

# UNIVERSITY CHOIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL CAPITAL AT A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

PRISPEVKI UNIVERZITETNEGA ZBORA V SOCIALNI KAPITAL  
VISOKOŠOLSKEGA ZAVODA

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*Abstract:* The paper raises the issue of a choir as a factor in social capital building at a university. Fourteen Lithuanian choir leaders from twelve universities participated in three focus group discussions. According to them, a university choir significantly contributed to the accumulation of social capital both at the institutional and individual student level. Meanwhile, the university community largely saw the choir as a kind of entertainment, part of institutional celebrations and events. Such an approach affected the quality of choir performance, student attendance, and the nature of choir funding and administration.

*Keywords:* social capital theory, individual and collective social capital, university choir, choir leaders

*Izvleček:* Prispevek odpira vprašanje pevskega zbora kot dejavnika izgradnje socialnega kapitala na univerzi. V treh razpravah v fokusnih skupinah je sodelovalo 14 litovskih zborovodij z 12 univerz. Po njihovem mnenju univerzitetni pevski zbor pomembno prispeva k akumulaciji socialnega kapitala tako na institucionalni kot individualni študentski ravni. Univerzitetna skupnost pa je univerzitetni zbor v večji meri zaznavala kot neka-kšno razvedrilo, del institucionalnih praznovanj in dogodkov. Takšen pristop je vplival na kakovost zborovskega izvajanja, obisk študentov ter naravo financiranja in upravljanja zbora.

*Ključne besede:* teorija socialnega kapitala, individualni in kolektivni socialni kapital, univerzitetni pevski zbor, zborovodje

## INTRODUCTION

The meaning of “university” is related to the Latin word *universus*, meaning “whole, entire”. Do modern universities really work in accordance with the principle of universality? According to Fuller (2001), the university is distinguished as an institution of knowledge governance by its dedication to creative destruction of social and cultural justification. Universities tend to be knowledge-bearing institutions, part of the knowledge economy, and regulators of intellectual property, devaluing benefits that accrue only over time (Price, 1993). Such values as disciplinary climate, academic norms,

trust and belonging, which are the main characteristics of social capital, stand far away from the priorities of academic institutions. What then do university choir leaders do when the aforementioned values are at the top of their priorities? What tensions arise and how do they overcome them, being part of the university community, which is not very sensitive to social and cultural ideals? These questions became the guidelines of our research. The purpose of the paper is to find out how university choirs contribute to the building of social capital at higher educational institutions.

#### SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY AS A BASIS FOR THE RESEARCH IN CHOIR BENEFITS

The concept of social capital is multifaceted, including the dimensions of both socialness and capital. Representatives of the social capital theory (Burt, 2000; Putnam, 1993; Coleman, 1990) describe social capital as a property of groups or communities: as relationships between “friends, colleagues, and more general contacts through whom you receive opportunities to use your financial and human capital” (Burt, 1992, p. 9), or as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinating actions” (Putnam, 1993, p. 167).

Despite certain differences between the definitions of social capital, the major postulates of this theory remain the same to this day. First, the relationships between individuals and the group is a jointly created property and a valuable resource of the group, community, or organisation. Secondly, not only does social capital refer to social relationships, but it also actualises their characteristics, such as trust, sympathy, commitments, and respect. And finally, social relationships are directly related to such processes of group activities and common gatherings as information availability, purposefulness of activity, influence, solidarity, effectiveness, and leadership. Thus, social capital is perceived as a kind of link that connects people with common or similar interests and contributes to the achievement of common goals in a purposeful way.

A distinction is made between collective social capital and individual social capital (Son, 2020). Individual social capital manifests itself through an individual’s connections and relationships with other individuals, facilitates trust and cooperation between network members, and enhances teamwork. Meanwhile, collective social capital is important for maintaining connections and relationships with external persons, small and large social networks, groups, and organisations. Social capital ensures trust and cooperation among group members, improves teamwork, and consolidates commitment to work and the organisation (Kim & Cannella, 2008). Such a breakdown of social capital describes the bidirectionality of its functioning and the coexistence of the two types of capital both in terms of the individual and a wider social context.

According to Putnam (1993), unlike private capital, social capital is both personal and public good at the same time. In other words, social capital is created and its benefits are accessed by both individuals and their groups, institutions, and organisations.

Social capital is not something given when people work or act in a group. Social capital has to be built, which requires the investment of time and human resources, the sharing of responsibilities and agreements as well as performance goals and roles between group members (Coleman, 1990). The understanding of how social networks are formed and function and the ability to predict the potential effects of social networks can effectively contribute to the dissemination and accessibility of information, the creation of operational norms and values, commitments, expectations, and responsibility. In order for interpersonal communication to start functioning as social capital and to be able to provide valuable social resources, essential elements of social capital should manifest themselves in communication and be viable: interpersonal relationships, social networks, norms and values, trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 1993; Son, 2020). All these elements exist in the choir activity. Therefore, in the next subsection, we shall discuss the functioning of the choir as a group of people engaged for specific purposes from the perspective of social capital.

#### BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE CHOIR

Singing in a choir is directly related to social capital. The importance of social aspects in choirs has been discussed by a number of researchers (Durrant & Himonides, 1998; Faulkner & Davidson, 2006). The value of the individual social capital of a choir member is defined by highlighting certain parameters such as commitment and sacrifice, health and well-being, accountability and responsibility, discipline and time management, friendship and a sense of belonging (Bartolome, 2013; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Barrett, 2017). Research findings prove that choristers experience a shared purpose related to creating good for both an individual and society (Barrett, 2017). Rehearsals give singers a chance to interact and socialise, whereas concert performances require a lot of concentration and dedication. As one of the strongest experiences, the choristers indicate the positive response of the audience to their singing and the recognition received after the concert. For these reasons, choir participants feel that they are engaged in socially meaningful activities, they are more self-confident and experience fullness of life and activity (Joseph & Southcott, 2014). Choristers recognise that the time spent in the choir is meaningful, revitalising, and motivating (Bartolome, 2013; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011; Sanal & Gorsev, 2014; Jacob et al., 2009).

A choir as a community is characterised by strong social networks created by people who adhere to shared norms and values (Langston, 2011). By participating in the choir, singers share those norms and values as well as create networks and connections, thus contributing to their own and others' well-being. Music making in groups significantly expands the opportunities for new acquaintanceships and creates conditions for people of different professions, social status, and age groups to meet and communicate (Esch & Stefano, 2010). Sufficiently sustainable social ties are formed between choir participants, and their presence significantly reduces levels of anxiety and the feeling of loneliness (Joseph & Southcott, 2014). The social bonds formed in the choir are much more sustainable than those formed through participation in other areas of activity (for example, sports), because the choristers are united by an interest in singing and a common desire to learn, rehearse, and perform music.

The choir, however, is not an isolated community. Through concerts, performances, and participation, choir members take part in civic and community activities. They know much more about the community and its leaders and have a stronger sense of identity with the organisation or institution. Public choir performances for one or another purpose and participation in organised actions or voluntary activities help them to both experience the meaning of belonging and activity in a social context and to establish relationships with other groups or organisations inside or outside the institution (Langston, 2011; Langston & Barrett, 2008). Upon comparing communities that have choirs and those that have never organised choral activities, a significant difference was found in terms of the following characteristics: a sense of belonging to the community, belief in social justice, community sustainability indicators, and a general feeling of happiness (Southcott & Joseph, 2013). From the standpoint of the social capital theory, the choir contributes to the social networking of an institution or organisation characterised by trust, civic and communal involvement, commitment and leadership, caring for each other and recognition of other people's values, and cooperation between individuals and groups.

By recognising the role of the choir in the formation of individual and collective social capital, one has to admit that the status and activity of the choir in the context of an institution has so far received little attention from researchers. Each choir has its own institutional community (school, university, church, self-governance institution, etc.), which often plays the role of the founder, supporter, or financial and material provider of the choir. Each of the institutions has a purpose that, at least theoretically, should be in harmony with the goals and aspirations of the choir. In the context of the current paper, the question arises of how the concepts of institutional and choral social capital fit together. In the next subsection, we shall review the role and challenges of a university as a higher educational institution in discerning, initiating, and sustaining choral activities under the premise that social capital should be, according to Putnam (1993), common public good.

*Collins English Online Dictionary* defines a university as an institution where students study for degrees and where academic research is done. In other words, the mission of a university is to develop knowledge through academic activities and research. This is also confirmed by the content analysis of the mission of 338 world universities conducted by Cortés-Sánchez (2017): when defining the mission of a university, the most commonly used words are research, knowledge, education, world, and university. However, as Cortés-Sánchez (2017) points out, the question arises for what purpose and why studies and research are conducted. It is obvious that the missions of universities lack orientation towards social, cultural, and global society goals, as testified to by the least frequently used words in mission definitions: preservation, respect, heritage, life-long, and reputation.

One of the reasons for that is the increasing importance attached to university rankings. One of the most prestigious Shanghai rankings, known as *Academic Ranking of World Universities*,<sup>1</sup> ranks universities in accordance with several indicators of academic activity or scientific research: graduates and employees who have won Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, cited researchers, articles published in prestigious publications and included in the main citation indexes, and academic results. Scores are awarded for each criterion, and standard statistical methods are used to calculate the overall result. The specificity of this and other rankings is to collect numerical data and present the university's evaluation in the same numerical expression. Chasing rankings diverts energy, attention, and resources away from universities' missions (Downing & Ganotice, 2016). The ratings game is reducing the quality of education: university graduates have poor critical thinking skills, have difficulty communicating effectively either verbally or in writing, and lack intercultural literacy (Musard & James, 2018). This is directly related to the mission of the university as a builder of social capital.

As noted by Brooks (2013, p. 1), the best outcomes go well beyond ranking: they “include development of the whole, thinking person, cultivation of creativity, maturation of social and cultural sensibilities, and even increased passion for life, learning and civic engagement of all sorts”. This should be integrated into all the main functions of universities: teaching, research, and participation in community activities, with particular emphasis on the third one (Askari et al., 2018). Participation in community activities is what builds relationships within the university as well as between the university and associated communities. This is what creates the prerequisites for the building of the individual and collective, personal and institutional social capital. Social capital based on relationships and connections can be used by university graduates

1 <https://www.shanghairanking.com/>

to acquire economic capital and, in the case of a university, serve as an effective tool for conducting academic activities and research.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to find out how the choir contributes to the building of social capital in a higher educational institution, and how university choir leaders interact with higher educational communities in this process, a methodological approach of qualitative research was used. As the main method of data collection, focus group discussion was chosen, that is, a semi-guided conversation of a small group of people with the aim of understanding and explaining the meanings, beliefs, and experiences that influence individuals' feelings, attitudes, and behaviour (Morgan & Scannell, 1998; Nyumba et al., 2018).

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Three focus group discussions were held with choirmasters of university choirs. In total, there are 19 university choirs in Lithuania. All their leaders were invited to participate in the research, and most of them (14) accepted the invitation: eight women and six men. The principle of homogeneity of the research participants was observed (Ho, 2006; Morgan & Scannell, 1998); the groups of participants were similar in terms of professional experience (all research participants graduated from the Choir Conducting programme at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and have been leading university choirs for at least 5 years) and composition (the group size was four to five persons). No specific criteria for the selection of focus group participants were set, the most important being their willingness to participate in the research and having something to say on the topic under consideration (Morgan & Scannell, 1998).

## RESEARCH ORGANISATION

In preparation for the focus group discussion, a meeting plan was drawn up, the main and supplementary questions were planned, and the instructions for conducting the research were sent out to those who confirmed their agreement to participate. During the discussion, a five-step focus group process was followed: an introductory part, an introductory question, transitional questions, main questions, and summarising and closing (Morgan & Scannell, 1998). Choir leaders were asked to speak about the choir activities, the goals they set for the choir activities, the benefits of singing in a choir as they saw them,

whether and what kind of support they received from the university community, and what challenges they faced.

The research participants were encouraged to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange opinions, and comment on one another's experiences and perspectives. The researcher played the role of a moderator and tried to remain neutral, but not to withdraw from discussions, to draw the participants' attention to one or another statement, to invite them to extend or supplement one or another idea, and to ensure that the research participants felt encouraged to participate and exchange ideas and opinions (Ho, 2006; Nyumba et al., 2018). The focus group discussion was conducted on the Zoom platform, with an average of one and a half hours each. The meeting was recorded using the Zoom tools.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE ZOOM PLATFORM

Zoom, a video conferencing platform with a number of unique functions, has been recognised as a quality data collection tool due to the relative ease of use, cost-effectiveness, convenience, effectiveness, and flexibility (Archibald et al., 2019). The main advantage of Zoom is the ability to communicate in real time with geographically distant people, to securely record meetings, to save recordings, and, whenever necessary, to share them for collaboration purposes (Zoom Video Communications, 2016).

When using Zoom for research purposes, certain ethical, practical, and interactional limitations have been identified: problems related to establishing a call, reliability and quality of communication, sound, and screen, limited possibilities to capture non-verbal information, and complexity of simultaneous speaking (Weller, 2017). It was established that, during the focus group discussion, the interaction between the participants was weaker due to lower clarity of speech and lack of signs of non-verbal communication. As a result, research participants' responses were shorter and faster, and included less explanation and detail (Woodyatt et al., 2016).

The above limitations were considered when preparing for the focus group discussion, and ways to reduce the impact of technology on the quality of discussions were provided. Before the interview, choir leaders were asked if they felt comfortable communicating on the Zoom platform, if they knew the functions of audio and video management, and if they had a reliable Internet connection to ensure quality communication. The leaders of the choirs were asked to identify themselves by writing down their names, to have the sound and screen turned on at all times during the discussion, to write observations or questions in the chat window, and to use the response tools offered by Zoom. The fact that the leaders of the choirs knew each other well and had experience in communication and cooperation, including on the Zoom plat-

form, had a positive influence on the quality of interaction between the discussion participants.

#### RESEARCH ETHICS

Rodham and Gavin (2006) argue that there are no different ethical requirements for online research than for face-to-face meetings. In both cases, it is necessary to obtain consent to participate in the research, to ensure the confidentiality of the discussion, and to observe the principles of respect and impartiality. The choir leaders were informed in advance about the purpose of the research and the anonymity of participation. Consent to participate in the research and permission to make recordings of the discussion were also obtained in advance. They were used only for the purposes of data analysis and were stored on the researcher's media. In the research results section, whenever the interview quotes are presented, the names of the informants and their group (1G, 2G) have been changed.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative content analysis was used to process the research data, which helped the researcher to cover the received information, to divide the data into groups and categories, and to draw conclusions based on this. A three-step data analysis sequence was applied (Nyumba et al., 2018). The first stage consisted of reading the transcriptions and making notes, and the second stage comprised the initial coding of the data, which included the generation of categories without limiting their number. In the final (focused coding) stage, the coding categories identified in the second stage were combined, paying attention to recurring ideas and themes that emerged in different groups. During the entire study, the researcher reflected on the matter of research conducting and result interpreting; she compared the identified groups with the issues of choral activity discussed in the literature (Morgan & Scannell, 1998).

#### RESULTS

In the analysis of the research data, three focus group discussion topics were formulated: the purpose and activity of a university choir, a university choir as a factor of social capital, and the choir's relationships with the university community.

The life of a university choir is active and meaningful. Choir leaders clearly distinguished between three parts of the choir's life: rehearsals, events for the internal organisation of the choir, and public performances. Rehearsal time, according to the research participants, was intended not only for the preparation of musical works and the development of vocal abilities; simultaneously, it was a very important part of the formation of relationships among the choristers as well as between them and the choir leaders. The relationships between choir members, the development and maintenance of choir traditions, and the formation of the choir community were also related to events intended for the internal organisation of the choir: creative camps, accepting new members, or the end-of-year celebrations. The choir's public performances covered a very wide spectrum: authorial choir concerts, participation in university-held (holiday commemorations, beginning of the academic year, graduation ceremonies, etc.) and national events (festivals, song festivals, and various cultural events). Performances abroad occupied a separate part of the choir's life: musical projects, competitions, and concerts. The choir's concert tours were understood as a symbiosis of the choir's musical and social goals.

The purpose of the choir was closely related to the directions of the choir's activities.

*I see the double function of the choir. The students themselves in a cultural organisation need a certain group of fellow students. A group of like-minded people sharing leisure time and hobbies, that is primarily a cultural need of students. [...] On the other hand, the university itself needs to be represented both in Lithuania and in the world; choirs are the bearers of the university's name. Singing in a choir makes one happy both on holidays and in everyday life. [Daiva]*

In her statement, the choir leader revealed the dual purpose of the choir—benefits for students and benefits for the university. For the higher education school, the choir functioned as a representation of the university's "popularity, strength, and fame. It's a great opportunity to carry the university's flag." Through the choir's performances, "the university becomes visible and heard both in Lithuania and abroad". It is an effective means of forming the image of the higher educational institution.

The choir leaders emphasised the outcomes of student participation in the choir activities. To quote one of the choir leaders,

*The main goal of the choir is to get together people from all over the university who want to sing and who are willing to devote their free time to choral singing. Choral singing creates strong relationships and bonds between students, that is, through the music they sing they get closer, they become like-minded people and carriers of culture. [...] Music is*

*necessary, it educates, and it can become an outcome of the meaning of learning or a change in specialty.* [Laima]

As we can see, the choir is seen as a means of socialising and cultural education of young people. Choir leaders understand music and music-making as an activity that unites students, enriches their cultural awareness, and possibly changes their way of life. The relationships that are made and the communion that is experienced are built on a deep and meaningful musical basis.

#### UNIVERSITY CHOIR AS A FACTOR OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

The choir directors provided their insights into both the individual and collective social capital accumulation of students singing in a choir. All the research participants emphasised that the choir was a factor in the formation of social ties.

*[S]tudents find friends or like-minded people in the team. After rehearsals, they stay, communicate, find a common language, celebrate personal holidays together [...] Communication is one of the reasons for attending the choir. [...] when friends invite, the student comes highly motivated to sing – my friend also sings here, and here I shall meet someone else. After all, it's fun.* [Rima]

In the choir, new relationships are forged and existing relationships are maintained. Students of various study programmes and years of study meet here. When they communicate, they exchange information about the current affairs of studies at the university; senior students give advice to their younger colleagues. The topics of student conversations are combined with the sharing of personal experiences and planning of common leisure activities. Starting to sing in a choir is usually motivated by the example of fellow students, although the motive of making new friends and the pursuit of meaningful communication is no less important. As one of the research participants points out, today's youth "miss live, real communication. After all, it's completely different from the usual maintaining of relationships by means of phone, computer, or message manager" (Jonas). Shared experiences and shared activities make the foundation of value-based communication.

Students' differences in the choir are accepted as a natural given of coexistence. The community of older and younger students, studying different specialties, having different life and musical experiences, and representing various regions of Lithuania, is accepted as a norm, a natural basis for the existence of a choir characterised by tolerance for otherness. This is especially evident in the case of different musical abilities and musical experience, when "the one who has a strong voice must hear the not so strong one singing. The one who sings not so well must grow and get stronger." In such a case, not only the tolerance

of the more experienced, but also the desire to help another one and contribute to musical development becomes evident. After all, according to the leader of the choir, “the success of the choir is an achievement of all and everyone individually”.

Choristers are united by the experience of representing the university, academic youth, and Lithuanian choral culture. This is especially evident when participating in national or international events.

*When we go to perform in another city or abroad, I always admire the pride with which the students carry the choir’s flag, wear their academic symbols, and are proud to represent Lithuania. When young singing people do this, I believe that values, such as responsibility, civic spirit, and community, have a future in our society. Our Song Festivals also testify to that: being part of a choir of several thousand people and singing Lithuanian folk songs lays a solid foundation for the choir’s work throughout the year. These are the values that support us during rehearsals as well. [Lina]*

Values-based participation is an important factor in the life of the choir. Students perceive the representative function of the choir at the institutional, regional, and national levels. When singing, one experiences a relationship with one’s higher education school, the nation, and the state. Choir leaders understand “how much a choir can do, how singing can contribute to the development of students’ personalities.” Therefore, a rich and diverse musical life of the choir is a constant goal of choir leaders.

#### THE CHOIR’S RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

If the value-based understanding of the choir’s activity is unified within the choir, the expectations of the choir are very different in the case of the choir leaders and the university community. The university community includes a wide range of people and their groups. The research participants noted that they received support and recognition from other academic staff members, yet the university administration had limited expectations for the university choir. According to the choirmasters, the school administrators expected the choir to enrich the celebrations held by the university with its performance and to contribute to the university’s popularity and its rankings.

*It’s often not great fun for me to sing at those university events. [...] If we are needed only to perform “Gaudeamus”, this is a mockery of the choir. [...] As they say, you stand in the corner, sing “Gaudeamus”, and go. And I say: play the recording and listen to it. [Irma]*

The representative function of the choir, the performance of the musical part of the events is not an improper expectation. However, the choir leaders were troubled by the fact that this might be the most important, and sometimes the only, understanding of the choir's purpose. It manifested itself in the limited support of the university administration or their wishes regarding the repertoire. One choir leader said:

*[W]hen we want to prepare some more serious composition, we get in response: why do you need such songs? Of course, singing a cantata or oratorio requires an orchestra, soloists, and a hall in which the composition will be performed. And this means that additional money, and sometimes also organisational support, is necessary. Then I am told: maybe you should sing something simpler, funnier, so that everyone has fun. [Ieva]*

The function of a choir as an entertainer, a creator of a festive mood, can be one of many, if only it were in harmony with the evaluation of other possibilities: "choirs are treated as entertainment or a leisure occupation, but not as a function of the university to educate and cultivate". Choir directors set ambitious goals: to foster students' cultural competence, to develop choral music traditions, and to ensure standards of artistic value both in terms of the repertoire and its performance. There is an obvious difference in the understanding of the purpose of choral activities within the university community.

A similar situation can be seen when talking about the function of the choir as a representative artistic group of the institution.

*The reason why the university has those art groups is that they are part of some kind of advertising. The administration is happy when we appear in television projects, take part in some radio show, when we sing under the university flag at the local or national events. However, we do not get any response if we have some nice campaign or contribute to social initiatives. Or just when we lead a simple, meaningful life of a choir. [Irma]*

The choir's visibility and representation of the higher education school is important and noticeable, but this is usually the limit of universities' attention to the choir's activity. According to the research participants, the university administration care about the prestige of the institution, but do not see the deeper meaning of the choir's educational and cultivating activities or its role in uniting the university community and building an academic-values based university environment.

The choir leaders make efforts to publicise the choir's activity: they inform the community about significant choir events on the university's website, take care of the choir's publicity through audio-visual means (posters, CDs, YouTube recordings), or initiate meetings with responsible university depart-

ments. Such initiatives are interpreted by the research participants as manifestations of their own belief in the importance of choral activities, which, unfortunately, have little influence on the relationship with the community.

Formally, the choir's activity is supported – rooms are provided for rehearsals, choir leaders and concertmasters received paid salaries, funds are allocated for the trips or choir paraphernalia. In all cases, however, this is done more out of inertia than out of recognition of the choir's value. In most cases, the contracts are signed for a year, and the choir leaders receive the information about the funding of the choir events at the last minute. According to one choir leader, "I get the impression that we are acting not on behalf of the university, but as an independent artistic group. Meanwhile, we would like to have a common understanding of young people's singing, to share the responsibility for the education of personalities, creators of the future, versatile specialists, after all, of cultured people." We can only be happy that university choir directors who take on these functions have a strong belief in the meaning of their activity and support the community of choir leaders of other universities.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

A choir is much more than just a large group of singers. It is a multi-layered and multifaceted phenomenon, which can be understood using various theoretical and methodological approaches. In each case, it is a way to get to know the choir as a complex phenomenon, revealing the meaning of choral activity for culture, an individual, and the community. In this paper, from the standpoint of the social capital theory, we aimed to show the most important aspects of the choir as a social phenomenon in a specific environment of a university. The results of the focus group discussions with university choir leaders highlighted the importance of a choir, as personal and collective social capital, for students and universities. University students who sing in a choir establish social relationships with their peers, accumulate cultural and artistic experience, and develop the values of cooperation, responsibility, duty, belonging to a group, creativity, and civic spirit (Coleman, 1990). The research data also suggest that chorister fellowship is a means of fostering an academic environment that exhibits indicators of social capital such as trust, faith-based engagement, and caring for and valuing others (Kim & Cannella, 2008).

Choir performances at the university and outside it can help develop relationships with other communities, organisations, and institutions (Barrett, 2017). They contribute to more intense networking and the broadening of the cultural horizons of the choir and choristers. On the one hand, new connections and new networks get established in this way. On the other hand, the individual's identity is consolidated, and the feeling of belonging to a group or an institution is intensified. Putnam (1993) notes that, in this way, the social fab-

ric of communality is strengthened, and individual and collective social capital is expanded.

As became clear during the research, the indicators of social capital were significantly more strongly expressed in the processes of internal relationships and interactions of the choir. Meanwhile, the relationships with other university social groups, both in terms of values and the understanding of the choir's purpose, were not unambiguous. University expectations regarding the choir were often limited to assigning representative, image-building functions to it. The choir leaders felt the lack of understanding of the personal, cultural, and social purpose of the choir. Therefore, the responsibilities of building social capital through choral activities in higher educational institutions remained the responsibility of choir leaders.

In the process of the research, we failed to find any literature examining the performance of a university choir from an institutional perspective. The apparent contradictions between the experience of choir leaders and the situation described by them in higher educational institutions prompted a problem for further research: how choir singers, their leaders, and the university community could cooperate in creating not only individual or institutional social capital, but also in contributing to strengthening the social capital of the global society.

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### *Povzetek*

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Kakšno vlogo ima pevski zbor kot dejavnik socialnega kapitala v visokošolski ustanovi? Analiza stanja je pokazala, da se je v enaindvajsetem stoletju koncept delovanja sodobnih univerz spremenil. Univerze pozornost in dejavnosti vse bolj usmerjajo v izpolnjevanje meril za razvrščanje univerz, v strategije za privabljanje študentov in v statusno rast ter dvig ugleda institucij. Kazalniki, kot so gradnja univerze kot skupnosti, razvoj študentskih kompetenc, zagotavljanje akademskega okolja, ki temelji na odnosih in mrežah, so vedno manj pomembni. Teorija socialnega kapitala je bila v prispevku uporabljena z namenom, da bi univerzitetni zbor obravnavali kot dejavnik izgradnje individualnega in kolektivnega socialnega kapitala v visokem šolstvu. Kaj počnejo univerzitetni zborovodje, ko so omenjene vrednote na vrhu njihovih prioritet? Kakšne napetosti se pojavljajo in kako jih premagujejo kot del univerzitetne skupnosti, ki ni preveč občutljiva za družbene in kulturne ideale? Tovrstna vprašanja so vodila raziskavo, katere namen je bil ugotoviti, kako univerzitetni pevski zbori prispevajo k izgradnji socialnega kapitala na visokošolskih ustanovah. V kvalitativno raziskavo je bilo vključenih 14 litovskih zborovodij z 12 univerz. V okviru fokusnih skupin so sodelovali v treh razpravah. Razpravljali so o vlogi pevskega zborovodje v življenju univerze in študentov, o napetostih, ki nastajajo zaradi pričakovanih univerzitetne skupnosti, in ciljih, ki si jih zastavljajo zborovodje. Le-ti menijo, da univerzitetni pevski zbor pomembno prispeva k akumulaciji socialnega kapitala na obeh ravneh: institucionalni in individualni. Sama univerzitetna skupnost na pevski zbor naj-

večkrat gleda z vidika razvedrila in sestavnega dela institucionalnih praznovanj ter dogodkov. Takšen pristop vpliva na kakovost zborovskega izvajanja, na obisk študentov na pevskih vajah in na naravo financiranja ter upravljanja zbora.