Farms, flats, and villas: senses of country living in a Basque-speaking village

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This chapter focuses on how peasants from a particular Basque village articulate their understandings of the country and the city during two periods: first, the late 1970s and the early 1980s; second, the beginning of the twenty-first century. The first corresponds to a high point in the process of national modernisation in Spain, which was based on industrial development. The second is occurring during a shift to Europe-oriented policies, and a growth of discourses on rural development and welfare. Both periods echo substantial changes in rural Basque society. To better understand those changes from a peasant's perspective, it is necessary to start from indigenous concepts of the country and the city. Thus, I discuss several words which Basque-speaking peasants refer to when locating themselves in the dialectics between the countryside and the city. To this end, first I briefly describe the village; then, I portray several traditional and newly cultural models with which villagers express concepts of social belonging or rejection; finally, in order to explain how residents interpret social change in the village in relation to those cultural models, I focus on the local school and the open party that parents have organised annually since the early 1990s. For, where there was once something approaching a unified local vision of the world, the present reality is much more complex, varied, and socially fractured.

All my remarks and information are based on the intensive fieldwork I carried out in the village between 1982 and 1985, followed by repeated visits in the following years; since 2000 I have resided there permanently.

Views of the village and the city

Alkiza is a Basque village in the province of Guipúzcoa, Spain. It has a population of almost four hundred people. It is 28 km to San Sebastián, capital of the province, and 8 km to Tolosa, the county's capital (Fernández de Larrinoa 1991; Aranburu Ugartemendia 2001). Some of the residents are still farming, which was the area's main activity until recently. Others have partially or totally abandoned farming for alternative activities. It is significant that there is an increase in the referents with which people identify when they decide to live in the countryside.

Among the rural residents of Europe today, farming and peasant identity are certainly no longer determining factors. Thus, the more inclusive term 'rural society' has come to substitute the former 'peasant society'; a term which referred only to one social segment of the several that exist in the countryside. While 'peasant society' referred to a segment that today is in explicit decline, the social segments it excluded are precisely those now thriving (Kearney 1996; Cloke and Little 1997).

As in other parts of Europe, farming in Alkiza is in decline, while the construction of apartment buildings and the conversion of old farmhouses into residential houses is proliferating. The globalisation of the economy is fuelling the development of agro-industrial research and enterprise (Clunies-Ross and Hilyard 1992; Goering, Norberg-Hodge, and Page 1993), and the peasantry has become a vestige of what it was before, at least in terms of being a singular, small-scale, family-based activity with distinctive cultural features (Franklin 1969).

Current residents in Alkiza show differing forms of identity. But it is of particular relevance that many of those who come from farming homes strongly identify with peasant activities, although they no longer make their living from agricultural business. Moreover, a very small number of houses in Alkiza still depend exclusively on farming; although a larger portion of the residents keep a bond with the land, maintaining orchards and vegetable gardens, keeping a few animals and planting trees (Adok 1998).

In order to understand rural identity in the Basque Country today several things must be taken into account. On the one hand, evolutionary views of human history have conceived of peasant life as being associated with discursive images which presuppose opposition, e.g. unkempt appearance; body odour; sociocultural backwardness; primitivism; and others elicited by the notion that peasants are tied to land and animals (Maget 1971). On the other hand, there have been movements such as the Romanticism of the late nineteenth century or the New Age of the late twentieth, which have produced positive images of the countryside, its residents and their culture. These movements, however, are notorious for their intellectual, spiritual or ecological approach to the countryside. However, its proponents are almost never involved directly in farming or cattle raising. Furthermore, the Basque nationalist movement has projected images which are paradigmatic in this regard. Basque nationalism developed, as positive images of traditional Basque culture multiplied. Thus, nationalists liked to praise farming and cattle-raising families, who were said to have kept and transmitted Basque culture through generations (Azcona 1984).

Basque ethnographers of the early twentieth century were also involved in the creation of positive images of the countryside, which the budding nationalist movement idealised. In this sense, Basque nationalism was an urban ideology which used the peasants and their rural life as an element for political action (Heiberg 1989). Today, however, when nationalism has a wide base in the rural, Basque-speaking areas, its leaders seem to have relegated farmhouses and farmers to the background. Rather, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is the choice representative of current

Basque culture for Basque nationalism (Zulaika 1995; MacClancy 1997). Without abandoning the idealised vision of the Basque peasant, nationalism now looks to the cities for images more prestigious than those the countryside can offer.

In this chapter I argue that thinking about how rural Basques experience their identity at present requires us to consider several referents. For instance, when peasants in Alkiza speak the Basque language (*Euskara*), they mark a conceptual difference between, on the one hand, *baserria*, *baserritarra*, and *baserrikoa*; and, on the other, *kalea*, *kalekoa*, and *kaletarra*. The words in the first group express nuances of the concept of countryside; those in the second to the city and the urban lifestyle. Thus, *baserria* means farm; *baserritarra*, farmer, and *baserrikoa*, someone from a farming family who does not make a living from agriculture. *Kalea* means city (literally, street); *kaletarra*, a city-dweller; and *kalekoa*, from the city (Fernández de Larrinoa 1991).

The sociocultural referents that residents in Alkiza use to express local identity are varied, but always the result of the tension with which they have internalised the semantic fields contained in the terms *baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa*, on the one hand, and *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa*, on the other. This tension comes from the fact that both sets of words create corresponding sets of social images whose main function is to stigmatisate, disparage, and culturally disqualify the other.

To a city-dweller, *baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa* refers to the rustic, the *Homo sylvestris*, while *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* represents progress and civilisation. To a peasant, however, *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* refers to a dark, menacing and undesirable environment. The interpretative transcendence of this contrast can be better understood in the context of what Mexican anthropologist Roger Bartra has written about culture and civilisation in Europe: the myth of the savage is essential to the concept of Western culture, and is the source of the West's idea of civilisation (Bartra 1996).

In Alkiza *baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa* and *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* are specific variants of the myth of the savage, in the sense that both find their own identity precisely at the point where they converge. *Baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa* is where *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* discovers the images with which to construct a 'self', and vice versa. The cultural stereotypes that each kind spreads about the other are illustrative: the person who is employed in farming and lives away from the urban centre is poorly educated, backward, ignorant and somehow defective. To reinforce the grotesque aspect of this image, Basque peasants are often portrayed in a situation where they have to communicate in Spanish, a language they do not speak fluently.

Similar characters continue to be displayed today, although now they are allowed to speak Basque. The public television Basque channel ETB1 (*Euskal Telebista*1) presents shows in which interviews and imitations encourage the model we describe. The question arises: how can Basque people be ridiculed when speaking their own language? Well, beginning in the 1980s, the modernisation process marked a distinction between *Euskara Batua*, the recently constructed Standard Basque, and

time-honoured dialects of *Euskara*. Batua has come to represent the city-dweller, the press, textbooks and literature, the speech of radio and television broadcasters, and local graduates. Scenes from TV shows often depict situations in which the differences between the city and country dwellers, or between the global Basque and the local Basque, are very marked. Astride this first difference are other contrasts, such as culture, prudence, and refinement versus ignorance, indiscretion, bullying, and poor taste.

The cultural product that best illustrates the cultural vision described above is the play *Kutsidazu bidea, Isabel* ('Show me the way, Isabel'), successfully staged in Euskara in several peasant towns and villages in 2003. That year, the programme for the local festivities of Alkiza included the staging of the play on the central plaza. The adaptation of a story originally written in Basque, it tells of a young, Spanish-speaking man from San Sebastián, who does not speak Euskara very well so takes a month-long course in it in Alkiza. To make sure that the students learn the language, the course includes a period of immersion during which they lodge in the homes of local families, which naturally are peasant families. According to its blurb, the story describes with humour and irony the confusing social situations and cultural mix-ups that people face when they do not share the same symbolic codes or communication instruments. The book is well known among Basque language students, since it is recommended in the programme of the Euskara schools for adults. The theatre version is also well known in rural areas, where the high turnout is rather remarkable, since farmers are not usually theatre-goers. Plays are not a common entertainment in small rural towns in the county of Tolosa. As a rule, the Department of Culture of Guipúzcoa is in charge of programming cultural activities in the rural areas of the province; these consist of an itinerant programme of concerts, conferences, slideshows, films, and sometimes, theatre. Even though all small villages in Tolosa have a Cultural Centre where these activities take place, the attendance of local residents is usually low.

In fact, those in charge of organising the festivities in Alkiza were unsure of the appropriateness of a play in the programme. They decided to include it for three main reasons: the popular reception of it in other nearby villages; the direct concern of its subject matter to Alkiza itself; and the cast included a much-liked actor, who appears regularly as an imitator on TV shows, and lives in a neighbouring municipality. The poster to announce the play showed the household group next to the student. The locals wear old, worn-out clothes and hold outdated farming equipment, with an old farmhouse in the background. The way they are posing suggests they are mentally defective. The whole play revolves around the idea that the student finds himself living among lunatics. The family photo on the poster is grotesque. The gags in the play are exaggerated to the utmost in order to get the audience laughing.

The portrait of the peasant in this play is quite different from the one offered by the descriptions of peasant families at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In the photographs of Eulalia de Abaitua Allende-Salazar

(1994, 1998) or those that Jesús Ramos (1999) included in his book of vintage postcards, for example, there is an evident effort to make the subjects look clean, elegant, and dignified, regardless of what the actual living conditions of these peasant men and women were. This is not surprising, since we know that the Basque ethnographers of the time propagated an idyllic image of the life and the people of the mountain villages. Earlier Basque ethnographers idealised the Basque peasant family as the embodiment of Christian values and social stability (Estornés Zubizarreta 1983), threatened at the time, in their view, by the growing influence of socialism and other revolutionary ideologies, as well as by industrial migration, which pushed people from the rural villages into the marginal living conditions of the industrial urban centres (Martínez Martín 1996). Thus, the images of *Homo sylvestris* with which *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* perceive *baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa* are of two kinds: those of the Rousseauian ‘noble savage’; and those of the savage that must be conquered and tamed. Or, to borrow a terminology (Carrasco 1996), we could say there is the ‘friendly peasant’ and the ‘defiant peasant’.¹

Therefore, there are popular images which tend to validate social scenarios in which those of peasant origin have to see themselves as carriers of a negative cultural identity. During my fieldwork I have collected a large number of anecdotes that depict current local versions of the *Homo sylvestris* with which people of Alkiza feel uncomfortable but have internalised in the course of their socialisation process (Fernández de Larrinoa 2007). And there is another side to the same coin, since *baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa* look at *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* according to their own parameters and to the images they have created of the city and its inhabitants, whose changing cultural referents I explain below.

As the urban industrial workshops became established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the city gradually displaced the woods and mountains as the place from which the images that reinforce the peasant’s self, its difference, and its positive identity were generated. Ethnographic research from the early twentieth century, such as that of Barandiarán and others, shows that legends and myths, along with geographical features, rock formations, and buildings are full of caves, mountain ledges, bridges, and groves inhabited by the Goddess Mari, the Basajaun, and a collection of other fantastic creatures whose menacing presence haunt the country dweller (Barandiarán 1997). These are characters whose features combine human, animal, and vegetable attributes, and in which it is easy to recognise the specific version of the *Homo sylvestris* that the Basque peasant created before the industrial revolution. However, the Basque peasant of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries no longer refers to the mountains and the woods as the main source of danger to their lifestyle. Danger today comes from the cities and the people who inhabit them, the *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* group.

City dwellers, given their particular perceptions of the rustics, strive to impose the cultural supremacy of the city over the countryside. Similarly, Basque peasants have constructed an imagery with which to demonstrate their sociocultural superiority

over city dwellers. Within this set there are two types of narratives, descriptions, and explanations which the peasants use to develop corresponding images of the city and its inhabitants. The first type centres on the idea that cities are filthy, dangerous places where people live under a constant threat. When I began to visit the area in the late 1970s, peasants from Tolosa county used to refer of Tolosa city (the industrial, commercial, and administrative centre of the region) with terms such as *zulo zikina* and *zulo iluna* ('dirty hole' and 'dark hole').

To peasants, the *kaletarrak* are dangerous people. When they visit or come to live in the countryside, they ignore the rules and behave as if everything that is within their reach belonged to them. In springtime they take walks and cut through the pastures, spoiling the hay. In the summer they forget to close the gates that keep the cattle in the fields, and walk their dogs off the leash where the cattle are grazing. In the autumn they come in groups to gather chestnuts, pecans, apples, and other fruit, and walk into private orchards as if they were their own. They even pick beans from people's gardens. In wintertime they break into shepherds' cabins if the weather turns bad, or just to eat their lunch sheltered from the cold. There are many anecdotes of instances in which *baserritarrak* express the anguish that takes hold of them when *kaletarrak* come into their environment. When this happens, the intruder is referred to as *kalekumea*. (The term *kalekumea* comes from *kalea*, street, and the suffix *-kumea*, used to refer to animals' offspring and vermin.) Significantly, in the 1980s *kalekumea* had taken the place that wolves, bears, and mythological characters had in the folktales recorded by academics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There is a second meaning attached to *kalekumea*: *gu baino gutxiagokoa*, or 'that which is lesser than us', which gives rise to many local stories. *Kalekumea* also represents a lesser ability – as compared to that of the country dweller – to deal directly with the demands of life, especially when they imply a physical effort. People who farm for a living see city dwellers as having very limited means to survive in a world without money as an element of commercial exchange. Farmers often express the opinion that people from the cities would slowly die out if there was an industrial crisis since, they reason, they have no land and no idea how to work it. Without wages or state welfare, they would not be able to get food.

The dying of the traditional?

When I entered the village in 1982, I encountered a sociocultural reality in Alkiza that did not fit into the framework suggested by the classical ethnographies of the area (Douglass 1969, 1975; Aranzadi 1974; Caro Baroja 1974; Ott 1981). While these concentrated on a Basque society of subsistence farming, the inhabitants of Alkiza were in 1982 confronting other elements coming from outside. I was to learn that throughout the 1970s and 1980s peasant identity was troublesome in Alkiza, since tradition and modernisation confronted each other. By tradition here I mean

the body of knowledge about peasant Basque society created by folklore and ethnography researchers (Fernández de Larrinoa 1997). Cultural traditions were losing social weight in Alkiza while agriculture was becoming mechanised, and people emigrating. The local system of social organisation was changing as *exotiká* died out (Stewart 1994). By modernisation I mean the influence of industrial development in the county of Tolosa, where the family-owned paper factories, sawmills, and small mechanic workshops employed many workers from the area's farms, and from other parts of Spain. During the 1980s, out of thirty-five people of working-age in Alkiza, fifteen worked in industry in Tolosa. At much the same time, in Alkiza farming machines substituted the traditional wood and wrought-iron equipment and ploughing teams. Raising cattle, particularly dairy farming, became an intensive industry in several farms. Also, importantly, this period witnessed the culmination of an economic process in which national tendencies of industrialisation, mechanisation, and modernisation were key referents with which peasants internalised images of themselves.

Perhaps it was not surprising then that the ethnographic data I was collecting in Alkiza tended not to fit the organisational and festive-ritual model that anthropologists and folklorists had drawn up to explain the details of traditional rural Basque society. The three pillars which, according to the scholars, held up Basque peasant culture were tumbling in Alkiza. First, the system of inheritance and the transmission of the family agricultural exploitation no longer followed the traditional form of *mayorazgo* (where the sole heir is the eldest son), at least not in the way that the anthropologists had described up to that point. Second, the system of reciprocity and mutual assistance among farmhouses was no longer based exclusively on a criterion of ritual neighbourhood as previous works of anthropology had reported. Third, my research into the folklore, composition and ritual-aesthetic usage of the spoken word among Alkizians uncovered an unexpected cultural situation. The cultural forms which had characterised local life in the past were changing content during my fieldwork. They continued to be practised, but their referents had changed. In the following pages I will briefly describe some of the sociocultural peculiarities that arose throughout the investigation with regard to these three themes.

Inheritance

In the 1970s Alkiza's heirs begged off the duty of running the family house in order to take salaried work in the small industrial workshops established in the valley's municipal seat. The job of running the house would then fall to another son until he in turn went to work in the valley, a keenly pursued goal. In this way the intergenerational transmission of the house and its associated complex of livestock and agriculture changed its referents in Alkiza. Until then the rule had been that the house went to the son best suited to work in the field; now the emerging practice was that the house went to the son least suited to finding work in the workshops in the valley. The norm of sole heir remained, but changed in referent.

Reciprocity

Ritual reciprocity between Basque farming houses, expressed in relationships of neighbourhood, have been well documented by previous ethnographers (Douglass 1969; Ott 1981). In this exchange system, each farmhouse in the village lends to one or more assigned farmhouses a certain type of help, or specific services, either to do with economic activities (e.g. the preparation of the fields, the harvest, haymaking, the slaughter of domestic animals, and the manufacture of products), or with religious-ritual activities (arranging the wake in the event of a death in the domestic group, or some other activity connected with the Church). Ritual neighbourhood is mutual help between homes for tasks that are beyond the abilities of a single domestic group. What is significant in this case is that domestic groups do not improvise where to seek the needed loans and services: the corresponding home or homes are already assigned.

In the county of Tolosa, the Basque word *auzoa* refers to the ritual neighbourhood house, and *auzokoa* to its dwellers. When asked about this custom, my informants had no difficulty identifying the relationships of *auzokoa* among households in the village, but noted that they were not always in operation, i.e. there were domestic groups who sought help from others living in houses where there had been no prior relationship of *auzoa*. The people I interviewed indicated that for an ever increasing number of matters domestic groups were not responding to the relationship of *auzoa*, partly because the tasks that required cooperation between neighbours were no longer carried out, partly because the acquisition of modern machinery meant that domestic groups no longer needed help for some tasks, and sometimes because the household which operated as *auzoa* had been abandoned and remained empty.

The word

Following previous investigators of oral culture in Euskara my original interest centred on compiling, directly from the mouths of Alkiza's inhabitants, samples of mythology, legends, sayings, songs, and verses. To this end I interviewed several villagers, who gave me interesting versions of local couplets, songs, and legends. Several matters caught my attention: as I compiled oral material, I began to see that these oral pieces no longer belonged to the sphere of local social relationships but to the memory of past times. This was demonstrated by the way in which I had to access the information: not a single person under the age of forty was able to reproduce the stories, songs, legends, or verses in the style which the Basque folklorists had published in their compilations. In fact, I found few in Alkiza who were learned in mytho-historical narratives, lyrical or epic songs, or in the improvisation of verse. Among these, fewer still were willing to perform in public; furthermore, not once in the duration of my fieldwork did I note a readiness on anyone's part to listen with a view to learning the pieces well enough to be able to continue the tradition.

Unexpectedly, my research on traditional singing in Alkiza was, however, to find myself in a contradictory situation. Oral culture in Euskara was revitalised in the

1980s thanks, to a great extent, to the launching of Basque public television and radio, as well as to the integration of Euskara into public education, both as a subject and as spoken language. There were books published and audio and videotapes made about rural Basque culture, which were shown on television, played on the radio, and sold to the public. Some of the folklore genres that the budding Basque cultural industry promoted were *kantu zaharrak* (old ballads and romances), *bertso zaharrak* (old verses), and *bertso berriak* (new verses). However, my research into the genres of folklore in Alkiza led me to the following conclusion:

Today there are few genuine sociocultural contexts in which to interpret the oral compositions of the Basque folklore artists of the past; even when there is such a context, the people involved would not feel it was appropriate to revive or recreate the compositions of their elders, since they consider them 'things of the past', *démodé*; even *bertsolaritza*, the oral genre with more social resonance in the Basque Country, is a marginal activity in Alkiza. (from my fieldnotes)

Village cultural decadence and the lively format for the day: storytelling

During my stay in Alkiza I noticed that, both there and in neighbouring villages, there was a vigorous form of verbal activity which contrasted with the decline of cultural features described above: *kontuak esatea* (storytelling), an activity I interpret following the way Jean Duvignaud has proposed, as simple talk, chatting, social intercourse which happens outside work, politics, and religion. He argues that there are times and places where people gather to talk and share everyday stories or emotions. People talk in cafes, restaurants, bars, plazas, public laundries, hallways, waiting rooms, and train and bus stations. This talk serves to build stories that take freely from the elements and themes with which a culture defines itself. Since these elements are nothing other than the everyday values, myths, and symbols of a society, Duvignaud argues that simple talk is a social activity based on the verbal manipulation of everyday life's images and representations. Thus, the gathered people compose and propagate stories made of a yarn that arbitrarily combines elements from their current system of social classification (Duvignaud 1980).

In Alkiza adults engaged happily in storytelling when they were idle. It took place in bars, plazas, grocery stores, in *herriko ostatua* (the village coffee shop), after Saturday or Sunday Mass, after a local festivity, during mealtimes at the farmhouse, and in the Monday and Saturday markets in Tolosa. Finally, people told stories during the dead time between finishing one task and starting another, or when meeting a neighbour while walking to or from the fields. During these occasions people may talk about any local event. Within this context of informal talk, villagers told stories whose characters belonged to the everyday world of the narrators. The stories were told during trivial social encounters as a verbal entertainment. Through them, those gathered spoke of their cultural identity and social status both in the local sphere and in society at large. This is what cultural interpretation analysis, like that

of Clifford Geertz, has defined as 'saying something of something', that is, a form of meta-language (Geertz 1973). Significantly, I collected many stories that exemplified the conflict between two referents and the resulting strained, dual identity of many peasants. In Tolosa, during the 1980s, it was common to hear people from peasant families tell stories which described working at the farm as a heavy burden identified with celibacy and slavery, while working in factories and living in the city was considered liberating; it fostered family life and allowed access to new goods and services (Fernández de Larrinoa 2007; also Fernandez 1989).

Furthermore, villagers made *kontuak esatea* a sociocultural activity through which they could negotiate the contradictions of their changing identity, between the inherited identity of loyalty to one's elders, in which the farmhouse played the role of sociocultural matrix, and the liberatory appeal of working for wages in the factories. In this sense, the farmers of Alkiza were acting like their counterparts in other places in the Basque Country. For example, in his study of peasants in north-eastern Guipúzcoa, who at the time combined farm work with jobs in the paper industry, Joxe Miguel Apaolaza writes:

For the *baserritarra*, or peasant, the factory is a place where the only meanings played out are those of urban life: financial and sociopolitical demands, strikes. The peasant's behaviour at the factory is peculiar and full of specific features that hint at the powerful contradictions within.

They think their time at the factory is transitory – even though some of them have been working there for over twenty years – that they are there only as long as it is necessary, as long as it takes for the farmhouse to become once again profitable ...

The *baserritarras* have always refused to become part of urban society. The reason for this self-exclusion is not comfort, or the inability to move in both spaces, rural and urban society, but rather, the firm belief that rural society is superior ... This behaviour does not extend to the younger generations. (Apaolaza 1981: 53–4)²

Towards today

Today Alkizians do not express sociocultural approval or rejection by referring to the pros or cons of industrial work. Rather, notions such as 'social well-being', 'agri-cultural-nutritional quality', or 'rural development' provide the discursive images used to talk publicly about living in the contemporary countryside (Ray 1997). Thus in this section I discuss how, in the current socio-economic context, the villagers endorse or rebuff the category of 'peasant', and what are the present sociocultural mechanisms they use to express features of local identity.

'Rural development', as a concept, is part of the institutional and administrative discourse of the European Union, a transnational institution which has approved guidelines for social, economic and cultural intervention in the agricultural spaces of its associated nations. Among the EU's objectives is to ameliorate the economic and political marginalisation of rural and farming communities in the mountain regions,

to address the problems of demographic decline and environmental degradation, and to resist the cultural homogenisation that urban models promote. Thus, the EU promotes measures and subsidies which stimulate the diversification of rural economic activities. Of course, this process of rural development is one taking place within a movement of economic Europeanisation (European Commission 1999; 2002; 2003; 2004).

Recently researchers have noted how the issue of cultural resources has begun to loom large in rural development plans. In order to revitalise the declining economy of farming regions, public administrations are promoting certain cultural resources: e.g. traditional festivities, local crafts and culinary traditions, typical farming landscapes, local products, and markets (Faure 2000). In a growing number of places this has encouraged the social activation of local cultural elements as economic goods or merchandise (Throsby 2001). This has resulted in a process of production and consumption of cultural symbols where the emphasis is (a) on promoting cultural tourism in the countryside and providing the infrastructure required for such activities; and (b) on the marketing of farming products as distinctive to the region. Hence the coinage of the new expression 'rural cultural heritage' (Ruiz Urrestarazu 2001; Fernández de Larrinoa 2011).

At the same time, the EU has classified certain spaces as 'disadvantaged mountain areas', making it possible for local development promoters to advocate investment in rural spaces, and favouring the economic activation of rural identity symbols. Following EU guidelines, the Strategic Rural Basque Plan 1997–2000 proposes four areas of development: (a) professional training in new farming, cattle raising, and forestry technologies; (b) leisure and tourism; (c) nature conservation; and (d) preservation of collective memory. The Basque government thus promotes a notion of 'rural Basque space' in which the definition of space has more to do with lifestyle than with primary productive activities (Departamento de Agricultura y Pesca 1997).

Josetxu Martínez Montoya has argued that there is an important sociocultural change process taking place in the Basque Country. He refers to three particular processes guiding this restructuring: rural spaces become urbanised; rural territories turn to tourism; and the rural economy turns to tertiary activities. The effects include the increasingly blurry distinction between rural and urban spaces, and the shifting of villagers' identity markers from rural ones to urban-rural. Rural space thus becomes a locus in which to represent emerging sociocultural identities that reappraise the values of 'local' and 'hometown' (Martínez Montoya 1996; 1999; 2002; ch. 5). For example, in Alkiza, the village once upheld an image of rural farming. Today, thanks to new patterns of settlement there, its image is changing in accordance with an urban understanding of rural space.

In the past, city dwellers associated Basque peasants with positive, laudatory images and negative, *Homo sylvestris* ones. The memories of these images are still strong, and today lie alongside newer public images of the Basque farmhouse, which

have changed referents but are still nevertheless contradictory. Here I look at these images and the contradictions they produce. But first I need to outline the changes in the social architecture of the village.

Three innovations in housing use: the 1970s and 1980s

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a pattern of cultural authenticity among the speakers and students of Euskara, linked to the idea of its pre-Indo-European origin and the rural habitat of its current speakers. This pattern had two main variants. In the colloquial variant, the dialect of Euskara spoken in the mountain villages was considered more authentic than other forms. Some considered *Batua* as inferior as they thought it 'artificial': a laboratory product assembled by scholars without taking into account people's everyday speech. Similarly, they put down *kaleko Euskara* (city-dweller Basque), to them a degenerative form polluted by Spanish, the dominant language in the cities.³ Alkiza, among other small mountain villages where Euskara was spoken, responded to this image of cultural authenticity.

The intellectual variant was stimulated by the aesthetic theories of sculptor Jorge de Oteiza (1908–2003), who had had a strong influence in the local artistic circles of the time. He argued for a concept of Basque cognitive authenticity based on the pre-Indo-European nature of Euskara. According to him, its antiquity gave its speaker a *sui generis* system through which to interpret reality. From this base, he strove to demonstrate the existence of a particular Basque aesthetic vision, essential for the interpretation and production of a genuinely Basque art (Oteiza 1963). During the late 1960s he also played a key role in stimulating a movement, known today as the Basque Art School, which aimed to rehabilitate Basque identity through artistic experimentation. Among the various Basque aesthetic ideas elaborated by the School, the ecological-linguistic proposal was one of the more important. Also, a significant number of artists established their workshops in rural settings, and often remodelled old farmhouses for this purpose.

It was within this context that several families arrived in Alkiza during the 1970s and 1980s. Two young Spanish-speaking couples settled in houses outside of the village. They came from the city, and were employed in the valley. They spent their leisure time caring for small vegetable gardens and fruit orchards for their own consumption. Their children attended the local school where Euskara was the medium of communication and therefore became friendly with local children, monolingual Euskara speakers. This also encouraged a feeling of belonging, and made it possible for the children to grow up in an Euskara-speaking atmosphere of *euskaldun*. The two couples themselves made an effort to learn some Euskara, which they used in the family to model a positive attitude towards the language for their children. A third young couple also left a nearby big town to build a house with a small garden and orchard in Alkiza. This couple spoke Euskara, and one of them worked in the service industry in the village. They too sent their children to the local school. Another settler of this period was a painter of the Basque heritage movement, who

moved with his family to an abandoned house in Alkiza, which he then renovated to serve as the family home and his art studio. Euskara-speaking emigrants from a city, they also sent their children to the local school and kept an orchard. Thus, this small group of ex-urban families aspired to become part of a new ecologic-cultural context through their identification with horticulture, the local school, and the language. They constituted a new social category within the village.

Another first during this period was the establishment of home-based workshops. When, in the 1970s, a young man – who was not to inherit the farm and had an industrial job in the valley – married, the new couple did not move into an urban flat but bought land from the family's farm and built a house there. Even more unusually, in the 1980s he quit his job and set up a small industrial workshop in his house. The workshop was still active in 2011 and, now assisted by his son and daughter, he works sharpening metal pieces sent by companies of the region. Similarly, the husband in a family which had settled in Alkiza in the 1970s, decided in the 1990s to quit his job in the valley and also started a small industrial workshop in his family home. With the help of his son, he maintained it until his retirement in the late 2000s.

A third innovation in residential pattern was the following. The owners of a compound located on the town's plaza decided to build a new house next to the old farmhouse. The house followed urban parameters with regards to materials, style, and distribution. The heir, his family, and his father moved in, two years after it was finished, while his unmarried uncle and sister stayed in the farmhouse. Here, father and son decided to live together with the son's family in a chalet-type house which, although near the farmhouse, possesses all the comforts of urban houses in the valley. The heir worked in a small industrial workshop in Tolosa county, while his father was a full-time farmer. This case did not follow the traditional trend where the children who marry, but will not continue working in the farm, must leave the farmhouse. Notably, it introduced a way of local living new to Alkiza. What is interesting is that the seekers for cultural authenticity and the constructors of home-based workshops have not had any imitators since, while the builder of a second home next to his old one has.

Flat, villa, double-family houses

By the 1990s the traditional farmhouse was becoming badly outdated: some, whose owners had moved on, stood empty; childless singletons inhabited others; yet others were occupied by adult offspring who had rejected their inheritance and worked outside the home but still periodically assisted their elders with farming tasks. Since this time, Alkiza has instead become home to three new residential concepts: flats, villas, and double-family houses.

Blocks of flats had become common in parts of Tolosa county since the industrial development of its towns from the 1960s on. They were occupied by non-Basque labour migrants and by local peasants who did not have or refused the right of primogeniture, and who on or after marriage left the paternal home. In traditional

Alkizian farmsteads, when a son or daughter other than the heir marries they must leave. Their options are: if he/she has married the heir to a different farmhouse, then the couple may keep the social status of *baserritarra* (peasants). They may also buy or rent a flat in a housing block in the valley, thus acquiring a dual public identity: no longer *baserritarrak*, they are socially identified as *baserrikoak*, i.e. born and raised on a farm, which carries some of the images associated with the term *baserritarra*. From the peasants' point of view, however, '*kalean bizi da*', 'they are living in the city'. And yet, according to local peasant opinion, *baserria* and *kalea* are opposing models. Until the 2000s, in Alkiza, there were only three flat-style buildings. Of traditional size and design, made of stone and wood, with a sloping roof, they are adjacent and face the plaza. In the village, then, living in a flat was rare, while in the towns nearby it had already become an extended practice.

A new-style villa is very different. Unlike flats (usually associated with waged workers), villas are spacious homes, normally built in a privileged part of town or near town, and confer on their inhabitants a higher social status. Just as blocks of flats have created working-class neighbourhoods, so the concentration of villas has produced exclusive residential neighbourhoods. In the past, living in a villa was restricted to families from the ruling class whose wealth grew with the economy and the industrialisation of the country. Today, however, the trend of living in villas has become generalised in the Basque Country.

As the purchasing power of the urban middle class grew during the 1970s and 1980s, people acquired second homes or flats on the Basque coast or nearby. Acquiring a chalet or vacation flat was for many their initiation into conspicuous leisure consumption. The development of villas in rural towns and mountain villages in the Tolosa area is thus due to various elements, including pressure in the real estate market; excellent land communications infrastructure; an urban imaginary which connects rural living to quality of life and social distinction; and the development of digital technology, which permits tele-cottaging.⁴ A consequence of all this is the change, since the late 1990s, in the architecture and the landscape design of many rural towns in Guipúzcoa. Rural municipalities enabled this change (by granting building licences, and recategorising rural land as urban) in order to finance the renovation of municipal services. Similarly, through the sale of land, locals have generated the money to renovate their homes or modernise their farming facilities. It is in this general context that a housing development consisting of five double townhouses and one detached two-family unit were built during the years 2004 and 2005 in the neighbourhood of the central plaza in Alkiza, and sold immediately to young people.

The construction of *etxeak* (single or double-family homes) was a new use of landscape which had arrived in Alkiza in the 1990s (Figures 6.1 and 6.2). About eleven new houses were built in the municipality between 1991 and 1999: three in the plaza, two nearby, the rest further away. Two were built by a real estate entrepreneur from Tolosa, originally for his own family's use but both, to the chagrin of the

Figure 6.1 The village of Alkiza, 1945.

town hall, were sold to young families from San Sebastián within a short time. Also, two old buildings, located near the plaza, were bought, restored, and are now homes for couples with children. The rest of the houses were not built by a profit-seeking intermediary but by locals. These were villagers who would not inherit or had rejected their inheritance; they built on the family's farmland, so living near their aged parents, who were still tending the farm. Some features of these houses, such as size and style, as well as the fact that their inhabitants were employed in activities other than farming, make farmers identify them as *kaletxeak*, 'city housing'. But people from out of town who do not share the farmhouse culture usually describe the houses as chalets, or villas. The houses stand on an ambiguous space in the local map: the proximity of the family farmhouse, the fact that the inhabitants participate regularly in farming work, that they keep vegetable gardens, fruit orchards or crops for cattle feed in the same land make them not, in the strict sense of the word, *kaletxeak* or chalets. It is interesting that neighbours use the term *etxea*, house, to refer to one of these buildings. However, they always use *baserria* to refer to the farmhouse, and chalet or villa to refer to the houses built by real estate agents or construction companies to make a profit.

This small wave of construction gave the town a feeling of renovation which became stronger as the number of apartment buildings around the town's plaza grew in the 1990s.⁵ During the 2000s, this urban growth continued, particularly around

Figure 6.2 Alkiza, 2006.

the plaza.⁶ One cause was the rise of ‘officially protected housing’ promoted by the Basque government in line with an EU objective for rural development: to stop the gradual emigration from villages by giving locals incentives to remain in their hometowns. To that end, the Basque government, together with the rural municipalities, designed an intervention plan whose goal was to create affordable housing for locals. Alkiza participated successfully in this scheme: in 1998, two new buildings with a total of eight flats were finished; seven years later, sixteen flats in four recently completed buildings were allocated to young locals.

Contemporary social relations

The village today is thus made up of the following: (a) locals living either in *herriko pisuak*, municipal flats around the plaza, or *etxeak*, two-storey, single-family houses on land near the original family farmhouse; (b) outsiders, some of whom have either renovated abandoned farmhouses, or built a detached house within near the village; others have bought a flat, while yet others have bought a single or a two-family villa in the town from a real estate agent; and (c) the *baserritarrak*, the farmers who live in farmhouses set far apart from each other. The confluence of these three residential styles in present day Alkiza has led to an unprecedented social and cultural experience for its inhabitants. The question is, what kind of relations are there between the people who live in the farmhouses and those who live in flats or villas?

For those born in Alkiza and nearby villages, there are certain social practices still in use which communicate a sense of exclusion or belonging, for example the communal meals of *cuadrillas*, a group of co-evals who spend social time together. In Alkiza, the *cuadrilla* is a group of people of the same age and gender whose relationship is based on the acquaintance and socialisation of its members in their school years, when they all attended the village school. The *cuadrilla* is a surviving fragment of the traditional society whose decline in the 1970s and 1980s I described earlier. During my fieldwork, the *cuadrillas* of Alkiza met on Saturday nights, after the family dinner and after mass, at the *ostatu*, the local coffee shop. The girls gathered outside, the boys inside. When all the *cuadrillas* were complete, their members organised themselves in the available cars and headed for the bars in Tolosa. The *cuadrillas* also met on Sunday afternoons, again at the *ostatu*, then in Tolosa. Once the members of a *cuadrilla* marry, their relation to the group is reduced to the periodical dinners and luncheons for the village's yearly festivities.

By belonging to a *cuadrilla*, a person becomes part of a network linking him or her to other local youths they would otherwise not meet. Taking part in *cuadrilla* relations (which is nothing more than exercising the right to participate in collective activities by ascribing to a group of the same age and gender) reinforces links that the members associate with the village, since it is the setting of shared school days, through childhood up to the end of adolescence. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s incoming adults, who by definition did not belong to a local *cuadrilla*, had a hard time taking part in local social life and so had to devise their own network of relations to link themselves to their neighbours. Since the school came to represent the idea of 'collective local life' in the late 1980s and early 1990s,⁷ their children were able to integrate, first, as members of *eskolako umeak*, the village's school children, and then in turn as *herriko gazteak*, the village's young people, finally becoming members of *cuadrillas*.

The case of the adults has been different. The couples that settled in Alkiza during the 1970s and 1980s have shared with their children the referent of school as the mechanism of inclusion in local social life. But the degree of connection of the children and the parents to the village life is notably different. Those who settled in Alkiza as adults have, as a rule, only formed superficial and discontinuous links to local social organisations. This superficiality is a consequence of the rigidity of peasant social structures, which are unable to accommodate *kanpotarrak*, outsiders, in local life. Several *kanpotarrak* families arrived during the 1970s and 1980s looking to find some kind of cultural authenticity. Justified by the conceptual difference between *baserria* and *kaletarra* and the images each notion casts on the countryside, the peasants of Alkiza were not particularly receptive to the newcomers.

For outsiders, the process of adaptation was long and had mixed results. For example: (a) during the 1980s, a family made several complaints to the authorities because a neighbouring farmer harassed them insistently; (b) a wife interviewed in the late 1990s explained how difficult it had been for them to join in local life; and it

was not until her children started at the local school that they made a few acquaintances. However, as happened with their children, couples found in the local school a way of linking with other families in the village, mostly through active participation in *gusaoen elkartea*, the parents' organisation of the school. This is an administrative body created by the public administration to foster the participation of society in the running of public schools and their activities. In Alkiza, the *gusaoen elkartea* had not really worked until young couples from outside the village joined in during the 1980s, as farmers had had little interest in school or in the formal education of their children. The school in Alkiza, as an institution, reveals much about the degree of people's social inclusion or exclusion in the socialisation and social gathering networks of the village. There is a specific collective event related to school which emphasises degrees of inclusion and exclusion: the community dinner organised by the *gurasoen elkartea* on the eve of San Juan, 23 June, on the town's plaza.

The San Juan festivities are well known in Tolosa and other parts of the Basque Country and southern Europe. In Alkiza, the tradition is to light a bonfire using firewood and old household utensils and other things on the evening of 23 June. Until recently, the norm was that each family lit their own bonfire on their property. The festivity was an intimate, private one, involving the *baserria*, the smallest unit of the landscape which has a specific social meaning among farmers and peasants of the area. When the *gurasoen elkartea* broke into local life, its members considered that the San Juan festivities were an ideal opportunity for a social gathering. Since 1993, the *gurasoen elkartea* lights a great bonfire on the town's plaza on the eve of San Juan. The celebration includes an outdoors dinner financed, cooked and served by the organisation's more active members (Figure 6.3). After the meal, the bonfire is lit; as the flames subside and turn into embers, young and old alike jump over the fire. The *gurasoen elkartea* invites the whole community to attend the dinner and bonfire by issuing formal, written invitations, and thus gives the celebration a communal character that was lacking before. Attendance is nevertheless low, since not everyone in Alkiza celebrates the festivity in the same way, and most of those who live in old farmhouses continue to light their own bonfire. When I attended the celebrations during 2001, 2002, and 2003, I could confirm that the participants in the *gurasoen elkartea* bonfire were for the most part the local people who lived in *herriko pisuak* and *etxeak*, although people from outside Alkiza, who live in the apartments by the plaza, also attended. Even though this is Alkiza's only community-oriented celebration, its organisers have failed to attract either the farmers and peasants or the outsiders who send their children to private schools away from the village. Thus the celebration has become representative of people in a specific social segment who, by participating with their children, create a space in which to express social neighbourly links: mainly young people born in farmhouses who have settled with their spouses in flats, adapted rural buildings or new houses;⁸ and outsider couples who identify with the idea of cultural authenticity in the terms described earlier.

Figure 6.3 The festivity of San Juan, Alkiza, 2006.

For the last decades San Juan has been an invented festivity linked to school life in Alkiza. Those who take part display their links to their neighbours and the degree to which they are part of a socially constructed space. However, in contrast with the role it played in the 1980s and before, in the late 1990s the school did not act as a space of cultural and social integration for newcomers. Rather, it became an institution immersed in controversy, and the source of social division among residents. It happened that some people started questioning whether a rural school really possessed the educational requirements to prepare children to continue their education in an urban centre and among urban teenagers. In addition, in the early 2000s, a violent incident between young children led two local families to withdraw their children from the school. As a result, members of the *guraoen elkarte* can see that withdrawing their children from this very small school is a threat to its very existence. They also believe that taking children out of school is a disloyalty to the community spirit which should surround the local school.

Several families that moved into villas and chalets in recent times have chosen to send their children to private schools in urban centres. A rift thus became noticeable between the people who live in *baserriak* and *etxeak* compared to those who buy villas or chalets. The latter have not developed social links with the rest of the neighbours, and some of them have sent their children to be educated in the city, while locals use the municipal school. Several inhabitants of villas and chalets leave the village early in the morning for the daily commute, and return in the evening, and have so become the owners of Alkiza's first dormitory houses. These results are very

different from what the local authorities had in mind when they granted permission to build the houses: they wanted to promote the settlement of young couples in hopes that this would mean more children attending the local school, and so reducing the chance of its closure.

Although in 2011 most parents support the local school, in 2005 it was no longer a local referent representing the future of the village; rather, it was a problematic institution that created unease and started arguments among neighbours. To a great extent, the unprecedented growth of real estate in Alkiza in the 2000s displaced the school in favour of the construction industry as the symbolic referent that represents the idea of growing collective life in the village. Many said: 'Houses are being built, and the village grows; therefore, there is life in the village.'

Towards a conclusion?

According to a population survey, there were 362 people living in Alkiza in 2011. This number reflects a considerable increase from previous years.⁹ It also indicates a change in the dominant demographic tendency of the second half of the twentieth century, when Alkiza had an increasingly older population. This shift in the patterns of rural residence is the result of specific changes in attitude towards rural space, which has recently acquired new meanings, and through which a notion of rural life is spreading that is rapidly separating itself from the economic activities of the primary sector. The population increase in Alkiza is the result of two combining processes, one internal, the other external: (a) young people have the opportunity of settling in their home village at an affordable price without having to be part of the farmhouse domestic group; and (b) some young urban couples feel that living in a villa in the countryside is a sign of quality of life and social distinction. That is, living surrounded by such landscape as Alkiza offers, villa buyers get to experience the 'getaway' excitement every day, and not, as other people, only on weekends or holidays.

Both these processes however, have a common source. The reason why flats, houses and villas coincided as housing options in the village of Alkiza in 2005 was the high cost of housing in Basque cities. Alkiza is now a place where real estate speculation has started its ascent. Local people have stopped considering their land as valuable in terms of vegetable or cattle farming; rather, they ask what price it might fetch them in the rising market of house construction. In Alkiza there is distinction between *baserria/baserritarra/baserrikoa* and *kalea/kaletarra/kalekoa* both conceptual and spatial, at least until very recently. In the 2000s they share spaces, and this has resulted in a reformulation of the distinction. In present day Alkiza, farmhouses, flats, villas, houses, heirs, non-heirs, men, and women share spaces, times, and forms of living together which they did not before. The decrease in active farmhouses is counterbalanced by a significant increase in building flats, chalet-style single-family houses, and villa developments. Among the people living in Alkiza, the number of *baserrikoa* (someone who comes from a farming family but no longer works in a farm) is rising, as is that of *kaletarra* (someone from the city who holds a city job).

Real estate speculation has stimulated the construction of flats for locals and of villas for outsiders. It has also enabled the possibility of Alkiza becoming a dormitory town, and has shifted the locals' understanding of their property to that of a tradable good which can give their home economy a quick and significant lift. Forgotten is the fact that these lands were in the recent past spaces invested with familiar uses and meanings with intimate symbolic and emotional values; that they were associated with a specific body of knowledge, to tools and equipment, to the memories and social referents which were to be faithfully transmitted to the next generation within the domestic group, or to another farming family. At the same time, there are those who see in the proliferation of new buildings a process of re-valuation of the village. Still others see the opportunity to make a quick profit. Those who came to Alkiza looking for cultural authenticity watch with concern the deterioration of the rural landscape and architecture which were the product of the cultural history of the local peasants and farmers. As population rates were dramatically declining in the village, most locals and newcomers pointed to the school as a community referent, and the local authorities granted construction permits and recategorised rural lands as urban in an effort to keep the population up and thus the local school open.

To conclude, in Alkiza there is an ongoing shift from traditional, farming-oriented community boundaries to modern, urban-oriented ones. There have been attempts by several social segments to publicly construct a new collective representation of the 'village', as the example of the San Juan's eve festivity suggests. However, such attempts have not succeeded as makers of the village imaginary. Today, many Alkizians are uninterested in constructing open local symbols with which to portray and give sense to both changed and changing life in households as well as in the village. Instead they feel at ease consuming images of the passed-away *baserritarra*. And this is why the play *Kutsidazu bidea*, *Ixabel* was enjoyed so very much in Alkiza and nearby peasant communities: laughing as a celebration of what we no longer are. Still with us, though no longer us.

Notes

- 1 María Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti used these terms to define a similar distinction in the images of Muslims that appear in the traditional Christian-Moorish festivities of Spain (Carrasco 1996).
- 2 Author's translation from the original Spanish text:

La fábrica para el baserritarra es el lugar donde exclusivamente se muestran para ellos todos los significados de la vida urbana: luchas por reivindicaciones económicas y socio-políticas, huelgas. Su comportamiento en ésta es muy peculiar, con muchos rasgos específicos que muestran la existencia de unas contradicciones muy fuertes.

Por un lado piensan que su paso por la fábrica, aunque algunos llevan más de veinte años, es una situación transitoria, que ha de durar únicamente el tiempo necesario, hasta que sea posible que el caserío vuelva a ser rentable como lo era ya hace muchos años.

[...]

Los baserritarras en todo momento se han negado a formar parte de la sociedad urbana. El motivo o la razón de esta automarginación no es la comodidad, el poder nadar entre dos aguas: la sociedad rural por un lado y la urbana por el otro, sino la firme convicción de que la sociedad rural es mejor ... Este comportamiento no es extensible a los más jóvenes.

- 3 This is why many Euskara students preferred rural towns as the setting in which to practise the spoken language. It also explains the Basque language lessons organised by a Euskaltegi in Alkiza during the summer. As we saw before, such lessons served as narrative thread for the play *Kutsidazu bidea*, Isabel (Sagastizabal 1994).
- 4 Buying a villa reflects the combination of two mutually reinforcing factors: the first is figurative, and refers to the propagation among the urban population of a rural imaginary which defines countryside housing in terms of life quality; the second is utilitarian, and relates to the fact that the high price of the city flat makes the villa an attractive option. Rural towns are well connected and just a short ride away from Tolosa. San Sebastián is just 28 km apart from Tolosa, and is connected both by highway and by rail. This has allowed the emergence of social behaviours related to the acquisition of countryside home which are new to Tolosa county, such as commuting and telecommuting.
- 5 Two brothers from another village restored a run-down building and now live each in a flat with their wives and children. In 1996 a developer transformed an abandoned building on the plaza into four modern flats: three were acquired by outsiders, the fourth by a young man from the village and his wife, who have lived there since and now have children. Two years later two more buildings, each with four flats, were finished. These flats were promoted by the local authorities so that young people from Alkiza could settle there with their families. Also, two old buildings, located near the plaza, were bought, restored, and are now homes for couples with children.
- 6 In 2005, sixteen 'officially protected' flats were finished, and have already been bought by young local people; a traditional farmhouse was transformed by its owners into a two-family house; another two-family house went up near the ruins of an recently demolished farmhouse; five terraced houses were completed; a developer started work on a separate two-family unit building.
- 7 Elsewhere I have mentioned the emergence of social practices which substitute that of *mayorazgo*, now in decline, and which symbolise the idea of continuity of the group in the rural setting. For example, in 1987, the *eskola txikiak* (small schools) group formed in Guipúzcoa to help keep the schools in the small villages open and resist the concentration in larger towns, a tendency fostered by public policy. Thus, I wrote: 'however, new social practices indicate that, apart from the house, it is still possible to symbolise the existence of a rural community. This symbolic practice centres now in the efforts to maintain the local school. The rural world at the end of the century is struggling to keep its schools open. If the absence of heirs is a dramatic example of the emptiness of the homes and the economic disappearance of the farming/herding family enterprise, the closing of the schools dramatizes the death of the village itself' (Fernández de Larrinoa 1997: 389).
- 8 And also those who live in farmhouses near the plaza and have remodelled their farmhouses in the 1990s, following the standards of urban housing.
- 9 Alkiza had 658 people in 1854; in 1960 it was down to 401; in 1981 there were 272; in 1991 only 242; in 1996 the population went up to 260; in 2002, to 266; in 2005, 326; and in 2011 it was 362.

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