

SUMMARY

The thesis „Seto youth as carriers of culture: choices and challenges in modern times” I conducted qualitative interviews with nine young people involved in Setomaa culture. I was interested in how they help keep Seto culture alive today, what choices they make, and what challenges they perceive. I wanted to understand whether young people see themselves as cultural bearers due to an inner calling or whether this role has been passed on to them through their families.

In the practical part, I photographed seven young people, creating a photo series of 2–3 images of each, which I presented alongside a quote that stood out from their interview. I conducted the photo sessions in environments familiar to the youth – in country homes, on busy streets, at home, and elsewhere. Each photo series aimed to tell a story and was paired with a meaningful quote. I focused on visual contrasts to highlight the interplay between modernity and tradition.

As a result of the study, I found that for young people, culture is a way of life. It could even be said that culture lives within them, and they have a deep personal connection to the region and its traditions. They actively participate in cultural life, whether through singing, playing instruments, crafting, or other traditional activities – often without even realizing that they are passing the culture forward. The interviews revealed that for most, the interest in Seto culture began in childhood through their families. A minority discovered the culture independently, without active family involvement. These youth often feel a subconscious drive to stay connected to the culture – just as I did when I chose this thesis topic. The responses also offered solutions to the concern of how to preserve Seto culture and prevent its fading. For example, encouraging older generations to support and guide cultural learning, creating attractive jobs in Setomaa, and making cultural life more visible through social media channels were among the suggestions.

In addition to gaining knowledge about Seto culture and the role of youth in its preservation, I grew personally as well. I learned to communicate with people, collaborate, and

manage my time. With this thesis, I aimed to give visibility to these young culture bearers and emphasize the importance of preserving cultural heritage.