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MINORITY CULTURES, AFFECTIVE ASSEMBLAGES, AND INWARD MIGRATION

1 Introduction

Amongst the many issues that minority cultures and nations experience, this paper will focus on maintaining cultural distinctiveness when the region experiences high levels of inward migration. In these circumstances, there can be fears that the minority culture might become diminished, threatening the rights of the local minority and their capacity to protect their status. Practically, this is imagined quantitatively, whereby the “risks” associated with potentially becoming “outnumbered” by “other” people impact the ability of the minority to exist. It also risks sliding into a rhetorical repertoire of becoming “swamped” by “invaders” who cause some form of harm to the minority, conjuring an emotive language that reinforces divisions between the people that inhabit a geographical space. This paper will explore this question in relation to Cornwall, a Celtic nation in the South-West of the UK. It will use ethnographic interview data and the concept of affective assemblages, to consider how the minority culture of Cornwall has been impacted by inward migration from other parts of Britain. The paper will show that there are spaces of assimilation of newcomers into Cornishness, but there are also challenges. However, we will also see that although instinctively, it might be imagined that the best way to protect minority culture is to police the borders between minority and in-migrant culture, an inclusive approach is a more effective way forward. The paper claims that this is an ongoing process which requires continual assertiveness and a confidence in the sense of self that minorities have. Having minority rights enshrined in law through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National

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Minorities is a key factor in legitimising local culture. The paper opens with an overview of Cornwall and its unique culture and heritage before setting out the methodologies employed in the research. Following a presentation of the qualitative data, the paper will offer some discussion and conclusions about ensuring that minority rights are protected moving forward.

2 Cornwall, Culture, and Minority Status

Cornwall is a peninsula in the far Southwest of the United Kingdom. Unusually for peripheral, rural areas (which can often see population shrinkage), it had a growing population of 575,500 in 2020¹ up from 53,000 in 2009.² This is part of a long-standing trend derived from the desirability of Cornwall as a visitor destination,³ whereby inward migrants are encouraged by the kind of coastal, rural lifestyle which they imagine that they will be able to experience in the region.⁴ The nearest major city, Plymouth, lies just over its border in neighbouring Devon, but otherwise, it is 78 miles long, 38 miles wide at the Devon/Cornwall border, tapering to a point at Lands End. With the exception of a 4 mile stretch of land between the Atlantic Sea on its North coast and the source of the river Tamar which joins the English Channel on its southern coast, Cornwall is almost entirely bounded by water. This goes some way to explaining a little about the special nature of Cornish culture, history, and heritage.

¹ Nomis Labour Market Statistics: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8uksbf>, accessed: 4 April 2022.

² Willett, Joanie: *Why is Cornwall So Poor? Narrative, Perception, and Identity*. (2010) Unpublished PhD thesis <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/104835>, accessed: 4 April 2022.

³ Perry, Ron: Economic Change and Opposition Economics. In: Philip, Payton (ed.): *The Making of Modern Cornwall, Cornwall since the War*. Redruth: Institute of Cornish Studies, 1993.

⁴ Bosworth, Gary - Willett, Joanie: Embeddedness or Escapism? Rural Perceptions and Economic Development in Cornwall and Northumberland. In: *Sociologia Ruralis*. 51 (2011), 195-214.

As a named population with a shared ancestry, set of traditions, culture, heritage, and myth of descent, organised around a defined territory, Cornwall meets the definition of an ethnicity as set out by Anthony Smith.⁵ It also meets the criterion as a nation, having mobilised a “mass public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and duties for all members.”⁶ In 1951 the first Cornish political party, Mebyon Kernow, was begun,⁷ and this party currently has 5 Councillors (out of 87) on Cornwall Council, the local government body. Whilst this might not necessarily be imagined as a *mass* political movement, it is instructive that it has mobilised major campaigns for political decentralisation to Cornwall,⁸ and often sets the political agenda. Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe⁹ show how key cultural-political campaigns have become mainstreamed from formerly marginal, outsider-type narratives, to become as now, generally accepted policy pledges across the main political parties operating in Cornwall.

The theme of Hechter’s¹⁰ concept of internal colonialism runs through contemporary understandings of Cornish history with regards to its neighbouring nation of England over the centuries. According to the historian Mark Stoye,¹¹ Cornwall’s geography and watery boundaries provided protection from the Saxons of England, who were never able to conquer the inhabitants, but who instead

⁵ Smith, Anthony: Nations in History. In: Guibernau, Montserrat – Hutchinson, John (eds.): *Understanding Nationalism*. Cambridge: Polity. 2001, 34.

⁶ *Ibid*, 19.

⁷ Deacon, Bernard – Cole, Dick – Tregidga, Garry: *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism*. Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press. 2003.

⁸ Willett, Joanie – Giovannini, Arianna: The Uneven Path of UK Devolution: Top-Down vs Bottom-Up Regionalism in Cornwall and the North-East Compared. In: *Political Studies*. 62 (2014), 343–360.; Deacon – Cole and Tregidga, 2011.

⁹ Willett, Joanie – Tredinnick-Rowe, John: The Fragmentation of the Nation State? Regional Development, Distinctiveness, and the Growth of Nationalism in Cornish Politics. In: *Nations and Nationalism*. 22 (2016), 768–785.

¹⁰ Hechter, Michael: *Internal Colonialism; The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*. London: Routledge. 1999.

¹¹ Stoye, Mark: *West Britons*. Exeter: Exeter University Press. 2002.

exerted a process of Anglicanisation. Kent and Angharrack¹² describe this in colonial terms, whereby the ideological takeover of the Cornish relied on locals adopting the idea that they were inferior in order to ensure compliance. Stoye argues that by the mid-14th century, Cornwall's separate ethnicity was beginning to fade away through these processes, and in the mid-1500's the primary seat of learning in Cornwall, using the Cornish language, was destroyed. However Stoye also argues that resistance to these processes were occurring in many different forms from the rebellions of 1497 and 1549 (which were quelled brutally, leading to the death of thousands of the population), to adopting the royalist cause in the English civil war of 1642 – 1641. In later times, this sense of difference congregated around religion¹³ and politics.¹⁴ However, the maintenance of this sense of difference also brings with it the constructed inferiorities of the internal colonialism concept. Therefore, the region and the people within it are still (mis)presented as backward, overly traditional, with a tendency to be childlike,¹⁵ which, in common with many rural areas, contributes to what might be imagined as a "hollowing out" of local capacity, as bright young people feel that they have no option but to leave for opportunities elsewhere.¹⁶

All of this presents a story of decline and loss. However, the survival of Cornish culture over the centuries, despite massive difficulties, is also an important success story, of which the Cornish language is a

¹² Kent, Aland: 'Art Thou Of Cornish Crew?' Shakespeare, Henry V and Cornish Identity. In: Philip, Payton (ed.): *Cornish Studies Four*. Exeter: Exeter University Press. 1996.; Angarrack, John: *Breaking the Chains. Propaganda, Censorship, Deception And The Manipulation Of Public Opinion In Cornwall*. Camborne: Cornish Stannary Publications. 1999.

¹³ Milden, Kayleigh: *Remembered Places and Forgotten Histories: The Complexities of Cultural Memory of Politics and Religion within Cornish Methodism*. Truro: Institute of Cornish Studies. 2006.

¹⁴ Tregidga, Garry: *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain Since 1918: Political Decline, Dormancy and Rebirth*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press. 2000.

¹⁵ Willett, Joanie: The Production of Place: Perception, Reality, and the Politics of Becoming. In: *Political Studies* 64 (2016, 2), 436–451.

¹⁶ Williams, Malcolm: Why is Cornwall So Poor? Poverty and In-Migration Since the 1960's. In: *Contemporary British History* 17 (2003, 3), 55–70.

good example. Reputedly, the last monoglot Cornish speaker, Dolly Pentreath, died in 1777, however, in practice, it survived in spoken form in many different arenas of life.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it fell out of common usage, and its revival began in earnest in the 1870's, with Henry Jenner's find of a fragment of Cornish verse.¹⁸ Currently, it is estimated that between 2-3000 persons can speak the language, with many others having a few words – helped by the inclusion of Cornish on road signs, in business marketing, and by the Local Government. It is one of a tiny handful of languages to be revived and as such attracts attention from scholars worldwide, and is supported by a range of cultural organisations, alongside Gorsedh Kernow, which exists to “maintain the national Celtic spirit of Cornwall”.¹⁹ Additionally, the UK-wide popular singer Gwennno releases songs in Cornish, and it has been used in UK-Wide advertisements for Cornish products. On the one hand, this might open up the charge of what Hobsbawm²⁰ calls an invented tradition. However, it has resonated sufficiently amongst the local population to become incorporated into familiar daily life.

Cornish culture and heritage have been shown to have a pragmatic usage, and the interaction between the cultural and the political has served to support local politics, whilst also helping local culture to grow in confidence and assertiveness. A key moment was during the 1990s when it became clear that Cornwall's deep levels of poverty compared to the rest of Britain and the European Union meant that it was not able to qualify for much-needed Objective 1 (now called Cohesion) Structural Funding. However, it was realised that being able to make the claim of cultural difference to its neighbours provided the opportunity to complete the steps required in order to be able to

¹⁷ Mackinnon, Kenneth: Cornish at its Millennium: An Independent Study of the Language Undertaken in 2000. In: Philip, Payton. (ed.): *Cornish Studies Ten*. Exeter: Exeter University Press 2002.

¹⁸ Lowenna, Sharon: 'Jenner, Dunscombe Jewel and their Milieu. In: Philip, Payton (ed.): *Cornish Studies Twelve*. Exeter: Exeter University Press. 2004.

¹⁹ Gorsedh Kernow <https://gorsedhkernow.org.uk/>, accessed: 31 March 2022.

²⁰ Hobsbawm, Eric., Ranger, Terence: *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1992.

claim the additional monies. From qualitative interviews with former campaigners, some actors were initially motivated by the rational, economic argument regarding drawing down additional funding for the region. According to one source, initial mention of Cornwall's language and Celtic heritage were added as an afterthought. However, when they realised that this was an angle that worked well at an EU level, the campaign shifted to centre around it.²¹ This cross-party campaign ranged most of the 1990s, during which time symbolisms of Cornish culture and heritage became much more visible throughout Cornish civil society.²² Indeed, there is a radical shift from the early 1990s when the local Council was perceived as trying to minimise Cornish distinctiveness, to the time of the Objective One Single Programming Document, providing a blueprint for funding spending, when Cornwall's distinctly Celtic cultural heritage and language was foregrounded.²³ This is a visibility which remains up to the present day.²⁴ It also may have been instrumental in the switch of Cornwall Council from being defiantly *against* any idea of Cornish identity and distinctiveness towards embracing it.

The final key moment to relate here in this brief overview, is about how now, there is an element of legal protection for Cornwall's minority status, through the 2014 inclusion in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. As we can see from Cornwall Council's *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – Contribution to the Fifth Cycle UK State Report*,²⁵ it has enabled the Council to better push for resources for protecting and promoting Cornish culture and heritage, as well as measures available in order improve the statistical visibility of Cornish people. However, in

²¹ Willett, Joanie: National Identity and Regional Development: Cornwall and the Campaign for Objective 1 Funding. In: *National Identities*. 15 (2013, 3), 297-311.

²² Deacon, Cole and Tregidga, 2003 *op. cit.*, 114.

²³ Willett 2010, *op. cit.*, 113.

²⁴ Willett and Rowe 2016, *op. cit.*, 773.

²⁵ Cornwall Council: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – Contribution to the Fifth Cycle to the UK State Report. 2021. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4farx6xj>, accessed: 22 June 2022.

practice, obtaining these resources has been difficult, and certainly, Cornish culture has not been provided with the level of support of other UK Celtic nations. For example, in their 2021 report the Committee of Experts (COMEX) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages reported that central government funding was based on political decisions rather than automatically applied.²⁶ This meant that the £140,000 provided to Cornwall Council was withdrawn in 2020. COMEX recommended that responsibility for protecting the language be devolved from central government to Cornwall Council with ring-fenced allocated funding.

Eight years on, Minority Status has been led at a Council level by a Cornish National Minority Working Group,²⁷ focusing on compliance with the Framework Convention. Cornish heritage is managed and promoted by the Cornwall Heritage Trust,²⁸ and the Cornish Language Office coordinates community projects and increases the visibility of the Cornish language inside and outside of Cornwall.²⁹ This includes a Cornish language translation on signage and the “Go Cornish” campaign to promote language learning amongst younger people and primary schools in particular.³⁰ Apps such as IndyLan and Magi Ann Kernewek increase access to Cornish language learning to a wider audience, the “Together for Families Education Team” is working on a Cornish school curriculum, and a state-of-the-art new archival centre, Kresen Kernow, was opened in 2019. Other campaigns include a long-standing campaign for a Cornish “tick-box” on the UK census in order to compile concrete data about the lives of people who identify as Cornish. This was promoted in partnership with arts organisations

²⁶ Council of Europe: *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action Contained in the Committee of Experts Fifth Evaluation Report of the United Kingdom and Isle of Man*. Strasbourg, 2021.

²⁷ Cornwall Council, *Cornish National Minority*: <https://tinyurl.com/3n43watp/>, accessed: 28 April 2022.

²⁸ Cornwall Heritage Trust: <https://www.cornwallheritagetrust.org/>, accessed: 28 April 2022.

²⁹ Cornish Language Office: <https://tinyurl.com/yr4msmb>, accessed: 28 April 2022.

³⁰ Go Cornish: <https://gocornish.org/>, accessed: 28 April 2022.

such as Golden Tree, and included the “Cornish Embassy Bus” which toured the region and encouraged people to sign up to their Cornish passports. Currently, the Office for National Statistics has refused to do this, but at the time of the 2021 census, there was a widespread push to encourage persons who identify as Cornish to write this in the “other” category. In a recent press release marking eight years since inclusion in the Framework Convention, Cornwall Council³¹ stated that over the next four years, they would work to:

- “See Cornwall secure a meaningful devolution settlement which will protect the unique characteristics of Cornish identity, and appropriately reflect Cornwall’s position as a Celtic nation within the UK.
- Further support and develop Cornish education, language, culture, and heritage, including the rollout of a Cornish curriculum in schools across Cornwall
- Ensure the needs of the Cornish National Minority are taken into account in all public sector decision-making.
- Create a culture of open and honest two-way communication with colleagues, local communities, Cornish diaspora, partners, and government.”

Taken together, this means that Cornish minority rights are becoming increasingly vocal, visible, and protected. However, in the introduction to this section the paper outlined the large scale of inward migration to the region. Indeed, between 1961 and 2000 the population of Cornwall grew by 50%, which has led to fears that Cornish identities, culture and heritage might be in the process of being watered down.³² Notwithstanding the evidence that it appears instead to be increasing and deepening, this does open us to the question about the relationship

³¹ Cornwall Council: *Blueprint to Further Promote Cornish Language and Culture as Minority Status Anniversary Approaches*. <https://tinyurl.com/5n8e75wf>, accessed: 08 April 2022.

³² Perry, Ron: *The Making of Modern Cornwall 1800–2000*. In: Philip, Payton. (ed.): *Cornish Studies Ten*. Exeter: Exeter University Press. 2002.

between inward migrants and the existing population, how the two groups interrelate, and what this means for minority rights in Cornwall

3 Research Methods

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in late 2019, early 2020, using ethnographic research methods and a grounded theory approach in order to allow the data to follow as closely as possible the subjective understandings of the participants,³³ and the meanings that they attached to their lives.³⁴ It began with the question of “what is Cornwall like to live in”, beginning with interviews with 25 general members of the public, representing individuals from a range of different backgrounds, sourced through recommendations and snowball sampling.³⁵ Later, this was supplemented with five policy-makers working at some level of strategic development in public or third sector organisations in order to explore some of the issues raised to a greater depth and find out approaches to tackling them. Where possible, research was conducted using embodied techniques, over the course of a practical activity such as painting, walking, or sports pursuits. This was to help to connect participants with the materiality of the region and their lives in order to generate richer, more meaningful conversations.³⁶

³³ Charmaz, Kathy: *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Delhi: Sage Publications. 2006.; Strauss, Anselm – Corbin, Juliet: *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. London: Sage, 2008, 3rd Edition.

³⁴ Goffman, Ervin: *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1959.; Blumer, Herbert: *Symbolic Interactionism; Perspective and Method*. California: University of California Press. 1969.

³⁵ Flick, Uwe: *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* London: Sage. 2006, 3rd Edition.

³⁶ West, Jodie – Saunders, Clare – Willett, Joanie: A Bottom Up Approach to Slowing Fashion: Tailored Solutions for Consumers. In: *Journal of Cleaner Production* 296. 2021.; Spatz, Ben: Embodied Research: A Methodology. In: *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*. Vol. 13 (2017, 2); Thanem, Torkild – Knights, David: *Embodied Research Methods*. London: Sage. 2019.

Interviews were fully recorded and transcribed and coded with respect to emerging themes around how respondents described and positioned themselves within the assemblages within which they were situated. Assemblages are drawn from a Deleuzian analysis³⁷ and represent the thoughts, ideas, objects, practices, meanings, organisations and institutions that are collected together around a particular thing.³⁸ Assemblages are multiple and overlapping, rather than singular, so for example, a larger assemblage around a minority culture will be comprised of smaller assemblages perhaps around language, language learning, and promotion; the gathering and preserving of historical material; gathering data about the contemporary minority population; and the formal and informal political activities which strive to enrich the lives of the minority population, and help them to flourish in the face of various challenges. As might be imaged, these various assemblages overlap at many different points. For example, archiving and contemporary data gathering may feed into political activities, or persons might feel impelled or fuelled to engage in minority politics on account of involvement with cultural activities.

This introduces us to the affective element of the assemblage. Assemblages are fluid, constantly growing, shrinking, combining or dispersing as they adapt to the contemporary encounters that they face. Ideas, knowledges, truths, and meanings readily flow between assemblages, occur or can be precipitated on the basis of the impacts that things have on other things. Sometimes these impacts might be physical, such as a policy change which affects minority rights. At other times the affective impact might be emotional, whereby particular feelings become aroused by particular objects, practices, or institutions, which enable other forms of movement within and amongst the assembled phenomena.³⁹

³⁷ Deleuze, Gilles – Felix, Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Continuum. 2004.

³⁸ See also Delanda, Manuel: *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London: Continuum. 2011.

³⁹ Ahmed, Sara: *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2004.; Bennett, Jane: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke

For the purposes of this study, assemblages provide a useful exploratory framework in order to examine the ways that constellations of meanings collect or pool in certain places and the emotional affects that help to facilitate this. This helps us to see how collected phenomena around the minority culture – in this case Cornwall, responds to what might be perceived as the encroachment of the threatening majority, into its territorial space. The fluidity of the assemblage helps us to consider the flows of information between minorities and majorities, the things that direct these flows, and the other assemblages which they are affectively attached to.

4 Cornishness

There are many places to begin this story, but we are going to start on a community walk, led by a local historian Matt, a former teacher who now works full time in politics. Matt explained that the differences between settlements in Cornwall, and those in England, related to the ways that they were physically organised. Cornish communities originated in a pattern around farms, whereas in England, they tended to be more feudal with land owned by a “lord of the manor”. He says:

“it was very much about small tenant farmers mostly, cause everything was owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, in many ways still is. People just farming, and then cottages for their labourers, and then gradually, fishing villages grew up.”

Matt went on to describe how the types of communities influenced their politics, so farmers tended to be more traditional, whereas fishing communities were much more socially liberal and independent of spirit. He also told the group about the intimate relationship between the names that were given to various parts of the neighbourhood,

University Press. 2010.; Connolly, William: *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2002.

and their history brought through to the present through the Cornish language.

“Trevor means large farm. The Gruda was the gallows ground, and the Merther ground was where people were martyred. Cornish and Welsh was originally the same language. As was Breton. But the Anglo Saxons divided it.”

Perhaps understandably, in a community painting exercise following this walk, participants were keen to include many traditional symbols of Cornishness alongside contemporary practices, including Celtic crosses, the Cornish flag and tartan, the traditional food of the pasty, and the sport of gig racing which is itself steeped in history and heritage.

Taken together, the casual observer might imagine this to be a community assemblage threaded through with a vibrant and confident Cornishness, a place where the minority culture could survive and thrive. However, by looking deeper, this is a much more complex story. Local resident Helen articulates the challenges. She says that

“it’s interesting to look at the demographic of even this room, how many are Cornish, and how many are not. And that has changed our village enormously – not saying it’s for the good or for the bad. But it has changed it. So there’s very few Cornish people that are around now”.

Helen points to the fact that, in common with many Cornish coastal communities, housing use and the local population is much more fluid than the sedentary impression provided in the earlier snapshot. Instead of an imagined stability which has enabled the concentration and amplification of minority culture, the attractiveness of the locality has meant that many people move there from wealthier parts of the UK. Alternatively, much of the housing stock is no longer used for primary residences, but are second homes or holiday lets for visitors.

Helen's matter of factness about the way that she articulated her point, hides an affective constellation which amplifies an emotive repertoire with a range from frustration to anger. This is exemplified in John, a manual worker in his early thirties who perceives assemblages around inward migration as a competition for scarce resources. This sets up a discourse of winners and losers, where people such as himself are "pushed" or "forced" out of their communities, intangibly ejected, because local wages are insufficient to support a life in the places in which they live their lives. He says

"I would like to see the likes of me, and the likes of my friends, that are actually Cornish, that want to stay in Cornwall, but it seems to me are actually being pushed out- they have to go up-country or abroad just to try and earn money, and try and live, have a better life."

This is an assembled collection of responses that notices the boundaries between "locals" and "newcomers", keeping their assemblages separate through a narrative that is kept alive by (an understandable) bitterness and resentment. It also echoes the surprise interjection behind Mandy's response to the question about how she would describe Cornwall to someone who didn't know it. Mandy was a health professional in her 40's, and was happy in the kind of life that she was living, so on the surface was not experiencing herself the structural exclusions that Tom was. However, her immediate response was *"I wouldn't tell them anyway because I don't want them to come here."* She qualifies this with another story about scarce resources, this time in terms of healthcare.

"A classic example is when I had [child's name] there was no bed for me at the hospital because it was bank holiday weekend, and there was an influx of people who was on holiday giving birth and I had to give birth in a ward where there was no bed. That's not even with Coronavirus, no. So I understand the seriousness

of it, and that was just because there were just extra five beds full and that meant they were absolutely saturated and had no room”.

Whilst John’s “other” or enemy object was the inward migrant, Mandy’s target is the visitor, the inward migrant for a few weeks of the year, but who dominate the summer landscape. In both these examples the incomer is assembled around a set of meanings that position them as the “invader” and the local as the victim. The local then becomes unable to access basic services in a set of structural exclusions which are made visible through creating fixed boundaries between local and incomer assemblages. These boundaries then become quite fixed and rigid. Amy is a community activist in her 40’s, and she has lived in Cornwall since she was brought here by her parents as a young child. The experiences that she has had growing up and as she has moved through the various phases of her adulthood, have shaped her as a person and moulded her into who she is today. You could say that she is *of* Cornwall. That she is Cornish. However, she doesn’t feel qualified to describe herself in this way. Despite the fact that the issues of poverty and exclusion experienced by the Cornish minority mirror her own experience and those of the communities she works with, the fight and the energy she has she reserves for her own survival and campaigning for campaigning, and with other issues. One might even say that as a result of her real or imagined feeling that people like her are excluded from Cornish assemblages, she has spent her time amplifying languages, discourses, narratives and institutions that are different and perhaps even oppositional to those of the Cornish minority.

Whilst the incomer other is readily demonised, it can also be easy to forget the dislocation that can be experienced on moving to an entirely new region. Sophie discusses how strange it was for her husband, to have spent most of his life living in a place that he grew up in and knew really well, to be somewhere where he knew nobody. For herself,

she really struggled to get to know other people and find people to spend time with. She says

“the other people I’ve now met through this job at [...] when new people come in from upcountry or from other places, there’s quite a lot of us who are all emmets, if you like, and actually, we all know how it feels for that first year, few years, and everybody makes a really conscious effort to make whoever’s moving in... to make that time go quicker. To settle in quicker and to make friends, and I think it’s funny that there are probably [...] I’ve probably got more friends down here that are from somewhere else, than Cornish friends.”

There are many important threads to unpick here. Firstly, we know from earlier in Sophie’s interview about the loneliness that she experienced on moving. We also find that she has a commonality of experience with other inward migrants, that resonates with her and means that she ends up being drawn towards more discreet assemblages around inward migrants, rather than Cornish people, who may already have established networks that might be harder to access anyway. She also introduces us to a word that is *designed* to repel non-Cornish people and reaffirm their continual otherness. “Emmet” is a highly derogatory term used by some to describe incomers. It is said to mean “ant” in Cornish, but this is untrue and the root of the word actually comes from English. It refers to imagery around “swarms” of outsiders, invading Cornwall like pests, and understandably, reinforces the boundaries between Cornish and inward migrants that Amy finds so difficult to cross. At the Epicurean root of the concept of affect, as individuals, we are attracted to positive affects, and repelled by negative ones. For Cornish minorities, this risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby being repellent literally diminishes Cornish assemblages, whilst at the same time the threatening (imagined) “invaders” get stronger.

But it would be wrong to imagine that these kinds of policing the boundaries around Cornish assemblages are routine practice. Some additional words from Mandy points us back to where we began. She says

“something that I noticed within Cornwall, there’s anywhere there’s the harbours where they have the gig clubs and they support the fishermen and the people who work on the sea become part of the communities, and they are strong traditional parts of the communities, [...] maybe over the last 10 years, a lot of the elder generation within those clubs were very concerned that they were losing traditions and the next generation weren’t taking up, even from the singing and some of the sea shanties, and the coming together. Yeah, it was interesting that they were worried that their sons or their daughters weren’t taking up those traditions, so there’s been a real push and I think, in turn, when you have those things at the centre of the community, where people come together to take part in sports or they’re drinking together or doing whatever they’re going to do, that there becomes a network, I think that people fit into.”

Mandy describes how many local traditions have become reinvigorated in coastal communities in particular and that this has not only helped to maintain them but helped to make them feel become “cool” and attractive. She later talks about how it is not only “Cornish” people who become involved in these activities, but that through traditional coastal activities such as rowing and singing, connecting bridges have been forged between Cornish and inward migrant assemblages. Indeed, inward migrants have been able to become Cornish if they so wish and in turn, help to keep minority culture alive and dynamic.

The community introduced in the opening of this paper is a good case in point. It became clear over the course of the conversations, that the rowing club was the central force holding the assemblage together.

It wasn't just a cultural assemblage, or a sports assemblage, but became the place where many different assemblages collided and intersected, including politics, faith, and business. In so doing, it became the central node in a network that included the whole community and meant that even though the community assemblage experienced some serious threats with regards to factors like second homes and inward migration from wealthier (and therefore more price elastic) areas, it was still able to not only survive, but also flourish.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

So, what does this mean for minority rights? Firstly, and most obviously, the use of adaptive assemblages helps us to observe the layered and textured intersections between different identity positions, the ideas, attitudes and values that individuals hold, and how this merges into the various collective groups in and around Cornwall. It also helps us to see the flows and physical and emotional affective linkages between and amongst different assemblages.

From this position, we are able to witness the discursive tensions surrounding inward migrants, who can become imagined as part of an affective constellation whereby they represent many of the intense difficulties that people find around access to housing, essential services, and the landscape. This places inward migrants in a perpetrator role, to Cornish people's victim status. In turn, this slides into a discursive repertoire that recalls the many injustices that have happened to Cornish people, from the ancient colonisation of Cornwall resulting in threats to the culture, loss of language, and institutions. The next step from these injustices is to create a flow of meaning between this sense of loss, with the poverty that many people in Cornwall experience. The extent to which the correlation between the Cornish loss, and poverty is causally connected, or whether it actually is just a correlation, is not of concern here. The point is that meanings are fluid and reliant on

emotional attachments rather than on particular objective truths.⁴⁰ The flow between these different meanings collects and pools between them, so they are *imagined* as causally linked, and this has an impact on how receptive (or not) minorities can be when welcoming incomers into their culture. On the other hand, being ostracised from local, minority culture causes newcomers pain or discomfort. Connolly talks about how the experience of pain causes the person to retract themselves and retreat.⁴¹ As we have seen in the material presented above, this can lead to newcomers seeking out instead people like themselves, with similar experiences of uprooting and moving somewhere different. Consequently, this boundary policing can actually amplify the separateness and differences between a newcomer and Cornish assemblages, risking exacerbating real or perceived inequalities.

What we also find, however, is that in attempting to protect minority assemblages from being “watered down” brings its own set of risks with regards to the sustainability of minority culture. What we see through the case of Cornwall is that *not* being inclusive, whilst coming from a place of trying to defend a threatened culture, risks the converse effect of shrinking minority cultural assemblages. Assemblages are not fixed for all time but are constantly evolving and adapting. This means that they are constantly changing, growing, shrinking, absorbing, or divesting.⁴² This is about more than literally not teaching newcomers about Cornish cultures, practices, and ways of life and so growing the physical numbers of people that are involved in these important activities which help to keep minority cultural assemblages living and breathing. To an extent, the cultural emphasis derived from inclusion in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities helps this as it has provided a sustained emphasis on Cornish culture and heritage, through language promotion, enhanced archives, and the “tick box” campaign for the UK Census. This contributes to efforts to help minority identification to be perceived as something that younger people want

⁴⁰ See Ahmed 2004 *op. cit.*, 13.

⁴¹ Connolly 2002 *op. cit.*, 24.5.

⁴² Deleuze and Guattari 2004 *op. cit.*, 4; Bennett 2010 *op. cit.*, 120; Delanda 2011 *op. cit.*, 2.

to be a part of, and think of as “cool”, rather than for the preservation and maintenance of minority culture to be the space reserved for older people. In the featured community, we see how in finding ways to include and absorb these potentially threatening assemblages, literally bringing newcomers into the Cornish fold through teaching culture and heritage in an attractive setting, it has strengthened the capacity of the community to weather the challenges that it faces to its ability to provide necessary services in the locality. A final benefit is in how it reduces the spaces for assemblages around “otherness” and difference, breaking down the barriers between different groupings and helping to maintain more cohesive communities, which in turn are better able to flourish. This is not to say that the featured community didn’t have any of the issues that we saw in other parts of Cornwall. It’s just that its inclusive approach enabled these problems to be discussed in a frank and open way.

However, doing this requires confidence and assertiveness, having the strength to be able to go out into the world and expect to be treated well. It would be counterfactual to claim that this process is happening now in a different way to previous decades. However, it is an interesting correlation between the broad traction of the political campaigns for minority rights in the 1990’s which made it not only “ok”, but also “good” to be Cornish; recognition under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; and the steady growth in the use of Cornish cultural symbolisms throughout the region.⁴³ Sustained promotion has made the Cornish language much more visible, celebrations of the national day (March 5th, St Piran’s Day) are widespread throughout the region, and awareness about Cornish heritage is growing. Being welcoming and inclusive is much easier to do if an individual, community or culture does not expect the hurt of their invite being rejected or ridiculed. Recalling above that the pain of being sostracised can lead to newcomers to retreat and create and nurture their own (rival) assemblages, perhaps in opposition to the minority. Equally, the ripples of pain and discomfort is a real

⁴³ See Willett and Rowe 2016. *op. cit.*, 773; Deacon, Cole and Tregidga 2003 *op. cit.*, 114.

problem for host cultures when they feel that newcomers carry a set of assumptions (such as the 'backwardness' often ascribed to rural peoples⁴⁴) towards them which are uncomplimentary at best, or cruel at worst. As Willett shows,⁴⁵ the ways that Cornwall and Cornish people have been discursively constructed by (some) others, includes an affective constellation around "backwardness", "slowness", being not progressive, childlike, and overly traditional. This can mean that the instinct to protect the minority assemblage might have a thread that is about fears of being watered down, but these fears might be merely the articulated version of a feeling that more accurately thinks "these people are going to be nasty to me. I don't want to hurt myself by getting too close to them". This is where official recognition is of special importance. It is a way of reminding the culture that if another grouping were to view it in negative, harmful ways, that is not the fault of the problem of minority cultural assemblages. Instead, it reminds the culture that they have a value that they should be proud of and can share with others.

⁴⁴ Willett 2016. *op. cit.*, 437.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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