the limited number of speakers, during recent years the use of Livonian has become increasingly important to modern cultural activities, e.g., literature is being published and new music is being composed, various cultural performances (poetry recitals, contemporary music concerts, art exhibitions) are taking place (Ernštreits 2019). As part of Re:voice, in the summer of 2021, the UL research team attended the concert performance “Kuolm randõ / Three Coasts”, created by musician Elīna Ose. This performance provided an opportunity to hear and experience how contemporary Livonian poetry inspires musicians to produce original music, which fuses classical,

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2 The Livonian cultural space has been included in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Latvia since 2018. The Livonian language is the pervasive element in the Livonian cultural space (aka cultural landscape), which connects various expressions of Livonian traditional and modern culture into a unified cultural process (Ernštreits 2019).

jazz, and world music. Furthermore, in the summer of 2021, Elīna Ose released her first single, “Sēļizt nemē mēg / People like us” with lyrics by Valts Ernštreits (Delfi 2021). In 2021, the independent theatre troupe “Kvadrifons” also based its premiere performance on a Livonian family story “Nēmiz pāl! / See you later!”, directed by Reinis Boters, a playwright and Livonian descendant (Kvadrifons 2021).

Research into the linguistic landscape shows that Livonian-language signage and place names are mostly seen on the Livonian Coast, for instance, on a granite slab near the Livonian Community House in Mazirbe and in inscriptions of grave monuments in village cemeteries. There are also signs with the names of the Livonian villages on the beach; information stands and village signs in Mazirbe, Košrags, Saunags, Vaide; the permanent exhibition “Kolka. One island. Two seas. Three Languages” at the Kolka Livonian Community House; etc. (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** A sign with the name of the village of Pizā or Miķeltornis on the beach, photo by I. Vītola, (August 6, 2021).

Newcomers to the Livonian Coast, choose Livonian names for their homesteads, for example, “Lindodi”, “Kōrand”, “Staltval”, “Piškival”, “Nūorpiļgōz” in Košrags; “Jengi” in Pitrags; “Nītaigā” in Saunags;

“Randa” in Lielirbe. Naming homesteads is a shared inherited tradition in Latvia and a growing practice in Estonia, which could be related to the symbolic expression of place identity. In Estonia, however, Livonian is not used in naming. In the summer of 2021, an open-air installation with a Livonian-language banner – “There are no Livonians” – received wide resonance across Latvian society following its unveiling in Miķeļtornis, which is one of the 14 villages of the Livonian Coast (Livones 2021, LSM 2021, Satori 2021). This installation art confirms that the display of Livonian in public spaces can make a difference and contribute significantly both to the revitalisation and recognition of the Livonians as a critically endangered indigenous community and to the recognition and development of the Livonian Coast.

Cultural performances such as festivities and events represent one of the significant practices of Livonian ICH. At the same time, these cultural performances are preserved and promoted to majority groups, while also forming and maintaining awareness of Livonian community identity. The most significant of these events – the Livonian Festival – has been organised by the Livonian community in the village of Mazirbe every year on the first Saturday of August since 1989. The festival has a wide and diverse programme. Its participants (about 250–300 people) are the most active representatives of the local community, who are also the main organisers of the festival, descendants of Livonian families, and residents of the Livonian Coast. At the same time, the festival functions as a reunion for relatives and friends as well as for the people of the entire Livonian Coast, and is accessible to everyone – regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity – to get to know Livonian heritage and culture. The research team observed the Livonian Festival on August 8, 2021 for Re:voice. The festival begins with a service at the Mazirbe Evangelical Lutheran Church. This is followed by a procession of the participants and visitors to the seashore where the opening of the festival takes place, and a symbolic ritual is performed – the offering of an oak leaf wreath to the Sea Mother (Figure 3). During the day, participants attend various events, including concerts, exhibitions, book presentations, there is also an open-air market where various Livonian handicrafts, traditional Livonian foods such as carrot pies (*sūr kak*), smoked fish, and other dishes are sold. The festival culminates with an evening concert and singing by the fire on the seashore. The final event of the 2021 festival programme was a performance of the concert

“Līvu sasaukšanās / Livonian convocation”; it was a joint production by the choir “Anima”, conductor Laura Leontjeva, and composer Uģis Prauliņš. The programme premiered in 2019, marking the UNESCO Year of Indigenous Languages (Anima 2019).



**Figure 3.** The offering of an oak leaf wreath to the Sea Mother is one of the activities during the Livonian Festival, photo by I. Vītola (August 8, 2021).

Livonian ICH is also noticeable in the lifestyle of the communities of northern Courland, for example, preparing and consuming traditional dishes such as carrot pies and various fish dishes; fish is fried, boiled, smoked, baked, or dried on the Livonian Coast. Interestingly, the combination of fish and milk or fish and meat is quite common in Livonian traditional cuisine. Moreover, traditional farming methods that are typical of the coastal residents of northern Courland are still in use, e.g., collecting sea manure (*mudā*) to fertilise and improve the sandy soil or feeding shells to chickens (Ernštreits 2019: 105). Rituals are still performed, and traditional beliefs are used to ground the rituals in many households. For example, broken rowan branches are placed above entrances in order to protect the house from evil forces, wizards, and witches.

The colours of the Livonian flag (*līvõd plagā*) – green, white, blue – are quite a visible manifestation of Livonian ICH in the cultural landscape of the Livonian Coast. Display of these colours is an essential

acknowledgment of belonging to the Livonian community. This combination of colours is used both on the signs showing homestead names and in the designs of letterboxes. The Livonian flag is one of the most visible symbols of the Livonian identity and its use is increasing. The Livonian tricolour has become a symbol of connection to the Livonian Coast. The tricolour is used not only by inhabitants of Livonian origin, but also by newcomers to the Livonian Coast who want to emphasise their respect for and belonging to the Livonian Coast, and a desire to support and experience Livonian identity (cf. Šuvcāne & Ernštreits 2018). Furthermore, the tricolour is found increasingly often in Livonian souvenirs, tourist information booklets and stands, logos, handicrafts, flower bouquets, table decorations, etc. The results of the survey “Use of Livonian Cultural Space Elements in Entrepreneurship on the Livonian Coast” (2019) show that the Livonian flag and its colours were first adopted by entrepreneurs, which indicates some ownership of this symbol. The colours green, white, and blue have become recognisable as the colour code of Livonianness, which shows great potential for the development of the Livonian Coast and its tourism (Kļava 2019) as well as a visual identity place brand.

#### **4.2. Teasing out intangible cultural heritage in the Salaca Livonian areas across the Estonian-Latvian border**

As preliminary field notes suggest, the visibility of Livonian ICH is sporadic in northern Vidzeme and southwestern Estonia. Although Livonian has historically played a major role in the formation of Latvian and has significantly influenced the sound, grammar, and vocabulary of Standard Latvian (Rudzīte 1994: 289), the majority of the community is not aware of the most visible influences of Livonian on Latvian – the Livonian-influenced dialects of Latvian as well as place names of Livonian origin. In northern Vidzeme, for example, there are homesteads with the names Kadagi, Killas, Karri, Mustlači, the river names Aģe, Īģe, Jogla, etc. In northern Vidzeme, Livonian is also visible in the public space in Staicele, where the Staicele Livonian Museum “Pivāлинд” (“stork” in Livonian or, literally, “holy bird”) is located. A monument dedicated to the Vidzeme Livonians is found in the centre of the town. The country names “Eesti, Līvõmō, Latvija” are written in each national language, including Livonian. A Livonian hillfort – a

historical site – is located on the bank of the Salaca River. Information about the Livonian hillfort is available on the stand next to the historical site. Legends about the origin of the names of Mazsalaca, the Salaca River, and the Gauja River have been translated into Livonian, other historical information about the archaeological site can be read only in Latvian and English. Before the pandemic, Livonian language camps for children were organised in Mazsalaca as well as annual reunions of Salaca Livonian descendant families. Almost every summer, Livonian ensembles from northern Courland participate in the Staicele Town Festival. In 2021, these events did not take place in northern Vidzeme due to pandemic restrictions.

The site visits to the coastal villages, incl. Treimani and Ikla, were primarily meant to observe Livonian ICH by documenting the Livonian language and mentions of Livonian in the landscape (aka linguistic landscapes) and mapping potential events and stakeholders. Since the start of Re:voice, there have been two events, which have used Livonian ICH in one way or another. The North Livonian Festival is an established annual event which has been held since 2006. The first of these was funded by INTERREG, the European Union instrument for funding cross-border cooperation. While the festival has changed its format, content, and location during its 15 years of existence, it was first aimed at boosting Estonian-Latvian cross-border tourism/exchange but has recently become an increasingly local (Estonian) festival attracting locals and summer residents from the Häädemeeste municipality and beyond as well as from Pärnu county (stakeholder interview on April 4, 2022). In recent years, it has been held on the first Saturday of June in Häädemeeste, except in 2020, when it was postponed until August due to COVID-19 restrictions and associated uncertainties. The 2021 festival has been positioned within coastal rural lifestyles by organisers, but they have also played with the symbols of the past by titling it “Ancient Call” (*Est ürgne kutse*) and scheduling a re-enactment demonstrating the medieval art of swordsmanship (Figure 4). The festival has generally been characterised by references to ancient history and the past more generally, but also includes more ordinary options for exchange such as a second-hand market. The North Livonian Festival deserves further attention in 2022, but according to one of its organisers, the 2022 festival theme/motto will be quite different than in 2021.



**Figure 4.** The poster of the 2021 North Livonian Festival Facebook event, screenshot by K. Koreinik (January 15, 2022).

However, there was another event, which was more closely connected to Livonian ICH. On July 28–30, 2021, there was a free open workshop “Ežā pāl” (On the border) focusing on Livonian history, language, and stories/folklore, organised by a returnee and summer resident Kersti Uibo, an Estonian documentary filmmaker. She was also interviewed to understand whether the draft interview protocol is working to capture the stakeholders’/organisers’ stance. Planned and advertised as a three-day event for all interested people, its core participants were drama students and their supervisors with the exception of a few local residents interested in the Livonian past. By the end of the workshop, the students were supposed to understand, practice, and perform the play “Livonian requiem” (2020) by Tiit Aleksejev, an Estonian writer and historian. To embrace the Livonian past, the audience was given an introduction to Livonian studies by Karl Pajusalu, a professor of linguistics at the University of Tartu. The culmination, i.e., the performance, was

scheduled for the third day. The second day was called off unexpectedly, and the whole event was rescheduled due to this cancellation. Nevertheless, we succeeded in observing the rehearsal led by Valters Sīlis, a Latvian theatre director. In particular, the event revolved around stories narrated by Pajusalu and Sīlis, one of which – the story of Uļi Kīnkamäg/Uldriķis Kāpbergs, aka the Livonian King (cf. Loorits 1938) – was also enacted by students in the form of improvisational etudes. Sīlis cited pre-WWII Latvian newspapers where Kāpbergs was represented as the ‘other’, one who was unwilling to give up his Livonian identity and resisted the Latvian state by avoiding the census and not letting his son be mobilised into the Latvian army. Sīlis also told students about Oskar Loorits, the Estonian folklorist and scholar of religion studies, who had been in touch with Kāpbergs in the 1920s, but himself was denied entry to Latvia and declared *persona non grata* in 1937 for supporting Livonian self-awareness (cf. Blumberga 2004). Those stories described an episode, which disrupted Livonian ICH in the Courland Livonian area, but also worked to construct Livonianness across the Gulf of Rīga.

There have also been minor events, such as community reunions, concerts, and village fairs in the area, most of those, following COVID-19 restrictions, were open air events organised with short notice throughout last summer and not specifically referring to Livonian heritage.

During our third site visit, the team met with Peeter Ilus, an Estonian poet and translator, who runs a small coffee shop and has rooms to let in the area. His interest in Livonian ICH is also visible in the name of his coffee shop – “Ovat” (Wellspring) – the only Livonian-language sign we spotted in the area (Figure 5). As for the rest of the linguistic landscape, the area has a number of tourist maps, some display the whole eastern coast of the Gulf of Rīga (Est *Liivi laht* ‘Livonian Gulf’), while others focus only on the portion within Estonia. Those representations were obviously determined by the respective regional or national programmes (INTERREG Estonia-Latvia, LEADER, or others) which financed the design and display of each map. In the Häädemeste area, according to the linguistic landscape, instead of cultural artefacts and narratives, natural objects such as the sea, sand dunes, seashore, and forest are used in the discursive production of place identity.



**Figure 5.** The Livonian-language sign at a local coffee shop in Ikla, photo by K. Koreinik (October 29, 2021).

## 5. What can we conclude based on early findings?

The elements of ICH are difficult to define, because, on one hand, the Livonians are an indigenous ethnic group in Latvia and their heritage makes up an important part of its majority culture, while on the other hand, the community that maintains the living Livonian heritage is very small and territorially dispersed. Therefore, as expected, the visibility of Livonian ICH is sporadic; stakeholders' knowledge varies considerably and so does their motivation. The interviewed stakeholders' stance towards the Livonians and Livonian heritage is ambivalent, but generally supportive for safeguarding scenarios to revitalise and realise ICH. Nevertheless, in some locations/communities there are only a handful of active and knowledgeable people for initiating and maintaining Livonian ICH.

The social construction of the cultural landscape and place identity within Livonian ICH embodies discursive cultural practices with very different levels of awareness and degrees of involvement from both individuals and the community. Their experiences are shaped by oral traditions, singing traditional songs, participating in festivities and performing rituals, the colours of the Livonian flag (*līvōd plagā*), and other factors. These practices of Livonian ICH build the symbolic and imagined relationships between humans, time, space, and nature. Based on interviews and early field research on the Livonian Coast, in northern Vidzeme and southwestern Estonia, some initial conclusions can be drawn.

In all areas, we observed the symbolic, albeit slightly different, use of Livonian colours and/or language in the landscape. Use of the Livonian flag and its constituent colours – green, white, blue – as well as the extent of this use also show belonging to and identification with the Livonian community, and add to the scenery of the Livonian Coast (particularly in the villages); these factors also demonstrate the area's branding potential, at least within Latvia. Our research into linguistic landscapes has identified place names and historically significant locations with signage in Livonian, which might evoke specific narratives connected to Livonian heritage. There is an interesting set of place names emerging in the area: when homes are built by newcomers, the names they choose are in Livonian. This creates a symbolic image of the landscape, which pertains to the present as well as the past and is a practice which definitely requires further research.

Our cases – the Courland Livonian area and Salaca Livonian area along with its extension into southwestern Estonia – present rather different settings. Communities located in these areas and people visiting them have been involved in and exposed to Livonian ICH in different ways. The reason for this is that the setting in which each community is located varies in terms of the events it hosts, the ways in which it is a carrier of Livonian ICH, the degree of community involvement and local cultural activism, and the volume of business enterprises. Also, most importantly, the concepts of majority and minority are understood rather differently in each region. In southwestern Estonia, those concepts bear no relevance; the only demarcation seems to take place between locals and visitors (possibly also newcomers). On the Livonian

Coast, the interpretation of those concepts seems to depend on knowing and understanding Livonianness.

However, from our observations, in contrast to the Livonian Coast, manifestations of Livonian ICH are rare in Estonia and northern Vidzeme. The ICH consists of (re)imagined narratives, which either originate from the Courland Livonian area or are connected with the distant past of which no one has personal or collective memory. Nevertheless, there is considerable interest in Livonian issues in these communities, which may be one of the building blocks of their place identity, depending on other available narratives. Yet, in both areas, on the Livonian Coast and the Häädemeeste area, natural objects are among the most important *topoi* in discursive production of place identity.

To conclude, there are a number of promising research avenues, which will be followed in the course of Re:voice. The fieldwork in the Courland Livonian area, northern Vidzeme, and southwestern Estonia will proceed in the near future with interviewing stakeholders who are the key players for the visibility of the marginalised Livonian ICH. For the time being, we have already witnessed a considerable research impact: after meeting informants, word-of-mouth evokes a snowball effect among not only local residents but also members of the media who are willing to be engaged in the process of this research.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to our informants for their cooperation in this pilot study. We are also grateful to our colleagues from Re:voice for asking relevant questions and Dr. Uldis Balodis for proofreading the article. This work was supported by the European Commission's Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage (JPICH). The Re:voice project – “Re-voicing cultural landscapes: narratives, perspectives, and performances of marginalised intangible cultural heritage” (No. 23-11.17e/21/316 (University of Latvia), project No. SHVEE21357 (Estonian Research Council).

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**Kokkuvõte. Lolita Ozoliņa, Valts Ernštreits, Kadri Koreinik, Ieva Vītola: Liivi vaimse kultuuripärandi manifestatsioonid Lätis ja üle piiri Eestis: raamistamas märkmeid välitöödelt.** Nüüdsel ajal tuntakse liivi alana Kuramaa 14 rannaküla Loode-Lätis. Ometi leidub liivi vaimse kultuuripärandi märke nii mõnelgi pool mujal – neil kultuurimaastikel, kus piki Liivi lahe vasak- ja paremkallast kulges liivlaste asustus, mis ulatus koguni Koiva ja Väina jõe alamjooksule ja üle riigipiiri Eestissegi. Vaatamata liivi kultuuri põliste juurtele on need märgid aga marginaalseks kahandatud ja sestap silmale peidetud. Artikkel võtab kirjeldada ja võrrelda esmaseid andmeid rahvusvahelisest uurimisprojektist “Kultuurimaastike hääle taasleidmine: marginaliseeritud vaimse kultuuripärandi narratiivid, väljavaated ja toimimine”, mis toob kokku teadlasi neljast Euroopa ülikoolist, sh Läti ja Tartu ülikoolist.

**Märksõnad:** vaimne kultuuripärand, kultuurimaastik, keelemaastik, kohaidentiteet, liivi keel

**Kubbõvõttõks. Lolita Ozoliņa, Valts Ernštreits, Kadri Koreinik, Ieva Vītola: Līvõd vaimliz kultūr pierändõks manifestātsijid Leṭmõl ja iļ rubiž Ēstimõl: tādõlpanmizt nurmtiestõ.** Paldīņiz āigal amā jemīņ neku līvõd jeltõbkūož ātõ tundtõb 14 Kurmõ rāndakillõ – Līvõd rānda. Sīegid līvõd vaimliz kultūr pierändõks um liedtõb ka mūsõ – nēši kultūrmõnistis, kus mõlmõd pūol Piškīzt mīerda vaņši aigši jelīztõ līvlizt, ja mis ulātizt Koiva ja Vēna jougūd sõņ ja iļ rubiž ka Ēstimõlõ. Vaņtlõmõt līvõ kultūr muinizt jūrd pāl, se pierändõks ni um sōnd jo pientizõks ja sīestõ ka siļmšti urgtõd. Kēra nīžõb ja iṭlõb ežmiži tuņšlimiz tieutidi rovõdvailizõs tuņšlimizprojekts “Kultūrmõnistõd iel ūd pāl lieudimi: margināliz vaimliz kultūr pierändõks naratīvõd, tulbizt vōimizt ja pīlimi”, mis tūob iḁõkubbõ tuņšlijizi nēļast Eirõp iļizskūolst, nānt siegās ka Tartu ja Leṭmõ Iļizskūolst.