

## Estonian by Recreation: Forging Ethnic Imagination through Communal Experience in Urban, Rural and Musical Spaces

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### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In der Freizeit zum Esten: Der Aufbau ethnischer Vorstellungskraft durch gemeinschaftliche Erfahrung im städtischen, ländlichen und musikalischen Umfeld

Der Artikel befasst sich mit den gemeinschaftlichen Freizeitaktivitäten von Angehörigen des estnischen Exils im Amerika des Kalten Krieges und beruht auf dem Gedanken, dass diese Gemeinschaften bei dem Bemühen darum, dass ihnen die jungen Leute Zeit und Aufmerksamkeit widmen, nach Bereichen und Orten suchten, um gemeinsam ihr Estnisch-Sein auszuleben. Städtische Orte waren zum einen ständige Einrichtungen wie Estnische Häuser, zum anderen große Kulturveranstaltungen an wechselnden Orten wie z. B. die Estnischen Westküsten-Tage (West Coast Estonian Days) oder das Festival ESTO mit Teilnehmern aus aller Welt. Die ländlichen Gegenden blieben Pfadfindern und Pfadfinderinnen vorbehalten. Obgleich sie auch größeren Zusammenschlüssen angehörten, war bei der Tätigkeit der amerikanisch-estnischen Pfadfinder eine spezielle estnische Ausrichtung spürbar. Da außerdem die Esten in den USA nicht in Enklaven, sondern über das Land verstreut lebten, führten sie eine neuartige Form des Pfadfindertums ein, bei dem sich die gemeinschaftliche Praxis zu einer individuellen veränderte. Während die wichtige Rolle der Chormusik im exil-estnischen Leben sowohl in kultureller als auch in politischer Hinsicht bereits nachgewiesen wurde, kann die bislang deutlich weniger erforschte Populärmusik in ähnlicher Weise dazu beitragen, die Freizeitgestaltung auf einer stärker persönlichen Ebene nachzuvollziehen. Da die Esten in den USA geistigen und praktischen Zugriff auf die globale Popmusikszene hatten, liegt die Vermutung nahe, dass sie in mancherlei Hinsicht in der estnischen Musikgeschichte eine Vorreiterrolle eingenommen haben. Wenn man aber die Musik aus der Diaspora mit der Musik im sowjetisch besetzten Estland vergleicht, gelangt man zu der überraschenden Erkenntnis, dass die Exilmusik teilweise auch als rückständig empfunden wurde. Der Aufsatz folgt verschiedenen Spuren, um Ursache und Wirkung dieses Phänomens festzustellen, und als Vergleichsbeispiel werden die Exil-Letten herangezogen. Anhand der gemeinschaftlichen Freizeitgestaltung einer ethnischen Gruppe unter den Bedingungen der Diaspora wird erforscht, welche Gedankengänge den dabei umgesetzten Neuerungen und den in diesem Zusammenhang ausgetragenen Konflikten zu Grunde lagen.

KEYWORDS: exile, diasporas, recreation, music, Estonia, America

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\* This article was written based on research informed by and conducted with the help of generous grants and support from the US State Department Fulbright Program, the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, the Latvian Government, Stanford University, Immigration History Research Center and Archives at the University of Minnesota.

There is an intellectual tradition, one might also call it a force of habit, to find means for making typologies that clearly differentiate between the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to the palette of feelings an individual or a collective entity may possess regarding their mutually recognized heritage, ethnic makeup or national allegiance. When looking at the views expressed in the printed press, literature and organizational archives of Estonians who fled their country during the Second World War<sup>1</sup> and ended up in the United States (US), one picks up on what seems to have been a widely shared notion that there can be no harm in pursuing “Estonianness”<sup>2</sup> in every aspect of one’s life. These former refugees who had often spent years in Displaced Persons’ (DP) camps before getting an opportunity to settle in a new country were not only afraid they themselves might perish upon return to Soviet-occupied Estonia, but were also pessimistic about the chances of Estonian culture surviving under that regime. That is why they made an effort to ensure that even if Estonia as a country was never liberated, Estonia as a culture would survive outside of it. The question of how to create posterity became paramount and an effort for communally performing “Estonianness” was what can be said to have been the defining experience for the second generation of exile Estonian-Americans who had no personal memories of the homeland. When it came to informing the minds of the young people who had been born into exile, it was not so much a competition for their time as it was a struggle to win their attention, which is without a doubt an exclusive and limited resource.

There is an abundance of literature on the generational conflict between first and second generation migrants who, depending on the level of culture clash between the values of the home country and host society, can experience generational dissonance and need to negotiate the art of compromise.<sup>3</sup> In the context of migrant ethnicity maintenance in the US, a mass of research is engaged with the large Italian, Irish, Chinese, Korean and various Latinx diasporas as well as other politically noteworthy cases such as that of the Cubans or Hmong. There is scarcely any research on small protestant minorities who never formed enclaves, but instead became scattered and very well integrated into American life, such as the Estonians or Latvians, and their ways of coping with the specific challenges of a diasporic existence and the search for

<sup>1</sup> Albeit having been an independent republic during the interwar period, Estonia was swept off the map by a Soviet annexation in 1940 and subsequent Nazi German occupation in 1941; another Soviet occupation began in 1944 but did not end with the war, lasting instead until 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Within the scope of this article “Estonianness” is used as an umbrella term encompassing the amalgam of cultural artefacts and imagination manifested in both tangible and intangible heritage perceived as unique for Estonians by Estonians.

<sup>3</sup> See for example NANCY FONER (ed.): *Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America*, New York 2009; MATTHIAS WINGENS, MICHAEL WINDZIO, HELGA DE VALK, CAN AYBEK: *A Life-Course Perspective on Migration and Integration*, New York 2011.

posterity. The article is based on extensive archival research as well as oral histories and addresses this gap in research literature by focusing on exile Estonian history of mentality in Cold War America. Other, not just Baltic, diaspora cultures will occasionally be used for comparison.

Instead of taking a formalistic approach by investigating the scene of organizations created and run by Estonian-Americans, this article will shed light on the hidden underbelly of performing “Estonianness” in exile via recreational activities, the urban and rural landscapes claimed, the traveling spaces and places created and the process of othering which took place at the same time as consolidation. First, the most formal realm of ethnic youth recreation will be dealt with—that of Scouting and Guiding with a focus on the innovations and modifications brought on by the diasporic condition. Second, attention will be focused on local and global Estonian events which not only sought to consolidate the existing core group of organizers but also forge new meaningful ties between people of different generations and varying levels of interest and competence in Estonian culture. Third, as one of the shared realms where diaspora-mentality created an interesting push-pull undulation for young creators and consumers of culture, popular music will also be looked into in order to further dissect the fascinating relationship between tradition and change in the exile-Estonian search for posterity.

Before diving into the topic of forging ethnic imagination via communal activities among exile Estonians in Cold War America, some relevant aspects of space and place in the wider Estonian-American community need to be historicized in order to better contextualize the exile Estonian experience at the heart of the article. Unlike most immigrant groups, different micro waves of Estonians arrived in America from both the Atlantic and the Pacific seaboard. The emergence of an actual Estonian diaspora as such can be dated back to the second part of the 19th century, when sailors who had defected czarist vessels, manifold colonists from all corners of the Russian empire and random adventurers started to make their way to the New World. These people began to be organizationally active during the last years of the century.<sup>4</sup> 1905 marked a cataclysmic change in the dynamics of the Estonian diasporas. This was the year of the failed revolution in the Russian empire which made many people fear persecution and consequently look for a new homeland. Thus, the Estonians who can be tagged voluntary migrants were now joined by those who had undergone forced migration. The bulk of this new group of people can be described as belonging to the political left. They were active and well organized—already in 1906 the Socialist Party of America officially

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<sup>4</sup> The first mutual welfare association “The Ameerika Eesti Heategew Selts” [The American Estonian Aid Society] was created in 1898. See: *Ameerika Eestlaste Album 2* (1919).

welcomed an Estonian Department.<sup>5</sup> Some competition over resources and social capital is observable, but it was not until Estonia's proclamation of independence in 1918 that the divide between and within communities became prominent. The pro- and anti-sovereignty groups were largely based on political affiliation—the leftists were against the whole idea of an independent Estonian state in a situation where Russia had undergone a successful revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Nowhere was this conflict more visible than in New York<sup>7</sup> where it is obvious from archival sources<sup>8</sup> and periodicals<sup>9</sup> that in spite of many thrusts to consolidate people belonging to different regions of the political spectrum, the repercussions of the communist threat to the new Estonian republic on the one hand and the way the republic went about neutralizing said threat on the other<sup>10</sup>, made large scale cooperation in the diaspora difficult. Thus, New York Estonians ended up having several ethnically owned or rented spaces in New York which were in simultaneous use by different factions. The one on 34th street, just a few blocks from the Empire State Building, became an improvised refugee-center/job fair/post-office etc. in 1948 for incoming Estonian DPs. It had been bought by the New York Estonian Educational Society a few years before the influx began and was a good fit at the time of purchase but was ill-equipped for its new multi-purpose nature as well as lacking in capacity. Despite good will on both the oldtimer and newcomer sides, the first postwar decade together was challenging and wrought with petty squabbles resulting in refugees gaining an upper hand and the other Estonian community centers in New York waning away.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Later this was turned into the Estonian Social-Democratic Association. JAAN PENNAR, TÕNU PARMING, PEETER REBANE: *The Estonians in America 1627-1975: A Chronology and Fact Book*, New York 1975, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO: *New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja pagulased* [New York Estonian Educational Society and Refugees], in: *Acta Historica* 17 (2011), pp. 110-123.

<sup>7</sup> New York had become the hub for left-wing American Estonians after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 destroyed not only the city, but also put a halt on societal activities and left one member of the Estonian community dead and another one injured. EDUARD VALLASTE: *Eesti elu ja laulu alged Ameerikas* [The Beginnings of Estonian Life and Song in America], in: *Eesti Päevad New York 1960* [Estonian Days in New York 1960, brochure], in: *The Michelson, Herbert Papers (MHP)*, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, box 1.

<sup>8</sup> See for example: *Amerika Eesti Ühisuse aruanne Asutavale Kogule* [Report by American Estonian Association to the Estonian Constituent Assembly], 1919-08-20, in: *Eesti Riigiarhiiv*, fund 957, list 11, document 104, pages 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Almost every interwar edition of New York left-wing Estonian newspaper *Uus Ilm* (1909-1989) deals with these issues.

<sup>10</sup> MAI KRIKK: *Eesti Poliitiline Politsei 1920-1940* [Estonian Political Police 1920-1940], Tallinn 2002.

<sup>11</sup> The New York Estonian House located 243 East 34th Street is still operating, but now relies heavily on yet another wave of voluntary (labor and adventure) migration—people who came to the US after the end of the Cold War. According to the 2000 cen-

The following is largely an account of how the refugees chose to go about things. Their numbers may not seem impressive in the big picture—around 12,000 Estonians were granted entry under the Displaced Persons Act which helped pave a path for 400,000 people altogether—but they did flood the American Estonian diaspora with their energy and passion to the point where they became the ones to define the key metaphors through which community dialogue functions. Their efforts to imagine and establish a number of tangible and intangible, temporary and permanent, ethereal and brick-and-mortar type of “little Estonias” in the form of Estonian Houses, camps and camping grounds, events, festivals, get-togethers and music constituted a coping mechanism to help compensate for the loss of their homeland as well as a way of finding authentic means of self-expression and self-importance. It can be said that the discourse they created and maintained with the help of these urban, rural and musical spaces provided them with the means to hold on to a sense of dignity in spite of their status as lowly refugee immigrants. This in turn liberated them for the pursuit of extra-group achievements in search of their very own personal American dream and perhaps somewhat contributed to them becoming one of the more successful immigrant groups in the Cold War US in terms of upward socioeconomic mobility and education.<sup>12</sup>

### Claiming Rural Landscapes

The exile Estonians in America made a point of creating rural landscapes for ethnic endeavors where children could be sent to for summer camps and a certain quasi Estonian culture context. Kiusuküla on Long Island started forming in 1950 and reached its first camp five years later<sup>13</sup>; Järvemetsa in Lakewood, New Jersey traces its inception back to 1956<sup>14</sup>, after which it quickly became the center for Estonian Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, both

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sus, there were approximately 25,000 people with Estonian ancestry in the US. Albeit an unremarkable number for America, it is a large number both in the context of the Estonian diaspora and the nation as a whole with its total of less than a million representatives; URL: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2000/dec/phc-t-43.html> (13.09.2017).

<sup>12</sup> PRIIT VESILIND: *Estonians in America, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise*, s. I. 2016, pp. 126-127.

<sup>13</sup> For the history of the Long Island Estonian compound, see [http://www.estonianhousenewyork.com/long\\_island.html](http://www.estonianhousenewyork.com/long_island.html) (2017-09-15).

<sup>14</sup> The land was bought in 1953, which was also the year when Canadian Estonians purchased Kotkajärve near lake Muskoka (Ontario) and Estonians in Sweden established Metsakodu near Jönköping. MERVI RAUDSAAR: *Võõrsil tehtud noorsootöö kui eestluse hoidja ja kandja* [Youth Work in Exile as a Preserver and Carrier of Estonianness], Master's thesis Tartu Ülikool, 2004, pp. 79-83; GUSTAV ILVES: *Metsakodu: Eesti pesapaik Rootsis* [Home in the Forest: Estonian Nest in Sweden], Tallinn 2001; JAAN LEPP, EGBERT RUNGE: *Eesti skautlus 50 aastat võõrsil* [50 Years of Estonian Scouting in Exile], Toronto 2003.

movements which were a prominent form of ethnic engagement for young people. Scouting was, of course, not limited to the Estonians in America, but became a part of the exile experience in other receiving countries as well.<sup>15</sup> Consolidation and cooperation between these different communities was considered vital and in 1949 Estonian Scouting leaders met in London to sign the charter of Estonian Scouts in Exile (*Eesti skaudid paguluses põhikiri*) at the Estonian Embassy (functioning in cooperation with the Estonian government-in-exile).<sup>16</sup> England was very fitting as a location, since it was the birthplace of Scouting. Curiously, however, regardless of this double legacy, no Estonian branch came into existence in England because ethnically-based and run Scouting units were not allowed there. The conditions were more favorable in the US: in 1949, the headquarters of American Boy Scouts and Girl Guides gave the Estonians permission to form their own units. The first ones were brought to life in Seabrook, New Jersey and New York City. By 1952 there were 350 Boy Scouts in 13 units<sup>17</sup> and at the advent of the new decade, the number of Estonian Scouts in the diaspora totaled 1,500 persons.<sup>18</sup>

Mervi Raudsaar, who has researched youth work in exile, finds it to have been an emotionally charged endeavor, which helps explain why there was communal support for the activities and why special Scout and/or Guide Friends Associations were often set up to ensure economic sustainability.<sup>19</sup> As was the case with supplemental Estonian schooling<sup>20</sup>, there is evidence that children's participation in the Scouting enterprise was not always voluntary, but rather they were often coerced into participation by their parents over posterity concerns.<sup>21</sup> How was being a member of the Scouting movement

<sup>15</sup> Scouting was also important for Latvian exiles and other former DPs. MARUTA KARKLIS, LIGA K. STREIPA, LAIMONIS STREIPS: *The Latvians in America: 1640-1973*, New York 1974, p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> *Eesti Skaudijuhid Londonis* [Estonian Scoutmasters in London], in: *Eesti Post* from 12.08.1949.

<sup>17</sup> RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), pp. 52-53; VELLO SOOTS (ed.): *Estonian Scouting 1912-1962: Estonian Boy Scout Associations in Exile*, Stockholm 1962, pp. 40-43.

<sup>18</sup> 1500 eesti skauti vabas maailmas [1500 Estonian Scouts in the Free World], in: *Vaba Eesti Sõna* from 22.12.1960. To consolidate and coordinate activities in different countries and continents, the *Eesti Gaidid Paguluses* was formed in 1949 and renamed *Eesti Gaidide Liit* in 1960. The analogous organization for scouts was also established a few months earlier in 1949 by the name *Eesti Skaudid Paguluses* (Estonian Scouts in Exile). In 1954 the name was changed to *Eesti Skautide Liit* (Union of Estonian Scouts). RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), pp. 54, 84.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed account on Estonian American Cold War era educational activities, see MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO: *Estonian by Education: Estonian Supplemental Schools in Cold War America*, in: *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte* (2017), pp. 220-250.

<sup>21</sup> In 1956 the ten commandments for "Estonianism" were forged in Canada. For example, these mottos or watchwords urged people to marry Estonians, educate their children, belong to Estonian organizations, support compatriots, be wary when communi-

supposed to help? For instance, the Estonian language was the preferred language for communication, there was an Estonian merit badge to be earned and the Saint George's Day celebration marking the peasant uprising of 1343 was among the most important events of the year.<sup>22</sup> Global gatherings of Estonian Scouts took place on a regular basis in different countries and often featured prominent patriotic elements such as standing face to Estonia and creating a mental bridge to the homeland by reciting poetry. This practice has formal similarities with Muslims praying in the direction of Mecca and can be interpreted in the context of exile Estonian patriotism as a secular religion. It can also be seen as a mode of embodiment: according to Dylan Trigg, "Just as memory is inherently spatial, so spatiality is inherently temporal, occupying a place in the present but stretching back into the past."<sup>23</sup> These entanglements play on people's expectations for the future as well and fuel the natural and artificial creation of mental maps that imbue locations with meaningful relationships to the observer. In terms of ethnic identity and national commemoration, another layer of exile youth consciousness was prompted to emerge by commemorating young Estonians who had lost their lives while serving in the US army in Korea and Vietnam. The underlying rhetoric was that had Estonia never been annexed, these young lives would not have ended in those wars and moreover, had communism not been allowed to prevail, perhaps these conflicts would not have come to pass.

Since not all eligible youngsters lived in areas with a substantial Estonian presence, there was an initiative for establishing a tradition for solitary Scouts via activities coordinated through correspondence. Contrary to regular units that organized elaborate events and published information about their activities in the media, solitary Scouts were a rather obscure entity even during their heyday. This was partly because of the very individual nature of their scouting culture and partly because they were largely excluded from PR friendly institutions such as awards, tests and ranks. Critics even raised the question whether the solitary Scouting experience had anything to do with what the real Scouts were about. Whereas regular Scouting aspired to resemble a big game comprised of smaller games through which knowledge and competence were taught playfully, there was a fear that solitary Scouting with its endless letters to strangers and alone-time would in fact cool children's fascination and deter them from Scouting altogether. In order to cure at least some of these maladies it was advised that solitary Scouts ought to be formally encompassed as units even though they rarely functioned as such. By

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cating with the homeland, support the fight for freedom and respect the country of residence. RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, pp. 56-61.

<sup>23</sup> DYLAN TRIGG: *The Memory of a Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Ohio 2015, p. 16.

providing them with a sense of collective, a name and other symbols, it was believed they would regain some of what they had been denied.<sup>24</sup>

In a similar effort, solitary Scouts were advised to join local American Scouts as a main activity and be a part of their Estonian “unit” on the side, treating the latter as a “supplemental school” and joining in on camps and jamborees as Estonian Scouts whenever they could. It was also considered important that regular Scouts be supportive of their efforts, engage in a buddy-system and write letters both as individuals and as units.<sup>25</sup> Obviously, the activities of Estonian solitary Scouts were not officially allowed by the US Scouting rules, precisely because they deviated significantly from what were considered norms and goals. The archival material also hints that when solitary Scouts showed up at Estonian Scouting events they were stigmatized and bullied because of their experience and the differences resulting from that.<sup>26</sup> This leads one to deduce that despite the seemingly shared rhetoric and mental maps created and conveyed by the Scouting establishment, there was still room for othering to take place within its ranks.

As previously mentioned, the British-born global phenomenon of Scouting and Guiding had also managed to find solid footing among many exile Estonian diasporas outside of the US; so much so, that at the height of the Cold War, exile Estonians found a way to come together and create transnational exile Estonian Scout and Guide camps. These events took place twice in the Järvemetsa Campground (Lakewoodi Laager) territory in Jackson, New Jersey—first in 1967 and then again in 1978 with more than 700 Estonian youngsters.<sup>27</sup> The world camp proved to be helpful for getting them to exercise and develop their Estonian language skills: just as American Estonian youth did not speak German, so the Estonian scouts and guides from Sweden were not fluent in English, thus it was reported that participants from different

<sup>24</sup> Overview of solitary Scouting, in: MHP, box 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, this happened in 1952 during the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of Estonian Scouting, see: METSAVANA: Üksikskautluse probleeme [Problems with Solitary Scouting], in: MHP, box 2.

<sup>27</sup> The first world camp for Estonian Scouts and Guides that took place in the US was called “Koguja” (Gatherer), referencing not only the fact that the event would bring together dispersed people, but also the Old Testament Ecclesiastes. Second time around, the ten-day camp was comprised of the following: Adjusting Day, Working Day, Holy Day, Youth Day, Camping Day, Estonian Day, Forest Day, Sports Day, Peace Day, Departing Day. Second time around, title nominations stretched from historic-mythological and culturally-grounded suggestions such as Taara, Kalev and Tammsaare and politically-engaged suggestions such as Exile 78, Estonia 60 and Esto-future to more generic ones such as Rainbow, Land of Friendship and Cedar Forest, with Koguja II getting the overwhelming majority of votes. Maailmalaageris Lakewoodis üle 700 noore [Over 700 Youth in Lakewood World Camp], in: Vaba Eesti Sõna from 1978-07-13; Kümme päeva “Koguja II” noortelaager [Ten Days in “Gatherer II” Youth Camp], in: Vaba Eestlane from 1978-06-15; Maailmalaager 1978 nimed [World Camp 1978 Names], in: MHP, box 1.



countries disciplined each other—since nobody enjoyed not being able to understand what was being spoken, when a conversation slipped into another language some peer pressure was exerted to switch back to Estonian. At those times, Estonian really was the only language that they shared. Moreover, it was promoted by the rhetoric and activities of the camp.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the Estonian language diet was never all-encompassing: among issues documented in the collection of letters, poems and feedback, there was the aspect of boys and girls mingling. One female participant from the US laments that other Girl Guides just want to talk about boys in English and call her a square for not going along with it.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, it seems that parents and chaperones were quite relaxed about letting boys and girls socialize. There is even evidence that when supervisors were under the impression that their wards were asking for permission to leave camp in order to pursue romantic interests with an Estonian, they were more likely to let them do so than they were for those who “just wanted to run around.”<sup>30</sup> Just like with Latvians and other recent immigrant groups, endogamy was seen as both a goal and a virtue.

Despite the *de facto* rigor of scouting and the conflicts based on that—when American Estonian youngsters asked for a smoking area or when Estonian girls from Sweden showed up in short skirts and Estonian boys from Sweden made an impression with their long hair<sup>31</sup>—there was also advocacy for general leniency. After taking a hard stance in his official letter, in his personal correspondence scoutmaster Linold Milles pleads with colleague Herbert Michelson to have all applicants in pursuit of a higher rank in fact receive it. He writes that it is not possible to have the exact same demands for youth as were in place back in Estonia before the Second World War when they did not have to deal with the cultural implications of exile.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to note that not all young people were involved with scouts and guides and there were also Estonian American summer camps and camping grounds that had no organizational affiliation. Also, these camps inevitably shared at least some of their constituency with the Scouts and Guides. For example, the young representatives of Estonian scouts from Sweden did not return to their country of residence immediately after “Koguja II” was over, but instead ventured on another American-Estonian (this time non-

<sup>28</sup> Kilde “Kogujast” [Fragments from “Gatherer”], in: Vaba Eesti Sõna from 1978-08-03.

<sup>29</sup> Feedback from participants, in: MHP, box 11.

<sup>30</sup> RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), p. 62.

<sup>31</sup> American Estonian conservatism and double standards are discussed for example in: Noorte Sõna (1967), 3 (124), and Noorte Leht (Eesti Päevaleht) from 1967-08-28.

<sup>32</sup> In a letter to Herbert Michelson from 11.04.1954, in: MHP, box 2, Milles stresses that the real victory is having these young men interested in Scouting activities at an age where they are already quite autonomous in their thinking and cannot be seduced by rhetoric as easily as younger children can be. Milles also brings out the need to have an active interest in how young Estonians think—he believes that a good way to get to know them better is to read what they write.

scout) camp experience, namely at the aforementioned ethnically-owned rural Kiusuküla landscape on Long Island.<sup>33</sup>

### Creating Urban Spaces

The former Baltic DPs were able to create anti-communist organizations and clusters thereof<sup>34</sup> to fight for the liberation of their countries. This at first seemed to deliver tremendous results as individual members succeeded in reaching high state officials as well as getting Senators and Congressmen to speak on behalf of their cause. However, in the light of America's weak response to the 1956 events in Hungary and the Prague Spring of 1968 it became obvious that immigrants' foreign relations (even when ideologically compatible with America's own) were not something the US would risk entering war over.<sup>35</sup> The exile Estonians' political struggle never ceased and preparations were made to ensure Estonian culture would not only survive in the free world if the country itself never regained independence, but that it could also have representation among other nations. That was the impetus behind staging elaborate global celebrations to showcase some of the more attracting and relatable aspects of the culture via the Estonian World Festival ESTO which traces its inception back to 1972 and has taken place once every four years in different major urban centers (Toronto, Baltimore, New York, Stockholm, Melbourne etc.) ever since.

The ESTO festival brought together Estonian exiles from all over the world and offered a wide variety of cultural events and public performances in addition to providing networking opportunities, (co-)hosting seminars and conferences and organizing social events ranging from formal dinners to speakeasy-style parties. A parade and choral song festival<sup>36</sup> were also part of the ESTO tradition. Since it began as an exile event seeking to provide exposure to the culture of a nation under political occupation and unable to represent itself in the international cultural sphere, one might assume that the tradition would have ceased as the country regained independence. Interestingly, that was not the case—it seems as though the symbolic value of a global Estonian festival proved high enough to keep diaspora communities interested in hosting them even after Estonia re-established itself as an independent country in 1991. Ever since, there has been a movement to end the tradition

<sup>33</sup> Kilde "Kogujast" (as in footnote 28).

<sup>34</sup> For example, the Estonian-American National Council (1952), Joint Baltic American National Committee (1961) and Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (1966).

<sup>35</sup> DONNA GABACCIA: *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective*, Princeton 2012, p. 170.

<sup>36</sup> Organizing choirs and song festivals is a tradition that stretches back to the age of the national awakening in 19th century Estonia and can be said to have provided not only a means for cultural expression, but also an education in how to run voluntary associations both in Estonia proper as well as in the diaspora. See also footnote 51.

while it's still viable, and the 2013 ESTO in San Francisco was at the time generally regarded as the last one.<sup>37</sup> However, there are concrete plans to hold yet another in Tallinn, Tartu and Helsinki in the summer of 2019 and thus put an end to the festival by “returning it home.”<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the global ESTO festival and its (similar in ethos, smaller in size) siblings West Coast Estonian Days (Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad, LEP) and East Coast Estonian Days (Idaranniku Eesti Päevad, IEP), there were other forms of regional urban festivals. Among them was the Midwestern Estonian Youth Association's (Kesk-Lääne Eesti Noorte Koondis, KLENK) conference series. The Midwest did not boast a dense Estonian settlement and neither did it exhaust youth with various activities, so this made some of them hungry for contact and cooperation. KLENK began as a cutting-edge gathering which welcomed bold presentations and alternative views on diaspora and global Estonian politics.<sup>39</sup> These get-togethers mainly attracted people of the second generation who had no personal recollection of Estonia and for whom the homeland can be argued to have been an imaginary *lieu de memoire*. That being said, KLENK youth also lobbied for bridging the generational gap between themselves and the ones before them<sup>40</sup> who had a somewhat more tangible bond to Estonia. Curiously, the impetus for coming together to create their own traveling space and place for Estonian American youth did undoubtedly shape a new generation of leaders, but failed to attract the new generation that came after it. This is why even though KLENK began as a youth organization, over the years it has aged alongside its initiators, gradually morphing into a senior citizen's cruise on the Caribbean.<sup>41</sup> The only youthful aspect about it is its name—the activists still gather under the title Midwestern Estonian Youth Association.

The generational issue of posterity outlined in the case of KLENK is semantically dramatic, but in principle it is rather commonplace among diaspora organizations. Admittedly, linking new members into an existing organization always has its challenges, but for the exile Estonians in Cold War America, contesting views on what constituted “Estonianness” brought about a significant drain of people who had lost their connection to the establishment<sup>42</sup> over the years and in the process of doing so, began to be othered in

<sup>37</sup> Conclusion based on my personal field work and interviews conducted at the festival.

<sup>38</sup> <https://esto2019.com/et> (2017-09-29).

<sup>39</sup> Various documents. Folder 1: Overview of activities 1958-1959; folder 2: Materials about the youth congress 1960-1965, in: KLENK/Midwest Estonian Youth Congress Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>40</sup> Resolution, *ibidem*, folder 2.

<sup>41</sup> About the event: <http://klenk-iep.com/et/kruuiskruuiski-programm/> (2017-09-29).

<sup>42</sup> Here, the notion of establishment refers to the people who were, for example, elected officials or active members in organizations, who participated in holding events, or who were responsible for keeping up the Estonian Houses or maintaining ethnic land-

intragroup discourse. This was especially true if they had, in addition to losing touch with the group, also lost touch with the Estonian language. From oral histories<sup>43</sup> it is clear that those who had limited or nonexistent Estonian language skills felt unduly disregarded. Even though they often claim to have a personal relationship with their heritage and don't declare a constant need for external validation or guidance, they still occasionally lapse into a narrative of disappointment. In fact, both the establishment and "rogue" individuals themselves often perceive this distance between community, language and the individual as a failure on some level. However, the culprit is different in each case.

DP-born Los Angeles Estonian T. L. explains:

"it wasn't like I intended to lose the language, it just kind of got lost along the way [...] there's always a consciousness of being Estonian and I don't think it's ever going away because you've lost your language or you don't do it on somebody else's terms. I think you can have your cultural identity on your own terms and it doesn't have to be like the way somebody else wants it to be [...]"<sup>44</sup>

Just like it is commonplace in present day Estonia to be Christian without any church-affiliation, it is not rare for people in the diaspora to find themselves bowling alone in the alley of "Estonianness," if one were to borrow Robert Putnam's analogy.<sup>45</sup> A striking feature of these indie or alternative diasporans is how they swing back and forth while analyzing the implications of their situation. At one point in their narrative they might express a feeling of being rejected, while at another point they feel that they are not the ones who are being isolated, but rather it's the community that is isolating itself.<sup>46</sup> Some blame themselves, others delicately point to their parents' difficult choices in the busy time of creating a new life for the family and yet others blame the establishment for keeping a rigid language policy for too long and thus successfully alienating people who would have wanted to belong.<sup>47</sup> As

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scapes; they were leaders of choirs or teachers at the supplemental school or people who were consistently active in voicing their opinions in the community newspapers and thus reflecting and shaping communal discourse etc.

<sup>43</sup> Conclusion based on the bulk of interviews I conducted in 2012/13 with the help of the Fulbright grant and in 2015 with the help of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies grant.

<sup>44</sup> T. L., interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2013-06-22, digital recording).

<sup>45</sup> ROBERT PUTNAM: *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York 2000.

<sup>46</sup> L. (as in footnote 44): "[...] these people who tell you in order to be Estonian you have to do this and this and this, you have to fill these requirements and [...] I feel bad for them because they've kind of isolated themselves in a lot of respects but maybe that's just a natural process [...]"

<sup>47</sup> As the share of former refugees among the Estonian population of American is decreasing, there has been real effort to do away with the language issue altogether by having an inclusive stance on the use of English. However, nowadays, that can become a source of tension because of new constituents. Since Estonia regained independence

communicative acts between these parties dwindled, the process of othering gained traction. Using Pille Petersoo's matrix of possible others in identity formation<sup>48</sup> as a model, it can be said the Estonians who for whatever reason strayed from the exile establishment, began to inhabit the category of the internal negative other in rhetoric, despite the fact that objectively, their unique versions of "Estonianness" can be argued to have been equally valid.<sup>49</sup>

## DIY music

For historic reasons<sup>50</sup> choral music has been proven to have played an integral part in exile-Estonian life<sup>51</sup>, not only as a cultural practice, but also as a mode of political agitation.<sup>52</sup> In order to shift the focus from collective recreational practices into a more personal sphere, we turn our attention to the less researched but equally compelling case of popular music. Up until recently, the hundreds of records and cassettes containing popular music from the diaspora had managed to evade the investigative gaze.<sup>53</sup> Yet, it is the (in an ideal world) democratic and individualistic nature of popular music which allowed

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in 1991, her citizens have had a chance to travel extensively as well as migrate within the European Union but also outside of it and many have chosen the US as their new temporary or permanent home. These recent additions to the communities are very competent in both the language and culture of Estonia since they have only recently departed from there. Thus, oftentimes their demands on supplemental schools and community events are far less tolerant about the *laissez-faire* style of communication that has only in recent decades become a reality. These newcomers aren't interested in spending money and resources to bring their children to school and donating their time to the community if what they get back from it all is not what they perceive as an authentic Estonian experience but just another version of an American context.

<sup>48</sup> PILLE PETERSOO: Reconsidering Otherness: Constructing Estonian Identity, in: *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (2007), 1, pp. 117-133.

<sup>49</sup> I believe that in a diaspora setting a person can possess not only competence but creativity in harboring and sustaining identification with several ethnic and national identities and does not need to choose which one to actualize at any given moment because they are simultaneously present as both cultural matter and energy.

<sup>50</sup> Estonians' self-image is connected to the notion of belonging to a singing nation. This idea has been shaped and formed by different thinkers and has historic roots stretching back to the reformation, the legacy of the Moravian Brethren and Baltic-German cultural influence as well as the Estonian Song Festival tradition established in 1869 and reinforced during the interwar republic.

<sup>51</sup> VESILIND (as in footnote 12); TRIINU OJAMAA: 60 aastast eesti koorilaulu multikultuurses Torontos / 60 Years of Estonian Choral Singing in Multicultural Toronto, Tartu 2011. ALFRED KURLENTS, RICHARD ANTIK et al. (eds.): *Eestlased Kanadas. Ajalooline koguteos*, Toronto 1975.

<sup>52</sup> ROMAN TOI, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2006-08-13, digital recording).

<sup>53</sup> The first comprehensive overview was published and compiled by Maarja Merivoo-Parro as a companion of the three CD box-set edited by VAIKO EPLIK: *Esto-muusika: Ulgu-Eesti leviplaadid 1958-1988*, 2015.

it to become a shared realm where diaspora-mentality created something of a push-pull undulation for young creators and consumers alike.

When comparing Cold War era popular music productions from Soviet Estonia to those from the Estonian refugee diaspora, a fascinating tendency appears. Paradoxically, the refugees' music can at different times seem both ahead of the curve as well as lagging behind it. The reasons why it might seem more progressive and contemporary than the pop music created in Soviet Estonia can very easily be taken back to the closed nature of the Soviet system. The Iron Curtain certainly limited not only the free movement of people and ideas, but also put a cap on people's ability to tap into the global music scene. Moreover, the Soviet Union's generally declared social mores were not only anti-capitalist, but were also very negative towards the ever evolving youth culture of the free world with its plethora of divisions. Granted, some of these subcultures as well as their music (for example, punk and hardcore) were also perceived as being subversive by the Western societies themselves.<sup>54</sup> Mainstream bemoaning, however, seldom had veto-power over an individual's more or less conscious decision to become either a producer or consumer of a type of alternative music in the Western world. Thus, Estonians born into the diaspora not only had the privilege of engulfing themselves with the very best of the very latest pop and alternative music, but had they wanted, they could have even physically "joined the scene" in New York, Los Angeles, London, Berlin or elsewhere. In other words, the exiles being ahead of the curve can be seen as a rather natural condition because the people living in Soviet Estonia lacked not only information and awareness, but also the means for being at the forefront of global pop.

Before diving into the other end of the spectrum and exploring the reasons why exile pop can paradoxically be found to be not only leading the way but also lagging behind its Soviet counterpart, some light needs to be shed on the nature and development of the scene in general. As was stated, until recently the story of Estonian refugee pop music of the Cold War era was relatively unknown and kept in the dark. A closer look has not only delivered fascinating results, but has also brought about the need to rewrite the key facts of Estonian music history in general because it was in the diaspora that so many of the "firsts" were able to appear. For a long time, it was assumed that the first Estonian language record to have allusions to rock 'n' roll was published in Soviet Estonia in the late seventies<sup>55</sup> when in fact this had already happened a full decade earlier in 1968, when Canadian-Estonian Jüri Lipp released his album *Laul Simule ...* (A Song For You ...) which is full of beats

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<sup>54</sup> See for example: WILLIAM OSGERBY (ed.): *Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2014; RYAN MOORE: *Sells like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, and Social Crisis*, New York 2009; ROGER SABIN (ed.): *Punk Rock: So What?*, London 1999.

<sup>55</sup> FIX: *Värviline maailm* (LP), 1978.

and psychedelia.<sup>56</sup> A year later in 1969 the first Estonian folk song recording with a jazzy twist was released by the Alex Miilits group in Sweden.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Fulbrighter Reet Hendrikson opened up the folk scene with her LP full of unique versions of well-known old Estonian songs.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most prolific Estonian diaspora musicians in the US was self-taught René Ufer, who began composing in the 1960s, and released his first album in 1972. He created dozens of original songs as well as published them, first on vinyl and later on cassette.<sup>59</sup> Ufer was completely unrecognized within the history of Estonian music up until recently when it became evident that he was a pioneer of Estonian electronica.<sup>60</sup> During the day, Ufer worked for NASA, as did his main partner—poet and engineer Jyri Kork from Baltimore. Ufer put together a home studio in Los Angeles with the first synthesizers and drum-machines which made him a self-sufficient composer who was just as productive as he was undervalued. He tried his luck both within and beyond the diaspora community but did not gain much traction until his path crossed with that of a recent addition to the California Estonians, Lilian Treiberg. Her story is quite unique and includes a period where her family was shunned from the local Estonian diaspora society because they had managed to emigrate from Soviet Estonia to the US in 1966 when migration to and from the Soviet Union was extremely complicated and often impossible. Their peaceful transition at the height of the Cold War seemed suspect to many exiles, but in fact it had been the result of a long and arduous legal process whereby Lilian's father appealed to his Swedish ancestry and submitted application after application for years before finally getting permission to leave. This backstory was lost on the wider California Estonian community and Lilian remembers the overall attitude towards her family as being unwelcoming.<sup>61</sup> Needless to say, in this atmosphere of distrust the Treibergs didn't develop a habit of frequenting the Los Angeles Estonian House very often and so it took a few years before Lilian's singing talent was "discovered" by local Estonians who invited her to perform in the Estonian House. She went

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<sup>56</sup> JÜRI LIPP: *Laul Sinule* (LP), 1968. He mostly relies on covers, but does manage to provide them with his individual touch. Albeit rock 'n' roll did not have the best reputation in the refugee community, this mono record was nevertheless quite well received. His next and last (stereo) release before his untimely demise was a collaboration with grade III a of the Toronto Estonian Supplemental School singing Christmas songs. IDEM: *Rõõmsaid jõulupühi!* (LP), 1969.

<sup>57</sup> Track 21 on CD 1 of *EPLIK, Esto-muusika* (as in footnote 53).

<sup>58</sup> REET HENDRIKSON: *Valik rahvalaule* (LP), 1969. The sincerity of these renditions as well as her signature guitar style has put this LP in high demand on the global acid folk scene with three official vinyl pressings of vinyl and one CD as well as some bootleg versions, making it the most successful diaspora record of all time.

<sup>59</sup> Because he was very prolific, the full extent of his discography is still not known.

<sup>60</sup> Vaiko Eplik, with whom I partnered for the exile-Estonian pop music box set (see footnote 53) was the one to bring this to my attention.

<sup>61</sup> LILIAN TREIBERG, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2015-05-09, digital recording).

and sang<sup>62</sup>, upon which her paths crossed with René Ufer and they embarked on a musical journey that would lead to fascinating results such as pairing early West Coast hip hop with Soviet Estonian estrada<sup>63</sup>, which can be seen as not only a musical, but also a political statement.

In the choral world, the exile communities were quite strict and did not allow choirs to perform pieces that had ties to Soviet Estonia. Only composers from before the Second World War or composers of the diaspora were allowed.<sup>64</sup> But in pop music, the rules seem to have been less strict. In fact, there is evidence, that during the late seventies and early eighties, covering songs from Soviet Estonia became increasingly popular, especially for bands comprising of youth, such as “Positiivsed Mehed”<sup>65</sup> (Positive Men) from Montreal or “Kaja”<sup>66</sup> (Echo) from Portland. And here is where they stumbled upon a transnational worm-hole of sorts: as mentioned earlier, it was difficult for people in Soviet Estonia to keep up with developments in global pop. Even though musicians tried hard to listen, it was very difficult to hear through the Iron Curtain, which is why the influences and inspirations they managed to get were haphazard and random. For some reason, country and bluegrass music was able to penetrate the Iron Curtain. Since both came from the West they began to be perceived as alternative and progressive by default and a number of bands arose in Estonia (such as “Kukerpillid” or “Justament”) that had chosen said vein of music as their inspiration. This aesthetic trend in Estonia can also be associated with a wider “rustic turn” in Baltic culture which Violeta Davioliute perceives to have begun in the 1970s, first as nostalgia for a long gone rural way of life, later morphing into a political narrative of collective trauma and thus paving the path for communal consolidation *contra* Soviet rule.<sup>67</sup> In any case, when exile Estonian hobby bands like “Kaja” were looking for new material, they turned to music (by “Kukerpillid” or “Justament”) that they thought was Estonian, but had instead been adopted from North America. Through this musical telephone game they became familiar with American music that they had not considered valuable or interesting, but that had now become relevant because it had made an impact in Soviet Estonia.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Curiously enough, her repertoire at the time also contained some pioneer songs which she had picked up as a child in Soviet Estonia whilst taking part in the activities of the all-union communist youth movement. Singing the pioneer-songs to the exiles who used to think her family were spies, proved to be without repercussions. *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> RENÉ UFER, LILIAN TREIBERG: *Unustuste tilk* (LP), 1977.

<sup>64</sup> TOI (as in footnote 52).

<sup>65</sup> “Positiivsed mehed” was a live band that never made it to recording status. ERIK TEOSE, LIINA TEOSE, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2015-04-29, digital recording).

<sup>66</sup> KAJA: *Kuldsest Läänest* (LP), 1981. “Kaja” drew inspiration for their music, stage presence and touring from the American-Latvian group *Dzintars*. *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> VIOLETA DAVIOLIUTE: *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War*, New York 2013, pp. 125-172.

<sup>68</sup> TEOSE/TEOSE (as in footnote 65).



This brings us to the curious case of diaspora musicians' occasional lagging behind global trends and sometimes even their lagging behind their Soviet counterparts which at first glance seems counterintuitive in the light of what was stated earlier regarding Westerners free access to not only the music but the hubs where it was created. When listening to Estonian refugee pop in bulk, it becomes obvious that as the years go by, the aural experiences that recordings are able to provide become increasingly detached from the musical eras they chronologically seem to stem from. With a few noteworthy exceptions most exile Estonians' music flirts with nostalgia and archaism in either topic, execution or sometimes both. Other Cold War era refugee diaspora music scenes have also been diagnosed with a complicated relationship between tradition and change. For example, Adelaida Reyes Schramm perceived the Vietnamese in New Jersey to have exhibited a similarly fascinating interplay between conservative content and innovative expression to the point where tradition and change not only coexist but also co-occur.<sup>69</sup>

Embarking from Jocelyne Guilbault's notion of audible entanglements that play into the notions of longing, belonging and exclusion<sup>70</sup>, perhaps one of the reasons behind the somewhat F. Scott Fitzgerald's Benjamin Button-like aural trajectory in exile-Estonian pop was the indisputable role of community self-regulation that played a noteworthy part in most if not all major processes within the global Estonian refugee diaspora. As was mentioned earlier, some musical genres like rock 'n' roll or punk were initially treated with mistrust in the wider society and that attitude was adopted by the conservative Estonian diasporans. This meant that if an artist wished to be accepted and have an audience, she or he was obliged to handpick her or his means of communication from the palette jointly deemed "safe" for musical expression. Needless to say this kind of palette tended not to be very progressive. It is important to add that the value-judgements placed upon different kinds of music within a diaspora have been linked to generational affiliation. Often it is possible to outline a palette of semantic associations by which an individual can link an aural experience to the notion of an imagined homeland. Hae-Kyung Um demonstrates this with regards to the post-Soviet Korean diaspora<sup>71</sup>, Jehoash Hirschberg alludes to it when discussing the role of music among Ka-

<sup>69</sup> ADELAIDA REYES SCHRAMM: Tradition in the Guise of Innovation: Music among a Refugee Population, in: Yearbook for Traditional Music 18 (1986), pp. 91-101.

<sup>70</sup> Her research in the early 2000s was engaged with the Calypso music scene of Trinidad and is quoted in KAY KAUFMAN SHELEMAY: Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music, in: Journal of the American Musicological Society 64 (2011), 2, pp. 349-390.

<sup>71</sup> HAE-KYUNG UM: Listening Patterns and Identity of the Korean Diaspora in the Former USSR, in: British Journal of Ethnomusicology 9 (2000), pp. 121-142, here pp. 135-137.

raite Jews in the US<sup>72</sup> and John Baily makes a similar point during his investigation into Afghan music in exile<sup>73</sup>, to name but a few.

Another explanation why older American-Estonian refugee diaspora pop seems more progressive than newer American-Estonian refugee diaspora pop might have something to do with the retrospective observer's lack of valid understanding of what constituted mainstream and alternative for the people creating music in the Cold War Estonian diaspora. In fact, one might go so far as to state that any and all Estonian-language music in exile was predestined to evade the lure of mainstream simply because it was a niche artifact deemed for a very select audience. Hence, it was alternative by default and did not need to adhere to what was going on in the big picture but instead demanded so much creativity and courage from its makers that it can and should inhabit a category of its own outside the sometimes strict and thus arguable borders of "pop or not." Yet another important aspect is the fact that the majority of these musicians spent most of their productive power engaged with their "real" careers, which more often than not had nothing whatsoever to do with music. Thus, the at times peculiar aesthetic choices and overall nostalgia are attributable to the artists' lack of natural contact with the latest developments in popular music.

Tied into this equation is the vast share of self-releases, some of which are still unaccounted for because of the unofficial nature of their birth and subsequent decay into obscurity. Even the numerous record labels<sup>74</sup> of the Estonian diaspora are not free from the sin of inadequate archiving and surprise discoveries are still possible. Another quite prominent characteristic is the lack of any real physical means for producing music. The labels were usually labels only by name. They did not have employees, they did not have proper studios or marketing schemes; in fact, they resembled voluntary associations held together by a belief in common values and in the necessity of walking a certain path in life. But even so, at this time there is evidence that the Cold War era Estonian diaspora was responsible for around 400 records. Most were released in very small quantities (ranging anywhere from 300-1,000 copies per edition) and have become rarities. Only a few records were ever re-issued.<sup>75</sup>

In order to contextualize the Estonian diaspora pop scene, it is useful to look into the musical heritage of exile Latvians. Upon doing so, it quickly be-

<sup>72</sup> JEHOASH HIRSHBERG: The Role of Music in the Renewed Self-Identity of Karaite Jewish Refugee Communities from Cairo, in: Yearbook for Traditional Music 21 (1989), pp. 36-56.

<sup>73</sup> JOHN BAILY: So Near, so Far: Kabul's Music in Exile, in: Ethnomusicology Forum 14 (2005), 2, pp. 213-233.

<sup>74</sup> Exile Estonian record labels include: EMP Records (Estonian Voice/Eesti Hääl), Bel-lacord, Reindeer Records, Merit Records, Rekalla Records, Kapa Kalja Records, Rakvere Records and others.

<sup>75</sup> EPLIK, Esto-muusika (as in footnote 53).

comes clear that diaspora Latvians' productions tended to be even less prone to experiments and more influenced by *schlager*. However, despite the variety in exile-Estonian popular music, it is undeniable that the diaspora Latvians' stylistically more coherent body of productions did additionally share space and attention with something that Estonians did not have—an underground. One of the surprising spaces where it proved fertile was the conservative Latvian Lutheran children's summer camp in the Catskills (New York) which is partially responsible for the impulse behind two hardcore bands—"The Inflatable Children" and "Citizens Arrest."<sup>76</sup> The latter ended up being part of the late eighties new no sexism-no racism-no homophobia wave of New York hardcore which made its debut at Lower East Side's independent art and social center's (then improvised and now legendary concert venue) ABC No Rio. Even though the band mostly sang in English, they also had a Latvian element episodically rearing its head in the lyrics, visual identity and performances. Founding guitarist Janis Chakars remembers that the American members of the band "just somehow identified Latvia with rebellion and people that are carving out a small part of the Earth for their special project which is like something that's easy to identify with if you're into punk rock and into hardcore."<sup>77</sup> A similar vein was struck in his other ABC No Rio affiliated group "Animal Crackers" which featured Ted Leo<sup>78</sup> on vocals.<sup>79</sup> Another

<sup>76</sup> Janis Chakars of "Citizens Arrest" remembers Derek Stukuls of "The Inflatable Children" as being the mastermind behind the tiny but remarkable wave: "Derek had already advanced to this world of punk rock and he had a little walkman and he would listen to it and one day let me listen and there was this band *DOA* singing this song 'Fuck You' and I just thought that was the craziest, greatest thing in the whole world. [...] A summer later he had converted his brother too and they had this band *The Inflatable Children* and I went to this basement where they were rehearsing and I had had like a couple of guitar lessons, but like a little kid who thinks they're into something and then gives it up before they get very good at it, but they were playing and they really only needed like two fingers to play their songs, but they were great songs. They were like, hey Janis, you wanna play? And I was like, I never really play guitar and they were like, it doesn't matter, we never really learned how to play either, so I did. I learned some of their songs and I went back to NY and then I was like I could do this, I could have a band." JANIS CHAKARS, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2016-05-28, digital recording).

<sup>77</sup> "One of the most attractive things about hardcore is that it's true folk music and not folk music like you hear on records, anybody can do it, anybody should do it, everybody does in that scene." Ibidem.

<sup>78</sup> Ted Leo is now an established musician, currently part of a duo with Aimee Mann called "The Both" and serving as front man and lead guitarist in the punk rock band "Ted Leo and the Pharmacists".

<sup>79</sup> "Animal Crackers" did a cover version of "Sweet Home Alabama", where the lyrics had been changed to "Sweet Home Latvia", which ended with drum-enriched chant "Nyet, Nyet Soviet! Ja, Ja, Latvija!". Janis Chakars: "It is hard to say how much these young kids really sat and thought about the political issues associated with late 1980s Latvia, although I tried to make a comparison with Native Americans as an aid to understanding, but I certainly think they recognized Latvia could stand for the small

er space that acted as midwife for fresh Latvian acts was the Munster Latvian Gymnasium in Germany, which catered to the global Latvian diaspora by hosting an additional 13th grade for Latvian studies. Kristaps Kreslinš of the Washington D.C. born punk rock group “Macitajs on Acid” recalls, it “was like living in a dormitory, just really, really far away from your parents. I got more life experience out of it than grade experience.” He also got a lot of band experience from it and his first visit to Latvia as the drummer for “Gūzma” in 1989.<sup>80</sup>

Thus far there is no information about similar examples from Estonian-Americans. It is safe to assume that apart from the transnational dynamics of covering songs from Soviet Estonia which had previously been “borrowed” from America, the realm of Estonian-American diaspora popular music never managed to bear the fruit of an underground scene. However, in Australia one second generation youngster, Estonian Olev Muska, did manage to make ripples in the wider alternative music scene. Among his musical ventures, Muska created the group “Kiri-Uu” and released their self-titled album<sup>81</sup> in 1988 to rave reviews from specialty publications like *Rolling Stone* magazine, as well as from mainstream media.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion

While exploring the notions of space and memory Dylan Trigg writes about how finding ourselves locked out of our home changes our relationship with the home, not just because it is inaccessible, but because our attempts to resolve the situation create a lag in time: “the drawn temporality of waiting has

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and disregarded and the unequal balance of powers in the world. I remember that I used to make double-sided flyers for shows sometimes too that would have editorial cartoons about the Baltics taken from newspapers on the back, especially during and after January 1991. However, I have to consider that, on some level, audiences may have also simply gotten a kick out of Latvia as something exotic and weird, which are also qualities embraced in that community.” E-mail from Janis Chakars to Maarja Merivoo-Parro, 2017-09-08.

<sup>80</sup> Footage of “Gūzma” performing in Latvia 1989: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0E0LHRj8DM> (2018-02-21).

<sup>81</sup> KIRI UU: Kiri Uu (LP?), 1988.

<sup>82</sup> These ethnotronic renditions presented an original way for a diaspora youth to connect with Estonian roots by using his visual thinking to recontextualize our shared sonic heritage. What Olev Muska did was not entirely kosher and some of it goes directly against the grain of Estonian folksong logic. He never saw eye to eye with the more conservative circles of the Australian Estonian establishment and professes to have always kept a provocative stance in his creative life. He believes this to have been one of the factors that kept his ambition of opening a studio in the Sydney Estonian House from meeting the necessary approval. He never got his studio and “Kiri-Uu” ceased to exist in the beginning of the nineties. OLEV MUSKA, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2015-04-27, digital recording).

less to do with the objective status of the environment, and more to do with a projection toward the future. The projection has its basis in a composite of how we anticipate place and time to interact.”<sup>83</sup> This quotidian example is very telling when used in the context of diasporas. The Estonians who fled during the Second World War were also in a way locked out of their home and became increasingly engaged with questions of how to ensure a future for the nation and its culture in the diaspora. However, try as one might, there is no one ideal recipe to be found for creating posterity. The exile Estonians in Cold War America learned this alongside their fellow refugees from Latvia, Lithuania and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe with whom they shared long-distance nationalism and ethnic anticommunism. As previously demonstrated, they also shared some tactics when it came to dealing with the challenge of the second generation’s coming of age in a diasporic setting.

In postwar America, adolescence was a time of personal exploration, unprecedented freedom and relative affluence, which meant that the ethnic community needed special measures to stake a claim on the youths’ time and attention. Both of these were needed to create and sustain an imagination of the homeland, its culture and its people under Soviet occupation, all of which were unreachable and as such, were linked to the grand narrative of exile itself. Raising awareness on these issues was a task which was often tucked away in the background of events and activities that sought to entertain youth, such as camps, Scouting and Guiding. The result was that these enterprises became emotionally charged and as was the case with solitary scouts, had the discursive power to create new modes of experience. Thus, it can be said that even with all its shortcomings, making sure recreation happened in a national-ethnic-diasporic setting proved to be an adequate tool for building all kinds of bridges. This is even attributable to the realm of music. Initially, diaspora pop provided a sense of musical modernity but as the exiles integrated into their new host societies and began to relate with the music created there, the notion of contemporaneity seceded and was replaced by an aspiration to tap into the intangible sphere of “Estonianness”. Despite the dominion of nostalgia brought on by this, the diaspora pop scene did manage to provide many of the firsts in Estonian music history in general as well as maintain a steady flow of musical culture in exile.

The Estonians in America were successful in creating various traveling spaces and places for ethnic endeavors as well as finding the means for running community centers in the form of a network of Estonian Houses in urban environments and maintaining rural landscapes where events could be held. Despite all the good will involved, they still managed to alienate some potential participants for a variety of reasons from the obvious (conservative views on language) to the obscure (conservative views on hairstyle). The examples of othering clearly demonstrate that decisions made on the continuum of phe-

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<sup>83</sup> TRIGG (as in footnote 23), p. 31.

nomena-perception-affection-behavior-response were not always in tune with what would best serve the community in the long run. That being said, the moveable feast of “Estonianness” did manage to stay appetizing for enough second-generation exiles (who let it shape their sensibilities and associational habits to the point of sparking passion for the cause) to keep up the cultural and political fight (*välisvõitlus*) until Estonia regained its independence in 1991. Roland Barthes has differentiated between two musics—one that people listen to and one that they play.<sup>84</sup> By paraphrasing that distinction in the context of the Cold War Estonian-American diaspora it can be said that there are two ethnicities—one a person perceives and one they perform. By according time and attention to exile Estonian “fun and games,” one seems to have been able to, in return, gain the power to shape the practice of forging the ethnic imagination via shared experiences, and indeed thus become, at least in part, Estonian by recreation.

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<sup>84</sup> ROLAND BARTHES: *Image, Music, Text*, London 1977, p. 149.