Chapter 8: Between tradition, folklore and modernity

Researchers interested in minority issues often ask about how minority cultures function in today's world and how their ethnic boundaries are constructed, both in immigrant cultures and in indigenous linguistic and cultural minorities (cf. Wimmer, 2008). Of course, these groups differ enormously. Representatives of the former invoke the cultural memory of their community and refer to (physical and mental) artefacts brought from their home country, and can also draw upon content coming from the reference country. The situation for indigenous minorities is more complicated, because their culture itself is subject to change under the influence of the social, political and economic context as well as ever-closer contacts with the dominant culture (and other surrounding cultures), with its representatives undergoing processes of acculturation. In their efforts to maintain their minority identity, they are unable to refer to any extant community evolving at its own pace, in order to see that some kind of change taking place within their culture is inevitable. Hence the tendency to highlight above all those aspects of minority culture that invoke the past in different ways, from folklorization to the creation of invented traditions.

Minority cultures have ceased to be traditional cultures under the influence of traditional cultural change, the kind which forces their leaders and representatives to create new ways of understanding their identity and therefore to reinvent themselves. As part of this process, minority cultures may become mental constructs, characterized by idealizing values imbued with strong emotions. Groups may refer to and invoke such constructs, thus stressing their distinctiveness. Another possibility is to envision minorities as a kind of quasi-political entity. As Roch Sulima (1992: 170–180) puts it, this path runs through various "-isms" (universalisms, nationalisms, regionalisms). The former option opens up to the folkloric landscape and the world of traditional values, through which a group may further strengthen its identity. The latter, in turn, strives to present modern aspects of the functioning of minorities and to play down public perceptions that link minorities to traditional culture, in addition to remaining open to new solutions needed for minorities to gain at least a certain degree of political independence. These two paths may run parallel to each other. Usually, however, they intersect in many places or may even merge. If folklorized minority cultures want to remain attractive to young people, they aim for modern forms of expression yet simultaneously undergo ideologization. Minorities that want to be given the rights and political status enabling their further development sanction these efforts by invoking traditions, history and distinctive rituals and axiologies. What is more, the paths that are chosen are rarely defined in advance. For minorities, following these paths and reflecting on various choices and behaviours already play an identity-forming role.

The very choice of a strategy is by no means arbitrary – rather, it is strongly rooted in the cultural, political and social context in which a specific group has functioned and in which it is currently situated. At the same time, this shows that a minority's mode of functioning is never given once and for all; instead, it evolves together with the changing conditions in which this minority functions and depends on how deeply representatives and leaders of specific groups reflect on cultural processes. Shaped by the digital revolution, the world in which today's young people have been raised differs considerably from the world of their grandparents or even parents, so expectations related to the life of minority cultures have likewise undergone significant transformations. When referring to the idealized traditional world, young people think and talk about the necessity of adjusting minority cultures to the modern world. As Roch Sulima argued, it turns out that the "urban–rural, central–peripheral, regional–universal and folkloric–national oppositions are all variants of the same pattern" (Sulima, 1992: 170), but they simultaneously lose their diagnostic power.

Such oppositions are called into question, but their persistence as constructs imagined and internalized by representatives of minority communities has not been invalidated. When we listen to the words and thought-patterns of young people raised in the 21st century, we notice not only echoes of earlier discussions and the influence of the patterns of functioning of minority cultures established in a specific socio-political context. What young people say and think about their culture is also characterized by a fear that their cultures may be "incomplete" or "insufficient" when compared against national cultures. This fear also concerns the blurring of cultural differences and, by the same token, losing the clear dis- tinctiveness of minority cultures. If minority cultures and dominant cultures have become identical, if they take the same models as reference points and require the same ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, is it at all possible to have a dis- tinctive identity? Such dilemmas, which have already echoed through many of the discussions above, prove particularly strong when questions are asked about the modernity and topicality of minority cultures as well the possible and desir- able mode of their functioning in the present-day world. In my description of the dilemmas faced by young people in the context of the current functioning and image of the cultures with which they want to identify, I adopt an emic perspective of the groups I have studied, by not only quoting the statements of their members but also by presenting and explaining their point of view. Highlighting this is important not only in light of not only my own research, but also with respect to the dominant narrative related to minority cultures, which are traditionally described from the perspective of dominant cultures and developed, national communities and therefore pictured as culturally and economically handicapped as well as cul- turally underdeveloped, which limits their participation in Europe's high artistic culture (cf. Sulima, 1992: 172; Gandhi, 1998; Rakowski, 2013). Such perceptions of minority cultures largely impact on how their elites think about themselves; hence the folklorization and intellectualization of these cultures and efforts to retain – or even ossify – the old ways coupled with the simultaneous negation of differences

that could entail political consequences. This way of thinking and the dominant discourse of speaking about minority cultures reaches young people and affects how they perceive their surroundings. At the same time, the media and the unlimited flow of information, which may be seen as a source of globalization-related threats, help young people find new ways to cope with the contradictions imposed on them and to develop identification and differentiation strategies.

Each of the communities I have studied has its distinctive characteristics and dilemmas, whose foundations and intensity vary depending on the differences in their situation and the context in which they function: the degree and form of folklorization, the acceptance of cultural change by the dominant society and the minority group itself, as well as attitudes towards traditions and ways of expressing them. Such differences cannot be ignored, despite similarities in how these communities reflect on the possibility of preserving the distinctive aspects of minority cultures in today's world, permissible changes and the local–universal opposition and how they express their reflections. What young people have in common are wide-ranging reflections on traditions and their current role as well as the restrictions that result from their identification with folklore, perceiving them as a threat to their culture, presented as unattractive to young people. On the other hand, they fear that treatment of ethnicity as a fad and its commercialization will cause their culture to lose what they describe as its "spirit." These dilemmas will be described in a broader cultural and social context for each of the groups. Similarities and differences between the groups will be highlighted and summarized in the final part of this chapter.

Upper Sorbian culture – rites and folklore

When compared against other minority cultures under study, the Catholic Upper Sorbs appear to form a particularly distinctive group. Although the Sorbs live in the same way as the Germans who surround them, it is hard to avoid the impression that – in the researcher's eyes – Lusatia forms a world that follows the rhythm of religious holidays, deeply immersed in the related rites. In the eyes of an outside observer, Sorbian culture simultaneously seems very highly folklorized. Ceremonies, choir performances, shows, exhibitions, celebrations of holidays, even major family gatherings all feature women dressed in folk costumes and presentations of the products of the "traditional" Sorbian culture and are dominated by folk music. Even in the language courses that have been organized for many years by the Sorbian Institute in Budyšin/Bautzen, students from all over the world are exposed above all to what is typically referred to as folk culture but what, after closer contact, appears to be folklorism. Over the many years of my research trips to Lusatia, during which I attempted to understand its culture, I would fall into a certain trap of comparativism that I set for myself. When I compared manifestations of the vitality of minority cultures and their modes of functioning in today's world (cf. Dołowy-Rybińska, 2011), I perceived Sorbian culture, which was immersed in folklore and filled the public sphere with the folklorist

symbols of the traditional culture, as a spectacle made for show, a manifestation of distinctiveness through the emphasis placed on the folk aspects of culture, which in my opinion had no substantiation in the surrounding world. Over the many years of my studies, I went through numerous crises related to my inability to understand what prompted people living in the 21st century to carve out a niche in their lives that was completely at odds with the world around them. In recent years, however, when I not only observed the Sorbian rites but also had the opportunity to participate in them as a person close to the Sorbian culture (who knew the language and had many Sorbian friends), I had a chance to gain further insight into this cultural phenomenon. Interviews with young people, in turn, allowed me to better understand the mechanisms and interdependencies that exist in this sphere. The Sorbian culture manifests itself in folklore, but folklore does not prevent it from modernizing. Explaining this phenomenon will require me to first clarify the historical and political context that has influenced the mode of functioning of the Sorbian culture and elucidate the difference between folklore and folklorism.

The inhabitants of Upper Lusatia live in a rural and agricultural region with its centre in Budyšin/Bautzen, a small town where Sorbian institutions have their seat. The Sorbian intelligentsia, who started to make intensive efforts to preserve and develop their culture in the 19th century (cf. Brankačk, 1970; Šołta, Kunze & Šen, 1984), did not want to distance themselves from common Sorbs. Its representatives still live in Lusatian rural areas and participate in the Sorbian culture and cultural life. Such rural and local aspects as well as a certain disconnection from the "big world" are important characteristics of Sorbian culture. Also, they can be seen as the sources of the greatest threat to this culture in connection with the growing mobility of young generations, who leave to study in major urban centres and metropolitan areas and often do not come back to Lusatia. On the one hand, there is a strong connection between the Sorbs and life in a small group of people who know one another well and participate in the Catholic religious life and the customs that follow its rhythm. On the other hand, the current shape of the Sorbian culture was influenced by the policies pursued by the communist authorities of East Germany after the Second World War. The Sorbs, who had been persecuted in Hitler's times, were then afforded protection that was without precedent in the world of that era: Sorbian institutions and schools were established and so was a Sorbian publishing house with daily newspapers, elements of bilingualism were introduced, and the Sorbs were allowed to cultivate the customs that provided the basis for their culture. However, the privileges given to the Sorbs in East Germany also entailed a number of obligations. Since decisions related to manifestations of the Sorbian cultural life depended on the authorities, the Sorbs had to be present in the public sphere and their celebrations and rites became increasingly folklorized (cf. Elle, 1992). At the same time, they had limited possibilities of advancing other, political and ethnic/national goals of their community. The mark of years of functioning in this context is still visible in Lusatia (cf. Dołowy-Rybińska, 2014). The Sorbian cultural life in East Germany was subject to political and ideological functions. Folkloric celebrations, used to demonstrate loyalty with

the "Slavic brothers," were organized chiefly by Domowina, which remained under party control (cf. Elle, 2010a). Impressive performances and celebrations therefore served as a way to include people into East Germany's system of government, assign them to a specific group. The presentation of the Sorbs as a "model minority" required a strong visualization of their culture, including numerous displays of traditional culture, performances of folklore bands, based on the presentation of the Sorbian customs and holidays, including the religious ones. The secularization function of those customs went hand in hand with their promotional, tourism-related function. The Sorbs in East Germany were expected to play the role of a relic of the past (Szczepankiewicz-Battek, 2003: 164), and their culture was largely reduced to that function. For that reason, the lingering consequences of the communist era in Lusatia include the strong folklorization of Sorbian culture (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2013b).

It is specifically the clash of these two phenomena – on the one hand, the rural sense of community immersed in Catholic rites, which protected the Sorbs against Germanization for hundreds of years, and on the other, the strong visual folklorization of culture in the communist era – that makes it so problematic to understand the Sorbian culture. Such understanding may be facilitated by the distinction between "external" vs. "internal" ethnic customs, proposed by Aleksander Posern-Zieliński (1982). The former involve manifestative demonstrations of folklore (above all showy-performance folklore, which meets the requirements of performing arts) aimed at expressing ethnic pride and highlighting homogeneity. The internal customs, by contrast, are not cultivated for show – they result from the needs of the community that participates in them. As Posern-Zieliński wrote (1982: 96), "This type of folklore is more private, intimate and spontaneous, unlike modern performative forms, which are manifestations of institutionalized folklore." Lusatia is characterized by the presence of both these types of ethnic customs. In the eyes of observers, however, the showy-performance forms seem to be forcefully taking over the function of community customs. To better grasp this phenomenon, therefore, it is worth turning to young Sorbs, who describe their culture and their participation in it in ways that are sometimes naïve but also free from such strong influence of external discourses.

Practically all of the young people I interviewed participate in the Sorbian culture in a twofold manner, i.e. both in organized activities (they are members of dance groups and choirs, they play Sorbian music and so on) and in the informal community life in their neighbourhood (they go to church and participate in religious and collective rites). Numerous meetings organized in villages, youth clubs, private houses and students' clubs or on the occasion of some public events usually continue until late in the night. Young Sorbs do not differ in any way from their peers from other regions of the world, listen to the same music, wear similar clothes and have equally easy access to the mass media, but when they are in a group, they often spontaneously start singing Sorbian songs that can be called folk songs. Apart from uncontrolled modern dances, young people also dance partner dances. Much to my surprise, they do so eagerly, because they have participated in

such parties since they were children. In Lusatia, dances, music and rites as well as the accompanying meetings are all part of the cultural heritage (Szacki, 1971: 152–153), which comprises the subjectively interpreted traditions of a specific group, "all of its cultural accomplishments and historical experiences, which influence the past that burdens the present" (Posern-Zieliński, 1982: 78). For young Sorbs, the present seems strongly burdened by the past and at the same time becomes a subject of reflections at various levels.

In his writings on tradition, Edward Shils (1958) pointed out that the durability of a specific practice or belief alone did not make a tradition, and a tradition must be also accompanied by affirmative attachment to the past. A closer look at what young people say about their attitudes to tradition shows that they treat it as a positive value. One student of Sorbian studies in Leipzig says:

> **A18F(S)**: One week before Easter, for example, I already feel excited and happy. I can't wait for Easter and the related customs [...]. On a Sunday morning, I feel completely differently when I'm here [in Lusatia] than when I'm somewhere else and I simply have to go and see something. This is part of us. During Easter, for example, I'm proud that I'm a Sorb and I can show that we have these beautiful customs. That's what I think when I talk about how I feel [about my culture].

Shils observes that in order for a tradition to exist, one more condition must be met: "A particular relationship to the individual or collective performers or believers in the past is called for. Some belief in affinity – be it primordial or civil or charismatic or ideal – is a necessary condition of the willingness to receive a tradition, to accept it as a mandatory model for one's own conduct and the judgement of others" (Shils, 1971: 131). For young Sorbs, participation in rites not only represents a link to the past and their forefathers, about whom they talk a lot on the occasion of such participation,[69] but also confirms the continuity of Sorbian identity. On the feast day of Corpus Christi, shortly after a procession attended by young women dressed in Sorbian national costumes, I talked to one young Sorb, who said:

> **F20F(S)**: I can't imagine that this could no longer be here. I'd say that these customs form a certain community. If they didn't exist, the Sorbian people, who are very close-knit – also because we have to fight for the preservation of the language and the customs – if they didn't exist, this community, these people, this thinking and maybe also this character wouldn't exist, either.

This young woman talks about the community dimension of the Sorbian rites, which make people stick together and continue to fight for the preservation of their culture. Other individuals I interviewed also pointed out the significance of participation in ritual life. This is especially important, because young people

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69   A18F(S): "Grandpa and grandpa also live with us. Our grandma is very pleased that we do this, because she remembers the old ways."

declare that they do not like many of these customs. But they like the atmosphere of the celebrations and the possibility of spending time with their friends. One secondary school student says:

> **C17M(S)**: [...] I wouldn't say these customs are attractive, but after these celebrations, you get together to have beer or talk – and that's what's attractive.

One of his peers offers a similar explanation:

> **J17F(S)**: Apart from that, when it comes to Sorbian customs... yes... my mum sometimes tells me that I have to dye eggs with wax, because I don't always feel like doing that. But when I start, it's always cool. Also, if you do that in the boarding school, you form a community, you talk to people to which you would not normally talk.

The vitality of the Sorbian customs and rites is also determined by their strong immersion in the Catholic religion, which plays three roles for the Upper Sorbs I have interviewed. First of all, it reinforces ethnic boundaries, because the Sorbs are surrounded by Germans and protestants. Secondly, it is strongly linked to the Sorbian language, which is the language of church services and religious ceremonies in Catholic Upper Lusatia. Thirdly, it strengthens group identity by enabling the Sorbs to hold regular meetings and participate in cultural activities together. These aspects of the Catholic religion and customs are also described by young people:

> **B22M(S):** I think that being a Sorb is also linked to faith. That's the impression I get. On Sunday, people still go to church. But not everyone does, especially when it comes to young people. There [in the church], you can hear the same or very similar things, but you can always hear something in Sorbian. That's part of the whole. You're a Sorb and, well, in fact you're also a Catholic.

A secondary school student expresses her thoughts in a similar way:

> **E17F(S):** This Sorbian community is a great thing. We can meet together. Without it, the language would be gone – if we didn't look after culture so much. This culture, these customs are like a wall that you can hold on to and that will keep things Sorbian. It is also thanks to this faith, if we go to church together and everything is in Sorbian there, then this Sorbian identity is maintained.

Both young people emphasize the role of customs, which bring members of the Sorbian community together and simultaneously protect this community from falling apart. In the student's comments one can hear a certain fear of imminent cultural changes, accompanied by secularization, also among the Sorbs. If religion is so strongly linked to customs and customs are performed in Sorbian, then all these elements provide the basis for the Sorbian culture and, in the opinion of young people, must exist together. The same secondary school student defines this interrelatedness in the following way:

> **E17F(S)**: When someone speaks Sorbian, this alone essentially means observing the customs. Those who have learned Sorbian from their parents also adopt Sorbian customs. [...] These things are linked together. There's essentially no other way.

The notion of there being an inseparable link between speaking Sorbian and participating in customs shows the exclusivity of this culture (the difficulty of being accepted as a new speaker of Sorbian) but also the strong connection between this type of cultural participation and the Sorbian identity present in the awareness of young people. Such attitudes and perceptions of the Sorbian culture are linked to something I have not found on such a scale in other places that I researched, namely young people's conservatism, related to their fears about the permanence of their culture. On the one hand, there are of course voices arguing that it is necessary to modernize the Sorbian culture and make sure that it is present in the spheres to which it previously had limited access. On the other hand, young people treat certain elements of the Sorbian culture as sacred. A Sorbian secondary school student says:

> **T17M(S)**: [...] Sorbian music is getting closer to modern music. There's also contemporary Sorbian music. We don't want to be as "sleepy" as the older generations. We're young, we want to do something new, and we want it fast. Of course, it's impossible to modernize certain things, for example all these old dances, folklore groups. They can't be modernized, because they have been so for centuries. It's impossible to make it more up-to-date. If we wanted to do so, all the Sorbian identity would be gone, because the important elements of this Sorbian identity would be gone. It's necessary to accept this and keep doing this.

The young man's comments are consistent with the observations made by Posern-Zieliński, who wrote that every cultural process is characterized by a mixture of opposing tendencies. Tendencies towards change clash against those opposed to change. "Such tendencies strengthen the existing forms and cause their petrification. They often sacralize them so as to make them even less susceptible to any modification through the fact of sacralization alone" (Posern-Zieliński, 1982: 77). For young Sorbs, these divergent tendencies are strongly present in all aspects of their lives specifically because of the important role played by participation in the Sorbian rites. Jerzy Szacki writes that "conservatism occurs when a system that has existed for a long time is completely threatened, but it still exists and its defenders think that it can still survive" (Szacki, 2011: 206). The statements made by young people and observations of their cultural practices show that these are exactly the fears that can be found in Lusatia. A student of Sorbian studies explains:

> **I22F(S)**: Because these customs have always been like that and, in my opinion, it will be better if they stay this way. If something changes, it will go in the wrong direction and it will be gone completely. It's better to stick with the old things, which have always worked.

On the one hand, traditionalism extends the existence of a range of folk culture contents (Posern-Zieliński, 1982: 81). On the other, a group perceives their durability as the main factor determining its ethnic identity and providing the basis for its cultural distinctiveness (Burszta, 1975). It appears that this role is currently played in Lusatia by traditional costumes, which are absent from daily life yet present in every sphere of the ritual and public life in Lusatia. Much has been written about traditional costumes having the power to create ethnic and cultural boundaries by enabling people to present and highlight their identity and culture, in the context of both popular culture, especially subcultures (Muggelton, 2000), and ethnic cultures, or even the Sorbs themselves (including Schöning-Kalendar, 2000; Tulloch, 2004; Feng-fang, 2009). Practically all young Sorbian women have traditional costumes and wear them with pride. Here is how one secondary-school student described the role of traditional costumes:

> **E17F(S)**: It could be said that it's a Sorbian uniform. [...] this costume shows well that who is a Sorb and who isn't. I think it's great that I have such a costume. Also because this is linked to the Church things, but that's because we worship this, so I think it's important.

The girl chose two important aspects of the role played by folk costumes. First, they are linked to Sorbian and religious traditions and therefore take on special importance and are "worshipped." Secondly, they identify members of the group visually and define the boundary between those who wear them and those who can only observe others. By the same token, costumes confirm group membership in the eyes of its members as well as outsiders. However, we should not ignore another aspect of the function fulfilled by traditional costumes, namely that of an element of the visual folklorization of the group, the reduction of its role to an object that is being watched. For that reason, many of the Sorbian girls and women I interviewed told me that wearing traditional Sorbian costumes was a difficult experience for them, especially when they had to do so in public outside their community. They often admitted that they felt put on display in such situations and they found the experience difficult, even humiliating.[70] However, almost all of them add that they find the costumes very important and are proud to wear them

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70 I encountered similar opinions about costumes in the Kashubian culture, but they are more clearly linked to the folklorization of culture. Young Kashubs are reluctant to wear Kashubian costumes, and this applies even to those linked to folklore bands. One of the young people I interviewed made an interesting observation by admitting that it was easier for him to wear the costume in a group. N22M(K): "[...] I'll never forget it: when I was in middle school, we went with this band to Hel and we performed in some Kashubian centre. One day, of our own initiative, he had this parade, we walked down the main street of Hel, all across the street, we played and waved at people. We were fooling around, but so what? I'm a Kashub, so I won't be ashamed of that. I still remember that. People took out their cameras, waved and smiled, we also gave them some joy. And we knew there was nothing to be ashamed

during Sorbian holidays. The conservatism of young Sorbs manifests itself in the wearing of the costumes and its performative function. They sometimes criticize their friends, especially female friends, who do not succumb to traditional models or combine them with everyday life. One Sorbian secondary-school student made an interesting comment:

> **D17M(S)**: [...] for example, those girls from the Sorbian boarding school. As Sorbian Catholics, they know they can't have any piercings – [what would it look like:] folk costumes plus piercings? But they decided to get piercings anyway, and they didn't wear any earrings at school, but they normally wear them. They like it. But they don't go well the Sorbian folk costumes.
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> **NDR**: *Why not?*
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> **D17M(S)**: Because their grandmothers and mothers see this. And a girl with piercings can also see that they don't go well [with Sorbian costumes]. Piercings – these grandmothers and grandfathers are so old-fashioned, and that's why.
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> **NDR**: *Do you think that a Sorbian girl shouldn't have any piercings?*
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> **D17M(S)**: Well, no. Sorbs can have [piercings] and they also get them. But they can't wear them with typical Sorbian costumes.
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> **NDR**: *So you think that there should be no changes in these things, in the Sorbian culture and customs?*
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> **D17M(S)**: In my opinion, tattoos and piercings are... for me, they could be there, but on the condition that you make sure that they're not [visible], because there used to be no such things.

The young man complains not so much about girls highlight elements of a culture that is seen as non-Sorbian and modern on a daily basis, as about their presenting them together with the Sorbian costumes, which he sees as vested with symbolic powers. The unchanging appearance of the costumes and the girls[71] who wear them ensures the continuity of the custom. Certain forms "existed in the past," so they should be preserved in the same form until the present day. This is because "the tangible, social and ideal products (objects, goods) of cultural tradition give rise to specific value judgments among individuals and in the whole group. All the things taken from the past and all the things that people pass down (or attempt to pass down) to the next generation belong to the system of individual and group values and are values in the full sense of the word and therefore give rise to attitudes of recognition, respect, efforts to possess or preserve it" (Burszta, 1974: 342). Therefore, what seems surprising is not so much the Sorbian young man's conservatism as the very high degree of reflection on the traditions that he observes. In a situation of the isolation

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of. Especially because there were more of us. We weren't alone, we were such a tight-knit group that no one later laughed at school."

71 Many of the girls I interviewed also complained about the hairdos they were required to wear to make the traditional headdress look "like from the past."

of a minority culture, self-awareness of cultural content would not be possible. When cultural content and practices undergo deterritorialization, this enforces a confrontation between a group's own culture and the cultures of other groups, thus opening critical attitudes, which in turn imply awareness and a selective approach to it (Giddens, 1991). Lusatia's opening up to the external world has not so much reaffirmed representatives of the community in their criticism of their own traditions as provoked reflections that led them to consciously regard these traditions as "the ideal status," which should be protected at any price (Szacki, 2011: 51). At the same time, this traditionalism raises objections among young people, especially when they feel limited in their major and minor life choices. The secondary school student cited above sees older people as "guardians" of traditions, those who might feel offended by changes in the costumes or customs. On the other hand, many young people blame the elderly for the ossification of traditions and the lack of change. They believe that older generations are unable to understand that the world is changing:

> **H25F(S):** As for some people in this older generation, I have the impression they're afraid of novelties, changes, things that are different from what they were taught. I think you can't do that. You should be open and accept [novelties]. Of course, you should work to preserve certain forms, but [...] this should change freely and [older and younger generations] should be able to work together.

As we can see, the young woman does not believe that the traditional forms of Sorbian culture should cease to exist. As a person who has been active among young people from different parts of Lusatia for many years, however, she expresses her concerns about the fact that many young people are weary of the choices imposed on them. She fears that if their voices and needs are ignored in advance ("because things have always been done this way"), they will turn their backs on the Sorbian culture as unfit to meet their needs. Such traditionalism, which boils down to "the conservation of everything that is old for fear of movement in any direction, out of complete inertia in thinking and acting" (Szacki, 2011: 187), also reduces traditions to a spectacle. I have also heard the following opinions expressed during my interviews:

> **T17M(S)**: I think [the Sorbian culture] is essentially not [attractive], because it is as old as it was a hundred years ago. There are attempts to develop it, because this is truly the tradition by which our grandmothers lived. Young Sorbs don't feel like doing what our great-grandmothers did. That's what I'd say. It isn't attractive, but people get involved, look after it.
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> **S17F(S)**: The problem is that many people, especially young people, don't want to take this as theirs. This is not modern, whereas young people are simply adjusted to what is modern, so it's hard to attract them. [...] That's why there is a problem with making Sorbian identity more up-to-date, but I'm a little traditional and I say that we'll lose something, these traditions and so on. It's hard to find the common ground.

These two comments show that many Sorbs involved in Sorbian culture fear that this culture is becoming completely separated from the daily life of young people, who will not feel any connection to it. At the same time, the two teenagers stress that this culture should be nonetheless preserved in the form in which it has functioned for years. Such ostensibly contradictory judgments are constant parts of the life of young Sorbs. It is also rooted in the external image of the Sorbian community as a folklore group that is incongruous with the modern world. Elka Tschernokoshewa (2004: 231) claims that this folkloristic image of the Sorbs is a construct created to meet the needs of the dominant culture: depicting the Sorbian culture in opposition to the German culture separates them and creates clear membership divisions. In this way, the Sorbian culture is associated with holidays and traditional customs and the German culture with the modern world, the media and novelties. This confirms the superiority of the dominant culture, because folklore is treated as the manifestation of a simple, folk culture that has not modernized or created any high, elitist culture, thus proving its cultural maturity and development. Young Sorbs have a problem with this depiction and they resist it by promoting modern forms of expression of the Sorbian culture (especially in the context of music and the media) but sometimes also by distancing themselves from their Sorbian identity.

Here is where reach the duality of the forms and functions of the Sorbian identity: living and non-staged folklore versus folklorized forms put on public display. That is because folklore means a "certain knowledge and creative artistic ability of a specific community" and as such remains closely linked to the life of a specific community in a given place and at a given time, so "its form and content also reflect the conditions of this life." By the same token, as Burszta (1974: 311) writes, changes and transformations related to changes in the life of local communities are inherent in folklore. As the ethnologist adds, folklore manifests itself in the fullest way in the form of customs and rites, songs, dances and music. All these elements are present in the life of Sorbs during not only holiday celebrations but also ordinary gatherings of people who belong to the same community. Music is perhaps the most important element of the Sorbian culture. In Lusatia, everyone sings on every occasion: in churches, during events, parties and weddings. Numerous choirs are formed and many Sorbs are actively involved in their activity. Children learn to sing not at school and not even in choirs but as part of everyday practice (cf. Statelova, 2013). The same holds true for Sorbian customs, such as the particularly well-known Easter Horse Riding processions. Such processions attract tourists from all over Germany and therefore serve as presentations of the Sorbian culture and its distinctive nature. Young people are aware of this fact:

> **A18F(S)**: It's really something special. It's enough to see how many tourists come to Lusatia for the Sorbs, to see our different customs. During Easter, there are so many people in Lusatia, also from other countries or different parts of Germany. I think it's very important that we show them that a nation can be full of life and have mutual bonds.

The young woman immediately adds that this is only an additional aspect of such celebrations, which are not driven by tourism but by the needs of the Sorbs and are rooted in the Catholic religion:

> **A18F(S)**: You can't turn the Sorbian culture into a product to make money. [In Lower Lusatia] the culture is still alive only for tourists. Here [in Upper Lusatia], it is also alive for the nation, for the identity, not just for tourists. That's a lot more important than showing someone how cool our nation can be.

Researchers have studied this duality of the Sorbian rites, including Easter processions, in an attempt to understand the phenomenon (cf. Schork, 2008). Before I get back to the internal contradictions within the Sorbian culture and its functioning in today's world, I would like to look more closely at what young people see as "genuineness" of the Sorbian rites and why they do not perceive them as folklorized and therefore invalid elements of their own culture. I earlier mentioned the strong links that young people see between the Sorbian customs, the community life and the use of the Sorbian language. This triad and the inseparability of its component parts are exactly what provides the basis for this sense of the "genuineness" of the Sorbian customs. When attempting to explain this phenomenon, young people refer to examples from Lower Lusatia, where the customs are still present, but the element of ethnicity and the language have disappeared. Catholics from Upper Lusatia see the rites performed in Lower Lusatia as having only a performative function:

> **G25M(S)**: For those people, what was once a custom is now a spectacle. I imagine that this will happen to our culture as well. I wouldn't like it to be just a spectacle, I'd like it to continue to develop as a culture, but I think that Lusatia will shrink, especially the language.

Culture, unlike folkloristic spectacles, is alive and pertains to the people who participate in it. As one student said, Sorbian customs are modern for as long as they are experienced by people who consider themselves modern:

> **P22M(S)**: […] I think the Sorbian culture is modern. Let's take customs, for example. Many people think they're not modern, that they're archaic. I don't agree, because they're modern also because these customs are always practiced by the new generation. Customs are as contemporary as anything else. The fact that it's a tradition this doesn't mean it's not contemporary. The essence of customs may also pertain to today's life.

If the Sorbian customs and the Sorbian culture are to be preserved, they must be constantly created and recreated anew by the young generation. It must be their culture and therefore have the forms and express the contents that belong to young people and through which they can express themselves. They frequently exist alongside the forms with which young people do not identify very eagerly but which they regard as part of their heritage:

> **RB18F(S)**: I only listen to folklore music during holidays, when there's no other choice. Of course, it's very nice, but I don't do it so eagerly that if don't have to. [...] I very much like going to the concerts of Sorbian music, especially modern music. In our club, there are meetings of a band that plays metal with Sorbian lyrics. And Sorbian lyrics with metal music are great. Many young people in Lusatia listen to that. I like such combinations a lot. [...]
>
> **NDR**: *Do you think it's important that the Sorbian culture is being modernized?*
>
> **RB18F(S)**: I think... on the one hand, it shouldn't be so artificial, but it should also require people to show some ingenuity. So that they would like to continue to protect this culture. On the other hand, the links to old traditions must be preserved and fostered.

While in Lusatia, I heard many similar opinions, which included contradictory opinions. They reveal the existence of a certain paradox in the Sorbian culture: some young people are reluctant to participate in and observe traditional Sorbian holidays, which they consider obsolete. They feel that, as participants in the Sorbian folklore life, they are regarded by outsiders as people belonging to a different system. This affects them, and many of them feel discouraged from identifying with the culture of their ancestors. But when they turn from observers into active participants, the Sorbian traditions, celebrations and customs come alive for them and participation in these traditions, celebrations and customs is exactly what develops their bonds and their sense of identification with other Sorbs to the greatest extent. I will quote two characteristic comments:

> **UB17M(S)**: I don't like going to folklore concerts, I'm not particularly fond of the atmosphere, but I like giving such concerts, for example with our choir. Such folklore concerts are usually boring and stiff, there's nothing to do. But I generally like this music, I like these songs, so I like singing them. When we put on a concert, we have fun, we can show something.
>
> **SB18F(S)**: [...] I'm a little annoyed by this Catholicism, by the fact that everyone has to do it. But I am Catholic and I find this important. But the Sorbs are very conservative in this respect. Secondly, this Sorbian costume is uncomfortable and you get very hot when you wear it. But I like it, it's beautiful. But I had a moment in my life when I rebelled against putting this costume on. Because people looked at me in a weird way and that annoyed me. But now I can see that that there are people who say that I look beautiful in this costume. And I no longer have a problem with it.

The folkloristic aspects of the Sorbian culture may be sometimes burdensome for young people, but they can also modify their traditions in a creative way, sometimes risking criticism on the part of the older generations, who regard themselves as guardians of these traditions (Langer, 2005). Importantly, these elements of tradition, modified by young people, slowly become part of the canon of the Sorbian culture, making this tradition alive, despite the fact that it appears unchanging. In the following chapters, I intend to show that efforts to modernize traditions and create a modern image of a culture may take on various forms. Also, contradictory

ideas are usually mutually exclusive and they are put into effect by people who differ in their understanding of what minority cultures should be in the present-day world. However, the situation in Lusatia is exceptional. Here, a culture based on customs and traditional costumes exists alongside the modern culture and there is practically no division into those who "create" or "participate" in one sphere or the other. An activist from one of the Sorbian institutions described this phenomenon in the following way:

> **PB25F(S)**: These spheres often overlap greatly – the same people perform in folklore bands, dance Sorbian dances wearing traditional costumes and then create modern music, hip hop and so on. That's nothing strange here. No one has a problem with that. I like it very much that there is no need for such divisions.

Kashubia – from folklorization to modernity

Out of the other minority cultures discussed in this book, the Kashubian culture is closest to the Sorbian culture – including because both belong to the Slavic minority cultures in former Eastern Bloc countries. On the first, superficial encounter, both seem to be strongly folklorized and to emphasize above all their showy, performance-based aspects, filled with folk symbols. But when we go deeper into the topic, get to know people, talk to them and look at how they perceive their own culture, we start to see the differences. These can be partially attributed to the political and historical situation of the two groups and the ongoing, very rapid changes in Kashubia. While the Sorbs in East Germany were afforded protection and could develop their culture in many aspects of their lives (within the scope permitted by the authorities), the Kashubs, in line with the authorities' policy of blurring ethnic boundaries, were referred to as an "ethnographic group" (Wicherkiewicz, 2011: 148), one that could only function in the form of folklorized cultural events. Despite the establishment of the Kashubian Association in 1956 (later renamed the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association), the Kashubs had very limited possibilities of deciding about themselves and demonstrating their collective identity. In addition, the Polish People's Republic's policy of "uniformization" and resettlement into areas inhabited by the Kashubs made their customs and rites, still alive in Kashubia after the Second World War, gradually cease to form a constitutive part of religious life. The proximity of two Slavic cultures and languages – Polish and Kashubian – and the latter's very low prestige resulted in the strong assimilation of the Kashubs. Linguistic similarity (with Kashubian being considered a dialect of Polish) was presented as proof that the Kashubs were not a distinctive ethnic group. After the end of the First World War, the Kashubs still had a very poor sense of their cultural distinctiveness and could not develop their culture in the communist-era Polish People's Republic, which allowed their distinctiveness only in terms of folklore. Also, the intellectual aspects of Kashubian culture (language and literature) developed as a niche (Obracht-Prondzyński, 2002).

The folklorization of Kashubian culture, understood as the reconstruction of selected forms and contents of tangible and intangible folklore in deliberately arranged situations (Burszta, 1974: 311), which means in isolation of their meaning, cultural context and bearers, was a measure deliberately taken by the authorities to limit the tendencies towards the development of the Kashubs' cultural self-awareness. The folklorization of Kashubian culture was part of the plans to marginalize all minorities in the Polish People's Republic and make them less visible (Łodziński, 2010: 23). Kashubian regionalism with its manifestations, such as open-air museums, ethnographic museums, traditional costumes and embroidery, has become a symbol of the Kashubian culture and its most important manifestation (cf. Kwaśniewska, 2007). In Kashubia, just like in Lusatia, the effects of that policy remain visible to the present day.

When the political system changed, the Kashubian culture started to develop dynamically, with the Kashubian language being gradually introduced in schools, media and public life.[72] However, the links between Kashubian identity and folklorism, strongly rooted in collective imagination, also among Kashubian activists, prevented transformations in this sphere of life. Many Kashubian activists, who have gotten traditions and folklore confused with the showy folklorization of manifestations of cultural activity, perceived (and still perceive) themselves and the institutions in which they are active as "guardians of tradition." In addition, the abandonment of symbolical and visual manifestations of the Kashubian identity, such as Kashubian embroidery and the traditional Kashubian costumes worn by Kashubian regional bands and by many people to celebrate special "Kashubian" occasions, gave rise to fears that without these distinctive aspects the Kashubs would not differ in any way from the surrounding Poles and their cultural distinctiveness would become watered down.[73] As Agnieszka Pasieka showed, "It seems that in order to find a place in the social imaginary, minorities have to be dressed in traditional costumes and presented as craftsmen, farmers, and practitioners of an exotic rite" (Pasieka, 2015: 217). Traditionalism understood in this way made it difficult for people outside small Kashubian farming communities that lived in

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72 In 2003–2004, students of ethnology in Warsaw conducted very interesting studies of different manifestations of the functioning of the Kashubian culture and customs in today's life (cf. Kalinowski, 2006).

73 In the early twenty-first century, groups of Kashubian activists held important discussions on the extent to which the Kashubs could free themselves from the costumes they wore. One of the activists and people running a folk band replied indignantly to the suggestions of the removal of the aura of folklorism from the Kashubs: "You [...] would like to dress the Kashubs in jeans. How do you imagine that? How would the viewers who have accidently come to the shows without reading the posters know they are Kashubs? We can't write that on their jeans. I can't imagine how rock bands can promote Kashubia without even an inkling of Kashubian traditions." Retrieved from: http://www.naszekaszuby.pl/modules/news/article.php?storyid=370 (access: 24.06.2015).

small villages where some Kashubian traditions were preserved to see anything different from this folkloristic aspect, which in turn effectively discouraged young people from identifying with the Kashubian culture. Here is how one Kashubian secondary-school student told me about her first conscious contact with the Kashubian culture:

NDR: *Can you recall your first contact with the Kashubian culture? The first time you said to yourself, "oh, that's Kashubian"?*

U18F(K): I think it was when I went to an orchestra competition and there was a Kashubian group performing. There were only old ladies on stage, in those costumes and they started to sing. I didn't know at all what language they were singing... Only afterwards did I find out that it was Kashubian. And I was sceptical about this, because I couldn't understand it at all. I thought that it was a language for old ladies who only crochet, sitting at home and nothing else.

NDR: *How old were you?*

U18F(K): About 6–7.

NDR: *So, your first contact with the Kashubian culture...*

U18F(K): ... was like 'oh dear!' Because there were no young women, no girls and I thought that Kashubian must be like that.

NDR: *And how long did that image remain?*

U18F(K): I guess to the secondary school. It was so orthodox for me. So: this is folklore, ok, we don't have to go back to it, they can live like this, but I don't need this. I think it was something like that.

This secondary school student associated the Kashubian culture with something that did not belong to her world in any way. The methods by which Kashubian culture is presented on stage alone create a certain distance to viewers, making it difficult for them to identify with the communicated content. Roch Sulima explained that the meaning of folklorism was determined not by folkloristic and folklorized objects alone (such as dances, folk costumes and stories) as quotes from the folk culture but by the types of the relations between the senders and the receivers that were hidden behind them. He wrote: "The phenomena that we term folklorism occur more or less in the following way: 'we' present our rituals, our songs and our stories to 'you,' and they serve 'us' and 'you' as ways of having fun, although they previously fulfilled other functions in our culture, ones that researchers described as related to life, religion, existence and so on. Consequently, 'we' and 'you' have arranged via institutions to meet for the purpose of having fun" (Sulima, 1992: 187). However, the problem is that today's young people not only do not think that such spectacles are fun but also associate them with something very distant. One young Kashubian activist sees this as the reason why his peers are not interested in the Kashubian culture:

A20M(K): I think that there is certain difficulty here, because this Kashubian culture is sold in a wrong way. It's presented more as a relic of the past, so young people often have the feeling that this is a history lesson: this is how things were

in the past, how the life of the generation of our grandparents looked, so this doesn't apply to us. We can watch this, take an interest, but it doesn't apply to us. That's because the Kashubian culture is promoted in a wrong way. We don't promote Kashubian culture as something that should directly influence young people. Unfortunately, young people must reach these conclusions alone, like I did.

The same aspect is stressed by another Kashub who is thinking about teaching Kashubian at school in the future. When asked what image of the Kashubian culture would be now attractive to young people, she answers:

> **B24F(K):** For sure, not a typical relic of the past, because it's like... Whenever I meet new people, especially from other parts of Poland, but from here as well, and I say that I am Kashub, I can see in their eyes that they perceive me as someone straight out of an ethnographic park. Of course I think that our folklore is interesting, colourful, etc. But for today's times... it does not harmonize with our times. So I think that we have to make the Kashubian culture more up to date.

This young woman points out to the consequences of the promotion of the folkloristic image of the Kashubian culture. In her opinion, such depictions objectify this culture and entail a certain simplified, folkloristic image of the people who represent it. Young people told me repeatedly, and on many occasions, that this bothered them and caused their aversion. In their opinion, the best remedy to folklorization involves modernizing the Kashubian culture and presenting it as consistent with the challenges of today's world. However, the fundamental questions are, what should this modern culture be like and in what forms should it manifest itself? Young people offer different answers and different ideas in response to this question. One of these ideas, which is especially frequently used by Kashubian creators, involves adjusting the folkloristic motifs of the tangible culture (Kashubian embroidery and craft) and the intangible culture (especially music) to the forms derived from the dominant culture. One student from Kashubia says:

> **I22F(K):** The Kashubian culture is all these elements that differentiate us from other cultures. So, up till now, it has been most of all the folk culture. Those folk songs which are sung sometimes in new arrangements – are interesting and worth listening to. This folk culture, which is as important as the older heritage element, matches our new trends well. As the Kashubian embroidery on t-shirts or on some home utensils (towels or something). All this fits in well into our modern world.

Such an approach to efforts to modernize a minority culture (and its image) appear particularly characteristic of the complex mode of its functioning in today's world. On the one hand, the modernization of a culture through the arrangement of its typical elements in new and modern forms brings elements of this minority culture closer to young people, raised among global culture models. On the other one, this form makes it possible to stress the "otherness" of the Kashubian culture, without deviating from its established symbols. This creates a double cultural quotation and simultaneously reduces fear of the loss of the exceptional, "genuine"

aspects of the minority culture. The young woman stresses that the preservation of "folk culture" is important, but it is hard to say how this folk aspect should be understood. It is therefore worth spending some time analysing this aspect of the Kashubian culture, which is often forgotten in considerations of the modernization of culture – in the eyes of some young people, it offers "real proof" of the Kashubs' cultural distinctiveness. For many of them, the value of their culture lies in its local aspects, its occupation of a niche and even its "backwardness." A student of Kashubian specialization characterizes the Kashubian culture in the following way:

> **F23F(K)**: It is this atmosphere. On the one hand, when I was a child, I thought it was so *wsiurskie* [bumpkin, village-related and embarrassingly unsophisticated]. Now, I think it's more *swojskie* [homey, local, ours, familiar]. I'd say it's a homey, niche culture, and not everyone can touch it, it's not for everyone. It's clear that there are such important things as literature and other creative works, but for me it's especially an emotional feeling, something that brings together a small group of people, chosen people.

Such a view of the Kashubian culture is interesting not because it is incongruous with the one proposed by most young people but because it paradoxically stresses the features of the modernization of culture that are feared by many people, even those who actively promote it. Describing Kashubian culture as something *wsiurskie* may be interpreted in two ways: firstly, as folklorization, something that is related not only to its village-related aspects but also to its embarrassing lack of sophistication. Here is how a different respondent described Kashubian culture:

> **H24F(K)**: It's certainly something *wsiowe* [village-related]. I use that word because I don't know how to say this properly. Even there, Kashubian culture means napkins, vases, dance groups… boring. Boring. That's what I feel.

The village-related aspects of this culture are clearly linked to the distinctive way in which it is presented, namely through folklorized artefacts of folk culture. But when we get back to the previous statement, we will see that – secondly – the speaker's attitude to this culture changed as she became more deeply and intimately involved in its aspects. The notion of *wsiurskie* 'bumpkin' thus became replaced by *swojskie* 'homey,' which carries completely different connotations, as something one knows well and understands. As such, the bumpkin/homey nature of Kashubian culture are contrasted against the way of thinking that is imposed on young people by the dominant culture, cultural organizers and financing institutions, about what a modern, developing culture should look like and how it should function (cf. Rakowski, 2013). The bumpkin/homey nature of Kashubian culture actually – and somewhat paradoxically – makes it elitist, specifically because it allows it to be different and therefore also inaccessible or at least incomprehensible to most people. Consequently, dressing up Kashubian culture, so understood, in a costume of modernity could actually harm it by making it seem vulgar, accessible, understandable to everyone and tailored to external models. Importantly,

many young people therefore fear modernity thus understood. One Kashubian activist said:

> **N22M(K)**: [...] the problem is, does this world have to strive to make everything modern? [...] [Kashubian culture] is what it is and what's the point of adapting it to make it attractive? Of course, this might look cool and attract many people, but preserving this tradition... [...] The question is, does "modern" mean "good"? Is the world headed in a good direction? Maybe if we stop the Kashubian culture from becoming attractive and modern, we will preserve the good features of this culture, instead of making it worse.

Importantly, this speaker draws a contrast between the adjectives "modern" and "attractive." What is attractive appeals to people and therefore saves culture from being marginalized and forgotten, yet at the same time, this may also cause it to lose its unique nature. Young people keep asking themselves what kind of minority culture they want to create and for whom. If many are put off by the folklorized image of this culture, while at the same time few are able to grasp its "homey" nature for reasons related to the assimilation that took place in the latter half of the 20th century, the minority culture should offer so many possibilities to people who are ethnically indifferent/neutral that everyone is able to find something for themselves there. In the opinion of young people, it is therefore necessary to stop the Kashubian culture from being guarded in a way that prevents any change. One Kashubian activist claims that young people need to be allowed to play with Kashubian culture:

> **O24F(K)**: For one thing, they need to be made aware that this is their culture, not something they can learn and do by dancing [folk dances], singing Kashubian songs in a specific literary language approved by a specific council with a specific accent; not only by pursuing culture, serving specific meals for holiday supper. But by making young people aware that this is *their* culture and they can do whatever they want with it. When they take a Kashubian embroidery pattern and want to get it tattooed on their buttock, they have the right to do so. If they take a Kashubian embroidery pattern and want to buy a paper napkin with this pattern, they have the right to do so. Because this is something that's alive, something that is theirs.

By postulating the "liberation" of the Kashubian cultural content, this young woman nonetheless does not restrict herself to playing with the elements that are obviously associated with the Kashubian identity. Extracting them from the models imposed by folklore and placing them in the context of popular culture is expected prompt young people to accept them. Consequently, these considerations may be summed up with the statement that not much is left without visual forms that are established in collective awareness and associated with the Kashubian culture and therefore allow this culture to be identified as separate from the Polish culture. However, young people rebel against this understanding of the Kashubian culture and see its distinctiveness as lying not in traditions and folklore but in the

Kashubian language, which is separate from the Polish language. Things that are "in the Kashubian language" obviously belong to the Kashubian culture, as opposed to the Polish culture. One Kashubian activist explains:

> **J21M(K)**: This culture is modern, but it has not rejected everything that was previously there. It simply makes use of all these traditions, bringing them into the modern times. It can develop, and that's visible, but I personally believe that it should be a little more modern and it should move forward a little more. It should surround us more broadly, [through] things that we have used on a daily basis for many years but are still not absent from Kashubian culture, the Kashubian language. As for such things as technology, if we don't bring the Kashubian language there, we automatically don't think about them as part of Kashubian culture. But if the Kashubian language appears there, then we think, yes, this is Kashubian.

When we retrace this Kashubian activist's train of thought, we can see that first he expresses a conviction that if modern aspects become rooted in traditions, this may protect Kashubian culture from losing its distinctive characteristics. Secondly, Kashubian culture must be present in everyday life, at every level. This is not possible when we identify culture with folklore, even if some of its elements are adapted to new forms. Thirdly and consequently, the young man says that it is necessary to look at what determines the rhythm of the life of today's young people and how Kashubian culture can become part of their life. If young people use mobile phones, their Kashubian identity might manifest itself in phone casings with Kashubian embroidery. In that case, it would stay at the level of external presentation – a casing with Kashubian embroidery is merely a symbol of Kashubian identity. Phones will be more strongly linked to the Kashubian identity if they feature content in Kashubian. Consequently, this means not only the use of Kashubian over the phone but the availability of Kashubian-language menus in phones. As this activist says, if technological solutions have an interface in Kashubian, no one will say that they do not belong to the Kashubian culture. Such situations are not about symbols but about specific everyday practices. In today's world, language is the only element of the Kashubian culture that could adapt completely to the modern era. This is noted also by people who claim that they feel no need to manifest their distinctive Kashubian identity:

> **B24F(K)**: It seems to be that [language is] probably the most important, because it's probably the only element that can be adapted to modernity. Because for other elements of culture, it may be a little harder to do.

Young people see language as an element that has the power of liberating the Kashubian culture from the shackles of folklorism. The Kashubian activist cited below made an important statement in this context. He did not learn Kashubian at home or at school. His father, despite not knowing Kashubian, is engaged in Kashubian cultural life. In primary school, the boy started to perform in a Kashubian dance group where he met people strongly involved in preserving Kashubian language and culture. At the beginning of his studies, he engaged in

institutional activities promoting Kashubia. Over the past two years, he took part in short courses of Kashubian twice. However, he did not have enough time, had no speakers of Kashubian in his surroundings and no motivation to learn the language, so he did not learn it well enough to start speaking it. He believes that:

> **N22M(K):** The language is the medium for all this, because via it everything gets transmitted at home. […] And later there's literature, texts in the Kashubian language, music, media, Radio Kaszëbë. Without the language nothing stands a chance here, everything will be reduced to folklore. This, I feel, was what was previously being inculcated in children. I was indoctrinated that Kashubia, our whole culture, was really nothing but folklore, nothing but children dancing in Kashubian costumes. Of course, in my case it has developed with age into a sort of consciousness, but in most cases, it stays at the level that we are ordinary Polish people, only we can dance, have our folklore, take snuff, we can go to festivals and that's it. But it has no influence on normal life. Yet the point is that it actually should influence it. It would be nicer and more normal for us to listen to the news in the Kashubian language, to talk in Kashubian with our friends, to read books in Kashubian. It would be just great.

In the context of the information I gathered during his biographical interview and my observations of his everyday language practices, this Kashubian activist's statement must be regarded as declarative, which not only does not change its interpretation but even brings it into sharper focus. The young man starts off by saying that language is the medium of a culture passed down from generation to generation. It also makes it possible to create works of Kashubian high culture (literature) and popular culture (songs and media). He goes on to what he remembers from his childhood – he did not learn the Kashubian culture or the Kashubian language at home, but he joined a folklore band, so he encountered the Kashubian culture presented in its folklorized, performance forms, as opposed to living, everyday forms. In his eyes, this Kashubian identity, expressed through participation in festivals, the wearing of traditional costumes and snuff taking,[74] was nonetheless disconnected from life. It remained reduced to folklore. It is likewise associated with folklore by most of the children currently being raised in Kashubia. While in the group, however, he met Kashubian activists and therefore started to reflect on certain aspects of the Kashubian culture. In his opinion, it should manifest itself in everyday life in the possibility of speaking, reading and watching television in Kashubian. He argues that it would be "nicer and more normal" to use Kashubian on a daily basis. Given the fact that he has difficulty communicating in Kashubian, his words should be interpreted in a different context – only those who speak Kashubian would not have to prove their Kashubian identity in every life

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74 Snuff is regarded as a typically Kashubian product, used both to promote the region and as a kind of identity policy (cf. Kulesza, 2006).

situation by manifesting Kashubian symbols, which could be reserved for special occasions, as is the case with national cultures.

As Colin Baker has observed, in order for a minority culture to be adopted by young people and recognized as theirs, it must permeate as many spheres and aspects of their lives as possible. In his opinion, "A menu restricted to language lessons in school is a diet for a few. The menu needs to include a constant re-interpretation of minority language cultural forms. Minority language discos and dating, minority language rock bands and records, minority language books and beer festivals become as important as traditional cultural forms" (Baker, 1992: 136). There are many manifestations of the Kashubian culture in modern forms, and their number keeps growing gradually. There are more and more bands that play new arrangements of folk hits as well as amateur Kashubian theatres that perform plays written for them or translations of world literature into Kashubian, there are Kashubian comic troupes, stand-up comedians and even parodies of TV series. Kashubian culture is increasingly visible, which attracts those who would not be interested in its folkloristic aspects. In a word, Kashubian culture is becoming fashionable. An activist and journalist who uses Kashubian language in her work says:

> **O24F(K):** Some people have their Starbucks cups, we have the Kashubian language. And that's fashionable. […] But not every [manifestation of the Kashubian culture] is. […] If we look at Kashubia only in terms of laying flowers by monuments of activists, if we only care for Kashubia in terms of decorating chapels for religious celebrations, if we only care for Kashubia in terms of serving bread with lard and cucumbers, it doesn't stand much of a chance. Of we only care for Kashubia in terms of wearing these beautiful folk costumes, there's no chance. But the Kashubs, especially the young Kashubs, have gone further, beyond that. It is evident that they are interested.

Kashubian symbols cease to be associated exclusively with folkloristic performances and start to be linked to the local identity coupled with pride in the region. The blossoming of the Kashubian culture and language and their modernization go hand in hand with young people's efforts to search for their roots and reinvent themselves. The Kashubian culture and the Kashubian identity have become fashionable, which, coupled with financial subsidies, started to make the promotion of the Kashubian culture profitable. However, the consequences of this situation are more complex. On the one hand, there is a risk that this culture may become commercialized. And such commercialization is increasingly present in Kashubia. One young woman admits:

> **G25F(K):** Well, I guess it is [fashionable]. Because [people] see that this can be partially profitable, because you can set up a tourism business or whatnot. Because of these bands that use the Kashubian culture and songs…

In this way, the Kashubian culture, presented in a modern dimension and therefore ostensibly disconnected from folklorism, returns to such a presentist function. As

Posern-Zieliński (1982: 95) writes, "the elements of folklore introduced into pop-
ular culture and exploited by the mass media have become a malleable material
that is used to create attractive products characterized as exotic and successfully
used in the industry, trade, tourism as well as regionalist and ethnic movements."
Consequently, young people fear that the Kashubian culture will become "a culture
for sale" (Nowicka, 2006) and undergo commercialization, which will in turn cause
its valuable elements to be replaced with tackiness. One Kashubian author points
out to the appearance of many products that imitate the Kashubian culture, but
their quality is very low:

> **L23M(K)**: [I'm bothered] that Kashubian has become fashionable and many people
> are trying to benefit from that, so they record albums with songs in Kashubian
> with no vocal or linguistic skill. What's the point of recording them, then? People
> who don't know any Kashubs will take those records, listen and [conclude] that
> those Kashubs are all lame.

There are also fears that if products of culture are forcefully created and promoted
only because they are in Kashubian, their quality will be low and their content
will have nothing to do with the Kashubian culture. It could be said that such are
the rules of mass culture. The following secondary school graduate who learned
Kashubian in secondary school lists a number of spheres that could be regarded as
"modern" Kashubian culture:

> **P19M(K)**: In addition, there is something like "Kashubian Idol," a competition where
> people sing in Kashubian and our local stars are promoted. And that's everything
> that fits in with this general global trend. It's the same model, but it's [organized]
> on a smaller scale in Kashubia and in Kashubian. I think that such activities, those
> in which Kashubia wants to stay in touch with general trends, are on the one hand
> good, because this culture gets closer and closer to people, and on other one not
> very good, because the literature becomes shallower and shallower, something you
> read out of boredom, not something you can think about more deeply.

As a result of this clash between the modern, widely promoted Kashubian culture
and how people imagine the traditions from which Kashubian culture is derived,
young people start to think about Kashubian culture in terms of "artificial" culture,
which is promoted, sold and commercialized, vs. "real culture," characteristic of
villages and based on values associated with the Kashubian identity. A Kashubian
journalist says:

> **H24F(K)**: I don't think we should be pushy with the Kashubian culture. Here, it has
> been recently the case that at every local event, on every stage, there is a Kashubian
> band, there's this huge inscription "Kashubian Day of Something" or "Kashubian
> Holiday of Something." There are Kashubian costumes, Kashubian meals, every-
> thing is called Kashubian and that's too pushy. I think this should stop.
> **NDR**: *So there's too much Kashubian culture now?*

H24F(K): Too much of this artificial, inflated culture. The real Kashubian culture means something completely different than a title.

NDR: *So tell me, what do you think real Kashubian culture means?*

H24F(K): Working hard, less talk and more action. Definitely, attachment to family, not to such artificial Kashubian traditions and customs we encounter so often nowadays. […] What else? Attachment to land and God, that's how I feel it.

Consequently, culture is understood not as a set of customs and institutions, but as the determining factor behind the characteristics and behaviours of the people who form it. Positive values associated with the older generations of Kashubs (family, customs, religion and hard work) are contrasted against the understanding of the Kashubian identity as a mere façade that helps gain certain profits. For that reason, some young activists wonder about the possible consequences of efforts to modernize the Kashubian culture through the promotion of the Kashubian language used in spheres previously reserved for national languages. Pursuant to the Poland's "Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and the Regional Language," the Kashubs as a group have no status, with protection (and therefore financial support) being afforded only to the Kashubian language. In the opinion of some people, this emphasis on the promotion of the Kashubian language and the related activities turns it into a construct abstracted from the cultural whole. Consequently, young people fear not so much changes in the language itself as the loss of the distinctiveness of their culture, its unique characteristics, its "spirit." One young Kashubian woman fears that the values that made the Kashubs stand out among other inhabitants of Pomerania may be lost amid efforts to make the Kashubian culture more modern, efforts understood as the promotion of the Kashubian language:

C21F(K): You may know no Kashubian, but if you feel you're part of this land… I feel this is not enough, because I know Kashubian, but I don't know much about the Kashubian customs and rites. And people from the older generations, our grandparents and great-grandparents, who may speak no Kashubian but were raised in a specific way, they feel this Kashubian spirit more than me or anyone else who only speaks Kashubian. I think that such people are more likely to be called Kashubs than we are.

The commercialization of ethnicity is a common phenomenon in the 21st century. Creating products related to the ethnic market, despite their "kitschiness," and participating in cultural spectacles performed "for show," despite fears of the loss of genuineness, do not necessarily entail exclusively negative consequences for the community. Individuals taking part in this ethnic theatre simultaneously become its recipients, as a way to "enact their identity, and, in the process, objectifying their own subjectivity, thus to (re)cognize its existence, to grasp it, to domesticate it, to act on and with it" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 26). Paradoxically, the commercialization of culture therefore makes it possible to restore the real relationship with this culture, consistent with the requirements of modern life, and therefore contributes to its survival. In this sense, folklorized forms of Kashubian culture also

play a role as long as they enrich not the tourists who watch them but those who participate in such spectacles. Finally, I would like to quote a fledgling Kashubian journalist who says that he rebelled against the Kashubian culture, despite the fact that it was instilled into him at home (in the form of "the Kashubian spirit"). Encounters with the Kashubian world, which he was expected to describe, was not so much difficult as thought-provoking:

> **V20M(K):** I was in a state of denial about this Kashubian identity throughout my adolescence [...]. I felt I was [a Kashub], that all of my grandmother's customs and views, the language in which she spoke to me [...], all these elements surrounded me, stimulated me, that the culture in which I had been raised was different from the Polish culture or any other culture. [...] I became a reporter. [...] I travelled across Kashubia and covered various events. For example, an anniversary of the formation of a [folklore] band with many years of traditions. [...] So as an 18-year-old rebelling against the Kashubian culture, I ended up [at this ceremony]. God in heaven, what am I doing here? Such tasks made me humbler. I saw that the people who formed such bands really had a knack for what they did. It is their passion, their way of life, they meet. [...] So I slowly warmed up to this Kashubian culture, mainly because I only met people involved in it. At the same time, I felt that the culture I saw [during the folklore band's anniversary celebrations] was not my culture, it was not the culture I wanted to help create.

When this Kashubian reporter got to know groups linked to folklore performances, which he had earlier disliked very much, he realized that they could be something valuable in and of themselves. However, this value should be attributed not to the visual aspects, perceived by outsiders, but to the pursuit of folklore as a cultural practice through which performers establish closer relations and form a community, thanks to which they start to understand their place in the local surroundings.

Brittany – from community customs to invented tradition

As a tourism region in France, Brittany presents visitors with what is considered typical for the land: regional culinary specialties like buckwheat flour crêpes called *galettes bretonnes* and folklore with characteristic women's headdress – tall lace caps from the region of Bigouden (Bro-Vigoudenn). One secondary school student complains that this picture of the region, created by marketing experts, makes people identify the Breton culture with such images:

> **B17F(B):** Even I have a tendency to associate it with stereotypes about the Breton culture. Because now in France, the Breton culture is kinds of like... for example, tourism and all of this... distorts the picture of the Breton culture. So where there's talk of Breton culture, I can often see crêpes, bonnets, and *fest noz,* really such things [...] So this is what immediately comes to my mind, because this is the picture created by marketers to attract tourists.

Other recognizable aspects of Breton cultural practices include music and dance, which function in both folkloristic and modern forms. In the former forms, they manifest themselves in numerous bands called *bagad* (plural *bagadoù*), which perform during most outdoor activities and at specially organized concerts and festivals. Inspired by Scottish bands, the *bagadoù* appeared in Brittany after the Second World War and quickly gained the status of traditional Breton bands. Many children whose parents identify in different ways with the Breton culture belong to such bands, and so do many adults. Some only attend several rehearsals, others stay in the bands for life.

In turn, Breton folk dances are danced in Celtic circles (called *cercles celtiques* in French and *kelc'hioù keltiek* in Breton). As folklore groups presenting different aspects of Brittany's folk culture, such bands have been formed since the beginning of the 20th century, when the traditional Breton world started to break apart under the influence of ever-stronger contacts with the French culture. In their current form, focused mainly on dancing, *bagadoù* started operating after the Second World War and reached their peak in the 1950s (cf. Micheau-Vernez, Valy & Brékilien, 1984). In Celtic circles, people dance traditional dances from different parts of Brittany, prepared under the watchful eye of choreographers, who make sure that the dances have the proper form and are consistent with traditions and visually attractive in a way that permits the modification of their forms. A dance group has a workshop that creates costumes made to look like folk costumes. Celtic circles, especially during peak season, travel from one show to another and from one festival to another, because such events are held very frequently in Brittany and therefore solidify the folklorist image of this culture. However, the association between the Breton culture and the past and the folklore presented to tourists is received negatively by young people, who fear that such stereotypical presentation of Brittany may be regarded as harmful for their activity. At the same time, when they try to define what the Breton culture means for them, they invoke associations from the sphere of folklore:

> **K21F(B)**: [...] by definition, it would be costumes, customs, traditional houses and so on. But that was before, now it's already a little outdated. Now, when we go to a festival and see people dressed in traditional costumes, we think that young people in Brittany don't dress like that. This refers to the earlier culture. But now, I don't know. [...] I think when you're inside, it's hard to have a comprehensive picture of what this culture is.

The folklorist image of the Breton culture, solidified by the performances of *bagadoù* and Celtic circles, makes it possible to define the Breton culture in a simple and clear way – as a culture that has rich music and dance traditions that should be preserved and presented in the form of a spectacle about the past. However, the young woman quoted above confirms, young people have difficulty defining what the Breton culture currently is. This is exactly why individuals linked to Celtic circles and *bagadoù* believe that the Breton folklorist culture should be promoted

to prove that it exists and that the Bretons have different roots and traditions than the French. One Celtic circle activist admits:

> **S22F(B):** But by this [recreation of Breton folklore dances], even if we are not ossified in traditions, this allows the Breton culture to be at least a little visible. I think it's a lot when culture is conveyed in this way. This also makes it possible to use the Breton culture even without being part of it. And to experience it.

It is interesting that the young woman says that folklore makes it possible to "use the Breton culture without being part of it." The world of Breton activists is divided quite clearly into two camps: one wants Brittany to obtain a political status and Breton to be guaranteed language rights and engages in activities to this end, while the other deals with folklore, traditional music and dances, without engaging in political issues. For them, the Breton identity is a regional, not ethnic identity, whereas folklore enables them to find a place in the local world and pursue a hobby that offers the possibility of "saving a fading world from oblivion." Individuals involved in folklore activities are very unlikely to simultaneously campaign in favour of political issues. One of the people I interviewed, who has run a Celtic circle for some time, argues that these days it is more important for the Breton traditions, especially costumes and dances, to survive so that future generations may get to know them, than to save the Breton language, which in his opinion is doomed to become extinct. Similar sceptical comments on the issue of Breton were made by S., quoted earlier. A different young woman who has been linked to a Celtic circle all her life (through her parents, who run it), was a student of the Diwan school and now teaches Breton in a bilingual school relates that she met with open aversion on the part of members of her circle when she suggested the introduction of basic Breton into classes.

However, young people do not associate Breton music and dances only with traditions and the past. Music is one of the most important aspects of the culture of today's Brittany. Numerous bands are being formed, the music industry is blooming, and Brittany is famous for the largest European music festivals such as *Vieilles Charrues* in Carhaix and *Festival Interceltique* in Lorient, which attract an audience of up to several hundred thousand people. In this market, there is room for both music based on modern arrangements of traditional musical motifs and modern songs in Breton. Avant-garde artists who play small concerts and musicians accompanying during *festoù-noz* are also quite successful (cf. Defrance, 2004). There are also artists who win nationwide recognition by singing in Breton, such as Nolwenn Leroy, who has come under heavy criticism from young people for having poor pronunciation and focusing on commercial aspects yet has contributed to the popularization of the Breton language.[75] Breton music is what young people regard as the most important aspect of their culture and their most

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75 Teachers of Breton for adults said that after the success of her album *Bretonne*, they noticed a distinct rise in the number of people wanting to learn Breton.

frequently pursued cultural practice. This is why they get annoyed when Breton music is discussed in terms of folklore. One secondary school student says:

> **Y17M(B)**: There is this term that is used by many people who say that Breton music is folkloristic. But I don't think it's folkloristic. Because folkloristic is what you say, for example, "Did you see that there was a lot of Breton music at the festival?" But here [in the Diwan school], there is as much Breton music throughout the year as during festivals. Because we don't want to show once a year that we speak Breton or play music. For me, the term "folkloristic" is not used correctly. […] When I hear "folkloristic," it's like putting something in a cage for people to watch it and say, "oh, it's nice, interesting, beautiful." Of course, we have folklore elements in our schools – there are costumes that were once worn and now you put them on special occasions, but this is art.

The speaker intuitively differentiates between the folkloristic aspects that merely play the functions of a spectacle and the manifestations of the vitality of a culture, its permanent presence. He understands folklore as an "art" and music is one of the cultural practices of the daily lives of school students. Many young people admit that they find these two aspects important in the Breton culture.

> **Q20M(B)**: […] the Breton language and the Breton music. […] the culture changes, and folklore remains the same. The Breton culture means its spirit. There's is traditional music, but above all [there is] the spirit. Maybe it's a simplification to say so, but we in Brittany have always celebrated a lot and we still do so. […] This is a way of living, the spirit of joy, despite the history of Brittany, which was sometimes difficult. […] I think that the Breton culture makes this region alive. For example, the Transmusical Festival in Rennes has nothing to do with the Breton culture, but I am convinced that this is in the Breton spirit. Just like there is Breton music, which is made in Brittany by people that want to enliven it. Here in Brittany, there is something to do every weekend. And that's the Breton culture, something is always happening.

In the opinion of this young man, "the spirit of the Breton culture" is connected with the pursuit of music as well as festivities and collective participation in artistic events. It may even manifest itself in efforts to preserve traditions and folklore as well as the organization of festivals, even if they have nothing to do with the stereotypically understood Breton identity. The activist believes that the quintessence of the Breton culture is expressed in the organization of music festivals and participation in such events. Other young people add that this "spirit" likewise expresses itself through self-organization, activism and the promotion of the Breton culture. In the opinion of a young activist, this is specifically how the Breton culture is made more modern:

> **K21F(B)**: The Breton culture is now expressed in a modern way, for example in people's dynamism. Initially, there were many people who organized various things: humanitarian campaigns, travel and so on. It was this state of mind,

openness to different things, people who become involved in various associations. We can see this state of mind in many people from the Diwan school. For me, this alone is modern, this feeling of being included in everything that is happening around us. Being modern also means becoming involved in various projects.

Elsewhere I have I described the phenomenon of the gatherings of the Bretons as connected with their community and parish life, their self-help and their functioning vis-à-vis the state culture (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2011: 123–131). However, it is worth stressing that young people who are involved in efforts to promote and support Brittany feel strongly that they are part of a larger and robust institution, a movement in which they can express their needs and put their ideas into action, including because Breton culture offers its participants numerous collective cultural practices, through which they can develop stronger ties and a stronger sense of involvement in a common cause. One secondary school student describes culture as something that expresses itself through interpersonal relations:

> **B17F(B)**: To me, Breton culture means above all relations between people, it means what happens between people who meet... the relations between people, in this atmosphere...

In Brittany, almost all gatherings, both local and community meetings and those organized by associations or institutions, are accompanied by night dance festivals called *festoù-noz* (singular *fest-noz*). They can take on the form of dances in well-lit rooms attended by people who know one another and belong to the same territorial community, but they can be also linked to major music festivals. People come to *festoù-noz* to dance, talk to their friends and other people, drink beer and collectively participate in a lifestyle that can be called "Breton." And that is exactly the primary yet not overtly defined goal of these night festivals – to live the Breton lifestyle and to keep the Breton culture alive (cf. Dołowy-Rybińska, 2013a). The proceeds from *festoù-noz* are usually used for purposes related to the Breton culture. Most dancers are regulars, while others attend *festoù-noz* only when they are organized to support "a just cause." Some see dancing Breton chain dances with their little fingers intertwined as an important practice in their lives, while others do so to demonstrate their belonging to the Breton culture. One Breton activist (who is not alone in her views) sees participation in *festoù-noz* as a symbol of what sets Breton culture apart from French culture:

> **A25F(B)**: Here in Brittany, we have two cultures, one alongside the other. For example, the atmosphere of discos – I would not call it Breton. For us, the equivalent role is played by *festoù-noz*, despite the fact they end at 1 am, not at 5 am. Discos are not our culture.

Contrary to this differentiation, *festoù-noz* are not folkloristic in their nature, despite having their roots in the group dances danced in Breton communities on the occasion of the harvest (Jigourel, 2009). After the First World War, traditional forms of community life and related cultural practices were supplanted by dances

and urban customs connected with the dominant culture. In the early 1950s, Breton dances as symbols of the traditional culture were recreated, reconstructed and propagated as part of the gradual rehabilitation of Breton culture.[76] Breton dances began to function as an invented tradition – Breton culture activists maintained that dancing these dances would restore the continuity of the Breton culture and its severed links to the past (Hobsbawm, 1983). Such activities resulted in a booming popularity of Celtic circles and became part of the folkloristic heritage of the region. In 1970s, the Breton movement's activists simultaneously took over the idea of *festoù-noz* as rural celebrations (and by the same token as celebrations of the "authentic" Breton life), which fit in very well with the public mood in that period and the search for connections with the traditional Breton culture. "Wild" *festoù-noz*, organized on beaches, in barns or on fields and accompanied by music concerts, emotional political discussions and copious amounts of alcohol, set the stage for the movement for the revival of Brittany and became its symbol (cf. McDonald, 1989) as well as a "school of being proud to be Breton" (Simon, 1999: 144). Steps taken in the 1970s triggered a chain reaction: from the awakening of Bretons' awareness, through the improvement of the region's economic situation, to cultural contestation (Favereau, 2005). The period witnessed the blooming of ideas related to Brittany's cultural identity, a certain cultural revolution in which the most important role was played by musicians and the ubiquitous *festoù-noz*. After that period, night festivals no longer played such a significant role, but they nonetheless remained symbols and manifestations of the Breton identity and a cultural practice that was kept alive. One Diwan school student opined:

> **F18M(B)**: I'd very much like to [live the Breton culture in the future]. Otherwise everything I've learned here, all my studies in Breton, would be for nothing. I guess the easiest thing for me will be to simply play at *festoù-noz*. […] I want to play at *festoù-noz*, because it's something like a big family, the same people are always in the same places.

Almost all of the people I interviewed declared that they attended *festoù-noz* whenever they had an opportunity to do so. Despite interpreting their participation in the festivals as a Breton cultural activity, they did not feel that this practice was incongruous with their daily lives. That is because the festivals are consistent with the preferences of today's young people. Here is how one student describes this phenomenon:

> **O24F(B)**: I think it fits in very well with this era. There was this risk that everything would turn into some sort of folklore, something ossified, exotic, taken from a different era and so on. And that's not the case here. That's not the case at the level of

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76 The collaboration of the Breton movement's pro-Breton, nationalistically-oriented faction with the occupying forces during the Second World War brought disgrace on the Breton culture and led to its marginalization.

> music: there are plenty of bands that play Breton music, do very novel things. But this is a similar situation: people talk about it, lament that it's no longer possible to dance to this [music]… And it's true that you sometimes can't dance to the music of these bands, but that's not the point.

Breton music has evolved, thus expressing the needs of successive generations, and that is why it has been kept alive as a cultural practice. The young Breton woman is therefore annoyed by the discussions that have been held in recent years on whether the form of *festoù-noz* should be allowed to change. The festivals feature the performance of traditional Breton dances that require specific rhythms, which gives rise to the fears that a change in accompaniment would cause Breton dances to be replaced with modern dances, which in turn would strip *festoù-noz* of their Breton character. Some of the bands that perform at *festoù-noz* already play non-dance music, which has come under heavy criticism from various groups but also earned the support of many people, especially among the young. The individuals I interviewed often told me about feeling torn between the practices in which they would like to participate and the sense that they should preserve the distinctive characteristics of the Breton culture. However, not all of them see cultural change as something negative. For example, one secondary school student, who also plays in a *bagad*, observes:

> **T16M(B)**: […] it's also a certain sign of openness. Because we didn't invent these modern things. We look for modern things among what has been invented in France, England and the United States. And we adapt them to our music and it seems to me that this is a sign of openness, of the fact that we are modernizing.

Adapting external motifs to incorporate them into the traditional Breton music is not necessarily seen as harmful to the Breton culture. On the contrary, this could demonstrate its openness and adaptation to the modern era. For that matter, such openness seems obvious to young people: how can they isolate themselves from new content if they have Facebook friends all over the world, go to festivals of African films and eat Asian cuisine? However, this approach is foreign to many "guardians of tradition," activists who are often responsible for important events and festivals representative of Breton culture. Much to the disappointment of young people, they attempt to prevent changes in the Breton culture. A young activist says bitterly:

> **N23F(B)**: […] Breton culture is now very folkloristic. And I think it's getting a bit artificial. […] the problem is, if a culture doesn't modernize, then I think it dies. At least that's the danger. If a culture remains something for the old, it will be alive only among the old. It's also necessary to interest young people.

In the opinion of this young woman, the folklorization of the Breton culture does not mean separating its components from their meaning, embedded in a specific cultural context (for example, music served the purpose of improving the effectiveness of work and strengthening bonds in a community). If today's people

live different lives than their ancestors, their cultural practices had to change as well. Folklorizing a culture therefore means that those responsible for the presentation of the Breton culture appear to overlook the fact that certain traditions have changed their forms yet have also been kept alive as practices. In the young woman's opinion, presenting folklore performances to the public therefore prevents active participation in the Breton culture. Meanwhile, young people who are actively involved in the Breton culture perceive it as modern. Nevertheless, they realize that there is considerable discord between how they perceive their own culture and its image presented to the external world. Here is how one Diwan school student explains this problem:

> **P18M(B)**: I don't think Breton culture is very conservative or traditional, despite what people often think. Yes, I think it's modern and it has evolved quickly over time. [But] people still see it as rural, so the Breton culture is not quite sure where it should be placed. I get the impression that there is still this room for hesitation between something too traditional, which would allow us to preserve our roots, and the people who would like to make this culture more modern… I don't think we know for sure what we would like to or should do – make it modern or keep it traditional.

This student's dilemma is therefore connected with a sense that the less clear the cultural boundaries are, the more firmly the ethnic boundaries should be drawn. However, different groups understand efforts to reinforce these boundaries differently. Some see them through the prism of a stronger emphasis on the traditional culture, linked to the period when cultural differences were evident. Others link the possibility of the survival of the culture to the pursuit of identity politics. Young activists can sense this discrepancy quite strongly. In their opinion, the Breton culture cannot develop fully, because it is "not sure where it should be placed." One secondary school student talks about this sense of being torn between the folkloristic image of the Breton culture and its modern forms:

> **F18M(B)**: But we're not people from these stereotypes. We don't all wear traditional costumes with caps and we don't dance all day. So the Breton culture is modernizing, moving forward, following the Breton movement, while keeping its roots.
>
> **NDR**: *What does that mean?*
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> **F18M(B)**: Roots… traditions, some Breton holidays that have been preserved… Aside from that, there are performances and competition of *bagad* bands and such things. And the costumes have been the same for many years.

This student says that the picture of the Bretons popularized in the media is incongruous with what they are like. In an attempt to emphasize that the modernization of the present-day Breton culture does not simultaneously mean its detachment from its roots, he nonetheless cites examples of activities that are stereotypically associated in collective awareness with Brittany, thus labelling it as folkloristic. Sensing the incongruity of these categories, young people become even more annoyed by the dominance of this folkloristic image of Brittany. They perceive

the sense of being torn between tradition and modernity as discord between the folklorized forms of the Breton culture and the practices of their daily lives. One secondary school student says:

> **DD16F(B)**: I think this was earlier mainly a tradition, so when people talk about Brittany outside the region, they immediately think of images of the Bigouden region, the seaside and people making crêpes. But that's not what immediately springs to my mind. For example, I find the Breton costumes outdated. Such things are now only used for shows. Today, something completely different is being created and to me this is exactly what the Breton culture means… of course, the past and traditions are important, but culture means the things that are created every day. For a culture to last, you need to create, not only stick to traditions…

She observes that too many discussions about the Breton culture understood as folklore ignore the aspects that are "created every day" and prove the vitality and topicality of this culture. This, in turn, reduces the momentum of the activities that promote the Breton culture and leads to their perception as needless, because they disrupt the picture of their culture that has already been internalized by the community. One Breton activist opines:

> **Z25M(B)**: I fear that if someone says, "Breton culture," people visualize dressed-up people playing bagpipes or eating crêpes with salted butter. This is so limited, so simplified that it does bother me a bit. Because when I talk about Breton culture, I see a much broader range. It can include very modern things, modern music, the whole community. But I fear most people see Breton culture as something traditional, for sale…

The combination of the words "traditional" and "for sale" is likewise characteristic of the Breton culture, because it is promoted specifically through folklorized forms. Interestingly, young people believe that these forms include no longer only the groups that present forms derived from the Breton folk culture in spectacular ways but also other "symbols" of the Breton culture related to the cultural and ethnic revival of the 1970s – Alan Stivell and the band Tri Yann. One student of Breton argues that repetitive references to these groups and their creations as products of "the modern Breton culture" exclude its currently emerging forms:

> **R21M(B)**: I think that all these events on posters are folklore, not culture. But that's how they are shown, people are pleased, because they hear bagpipes and see how people dance and wear caps. But to me that's not what the Breton culture means, not even a little bit. Because there are so many things that are being created, not just Tri Yann or whatnot. There are some good bands, there's everything we want, but no, they still play bands from 40 years ago, which are a bit outdated. They don't change their repertoire, they continually play the same things, although interesting things are now being created in Brittany.

In the opinion of some people, the modernity of the Breton culture, demonstrated by a multitude of forms and genres that correspond with global musical trends,

means its ability to become part of the world that derives profits from music and festivals. This is because it is connected with "modern" thinking about culture:

> **Q20M(B)**: [...] it's definitely modern, with all these largest festivals in France. They may be commercial, but this commercial aspect of the Breton culture proves that it's modern, that it has managed to fit in with other things.

Breton culture is currently being promoted in many different ways. It is also becoming fashionable, which is demonstrated by the emergence of numerous brands that make use of Breton symbols and adapt them creatively as well as the continued presence of these brands in the market. On the one hand, young people sometimes argue that this activity is "for sale" and does not reflect attachment to the culture that is close to them. On the other, commercialization of symbols linked to Brittany could bring benefits to the region and consequently also to Breton culture. Here is how one young Breton woman describes this:

> **A25F(B)**: We can see more and more different shops with clothes with the word "Breizh," but there's nothing behind it. But that's nothing bad; the more, the better. It makes the culture more visible, but the word "Breizh" is only a display.

When asked about manifestations of the modern character of the Breton culture, young people point to the aspects related to new media and technologies, which means their everyday practices. One characteristic comment was made by a secondary school student who, just like many of his peers, points to the possibility of using new media in Breton as proof of the modernization of the Breton culture:

> **G16M(B)**: [...] but there's also a growing number of modern newspapers that cover current topics and debates and discussions. There's also television [...]. And even if it's not modern, it's becoming modern, things are changing very rapidly. One must not believe that the Bretons will remain a rural and traditional culture, because it keeps developing and moving in a completely different direction.

He stresses another important aspect of the Breton culture that should make people see it from a new perspective. The changes that have taken place within this culture pertain not only to its forms of expression it but also to its demographic and geographic structure. Breton culture is slowly becoming a culture of young people (although it continues to be associated with the oldest, Breton-speaking inhabitants of Brittany) and city dwellers (although it is still symbolized by small villages in Lower Brittany). It is becoming more urban, centred in big cities, especially Rennes, which was historically not part of the Breton-speaking regions but is now the seat of many Breton local government and political organizations. In the capital of Brittany, there are also many students who had a chance to meet with the Breton language at school and are now trying to promote their own Breton culture. Young activists fear that linking the Breton culture to rural areas and Lower Brittany may cause it to cease to exist in the eyes of the outside world when the inevitable change of the language occurs. One student points to this aspect:

CC20M(B): One thing is certain: at some point, the old will be gone, they will die. For now, they're still more vital than the young, but at some point, they will perish. But young people will still live this culture, because they are young, because they want to develop it, because they have ideas, because they like it more and more, regardless of whether they are from Brittany or from other places. For me, the new Breton culture […] means the culture that will be in the future. But somewhat nostalgically, where is this connection, what can you do to recreate a link in a chain that has been broken? As for this Breton culture that will be created, where will it have its legitimization to combine the Breton culture and the Breton language?

Young people attempt to find an answer to this question, as do their peers from other minority groups. They believe that the preservation of the image of their culture as folkloristic and rooted in traditions is harmful, because it puts off those who are ethnically undecided. They want to see the Breton culture as modern, they want it to change, but they also fear that it may become detached from its roots, which will cause it to lose what sets it apart from the dominant culture.

Welsh culture – between everyday practices and festivities

Unlike the regions inhabited by the other minorities discussed in this book, Wales has a defined status and borders, as well as its own myths and a recorded history, which can be invoked when invented traditions or national holidays are established. This fact plays quite a significant role in debates about the Welsh people's cultural and ethnic distinctiveness, be they political debates about Wales' potential independence or the sociocultural discussions about the revival of the language and the functioning of institutions that support the preservation of Wales' distinctiveness. When describing Wales' separateness from England, young people cite the most characteristic determinants of culture, such as history, tradition, myths and symbols (Smith, 1986). Here is how one student describes what being Welsh means for him:

A20M(W): […] It's a feeling of belonging to where you are from. It's a feeling of pride in your country, your family, your old tradition knowing that Welsh is the oldest spoken language in Europe. One of the oldest at least. It's important that our history dating to 3rd or 4th century is known, and that the bridge between the past and the presence is priceless to me. […] We've got our legends we identify with and which make us proud of where we are from.

The pride that this young man takes in speaking "one of the oldest spoken languages in Europe" manifests itself in the *eisteddfod* competitions, analysed earlier in this book. In the opinion of young people, the festivals are important, but they also present the Welsh culture as folkloristic. Young people from families linked to the Welsh language and culture grew up participating in these events. However, their peers who have not participated in the festivals since childhood view the message of *eisteddfodau* as anachronistic. Although new competitions

are now being introduced into the permanent program of the festivals, the image of the inhabitants of Wales seen by the outside world (not only the non-Welsh but also the non-Welsh-speaking world) is particularly that of people who cultivate druidic traditions and dance clog dances. Young people see this picture of their community as harmful. When asked if she considers *eisteddfodau* to be important for young people in Wales, one Welsh activist replies hesitantly:

> **E25F(W):** Umm…. Yes, yes, I suppose they are because it does give them that sense that they are doing something in Welsh and it's a part of their culture and that kind of thing. But it's a difficult one because you don't want the Welsh language just to be something that is connected or seen as just involved with the old traditions that are just carried on.

Other people I interviewed expressed similar opinions. They argue that the image of Wales is very strongly folklorized, which may be harmful to the Welsh culture and efforts to encourage young people to actively participate in this culture and use the Welsh language. It is worth pausing briefly to analyse why young people feel so strongly about how their culture is perceived by outsiders. Above all, the development of the Welsh language appears quite robust, especially when compared against other minority languages, and it is used actively in many institutions and business organizations. Wales has its own Welsh-language television channel and some Welsh films are internationally successful.[77] Welsh is also present in the new media and in the public sphere. At the same time, young people often hear opinions that their culture is old, even dead. One student from Wales says that she constantly encounters claims that Welsh culture is outdated:

> **M20F(W):** It doesn't make me nervous, I just tell them that it's not history. Yes, it is a part of history, but there's still a lot of life. It is not dead culture.

Young speakers of Welsh, especially those who had to learn the language or wanted to use it in everyday life yet realized that they had to constantly fight for this right, are not only aware of the situation of their culture but also active in the quasi-political sphere, which is where the most important discussions on the Welsh culture, nation and language are currently playing out. The broader the possibilities of using the Welsh language in everyday life, the more emotionally young people react to what they believe is an unfair image of Wales as a land of traditional culture civilized by Britain. The depiction of Welsh culture as outdated is connected with the fact that those presented as users of Welsh are usually elderly people, who

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77 Numerous acclaimed films produced since the 1990s (cf. Woodward, 2006; 2012; Price, 2013) include at least two that have won international recognition: the film *Hedd Wyn*, which was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1993, and Gruff Rhys's *Separado!*, which won many awards. Welsh animations are likewise popular (Robins & Webster, 2000).

typically have occupations characteristic of farmers. Here is how one secondary school student explains this:

> **P16F(W):** Welsh speakers, they are disappearing. People say, "Oh, my mum or grandma used to speak Welsh." So I think this image is just because the elderly people speak Welsh it seems to be an old thing. But… it is also because of tourism. They show tourists that Wales is old-fashioned. Like on TV, the advertisements show costumes, cottages, charming fireplaces, that kind of stuff. But you know, not everyone in Wales looks like that. I think that the media doesn't really help.

In her opinion, the stereotypical image of Wales is based on three pillars: the first is defined by the age of those who speak Welsh, the second is created by the tourism industry, which pictures Wales as a world of ossified traditions, and the third is formed by the media, which perpetuate the folkloristic image. Meanwhile, young people are very strongly aware of the fact that the traditional world of Welsh linguistic and religious communities, the one in which their grandmothers and grandfathers were raised, will perish with them. The community life, which previously determined group membership, is increasingly supplanted by imagined symbols of national identity, manifested during the celebrations of the feast day of Saint David, the patron saint of Wales. Such festivities quickly turned from modest ceremonies celebrated by smaller communities into grand street parades that showcase national and popular symbols of the Welsh identity (cf. Enough-Jackson, 2013). Most young activists that I interviewed said that Wales should regain its independence one day. When asked if such a political change might actually alter anything, one student of Welsh replied:

> **C21M(W):** […] when Wales becomes independent, for example, maybe people in Wales will develop a new identity. An institutional identity, civic identity rather than a cultural identity. I think that the Welsh state would change the perception of the language. I also believe that with Welsh independence we would be able to control our things, roads, taxation, housing […] and it would change our situation.

His peer from North Wales, below, adds that it is the absence of independence that makes the Welsh identity difficult. Wales is not politically independent and therefore not recognized as a separate state, so considering the Welsh culture in isolation from the British culture proves problematic. Some young people doubt if modern-day Welsh culture even exists. This secondary school student says:

> **Y16F(W):** […] we've lost most of our celebrations, we've lost our church holidays, the folk dances are no longer as they used to be. I don't know, I think now it is rugby more than anything. It is kind of a stereotypical way of perceiving Wales, with leeks, daffodils, and sheep. And that we are all farmers. Which might sometimes be true, but not always. I don't think we have our culture anymore.

This young woman believes that Wales is now more famous for its national sport than for the customs that draw people together. She also fears that the traditional elements of the Welsh culture may become blurred in the popular culture, which

is typical of the English or global culture, rather than Welsh culture. Despite being in a better situation than their peers from other minorities, therefore, young Welshmen and Welshwomen turn out to face dilemmas of the same nature: where is the boundary between what is Welsh and what is national/global, and what might be done to help their culture modernize without losing its distinctive characteristics? Nevertheless, they have no doubt that a folkloristic image may harm, rather than help their culture. One university student says:

> **B20M(W):** I think my image of Welsh culture is more traditional, people in traditional clothes, dancing, daffodils, maybe a leek somewhere… just all this old stuff, the symbols of Welshness. […] It's a very old view. Cause you don't get something like that in modern Wales. So maybe one of the problems is the lost connection with the younger generation. […] So it is time to create a new identity, and a new image of Wales more appealing to young people.

Wales's transition from the traditional Welsh world to the modern culture was very rapid; this process culminated in the Second World War together with the emergence of a strong national discourse related to the need to protect national sovereignty. Consequently, young people are not quite sure how to be Welsh. Nevertheless, they are convinced that Welsh culture, though promoted as folkloristic in the outside world, may be regarded as modern. Unable to separate the aspects of their lives that are Welsh from the ones that belong to British culture, they stress in particular that nowadays they can do anything in Welsh, use it in the new media and at work. When asked if he sees Welsh culture as modern, one university student replies:

> **A20M(W):** There is technology, we've got Facebook in Welsh. There is a strong Welsh speaking input, strong Welsh speaking Facebook community. So Welsh culture is developing. It's not the most modern culture, there are so many ancient elements, but just because there are ancient elements through the culture, it doesn't make it unmodern. It's just, you know, able to keep its tradition plus to renew.

This young man expressed an idea that is important to many young people. When I was analysing the role of the *eisteddfod* festivals in today's Wales, I paid attention not only to the fact that they are rooted in tradition, which makes young people aware of their cultural distinctiveness, but also to their community-forming role. A similar role is played by celebrations related, for example, to St. David's Day. Preserving connections with the past, even ensuring the visibility of Welsh symbols, is important, because this helps people create an imagined community and stress their "banal" everyday nationalism (Billig, 1995). Young people do not want to detach themselves from their traditions and stop organizing *eisteddfod* festivals or other Welsh festivities. However, they would prefer to have greater visibility of a different aspect of their Welsh identity, namely the one linked to everyday life in Welsh, used for example in modern technologies.

The Welsh language is afforded protection and its use in various spheres is regulated by legislation and promoted. Such regulations nonetheless do not stop young

people from feeling that it is impossible to live their lives fully in this language as a result of its inferior position compared with English and the limited sphere in which it can function. All inhabitants of Wales, whether they want this or not, must live in English-speaking culture. For this reason, it is clear from their statements that young people feel that by devoting their time to things that are not directly related to Wales or the Welsh culture (through Welsh institutions and the language) or are only symbolically related (references to Welsh traditions, history and myths), they participate in the national culture, rather than Welsh culture. One student concluded:

> **N22F(W):** In some ways, it is easy to be Welsh, but it depends on context. If you step outside the Welsh community and study sociology, philosophy or sciences, it would be hard to study it and keep your Welsh identity and feel that you are doing something specific just for Welshness. The Welsh newspapers they are not like newspapers. They are like cultural newspapers. They speak only about cultural news. I remember, it was like a surprise, one week there were a lot of suicides so all the main headlines on the front pages [in English] were only about it. But in the Welsh newspaper, the news was like "No places to park at Eisteddfod," on the front page! So it is like, in the Welsh language you can only write about the Welsh culture and community.

This comment shows a high degree of awareness of not only the status of the Welsh culture as a minority culture but also the projection of its image (by people outside and inside the group) in a way that highlights this minority status, understood as "incompleteness," even "insufficiency." This image keeps the Welsh culture locked in a world disconnected from everyday problems and conveys the message that holiday celebrations are important in the Welsh culture, because they characterize it, whereas the real life lies on the side of the British culture. Consequently, the image of Welsh culture as limited to selected spheres of life is very deeply rooted in young people's awareness, irrespective of how "Welsh" (here in the context of the Welsh language) their lives are. Such an image was presented by the young woman studying law in Welsh at university, as well as by the following activist who organizes political campaigns. When asked to list the associations that come to her mind when she hears the phrase "Welsh culture," she replies with a laugh:

> **E25F(W):** Oh gosh! [laugh] You do think of *Eisteddfod* and traditional dancing… it's a normal association when you think of something typically Welsh… But, not, it has changed a lot. Our culture is actually quite modern. You have many writers, and there are new films… yes, the Welsh culture has changed quite a lot. And there are a lot of subcultures, you have a lot of people working on fanzines and online websites, a lot to do with different aspects of culture. So, there is probably a mix, you still got very traditional, and then you've got very modern things […]. Yes, there is a mix of cultures between the old and the modern.

This young activist believes that it is necessary to change this image of the Welsh culture, which is linked to festive celebrations and therefore folklorizes the

traditional culture, and this change should involve promoting the conviction that the Welsh culture may function, and currently functions, in all spheres of life and the practices of young people and reinforcing this belief in the collective awareness. Welsh culture is helped by the official status of the Welsh language (which all young people see as a tool that adapts best to "modernity") and the support it receives. However, the modern Welsh culture is expressed in a language that is not known by many people who identify with Wales and is broadly used by older generations, which is why it remains a niche culture addressed to a narrow group of the young people who know Welsh. Consequently, it remains closed and obscure to people outside the group of "chosen ones." Its only active participants are therefore those who were born in this culture, joined it through their friends or have otherwise taken an interest in it. When pondering what might be done to attract young people to the Welsh culture, one student opines:

> **G19F(W):** So I think if you have more things like the gig I went to last night, which was all Welsh-medium and with really good music. I think a lot of people grew up with Welsh music in the background. Whereas if you show them something Welsh that is so modern, so culture enriching, and presented in an entirely different way to Eisteddfod, I think that's what is important. You know, a lot of Welsh literature now is going on, and it is too modern, almost. Everything is a bit rude, a bit vulgar, and not everybody wants to read literature like that. I am not saying it's bad literature, it's just not to everybody's taste. So I think you need to promote more things for young people, they must be good things, good films, good programs. They may be controversial, but they must be in Welsh.

In the opinion of this young woman, Welsh culture would stand a chance of attracting more people if it did not restrict itself to presenting the same topics. Welsh culture should be universal and offer something interesting to all people, regardless of their age, education and interests. However, this development of the Welsh culture is limited by its minority status. There are so few recipients of this culture that this affects the form and substance of cultural activities. One Welsh musician and activist gets annoyed by this degradation of the Welsh culture:

> **W18M(W):** I don't think there are enough writers who would write Welsh novels and when they do they don't just write, but they think, what would Welsh speakers like to read. And it is not good. Because they think they cannot allow themselves to use modern forms cause there would be no recipients. I think if Welsh culture is about to become modern, it must be treated in the same way as English culture. If you're gonna write a song, write a song, and not something based on an image of what the Welsh people want. Otherwise, you get stuck in the same routine.

Reducing the Welsh culture to topics that are regarded as Welsh and therefore "can be sold" entails yet another consequence: it perpetuates the stereotypical image of this culture and limits even further the group of the potential recipients of other cultural messages. However, young people in a sense understand the conservatism of this culture (although they do not approve of it). They note that it is motivated

by the fear that the Welsh culture may become watered down under the influence of the global culture. Here is how one activist explains this:

> **N22F(W):** I can understand why Welsh culture has this conservatism to it, because they're trying to defend against globalization, so I can understand that's the reaction to it.

No one is currently calling into question the need for the Welsh culture to function in all possible spheres of life and everyday practices of young people, who want to live according to the models of the dominant culture yet also stay in the sphere of influence of the minority culture. However, this minority culture is in a sense becoming similar to the dominant culture, which is why many people do not want it to lose its values in the course of modernization. In the opinion of one of the people I interviewed, these values are connected with the local aspect of the minority culture, which can be contrasted against the global culture:

> **K25M(W):** […] yes, it should definitely be more modern. But you should keep your old values and not throw the baby out with the bath water, throw out something valuable and replace them with some second-hand things. So you should kind of incorporate your traditional values into modern things, fine. […] There are lots of different ways you can do it. But I think the problem is how to make it more appealing to young people; also a lot of young people think it's irrelevant to modern life. What's important is that people could live a modern life but through Welsh. You can eat soup from the supermarket, but you should be able to do it in Welsh.

This young man fears that a culture that invokes the Welsh traditions and the Welsh past (the period when its ethnic boundaries were so obvious that no one needed to manifest their distinctiveness) could appear unattractive to the young. He therefore argues that the Welsh culture should not be limited to references to the past. Again, the rescue comes in the form of the Welsh language ("eating soup in Welsh"), which makes it possible to transfer practices taken from the global culture (buying soup in a can from the supermarket) into the Welsh culture. Similar opinions are expressed by a student who believes that the "prehistoric" aspect of the Welsh language fulfils important mythmaking functions, which bring into focus the need to preserve it, but it is simultaneously not the best incentive for those who did not learn the language at home. In order for such people to want to identify with the Welsh culture, the language must be present everywhere, especially in spheres that are attractive to young people.

> **B20M(W):** I think one of the things is to make the Welsh language be seen as something cool. Because by the younger generation the Welsh language is viewed almost like a prehistoric language, the language of the Celts, the language of the oldest generation. It is not seen as exciting anymore. Because everything exciting is through English, all the films, all the music, it is all through English. It makes English the language of success, the language of the cool, the language of the popular. So I think we definitely need to concentrate on making the Welsh language

more visual and more appealing to the young community. Because that's the thing, I myself actually did not realize how active Welsh is until I went to a university and going to gigs, and stuff like that, you actually see how Welsh is actually used within the community.

This young man states that "everything exciting is through English," but he quickly switches to the conclusion that such things do exist in Welsh, though not many people find out about them. He did because he lived in a residence hall for Welsh-speaking students and joined a group of people interested in this topic, who found out from their older friends where they should go and what they should see. A student from a different university makes a similar point:

> **T20F(W):** A lot is happening, there are gigs and stuff like that. But I suppose it is small culture, and modern Welsh culture is not known to people, really.
>
> **NDR:** *Why not?*
>
> **T20F(W):** I guess it is not well promoted. And people just don't really know about it, or they are not interested, I don't know.

In turn, another student involved in the Welsh political and cultural life is concerned that Welsh culture is only attractive to those who were raised in this culture or became involved in its conservation. Others, even those who try to get to know it better (attending an *eisteddfod* for a brief moment or a concert) will not find it interesting:

> **O20M(W):** Welsh music is becoming now attractive and modern, linking pop music with Celtic music. But the only people who listen to this music are people who were engaged from the beginning. My father was a member of a Welsh band. So I was always raised in such sense of a community and in that music environment. Whereas when I show this music to an English-speaking person raised on English-American music, they will say it's boring. So I see this culture is modern and cool cause I was raised in it. But the challenge is to make other people aware of it and getting them involved. For someone who was not raised in it to understand it and like it, you know, takes time. If someone goes to *Eisteddfod* only once, he won't get it and won't say "Now I think it is cool."

Young people define the modernity of their own culture in various ways. As I wrote earlier, they associate it chiefly with the language, which successfully functions in the new media, and with music. For others, the modernity of their culture manifests itself in the very fact that they identify with it. A 20-year-old man says:

> **R20M(W):** Yes, for me it is modern cause the majority of people who speak [Welsh] are young people.[78] So it is a very modern thing to speak Welsh. Other people here

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78   Statistically, this is not actually true. This imagined notion is due to the rapid increase in the number of young people who have studied Welsh (to varying degrees) at school.

will probably tell you about the Welsh modern rock scene and stuff like that, but it is not really important to me. I see it as a modern thing because I am young, I speak it, and I am modern.

One secondary school student I interviewed was even surprised that people her age saw Welsh culture as serious and old-fashioned. For her, this culture not only remains the culture of her everyday life (as someone who comes from a Welsh-speaking family) but also gives her constant emotions in connection with her involvement in cultural activities:

> **P16F(W):** I just think it's funny that so many people find it old-fashioned or serious. And I think it's so great and so funny. But then you see so many pictures and see how people present it. I think it is so stereotypical. But for me, I find it amusing, for me it is a culture of jokes, singing, but people present it as something serious. In my group – I am a member of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* – we always try to show that it is not serious, it is not a school culture, it is not formal. We live it, and for us, it is very informal.

However, the girl admits that the perception of the Welsh culture by her friends is linked to how it is presented to people. Those in the know ("my group – I am a member of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith*") can see a different face of this culture and experience it not only at home, at school or in contact with institutions but also in their social life and pastime activities. However, this sphere is not accessible to many people. It is nonetheless this niche aspect that activists see as the biggest value of their culture. They see it as attractive, because it differentiates them from the surrounding world. They are special. As one student says, Welsh culture allows them to break the rules imposed by the mainstream culture:

> **U22M(W):** Often people don't realise [that the Welsh culture is modern] because they associate it with more traditional things. Ignoring the fact that most young people want to do it in their way, to break away all these ties and to cross borders. For many young people, Welsh culture is what lets them break these ties, break the rules, be independent, be individual.

In search of ethnic boundaries in the transcultural world

Searching for and constructing ethnic boundaries (the boundaries of language communities, the boundaries of the communities with which young people identify) poses a major challenge facing young minority activists. It bears upon the dilemmas they face in connection with the fluidity of cultural references and the disappearance of clearly defined divisions between dominant and minority cultures. What is more, it even seems that young people's language and cultural practices demonstrate that these boundaries, if they are to exist, must be set arbitrarily by individuals and by their portrayal of the rightful place of the community with which they identify in the present-day world. Consequently, there are

many strategies for establishing boundaries: some lean towards political meanings and conscious self-determination on issues regarding the future of a specific group, others stress cultural distinctiveness rooted in history and tradition, still others are based on the structure of social networks and the assimilation of the resources that they generate. In today's world, both identifying with a minority culture and practicing it are conscious activities based on choices and reflections. Young people were raised in a world that could be called transcultural, a world with the free flow of information, meanings and values. Popular culture transcends social, religious and state boundaries, blurring to a certain extent ethnic, national and linguistic differences, which – in order to exist – must be constructed, even brought into sharp focus. At the same time, the uncertainty caused by the blurring of permanent points of reference and the possibility – even necessity – of assuming many different social identities may lead to the polarization of identity, the construction of clear ethnic boundaries and even rebellion (Appadurai, 2006). Ethnicity in the primordial sense becomes watered down, because representatives of minority groups do not differ in any obvious way from representatives of dominant cultures. Identity is not assigned to an individual, it is something that an individual constantly chooses. In turn, the necessity of constantly making identity-related decisions may result in radicalization, because the preservation of distinctiveness requires engagement in related activities. For this reason, globalization does not mean the disappearance of cultural diversity and researchers argue that it is exactly when the world's pursuit of uniformity is at its greatest that people conclude that "everyone has got 'culture'" (Sahlins, 1999: 401). By searching for what sets them apart from others, for cultural distinctiveness, minorities preserve and express their separateness. Wolfgang Welsch wrote that transculturality does not mean uniformization and "[i]t is, rather, intrinsically linked with the production of diversity" (Welsch, 1999). In turn, diversity requires the constant creation and affirmation of boundaries, which are by no means obvious to the group as a whole or to the individuals who form it.

Studies carried out among young people who consciously identify with minority groups and engage in the promotion of their cultures and languages show that they find it very difficult to define their cultural affiliation and identify the elements of their lives that could be categorized as belonging to the minority culture and those that belong to the dominant culture. This difficulty grows together with the degree of fragmentation of the language community and the blurring of clear differences as a result of the modernization of the minority culture on the one hand and the absence of sufficient political recognition on the other. Consequently, setting ethnic boundaries is easier for the Catholic Upper Sorbs, who live in communities whose members are bound together not only by their language but also by their religion, than for the Bretons, who are raised in the official language of the state and find it hard to identify the ways in which their culture differs from French culture. It is easier for young inhabitants of Wales to separate Welsh culture from British culture, because they can refer to their legends and traditions as well as the existence of a political boundary that defines a specific area as Welsh (regardless

of the nationality of the people who inhabit it), than it is for the Kashubs to separate Kashubian culture from Polish culture. Most Kashubs were raised in the belief that what sets them apart from the Polish culture is above all folklore, which is incongruous with everyday life. Resistance to this attitude provided a basis for the emergence of a small national group whose members seek ethnic boundaries by reinterpreting history and demonstratively using the Kashubian language, which they themselves have often learned as a foreign language. However, the views held by Kashubian "nationalists" are unacceptable to most Kashubs, who identify with Polish culture. At the same time, the stronger this identification, the more difficult it is for them to define the Kashubian aspects of their lives. Young Bretons likewise experience similar difficulties in identifying what makes their lives Breton and naming those aspects. In this situation, what serves as the point of reference is a specific system of values and traditions, which are often passed down at school, not through community practices. Identification becomes a conscious creation, one that requires constant confirmation and redefinition.

Before the cultural and linguistic change that occurred in the 20th century, people drew their sense of security and stability from their belonging to a specific community, traditional culture and religion. In the modern world, however, life is a sequence of choices that people must make with no permanent support or certainty that the choices they make are right (Barker, 2003: 176). When the young people I interviewed reflected on their culture, they therefore often talked about tradition, searching for a point of reference there and by the same token also for a justification of their individual identity-related choices. Young people seek clear references, whereas "the world of traditional forms of socialization appears, from the perspective of modernity, to be an integrated world that could provide individuals with a permanent and certain horizon of action determined by the boundaries of the community" (Jacyno, 2004: 135). What matters to them, however, is not the past itself or participation in traditional customs but the possibility of invoking such customs to confirm their place in the new configuration of values and references. Many young people I interviewed admitted that belonging to a minority group and engaging in its promotion were linked to a conscious decision that might, but did not have to, be motivated by their origin and their desire to find their roots, which would justify these decisions and legitimize them in the eyes of the community. Consequently, drawing on traditions has become an identity strategy for them. In turn, traditions are subject to reflections – they represent a consciously adopted point of reference. As Małgorzata Jacyno (2004: 133) writes, "In these conditions, tradition is no longer a systemic 'mechanism' for recreating the past; instead, it becomes an individually constructed and selected context of the interpretation and reinterpretation of a participant's current experience." References to tradition no longer mean (only) confirming the existence of a certain set of standards and values upon which a specific community relies but also making use of commonly known narratives, images and symbols that refer to a specific culture to confirm its existence (Lubaś, 2008: 42). By the same token, this reaffirms people in their conviction that their choices make sense.

Young inhabitants of Wales treat *eisteddfod* festivals as an invented tradition that fulfils certain community-forming functions, but they do not treat the festivals as folkloristic festivities organized for local inhabitants and tourists. The young people I interviewed see *eisteddfodau* as a Welsh territory, separated in time and space, where they can live the Welsh life all day and speak Welsh, without wondering if it is appropriate to do so or if they will be understood. It is a kind of carnival time in which hierarchies become reversed: Welsh culture becomes the dominant culture and, for one week a year, outsiders must adjust to the rules governing the Welsh world. The boundaries of Welshness are determined by *eisteddfodau*: those who participate in the festivals are Welsh. The festivals not only confirm that Welsh culture exists but above all create links between today's inhabitants of Wales and their ancestors, for whom Welshness was something obvious and who cultivated those traditions in the past (Shils, 1971). However, none of the *eisteddfod* participants ask themselves whether recitation competitions were organized in the same way centuries ago, because the purpose is not thoughtless repetition but rather the identification of certain values that currently living people see as theirs in their awareness (Szacki, 2011: 137).

Similarly, young Bretons who participate in *festoù-noz,* both the local events and the major international music festivals, feel that they are doing something "typically Breton," because the tradition of dancing, which expresses the relations between members of a specific group, is seen by them as constitutive of their culture. Such practices continue to carry significance, despite the fact that the form of dances and their role in society have changed. However, this poses no identification problem. Tradition can, and even must, be modernized, because it only comprises what the current community sees as positive and recognizes as tradition (Szacki, 2011: 141–143). Consequently, if traditions are to be cultural practices of young people, they must recognize these traditions as their own. Of course, the world in which young people live requires forms of communications that differ from the ones that existed earlier. James Clifford (1988: 14) concluded that "Twentieth-century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere individuals and groups improvise local performances from (re)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols, and languages." At the same time, the new forms of expression, consistent with the changing world, have made it possible for people to remain aware of their links to the past. One could therefore repeat after Talal Asad that "when one talks about tradition, one should be talking about, in a sense, a dimension of social life and not a stage of social development. In an important sense, tradition and modernity are not really two mutually exclusive states of a culture or society but different aspects of historicity" (in: Mahmood, 1996). Young people from minority cultures devote a lot of attention to the relationship between tradition and modernity, because the world of clearcut divisions and boundaries is a thing of the past. Here is also where traditions are situated, serving as a point of reference for young people. At the same time, they live in a constantly changing modern world. That is why they find it so important

to constantly reaffirm and creatively make use of the traditions and history of their groups in the activities and practices that belong to the system of today's world.

However, this interpretation of tradition is not obvious to its "guardians." Unable to refer to some politically defined organism that might justify these ongoing changes inside a minority, or to the (physical and ethnic) boundaries specified by the community itself and its surroundings, minority cultures constantly grapple with the dilemma of the permissibility of changes within their own community, sometimes arriving at radical forms in their conservatism. Shils makes this point: "Traditionalism, which is a form of heightened sensitivity to the sacred, demands exclusiveness. [...] It is satisfied only if the traditionalist outlook permeates all spheres – political, economic, cultural, and religious – and unifies them in a common subordination to the sacred as it is received from the past" (Shils, 1958: 160). The fear that a minority identity will be lost if any of the components of the culture regarded as traditional changes nonetheless prevents this culture from being alive and turns it a museum of its own traditions. Traditionalism understood in this way, which solidifies cultural forms and substance "for reasons related to their alleged or real value" (Lubaś, 2008: 11) may not only lead to the abandonment of creativity in a culture but even prompt young people, who must choose and confirm their identity alone, to refuse to identify with a culture understood in this way.

Importantly, the interviewees from each group were critical of the widely promoted image of minority cultures as being traditional, locked in some unspecified space and time and represented by people who should behave in a specific way and practice customs regarded as characteristic of this group. Such aversion, particularly visible among the Upper Sorbs, is not related to negative attitudes to tradition as such, because its importance is stressed by almost all young people. However, they object to the folklorization of their cultures and their images, which follow from a reactive, traditionalist and even conservative approach to how a minority should function in today's world. It should be noted, however, that this image is so deeply entrenched in how young people imagine their own culture that they find it hard to free themselves from its influence.

The strength of the functioning of this vision of minority cultures is based on the popularity of folklorization, which, apart from "exoticism" (Said, 1978), was (and still is) a primary strategy used by Europe's dominant cultures to devalue "others." It serves to simplify the aesthetic and semantic meanings of a complex cultural entity, separate them and rearrange them anew to form a new whole. Initially, folklorization was only used by dominant cultures, which did so to reaffirm their superiority. It was later taken over by activists from fragmented or assimilated minority cultures who had no other possibility of defining their distinctiveness and started to use it as a primary – and gradually the only legitimate – way to express their distinctiveness. Minority institutions became guardians of the unchanging nature of the customs that demonstrated their distinctiveness (Kempny, 2004).

Folklorization as a cultural strategy refers to the 19th-century Romantic concept of traditional cultures as authentic cultures. Folklore is perceived as the expression of a simple, folk culture that did not modernize or create a high, elitist culture,

which would have demonstrated its development and social maturity (Lavoie, 1986: 71–72). In order to highlight the distinctiveness of minority cultures and their continuity, certain traditions and customs, played out in front of audiences on special occasions, were preserved and conserved. They came to be symbolized by folk costumes of varying degrees of "authenticity." Everyday cultural practices, in turn, were separated from institutionalized activities that were expected to confirm belonging to a minority group, both in the group and outside of it. Gradually, this led to the perpetuation of the image of minority cultures as functioning in some abstract time and space.

Many children from European minority groups were raised to cultivate a folkloristic image and understanding of culture and of participation in culture. In their case, participation in the minority culture is often limited to after-school ethnic, cultural and language-learning activities. As they grow up, they distance themselves from such organization of minority life, because they no longer want to participate in such spectacles; such participation may even meet with aversion on the part of people in their everyday surroundings. As all other European teenagers, young people from all four minority groups studied here go to parties and discos, drink alcohol, watch television series and play computer games. Young people do not find participation in a minority culture important if it is in no way consistent with their lives, interests and tastes. This creates and expands the grey zone of ethnicity, those who are indifferent to minority issues and do not understand what identification with a minority culture should mean. This problem has been repeatedly signalled by young activists from all the minorities discussed in this book, and we have seen it many times in the interviews cited herein. Even the Upper Sorbs, who are raised in language and cultural communities based on ritual and religious practices, rebel against the reduction of ethnic activities to folklore. In addition, they fear that the perpetuation of this image will create greater distance between them and the Germans who surround them or even spark aversion from the latter. Young Kashubs see the folklorization of their culture as the reason why their peers are reluctant to identify with it. Young Bretons, in turn, are concerned that the French treat their culture as a tourist attraction and the commercial character of folkloristic festivals perpetuates the image of their culture as a relic of the past. Young inhabitants of Wales are annoyed by the fact that when Wales is discussed on British television, the only aspects that are shown are ones that perpetuate the image of their culture as peripheral. At the same time, young people realize that the folklorized image of their culture is not only spread by the national media but also preserved and even promoted by local activists, who want to bring into focus the aspects of their culture that differ undeniably from the dominant culture. This is why young representatives of minority cultures who consciously identify with these cultures and are actively involved in their promotion often choose a different identity strategy, namely one linked to the politicization of their cultures.

Here, the search for distinctive components of minority cultures turns into a creative activity. It makes use of the trend towards alternative, minority lifestyles as well as the rules of the political game: discourse on human rights and linguistic

rights (Bell, 1975: 169). Identity politics, closely related to globalization, is one of the ways of "reacting to a situation in which it becomes necessary to redefine the relations between the dominant culture in a given nation-state and the cultures of the spontaneously emerging minorities" (Kempny, 2004: 182).

Effective identity politics[79] requires not only modern thinking about identity-related issues but also measures and campaigns addressed to as many people (potentially) related to a specific minority as possible. A minority culture modernizes when the lifestyle of its representatives changes. At the same time, as Eriksen argues (2010: 195), "Contemporary ethnicity can be described as the process of making cultural differences comparable, and to that extent, it is a modern phenomenon." Consequently, cultural differences are stressed by means of each of the strategies for highlighting the cultural distinctiveness of a specific minority group. In terms of the group's new image, it becomes important which of its components or characteristics will be brought into focus or created as part of the adopted measures.

The showcasing of the cultural distinctiveness of minorities is usually reduced to emphasis placed at three levels (Posern-Zieliński, 1982: 89): high culture (references to major works created either currently or in the past as part of this culture); folklore and attempts to revive it (folklorization) so as to make it attractive not only to the group members but also to outsiders; and popular culture (celebrating, spending time together, eating). However, in order for a minority culture to avoid being pushed into the margin of the dominant culture and institutionalized in terms of the way it functions, it must be present in all spheres of everyday life. It must constantly adjust to everyday life and modernize. However, this modernization of minority cultures triggers extreme reactions: from claims that its closeness to the dominant culture causes it to lose its distinctiveness, to a willingness to abandon traditions and rely on the culture functioning only in modern aspects. All these reactions, both those praising the virtues of modernization and those condemning it as a road to the loss of cultural distinctiveness, are ideologies and as such attempt to present modernization processes through the prism of the benefits desired by the people who take advantage of them (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974). Regardless of their attitudes to traditions and the level of folklorization of their culture, however, young people often arrive at the conclusion that if they are modern and identify with a minority culture, then this culture is also modern, regardless of how it is presented or perceived on the outside.

Listening to the statements made by young people and watching their cultural practices, one can notice that the dilemma between tradition and modernity is

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79 I understand identity politics in line with Thomas Hylland Eriksen's definition, as "political ideologies, organization, and action that openly represents the interests of designated groups based on 'essential' characteristics such as ethnic origin or religion, and whose legitimacy lies in the support of important segments of such groups" (Eriksen, 2001: 42).

only superficial. Young people attempt to find new forms for these components of traditional cultures that continue to occupy an important place in the collective perception of the group and therefore determine its distinctiveness. They do not want to distance themselves from history and traditions. However, they want to belong to a minority group without changing their lifestyle, values and habits. Young people think about their ethnic culture in different terms than previous generations, because the context and character of the functioning of minorities have changed. Young people want to practice a minority culture and creatively develop it as their culture – they do not want to be a relic from the past shown on television or presented to tourists. One fundamental activity that they take involves adapting some aspects of minority cultures to modern technologies, trends in art and applications. Such efforts are especially discernible in music, where the range of solutions is very broad: from modern arrangements of folk motifs to the performance of songs from new musical genres in minority languages.

Language is regarded by everyone as the aspect of a minority culture that adapts best to the modern era and confirms in the simplest way that a specific person, event or spectacle is connected with a specific minority. For this reason, young people find it easier to differentiate between what belongs to the minority culture and what belongs to the dominant culture in the spheres where a given minority language functions as a basic means of communication within the community. A book written in a minority language is a creation of this minority, regardless of its content. However, this situation is still exceptional in the face of the disrupted continuity of intergenerational transfers, continuously weakened by mixed language and culture marriages, people's mobility, the low position of minorities and the low prestige of their languages. A strong language policy makes functioning in the Welsh language possible (though difficult, as my interviewees declared) in many spheres of life, also outside school and work. With a certain amount of determination, speakers of Welsh can live their lives in Welsh in certain places in Wales, even if they do not have occupations stereotypically considered as Welsh. However, the languages of other minorities are in a worse situation. Upper Sorbian, the everyday language of this community, is not used publicly in other spheres than those dedicated to minorities (their institutions and schools). Despite the existence of certain legal regulations, the Sorbs find it difficult to handle their affairs in public institutions in Sorbian and it is completely impossible for them to communicate in this language in the business sector. In the context of Kashubia and Brittany, where the process of assimilation was a lot more intensive and the position of minority languages is weaker, the use of minority languages is limited to narrow social groups. One type of group is formed by native speakers of the minority language, who nonetheless often cannot imagine speaking their ethnic language outside the circle of family members and closest friends. Another type of group is formed by those who want to stress their membership in the minority by using its language, which they learned as a foreign language. In their eyes, knowing an ethnic language forms the basis of their identity, it underscores an ethnic boundary where others think it has become blurred. Those who do not

know the minority language may express their identification with the minority through their participation in more or less organized cultural life, their political views and their actions.

Nevertheless, the dilemmas that young people face regarding the extent to which a minority culture can change and still remain itself are not completely resolved. It is obvious that they are members of the dominant culture of the states in which they live, regardless of their behaviour, views or attitudes to the past or to traditions. Such membership is determined by their identity documents and citizenship. State cultures guard their traditions and pass them down with the help of an extensive infrastructure of schools, public holidays, symbols, museums and institutions. Minority cultures must work out their own forms, draw their own ethnic boundaries. However, these boundaries must be drawn and interpreted in a new way (Cohen, 1985: 74). They must influence what is happening not only outside the group, by stressing and creating their distinctive features, but also inside the group, which pertains to every individual that identifies with it. Boundaries of minority cultures may therefore run across various spheres and vary in strength depending on individual experiences and views. Likewise, they may be constructed arbitrarily based on differences that stem from a new transcultural system of references. Young people want to use these new possibilities, they want a minority culture to be their own culture, regardless of what transformations it may have to undergo. However, contrary to the predictions of the guardians of tradition from older generations, they have no intention of distancing themselves from the past. References to the past are therefore an inherent part of the discourse of young activists.