

Soviet Journals Reconnected: Periodicals and Their Networks under Late Socialism

THE CENTER FOR DIGITAL HUMANITIES @PRINCETON

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Introduction

The so-called **thick journal** was a central institution of Soviet culture in the 1960s-1980s. Featuring literary and artistic content, as well as social and political writing, these monthlies had print runs in the hundreds of thousands or even millions. For scholars of Soviet literature, history and politics, thick journals are of great interest, because they organized some of the major aesthetic and ideological debates of the time.

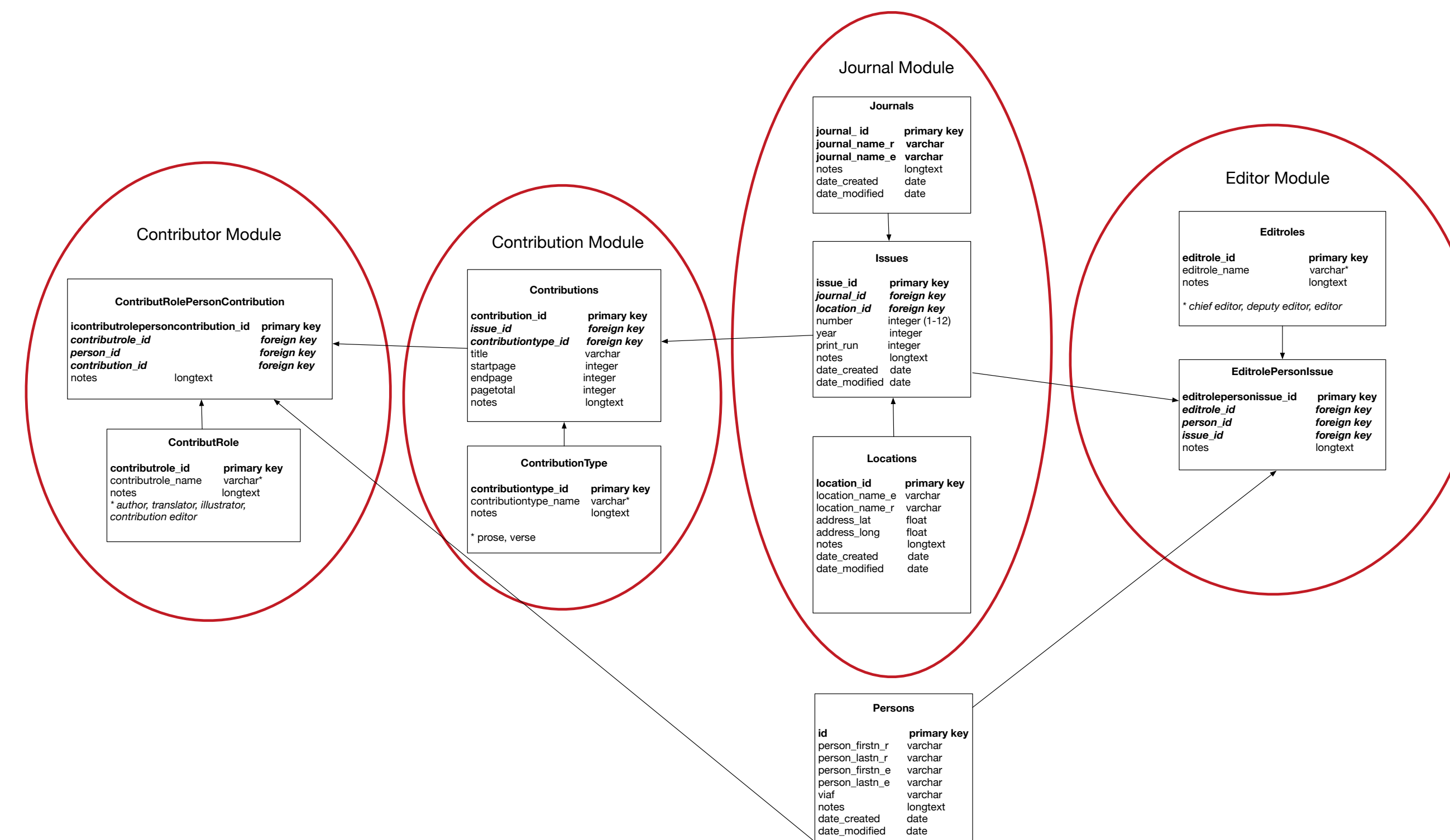


Cover designs of the popular Soviet literary magazine *lunost'* (*Youth*) in the 1960s.

Nearly every literary text of the time found its first publication on the pages of a periodical. Soviet Journals Reconnected traces how the Soviet thick journal facilitated the **social organization of Soviet literature**, based on six major publications between 1958 and 1972

Project Design

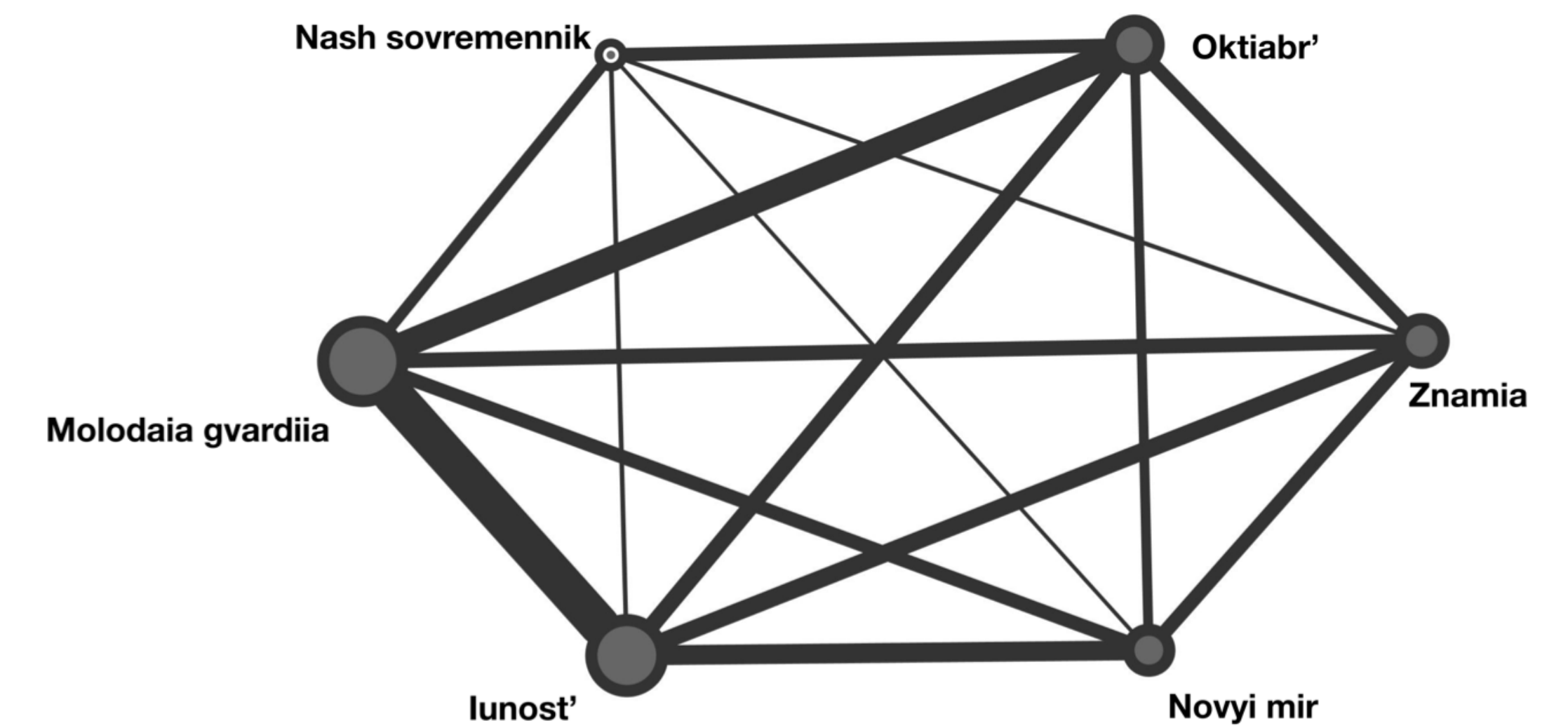
Soviet Journals Reconnected uses **bibliographical data** from the Soviet index of periodical contributions (*Letopis' zhurnal'nykh statei*) to trace how communities of shared aesthetic and ideological inclination took shape. The data has been cleaned and normalized. It is organized in a **relational database** that allows for targeted queries in light of the central research questions.



Schema for a relational database, representing contributor-level information on Soviet journals.

Methods

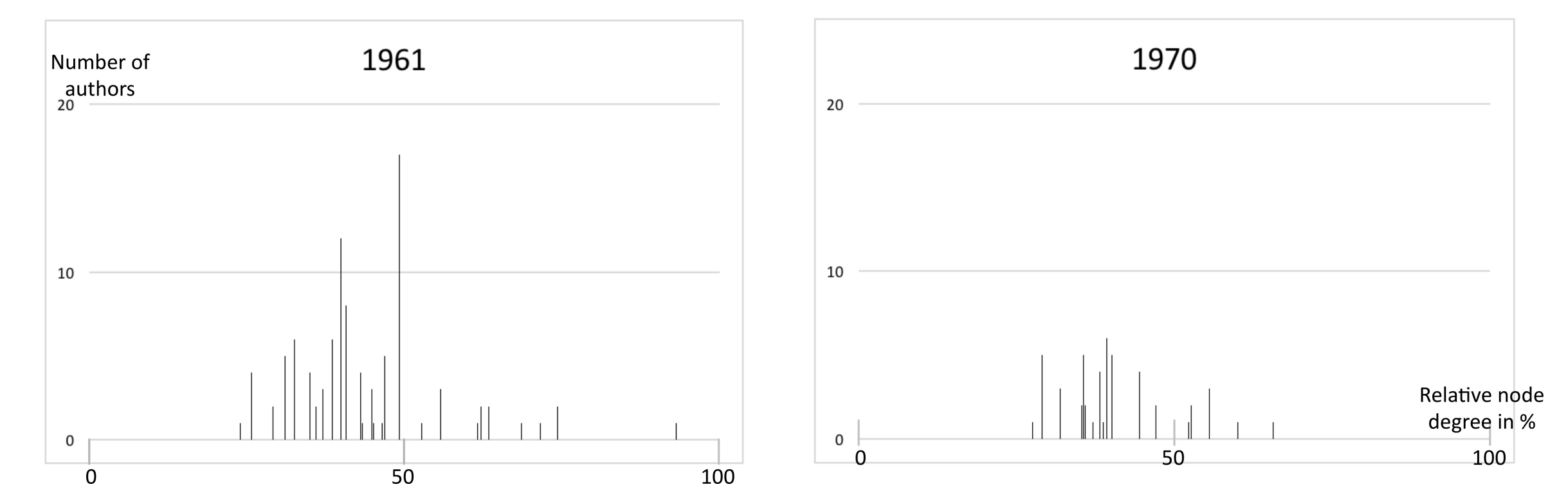
The data set allows for a quantitative analysis of Soviet journals, especially with the help of the **network analysis software Cytoscape**. Journals can be represented as networks, where shared authors constitute a connection between publications. Similarly, authors can be shown in their networks of co-publication.



Strength of ties between six journals, based on shared authors between 1960 and 1964. This network graph gives an overview over the field of Soviet journals.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary visualizations of the data show the general constitution of the field of Soviet journals, its expansion and dynamics within it. Over the 1960s, press runs increase and editorial staff grows, while the journals become increasingly distinct from each other, sharing fewer and fewer authors. The **centrifugal forces of Soviet journal-making** can be observed especially well in the author networks of co-publication. Over the 1960s, the communities in which authors publish become increasingly local.



Distribution of relative node degrees among authors published in more than one journal. Average node degree decreases and fewer authors have a high node degree. Publication of one author among the authors of several other journals within one year becomes less common.