

## The Lazgisphere and tourism in the thirdspace

### A lazgi-esfera e o turismo no terceiro-espaço

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#### Abstract

This paper applies the concept of Soja's Thirdspace to the phenomenon of Lazgi dance and tourism in Uzbekistan. In doing so it analyses the different levels of perception (including Firstspace and Secondspace) of Lazgi and tourism via an autoethnographic lens. Complemented by expert interviews, the interaction of Lazgi and tourism is examined and characteristics of the Lazgisphere (world of Lazgi) in Uzbekistan are distilled. The results show that Lazgi is often directly or indirectly connected with tourism in Uzbekistan, but even more so serves to reaffirm national identity.

**Keywords:** Lazgi; dance; Uzbekistan; Thirdspace; autoethnography; Edward Soja.

#### Resumo

Este artigo aplica o conceito de Thirdspace de Soja ao fenómeno da dança Lazgi e do turismo no Uzbequistão. Ao fazê-lo, analisa os diferentes níveis de percepção (incluindo os conceitos de Firstspace e o Secondspace) do Lazgi e do turismo através de uma lente auto-etnográfica. Complementada por entrevistas a especialistas, a interação entre o lazgi e o turismo é examinada e as características da lazgi-esfera (mundo do lazgi) no Uzbequistão são destiladas. Os resultados revelam que o Lazgi está frequentemente ligado, direta ou indiretamente, ao turismo no Uzbequistão, mas serve sobretudo para assegurar a identidade nacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Lazi; dança; Uzbequistão; terceiro espaço; auto-etnografia; Edward Soja.

### 1. Introduction

Lazgi is an old Uzbek dance that became immaterial world heritage in 2019 (Hamroeva, 2021b; Maxkambaevna, 2021). It dates back some 3000 years and is said to be linked to Zoroastrian time, early creation myths, and totemic beliefs (Vercoe, 2020; Skublewska-Pszkowska et al., 2021; Tolstow, 1953; Matyokubova et al., 2022). Fire was an important element of worship for Zoroastrians, who came into existence some 3000 years ago in the Persian region and refer to their founder Zoroaster (Hannemann, 2022). The trembling body language of the dance - Lazgi means trembling - (Rakhimov, 2020; Chandr, 2022; Matyokubova et al., 2022; Baxtiyorov, 2021) is considered to be a reflection of that. Hints of early dances can be found in the Avesta, the holy script of the Zoroastrians, which is seen as the origin of Lazgi (Hamroeva, 2021b; Matyokubova, 2022; Musaeva, 2022). This is confirmed by archaeological



findings in the ancient citadel of Toprak-kala in Khorezm, where a wall shows male and female dancers wearing goat masks. A remnant of these former totemic beliefs is a feather still worn today in female Lazgi dancers' headgear (Vercoe, 2022).

Lazgi developed in the ancient Khorezm region that once extended from the present Uzbek city of Khiva into parts of modern-day Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan (Skublewska-Pszkowska *et al.*, 2021; Vercoe, 2020). It reflects the entire spectrum of human feelings (Hamroeva, 2021b) and developed nine variations including Qayroq lazgisi, Dutor lazgisi, or Surnay lazgisi (Rakhimov, 2020; Matyokubova, 1993; Chandr, 2022; Baxtiyorov, 2021). The Khorezm province in Uzbekistan today is much smaller and borders on the autonomous Uzbek region of Karakalpakstan to the north, the Uzbek province of Buchara to the south, and Turkmenistan to the west.

The dance is now an important element of Uzbek nationality and identity (Rakhimov, 2020; Shahlo, 2021) that emerged especially after the country declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Turaeva, 2008; Sultanova, 2005) and is considered to belong exclusively to Uzbekistan due to its comparatively isolated development in Khorezm. The dance is widely performed over the entire country and beyond Khorezm at family occasions such as weddings. It has also been a domestic tourism attraction e.g., during Lazgi Festivals. The dance has become more and more of a tourist attraction for international visitors since the opening up of Uzbekistan for international tourism, especially post 2017.

The motivation for this research lies in the lack of scientific consideration of the nexus between Lazgi and tourism - a research gap that is worth filling.

The idea of *Thirdspace* developed by Edward Soja (1996) serves as an analytical framework in this paper. Soja developed the idea of *Thirdspace*, a concept where *Firstspace* (the physical space) and *Secondspace* (the imagined space) interact and develop into something new: the *Thirdspace*. The paper aims to analyse the Lazgisphere (world of Lazgi) and tourism with the help of this concept. The notion of *Thirdspace* is especially appropriate in this regard, because it allows the analysis of the interdependencies of Lazgi and tourism. In doing so the author would like to contribute to closing the research gap mentioned above.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Dance and tourism<sup>1</sup>

Music and dance in general are ephemeral and creative aspects of tourism products (Wood *et al.*, 2007) and can – in connection to tourism – be seen as an under-researched niche. Dance tourism is normally a passive experience, with the tourist just watching an event that is part of his or her trip or as a leisure activity. However, it can also involve active participation in a specific dance form and may even be the actual reason for traveling (McCleary *et al.*, 2006), especially to the country where the respective dance originates (Banio & Malchrowicz-Mósko, 2019; Hughes-Freeland, 2012).

One reason tourists actively participate in such events is the cathartic experience induced by the intensive full-body experience while dancing (Matteucci, 2021) and can

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<sup>1</sup> This section is an updated and modified version of a respective section in another published journal paper (Thimm, 2022).

contribute to an increase in eudaimonia, a process of fulfilment and self-development (Matteucci & Filep, 2017). McCleary *et al.* (2006: 277) furthermore identify six motivations for dancing: “escape & relaxation, socialization, novelty, dance learning, (dance) event, enjoyment, and excitement”. The music, in particular, causes the dancers to become absorbed in the dance and to be part of a dance flow (Matteucci, 2018).

Another reason tourists may engage in dancing activities during their vacations is to distinguish themselves from other tourist groups: since dancing skills are very specific, the dance tourist becomes something special and different from the other mainstream or mass tourists (Matteucci, 2014) becoming part of a specific sub-culture (Garcia, 2016).

In terms of the interdependency of tourism and dance, sometimes dance depends on tourism while sometimes tourism on dance: in some cases, dance preserves tourism, e.g., in Hawaii (Kole, 2010) and Ecuador (Bohórquez *et al.*, 2021), in others tourism preserves dance, e.g. in Andalusia (Aoyama, 2009; Thimm, 2022). The commercialization of dance due to touristic demand has often been heavily criticized. However, the commodification of dance when it is confronted with tourist expectations is unavoidable (Wall & Xie, 2005; Morel, 2009). The example of the Argentine tango shows that this does not necessarily lead to a decrease in quality (Thimm, 2014). Art forms, particularly music and dance, indigenous to a certain place are often used as tourism icons since they often represent a unique selling proposition, a distinctive sense of place (Henke, 2008) or space (Smith, 1997) or a music region (Nash, 1968).

## **2.2. Lazgi and tourism**

Although the Lazgi has over time absorbed components of the respective natural and cultural environment, like the sun, animal mimicry, or shamanic myths (Vercoe, 2022) – e. g., the Doira, a traditional round hand drum (Turaeva, 2008) is a shamanistic remain - at its core it has remained remarkably unaltered over the thousands of years of its existence. According to Turaeva (2008), this is due to the traditional master-apprentice system: learning the Lazgi dance in Uzbekistan has always followed and continues to follow this ancient educational approach (Sultanova, 2009). The apprentice first copies the movements of the master to perfection and acknowledges the authority of the master. Later the apprentice makes their own contributions to the art form but sticks to the principles of the dance. This master-apprentice system is the main reason why the Lazgi dance has been able to survive for centuries: the concept of Nazira, meaning respect for the master, led to a resilient maintenance of traditions until today (Vercoe, 2022). Because of this, the Lazgi itself has remained comparatively unchanged over time and thus helps to preserve values, traditions, and customs of the past (Hamroeva, 2021a). However, the location of Khorezm at the centre of the Silk Road (Feldbacher, 2022; Schwarzstein, 2022; Tolstow, 1953; Whitfield, 2021), has led to the Lazgi dance itself being influenced by other dances, especially in the neighboring countries, via a cultural dialogue along the trading routes (Kalami, 2022).

Rooted in Zoroastrian rituals related to the sun and animals, Lazgi dance was able to preserve shamanistic elements even during the Arab invasion in Central Asia and developed into a stage dance when Uzbekistan was part of the Soviet Union in the 1930s (Vercoe, 2022). The country became a tourist destination, primarily for Eastern countries (Eitzenberger & Thimm, 2022), and cultural tourists also discovered Lazgi.

Today Lazgi exists predominantly in three forms: as a private dance, performed at family events such as weddings, as a dance for tourists, e. g. at restaurants and, at the highest professional level, at festivals and national festivities (Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022; Turaeva, 2008). After Uzbekistan began to open up for international tourists, mainly since 2016, the country started promoting festivals and smaller events at restaurants for domestic and international tourism (Eitzenberger & Thimm, 2022). In Uzbekistan, Lazgi dance tourism is predominantly a passive event involving domestic and international tourists watching a Lazgi performance at a festival or a restaurant. It is much rarer that tourists actively participate in the dance, and then mainly in the form of guests being invited to an Uzbek family occasion or taking classes at a Lazgi dance school.

The first Lazgi festival in Khiva 2022 (UZDAILY, 2020) and the contemporary dance production “Lazgi – Dance of Soul and Love” that premiered in 2022 in Uzbekistan and Germany as an Uzbek-German collaboration was the start of Lazgi dance reaching out to attract new international tourism target groups. Especially the latter production is considered a “business card for Uzbekistan of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Schwarzstein, 2022: 19).

### **2.3. The Thirdspace according to Edward Soja**

Building on Lefebvre’s (1991) constructivist ideas about space as Heterotopology and Foucault’s concept of Other Spaces (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986), Soja (1996) developed the idea of Thirdspace, a space that combines by Firstspace and Secondspace to something new:

Thirdspace [...] can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the “real” material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through “imagined” representations of spatiality (Soja, 1996: 6).

While the concept of heterotopia/other spaces focuses on the idea of counter-places that are real but have certain social and cultural characteristics, the idea of thirspace goes beyond this in its trialetics (Seywald 2021): for Soja spaces are real (Firstspace) and imagined (Secondspace) at the same time: the Firstspace represents the material and empirically describable world and the Secondspace is the world of ideas, mental and cognitive forms of spaces. With the Thirdspace this Firstspace-Secondspace develops into something new, beyond the combined First- and Secondspace, a process, Soja calls “thirling”:

“Thirdspace and to initiate its evolving definition by describing it as a product of ‘thirling’ of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning.” (Soja, 1996: 11).

This hybrid idea of Soja’s Thirdspace forms the analytical framework of this paper. Although the notion of Thirdspace – like other postmodern concepts - was criticized as unpractical, prescriptive, abstract or eclectic (Smith, 2015; Seywald, 2021; Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002), the author considers this concept especially appropriate for her

research topic, since Soja refers to space that is enlivened, just as dance and tourism always have spatial aspects and are enlivened, too.

The following research questions were formulated based on the literature review:

- a) What constitutes the Lazgisphere in Uzbekistan?
- b) What are the interdependencies between Lazgi and tourism?
- c) What insights does the concept of Thirdspace provide in this regard?

### 3. Methodology

Soja's concept of Thirdspace represents the analytical framework of this paper. The author combined this with an autoethnographic approach: before every visit to a Lazgi space (e.g., a museum, or an institution) the author recorded a voice message of how she personally imagined this space (the Secondspace). After the visit, she then recorded her personal observations of the Firstspace and the Thirdspace for the respective Lazgi place. The author selected a total of six Lazgi spaces: five in Uzbekistan and one in Germany.

Autoethnography is applied as an approach; this concept uses personal observations and experiences (auto) as primary data to describe and analyse (graphy) other cultures (ethno) (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). In other words: "[...] autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding of others (culture/society) through self" (Chang, 2008).

Thus, autoethnography as a method is a process and product at the same time. It explicitly recognizes the influence of personal experience on the research process, therefore allowing first-person perspectives. In doing so, the researcher uses autoethnography to try and gain an understanding of a foreign culture (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). The author chose the approach of autoethnography because her own dance experiences give her suitable access to the world of the Lazgi. The author, being observer and subject of research at the same time, is aware of the subjectivity of this approach, but sees it precisely as a suitable way of gaining insights into a dance form that was previously unknown to her. There is a good fit between the creativity of the approach and the creativity of dance as an art form. Furthermore, dance is emotional and immersive and the approach of autoethnography does justice to this: as subjective emotional aspects can thus be incorporated into the research and the researcher immerses into her field of research. Several authors, such as Noy (2008), Pelias (2003), Scarles and Sanderson (2016) or Stanley (2014) used this method previously, also in connection with tourism topics.

The qualitative method mix used in this study was complemented by ten semi-structured qualitative interviews with Lazgi experts, including teachers, dancers, and faculty members of universities in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Urgench, but also in Europe. The interviewees were identified via snowball sampling and selected according to their expertise on Lazgi and tourism. The interviews were held in English. Interpreters were used when the interviewees did not speak English. The cities where the interviews took place were identical to the cities where the author visited Lazgi spaces, in addition to the city of Khiva. The data was collected during the author's field stay in Uzbekistan in September/October 2022. All interviews were recorded, anonymized, and informed consent was given before the

recording. The interviews are listed below the reference list and are abbreviated in the text when quoted (e. g. Interviewee 1 = I1). The spaces and corresponding dates of visit are also listed below the reference list.

In addition, two documentaries on Lazgi were analysed. The first one is the documentary “Lazgi” by Baxtiyorov (2021) and the second one is by Blue, White and Green Production (2021) “Legends of Uzbek Dance”. Both provide valuable insights into the history of the dance and the different Lazgi styles that evolved.

The author considers this qualitative mix of methods to be very suitable for the study of the topic, as researching dance is always about personal perspectives, special scenes, atmosphere and moods - relevant aspects that could not have been captured with quantitative methods.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Lazgispheres**

The Lazgi, with its pre-Islamic origins, relates to an early animistic, shamanistic and Zoroastrian period some 3000 years ago (I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9). For some time, it was most likely predominantly a warrior (I1) or animal mimicry/hunter dance (I9, Blue, White and Green Production, 2021). These elements, along with the shaking and shivering movements toward the sun, the Zoroastrians object of worship, can still be found in the dance up to today (I4, I7). This might also have to do with the fact that Khorezm is a comparatively cold region (I5, I8). Hard historical evidence on the origin of the Lazgi is hard to find as there are few written sources (I2, I6, I7, I8). The Lazgi mostly expresses a positive range of emotions (I6, I7, I8) while interpreting the singer’s words (I10). In addition, the Lazgi may even have healing effects (I7). The use of stone castanets is a distinguished feature of the Lazgi dance (I9).

The results show that there are three specific Lazgispheres: the private Lazgisphere, the tourism Lazgisphere, and the official Lazgisphere. The Lazgishphere in general comprises Lazgi music and dance, the venues, dancers, musicians and the audience.

4.1.1. The private Lazgisphere – Lazgi is very much alive and danced at many family occasions all over Uzbekistan, by women and men alike (I1, I3, I8, I9). This private Lazgisphere, created by Uzbek hobby dancers, is deeply rooted in the centuries-old Lazgi music and dance tradition giving everybody at a family event the possibility to participate (I1). In the private Lazgisphere, the music may also be mixed with foreign music just for experimental purposes or for fun (I1) or there may be a preference for humorous Lazgi forms, e. g. the Clown Lazgi (I8). The interconnection with tourism occurs only occasionally, e. g. in the case of tourists being spontaneously invited, or in a passive way, tourists observing a family event by chance. Since part of the Uzbek diaspora also dances Lazgi abroad (I8, I9), this may be another tool to promote the dance to possible tourists, provided the Uzbeks abroad leave the private Lazgisphere and open up to foreigners.

4.1.2. The tourism Lazgisphere – The tourism Lazgisphere is built by professional Lazgi dancers that perform for domestic and international tourists, e.g., at restaurants. The dance develops over the time of the performance according to the tourists’ reactions: the more

appreciative the audience, the more enthusiastic and elaborated their expressions become (I1, I4, I5). There is no compromise on quality during Lazgi performance for tourists, since this very old dance form has been preserved over centuries and continues to be preserved (I2, I7). Since the nine Lazgi types are each accompanied by specific instruments (e. g. flute, accordion, stone castanets, dutar), a preference may be given to Lazgi types with instruments that are more familiar to the respective tourist (I1). Since the Lazgi is widely known in Uzbekistan's neighbouring countries (I1, I3, I6, I7, I8, I9), but not as much outside Central Asia, it is more a kind of by-product for international tourists whose main reason to travel to Uzbekistan is to visit the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva (I10). However, in some countries, e. g. in Dagestan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, India, Iran, and Turkey (I2, I3, I7, I8), the Lazgi may be more widely known, as there are dances with similar elements in the respective countries. Therefore, in those countries the Lazgi is a considerable cultural element for tourism promotion. The Lazgi may have influenced these dances due to the central position of Khorezm along the ancient silk road (I2, I3, I5, I8, I10) while remaining unaltered due to the master-apprentice system and the comparative isolation of Khorezm (I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10). At Lazgi festivals, mainly domestic tourists participate (I1, I2). This might change with the Lazgi having just recently become immaterial world heritage in 2019 and subsequently being increasingly promoted at an international level (I2, I4, I6, I7, I8, I9). Attracting international tourists to regions like Khorezm is important as a means to provide jobs (I9), since due to financial constraints the domestic labour market is limited (I10). One important step to tap into the international tourism market via Lazgi was the Uzbek-German production of Lazgi – Dance of Soul and Love, which premiered in 2022 in Tashkent and Dortmund. This dance show, combining traditional Lazgi elements with the history of the dance and modern ballet, specifically targets a Western audience (Schwarzstein, 2022, I9). A small number of tourists already practice and learn the Lazgi, either directly in Khorezm (I2, I4, I7), or online (I4).

4.1.3. The official Lazgisphere – The official Lazgisphere is created at official events such as the National Day of Uzbekistan. It is performed by the best dancers in the country and is of high importance for Uzbek nationality and identity (I1, I4, I5). Lazgi is supported by the Uzbek government, e. g. via a State Academy for Choreography (I8). Since Uzbekistan only became independent in 1991, the historic region of Khorezm and its culture is an important element of Uzbek national identity (I1, I4, I6, I7). Although targeting the domestic audience, tourists may be present at official festivities and perceive Lazgi dance as integral and even a core component of the representation of the state of Uzbekistan (I10). This image is increasingly being transported beyond Central Asia, with professional dancers going abroad and making a living from their art (I1, I9, I10). For female dancers in Uzbekistan, however, this is not an option, as a conservative understanding of the roles of women in Uzbekistan deems them as predominantly caregivers for the family (I4, I5, I9).

## **4.2. Lazgi spaces**

4.2.1. State Academy of Choreography in Tashkent – The Secondspace, as I imagined it before visiting, was a very international institution, where I would be meeting English-speaking

colleagues and international dancers from outside Uzbekistan as well as locals. The place in my imagination was vibrant and full of dancers, a house of dance in a functional building.

The Firstspace was a very functional building, as per my expectations. The dance room doors looked like office doors. Dancers were depicted on the façade as a little element of decoration. Indeed, I met at least one colleague who spoke English and some local dancers in the hallway.

The Thirthing via the Lazgi, i.e. the emergence of the Thirdspace occurred as follows: although I did not see Lazgi dance in this building, I could talk about it a lot: so, the resulting Lazgi Thirdspace was very lively, friendly, and welcoming, but also full of patriotic statements from my dialogue partners promoting the Lazgi.

(Author's recordings, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022)

4.2.2. Kukeldash Madrasa in Buchara – As I did not expect any Lazgi to be present at the Kukeldash Madrasa, Second- and Firstspace were congruent as non-Lazgi spaces. During an Uzbek-German seminar at the Madrasa, an Uzbek colleague surprisingly brought musicians and a Lazgi dancer.

The unexpected Lazgi-Thirdspace created by the Lazgi dancer invoked a very positive and surprised reaction from the whole audience who – like me – was not expecting a dance at this time and place. Nevertheless, the audience immediately cheered during this surprising performance.

(Author's recordings, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022)

4.2.3. Museum of Musical Art in Khiva – The Secondspace I imagined for this museum looked very much like some other museums I had visited in Uzbekistan – not really targeting the international market and equipped in an outdated manner.

The Firstspace was actually even worse: the exhibition was not suitable for foreigners, very little information was provided in English, and it was overall very unappealing.

I am not sure if a Lazgi Thirdspace can be found here, since the museum is only partly dedicated to Lazgi and, in general, appeared pretty lifeless to me.

(Author's recordings, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022)

4.2.4. Branch of the State Academy of Choreography in Urgench – I imagined the Secondspace to be a bit like the main building of the State Academy in Tashkent. Maybe it would be a bit less equipped since this is not the capital, but maybe it would be similar since it is located in Khorezm, the region where Lazgi originated.

Astonishingly, there was no sign indicating the institution outside the building; here also the Firstspace met my expectations of the Secondspace: it looked a bit less equipped than the Tashkent main building, with the exception of the training room for the dancers, which was a pleasant surprise: bright and large.

The Thirdspace via the Lazgi, i.e., talks about Lazgi and a Lazgi performance by the students of the Academy, was very friendly, welcoming, and joyful. During the students' performance, the entire teaching staff was present which allowed for an interactive exchange about Lazgi.

(Author's recordings, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022)



4.2.5. Philharmony in Urgench – The Secondspace in my imagination was a very representative building, a smaller version of the Tashkent opera with well-equipped training rooms for the dancers. I also expected to meet professional Lazgi dancers during their rehearsal. I expected that the renown of the country’s Lazgi would be reflected in the space, too.

The Firstspace was actually not glamorous but a rather functional building, yet there was a very big training hall for the dancers.

The Lazgi Thirdspace was filled by the rehearsal dance of the professional ensemble dancers of the philharmonic. There was a bit of exchange in English with some dancers and conversation in sign language and a few scraps of Russian with the teacher. Despite the modesty of the place, the atmosphere was very friendly and loving. I noticed the love for the Lazgi dance in this Thirdspace.

(Author’s recordings, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022)

4.2.6. Theater Dortmund – As a Secondspace, I imagined the Theater Dortmund as a functional building due to its location in the German industrial area of Ruhrgebiet. Since the area has been undergoing a structural change for years, including the promotion of culture, I thought that this would be reflected in the space, too. As a German theatre, Theater Dortmund is not really a traditional Lazgi space so I was curious how the contemporary dance production “Lazgi – Dance of Soul and Love” would resonate with this place.

The Firstspace of the theatre was much bigger than I thought, but regarding its functional design, it was just as I imagined it. The theatre was pretty full due to the fact that the production was directed by the well-known choreographer of the theatre, Raimondo Rebeck, and because many Uzbek and Russian-speaking people were sitting in the audience. This was not really a surprise, since the Ruhrgebiet is an area with a high percentage of immigrants.

The Thirthing that happened through the Lazgi performance in the theatre converted the Thirdspace into a very poetic one, blending traditional Lazgi elements with modern ballet movements. The space resonated with the history and the topics of Lazgi. Via the modern ballet, the German audience was well addressed, and via the Lazgi the Uzbek diaspora.

(Author’s recordings, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022)

## 5. Discussion

The findings show that Lazgi is deeply rooted in Uzbek culture and is considered a valuable asset for tourism. The dance is a core element of the historic and current region of Khorezm and has developed into a national icon for the young Uzbek state. Research on Lazgi and the official performance of Lazgi serve as a historical self-reaffirmation for the Uzbek nation. The connection between Lazgi and tourism differs gradually regarding the interaction with tourists: from the private Lazgisphere, where the tourist may occasionally be invited, to the official Lazgisphere the tourist intentionally or incidentally perceives, to the tourism Lazgisphere, which is designed and performed specifically for the tourist. The same applies to the analysed Lazgi spaces: The Museum of Musical Art in Khiva is at the centre of one of

the main tourist cities in Uzbekistan and a tourist attraction itself. So is the Kukeldash Madrasa, normally not a Lazgi space, but if Lazgi is performed there it is at one of the known tourist attractions at Buchara. The Theater Dortmund was filled with tourists as well as local people; the Lazgi here was performed in combination with modern forms of ballet as a tourist attraction. The State Academies of Choreography in Tashkent and Urgench and the Philharmony in Urgench are indirectly linked to tourism: they train professional dancers who then perform for tourists at festivals or performances. The process of Thirding via the encounter with Lazgi and tourism in these spaces, led to different Thirdspaces, most of them friendly and joyful, some surprising or poetic, and in one case also disappointing. Limitations exist because of the author's Western lens: especially during the autoethnographic recordings, it became clear that the author had preconceived concepts of cultural spaces in mind. Furthermore, the scope of the study is limited to the very specific case of Lazgi and tourism in Uzbekistan and thus the results are not transferable to other regions.

## **6. Conclusion**

Answering the first research questions it can be concluded that the three specific Lazgispheres, the private Lazgisphere, the tourism Lazgisphere and the official Lazgisphere are all constituted by very traditional elements of music and dance passed on for centuries. Especially the tourism Lazgisphere, but also the official and private Lazgisphere are open to foreigners. For the official Lazgisphere the element of display and assurance of national identity is dominant.

As to the second research question the interdependencies between Lazgi and tourism become obvious in the examined Lazgi spaces: The State Academy of Choreography in Tashkent, the branch of the State Academy of Choreography in Urgench and the Philharmony in Urgench are pre-tourism spaces, since dancers are trained there to perform also for a tourism audience. The Kukeldash Madrasa in Buchara, the Museum of Musical Art in Khiva and Theater Dortmund in Germany are spaces where the Lazgi comes into contact with tourists. Lazgi in Madrasas performing for tourists is very common in Buchara. Also the museum in Khiva is a classical way of displaying art to tourists. The performance in the Dortmund theater, however, is more a combination of promoting the art of a country not really known in Europe and demonstrating that this art is open to contemporary fusion forms.

The concept of Thirdspace (third research question) in this regard allows a deep analysis of the Lazgi spaces. The insights gained from that are predominantly impressions that underline the deep rootedness of Lazgi in Uzbek culture and the strong will to show it to foreigners.

The Lazgisphere in Uzbekistan is alive in the private, official, and tourism space. Being an ancient dance of Khorezm it serves as an important element of Uzbek culture contributing to national identity. As a tourism product, Lazgi is performed at domestic occasions and international festivals and promoted abroad with the help of its status as an immaterial world heritage. In doing so, it does not compromise on quality, and it is not changed in its essence as the master-apprentice system guarantees its preservation. Lazgi spaces as Thirdspaces, in

the sense of Soja (1996), are attributed predominantly positively and are linked to tourism directly or indirectly.

Future research is needed with regard to the relation of dance or other immaterial world heritage and tourism in other countries of Central Asia. As to Uzbekistan a study on tourism demand and the specific role of Lazgi in it would be another important perspective for research.

The practical implications lie in the advice for tourism decision makers to modernize museums like the Museum of Musical Art in Khiva and, building on the success of the performance “Lazgi – Dance of Soul and Love”, to create more contemporary fusion projects for Lazgi for an international audience.

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### Disclosure statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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### List of Interviews

- Interviewee 1: 16/09/22, academia and Lazgi hobby dancer, female
- Interviewee 2: 16/09/22, academia, female
- Interviewee 3: 19/09/22, academia, male
- Interviewee 4: 19/09/22, professional Lazgi dancer, female
- Interviewee 5: 20/09/22, professional Lazgi master and teacher, female
- Interviewee 6: 26/09/22, academia, female
- Interviewee 7: 04/10/22, academia, male
- Interviewee 8: 05/10/22, academia, male
- Interviewee 9: 13/01/23, author, female
- Interviewee 10: 17/02/23, academia, female

### List of Spaces

- State Academy of Choreography in Tashkent, 16/09/22
- Kukeldash Madrasa in Buchara, 19/09/22
- Museum of Musical Art in Khiva, 03/10/22
- Branch of the State Academy of Choreography in Urgench, 05/10/22
- Philharmony in Urgench, 05/10/22
- Theater Dortmund, 06/12/22

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