The Role of Popular Music Forms in the Construction of Cultural Identities in Post-Soviet Belarus: Discourses and Practices of Young Belarusians

Approved dissertation

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1.   Introduction and Research Contexts

1.1.   Introduction

In the middle of the 20th century, Western popular music became a phenomenon that played a central role in the emergence of a distinct youth culture. Popular music, particularly rock 'n' roll, became directly associated with the youth, who used music to create a common culture and to construct difference from the world of the parent generation. Popular music continues to play a great part in the lives of young people around the world, serving in the construction of cultural boundaries and producing various elements of youth culture. It goes beyond the sphere of aesthetics, offering a sense of identity for the young and representing a key factor in the formation of worldviews and lifestyles.

In Belarus, a newly independent post-Soviet state, popular music has circulated throughout the culture in various ways over different periods of time. During the Cold War, which had a great impact on Soviet and Belarusian culture, Western (rock) music found its way through the Iron Curtain, producing youth cultures in creative ways. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the increased flow of Western and global music drastically transformed the cultural landscape of Belarus. Belarusian, Russian and Western music have formed a complex cultural phenomenon used by people – and especially by the youth – in the construction of identities.

The purpose of this empirical study is to analyze the relationships between popular music and identity constructions of young adults in post-Soviet Belarus. Popular music is understood as a discursive practice that acquires meaning in specific contexts. The focus of this study is on Belarusian cultural, historical, social and political contexts, in which various popular music forms are negotiated, (re)interpreted and attributed with ideas, symbols and meanings. The purpose of the study is to identify discourses and practices related to popular music, and to analyze the ways in which young people in post-socialist Belarus articulate meanings and construct identities.

This study was conducted at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in the framework of the interdisciplinary post-graduate studies programme "The Construction of Identities of Young Adults in a Post-Socialist Society in Transformation: The Case of Belarus." The programme comprised five projects dealing with young

Belarusians' values, language practices, attitudes to literature (Institute of Slavic Studies), music preferences (Institute of Music), and clothing choices (Institute of Material Culture). In the framework of the programme, the institutes of the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg cooperated with the Department of Economic Sociology of the University of Vienna and the Center of Social and Political Investigations of the Belarusian State University of Minsk.[1]

1.2.   Thesis Structure

In the further course of this chapter, research questions are described in detail, along with the state of research on popular music in Belarus and issues of identity in the newly independent state.

In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework of the research is outlined and key terms of the study are defined. The study focuses on the concepts of popular music, culture, discourse, articulation, and identity, whereas the concepts of nation, transculturality and globalization form the theoretical background of the study.

In Chapter 3, the methods applied are described in detail. A nation-wide survey, based on structured interviews and conducted in 2013, was followed by in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted in Minsk in 2014. Throughout the research process, a combination of approaches was applied, including ethnographic methods, "case studies," participant observation at concerts, observations of musicians' activities in social media, online communication, and conversations with young people living in Minsk. In this chapter, the advantages and shortcomings of the applied methods are discussed, along with reflection on my own positioning as a researcher.

Chapter 4 provides historical and social contexts of popular music in Belarus, starting with the period of a mass spread of music across the Soviet Union in the 1950s, when Western culture contributed in the emergence of a Soviet youth culture produced by rock 'n' roll. This underground youth culture developed alongside the official cultural forms, such as estrada. The chapter continues with a description of post-Soviet music cultures, such as the so-called "popsa," Belarusian rock as well as other music genres (from various regions) within the media landscape of Belarus.

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[1] Description of the programme: https://uol.de/hlk-belarus/

Chapter 5 consists of descriptive statistical data derived from the survey. The survey is considered representative and provides data about general stylistic preferences of young Belarusians; their choices in music languages and regions of music's origin; choices in using the internet, radio, and other sources of music consumption; places and spaces of music consumption, such as clubs, discos, concerts, parties, or home. This chapter also describes various functions that popular music fulfills for young Belarusians; and cultural identifications in reference to "national" cultures as well as to "underground" culture. The resulting data are analyzed in relation to the criteria of age, gender, region, size of municipality, and education. They illustrate the preferences and attitudes of young people, the distribution of Western, Russian and Belarusian music in their choices, and media processes around popular music and music consumers. Similar to the overview in Chapter 4, the survey data ultimately provide an empirical context for popular music culture in Belarus.

Chapter 6 constitutes the major part of the thesis, providing the analysis of qualitative data: it reveals the constructed discourses in which meanings are produced in "bottom-up" ways, showing various ways in which young people living in a post-socialist society construct identities. The first section deals with the discourses maintained by research participants in relation to Belarusian culture and music. Based on these discourses, the role of Belarusian culture and music appears as extremely controversial. This section identifies strategies that the respondents apply in the construction of "Belarusianness" and analyzes how the attitudes toward Belarusian music reflect the status of the Belarusian language and culture in general. Subsequently, in the next section, the articulations of music's "meaning" are described, followed by the analysis of a discourse on "underground" and "mainstream," in which these controversial concepts contribute in the construction of boundaries and cultural hierarchies. This is followed by the analysis of equally controversial notions of "good" and "bad" music, and of the discourse on "popsa," characterized by a strong "anti-identification" with pop music, which is generally considered as meaningless. In many aspects of the analyzed discourses, the concept of authenticity plays a central role, producing and reinforcing distinctions between two hypothetical groups, "us and them." Finally, identity-building practices are described, such as Russian rock; Belarusian, rock, folk and bard song; punk and skinhead; hip-hop; reggae; and identification with "different musics." The analysis of these

practices and discourses shows that they offer a variety of identity options, representing the sites in which young people articulate meanings, maintain agency, and construct identities.

In Chapter 7, the advantages and shortcomings of the applied research methods are discussed, and central quantitative and qualitative results obtained from the research process are summarized. This chapter also offers an overview of perspectives for future research.

1.3.   Research Goals and State of Research

The goal of this research is to identify, describe and analyze interconnections between music choice and identity constructions of young people in post-Soviet Belarus. In this study, I pose the following questions: what kinds of music preferences exist among young Belarusians? What meanings do they attribute to various popular music forms, and in which contexts? How do they use the created meanings to construct identities? Which identifications do various music cultures offer and which of them are actively used? How is popular music used for making sense of self and others? How is it used in the construction of difference and belonging? In what ways is music choice connected with various aspects of life, such as visual style, social environment, profession, hobbies, social status and lifestyle? How do young people construct identities relating to the concepts of nation through music choice? How is transculturality expressed and created by means of music? Which global processes are recognizable in popular music appropriation in today's Belarus? Which of these are also local and distinctive? What kinds of identities do young Belarusians construct in general, and to what extent does popular music participate in identity construction?

Popular music in Belarus is underrepresented both in local and in international academic discourse. It has primarily been classical and folk music that received the attention of musicologists and ethnomusicologists in Belarus. As Survilla (1994) explains, since the late nineteenth century, much academic attention has been directed toward the collection and documentation of musical and poetic repertoires in Eastern and Central Europe. During the Soviet period, this documentation was partially encouraged as a political strategy: folk repertoires were analyzed "as a contemporary musical mirror of a Soviet society united in work as well as in expression" (Survilla 1994, 223).

Moreover, according to Survilla, distinctions between popular music genres in Belarus are less clear than in the West due to the lack of a music industry that would develop such distinctions, and a perception of folk music has been affected by the absence of industry-defined musical categories. In comparison to Belarusian rock, traditional music is not marginalized in Belarus, and, furthermore, rock has been described as "contemporary young urban folklore" (Survilla 1994, 223).

In popular music journalism, local authors write in both Belarusian and Russian.[2] In 1994, Survilla stated that in local journalism, there is a tendency to ignore Belarusian rock in favor of Russian-language groups from Belarus (1994, 227). Today, the internet provides more opportunities for music journalists and critics to review Belarusian music with lyrics both in Belarusian and in Russian.[3]

Western authors (e.g. Survilla and Petz) have focused on Belarusian rock as an expression of national identity and as an anti-establishment movement in Belarus.[4] A number of works by Survilla (1994; 2002; 2003; 2005) provide material on Belarusian rock as well as on the musical landscape of Belarus. In her research, Survilla analyzes Belarusian rock as an expression of national identity negotiated by means of the Belarusian language and pre-Soviet history of Belarus. She describes the interrelation between rock musicians, the ideas they communicate by means of language, and the audience who are familiar with those ideas and who therefore "receive what they want, need and can creatively use" (Negus 1996, 21). Belarusian rock can certainly provide answers to the question of nation, which remains highly relevant for a particular group of people in Belarusian society.

However, in this study I shift focus from Belarusian rock (and the respective cultural group) to a wider range of music forms, choices and preferences, as well as identifications that these music forms offer to various groups of young people. This

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[2] For example, Martynenka and Mial'hui (2006) write in Belarusian. In the encyclopedic book *222 Al'bomy Belaruskaha Roku i Nya Tol'ki* they offer a review of a variety of Belarusian-language folk, bard and rock albums.

[3] The website experty.by is a project created for the distribution of Belarusian music. Belarusian journalists and critics review both Belarusian- and Russian-language albums of rock, folk, electronic and pop performers. Alongside local critics, foreign experts from Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland participate in the project to review Belarusian music albums and also to distribute annual awards for "the best Belarusian album" according to various criteria. The reviewed albums are available on the website for direct online listening and downloading.

[4] Belarusian rock is considered to be rock sung in Belarusian and is distinguished from Belarusian rock with Russian-language lyrics.

approach contributes to the discourse on popular music in Belarus, providing quantitative and qualitative data on young people's preferences in global and local music and its role in identity constructions of young Belarusians.

Different music genres preferred and performed in today's Belarus, such as rock, punk, metal, hip-hop, reggae, pop, etc. provide examples of local appropriations and interpretations of Western and global music forms. In local settings, a variety of "new" meanings are produced, which are informed by people's knowledge, experience, self-perceptions, and attitudes toward the society. In various local contexts, "musical meanings take on highly particularised, local inflections" (Bennett 2000, 193). Local contexts inform the ways in which music is perceived, but the contexts are not stable or homogeneous settings. Particularly in Belarus, as described in the next section of this chapter, history and culture are interpreted from different, even polar perspectives, which make actors within the same cultural context the creators of different meanings. The same music style in the same local setting can also be interpreted differently. Individual tastes are eclectic and the mixture of music is "lived" across commercial and scholarly categories, so that the same musical genre or piece of music can be enjoyed and engaged with in completely different ways (Negus 1996, 32). The goal of this study is to explore the spectrums of young Belarusians' music preferences and the ways in which popular music is used in the construction of identities. The focus is on young people and their cultural practices as well as discourses within the specific cultural context of Belarus.

1.4.   National Identities and Historiographies of Belarus

In newly independent states such as Belarus, issues of national identity remain an important topic in social and academic discourse. Belarus, a small country with the population of around nine and a half million people, is often referred to as a territory between "East and West," as a transitional region between Central and Eastern Europe, and as a country characterized by the complexity of historical and cultural impacts. Before it became independent in 1991, Belarus belonged to and was culturally influenced by different regions, such as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire and, finally, the Soviet Union (Bohn 2011, 9-12).

As a result of the Russification policy of the Russian Empire and later of Soviet Russia, the Belarusian language has been marginalized and is still heard only occasionally

in Belarus, which legally has two official languages – Belarusian and Russian. However, the actual linguistic situation is much more complex: the Russian language and Belarusian-Russian mixed speech ("trasyanka") are widely spread in Belarus and, while the Belarusian language has a symbolic meaning for many Belarusians, it is used rather rarely in everyday life (cf. Hentschel et al. 2016; Hentschel and Zeller 2012; Hentschel and Kittel 2011). Belarus as a post-Soviet state continues to preserve the cultural legacy of the Soviet past on the one hand; on the other, many young Belarusians strongly identify themselves as European, and Belarus with Europe. Belarus is often described (by Western authors) as the last dictatorship in Europe, and is even referred to as "the most complicated country in the world" (cf. Büscher 2003). In academic discourse, Belarus is considered a place where issues of national identity remain unresolved. The engagement with the national question and with the issues of construction and perception of the nation is therefore common in academic literature on Belarus. Different scholars describe Belarusian national identity as "malleable" (cf. Wilson 2011) and as "less well developed" than in neighboring states (cf. Marples 1999).

However, there are two different notions of national identity that coexist in Belarus. Bekus (2010) describes them as "the official and the alternative Belarusiannes." Ethnically, the vast majority of the population is Belarusian, but the Belarusian nation is split into two different political nations and two different conceptions of national identity. Each of them applies its own identity politics, symbols, discourses and cultural practices to construct and express itself. The alternative Belarusianness involves engagement in Belarusian pre-Soviet history, use of the Belarusian language, anti-establishment discourses and practices, and pro-Western positioning. On the other hand, the official Belarusianness relates to the idea of national identity as maintained by the official pro-Soviet discourse and embraced by the larger part of Belarusians. While the model of alternative Belarusianness suggests the active use of Belarusian in everyday life, official Belarusianness is associated with the Russian language (cf. Bekus 2010). Although the two opposing concepts of national identity cannot represent the whole spectrum of identity projects in the complex Belarusian context, they can serve as a reference point for understanding different ideas and practices used in the construction of identities.

In official discourse, Belarusian national identity is defined by the Soviet past and Slavic unity rather than ethnicity and language. According to Bekus (2014), the weak

ethnolinguistic self-perception of Belarusians has a historical explanation: throughout history the ethnolinguistic identity of Belarusians was subordinated to other aspects of their social identity: religion (Orthodox Church), state affiliation (Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian Empire and Soviet Union), or dominating ideology (social liberation since the late nineteenth century and Sovietness within the USSR). In her article "Ethnic Identity in Post-Soviet Belarus," Bekus gives a historical overview of the discourses that have shaped the ideas of the Belarusian nation. She starts with the point of the collapse of the USSR, when, in the period between 1990 and 1994, the Republic of Belarus was being shaped into a new state by national activists, who managed to implement the policy of "Belarusization." This policy introduced new approaches in the spheres of historiography, language, media and education. In the new discourses, Belarusian history and tradition had their own dynamics, and the Belarusian people represented a separate ethno-cultural "entity." A difficulty in the Belarusization policy, Bekus points out, was the common perception of Belarusian ethno-cultural identity as closely related to and inscribed into Russian ethno-cultural identity. Belarus has depended politically on Russia since the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772; culturally, Belarus was dominated by Russia as well by the processes of Russification, which aimed to weaken Polish cultural and political influence on Belarus. Belarusians were dominated either by the Russian or Polish ruling class, and throughout their history they lived in a state shared with other ethnic groups, each of whom saw the Belarusian "ethnie" as part of their own culture. According to Bekus, historical processes such as this produced the Belarusians' cultural and political "hesitation" between the East (i.e. Russia) and the West (i.e. Poland).

After the October Revolution, as Bekus further describes, a Belarusian ethno-cultural project of change was initiated: a traditional, rural society was transformed through processes of industrialization and modernization in a socialist framework. In post-World War II Soviet Belarus, marginalization of ethnic culture and language was caused by Russification, or "Sovietization." This process, however, followed the decade of the 1930s, marked by an intensification of Belarusian national identity and cultural nationalization, which was extremely important for the formation of Belarusian ethnolinguistic identity in modern terms: during this decade, for the first time, the Belarusian language was supported by state policy and became the language of official

public life. However, as Bekus explains, the new policy of Russification and promotion of bilingualism did not leave space for Belarusian ethno-cultural development, and Belarussianness became associated with the Russian language and Soviet culture. In the context of the "progressive" development of the Soviet Belarusian nation, reference to Belarusian ethnic culture and language was regarded as "backward." Although Belarusians became a "nation," the idea of belonging to the Belarusian ethnie appeared secondary and less important than identification with the Soviet Belarusian nation. The promotion of Russian culture and language as primary instruments of mobility made the Belarusian language less prestigious (Bekus 2014).

The revival of the national language, Bekus writes, formed a main part of a nation-building project by nationalist forces, when the Soviet system collapsed. In this project, nationalizing of Belarusians meant "ethnicization" of Belarusian society, i.e. the "infusing" of social, political and cultural life of Belarusians with an ethnolinguistic basis of identity. On the official level, this process failed when Lukashenka became president; the nationalization policy was cancelled, and the idea of the Belarusian nation as a product of "Sovietness" and of Slavic unity continued to be promoted. Today, Bekus points out, while some components of the ethno-cultural national project enjoy support in Belarusian society, the national language continues to be the least popular marker of identity.[5] According to Bekus, conceiving of Russian culture as an integral component of Belarusian identity makes Belarus a unique nation-state. Differently from other post-Soviet states, Belarus did not follow a revival project maintaining the ethnolinguistic concept of national identity, but continued preserving the Soviet project of identity and nation (Bekus 2014).

As Titarenko (2011) argues, the current Belarusian situation is characterized by a plurality of identities. According to Titarenko, Belarusian national identity has not yet been completely constructed, since there is no "dominant" sense of national identity shared by a majority of the population. Similar to Bekus, Titarenko points out two antagonistic political projects in relation to the concept of Belarusian identity: the nationalistic project associated with Belarusian intellectuals, and the pro-regime project

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[5] However, the Belarusian language has a symbolic significance in many people's identifying as Belarusians: as empirical studies have shown, Belarusian is often declared as a native language, or mother tongue, despite its absence in respondents' everyday lives (cf. Zeller and Levikin 2016; Hentschel and Kittel 2011).

promoted by the official ideologists. According to Titarenko, the Belarusian people are divided into two unequal parts. One part is represented by Belarusian intellectuals, i.e. a minority conceived by nationalists as "a nation," who propagate ethno-cultural identity and the Belarusian language. Another part is represented by "the rest" of Belarusians, or "the people of Belarus." Titarenko argues that both approaches are unsatisfactory, politically biased and unable to deal with the great range of factors that define the process of the construction of national identity. Pointing out the eclecticism of Belarusian identity and the coexistence of several types of identities without a dominant one, Titarenko suggests a new pluralistic approach that "is more relevant to post-Soviet, post-modern reality" and assumes that "only a plural civic identity can be the key to the construction of a new model of national identity in Belarus" (2011, 13).

The approach of this study resonates with the approach suggested by Titarenko: it is pluralistic and directed toward identifying different resources that young people use in the construction of identities. In this approach, the concepts of the "official" and "alternative" Belarusianness serve as reference points rather than established notions. Understanding "identity" as a fluid, unstable, contextual process, I apply the concepts of the official and alternative Belarusianness as a frame of reference that by no means suggests the existence of only two opposing fixed identities. With awareness for the importance of the national identity issue in the social discourse of Belarus, I choose to widen the focus and take into consideration a variety of possible identifications that participate in the identity-building process along lines of nation and beyond.

2. Constructions of Cultural Identities: Theoretical Framework

This chapter describes the key concepts applied in the study as well as concepts that function as a theoretical background of the research process. The key concepts include those of popular music, signifying practice, culture, discourse, articulation, and identity. Theories of national identity, nationalism, transculturality, and globalization provide a general conceptual framework, within which the study has both been organized and conducted. The theoretical approach is interdisciplinary and includes concepts and ideas from a variety of disciplines, such as popular music studies, ethnomusicology, cultural studies, philosophy, psychology, and sociology.

2.1.   Popular Music as a Signifying Practice

"Popular music" (or "light music") as opposed to "serious" classical music is commonly understood as music that began to develop with the growth of industrialization in the 19th century and reached broader audiences by the 1950s, as sheet music was completely replaced by vinyl records. Popular music can be defined as "readily comprehensible" to a large amount of people with no obligatory knowledge of musical theory and techniques (Sadie 1980, 87).

The term "popular music" is understood as a whole set of musical styles and genres and part of popular culture: according to Wicke et al., popular music is an ensemble of musical genres that has emerged as a result of transformations caused by industrialization of society. Popular music functions as part of mass culture and is produced and distributed on a mass basis. Popularity as a social quality of music encompasses both social settings and conditions of its production, distribution and appropriation in society (Wicke et al. 2001, 393-94).[6]

The term "popular music" is neutral and is used to describe various styles and forms of music. In this study, popular music is understood as a discursive practice that offers a potentially infinite variety of cultural meanings. As Wicke (1993) pointed out, the complex relationships between music, interpretations of it, and practices related to it produce symbols, values, worldviews and attitudes. Popular music is a "medium," through which meanings are constructed (Wicke 1993, 20), and is therefore a discursive signifying cultural practice that contributes directly in the construction of identities.

In the ever-globalizing world of today, popular music, not least due to its ubiquity and global medial availability (cf. Binas-Preisendörfer 2010), constitutes an important part of people's lives. Music is not simply a leisure activity but plays a major role in young people's construction of identities. Music is a resource in which and through which agency and identity are produced (DeNora 2000, 5). It expresses complex

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[6] Popular music is defined as follows: "Ensemble von musikalischen Genres und Gattungen, das aus den durch die Industrialisierung der Gesellschaft tiefgreifend veränderten Funktions- und Wirkungsbedingungen für Musik hervorgegangen ist, als Bestandteil von Massenkultur funktioniert und auf einer Massenbasis produziert und verbreitet wird. […] Popularität als besondere soziale Qualität von Musik umfaßt sowohl die sozialen Bedingungen und Verhältnisse ihrer Produktion, Verbreitung und Aneignung in der Gesellschaft als auch im Zusammenhang damit spezifische musikalische Besonderheiten, in denen sich ihre gesellschaftlichen Existenzbedingungen jeweils musikalisch realisieren" (Wicke et al. 2001: 393-94).

interconnections between the individual and the social, and between the local and the global. Popular music is used in creating boundaries between "us" and "them," and therefore it offers a sense of sameness and difference, shaping people's self-perception and perception of others.

Being a signifying practice, popular music is perceived and interpreted in relation to, and within the sociocultural context. In contrast to the view of music as "the universal language," Binas-Preisendörfer (2008) suggests that individual perceptions of music are culturally and socially constructed according to particular maps of meaning. Music, therefore (or the meanings attributed to it), is not "universal" but rather specific to social, cultural and economic dispositions of actors. According to Binas-Preisendörfer, perception is not a passive but a constructive process and part of the cultural and social practice. It is emphasized that what people regard as aesthetically meaningful or meaningless (pleasant or unpleasant, cool or boring) can only be communicated through culturally influenced senses, affecting the corresponding "cognitive maps." In this regard, music depends on the social, cultural and economic dispositions of the actors involved (168). Therefore, the question to be posed is what exactly is being appropriated, and why, not assuming that different people attribute equal meanings to the same piece of music: what is meaningful to one person or group is not necessarily valid for others (Binas-Preisendörfer 2008, 173).

Particularly in relation to music lyrics, Cohen similarly emphasized that "meaning does not reside within musical texts, but depends upon the interaction between individuals and texts" (1993, 132). Attribution of meanings to music is a process in which boundaries are produced and articulated, and a sense of socio-cultural belonging and difference is reinforced. Music is actively appropriated and used as a resource for making sense of situations (DeNora 2000, 13). As Frith put it, "music is a metaphor for identity" (1996, 109).

2.2.   Culture

In terms of this thesis, "culture" is understood broadly as a set of relations, social norms and values, discourses, meanings, and symbols that are conditioned historically and contextually, and are therefore related to time and place rather than represent an "objective reality." The term "culture" can be conceived as

a multiplicity of human forms and relations: from micro-interpersonal interactions to group norms processes and values to communicative forms, provided texts and images; wider out to institutional forms and constraints, to social representations and social imagery; wider out still to economic, political, ideological determinations. All can be traced back for their cultural effects and meanings, all traced for their mutual interactions from the point of view of how the meanings of a particular 'culture' are formed and held to operate. (Willis 2008, xxi-xxii)

The concept of culture represents "overlapping maps of criss-crossing discursive meaning which form zones of temporary coherence […]. The production and exchange of meanings, or signifying practices, leading to that which is distinctive about a way of life" (Barker 2008, 477). Culture is thus produced and constructed rather than "objective" and representing an "independent" world. The following statement suggests the importance of difference in conceiving of culture: it is "neither autonomous nor an eternally determined field, but a series of social differences and struggles" (Connery 2007, 2).

In cultural studies, culture is understood as "the texts and practices of everyday life" (Storey 1996, 2). Culture is political and ideological in the sense that it is a "terrain on which there takes place a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant groups" (Storey 1996, 4). Particularly, "Belarusian culture" can be conceived as "a way of life" including discourses and practices of Belarusians as well as "the production of meanings" in various cultural forms.

2.3. Discourse and Articulation

The concept of discourse, developed by Foucault, refers to the production of knowledge through language which gives meanings to the discursively formed material objects and social practices (Barker 2008, 90). Discourse unites both language and practice, constructing, defining and producing the objects of knowledge (Barker 2008, 90; 478). Therefore, discourse gives meaning to social practices, taking place under specific historical conditions. Foucault wrote that in any society, the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized and canalized in order to restrain its power and dangers. Discourse is understood as a complex, constantly transforming framework, whose boundaries are arbitrary and organized around historical coincidences. Therefore, the boundaries are constantly shifting, as Foucault argued, and discourses represent

discontinuous practices. Being changeable, discourse is made, however, a very powerful instrument of struggle. Discourse does not merely "translate" the struggles or systems of domination into language: discourse itself is the power, over which it is struggled (Foucault 1991, 11).

Discourses generate meanings that are contextual and produced by articulation, which means both "expressing" and "connecting" of different discourse elements. Articulated meanings and discursive concepts are therefore changeable, and the links between them are temporary and connotative, "bound by the power of custom and opinion" (Barker 2008, 95). According to Hall, articulation is

> the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is the linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. […] So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.' The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. (Grossberg 2005, 141)

By analogy, the "unity" of identity is the articulation of different elements that can be rearticulated under other cultural conditions (Barker 2008, 229-30). This makes individuals the unique, historically specific articulation of discursive elements; there is no automatic connection between various discourses of identity, class, gender, age, etc., but they can be articulated together in different ways (Barker 2008, 230). Articulation implies constructed boundaries and

> understands frontier-effects, the lining up of friends and enemies, us and them, insiders and outsiders, on one side or another of a line, as tactical. Instead of rigid confrontations […] one sees continuing struggles across a terrain [and] hooking up and unhooking particular elements. (Clifford 2007, 23)

Discourse is always a selection from a great repertoire of semiotic possibilities, and what is articulated or "hooked together" can also be "unhooked" and rearticulated (Clifford 2007, 24). Social and cultural formations understood as articulated ensembles are not persistent and continuous bodies; their elements and positons are historically imposed (Clifford 2007, 24). Articulation implies that elements of discourse are fluid and unfixed, and discourses are historically and socioculturally conditioned.

According to Storey, cultural texts and practices are not inscribed with meaning; meaning is always the result of an act of articulation, in which meaning has to be

expressed – in a specific context and within a specific discourse. Thus, expression is always connected to the context, as meaning is determined by the context of articulation. Meaning is therefore a social production: "the world has to be made to mean" (Storey 1996, 4). A practice is not a source of meaning, but a site in which the articulation of meaning can take place, and different meanings can be ascribed to the same text or practice. This makes meaning a "potential site of conflict" (Storey 1996, 4).

Music as a signifying practice is obviously not a source of meaning; it offers a "site" in which meanings are produced as "results of an act of articulation" within specific discourses. Popular music is, then, simultaneously a practice and a discourse.

2.4.   Identity

In terms of this study, "identity" is understood as a process involving the "suturing" of the discursive outside with the internal processes of subjectivity (cf. Hall 1996). Identity is a "project" which is both individualistic and related to others; in this process, the sense of difference, or "otherness," is central and forms "what we really are," or rather "what we have become" (Hall 1995, 435). In other words, the construction of difference forms identities, whereas "difference" is context-specific rather than fixed. Cultural identity is being produced continually "within the vectors of similarity and difference" (Barker 2008, 229). Difference is the mechanism for the generation of meaning, whereas it is not an essence of an object but a position or perspective of signification (Barker 2008, 478). Identities are fractured discursive constructions that are constantly in a process of interpretation and transformation. Identity as a process implies its flexible, unstable and contextual character.

Related to the concept of identity, the concept of agency refers to the notions of freedom, free will, action, creativity, originality and the possibility of change through the actions of free agents (Barker 2008, 234). However, since some actors have more domains of action than others, agency can be conceived as "the socially constructed capacity to act" (Barker 2008, 236).

Bamberg et al. (2011) discuss agency in terms of two dimensions, or directions: from the discursive perspectives, the speaking subject is viewed as a bodily agent, in contrast to a disembodied mind. Participants in discursive interaction are "the location" where identities are construed, in and through talk. The speaking subject is viewed as

"agentively" engaging in discourse, and when choosing discursive devices from existing repertoires, speaking subjects face the "agency dilemma" of choosing between a person-to-world or the world-to-person direction, i.e. between the direction in which the person constructs the world and the direction in which the world constructs the person (Bamberg et al. 2011, 187). The latter direction is termed as "low agency" that assists in the construction of a position as less influential, powerful, and responsible. Low agency is contrasted to the person-to-world direction, or "high agency," where speaking subjects position themselves as "agentive self-constructors" who are in control and self-determined. In either case, as Bamberg et al. emphasize, a choice of positioning is required, through which speaking subjects negotiate a sense of self as actor or as undergoer (2011, 187).

Bamberg et al. also discuss discursive approaches in identity studies, conceiving of identities as discursively constructed. It is pointed out that knowledge, agency and identity are intersubjective and are historically and culturally negotiated. These negotiations are never fixed but subject to constant renegotiation. Identities are viewed as constructed in discourse, negotiated among speaking subjects in social contexts, emerging in the form of subjectivity and sense of self. Discourse (be it social discourse or discursive practices) is characterized as the "place" for negotiating categorical distinctions in relation to various identity categories, such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, "race," nationality, etc. (Bamberg et al. 2011, 182).

Further, Bamberg et al. point out that sameness and difference are the aspects that are picked and made relevant in a particular speech situation; what will be picked and made relevant varies and is (re)negotiated between conversationalists in local contexts. It is emphasized that from a discursive perspective, a "positively distinct" identity is socially constructed:

> Some of these aspects fall under the traditional header of social identities and are said to be sorted out in terms of placing others and selves in membership groups, associating with particular groups favorably, comparing us (as the in-group) with other groups, and desiring an identity that is (usually) positively distinct in relation to other groups. However, the contrast or seeming contradiction between what is social and what is personal or individual dissolves away in discursive perspectives on identity construction: The personal/individual is social and vice versa. (Bamberg et al. 2011, 188)

In an attempt to generate an all-encompassing definition of identity, Vignoles et al. offer an overview of four dimensions, or "contents" of identity: the first content is individual or personal identity, which refers to aspects of self-definition at the level of the individual person (including goals, values, beliefs, self-esteem and self-evaluation, desired, feared and expected future selves, and a "life story") (2011, 3).

The second content is relational identity, which refers to the roles in relation to other people (such as child, spouse, parent, co-worker, supervisor, etc.). It is emphasized that relational identity refers not only to these roles, but also to the ways in which they are defined and interpreted by those who assume them within interpersonal space, within families, or within a larger system (e.g. workplace). Finally, as Vignoles et al. summarize, relational identities cannot be established by individuals on their own, but rather need to be recognized by a social audience (2011, 3).

The third dimension is collective identity, which refers to people's identification with the groups and social categories, the meanings that they attribute to these groups and categories as well as the feelings, beliefs, and attitudes that result from identifying with them. Social groups or categories may include ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender as well as smaller groups, such as families and work groups. Vignoles et al. further explain that collective identity contents also refer to collective processes, such as moment-to-moment changes in inter-group contexts, or wider societal changes underlying historical transformations (2011, 3-4).

The fourth dimension of identity described by Vignoles et al. is material identity: it is suggested that not only individual selves and social categories and groups are made part of identity, but also material artifacts (clothes, house, car, money, etc.) as well as significant places (2011, 4).

The four dimensions of identity, which intersect and interact with each other, are united with the purpose of providing an integrated definition of identity:

> Viewed through the lens of an individual person, identity consists of the confluence of the person's self-chosen or ascribed commitments, personal characteristics, and beliefs about herself; roles and positions in relation to significant others; and her membership in social groups and categories (including both her status within the group and the group's status within the larger context); as well as her identification with treasured material possessions and her sense of where she belongs in geographical space. (Vignoles et al. 2011, 4)

It is also pointed out that the range of identity categories and the meanings that are attributed to them depend on a social context and are constructed through a confluence of social processes over historical time (Vignoles et al. 2011, 4).

Hall (1996) distinguished and described three conceptions of identity as being those of the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the post-modern subject. The first "individualist" conception was based on the idea of the subject as a unified individual, endowed with an inner core as the "essential center" of the self, remaining continuous and identical with itself. The second conception, which is interactive, reflected the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous but formed in relation to "significant others." This "essence" of the subject is formed in a continuous dialogue with the world "outside" and the identities it offers. In this conception, the contradictions between the "inside" and the "outside" become reconciled through projecting oneself into the offered identities and simultaneously internalizing their meanings. Further, Hall describes the emergence of the postmodern subject: the subject that was previously conceived as having a stable identity is becoming fragmented and composed of several, sometimes contradictory, identities. The process of identification and of the projection of the self into cultural identity becomes problematic. This process, then, produces the post-modern subject that has no fixed or essential identity. In this conception, identity is transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which subjects are represented or addressed in cultural systems. The post-modern subject is defined historically, not biologically, and assumes different identities at different times as well as different, permanently changing identifications. "If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves" (Hall 1996, 598). Instead, as Hall contends, subjects are confronted by a multiplicity of possible identities.

To summarize, in terms of this study identity is understood as a process, which is individualistic, but also related to others; it implies an unfixed, fragmented, contextual character; it refers to becoming rather than being. Identities are negotiated and renegotiated within the vectors of similarity and difference, whereas similarity and difference are not an "essence" of objects but are discursive acts of articulation that take place in specific cultural contexts.

2.5. Music and Identity

Identity as an experiential process can be analyzed, understood, mobilized, and actualized through music: "Music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective" (Frith 1996, 110). Music encourages people to recognize themselves, their emotions and their community (Stokes 1994, 13). According to Gilroy, music gives the power to be free and to be oneself, and can be used to create a model, through which identity can be understood. "Thinking about music – a non-representational, non-conceptual form – raises aspects of embodied subjectivity that are not reducible to the cognitive and the ethical" (Gilroy 1993, 76).

Frith (1996) suggests that an experience of music is best understood as an experience of identity: it describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, and refers both to ethics and aesthetics. He poses the question not as to how music reflects people, but how it produces them. According to Frith, popular music is involved in embodying values and ideas rather than merely expressing them. Music offers "a pleasure of identification" and produces both inclusion and exclusion, i.e. the sense of belonging and difference:

> we enjoy popular music […] because of its use in answering questions of identity: we use pop songs to create for ourselves a particular sort of self-definition, a particular place in society. The pleasure that pop music produces is a pleasure of identification – with the music we like, with the performers of that music, with the other people who like it. And […] the production of identity is also a production of non-identity – it is a process of inclusion and exclusion. (Frith 2007, 264)

It is pointed out that popular music has always had important nationalist functions: folk musics, particularly, are used to mark the boundaries of ethnic identity (Frith 2007, 265). Another social function of music, Frith suggests, is offering a way of managing the relationship between public and private emotional lives; music gives shape and voice to emotions (2007, 265). Furthermore, popular music functions to shape popular memory and to organize the sense of time, to intensify the experience of the present and the feeling of time (2007, 266). Finally, this use of time makes popular music important in the social organization of youth. Frith points out "a sociological truism" that personal investment in popular music is strongest in adolescence and young age: "music then ties into a particular kind of emotional turbulence, when issues of individual identity and social place, the control of public and private feelings, are at a premium" (2007, 267). This

suggests, as Frith argues, "not just that young people need music, but that youth itself is defined by music," which does not just reflect youth experience but defines what "youthfulness" is (2007, 267). As Frith puts it, "young people who, for whatever reasons, took no interest in pop music were not really 'young'" (2007, 267).

In popular music and in discourses related to it, the concept of authenticity plays a great role, contributing in the construction of hierarchies. According to Frith (2007), authenticity is a "rock concept": in rock criticism, technology has been blamed as opposed to nature: technical sounds are considered unnatural and artificial. Further, technology is opposed to community: electronic amplification alienates performers from audiences. Finally, technology is opposed to art: there is a distinction between "musician" and "sound engineer," in which the former are seen as creative artists in contrast to the latter, whose practices are far from "self-expression." These arguments point to the issue of authenticity or truth of music, and the implication that technology is false or falsifying (Frith 2007, 78-79). The idea of authenticity has played a key role in popular music, while the idea of truth is constructed in opposition to something else, and in particular as a reaction to technological innovations:

> rock-n-roll, rhythm-n-blues and punk were all, in their turn, experienced as more truthful than the pop forms they disrupted. And in each case authenticity was described as an explicit reaction to technology, as a return to the 'roots' of music-making – the live excitement of voice/guitar/drum line-ups. The continuing core of rock ideology is that raw sounds are more authentic than cooked sounds. (Frith 2007, 80)

If "good" music is "honest and sincere, bad music is false – and technological changes increase the opportunities for fakery" (Frith 2007, 81). Therefore, the idea of authenticity facilitates the construction of an authentic self. "Good" popular music is believed to go beyond or break through commercialism. This discourse has been maintained since the 1920s, when music critics struggled to distinguish jazz from pop, or later, in the 1930s, black jazz from white jazz (Frith 2007, 260). Rock's claim to aesthetic autonomy rests on the arguments of folk music rock, representing the community of youth, and art music rock as the sound of creative sensibility. "The rock aesthetic depends, crucially, on an argument about authenticity. Good music is the authentic expression of something – a person, an idea, a feeling, a shared experience, a *Zeitgeist*. Bad music is inauthentic – it expresses nothing" (Frith 2007, 260). Rock criticism (as well as the discourse on "good" and "authentic" music in general) depends on the myth of the youth community and of

the creative artist, but the reality is that rock, like all pop musics, is a commercial form, produced as a commodity and distributed through mass media as mass culture (Frith 2007, 260-61).

The myth of authenticity is an ideological effect and an aspect of the sales process of rock, which is marketed as a means of identity (Frith 2007, 261). Frith poses questions how tastes and value judgements come to be made; and if the music is not made according to the "authentic story," how judgements are made about some sounds as more authentic than others, and what is actually listened for. The question that follows is "not what does popular music *reveal* about 'the people' but how does it *construct* them" (Frith 2007, 261). The term "authenticity" is therefore misleading: what should be examined is not how "true" a piece of music is, but how it constructs the idea of "truth" (Frith 2007, 261).

As Stokes (1994) points out, music is socially meaningful because it offers ways for people to recognize identities, places, and the boundaries between them. According to Stokes, the concepts of authenticity and identity are closely related, whereas authenticity is not a "property" of music but a "discursive trope of great persuasive power" (1994, 7). That is, articulation of authenticity contributes to the perceived uniqueness of music, which offers people a sense of place. Places "created" by music and its "authenticity" can produce social boundaries and a sense of difference. Music, then, does not simply reflect: it transforms the hierarchies of place and of social space. Music, according to Stokes, is not a static symbol understood in a context, but is itself a context to be considered. It is, therefore, a means for recognizing identities and places, whatever the notion of a music genre implies for particular social groups. As Stokes (1994) also argues, in the construction of social difference popular music is often used to generate domination, in which case, rather than unite and harmonize social relations, music reinforces dominant classifications.

According to O'Flynn (2007), relationships between popular music and identity are permanently changing in the global and local contexts. Similar to Stokes, O'Flynn points out that (national) identity and authenticity are closely linked to musical activities. He emphasizes the importance of the discourse in analyzing the relationships between music and national identity, which are "never constitutive of each other; rather, they interrelate through processes of articulation and negotiation" (2007, 20). At the same time, though, the relationship between music and national identity needs to be viewed as

an "interpenetrative process." Furthermore, O'Flynn argues, reducing popular music to a reproduction of a culture or subculture rejects its potential for cultural and social change. Finally, since music of one group is often appropriated by other groups, the expressive connection between groups and music forms appears to be irrelevant. In other words, according to O'Flynn, it is simplistic to associate certain music styles with certain groups, given the interchangeable character of groups and genres in a globalizing world.

This argument, however, contradicts Survilla's analysis (2002), which demonstrates the direct relationship between national identity and Belarusian rock. According to Survilla's work (2002), Belarusian rock is an expression of national identity understood as the "alternative Belarusianness" (cf. Bekus 2010), which is negotiated through the Belarusian language and pre-Soviet history. Generally, Belarusian rock musicians and fans are associated with the alternative discourse on national identity and with oppositional views.

Groups of people who adhere to the alternative discourse – and the music expressing it – subvert the official pro-Soviet version of Belarusian identity and are, therefore, often accused of nationalism. In the official discourse, the "alternative Belarusianness" is represented extremely negatively as a nationalist ideology hostile to the "Belarusian nation." As Titarenko (2007) points out, nationalism is an elitist discourse in Belarus, i.e. the nationalist ideas have been primarily spread by writers, poets, and other representatives of the intelligentsia. This means that these ideas cannot be applied to the majority of Belarusians, which is constituted by "common" people who are represented in the official discourse as peaceful, tolerant, hard-working, hospitable, and thus distanced from nationalism, commonly perceived as an aggressive ideology.

2.6.   National Identity and Nationalism

Smith (1991) described nationalism as an identity myth. Nations can be seen as cultural communities whose members are united or even made homogenous by common historical memories, symbols and traditions, common mass culture, historic territory, legal system and economy.[7] This homogeneity, inherent in or ascribed to people who define

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[7] These components of the nation relate to the Western model of the nation. The non-Western model entails an ethnic conception of the nation and describes nations as communities of common descent. The latter model allows no choice of nation-belonging, as is the case in the Western model (cf. Smith 1991).

themselves in terms of "nation," is what makes the concept of national identity problematic for several reasons. Firstly, people cannot be a completely homogeneous group, and secondly, the notion and articulation of national identity excludes immigrant communities, to name just two possible conceptual problems. National identity has an abstract but multi-dimensional nature, as Smith points out. Moreover, national identities fulfill certain functions for individuals. One of these is socialization as "nationals" and "citizens" (Smith 1991, 16). National identity also functions to provide people with a sense of belonging which helps them to cope with obstacles and hardships (Smith 1991, 17). Most importantly, national identity serves as a means of defining and locating individual selves through collective personality and shared culture. Smith adds that by rediscovering shared culture people rediscover their "authentic" selves in the contemporary world with its constant changes and uncertainties. Nationalism can also have such positive effects as, for example, its rescue of lost histories and cultures and its "inspiration to resist tyranny" (Smith 1991, 17-18).[8]

As Brubaker suggests, ethnicity and nation should be conceived "not in terms of substantial groups or entities but in terms of *practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects* and *contingent events*" (2002, 167). Instead of discussing "groups," Brubaker suggests the terms "groupness" and "group-making." Groupness is understood as variable and contingent, rather than fixed and given, and constructed through the mechanisms of framing and narrative encoding, i.e. the processes of interpretation and attribution. "Group-making" is described as a social, cultural and political project. "Ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world" (Brubaker 2002, 174-75). In other words, "ethnicity" and "nation" are discursive formations rather than notions representing the objective world.

Similarly, in referring to Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," Hall suggests that national cultures are about discourses: "A national culture is a *discourse* – a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves" (1996, 613). It is argued that people are not only citizens of a nation, but they also participate in the idea of the nation. Through the participation they

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[8] This also explains the hostility of Belarusian official politics toward the "alternative" discourse.

acquire a sense of identity. According to Hall, national cultures into which one is born are often understood as one of the principal sources of cultural identity in the modern world. A sense of national identification is often considered essential for a person's self-perception. However, as Hall emphasizes, national identities are not in-born things but are formed and transformed within representation of a nation, understood not only as a political entity but also as something which produces meanings, as a symbolic community. National cultures, therefore, produce identities by producing meanings about the nation, with which one can identify. National cultures function as a resource of cultural meanings, a focus of identification, and a system of representation (Hall 1996, 611-16).

In Belarus, the differences between two versions of national identity – the official and the alternative Belarusianness – are the differences between the ways in which the nation is "imagined" and represented, i.e. in the different discourses about "the nation." Each of them applies its own representational strategies, historiography, collective memory, and symbols in the construction of meanings that signify "national identity."

2.7.   Transculturality and Globalization

The concept of transculturality (cf. Welsch 1999) provides a framework for understanding the ways in which identities are constructed beyond the binary conceptions of Belarusian national identity. According to Welsch's concept of transculturality, cultures are not closed, homogeneous, uniform national entities or communities, but represent a plurality of possible identities. Cultures are marked by complexity and interconnectedness. The concept implies that cultures and identities are characterized less by diversity than by "hybridization," that is, cultures do not just coexist but are interpenetrative and flow into each other (Welsch 1999, 198). According to Welsch, modern societies are multicultural in themselves, encompassing a multitude of different ways of life and lifestyles. Welsch criticizes the classical concept of single cultures, which is characterized by social homogenization, ethnic consolidation, and intercultural delimitation. The concepts of interculturality and multiculturality are also criticized, since they conceptually presuppose the traditional (monocultural) concept. Welsch also criticizes the concept of globalization as culturally limiting and imposing uniformity. The concept of transculturality, he argues, covers both the global and the local, both universalistic and

particularistic aspects, both cosmopolitanism and local affiliation. Global processes become visible in everyday practices: "Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures"[9] (Welsch 1999, 197). As Hall (1996) similarly argued, national identities are declining, but new identities of hybridity are taking their place.

In Belarus, lifestyles and identities that exceed national boundaries are lived and articulated in a variety of (trans)cultural practices and discourses. Furthermore, even the ideas of "national culture" are constructed in transcultural discourses. The two versions of national identity – the official and the alternative Belarusianness – are therefore transcultural, albeit in different ways. Transculturality of the official version of Belarusianness is expressed in the perception of Belarusian and Russian cultures as "the same" or "similar," both of them influenced by Western and global culture through mass media and popular culture. The alternative version is expressed in similar Western and global influences, but also in the separation of Belarusian and Russian cultures, which coexist and are interpenetrative, but are perceived as different.

Transcultural identities both within and beyond the two ideas of Belarusianness allow for new perspectives in research on Belarusian identity. The concept of transculturality is applied in this work to broaden the perspective and analyze identity constructions beyond the national issue. Moreover, since popular music is a "product" of globalization processes, it is perceived and appropriated in transcultural ways, contributing in the construction of transcultural identities.

The concept of transculturality is linked to the discourse on globalization (despite Welsch's criticism of the latter concept). Globalization suggests that the local and the global are in a permanent interaction. Globalization refers to a multidimensional set of social processes that create and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of the connections between the local and the distant (Steger 2003, 13). Globalization is also described as a reconfiguration of social geography marked by the growth of "transplanetary" and "supraterritorial" connectivity, which has encouraged non-national

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[9] It can be disputed that lifestyles are found "in the same way" in other cultures. Rather, lifestyles are informed by new meanings produced within discourses, and are thus specific to the cultural context. In this sense, lifestyles can be similar but not "the same" across cultures.

forms of identity and non-rationalist (e.g. religious or spiritual) types of knowledge (Scholte 2005, 8).

Identity is a critical issue in the global context. Globalization has produced different kinds of (new) identities and facilitated various "nonterritorial" (as opposite of national) identities along lines of faith, gender, class, and race (Scholte 2005, 240). These lines lack a territorial referent and represent "supraterritorial," "transworld," "transplanetary" categories of identity: "large-scale globalization since the middle of the twentieth century has spurred unprecedented growth in nonterritorial identities and associated networks of solidarity and struggle," for example, universalistic identifications with humanity as a whole (Scholte 2005, 240). Globalization has made it possible that "humankind in some respects becomes a 'we,' facing problems and opportunities where there are no 'others'" (Giddens qtd. in Scholte 2005, 241). However, although in some aspects of "global" identity there are no boundaries and "no others," in other aspects boundaries can be articulated despite the self-perception as "Cosmopolitan" (as shown in Chapter 6).

The theoretical framework provided by the concepts of transculturality and globalization represents a pluralistic approach in Belarusian identity studies, allowing for the consideration of various possible identities and identifications. The process of identity construction is characterized by complexity and fluidity, and the aspect of national culture is merely one among a variety of others in this process.

3.   Research Methods

In this chapter, the methods applied in the research process are described in the light of methodological issues as well as of the role as the researcher. Research on music and youth cultures requires a reflective self-analysis of the researcher's relationship to the research setting and research subjects (Bennett 2002, 461). After an overview of the methods, I describe various factors that have influenced the process of collecting and analyzing data.

The dissertation project has been conducted in the context of the interdisciplinary post-graduate studies programme "The Construction of Identities of Young Adults in a Post-Socialist Society in Transformation: The Case of Belarus." In the programme, a

combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods has been applied. A combination of research methods, which are regarded as complementary, is termed "triangulation" (cf. Flick et al. 2008), although it is disputed whether quantitative or qualitative research should be conducted first. Quantitative research is often based on qualitative data because in this way, it is possible to generate hypotheses based on themes that have emerged during the qualitative data collection. This represents a pragmatic approach in research on music and identity constructions, since the complex and eclectic relationships between them require an in-depth research, on the basis of which it is possible to create an operative survey. However, if statistical data serve to provide a general, empirics-based context, they can as easily precede the collection of qualitative data. In this study, qualitative research followed the survey. Quantitative data thus provided a broader context for the interviewees' music preferences, patterns of music consumption, and articulated meanings as well as discourses and practices used in identity construction.

3.1.   Statistical Data and the Development of the Survey

The survey was developed by the members of the post-graduate studies programme in cooperation with the Center of Social and Political Investigations (CSPI) of the Belarusian State University, Minsk. The nation-wide survey consists of standardized interviews with 1000 Belarusians, aged 18 to 30 years.[10] It was conducted by the CSPI, and is considered representative. The language of the survey was Russian, for pragmatic reasons, since Russian is the most-used language among the Belarusian population.

Methods of Data Collection [11]

Standardized interviews throughout Belarus were conducted in the period from October 28 to November 22 in 2013. For this purpose, the CSPI recruited 103 interviewers from its survey network. The field experience of the interviewers ranged from 3 to 10 years;

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[10] Given the programme's focus on young adults as a group representing a post-socialist society, the age of this group was framed between 18 and 30 years, which means that the project's respondents were born shortly before or after the collapse of the socialist bloc, and grew up in a post-socialist state.

[11] The overview of the methods and of the process of data collection was provided by the CSPI (for the complete report, see Appendix B).

and the interviewers' age ranged from 20 to 60 years. The survey interviewers have specialized secondary, incomplete higher (e.g. still studying) and higher education, and took special training in interviewing, which included methodology and technical aspects of conducting a survey.

The sampling type that the CSPI applied was quota sampling. The quota criteria were based on sex, age, and place of residence. Sex and age quotas were calculated according to age-sex proportions among urban and rural population of the age group of 18-30 years, from each region and Minsk city, based on data of the national census of population of 2009.

For the purpose of the geographical representation, ranking of primary units of sampling by six regions of Belarus was made, depending on the size of locality. Municipal localities were grouped by the number of residents aged 18-30 years: first, the capital; then regional centers; municipalities with a population of more than 50,000; and municipalities with population of less than 50,000. Thus, the sampling includes the capital and all regional centers. Further, in each stratum, random sampling was used, in which one or several cities were chosen, taking into account the total population of these localities.

The random sampling method was also applied to determine which rural area should be included in the survey to represent all regions. Initially, a list of rural localities was made to conduct the survey in each region. If it appeared impossible to interview the necessary number of respondents in a given locality according to the quota, additional interviews were organized in another locality of the same region.

Given the specifics of the age interval, the applied sampling method was snowball sampling. Recruitment was made by one interval of acquaintance, i.e. the respondents had to be found not among the interviewer's acquaintances, but among acquaintances of the interviewer's acquaintances.

The survey was conducted at the respondents' place of residence, including hostels. Only one interview was conducted in any one flat, family house, or hostel. After each interview, the interviewer indicated the following information in the report: the name of the street, number of house, number of apartment, sex and age of the respondent, name, phone number (for eventual quality control), and the date of the interview. After the end

of the survey, quality control of the interviewers' work was conducted, based on verification sample of 16.5 percent of the respondents' addresses in each survey point.

Design of the Statistical Survey

The questionnaire consisted of five parts related to the five projects of the interdisciplinary programme. The five projects deal with: 1. values of young Belarusians; 2. their language practices; 3. attitudes to literature; 4. music preferences; and 5. clothing choices as aspects that participate in the construction of identities. In addition to the respective thematic sections, the survey contained a demographic section. All project participants had access to the data of all thematic sections. In this way, for example, it was possible to analyze data on "Music and identity" in combination with other relevant topics, such as cultural and national identification, language use or patterns of dress behavior. The data were analyzed using the SPSS software.

Formulating aims and hypotheses

Hypotheses are usually formulated either on the basis of collected qualitative data or on a theoretical basis. Since the qualitative research was conducted after the survey, the basis for hypothesis formulation was both theoretical and empirical, based on the researcher's relevant knowledge.

Questions about preferences for music styles were in two parts, the first of which suggested only one response option: "Which music style do you like most?" (46A), while the second suggested several response options to "Which further music styles do you like?" (46B). The response options in both 46 A and B included "pop," "rock," "hip-hop," "reggae," "club music," "jazz," "classical music," "other music," or "something else." This questioning aimed at receiving general information on young Belarusians' preferences for music styles, and the response options were based on the common meta-categories of the (Western) music industry as well as on reference to particular social media that represent the platforms of musical engagement in Belarus.[12]

The question "Which styles do you reject?" (46C) was based on the assumption that anti-preferences are as important as preferences in music consumption. Oppositions

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[12] The social network *VKontakte* (based in Russia) is one of the most popular social media services in Belarus. It offers free access to practically any music, which can be heard online, downloaded, transformed into personal playlists, etc.

and distinctions are used in the construction of boundaries between music genres. Anti-preferences in music facilitate the sense of difference, which is central in the process of identity construction. Anti-preferences, therefore, may even strengthen the preferences. The hypothesis on which question 46C is based suggests that "anti-preferences versus preferences" reflect binary oppositions of the meta-categories, i.e. that preference for "rock" presupposes an aversion to "pop," or reflects the "rock versus hip-hop" opposition.

The question about preferences related to broadcasting "Which radio stations do you prefer?" (47) was based on the hypothesis that present-day preferences of young Belarusians are shaped by Western music, and that Western online radio stations are more preferred than Russian radio stations.

The questions regarding the countries of origin of favorite music (48A, 48B) and languages in favorite music (49A, 49B) were based on the similar hypothesis that the preferred countries are those of the Anglo-American space, and English is the most preferred language in music choices of young adults in Belarus.

The question about the sources of music consumption "Where do you get music from?" (50) was based on the hypothesis that, today, practices of buying records and listening to analogue radio are increasingly becoming less popular than in the time period before the "internet era." The assumption was that the most widespread source of music consumption among young Belarusians is the internet, and particularly music platforms and social media.

Question 51 "How often do you listen to music…" was split into eight sub-questions, the goal of which was to find out how often and where (at home, on the way to school or work, in clubs, at concerts, etc.) young Belarusians generally enjoy music. Particularly, it was assumed that for the majority of young people living in a world of "ubiquitous" music, listening to music is an everyday practice. This suggests another hypothesis that home and the way to school or work are the most regular spaces of music consumption.

Question 52 refers to the practice of attending live performances, i.e. preferences for music styles in a particular context of the active engagement in music: "Which music do you enjoy in clubs, at concerts and festivals?" The response options (which are more specific than those of Question 46A) were chosen on the basis of research on performances taking place in Minsk and other venues in Belarus as well as on the basis

of knowledge of specific music forms appreciated in the post-Soviet states (such as the "bard song" or "estrada").

The question "To which extent do you agree with the following statements: "I listen to music because…" (53) was aimed at receiving information about various functions that popular music fulfills for young Belarusians.

Question 54 "Whose opinion influences you the most when you choose music?" served to analyze the role of the "significant others," of media, and of social contexts, in which the respondents enjoy music. The hypothesis was that music preferences of young Belarusians are shaped by the social environment, and particularly by peer groups, and that the younger people are the stronger they are influenced by peer groups in their music choices.

Finally, Question 55 "What is your attitude toward the music underground in Belarus?" and Question 56 "Could you say you are part of this underground culture?" were aimed at describing the attitudes toward underground culture in Belarus. Given that the term "underground" is often associated with oppositional views in Belarus and that the survey was organized by a state institution, it was expected that the majority of respondents would indicate a negative or at least neutral attitude toward "underground culture." It was assumed, therefore, that a positive attitude toward "underground culture" would be expressed by a minority of young people.

Generally, the survey section "Music and identity" was designed with the purpose of providing the contexts for popular music in Belarus and for music consumption of young Belarusians. These contexts are obviously shaped, for example, by Western and global as well as Russian music's presence in the cultural landscape of Belarus. The purpose of the survey was to reveal the extent to which various influences impact preferences of young people. However, the questionnaire would have been designed differently on the basis of the interviews and focus groups, if it had been conducted not before but after the interviewing. Certain themes that emerged during the (group) interviews had not been foreseen and were therefore not included in the questions. For example, the issue of Belarusian music and its (in)authenticity appeared an important topic in many discussions, while the survey data merely provide information on languages in (Belarusian) music. However, the issue of Belarusian music in general and its authenticity in particular includes not only questions of the language but also musical and

social factors that became visible in the interviews and focus groups but were not considered in the quantitative survey. The role of lyrics (i.e. "meaning") in music and especially the topic of "popsa," which appeared extremely controversial in the interviews and focus groups, could have also been represented in the survey on the basis of qualitative data, had the interviews preceded the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questions regarding the attitudes toward "underground" could also have been formulated more precisely on the basis of information from the interviews. For instance, differently than expected, "underground" turned out to be not necessarily associated with political attitudes. Based on the interview data, the question could have been formulated with a deeper empirical awareness of the complex contexts of "underground" and the aspects that are actually associated with it. Nevertheless, despite certain shortcomings inherent in a survey conducted prior to in-depth interviewing, it has served to provide an empirical context to describe the statuses of popular music and its consumption in today's Belarus.

3.2. Interviews

Following the questionnaire, the central methods of the study were semi-structured guided interviews and focus groups. Throughout three stays in Minsk in 2013 and 2014 (about ten weeks in total), I conducted twenty-one in-depth interviews and two focus groups, and attended various music events. This can be described as "field work" involving elements of ethnographic research with a focus on young people and their music preferences. Without choosing a specific genre, I placed a "microsociological" focus upon people and their musical practices as well as discourses in an attempt to recognize "the ways in which music is used and the important role that it plays in everyday life and in society generally" (Cohen 1993, 127).[13]

An ethnographic approach is usually associated with a particular (youth) culture. Seeking to understand culture from within as well as meanings produced in this culture, ethnography involves the intense development of relationships in the field and "a lengthy period of intimate study and residence with a particular group of people, knowledge of the spoken language […], direct participation in some of that group's activities" (Cohen

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[13] Although Cohen's article (1993) is not among the latest works on methodology, it highlights different approaches (as well as their limitations) and the important methodological issues of a variety of relevant disciplines, such as ethnography, anthropology, popular music studies, and popular music ethnography.

1993, 124). Ethnography also involves experiencing the studied culture in the same way as its insiders (Cohen 1993, 124). This approach in research on identity constructions through music in general (i.e. through a variety of musics) is hardly manageable in terms of one study. However, elements of the ethnographic approach, such as in-depth interviewing, conversations, observations of some respondents' social media activities, and attending concerts and events (in part together with the respondents) can as well help "to discover the way in which [culture insiders'] social world or reality is constructed, and how particular events acquire meaning for them in particular situations" (Cohen 1993, 124). Moreover, interviews and group discussions reveal not only social discourses that reflect the broader context but also the discourses in which meanings are produced in "bottom-up" ways.

In semi-structured, or problem-centred interviews, issues are reconsidered either by the interviewee or in conversational dynamics between the interviewee and the interviewer (Schlehe 2003, 78). The relative freedom of the interviewee to digress from a concrete subject gives the interviewer an opportunity to discover the topics that are particularly relevant to the interviewee. Having guide questions for the interviews, I was flexible in dealing with the guide. Often I deviated from it to let my interview partners direct the conversation and define their own priorities. In some cases, a number of questions were not even asked because the respondents talked eagerly, answering many guide questions on their own initiative. This kind of interview proved to be more effective and informative than the interviews that had to be guided, i.e. in cases when the respondents were restrained or confused (I elaborate on this in Chapter 3.4).

As mentioned before, I have interviewed people with different music preferences, without laying the focus on a particular music style or subculture. As also pointed out earlier, it has been more common in popular music studies to do research on certain groups or subcultures with specific shared features and attitudes that characterize these groups and make them distinctive. However, youth is also a group within a society; being highly heterogeneous, this group is nevertheless characterized by distinctive features, including discourses, musical practices, meanings, and other aspects through which identities are constructed in a specific post-Soviet context. None of these features, discourses, and practices exist autonomously but are constructed in interaction; they overlap and intersect.

The boundaries between cultures, subcultures, music styles, musical practices, and identities are constantly shifting in a globalizing world. Since the same music can be engaged with in very different ways by different individuals, it is important to study social contexts in which music is consumed, as well as individual patterns of music consumption. In the world of today, youth culture is characterized by "essential eclecticism" (cf. Bennett 1999). Groups, as Bennett argues, can hardly be seen as coherent or fixed (as implied by the concept of subculture), but rather, the "so-called youth 'subcultures' are prime examples of the unstable and shifting cultural affiliations which characterise late modern consumer-based societies" (1999, 605). The group (in the subcultural sense) is no longer a central focus for the individual, but rather a site within which the individual can live out a temporal role before relocating to an alternative site and assuming a different identity (Bennett 1999, 605).

To reveal the individual patterns of music consumption, the "temporal roles," identifications, and their cultural contexts I posed questions regarding people's perceptions of such categories as "underground" and "mainstream," or "culture." Combined with other themes, such as identification with particular styles of music, languages in music as well as in everyday life, social contexts and networks etc., the interpretations of the above-mentioned concepts provide information on discourses, socio-political contexts in Belarusian society, power relations, processes of globalization, and collective representations of "common history," nation, belonging, and difference.

Sixteen focus group respondents as well as thirteen interviewees were recruited by the CSPI, whose networks are broad enough to offer a wide range of representatives of Belarusian youth with various possible music preferences.[14] In addition, one interviewee was an acquaintance that I made at a concert.[15] The remaining seven interviewees were recruited through my personal network in Minsk, and were selected based on a strong identification with a particular music style (or styles). The selection method can thus be described as snowball sampling, which enables the researcher to get access to the inner structure of the field and to explore its network boundaries that may

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[14] Interview and focus group respondents recruited by the CSPI were offered a symbolic payment for their participation.

[15] It was a punk rock concert in a club named *Piraty*, which made an impression of an underground club, situated far from the center of Minsk. The performing bands were *Adaptatsiya* from Kazakhstan and the famous Belarusian band *Neyro Dyubel*.

be indicated by research participants through their distancing from "the others" (Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr 2014, 59).

The interviewees were initially selected on the basis of their positioning toward underground culture because selecting a specific criterion simplifies recruiting of respondents in the broad field of youth culture. Therefore, a portion of the respondents were supposed to identify with underground culture and music. The model "non-underground versus underground" in relation to popular music seemed to reflect the model of the "official and the alternative Belarusianness." Although the reality proved to be far more complex than a dichotomy model, it is remarkable that almost all "underground" and "subcultural" respondents were found outside of official settings, while the majority of "non-underground" respondents were among those recruited by the CSPI.

The interview guide was centered around such topics as the participants' preferences and dislikes in music; languages in preferred music; countries of origin of favorite music; the role of lyrics in music; the use of mass media and social media; sources of music consumed; the role of social surroundings in choosing and listening to music; attending concerts and festivals; functions that music fulfills and the role it plays in the respondents' everyday lives; the relationship between music choice and visual style; subjective perceptions of the terms "underground," "subculture," and "mainstream"; and cultural or national identifications as well as interpretations of "Belarusian," "Russian," "European," or "Cosmopolitan" culture.

3.3.   Focus Groups

While interviews provide a deeper understanding of a person's identifications and their cultural contexts, focus groups are characterized by conversational dynamics and reveal patterns of interaction between the group members, serving as a model of interactions that exist in society. In group discussions, discourses are both reflected and constructed. Interviews and focus groups reveal views, reactions, and identifications of people from different angles and, therefore, these two methods can successfully complement each other. A focus group offers a site in which participants articulate sameness and difference in the dynamics of a group discussion.

A focus group, in-depth group interview, or group discussion is a method approaching the group as a model of society, or as a microcosm modelling a bigger community (Belanovskiy 2001, 41; 43). Different roles assumed by focus group participants reflect their social roles: for example, "leaders" in a group interview are most likely leaders in their social environment, whereas "followers" have similar roles in theirs (Belanovskiy 2001, 43). At the same time, as Belanovskiy explains, for the purpose of effectiveness of a group discussion, participants should be homogeneous, while homogeneity relates to social characteristics of the participants rather than to their views and attitudes (2001, 79). Group discussions, according to Belanovskiy, are most effective when they involve eight to twelve participants; if a group is too big, it prevents most participants from active participation, and if it is too small, it becomes hardly advantageous in comparison with individual interviews (2001, 75). Overall, focus groups are useful for obtaining a wide spectrum of reactions, opinions, and assumptions, which is more or less representative of the studied community (Belanovskiy 2001, 55).

Given the project's focus on the construction of cultural identities in a post-Soviet society, respondents of the two focus groups were selected on the basis of their identification with "European" or "Cosmopolitan" culture in the first case, and the lack of this identification in the second case. Furthermore, the participants were supposed to be equally represented in terms of gender, and to have a similar social status, in this case represented by being a student or having a higher education. The participants were recruited by the CSPI according to the snowball method, and the focus groups took place in one of the CSPI office rooms.

The focus groups, each consisting of eight participants, were conducted in cooperation with Agnes Reiter, whose project deals with young Belarusians' dress behaviors and their role in identity constructions. Since music and style are often related (or are considered to be related), the two themes were combined into one guide: in the first focus group, the discussion began with the topics regarding style, and continued with music preferences; the second focus group started with the discussion of music, which was gradually directed toward style preferences and attitudes.

Similar to the interview guide, the focus group guide (i.e. its section "Music and identity") comprised such themes as music preferences, media use, the role of social circles, perceptions of "underground" and "mainstream," attending concerts, the

influence of music, relationships between music and style, and cultural identifications as expressed in music appreciation and dress behavior. When moderating the focus groups, I did not follow the guide strictly, but rather followed the course of discussion. During the dynamic discussions extremely important and controversial topics emerged, such as "meanings" in music, notions of Belarusian culture and "authenticity" of Belarusian music, common dissociation from "popsa," etc.

As mentioned above, the first focus group was supposed to represent "European" or "Cosmopolitan" identifications, while the second one was supposed to lack the "pro-Western" orientations. However, it proved difficult to organize the focus groups by the principle "West versus East" because the question of (trans)national identity is highly complex in Belarus (as shown in Chapter 6). Differently than planned, the first focus group was eventually characterized by primary identifications with "European" and "Cosmopolitan" cultures but also with "Slavic" culture, while in the second group identifications with "European" culture prevailed. Many respondents simultaneously identified with Belarusian culture, which indicates that the perceptions of it are ambiguous and can represent either of the opposing "East-West" poles. The focus groups (as well as the interviews) showed that, on the one hand, these categories are perceived quite ambivalently, but on the other, they can generate a vivid discussion revealing a person's positioning and providing further insight into discourses taking place in society.

Overall, the participants of the interviews and focus groups were young adults aged 17 to 30 years, living in Minsk. The majority of them were Russian-speaking, while four interviewees were Belarusian speakers. All participants, except for one person, were currently studying or already had higher education. In each focus group, four female and four male respondents participated. In individual interviews, nine respondents were female and twelve of them were male. Interview and focus group respondents were people with different music preferences – from punk rock, metal, folk and indie to reggae, rap, pop or various forms of electronic music. Some of the interviewees expressed belonging to a subculture, such as punk, goth, skinhead, or hip-hop. Half of the interviewees, as well as some of the focus group participants, were professional or amateur musicians, and

some respondents had a musical education. The interviews and focus groups were conducted in Russian.[16]

The interviews and focus groups were recorded, and all records were transcribed.[17] Subsequently, the transcripts were coded, and the categories were developed according to the method of qualitative content analysis (cf. Mayring 2015) and using the MAXQDA software program, designed for computer-assisted data analysis. In the presented analysis, all names were changed to guarantee anonymity of the research participants.

3.4.   Reflections on Research Contexts and Positioning of the Researcher

As described previously, the methodological approach of this study is pluralistic and includes the elements of ethnography. Interviewing is one of these elements – this method allows one to receive information and insight into the ways in which young adults identify with music, on their cultural and social positioning, and on the ways in which this positioning is constructed by means of music. As Cohen (1993) describes, ethnography highlights the dynamic complexities of situations and the social, cultural and historical contexts of events, activities, relationships and discourses; it focuses on social relationships, emphasizing music as a social practice. An ethnographic approach involves a "microsociological" focus upon the beliefs and practices underlying social relationships, embodied in terms such as "kinship," "identity," "society," "culture" and "community" (Cohen 1993, 123-24). The purpose of ethnography is thus to describe discourses, practices, knowledge, and the system of meanings of a group's culture in a specific context. The "bottom-up" approach recognizes the global in the local and the social in the individual. The focus on people and on social relationships can reveal the processes, through which concepts are socially and historically constructed (Cohen 1993, 132).

The role of the researcher is decisive in the process of "writing culture": not only the researcher's theoretical positioning, but also their cultural background and experience shape the focus and the ways in which data are described and interpreted. The researcher's

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[16] Given my insufficient command of Belarusian, Belarusian speakers did not mind speaking Russian during the interview.

[17] In addition to audio recording, the focus groups were video recorded to simplify the process of transcribing.

status and their demographic characteristics also have an impact on interactions in the field. Factors such as age, gender, class and ethnicity influence the research process, involving relations of similarity and difference, of equality and inequality; and such relations impact the way in which the research is finally textualized (Cohen 193, 134).

In the beginning of the research process, the specific research goals had to be defined within the framework of the programme. The cooperation with the CSPI presupposed that the interview respondents would be recruited by the institution, which obviously simplified the access to the field, but also seemed insufficient. The awareness that the official setting could have an enormous impact on young people's readiness to share their experiences resulted in the decision to find interviewees through my own informal networks, which emerged both before and during the research process. For example, I turned to my acquaintances in the search of young people whose lifestyle was informed by specific music. In addition, two interviewees were found "accidentally": I met one of them at a punk rock concert, and the second of them was the acquaintance of the former. The purpose of my own search for respondents outside of the CSPI network was to get insight into the ways in which various "alternative" youth cultures are organized, specifically in Minsk, and the ways in which the adherents construct identities within these cultures as "products" of Belarusian society. Moreover, I believed that the distance between the research participants and me as a researcher would be smaller if I used my own contacts in "the field."

Initially I was interested in researching hip-hop and reggae cultures in Minsk. Belarusian hip-hop is partly characterized by the oppositional message and subversive potential, which thereby evokes interest as a source of exciting material, and as an example of local appropriation of global culture. Moreover, this youth culture is underrepresented (compared to Belarusian rock), which would be another reason to do research on it. A personal involvement in hip-hop culture was absent but would be compensated by the prospect of studying an underrepresented phenomenon. On the contrary, reggae culture was a focus of my personal interest in the academic context. Having previously studied it in global and local German contexts, I had theoretical and empirical knowledge of it, and the opportunity of applying this knowledge and experience in a new context was extremely attractive. However, both youth cultures – particularly reggae and Belarusian-language rap – are represented by quite small groups, which

became obvious after preliminary research. Eventually, motivated by the goal of a full integration of the project into the research programme, I decided to shift focus from hip-hop and reggae to various preferences and patterns of music consumption. Hip-hop and reggae did not disappear from the research field, however; alongside Belarusian rock, bard, folk and punk, they became the "case studies" within a broader framework of the research.

Identity-building practices described in sections 6.3.2 (Belarusian rock, folk and bard), 6.3.3 (Punk and Skinhead), 6.3.4 (Hip-hop) and 6.3.5 (Reggae) can be placed methodologically within the framework of "case studies." Case studies refer to a strategy that consists in "studying a particular phenomenon using one or more objects of investigation in its real context" (Titscher et al. 2000, 43). Furthermore, it is argued that case studies are "particularly appropriate if the context is unusually rich or complex" (Titscher et al. 2000, 43), which can be stated about the historical and sociocultural contexts of Belarus. Conducting a case study presupposes a combination of methods rather than one particular method (Titscher et al. 2000, 43). In the above-mentioned "case studies," I applied the methods of interviewing, participant observation at concerts, and observations of the respondents' social media activities. It is important to point out that the "case studies" of this project do not claim extensiveness but represent particular cases characteristic of certain groups produced by the wider social processes in Belarus and beyond.

Generally, the respondents, both recruited through the CSPI network and through my personal one, are a very heterogeneous group, albeit sharing certain demographic characteristics. The relationships to the respondents were therefore also different. For example, most interviews with people from the personal network were more informal and often more responsive than the interviews which took place in the CSPI.[18] Although many interviewees recruited by the CSPI were also open in sharing their views and feelings, the context was formal, since it was informed by the state institution.[19] This inevitably

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[18] This is not to suggest that these interviews were more valuable than those that took place at the CSPI. On the contrary, both approaches provided equally valuable information and examples of discourses and practices that exist in Belarusian society, represented by people articulating different, sometimes even opposing, national identities.

[19] E.g. the formal-polite form of address was used, expressed in the Russian pronoun "vy" instead of the informal "ty." Furthermore, the interviews took place in the office of the CSPI.

influenced the ways in which the respondents expressed their thoughts. It also influenced what was said and what was omitted: one of the respondents (who is a member of a punk rock band), not willing to speak about the political aspect in punk rock, shared more details only after the interview, when I switched off the recorder and we left the CSPI office.[20] Some respondents uttered statements such as "It's better not to talk about politics." Others, on the contrary, discussed this topic willingly, albeit simultaneously distancing themselves from politics. There were two respondents who spoke quite directly, though. They described situations that revealed the control of the state in the cultural sphere (in form of censorship, surveillance, prohibitions, etc.) and criticized these practices openly.

However, other factors influenced the interviews as well, including age, gender, and place of residence. For example, some younger female respondents (around eighteen years old) felt less confident during the interview than male respondents in the same age or people (both women and men) in their late twenties. In some cases, the respondents were restrained and confused, which could have been caused by a variety of factors, such as age, the perceived officialdom, or individual traits. In one case, the factor of education played a role: one of the respondents did not have a higher education and never studied at a university, and his confusedness could have been caused by a general context that was unfamiliar to him. Besides, in their everyday lives, some people had never thought about certain things that were asked in the interviews, and were confused by the perceived unawareness. Of course, in such cases I attempted to relieve the respondents' stress by showing empathy, but I also had to ask more questions than usual. This factor, then, had to be taken into consideration during the analysis: this was expressed in the self-question "Would they have said that if I had not posed additional suggestive questions?"

Besides, since I explained the context of research and the goals of the interview, I was perceived as a researcher from "the West," albeit speaking the same language. At least in some cases, this factor might have influenced the respondents' articulations, particularly in regard to "Belarusian culture."[21] Especially in the focus groups, which were characterized by dynamic discussions, articulations of "Belarusian culture" and

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[20] The respondent told me that his band was once taken to the militia station right from their performance at a concert. Since then, according to the respondent, the band has been in the "blacklist," and before each performance the band members are called by a militia inspector for a "preventive conversation."

[21] It is shown in Chapter 6 that the concept of Belarusian culture is articulated differently according to the constructed hierarchies of "the center and margin."

"Russian culture" were presumably to some extent shaped by the knowledge that the group interview was conducted in the framework of a Western project. In another context, e.g. that of a Russian research project, the statements might have been formulated differently, however one can only speculate to what extent the statements and beliefs are shaped by such knowledge. In any case, this is not to suggest the lack of the interviewees' sincerity, and I strongly assume that most of them said what they really meant at the particular moment. However, this is to suggest that different factors and contexts have impacts on discourses, and the awareness of possible impacts informs the analysis and interpretation.

As the concept of articulation suggests (cf. Chapter 2.3), statements, meanings and the links between the discourse elements are temporary and contextual, rather than absolute and essential; and the elements of discourse can be rearticulated in another historical, social or spatial context. This means that under other conditions, the respondents' statements would be different, depending on a variety of social and cultural factors. The (group) interviews conducted in 2014 represent, therefore, a historical "snapshot" of articulations produced at the particular moment in a particular place, rather than a static picture of views and opinions. It is likely that, even some few years later, the discourses would be constructed and hierarchies articulated in other ways, depending on various dynamics that contribute to these processes.

Cohen (1993) criticizes the method of interviewing as approaching people "outside their usual social, spatial and temporal context," and argues that "their discourse is consequently disconnected from their day-to-day activities, relationships and experiences (and obviously, what people say they do often differs from what they actually do, or from what they think they do)" (Cohen 1993, 127). I partly agree with Cohen's argument – particularly the aspect that the interview is not part of "natural" circumstance is undisputable. Moreover, people's activities may indeed differ from their statements about these activities. However, I would like to paraphrase the argument in the following way: "what people say they do represents what they think they do rather than what they actually do." This refinement is important because it approaches discourse participants as constructive actors rather than unreliable narrators. Besides, it is important to pose the question, "why does what people say differ from what they do?" This question is significant because it indicates the power of discourse: the difference between activities

and statements about the activities might lie in the awareness of social discourse as imposing certain rules.

Discourses produce agents, but are also produced by them. In this study, discourse is understood as being as significant as practice. Discourse, conceived as a site, within which meanings and identities are produced and articulated, plays as an important role as a cultural practice, within which the same processes of identity construction and articulation take place. Furthermore, I argue that discourse is not "disconnected" from people's everyday practices and experiences, but is constructed around and through them. As emphasized in Chapter 2, popular music is both practice and discourse; they are interconnected, and both represent sites of contradictions, eventually producing senses of difference and belonging. As Bennett points out, discourse on music can be conceived as a method of analyzing musical taste underlying cultural practices:

> […] an intimate knowledge of fan discourse, rather than serving as a distraction from the purpose of youth and music research, may in fact be utilized as a means of understanding the collective aesthetic values attached by audiences to particular styles of music. The task thus becomes one of systematically assessing how far discourse, as a knowledge acquired through the learning of a particular set of stylistic and 'performative' […] conventions, can be recast as a method of researching, analysing and relating musical taste to the broader issues surrounding the 'musicalization' […] of everyday life for young people. (2002, 463)

For example, the discourse on popsa, discussed in Chapter 6, makes visible "the collective aesthetic values attached by audiences to particular styles of music" that are contrasted with popsa. Though the discourse on popsa is not a "fan discourse," it reveals, and also produces, identifications with particular music styles that are attributed with meanings through contraposing them to popsa. In this regard, the discourse on popsa is an "anti-fan discourse," within which people construct and articulate meanings, practices, and identities.

Generally, a variety of factors impact the process of collecting and analyzing data, and the researcher's positionings are among the influential factors. First of all, from the very beginning, the research is shaped by theoretical positioning, which, being transformed during the process, both informs and is informed by the received data. As Cohen points out, "Ethnography is meaningless in the absence of theory, but theoretical models are not simply imposed on field situations and data; rather, they provide an orientation to the research which can be developed by the researcher over the course of

analysing data" (1993, 132-33). Particularly, conceiving of identity as a process and of music as a cultural practice shapes not only the ways of interpretation but also the ways of observation. At the same time, understanding music as *both* practice and discourse has been fully formed *during* the process of analyzing data. Generally, theoretical concepts shape the perspective, but the perspective transforms during the process of interpretation.

Certainly, the researcher's perspective, both in observation and interpretation, is shaped not only by theoretical positioning but also by personal experiences, views, interests, sympathies, and antipathies. Selectivity is a process determined by these factors, and to claim objectivity means to deny the inevitability of the influence of subjective factors. Ethnographic writing is a "discursive formation" rather than a neutral discourse (Bennett 2002, 459), and this process is never objective. For example, the selection of identity-building practices, or "case studies" described in Chapter 6, was partly informed by my personal interests, as mentioned earlier. Simultaneously, some "case studies," particularly punk and skinhead, were the results of unexpected experiences in the field, which were, in turn, the results of selectivity (going to a punk rock concert was a choice). Punk and skinhead followers were thus found "accidentally," and my enthusiasm to interview them was informed not by identification with these cultures, but rather by the wish to get insight into the "alternative" practices and discourses; this wish was, in turn, produced by my idealization of the "oppositional" and "dissident" practices as having great potential for social change. In the course of collecting and analyzing data, however, the idealized perception transformed into a critical perspective.

Generally, the presented spectrum of identity-building practices, which is by no means comprehensive, is a result of selectivity, and it is obvious that a researcher with other interests would undergo a different process of selectivity. It is also likely that the discourse on above-mentioned popsa could be identified because my experience with this topic was both personal and affected by a distance from it: on the one hand, I had already been familiar with the popsa phenomenon in the context of post-Soviet culture, but on the other, the critical distance to it emerged only after years spent far away from this discourse. "Popsa" was widespread across the (post-)Soviet space, and Kazakhstan, where I grew up, was not an exception. Popsa was broadcast through Russian radio and television, and while many people liked it, many others hated it. Having left Kazakhstan, I did not come across Russian popsa songs anymore, and having spent years in Germany,

I almost forgot about the discourse related to popsa (though I hardly had an actual awareness of it as a discourse). During the interviews and group discussions in Minsk it suddenly became clear to me that the common contempt for popsa *is* actually a discourse; that this discourse has not disappeared, and is still very much present in the post-Soviet space, or at least in Belarus.

However, this insight and the subsequent critical, more or less unbiased engagement with the concept of popsa became possible only from the perspective of an "outsider" of this discourse, and this perspective was formed by years of living and studying in "the West." In other words, it is quite likely that the discourse on popsa was identified due to the experience of living both in (post-)Soviet and Western cultures, and the interpretation of it was also informed by this experience. This is true, however, of many other aspects of the analysis as well: my perspective as a researcher is largely informed both by closeness to various aspects of post-Soviet culture and by my distance from this culture. The perspective is thus simultaneously that of an insider and an outsider of post-Soviet – and Belarusian – culture.

To summarize the discussion of the research methods, the entire process of the research can be illustrated by the following generalized structure:

Initial theoretical positioning — Defining the goals of research — Selection of methods — Collection of data — Analyzing data — Theoretical reframing — Discussion
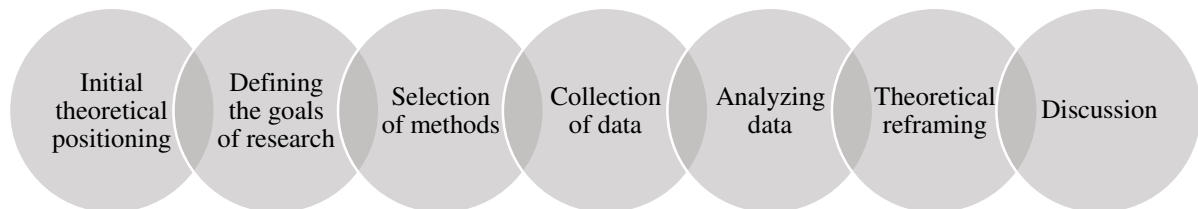
This process is dynamic and its different phases overlap continually. In general terms, initial theoretical positioning informed the definition of the research goals, which was followed by the selection of the methods. The subsequent collection and interpretation of data were followed by theoretical reframing and discussion of the research results.

4. Contexts of Popular Music in Belarus

This chapter describes the contexts of popular music in Belarus, which go back to the 1950s and the era, when Belarus was a part of the USSR. Therefore, it is important to begin with the description of popular music contexts in the Soviet Union, so that particular attention is paid to rock and estrada – the two major music cultures that formed Soviet popular culture from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. The overview of Soviet music cultures is followed by an account of popular music of the perestroika period, which was characterized by the emergence of popsa. This account is followed by the contexts of present-day musical landscapes of Belarus.

4.1. Popular Music in the USSR

4.1.1. Rock Culture in the USSR

In the period of de-Stalinization and the Thaw in the 1950s, Soviet popular culture became more open to various influences of Western culture. Despite the continuing Cold War, various elements of Western culture, such as music, fashion, literature, etc. were brought to the Soviet Union through different channels and spread across the Soviet space. Western music, particularly rock 'n' roll, played a central role in the formation of a distinct youth culture in Soviet society.

As Ryback writes, from the late 1940s, Soviet and East European youths overcame cultural isolation by means of American jazz, fashion and cultural artefacts, and thereafter, "Soviet-bloc governments have condemned Western youth culture as "spiritual poison" (1990, 3-4). Rock 'n' roll became a symbol of rebellion: "In the mid-1950s, when Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" first infected the repertoires of local jazz ensembles, cultural officials added rock and roll to their list of subversive dangers" and attempted to eradicate it throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s (Ryback 1990, 4). In 1964, "Beatlemania smashed through the Iron Curtain, battering back official resistance to rock music and sweeping a whole generation of Soviet-bloc youths into ecstasy" (Ryback 1990, 4). Soviet-bloc officials, Ryback writes, smashed rock concerts and imprisoned rock musicians, which, however, could not control people's "acts of private

rebellion." In this way, Western rock culture challenged the assumptions of the state about its ability to control its citizens (Ryback 1990, 5).

The following paragraphs present Ryback's account of "Soviet-bloc" rock. Popular music culture began in the early 1950s with the *stiliagi*: during this period, Soviet youths' common trait was to imitate Western lifestyles and fashion. These youths were called "stiliagi" ("style hunters"). They listened to American jazz, which was condemned as a "tool of American imperialism," and imitated the American film heroes, purchasing records, films and fashion objects on the black market. They were hunted and ridiculed by Soviet officials. After Stalin's death, the policy on jazz was liberalized, though the music continued to be banned. However, despite the government's measures against it, jazz, swing, boogie-woogie and bebop "flourished in the underground" (1990, 16). The "rehabilitation" of jazz occurred in 1957 at the World Youth Festival in Moscow, which was a step in realizing the government's goals of breaking the Soviet Union's "self-imposed isolation" (1990, 18). At the festival, jazz ensembles from the Western countries participated, and so jazz, swing and boogie-woogie were finally included in the Soviet cultural policy and in its "blueprints for the soul of the new socialist man" (1990, 18).

The World Youth Festival of 1957 also introduced new music to Soviet youths: rock 'n' roll. "Jazz music was the musical staple of most groups, but some bands from the West arrived with unexpected instruments in their baggage and unanticipated songs in their repertoires" (Ryback 1990, 30). During the next years, rock 'n' roll was condemned as "poisoning" the Soviet cultural scene, as "musical banality," and as "boisterous, convulsive music" imitated from the "worst foreign examples" (1990, 31). It is pointed out that, despite the Soviet officials' claims, rock 'n' roll was a "visceral" rather than political experience for Soviet youths, allowing them to escape politics rather than engage in it.

In contrast, Ryback writes, the folk-music movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s was characterized by a political message: Soviet folk musicians, called bards, sang about Stalin's crimes and the abuses of the communist system. Bard music drew from indigenous music traditions and addressed issues relevant to society (1990, 34). Bards appeared in the mid-1950s, when the first wave of prisoners returned from the Siberian labor camps. With the thousands of rehabilitated people, their ballads penetrated into the cities and were picked up by the intelligentsia (1990, 43). The first underground songs

were performed in private gatherings, but the increased production of reel-to-reel tape recorders gave underground singers access to broader audiences, and soon the tapes with their songs circulated by the millions. *Magnitizdat* was thus born, which re-copied and distributed tape recordings, and a vast underground culture developed around it (1990, 44).

In 1964, Beatlemania "seized" Soviet youths: for millions of them, the music of the *Beatles* provided the background for everyday living under socialism (Ryback 1990, 51). According to Ryback, the *Beatles* provided inspiration for hundreds of Soviet-bloc rock musicians. The official response to Beatlemania was ambivalent, as Ryback explains: at times it was tolerant, but it could also be harassing, arresting musicians and fans and cancelling the concerts. The official response to Western music was also expressed in concession to it, and the most explicit form of concession was the emergence of state-supported beat-music "vocal instrumental ensembles" (VIAs). One of the most famous of them was the VIA *Pesniary* from Minsk: they enjoyed both the benefits of state approval and popularity among millions of Soviet youths, performing an eclectic pastiche of jazz, rock, folk, and classical music (Ryback 1990, 151-52). *Pesniary* provided a model of the Soviet popular music ensemble combining folk traditions with contemporary music, and exemplified the symbiosis between Soviet cultural policy and rock 'n' roll (1990, 152).

Soviet underground with its unofficial rock scene existed in parallel to the state-supported VIAs. According to Ryback's account, by 1976 there existed a thousand amateur rock 'n' roll groups for every professional VIA. Amateur status meant playing in spare time while being employed elsewhere and the impossibility of appearing on radio or television. In the 1980s, Ryback further writes, Soviet rock 'n' roll became a distinct phenomenon. It became very popular, and its popularity could be explained by the fact that Soviet bands no longer imitated Western groups, having developed their own styles and writing their own songs about the realities of Soviet life. In 1984, there were around 160,000 amateur bands; in Moscow and its environs, there were an estimated 1500 rock groups, one third of which were not registered (Ryback 1990, 211-12).[22] The hand-made albums were copied and distributed: "The tapes multiplied into hundreds and thousands

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[22] The Leningrad Rock Club, which was very famous among rock fans, provided the basis for developing "original Soviet-style rock music" and a "refreshing alternative" to the mundane concerts of the professional VIAs (Ryback 1990, 213).

of copies, working their way across the Soviet Union through the underground network that had created […] underground superstars" (1990, 214).

During perestroika, the record label *Melodiya* started to release albums of famous underground bands (e.g. *Aquarium*, *Kino*, *Alisa*, etc.). *Melodiya* was "forced to reassess the demands of its public" – the Soviet record industry (as admitted by officials themselves) was 20 to 30 years behind that of the West, so it sought to catch up with Western competition (Ryback 1990, 227-28). This, however, did not lead to actual acceptance of rock culture by authorities and officials, who continued to view rock music as "mentally and morally damaging" and as "a viral disease." They lobbied for a reversal of policy toward rock music and for the introduction of new restrictions on the rock scene. Ryback points out that the concerns over the negative impact of rock on Soviet youths were well founded: it provided them with a vehicle for expressing political and social discontent. However, the efforts to eradicate rock from Soviet society were destined to failure (1990, 230-31).

Russian rock critic Troitsky (2007) approaches the question about the difference between Soviet and Western rock: in the musical aspect, according to Troitsky, there were no significant differences, and Soviet rock did not have a distinct sound. However, the dimension of the song content reveals a variety of radical differences, as Troitsky suggests. The lyrics in Russian rock play a more important role than in Western rock, for several reasons: first, Soviet rockers were aware that they were musically "secondary" (i.e. they were not the founders of rock music but appropriated it); second, they were less well trained technically; third, the "commercial" dance aspect of rock never prevailed in Soviet rock, but rather the "message" was valued. As Troitsky argues, the literary level of lyrics in Soviet or Russian rock is higher than in Western rock. Soviet rock lyrics had a direct connection to academic poetry, which is explained by the popularity of "serious" poetry in the USSR (some poets had a cult status among young people). Soviet rock became the direct successor of the bard tradition in a modernized way, as Troitsky points out. The major difference between Soviet and Western rock is the text content – Soviet rock songs were not about love and sex, but rather had social-ethical and philosophical themes (Troitsky 2007, 57).[23]

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[23] Soviet rock eventually became Russian rock, i.e. the phenomenon of Russian rock comprises both Soviet rock and post-Soviet rock sung in Russian (mostly from Russia, but also from other post-Soviet states).

Alongside the account of rock culture in the USSR, Troitsky describes the Soviet hippie movement of the 1970s, which provided thinking Soviet youths with their own system of values and alternative way of life within a hypocritical and repressive society. As Troitsky claims, the hippie movement was really a mass movement, most remarkable of all alternative movements in the Soviet Union. It is pointed out that the philosophical side of the hippie way of life did not play a significant role. Rather, according to Troitsky, the hippie movement offered a countercultural lifestyle, which millions of young people desired. The hippie lifestyle enabled them to contrast themselves to "normal" society and identify with a progressive community (Troitsky 2007, 41). At the head of the Soviet hippie movement was music, and first of all, Anglo-American rock (2007, 43).

4.1.2. Estrada in the USSR

While Western jazz and rock 'n' roll offered a variety of identifications to Soviet youths, official Soviet music, at least that of the 1950s and 1960s, completely lacked offers of identity for young people. "Light music" was condemned as a "petty bourgeois" and worthless product of the capitalist society; instead, classical music by Soviet composers was approved and propagated. Prior to the late 1960s, when state-supported vocal instrumental ensembles were created, the official Soviet music scene comprised patriotic songs, folk music, and Soviet classical music, with which the youth could barely identify. Official Soviet culture was therefore a fruitful ground for alternative forms of Western youth culture.

According to Baraban (2007), the fact that Soviet popular culture comprised elements of high culture did not necessarily suggest that high culture was readily perceived by mass audiences. Anyway, as Baraban points out, the distinction between high and low art was less important than the distinction between official culture and culture which was "truly popular" among different social groups. After the October Revolution, the state nationalized the entertainment industry and established censorship and control over expression; the major task of Soviet culture was propaganda in support of communist ideology. From the 1940s to the 1980s, Soviet popular culture comprised patriotic songs, novels and films celebrating Soviet military heroism (after the Great Patriotic War). After Stalin's death, Baraban writes, Soviet cultural policy started to approach popular tastes. By the mid-1980s, Soviet popular culture had become a

compromise between the official cultural policy, creative artists and popular tastes; it was an "uneasy balance" between the ideological functions of promoted popular art forms and "the natural tendency of those forms to be pure entertainment" (Baraban 2007, 484). When censorship was abolished in 1989, Soviet popular culture began to be shaped by consumer demand; the fall of the USSR in 1991 caused the rapid disintegration of Soviet culture and the rise of a new popular culture, which was characterized by commercialization and incorporation of Western popular culture (Baraban 2007, 484).

Popular music in the Soviet Union was officially represented by estrada. According to Partan's account (2007), estrada was a favorite form of mass entertainment. The term "estrada" is of foreign origin and means "elevated platform or stage" (Partan 2007, 486). Estrada with its patriotic or sentimental lyrics was performed by popular singers on stage, on radio and on television. Estrada, Partan writes, refers to performing art comprising concerts (similar to Western variety shows and Russian pre-revolutionary cabarets) and multiple forms of entertainment. According to Partan, the music and lyrics of estrada songs combined tradition with innovation, and were strongly influenced by Russian folk music, urban romances, gypsy music, and Western popular music.

As Partan points out, Soviet popular music was a propaganda tool financed, controlled and censored by the government, seeking to build support for faith in the communist system through optimistic melodies and ideologically-charged lyrics (2007, 487). Partan offers a variety of names of famous estrada performers of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, who were loved by many Soviet people and who became "cultural icons." However, these performers' songs had arguably little or nothing in common with issues that might have been relevant to the youth, probably because a distinct youth culture did not yet exist. From the 1970s until the dissolution of the USSR, as Partan describes, a new generation of popular music stars was increasingly experimental and often Westernized. Performers of this generation held great appeal for younger generations; at the same time, Partan points out, more conventional, older singers' repertoires were ideologically charged, with formal and static performing styles. Finally, the last decades of the Soviet era saw the flourishing of VIAs that promoted the multi-national musical traditions of the Soviet republics (Partan 2007, 487).

Estrada music, which was characterized by the patriotic "Soviet song" prior to the 1970s, gradually became less ideologically charged, and from the late 1970s it became

more heterogeneous and more appealing to the youth. Alongside vocal instrumental ensembles, a variety of individual performers enjoyed popularity among different age groups. While the VIAs often had a "youthful" image, the music of most estrada performers was not youth-specific, though some of the latter integrated Western music genres, such as rock and funk, in their repertoires.

MacFadyen describes one of the most famous estrada performers Filipp Kirkorov in the following way: "Kirkorov […] works in a wide range of genres, with scant regard for fashion: big, bouncy pop numbers designed for the widest possible audience and with a type of simple rhythm […]" (2002, 9). The general appeal of estrada music can be characterized in terms of MacFadyen's description: most estrada performers create "pop numbers designed for the widest possible audience," which is, however, specific to Western popular music as well. Yet, estrada music is also distinctive: as MacFadyen writes, estrada is characterized by "anachronistic merging of traditions" (2002, 11). He points out the differences between estrada and Western music: "Western pop is guitar-based; estrada has its roots in jazz" (2002, 11). MacFadyen also points out "the respect for tradition" and "nostalgia for folk" in estrada music. However, by the end of the 1980s, estrada performers had become more innovative:

> Artists began to move between genres with increasing freedom after perestroika, since the dogmatic basis of Soviet light entertainment was no longer a thematic constant. Estrada, even during the eighties, humbly began to operate independently of politics; it became a mode of personal expression. (MacFadyen 2002, 35)

Pop and estrada are considered separate categories in the post-Soviet space. In the Soviet Union, at least prior to the late 1980s, the genre of "pop" did not exist in Soviet discourse in relation to Soviet music.[24] However, as MacFadyen points out, estrada performers distanced themselves from emerging music that could be conceived as pop: "The Soviet tradition was still playing an important role in the eighties, an emotional one. One of the ways it stressed that importance […] was by attacking extreme and commercially driven frivolity within itself. Estrada started denouncing pop!" (2002, 23). Repertoires that included folk, blues, Spanish rhythms, musicals, Soviet classics and avant-garde

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[24] Pop as a music style was associated with Western music, and the absence of this term in relation to Soviet music obviously had ideological reasons.

electronic innovations rejected not only Soviet propaganda, but also "the worldview of excessively novel, commercial, tawdry pop" (MacFadyen 2002, 23).

During the late 1980s and after the fall of the USSR, when the term "pop" appeared in local discourse, estrada and pop became distinguishable genres. Estrada has been regarded as a respected entertainment genre, in contrast to the new pop style that emerged in the process of cultural, social, political and economic liberalization. This newly emerged style was largely a product of abrupt changes in Soviet society, and became known as popsa.

4.2. Popular Music in Post-Soviet Belarus

4.2.1. Popsa in the Post-Soviet Space

Popsa is a product of rapid societal transformation in several aspects. First, during perestroika, the term "pop" had been appropriated from the West and began to be used in relation to local music; second, there appeared a commercial form of music, which became possible with the transition to a market economy; third, the abolition of ideology and of state control in the cultural sphere facilitated the emergence of amateur performers in (post-)Soviet popular culture. Against the institutional training of the estrada performers, the amateurship of newly emerged pop singers became a characteristic feature of new perestroika pop. In contrast to amateur music of rock musicians who were still largely in the underground, the music of the new pop singers was commercially conditioned: the songs have been characterized by simple melody, rhythm and lyrics to achieve the widest possible audience.

Most likely, amateurism combined with commercialism contributed to the emergence of the term "popsa," which came to define a new genre of late Soviet and post-Soviet pop music. The term "popsa" has been pejorative in most cases; however, it has also been used as a neutral definition of the genre. The term is therefore very controversial, and refers either to the "quality" of the respective music or to the genre itself.[25]

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[25] The term "popsa" both in the negative and neutral connotation has been widely used in mass media of the post-Soviet space.

To describe the newly emerged Russian music genre MacFadyen gives an example of the famous band *Laskovyi mai*, who enjoyed great popularity across the Soviet space in the late 1980s and the post-Soviet space in the early 1990s:

> Just prior to communism's death throes in 1991, the most popular musical ensemble in Russia was the all-male Laskovyi mai (Tender May), which exchanged the jazz, rock, or folk strains of major Soviet [estrada] performers for something very new: clumsy, weakly produced synthesized pop. The adolescent members had all at some time been housed in state orphanages, and their manager, a certain Andrei Razin, had made good use of these maudlin origins to win both government and audience support for the band's work. Their rapid ascent to mass popularity, however, was swifter than the willingness of Soviet television to embrace the callow upstarts. As a result, many young people knew what Laskovyi mai sounded like, but their actual appearance was much less of a certainty. (2002, 7)

As MacFadyen explains, the lack of information (particularly on the band members' appearances) resulted in the emergence of several *Laskovyi mai* groups touring the Soviet Union. Their performances, MacFadyen writes, were possible due to lip-synching, which became much more common than in prior decades, when lip-synching was "anathema" in estrada performances. "Known in Russian as 'veneer' or *fanera*, it soon became a wide-spread practice, though – perhaps understandable when one considers the size of Russia and the lack of funds for financing any type of extended activity across its expanse" (MacFadyen 2002, 7-8). *Laskovyi mai* was not a single example of a band with multiple presences, and there were other famous performers and their "doppelgangers," who used lip-synching to provide periphery audiences with their loved repertoires and to earn good money along the way.

Radical changes, new economic conditions and the inflow of Western music after perestroika made the post-Soviet music market more heterogeneous. While estrada was transformed by these processes, popsa was produced by them. In the latter, the commercial mechanisms of show business played a central role, while musical ability became distinctly secondary. Commercial mechanisms included the practice of lip-synching described above, which caused a variety of scandals as well as the audience disappointment across the Soviet and post-Soviet space in the late 1980s and in the 1990s.

While estrada performers have distanced themselves from popsa singers, it did not necessarily mean that estrada and popsa were perceived as different genres by the public. In fact, both styles are interrelated in many people's perception, and estrada (especially

that of the post-Soviet period) is often equated to popsa. It is likely that the equation of estrada and popsa is a construct of rock musicians and fans as a means of distancing themselves from music associated with commercialism (of popsa) on the one hand, and conformism (of estrada) on the other. Generally, "popsa" is an ambiguous term, meaning Russian estrada or Russian pop for some, and pop music as a whole for others, be it post-Soviet or Western pop. Yet, the most common perception of this term implies the association with Russian pop since the late 1980s, and also with post-Soviet estrada.

4.2.2. Belarusian Rock

Belarusian rock is one of many local cultural forms, which is most represented academically. As described in Chapter 1, Belarusian rock is considered as an expression of Belarusian identity (cf. Survilla 2002). Belarusian rock musicians have mediated national consciousness and struggled against "cultural colonialism" by means of the Belarusian language, negotiation of Belarusian pre-Soviet, West-oriented history, and symbolic separation from the Soviet past (cf. Survilla 2002). Belarusian rock involves the choice of the Belarusian language, the use of traditional instruments, reference to historical experience, and socio-political criticism. Belarusian rock falls within the concept of underground music in Belarus.[26] Influenced by the *Beatles*, blues, and heavy metal styles, this music played an important role in the movements toward cultural and political change, such as the Renaissance movement (cf. Survilla 2002; 2005).[27] As an anti-establishment movement, Belarusian rock introduced the Belarusian language and specific issues of Belarus to a generation disconnected from traditional histories (Survilla 2002, 65).

According to Survilla's account (2003), the roots of the Belarusian rock movement are found in music scenes of the Soviet era. When smuggled recordings of Western music became increasingly popular in the 1960s, the government tried to control popular music production and created the VIAs, one of which, as described in Chapter 4.1.1, was the famous Belarusian VIA *Pesniary*. In the climate of genre censorship,

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[26] Although the term "underground music" is vague, in this case it is used as opposite to "official" music.
[27] The period from the beginning of independence in 1990 to the imposition of Lukashenka's administration in 1994 is known as cultural renaissance, or *adradzhenne*. During this period, the Belarusian language was intensively promoted in the social sphere and the spheres of culture and education.

Survilla writes, Belarusian and other Soviet audiences became receptive of *Pesniary* who sang in Belarusian and who therefore introduced the Belarusian language as a medium for popular music in the public sphere. It is pointed out that *Pesniary*'s popularity was seminal to the emergence of Belarusian popular music (Survilla 2003, 193).

The Belarusian rock movement, Survilla writes, was fully shaped in 1986, the year associated with the first appearance of the Belarusian Renaissance. Cultural and political criticism by the rock movement forged an association linking the Belarusian language, the rock musician, and rebellion; Belarusian rock became associated with the West and with "national chauvinism," and was criticized for "lack of authenticity" (Survilla 2003, 193-94). Survilla points out the lack of a music market in the 1990s: "[Despite] a more relaxed social and political climate for both established and newly emerging bands, recording opportunities and performance venues were few. As a result, bands that represented very different styles of rock would play at the same events" (2003, 194).

Alongside Belarusian rock, bard music has played a role in introducing the Belarusian language to the public sphere. Bard music is regarded as an intellectual and non-commercial genre that rarely gets the sponsorship found in popular and rock music (Survilla 2002, 64). Bards, or "singing poets," are considered mediators of the Belarusian language and are associated with the Renaissance movement (2002, 64).[28]

For decades, Belarusian rock musicians have been banned by the government and experienced difficulties in the organization of concerts. In many cases, the concerts were cancelled by authorities for various formal reasons. Belarusian rock musicians often perform in neighboring countries, such as Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Russia.[29] According to Survilla (2005), these musicians do not benefit economically from their popularity, they often require sponsorship from entrepreneurs, and are compelled to produce records after-hours in Belarusian radio studios, in Poland or in Germany.

As Survilla (2003) argues, the text in Belarusian rock plays a central role (as it does in Soviet and Russian rock). Belarusian rock understood as a social movement has articulated the issue of rediscovery of Belarusian identity, most effectively achieved by means of the language. As Survilla also states, the Belarusian language has served as a means for postcolonial positioning, in opposition to Russian cultural and linguistic

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[28] Bards are also highly respected by the Belarusian literary community (Survilla 2002, 64).
[29] However, the situation seems to have changed recently: the most famous Belarusian rock musicians Lyavon Volskiy and Sergey Mikhalok announced live performances in Minsk in 2017.

hegemony. Rock musicians who articulated cultural and political criticism in Belarusian have been treated by the government as rebels. It is pointed out that language choice serves as a "meta-frame" that heightens the impact of the words in music and empowers the listener who is familiar with them. Moreover, Belarusian rock provides the audiences with access to the Belarusian language and gives voice both to musical experience and social awareness. Survilla concludes: "For the Belarusan rock fan, the expectation is that the aesthetic experience of this music is bound up with the Belarusan language and the complex package of meanings that it entails, including the meaning of identity, history, experience, youth, and activism" (2003, 204). Belarusian rock is thus regarded as an expression and embodiment of national identity understood as the "alternative Belarusianness."

However, as Petz (2013) states, there has been a growing adaptation to the current political situation among Belarusian cultural activists and musicians since repressions and prohibitions strengthened in 2010. Young musicians' avoidance of political participation as well as the older rock musicians' adaptation is a survival strategy in a dictatorship with its repressions which unavoidably impact cultural expressions. Petz points out that, differently than in the 1990s, new repressions did not lead to a stronger protest culture, instead of which pragmatism and escapism have been preferred as a "survival strategy." The latter also resulted in experiments of cooperation between the state and underground culture, causing controversy within the cultural scene. Musicians of the younger generation are claimed to be adjusting to the regime rather than resisting it, which is perceived as contradictory to "revolutionary" rock music. The analysis of the current alternative cultural scene is thus pessimistic: "depression, stasis and disorientation" cannot serve for a strong protest culture (Petz 2013, 4).

4.2.3. Musical Landscapes of Belarus

In Belarus, there is a marked lack of a music industry, as Survilla (2005) has stated. The Belarusian music scene is described as paradoxical: it involves inconsistent production mechanisms, severe bureaucratic restrictions, and economic challenges of creating music. Pop and rock are considered separate categories in urban Belarus, although this distinction is vague, as Survilla points out. The distinction is largely based on such categories as gender: rock is considered male, sincere and rebellious, implying

instrumental ability and reflecting a lifestyle, while pop is regarded as lighter and better suited to women, and is associated with commercialism rather than with musical talent (2005, 48-51). Generally, the term "popular music" is often used to distinguish various music styles from "rock" (Survilla 2002, 64).

Western popular music has had a great influence on music production in Belarus, as in other Soviet and post-Soviet states. These Western influences began with the import of the *Beatles* and continued, more recently, with various musicians' interest in reggae, Afro-Cuban and Spanish rhythms, etc. (Survilla 2002, 80). In Belarus, such cross-cultural appropriations are often considered "inauthentic" and are perceived as "inappropriate" mixture of styles which results in a loss of the required emphasis on Belarusian musical elements and authentic expression (2002, 80-81). Authenticity in this context involves an embracement of folk roots through the use of the Belarusian language, of folk metaphors and iconography, and of the poetic and musical folk repertoire, while the "Western-style fans" and their music choice are often criticized as being controlled by Western commercialism (2002, 85).

Traditional Belarusian music regarded as authentic plays an important role in Belarusian music-making. Particularly, as Survilla explains, rural music-making is mediated as an example of authentic Belarusian expression. The production of urban performance ensembles is institutionally based (i.e. government-controlled) and is directed toward a recontextualization and "elevation" of Belarusian musical tradition. This genre of the urban-rural is an active part of the urban music scene and music production (Survilla 2002, 62-63). At the same time, music-making in Belarus is affected not only by references to Belarusian tradition but also by the conflicts resulting in the comparisons between new urban music (often perceived as imitative) and rural practice (viewed as authentic), as well as by the impact of world music and Western popular cultures (Survilla 2002, 11).

As Survilla pointed out, responses to the music genres vary according to the attitudes toward traditional culture, toward institutionally-defined performance, and toward the appropriation of Western styles. According to Survilla, genres of music involved in Belarusian contemporary music-making include rural repertoires, classical music, variety performance (estrada), staged folklore, bardic performance, pop and rock music (2002, 62). Besides, according to my own observations, local music-making

comprises electronic music in its diverse forms as well as styles that are only indirectly related to pop and rock, such as reggae and hip-hop.

Overall, my observations in Minsk from 2013 to 2017 make it possible to confirm the heterogeneity of events and offers of identity for young people. Small clubs, large concert halls and different open-air locations offer a variety of concerts and festivals, with local and foreign bands participating, for fans of various possible genres of music, such as alternative rock, indie, blues rock, punk rock, post-punk, metal, experimental folk, neo-folk, ethno-rock, folk, jazz, reggae, dub, hip-hop, R'n'B, disco, house, pop, estrada, etc. Local alternative bands usually perform in small clubs, bars und pubs,[30] while Western and Russian stars give concerts at big halls, such as the Sport Palace (*Dvorets Sporta*), a "cultural and sportive republican unitary venture," a state building accommodating audiences of 4500 and offering organized concerts and festivals.[31]

The major sources of popular music in Belarus are radio, television, live performance, and the internet. The production of records, most of them pirated, continues to decline in the internet era. Music offered in music stores in Minsk (in CD or mp3 format) is usually Russian, Western and, more rarely, Belarusian.

Radio and television are government-controlled in Belarus. As Krivolap and Matusevich (2008) point out, the Belarusian media-landscape, which did not exist during the USSR period as a separate mass media system, continues to be unified with Russian mass media, forming a common information space. The unified media space impacts upon the identification of Belarusian media, reinforcing an orientation toward Russia (Krivolap and Matusevich 2008, 210).[32]

However, despite the common media space, the government has introduced quotas for Belarusian music on Belarusian radio stations: since 2005, every Belarusian radio station has had to play 75 percent Belarusian music (which is not necessarily Belarusian-

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[30] E.g. *Graffiti*, *Piraty*, *Doodah King*, bar *DK* are small clubs staging local and Russian musicians' concerts. *Graffiti*, for instance, represents itself as an underground club and hosts bands playing blues rock, punk rock, post-punk, experimental/neo-folk, reggae, etc.

[31] Ticket prices vary significantly according to the scope of the event. Tickets for concerts of local (and sometimes Russian) musicians in small clubs cost around 7 to 15 euros. Ticket prices for concerts of Western stars, e.g. *Depeche Mode*, vary from 60 to 130 euros (the average salary in Belarus is currently ca. 400 euros per month, according to the national statistics committee of the Republic of Belarus).

[32] The language spoken on radio and television in Belarus is predominantly Russian.

language music).[33] The quotas lead to uniformity of radio stations on the one hand, and impossibility of certain formats on the other: it is impossible to air 75 percent of Belarusian classical or rock music according to the quotas (Krivolap and Matusevich 2008, 166). Alternatively, there are a few independent Belarusian-language radio stations that broadcast from Poland and can be heard on the internet.

The internet enables Belarusians to get music not available on radio, on television and in live performance. Although the internet is not an entirely free space either, it is less associated with governmental control than broadcasting and concerts. The internet provides access to the whole spectrum of various possible forms of Western, global and local music. Downloading is not prohibited owing to the ineffective copyright laws in Belarus (as in the post-Soviet space generally), and a variety of websites offer the possibility of downloading almost every foreign and local album or piece of music for free. While copyright is a regulated process in the West, many other states, including the former Soviet bloc, have problems enforcing copyright laws (Cloonan 1999, 200). The lack of copyright laws has made "piracy" almost legal in the post-Soviet states. Pirated CDs, DVDs, mp3 discs, etc. are sold in shops and on markets openly, and the piracy market is not regulated by authorities. Local Belarusian musicians themselves often provide their websites with links for downloading, which helps them to distribute albums produced not so much for commercial profits as for increasing popularity. Local musicians' profit is achieved via live performance, in Belarus and abroad, rather than through album recording and distribution.

In analyzing the role of Nation-States in popular music, Cloonan (1999) points out that the issue of censorship is closely associated with broadcasting and general control of the media. Various records and videos have been banned from the airwaves in various Nation-States for various reasons, and this process is predicted to continue (in today's Belarus, it continues indeed). Censorship takes place at various levels and under various Nation-State regulations. Laws on censorship, Cloonan points out, have an important impact on the type of pop which is acceptable within Nation-State boundaries. It is

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[33] This requirement has driven several radio stations into insolvency because they were no longer able to provide their audience with the music associated with those stations' image. Other stations that adhered to their format were closed for ignoring the governmental requirement. One such station is "Avtoradio" which was closed in 2011. It is remarkable that during the Belarusian election campaign in 2010, this station broadcast campaign agitations of Lukashenka's rivals. Cf. http://vestiregion.ru/2011/01/13/v-respublike-belarus-zakryli-avtoradio/

claimed that, while censorship of pop has taken place in a variety of democratic as well as undemocratic Nation-States, the most overt forms of state censorship are practiced in the former socialist bloc. These states, as Cloonan further describes, not only banned records and performances by Western performers, but also controlled domestic musicians, e.g. by issuing licenses for live performances and forbidding performance without a license.[34]

Recorded music was also controlled: in the Soviet Union, according to Cloonan, only professional bands singing in Russian were recorded.[35] Not only recorded music was censored, but the issue was often whether a song should be recorded at all; censorship was thus applied routinely, which caused a profound effect on popular music (Cloonan 1999, 198). Popular music, as Cloonan states, continues to play an important role in constructing national identity. In some cases, national identities are imposed on musicians; in other cases, musicians play a role in defining national identity (Cloonan 1999, 203). This statement evokes associations with the Belarusian identity discourse: while "official" Belarusian identity can be imposed on approved local musicians by the Belarusian Nation-State, "alternative" Belarusianness is rather (re)asserted by musicians in the "underground."

5. Music Preferences of Young Belarusians: Statistical Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the survey data collected in 2013 throughout Belarus. First, demographic data are described, which is followed by the description of music preferences of young Belarusians, of choices in music languages and regions of music's origin, choices of sources of music consumption, places and spaces of music consumption, functions of music, and cultural identifications of the respondents. Presenting empirical evidence on music preferences of young Belarusians, the chapter simultaneously provides a broader context for popular music in Belarus.

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[34] The same is stated by some respondents, as shown in Chapter 6.

[35] The VIA *Pesniary* singing in Belarusian proves the opposite, although such examples were quite rare.

Demographics

Participants in the survey were 493 female and 507 male respondents from all regions of Belarus (Brest region, Vitebsk region, Gomel' region, Grodno region, Minsk region, Mogilyov region, and the city of Minsk). The respondents' age ranged from 18 to 30 years; 38.3 percent of them were from 18 to 22 years old, 32.6 percent were 23-26, and 29.1 percent were 27-30 years old. 24.5 percent of all respondents lived in the capital; 35.8 percent were from a "big city" (more than 100,000 residents); 5.5 percent resided in a "middle-sized city" (50-100,000 residents); 15.7 percent were from a "small city/town" (less than 50,000 residents); and 18.5 percent of the respondents lived in a rural area. 90.4 percent of the respondents, i.e. the majority, declared themselves having a "Belarusian nationality"; 6.2 and 2.3 percent indicated "Russian" and "Polish," respectively; 0.8 and 0.3 percent chose "Ukrainian" and "other" nationalities, respectively. The distribution of the education levels is shown in Table 1:

Incomplete secondary (8-9 grades or less)	1.3%	13
Secondary general (10 - 11 grades)[36]	29.0%	290
Professional technical (*PTU*)	11.3%	113
Specialized secondary (*kolledzh*, *tekhnikum*)	36.3%	363
Higher education	21.9%	219
Doctor's degree	.2%	2
Total	100	1000

Table 1: Education level

5.1.   Music Styles

Responses to the first question of the "music set" of the survey show the following results: 35.9 percent of the young people consider "pop" their favorite music style, 22.6 percent

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[36] In many cases, having "secondary general education" implies currently studying: 45.5 percent of the respondents having this education level indicated their current occupation as "studying" (in a university or elsewhere), and 26.2 percent of them indicated "working and studying."

of the respondents prefer "rock," 14.1 percent indicated "club music" and 7.5 percent chose "hip-hop," to name the most prevalent answers. Overall, music styles preferred by young Belarusians include various genres alongside the common categories such as pop, rock, hip-hop, jazz and classical music.[37] Among the possible response options, reggae is most underrepresented, being preferred only by 0.7 percent of the respondents. 4.8 percent found it difficult to answer this question (see Table 2).

Music style	Frequency	Valid Percent
Pop	359	35.9
Rock	226	22.6
Hip-hop	75	7.5
Reggae	7	0.7
Club music	141	14.1
Jazz	21	2.1
Classical music	65	6.5
Rap	3	0.3
Chanson[38]	14	1.4
Indie	3	0.3
Punk	1	0.1
Rock-n-roll	1	0.1
Retro[39]	2	0.2
Deep house	1	0.1
Folk metal	1	0.1
Blues	1	0.1
Avantgarde	1	0.1
Trance	3	0.3

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[37] The entire spectrum of the respondents' favorite music styles is presented in table 2 showing the suggested response options as well as the respondents' own variants. The generalized, unified data are presented in Figure 1.

[38] Most likely, the implied genre is not the French chanson, but the so-called "Russian chanson," which refers to the Russian "criminal folklore" or related genres.

[39] According to the popular social network and music platform *VKontakte*, it is likely that "retro" refers to Soviet estrada and Western pop of the 1980s.

Metal	1	0.1
Dub-step	2	0.2
Folk music	2	0.2
Grindcore	1	0.1
Bossa nova	1	0.1
None	20	2.0
Difficult to answer	48	4.8
Total	1000	100

Table 2: Distribution of favorite music styles

The following graphs show general stylistic preferences of young Belarusians (Figure 1)[40] and preferences for music while attending concerts and festivals (Figure 2):
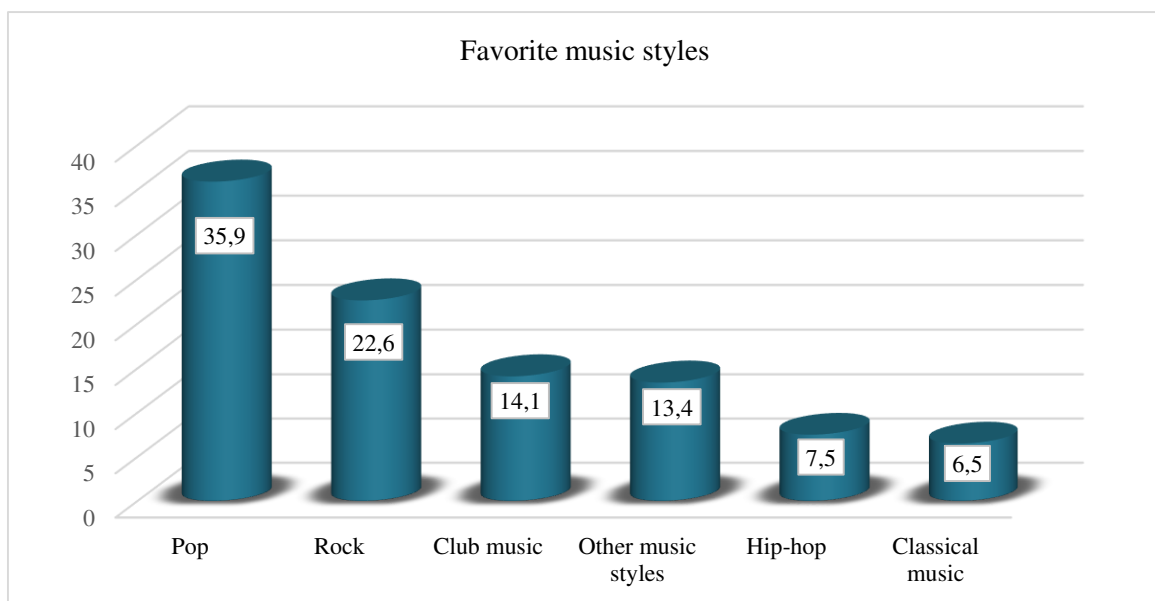
Figure 1: Distribution of favorite music styles

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[40] Small values were unified into the "other music styles" category.

Favorite music while attending clubs, concerts and festivals

Genre	Value
Ethno/Folk rock	1,1
Rock	2,1
Reggae, Dub	2,1
Drum and Bass	2,4
Bard song	2,5
Jazz	2,7
Punk	2,9
Folk music	3,1
Metal	4,5
R 'n' B	6,5
Indie/Alternative rock	7,3
Hip-hop	7,9
House/Techno	8,7
I don't attend clubs, concerts, festivals	9,1
Estrada	11,6
Pop	22,4
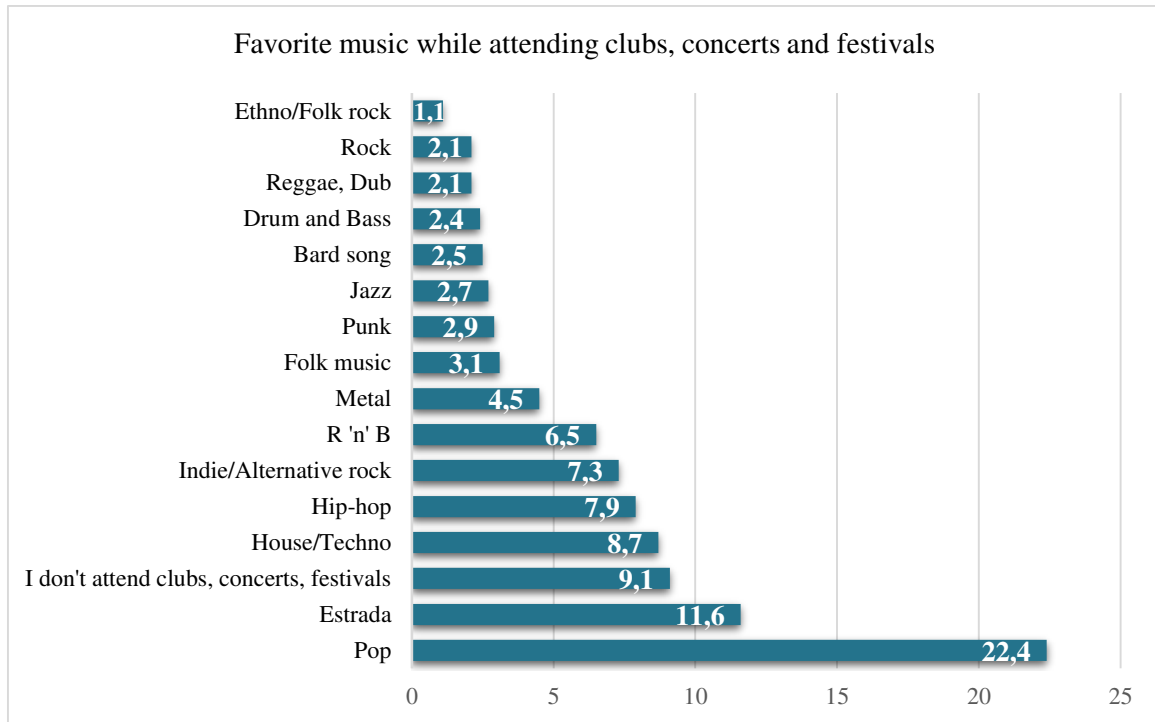
Figure 2: Distribution of favorite music while attending clubs, concerts and festivals

Figure 1 reflects the classical "pop-rock" division, although one should bear in mind that genres such as "pop" and "rock" are broad meta-categories and can be interpreted very differently. The graph showing music preferences while going out does not reveal such a division because, firstly, the respective question offers more options, secondly, the meta-category of rock is split into several "sub-styles," and thirdly, the respective question allowed two response options, unlike the question regarding one favorite music style.

However, responses to the second question "Which further music styles do you prefer?" reveal practically no differences between preferences of "pop", "rock" or "hip-hop" (see Table 3), which indicates that having to choose only one favorite music style is more likely to reveal people's stronger identification with a music style than the option "further music styles" allowing for multiple response options.

Further preferred music styles	*Responses*		*Percent of Cases*
	N	*Percent*	
Pop	216	12.4%	21.6%
Rock	213	12.3%	21.3%

Hip-hop	214	12.3%	21.4%
Reggae	111	6.4%	11.1%
Club music	341	19.6%	34.1%
Jazz	173	10.0%	17.3%
Classical music	290	16.7%	29.0%
None	43	2.5%	4.3%
Difficult to say	79	4.5%	7.9%
Total	1737	100.0%	173.7%

Table 3: Further preferred music styles [41]

In the question as to which music is preferred at concerts, festivals and in clubs, it turns out that indie/alternative rock (7.3 percent of responses), hip-hop (7.9 percent) and house/techno (8.7 percent) are represented by more or less similar numbers. With 4.5 percent of all responses, metal is more popular than the club music styles, such as dubstep or drum and bass. Pop and estrada are represented by 22.4 and 11.6 percent, respectively, which makes pop predominant over all other music styles (see Figure 2 and Table 4).

Music styles preferred at events	*Responses*		*Percent of cases*
	N	*Percent*	
Indie/alternative rock	110	7.3%	11.0%
Metal	68	4.5%	6.8%
Punk	43	2.9%	4.3%
Hip-hop	119	7.9%	11.9%
R&B	97	6.5%	9.7%
Reggae, Dub	32	2.1%	3.2%
House/Techno	130	8.7%	13.0%
Drum and Bass	36	2.4%	3.6%

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[41] The counted number is the number of responses (several response options were possible).

Ethno/folk rock	16	1.1%	1.6%
Bard music	38	2.5%	3.8%
Folk music, folklore	46	3.1%	4.6%
Pop	336	22.4%	33.6%
Estrada	174	11.6%	17.4%
Jazz	40	2.7%	4.0%
Other	14	0.9%	1.4%
Opera	1	0.1%	0.1%
Classical music	8	0.5%	0.8%
Deep house	1	0.1%	0.1%
Rock	31	2.1%	3.1%
Folk metal	1	0.1%	0.1%
Blues	1	0.1%	0.1%
Trance	2	0.1%	0.2%
Dubstep	2	0.1%	0.2%
Grime	1	0.1%	0.1%
Club music	1	0.1%	0.1%
Difficult to answer	13	0.9%	1.3%
I don't attend clubs, concerts, festivals	137	9.1%	13.7%
Total	1498	100.0%	149.8%

Table 4: Music in clubs, at concerts and festivals [42]

Selection of cases "pop as the favorite music style" showed the following: out of 359 people preferring "pop," 97 also indicated "rock" as a further favorite music style; 93 chose hip-hop; 17 respondents also like reggae; 180 indicated club music; 10 people preferred chanson; 45 young people chose jazz; and 107 respondents preferred classical

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[42] Two response options were possible.

music. This indicates that "club music" is more associated with "pop" than other styles, and that classical music as a further favorite "style" is quite widespread among young Belarusians. At the same time, "rock" and "hip-hop" are also popular among those who prefer "pop" the most, which points to the ambiguity of such terms as "pop" and "rock," but also indicates fluidity of music preferences.

The question "Which music styles do you dislike?" revealed that rock and jazz occupy a similar position in the anti-preferences of the respondents, with 14.7 and 14.1 percent, respectively (out of 100% of responses). A similar tendency is observable in the case of hip-hop and reggae (12.3% and 12.1%, respectively), as well as pop (9.3 %) and club music (8.4%). These parallels indicate that in some cases, the respective music styles may be associated with each other. Thus, pop and club music, hip-hop and reggae, or rock and jazz may be perceived by young people as related genres (see Table 5).

Music styles disliked	*Responses*		*Percent of cases*
	N	*Percent*	
Pop	147	9.3%	14.7%
Rock	233	14.7%	23.3%
Hip-hop	195	12.3%	19.5%
Reggae	191	12.1%	19.1%
Club music	133	8.4%	13.3%
Jazz	223	14.1%	22.3%
Classical music	122	7.7%	12.2%
None	98	6.2%	9.8%
Difficult to say	219	13.8%	21.9%
Total	1583	100.0%	158.3%

Table 5: Music styles disliked [43]

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[43] Several response options were possible.

Obviously, there is a connection between people's favorite music styles and concerts that they attend, i.e. people who prefer "pop" often indicate attending pop concerts, while people who prefer "rock" attend indie/alternative or metal music events, etc. However, although the connection seems obvious at first sight, a closer observation reveals certain discrepancies. For example, people who chose "pop" as their favorite music style also attend "indie/alternative" or "metal" concerts. Hip-hop fans also attend "estrada" concerts, and for some people, club music is not a contradiction to metal, estrada or folk. This indicates flexibility of musical practices and fluidity of musical taste.

Gender

There are obvious differences between genders in relation to music preferences. While of all female respondents 47.3 percent consider "pop" their favorite music style, the number of male respondents with the same preference is only 24.9 percent. On the contrary, "rock" is the favorite genre for 30.6 percent of men and only for 14.4 percent of women. Hip-hop is also more preferred by men (10.7 percent) than by women (4.3 percent). On the contrary, classical music was indicated by 9.3 percent of women and only by 3.7 percent of men (see Table 6).

Favorite style	*Male*	*Female*
Pop	24.9%	47.3%
Rock	30.6%	14.4%
Hip-hop	10.7%	4.3%
Reggae	.8%	.6%
Club music	15.8%	12.4%
Jazz	2.0%	2.2%
Classical music	3.7%	9.3%
Rap	.4%	.2%
Chanson	2.6%	.2%
None	2.2%	1.8%

Difficult to answer	4.5%	5.1%
Total	98.2	97.8

Table 6: Favorite music styles according to gender [44]

Howerver, when asked which further music styles the respondents like, the results appear to be different. Unlike in previous cases, here the categories of pop, rock, and hip hop are represented by almost equal numbers (see Table 7). The difference between the figures may be explained similarly to the case with "favorite music styles" and "further preferred music styles," i.e. the latter is less indicative of a strong identification with particular music than the former.

Further preferred styles	*Male*	*Female*
Pop	21.3%	21.9%
Rock	22.5%	20.1%
Hip hop	21.9%	20.9%
Reggae	13.8%	8.3%
Club music	32.0%	36.3%
Jazz	18.1%	16.4%
Classical music	24.1%	34.1%
Rap	.4%	.6%
Hardcore	.6%	
Chanson	1.6%	.8%
Opera		.2%
Punk	1.0%	
Rock-n-roll	.2%	.2%

[44] Minor values (equal to 0.1) were omitted.

Retro	.2%	
Deep house		.4%
Blues		.4%
Romance		.2%
Avantgarde	.2%	
Trance	.4%	.6%
Metal	.2%	.2%
Dub-step	1.0%	.4%
Grime	.2%	
Folk music	.2%	.8%
Bard music	.2%	
Dark Ambient	.2%	
None	5.5%	3.0%
Difficult to answer	7.7%	8.1%
Total	173.5	173.9

Table 7: Further preferred music styles, according to gender [45]

In the question "Which music styles do you dislike?" 21 percent of male and 8 percent of female respondents' responses indicate dislike of "pop," while "rock" is represented by 16.6 percent of responses of men and 30 percent of responses of women. "Hip-hop" and "club music" are represented by more similar figures: 18 and 21 percent of responses of men, and 12.8 and 13.8 percent of responses of women, respectively. Classical music is indicated by 14.6 percent of male and 9.7 percent of female respondents' responses (see Table 8).

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[45] The counted number is the number of responses.

Disliked styles	*Male*	*Female*
Pop	20.9%	8.3%
Rock	16.6%	30.2%
Hip-hop	18.1%	20.9%
Reggae	16.0%	22.3%
Club music	12.8%	13.8%
Jazz	23.1%	21.5%
Classical music	14.6%	9.7%
Rap	1.2%	.2%
Chanson	1.4%	.4%
Techno		.2%
Metal		.6%
Country		.2%
R&B	.2%	
None	9.9%	9.7%
Difficult to answer	22.5%	21.3%
Total	157.3	159.3

Table 8: Music styles disliked, according to gender

Table 9 shows the distribution of music preferred in clubs and at concerts according to gender. 45 percent of female respondents' responses are represented by pop, while only 22.5 percent of male respondents' responses are represented by the same preference. Estrada is indicated by 21.3 percent of female and by 13.6 percent of male respondents' responses. 11 percent of male metal fans' responses prevail over 2.4 percent of responses of female metal concert goers. The tendency is similar in relation to punk. This means that "pop" and "estrada" are more preferred by women, and rock styles such as metal and

punk are more preferred by men (see Table 9). This case as well as the case with "favorite music styles" (Table 6) support the assumption that the distinction between rock and pop in Belarus is largely based on the category of gender, as Survilla (2005) has pointed out.

Music styles preferred at events	Male	Female
Indie/alternative rock	13.6%	8.3%
Metal	11.0%	2.4%
Punk	6.9%	1.6%
Hip-hop	13.2%	10.5%
R&B	10.5%	8.9%
Reggae, Dub	3.6%	2.8%
House/Techno	15.2%	10.8%
Drum and Bass	4.3%	2.8%
Ethno/folk rock	1.0%	2.2%
Bard music	3.4%	4.3%
Folklore	3.0%	6.3%
Pop	22.5%	45.0%
Estrada	13.6%	21.3%
Jazz	3.2%	4.9%
Something else	1.6%	1.2%
Opera		.2%
Classical music	.6%	1.0%
Deep house		.2%
Rock	4.1%	2.0%
Folk metal	.2%	

Blues	.2%	
Trance	.2%	.2%
Dub-step	.4%	
Grime		.2%
Club music		.2%
Difficult to answer	1.2%	1.4%
I don't attend concerts, clubs, festivals	15.2%	12.2%
Total	148.7	150.9

Table 9: Music styles preferred at concerts and festivals, according to gender

Age

For a comparison of different youth age groups, ages between 18 and 30 were grouped into three groups: 18 to 22 (average age range when studying), 23 to 26 (first work experience on average), and 27 to 30 (average family establishing). In comparing these groups one can observe an increasing tendency of the preference of pop according to age, i.e. the older people are the more often pop is preferred within respective groups (see Table 10). On the contrary, rock and hip-hop are more represented among the younger respondents: while 27.9 percent of the people interviewed at an age between 18 and 22 declared rock their favorite music style, among the 27- to 30-year-old respondents only 16.8 percent said that they prefer rock (see Table 10).

Favorite music style	*18-22*	*23-26*	*27-30*
Pop	29.0%	36.2%	44.7%
Rock	27.9%	21.5%	16.8%
Hip-hop	9.4%	8.6%	3.8%
Reggae	.5%	.6%	1.0%
Club music	18.0%	14.4%	8.6%

Jazz	1.8%	2.5%	2.1%
Classical music	5.2%	6.4%	8.2%
Total	91.8	90.2	85.2

Table 10: Favorite music styles according to age [46]

Similar tendencies exist in "going out" preferences. The younger people are the more they prefer attending clubs and concerts to enjoy indie/alternative rock, metal, punk, rock as well as R&B, reggae/dub, house/techno and drum and bass. Conversely, the older people are the more they prefer pop and estrada as well as bard music, ethno/folk rock and folklore (see Table 11). Generally, the older people are the less often they attend concerts and festivals, probably because other aspects, such as family and work, become prioritized in an older age.

Music styles preferred at events	*18-22*	*23-26*	*27-30*
Indie/alternative rock	14.9%	10.1%	6.9%
Metal	8.4%	6.7%	4.8%
Punk	5.7%	5.2%	1.4%
Hip-hop	12.8%	14.4%	7.9%
R&B	12.0%	11.0%	5.2%
Reggae, Dub	3.9%	3.4%	2.1%
House/Techno	17.5%	11.3%	8.9%
Drum and Bass	5.5%	3.4%	1.4%
Ethno/folk rock	.8%	1.8%	2.4%
Bard song	3.1%	3.7%	4.8%
Folklore	4.2%	4.0%	5.8%
Pop	32.4%	31.9%	37.1%

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[46] Minor values were omitted.

Estrada	12.3%	17.2%	24.4%
Jazz	3.9%	4.6%	3.4%
Rock	4.4%	2.5%	2.1%
I don't attend clubs, concerts, festivals	10.4%	14.4%	17.2%
Total	152.2	145.6	135.8

Table 11: Music styles preferred at concerts and festivals, according to age

Education level

Music preferences do not seem to be strongly influenced by level of education. Of those who prefer "pop," 23.4 percent have secondary general education, 12.5 percent have professional technical, 41.2 have specialized secondary, and 22 percent of the respondents have higher education. Of those preferring "rock," 38.5 percent have secondary general education, 31.9 percent have specialized secondary, 20.4 have higher, and 8 percent have professional technical education. Of those who declared hip-hop as their favorite style, 33.3 percent have secondary general education, 12 percent have professional technical, 36 percent have specialized secondary, and 18.7 percent have higher education. Thus, people with higher, technical and specialized secondary education level prefer pop, rock and hip-hop more or less equally, although people with a secondary general education level prefer rock and hip-hop over pop. People with a higher education level prefer classical music over pop; other differences between music preferences in relation to the education level are rather insignificant, which indicates that the education level is not a highly important factor in musical identifications (see Figure 3).
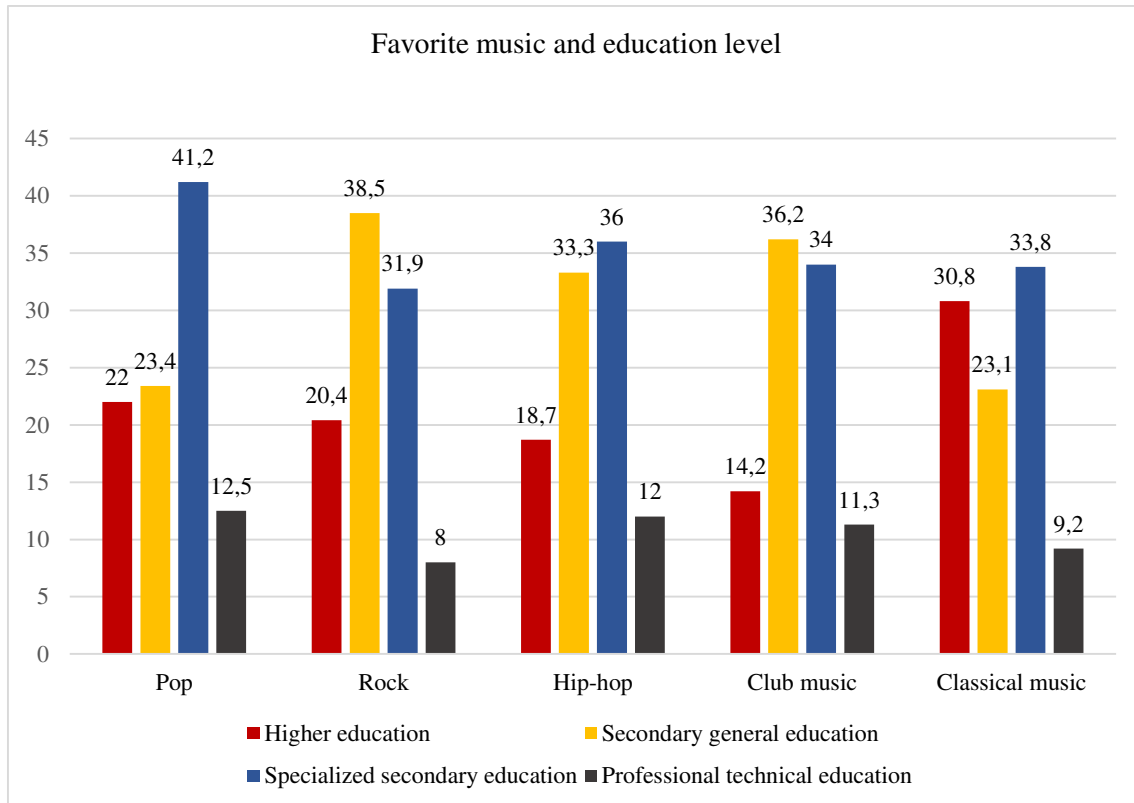
Figure 3: Favorite music and education level [47]

In relation to preferred music while attending events, the differences between education levels are least significant in the case of "punk," "hip-hop," "pop" and "estrada." Indie, metal, and house/techno are most preferred by people having incomplete secondary or secondary education; generally, the differences between education levels are more noticeable in relation to these styles than in the case of pop, hip-hop or punk. Particularly in relation to pop, these tendencies point to the insignificance of education level, i.e. people almost equally prefer "pop" regardless of level of education. The same applies to "punk" (see Table 12).

Music styles preferred at events	Incomplete secondary/ secondary education	Professional technical education	Specialized secondary education	Higher education
Indie/alternative rock	17.2%	4.4%	10.2%	7.2%
Metal	10.6%	7.1%	4.1%	5.9%

[47] Minor values in music styles were omitted.

Punk	4.6%	3.5%	4.4%	4.1%
Hip-hop	9.6%	13.3%	14.3%	10.4%
R&B	10.6%	9.7%	10.5%	7.2%
Reggae, Dub	4.3%	.9%	3.0%	3.2%
House/Techno	17.8%	11.5%	10.5%	11.3%
Drum and Bass	5.3%	2.7%	3.3%	2.3%
Ethno/folk rock	2.0%		1.1%	2.7%
Bard song	2.6%	6.2%	3.6%	4.5%
Folklore	3.3%	8.0%	3.6%	6.3%
Pop	30.7%	34.5%	33.9%	36.7%
Estrada	9.2%	21.2%	20.4%	21.7%
Jazz	3.0%	3.5%	2.8%	7.7%
Other	2.0%		1.7%	.9%
Difficult to say	.7%	.9%	1.1%	2.7%
I don't attend clubs, concerts, festivals	11.9%	15.9%	16.0%	11.3%
Total	145.4	143.3	144.5	146.1

Table 12: Preferred music styles at concerts and festivals, according to the education level

Size of municipality/place of residence

The pop-rock distinction is observable not only in relation to gender, but also to the size of municipality, in which the respondents reside. As the graph below shows, in all municipalities, except for the capital, "pop" prevails over "rock."[48] The biggest difference between pop and rock preference exists in the village, although the tendency is similar in the big city. This means that young Belarusians living in big, middle and small cities as

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[48] In relation to other music styles, there are no observable differences.

well as in villages, who prefer "pop" the most, are quantitatively more prevalent than those who prefer "rock." Only in Minsk is the situation opposite, where the number of "rock" listeners exceeds that of "pop" fans, which can be explained by a bigger number of events and a larger variety of cultural opportunities in the capital (see Figure 4).
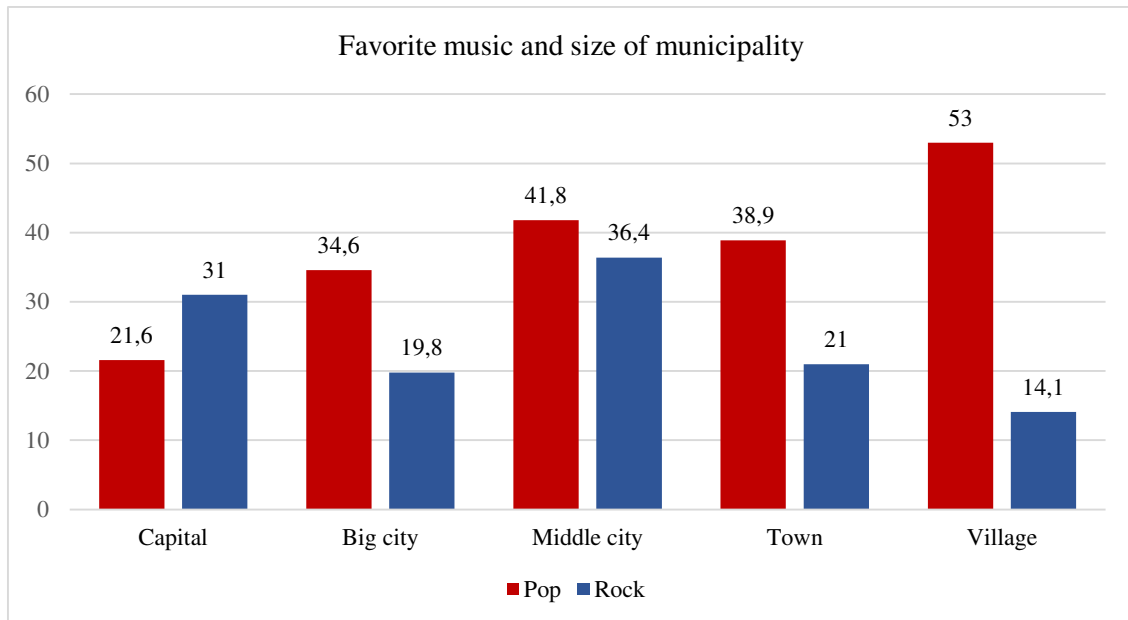
Figure 4: Favorite music and size of municipality

Table 13 shows a more detailed distribution of favorite music styles according to the size of municipality. (The differences become less considerable, when the data are related to the question as to what *further* music styles the respondents like.)

Favorite music styles	Capital	Big city	Middle city	Town	Village
Pop	21.6%	34.6%	41.8%	38.9%	53.0%
Rock	31.0%	19.8%	36.4%	21.0%	14.1%
Hip-hop	7.8%	10.9%	3.6%	5.1%	3.8%
Reggae	.8%	.8%		1.3%	
Club music	14.7%	14.5%	5.5%	17.8%	11.9%
Jazz	2.9%	2.2%	1.8%	1.3%	1.6%

Classical music	8.2%	6.1%	5.5%	4.5%	7.0%
Total	87.0	88.9	94.6	89.9	91.4

Table 13: Favorite music styles according to the size of municipality [49]

In terms of dislikes, one can observe a decreasing tendency (from the capital to the village) in "pop" and "club music," and an increasing tendency in "rock" and "jazz," i.e. the smaller a municipality is the more often rock and jazz, and the less often pop and club music are disliked. Hip-hop, reggae and classical music are least appreciated in the village. Overall, the percentage of responses regarding anti-preferences is highest in the village (see Table 14). This might indicate that people living in rural areas have more fixed choices in music and are less open to a variety of music styles than people living in urban areas.

Music styles disliked	*Capital*	*Big city*	*Middle city*	*Town*	*Village*
Pop	19.6%	15.1%	9.1%	12.7%	10.8%
Rock	14.3%	25.4%	12.7%	20.4%	36.8%
Hip-hop	17.6%	20.9%	9.1%	12.7%	28.1%
Reggae	13.1%	21.8%	16.4%	13.4%	27.6%
Club music	18.4%	12.6%	7.3%	7.0%	15.1%
Jazz	14.7%	19.0%	23.6%	24.2%	36.8%
Classical music	6.1%	13.1%	10.9%	8.9%	21.6%
Total	103.8	127.9	89.1	99.3	176.8

Table 14: Music styles disliked, according to the size of municipality

The following table shows the distribution of music styles preferred in clubs, concerts and festivals according to the size of municipality. It demonstrates that pop, estrada, bard and folk music are most preferred in the villages, while indie/alternative rock and metal

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[49] Minor values were omitted.

are most appreciated in the middle-sized cities. Punk, hip-hop, folk rock, rock and jazz are most often chosen in the capital, while reggae and electronic music, such as dub, house/techno and drum and bass are most preferred in the big cities (see Table 15).

| Music styles preferred at events	Capital	Big city	Middle city	Town	Village
Indie/alternative rock	12.2%	10.6%	16.4%	12.1%	7.6%
Metal	11.0%	3.9%	12.7%	8.3%	3.8%
Punk	8.2%	3.4%	5.5%	4.5%	.5%
Hip-hop	13.5%	12.0%	10.9%	12.1%	9.7%
R&B	11.0%	12.3%	12.7%	4.5%	6.5%
Reggae, Dub	3.7%	3.9%	1.8%	3.8%	1.1%
House/Techno	14.3%	14.8%	14.5%	11.5%	8.6%
Drum and Bass	2.4%	5.3%	3.6%	2.5%	2.7%
Ethno/folk rock	2.9%	1.1%		1.9%	1.1%
Bard song	4.5%	2.2%	5.5%	3.2%	5.9%
Folklore	4.5%	2.8%	3.6%	2.5%	10.3%
Pop	31.0%	33.8%	27.3%	31.2%	40.5%
Estrada	10.6%	19.6%	10.9%	15.3%	25.9%
Jazz	6.9%	4.5%		2.5%	1.6%
Rock	5.3%	2.2%		1.9%	3.8%
I don't attend clubs, concerts, festivals	7.8%	12.6%	18.2%	19.1%	17.8%
Total	149.8	145.0	143.6	136.9	147.4

Table 15: Music styles preferred at concerts and festivals, according to the size of municipality

5.2.   Languages in Music and the Countries of Music's Origin

Russian and Western music is most widespread in Belarus. Languages that Belarusian musicians use in songwriting are, in most cases, Russian, Belarusian and English, with Russian being most preferred. Belarusian and especially Belarusian-language music has a marginal status in Belarus, compared to music from Russia and the Western countries. This is evidenced by the following statistics: in answering the question "What country's music do you prefer most?" 50 percent of the respondents indicated a preference for music from Russia, while a further 34 percent chose music from the USA or Great Britain.[50] Music of Belarus was preferred by 5.5 percent (see Figure 5). Of these 5.5 percent (or 55 respondents), 30 persons indicated that the texts in music they prefer are in Russian, 9 respondents chose English, and 14 persons indicated Belarusian. This demonstrates the low proportion of Belarusian-language music in Belarusian music, as well as the low popularity of Belarusian-language music among young Belarusians. In the question "What further countries' music do you prefer?" Belarus was represented by 15 percent, Russia by 22 percent, and USA/Great Britain by 26.5 percent of the responses (of 100%). These results indicate that Belarus as the "country of music's origin" occupies a marginal position in music preferences of young Belarusians, remaining far behind Russia, the USA and Great Britain.
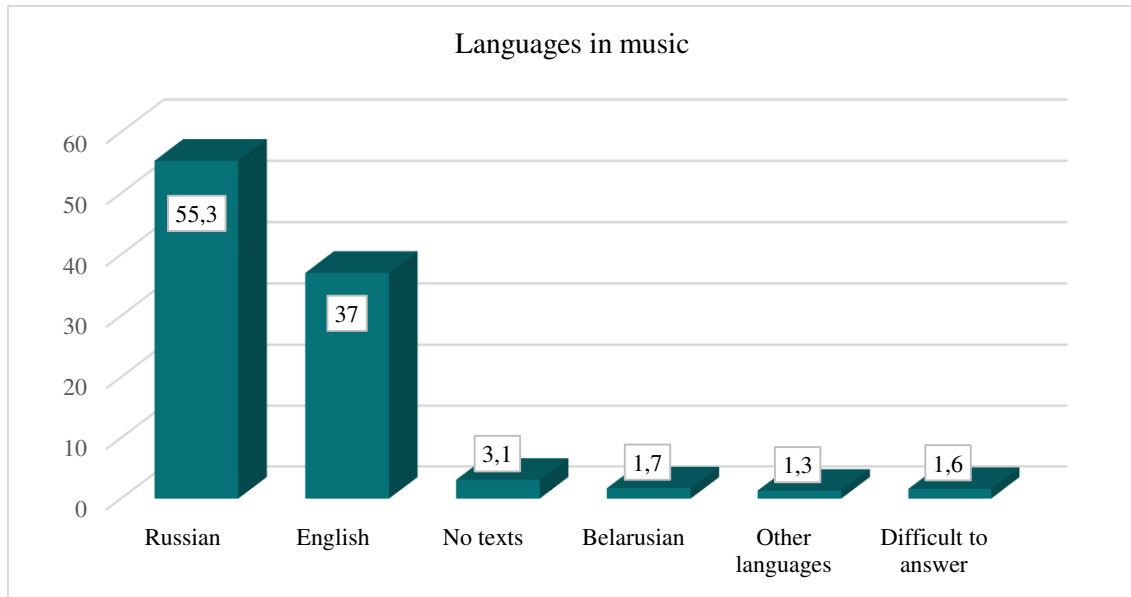
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[50] This result contradicts the hypothesis that preferences of young Belarusians are shaped by Western music and the preferred countries of music's origin are those of the Anglo-American space. As it turned out, Russian music is more preferred than Western music.
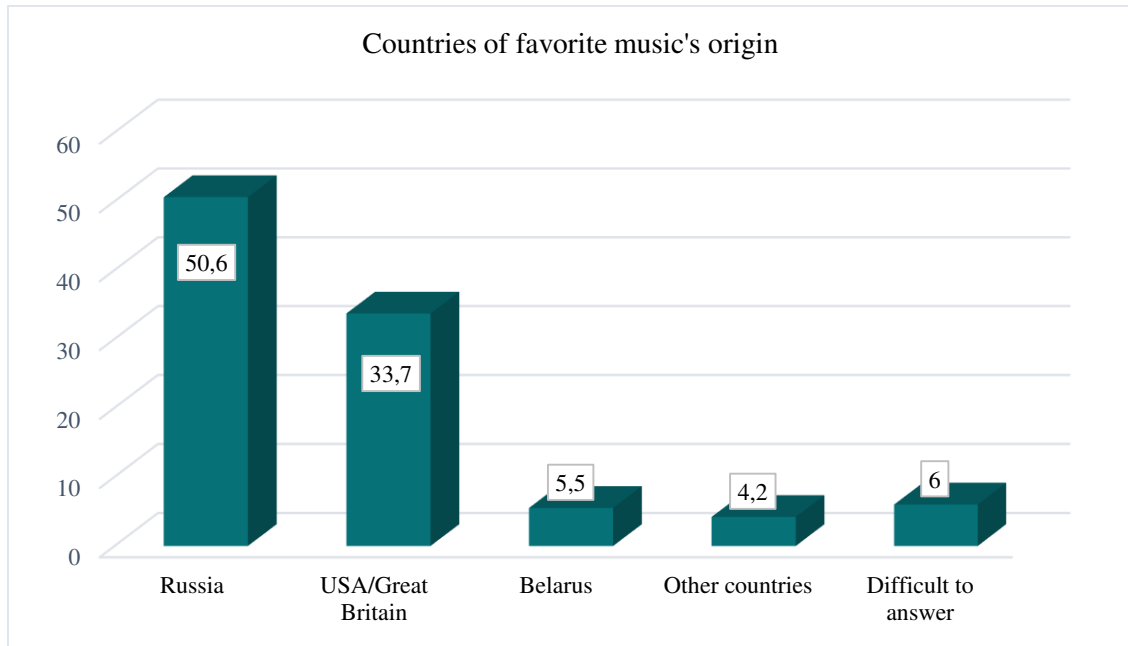
Figure 5: Distribution of countries of favorite music's origin

The distribution of language preferences in music is similar, in relation to Russian and English (see Figure 6). Comparing the graphs in Figures 6 and 7 reveals a parallel between preferences in music's languages and languages considered as native. Nearly 52 percent of the respondents identified Russian as their native language, and 55 percent chose the Russian language for music they preferred. However, this parallel is obvious only in relation to the Russian language, not to Belarusian. While 35 percent of the respondents consider Belarusian their native language, less than two percent said that their favorite music's texts are written in Belarusian (see Figures 6,7).

Languages in music

Russian	55,3
English	37
No texts	3,1
Belarusian	1,7
Other languages	1,3
Difficult to answer	1,6

Figure 6: Distribution of languages in favorite music

Languages considered native

Russian	51,9
Belarusian	35
Belarusian-Russian	12,5
Other language	0,6
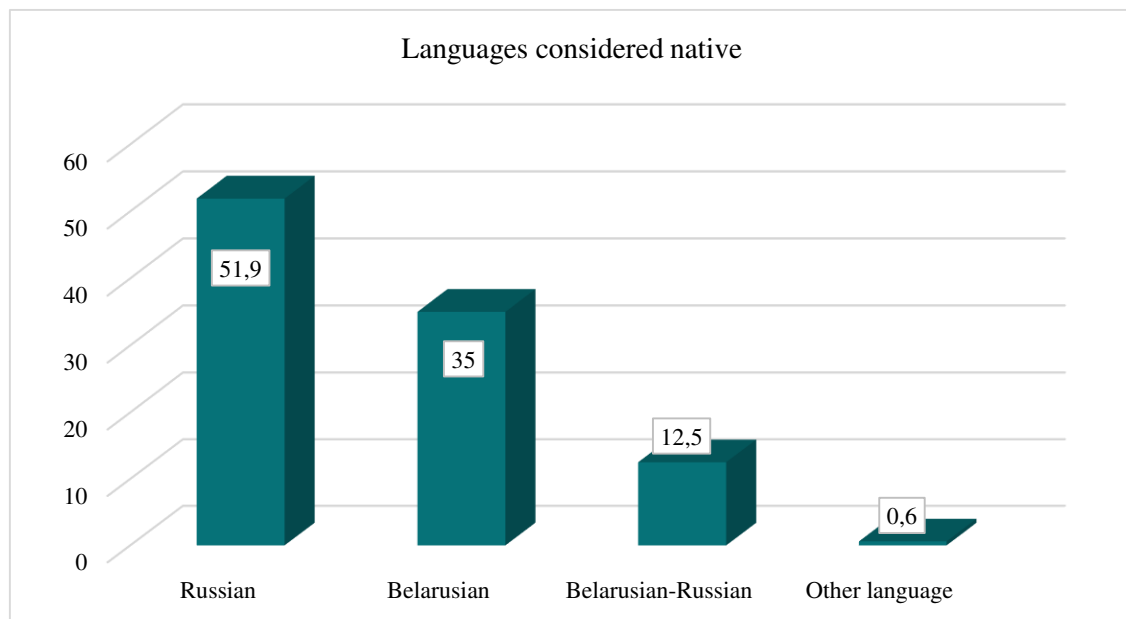
Figure 7: Distribution of languages considered native

Of those who consider Belarusian their native language, only 2.9 percent said that they prefer Belarusian-language lyrics, while 55.1 percent chose the Russian language in music (another 37.1 percent chose English). Of those who consider Russian their native language, 0.8 percent preferred Belarusian, 50.5 percent chose Russian, and 42.2 percent preferred English as the language of song lyrics. Of those who indicated Belarusian-

Russian as their native language, 2.4 percent chose Belarusian, 76.8 percent preferred Russian, while another 14.4 percent chose English as the language in their favorite music.

There is an obvious discrepancy in relation to Belarusian as the native language and languages preferred in music. This discrepancy can be explained, firstly, by the fact that considering a language native and actually speaking this language do not necessarily coincide in Belarus.[51] Many Belarusians, who identify Belarusian as their native language, in fact speak Russian in everyday life: of the 35 percent of the respondents who consider Belarusian their native language, only 8.3 percent said that they use it in everyday life. Secondly, the music market is primarily provided with Russian and Western music rather than Belarusian, so it is hardly possible for Belarusian-language music to gain priority.

The responses to the question "In which further languages are your favorite music's texts written?" show that Belarusian is indicated by nearly 15 percent, Russian by 28 percent, and English by 41 percent (of 100% of the responses). Both the distribution of the "countries of preferred music's origin" and the distribution of "languages in favorite music" reveal that Belarusian music (which may be in Russian or English) as well as Belarusian-language music occupies a marginal position in music preferences of young Belarusians (Wakengut 2015, 140-43).

In analyzing "favorite music" in relation to languages in music, it becomes obvious that "pop" is more associated with the Russian language, while "rock" is linked with the English language, i.e. a majority of pop listeners (72.7 percent) prefer Russian-language music, while a majority of rock fans (59.3 percent) choose English-language music. In regard to other styles, except for "rock," the Russian language prevails as well, while Belarusian is strongly underrepresented (see Figure 8).

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[51] According to Hentschel and Kittel (2011), the Belarusian language has a symbolic meaning for many Belarusians: it is often declared to be a native language despite the use of Russian or Belarusian-Russian mixed speech ("trasyanka") in everyday life. For more about this mixed speech, see also ″Eleven Questions and Answers about Belarusian Trasyanka" (Hentschel 2017).
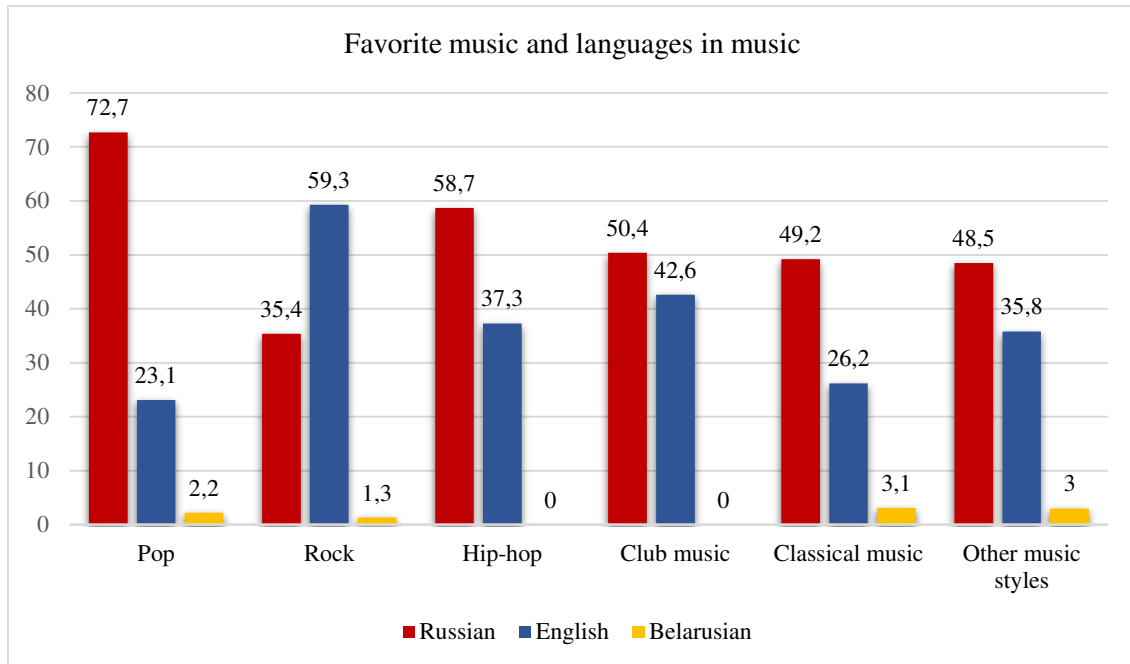
Figure 8: Favorite music and languages in music

Distribution of languages in music as well as of countries of favorite music's origin according to respondents' gender did not reveal any significant differences: the number of both women and men who prefer Russian music as well as music in Russian exceeds the number of women and men who prefer music from the USA/Great Britain or elsewhere, or music in English or in other languages.

Comparing groups according to education level reveals the following results: preference of English-language music as well as of music from the USA/Great Britain prevails in the group of respondents who have secondary general education, while in other groups of respondents (having professional technical, specialized secondary, or higher education) the preference of Russian-language music and music from Russia is predominant (see Tables 16, 17). However, there is a reverse tendency resulting from the responses to the questions as to what *further* languages and countries are preferred: in the groups of respondents having higher, specialized and professional technical education, the number of those who prefer English music as a further option is higher than the number of those who choose Russian music. Conversely, in the group of respondents having incomplete secondary or secondary education, there are more people who indicated Russian music as a further option than those who chose American/English music. Thus, the differences are balanced through the possibility to indicate several

further response options, and it becomes obvious that Russian and American/English music are interchangeable in music preferences of young Belarusians.

Languages in favorite music	Incomplete secondary/ secondary general	Professional technical	Specialized secondary	Higher	Total
Belarusian	1.3%	4.4%	1.9%	.5%	8.1
Russian	42.6%	66.4%	60.6%	58.4%	228
English	49.5%	23.0%	32.5%	34.4%	139.4
Total	93.4	93.8	95.0	93.3	

Table 16: Languages in favorite music and education level [52]

Countries of favorite music's origin	Incomplete secondary/ secondary general	Professional technical	Specialized secondary	Higher
Belarus	6.6%	7.1%	5.0%	4.1%
Russia	35.6%	61.1%	57.9%	53.8%
USA/Great Britain	46.5%	22.1%	27.8%	31.7%
Total	88.7	90.3	90.7	89.6

Table 17: Countries of favorite music's origin and education level

Music from the USA/Great Britain and English-language music is more preferred in the capital than in all other municipalities. In the big, middle-sized and small cities as well as in the village, the number of respondents who prefer Russian music is more prevalent than the number of those who prefer American or English music. The situation is opposite in the capital (see Tables 18, 19), which may be caused by a greater variety of music events there: in particular, it is Minsk rather than other cities of Belarus, where Western stars give concerts.

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[52] Minor values in Tables 16, 17, 18 and 19 were omitted.

As in the previous case with the education level, the tendency is reversed when related to *further* preferred countries of music's origin and languages in music, i.e. people living in the capital choose Russian music as a further option, while American and English music is preferred as a further option by people from the big, middle-sized and small city, and the village. This indicates the interchangeable character of language choices in music, albeit only in regard to the Russian and English languages (but never to Belarusian).

Countries of favorite music's origin	Capital	Big city	Middle city	Town	Village
Belarus	3.3%	2.5%	7.3%	8.9%	10.8%
Russia	35.1%	47.8%	58.2%	59.2%	67.0%
USA/Great Britain	48.2%	38.0%	29.1%	24.8%	15.1%
Total	86.6	88.3	94.6	92.9	92.9

Table 18: Countries of favorite music's origin according to the size of municipality

Languages in favorite music	Capital	Big city	Middle city	Town	Village	Total
Belarusian		.3%	1.8%	3.2%	5.4%	10.7
Russian	40.8%	51.1%	60.0%	65.0%	73.0%	289.9
English	51.4%	41.3%	36.4%	27.4%	17.8%	174.3
Total	92.2	92.7	98.2	95.6	96.2	

Table 19: Languages in favorite music according to the size of municipality [53]

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[53] The Russian language is prevalent and Belarusian is underrepresented, as shown in this table as well as in Table 16.

5.3.   Sources, Spaces and Places of Music Consumption

Sources of music consumption

Downloading music from the internet is the most common way for young people in Belarus to get music, as demonstrated by 81.2 percent of all responses to the question "Where do you get music from?" "Listening to music online" is represented by 41.5 percent of responses. Only 10.7 percent of responses feature the option "I buy records" (see Figure 9).[54]
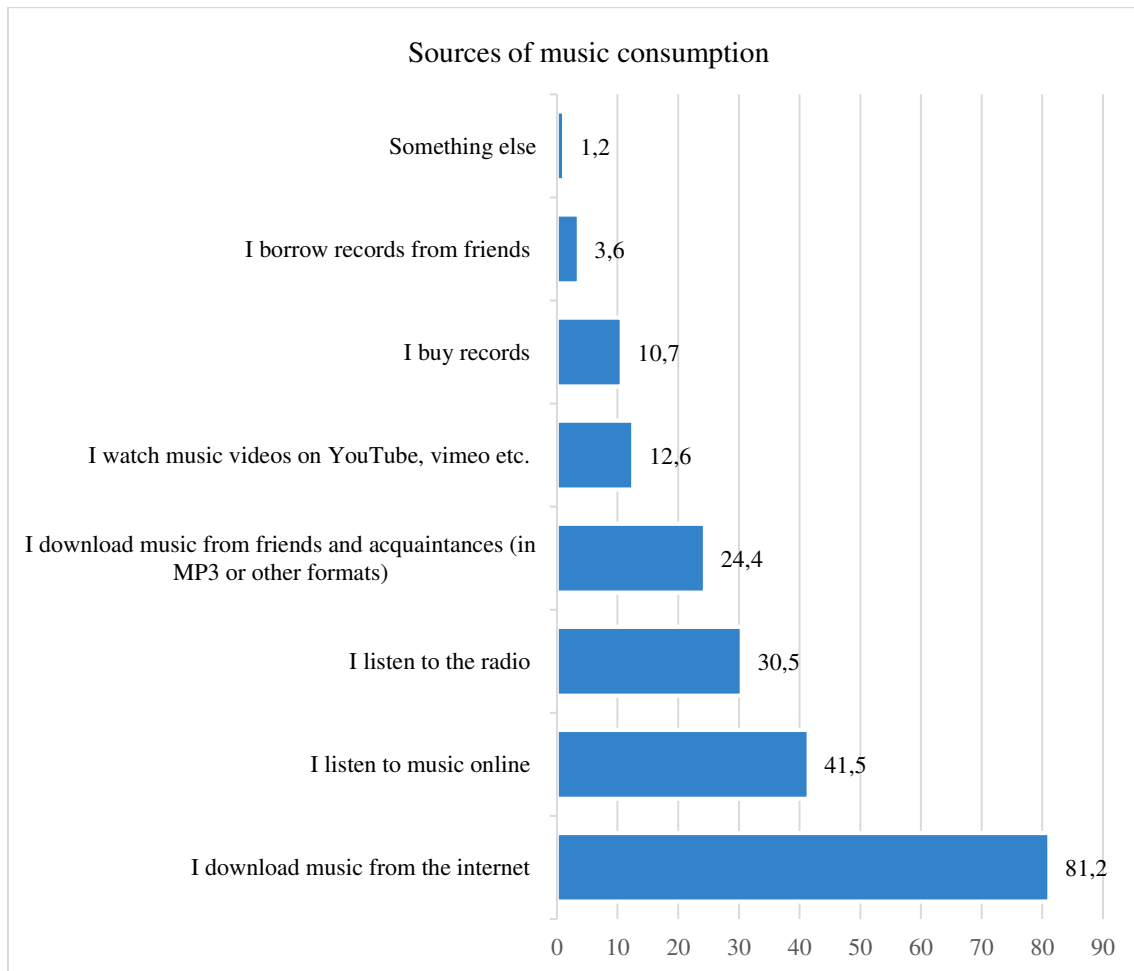
Figure 9: Sources of music consumption [55]

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[54] "Records" usually imply CDs, and less commonly vinyl records.
[55] Several response options were possible.

As the following table demonstrates, the younger people are the more they use the internet to get music, be it downloading, listening online, or watching music videos. On the contrary, the older the people are the more often they declare they buy records and listen to the radio (see Table 20).

Where do you usually get music from?	18-22	23-26	27-30
I buy records	6.5%	8.9%	18.2%
I download music from the internet	87.2%	84.0%	70.1%
I download music from friends and acquaintances (in MP3 or other formats)	25.8%	23.6%	23.4%
I borrow records from friends	3.9%	3.4%	3.4%
I listen to music online	48.3%	41.1%	33.0%
I listen to the radio	24.0%	27.9%	41.9%
I watch music videos on YouTube, vimeo etc.	16.2%	12.9%	7.6%
Something else	.3%	1.8%	1.7%
Total	212.2	203.6	199.3

Table 20: Sources of music consumption according to age [56]

Buying records and borrowing records from friends as well as listening to the radio are more prevalent among rural Belarusians than urban respondents (see Table 21). Downloading music from the internet is more common among urban Belarusians than rural; listening online is more prevalent in the capital and big city than in other municipalities, which may result from a better internet infrastructure in the capital and big cities than in rural areas.

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[56] The counted number in Tables 20 and 21 is the number of responses.

Where do you usually get music from?	Capital	Big city	Middle city	Town	Village
I buy records	12.7%	9.5%	5.5%	6.4%	15.7%
I download music from the internet	84.9%	82.1%	90.9%	80.3%	72.4%
I download music from friends and acquaintances (in MP3 or other formats)	22.0%	19.6%	45.5%	33.1%	23.2%
I borrow records from friends	2.9%	2.0%		1.9%	10.3%
I listen to music online	49.0%	48.6%	29.1%	32.5%	29.2%
I listen to the radio	20.0%	34.9%	27.3%	27.4%	39.5%
I watch music videos on YouTube, vimeo etc.	16.7%	13.1%	9.1%	9.6%	9.7%
Something else	.8%	.3%	3.6%	.6%	3.2%
Total	209.0	210.1	211.0	191.8	203.2

Table 21: Sources of music consumption according to the size of municipality

Radio

Russian and Belarusian radio stations are most popular among young Belarusians (38.5 and 37.5 percent of responses, respectively), while the response option "I don't listen to the radio" is represented by 17.3 percent of responses. Western radio stations (e.g. from Poland) that broadcast for the Belarusian audience are rather unpopular among young Belarusians, being represented by 2.7 percent of responses (see Figure 10). The unpopularity of the latter can be explained by the fact that these radio stations are assoiated with oppositional views; given the institutional context of the survey, it can be expected that this response option often remains unindicated.
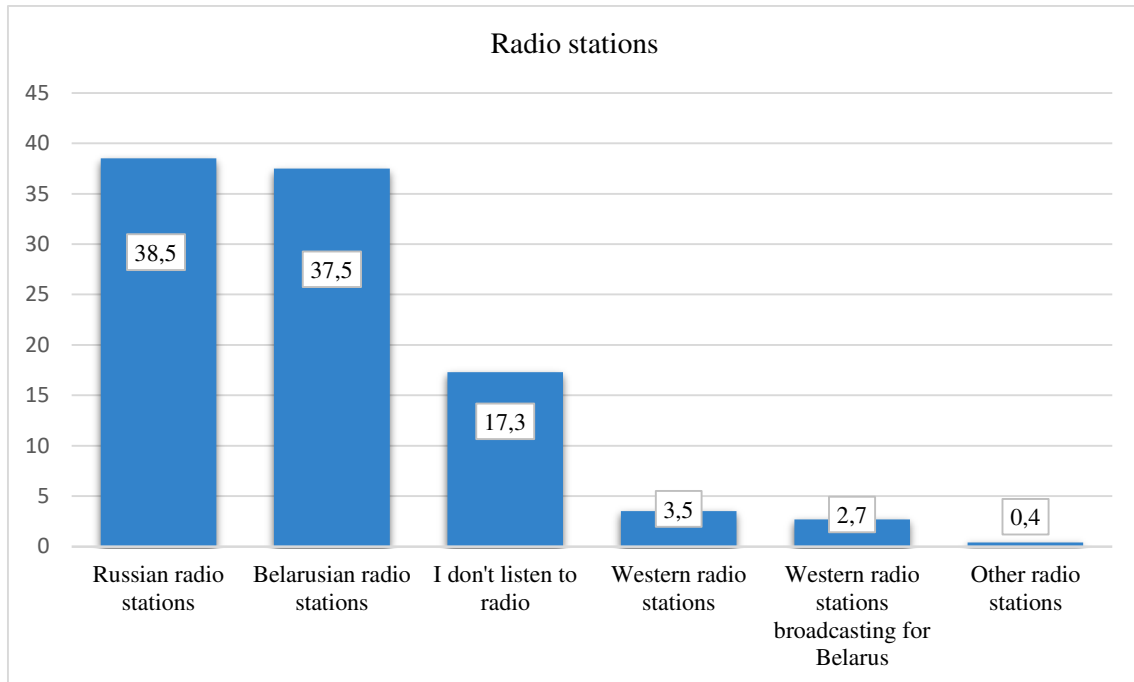
Figure 10: Radio stations [57]

The younger people are the more often they declare not listening to the radio at all. Among those who never listen to radio, 26.4 percent were 18-22 years old; 24.8 percent were 23-26; and 17.9 percent were 27-30 years old.

Places and spaces of music consumption

69.9 percent of respondents declared that they listen to music at home every day, a further 22.9 percent said they do it at least once a week. 49.7 percent of respondents listen to music every day on the way to school or work, and 22.5 percent do it at school or work. 11.3 percent declared to listen to music at discos at least once a week, and a further 23.6 percent responded "at least once a month." 32.6 percent said that they listen to music at home parties at least once a month; with the same frequency, 10.3 percent of the respondents attend clubs with live music. Home parties with friends or family are, thus, a more common space for enjoying music than clubs and discos. 53.4 percent attend concerts and festivals once or twice a year, while 29.4 percent never attend them. Playing

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[57] Several response options were possible.

an istrument every day or at least once a week was indicated by 3.3 and 5.1 percent, respectively.

How often do you listen to music...	Every day	At least once a week	At least once a month	Every two or three months	Once or twice a year	Never	No response
At home	69.9%	22.9%	5.1%	1.3%	.5%	.2%	.1%
On the way to school or work	49.7%	22.1%	5.8%	2.0%	2.0%	18.2%	.2%
At school or at work	22.5%	19.5%	8.8%	3.1%	4.1%	41.4%	.6%
At discos		11.3%	23.6%	15.4%	24.1%	24.8%	.8%
At home parties with friends or family		13.3%	32.6%	24.2%	17.9%	11.7%	.3%
When playing an instrument	3.3%	5.1%	4.7%	3.4%	5.6%	77.7%	.2%
In clubs with live music		2.2%	10.3%	9.8%	22.9%	54.4%	.4%
At concerts and festivals		.4%	5.2%	10.6%	53.4%	29.4%	1.0%

Table 22: Places and spaces of music consumption

The younger people are the more often they listen to music: in the group of the 18-22-year-old respondents, 79.4 percent declared they listen to music at home every day; among the 23-36-year-old, there were 67.5 percent; in the 27-30-year-old group, 60.1 percent indicated this response option. In the latter group, 29.6 percent responded that they listen to music at home at least once a week; in the group of the 18-22-year-olds, the percentage is only 16.2, which means that the older people are the less they listen to music. Conversely, the younger people are the more often they attend discos, home parties, clubs with live music, concerts and festivals, and play an instrument.

In many cases, young men listen to music more often than young women. On the way to school or work, more men (57.6 percent) than women (41.6 percent) listen to

music every day, as well as at school or work: 27 percent of men and 17.8 percent of women. At discos at least once a week, there are 14.4 percent of men and 8.1 percent of women. At home parties at least once a week, there are 16 percent of men and 10.5 percent of women. While playing an instrument, 4.5 percent of men and 2 percent of women listen to music every day; at least once a week this is 6,5 percent of men and 3.7 percent of women. In clubs with live music, almost equal numbers of 2.4 percent of men and 2 percent of women listen to music at least once a week; at least once a month this is 11.2 percent of men and 9.3 percent of women. However, women declare they listen to music at concerts and festivals slightly more often than men: at least once a month this is 5.9 percent of women and 4.5 percent of men; every two or three months this is 11.2 percent of women and 10.1 percent of men. In everyday listening at home, the difference is insignificant, with 70.8 percent of women and 69 percent of men.

Listening to music in clubs is generally more common in urban areas than in rural: in the capital 15.9 percent of the resspondents attend clubs with live music at least once a month; in big cities and towns, these are 10.6 and 10.8 percent, respectively; in middle-sized cities the percentage is 5.5; and in villages 3.2 percent. Listening to music at concerts and festivals every two or three months prevails in the capital and middle-sized cities with 15.5 and 14.5 percent of the respondents, respectively. In big cities and towns, these become 9.8 and 8.3 percent, respectively. In the village, only 6.5 percent indicated this option. However, attending discos at least once a month is more prevalent in rural areas with 27.6 percent (24.1 percent in the capital; 23.7 percent in big cities; 21.8 percent in middle-sized cities; 18.5 percent in towns). Listening to music at home parties at least once a month is common both in urban and rural areas: 35.1 percent in the capital; 33.8 percent in big cities; 36.4 percent in middle-sized cities; 21.2 percent in towns; 27 percent in villages.

Estimation of external influence on music preferences

As shown in Table 23, orienting on one's own opinion and musical taste prevails over all of the other response options (87.4 percent of responses). Close friends' opinion (24 percent of responses) is indicated twice as often as the opinion of one's boyfriend/husband or girlfriend/wife (11.9 percent of responses). Influence of social media and of television (7.3 and 6.1 percent of responses, respectively) is stronger than the influence of radio,

which is rather unpopular among young people (4.9 percent of responses). Parents' opinion is the least preferred response option (1.1 percent of responses). It is important to note, however, that the response option "*My own opinion. I am oriented on my own musical taste*" is likely to reduce the respondents' readiness to deal with other response options. It is likely that the option "my own opinion" is more appealing to young people than the response "someone else's opinion," as the former emphasizes the sense of independence and individuality. Obviously, therefore, this question without the response option "my own opinion" may well have produced quite different results.

Opinion of close friends	24.4%	244
Opinion of my girlfriend/wife or boyfriend/husband	11.9%	119
Opinion of my sister(s) or brother(s)	2.7%	27
Opinion of my parents	1.1%	11
Opinion of music critics	2.7%	27
Opinion of radio DJs	4.9%	49
Opinion of club DJs	4.1%	41
Opinion of TV moderators/VJs	6.1%	61
Opinion of my friends on social media	7.3%	73
My own opinion. I am oriented on my own musical taste	87.4%	874
Total	152.6	1526

Table 23: Opinions influencing music choices [58]

Women (14.2 percent of responses) declare the influence of the opinion of one's partner more often than men (9.7 percent of responses). A similar tendency was found in relation to VJs' influence: responses of female respondents (8.9 percent) exceed those of male respondents (3.4 percent). In other cases, the differences are insignificant.

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[58] Several response options were possible.

5.4. Functions of Music

Figure 11 shows the functions that music fullfills for the respondents in descending order.[59] "Improving one's mood" is thus the most widespread response option among young Belarusians; conversely, "reflecting religious attitudes" is the least preferred. According to the data, the functions of music are generally more associated with emotions and moods than with cognitive and social aspects, such as "reflecting the wordview" and "reflecting political views," or "uniting with friends" and "helping to make new friends" (see Figure 11).
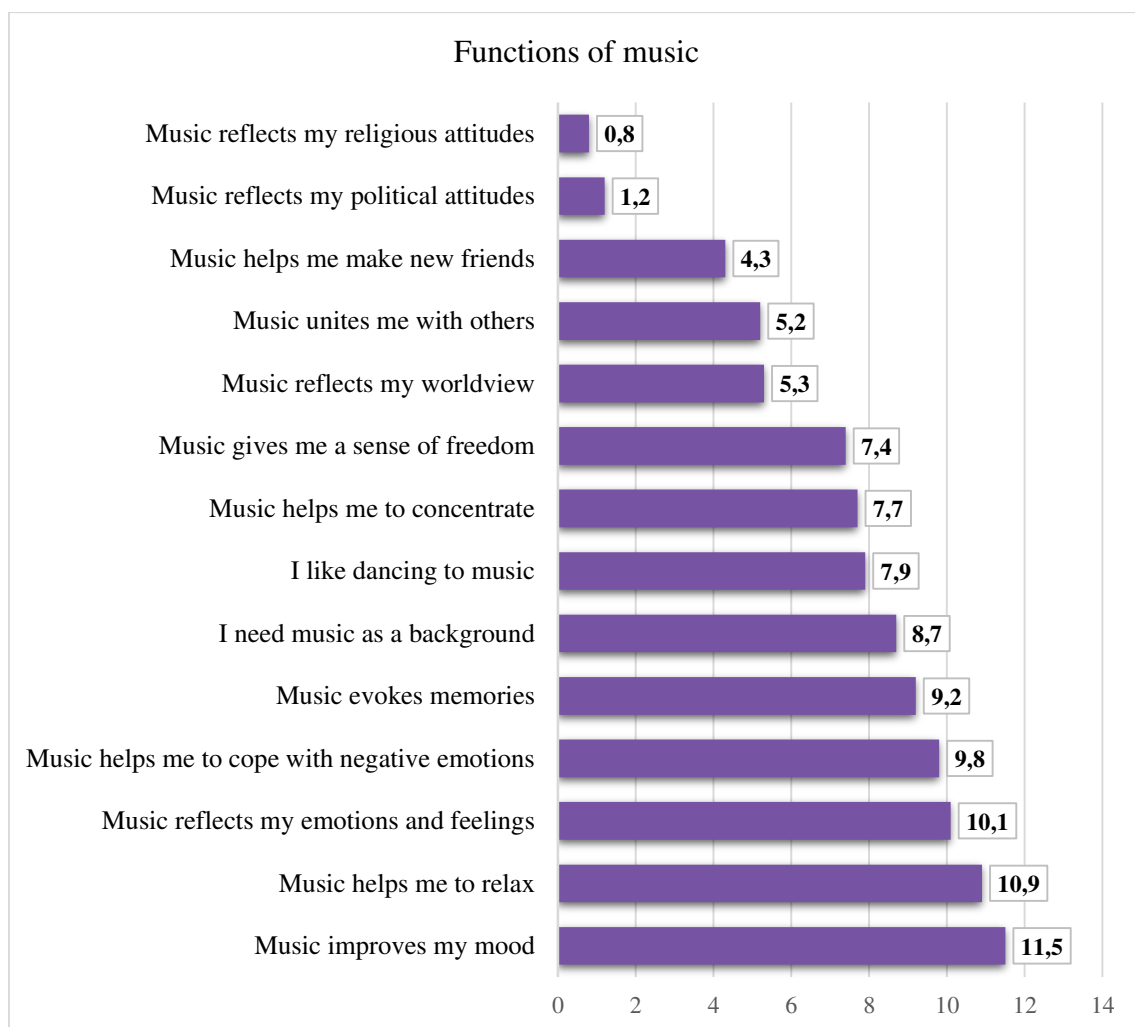
Figure 11: Functions of music

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[59] The percent numbers are taken from 100 percent of all responses; the options "agree" and "rather agree" were unified.

Women agree more often than men with the statement "I like dancing to music" (49.5 and 25 percent, respectively). Women also prevail in agreeing with the statements "Music improves my mood"; "Music reflects my emotions and feelings"; and "Music evokes memories and associations with somebody or something." Conversely, men agree more often than women that music helps them meet or make friends; that music reflects their political views; that music reflects or strengthens the worldview; or that music helps them to concentrate (see Table 24). Therefore, at least in the "agree" option, there is a tendency that women are more likely to associate music with emotions and body (dancing), while men more often associate music with its cognitive and social functions.

"I listen to music because…"		*Male*	*Female*
I like dancing to music	Agree	25.0%	49.5%
	Rather agree	25.0%	32.9%
Music improves my mood	Agree	60.7%	67.7%
	Rather agree	33.9%	29.2%
Music reflects my emotions and feelings	Agree	46.5%	51.9%
	Rather agree	34.9%	35.1%
Music helps me meet my friends more often or make new friends (e.g. at concerts)	Agree	13.6%	11.4%
	Rather agree	22.9%	23.7%
Music reflects my political views	Agree	4.3%	2.2%
	Rather agree	7.3%	6.9%
Music reflects my religious views	Agree	2.2%	2.4%
	Rather agree	5.3%	4.1%
Music reflects and strengthens my worldview	Agree	18.5%	16.6%
	Rather agree	26.6%	26.2%
Music helps me to calm down and to cope with negative emotions (aggression etc.)	Agree	42.8%	40.2%
	Rather agree	36.5%	45.4%

Music gives me a sense of freedom	Agree	31.8%	30.2%
	Rather agree	30.4%	31.2%
Music helps me to relax	Agree	50.3%	51.9%
	Rather agree	38.7%	41.2%
Music helps me to concentrate	Agree	30.4%	28.6%
	Rather agree	32.9%	36.7%
Music unites me with friends/relatives	Agree	16.4%	16.8%
	Rather agree	27.8%	26.6%
Music evokes memories and associations with somebody or something	Agree	35.1%	41.6%
	Rather agree	37.5%	40.4%
I need music as background	Agree	34.9%	33.1%
	Rather agree	38.5%	39.4%

Table 24: Functions of music

The younger people are the more often they declare that music reflects or strengthens their worldview: 21.4 percent of responses "agree" in the group "18-22" and only 12 percent in the "27-30" group. Also, the younger people are the more often they agree with the statement "Music unites me with friends/relatives": 20.1 percent of responses in the group "18-22" and 12.4 percent in the "27-30" group.

5.5. Cultural Identifications and Music Preferences

As shown in Table 25, Belarusian and Russian cultures are closest to young adults. Almost half of the respondents declared Belarusian culture as "closest" culture, while 32.8 percent of responses represent it as a "further close culture." Russian culture as "closest culture" was chosen by 27.7 percent of the respondents, while 46.5 percent of responses represent it as a "further close culture." Slavic and European cultures as "closest" were chosen by 10.5 and 9.8 percent, respectively; 2.5 percent indicated

Cosmopolitan culture as "closest." European culture as a "further close culture" is represented by 18.7 percent of responses (see Table 25).

	Closest culture		Further close culture	
Belarusian culture	46.6%	466	32.8%	328
Russian culture	27.7%	277	46.5%	465
Polish culture	1.4%	14	5.4%	54
Ukrainian culture	.9%	9	7.1%	71
Slavic culture	10.5%	105	16.8%	168
European culture	9.8%	98	18.7%	187
Cosmopolitan culture	2.5%	25	7.7%	77
Other culture	.5%	5	.8%	8
None	.1%	1		
No response			3.0%	30
Total	100	1000	138.8	1388

**Table 25: Cultures considered close [60]**

Selection of the cases "Slavic culture as closest" and "European culture as closest" shows that in the first group, there are more people who prefer Russian-language music (53.3 percent) as well as music from Russia (46.7 percent) than people who prefer English-language music (39 percent) or music from the USA/Great Britain (36.2 percent). Conversely, in the second group ("European culture as closest"), more people prefer English-language music (59.1 percent) and music from the USA/Great Britain (56.1 percent) than Russian-language music (34.7 percent) or music from Russia (31.6 percent). This means that the respondents who indicate belonging to Slavic culture choose Russian music more often than English or American music. Conversely, respondents who indicate

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[60] In the question about the "closest culture," only one response option was possible; "further close culture" allowed for several response options.

belonging to European culture choose American or English music more often than Russian music.

The following graph shows the distribution of languages in preferred music: in the groups "belonging to Belarusian culture," "belonging to Russian culture" and "belonging to Slavic culture," there is a prevalence of Russian-language music. Conversely, in the group "European culture," there is a prevalence of English-language music. However, in all groups, Belarusian-language music is strongly underrepresented (see Figure 12). It is likely that identification with European culture is reinforced through identification with American and European music, although it is obvious that people who identify with other cultures can as well prefer European and American music.
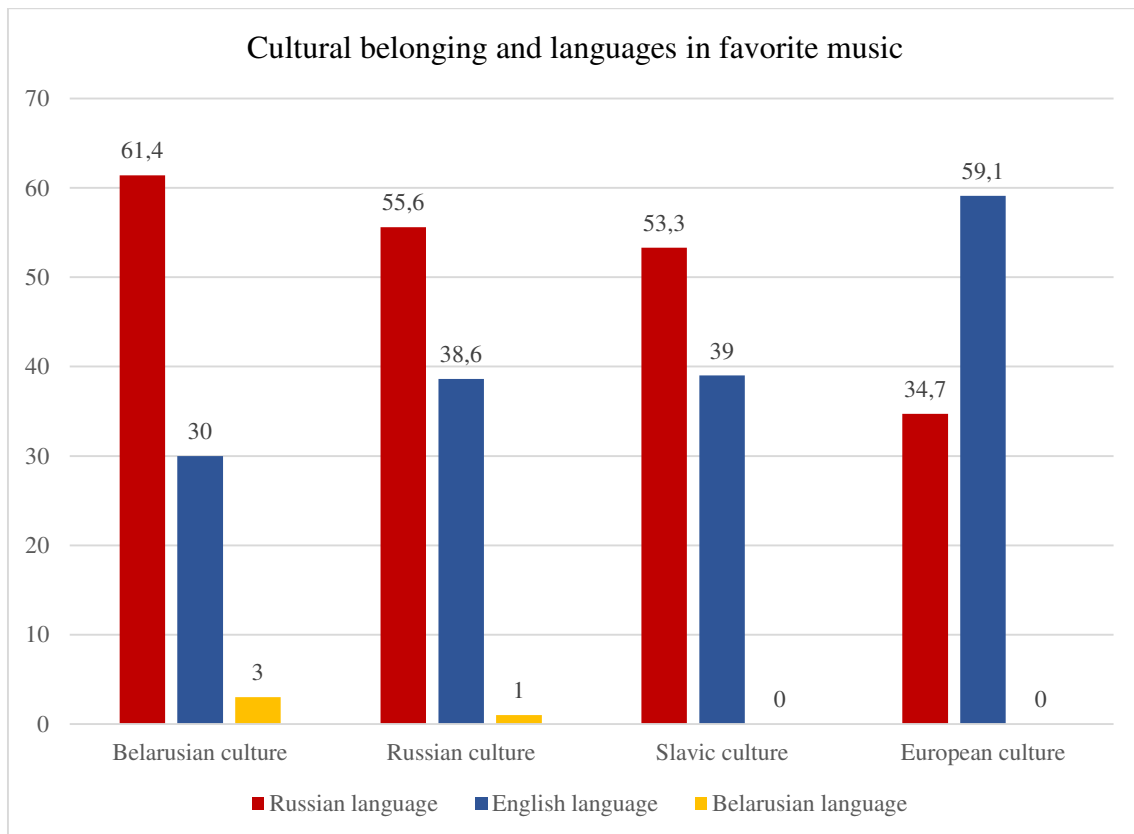
Figure 12: Cultural belonging and languages in preferred music

In relation to preferred music styles, it is interesting that "pop" prevails over "rock" in the groups "Belarusian culture" and "Russian culture," while the tendency is reversed in the groups "Slavic culture" and "European culture," where "rock" prevails over "pop." In the

latter group, "pop," "hip-hop" and "club music" are represented by equal numbers, with a strong prevalence of "rock" (see Figure 13).
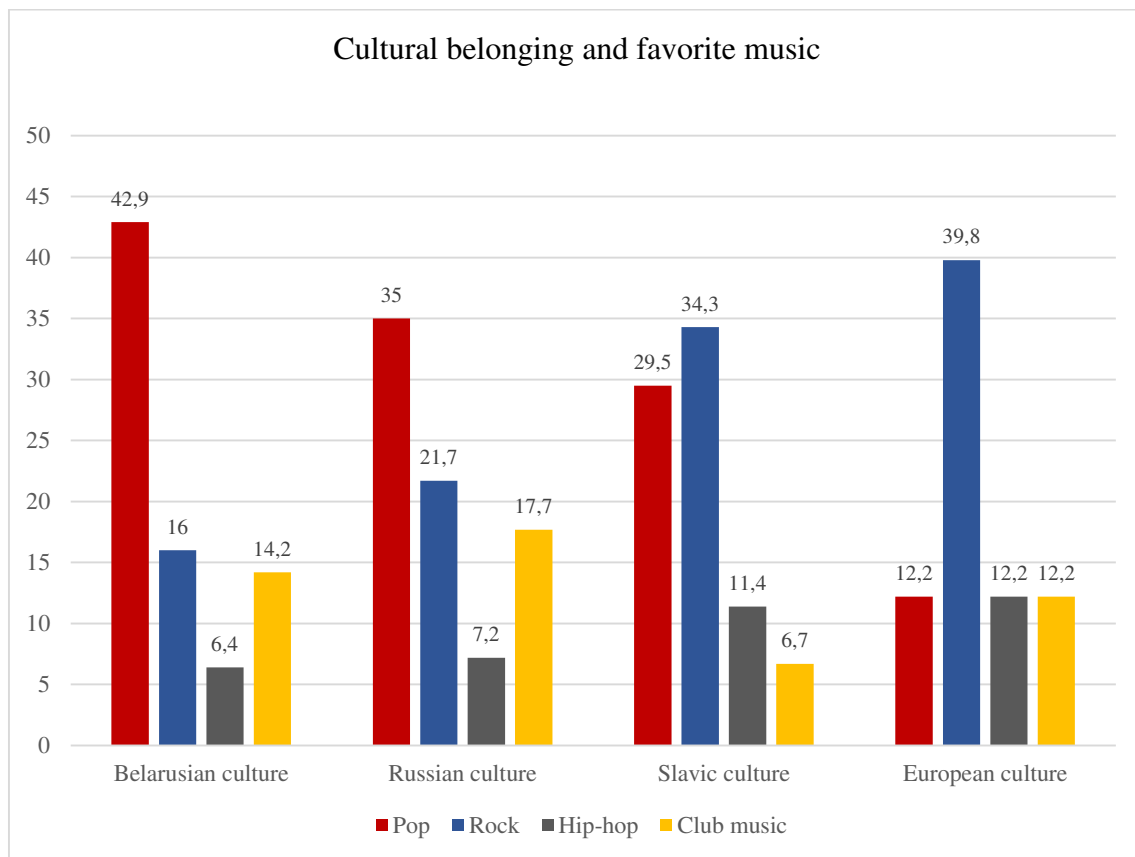
Figure 13: Cultural belonging and favorite music

Attitudes toward underground culture

38.8 percent of the respondents indicated having a neutral attitude toward underground culture and music in Belarus, while 26.2 percent "did not know" that it exists. 22.6 percent declared a positive attitude, and only 2.9 percent declared a negative attitude toward underground. 9.5 percent found it difficult to answer this question (see Figure 14).[61]

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[61] As shown in Chapter 6, perceptions of the "underground" in Belarus vary significantly, and the term can have different meanings in different contexts.
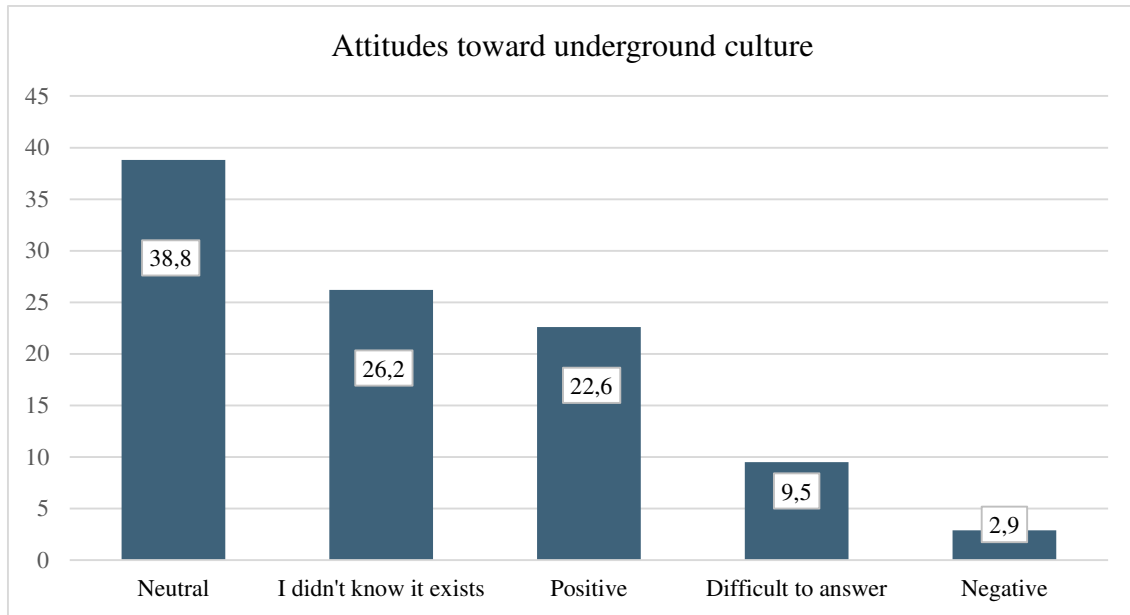
Figure 14: Attitudes toward underground culture

428 respondents indicated that they do not see themselves as part of underground culture; 132 of them responded "rather no"; 81 respondents found it difficult to answer the question. 262 respondents (those who "did not know" that underground culture exists) did not give a response to this question. 68 respondents indicated "rather yes," and 29 of them declared they were part of underground culture, i.e. in general, 97 respondents indicated belonging to underground culture (see Table 26).

Could you say you are part of an underground culture?		
Yes	3.9%	29
Rather yes	9.2%	68
Rather no	17.9%	132
No	58.0%	428
Difficult to say	11.0%	81
Total	100	738

Table 26: Estimation of belonging to underground [62]

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[62] The percentage is the valid percent of 738 valid responses. 262 responses are missing: in the previous question, these 262 respondents indicated that they "did not know" that underground culture exists in

Slightly more men than women responded "yes" to the question about belonging to underground culture. In all other cases, there are practically no differences between genders: similar proportions of women and men indicated "rather yes," "rather no," or "no" (see Table 27).

Could you say you are part of an underground culture?	*Male*	*Female*
Yes	5.6%	2.2%
Rather yes	9.4%	9.0%
Rather no	17.2%	18.6%
No	59.2%	56.7%
Difficult to say	8.6%	13.4%
Total	100	100

Table 27: Estimation of belonging to underground according to gender

Comparing the age groups shows that the younger the respondents are the more often they declare a positive attitude to underground culture in Belarus, and the older they are, the more often they state not to know about its existence, which indicates that "underground" is associated with younger people (see Table 28).

Attitude toward underground	*18-22*	*23-26*	*27-30*
Positive	29.0%	21.2%	15.8%
Neutral	38.9%	39.9%	37.5%
Negative	2.9%	2.8%	3.1%
I didn't know it exists	23.0%	23.6%	33.3%

Belarus. This indicates, on the one hand, that some of these respondents might have been unfamiliar with the term "underground," despite its widespread usage. On the other hand, this also indicates an ambiguity of the term, which is discussed more in detail in Chapter 6.

Difficult to say	6.3%	12.6%	10.3%
Total	100	100	100

Table 28: Attitudes toward underground according to age

A positive attitude to underground culture is declared more often in the capital than in other municipalities, and least often in middle-sized cities. Least often than other municipalities' residents, respondents living in the capital indicated that they did not know that underground culture exists (13.1 percent of those living in the capital versus 27.7 percent of those living in big cities, and 35.1 percent of those living in the village). In other words, a positive attitude toward underground culture is more widespread in the capital than in small towns or rural areas.

Similarly, the highest percentage of those who declare themselves as part of underground culture live in the capital; the village is represented by the lowest percentage (in relation to the responses "yes" or "rather yes"). On the other hand, there are practically no differences in the responses "no" and "rather no" (see Table 29).

Could you say you are part of underground culture?	*Capital*	*Big city*	*Middle city*	*Town*	*Village*
Yes	6.6%	3.5%		2.8%	2.5%
Rather yes	12.7%	8.9%	7.9%	8.3%	5.0%
Rather no	19.7%	14.3%	18.4%	19.4%	20.8%
No	53.5%	64.1%	52.6%	55.6%	56.7%
Difficult to say	7.5%	9.3%	21.1%	13.9%	15.0%
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 29: Belonging to underground according to the size of municipality

In the question regarding the respondents' belonging to youth cultures, the majority (85.6 percent) said that they did not feel close to any youth groups. Among those who indicated belonging to youth cultures, 4.1 percent were rockers, 3.4 percent were football fans, 3.1 percent were rappers/hip-hoppers, 2.4 percent were punks, 1.7 percent were hipsters, and

the remaining 4.0 percent indicated belonging to groups and cultures such as role-players, indie, goth (0.7 percent in each group), emo (0.6 percent), folk, skinheads (0.3 percent in each group), anime fans (0.2 percent), bikers (0.1 percent), and "other groups" (0.4 percent).

Remarkably, belonging to youth cultures associated with the underground does not necessarily coincide with the respondents' estimated belonging to underground culture. For example, all respondents who expressed belonging to skinheads and emo said that they were not part of underground culture. Among rockers, punks, rappers, goths, role-players, anime fans, football fans, hipsters, indie and folk adherents there were both those who indicated belonging to underground culture and those who indicated the opposite. In other words, there is no direct correlation between belonging to "underground" youth cultures and a sense of belonging to underground culture in general: while skinheads did not see themselves as part of underground culture, some of the hipsters and football fans did, although the latter are usually not associated with the underground. This may indicate that "underground" as a term and concept is perceived ambiguously and has different connotations. However, a negative attitude to underground was not indicated in any of these groups, except for two respondents who identified as football fans. In all other groups, the respondents indicated either a positive or neutral attitude to underground; some of them "did not know that it exists," and some found it difficult to answer this question.

In almost all groups represented by the respondents who identified with certain youth cultures, there were both women and men (except for skinheads and bikers, among whom there were only male respondents). Among the hipsters, there were 12 female and 5 male respondents; among the punks, there were 8 women and 16 men. Furthermore, there were 4 female and 2 male emo adherents; one male and 6 female goths; 12 female and 19 male rappers/hip-hoppers; 15 female and 26 male rockers; one male and two female folk adherents; one male and 6 female indie fans; 5 female and 29 male football fans; 4 female and 3 male role-players. Thus, women are more prevalent in hipster, emo, goth, folk, indie, and role-play groups. In other groups, such as punks, rappers/hip-hoppers, rockers, and football fans, there are more men than women, which reflects the common representation of these groups as "masculine" and typical of men rather than of women.

5.6. Summary

The survey data reflect the widespread pop-rock division, where pop is more preferred by young Belarusians than rock. Pop and estrada concerts are also attended more often than other concerts. This leads to a discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative data: as shown in Chapter 6, the majority of interview and focus group respondents distance themselves from pop and estrada. However, in the dissociation from pop, the (group) interview respondents mostly referred to popsa, and popsa as a music style was not offered among the response options in the survey (because "popsa" is not an "official" term for the pop genre and has extremely negative connotations, which would have produced a biased question or response option). On the other hand, the survey respondents had the opportunity of naming a favorite or a disliked genre, and there was no "popsa" among additional responses. This may indicate that "pop" and "popsa" are associated with one another; in this case, the discrepancy is obvious and shows that, while 35 percent of the survey respondents declared "pop" their favorite music style, almost all interview and focus group respondents expressed a strong dissociation from pop or/and popsa.

According to further data, pop and estrada are more preferred by women, and rock is more preferred by men, which reflects the assumption (cf. Survilla 2005) that the distinction between rock and pop in Belarus is based on gender. Further, rock is more preferred in the capital than other municipalities; conversely, the smaller a municipality is the more often rock and jazz (and the less often pop and club music) are disliked. Pop, estrada, bard and folk music are most chosen in the village, while punk rock, hip-hop, folk rock, rock and jazz are most often chosen in the capital. The younger people are the more they attend indie/alternative rock, metal, punk, rock and reggae/dub concerts as well as R'n'B, house/techno and drum and bass parties. Conversely, the older people are the more they prefer pop and estrada as well as bard music, ethno/folk rock and folklore, which indicates that rock and club styles are more preferred by younger people. The older people are the less they attend concerts and festivals, which may be explained by older respondents having other priorities, such as family and work. Furthermore, the older people are the more often pop is preferred; conversely, rock and hip-hop are more represented among the younger respondents. The education level, on the contrary, seems to be a rather unimportant factor in music preferences.

It is likely that "pop" and "rock" are perceived as ambiguous terms: e.g. some people who chose "pop" as their favorite music style attend "indie/alternative" or "metal" concerts, while club music fans also attend metal, estrada or folk concerts. This strongly indicates ambiguousness of terms and genres, but also flexibility of musical practices and fluidity of musical taste.

Russian and Western music is most widespread among young Belarusians, while Belarusian music has a marginal status. This reflects ambiguous attitudes toward Belarusian music, but is also caused by insufficient production of Belarusian music, compared with music available in the Western and Russian music markets. Furthermore, music from the USA/Great Britain and English-language music is more preferred in the capital than in other municipalities. Generally, though, Russian music is more preferred than Western music, which contradicts the hypothesis, on which the questioning was based. This indicates that young Belarusians' preferences are shaped more by Russian music than Western music.[63]

Downloading music from the internet is the most common source of music consumption for young Belarusians; the younger people are the more they use the internet to get music. Conversely, the older people are the more often they buy records and listen to radio. Downloading music from the internet is more common among urban Belarusians than in rural areas; listening online is more widespread in the capital and big cities than in other municipalities, which may be explained by a better media infrastructure in big cities.

The younger people are the more often they listen to music generally, and the more often they attend discos, home parties, clubs with live music, concerts and festivals, and play an instrument. Listening to music in clubs is generally more common in urban areas than in rural, which is obviously explained by the entertainment industry being better developed in urban areas.

The majority of respondents declared that they orient themselves on their own opinion and taste in choosing music. This is, however, not to suggest that social circles

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[63]According to the data (2017) of the Russian "Institute of public opinion" (302 people of all ages participated), 84.6 percent of Russians choose Russian music, 57.9 percent choose American music, and 41.1 percent prefer English music. Therefore, in Russia, Western music is similarly less popular than Russian music. Furthermore, pop and rock are similarly the most popular genres: pop was chosen by 65.1 percent, and rock was indicated by 53.8 percent of the respondents:

https://iom.anketolog.ru/2017/07/07/muzykal-nye-predpochteniya-rossiyan

actually play a minor role; rather, the response option "I orient myself on my own musical taste" was obviously most attractive to the respondents, emphasizing individual aspects in music choice. It is interesting that female respondents declared "external" influence on their music choice more often than male respondents, which may indicate that young women are more socially oriented than young men.

Music functions are more often associated with emotions and moods than with cognitive and social aspects; female respondents agree more often with the statements "I like dancing to music," "Music reflects my emotions and feelings" and "Music evokes memories and associations." Generally, the younger people are the more often they declare that music reflects or strengthens their worldview, and that music unites them with other people.

Interestingly, respondents who indicated belonging to European culture chose American or English music more often than Russian music; conversely, respondents who indicated belonging to Slavic culture chose Russian music more often than English or American music. This may indicate that, for young Belarusians, music plays an important role in their cultural and national identifications. Particularly, identification with European culture may be reinforced through preference of European or American music, although such tendencies should not be generalized.

Finally, adherence to underground culture was only declared by a minority of respondents, whereas 262 respondents "did not know" that it exists at all. This indicates that the topic of the underground is ambiguous and charged with different meanings: first, some of the respondents might have been unfamiliar with the term itself (although it is quite widespread); and second, "not knowing" that it exists can also mean that, for some respondents, while underground culture per se exists (e.g. globally), it does not exist in Belarus – for social, cultural, political, or other reasons. Moreover, belonging to youth cultures, particularly those associated with the underground, is not necessarily connected with respondents' estimation of belonging to underground culture in general, which (again) indicates an ambiguity of the concept of "underground culture" in Belarus. This complex concept is one of the topics of Chapter 6, approached from the perspective of personal associations and attitudes of the interview and focus group respondents.

6. Popular Music and Identity Constructions: Discourses and Practices

This chapter presents the analysis of the interviews and focus groups, concentrating on the ways in which the interview and focus group respondents construct identities along lines of culture, nation and community, but also individuality. First, the discourses on Belarusian culture and music are analyzed; in the subsequent section, the respondents' articulations of music's "meaning" are described. They are followed by the discourse on the "underground" and "mainstream," and then a discourse on "good" and "bad" music; the subsequent section deals with "popsa," which represents an "anti-identification" with "meaningless" music. Finally, identity-building practices are described, such as Russian rock; Belarusian rock, folk and bard song; punk and skinhead; hip-hop; and reggae. The final section of this chapter describes identifications with "different musics."

6.1. Discourses around Belarusian Culture and Music

6.1.1. Cultural Identifications and the Concepts of "Belarusian Culture"

This section analyzes various interpretations of Belarusian culture and describes the resources through which young Belarusians construct the concepts of "Belarusian culture." This section, therefore, presents the discourse on Belarusian culture, which is part of the construction of Belarusian, European, Slavic, or Cosmopolitan identities.[64]

"Belarusian culture" as a concept is extremely multifaceted and is perceived differently. The variety of perceptions of culture is reflected in people's positioning within the society and is expressed in their everyday practices. Though the majority of my respondents identified with Belarusian culture, they described it in very different ways – or expressed difficulty in defining it. The variety of concepts and perceptions of Belarusian culture as well as difficulties in articulating it indicate a current search for identity among the respondents. Some of them perceived Belarus as part of Europe and its culture as European. Others stated that Belarusian culture echoes "Soviet" culture or that it belongs to Slavic culture. At the same time though, many respondents argued that

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[64] Since "Cosmopolitan identity" is an important aspect of some respondents' identity construction, the term "Cosmopolitan" is capitalized, similarly to other terms, such as "Belarusian," "European," etc.

Belarusian culture is unique and independent, albeit influenced by various territorial entities and historical processes.

Despite many respondents' difficulties in defining "Belarusian culture," many of them identified as Belarusians. Analyzing the interviews and focus groups, I have distinguished a number of resources, through which Belarusian identity can be constructed. These resources include the following: identification with Belarusian history, folklore and traditions; identification with Belarus as a territory ("territorial" identity); dissociation from nationalism; and dissociation from Russia, i.e. from Russian political and cultural influence, and a simultaneous identification with European culture. In addition to Belarusian identity, some respondents articulated "European" identity, "Slavic" identity, or "Cosmopolitan" identity, without identifying with any particular "culture."

Belarusian culture as history and traditional culture

While discussing cultural identifications, some respondents referred to the history and folklore of Belarus as important aspects of cultural self-perception. For example, identifying with "Litvin culture," Kira, who is a Belarusian-language bard singer, refers to historiography of Belarus as part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, respectively, of Europe.[65] Her definition of "culture" is broad, including history and traditional culture of Belarus, as shown in the following passage:

> **Interviewer**: So, actually, which cultures do you perceive as close to you? Which national cultures?
> **Kira**: Litvin [culture] (*smiling*). Well, our Belarusian [culture] is the closest. Territorially, I don't know… I'm thinking about what country I could live in, and I come to a conclusion that in no other [country]. Because culturally, [Belarus] is close to me – language, culture, people. But still, rather into the European side than into the Asian one.
> **Interviewer**: What does the notion "Belarusian culture" mean to you?
> **Kira**: Well, everything, including history, customs, rites, traditions… Music, literature, some social relationships, [values] – that's what's concerning my personal view.[66]

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[65] The term "Litvin" refers to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its people. It has a special meaning for some Belarusians who speak Belarusian and identify Belarus with the Grand Duchy. It also implies the historical contraposition to Ruthenians (or Russians) and stresses the European (in contrast to the Russian) component of the historical development of Belarus.

[66] Since it is not always possible to translate certain phrases precisely, some excerpts, in such cases, are offered additionally in Russian:

И: А вообще какие культуры вам близки? Какие национальные культуры?

Clearly identifying with Belarusian culture, Kira emphasizes her vision of Belarus as a European state. She does so in two ways: by naming Belarusian culture "Litvin" and by actually referring to the "European side," with which she identifies, as a contrast to the "Asian side." Placing Belarus in Europe historically and identifying with its culture, Kira sees herself as Belarusian – and European. Her music preferences include Belarusian folklore and rock music as well as a variety of genres of Western music, but also Russian rock.

Similar to Kira, Yuliya refers to Belarus as having history and tradition, which obviously plays an important role in her understanding of Belarusian culture. Yuliya had played accordion in a folklore orchestra in the past and preferred Western indie rock music at the moment of the interview. She reflected on her cultural belonging as follows:

> **Interviewer**: And if we speak of a national culture – Belarusian, Russian, Western, Slavic, Cosmopolitan – which one would you rather identify with?
> **Yuliya**: Frankly speaking, it's very difficult to say. Our culture is more ancient in comparison with American [culture].
> **Interviewer**: You mean Belarusian [culture]?
> **Yuliya**: Yes. [In America], culture is completely different and it's not so ancient as ours.

In her response to the first question, three different aspects, or dimensions, can be distinguished: first, difficulty in a characterization of belonging indicates a current process of identity search. Second, reference to the "ancient" Belarusian culture points to the importance of traditional culture, which is valorized both in the official and the "alternative" discourses, albeit for different reasons. Finally, there is a contradistinction to the "other" American culture, which obviously facilitates an awareness of one's own belonging. In Yuliya's case particularly, these three aspects arguably play an important role in the process of identity construction. However, at the same time she compares Western and Belarusian music, stating that the latter cannot offer her anything "interesting," unlike Western music. In Yuliya's case, therefore, both traditional culture

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К: Литвинская (*улыбаясь*). Ну, вот, белорусская наша – самая близкая. Территориально я не знаю… Я думаю о том, в какой бы стране я могла жить, и я понимаю, что ни в какой. Потому что культурально мне это близко: и язык, и культура, и люди. Ну, все равно в европейский больше бок, чем в азиатский.
И: Что входит для вас в понятие «белорусская культура»?
К: Ну, все входит, начиная от истории, обычаев, обрядов, традиций… музыка, литература, отношения социальные какие-то (в плане их развития: как семья развивалась, какие ценности – это тоже в некотором роде входит в понятие «культура») – это если брать лично меня.

in Belarus and Western popular music represent identity offers, which she uses in the ongoing process of identity construction. Identifying with Belarusian culture and seeing herself as Belarusian, she chooses traditional culture (and, as shown later in this chapter, territorial belonging) as a source of identification, appropriating Western popular music as another source of identification with particular aspects of Western culture.

Aleksandr's responses reveal another kind of contradistinction to the "West." Identifying with Belarusian culture "one hundred percent" he says: "I see much nonsense in the West, which I don't like… If we imagine Belarusian culture as a culture of a small nation… Generally speaking, a small proud nation – if it was so I would definitely choose Belarus."[67] As examples of "nonsense" that happens in the West Aleksandr suggested the "gay hysteria," the American judicial system, which he considers absurd in certain cases, as well as consumer protection cases that "try to protect idiots from everything, like from licking or eating batteries." In Aleksandr's case – unlike in many other cases – the comparison with the West functions in favor of Belarusian culture and facilitates a clear identification with it. His understanding of Belarusian culture as "something intelligent and forgotten" indicates a reference to the history of Belarus with its language and tradition. As described more in detail in Chapter 6.1.2, Aleksandr strengthens his identity as a Belarusian by applying everyday practices, such as Belarusian music and style, which acquire a symbolic meaning.

The perception of Belarusian culture as folklore is also evident in the following excerpt:

> **Interviewer**: If you were asked which culture is closer to you…
> **Olga**: Ah! I will say I'm a Belarusian and that Belarusian culture is closer to me. I've never denied it and I'm proud of it.
> **Interviewer**: What do you think the notion "Belarusian culture" includes?
> **Olga**: Belarusian folklore. In my childhood, in the recent past, I read a lot in Belarusian, I still go to the theater, only for Belarusian plays. […] And I listened to Belarusian folklore, songs of Belarusian villages, folklore songs – they sound beautiful to me.

Olga's identification with Belarusian culture and even "pride" to be a Belarusian seem to draw strength from "traditional" practices, such as reading in Belarusian, going to the

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[67] Я вижу на западе много всякой хрени, которая мне не нравится… Если представить белорусскую культуру как культуру небольшого народа… В общем, небольшой гордый народ – если бы так было, то стопроцентно я выбрал бы Беларусь.

theater and listening to folk music. These practices obviously embody a conscious attempt at the maintenance of the language and of a valorized tradition. The conscious practices have a symbolic meaning and eventually facilitate the construction of Belarusian identity.

Belarusian identity as territorial belonging

Belarusian identity, however, is not necessarily constructed by means of symbolic or everyday practices. In some cases, territorial belonging informs an identification as Belarusian and can be defined as "territorial identity." Territorial identity is exemplified by the following expression, where Gleb associates his cultural identity with the territorial location.

> **Interviewer**: What culture do you actually identify with: Belarusian, Russian, European, Cosmopolitan?
> **Gleb**: Well… With Belarusian! I live in Belarus, therefore, with Belarusian.

Yuliya's explanation is similar: "I live in this country, it is my motherland, and [Belarusian] culture is surely close to me." In focus group 2, some respondents reflected on the difference between territorial and cultural belonging. One of the respondents said that to her, it is difficult to answer the question about cultural identification because territorial and cultural identities do not necessarily coincide:

> **Respondent (further: R) 4**: I can't say which culture I identify with. Maybe someone will define it but to me, it's an uncertain question. […]
> **R6**: It's like a tree without roots.
> **R4**: Thoughtlessly identifying oneself with someone…
> **R3**: I've got a question. During certain occasions, you feel it somehow inside. And who do you feel you are at that moment?
> **R4**: When everybody sings the hymn together? What occasions?
> **R6**: Not political ones. When you go abroad and you are asked, "where are you from?" Do you say you are from Russia?
> **R4**: From Belarus. I live territorially in Belarus.
> **R6**: If you are from Belarus and someone asks about your…
> **R2**: No, but this is not connected with culture.
> **R4**: It's absolutely not connected: territorial and cultural belonging. These are two different things.

This example shows that, while for some people cultural identity can be expressed in terms of territorial belonging, the cultural and the territorial represent two different forms of identification for others. As shown in Chapter 1.1.2, this respondent (R4 of focus group

2) reflects on the role of language for identity. To her, the fact of the dominance of the Russian language in Belarus makes Belarusian identity difficult to achieve or to maintain.

Belarusian identity and dissociation from nationalism

Paradoxically, rejection of nationalism can fulfill the function of reinforcing Belarusian identity. However, this form of identification with Belarusian culture differs significantly from the "alternative" Belarusianness, which is characterized by a more radical approach to the issues of national identity in Belarus. As the following examples demonstrate, dissociation from nationalistic attitudes produces "transcultural Belarusianness," albeit in very different ways. While in the first example (of Vadim) Belarusianness is articulated as "Cosmopolitan," in the second excerpt the respondent (Viktor) speaks about his belonging to Belarusian and Russian cultures. Also "pride" to be Belarusian is articulated completely differently: while Vadim does not see a "reason for pride" for being Belarusian, Viktor is "proud of having been born" in Belarus. Vadim plays bass guitar in a punk rock band, whose song texts are written in Belarusian, Russian and English. Viktor is an amateur rapper, who writes his lyrics in Russian. Vadim tells:

> Well, in general I'm Belarusian, but since I don't observe any religious traditions […] the fact that I am Belarusian and identify with Belarusian culture doesn't actually give me any reason for pride or anything that would distinguish me among other nationalities. In general, I'm Cosmopolitan, kind of. Nowadays, there's such a wave of nationalism arising, both healthy and unhealthy, in the GUS states. That's alien to me.

Referring to the Euromaidan events in Ukraine and rejecting "nationalistic performers," Viktor emphasizes the former unity of the post-Soviet states:

> **Viktor**: […] In Ukraine, there are such performers who are kind of… how do I say that? Nationalists? I have no respect for them. To me, it's complete nonsense.
> […]
> **Interviewer**: And how do you define yourself, first of all?
> **Viktor**: As Belarusian, of course, first of all.
> **Interviewer**: And second of all?
> **Viktor**: As Russian. Because it all was united once and I think one shouldn't deny that. But first of all, of course, I'm Belarusian: I was born here and I'm proud of having been born here. And whatever they might say, I will stick at it.

Dissociation from nationalism can thus reinforce different forms of transcultural Belarusianness. In the case of Vadim, it maintains his self-perception as Cosmopolitan but also as Belarusian. Quite differently, as in the case of Viktor, the dissociation from

nationalism reinforces identification with the post-Soviet space, in which the states and nations – particularly Belarusian and Russian – (should) remain "united." [68]

Belarusian identity: identification with Europe and dissociation from Russia

Dissociation from Russia and its cultural and political influence, often perceived as imposed on Belarus, is a factor that, in the case of many respondents, plays an important role in the construction of Belarusian identity. For example, Alina identified with Belarusian culture and presented herself as a patriot of Belarus. She explained that her spirit of patriotism "has woken up" since she began to study abroad, in Vilnius. However, she also identified with a "European model of behavior" and with "European values." For example, she explained that she had distanced herself from such "post-Soviet models of consciousness" as racism, sexism and homophobia, which exist in Belarus and become especially noticeable after spending some time in "Western Europe." As she told, Belarusian culture "is now being revived" in mass media, for example by means of advertisements in Belarusian or practicing the language on television. As Alina further tells:

> And earlier, Belarusian-speaking young people were associated only with the opposition […]. And… now they are reviving this in our culture. But I didn't grow up in all that, I grew up in a Russian-speaking society, where there was Russian propaganda – I don't know how to explain it in a different way. Belarus has always been viewed as a part of Russia. This was the society in which I grew up. And that's why I by no means want to identify with Russian culture because I have this little phobia of Russia (*laughing*). I surely would like to identify with Belarusian culture but somehow… I don't see clear boundaries yet. But actually, if I was asked, I would definitely say, "yes, I am Belarusian and I identify with Belarusian culture!"

The lack of "clear boundaries" in the perception of Belarusian culture is compensated by Alina's dissociation from Russian culture. Through this dissociation, it becomes easier for her to identify with Belarusian culture despite its blurred boundaries. Dissociation from Russia, therefore, facilitates identification with Belarus.

One of the participants of focus group 2 expressed a similar dissociation from Russian culture. She perceived Belarusian youth as "closer" to Europeans and differentiated between young Belarusians and Russians:

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[68] Viktor prefers Russian rap, and also regards Belarusian Russian-language rap as "Russian rap," stating the "lack of difference" between Russian and Belarusian performers.

> **Respondent 6**: […] But if we take the youth from Russia, with whom you communicate, and our youth, and compare them with the European youth, then we, our behavior is closer to the European youth. Because there, the youth is a bit different in their everyday life. I think our people are more cultured than in Russia. Maybe it's just such a perception of mine. (focus group 2) [69]

Roman refers to his "knowledge of history" and feels uncomfortable when Belarusian and Russian cultures are being equated as "brotherly nations." His personal impression is that Russians are much more "negative" than "Western" people:

> I would say European and Belarusian [cultures are close to me]. Russian culture… I know the history of my country well enough… They say "brotherly peoples" but somehow that evokes a negative reaction of mine. Well, it also depends on Russians. They are different. However, I dealt with negative reactions [e.g. to the hippie look] from Russians much more often than with those from Europeans, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and all those who are west of us. (Roman)

Generally, with few exceptions, the respondents of the focus groups and of the interviews distinguished themselves from Russians and explicitly emphasized their belonging to Belarusian (and European) culture. They did so in different ways, while discussing music preferences, languages in music or in everyday life, cultural belonging, and other themes. Although most respondents expressed a strong distinction between Belarus and Russia in both territorial and cultural aspects, the dissociation from Russian culture did not necessarily include hostile attitudes against Russians. Dissociation from, and in some cases rejection of, Russian culture functions as a means of assertion of Belarusian history, independence, culture, and identity. While some of the respondents expressed a negative attitude toward Russian and Soviet politics and/or culture, many of them, quite neutrally, stated the fact that Belarus and Russia are separate states, and emphasized the independence of Belarus, saying that, although Belarus belonged to the Russian empire and the Soviet Union in the past, now it is independent and has its own culture. An example of such statements is the following reflection of Boris, who clearly separates Belarus from Russia, albeit remaining more or less neutral in judgement:

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[69] Но если взять молодежь из России, с которой общаешься, и наших, и сравнивать с европейской, то всё-таки мы по поведению, по нашему этому, ближе к европейской. Потому что там молодежь вообще немножко другая в своей повседневной жизни. Мне кажется, у нас более культурные люди, чем в России. Может, это моё такое ощущение.

I think Belarus is a sovereign state, independent [...]. A separate state, that's all. That's an object of endless debates. Some say that Belarus is a part of Russia, others – especially Belarusian nationalists – shout that Belarusians are Litvins. [...] It's difficult to find the truth, I guess almost impossible.

Interviewer: Yes, but is there some kind of a personal feeling? [...] You say "I'm a Belarusian" but what prevails there – Russian or European?

Boris: [...] I think there is more of the European there. [...] Of course, Russia has influenced Belarusian culture very much, [the USSR] destroyed it, one can say. [...] But still, initially it was a European country.

A more radical dissociation from Russian culture is expressed by Maksim, who criticizes the government and the older generation for a continuing (mental) dependence on Russia. Speaking of his father as a representative of the older Soviet generation, Maksim labeled him as a "homo sovieticus," meaning that this generation is still strongly influenced by the Soviet past. He says: "Our country and society are fully in the Russian information space [...].[70] How can we speak of Belarus if in the consciousness of the population, Belarus is perceived... either it is not at all perceived or as de facto one of the regions of Russia." Through his critique of Russia's influence on Belarus as well as of Belarusians themselves, who approve this policy, Maksim emphasizes his belonging to Belarusian culture. Through his dissociation from Russian and Soviet culture, his Belarusian identity is reinforced.

Dissociation from Russian culture often implies "oppositional" attitudes, as in the case of Maksim as well as many other cases that I observed while having conversations with people. Similar to Maksim, Stas understands Belarusian culture "differently from how it is represented in the society" and as being influenced negatively by the Russian mass media, which impose "Russian values" on Belarusians. The oppositional attitude of Stas is expressed in the discourse taking place among certain communities of Belarusian speakers. This discourse includes such themes as "developing Belarusian culture" and "protecting cultural legacy" of Belarus. Stas also emphasized the necessity of "generating Belarusians' own values." He explained that when he speaks Belarusian he feels "spirit rise" and is "at the core of cultural values" which he identifies with. Stas contraposes European values to the Russian ones: "I am a product of these cultural values, the Pan-European ones. There are West-European values, and there are Russian values. In Belarus, I don't think that Belarusian values that I share, or those I take for Belarusian

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[70] The "Russian information space" means the sphere of influence of the Russian mass media.

[values], contradict the European values." This contraposition informs his radical Belarusianness, which is constructed through the discursive placement of Belarus in Europe and a simultaneous dissociation from Russia perceived as the "counter pole" of Europe. The sense of sameness with Europeans and, at the same time, the sense of difference from Russians produce and reinforce Belarusian identity that understands itself as European.

Many respondents identify simultaneously with Belarusian and European cultures. In most cases, this "double" identification is based on the perception of Belarus as part of Europe. Referring to the pre-Soviet history of Belarus, young Belarusians place themselves in Europe. One of the examples of the historical placement of Belarus in Europe has already been given above, where Kira speaks about her identification with "Litvin culture." Maksim and Stas, quoted above, also identify as both Belarusian and European, but for them, articulation of difference from Russians plays an important role in their self-perception as European Belarusians. The following excerpt similarly suggests the respondent's contradistinction of Belarusian and Russian histories, while the overall conversation did not reveal any radical dissociation from Russian culture. Mark tells:

> I like the history of our country very much… And I don't like it when they try to hide it, be ashamed of it with some political purposes. We were one of the European, really European countries, we are [a part of] Europe. Absolutely. The Magdeburg rights… And this history has its impacts. And you can't consider culture as separated from history. […] The Magdeburg rights meant free urban citizens, therefore, they would have had a completely different culture [than that of Russians]. This would rather be an urban culture.

Referring to the history (and particularly to the existence of the Magdeburg rights in Belarus), Mark identifies it with Europe, and himself as European. Even though he did not express a dissociation from Russian culture, the comparison of Belarusian and Russian histories still takes place, reinforcing the sense of European Belarusianness. To articulate Belarusian-European identity it is obviously necessary for many to articulate both sameness with Europeans and difference from Russians. Moreover, articulation of difference in identity construction seems as important as articulation of sameness, since the sense of difference strengthens, and sometimes produces, the sense of sameness.

Roman similarly identified with Belarusian – and European – culture, referring to the history of Belarus. Moreover, he considers Belarus as a "center of Europe," which strengthens his self-perception as European: "Well, yes, Belarus is part of Europe – it is

a center of Europe, I would even say. Well, geographically, it's a center." The discourse on the history of Belarus, which places it in Europe, obviously plays an important role for these young Belarusians in the construction of "European identity." Through the discourse on pre-Soviet Belarusian history, Belarus is positioned in and identified with Europe. At the same time, it is contrasted with Russia, and the contrast reinforces identification as European and the construction of "European identity."

European identity

However, "European identity" can also be articulated without identifying with Belarusian culture. Moreover, in some cases, Belarusian culture is equaled with Russian culture and contrasted with Europe. These cases make it evident that for some young people, European culture represents a lifestyle that is perceived as "different" from Belarusians' daily lives. Identification with European culture is based on the dissociation from the "common" Belarusian lifestyle and is expressed in preference for Western music and visual style. As Lyudmila suggested, European culture means "music, style, generally some lifestyle." She identified with European culture, stating that Belarusian culture "doesn't develop" and referring to her preference for British indie rock:

> **Interviewer:** What culture is closest to you?
> **Lyudmila:** You mean Cosmopolitan, Belarusian, Russian? Probably, European.
> **Interviewer:** Why?
> **Lyudmila:** As for Belarusian culture, at the moment I would say that it doesn't develop in our country. Considering at least the fact that almost all or most people speak Russian, and some don't know Belarusian at all. Considering this at least, I cannot say that Belarusian culture is close to me, if I speak Russian all the time.
> **Interviewer:** What do you think, is your belonging to European culture somehow expressed in music?
> **Lyudmila:** I think, yes. Because as I said, I mostly listen to British music, and much less Belarusian music.

Lyudmila's identification as European is facilitated by her dissociation from Belarusian culture, which is explained by speaking Russian instead of Belarusian. In turn, the lack of belonging to Belarusian culture is compensated by identification with European culture, while in this identification, preference for Western popular music plays a central role, producing the respondent's "European" identity.

Vladimir identifies with "Western culture" and supports his statement as follows: "I wear Western clothes, I listen to Western performers, I read Western sources – that's

why I identify more with Western culture. It's more popular." By "popularity" Vladimir means the status of Western music as contraposed to that of Belarusian and Russian music. As Vladimir sees it, music "made in the GUS states" is "unqualitative," "backward," "unprofessional," "uninteresting," and "copies Western music." He strongly dissociates himself from this music and identifies with Western music, which he perceives as "progressive." Vladimir's "European" identity is constructed through his dissociation from the post-Soviet space *and* through his preference for Western music as well as his overall identification with Western popular culture.

Generally, for many respondents, European culture represents a lifestyle, while Belarusian culture is rather associated with folklore and the "roots." While traditional culture has a symbolic meaning for some young people in their identification as Belarusians, for others it does not play a role in cultural self-perception. For some, the sense of identity is offered by symbolic practices and discourses related to traditional culture, and for others it is offered by popular culture and everyday practices. Since Belarusian popular culture is often perceived as imitative, backward or even nonexistent, identification is found more easily in European popular culture. European culture represents a lifestyle, which includes everyday practices, such as popular music appropriation and a broader consumption of media and style. This makes "European culture" more tangible and available, and facilitates identification with it.

Transculturality and Cosmopolitanism: Belarusian culture as a conglomerate

For many respondents, Belarusian culture represents a conglomerate of cultures, languages and peoples. Fully identifying as Belarusians, they largely emphasize, simultaneously, the complex history of Belarus and multisided influences on it. As Boris tells:

> [I consider myself] Belarusian. Although it's a quite complicated notion. Everything is mixed up in our country. If looking at history, how many peoples, how many wars there were. Everything is mixed up, in every person there's some foreign blood. […] I think there can't be a pure Belarusian.

Similarly, Mark perceives Belarusian culture as a "mixture" of historical events and of peoples. Stating his belonging to Belarusian culture, he explains that to him, "Belarus is a place where one could find anyone and anything" and that "pure Belarusians" do not

exist anymore: "I probably don't know any Belarusian who wouldn't have Russian, Polish, Jewish blood somewhere there." At the same time, Mark understands Belarus as a part of Europe, referring to its history (as quoted earlier in this chapter).

Sergey similarly identifies with Belarusian culture, elaborating his understanding of it as follows: "Belarus is not some isolated community of Belarusians, it's not an isolated cultural field […]. What almost absolutely opens these cultural fields is the internet. […] At the same time, I'm integrated in the global cultural field." Sergey's explanations resemble those of Mark, when he speaks about Belarusian culture as "Western" culture and mentions its urbanity, suggesting a broader understanding of it beyond traditional culture:

> Modern Western culture is actually Cosmopolitan, it's an urban culture. […] It's difficult to say what Belarusian culture is. Belarusian culture is [a] culture of modernity. When we speak about Belarusian culture we don't limit it to some rural traditional communal culture. It is also already [an] urban, modern culture. Urban cultures of the West are basically very Cosmopolitan. They are strongly influenced by the processes of westernization, globalization. Namely, not only due to the city but also due to the development of mass media, we are integrated into […] the global cultural space.

While some respondents' perception of Belarusian culture as Cosmopolitan is based on reference to history, others refer to their everyday practices, through which they understand themselves as Cosmopolitans or Europeans. These practices include the appropriation and use of music, film, literature, style, travel, and so forth. For example, Karina prefers punk and reggae as well as the so-called hipster and hippie style, and identifies with "Cosmopolitan culture," viewing culture through the prism of music and style. Karina tells about her identifications:

> This question is very complex. Rather Cosmopolitan, citizen of the world. Well, at first I thought, as you asked, that it's European [culture]. Because… I don't know why, it's just an association and the first thought that comes to my mind. Then I thought that it's rather American [culture] because it comes from there – Woodstock, I like this festival very much, I often listen to it. And hippie, I like the cult of freedom and that they travel by hitchhiking… But then I thought that it's not all, it's just some small part of what I identify with. So it's European, American, Belarusian, and it all comes to be Cosmopolitan. And African as well, yes, I immediately thought of African [culture].

In Karina's self-perception as Cosmopolitan, popular music plays a central role. Her identification with a variety of "cultures" is produced by music: her "belonging" to

American hippie culture by the Woodstock festival, and identification with "African culture" by reggae.

While Kseniya's identification with "Belarusian and Russian culture" seemed certain at first, her later reflections revealed that she was "not particularly interested in Belarusian culture," preferring English and American literature and European films. She signified transculturality of her cultural identity by the following: "Actually, I like to travel. And get to know different peculiarities of culture in which I find myself. This is what interests me… In many cultures I can find something I like." She wears long dreadlocks and likes a variety of genres of Belarusian, Russian and Western music, such as reggae, folk rock, grunge, rock-n-roll, country, etc.

Similarly implying the complexity of the term "culture," Denis associates it with his everyday practices: he likes, for example, Bulgarian cuisine, as a child he liked Hungarian fairy tales, he plays Japanese and Russian lullabies for his daughter, likes Russian and French literature, and Russian and English music. However, a short reference to history takes place as well:

> Well, if some think that they definitely… choose one certain cultural belonging, assuring you that they don't like anything else, any other cultures of the world… I think they lie to themselves. Because, indeed, if considering it, all cultures are mixed up somewhere. If looking at it from a historical point of view, we have much that came from India. (Denis)

Despite the reference to history, Denis's self-perception as Cosmopolitan is produced, mainly, by his cultural practices. Similarly, one of the respondents of focus group 1 clearly associates her music preferences and style with her identification with Cosmopolitan culture:

> I would choose Cosmopolitan [culture] because music of every country has its gem, from every country there is [a gem] in style. I listen to k-pop and j-pop – this is a high point of my everyday life. I like the way they dress in Spain, France, Germany. Everywhere there are some details that can be connected. And you get a coherent image, and you can't even tell that parts of the image are collected from all over the world. (resp.8, focus group 1)

These examples suggest that the self-perception as Cosmopolitan can have different vectors that can be characterized as "Cosmopolitan Belarusianness" and "Cosmopolitanness." Cosmopolitan Belarusianness is constructed mainly through reference to the history and suggests identification with Belarus, whose history and culture are viewed through the prism of their complexity and variety of impacts. On the

contrary, Cosmopolitanness, similar to Europeanness, does not necessarily imply an identification with Belarusian culture and is produced by everyday practices rather than discursive references to the history of Belarus.

Identification with Slavic culture

While the majority of the interviewees and focus group participants described themselves as (European) Belarusians and distanced themselves from Russian culture, the respondents who identified with Slavic culture were in a minority: one interviewee and two focus group participants. Some others identified with Slavic culture implicitly, stating their belonging to Belarusian and Russian cultures (as Kseniya and Viktor did), or to Russian culture (as one focus group participant indicated). Logically, in these cases, dissociation from Russian culture was not articulated, as was the case with "European" Belarusians. On the contrary, the "unity" of Slavic cultures was emphasized. Natalya tells:

> Probably, Slavic culture and everything connected with Slavs will be closer to me. And I think it's normal. We are all close to each other… I'm from Grodno, and next to me Polish music often played. I heard it and I heard the language – I liked it a lot. Lithuania was near – many compositions were also there to hear. […] There are radio stations, and you listen… And it's rather a Slavic [culture]. Well, Western music […] is also there, it's broadcast, it appears there and you can't avoid it. But I think I would prefer Slavic music.

It is remarkable that Natalya, obviously referring to the Soviet history and historiography, attributes Poland and Lithuania to Slavic cultures, whereas meanwhile it is common to consider these states European. Paying much attention to the linguistic aspect in music and referring to Polish- and Lithuanian-language music, she describes this music as "Slavic" and contrasts it with Western music, identifying with Slavic music and Slavic culture.

In Search of Belarusian culture

While many respondents, as the examples above have shown, identify with Belarusian culture (in its various forms), many others expressed difficulty in characterizing it and uncertainty in identification with "Belarusian culture." Some respondents assumed that culture is in the process of development: "But now, [our culture] is being formed. […] We take something from Western culture, something from Eastern. And it's being

assimilated according to our political or territorial situation, and so forth" (resp.2, focus group 2). The term "Belarusian culture" is perceived as ambiguous, as the following excerpt of focus group 1 shows:

> **Moderator**: […] What cultures do you identify with, except for Belarusian culture? And is Belarusian culture the one you identify with?
> **Respondent 6**: And what is Belarusian culture?
> **R7**: *Tuteishiya*.
> **R6**: I think it is a very complex notion. It would be nice to have Belarusian culture. It, kind of, manifests somehow but…
> **R1**: There's not much of it.
> **R5**: There is no integrity. We can consider Belarusian culture as folklore, or in style. But we don't have a common, holistic perception of it.

To the question "what is Belarusian culture?", signifying ambiguity of the term, another participant suggests ironically the local Belarusian-language term "*tuteishiya*," which connotes territorial belonging as the equivalence of cultural identity. It is also discussed that Belarusian culture is not marked sufficiently and, finally, that it can only be viewed in parts but not as a holistic phenomenon. "Belarusian culture as folklore" is a common perception of culture, as described previously in this chapter. Traditional culture is contrasted with "modern" culture, while the latter is often characterized as "undeveloped," "unpopular," "copying," "uninteresting," and "indistinct." This contrast is expressed in the following quotation:

> Unfortunately, modern youth culture – I don't consider these old rites, old clothes – is tracing (copying). Currently it's tracing of Western culture or Russian one. Old Belarusian culture is detached from reality, and the new one is making a symbiosis. Yes, I wear clothes that I bought abroad, in Europe, but as for music, I listen to Russian music. It's not related anyhow yet, I think. (resp.2, focus group 2) [71]

This excerpt is representative of a variety of discourse aspects: the contraposition of modern and traditional cultures; the perception of Belarusian modern culture as unoriginal "tracing" of "the West and the East"; the insignificant role of traditional culture in everyday life; and the relation between cultural practices and the concept of culture.

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[71] К сожалению, современная молодежная культура (я не беру эти старые обряды, старую одежду) – это калька. На данный момент это калька с западной культуры либо российской. Старая белорусская культура оторвана от реальности, а новая занимается симбиозом. Да, я одет в вещи, которые купил за границей, в Европе, но музыку буду слушать русскую музыку. Пока еще это никак не связано, мне кажется.

The respondent states that Belarusian culture is not reflected or expressed in his cultural practices, while the excerpt demonstrates that his perception of Belarusian culture as a "symbiosis" is expressed in his European style but preference for Russian music.

In the discourse on Belarusian culture, the issue of language plays an extremely important role. In one of the focus groups, some respondents pointed out that Belarusian culture as a fusion of different cultures *is* unique, particularly, by being a fusion (which is remarkable, given that any culture can be considered a "fusion"). Others similarly argued that Belarusian culture is distinctive and differs from other cultures. One of the respondents (respondent 4 of focus group 2) expressed the opposite opinion, saying that there is nothing "special" about Belarusian culture, which provoked a negative reaction from some others. She emphasized the importance of the language, and her doubt in the existence of Belarusian culture results from the fact that the Belarusian language is in a marginal position. Overall, the following passage demonstrates the diverse ways in which young people perceive Belarusian culture, and therefore is quoted at length:

> *Moderator: So, is there other cultures' influence? In the questionnaire, you indicated different answers to the question "What culture(s) do you identify with?" Some of you indicated "European," others chose "Russian" or "Belarusian." So how do you feel, what culture is closest to you, and why?*
>
> **Respondent 6:** I don't feel that Belarusians are part of Russia. In my opinion, we have our own culture, a Belarusian one, not like others. And I indicated two options – Belarusian and European – because tendencies of Europe are close to us. We communicate with Lithuanians and Poles. And I think it is important for us. I am part of European society. But this doesn't stop me from being part of Belarusian society.
>
> **R2:** This, in my opinion, is what makes Belarusian culture unique. I believe that we do have our own culture. Although, when you read scientific literature, many authors state there is no Belarusian culture, it hasn't developed yet. Yes, it is young. And the uniqueness…
>
> **R4**: So what makes it evident?
>
> **R5**: What about our traditions? This is also culture. And they are not young at all.
>
> **R2**: Traditions, it's clear. Unfortunately, they practically disappeared while we belonged to other states.
>
> **R6**: They didn't die. They've been almost stifled but they are being reborn.
>
> **R2**: Yes, they are stifled. And I would be glad if they were reborn again. And what makes our culture unique, it is a blend. We've always been between Europe and Russia (I almost said Asia). And I can't say for sure that I feel like part of Europe or Russia. I feel I am Belarusian, and I'm glad that both Russian and European tendencies influence me.
>
> **R8**: I would agree with [respondent 6] because throughout history, we've been a ping pong ball between Europe and the Russian Empire, which has somewhat negatively influenced us. Although they kind of say "Slavic brothers." But I'm not going into historical detail. But yes, we are a blend. A blend of cultures […]

R5: I believe we have a distinct culture. Because if you simply judge by literature, Russian classics such as Pushkin and Lermontov and Belarusian classics are absolutely different. […] Belarusian festivities embody the old traditions […]
R6: Ethnic weddings.
R5: Yes, yes, all that. And there is a lot of that. Our culture is individual, and it differs from others. It has similarities because it's close but…
R4: To me, the notion of culture is an ambiguous one. Especially the notion of Belarusian culture. I don't know why they say it's special. Traditions, what traditions have we adopted? Kupala is celebrated.[72] What further Belarusian traditions? The key indicator of culture is language. How many percent do we have speaking Belarusian?
R5: Not everyone, but many, enough. Recently, I was buying guitar strings in a music shop, and there was a young man, a little older than me, who spoke pure Belarusian.
R2: That's just a single case.
R5: But still, there are such people.
R4: These are some sort of subcultures. But we are talking about Belarusian culture. Language is the key factor. Practically no one speaks Belarusian.
R6: This is our problem that no one speaks it.

These examples of articulation of culture illustrate young people's active search for identity. The discussion reveals several issues in the discourse on Belarusian culture. First, perceptions of what represents Belarusian culture vary; second, there are different opinions on whether Belarusian culture is distinct; and third, one can observe an awareness of the role of language for Belarusian identity. The passage demonstrates that for young Belarusians, it is obviously important to discover and articulate national identity, albeit in different ways. While some respondents express uncertainty in relation to Belarusian identity, others articulate it by means of the dissociation from Russia and, simultaneously, identification with "European society," which indicates the perception of Belarus as part of Europe. Another view of Belarusian identity is that it is distinct and is neither "Russian" nor "European," albeit influenced both by Russian and European cultures. However, many respondents of the interviews and focus groups express the ambiguous perception of Belarusian identity, which is inextricably linked with the issue of the Belarusian language. In other words, the marginal position of the language is one of the primary factors in the ambiguous self-perception as Belarusian. Many respondents articulated the difficulty in a complete identification with Belarusian culture because of insufficient command of Belarusian. The critical engagement with the issue of language is, therefore, a key factor in the ongoing processes of national identity formation.

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[72] Kupala is a traditional Slavic celebration.

The theme of the Soviet past of Belarus was often present among the respondents. Many of them, especially those who identify as Europeans, separated themselves symbolically from the Soviet legacy. Others, on the contrary, emphasized "unity" of Slavic cultures (as in the aforementioned example of Viktor) and associated themselves with Russian or Slavic culture (as Natalya did). Ambiguity of young people's perception of the Soviet past and of its impact on present-day Belarus reflects the opposing societal orientations toward West versus East. This ambiguity is expressed in the discourse on Belarusian culture. The following excerpt shows the respondents' critical approach toward the issue of "modern culture," of culture's "integrity" and self-sufficiency as well as the issue of the Soviet legacy and its impact on the linguistic situation in Belarus:

> **Respondent 5:** Modern culture must be built on history, on every next generation. But we kind of ignore the Soviet past, trying to grasp what was long ago. But we don't know what was.
> **R1**: Because it wasn't. There was Rzeczpospolita[73] back then. There was very little of Belarus as such. Territorially, it existed, but not as an integrity, as a state. What is a state? It means to have one's own language, culture, territory. And this is integrity.
> **R7**: I could explain every point. Our language is much older than Russian. The Soviet Union just instilled in us the Russian language much deeper than Belarusian. That's why even now, the Russian language is closer to me personally, I like it, it's very popular, it's inside of me. But the Belarusian language is older.
> […]
> **R7:** […] We take some tendencies from Europe and remake them here. But the fact is that Belarus never was a lawmaker of any postulates. We were always people who remake how they like and how it's convenient, using others. (focus group 1)

The issue of the Soviet past obviously occupies an important position in the discourse on Belarusian culture. The quoted excerpt reveals the respondents' critical engagement with historiographical issues. Particularly, speaking about "ignoring" the Soviet past, respondent 5 implies the "alternative" historiographical emphasis on pre-Soviet history of Belarus. He obviously does not fully share this approach and suggests that Belarusian culture cannot be detached from the Soviet past. The issue of language and, generally, of Belarusian culture is addressed by respondent 7: she speaks about the Soviet impact in relation to the language situation in Belarus, while her attitude toward this impact seems positive. She describes Russian as "popular" in contrast to Belarusian, emphasizing the longer history of the Belarusian language – obviously because the "tradition" is a

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[73] The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

valorized system of values in Belarus. The contraposition of the "popular" versus "traditional" indicates the "practical" function of the Russian language and the symbolic function of Belarusian. The impact of the Soviet past on everyday life is perceived as crucial but not necessarily as negative, while traditional culture and its symbolic meaning remains intact, occupying a special position in the discourse on Belarusian culture and identity. "European tendencies" mentioned by respondent 7 relate to "modern" Belarusian culture, emphasizing her perception of it as "reproducing" culture influenced both by European and Russian, or Soviet, cultures.

Summary

The discourse on Belarusian culture plays a central role in young people's self-perception and construction of cultural identities. The notion of Belarusian culture is perceived as extremely complex, and this complexity offers young people a variety of identity options. Different interpretations of the concept of Belarusian culture – as well as cultural practices associated with it – produce either identification with this culture or dissociation from it. In turn, identification with or dissociation from Belarusian culture reinforces a further variety of cultural identities.

A positive interpretation of Belarusian culture produces Belarusian identities based on the discourse on history and traditional culture of Belarus; on territorial belonging; on dissociation from nationalism; and on dissociation from Russian culture and a simultaneous identification with European. Often these different identity options intersect and interact, producing eclectic identities that are in a permanent process of transformation.

In the discourse on history and traditional culture, reference to pre-Soviet history allows one to place Belarus in Europe and to identify as European. Reference to traditions and folklore occupies a special position in the discourse. Traditional culture of Belarus is contrasted with its modern culture as well as with traditional cultures of Russia and the "West." Through this contrast, folklore and traditional culture acquire a special symbolic meaning, which facilitates the construction of Belarusian identity.

While, for the maintenance of "traditional" Belarusianness, young people use cultural practices (such as listening to folklore or Belarusian-language popular music),

"territorial" Belarusianness seems equivalent to territorial belonging and does not require an engagement in cultural practices.

Dissociation from nationalism can reinforce different forms of transcultural Belarusianness, producing a self-perception as "Cosmopolitan" or strengthening an identification with the "unity" of the post-Soviet nations.

European Belarusianness is constructed through the dissociation from Russian culture and a simultaneous identification with Europe. Not necessarily radical, dissociation from Russia functions as a means of assertion of Belarusian culture and identity. Through the discourse on pre-Soviet Belarusian history, and through oppositional attitudes, Belarus is positioned in Europe and, at the same time, contrasted with Russia. This contrast reinforces the sense of sameness with Europeans and the sense of difference from Russians, producing European Belarusianness.

"European identity" articulated by some respondents does not necessarily imply identification with Belarusian culture. In these cases, European identity is constructed through a negative interpretation of Belarusian culture, and particularly through the discourse on "backwardness" or "nonexistence" of Belarusian modern culture and through dissociation from Belarus as a perceived periphery. Above all, however, European identity is constructed through cultural practices, such as popular music and visual style. European culture is commonly perceived as a lifestyle, while Belarusian culture is understood as traditional culture. While the "European lifestyle," which includes popular music and visual style, is more available via mass media, "intelligent and forgotten" Belarusian traditional culture is more distanced from everyday life, unable to offer a variety of identity options that are easily available through (European) popular culture. While "nonexistent" modern Belarusian culture as well as traditional culture of Belarus is detached from everyday life, the abundance of the European and American media market easily fills the "gap." Popular music and style available from Europe offer young Belarusians cultural practices and identifications with European culture, thus producing "European identities."

"Cosmopolitan identities" include both "Cosmopolitan Belarusianness" and "Cosmopolitanness." While the former is constructed through the discourse on history of Belarus, Cosmopolitanness, similar to Europeanness, is produced by a variety of everyday practices. In the case of "Cosmopolitan Belarusianness," identification with Belarusian

culture and perception of it as Cosmopolitan is based on discursive reference to history and a positive interpretation of Belarusian culture as a conglomerate. In the case of "Cosmopolitanness," identification with Belarusian culture does not necessarily take place, while everyday practices play a central role in people's self-perception as Cosmopolitan. These practices are offered by, or associated with popular music, internet, film, literature, cuisine, style, travel, and so forth.

Finally, "Slavic identity" is reinforced by the emphasis on the "unity" of Slavic nations as well as through contraposition of the "Slavic space" to the "West."

Overall, despite many respondents' identification with Belarusian culture, many of them, at the same time, expressed difficulty in defining it. Moreover, the very existence of Belarusian (popular) culture was often questioned. While defining Belarusian culture in terms of history and tradition is less problematic, the perception of this culture as present-day, "modern," popular culture is controversial. A positive interpretation of the concept of Belarusian culture is often connected with history and tradition. A negative interpretation of this concept is linked with the understanding of culture in terms of popular culture, which is perceived as underdeveloped or not to exist at all. Both positive and negative interpretations of the concept indicate an ongoing process of identity formation. At the same time, these different interpretations produce identities along lines of European Belarusianness, Europeanness, Slavicness or Cosmopolitanness. None of these identities is absolute or unambiguous; rather, they overlap and interrelate, and each of them is evidently transcultural.

6.1.2. Discourse on Belarusian music: Authenticity and Language [74]

The discourse on Belarusian music is inextricably linked with the discourse on Belarusian culture and identity. Especially in the focus groups, the interconnection of these discourses was evident: discussions of music preferences revealed that the issue of Belarusian music is crucial for many respondents, while the issue of Belarusian music is closely linked with the issue of Belarusian culture. The focus group discussions as well as several interviews revealed that Belarusian culture and identity are in the process of becoming and transforming. This process is reflected and expressed in the cultural

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[74] This chapter is based on the article "A Discourse on Belarusian Music and its Role in the Construction of Identities in Belarus" (Wakengut 2015).

practices of popular music consumption and performance – and in the discourse on Belarusian music.

It is possible to emphasize three major aspects in this discourse: the first is in regard to Belarusian music's existence, which leads to the second aspect of the music's authenticity and, finally, to the third which is language. The aspects of the discourse are closely interconnected and flow into each other. Ultimately, they reflect the extremely complex perception of Belarusian culture by young people as well as their self-perception within this culture.

"Belarusian music doesn't exist"

To some respondents, the marginal position of Belarusian music raises the issue of its very existence. The topics of Belarusian music and Belarusian culture were often closely interlinked in the interviews and focus groups. As the following examples demonstrate, young people's perceptions of Belarusian culture vary significantly. Some of the respondents stated that Belarusian culture does not exist, and others supported this statement. "Nonexistence" of Belarusian culture is usually explained by the country's position between Russia and the Western states as well as by the inevitable influences of other cultures. Some respondents of focus group 1 pointed out that under these influences, Belarus has lost or never had its own identity, as can be seen from the following interview excerpts:

> **Respondent 4**: As for Belarusian culture, I think there is practically no such notion. Because Belarusian culture is rather a formation of culture of Russia, Ukraine, the neighboring countries. It is connected rather with the history; it is a historical development. If in music there is some progress – it is made and becomes more popular… Then, as for Belarusian clothes – there are none. Everything is formed from the neighboring countries. We don't have a distinct Belarusian culture. There is something, but it is weak, I wouldn't consider it culture, if we speak just of clothes and music.
> **R3**: I don't know any distinctive features of Belarusian culture. But people who work on that are trying to find Belarusian culture, to highlight what was destroyed in the Soviet Union, and to form it in the context of global culture. I am in the search, trying to find it to formulate it for myself. On the other hand, there are so many other cultures – Indian, African, American. To me, this is all interesting. The world is moving toward globalism. All we can do is our contribution, i.e. throw Belarusian culture into the global melting pot.
> **R6**: We are still a very young country. So the absence of culture is not a big catastrophe.

This passage reveals that "distinctiveness" of culture and music is viewed as a criterion of their existence. The attempts to discover and articulate differences between other cultures and one's own culture are clear evidence of the ongoing search for identity. As one of the respondents (respondent 3) put it, he is "in search" of Belarusian culture, while being interested in other cultures as well. Transculturality and national identity formation are, therefore, not mutually exclusive processes and can coexist within one person or group.

"Nonexistence" of Belarusian music is similarly explained by the lack of the music's distinctiveness. As one of the respondents of focus group 1 stated, Belarusian culture and music fail to be "unique" and are "lost" in other cultures:

> Remaking and imitation, that's the dead-end development of Belarusian culture. […] it is trying to become popular by copying. But it isn't unique; it just gets lost in European, in world culture. We have folk musicians, and that's the only thing that makes us different from the masses. […] All the rest is European or world culture in miniature. (resp.1, focus group 1)

Some respondents expressed the opinion that Belarusian music is "backward" and lacks progress. It is usually compared with Western music, which is considered more innovative. Vladimir says, "Everyone listens to Western music, […] in Belarus there is no music, actually. […] It doesn't develop at all, […] it's backward. […] We are behind [the West] because in Soviet times there was the iron curtain, when it was not allowed to listen to Western music." This attitude understandably produces disinterest in Belarusian music because it, in Vladimir's words, "falls behind Western music for decades." The disinterest is also justified by the assumption that the state does not support and develop Belarusian culture and music, as some respondents claimed. For example, one of the respondents of focus group 1 spoke about the lack of possibilities for Belarusian musicians:

> **Respondent 2**: Modern culture of Belarus, I think, is unpopular. There are no perspectives for development. There are people who write music, make clothes, create. In our country, there are no development perspectives. Talented people go abroad, they get promoted. There they have more chances to achieve something than here. […]

Similar to some others, this respondent states "unpopularity" of modern Belarusian culture, pointing at the lack of the government's effort in "developing" the culture. Beliefs in the "absence" of Belarusian music result from disinterest produced by assumptions of

the music's "backwardness" and of the government's passive attitude toward Belarusian culture. Disinterest is also often explained by the music's imitative character. For example, Yuliya says:

> No, I don't listen to Belarusian music, actually […]. Maybe because I don't feel it's close to me.
> **Interviewer**: Even Belarusian rock?
> **Yuliya**: I would say there are very, very few such bands. And even if there are some bands – excluding *Lyapis Trubetskoy*[75] – they are so unknown that… How do I say that? Their music, I would say, doesn't have something distinct. As far as I know, our bands perform in English [or perform tributes.]

Mark made a similar statement about Belarusian music being a "copy" of something else: "On television, too, it's all very pitiful. If it's not ideology, then it's copies of something successful from the West or from Russia. There is nothing [of its] own." Olga does not like Belarusian music at all: according to her, "there is nothing interesting about it." Moreover, despite her speaking Russian in everyday life, she articulates the "purity" of the Belarusian language (i.e. the lack of Russified words) as important: "I listened to a few songs of Palina Réspublika[76] but… I don't know, I guess I don't like the pronunciation. I only like the pure Belarusian pronunciation, so that there is a minimum of Russified words, that's why I don't like it very much" (Olga).

Terms such as "not unique," "copying" or "different from the masses" raise the issue of authenticity, which obviously plays a very important role in the perception of Belarusian music for many people. The quite common opinion that "Belarusian music doesn't exist" should therefore be understood as "Belarusian music that is distinct and authentic does not exist."

Authenticity

The myth of authenticity and the idea of truth (cf. Frith 2007 and Chapter 2.5) represent the important elements of the discourse on Belarusian music. Remarkably, the fact that music is made in Belarus often turns out to be insufficient for considering it "truly" Belarusian. As commonly believed, criteria for the music's authenticity are the use of traditional instruments and of the Belarusian language. The discourse on the "imitative"

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[75] Belarusian rock band, famous both in Belarus and abroad.
[76] Singer-songwriter singing in Belarusian.

character of Belarusian music arguably has its roots in Soviet cultural politics, which propagated folk musics of Soviet republics with the use of native languages and traditional instruments. Folk music was regarded as authentic and genuine to the Soviet people, since it was the "music of the people." Popular music with folk components (such as the vocal instrumental ensembles) was appreciated, while Western rock music was represented as being the product of the antagonistic capitalistic world and of the "bourgeois" society. Soviet music that happened to reveal Western influences was devalued as being "inauthentic."

The Soviet legacy arguably still plays a role in many discourses, including the discourse on Belarusian music and its (in)authenticity. The "idea of truth" constructed around folk musics and Soviet popular music is part of cultural memory, which in different, transformed ways can affect young people born after the fall of the Soviet Union, as evidenced by the respondents' claims about the imitative character of Belarusian music. The idea of authenticity in general, not only in relation to Belarusian music, is multifaceted and functions at different levels, being used in the construction of various hierarchies (as also discussed in the following sections).

Language

As explained above, many respondents perceive the issue of language as very important. Ambiguousness of identification as Belarusian is often caused by the marginal status of the Belarusian language, which is reflected in ambiguous attitudes toward Belarusian music. The discourse on Belarusian music reflects the discourse on the Belarusian language and, eventually, the discourse on Belarusian identity. Unpopularity of Belarusian music among many young people is often explained by the lack of the Belarusian language in society and in their everyday lives.

However, while many respondents expressed uncertainty in identification as Belarusian because of their insufficient command of the language, others identified fully with Belarusian culture despite not speaking Belarusian. In some cases, the lack of use of Belarusian in everyday life is compensated by cultural practices different from language use, and particularly by music. The following excerpt of the interview with Aleksandr demonstrates the symbolic meaning of cultural practices in the process of identity construction:

> To me, Belarusian culture is something intelligent and forgotten… You can't call it guilt that I am a Belarusian and don't speak Belarusian, but there is something in it. If I see an opportunity somewhere to express myself as a Belarusian, I do that. For instance, I choose the Belarusian language in a computer program and I listen to Belarusian music. Or I have a t-shirt with the Ў print.[77] Indeed these are small things but still I like to do that.[78]

Many respondents perceive their insufficient command of Belarusian as a negative phenomenon that results from historical peculiarities of Belarus. Some of them, indeed, seem to have feelings of guilt and embarrassment because of not speaking Belarusian, as Aleksandr suggested. In such cases, Belarusian-language music has a function of compensation and is favored, among other meanings that the music offers, as a language practice. In this way, by means of music, the Belarusian language is made an everyday practice without the necessity to actually speak it in everyday life.

The Belarusian language often seems to have a symbolic meaning for Belarusian identity.[79] In music making and music preferences, the symbolic meaning of the language is especially evident. Boris describes himself as an apolitical skinhead of the SHARP movement[80] and plays guitar in a punk-hardcore band. He identifies with Belarusian culture (which he perceives as having European roots) and speaks Russian but considers it important for the band to have songs in Belarusian in order to be able to represent Belarus abroad properly:

> **Interviewer**: Do you have a good command of Belarusian?
> **Boris**: I do, but I kind of don't care about speaking it. There are people who are crazy about all that. But I… I grew up in Russian, was brought up in Russian…
> **Interviewer**: Still, you write your texts in Belarusian as well.
> **Boris**: Well, of course. But that's more for people from other countries, so that they know how our language is, how our culture is. Our lead singer […] doesn't speak Belarusian either but nonetheless, he appreciates Belarusian culture very much.

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[77] Ў is a sign of the *Galereya Ў*, a venue in Minsk, which promotes Belarusian-language literature and music as well as Belarusian-made artefacts, such as clothes, souvenirs, toys etc. *Galereya Ў* postulates itself as a mediator of Belarusian culture and is a meeting point for young Belarusian speakers.

[78] Для меня белорусская культура – это по большей части что-то интеллигентное, забытое… Это нельзя назвать чувством вины, что я белорус и не говорю по-белорусски, но что-то такое есть. Если я вижу где-то возможность проявить себя как белорус, то я это делаю. Например, выбираю в программе язык белорусский, если такой есть, слушаю белорусскую музыку. Или вот у меня есть майка «Ў». На самом деле, это все такие мелочи, но, тем не менее, мне нравится так делать.

[79] As Hentschel and Kittel (2011) have shown, the Belarusian language has a historical, archaic, sacral meaning for Belarusians, although in many cases, actually speaking the language is considered not necessarily important for Belarusian identity.

[80] The term "SHARP" stands for "Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice."

The symbolic use of the language obviously functions as a means of maintaining authenticity of the music for Boris and his band. It is important to them to be able to represent Belarus in a way that would emphasize its difference from other countries: by means of the language of the lyrics. In this way, musicians construct authenticity of their music – and of themselves.

Belarusian-speaking respondents, who were in a minority, favored Belarusian music, and particularly Belarusian rock. The latter is often associated with nationalistic attitudes. Belarusian rock as an expression of Belarusian identity offers Belarusian speakers a sense of national identity (cf. Survilla 2002). Maksim's words support this observation: "It is obvious that in Belarus, Belarusian culture is suppressed, trampled down, and it's going on… And often those who are interested in Belarusian culture, their own culture, among those people there are many, who listen to Belarusian-language music, Belarusian music and so on." Maksim would fall within the concept of conscious "alternative Belarusianness": he speaks Belarusian in everyday life and maintains a pro-Western attitude as well as criticism of Russia's political and cultural influence in Belarus. He prefers Western and Belarusian music, which is mainly rock, folk rock and folk metal. To him, the existence of Belarusian music is undeniable, and is dependent on the level of interest in one's "own" culture. In Maksim's opinion, all Belarusians, who consider themselves as such, should and will appreciate both the Belarusian language and music.

However, it is important to mention that some Belarusian-speaking respondents feel irritated by the "demonstrative function" of language in music, as well as by politicization of Belarusian-language music (especially rock and rap). In their opinion, Belarusian music should be appreciated not for the use of language, but for aesthetic or expressive qualities. For example, Belarusian-language rapper Mark explains, "Of course I identify with Belarus and consider myself a Belarusian, but I don't like it when they make music in Belarusian just for it to be in Belarusian." He adds, "The language as well as music is a means to express oneself" and should not be politicized because politicization restricts both the language and music. Stas similarly claims that "music is music" rather than a "political instrument." The respondents' view of Belarusian music reveals another dimension in the articulation of identity: they dissociate themselves from the "demonstrative" use of language and regard it purely as a means of communication

and self-expression, which indicates an aspiration of "Belarusianness" as a state of mind, not as an indicator of political attitudes.

Summary

The discourse on Belarusian music reveals the extremely complex perceptions of Belarusian culture and indicates a continuing process of identity formation of young Belarusians, represented by the research participants. This is mainly evidenced by the aspect of authenticity expressed in the attempts to discover and articulate the difference of Belarusian culture and music from other cultures and musics. The difficulty in articulating this difference leads to disinterest in Belarusian music, which in turn results from such themes of the discourse as "nonexistence," "lack of uniqueness" or "backwardness" of Belarusian music. This discourse is organized around the issue of the Belarusian language in Belarus and often seems to be influenced by young people's awareness of insufficient command of Belarusian. Unpopularity of Belarusian-language music among young Belarusians reflects the status of the Belarusian language. Belarusian music represents a cultural landscape that reveals the issue of the language in Belarus, i.e. the lack of Belarusian in most people's everyday lives.

Both the Belarusian language and Belarusian music often have a symbolic meaning for Russian speakers. The symbolic meaning of Belarusian music facilitates the construction of Belarusian identity without using the language as an everyday practice. Belarusian music can thus fulfill the functions of compensation and authentication. For some Belarusian speakers, Belarusian music and language represent a resource through which they construct and articulate conscious positioning of (pro-Western) Belarusianness; for others, the music and language represent an aspiration toward cultural self-expression as Belarusians beyond politics.

6.2.   The Construction of Meanings through Music

6.2.1. The Articulation of Meaning

The articulation of "meaning" plays a central role in the respondents' perception and interpretation of music. The "meaning" represents a discourse, in which various understandings of music's purpose are intertwined. The "meaning" that music conveys is

perceived at the intellectual and emotional levels, which are described in this section. In the intellectual perception of music, "meaningful" lyrics play a major role. The emotional perception of music is characterized by appreciation of melodies that evoke, intensify or "reflect" emotions and feelings.[81]

The Aspect of Intellectual Perception

"Meaning" is often articulated in relation to lyrics in preferred music. Quite commonly, "meaning" is equated with lyrics, and vice versa. For example, speaking about her preferences in music, Viktoria says that to her, first of all "the meaning, the text matters." The similar association between lyrics and meaning is common among many respondents. In their opinion, in order to be "meaningful," a song's lyrics must "tell a story" or convey a "hidden meaning." For many respondents, lyrics are the essential part of musical experience and represent the "meaning" of music. As Vladimir explains:

> [T]o me actually, lyrics are very important… because it's the meaning of music. If I listen to some stupid words, then music loses its meaning. To me, lyrics are very important. […] In music, sometimes the rhythm is important and sometimes… At a party I wouldn't care, […] lyrics are not important in a club, the beat is important there. But when I listen to my music, I care for lyrics because I choose this music myself.

Vladimir differentiates between "party music" and "his music," defining the respective functions: if party music's main feature is the rhythm, the central component of "his" music is lyrics that convey the "meaning." Entertainment as a purpose of club music is therefore contraposed to the "meaning" of one's "own" music.

Some respondents emphasized the importance of texts, especially in Russian music, or music with lyrics in Russian. The "closer" and the more understandable the language is the more important the lyrics are. Denis tells:

> I like the Russian language [in music]. […] I like it when the texts are understandable. Interesting texts, so that they convey some kind of meaning. That's why, mostly, I like Russian music with good texts. I also like good foreign [music] of high quality very much. […] Because if the texts don't turn me on, then the melody should.

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[81] Of course, the role of the cultural aspect is as important as the other described aspects: if music facilitates belonging to a group (or difference from "others"), its implicit "meanings" come into the foreground. However, it is the articulated "meanings" of music that this section focuses on, and the cultural aspect was not explicitly articulated.

Denis prefers Russian-language music exactly because lyrics play a great role to him.[82] It is very important to him to be able to understand the songs' texts fully in order to understand the "meaning" conveyed through the texts. While Russian music appeals to him with lyrics, Western music must offer "good" melodies. The lyrical component of Russian-language songs is thus contrasted to the melodic component of Western music. This view is echoed by Vadim's reflections, where English- and Russian-language rock is compared. While the lyrics' flaws can be ignored in English-language songs, they "hurt to listen" in Russian music:

> I can't separate music from the text. Sometimes the music is very good but the text is poor, and you can ignore it. Especially if it's an English-language band. It just doesn't hurt to listen. […] Russian-language bands, if the text is poor, it catches the eye and it's impossible to listen to. In a good rock song, you can't separate music from the text.

The following response by Aleksandr implies the same perception of Western music's instrumental proficiency versus lyrical strength of Russian rock: "I listen to some groups because they have cool texts, and I listen to others because the music is cool. But I can't tell what's more important. […] [If I listen] because of the texts, it's mostly Russian-language music" (Aleksandr).

Viktoria's reflections resemble those of Vadim: while she can ignore lyrics in other languages, it is hardly possible if the texts are in her native language. Viktoria pays much attention to the text as the "messenger" of meaning:

> And if [a song] is in a language that is closer to you, all the same you listen attentively. Whether you want that or not, all the same you hear it. I would like a text to create the mood, the tone… The meaning is always different but there should be an idea. Not just something but exactly the idea, which could make you think […].

The "idea" that Viktoria mentions refers largely to Russian rock, where lyrics play a primary role. Obviously, Viktoria has been paying attention to the lyrics since she "discovered" Russian rock through her peers. She compares Russian rock with music "for the background," with which "one doesn't think." If earlier she listened to music "for the background," she discovered Russian rock when she "grew up." Russian rock is, therefore, associated with being an adult, with thinking people, and with meaningful lyrics.

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[82] Denis's foreign language skills included, as he described them, "a little understanding" of English and Polish.

Denis, who prefers various forms of punk rock and Russian rock, similarly emphasizes the importance of lyrics in music, and particularly in Russian rock:

Denis: [I appreciate] *Kino*.[83] Very good texts and quite good music. I actually appreciate songs, texts, poetry. […]
Interviewer: You mean that to you, the texts are important in music?
Denis: Very important. One of the most important is, surely, the text. If music is with words, yes. It must convey some meaning. Because a person wants to convey something when they sing.

Russian rock and the importance of lyrics were also discussed in focus group 2. Particularly, one of the participants (respondent 5) explicitly associates song texts with the meaning: "In rock, I prefer Russian-language rock because it's important for me to hear what people sing and what they write in the text, in order for it to have some meaning. I'm not so good at foreign languages, that's why I don't like foreign rock very much." This statement illustrates, firstly, the common association of Russian rock with lyrics and, secondly, the role of language skills in music preferences. Since the respondent pays much attention to lyrics and to the "meaning" associated with them, she prefers Russian-language rock and rejects music with lyrics in other languages.

Russian rock is commonly considered "music with the meaning," where the meaning is conveyed mainly through lyrics. Russian rap, however, is considered "meaningful" as well, albeit by a far smaller number of respondents. Moreover, Russian rap is often rejected and disliked by those who appreciate Russian rock because in their opinion, Russian rap is a "stupid set of words," full of a negative propaganda (e.g. of drugs), filled with jargon and "filthy language" or because rappers use electronic music, which is considered "inauthentic" and "lifeless." Still, some of the respondents consider Russian rap exactly the music that conveys meaning. For example, Viktor identifies with Russian rap and its "sincerity": "anyone can sit down and think up what never happened and will never happen. And sincerity is when you write what is happening for real." Viktor states that "meaning" is the most important for him. His following argument implies an association between the meaningful and the factual: "anyone can write something fictitious and without a meaning." To him, "meaning" is expressed by concrete, "real" themes, such as family or relationships: "for example, a performer […] expresses the meaning that one shouldn't forget his family, one should always help them,

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[83] *Kino* is the name of one of the most influential Russian rock groups (1981-1991).

shouldn't turn away and should be with them." Thus, to Viktor, informative and instructive contents represent meaning, and vice versa. Moreover, rap is a symbol of masculinity to him: he contrasts it with popsa, which he labels as "music for girls."

Another respondent, who prefers Russian rap, appreciates wordplay in this music form and compares rap with poetry, which suggests a different dimension in the perception of rap. He emphasizes the importance of lyrics in music generally, favoring them over melodic or instrumental elements: "To me, in music and in songs the primary thing is the text. I can excuse flaws in the melody, etc. It's understood already from the fact that I prefer rap, and mainly rap in Russian" (resp.1, focus group 2). Another participant of the focus group has a similar point of view on rap with the "interesting meaning": "I could kind of ignore the lack of a good melody, but the text turns me on" (resp.8, focus group 2). The importance of the text is similarly emphasized by a rapper, Mark, who performs rap in Belarusian and Russian, and expresses a point of view that rap is "not completely music," stating that "the primary meaning is in the text." More generally, in Mark's opinion, the "meaning" of music, whether in making or listening, is "self-expression."

Russian rock or (Russian) rap is arguably preferred by young people exactly because they consider lyrics extremely important. Since both in Russian rock and in (global) rap lyrics play a primary role, these music forms are able to offer people "meaning" through understandable text. If foreign language skills are estimated as insufficient, Russian-language music becomes particularly valued, providing a frame of reference through which the "meaning" is best expressed and perceived.

English-language lyrics, however, are also important to many respondents. Some of them, having a good command of English, pay much attention to texts that they hear in music, since the texts are perceived as an integral part of music. Others search for the texts on the internet and translate them into Russian in order to understand the "meaning" of a song. Generally, whether in Russian or in other languages, song lyrics play an important role for many respondents in their articulation of music's "meaning." The perception of music at the level of lyrics, appreciation of poetic texts, taking an interest in "what the performer thinks about," translating texts from other languages etc. indicate an intellectual aspect in young people's search of "meaning" in certain pieces of music, or in music generally.

The Aspect of Emotional Perception

The emotional aspect represents another level of the articulation of meaning. Both intellectual and emotional aspects can intersect within the same person's perception. While some respondents seem to perceive music primarily at the level of lyrics, i.e. intellectually, others perceive it at both levels or predominantly at the emotional level. The following quote from a conversation with a bard singer reveals that lyrics can evoke not only an intellectual but also a strong emotional resonance:

> The meaning [of songs] is in empathy, in some sort of catharsis… When we read these poems, listen to these songs, we discover […] some kinds of emotions […]. It widens emotional boundaries very much. Because sometimes words become phrases that turn everything upside down inside (Kira).

Stating the importance of "meaning" in music, Denis explains his understanding of it in terms of the emotional perception: "Firstly, when music gets you high, when you just like it, when it grasps something inside."[84] In focus group 2, one of the participants, in contrast to others, stated that lyrics are secondary, while the melodic component is primary to her: "To me, I think, music is more important than texts. Even if a song is *popsa* but I like the music, it corresponds to my mood, to the way I feel, then I can ignore these words and just listen to music. […] The main thing is the music and the condition that it conveys" (resp.4, focus group 2). Similarly, Alina pays more attention to the melody than to the texts because, in her opinion, "music must bring pleasure" and offer "pleasant moments." In addition, Alina does not hold much of the music's lyrics in high regard, and that is why she appreciates the melody rather than lyrics:

> The meaning is in the melody itself. Because texts are often not very [good]. But if the music itself is good and the song is about nothing, I will listen to it. […] It happens that a song gets you high just because the text is cool (although I can't remember such examples for myself). It happens with my friends. But not with me, to me the most important thing is that I like the melody.

Differently than other respondents, Olga does not set priorities between lyrical and melodic components in music. Rather, both components can evoke emotional states, which is a desirable effect for Olga: "Many songs convey different feelings, happenings,

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[84] However, Denis also states that lyrics play the most important role to him (quoted earlier in this chapter), which indicates the unity of intellectual and emotional aspects in the articulation of meaning and in overall music consumption.

memories, many songs are about love, which I like very much." Olga speaks very emotionally about her musical experiences: according to her, a song has meaning if it fully expresses her emotional states, so that she can declare to herself: "this song is exactly about me!" Olga tells: "sometimes the song, the music, the video – all of it together – can move me so much that in the end I just sit and cry. Because it's so much about me or it touches my feelings so much that I can't resist it. I think it's wonderful." Although she pays attention to lyrics, she seems to find "meaning" in the song as a whole: "I find in [music] very much meaning because it fits me, it fits the state of my soul in different situations, and also because when I listen to this music I feel unity with the fans from other countries and other regions as well as with the performer." As a quite emotional young person, Olga feels and expresses her "unity" with music as well as with the associated people, i.e. fans and performers. The articulation of "unity" suggests another aspect in the articulation of meaning. This is a cultural aspect, which, surely, plays a very important role in people's perception of music and of meaning. This role, however, seems to be less conscious: the meaning in the cultural aspect is practically not articulated in any other interview or focus group.

Finally, the point of *creating* the meaning was discussed in focus group 2: one of the participants suggested that "one can find meaning in music [i.e. melody] itself" and that "a bare meaning is offered extremely rarely." Some others agreed, reflecting on meanings and their constant changing, which depends on the person themselves and on such factors as age, mood, current events, etc. As one of the participants put it: "One can think up the meaning for themselves. Music expresses emotions, first of all. And emotions depend on your consciousness, on a context, on what you're thinking about. You fill this music with your own words" (resp.2, focus group 2).

Summary

Although both aspects of intellectual and emotional perception of music and "meaning" are often interconnected, it is obvious that in many cases, one prevails over the other, allowing one to differentiate these both aspects. The differentiation has been made on the basis of the discussions of "meaning," i.e. articulations, mostly raised by the respondents themselves, have served as the material of this section. The cultural aspect, which seems

less conscious for the respondents, has been omitted, but will be discussed in the next sections in the context of other (often interrelated) themes.

The aspect of intellectual perception seems to play an extremely important role in the discourse on music and in people's music preferences. This aspect includes appreciation of lyrics as the key component of music. Lyrics are equated to "meaning," and vice versa. Placing the lyrics at the top of the hierarchy of musical experience requires a complete comprehension of the text, which is only possible for many if the text is written and sung in one of the languages considered native. This explains many respondents' preference of Russian rock and Russian rap, since this music, focused on the lyrical component, offers them the highly appreciated poetry, wordplay, or social commentary – the aspects that are closely associated with "meaning."

Compared with the intellectual aspect, that of emotional perception was articulated less intensively. This might be explained by the characteristic feature of the discourse in which "meaning" is strongly linked with the text. Otherwise, this might be caused by the respondents' possible perception of the interview or focus group as a situation inappropriate for discussing intimate themes, such as one's own emotions. However, those who shared their emotional states made it clear that emotions can be evoked both through the lyrical and melodic components. Some find a "catharsis" (as Kira did) or intense emotional experiences in lyrics: "this song is about me!" (Olga); others see the meaning in the pleasure and in the "reflection" of moods, offered by the melody and instrumental compositions.

Finally, some respondents reflected on the relativity of "meaning." As they suggested, people create meaning themselves, and the same piece of music can acquire different meanings for the same person through a lifetime.

6.2.2. "Underground" and "Mainstream"

In this section, different perceptions of the concepts "underground" and "mainstream" are analyzed, as well as the ways in which the respondents articulated these notions. Given the presence of control and censorship in many spheres of Belarusian society, it was meaningful to raise the topic of the underground in interviews and discussions about music. As the "opposite" of the underground, the topic of the mainstream was also

addressed and discussed intensively. Both terms evoked a variety of reactions and associations that are part of a discourse analyzed in this chapter.

Underground music is usually understood as an antipode of mainstream culture and commercial music, although there is no univocal (academic) definition of this term. The "mainstream" as a "particularly vexed" term is explained as follows: "mainstream music is perceived by the music industry (and thus by the rest of the society in which the music industry participates) to be marketed towards the largest possible, most heterogeneous audience" (Brackett 2015, 198). "Underground" is usually understood as music expressing "sincerity," individuality, freedom and creativity, and is opposed to commercial mainstream music. Terms such as "sincerity," "freedom," "expression," and "individuality" are loaded with conceptions of meaning and point to another highly loaded term "authenticity." These concepts represent an antipode of the "mainstream" and the associated connotations, such as "conformity" and "commercialism." The two polar concepts represent, therefore, the "idea of truth" (as Frith (2007) formulated it) versus the idea of "fakeness." As these ideas are constructed in a given social context, they are part of the discourse and process of articulation, in which subjective perceptions interrelate with shared beliefs about "authentic" and "artificial" music, i.e. about underground and mainstream. Obviously, the notion of the underground is also associated with the "freedom" from control and censorship. As other ideas, the idea of freedom is not fixed, being created in a given context. Particularly, different sets of positioning in Belarusian society influence the ways in which young people articulate underground, authenticity and freedom of expression, as well as the "opposite" concept of mainstream.

The theme of the underground is controversial, as focus group discussions and interviews have revealed. While some of the respondents stated that they had never heard the term "underground" before, others, on the contrary, argued that "only underground exists" in Belarus and that underground music is "popular" there: "I can't name a single group that wouldn't be underground" (resp.8, focus group 1). It is remarkable that the term "underground" is not necessarily widespread even among people who identify with a subculture.[85] However, this term is known well enough to allow for the possibility of

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[85] For instance, Alina, who identified with the emo and goth subcultures in the past, told that among her peers, this term was never used. Instead, they described themselves as *neformaly*, which means "informals," "nonconformists," "rockers," or subcultural people.

discussions. Most respondents were familiar with the term, even if it evoked much uncertainty.

The topic of the mainstream is less controversial, although it also evokes different connotations, and sometimes contradictions. To some respondents, mainstream is pop music or dubstep, while for others, it is alternative or classic rock. One of the respondents, Viktoria, considered Russian rap as the mainstream. She labeled it as "drug rap" and insisted that it is "imposed" on the youths, influencing them negatively (because many teenagers "learn" to use drugs through this music). However, it is common to associate "mainstream music" with commercial profits, with the "broader public" and with "the trend" followed by "the majority." For instance, Sergey defines mainstream as "popular music and music that can be turned into money." One of the focus group participants characterized mainstream by "playing for pleasing the public" (resp.3, focus group 1).

Although many respondents perceived underground as a relative phenomenon, most of them had a more or less clear definition of it. The proposed definitions indicate three categories, according to which the underground is conceived and evaluated. The first category comprises "unpopularity" of music associated with the underground; the second category includes the political aspect, i.e. the underground (in Belarus) is linked with musicians' and audiences' political attitudes as well as with governmental control, prohibitions and censorship. The third category is that of authenticity and "self-expression."

Underground as unpopular music

Unpopularity, with which my respondents associate the underground, implies, firstly, small audiences able to appreciate the music, and secondly, the lack of commercial success of the music. Particularly, underground was defined as "music that is not very famous" (Stas) and as "unpopular music" (Vladimir). In one of the focus groups, underground was described as "uncommercial music" and was associated with subcultures: "Underground is, commonly, music of the subcultures in the primary understanding" (resp.2, focus group 2). Vladimir associates underground with an "asocial way of life" as well as with small audiences. According to Olga, underground music is "appreciated by a minority of people," and therefore, in the case of identifying with the underground, "music belongs only to you." These examples make it obvious that the term

"underground" evokes both positive and negative connotations, and that "unpopularity" is interpreted differently. Particularly, Vladimir evaluates the unpopularity of underground music negatively because he associates it with the "asocial" way of life, from which he strongly dissociates himself. On the contrary, Olga's positive perception of the term suggests in her the sense of exception and individuality offered by music available only for a "minority" of people.

The lack of commercial success and of large audiences is often ascribed to entire Belarusian music, regardless of the genres. In this logic, according to some respondents, the underground "prevails" because the Belarusian music market fails to provide successful products and to attract mass audiences. Some respondents stated that "only underground exists in Belarus," which suggests that even pop music produced in Belarus is considered underground because it is "unpopular." These statements are part of the discourse on Belarusian music (which has been discussed in section 6.1.2). In the context of "non-existence" of Belarusian music and culture, music that *does* exist is identified as underground because the mainstream "doesn't exist" anyway.

The statement "only underground exists in Belarus" refers greatly to the insufficiency of the music industry and to the lack of "the right marketing," which drive Belarusian music into the underground. In other words, given the lack of the mainstream, Belarusian music culture is perceived entirely as unpopular and therefore as "underground." The existent pop music is either not taken into account or is also considered "underground" due to its unpopularity. Particularly, Vladimir's point of view suggests that most Belarusian music is in the underground, with the exception of the famous band *Lyapis Trubetskoy*:

> [In Belarus,] exactly the underground prevails. I don't think we have mainstream groups in Belarus. We mostly have the underground. Mainstream is there for everyone to listen. We have maybe only one mainstream band, *Lyapis Trubetskoy*. Everybody has heard of it. Other groups from the underground are unknown. At the same time, certainly, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* identify themselves with the underground. But in their genre they are the mainstream because they are the most popular group in Belarus.

Similarly, one of the focus group participants stated that "only [the underground] exists in Belarus. Because I don't see much pop music as it is." Another participant replied: "I agree. In Belarus, I've never met an underground musician who would say that music provides money. They all work somewhere. This is a criterion indicating that this music

is not very popular and developed. They kind of exist and kind of don't" (focus group 1). This discussion reveals such topics as the lack of pop music in Belarus, unpopularity and unprofitability of underground (rock) music, and questioning of its very existence. The discussion therefore suggests that both Belarusian pop music (or mainstream) and underground music are perceived as undeveloped or nonexistent at all, even in the case of a positive interpretation of the underground. The articulation of nonexistence is linked to the discourse on Belarusian culture, in which nonexistence often implies "inauthenticity" of Belarusian music. This articulation indicates a process of search for a "distinct" Belarusian identity.

Underground and the political aspect

The political aspect is very important in the perception of underground. Some respondents described it as "something forbidden" and as music that is not broadcast on radio or television "for political or social reasons" (Lyudmila). Similarly, Viktoria defined it as "music with social themes, which is prohibited" (such as *Lyapis Trubetskoy*), and as music "not brought to perfection" and "rejected by the authorities and by a certain stratum of the population" (such as Russian rock bands *Kino* and *DDT*). At the same time, according to Viktoria, censorship does not play a great role nowadays because the commercial interest is primary: "if you have money, pay it and you get everything done." Roman described underground as music "not banned by any institutions", i.e. as music that manages to remain beyond control and censorship. Similarly, underground is associated with social and political protest (Denis).

An immediate association that the term "underground" evoked among many respondents was the Belarusian ska punk band *Lyapis Trubetskoy*, very famous not only in Belarus but also in neighboring countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania.[86] Due to the critical oppositional content of song lyrics and of the lead singer's commentaries in social media, the band has been banned in Belarus, and most performances have taken place abroad. Many respondents suggested *Lyapis Trubetskoy* as an example of Belarusian "mainstream underground," meaning the band's popularity

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[86] The band existed from 1990 until 2014 (i.e. it still existed when most interviews were conducted). Initially singing mostly in Russian, the band later became strongly oriented on Belarusian-language lyrics. In late 2014, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* ceased to exist, and its lead singer Siarhei Mikhalok founded a new Belarusian-language band *Brutto*.

in and beyond Belarus in spite of – or exactly due to – the oppositional message of *Lyapis Trubetskoy*'s music. The case of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* demonstrates that control and censorship have little influence on people's music preferences – or have the opposite effect of attracting the audiences. As Aleksandr put it, suggesting *Lyapis Trubetskoy* as an example of Belarusian mainstream, "protest and mainstream are almost the same things." Similarly, Roman states that, despite the "underground message," *Lyapis Trubetskoy* is in the mainstream. He explained that earlier, he ignored the band's music exactly because it was considered mainstream; it was some time later that he realized that "the songs are very interesting indeed" (Roman).

Lyapis Trubetskoy are therefore a symbol of the "popular underground" indicating that many young people in Belarus either identify or sympathize with the subversive message. Moreover, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* is surrounded by the romanticism of a herald persecuted by the authorities. On the other hand, the fact that the band is so famous makes it an exceptional Belarusian phenomenon because no other Belarusian musician or band enjoys popularity comparable with that of *Lyapis Trubetskoy.* As one of the respondents put it, "there is really pride" for the band (Karina). *Lyapis Trubetskoy* is therefore appreciated for representing Belarus abroad – and for making Belarusians "visible." Very often, the respondents articulated "unpopularity" of Belarusian music and even stated "nonexistence" of it (cf. Chapter 6.1.2). Therefore, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* as an extremely famous Belarusian band stands out of the background of "unpopular" Belarusian culture and, furthermore, represents young Belarusians as part of a progressive, freedom-seeking nation internationally. This suggests cultural and national self-perception, in which Belarusian culture is only brought into being and "legitimized" through international representation. In other words, in some people's perception, Belarusian culture per se does not exist but is valorized through representation among other cultures. In this way, Belarusian identity is reinforced through "others," i.e. it is the recognition of a Belarusian cultural product by other nations that "validates" Belarusian culture for Belarusians themselves.

The phenomenon of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* suggests the existence of two different interpretations of the band – as a freedom fighter and national hero, or as a cultural product able to represent Belarusian culture beyond Belarus. Respectively, interpreters of the band as rebellious and subversive would rather relate it to the underground, and

appreciators of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* as a cultural product would associate it with the mainstream. However, the two interpretations often intersect, producing the phenomenon of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* representing the "underground in the mainstream," and the "mainstream in the underground."

Underground, mainstream, relativity and authenticity

Many respondents articulated the flexibility of boundaries between underground and mainstream, offering various examples of the "transition" of the former into the latter. Many of them suggested – explicitly or implicitly – that the terms are relative, and some respondents even labeled them as "meaningless." However, at the same time, it was obvious that often, one concept was preferred over the other, namely the concept of underground was valued more than that of mainstream. This indicates the existence of a hierarchy in the discourse about music. Even when young people claim to ignore the "limiting" division "underground versus mainstream," it appears that the hierarchy, in which the underground is placed at the top, and the mainstream at the bottom, plays a significant role in their interpretations.

According to Aleksandr, among his friends and acquaintances mainstream is regarded as a "mild synonym" of "bad" music. In Aleksandr's opinion though, good music can be found both within and outside of the mainstream. Moreover, he is "attempting to struggle with the notion of mainstream" because mainstream versus non-mainstream is "a stupid division." However, he admits that, although he does not like this division, he still keeps following it: "sometimes I'm saying "it's too mainstream, I don't listen to such music." This statement obviously derives from Aleksandr's social environment, where he and his peers were fans of metal music. Representation of the underground and mainstream among metal rock fans ubiquitously creates a hierarchy of music and its creative expression, placing metal at the top, and pop (or mainstream) at the bottom of the hierarchy. The hierarchy draws the line between creation, expression, and authenticity at one end, and artificiality at the other, creating and reinforcing the boundaries between "us and them."

In relation to his former identification with metal music, Aleksandr reflects that it was much about "showing off" and being different. He used to think: "we listen to metal, we are different." Identification with music "for the minority" played, therefore, a great

role in Aleksandr's identity formation through the construction of difference. However, Aleksandr does not romanticize the underground – in fact, he speaks ironically about it and does not identify with it (any longer). He associates underground people with nonconforming appearances (e.g. with dreads, beards or piercing) and with nonconformist practices: "it is something that sounds from the cellars" and "something that is, kind of, not for everybody." Aleksandr compares Belarusian and Western underground, stating that in Belarus, underground is "not very much developed," unlike in England, where "in every district there are ten bands, and all of them play something interesting. [In Belarus] I haven't heard anything like that." In this comparison, the common perception of Belarus as a cultural "periphery" is addressed, while the "center" is projected onto the "West." Here, the hierarchy is shifting, as Western underground is placed above the Belarusian one. As also shown in the next example, Belarusian underground is perceived as inauthentic because Belarusian musicians tend to "copy" Western stars rather than create their own music. The shifting hierarchy, the comparison of Belarus with the West, the perception of Belarus as periphery, and the projection of the cultural center onto the construct of the "West" indicate the process of the search for identity along the lines of nation and culture. Belarusian identity is a very controversial concept, and young people attempt to articulate it for themselves on various levels, including the discourse on Belarusian (underground) music and its place in global culture.

Sergey's definition falls within the common understanding of underground music: "underground is noncommercial music based on a pure aspiration to do something." This means that underground musicians make music "not for money, but for doing what they like" (Sergey). At the same time, Sergey challenges the notion of "pure underground" and gives an example of the band *Sex Pistols*, who "turned into stars and into a product." In his opinion, whether a band is underground or not is a "subjective perception," and the underground and the commercial field "intersect constantly." These statements echo Aleksandr's reflections on the "stupid division" between underground and mainstream, and suggest a similar view on the boundaries that are unstable and changeable.

The issue of authenticity was also addressed in Sergey's reflections. Stating that underground "certainly exists" in Belarus, he does not find "the product" interesting. In his opinion, this music lacks originality: "guys gather in a garage in order to copy a [Western] star or a famous rock band. […] Quantity dominates over quality. Just one

more simulacrum appears." Such terms as "copy" and "simulacrum" as well as the respondent's dissociation from them indicate that the issue of authenticity is very important in the respondent's judgements and decisions regarding the consumption of music. Being a musician himself and playing several traditional Belarusian instruments, Sergey is attempting to "restrict music consumption consciously" in order to avoid copying others, and therefore to maintain authenticity.[87] Obviously, traditional music is perceived as authentic because the folklore is widely associated with the (national) roots, expressiveness, creation and "spirituality" beyond the commercial mechanisms of the music industry. This common perception of traditional music contributes to the idea of authenticity. Instead of "imitating" others, Sergey turns to traditional music, which is considered authentic. In this case, authenticity is constructed through the idealization of folklore as spiritual, noncommercial music. Therefore, the idea of authenticity is closely linked with national identity, i.e. in this case, "authentic" music is supposed not to "imitate" others, but to express and emphasize Belarusianness. It is obviously important for the respondent to assert himself as an authentic musician through the use of traditional Belarusian instruments. For Sergey, authenticity also functions as a feature that distinguishes him from other musicians – be they Western musicians or Belarusians who "imitate" Western stars. Eventually, the idea of authenticity serves for the assertion of national identity, despite – or exactly due to – Sergey's perception of Belarusian culture as Cosmopolitan. In other words, self-awareness as Cosmopolitan does not contradict the wish to assert national identity; furthermore, Cosmopolitanism *requires* the assertion of Belarusianness as a feature of difference, which reinforces the sense of self.

Sergey contraposes underground to mainstream: "The basis and essence of underground is creation. And the main content of mainstream is money." In spite of the articulated contraposition, Sergey does not idealize underground music and admits that the mainstream can be "good music." Moreover, he criticizes "imitative" underground in Belarus, as described earlier. Sergey's articulation suggests two contradictory ways of thinking: the perception of the relativity of the terms "underground" and mainstream, and simultaneously a shaped idea of authenticity, which eventually offers him a sense of self, i.e. the sense of Belarusianness within Cosmopolitan culture.

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[87] Sergey's band plays neo-folk and dark folk.

Many respondents share the awareness of relativity and the flexible perception of boundaries between underground and mainstream. Kira points out that underground can be transformed into mainstream, and is transformed in time, according to place, mentality and society. She states that "underground is a relative term." Yuliya expresses it similarly: "There is almost no boundary between mainstream and underground. Because some bands that could be associated with the underground a couple years ago are in the mainstream now."

While expressing uncertainty in relation to the notion of mainstream, Denis states that "underground does exist and has always existed."[88] At the same time, he argues that many underground musicians would readily agree to use the "big stage" and "high-quality equipment", and "to become more popular to [be able to] convey their thoughts to a broader range of people." Denis's argument also suggests a flexible perception of the terms and boundaries, and is supported by Roman's following statement, where he points out the changeable character of music interpretation: "today it's underground, tomorrow it's mainstream." As Roman also argues, "almost all qualitatively good bands come out from the underground." However, he points out, it is difficult to differentiate, and the boundary between underground and mainstream is "very unclear." Similarly, Vladimir states that "any underground group dreams of becoming mainstream." To him, "these notions make no sense" because they are "limiting."

Several participants of focus group 1 also discussed the frequent "transition from underground to mainstream", suggesting different examples of the bands that, once not very well-known, became extremely famous (such as British *Coldplay* and Belarusian *The Toobs*). Some participants pointed at the relativeness of the terms, and one of them stated that "one cannot draw clear boundaries between underground and mainstream" (resp.5, focus group 1).

Maksim does not take the notions of mainstream and underground seriously: "[in my circle of friends] they use jokes like 'I'm in the mainstream because being outside of the mainstream has become mainstream." He associates underground with subcultures and divides subcultures into "serious" and "unserious" groups. For example, those who *are* punks (i.e. the smaller part) would be in the "serious" group, and those who "want to be like punks" would be in the "unserious" group, so that those who really are punks can

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[88] Denis identifies with the punk subculture.

be identified with the underground. In Maksim's reflections, therefore, the issue of authenticity is also addressed, albeit in a more general way, not necessarily related to musicians but, more broadly, to people identifying with subcultures. As follows from Maksim's statements, only a small portion of punks or Rastafarians can claim authenticity, while in most cases in Belarus, subcultures are used "to create the goal of social identification" (Maksim). Those who "want to be like" punks or rastas only aspire social identification through a group, and those who *are* punks or rastas pursue the group's "authentic" goals and are in the underground. According to Maksim therefore, social identification is a superficial purpose of belonging to a subculture, while pursuing the subcultures' "inner content" is evaluated as a feature of authenticity, which is, in turn, linked with the underground.

More generally, Maksim's notion of authenticity is closely linked with his interest in folklore culture (as in the case of Sergey), and the practice of historical reconstruction. In this practice, the use of traditional instruments, cloths and artefacts plays a central role and is viewed as a characteristic of authenticity. The idea of authenticity obviously influences Maksim's preferences in Belarusian rock and metal (e.g. *Litvintroll*), where the Belarusian language and traditional instruments play an important role. Maksim's everyday practices fall into the concept of the "alternative Belarusianness": he speaks Belarusian, prefers Belarusian-language rock, criticizes the influence of Russia on Belarus, and places Belarus historically and culturally in Europe. The issue of authenticity is crucial in the model of the "alternative Belarusianness": particularly, authentic music is supposed to express Belarusianness through the use of the language (and often through the use of traditional instruments). Authenticity in this case is, therefore, "the idea of truth" about the values which represent Belarusian culture from the perspective of the "alternative" Belarusians. Here the construct of authenticity functions as the expression and assertion of national identity.

In the words of Mark, musical underground is like independent cinema, where the musician "expresses their opinion not ordered by the society or by anyone else." In other words, the musicians "express themselves." However, Mark's judgement is not categorical and allows for certain "compromises." According to him, commercial success is not the primary reason of making underground music but can be a byproduct of creativity: "when you express your opinion […], you give the music to people and they

like it, okay, you can be rather famous, but it's still underground." Mark is a rapper, who "expresses himself" through music and identifies with underground culture fully. He contends that in the underground, "you don't owe anything to anyone. You only owe your conscience." In Mark's articulation, underground as creation and self-expression is contrasted to commercialism and mass consumption (or *shirpotreb*, as he phrases it). This articulation points to the idea of authenticity, which strengthens the sense of self through the dissociation from a broader mass of consumers, who "don't want to create anything themselves" (Mark).

Summary

The notion of underground raised much controversy among the respondents and suggested the existence of a variety of associations and definitions. In this section, three categories of the perception of the underground have been distinguished: the category of unpopularity, the political aspect, and the aspect of authenticity.

The category of unpopularity of underground music is closely linked with the discourse on Belarusian music and its "nonexistence." The statement "only underground exists in Belarus" relates to this discourse too. The entirety of Belarusian music is perceived as "unpopular underground" due to the inadequate music market and the lack of the governmental support. Both pop and rock, i.e. the mainstream and underground, are declared nonexistent, which has a reference to the issue of authenticity. Belarusian music, be it rock or pop, is considered inauthentic and indistinct because it "copies" Western or Russian music. This consideration indicates the search for authenticity and distinctiveness in Belarusian music, reflecting the ongoing process of the search for Belarusian identity.

The political aspect in the perception of underground points to the representative figure of *Lyapis Trubetskoy*, with whom the majority of respondents associated both the underground and mainstream. The association of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* with the underground is linked with the perception of the band as a freedom fighter and persecuted herald of Belarusian national values. The association of it with the mainstream is explained by its great popularity in Belarus and – what is probably more significant – beyond its borders. In this sense, the association of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* with the mainstream is in most cases loaded positively – as an association with the underground. In the context of the

articulated "nonexistence" of Belarusian culture and music, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* stands out as a symbolic figure making Belarusian music and culture "visible" for others. Representing Belarus abroad, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* brings Belarusian culture into being for young Belarusians themselves, which arguably explains the group's symbolic status. In this specific discourse, the phenomenon of *Lyapis Trubetskoy* suggests that "nonexistent" Belarusian culture is valorized through representation outside Belarus, and Belarusian identity is thus "validated" through others.

The aspect of authenticity plays a great role, despite many respondents' flexible perception of the terms "underground" and "mainstream." Both relativity and authenticity are articulated in the discourse, which indicates the pervasiveness of the idea of authenticity even in critical thinking about loaded terms, such as "underground" and "mainstream." Articulating the relativity of these terms, the respondents still show preference of underground over mainstream (i.e. what they perceive as underground and mainstream). The preference indicates the existence of a hierarchy, at the top of which people place authenticity and expression associated with the underground. As an antipode of the underground, the mainstream is placed at the bottom of the hierarchy through an articulation of consumerism and conformity. As a discursive construct, this musical hierarchy tends to be shifting, depending on the context: in the local context, Belarusian underground is placed at the top, while in the global context, it is Western underground that is placed there. In this shifted hierarchy, then, Belarusian underground is not at the top any longer, but somewhere in the middle, above local and global mainstream, and below Western underground. The construction of hierarchies serves to reinforce the sense of sameness and difference, producing identities on lines of culture, social group, and nation.

In his analysis of world music discourse, Stokes (2004) points to "a simplistic opposition of authentic and inauthentic," which merely reverses the conventional polarities of "hybrid" versus "nationalistic." As Stokes argues, "If anything is authentic now, it is hybrid genres, organically connected to the social life and cultural aspirations of particular localities. If anything can be truly described as inauthentic, in this view, it is state-promoted efforts to install authentic national traditions" (2004, 60-61). However, in the discourse described in this work, the articulated ideas of authenticity indicate the process of the respondents' (national) identity formation in the context of controversial

attitudes toward the Belarusian language, and do not contradict the practices characterized by "hybridization" and transculturality. Rather, these ideas represent meanings that are part of the (transcultural) practices used in the construction of an authentic, distinct self, and of a Belarusian identity within Cosmopolitan culture.

6.2.3. Perceptions of "Good Music" and "Bad Music"

The notions of "good" and "bad" music are eclectic, and are perceived by many respondents as relative terms (similarly to the notions of underground and mainstream). However, the articulated relativity goes along with the more or less clear understanding of what represents "good" and "bad" music. The respondents characterized these notions according to the previously discussed category of the "meaning"; according to intuitive perception of "good" music; and according to the opposition "rock versus rap or pop," or "instrumental versus electronic."

The concept of "good music" is largely associated with "meaning" that people attribute to music. Conversely, the perception of "bad music" is associated, among other aspects, with the lack of meaning. For example, Olga, who likes "different music," such as pop, rock and rap, dislikes black and death metal as "very aggressive music, [in which] you can understand neither words nor the meaning." In this judgement, two aspects of rejection interrelate: firstly, negative emotions evoked by extreme "unmelodic" music and, secondly, the absence of "meaning" associated with texts.

"Unmelodic" music is also rejected by punk rock musician Vadim: he dislikes "extreme music styles that are not melodic, especially when there is a complicated play with meters and broken rhythms." As examples of such music he offers post-rock and post-hardcore. Vadim's idea of "good music" also implies a combination of a "good melody" and "deep text."

The idea of "good music" is often based on the emotional aspect: "Good music is music that evokes positive emotions" (Viktoria, folk and rock fan); "Good music is music that I like" (Vladimir, fan of "most different musics", from various genres of rock to hip-hop). In these cases, the notion of "good music" is articulated in terms of positive emotions and of intuitive perception. However, the intuitive perception of "good" or "bad" music barely emerges by itself but is rather influenced by social environments. For example, Viktoria's narrative suggests in her a strong influence of peers on the further

development of her music preferences – especially in relation to her "discovering" of Russian rock.

Aleksandr, who prefers rock, blues, indie and reggae, perceives the notion of "good music" as ambivalent:

> It is hard to say [what music I consider good]. I don't understand what good music is. I feel it. I listen to a song, I like it. Moreover, some years ago I could have considered it good, and now I can consider it not good. I can't define it. I just feel it when the music is cool, when it has drive, when it has a good melody. And if in addition it has the text – not just "hey hey hey" – then it's also cool.

Aleksandr's reflection suggests that his idea of "good music" is constructed rather emotionally and intuitively, although he also places the importance on the meaning conveyed through the text. However, it is obvious from his other reflections that the idea of "good music" is also constructed socially: for example, in his former environment among metal rock fans, the ideas of "good music" and "bad music" were produced and expressed through the construction of the boundaries between "authentic" and "expressive" (metal) rock music, and "artificial" rap or pop music.

Discussions about "bad music" usually arose in response to the question "What music do you dislike?" The respondents offered different views on "bad music": it can be music that "lacks harmony and melody", such as dubstep or post-hardcore; "aggressive" music, such as black and death metal; "artificial" electronic music; "vulgar" Russian rap; and "meaningless" Russian popsa.

Some respondents, mostly the fans of punk or metal rock, reject electronic music as "artificial" because it lacks "expression." Punk-hardcore musician Boris declares: "I don't like it when music is made on computer. I think music must be live and be played with hands." With this statement Boris articulates the common rock opposition of technology to nature and art (cf. Frith (2007) and Chapter 2.5). However, he dislikes rap not only because it is "artificial" in terms of instrumental expression but also because the lyrical component is not highly valued: rap is "just lyrics to some beat, roughly speaking. I don't see anything genial in it" (Boris).

Some respondents expressed a negative attitude toward Russian rap, which was characterized as "vulgar," "stupid," "unquotable," lacking an "inner world," and "propagating drugs" (Viktoria, folk and rock fan); irritating (Alina, former member of the emo and goth subculture), "unmelodic" and lacking masculinity (Yuliya, indie rock fan).

Aleksandr admits that his peers have strongly influenced his negative perception of rap: "Too many times it was said that it's not cool." Although Aleksandr "theoretically" accepts the option that rap can be "good music," practically he is still in a pattern of rejection: "I'm sure that [in rap] there is so much different and interesting, but today I'm not interested in it at all and don't listen to it" (Aleksandr). Generally, these examples suggest a widespread rejection of rap by "rockers" or rock fans.

A reversal of this can be recognized in the case of Viktor, who is a rapper and big fan of Russian rap. Viktor rejects "rock-n-roll, rock and metal," giving the example of the Belarusian punk band *Lyapis Trubetskoy*. He rejects social and political criticism in music because he associates it with nationalism "like in Ukraine." Viktor declares: "I don't respect these nationalists [in rock music]. I think it's complete nonsense." He contrasts the "abstract" or "nationalistic" content of rock with the "sincerity" of rap, which he equates with "meaning" (as outlined in the previous section). Attributing rap with authenticity and opposing it to the "abstractionism" of rock, Viktor challenges the common assumption that authenticity is a quality of rock, widespread in rock criticism, which declares authenticity as a defining rock concept (cf. Frith (2007) and Chapter 2.5).

However, the "rock versus rap" pattern is not omnipresent, and many rock fans and musicians have a positive attitude to hip-hop culture. In turn, hip-hop followers can also identify with various rock genres. For example, Mark, who is a rapper and fan of "global" hip-hop culture, challenges the "stupid stereotype" of the "rock versus rap" opposition. According to Mark, his audience is mixed and consists not only of rap fans but also of rock fans, which makes him "proud" of his small but varied audience. In Mark's opinion, music can be "good" or "bad" regardless of the genres. He uses the term *shirpotreb* while discussing the music that he considers bad: [89]

> By the way, [shirpotreb is] not necessarily pop music, it's broader. There is also pop that is not bad. […] In hip-hop, in rock, there is also shirpotreb. In hip-hop, if looking at 50 cent, yes, it was permanently on the screen. This is what shirpotreb is. That is, it was permanently on the screen not because it's something classy, remarkable. It was, say, paid for repetition on TV by the producers. So it was initially about the money, but people say like "we saw it on TV." This is more a Belarusian feature, but in general it's global. People are too lazy to search for something for themselves […] because they are too involved in work, earning money, such grown-up things.

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[89] Shirpotreb means a product of mass consumption; this term has an extremely negative connotation and implies in music the lack of expression and authenticity.

Regardless of the genre, music can be "bad" or be *shirpotreb*, if it is highly commercialized and lacks self-expression, which Mark considers the foremost purpose and meaning of music. He opposes himself to the "lazy" and "grown up" masses, who do not aspire to creation or discoveries but are satisfied with what they see on television or hear on the radio. Interestingly, Mark associates consumerism with being an adult, and believes himself to be a "child" in the perception of others because instead of "earning the money" his priority is creation. He also points out that "laziness" is a "Belarusian feature" because "people don't want to think" and, furthermore, "they don't let people think."[90] However, Mark opposes himself not only to the consumerist "masses" but also to other rappers: he states critically that many rappers "consider themselves exceptional" and have a "superiority complex" without having much to say to their audiences. In opposition to them, the only reason that drives Mark to make rap is the possibility of creation and expression of his ideas, thoughts and opinions. By analogy, music that he prefers to listen to is regarded as a product of creativity and originality, while he distances himself from the *shirpotreb* as well as from consumerist people associated with it.

Finally, "bad" music for many is the so-called popsa, i.e. largely Russian pop music that evokes negative reactions among many – in fact, almost all – respondents. The discourse on popsa is extremely important, and is analyzed in the next section.

Summary

While being rather eclectic, perceptions of "good" and "bad" music show certain patterns nonetheless. First, the notions of "good" and "bad" music are closely linked with the discourse on meaning. In the idea of "good music," importance is placed on the meaning expressed through lyrics, which suggests a parallel between "meaningful" and "good" music, as well as between the lack of meaning and "bad" music.

Second, the intuitive awareness of what "good" music represents seems, at first sight, to be based on the emotional perception (as in the phrase "good music is music that I like"), which is related to the melodic component of music. However, the intuitive perception is often influenced by the social context, and particularly by peer groups, especially those that are centered around common musical interests.

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[90] Obviously, by the pronoun "they" Mark means the government.

Third, in the ideas of "good" and "bad" music, certain oppositions exist, similar to those described by Frith in relation to "falsifying" technology, which is opposed to nature, community, and art, as the "false" is opposed to the "authentic" (2007, 78-81). The respondents articulated the opposition "rock versus rap," "instrumental versus electronic," or "rock versus pop." Although these oppositions are challenged by many respondents, the pattern of the opposition seems to facilitate the sense of self through the construction of boundaries between "good" and "bad" music, or between "us and them."

In each of the described patterns, the construction of the notions of "good" and "bad" music represents a cultural hierarchy which serves to reinforce the sense of sameness and difference. The ideas of "good" and "bad" music are articulated as the ideas of "meaning," "(in)authenticity," "underground," "mainstream," and "popsa," which represents the central theme of the discourse analyzed in the following section.

6.2.4. "Popsa" as Anti-Identification [91]

In this section, I identify and analyze the discourse linked with Russian music known as popsa. This discourse manifests itself in a common dissociation from music considered "meaningless" and "of low quality." Both in interviews and in focus groups, many respondents strongly dissociated themselves from popsa as well as from various aspects related to it. However, this form of music seems to play an important role in many people's self-perception. The concept of popsa functions as an anti-model, with which the majority of people would not like to be associated. In other words, popsa offers people an awareness of what they are not like and who they do not want to be. Therefore, popsa can be a resource for constructing difference and creating boundaries, which directly participate in the identity-building process.

In this context, I suggest the term "anti-identification" to denote a discourse characterized by a strong dissociation from certain aspects of culture, and particularly from popsa. Anti-identification means a discourse, in which people often distinguish themselves from popsa as meaningless and inauthentic music as well as from different facets that they associate with it. The anti-identification with popsa, therefore, can function as a resource for constructing cultural identity.

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[91] This chapter is based on the book contribution "Popular Music and Identity Constructions of Young Belarusians: 'Popsa' as the Phenomenon of 'Anti-identification'" (Wakengut 2019).

This discourse takes place at three levels: the level of music's quality; the level of societal orientations; and the level of cultural/national positioning. The level of musical quality includes such categories as lack of meaning, lip-synching, commercialism, imitation, and the lack of "professional" or aesthetic quality. At the social level, popsa as "imposed" music, its state-oriented focus, and the association of it with an uncritical attitude toward the official structures are the aspects that raise controversy among many respondents. The cultural level encompasses such issues as backwardness, stagnation, Soviet legacy, the issue of authenticity and of Belarusian culture, and the territorial aspect of popsa.

The quality of music

The issue of music's quality plays an important role for many of the respondents. They commonly expressed the opinion that popsa does not have meaning and is not "loaded" intellectually or emotionally. The "meaning" is usually associated with texts in music, that is in order to be meaningful, a song must offer a "deep" content. Depending on individual contexts, this content can involve intellectual or emotional aspects, such as thoughts and ideas or moods and feelings, respectively. In many cases, the respondents contrast "meaningless" popsa with the different rock styles (or, more rarely, with rap), in which they easily find ideas or emotions to identify with.

To many respondents, a factor that contributes to the "meaninglessness" of popsa is its commercial intent, since commercialism implies artificiality, inauthenticity, and the lack of quality, creativity and originality. They often argue that popsa is primarily "for making money," is imitative and lacks individuality: "Everything is filled with popsa and it must be universal, fitting all" and: "Popular and universal music has no purpose. The purpose is to make money, roughly speaking" (resp.2, focus group 2). "Commercial" music is often associated with a lack of musical talent, since to many people, commercial music means using a "template" (that can be provided by a synthesizer) to achieve quick wins. Therefore, such a product cannot be a result of artistic effort and be classified as "good" music.

Pop music (as a genre) is often pejoratively associated with "simple" people or with "the masses," from whom the majority of respondents wish to distance themselves. One of the interviewees, Maksim, speaks Belarusian in everyday life, practices historical

reenactment, plays Belarusian folk instruments and prefers Belarusian rock. He clearly connects popular music with "common" or "mass" people:

> **Maksim**: Well, I think if music is quite simple – both music itself and the texts, then… well, probably it will be easier to sell it to a mass person because the mass person, in my opinion, doesn't reflect much… or let's say doesn't think deeply about… anything that happens, not just about what he hears in the headphones. Well, that's my chauvinistic opinion.
> **Interviewer**: So what kind of music do you think the mass person prefers?
> **Maksim**: The mass person? Popular [music]. That's the sense of the mass culture – to listen to popular music. It comes from the definition.

Maksim's understanding of "popular" music suggests a judgmental definition of "mass culture" and exemplifies a common classification of "popular music" as a distinct genre. In Maksim's opinion, this genre is aimed at a particular audience, which he describes as "mass people." He also assumed that a person's character and ability to reflect defines what kind of music the person will prefer. Therefore, "mass" people who "do not reflect" will prefer "popular" music that fits them and that, in turn, is aimed at the "mass" audience.

Another important theme in discussions about popsa is lip-synching, which is practiced in Russian pop music even by performers, whose shows are not choreographed.[92] As the following passage demonstrates, lip-synching is perceived as inauthentic and dishonest, and is strongly associated with popsa:

> **Interviewer**: And what kind of music do you not like, what music do you reject?
> **Gleb**: Probably pop because there is mostly lip-synching. Maybe I had some stereotypes from childhood memories. I remember [they said] "uh, popsa!" If, God forbid, someone sees some [pop] song on the player or on the computer, they'll laugh. Maybe that's why it's still there, this attitude of mine. […] If I can easily listen to rap or metal, there are problems with popsa.
> **Interviewer**: What exactly do you not like in this music?
> **Gleb**: Well, the first thing I look at is concerts. Because there is live music at concerts. In popsa, I don't know. […] In my opinion, music must be live, and they all sing with pre-recorded sound, that's why I think that they are not the kind of artists they should be. Because they can hardly sing at a concert like on a record.

Lip-synching is a feature of pop music performances and is rejected by most artists performing rock, folk, bard song, rap, reggae, etc. Such artists explicitly distinguish themselves from *fanershchiki*,[93] who apply lip-synching and are considered unscrupulous

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[92] Unlike in Western pop music, lip-synching in Russian music is not necessarily a "side effect" of a complexly choreographed show. The problematic issue of lip-synching is that in many cases, lip-synched shows have not been announced as such.

[93] "Fanershchiki" is a pejorative term, which connotes lip-synching artists.

and often untalented. Not practicing lip-synching is, therefore, a clear mark of quality both to musicians and audiences.

In one of the focus groups (focus group 1), the issue of music's quality appeared very important. Many participants stated that they listen to "any" music or "different" music, given that it is "of high quality." Some respondents emphasized that they can listen to pop music as well, but only if the condition of the "quality" is fulfilled. The notions of quality vary: it implies technological perfection for some and meaningful lyrics or "good melody" and "beautiful voice" for others. Only for one participant (respondent 3), a deliberate lack of use of technology would make sense because in this case it would mean artistic expression. Another person (respondent 2) described quality as follows: "when it is well made and sounds good." A further participant explained that a live performance should be an evidence of recorded music's quality:

> I agree with the guys that quality music sounds good. It is also important for me that it sounds the same both live and on record. When you listen to a song on a record, you think "it's not bad" and when you listen to it live, it is horrible, it's like a murder of a kitten on the stage. It's necessary that music both on record and live evokes the same emotions and that there is no contrast there. Otherwise, it's a deception. (resp.6, focus group 1)

However, not all participants found this issue important. As another respondent argues: "It depends on what you want. Either you want not to be deceived [by technical tricks] or you want music that you like and that sounds good. If I enjoy music, it doesn't matter to me whether he really can sing or not" (resp.2, focus group 1). For many others though, such discrepancies between medial representation and actual musical ability are associated with artificiality and commercialism, which are, in many people's opinion, the characteristics of popsa.

The negative connotations of popsa are especially evident in the focus groups. The majority of respondents in both focus groups mutually expressed dislike of popsa and supported each other in this rhetoric. Even if the topic of popsa did obviously not play an important role for some, they agreed with those who felt the need to express their dissociation from this genre. In one of the focus groups, all respondents, except for one person, said that they prefer rock – either "classic rock" or alternative rock – and opposed it to popsa in various ways (as shown in the excerpt from focus group 2 on the following page). One of the important issues was meaning, which they find in rock (or, more rarely,

in rap), and do not find in popsa. The latter was also labelled as "trash" (*трэш*) because it is "artificial," "ungenuine," and "unsophisticated."

Generally, the focus groups demonstrated that expressing mutual anti-identification with popsa is one of the central aspects in discussions on music preferences. Agreeing with others on the topic of popsa and its characteristics was a noticeable feature of communication in the focus groups. In the excerpt from focus group 1, the response to the question regarding the respondents' attitude toward "popular music" is a wordplay (which I have attempted to convey in the translation). Both responses demonstrate a clear dissociation from this type of music:

> *Moderator:* And what is your stand on popular music?
> **Respondent 5:** There is none.
> **R1:** I guess we don't stand for it. (focus group 1) [94]

The second focus group demonstrates how a group discussion as a model of social behavior can generate and facilitate shared views, such as the mutual and perhaps somewhat demonstrative dissociation from "popsa":

> **Respondent 6:** I like rock too. I principally don't like popsa. It irritates me. I can't listen to a song text about nothing. Also, I like classical music. I don't even like rap.
> **R7:** I like rock too. My favorite band is *Red Hot Chili Peppers*. I like indie-rock that is not *popsoven'kiy* [sounding like popsa], and I like garage rock. And classics of rock, that's *Pink Floyd*. I don't like rap and club music.
> **R2:** If we speak of what we don't like, I don't like modern rock, garage rock, indie-rock. Because I think that this is not right. But tastes differ. That's why I respect people who can listen to rap, hip-hop, popsa and so on. This is their choice.
> **R8:** I am omnivorous in terms of music. To me, the main thing is meaning – what they want to convey to the audience through the music and the text. If there are three words in a song that are repeated for five minutes, this is brain killing. To me, it's important to feel, to transfer [music] through myself. That's why to me, *Pink Floyd, Queen, Deep Purple* are the mammoths in music, like three giants. (focus group 2)

Obviously, the public opinion on music and particularly on popsa plays an extremely important role for young people because this opinion expresses and reflects attitudes toward oneself, other people, and the society.

It is noteworthy that many respondents ultimately attribute popsa to the "majority": "To me, pop is something that everybody listens to. As they say, "hard-core popsa," something they repeat on the radio 150 times a day. Well, indeed, it is popular

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[94] **M:** А как вы относитесь к популярной музыке?
  P5: Никак.
  P1: Мы, наверное, не относимся.

music" (Kira). The following excerpt provides another example of the association of popsa with the majority of people, and simultaneously the sense of group identity and of difference based on the dislike of popsa:

> **Respondent 2**: Here I can give a simple example. Any group, like with friends at a home party, will never play rock because the absolute majority will choose…
> **R6**: It depends on what kind of company…
> **R2**: If we consider a student group. If it's a post-student group or a group of soulmates, then of course we don't listen to popsa. But generally, I've been in many social groups […], and there you can't say that. Because the majority will say "What are you turning on?" And they listen to *Max Korzh*.[95] (focus group 2)

Therefore, attributions such as the lack of meaning, thoughtlessness, inauthenticity, commercialism, imitation and other "features" that are associated with popsa also become associated with the mainstream of people. "The lack of meaning," then, becomes a form of discourse, which eventually occurs not only at the "musical" level but also at the social and cultural levels.

Societal Orientations

Popsa is often associated with the official structures, which contributes to the rejection of it among many respondents. Music bands, ensembles or orchestras approved by the state perform mainly classical, folk or pop music. The majority of other musicians, who perform different music (regardless of the political stance), are, in practice, because of state control, in the "underground" in the sense that they are not supported by the government in any way and are often denied the permission to give concerts. Thus, being in the underground is not always a matter of a conscious political attitude – in many cases the underground is the only choice that the musicians have to express themselves.

One of my interviewees, 29-year-old Denis, who identifies with the punk subculture, stated that popsa is being imposed on people by the government in order to make them "not think about anything." Denis told that when he was about 12 or 13 years old he borrowed a cassette with a record of Nirvana, with which his passion for music actually began. On the one hand, he tells that Nirvana's music was "in," "everybody was wearing Nirvana t-shirts" and that Nirvana songs were broadcast "very often." On the

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[95] Max Korzh is a young Belarusian pop and hip-hop performer who moved to Moscow and enjoys popularity in Russia as well.

other hand, though, he emphasizes that this music was unique and different from "common music that existed in the country." He characterized "common" music as "some kind of popsa, ordinary dance music that is being heard and propagated, with texts about nothing, and this music itself has neither meaning nor spirit." In Denis's opinion, popsa is meant for unsophisticated people, who are "satisfied with everything," particularly with a "salary of half a thousand dollars." He associates popsa as well as those who prefer it, with the official structures, and vice versa: "I don't like such music. [It] can be heard often enough, it's not forbidden, it's popular, people listen to it, the government listens to it."

Therefore, for Denis, popsa is linked with the establishment and with certain political aims. Popsa is made a political instrument, whereas "other" music cannot be accepted in the society because

> [people] have been brainwashed that everything is all right. Here's the music. Here's the vodka, here's the food, here's the job. You work, you drink, you eat, here's the shit music for you, to which you can dance. Dance and don't think, that's all. That's the way it is.[96] (Denis)

"Brainwashing" is believed to be the objective of the government and is obviously associated with cultural politics, such as promoting popsa. Therefore, reflective people would reject the "meaningless" popsa, just as they would refuse to be "brainwashed."

Also in one of the focus groups, the participants vividly discussed the common opinion that the government neither develops nor supports music and culture in Belarus: "But unfortunately, in Belarus, it seems to me, culture is underdeveloped. And the government hardly supports this culture. They prefer hockey. And that's regretful" (resp.1, focus group 1). As the same respondent stated earlier, "[…] people who form and accept [pop culture in Belarus] are satisfied with how it is" (resp.1, focus group 1). Other participants of focus group 1 similarly argued or agreed with others that Belarusian culture "is not supported by the government materially," that it is "unpopular," and that "there are no perspectives" for the development of music and culture in Belarus.

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[96] [Людям] вбили в голову, что у нас все хорошо. Вот тебе музыка. Вот тебе водка, вот тебе жрачка, вот тебе работа. Поработал, выпил, закусил, вот тебе дерьмовая музыка, под которую можно плясать. Танцуй, не думай, всё. Ну, так и есть.

One of the interviewees (Mark), who identifies with hip-hop culture and performs rap both in Belarusian and Russian, states that Belarusian present-day culture and music is largely *shirpotreb*[97] meant for the average masses. According to Mark, he is culturally in the underground because it is important to him to be able to express an independent opinion, which is not possible in music of the establishment.

> **Mark**: […] Actually, the whole Belarusian musical and generally cultural life is mainly *shirpotreb*. Anything unusual happens only in very narrow circles. […] On television it's all very pitiful, if it's not ideology, then it's copies of something successful from the West or from Russia. There is nothing of our own. And people are afraid of new things. [In a university music competition] the typical shows that win are like those Belarus sends to Eurovision. There's nothing inspirational there.
> **Interviewer**: So that's what *shirpotreb* is?
> **Mark**: Yes. And it's being formed, you know? […] It's all being sold. That's why… I don't really believe in the conspiracy theory that they make us buy it. No, we take it ourselves. No, we lack energy to say "I don't like it, I will search for something for myself." […] They broadcast the same song four times a day, so we'll listen to it in the car. We're used to that.

According to this rhetoric, people listen to what is offered, which is mainly popsa and *shirpotreb*. Moreover, as a number of respondents stated, this kind of music is imposed through radio and television. This explains why the majority of people, who expressed anti-identification with popsa, also said that they never listen to the radio. They often emphasized that if they ever listen to it, then it happens only occasionally or "accidentally." Many respondents expressed the opinion that the radio stations' audience are predominantly the "older people" and that youths do not actually listen to the radio. As the following excerpt from a focus group demonstrates, broadcasting is perceived as imposed and ubiquitous, so that people are compelled to hear popsa against their will:

> **Moderator**: *So how would you characterize trash music? Artificial music?*
> **Respondent 6**: […] Trash music is, for example, when they have to make a track, I won't name them… Some kind of hit… They know that people will like a simple rhythm, so they put words upon that rhythm… […] And they know it will do, people will listen to it. So they make a nice video and off you go. O.K. They made their money.
> **R3**: And we have to listen to it.
> **R8**: Don't listen if you don't want to.
> **R6**: It is imposed on us. Maybe you don't want to listen…
> **R7**: Like children – it comes by itself. Like that *Psy, Gangnam Style* – everybody knows it.
> **R8**: Turn it off and don't listen.

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[97] Something extremely popular, banal, or ordinary.

Moderator: So how is it imposed?
R7: By means of television, radio. Everywhere.
R6: Everywhere. Whatever you turn on. In shops, bars, clubs, cafes there is background music. They turn the TV on and it's all the same. I don't want to watch it. I go to a certain bar where I know they play live music. But you also go to usual places where usual people and children sit and listen to all that. […]
Moderator: What do you think, what you call trash music, do the majority or the minority of people in Belarus listen to this music?
R2: The majority.
R6: I don't know. I think more people listen to it. But in my surroundings, you have people like yourself, so I can't say they listen to it. You just listen… I can say that I listen to it too because the radio is on at my workplace. But I listen to it without pleasure. Because you can't tell people "Turn it off. I can't listen to that." People like it as background music. So you listen but sometimes, when you hear the words, you are just shocked, frankly speaking. (focus group 2)

Other focus group participants and interviewees expressed a similar point of view that popsa is ever-present, is heard "everywhere," and that it is oriented towards the older or "average" people. One of the interviewees claimed that public space is filled with popsa and that "for some reason" it is generally presupposed that everybody listens to *otstoynaya* (bad, worthless, poor) music.

These examples raise the issue of censorship in Belarus. The state supports and promotes certain music and certain artists, while denying the right for other artists to organize concerts. This official support or promotion is practiced e.g. via the obligatory distribution of concert tickets among employees at different work places, such as state institutions, factories, plants, etc. As Belarusian-speaking rock music lover Maksim explains,

[Rock] music is forbidden, they are trying to substitute it with other music and force people to attend concerts. They force them using administrative methods – they sell a certain number of tickets at the work places, for example… People don't go there voluntarily, there is pressure upon them. So they have to go to Dorofeyeva's[98] concert, and [other] music is forbidden.

Such practices of authorities as ticket distribution or compulsory newspaper subscriptions were common in the Soviet Union. Censorship and control functioned in the Soviet states

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[98] Irina Dorofeyeva is a pop singer and honored artist of Belarus, who is associated with the official culture. One of her songs "Belarus sil'naya" with a patriotic content evokes direct associations with Soviet estrada due to the manner of performance.

through such practices, and the example given by Maksim demonstrates that the legacy of Soviet cultural politics is still persistent in Belarus.

It is paradoxical that, on the one hand, the ever-present popsa seems to be a very persistent genre of music in the post-Soviet space, and on the other, hardly any people would like to be identified as associating with it in any way. Popsa is generally about "others." Young Belarusians' positioning often implies a critical attitude toward the official cultural politics and toward Belarusian society. Obviously, the paradox of the "ever-present" popsa *is* a discourse, in which people articulate both identification with music they consider meaningful *and* anti-identification with popsa as meaningless, inauthentic, backward, and unworthy music. Through this discourse, they also construct difference from the "others."

It is noteworthy that both "subcultural" and non-subcultural people equally express anti-identification with the popsa genre, regardless of the forms of music they prefer. Both the respondents who prefer "different" music (just not popsa) and people who belong to a subculture (such as punk, skinhead, rap, goth, reggae) equally articulate dissociation from popsa. Therefore, people can differ from each other at various levels but at the same time be unified in the anti-identification with popsa and the related aspects. This anti-identification becomes their common feature notwithstanding all other differences, such as musical taste, (sub)cultural belonging, social status, age, or gender.

Cultural Positioning

Since popsa most commonly implies Russian pop music, this phenomenon arguably acquires a territorial aspect in Belarus. The popsa genre is associated with the Russian music industry and with certain elements of Russian culture. As mentioned in one of the focus groups, pop music as a genre is more widespread in Russia than elsewhere. Moreover, Russian pop is considered "of less quality" than Western pop music: "There are talented people [in Western pop music], and you can't say that pop music is something of low quality and that they sing nonsense. Don't judge by the Russian music […]. Maybe there are some people on the Belarusian scene as well" (resp.1, focus group 1). The participants of focus group 2 also compared Russian and Western pop:

> **Respondent 2**: […] We can say "popsa is disgusting" and so forth. But if it sounds somewhere as background music, it doesn't disturb so much, we're already used to that.
> **R6**: This is so if we speak of Western popsa, where it's more or less [good].
> **R2**: Because we don't understand some parts of the words.

One of the interviewees also compared Western pop with Russian or, more generally, post-Soviet popsa, which he characterized as "simple," "imposed," "untalented," and "of low quality." His comparison also favored Western pop: "I don't like, frankly speaking, stagnation in music. In America they have their Estrada too, don't they? But… pop music in America is completely different from ours – it is for the youth, it develops. […] And our estrada is a poor simulacrum of the American, Western one" (Vladimir). This example demonstrates that Belarus and Russia – even in a perception of an eighteen-year-old – are still identified as a common cultural space: while speaking about Russian estrada, Vladimir characterized it with the pronoun "our." Moreover, the USA is obviously regarded as a cultural "center," while Russia and Belarus, as well as the (post-)Soviet space become the cultural "periphery," where music has no or only small chances to "develop."

Many respondents emphasized their dislike of "Russian popsa" either by saying it directly or by naming the performers of Russian estrada or Russian pop, such as *Alla Pugachyova, Philipp Kirkorov, Dima Bilan*, *Ruki Vverkh* (Hands Up), etc. For example: "I don't understand the modern Russian popsa. They sing such nonsense… I don't understand what these songs are about and what they are for. There is no music, no text, nothing there" (Alina).[99] According to another respondent, popsa is preferred by narrow-minded people:

> **Interviewer**: What kind of music do you dislike?
> **Aleksandr**: Russian popsa. […]
> **Interviewer**: And what kind of people listen to Russian popsa?
> **Aleksandr**: Well, there is this stereotypical opinion that usually those are quite narrow-minded people.[100]

Afterwards, Aleksandr provided a "counter-example" by mentioning his university colleague, who was "very intelligent" but preferred Russian popsa because in his opinion, music should be simple to "relax the brain." The respondent critically reasoned that he is "in the grip of stereotypes" and that he actually cannot explain to himself, why he dislikes

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[100] **И.**: Какая музыка вам не нравится?
  А.: Русская попса. […]
  И.: А какие люди слушают русскую попсу?
  А.: Ну, такое стереотипное мнение, что обычно это довольно недалекие люди.

certain music genres, such as popsa or Russian rap. He said, "Too often I was told that this music is not cool, that it is bad. But it didn't do me any harm to dislike it." Another interviewee similarly mentioned the "stereotype" about pop: "since I was a child I have conformed to the stereotype that pop music is not for me, and I've been trying to avoid listening to it" (Roman). Since stereotypes often represent common, widespread opinions and are usually about "others," the stereotypes about popsa are obviously part of the discourse on music and culture, which exists in Belarusian society among its young representatives.

Such articulations about popsa are not only characteristic of Belarusians but are present in other post-Soviet states as well, including Russia. Yet, the rejection of Russian popsa seems to be gaining a territorial importance in Belarus, particularly for people, whose self-perception is West-oriented. One of the interviewees, Vladimir, who characterized himself as a "true," "almost unhealthily exaggerated," "multifaceted" music lover and considered himself "more related to Western culture," started the conversation by informing me that he dislikes Russian chanson ("criminal folklore"), which is often associated with popsa:

> Yes, exactly chanson because if we speak of estrada, Belarusian estrada doesn't actually exist. Not that it doesn't exist but no one listens to it. Well, probably there are some popular songs. In the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States], Russian estrada prevails, and Russian estrada is filled with chanson […]. In Russia, most of the population is more… inclined to that than to listening to other music. It's just easier for them to find what's nearer than to go further and to look at something else.

In this case, the dissociation from certain Russian music has several dimensions: first, it raises the aspect of contraposition of the "West" and the post-Soviet space (particularly Belarus and Russia, which the respondent implicitly identified as one cultural space by saying "our estrada"). Second, there is an awareness of Russian mass media as prevailing in Belarus and simultaneously of Belarusian music as being unpopular. Third, the respondent expressed a distance from the audience, with which he identifies Russian music such as estrada and chanson. This audience is primarily Russian, as seen in the excerpt. Therefore, in this case, the dissociation from Russian estrada and chanson also suggests distancing from Russians who are "inclined" to this music.

Generally, popsa is associated with Russia and with certain aspects and values, from which many West-oriented respondents dissociated themselves. Russian popsa becomes, therefore, a resource, through which they construct difference from certain

aspects of Russian culture and, eventually, reinforce their own identity, different from the Russian one. In some cases, anti-identification with Russian popsa and its related associations seems to facilitate identification with Belarusian culture and self-perception as a Belarusian. In other cases, this anti-identification seems to reinforce identification with Western culture. Therefore, anti-identification with popsa and a simultaneous identification with various global or Western music forms play an important role in the respondents' construction of "Belarusian" and "European" identities.

Summary

Anti-identification with popsa is an "anti-fan" discourse functioning at multiple, interrelating levels. This discourse is marked by a hierarchy: "meaningful" music styles (such as different rock genres or hip-hop) are at its top, and the "meaningless" popsa is at the bottom. At the top of the hierarchy, people place music that represents authenticity, expression, creativity, experimentation, originality, individuality and freedom – the values that they associate with "meaning." As an antipode of meaning, authenticity and quality, popsa is placed at the bottom of the hierarchy by the articulation of the "anti-values," such as commercialism, artificiality, meaninglessness, consumerism and conformity. Popsa is attributed to "simple" people and "the masses," from whom the majority of people wish to distance themselves. Anti-identification with popsa offers, therefore, a sense of individuality and distinctiveness, functioning as a resource for the construction of difference along lines of musical taste, political stance, or cultural and national positioning. Popsa – as an anti-value and anti-identification – offers young people a sense of identity.

However, while many respondents distinguished themselves from Russian culture as expressed in popsa, some of them identified with certain elements of Russian culture, such as Russian rock, which is one of the topics of the following chapter.

6.3.   Identity-Building Practices

6.3.1. Russian Rock

Russian rock is one of the most popular genres of Russian music in Belarus and in the post-Soviet space generally.[101] Russian rock (or Soviet Russian-language rock), which played a central role in the lives of many young people across the Soviet Union, remains a significant part of cultural life in Russia and in a variety of post-Soviet states, such as Belarus, long after the fall of the USSR.

In some cases, the development of the respondents' musical taste began with Russian rock. Particularly, the interest in various rock genres has been initiated by "discovering" Russian rock, as in the case of Denis. He identifies with the punk subculture and prefers different forms of punk rock, and has always appreciated *Kino*[102] for their lyrics and their poetry. Another respondent, Kseniya, who prefers reggae, country, folk and various rock styles (such as indie, punk rock, grunge) mentioned that since she was a child, she has liked *Kino* and *Zemfira*[103] (as well as Belarusian and Russian rap). Similarly, Aleksandr, who also prefers different rock styles, reggae, etc. pointed out that he listened to *Kino* "from childhood."

In one of the focus groups, some participants pointed out the role of Russian rock, which introduced them to further music styles and initiated self-education in the sphere of (rock) music. Particularly, respondent 2 in focus group 2, who expressed preference of "old rock" (i.e. classic rock) and of *Queen*, discovered his currently favorite music through Russian rock. It motivated him to inform himself about the origins of Russian rock, eventually leading him to Western rock:

> Thinking historically, in the beginning, in childhood, everybody listened to what everybody listened to. Different options are possible here: either the parents listen and you listen with them, or the class-mates and peers. Then you develop and think that it's not what you need. And then, at one point, it all began with Russian rock […]. And then I read where it all comes from, where *Ariya*[104] stole the music from, and listened to those who they stole it from. And I liked them more. And so I came to the music which I began to listen to. (resp.2, focus group 2)

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[101] According to the survey, among those young Belarusians who prefer Russian-language music, Russian-language rock occupies the second place after Russian-language pop.
[102] One of the most famous Soviet rock bands.
[103] Zemfira is a famous Russian alternative rock musician.
[104] Russian heavy metal band.

The respondent defines the process of music appropriation with the word "stealing," indicating the issue of inauthenticity. Western music, to which he came through Russian rock, is obviously perceived as original and authentic, while Russian rock is a product of cultural appropriation. In this way, the opposition "East versus West" is produced, and the hierarchy of music (preferences) is constructed. Russian rock represents, then, an "entry level" to a more sophisticated, global and manifold music experience.

Respondent 3 also emphasized her preference of Russian rock which, unlike the previous example, remained central. However, it similarly inspired further engagement with music. At the beginning of the group discussion, she introduced herself as an (alternative) rock music lover and manager of a Belarusian rock band (which she refused to name). She told a story of how her life changed when she discovered the famous Russian pop rock band *Mumiy Troll*: "I saw gorgeous Ilya Lagutenko[105] on TV in the fifth grade and I realized that *this* happened in my life." Since then, she has discovered new bands and made many new friends "through musical interests." The following excerpt reflects how the respondent's lifestyle was inspired by Russian rock:

> **Moderator**: And generally, how does music influence your life?
> **Respondent 3**: Very strongly. When I began to listen to *Mumiy Troll* it all was with elements of subculture back then. It was very important to me that I listened exactly to this band. And that I listened to other similar bands. I began to be interested in music generally. But since I can neither sing nor play any instrument, I began to take an interest in the process: how it generally takes place, some organizational moments. Somewhere in my head, when I was about thirteen, a dream was born. And currently, it is beginning to come true. The dream is to be related to music without being a musician, as a manager. (focus group 2)

Russian rock, and particularly the band *Mumiy Troll*, not only produced the idea of a "dream profession" and of close social surroundings, but also shaped the respondent's style and her sense of difference: "In the eighth grade, I wore a Mumiy Troll scarf, a Mumiy Troll tee-shirt, and I was mobbed by class-mates, older school-mates and all the rest. But [it doesn't matter because] you no longer listen to *Spice Girls* with everybody else." It is noteworthy that the respondent contraposes Russian rock to Western pop (*Mumiy Troll* versus *Backstreet Boys* and *Spice Girls*), articulating the common

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[105] Frontman of *Mumiy Troll*.

opposition "rock versus pop" and indicating the different adolescent identity options in Minsk (or in Belarus) in the early 2000s.

One of the interviewees, Viktoriya, discovered "old" Russian rock through her peers when she was "mature enough" for this music and the "meaningful" lyrics. Russian rock, as she explains, "makes you think" but "doesn't burden you," relieving tension. She associates Russian rock with the underground and identifies with such Soviet and Russian bands and singers as *Kino*, *DDT*, *Bi 2*, *Agatha Christie*, and *Zemfira*. Generally, she prefers "different" music styles: folk, classical music, dance music, and Western rock bands, such as *Three Days Grace* (alternative rock) and *Black Stone Cherry* (hardrock, heavy metal). In Viktoriya's case, Russian rock is one of many preferences, rather than a "primordial" element of further musical engagement.

In the case of bard singer Kira, Russian rock and Western rock forms were equally important in her adolescence. For example, in the age of thirteen, she liked listening to *Agatha Christie* (Russian New Wave, gothic rock) and *Nick Cave* (post-punk, gothic rock, alternative rock). Therefore, Russian and Western rock were perceived as one continuum and were not opposed as "East versus West." However, at the moment of the interview, when Kira was thirty, she no longer found *Agatha Christie* interesting: "I listen to *Nick Cave* with great pleasure – both the old and the new stuff. But *Agatha Christie* was interesting back then, and now I don't listen [to them] any longer. Well… tastes change, depending on surroundings." In different and eclectic ways, social surroundings and age-related changes influenced and transformed Kira's music preferences. In her current music experiences, the Russian *Agatha Christie* has become the music of her past, while *Nick Cave*'s music remains relevant.

To summarize, for some respondents, Russian rock played a significant role in their musical and cultural becoming. In some cases, Russian rock was a starting point of the development of musical taste, and remained one of the favorite musics. In other cases, Russian rock functioned as an "entry level" to further musical experiences and as inspiration for musical engagement in general. There Russian rock becomes secondary in relation to "primary" Western rock. In this way, a hierarchy of music cultures is created and perpetuated. The hierarchy constructed around Russian rock as an entry level of Western rock eventually reflects representations and perceptions of the "center and margin," where the center is the "West" and the margin is Russia. However, the hierarchy

is different when Russian rock is articulated as a central preference: in this case, the "center" is Russia rather than the West. Belarusian culture, then, appears to be between two "centers," i.e. between Russian and Western cultures; it is an imagined place between both cultural centers in the discursive hierarchy. This hierarchy is constantly shifting, though, from Belarus as "margin" to Russia as "center," from Russia as "margin" to the West as "center," and from Belarus as "margin" to the West as "center." In these articulations, Belarus is never a "center," but represents the "margin" (re)negotiated in relation to the "centers."

6.3.2. Belarusian Rock, Folk, Bard

This section deals with Belarusian rock, bard song and folk as different expressions of Belarusian identity. Belarusianness can be expressed by means of language and/or the use of traditional instruments. For example, bard singer Kira as well as the respondent identifying with Belarusian rock and folk, Maksim, are Belarusian speakers, while folk musician Sergey is a Russian speaker. In Belarusian rock and bard music, language is of primary importance, which is not the case in instrumental experimental folk, where lyrics are absent and traditional instruments play a central role. While Kira and Maksim articulate the "alternative" Belarusianness through Belarusian bard song and (folk) rock/metal, Sergey articulates Cosmopolitan Belarusianness and simultaneously maintains "authenticity" in practicing experimental folk.

Kira (Belarusian bard song)

Kira was one of the few respondents who speak Belarusian in their everyday life. At the moment of the interview, she was thirty years old, and had been a bard singer singing in Belarusian for several years. Kira described her music as a "genre on the border between theater and song," which includes "literary-musical compositions" and dialogues composed of poems with instrumental accompaniment (usually acoustic guitars). Kira performs songs composed by herself as well as other composers, while the song lyrics are usually poems by Belarusian poets. As the following interview excerpt shows, she identifies fully with bard song as a way of self-expression giving her voice and agency, and opposes this genre to estrada which is perceived as an inauthentic commercial product. This opposition seems to reinforce Kira's sense of identity:

> **Interviewer**: How did you come to bard song, when did it begin?
>
> **Kira**: I think it began initially when my interest in music began. I just had a feeling that I'd like to perform something, but exactly what I want. Because I tried to work with estrada composers but then I could not do what I wanted – they would do something with me that they need and that sells, and I didn't want to be a product made by someone. [Bard song] is not a product that initially must be sold. It is rather a way of expression, an opportunity to tell something.

Kira formed an interest in bard song quite early, when she was ten years old and was in the third grade. In her opinion, musical taste strongly depends on a social surrounding: when she got acquainted with Belarusian bard singer Ales' Kamotskiy, her interest in the genre developed into a profession. During the interview, Kira often emphasized that her music is a resource for self-expression and creativity. As described in Chapter 6.1.1, she identifies with Belarusian culture, interpreting it in relation to pre-Soviet history, traditional culture and "authentic" folklore. She emphasized that she prefers not the staged or estrada folklore, but that performed by "old wives who got it transmitted through generations." Kira finds it inspiring and admiring when "you meet a person who learned [to play instruments] by themselves, not having any musical education, having received their education from their grandfather or father, who in the same way learned it by themselves […]." Rural self-education in folk music is opposed to institutional education, often perceived as imposed and lacking creativity. Rural folklore is therefore associated with inspiration and authenticity. The idea of authenticity obviously plays a central role in Kira's musical practices as well as her self-perception as a "true" Belarusian valuing national traditions and preserving the "roots" expressed in language and folklore. Kira's example suggests that Belarusian-language bard song is an expression of Belarusian identity, in this case understood in terms of the "alternative Belarussiannes."

Maksim (Belarusian rock and folk)

Maksim's ideas and practices fall within the model of the "alternative Belarussiannes" as well. As described previously (cf. Chapters 6.1.1 and 6.1.2), Maksim speaks Belarusian in everyday life and is West-oriented, placing Belarusian culture and history in Europe. He prefers Belarusian rock and folk, and plays several traditional instruments. Maksim also practices historical reconstruction, participating in festivals of Belarusian culture and in various events dedicated to the reconstruction of Belarusian history. The band he is engaged in plays medieval music, and particularly the repertoire of Western Europe of

the 13th – 16th centuries. Maksim often travels to participate in festivals and concerts, for instance in Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Sweden. He has been interested in history since childhood, as he explains, and participated in medieval reconstruction festivals from then on. In popular music, Maksim prefers Western and Belarusian rock as well as Western and Belarusian pagan metal and folk metal, where historical references and traditional instruments are part of the performance.

Both in the popular music he prefers, and in the folk music he makes, the issue of authenticity is of central significance. It has been outlined in Chapter 6.2.2 that due to the use of the language and traditional instruments, Belarusian rock, metal and above all folk are considered "authentic," and are often in the "underground." Authenticity here is a perspective, from which the "alternative" Belarusians look at Belarusian culture, i.e. culture is evaluated through the prism of authenticity. The staged folklore of the official culture is considered inauthentic, as both Kira and Maksim pointed out. "Estrada folklore" is associated with superficiality and officialdom, while folk rock or folk metal are linked with the "roots."

Although in both staged folklore and folk rock particular elements of folklore are picked out and used, the two music forms are evaluated differently in terms of authenticity, and "authentic" folk rock is opposed to "inauthentic" staged folklore.[106] This can be explained by the perception of rock as the archetype of "true" music. Combined with traditional elements and/or with the Belarusian language, folk rock becomes a valorized, spiritual genre. It offers the "idea of truth" (cf. Frith 2007) at multiple levels – at the level of the "truth" of rock and at the level of the roots of folk. In this way, Belarusian folk rock is interpreted as music of the free spirit with reference to history and tradition, which are equated to integrity and rightness. In this case, Belarusian identity is constructed and articulated through Belarusian (folk) rock and other music forms its adherents consider authentic.

The idea of truth is inevitably contraposed to the idea of untruth. In Maksim's identity construction, a critical attitude toward Russian political and cultural influence plays an important role. As described in Chapter 6.1.1, he criticizes the older generation of the "Homo Sovieticuses" and the common perception of Belarus "as one of the regions

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[106] On the other hand, it is quite obvious that the "official" Belarusians would interpret staged folklore as at least as authentic as folk rock.

of Russia." He also depicts the negative attitudes of Russian speakers toward Belarusian speakers: "If you speak your native language, you are a dissident, terrorist, […] fascist, and so on." Through his critique of Russia's influence on Belarus and his dissociation from Russian culture, Maksim reinforces his identity. The idea of "Homo Sovieticus" identity, represented by the older, Russia-oriented Belarusians, strengthens the idea of "true" Belarusianness, indicating political and generational splits in Belarusian society.

Maksim offered a vivid depiction of the ways in which popular music circulates in Belarus (and abroad), pointing out Belarusian-language rock and the problems occurring around this music:

> […] Sometimes I wondered that they play some… Vaityushkevich[107] [on the radio] because he sings mainly in Belarusian and speaks [Belarusian], and usually such people are labeled by official persons as outcasts and thugs. And that's why, when I hear such performers on the radio, of course I'm glad but then I think "How is it possible, what caused this?" Won't they send all the radio workers and their families into jail for that? So there surely is Belarusian music on the radio but its quality isn't satisfying, because for example, the concerts of *Lyapis Trubetskoy*, who were forbidden in Belarus – although no one forbade them, they are forbidden in Belarus – such things happen in our country. And people, thousands if not tens of thousands, go to Vilnius, to Prague, to L'viv. Crowds of Belarusians go there because at home they forbid such music. […] They are trying to substitute it by other music, forcing the people to go to concerts. They force them using administrative methods, selling a certain number of tickets among employees, for example. People don't go there voluntarily, they are forced in some way to go and listen to Dorofeyeva,[108] while the music, for which thousands of people go abroad, is forbidden. […] No one forbids their concerts but they are not allowed – either there's a problem with the fire department, or something else, or they just don't explain the reasons.

Maksim's account echoes stories of other people, with whom I conducted interviews and had conversations. Other people, among whom there were several musicians, similarly explained that it is difficult or impossible to organize concerts in Belarus. Regarding Belarusian rock particularly, the common knowledge about the concerts as per se prohibited, can hardly be supported by any official references.[109] Falling within the model of the "alternative Belarusianness," Maksim's perspective reflects a certain positioning represented by many young Belarusians, and indicates the existence of social, political, cultural, and generational contradictions in Belarusian society. These contradictions,

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[107] Belarusian-language folk rock musician.

[108] Belarusian Russian-language estrada singer.

[109] It is also obvious that representatives of the "official Belarusianness" would deny Belarusian rock fans' statements about the impossibility of concerts.

centered around the language and historical-cultural placement of Belarus, ultimately strengthen national identities, and particularly "alternative" Belarusianness.

Sergey (Belarusian experimental folk)

The case of Sergey represents an example of "Cosmopolitan Belarusianness," i.e. Belarusian identity interpreted not as isolated but as part of the "global cultural field" (cf. Chapter 6.1.1). Sergey plays keyboards and wind instruments in a band that experiments with different genres, such as folk and industrial. Before the band, he was engaged in traditional Belarusian music and was a music teacher for traditional wind instruments, such as flutes and *zhaleikas*. Apart from that, he was interested in experimental music, e.g. industrial and avant-garde, and he also liked "synthesizer timbres." He tells: "[I decided] not to focus too much on reconstruction of traditional or folk music but to do what I like and use all those things that are closest to me in music." Sergey describes his music (and the music of his band) as an instrumental mix of industrial and folk, which is "neither industrial nor folk in spirit." His interest in industrial, for instance, began with an underground magazine *Stigmata*: [110]

> At first, it was passion for gothic. I was a teenager then, it was quite natural, and I saw a magazine about industrial. That was, of course, very new, I got to know what dark folk is, and other interesting musics. From that moment on, thanks to that magazine, where the first acquaintance took place, I continued to search further myself.

Differently from Kira, Sergey does not mention the role of social surroundings in the development of musical tastes: rather, his account indicates an individualist approach. As he explains, his music preferences are mediated by his "previous experience," which includes books that he had read and music that he had listened to. Sergey describes this cultural experience as "co-authorship of the entire cultural background," in which he finds himself. Reflecting on music as an expression of the self, he states: "this is an expression not only of myself but also of those co-authors […] who are invisibly present and who create that same cultural background […], and from this background, I return something back here." Sergey's reflections suggest the influence of culture, rather than that of a social circle, on his musical experience.

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[110] On the one hand, Sergey criticizes the term "underground," on the other, however, he uses it himself, when explaining his music preferences, and also characterizes the music he makes as underground.

Generally, apart from industrial, Sergey prefers ambient, post-punk, and "different folk musics." He emphasized, however, that he had been attempting to "minimize the stream of music" to avoid musical borrowing and to maintain "purity" in music. Being "included in the global cultural field," Sergey obviously considers it important to maintain originality, authenticity, and the local distinctiveness of the music he is engaged in. It is also important to him to pursue his personal interests:

> **Sergey**: […] it was clear to me that I don't just want to make folk – it's just uninteresting for me what the numerous ensembles do, how they reproduce [folk music], always one and the same thing. I knew that I wanted to make dark folk and neo-folk, to move in this direction.
> **Interviewer**: So you wanted to do something unusual?
> **Sergey**: I wanted to do what I like.

Emphasizing the importance of doing what actually interests him, Sergey articulates the sense of difference from other "numerous" musicians and bands, and obviously has a strong wish to distance himself from "reproducing" performers. "Minimizing the musical stream" and doing what he likes, Sergey remains simultaneously distinctive while still "included in the global cultural field," creating authenticity in music and of self. In this way, Sergey creates a sense of Belarusianness in Cosmopolitanism (cf. also Chapter 6.2.2).

Sergey also described concert organization in Minsk and the difficulties that often occur when musicians or bands are not included in official culture. Difficulties obviously relate not only to Belarusian rock bands but generally to "unofficial" independent bands and musicians who aspire to innovate and experiment with genres. Sergey tells:

> I communicate a lot with organizers and [they say that] there are problems with organization… One must provide the executive committee with records of foreign musicians for censorship, one must get the tour certificate, and all this takes time. This procedure is not always pleasant, and besides we could be obstructed by the executive committees if something goes wrong. There is rivalry between concert organizers, unfortunately. I was told by organizers themselves about the previous cases when denunciations against other organizers were written, saying that someone is bringing a 'bad' band, and then chekists [security officers] came to see whether they really have brought a bad band. Another problem is that there is not always a high level of organization because not so much money is involved in music that is not very popular. If there is not much money involved, the concert is organized mainly on people's enthusiasm. The problem of the equipment and of sound checks appears. [At concerts] where, for example, five bands play […], there is always a problem with sound checks. This means that the concert will be delayed, there will be long pauses. […] As a rule,

great sound will not be achieved. Here we have the problem of the underground as uncommercial music, it's difficult to provide the quality that pop music can provide. And the third problem linked to it is that not enough people are interested in this music to provide it a normal commercial existence.

It becomes evident that problems and challenges linked with concert organization have multiple reasons and occur at different levels. The issue of unpopularity of independent music and the lack of the (sonic) quality of music signify an economic aspect of the music market in Belarus. Since independent or experimental music is absent in broadcasting, it can hardly achieve the popularity that broadcast pop music enjoys. The consequence of this is the unpopularity of concerts and the lack of financial profit and support, which leads to the involved bands and musicians having to accept underground status. The issue of governmental control and censorship is thus made visible. It is, moreover, not only government representatives but also event organizers, i.e. private persons, who are involved in state interference. They do this for different reasons, apparently: where the former are interested in perpetuating social and cultural control, the latter use the former to exclude competitors and achieve their market goals by means of denunciations. This is strongly reminiscent of control practices during the Soviet period and suggests the existence in today's Belarus of public and private spheres, in which the perpetuation of these practices may still be of interest for various groups of people.

6.3.3. Punk and Skinhead

Denis

I met Denis at a performance of the Belarusian band *Neiro Dyubel'* and the band *Adaptatsiya* from Kazakhstan in a small club, *Piraty*, situated in a peripheral suburb of Minsk. I went there with a friend, we sat at a big table, and Denis asked if he could take a seat next to us. Quite uncommonly, given that we were not acquainted, he started a political conversation with unusually direct and critical statements about the government and about "stupid people around, who don't need or want anything except drinking after work." Some time later he told me that he played bass guitar in a street punk band and that he was a concert organizer. I asked him if he would give me an interview, and he agreed. During a long conversation in a park, a few days later, Denis told me that he identifies with the punk subculture and such styles as street punk, Oi!, ska punk, and so

forth. Generally, alongside punk rock, he preferred Russian rock and classical music, and frequently emphasized his rejection of popsa. He often organizes unofficial concerts, where his band and other participants can distribute their home-made albums. When he was between 16 and 19 years old he was actively involved in the "development of the subculture" in Minsk: "I tried to unite the punk movement and punk culture in our city, and also the rock movement, so that everybody could interact. People opened rock clubs where they could exchange records, articles, literature and so on. In big cities we had this. In small ones, nothing like that existed."

The lyrics of the band's songs feature such themes as corruption, bureaucracy, the political regime and the "system." At the time of the interview, Denis was twenty-nine years old. As outlined in Chapter 6.2.4, his passion for music began with a cassette of *Nirvana* when he was twelve or thirteen. This music differed from "common" "meaningless" and "spiritless" music, i.e. popsa. Denis explicitly contraposed popsa to punk rock and Russian rock, emphasizing the importance of the texts in rock. Particularly in punk, "there is very much protest, protest against the regime, against the [political] order, against everything that is happening – against all these common people who see things in this way. Very much protest." Denis views protest as "the state of the soul" that can and should be mediated through text. Punk rock offers him the opportunity of self-expression, and his personal but also social protest in adolescence was against the rules that forbade him self-expression by means of punk style. He explained that meanwhile, his protest embraces more "global" things, such as political issues, corruption, bureaucracy, etc.

> **Interviewer**: What exactly in politics [do you protest against]?
> **Denis**: The regime. There's currently such a peculiar regime… I wouldn't say it disturbs me so much but there are some aspects […]. First of all, it's too much [if we think of] political prisoners. Second, [there must be] honest elections, although it doesn't matter who will be elected. I rather hold anarchic views, that's why I don't care who will be in power – all the same, power will be like it is, it will never satisfy the needs of the society.

The protest described by Denis finds expression in text and music, which is "aggressive" and gives relief and freedom through the "adrenaline splash" caused by its energy. "I don't know how to explain that, but sometimes when you listen to such music you feel better because you become part of something that is acting, moving, doesn't stand still [and] go with the flow, but tries to get out of this hole of common indifference." Denis

obviously means Belarusian society, when speaking about the common indifference and going with the flow. Punk is therefore a resource for distancing himself from the flaws of Belarusian society, such as passiveness, indifference, obedience to the "system." Punk offers him identification and self-expression as a freedom fighter and creative person. In other words, he maintains agency through the practice of punk. Remarkably, Denis interprets punk as a symbol of masculinity: "[my wife] listens to folk and rock – also quite good quality music, but I would put more drive into it. I like it when the music has a masculine character and not some smudged snot." Overall, punk offers him a sense of difference, as is evident in the following:

> [Some day] it became totally untrendy to wear torn jeans because they were meanwhile sold in shops, so it became a common trend – and you no longer differ. You made these jeans yourself, you tore them, colored them or bleached them, but then it became a trend and everyone started wearing such outfits. So it ceased to be special. The same is with iros.[111] It was a trend at some moment and all the boys had iros, and they found themselves irresistibly cool. Well, [calling it an] iro is an exaggeration. Pathetic likeness, something so short that they won't get it told at school "you will be expelled if you don't cut it off" or that they don't lose their premium salary at work.[112]

It is obvious that music and style are of equal significance for Denis in his identification with the punk subculture. Since music and style are the central resources in the construction of difference, it is perceived as profanation when the elements of the subculture become a free-for-all trend. Popularity of subcultural elements devalues their meaning, and for this reason it is important for Denis to maintain and articulate belonging to the underground, which is per se unpopular: "Music that I make is complete underground." He points out that pop music is uninteresting because it is "not prohibited," and "no one is afraid of it," which is why "there is no sense in organizing this kind of stuff." What makes sense for Denis is underground culture, and particularly punk. He showed me several videos of punk rock concerts that he organized – these took place in

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[111] Hairstyle popularized by adherents of the punk subculture.

[112] […] совершенно не модно стало ходить в драных джинсах, потому что их начали продавать на рынках, в магазинах, то есть это стало модно поголовно – и ты уже не выделяешься. То, что ты там делал сам эти джинсы, рвал, или разукрашивал, или вываривал в отбеливателе – все это стало модным и все начали поголовно ходить в такой одежде. Ну и это стало уже не то. Немножко не то. Точно так же с ирокезами. Было одно время очень модно, и все мальчики выстригали себе ирокезы, и им казалось, что они неотразимо крутые. Причем, ну как ирокез? Жалкое какое-нибудь подобие, что-то такое коротенькое, чтобы в школе не сказали «ай-яй-яй, мы тебя выгоним из школы, если ты не пострижешься завтра» или чтобы на работе премии не лишили.

a forest and resembled open air events, albeit only for a small number of people (around thirty, including the band on stage). People are informed about these events by means of "word of mouth," i.e. there are no flyers, posters or other forms of advertisement. Denis tells about the problems linked with (punk and rock) concert organization:

> **Interviewer**: So why is it actually the word of mouth method, why not ads?
> **Denis**: Well, first of all because… we are being watched (*smiling*). If there is advertisement, there is always militia that read it. Of course, they have an order from above to close, to prohibit the mass events. How come that someone didn't ask for permission and decided to arrange a concert? It's not how things are done. An extraordinary case. So they punish you then. They come and close [the concert].
> **Interviewer**: And if you ask for permission, won't they permit it? Or why don't you ask?
> **Denis**: Firstly, yes, when I tried to organize concerts we often received denials, groundless ones. Second, of course they come to the concert, worried that something happens with people… [For example], when there's slam and people jump from the stage, of course they don't like it – what if someone breaks an arm. Third, the stage becomes politically correct, which is also unacceptable. We want more freedom, we express our opinion and our thoughts, and if you are compelled to keep silence just because you were permitted to give a concert, then…
> **Interviewer**: So your opinion is politically incorrect?
> **Denis**: Usually, yes. But it's not the main aspect. Although the militia and the government, when forbidding these concerts, are in most cases afraid exactly of that – of politically incorrect opinions and their spreading among people. Because it's such a power, to transmit their opinion through music, to call people for some actions. […] Yes, they forbid. And I don't want to ask. I wonder why the hell I have to ask for permission to relax. I'm not going to break anything or hurt anyone. I just want to play music. That's why, without disturbing anyone, I go to the forest. If clubs allowed it, we could do it in a club, but even if the club allows, militia will go to the club director and threaten him […]. So no one needs that.

Denis's experience reflects current political issues and cultural politics in Belarus, including state control of music events, censorship, and the lack of freedom of expression. By "political incorrectness" Denis means views and opinions that are inconsistent with state policies and politics. According to Denis, his attempts to organize concerts officially were unsuccessful, and the experience of performing for a large number of people (on "the day of the city," which is an official celebration) was not positive: "Of course, our music is unofficial, such music shouldn't be shown to the common public. People just don't perceive it adequately. The majority of people of the older generation hear roaring and howling in this music. I hear just the screams of despair." On the one hand, it is difficult to arrange a concert in terms of official organization and bureaucracy. On the

other hand, an organized event may be received negatively by the public – either because of people's "conformity" or, as Denis himself admitted, because of insufficient professionalism of the band or because of the harshness of the lyrics. He gave an example of club owners' reactions to his attempts to organize a concert: "You are good guys, if you played balalaikas and accordions we would let you give the concert. But you sing something incomprehensible. And you play music that is too hard, it hurts the ears."

At the same time, Denis points out the financial factor: "You pay money to the club and it's not so important for them what you are playing there." He pointed out that the situation is different on "periphery," where private clubs do not exist, and it is difficult to arrange an event at a state-run place. Overall, it is difficult to organize a concert of a band whose music is nonconformist and economic situation is precarious. These factors lead to the decision to arrange events unofficially in garages or in a forest, without having to undergo any bureaucratic procedures to perform for an audience who will not perceive the music "adequately" in any case.

Generally, playing punk rock and being part of the subculture, Denis articulates the sense of difference from a "common" society, maintains agency and constructs identity as a thinking, nonconformist, free and creative person: "That's why I still make music, in order to do something and not to turn into this common man who just cares for his soup, house slippers and TV-set. [They are] zombies, robots. I don't want to be like them, it's uninteresting to me. I want my soul to sing."

Boris

Boris describes himself as a skinhead of the SHARP[113] movement. He is an acquaintance of Denis and involved in the punk subculture of Minsk as well. Denis gave me Boris's number when I asked whether he knew anyone else from the subculture (or other subcultures), who would want to give me an interview. Twenty-three-year-old Boris told me that after university he started to work in a company where he has various responsibilities "from manager to loader." Boris is engaged in blacksmithing, but his "primary passion" has been for music since he was fifteen. He tells how his interest in punk rock emerged:

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[113] "Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice."

> **Boris**: It was that old punk rock. Of course it began with *Grazhdanskaya Oborona* and *Korol i Shut*[114] and so on. Then I started to communicate [with other fans], to go to concerts […]. I was given lots of CDs with different European punk rock, street punk, anarcho-punk, etc. I was listening and delving into it. And then it turned into my current state.
> **Interviewer**: And what's your current state?
> **Boris**: Skinhead.

In regard to his initial musical interests, Boris's case is similar to that of some of the respondents (described in Chapter 6.3.1), for whom Russian rock became an "entry level" to identification with global or European music. For Boris, identification with punk began with an interest in Russian punk rock bands, whose visual image and presence were closer than those of Western bands. However, first of all, the lyrics of Russian bands were more understandable, offering a direct identification through the text.

> Boris tells about the subculture in Minsk and its "decline" during recent years:
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> **Interviewer**: Are there many of you in the subculture, particularly in Minsk? Do you know many?
> **Boris**: [I know] almost all of them, I think. We don't have such a strict division. Punks hang out with skinheads, psychobilly fans, hardcore fans. Unity, roughly speaking. It's currently in decline, however. People started to divide and spread rumors. The scene is also in decline [in Belarus and particularly in Minsk]. Earlier, about four years ago, there were 400 and 500 people at concerts, for example of our band. Now, if 150 people come, it's good already.

According to Boris, the members of the punk subculture are between sixteen and thirty years old, with the estimated average age of twenty to twenty-five. The majority of the members are male, which seems quite natural to Boris: "Girls, most of them, don't like this style. Only a minority choose it. And many of them come quickly and go quickly. Those girls who have been [in the subculture] for five years or longer are quite few. One could count them with fingers." This observation seemed neutral rather than judgmental or regretful. It is not crucial for Boris whether his potential girlfriend is in the subculture or not: it is rather feelings, understanding and mutual responsibility that are of significance to him. He says: "It doesn't matter who your girlfriend is – an ordinary girl, punk girl or skinhead girl. Here the other factors are more important, the inner ones." Despite this visible neutrality, however, the opposition of "ordinary versus punk and

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[114] Famous Russian punk rock bands.

skinhead" takes place, indicating the sense of difference and individuality of Boris as a member of the subculture.

Boris often attends gigs and concerts of Belarusian and foreign punk rock, psychobilly and hardcore bands (once a month on average). Gigs and concerts usually take place in clubs, one of which I had attended some time earlier.[115] Although it looked like an underground club attended by the subcultural (e.g. emo and goth), the *neformaly* or hippie-looking people, Boris did not consider it underground. He stated that the club "just earned its money." Differently from Denis, who claimed that it was difficult or impossible to arrange a punk concert in a club, Boris was convinced that the question of concert organization was purely financial. He admitted, though (similarly to Denis), that the situation used to be linked with difficulties earlier. According to Boris:

> You just pay money and do whatever you want, only if there are no problems [e.g. drugs or broken furniture] then. There were a couple of other clubs as well. It's becoming easier. Earlier, some [club owners] didn't want to deal [with punk] and said "you look so and so, we'll have problems with the militia. No guys, you won't do the concert here." And now it's already [different]. There are lots of small bars for small gigs for 50-100 people. You come with your equipment, you play and you go. Just pay the money, that's all.

By appearance, Boris (as Denis as well) did not make an impression of a person belonging to a subculture: he was dressed in jeans, denim jacket and sneakers. Except for his shaved head there were no subcultural markers or symbols in his look. The interview took place during his lunch break in a park not far from his workplace. Boris explained: "I don't dress up for work. It's like, when I go out on weekends I wear boots and roll up the jeans, almost to the knees." Adapting to the circumstances of the workplace is obviously necessary and can hardly be avoided or ignored. However, as Boris observes, the reactions of people to the typical skinhead look have become less constraining than earlier. His repeated use of the word "unordinary" is indicative of his sense of distinctiveness, achieved and maintained through his subcultural practices:

> When you came out on the street, everybody stared at you. You caught a hundred of gazes on you. Now the people are [different]. Much new, many different subcultures, various unordinary people have appeared… And people are already more or less used to unordinary things.

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[115] This was a small club that made an impression of an underground venue with an experimental musical and art performance. Also, second-hand vinyls (mostly Western and Russian rock) and unconventional (hippie look) cloths were sold there.

Boris has been engaged in several bands. In one of them, he played drums; in another band he sings and plays guitar. He describes his music as politicized with socially critical themes, "about the government, power, the militia lawlessness and so on." However, the lyrics are not always politically and socially critical, as in the music of another band Boris is engaged in: "we played oi! and punk rock and sang more about alcohol, fights and fun. Of course, we didn't ignore the social side. But there was no such tough politicization of the texts." Boris considers himself an underground musician, articulating the difference between punk and commercial music, or between underground and mass culture: "everyone chooses for themselves, whether they play some commercial music on TV or something else. We prefer it in this way – our own hangouts, our own concerts, our own people." It is thus equally important for Boris to share identity-building practices with others and simultaneously differ from people associated with official culture.

On the one hand, the music of one of Boris's bands is politically and socially critical, and on the other, he paradoxically articulates the apolitical character of his belonging to the SHARP movement: "I guess I'm closer to the SHARPs. […] However, totally apolitical. I don't identify with any political movements like the anarchists or the left… I think it's not okay to bring all these positions into the skinhead movement. […] This shouldn't be embedded into music." According to Boris, he often had to struggle against societal views which categorize skinheads as fascists.[116] He often had to explain to people that originally, the skinheads who emerged in England were influenced by English mod and Jamaican rude boy cultures, and "by this logic" they cannot be accused of fascism or any hate ideology: "as they listened to black music they a priori can't be fascists, racists or people with any prejudices." Despite the anti-racist character of the movement, Boris emphasizes the lack of political ideology in it, e.g. in opposition to punk with the ideology of anarchism. It is rather "fun" and "relaxation" that he emphasizes as central. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the lyrics of one of the bands Boris is engaged in deal with political themes adapted to the realities of Belarus. Boris's identification with the subculture offers him a variety of options, such as "having fun," being different from the majority, separating himself from "fascism" and racism globally, and simultaneously maintaining and expressing political criticism in the local context.

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[116] Given the history of World War II and the impact of it particularly in Belarus having lost a third of its population during the war, any involvement in fascist ideology, or any suspicion of this, widely evokes strong reactions of indignation.

According to Boris, the majority of skinheads in Belarus are "left-wing" and apolitical. He states that in opposition to Russia and Ukraine, in Belarus the right-wing skinheads are in a minority. The following passage reveals contradictions between the articulated SHARP attitudes and actual experiences:

> In Russia, there is [the phenomenon of the right-wing skinheads], of course. Especially earlier. […] They went to markets to beat those Tadzhik bums and cleaners. We didn't have anything like that. I think. Maybe there was something earlier, when I was little, but in my conscious age I didn't see or hear that.
> **Interviewer**: Why do you think is it so different here in Belarus and in Russia?
> **Boris**: I don't know. On the one hand, probably, because our people are more peaceful. And besides, of course, because there was no such inflow of immigrants here. We didn't have so many of them. And there… Maybe it's even justified because they come and behave very badly, many of them. […] I've been in Moscow a few times and I don't like them myself. And the Moscow SHARPs, all of them antifascists, also have fights with them because some of them are totally insolent. When I was there it happened that three of such […] Ossetians […] with red eyes wanted to [attack me]. […] Then the guys told me that it's normal. They are sometimes insolent. Especially when they feel their power.[117]

In fact, as Boris suggests, right-wing skinheads barely exist in Belarus perhaps because Belarusians are more "peaceful" than people in Russia or Ukraine. This suggestion reflects the common (self-)representation of Belarusians as a "tolerant" and "peaceful" nation, propagated by authorities and official mass media. On the other hand, Boris finds the lack of right-wing skinheads understandable because of the lack of immigrants from "Eastern countries." His considerations and his experiences in Moscow contradict his

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[117] В России есть, естественно. Особенно раньше. Видела видео всякие там, формат 18, Тесак этот известный, который эти видео снимал? Они на рынки ходили, бомжей этих били… черных. Таджиков, уборщиков и так далее. У нас такого не было. Вроде бы. Может, когда-то раньше и было, когда я был совсем маленький. Но в моем сознательном возрасте я такого не видел и не слышал.
И: А как ты думаешь, почему это так по-разному – здесь в Беларуси и в России?
Б: Не знаю. С одной стороны, может быть, потому что у нас народ более спокойный. И еще, естественно, потому что у нас такого наплыва не было их, иммигрантов. У нас их особо много не было. А там… может быть, даже это и оправданно, потому что они приезжают, там, и очень плохо себя ведут многие. Очень. Потому что вот из этих вот восточных народов, те, кто приезжает, вот я так заметил, они все какие-то то ли неблагополучные, то ли какие-то плохие и т.д. Потому что нормальный человек и в своей стране может нормально жить и работать. А они приезжают туда, большинство, естественно… Как я в Москве бывал пару раз, сам их не люблю. И московские шарпы, все антифашисты, тоже бывают иногда у них там стычки с ними, потому что оборзевшие полностью некоторые бывают. Когда я сам был, стоят там три таких быдла, асетины, может, какие-то или еще кто-то, в спортивных костюмах, напаленные, с глазами красными, и на меня там уже что-то... А я там... Москва, я там первый раз вообще, я так быстренько в метро забежал и все. А потом с ребятами встретился, они такие: "это нормально". Они там, бывает, борзеют так иногда. Особенно, когда чувствуют силу.

articulations of the antiracist character of the SHARP movement and of his belonging to it. This indicates a creative and contextual approach in cultural appropriation: the subculture that emerged in Britain is inevitably adjusted to other cultural, societal and political contexts, in this case to those of Belarus, and in different ways. Certain elements of the subculture are chosen, renegotiated and attributed with new meanings. This process takes place in the constantly changing framework of culture, and is therefore continuing, transforming and offering various possible identity options.

6.3.4. Hip-Hop

Mark

Mark is an underground rapper, as he describes himself. He was twenty-six years old at the time of the interview and worked in a travel company. As a passion rather than profession, rap has become a means of self-expression for Mark, who also sees himself "somewhere in the middle between a poet and public activist." He previously participated in a famous Belarusian-language rap project *Chyrvonym pa Belamu*, which has been politically challenging due to socially critical lyrics and symbols associated with opposition. As described in Chapter 6.1.1, cultural identification of Mark relates to "European Belarusianness" and simultaneously to Cosmopolitanism, i.e. he places Belarus in Europe culturally and historically, but also views it as a "mixture" of different possible cultures. Mark recalls that his passion for rap began with "banal fashion" when he was twelve: "back then, everybody listened to rap. Well, they either listened to rap or they beat those who listened to rap (*laughing*). There was, kind of, no third option. I was kind of inclined to rhyming and languages." This personal inclination and the "common" interest in hip-hop culture led Mark to amateur rap-making together with his class-mate. He began with the Russian-language rap, and started to use Belarusian some years later. According to Mark, his language choice has nothing in common with politics:

> Actually, in terms of language choice, I never considered it so very important. I speak both Russian and Belarusian quite well. Of course I identify myself with Belarus and consider myself a Belarusian, but I don't like it when they make music in Belarusian just for it to be in Belarusian. Some people look for an audience in it, i.e. if I make it in Belarusian then I'll be appreciated by Belarusian speakers. Others link themselves to politics. As for me, I felt like making it [in Belarusian], and so I did it.
> **Interviewer**: So you don't link yourself to politics?

Mark: Absolutely not. I have my views that probably don't coincide with the views of most people, but I try to take something from [different views]. And I don't support the dogma that Belarusian speakers are necessarily in opposition or opposers of Lukashenka and so on. I'm not a supporter myself, but I don't like this linking under the aspect of language. This harms the language because it restricts the sphere of language use. Language […] is a means of communication, and not a means of political identification. This is why it makes me angry. […] I think this issue is artificial and people who want to help the language, in fact make it worse with this linking to politics.

It has been mentioned in Chapter 6.1.2 that Mark distances himself from the "demonstrative function" of language in music, as well as from politicization of Belarusian-language music and of Belarusian history. In his opinion, Belarusian music should be appreciated not for the use of language, but for aesthetic or expressive qualities. Language is a means of self-expression, as Marks puts it, distancing himself from political symbols of the language. His lyrics consist of his "observations" and "reflections" about himself, his experiences, beliefs, impressions and his perspective. Mark explains: "I do it for myself, I don't want to be liked to win audiences or followers. If I have them, it's good, it means if these people find themselves in my texts […], it's cool. But I don't pursue these goals." The goal is rather the expression of thoughts, and rap is the best means of self-expression for Mark. He views himself as part of the (global) hip-hop subculture and evaluates Belarusian hip-hop critically. His account also reflects the circulation of culture and music through different spaces — Western and post-Soviet:

> [I identify with] hip-hop. The classic [subculture]. But we have big problems with it. Everything comes to us in a very distorted way, extremely distorted because, as a rule, everything comes to us from Russia, and comes to Russia from somewhere else. And everywhere it gets its peculiarities. When it arrives to us, it's changed beyond recognition. For instance, hip-hop in our country is associated with not very smart guys. […] This culture is ascribed with characteristics that are not necessary [and optional]. And the classics of it is that hip-hop is the way to express oneself. It gave little people the opportunity to convey their thoughts. They can be absolutely opposite. [Hip-hop] can be white or black. Hip-hop is equality. […] And diversity.[118]

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[118] Ну как хип-хоп. К классической. Но дело в том, что у нас с этим большие проблемы. До нас, во-первых, все доходит в очень искаженном виде, в крайне искаженном, потому что... ну, как правило, к нам же все попадает из России, а в Россию оно попадает еще откуда-то. И везде обрастает какими-то своими особенностями. Когда оно приходит к нам, оно до неузнаваемости просто. То есть у нас, допустим, тот же хип-хоп ассоциируется с не очень далекими ребятами. Все наркоманы повально. Ну, скажем, не наркоманы, но травку покуривают. А я, допустим, нет, я вот выпить люблю... Приписываются культуре какие-то характеристики, которые совсем необязательны, то есть они там могут быть, но это все вариативно. Классика же состоит в том, что хип-хоп – это способ выговориться. Он дал маленьким людям возможность свои мысли как-то доносить. Они могут быть

Mark identifies with the "original" hip-hop subculture and distances himself from the local subculture which is, in his opinion, stereotyped and distorted. He points out that hip-hop came to Belarus through Russian rap, which used to be "conscious" and socially critical in the past and with which Mark fully identified. However, according to Mark, this culture has meanwhile been profaned: profanation implies a lack of critical thinking and use of hip-hop culture for showing off and for self-affirmation. Mark perceives this profanation as "culture abuse" and separates himself from profaning Russian and Belarusian rappers. He identifies with "conscious rap" and states that "there are not many such people" in Belarus. Mark's identification with global (or Western) hip-hop culture is expressed in his interpretation of it in terms of equality and diversity, as well as in his distancing from local politicization or profanation of rap. As he points out, the "true culture" of hip-hop is followed by only a few people, and therefore he performs for small audiences, which he enjoys: "it's easier to perform for seven thousand people than for twenty or thirty because you don't see their eyes, they become one crowd, and not very smart one."

Mark's audience consists of 550 followers in the social network vkontakte, and as he observes, the average Belarusian rapper has 1500-2000 followers. Unlike other rappers, Mark is not engaged in promotion, and his audience is "not typical for a hip-hop performer." His audience, in his words, actually listens to other music, such as Russian rock and punk, and there are "many interesting persons like anarchists," who obviously identify with Mark's lyrics. He explains that these people's music preferences are related to and motivated by politics, and in his music "they hear something they agree with." I asked Mark, whether his fans hear a political message in his texts, to which he responded as follows:

> Calls for anarchy? (*laughing*) Rather the social [message]. On the small everyday level, yes. I stand against greed, for instance. I don't like it when people do everything for the sake of money. […] This coincides with their views somehow, they have kind of broader views. And again, the power of money, capitalism, it overlaps indeed. I mean I'm even proud that my audience differs from the standard rapper audience. In the West, there are very many different performers in hip-hop. […] There are many like me there, but not here. My audience is my pride. They are thinking people.

вообще абсолютно противоположны. Содержание хип-хопом не регламентируется никак. Он может быть белый, черный. Хип-хоп – это равенство. Необязательно, что это музыка черных. Там и черные, и белые, и желтые, и красные, какие угодно люди могут быть. Они могут абсолютно друг другу противоречить, у них может быть абсолютно разная даже музыка... Разнообразие.

Mark positions himself in the underground, which he defines as independent culture and opportunity to express one's own opinion "not ordered by society." Self-expression, creativity and refusal to make music for money are the features of the "pure" and "needed" underground, as Mark sees it. He does not take money for his performances in order to "avoid temptation to make [rap] to order." Self-expression, independence and freedom from stereotypes and from other people's opinions and expectations are primary values that Mark articulates in relation to music-making. He distances himself from values "inflicted by society" because the society is "not a standard of quality." Values imposed by society are rather "something averaged, and the average can never be good" (Mark). Opposing himself to the majority of people and also the majority of other rappers, Mark articulates his belonging to the underground and the "true" subculture. The following excerpt reflects his views on society and its values and qualities:

> Our people generally don't want to join subcultures. Maybe it's right because they have other things in mind. You see, one starts looking for identification when the head is free from other things. Our people work, earn money, and many believe that they are surviving. And besides, Belarusians have this feature of thrift, possibly too much of it. Nothing else is interesting until they've filled the purse and the fridge. And when you fill the purse and the fridge, you don't have time left for anything else. In this way they also leave rap. […] Marriage is an obstacle for many because they have to provide for the family. And again, there is this Belarusian thing "to be like others" and "not worse than others" and… we're becoming dull. I've been in Germany and I saw how it is there – people at the age of 35, 40 and 45 are dedicated members of some subculture, and that's normal, it looks absolutely normal. Our people are afraid of it. They think "how will people look at you?"

According to Mark, Belarusian society is characterized by materialistic values and a conformist way of life, from which he distances himself. The comparison of Belarus with Germany reflects his idealized perception of the West as a free, progressive culture and counter pole to Belarusian society. The hip-hop subculture, as Mark understands it, offers him space for identity-building ideas and practices, such as self-expression, creativity, equality and justice, freedom from public opinion, critical thinking, global consciousness, and simultaneously difference from others – within the society as well as within the subculture. Through the construction of difference on the various levels, Mark maintains agency and reinforces his "Cosmopolitan" Belarusian identity.

6.3.5. Reggae

As observed during the interviews and reggae concerts in Minsk as well as on internet platforms, elements of reggae and Rastafari culture are appropriated by young people largely in an aesthetic aspect. However, reggae music and style are also used in the construction of "Cosmopolitan" identities. Reggae culture offers a variety of identity-building practices, ideas and symbols, such as a "positive" way of life, traveling, feeling free from societal norms, and unusual appearances, involving dreadlocks and Rastafari-like or hippie-like style.

Kseniya and *Karina* represent the examples of appropriation of reggae culture in the Belarusian context. I found them through my personal network in Minsk, and as it turned out later, they were friends. When I met 24-year-old Kseniya in a park, it was easy to recognize her: she had long dreadlocks and wore a long flowered dress, showing clear visual difference from most people. Overall, she made an impression of a reflective and restrained but also self-confident person. Karina was interviewed some six months later; she was 25-year-old and was styled in a "hipster" or "hippie-chic" manner: she wore a very short haircut, big black-rimmed glasses, black linen skirt, plaid shirt, yellow boots and a short grey coat. She was willing to talk and seemed to be an extravert person.

Kseniya expressed identification with reggae culture (and with Russian and Belarusian cultures), and positioned herself as a person who listens to "good music," which is "very diverse." Alongside reggae, good music is represented for Kseniya by rock-n-roll, alternative rock, punk rock, country, folk, etc. Belarusian bands (*Serebryanaya Svad'ba, Kassiopeya, Nagual, Petlya Pristrastiya*) were frequently mentioned among Kseniya's preferences.

She had made dreadlocks four years earlier "for practical reasons" in order to avoid everyday hair styling and "just because [she] liked it." However, the decision to make dreadlocks was also influenced by reggae music, which she especially preferred at that time. Kseniya emphasized that she still liked reggae, but her spectrum of music preferences had "widened." When I asked her how she came to like reggae music, Kseniya replied: "I guess it just initially fit me and it has always fitted." She listened to Bob Marley at first, and then she started listening to Belarusian reggae as well as reggae-related genres, such as dub, ska, ragga jungle, etc. Prior to reggae and "from childhood," she preferred Russian rock (*Zemfira* and *Kino*), and Belarusian and Russian rap (albeit

rather restrictedly). Russian rock, therefore, can function not only as an initial stage of appreciation of global or Western rock (as described in Chapter 6.3.1), but also that of global or Jamaican reggae.

Kseniya reflects on the connection between music and herself: "Music reflects the person's inner world anyway. And I've always been so relaxed, so reggae fits me very well. I think I would have listened to it all my life if I had heard it earlier than I did." The following excerpt reflects her interpretation of reggae and of its message:

> **Interviewer**: What else is there in reggae music, which reflects you personally?
> **Kseniya**: I think some certain… how do I say that… way of life that is not consumerist. I think so. Because now, everywhere, I'm observing this chasing after consumerism, prestige, such values of the society… And in [reggae] music, there are no such things, I've never heard texts like "earn more money, become a boss." I mean, [reggae] is close to me. [In reggae] there are such ideas as feeling happiness inside oneself and looking for happiness in yourself, not in some successes. In relaxedness and a calm view of the world.
> **Interviewer**: And these ideas, are they mainly conveyed through the texts?
> **Kseniya**: The music is also calm. But yes, also the texts. If to translate English texts, the meanings are quite the same, like "don't fight, let's be friendly, let's travel and not waste our life on unimportant things." I think the meaning is like that practically everywhere.

Reggae obviously offers a certain worldview to Kseniya, which includes spiritual rather than consumerist values, as well as mindfulness and peacefulness. Stating that reggae and its message "initially fit" her and reflect what she already has, Kseniya represents an example of cultural appropriation with a contextual attribution of meaning to a cultural product. Reggae is interpreted in the aspect of a "harmonizing" function, whereas its actual religious context and that of "black consciousness" is not mentioned at all. In this music, Kseniya rather perceives what has relevance to her in a given context at a given time. The ways in which the music is received and perceived are very creative and depend both on social and individual frameworks. In Kseniya's words, reggae also reflects her as a freedom-loving person, who is not "attached" to any certain place. Freedom means to her the ability "to allow yourself to move beyond the borders of ordinariness" and "to understand that you can do what you want, and live the way you want. And not to satisfy anybody's expectations. [And] to pursue one's own path." Freedom, harmony and originality are thus the values that are both attributed to and received from the music; this is a creative two-way process of music consumption, in which meanings are produced in order to be used as a frame of reference in the construction of identities.

Differently from Kseniya, Karina did not express belonging to reggae culture; it is rather one of her used "identity options." Karina described herself as "rather a punk rock person than reggae person," although reggae music and culture obviously play a role in her self-perception. Her attraction to reggae began with Belarusian reggae music (*Addis Abeba, Botanic Project*), and only later she came to "roots" reggae (particularly Bob Marley), after which she ceased listening to Belarusian reggae because the music "became too commercial." This means that Karina perceives roots reggae as authentic, and Belarusian reggae as secondary. It is noteworthy that unlike her friend Kseniya, Karina discovered roots reggae through Belarusian music, i.e. the latter functioned as an "entry level" for global, Western, or Jamaican reggae music. However, at first, she was not a reggae fan and listened to this music in order to "calm down." She perceived it as "background music" for a "better mood" and did not "delve into it." Karina recalls:

> I always liked more aggressive music. And then I started listening to [reggae] all the time, started being imbued with African culture. My friend made dreads. […] Somehow it seemed to me that all they were free and joyful, they always had hot weather there. I liked the picture of Bob Marley, I imagined him lying in the sun, smoking grass, singing songs, writing. I guess I rather liked this music's atmosphere itself. But the music itself too, actually. It gives such lightness and relaxedness.

The image that Karina presents reflects the widespread perception of reggae as detached from Rastafari culture. Its popularized facets, such as "positive vibrations," smoking marijuana[119] and enjoying life, have widely become elements of a lifestyle, which may indicate both a lack of knowledge of the music's history and the interpretation of the music according to the local cultural context of a post-Soviet society, where issues of racial inequality, inherent in Jamaican reggae, do not play a significant role.

The common perception of reggae culture as "the art of enjoying life" was also exemplified by other respondents. For instance, Roman, who identified with various music styles but also with reggae, took an interest in the music's history and discovered its religious background; however, his perception of it remained strongly related to his local social and individual context. Reggae attracted Roman with its "happiness, lightness and freedom." He explains:

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[119] Particularly in regard to smoking marijuana, the respondents did not mention any use of this substance and, given that the use of it is prohibited in Belarus, I avoided posing suggestive questions.

> I'm not a religious person, I got to know how and why, and for this moment it's enough for me to know these things and listen to the people who sincerely believe in it, are happy, sing with a smile on their face, and this music improves my mood. If I listen to Bob Marley right in the morning, the day will be fine (Roman).

It is remarkable that reggae fans associate Rastafari culture with hippie culture, as Roman's reflections suggest. He states that he prefers reggae exactly because he has certain beliefs: "If my belief is peace in the world, I'm against the war, then I […] listen to music of the hippies and Rastas, who are also for peace in the world." This example also shows how ideas are attributed to music and then used as a confirmation or reaffirmation of one's beliefs. The following excerpt from the interview with Aleksandr also reflects the common association of reggae with hippie culture:

> **Aleksandr**: [In reggae] there are very nice songs. Sometimes it's very pleasant dance music. And I like their worldview, of these hippies [and] the guys who make reggae.
> **Interviewer**: And what does their worldview include?
> **Aleksandr**: Well, kind of "don't worry," […] "everything's all right," "everything will be fine." If something happened, don't worry, it will be okay.[120]

The respondents' interpretation of reggae as resembling hippie culture is obviously produced largely by the image and song lyrics of Russian and Belarusian reggae bands, who appropriate the music according to local contexts. Their lyrics deal both with social criticism of local realities (such as corruption, crime, and political issues) and, more commonly, with themes of love, "universal justice," enjoying life, and smoking marijuana. Reference to "African roots" or the religious aspects of Rastafari culture are rather uncommon in Belarusian and Russian reggae,[121] which explains the respondents' articulations of this music in terms of "universal" issues popularized in Western reggae and reinterpreted by Russian and Belarusian reggae musicians.

Not only reggae fans themselves, but also other people equate reggae music with hippie culture. As Karina tells, punks also label reggae fans as "hippies" who are "sitting around and doing nothing." According to Karina's observation, "in punk *tusovka*,[122] there

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[120] **A**: Очень добрые песни. Местами очень приятная музыка танцевальная. И мне нравится их мировоззрение: этих хиппи, реггерей, реггистов – в общем, ребят, которые делают регги.
И: Их мировоззрение что в себя включает?
А: Ну, условно «не парься», если одним словом, «все хорошо», «все будет отлично». Там что-то произошло – не парься, все исправится.
[121] One of the exceptions is a famous Russian Rastafari-reggae group *Jah Division*, whose lead singer Gerbert Morales claims to be a son of one of Che Guevara's comrades.
[122] Social circle, get-together, "hangout," or party.

are more young men, while in our [reggae *tusovka*] there are more girls." Furthermore, punks have "unserious" attitudes toward reggae fans, considering reggae "unserious music, so light-minded, for girls." This indicates the perceptions of punk as "masculine," and hippie and reggae as "feminine" culture and music, which are obviously linked with an opposition of rock as "masculine" and "serious" music to "light" and therefore "feminine" music (mostly to pop, but in this case to reggae). This opposition points to the gender roles in Belarusian society and shows ways in which masculinity can be constructed and articulated. Particularly in this case, punk and rock are used to construct discursive hierarchies and oppositions functioning as a reinforcement of "masculinity." Ultimately, these hierarchies reflect and perpetuate established gender roles in a post-Soviet society.

Overall, reggae plays different roles in reinforcing and producing identities along lines of culture, nation, society, and individuality. Attributing certain values to the music and using them in an identity-building process, Kseniya understands herself as an "unordinary freedom lover"; Karina's perception of reggae suggests an idealized image of what is seen as "African culture," and her "hippieness" is closely linked with reggae music. Roman receives new knowledge and experience from reggae music, using these to describe himself as open to experiments. There is no parallel between preference of reggae and certain national identities. For instance, while Kseniya identifies with Russian and Belarusian cultures, Roman perceives European and Belarusian cultures as closest. In both these cases, national identifications are not articulated as connected with music.[123] Differently from Kseniya and Roman, Karina sees herself as Cosmopolitan, based on her multiple music preferences (as described in Chapter 6.1.1). Her identification with reggae produces "belonging" to African culture, and her preference of other music forms from different regions creates identification with European, American and Belarusian cultures, producing a sense of Cosmopolitanism.

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[123] In the case of Kseniya, identification with Russian culture is conditioned by speaking Russian; Roman constructs his European Belarusianness through the placement of Belarus in the "center of Europe" and through dissociation from Russia.

6.4.   Different Musics, Shifting Boundaries, and Eclectic Identities

Many respondents found it difficult to define a favorite music style or to identify with a specific (sub)culture. A multiplicity of styles and identity options has different effects on young people: if choosing one favorite style gives clarity for some, others consider this approach as limiting. Although the majority of the respondents expressed multiple music preferences, some of them could clearly define one or few favorite genres. Others, on the contrary, found it difficult to distinguish a certain preference, articulating a diversity of musical tastes and flexibility of self.

Roman describes himself as a hippie, although some time earlier he also used to be a goth. The spectrum of his favorite music is wide: he enjoys reggae, post-punk, jazz, electronic music, and so forth. According to Roman, music offers experience:

> Why not try [different lifestyles]? I think the more one tries in life, I mean good things, and the more one experiences some emotions and feelings, the fuller life will be, and one won't live it in vain. And besides, any new thing is an experience for a person. And the experience leads to certain conclusions… It's possible to live without the experience, but that is uninteresting.

Music offers Roman various identity options, lifestyles, and experiences – from being a hippie with dreadlocks to becoming a goth. Hippie and goth lifestyles represent completely different worldviews and offer diverse experiences through different social surroundings, practices, ideas, symbols, and knowledge. The experiences develop and transform constantly, and popular music obviously offers contexts for ever-changing individual perceptions.

Another respondent, Vladimir, described himself as a music lover with a "vast range" of music preferences, and stated that choosing one favorite music style is a "prejudiced, conservative attitude." Vladimir enjoys "totally different genres of different periods," e.g. classic rock, heavy metal, punk rock, alternative, American hip-hop, etc. Different music offers him different emotions and states of mind: "Some music gives me depression or melancholy, some of it gives me drive, good mood, and some of it just gives me strength or anger." Recalling the period of his passion for metal, he speaks about the disturbing "boundaries":

> Metal burdened me with driving me into some boundaries, frames of music… I generally believe that going into any boundaries is useless and meaningless. When you can't choose something else, you limit yourself. When you say "No, I won't listen to that because I can't" then you limit yourself, and it looks ridiculous.

Subcultures are viewed as limiting and imposing boundaries of thinking, style and music, as Vladimir claims. Subculture membership makes people "outlaws in the society," and as he sees it, "I don't want to be a marginal in the society. I actually want to be like everyone else, but have my own peculiarity." Compliance with the norms is obviously very important to him, and any subcultural identification would contradict this positioning. A wide range of music preferences liberates Vladimir from such perceived restrictions and boundaries. Vladimir expressed a belonging to Western culture based on practices of listening to Western music, wearing Western clothes and reading Western sources (cf. Chapter 6.1.1). He also emphasized that Western tendencies are "more popular," which indicates the wish to be included into a "Western" society.

Similarly, Vadim, who is a member of a punk rock band, perceives subcultures as limiting because they are full of "dogmas and axioms": "subcultures impose limitations, boundaries, customs, traditions. I don't want to clamp myself." The band experiments with various music styles, integrating them into punk rock. Vadim's self-perception has a parallel to the practiced eclectics of music: he views himself as an open person and a "Cosmopolitan."

A negative attitude toward subcultures is also reinforced by the perception of them as inauthentic. For instance, the respondents of focus group 1 discussed subcultures in Belarus, comparing them with those in the West.[124] Western subcultures are perceived as authentic, while Belarusian ones are viewed as secondary and belated. It was also stated that "lately, the influence of subcultures has decreased, compared with the way it was five or six years ago, when they could even beat you [if you look different]" (resp.3, focus group 1).

Karina's observation is that the underground *tusovka* of Minsk is "mixed up." [125]

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[124] For example, the hipster subculture of Minsk was compared with that of Vienna. Respondent 5 stated that Vienna hipsters are more "authentic" than those in Minsk because in Belarus, there is a "lack of resources" for hipsters to look "like they really are." Respondent 1 replied that it is "the matter of time" and that "everything comes a bit too late" to Belarus.

[125] This assumption can be supported by the following observation, which I made at the *Dvorets sporta* (Sport Palace, a concert venue) before the beginning of a festival of metal music (it was called "Metal All Stars," with participation of Western musicians, such as Phil Anselmo (*Pantera*), Tom Araya (*Slayer*), Rob Halford (*Judas Priest*), etc.). The festival audience was surprisingly heterogeneous and ranged from metal music fans in their forties or fifties and "hipsters" in their twenties to teenagers with emo-like looks. Another aspect of the observation relates to the issue of state control: fans and visitors seemed unusually calm and reserved, given the context of a rock festival. However, soon I noticed militiamen, standing aside, watching people, and obviously ridiculing their looks. On the side of the building, I saw a few big military

She compares Moscow subcultures with those in Minsk (she lived in Moscow for a year), pointing out that in Moscow, there is more differentiation between subcultures. In her opinion, the lack of differentiation is explained by the smaller size of Minsk as well as of its underground *tusovka*. While there is a lot of choice for the subculturally inclined in Moscow, in Minsk they often have to adjust: "Here the concerts don't take place often, and people, in order to develop somehow, go to [concerts] that are in some way close to their musical tastes and preferences" (Karina). It is therefore suggested that flexibility of subcultural people is forced by local circumstances rather than conditioned by "universal" and historical development producing the global "post-subcultural" era. It is, however, possible to assume that both processes simultaneously play a role in Belarusian society.

Some respondents suggested that various music preferences reflect or form a flexible, changeable or inquiring character. Olga does not "stick to any certain direction in music" or "limit" herself with particular languages in music. She states: "As I listen to very many different styles, I often have a changeable character and changeable mood – all this [music] influences me and my inner state." Kira suggests that music of different regions and in different languages expresses her as a "person who is interested in everything." On the one hand, bard music in which Kira is engaged expresses her Belarusianness while, on the other, the interest in music of various regions and time periods offers broader identifications and indicates multiple identities rather than an "identity."

Music shapes the lifestyle, as some respondents stated. For instance, Karina travels widely, which is connected with her love of music. She said: "Many trips were organized to attend music concerts" and "If I go to a concert I get to know some people, we start to communicate, so common interests appear, as well as practices and events linked to them" (Karina). Music also shapes some respondents' emotional perceptions: "I began to listen to Korean music and *Zemfira*, and at some moment I realized that I've become nicer, more compassionate than I'd been before – this came exactly through music and not because I just realized I have to take pity on a kitten" (Olga).

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trucks. As a friend of mine who lives in Minsk explained to me, those trucks were placed there for potential "misbehaving" and in case of a "turmoil" that might occur before or during the concert. In such a case, people would be put in these trucks and brought to a militia station. People living in Minsk are obviously familiar with these practices, which explains why the festival audience was quiet and restrained.

Music shapes the worldview, as many respondents pointed out. For example, Vadim told that "music is one of the aspects that form the worldview" (alongside literature and social interconnections), and it does so by means of the text: "Good rock music or song combine a good melody and deep text. Lyrics, as books also do, often move you to do something… or help in dealing with some issues. [The text offers] one more view of a problem." Denis also stated that music shapes the worldview and the "general attitude toward the world": music supports certain attitudes and beliefs, as Denis puts it. He adds, "music just cultivates what exists in a person." He explains that poetry and literature can as well have an impact on one's worldview and formation of one's own opinion, therefore it is mainly lyrics that may shape the worldview, whereas music (or melody) influences the mood.

Aleksandr also expressed the opinion that music shapes the worldview. In his case, it was metal that formed his views of this music and changed his attitude to it: "I don't know why, but since I was a child I considered metal bad. Someone told me that it is bad, that screaming into the microphone is wrong. And when I started to listen to it I realized that there's nothing bad in it; in fact, there's even something good." Later, everything changed: "I finished school, went to university, where there's a different environment; I started listening to other music, I got other hobbies." According to Aleksandr, these changes are connected with music: he explained that his musical taste is influenced by his friends, therefore a new social environment produces new music preferences.

Viktoria perceives herself as a flexible person and associates her flexibility with her musical taste: "Because I listen to various musics it's very easy for me to adapt in different groups." According to Viktoria, music is an "integral part of life," and without it, everything is "grey and dull." She compares music with an "addiction" and adds that "a day without music is not a day." In Vikroria's life, music is ubiquitous: "You can't imagine yourself [without music] anymore."

Participants of focus group 2 expressed different opinions on the role of popular music in their lives. For some, music played a decisive role, while others consider it rather as a "background." Additionally, many respondents claimed that there is absolutely no connection between music and visual style. Others stated a strong influence of music: apart from offering a variety of hobbies (such as playing an instrument or creating social

media groups based on music interests), music defines their appearances, views and lifestyles. The various attitudes toward music are reflected in the following excerpt:

> **Moderator**: How does music influence your life, generally?
>
> **Respondent 3**: Very strongly. When I began listening to *Mumiy Troll* – it had elements of subculture back then – it was very important to me that I listen exactly to this band [and] other similar bands. I started taking an interest in music generally. […]
>
> **R2**: To me, music doesn't play such a big role in life. […] To me, it's rather an instrument that helps me work and relax. […] But it's not like it influences my life. Sure, everyone has his own thing instead of music. But I listen [to music] practically 24 hours a day. When I'm not asleep, I'm with the music. […]
>
> **R6**: Generally, music is an integral part of life. […] It unites people: [one can] dance to it, it's easier to communicate [with it], to relax, to speak [about it]. I think its influence on people is just huge.
>
> **R5**: Music influences the way I look. I always have some music playing at home, no matter what I'm doing. […] I transform with the music. […] It changes everything. […]
>
> **R4**: I always have music playing in the background, I listen to it every day. When you're alone, you turn the music on, and it creates the effect of presence. Yes, with music you can relax, but I can't say that music is a founding factor of my life or that it strongly influences my worldview. I have other things that influence me stronger than music. Music is like a pleasant background to me.
>
> **Moderator**: So what other things influence your worldview?
>
> **R4**: In a greater degree, I think, it's literature and cinema. More than music.
>
> **Moderator**: And how is it for the others?
>
> **R2**: Football. […] To me, it's sport. […] And music is an addition to the main hobby.

While some respondents see popular music as an "integral part of life," for others it is a "pleasant background" or an "addition." However, in both cases, music is obviously omnipresent in the respondents' lives, though the interpretations of its role vary. The interpretations do not depend on whether people belong to a subculture: all respondents of the focus group were "non-subcultural" (except for respondent 3, who mentioned subcultural elements of Russian rock, with which she strongly identified). Also, the factors shaping the worldview – alongside popular music – were emphasized, both by people who perceive music as central and those who described it as a background. In other words, for many, the aspects such as literature, film or sports play an equally important or a more fundamental role than popular music.

Many respondents also stated that music does not have an impact on visual style. Remarkably, though, among the non-subcultural people there were those who claimed that music defines their look; and some of the subcultural respondents claimed the

opposite. However, most subcultural interviewees emphasized a more or less stable interconnection between music and style. Conversely, most non-subcultural respondents stated that their appearance and style do not depend on music they identify with, or that music and style generally do not have to be connected in any way at all. Obviously, the multiplicity of music preferences has blurred the boundaries between musical genres, subcultures and visual style; as a result, the connection between them is often perceived as obsolete. The relation between music and style was discussed in focus group 1:

> **Moderator**: What do you think, is the clothing that a person chooses and wears connected to their musical taste?
> **Respondent 6**: Partly so, that is, [it depends on whether] they belong to a subculture or not. There are very strict subcultures where there are requirements of style to belong. And now, I think, the majority may listen to completely various music.
> **R5**: Now a majority of people listen to different music styles and don't identify with any specific one, that's why they don't have the need to dress in a specific way. This is why they dress in the way we've already discussed.[126]
> **R4**: If the person is a fan of certain music, then yes [it is connected]. But if the person listens to any music then it's impossible to say so because they won't stand out or demonstrate what music they listen to.
> **R2**: If they initially have an idol, they will rather follow it, but it's not necessary. Those who listen to various music may listen to rock, rap, pop, etc., and they will dress the way they like. […]
> **R1**: I absolutely agree with [respondent 6]. If there are no requirements of style in a subculture, then the person can dress in the same way and nobody will know what they listen to.
> **R6**: There are people who listen to punk, but it's convenient for them to look common. Or they work in a bank. But if it's a teenager, they want to be included in a group, then they try to look this way. […]
> **R7**: I'm thinking whether there is a place on earth where music dictates how to look. I guess there isn't.

The connection between music and style is considered in terms of subcultural belonging, i.e. as most respondents see it, music and style are only interrelated in subcultures. The latter are evaluated quite neutrally in this part of discussion, though subcultural identification is attributed to "teenagers" and to the adolescent urge of being included into a peer group. In this case, although many of the respondents were in their early twenties, distancing from subcultures as an adolescent phenomenon reflects, strengthens and creates a sense of maturity and adulthood.

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[126] This means "differently" or in the "convenient" or "comfortable" way.

Quite differently, the discussion of focus group 2 indicated a "post-subcultural" understanding of music and style as well as the interrelation between them. Subcultures were discussed in relation to popsa: as one of the respondents (respondent 2) stated, unoriginality, inauthenticity and commercialism in popsa are caused by the fact that, unlike earlier, "music is often separated from a subculture" and that "universal" popsa which is "fitted to everyone" has "occupied" the space around. He also stated that "subcultures have become a thing of the past now" (except for the hipsters, who do not have a single common music preference). The discussion that followed this statement reflects the perceived lack of boundaries between music styles as well as between music and visual style:

> **Respondent 6**: I don't agree that [subcultures] don't exist anymore. They do, there are many, they are just not so distinct.
> **R2**: They are small and indistinct because of universal music written for all of them. […]
> **R1**: I think [respondent 2] didn't mean that subcultures don't exist any longer, but rather that they died in terms of their initial meaning. Music that initially belonged to certain subcultures, like hard rock or gangsta rap, becomes available easier for those who want it. […] Now the scope of tastes is bigger, and it's much easier to get and choose music that you want.
> […]
> **R2:** I'd like to add that in subcultures, style and music have ceased to be connected. I'm not dressed like those who listen to classic rock. Because I don't like those dark clothes. It's inconvenient and hot in the summer, and I feel comfortable in a hoodie. All this is getting lost, boundaries are getting blurred, […] there are mixed styles and so on. Any band wants to embrace a large audience. That's why, when you download an album (good that piracy is practically legal in our country), and there are three rap songs and three rock songs. What's that I've downloaded? But that's one performer. (focus group 2)

Boundaries being blurred are evaluated neutrally or positively, though the role of age and of societal norms was emphasized as well. People with subcultural appearances are "persecuted for dissent" (resp.2, focus group 2). Intolerant views are explained by "mentality" and the "established Soviet culture." On the one hand, the respondents seem to regret this circumstance, but on the other, they position themselves against "the extremes" and for compromises in relation to appearances (particularly for school teachers, who have to be an "example" for students). Standing out from the crowd should therefore remain within limits, according to some; others, though, pointed out critically that Belarusian people prefer being "like everybody else" and "do not want to stand out." The same person (resp.8), however, simultaneously regretted people's conformity and

agreed with others that "one shouldn't go to the extremes." Overall, according to most respondents, music and style are not interrelated, at least in everyday life.

However, some female participants of the focus group considered music and style as connected particularly with attending rock concerts. In this case, style has a symbolic meaning, serving as a sign of belonging to the audience of a certain band or performer. The following excerpt reflects the perception of a rock concert as a context for experiencing a group identity:

> **Respondent 3**: When we had a concert, I realized as a girl that I need a dress. It's an event, so I need a dress! […] We bought [a dress that suited] rock-n-roll, added rock-n-roll elements, but without fanaticism. But in everyday life [I have] an absolutely casual style.
> […]
> **Moderator**: When you go to concerts, do you dress in a special way?
> **R5**: Of course.
> **R6**: Yes.
> **R3**: I can say that ten or fifteen years ago, my elder sister seriously started listening to hard music. […] She was eighteen, and she prepared herself for a concert all day long: she had to make black nails, certain makeup, certain black clothes were worn. She absolutely dressed according to the event she was going to. Now she can go to a metal concert wearing a dress, and feel fine. […] Today, it's different already.
> **R6**: I think there are those thematic parties where you wear certain clothes to show that you are one of them.
> **R3**: Not to stand out.
> […]
> **R6:** It's cool – you feel like a part of it.
> […]
> **R6:** I think in everyday life there is no such a thing today. There are few such people.
> **R3:** It's just, if you love something and it's very important to you, then you will probably dress in some special way. It's significant for you. But these are probably only girls who are like that.

The excerpt reveals gender issues: dressing up for a rock concert is considered as a per se female feature. The respondents also draw a clear line between music events and everyday life: if they dress "in a special way" for a concert, their everyday style does not reflect their music preferences in any way. Whereas a rock concert is experienced as a celebration of style and group identity, everyday life lacks any style distinctions between "us and them." The boundaries that are still present in symbolic contexts of music events disappear or become blurred in everyday life. This indicates the symbolism of cultural

practices, which occurs occasionally rather than habitually, but represents an important component in the identity-building process.

6.5.   Summary and Discussion

In Chapters 6.3 and 6.4, various identity options have been described – from identifying with a particular music genre to subcultural belonging to the variety of "different" music preferences. By no means extensive, these chapters reflect musical identifications of the research participants and present an image of cultural practices and discourses that (partly) characterize Belarusian youth.

Russian rock as a cultural phenomenon of the post-Soviet space plays a significant role for many of the respondents: it is either a central object of identification or functions as an "entry level" to global music. Different hierarchies are created, depending on where Russian rock is placed: centrality of this music reflects and creates a cultural center in Russia; when Russian rock ceases being central and becomes an entry level to Western music, the hierarchy is shifted, and the cultural center is placed in the "West." Belarus as a territory between two centers of political and economic power is also an imagined place between both cultural centers in the discursive hierarchy. The hierarchy is constantly shifting, and so are the ideas of the "center and margin."

Belarusian rock, folk and bard music are the valorized forms of popular music and are expressions of Belarusianness, or Cosmopolitan Belarusianness. The idea of authenticity of folk rock (and the related genres) is constructed at multiple levels – the level of rock as music of the "free spirit" and the level of folk as music of the "roots." The idea of truth expressed in Belarusian rock and folk rock is contraposed to the idea of untruth expressed in the common perception of Belarus as an "appendage" of Russia. Belarus is not only placed in Europe, but is perceived as a center of identification, which overthrows common hierarchies representing Russia as a center and Belarus as a margin.

The punk subculture offers a variety of identity-building aspects: punk is a means of expressing protest against the regime and an "indifferent" society; it is also opposed to "meaningless" popsa; and it offers identification as a freedom fighter and creative person, strengthening and producing the sense of difference (in which music and style are of equal importance). As Hebdige argued, subcultures represent symbolic challenges to a symbolic order (2002, 92); subcultures are also marked by the communication of a significant

difference (2002, 102). These aspects pointed out by Hebdige resonate with the described practice of punk. However, other aspects, such as the emphasis on class representation and class struggle, are hardly applicable in the local terms of a post-Soviet society.

Alongside hip-hop and heavy metal, punk has globally shaped youth culture and music with its anti-authoritarian spirit and a do-it-yourself ethic (Haenfler 2015, 278). Initially analyzed by Hebdige in terms of symbolic resistance to the dominant class structure, punk soon ceased to represent working-class struggle, drawing middle-class adherents (Haenfler 2015, 280-281). Pointing out historical hybridity of punk culture, Haenfler argues that punk appears homogenous only on the surface. In various local contexts, punks are not passive consumers but agents adapting punk to their own needs and circumstances, infusing it with local and national mythologies, experiences and politics; they actualize the global and the local simultaneously (Haenfler 2015, 290). Haenfler's argument is fully applicable in regard to the described Belarusian punk adherents, whose practices are both globally influenced and locally constructed.

Cultural appropriation of the skinhead subculture in the Belarusian context is reflected in "global" separation from racism and local engagement in social and political criticism. A cultural appropriation also produces certain contradictions, though: the articulation of the antiracist character of the SHARP movement does not necessarily coincide with actual experiences. Finally, the lack of the right-wing ideology is attributed to "peacefulness" of Belarusians, which indicates a creative local interpretation of the global cultural phenomenon.

Originally an African-American street culture, hip-hop is articulated, by its Belarusian adherent represented in this study, as a means of self-expression and is interpreted in terms of global justice and equality. Distancing from the local "distorted" subculture and local profanation and politicization of hip-hop, the respondent positions himself in the underground, i.e. in independent culture and the "authentic" subculture. Mark's identity is constructed through the articulation of difference from materialistic values and conformism of society as well as from other rappers, who are regarded as limited by local realities. Hip-hop offers a variety of ideas, including self-expression, independence, freedom from societal norms, critical thinking, creativity, justice and global consciousness. This confirms the assumption that hip-hop is "culturally mobile" and that the definition of hip-hop culture as well as related notions of authenticity are

constantly being "re-made" in the process of appropriation, eventually representing a product of locality with its distinctive local knowledge (Bennett 2000, 133; 164). Mark's ideas, which he both attributes to and draws from globalized hip-hop culture, produce a sense of Cosmopolitan identity – and authenticity.

Reggae music, which emerged in Jamaica as an expression of Rastafari identity and of "black consciousness," offers various identity options in Belarus. Infused with local knowledge, reggae becomes a localized cultural practice through the attribution of certain values to the music and using them in the identity-building process. These values represent a worldview that is clearly detached from the initial reggae message as a form of cultural resistance to racial oppression in Jamaica. Reggae and Rastafari culture spread globally in the 1970s, when Bob Marley "translated" Jamaican reggae into international music and transformed Rastafari from a local Jamaican presence into a global culture (cf. Wakengut 2013). Reggae and Rastafari are the products of globalization that provide universalistic identifications of solidarity, justice, and equality. The message of Rastafari spread through reggae music has been interpreted in various local contexts in different ways, e.g. in terms of class injustice. Local and micropolitical metaphors from Jamaican rural culture were transformed into allegories of a global hegemony (Chude-Sokei 2007, 139). Popular culture, specifically global reggae culture, became a site for "symbolic insurgency," which can be fulfilled only in a "symbolic counterworld" (Bogues 2003, 199). Symbolic insurgency is a process in which "an individual is engaged in consistent efforts to rearrange the ways in which mainstream reality is both constructed and explained" (Bogues 2003, 199). This process has eventually become globalized and "glocal," producing "symbolic counterworlds" that can be constructed anywhere.

In Belarus, where issues of racial inequality are completely absent, reggae music, i.e. its globalized and popularized form, is interpreted according to local social and political issues and, at the same time, according to its "global" message, which offers a universalistic worldview that includes spirituality, peacefulness, consciousness, and distancing from consumerism. Reggae also offers knowledge and experience; it represents an idealized image of "African culture"; and it is linked with hippie culture. Identification with reggae can produce "belonging" to African culture, and alongside a variety of other music preferences, it creates "belonging" to a variety of cultures, producing a sense of Cosmopolitanism. Musical meanings, thus, "take on highly

particularised, local inflections," as Bennett phrased it (2000, 193). Particularly in Belarus, global reggae culture is attributed with ideas in local settings and is imagined in new ways, offering a site for creative reinterpretations of music and of self.

Arguably, the described identity-building practices fall into the concept of lifestyle, albeit with subcultural elements in some cases. Applying the concept of "tribe," Bennett argues that groups, previously conceived as coherent subcultures, are better understood as a "series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships" (1999, 600). According to Bennett, the concept of lifestyle, similarly to that of "neo-tribes," successfully describes how individual identities are constructed and lived out in local contexts. The concept of lifestyle conceives of individuals as active consumers whose choice reflects a self-constructed notion of identity. Therefore, this concept allows for the fact that individuals often select lifestyles which are in no way indicative of a class background (Bennett 1999, 607). This arguably applies to the "case studies" described in this thesis: groups represented by the interviewees can hardly be conceived as coherent subcultures resisting the dominant class system, but rather as sites in which identity-building discourses and practices are constructed and creatively used in local contexts.

Finally, identification with "different musics" reflects and produces eclectic identities, offering diverse experiences and lifestyles, and shaping people's worldviews and emotions. It is evident that a strong identification with music is possible outside of subcultures as well, and diversity of music preferences does not necessarily indicate a lack of musical identities. On the other hand, it is also evident that many people do not consider popular music a central identity-building aspect of life; it is rather one of the aspects, alongside literature, film, sports, etc., which shape their lifestyle and worldview. Music and visual style are not interrelated for the majority of respondents with a variety of music preferences, though the interrelation remains existent for most subcultural interviewees. Generally, subcultures are perceived by the former group as inauthentic, limiting, or outdated, and the boundaries between musical genres and subcultures are commonly seen as blurred. This resonates with Bennett's argument that the relationship between musical taste and visual style is flexible and fluid: many respondents' perception of this relationship "negates the notion of a fixed homological relationship between musical taste and stylistic preference by revealing the infinitely malleable and

interchangeable nature of the latter as these are appropriated and realised by individuals as aspects of consumer choice" (1999, 613). It is pointed out that consumption of popular music offers the individual freedom of choice between various music styles and visual images. Moreover, individuals are free to define what these choices are made to stand for, assuming a fluid, malleable, neo-tribal character (Bennett 1999, 614).

However, the "boundaries" still exist in contexts of music events as well as, obviously, within subcultures (or groups conceived as such). This indicates, both in the case of subcultural and that of non-subcultural people, that it is the symbolic meaning of cultural practices, which plays an important role in the identity-building process. Overall, regardless of whether a person identifies with a specific subcultural group or with "different musics," the variety of identity options in both cases produces multiple identities rather than an "identity."

7. Conclusions

In the present study, I have examined young Belarusians' discourses and practices related to various popular music forms, and described the ways in which young people in post-Soviet Belarus construct meanings and identities. For this purpose, I have laid focus on qualitative methods of individual and group interviewing as well as observations at live performances and in social media, while the nation-wide survey has served as the empirical context of young people's music preferences, which play an important role in identity constructions.

Popular music as a discursive practice offers a potentially infinite variety of cultural meanings. Popular music is both practice and discourse: music as a signifying practice is not a source of meaning, but represents a "site" in which meanings are produced in articulation. I have argued that discourse is not "disconnected" from people's everyday practices and experiences, but is constructed around and through them. Given this approach, the method of individual and group interviewing has been very appropriate, given the research focus on the wide spectrum of young people's music preferences. Elements of ethnography, such as in-depth interviewing, group discussions, conversations, attending concerts and events, and social media observations allow one to

discover the ways in which meanings are constructed and used, and to receive insight into discourses and practices produced by popular music consumption and performance.

As a complement to in-depth interviewing, the method of the quantitative survey has served the purpose of providing an empirical context of young people's choices and patterns of music consumption; it also provides general information on relevant processes taking place among youths in Belarusian society. The survey section "Music and identity" was designed with the purpose of revealing various factors that impact young people's music preferences. As has become evident afterwards, the survey lacks certain topics that appeared extremely important during the interviews and focus groups, which were conducted after the survey. It is obvious, therefore, that the survey would have contained questions related to the issues raised by the interviewees, if it had been conducted not before but after the qualitative research phase. Although there are certain discrepancies between the quantitative and qualitative data, I assume that the survey has fulfilled the purpose of providing a general empirical context of music consumption and music preferences of young Belarusians. However, to minimize the discrepancies and make sure that relevant issues are included in the survey, it seems more appropriate, given a research focus on identity constructions, to conduct qualitative research prior to a survey.

7.1.   Quantitative Research Results and Data Discrepancies

The survey data reflect the widespread "pop-rock division" and reveal that pop is generally more preferred by young Belarusians than rock. However, "pop" and "rock" seem to be perceived as ambiguous terms: for instance, people declaring "pop" as their favorite music style also indicated attending "indie/alternative" or "metal" concerts. This suggests not only the ambiguousness of terms and genres, but also flexibility of musical practices and fluidity of musical taste.

The hypothesis that preferences of young Belarusians are shaped by Western music, i.e. that Western music is more preferred than Russian music, has not been confirmed: among young Belarusians, Russian music is more preferred than Western music. This indicates that people's preferences are more shaped by Russian music than Western music, which can be explained by the common information space shared by Belarus with Russia. Belarusian music has a marginal status in the preferences of young Belarusians: this reflects ambiguous attitudes toward local music, which are, in turn,

caused by insufficient offers of the Belarusian music market, compared with those of the Western and Russian music industry.

There is a parallel between cultural belonging and preferences in music languages: people declaring a belonging to European culture chose English-language music more often than Russian-language music; conversely, people who declared belonging to Slavic or Russian culture chose Russian-language music more often than English-language music. Without generalizing, it can be assumed that young Belarusians' identification with European culture is reinforced through preference of Western music, just as identification with Slavic or Russian culture is strengthened by Russian music. However, there is no parallel between Belarusian music and belonging to Belarusian culture: people who indicated belonging to Belarusian culture chose Russian-language music twice as often as English-language music, and twenty times as often as Belarusian music. This reflects the marginal status of Belarusian music, which, being lost in the abundance of Western and Russian music, appears relatively unable to offer the majority of young Belarusians a variety of identity options provided by other music markets. However, as I will outline further, the marginal status, or "nonexistence" of Belarusian music and its lack of identity offers are also *produced* in the discourse, in which the category of authenticity plays a central role.

As further survey data have shown, music functions are more often associated with emotions and moods than with cognitive and social aspects. However, according to the data from the interviews and focus groups, the intellectual aspect in music consumption plays a very important role, as shown in discussions of music's "meaning," of "good" and "bad" music, of popsa, and of other themes.

According to the survey, the internet is the major source of music consumption: downloading and listening online are the most widespread activities, while buying records is (or has become) an unpopular practice. In relation to the qualitative data, there is no discrepancy: most respondents download music and listen online on the social media platform *vkontakte*, and consider it unnecessary to buy records.

The questions about attitudes and belonging to the "underground" revealed that more than a quarter of the respondents "did not know" about the existence of underground culture in Belarus. This may indicate that the topic of the underground evokes ambiguous associations, and that the context of the institutional survey plays a significant role for

respondents when answering certain questions. For example, it is likely that these respondents actually questioned the existence of underground culture particularly in Belarus, but not in general, which may indicate a reference to the political situation in Belarus, in which underground culture can hardly exist. On the other hand, declaring "I didn't know it exists" may also have been caused by some respondents' unfamiliarity with the (quite widespread) term "underground." However, most interview and focus group respondents discussed this topic willingly regardless of personal positioning toward it, and only a few respondents were unfamiliar with the term "underground" or its meaning in the local context. Furthermore, belonging to youth cultures, commonly associated with the underground, does not necessarily correlate with belonging to underground culture in general, which indicates an ambiguity of "underground" as a term and concept.

A comparison of the data provided by quantitative and qualitative methods revealed a discrepancy in relation to pop: according to the survey, pop and estrada are the most popular genres among young Belarusians, while almost all (group) interview respondents dissociated themselves from these genres. Moreover, while a quarter of the male respondents indicated preference for pop, twice as many female respondents indicated the same, i.e. according to the survey, twice as many female as male respondents prefer pop. However, almost all interview and focus group respondents, regardless of gender, distanced themselves from pop, particularly in association with popsa.

This discrepancy is caused, firstly, by the factor that the interviews and focus groups were conducted in Minsk, but as the survey data show, "pop" prevails over "rock" (and over other genres) in all municipalities, except for the capital, where "rock" is more preferred than "pop." However, there is a second aspect of this discrepancy: it also indicates the importance of the discourse, in which pop, or popsa, is articulated by representatives of both genders as commercial, meaningless, inauthentic music. Through this articulation, other music styles opposed to popsa are attributed with authenticity and meaning – the qualities that are used in the construction of identities.

7.2.   Discourses and Practices of Qualitative Research Participants

1.   Discourse on Belarusian culture

Discourses constructed around the concept of Belarusian culture reflect the processes of the search for identity. The notion of Belarusian culture is extremely complex, and this complexity offers young people a variety of identity options. Different interpretations of the concept of Belarusian culture produce either identification with, or dissociation from Belarusian culture. In turn, identification and dissociation produce a further variety of cultural identities along lines of Belarusianness and beyond. A positive interpretation of Belarusian culture produces different strategies that young people apply in the construction of Belarusianness. These strategies include: a. identification with traditional culture and pre-Soviet history of Belarus; b. identification with Belarus as territory; c. dissociation from nationalism; and d. dissociation from Russian culture, and a simultaneous identification with European culture.

a. In the identification with Belarusian traditional culture, reference to pre-Soviet history allows one to place Belarus in Europe and identify as European. Reference to traditions and folklore occupies a special position in this case: through the articulation of authenticity, traditional culture acquires a symbolic meaning, which facilitates the construction of Belarusian identity. In the maintenance of "traditional" Belarusianness, cultural practices, such as engagement in folklore or Belarusian-language popular music, play a central role.

b. On the contrary, identification with Belarus as territory, i.e. "territorial" Belarusianness, does not necessarily require an engagement in cultural practices, but is based on territorial belonging.

c. Dissociation from nationalism produces different forms of transcultural Belarusianness: self-perception as "cosmopolitan" or identification with the "unity" of the post-Soviet nations.

d. European Belarusianness is constructed both through the dissociation from Russian culture and through identification with Europe: through the discourse on pre-Soviet Belarusian history, Belarus is positioned in Europe, and dissociation from Russia additionally serves for the assertion of Belarusian culture and identity.

"European identity," which does not imply identification with Belarusian culture, is produced by a negative interpretation of the latter as "backward" or "nonexistent." First

of all, however, European identity in this case is constructed through preference for Western popular music and style. While European culture is perceived as a lifestyle, Belarusian culture is understood as traditional culture. As a result, the "European lifestyle," produced by popular music and style, is more available and tangible than the "intelligent and forgotten" (cf. Chapter 6.1.2) Belarusian traditional culture, which is detached from everyday life. "European lifestyle" appears to offer more identity options for young people than Belarusian culture, perceived as "tradition."

"Cosmopolitan identities" include both "cosmopolitan Belarusianness" and "Cosmopolitanness." Cosmopolitan Belarusianness is constructed through the discursive reference to the history and positive interpretation of Belarusian culture as a conglomerate. Cosmopolitanness, similarly to Europeanness, does not necessarily imply identification with Belarusian culture, and is produced by a variety of cultural practices, offered by global popular music, the internet, film, literature, cuisine, style, travel, and so forth.

Finally, "Slavic identity" is reinforced not only by the emphasis on "Slavic unity," but also by the articulation of opposition between the "Slavic space" and the "West."

Generally, despite many respondents' identification with Belarusian culture, many expressed uncertainty in defining it. While defining Belarusian culture in terms of history and tradition is less problematic, the perception of it as popular culture is controversial, and the very existence of Belarusian (popular) culture is often questioned. Both positive and negative interpretations of the concept of Belarusian culture indicate an ongoing process of the search for identity. At the same time, the different interpretations produce identities along lines of European Belarusianness, Europeanness, Slavicness or Cosmopolitanness. Different interpretations and identity options overlap and interrelate, thus producing transcultural identities; and popular music – Belarusian, Western, Russian or global – often plays an important role in the construction of meanings and identities along lines of nation and beyond.

2. Discourse on Belarusian music

The discourse on Belarusian music reflects the complexity of the discourse on Belarusian culture, similarly indicating a continuing process of young Belarusians' identity formation. The aspect of authenticity plays a central role in this discourse: it is expressed

in the urge to articulate the difference of Belarusian culture and music from other cultures and musics. The difficulty in articulating this difference, leading to disinterest in Belarusian music, is the difficulty in finding "uniqueness" of Belarusian music. Moreover, the articulated "nonexistence" of Belarusian music means the perceived lack of authenticity and distinctiveness of Belarusian popular music. This discourse is organized around the issue of the Belarusian language: Belarusian Russian- or English-language music is considered inauthentic and imitative, and Belarusian-language music is regarded as unpopular. Eventually, unpopularity of Belarusian music reflects the marginal status of the Belarusian language.

However, for some young people, Belarusian-language music is a symbol of authenticity, and occupies a special position both for Belarusian and Russian speakers. For Russian speakers, both the Belarusian language and Belarusian music have a symbolic meaning, which facilitates the construction of Belarusian identity without the need for speaking the language in everyday life. The practice of engaging in Belarusian-language music compensates the lack of the language practice; Belarusian music thus fulfills the functions of compensation and authentication for Russian speakers. For Belarusian speakers, Belarusian music and language are either used in the construction of the "alternative" European Belarusianness, or articulated as resources of cultural self-expression, agency, and individual choice.

3.   The construction of meanings

3.1. Articulations of "meaning"

Music's meaning is articulated in the interconnected aspects of intellectual and emotional perception. The aspect of intellectual perception plays an important role in discourse on music: this includes the appreciation of lyrics as the key component of music. Lyrics are equated with "meaning," and are placed at the top of the hierarchy of musical experience. This explains many respondents' preference of Russian rock or Russian rap: this music is focused on the lyrical component, providing highly valued and linguistically understandable poetry, wordplay, or social commentary, which are closely associated with "meaning."

The aspect of emotional perception involves both the lyrical and melodic components. Lyrics can offer a "catharsis" or intense emotional experiences, expressed

in the phrase "this song is about me!" The meaning is also felt in the pleasure and in the "reflection" of moods, offered by the melody. However, the relativity of "meaning" is also articulated: this articulation is informed by an awareness that meanings are created, and the same piece of music acquires different meanings not only for different people, but also for one person in different time periods.

3.2. Perceptions of "underground" and "mainstream"

In discussions about underground culture in Belarus, three categories of the perception of it have been distinguished: the category of unpopularity, the political aspect, and the aspect of authenticity. The category of unpopularity of underground music is closely linked to the discourse on Belarusian music and its "nonexistence." The statement "only underground exists in Belarus" means that Belarusian music as a whole is perceived as "unpopular underground." Both pop and rock, i.e. the mainstream and underground, are declared unpopular or even nonexistent, which makes a reference to the issue of authenticity, indicating the process of an identity search.

The political aspect in the perception of underground points to the representative figure of the famous Belarusian band *Lyapis Trubetskoy*, who are associated both with the "underground" and "mainstream." Placing *Lyapis Trubetskoy* in the underground is linked with the perception of the band (and particularly its leader) as a freedom fighter, and placing it in the mainstream is due to its great popularity beyond Belarus. *Lyapis Trubetskoy* is perceived positively in most cases; representing Belarus abroad, the band makes Belarusian music and culture "visible" for others. Belarusian identity is thus "validated" and Belarusian culture is valorized through representation among "others." Moreover, in the context of the articulated "nonexistence" of Belarusian culture and music, *Lyapis Trubetskoy* stands out as a symbolic figure, bringing Belarusian culture into being for Belarusians themselves.

Despite many respondents' flexible perception of the terms "underground" and "mainstream," the aspect of authenticity plays an important role in this discourse. Articulating the relativity of the terms, many respondents still prefer "underground" over "mainstream," which indicates a hierarchy; at the top of it, people place authenticity and expression associated with the underground, and at the bottom they place the mainstream associated with consumerism and conformity. The discursive hierarchy is not stable but

shifting: while Belarusian underground is placed at the top in the local context, it is shifted down in the global context, where Western underground appears at the top. This hierarchy reflects the constructed meanings around "underground" and "mainstream," revealing that local underground is both authentic (compared with global and local commercial music) and inauthentic (compared with global underground). The articulation of local underground's authenticity facilitates the construction of difference and distinctiveness; the articulation of its inauthenticity indicates a critical engagement with loaded terms, such as "underground" and "mainstream."

In Belarus, the ideas of authenticity, articulated both in social discourse and in discursive practices, are indicative of the process of identity formation at individual and social levels. In this context, articulations of authenticity do not contradict the practices characterized by hybridization and transculturality, but are included in them as integral meanings that are used in the construction of the authentic self.

3.3. Articulations of "good" and "bad" music

The eclectic perceptions of "good" and "bad" music show certain patterns: first, they are closely linked with the discourse on the meaning, suggesting a parallel between "meaningful" and "good" music, as well as between a lack of meaning and "bad" music. Second, the intuitive perception of "good" music, which seems at first to be based on emotions and related to the melodic component of music, is often influenced by the social environment, and particularly by peer groups. Third, the ideas of "good" and "bad" music suggest certain oppositions, such as the opposition "rock versus rap," "instrumental versus electronic," or "rock versus pop." Such patterns of the opposition are used in the construction of boundaries between "good" and "bad" music, and between "us and them."

3.4. Anti-identification with popsa

Anti-identification with popsa is a discourse characterized by a strong dissociation from music considered meaningless and inauthentic. This discourse functions at multiple levels. The level of music's quality includes the categories of the lack of meaning, lip-synching, commercialism, imitation, and the lack of aesthetic quality. At the societal level, popsa is articulated as "imposed" and state-oriented. The cultural level

encompasses the issues of backwardness, stagnation, the issue of authenticity, and the territorial aspect of popsa.

This discourse is also marked by a hierarchy: "meaningful" music styles (such as rock or hip-hop) are at its top, and the "meaningless" popsa is at the bottom. At the top of the hierarchy, the respondents place music that represents meaning, authenticity, creativity, originality, individuality and freedom. As an antipode of meaning, authenticity and quality, popsa is placed at the bottom of the hierarchy as representing the "anti-values," such as commercialism, artificiality, meaninglessness, consumerism and conformity. Attributing popsa to "the masses," people distance themselves from both. Anti-identification with popsa offers a sense of individuality and distinctiveness, and a sense of identity. The construction of hierarchies, which is characteristic of most of the discourses on popular music described in this study, serves to reinforce the sense of sameness and difference, producing identities along lines of culture, social group, and nation.

4. Identity-building practices

Identity-building practices described in this thesis include various cultural practices, such as belonging to a subculture or identifying with a particular music genre, as well as discourses linked with these practices.

Russian rock, playing an important role for many respondents, is either a central object of identification or has been an "entry level" leading to identification with Western and global music. Here the discourse participants also construct hierarchies and "centers": people identifying primarily with Russian rock place the cultural center in Russia; when Russian rock becomes an "entry level" of Western music, the hierarchy shifts, and the cultural center is placed in the "West." Belarus is, then, a "margin" and an imagined place between both cultural "centers" in the discursive hierarchy, which is constantly shifting together with the constructs of the "center and margin."

Belarusian rock, folk and bard music are the most valorized forms of music in Belarus and represent expressions of European or Cosmopolitan Belarusianness. The idea of authenticity of folk rock is constructed at two levels: the level of rock as music of the "free spirit" and the level of folk as music of the "roots." The "idea of truth" (cf. Frith 2007 and Chapter 2.5) articulated in Belarusian rock and folk rock as an expression of

authentic and independent Belarusian culture is opposed to the idea of untruth expressed in the perception of Belarus as a "region" of Russia. Belarus is, then, not only placed in Europe, but represents the "center" in this discourse, which overthrows the hierarchies constructed around Russian rock, according to which Russia is a "center" and Belarus is a "margin."

The punk subculture offers a variety of identity-building aspects, such as expressing social and political protest, maintaining agency as a freedom fighter and creative person, strengthening the sense of difference, and constructing meaning through the opposition to "meaningless" popsa and its related aspects. Still representing symbolic challenges to a symbolic order and communicating a significant difference (cf. Hebdige 2002), the punk subculture, having become global, is attributed with local meanings different from the initial symbolic resistance to the dominant class structure. The practices of Belarusian punk adherents are influenced by global punk culture, which is reinterpreted in local contexts according to relevant issues, thus becoming simultaneously global and local.

Similar global-local articulations and practices are characteristic of other groups as well. Cultural appropriation of the skinhead subculture is expressed in "global" dissociation from racism and local sociopolitical criticism. Furthermore, the lack of a radical right-wing ideology is attributed to the officially represented "peacefulness" of Belarusians, which indicates a creative local interpretation of the global cultural phenomenon. The cultural appropriation also produces contradictions: the antiracist character of the SHARP movement is interpreted in abstract terms, and the articulation of this character does not necessarily coincide with actual experiences.

Hip-hop, which transformed from an African-American street culture into a global and mobile cultural phenomenon, is articulated in the described Belarusian example as a medium of self-expression and of global justice and equality. Hip-hop culture is positioned in the underground and is considered an independent and authentic subculture. Global hip-hop offers a variety of ideas in the local Belarusian context: articulation of difference from a conformist society, self-expression, independence, freedom from societal norms, critical thinking, creativity, justice and global consciousness. Hip-hop thus reinforces a sense of Cosmopolitan identity and authenticity, and becomes a culture which is simultaneously global and local.

Similarly, reggae music with its universalistic symbolism offers various identity options: people identifying with reggae music attribute different meanings and values to the music, and then use them in an identity-building process. These values include spirituality, peacefulness, "consciousness," and distancing from consumerism. Attributing globalized music with local meanings and using these in the construction of identities is thus an active and creative two-way process of music consumption. Reggae is linked with hippie culture for some; and it offers knowledge and experience for others. Representing an idealized image of "African culture," global reggae can produce "belonging" to African culture in the local Belarusian context. Reggae music, alongside a variety of other music preferences, also creates "belonging" to various cultures, producing a sense of Cosmopolitan identity. In this way, similar to the practices described above, globalized reggae culture is infused with local meanings in Belarus, thus becoming "glocal."

Identity-building practices described in this thesis fall into the concept of lifestyle that is conceiving of individuals as active consumers whose choice reflects a self-constructed notion of identity, which is in no way indicative of a class background (cf. Bennett 1999; 2000). Although some of the described groups are marked by certain subcultural elements, such as symbolic resistance to a symbolic order, they can hardly be conceived as subcultures challenging the dominant class structure in Belarus. The case studies, or groups represented by the interviewees, can rather be conceived as sites in which identity-building discourses and practices are constructed in local contexts and creatively used according to relevant local factors.

5. "Different musics" and eclectic identities

Finally, identification with "different musics" reflects and produces eclectic identities, offering diverse experiences and shaping worldviews. On the other hand, for some people, popular music is not a central identity-building aspect of life, but rather one of the aspects alongside literature, film, sports, etc. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents stated a position of irrelevance for the relation between music and visual style, and perceived subcultures as inauthentic, limiting, or outdated. In this way, the respondents' positioning showed a fluid, malleable, neo-tribal character (cf. Bennett 1999 and Chapter 6.4). The

relationship between musical taste and visual style is flexible and (re)constructed, being reinterpreted in various ways according to context.

Generally, most respondents expressed the idea of vagueness of boundaries between musical genres. However, the boundaries continue to be constructed in certain contexts (e.g. at live performances of a favorite band) as well as within groups conceiving of themselves as subcultures. This indicates the symbolic meaning of cultural practices, such as dressing up for a concert, which plays an important role in the identity-building process despite the articulated irrelevance of the relationship between music and style.

Overall, the wide range of music forms offering a variety of identity options and experiences produces multiple identities rather than one all-encompassing "identity." Fluid and heterogeneous forms of music consumption are central to youth culture, which is marked by "the essential eclecticism" (cf. Bennett 1999 and Chapter 3.2). Identities are fractured discursive constructions that are constantly on the move; the construction of identities is a continuing, flexible process of articulation of similarity and difference. As various examples in this study show, consumption of popular music in its various forms is a practice producing lifestyles characterized by fragmented, rather than continuous, identifications. Popular music itself represents a site in which young people create and articulate meanings along lines of similarity and difference.

Discourses described in this study are marked by the construction of hierarchies and by the articulations of authenticity of Belarusian music. The shifting ideas of the "center" and "margin" indicate the constructed nature of the notion of authenticity as well as the process of the search for identity among young Belarusians. Facing the "agency dilemma" (cf. Bamberg et al. 2011 and Chapter 2.4), discourse participants show "low agency" in stating and accepting the realities of Belarusian society, or maintain "high agency" in choosing a positioning as creative authentic freedom-fighters. Articulations of authenticity do not contradict the (articulated) transculturality; rather, they reflect the identity-building process, in which Belarusian culture, Belarusian music, "good" and "bad" music, underground, popsa, and other notions represent concepts charged with a variety of meanings that are discursively created to be used in the construction of national and transcultural identities.

7.3.   Perspectives for Future Research

The focus of this research has been on young people's constructions of cultural identities in the post-Soviet society of Belarus. In this study, I have described the ways in which young Belarusians use popular music forms in the construction of similarity and difference along lines of community, society, culture, and nation. Gender issues, which remain highly important in post-socialist societies such as Belarus, could not be fully examined in this study. Gender issues in popular music consumption and identity constructions are a broad and controversial field requiring a special attention from the perspective of gender studies. Particularly, the constructions of femininity and masculinity through popular music, the presence of women in the musical landscape of Belarus, gendered representation in Belarusian mass and social media, and feminist practices in music consumption and performance are the underrepresented and important phenomena that form the potential objectives of research on popular music and culture in post-Soviet Belarus.

Obviously, from the perspective of gender studies, the present thesis would have posed different questions and received different results. The various constructed hierarchies described in this study are centered around the notions of authenticity, language, and Belarusian culture. A gender perspective would have certainly revealed other hierarchies based on gender roles, and their representation and construction. Given the prevalence of patriarchal norms in Belarusian society, it is possible to assume that the hierarchies, particularly revealed in cultural practices, are strongly influenced by the notions of femininity and masculinity. These notions are commonly conservative, placing the concept of masculinity above that of femininity, in the constructed hierarchies of gender roles. It is therefore important to examine the ways in which these hierarchies are perpetuated in normative contexts, and challenged in feminist practices. Generally, as an objective of research, gender issues in popular culture in a post-Soviet society offer a variety of research perspectives, which could not be fully actualized in terms of this study, remaining a still underrepresented field both in Belarusian and international academia.

Different forms of Belarusian music (alternative music forms in particular) as well as the issues of the Belarusian music and media market similarly offer various perspectives for research in popular music studies, musicology, cultural studies, sociology, and other relevant disciplines. The issue of language representation in music

remains central: while some Belarusian bands use the Russian language in their lyrics, striving for recognition abroad, others argue that only Belarusian-language bands can represent Belarus. This inevitably produces controversies in music production, and influences the extent of the bands' popularity. Belarusian show business and music market, impacted by the lack of a musical infrastructure, e.g. of independent labels, radio stations and television channels, are the potential objectives of research on Belarusian cultural politics in relation to popular music and media. Another aspect to be examined is the influence of the Russian and Western music industries on the mechanisms of the Belarusian music market, and the political aspects in the interaction of all three.

From a perspective of media studies, it is relevant to examine the effects of both Belarusian and international media on Belarusian society and consumers of popular culture. In particular, the question of representation is central, i.e. as to what ideas, languages, (sub)cultures, lifestyles, etc. are being represented; media from which regions are prevalent in Belarus; which of them has a stronger influence on Belarusian society, and how power relations are maintained, perpetuated, or challenged by means of different areas' media in a transitional post-Soviet society.

Finally, interdisciplinary projects, having great potential of complementarity, should strive to maintain not only theoretical and methodological, but also empirical interdisciplinarity of research, particularly on identity constructions, popular culture, language, and related aspects. In the present study, which is a part of the wider project on identity constructions in Belarus, complementarity could be fully achieved in the quantitative survey. However, the results of qualitative research of all part projects could not be unified for various reasons. It is therefore important to maintain intensive exchange among research participants in order to achieve full complementarity of the projects involved in interdisciplinary research, which deals with complex questions of identity construction in a world marked by both global and local phenomena.

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Note on empirical data: statistical data and transcripts of interviews and focus groups are deposited at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. For questions and inquiries on the collected data, please contact:

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Appendix A

Survey

Section 1. General Questions and Sociocultural Identity

1. Please answer, to what extent the following is important in your life (very important, rather important, rather unimportant, absolutely unimportant, difficult to say)
   1. Work
   2. Family
   3. Friends
   4. Free time
   5. Politics
   6. Religion
   7. Education

2. How often do you spend your free time with the following activities? (every day, at least once a week, at least once a month, maximum a few times a year, never)
   1. Meeting friends
   2. Watching TV
   3. Watching movies
   4. Listening to music
   5. Attending concerts, festivals
   6. Sports
   7. Reading newspapers
   8. Reading books
   9. Internet surfing (aside from social media)
   10. Internet communication (social media, forums, chats etc.)
   11. Computer games
   12. Attending theaters, museums, exhibitions
   13. Attending bars, restaurants, cafes, clubs, discos
   14. Shopping
   15. Attending beauty salons, hairdressing, etc.
   16. Volunteering
   17. Engagement in public associations, movements, organizations, etc.
   18. Engagement in political organizations, movements
   19. Going to church, holding religious rites
   20. Further education (self-education, attending courses)
   21. Handwork
   22. Something else_____

3. What is important to you in your work? *Interviewer card no.1.* Choose max. 5
   options:
   1. High salary
   2. Friendly colleagues
   3. Absence of strict control
   4. Guaranty of a permanent job
   5. Convenient work time
   6. Possibility to take the initiative
   7. Work which is useful for society
   8. Long vacation
   9. Communication with people
   10. Career opportunities
   11. Responsibility in work
   12. Work which interests you
   13. Work which fits your skills and abilities
   14. Opportunities to acquire new competences
   15. Compatibility with family life
   16. Participation in decision-making
   17. Equal treatment of all people at the work place
   18. Something else_____

4. Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements (fully
   agree, partly agree, rather disagree, disagree, difficult to say)
   1. Parents must give the best to their children
   2. Adult children must take care of their parents
   3. Children must live with their parents until they build their own family
   4. Marriage is an outdated social institution
   5. It is important to me to become a mother/a father, to have children

5 A. Which culture is closer to you? *Card no.2. One response option*

5 B. What further cultures are close to you? *Interviewer card no.2. Several response
options possible*
(options given as "fully", "rather")
   1. Belarusian culture
   2. Russian culture
   3. Polish culture
   4. Ukrainian culture
   5. Slavic culture
   6. European culture
   7. Cosmopolitan culture
   8. Other culture, which one?

6. Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements (fully agree, partly agree, rather disagree, disagree, difficult to say)

1. There is a big difference between Russian and Belarusian culture
2. There is a big difference between Belarusian and Polish culture
3. There is a big difference between European and Belarusian culture
4. It is possible to be simultaneously Belarusian and Russian
5. Belarusian culture is enriched by the Russian language
6. For the preservation of Belarusian culture, it is important to broaden the spheres of usage of the Belarusian language
7. Belarusian culture is disappearing under influence of the Russian language

7 A. Who do you consider yourself to be, primarily? *Interviewer card no.3. One response option*

7 B. Who do you further consider yourself to be? *Interviewer card no.3. One response option*
(7A. primarily, 7B. further)

1. A citizen of a municipality in which you live
2. A citizen of a region in which you live
3. A citizen of Belarus
4. A citizen of the CIS
5. A European
6. A cosmopolitan

8. What feelings does living in Belarus evoke in you? *Card no.4. Several response options are possible*

1. Pride
2. Disappointment
3. Dissatisfaction
4. Security
5. Distress
6. Joy
7. Indifference
8. Insecurity
9. Hope
10. Satisfaction
11. Shame
12. Other. Which ones?_____

9. To consider yourself a Belarusian, how important to you is the following?
(very important, rather important, rather unimportant, absolutely unimportant, difficult to say)

1. To be born in Belarus
2. To have Belarusian citizenship

3. To have spent the largest part of life in Belarus
4. To understand Belarusian
5. To speak Belarusian
6. To understand Russian
7. To speak Russian
8. Acknowledgement of political institutions and laws of Belarus
9. To feel yourself Belarusian
10. To have Belarusian ancestors
11. To know Belarusian history
12. To know and support cultural traditions of Belarusians
13. Participation in the political life of the country
14. Active participation in social life
15. To respect official state symbols
16. To be informed about current cultural events, tendencies, movements in Belarus (music, literature, theater, art)
17. To support local production, to buy Belarusian products

10. Please indicate qualities (max.3) that you think are inherent to Belarusians, Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Germans:

1. Belarusians:_____
   _____

98. I don't have stereotypes in relation to nationality
99. Difficult to answer

2. Russians:_____
   _____

98. I don't have stereotypes in relation to nationality
99. Difficult to answer

3. Poles:_____
   ____

98. I don't have stereotypes in relation to nationality
99. Difficult to answer

4. Ukrainians:_____
   _____

98. I don't have stereotypes in relation to nationality
99. Difficult to answer

5. Germans:_____
   ____

98. I don't have stereotypes in relation to nationality
99. Difficult to answer

11. To what extent do you feel connected to/identify with the following groups? (fully, rather, rather not, absolutely not, difficult to say)

1. With people of your nationality
2. With representatives of your profession

3. With people who have the same faith
4. With people who have the same worldview and values
5. With citizens of your country
6. With your family members, relatives
7. With people who have the same social status (working people, students etc.)
8. With people who have the same life style (dress style, musical taste, free time activities)
9. With people who have the same gender
10. With representatives of your generation
11. With people who have the same hobby

12. Please choose the statement which in the best way describes your attitude to the society. *Interviewer card no.5*
1. Our society must change radically
2. Our society must transform gradually by means of reforms
3. We must protect our society from any kind of changes

13. If you had to choose between unification with Russia and integration in the European Union (given that independence of Belarus is preserved in both cases), which option would you choose?
1. Unification with Russia
2. Integration in the European Union
3. Difficult to say

14. If you had a choice to move to another country or to stay in Belarus, what would you choose?
1. I would stay in Belarus → *GO TO QUESTION 17*
2. I would move to another country for a limited period of time, but prefer to live in Belarus permanently
3. I would choose to move to another country
4. Difficult to say

15. If you chose to move to another country, which country would it be?
_____

16. If you chose to move to another country, what aim would you pursue? *Several response options possible*
1. To learn the language, culture, traditions of another country
2. To receive education / to enhance a qualification
3. To work
4. Another aim. Which one?
_____

17. In which social media are you registered?
1. Facebook
2. VKontakte
3. Odnoklassniki
4. In other social media. Which ones?
_____

99. In no social media

Section 2. Language and Communication

18 A. Please choose your native language/mother tongue. *One response option*

18 B. If you have a second mother tongue, which one is that? *One response option*

1. Belarusian	4. Polish
2. Russian	5. Ukrainian
3. Belarusian-Russian mixed speech	6. other _____

19. Why do you consider this language as your mother tongue? *Interviewer card no.6. Several response options possible. If you have two mother tongues, responses should apply to both.*
 (A. Belarusian, B. Russian, C. Belarusian-Russian mixed speech, D. other)
1. Language acquired in childhood
2. Language that I speak most fluently
3. Language used in everyday life
4. Language in which I think
5. Language of my parents
6. Language of the nation (ethnic group) to which I belong
7. Language that I love and value
8. Something else _____ no; yes

20. What was the language your family spoke when you were a child? *Several response options possible*

1. Belarusian	3. Belarusian-Russian mixed speech
2. Russian	4. other_____

21. At what age did you learn Belarusian and Russian:
1. In childhood (until 13)
2. As a teenager (between 14-17)
3. As an adult (from 18)
4. I don't speak these languages

22. At what level is your command of both Belarusian and Russian?
Several response options possible (answers expected for both languages)
1. I can write fluently
2. I can speak fluently
3. I can understand the spoken language fluently
4. I can read fluently
5. I don't know the language

23. Do you have a good command of other languages?
1. yes   2. no → *GO TO QUESTION 25*

24. In which languages can you communicate freely?
1. English
2. German
3. French
4. Polish
5. Spanish
6. Other_____

25. In which language do you communicate most often (in Belarusian, Russian, Belarusian-Russian mixed speech, no response)
1. …in family
2. …with friends
3. …at work
4. …in studies
5. …in the service sector (supermarkets, public transport, cafés)
6. …in public locations

26. Who/what influenced your acquiring of Belarusian, Russian, or Belarusian-Russian mixed speech?
Interviewer card no. 7. Several response options possible
(Belarusian, Russian, Belarusian-Russian mixed speech)
1. My mother speaks it / has spoken it
2. My father speaks it / has spoken it
3. My relatives speak it / have spoken it
4. My friends speak it / have spoken it
5. I was taught in this language in school
6. This language is/was spoken at work
7. TV, Radio
8. Newspapers
9. Literature
10. Theaters
11. Something else_____
99. I don't use the language

27. Have you experienced situations in which you felt uncomfortable (e.g. because of negative reactions), when you spoke Belarusian, Russian, Belarusian-Russian mixed speech?
(yes, this happened, no, this never happened, I don't use the language)
        1. When I spoke Belarusian
        2. When I spoke Russian
        3. When I used Belarusian-Russian mixed speech

If in question 27 the respondent chose "no, this never happened" or "I don't use the language", go to question 29. If the first response option was chosen in relation to at least one language, go to question 28.

28. If something like this happened, in what situations was that?
Interviewer card no. 8. Several response options possible.
(because of using Belarusian, Russian, Belarusian-Russian mixed speech)
        1. At work
        2. During school time
        3. In playing with peers in childhood
        4. In college or university
        5. In the service sector
        6. In public locations
        7. In acquainting with young people
        8. On the street
        9. In other situations_____

29. In the question regarding the expansion of spheres of usage of Belarusian in everyday life there are both followers and opponents of this idea. What attitude do you personally have? In the scale from 1 to 10, 1 means absolute agreement with the statement "I am against the expansion of spheres of usage of Belarusian", and 10 means absolute agreement with the statement "I am fully for the expansion of spheres of usage of Belarusian" *Interviewer card no. 9.*
(1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
        1. I am against the expansion of spheres of usage of Belarusian
        2. I am fully for the expansion of spheres of usage of Belarusian
        99. Difficult to say

30. In what sphere do you think should Belarusian be used more often? *Interviewer card no. 10. Several response options possible.*
        1. In state administration
        2. In management
        3. In mass media
        4. At your work
        5. In kindergartens
        6. In schools
        7. In universities, colleges

8. In your social circle (friends, acquaintances)
9. In your family
10. In the service sector
11. In other spheres_____

31. To what extent is the following important to you? / If you had children, to what extent would the following be important to you?
(very important, rather important, rather unimportant, absolutely unimportant, difficult to say)

1. That your children know the Belarusian language
2. That your children know the Belarusian history and traditions
3. That your children become acquainted with Belarusian authors' works at school

Section 3. Literature

32. Which genre do you prefer in literature?
1. Fiction
2. Academic/scientific literature
3. Popular sceince literature (e.g. history, philosophy, sociology, esoteric literature, etc.)
4. Hobby literature (magazines, recipe books, garden, handwork, fishing, etc.)
5. Reference books (e.g. in the sphere of medicine, etc.)
6. Other_____
7. I don't read. →*GO TO QUESTION 39*

33. How often do you read fiction?
1. Almost every day
2. At least once a week
3. At least once a month
4. Several times a year
5. *Never → GO TO QUESTION 36*

34. In what languages do you read fiction?
Several response options possible
1. In Belarusian
2. In Russian
3. In another language _____

35. Why do you read fiction in Belarusian, Russian and in other languages? *Card no. 12.*
Several response options possible
(in Belarusian, in Russian, in other languages)
1. It is easy for me to read in this language
2. This language offers a bigger choice of works and authors that interest me
3. Books that interest me are only available in this language; no translation is available
4. It is necessary for my work or studies
5. To keep and improve my language skills
6. I avoid reading translations; I prefer reading in the original
7. I prefer reading in my mother tongue
8. Other reasons _____
99. I don't read in any of these languages

36. To what extent do you agree with the following views? You read fiction…
(fully agree, partly agree, rather disagree, disagree, difficult to say)
1. …to educate yourself, to widen your horizon
2. …to be able to discuss works with your friends, colleagues, acquaintances, to be informed about new works, to be able to contribute to discussions
3. …to relax, for entertainment
4. …it is necessary for professional reasons, for studying
5. …because you like to think and reflect

37. Do you read fiction…?
(yes, no, difficult to say)
1. Of Belarusian authors
2. Of Russian authors
3. Of Polish authors
4. Of Ukrainian authors
5. Of English/American authors
6. Of German/Austrian/Swiss authors
7. Of Spanish/Latin American authors
8. Of French authors
9. Authors from other countries _____

38. Do you like reading <u>contemporary</u> fiction of the following genre?
(yes, rather yes, rather no, no, difficult to say)
1. Detektive
2. Romantic novels, women's novels
3. Adventure novels
4. Historical novels
5. Fantasy
6. Science fiction
7. Poetry

8. Comics
9. Other_____

Only for those who do not read fiction!

39. Did you read fiction earlier? (except obligatory works in school and in studies)

    1. Yes   2. No → *GO TO QUESTION 43*

40. When did you stop reading fiction? *One response option*

1. In school
2. In college/during studies
3. When you started working
4. Something else_____

41. For what reasons do you not read fiction? *Interviewer card no. 13. Several response options possible*

1. No time
2. No one reads in your environment
3. You do not find it interesting
4. Reading is hard
5. Reading fiction is outdated
6. other reasons_____

42. Would you start reading fiction if…

(yes, rather yes, rather no, no, difficult to say)

1. …someone gave you an interesting book?
2. …someone told you enthusiastically about a book?
3. …someone from your social environment started to read fiction?
4. …you had more time?
5. …if you had no internet, no TV, no computer games, etc.?
6. …another reason_____

43. Which of the following fiction do you know / do you read?
Interviewer card no. 14. Several response options possible
(I know this from school, I read this in my free time/for my studies/for my work, etc.)

1. Works by Belarusian authors of the pre-Soviet and early Soviet period (e.g. Ya. Kolas, Ya. Kupala, M. Bogdanovich, K. Chërnyj)
2. Works by Belarusian authors of the post-war and Soviet period (e.g. V. Korotkevich, I. Shamjakin, I. Melezh, Ya. Bryl', V. Bykov)
3. Works by authors of Russian romantiscism and Russian realism (e.g. A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, N. Gogol', F. Dostoevskij, L. Tolstoj, A. Chekhov, N. Leskov, I. Bunin)
4. Russian authors of the Soviet period (e.g. M. Gor'kij, A. Tolstoj, A. Platonov, M. Bulgakov, B. Pasternak)

5. Russian poetry of the 20th century and Avantgarde (e.g. A. Akhmatova, V. Mayakovskij, N. Gumilëv, A. Blok, O. Mandel'shtam, I. Brodskij)
6. Foreign classical literature, excluding Russian literature (e.g. E.M. Remarque, Ch. Dickens, G. Flaubert, E.T.A. Hoffmann, V. Hugo, Stendhal, T. Mann, H. Hesse, E.A. Poe, J. Joyce, etc.)
7. Nothing of the listed

44. Who is in your opinion a Belarusian author? *Interviewer card no. 15. Max. two response options possible*
1. An author who writes in Belarusian
2. An author who lives in Belarus
3. An author who was born in Belarus
4. An author who is of Belarusian descent / has Belarusian ancestors, but does not necessarily live in Belarus
5. An author who publishes their works in Belarus
6. An author whose works deal with / are connected with Belarus
7. Another option_____

45. What do you think: Is Belarusian-language fiction important for the preservation of the Belarusian language?
1. Yes
2. Rather yes
3. Rather no
4. No
5. Difficult to say

Section 4. Music and Identity

46. a) Which music style do you like most?
Interviewer card no. 16. One response option

46. b) Which further music styles do you like?
Interviewer card no. 16. Several response options possible

46. c) Which styles do you reject?
Interviewer card no. 16. Several response options possible
1. Pop
2. Rock
3. Hip-Hop
4. Reggae
5. Club Musik
6. Jazz
7. Classical music
8. Other_____

98. None
99. Difficult to say

47. Which radio stations do you prefer?

Interviewer card no. 17. Several response options possible

1. Belarusian radio stations (Pilot FM, Unistar, Stalitsa etc.)
2. Russian radio stations („Russkoe radio", Evropa Pljus, etc.)
3. Western radio stations broadcasting for Belarus (Radio Svoboda, Eŭraradyë, Radyë „Raciya", etc.)
4. Other western radio stations (from Poland, Great Britain / USA, etc.)
5. Other_____

99. I don't listen to radio

48 A. Which country's music do you prefer?

Interviewer card no. 18. One response option

48 B. Which further countries' music do you prefer?

Interviewer card no. 18. Several response options possible

(which country, which further countries)

1. Belarus
2. Russia
3. Great Britain / USA
4. Poland
5. Ukraine
6. Germany /Austria / Switzerland
7. Italy
8. France
9. Other_____

99. Difficult to say

49 A. In which language are your favorite music's lyrics written?

One response option

49 B. In which further languages are your preferred music's lyrics written?

Several response options possible

(language in music, further languages)

1. In Belarusian
2. In Russian
3. In English
4. Other languages_____

98. I prefer music without lyrics
99. Difficult to say

50. Where do you get music from?

Interviewer card no. 19. Max. 3 response options

1. I buy records
2. I download music from the internet
3. I copy / download music from friends and acquaintances (in MP3 and other formats)
4. I borrow records from friends
5. I listen to music online
6. I listen to the radio
6. I watch music videos on YouTube, vimeo, etc.
7. Something else _____

51. How often do you listen to music…
(every day, at least once a week, at least once a month, every two-three months, max. once or twice a year, never)
   1. At home
   2. On the way to school/work
   3. At school/at work
   4. At discos
   5. At home parties with friends or family
   6. When playing an instrument
   7. In clubs with live music (alternative clubs, jazz clubs, etc.)
   8. At concerts and festivals

52. Which music do you enjoy in clubs, at concerts and festivals?
Interviewer card no. 20. Max. two response options
   1. Indie
   2. Metal
   3. Punk
   4. Hip-Hop
   5. R&B
   6. Reggae
   7. House / Techno
   8. Drum and Bass
   9. World music / Ethno / Folk rock
   10. Bard song
   11. Folk music
   12. Pop
   13. Chanson
   14. Jazz
   15. Other _____
99. I don't attend clubs, concerts, festivals

53. To which extent do you agree with the following statements: "I listen to music because…"
(agree, rather agree, rather disagree, disagree, difficult to say)

1. I like dancing to music
2. Music improves my mood
3. Music reflects my emotions and feelings
4. Music helps me meet my friends more often or make new friends (e.g. at concerts)
5. Music reflects my political views
6. Music reflects my religious views
7. Music reflects and strengthens my worldview
8. Music helps me to calm down and to cope with negative emotions (aggression etc.)
9. Music gives me a sense of freedom
10. Music helps me to relax
11. Music helps me to concentrate
12. Music unites me with friends/relatives
13. Music evokes memories and associations with somebody or something
14. I need music as background

54. Whose opinion influences you the most when you choose music?
Interviewer card no. 21. Max. 3 response options
1. Opinion of close friends
2. Opinion of my girlfriend/wife or boyfriend/husband
3. Opinion of my sister(s) or brother(s)
4. Opinion of my parents
5. Opinion of music critics
6. Opinion of radio DJs
7. Opinion of club DJs
8. Opinion of TV moderators/VJs
9. Opinion of my friends on social media
10. My own opinion. I am oriented on my own musical taste
11. Something else_____

55. What is your attitude toward the music underground in Belarus (alternative music, unofficial concerts/festivals, subcultures, etc.)?
1. Positive
2. Neutral
3. Negative
4. I didn't know it exists
5. Difficult to say

56. Could you say you are part of this underground culture?
1. Yes
2. Rather yes
3. Rather no
4. No
5. Difficult to say

Section 5. Clothing and Identity

57. Can you identify with any of the following youth groups, and if yes, with which?
Do not show the card to the respondent, write down the response; if applicable, add the reponse in the category "other group"

1. Punk
2. Emo
3. Goth
4. Rapper, Hip Hopper
5. Hipster
6. Rocker
7. Roleplayer

8. Folk
9. Indie
10. Skinhead
11. Football fan
12. Other group: _____
13. I don't belong to any youth culture
   -> *GO TO QUESTION 59*

 58. Can you say that you look like a member of this group (clothing, attributes, hair style, etc.)?

1. Yes, completely
2. Partly
3. No
4. The group to which I belong does not have a particular style

59 A. If you think of your usual dress style, which of the following styles (clothing, accessories) do you wear? *Interviewer card no. 22. One response option*

59 B. Which further styles do you wear? *Card no. 22. Several response options possible* (you wear often, you also wear)

1. Classical (official clothing, office costumes, festive costumes)
2. Military
3. Romantic (clothes with frills, lace)
4. Casual (comfortable every day clothes, jeans, t-shirts, etc.)
5. Sporty (sport costumes, sport logos, baseball caps, etc.)
6. Glamour (luxurious clothes, fur, feathers, sparkling clothes, much jewelry)
7. Retro (clothes in styles popular in the past)
8. Unisex (clothes both for women and men)
9. Other _____
99. Difficult to say

60. What is your size? *Two response options, e.g. 50,52*

1. 38 and smaller
2. 40
3. 42
4. 44
5. 46
6. 48

7. 50
8. 52
9. 54
10. 56
11. 58
12. 60 and larger

61. What is your height?
1. Smaller than 1,60 m
2. 1,61-1,70 m
3. 1,71-1,80 m
4. 1,81-1,90 m
5. Taller than 1,90 m

62. *Only for women:* Which of the following shoe variants do you wear most often?
1. Completely flat shoes
2. Shoes with low heels (up to 6 cm)
3. Shoes with high heels (over 6 cm)
4. Difficult to say

63. To what extent do you stick to official and unofficial dress codes advisable in a university, at work, at official events, etc.?
1. I try to stick to these dress codes
2. I do not dress according to these dress codes
3. At my work/in my university there are neither official nor unofficial dress codes
4. Difficult to say

64. With your clothes…
1. you would like to be seen positively and be liked by people
2. you shock others
3. you prefer not to stand out
4. something else: _____
5. Difficult to say

65. You preferably dress…
1. completely like most young people in Belarus
2. quite like most young people in Belarus
3. quite differently from most young people in Belarus
4. completely differently from most young people in Belarus
5. Difficult to say

66 A. What is your attitude to the following types of clothing?

66 B. Which of the following dress styles do you prefer?
If no style is preferred, no indications are needed
(positive, neutral, negative, difficult to say, I dress this way myself)
1. Belarusian national elements in clothing (ornaments, (parts of) traditional costumes)
2. International ethnic elements in clothing (ornaments, patterns, …)
3. White-red-white dress elements or accessories for ideological reasons

67. In what ways do you extend your wardrobe? *Several response options possible*
1. I choose and buy my clothes myself
2. I sew clothes myself
3. My parents buy clothes for me
4. My girlfriend/boyfriend (wife/husband) buys clothes for me
5. I get clothes from others (e.g. from my sister/brother)
6. Something else_____

68. When choosing clothes, to what extent are the following criteria important to you? (very important, rather important, rather unimportant, absolutely unimportant, difficult to say)
1. Price
2. Compliance with fashion trends
3. Fabric
4. Brand
5. Place of production
6. Possibility to combine
7. Compliance with your worldview, your values
8. Compliance with your political views
9. Compliance with your religious views
10. Longevity
11. Good quality
12. Comfort
13. Color

69. In what proportion are new clothes and second hand clothes in your wardrobe?
1. Only new clothes, shoes and accessories
2. More new clothes, shoes and accessories than second hand clothes
3. Quite an equal proportion of second hand and new clothes
4. More second hand clothes, shoes and accessories than new clothes
5. Only second hand clothes
6. Difficult to say

70 A. Where do you buy clothes most often? *Card no. 23. One response option*

70 B. Where do you buy clothes besides? *Card no. 23. Several response options possible* (most often, besides)
1. On a market
2. In a supermarket
3. In stores or shopping centers (GUM, CUM, Univermag, …)
4. In designers' stores
5. In specialized stores, brand stores
6. In boutiques
7. In discount stores
8. In internet stores

9. Something else (*indicate for each column*) _____
99. Difficult to say

71. Do you buy clothes, shoes and accessories made in Belarus?
(yes, no, difficult to say)
      1. Underwear, tights, socks
      2. Knitwear (t-shirts, dresses, …)
      3. Linen clothes (dresses, costumes, …)
      4. Other clothes (coats, costumes, …)
      5. Shoes
      6. Bags
      7. Other accessories

72. Where/by whom were most of your clothes, shoes, accessories produced?
Interviewer card no. 24. One response option
      1. In Belarus
      2. In Russia
      3. In Poland
      4. In Ukraine
      5. In Turkey
      6. In China
      7. By international manufacturers of famous brand clothing
      8. By unknown international manufacturers
      9. By me (sewed, knitted by me)
      10. Something else: _____
      11. Difficult to say

73. How much money do you spend for clothes, shoes and accessories, with a monthly average?
      _____Belarusian rubles
      99. Difficult to say (or count)

Section 7. Sociodemographic Section

74. Please indicate your age: _____

75. Sex: 1. Male   2. Female

76. Marital status:
      1. married
      2. in a partnership
      3. divorced
      4. widowed
      5. single

77. Do you have children?   1. Yes, how many _____   2. No

78. Education level:
1. Secondary education and less
2. High school certificate
3. Professional school education/tertiary education
4. Specialized education (technical college)
5. Higher education
6. Doctor's degree

79. Education level of your parents:
(A. father, B. mother)
1. Secondary education and less
2. High school certificate
3. Professional school education/tertiary education
4. Specialized education (technical college)
5. Higher education
98. I don't know

80. Nationality:
1. Belarusian
2. Russian
3. Polish
4. Ukrainian
5. Other_____

81. Nationality of your parents:
(A. father, B. mother)
1. Belarusian
2. Russian
3. Polish
4. Ukrainian
5. Other_____
98. I don't know

82. Religion:
1. Orthodox
2. Roman Catholic
3. Protestant
4. Uniate
5. Muslim
6. Jewish
7. Other_____
99. no confession

83 A. In what country (what part of the post-Soviet space) were you born?

83 B. Where did you grow up?
  (**A.** was born, B. grew up)
  1. in Belarus
  2. in Russia
  3. in Poland
  4. in Ukraine
  5. in another country_____

84. Most of your childhood was spent in…
  1. a capital
  2. a big city (>100.000 residents)
  3. a middle-sized city (50.000-100.000 residents)
  4. a small town (< 50.000 residents)
  5. a village

85. How would you evaluate the financial situation of your family?
Interviewer card no. 25. One response option
  1. We do not have any financial restrictions. We can afford very expensive purchases (a new expensive car, an apartment, etc.)
  2. Our financial means provide a sufficient standard of living, but we cannot afford very expensive purchases (e.g. real estate, expensive cars)
  3. We can sufficiently provide food and clothing, but cannot afford expensive purchases (such as furniture, electric goods, etc.)
  4. Our financial means are sufficient for food, but we have difficulties in affording other necessary products (e.g. clothing, medicine, etc.)
  5. We often have difficulties in providing ourselves with enough food

86. What do you do at the moment?
  1. I work
  2. I work and study
  2. I study   → *GO TO QUESTION 89*
  3. I take care of the family and household   → *GO TO QUESTION 91*
  4. I am unemployed and don't study   → *GO TO QUESTION 91*

87. How would you characterize your professional position?
  1. Staff member/employee / in a leading position
  2. Qualified specialist (lawyer, accountant, teacher, doctor, research assistant, etc.)
  3. Middle and lower level employee (manager, secretary, etc.)
  4. Master in production, brigade leader
  5. Skilled worker
  6. Unskilled worker
  7. Entrepreneur
  8. Something else _____

88. Sector in which you work:

      1. Industry   6. Healthcare

      2. Construction   7. Military

      3. State administration   8. Trade

      4. Education   9. Finance sector

      5. Culture   10. Service sector

      11. Other _____

Questions 89 and 90 are only for those studying at the moment!

89. In which educational institute do you study?
(full time study, evening study/distance learning)

      1. Professional school

      2. Specialized college, technical college

      3. University

90. Field of your study:

      1. Humanities

      2. Natural sciences

      3. Technical

91. Where do you live?

      1. In the house/apartment of your parents

      2. In your own apartment/house

      3. In a hostel

      4. In a rented apartment

      5. In a rented room

      6. With your relatives, friends

      7. Something else_____

92. Place of residence:

      1. Capital

      2. Big city (>100.000 residents)

      3. Middle-sized city (50.000-100.000 residents)

      4. Small town (< 50.000 residents)

      5. Village

93. Region:

      1. Region Brest   4. Region Grodna

      2. Region Vitebsk   5. Region Minsk

      3. Region Gomel   6. Region Mogilëv

      7. Minsk city

94. Would you be willing to answer further questions in the near future?

    1. Yes   2. No → *The interview is finished*

Final question:
Please indicate your name, father's name and your phone number for a further interview.
Name _____
Phone number_____

Place of conduct of interview_____
Time of the end of interview ___ h ____min
Name of the interviewer_____

Appendix B

Technical Report

1. **Organization responsible for the conducting of the survey**

The survey in Belarus was organized by the Center of Social and Political Investigations (CSPI) of the Belarusian State University.

2. **Duration/timeframe of the survey**

Standardized interviews throughout Belarus were conducted in the period from 28. October to 22. November 2013. For this purpose, the Center of Social and Political Studies recruited 103 experienced interviewers from its survey network. The table below shows the number of interviewers in each region, where the survey was conducted.

3. **The number of interviewers of the survey network in each city or town**

103 interviewers participated in this study in selected cities. The interviewers of the survey network of the CSPI have a long experience of conducting different types of research. The field experience of most interviewers ranges from 3 to 10 years; the age ranges from 20 to 60 years. The survey interviewers have specialized secondary, incomplete higher and higher education, and took special training in interviewing.

The following table presents the number of interviewers working in each region during this study:

Name of region	Number of interviewers
Brest region	12
Vitebsk region	13
Gomel region	12
Grodno region	11
Minsk city	27
Minsk region	18
Mogilyov region	10
Total:	103

Of these 103 interviewers, nineteen persons participated in sociological research for the first time. They were recruited from the local communities by the heads of regional offices

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of the survey network. The heads of regional offices personally ensured the suitability of the future interviewers. In the process of selection of the interviewers for participation in the research group, attention was paid to personal characteristics, such as responsibility, communication skills, psychological stability, ability to speak clearly, and a good observation capacity. The interviewers participated in a special training, which included methodology and technical aspects of conducting a survey. All interviewers were instructed in terms of the purposes and the procedure of the survey, rules of filling in the documents, principles of the selection of respondents, timeframe of data collection, payment of respondents, etc.

4. Sampling type

The sampling type applied by the CSPI was quota sampling. Quota criteria were based on respondents' gender, age and place of residence. Gender and age quotas were calculated according to age-sex proportions among urban and rural population of the age group of 18-30 years, from each region and Minsk city, based on data of the national census of population in the year 2009.

Ranked statistical data for quota sampling, in absolute values

	Total population			Urban population			Rural population		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
18-22	741797	381824	359973	609092	307704	301388	132705	74120	58585
23-26	630592	321471	309121	509550	256464	253086	121042	65007	56035
27-30	569851	287298	282553	463774	231319	232455	106077	55979	50098
18-30	1942240	990593	951647	1582416	795487	786929	359824	195106	164718

Ranked statistical data for quota sampling, in percent

	Total population			Urban population			Rural population		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
18-22	38,2	19,7	18,5	31,4	15,8	15,5	6,8	3,8	3,0
23-26	32,5	16,6	15,9	26,2	13,2	13,0	6,2	3,3	2,9
27-30	29,3	14,8	14,5	23,9	11,9	12,0	5,5	2,9	2,6
18-30	100,0	51,0	49,0	81,5	41,0	40,5	18,5	10,0	8,5

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Quota sample, persons

	Total population			Urban population			Rural population		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
18-22	382	197	185	314	159	155	68	38	30
23-26	325	166	159	262	132	130	63	34	29
27-30	293	147	146	239	119	120	54	28	26
18-30	1000	510	490	815	410	405	185	100	85

Achieved sample, persons

	Total population			Urban population			Rural population		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
18-22	383	196	187	315	158	157	68	38	30
23-26	326	166	160	264	132	132	62	34	28
27-30	291	145	146	236	117	119	55	28	27
18-30	1000	507	493	815	407	408	185	100	85

Sample by region

Regions	Statistical data, in absolute values	Statistical data, in percent	Sample	Achieved sample
Brest region	262419	13,5	135	135
Vitebsk region	235557	12,1	121	121
Gomel region	283761	14,6	146	146
Grodno region	199239	10,3	103	103
Minsk city	476677	24,5	245	245
Minsk region	267244	13,8	138	138
Mogilyov region	217343	11,2	112	112
Belarus in total	1942240	100,0	1000	1000

Deviation of sampling by quota attributes (modifiers):

by sex: 0,3%

by age: 0,2%

by place of residence (city/village, regions): 0,0%.

For the purpose of geographical representation of the country as well as for representation of municipal localities of different sizes, a stratification (ranking) of primary units of sampling for the six regions of Belarus was made, depending on the size of a locality. The municipal localities were grouped by the number of residents in the age of 18-30 years: capital; regional centers; municipalities with population of more than 50 000; municipalities with population of less than 50 000. Thus, the sampling includes the capital and all regional centers. Further, in each stratum, the method of random sampling was used, in which one or several cities were chosen, taking into account total population of these localities.

The method of random sampling was also used to determine rural areas of each administrative area from all regions. Initially, a list of rural localities was made to conduct the survey in each region. Where it was impossible to interview the necessary number of respondents in a given locality according to the quota, additional interviews were organized in another locality in the same region.

In total, the sampling included 47 survey points: urban localities and rural regions (see table below).

Survey points

Region	Name of locality	Type of locality	Number of respondents
Brest region	Brest	city	39
	Baranovichi	city	23
	Pinsk	city	14
	Zhabinka	city	8
	Kamenets	city	16
	Drogichin region	village	12
	Malorita region	village	12
	Ivanov region	village	11
Vitebsk region	Vitebsk	city	42
	Orsha	city	18
	Novopolotsk	city	15
	Postavy	city	14
	Dokshitsy	city	8
	Glubokoe region	village	12
	Liozno region	village	12

Gomel region	Gomel'	city	59
	Mozyr'	city	19
	Svetlogorsk	city	15
	Rogachyov	city	15
	Khoyniki	city	8
	Rechitsa region	village	10
	Lel'chitsy region	village	10
	Dobrush region	village	10
Grodno region	Grodno	city	43
	Lida	city	10
	Volkovysk	city	18
	Oshmyany	city	11
	Berestovitsa region	village	10
	Iv'ye region	village	11
Minsk region	Borisov	city	21
	Molodechno	city	18
	Zhodino	city	12
	Uzda	city	9
	Fanipol'	city	9
	Mar'yina Gorka	city	14
	Minsk region	village	12
	Myadel' region	village	11
	Smolevichi region	village	10
	Kletsk region	village	11
	Borisov region	village	11
Mogilyov region	Mogilyov	city	42
	Bobruysk	city	23
	Bykhov	city	14
	Gluzsk	city	13
	Belynichi region	village	10
	Klimovichi region	village	10
Capital	Minsk	city	245
Total:	47 survey points	30 cities, 17 villages	1000

Given the specifics of the age interval, the applied sampling method was the snowball sampling. Recruitment was made by one interval of acquaintances – not among the interviewer's acquaintances but among acquaintances of the interviewer's acquaintances. This enabled sampling according to quota characteristics to be carried out more promptly. The heads of the regional survey network gave the interviewer instructions with an indication of the amount and quota criteria of the respondents. The survey was conducted at the respondents' place of residence, including hostels. Only one interview in any one flat (or one-apartment house) and in any one hostel was allowed. The interviewer could interview any person, permanently living in an apartment (or in a one-apartment house, or hostel room), whose sex and age corresponded to the quota characteristics. They were not allowed to interview residents of other states as well as people studying or working (and having permanent residence) in another municipality.

After each interview, the interviewer indicated the following information in the report: the name of the street, number of house, number of apartment, sex and age of the respondent, name and father's name (*otchestvo*), phone number (for eventual quality control), and the date of the interview.

The sample is representative for the population of Belarus in the age of 18 to 30 years.

5. Data processing

For the data processing, the SPSS package was used. The following data were provided: the data base in SPSS, linear distribution of the entire survey, and correlation tables by sex, age, education level, place of residence and region.

6. Quality control of the survey

After the end of the survey, quality control of the interviewers' work was conducted, based on verification sample of 16.5 percent of the respondents' addresses in each survey point. The control was made by means of a phone call to the respondent. The controllers verified to what extent the information had been collected methodically correctly. They also controlled the very fact that the interview took place, duration of the interview, and correctness of choice of the respondent according to the quota criteria. Quality control

rejected 29 interviews as invalid. After the modification of the sample, 29 additional interviews were conducted according to the quota characteristics.

Results of quality control of the survey

Name of region	Assignment/task according to sampling	Controlled interviews	Rejected interviews	Total number of interviews (including additional interviews)
Brest region	135	18	3	138
Vitebsk region	121	24	3	124
Gomel region	146	27	6	152
Grodno region	103	15	2	105
Minsk city	245	42	8	253
Minsk region	138	21	2	140
Mogilyov region	112	18	5	117
Total:	1000	165	29	1029

7. **List of documents** (at disposal of the project supervisor):

1. Complete number of questionnaires (1000)

2. Reports of regional brigadiers of each region and Minsk city, where information was collected (7)

3. Reports filled in by the interviewers (103)

4. Instruction for the interviewers

5. Instruction for the brigadiers

6. Report of quality control.

Appendix C

Interview guide [1]

1. Introductory conversation and acquaintance

2. The role of music in everyday life
What have you been doing (during the day) today? Have you listened to music today? Which of your activities were accompanied by music? What music was that? Why did you choose exactly this music today? To what extent (and why) does your choice of music depend on the time of the day? How do you prefer to listen to music, alone or in company? Why?

3. Music styles
What music do you like most (styles and performers)? When and how did your passion for this music begin? What music did you like before that? What music do you dislike? Why? What qualities does music you like have?

4. Definitions
What does "mainstream" mean to you? What kind of music do you consider non-mainstream? Why? What does "underground" mean to you? What kind of music do you define as pop, and why? What kind of music do you define as rock, club music, etc. (depending on an interview situation and an interviewee's preferences). To what extent does your music collection correlate with your definitions of "mainstream/underground", etc.? What does "good" and "bad" music mean to you and why?

5. Languages in music
Which are the languages of the lyrics of music you listen to? Which languages are most frequent in music you like, and why? In which languages would you not like to listen to lyrics, and why? Which countries' music do you like? Which countries' music would you avoid, and why? Which radio stations from which regions do you prefer?

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[1] This is an initial version of the guide. The questions were often modified, depending on an interview situation, interviewees' preferences, their readiness to talk, etc. In the course of many interviews, half of the questions did not have to be asked, especially in "expert" interviews with musicians.

6. Media

Which media do you use while listening to music? Do you have a portable media player? If yes, where do you take it with you? Do you have a radio? How often do you turn it on? How often do you listen to music on a computer or on the internet? What music videos do you watch? Which CDs do you have at home? Which CD did you buy last, and where? Do you have vinyls? Where do you get music from (buying, listening online, downloading from the internet, borrowing from friends, etc.)?

7. Concerts

How often do you attend clubs, concerts, festivals? What kind of music is that? With whom do you go there? For what exactly do you go to concerts? How do you dress there? Would you like to attend concerts more often? If yes, what should change to make it happen?

8. Music and society

What or who do you orient on, when you choose music? Concerning your music preferences, who or what matters to you? Whose opinion is important to you (and whose is not)? Why? What kind of sources and media are important to you, and which aren't (charts, reviews, magazines, music blogs, social media, etc.)? How important are mass media – TV, radio? What music do or did you parents like? What music do your friends prefer? How important is it to you that your music preferences coincide with those of your friends? If you have a boy- or girlfriend (husband or wife), what music do they prefer? How important is congruence of musical tastes here?

9. Music and identity

Why exactly do you like the music you choose? What does this music give you? What aspects of your life does it influence on (visual style, free time, social circles, circle of friends, self-perception, mood)? How exactly does it influence these aspects? What does the music reflect (attitudes, lifestyle, worldview, social status)? What role does music play in your life?

Would you like to add anything? Are there any questions that have emerged during the interview? Is there anything else you would like to tell or talk about?

Appendix D

Examples of Belarusian music [2]

1. Lyapis Trubetskoy. "Belarus Freedom." *Gray,* Soyuz, 2013.

2. Lyapis Trubetskoy. "Au." *Ty Kinula*, Soyuz, 1998.

3. Litvintroll. "Kryzak (Piesnia Pra Troliau II)." *Czornaja Panna,* SoundAge, 2013.

4. Petlya Pristrastiya. "TÈTS." *Fobos*, Soyuz, 2013.

5. Serebryanaya Svad'ba. "Kak Strizhi" *Ag*, Deti Solntsa, 2014.

6. Addis Abeba. "Dzetsi." *Shifrovat'sya*, Samizdat, 2009.

7. Botanic Project. "Rastamany." *Reanimatsiya*, Muzykalnaya Industriya, 2012.

8. Nagual. "Geolog." *Zemlemer i Chippolino*, Pyarshak, 2017.

9. Kassiopeya. "Kulaki." *Krestik*, SunWoofer, 2015.

10. The Toobs. "Crap on the Radio." *My Generation*, Vigma, 2011.

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[2] The listed groups were mentioned by the interview respondents as examples of their favorite Belarusian music. *Lyapis Trubetskoy* as the most popular Belarusian band was the most frequent example. "Belarus Freedom" is an example of the band's Belarusian-language music with politicized lyrics, while "Au" is one of their most popular Russian-language songs broadcast across the post-Soviet space in the late 1990s.