

## The Challenging Food Regionality in Lower Silesia: Between Nostalgia and Innovation

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### Abstract

Lower Silesia, Poland, is a region that experienced almost a total change of population after 1945. Often described as a region of uprooted people and without its own identity and traditions, the regionality of its food presents in fact a particular phenomenon of transplanted and re-invented traditions. Foods declared regional culinary heritage or traditions in the last few decades are mostly either those brought by the ancestors of today's Lower Silesians who migrated here, or traditions related to the place, re-created and carried on even without the population in which they originally evolved. Accordingly, regionality is defined by social or territorial criteria. Trying to make sense of the traumatic history of their region, the Lower Silesians construct multilayer foodways and re-invent traditions of their region. Along with the *mélange* of the traditions from other Polish regions and several ethnic minorities, a nostalgia for the cuisines of the former Polish Eastern Borderlands is particularly cherished. At the same time, more and more traditions of German Silesians or Medieval Silesia are being revived and reintroduced into the local foodways. These strategies, not specific to this region alone, allow for a construction of a food regionality rooted in older traditions, even though the continuity of place or population are disrupted.

### Keywords

Re-invention of tradition; regionality; migration; nostalgia; culinary heritage

This study delves into the challenging<sup>1</sup> regionality of Lower Silesian foodways, aiming to identify main strategies applied there to construct cultural difference and imaginative geography of the region.<sup>2</sup> It exemplifies a differentiating aspect of global

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<sup>1</sup> In the sense of “difficult heritage,” see Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage. Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), 1; applied to Lower Silesia Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel and Grzegorz Strauchold, eds., *Trudne dziedzictwo. Tradycje dawnych i obecnych mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska* (Wrocław: Oficyna Wyd. ATUT, Wrocławskie Wyd. Oświatowe, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Ian Cook and Philip Crang, “The World on the Plate: Culinary Culture, Displacement and Geographical Knowledges,” *Journal of Material Culture* 1 (1996): 133, 140.

transformation processes, intensified in Poland after the EU accession of 2004, and the dynamics of the re-invention of tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Lower Silesia<sup>4</sup> in southwestern Poland is a region that experienced almost a total exchange of population after 1945. The number of autochthones left behind in this area was minimal. Often described as a region of uprooted people and without its own identity<sup>5</sup> and traditions, the regionality of its food is constructed through a range of strategies including transplantation, re-creation, reintroduction, and innovation.<sup>6</sup>

A censored history, as it was in the Polish People's Republic, may weaken the local and regional sense of belonging, and this seems to manifest itself specially in the western and northern regions, whose local history was particularly affected.<sup>7</sup> A certain erasure of the non-Polish heritage of these areas from public discourse meant that the local population did not feel fully connected to their places of residence and largely ignored their history. A striking phenomenon illustrates the difficulty to accept the new “home”: The families who were resettled from the former eastern Polish territories did not unpack their suitcases for years or even decades, convinced that the borders were only temporary and that they would soon be allowed to return to their old homes.<sup>8</sup>

For most of the time after 1945, this attitude meant the rejection of the territorial heritage, i.e., the one immobile and specific to the territory, dependent on the terroir.<sup>9</sup> Lower Silesians often define culinary heritage through the collective or

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<sup>3</sup> Guy Beiner, “The Invention of Tradition?,” *The History Review* 12 (2001), 6; compare: Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> By the region of Lower Silesia, I mean the area of the current voivodship, created in 1999, only roughly similar to the Wrocław voivodship (1946-1975) or the German Province of Lower Silesia (1919-1938 and 1941-1945).

<sup>5</sup> See the audition by Radio Wrocław, broadcasted on May 22' 2018, its very title includes the question “Lower Silesia – a region without identity?,” accessed January 30, 2024, <https://www.radiowroclaw.pl/articles/view/77849/Spor-polemika-dialog-Dolny-Slask-region-bez-tozsamosci>

<sup>6</sup> The impetus for creating this typology arose from conversations with Anna Rumińska, leader of Slow Food Dolny Śląsk, for which I am grateful to her.

<sup>7</sup> Anna Wolff-Powęska, “Lokalność w Niemczech i w Polsce – doświadczenia i perspektywy,” in *Wielopolska regionalna? Regionalizm w Polsce a polityka strukturalna w Unii europejskiej*, ed. Krzysztof Bondyra, Marek Szczepański and Paweł Śliwa (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej w Poznaniu, 2008), 120.

<sup>8</sup> Wolff-Powęska “Lokalność,” 120.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Rumińska and Bruno Zachariasiewicz, *Patriotyzm kulinarny jako ochrona dziedzictwa małej i dużej ojczyzny* (Moszczanka and Skrzebowa: Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju i Współpracy Wsi Moszczanka i Skrzebowa, 2022), 32.

individual memory, applying the social criteria.<sup>10</sup> Elements of such a heritage are mobile and specific to the people who transport them in time between generations and in space between places.<sup>11</sup>

Today's Lower Silesians descent from the various immigrant groups that settled here after 1945. In terms of numbers, these were mainly 1) the resettled from the overpopulated villages and bombed-out towns in the areas that belonged to Poland both before and after World War Two, 2) the expelled from the former Polish territories annexed by the Soviet Union, and 3) the so-called repatriated, who were remigrants from various countries, but also returning prisoners of war, forced labourers and concentration camp prisoners. Forced emigrants from the former eastern territories of Poland included people categorized by the administration as Poles and Jews, but the cultural diversity of these migrants was far more complex.<sup>12</sup> Although not numerous, the repatriates from Romania and Yugoslavia are interesting from a culinary point of view and often mentioned as a part of the now gladly accentuated diversity of the Lower Silesian culinary heritage. The region is also home to Ukrainians, Lemkos and Boykos forcibly resettled in 1947 as part of "Operation Vistula," as well as Greeks and Macedonians<sup>13</sup> taken in by the Polish People's Republic during the Greek civil war of 1946-49 or immediately afterwards. Although the administration defined most of those people as Poles or expected them to assimilate quickly, the considerable multiculturalism of this region debunked the declared monoethnic character of communist Poland and challenged the regime's striving for an ethnically homogenous state.

Anna Rumińska, leader of the local Slow Food group, described the identity of Lower Silesians as a complicated and difficult one, pointing out that according to

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<sup>10</sup> See also Bernhard Tschoffen, "Kulinaristik und Regionalkultur," in *Kulinaristik. Forschung – Lehre – Praxis*, ed. Alois Wierlacher and Regina Bendix (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 72.

<sup>11</sup> Rumińska and Zachariasiewicz, *Patriotyzm*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Agreements on population exchange, signed between Polish Committee of National Liberation and the Belarussian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics in 1944, spoke of people of Polish and Jewish ethnicity, who were Polish citizens prior to WW2, despite the unclear criteria for these ethnonyms. See Piotr Eberhardt, *Przemieszczenia ludności na terytorium Polski spowodowane II wojną światową* (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Geografii i Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania: 2000), 50. Members of the Tatar, Armenian and Karaites minorities often left the former Polish territories by declaring Polish ethnicity, something the Soviet authorities frequently contested. See Andrzej Rykała, "Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce z perspektywy geografii politycznej," in *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Geographica Socio-Oeconomica* No. 17 (2014), 83.

<sup>13</sup> Following the introduction of the amnesty by the government of Andreas Papandreu in 1982, most Greeks and some Macedonians returned to their country of origin. Many more Macedonians had already emigrated to Yugoslavia earlier.

many, Lower Silesians have no regional identity,<sup>14</sup> while the ethnologist Henryk Dumin claimed that there was no homogeneous Lower Silesian cuisine of the post-war period, but rather a collection of coexisting elements that were brought by the families of the immigrants and constitute the culinary richness of the region.<sup>15</sup> The region thus seems to be a collective term, a kind of container for all culinary practices that take place within its borders and to which a longer past is attested. This suggests some kind of methodological regionalism.<sup>16</sup>

In her educational work, Rumińska has observed that people think rather locally than regionally.<sup>17</sup> She calls regionality “a slogan, a buzzword, now sometimes used a lot in administration, often misused,”<sup>18</sup> even though the concept motivates her work. The concept does not correspond to the reality of people’s lives, unless they adopt it in the form prescribed by the regional administration, for example for legal and financial reasons. The construct of “region” is accordingly rather a framework for political, administrative, and economic activities, which, however, does not necessarily coincide geographically with cultural and social activities. Thus, regionality seems to be a problematic word because it bundles together foods, dishes and other elements that do not correspond to a cuisine practised by people. If some elements are only known and practised locally, others are shared beyond the borders of the region and the state.

## Transplantation

The various groups of people who settled in Lower Silesia after World War Two brought their culinary habits with them. They continued to cultivate these as far as possible, although a complete transplantation of the foodways into the new reality was not possible due to the lack of ingredients and changed social and economic circumstances. In the case of Christmas Eve in rural areas, the mixing of populations from different regions caused a re-evaluation of own traditions, particularly the generations born in Lower Silesia who tended to discard some elaborate specialities

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<sup>14</sup> Anna Rumińska, personal Interview, July 24, 2022. The interview was conducted as part of collecting oral history sources for a doctoral thesis. Its content will be archived in the Saxon State and University Library Dresden (SLUB) and will be publicly accessible.

<sup>15</sup> Henryk Dumin, “Mała Wielkanoc,” *Kuchnia* 4 (2017), 90.

<sup>16</sup> Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm, “Conclusion: Overcoming methodological regionalism,” in *Regionalism and modern Europe: identity construction and movements from 1890 to the present day*, ed. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 351.

<sup>17</sup> Rumińska, personal Interview.

<sup>18</sup> Rumińska, personal Interview.

and adopt attractive festive dishes from their neighbours.<sup>19</sup> As the ingredients of these dishes carry ancient meanings and tend to be similar in all regions, it was the diverse preparation and serving methods that testified to the different origins of the immigrants and fostered an emotional connection to their homelands.<sup>20</sup> This process could be even more pronounced in the case of daily nutrition and in urban areas. A limited supply on the socialist market, but also rapidly advancing modernisation and the resulting abandonment of the need to prepare all dishes by hand, led to a slow convergence of the cuisine practised. Spreading a selection of regional, foreign and new dishes through the canteens, milk bars and restaurants or company holiday resorts, the People's Republic facilitated a homogenisation in the spirit of a national cuisine.

None of the regional foodways were therefore completely transplanted and cultivated, rather specific dishes were honoured and passed on within families. In the last two decades, the rise of restaurants, culinary programs, and food events, has brought these private traditions into the public sphere, spreading their popularity. The now uncensored nostalgia for the former Eastern provinces (*Kresy*) led to numerous publications<sup>21</sup> on life and cooking in those territories. The market's thirst for regional products over the last 20 years has encouraged the transfer of many specialities from the private to the public sphere, and in some cases new creations based on the old specialities. In Lower Silesia, the Polish Ministry of Agriculture's list of traditional products includes quite a few specialities from the *Kresy*. As regional heritage, they have a short history locally, but frequently a long social one. A balancing act between the region of origin and the region of production in naming these specialities is striking. For instance, the *Galicjanka* sausage comes from Galicia and at the same time from Niemcza, while the Armenian kolache is traditional among the Armenian Lower Silesians, but comes from Kutuy, today Ukraine. The names in minority languages like in case of *gandzabur* and *kysylycia* are retained. These confusing designations of origin reflect and tell part of the Lower Silesian history.

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<sup>19</sup> Anna Drożdż, "Wigilijne tradycje kulinarne osadników na Dolnym Śląsku w świetle materiałów źródłowych Polskiego Atlasu Etnograficznego," *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne* 22, No. 1 (2022), 14.

<sup>20</sup> Drożdż, "Wigilijne tradycje," 14.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g., the eight volumes of Witold Szolginia, *Tamten Lwów* (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Sudety, 1992-1997), Henryk Drzazgowski, *Na kresach II RP: Polesie – Wołyń* (Warszawa: Efekt, 1993), specifically on food: Barbara Hołub, *Przy wileńskim stole* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1992), and numerous cookbooks: Marta Orłowska, Marta (ed.), *Regionalna kuchnia polska: Kresy Wschodnie* (Kielce: O-Press, 2007), Małgorzata Caprari, *Kuchnia kresowa* (Warszawa: Klub dla Ciebie, 2007), Andrzej Fiedoruk, *Kuchnia kresowa* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2008), Ryszard Jan Czarnowski, *Kuchnia polskich Kresów* (Warszawa: Ofic. Wyd. Rytm, 2023).

Establishing the transplanted foods as regional products proves a nostalgia and a double regional affinity. In fact, the country housewives' associations<sup>22</sup> in the region tend to emphasise their members' roots and promote the transplanted traditions, i.e. their social heritage.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the extent to which the Lower Silesians, especially those who did not come voluntarily, are still attached to their regions of origin should not be underestimated. An extreme example are many Lemkos, even the younger Lower-Silesia-born ones, who still tend to speak of an exile.<sup>24</sup> Also, the voluntarily remigrated Poles from Bosnia are apparently prone to homesickness: "In Yugoslavia they missed Poland, here they miss Yugoslavia."<sup>25</sup> Journalists might mention that the descendants of these remigrates still prepare *sarma* and *pljeskavica*, and distil *rakija*,<sup>26</sup> but the truth is that they have been doing so for longer in Lower Silesia than in Bosnia. What fuels such a pronounced nostalgia? In this case, it becomes clear that tradition often refers to practices that were still new to grandparents or even parents. Possibly, people from smaller, distinct groups often experienced heightened alienation in their new surroundings, exacerbated by prejudice and occasional harassment from fellow immigrants.

Frequently, as in case of the festival and competition of regional traditions "Mała Wielkanoc" (literally: Little Easter) initiated in 1985, the intergenerational transmission is aided by ethnographic expertise. As in an open-air museum, a dedicated ethnography here is prone to a "carefully arranged authenticity"<sup>27</sup> and keen to "preserve old recipes, forms and, above all, the flavour of traditional dishes."<sup>28</sup> The inherent dynamics of culture are "frozen," to identify, preserve and promote the forms that are considered particularly archaic. The restoration or reinvention of such traditions present in the region involves the selection, interpretation, and institutionalisation of some, but impossibly all, of the elements that have been found or painstakingly dusted off. Whether they are considered worth preserving depends on whether they are categorised as traditional (enough), typical and authentic.

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<sup>22</sup> *Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich* are women's associations active in rural areas. They often dedicate themselves to preserving local culinary traditions and promote women's entrepreneurship.

<sup>23</sup> Rumińska, personal Interview.

<sup>24</sup> Helena Duć-Fajfer, "Migracja kolista. Tożsamościowe wędrowanie Łemków: tekst i rytuał," *Porównania* 2, No. 32 (2022).

<sup>25</sup> Aneta Augustyn, "Galicjani czyli tam i z powrotem," *Kuchnia* 8/2013, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Augustyn, "Galicjani," 15.

<sup>27</sup> Antoni Kroh, *Za tamtą górą* (Warsaw: Iskry, 2016), 14.

<sup>28</sup> Henryk Dumin, "Mała Wielkanoc," *Kuchnia* 4/2017, 91.

## Re-creation and reintroduction

Expressions such as the preservation and protection of traditions or cultural heritage refer to existing practices or objects that are to be maintained and passed on. While destroyed objects are often rebuilt or reconstructed and historical events re-enacted, lost cooking practices and dishes might be reintroduced. Historical re-enactment, based on preserved historical and archaeological sources, has become increasingly popular since the 1960s.<sup>29</sup> Unlike re-enactors, people might reconstruct or re-create food without the whole context with costumes and utensils, probably with some changes to the technology but still pursuing the idea. While re-enactments can be one-offs, regular events such as anniversaries or educational events, re-creations might aim for permanency and become reintroductions.<sup>30</sup> Reintroduced culinary practices and artefacts become a lasting part of the present. Food and utensils that have been missing for decades or centuries are offered on the market again.<sup>31</sup> Dishes from historical cookery books appear in restaurant menus<sup>32</sup> or on private and public tables at certain celebrations.

The motivation behind these practices can be both fears of standardisation and globalisation of taste and the desire to use historical specialities from the region as a resource to find a market niche. The justification for such a reintroduction is often found in the preserved biodiversity and cultural heritage or the sustainability of traditional production techniques.

A perfect imitation is mostly not possible under new and different conditions, regardless of whether it is wanted at all. A reintroduction may be based on the social or territorial aspect of cultural heritage, as the desire for historical and cultural continuity may relate to a declared and perceived affiliation to a particular group (social aspect) or a perceived attachment to the region (territorial aspect).<sup>33</sup> While in many regions, the social and territorial points of reference coincide, at least for

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<sup>29</sup> Ewa Szczecińska-Musielak, "Odgrywanie powrotów do przeszłości w rekonstrukcjach Historycznych," in *Kreacje i nostalgje: Antropologiczne spojrzenie na tradycje w nowoczesnych kontekstach*, ed. Grażyna Woroniecka et al. (Warszawa: Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne, 2009), 210.

<sup>30</sup> Examples of reintroductions in Lower Silesia are *pierniki bardzkie* with traditional moulds, see Aneta Augustyn, "Piekarczyk z ulicy Główniej," *Kuchnia* 12/2015; and *bomba legnicka* by Pierniki Wrocławskie, accessed March 29, 2024: <https://piernikiwroclawskie.pl/pierniki-bomba-lednicka>.

<sup>31</sup> Back on the Polish market is for instance the capon: Magdalena Zawacka-Chaberek and Anna Wójcik, "Kapłon – popularny w kuchni staropolskiej czy powróci na nasze stoły?," *Przegląd hodowlany* 6/2020, 16-18. This counts for numerous animal breeds and plant varieties too, the production and consumption of which is promoted not least by Slow Food and its Ark of Taste project.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g., Restauracja Wrocławska, accessed March 29, 2024, <https://wroclawska.com.pl/en/homepage>.

<sup>33</sup> Szczecińska-Musielak, "Odgrywanie powrotów," 216.

part of the population, for the Lower Silesians the area that offered them a new home was culturally and semantically alien. The strategies for overcoming this alienation ranged from identification with the family's place of origin and a return to the culture of that place, to an interest in the history and culture of the new place of residence and an adoption of these as positively perceived points of reference for identification.<sup>34</sup> The latter strategy has only been observed in Lower Silesia in the last few decades. In the past – an article about Silesian *piernik/Pfefferkuchen* traditions says – “the new inhabitants of these areas distanced themselves from everything German. Centuries-old traditions, including culinary ones, were forgotten.”<sup>35</sup> The fact that this phenomenon is explicitly mentioned points to processes of rethinking. As a result, an abandoned tradition is rediscovered and reintroduced, its origins are by no means disguised and its long history becomes an object of regional pride. Many of the numerous Silesian *Pfefferkuchen* traditions, like *pierniki bardzkie/Warthaer Pfefferkuchen*<sup>36</sup> and *legnicka bomba/Liegnitzer Bombe*, have been brought back to life during the past 10 years.

There are also numerous other foods and associated practices that are being restored. The territorial aspect emerges most strongly in the products associated with the *terroir* concept. This is first and foremost wine, the cultivation of which has been booming over the past ten years. The quantities involved are relatively small, but the number of registered winegrowers in Poland grew from 21 to 380 between 2009 and 2022, and the area of vineyards from 36 to almost 620 hectares.<sup>37</sup> It is not always possible to speak of a deliberate revitalisation of winegrowing in Lower Silesia, it is rather part of a larger global trend. Only a few names, such as *Grempler Sekt* from Winnica Miłosz,<sup>38</sup> show a conscious link to German wine traditions, while the selection of grape varieties is rarely based on the pre-war stock.

Another example of the interest in German cultural heritage with the potential for reintroduction are old fruit varieties, preserved in some collections<sup>39</sup> and increasingly available in nurseries. Non-cultivated foraged species might establish an emotional and cultural connection to the territory too, as Rumińska's

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<sup>34</sup> See Aldona Jawłowska, “Nowe regionalizmy w Polsce,” in *Wymiary globalizacji kulturowej*, ed. Marian Kempny and Grażyna Woroniecka (Olsztyn: Wyższa Szkoła Informatyki i Ekonomii, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Karolina Klimek, “O wykonujących pieprzne ciastka,” *Kuchnia* 11/2017, 82.

<sup>36</sup> Aneta Augustyn, “Piekarczyk z ulicy Głównej,” *Kuchnia* 12/2015.

<sup>37</sup> “Rynek wina w liczbach, lata gospodarcze 2009/2010 - 2021/2022,” Krajowy Ośrodek Wsparcia Rolnictwa (National Agricultural Support Centre), accessed November 11, 2023, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kowr/administrowanie-potencjalem-produkcyjnym-produktow-sektora-wina>.

<sup>38</sup> The vineyards are located east of Zielona Góra, in the present-day Lubusz Voivodeship. Historically, this area was referred to as North Silesia.

<sup>39</sup> An example of this is the collection of historical sweet cherry varieties in Wojsławice, see Aneta Augustyn, “Piknik z ogoniarą,” *Kuchnia* 07/2014.



“Chwastożercy<sup>40</sup> - Ancient Slow Food” project proves. As part of the project, uncultivated edible plants thriving in Lower Silesia and their traditional culinary uses are researched and disseminated as knowledge through publications, social media, and workshops. The addition of “Ancient Slow Food” points to its ethnobotanical and re-creating character. It is less about traditions of a spatially and culturally defined society, but rather the aggregate of natural resources, products and practices that are related to the territory. The regional heritage includes thus not only traditions brought from various regions of Poland and other countries, but also the traditions of displaced German Silesians and local practices from the Middle Ages and earlier periods. In this way, the project “denationalises” the regional cultural heritage, identifying it more strongly with the territory and presenting it as local and not foreign.

## Innovation

For many products it is debatable whether they can be considered a re-creation or reintroduction at all. They refer to certain traditions, but the production process or the used ingredients might be far from the original. In some cases, foods called regional are produced outside the region itself, merely taking advantage of the regional narratives. Such products should be considered innovations inspired by traditional and regional elements.

An innovative attitude toward the resources offered by historical foods, processing techniques and recipes seem to distinguish many chefs, often following in NOMA's<sup>41</sup> footsteps and underlining rather their own creativity than striving for historical accuracy. Many of their creations are only vaguely like their declared ancestors, but bear names adapted to the needs of marketable regionality. A short look at the menus of the restaurants listed in the Culinary Trail “Tastes of Lower Silesia”<sup>42</sup> shows the arbitrariness of using terms like “traditional,” “heritage” and “regional.”

Outside ambitious restaurants, innovation is only reluctantly recognised as such and thus given attributes suggesting a longer tradition or history by both the producers and various actors promoting regionality. The “Our Culinary Heritage -

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<sup>40</sup> Literally: weed eaters. See the project’s social media, accessed January 31, 2024: [https://www.instagram.com/chwastozerzy/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/chwastozerzy/?img_index=1); <https://www.facebook.com/chwastozerzy/>.

<sup>41</sup> A three-Michelin-star restaurant in Copenhagen founded by chef René Redzepi and Claus Meyer. It is famous for experimenting with regional products and significantly contributing to the spread of the New Nordic Cuisine concept and its emulation in other countries; see Jonatan Leer, “The rise and fall of the New Nordic Cuisine,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 8/2016.

<sup>42</sup> See “Smaki Dolnego Śląska,” Lower Silesian Tourist Organization, accessed January 4, 2024, <https://www.smakidolnegoslaska.pl>.

Taste of Regions<sup>43</sup> competition routinely celebrates products as regional and culinary heritage that may be rooted in the concept of terroir, but their typicality or traditionality is often scarcely warranted. An example is the Sudetes mountain cheese (*ser górski sudecki*) that does not hark back to either Polish or Silesian traditions before 1945, nor does the Jersey breed of cattle. As the milk used in the dairy is also purchased, the origin is not necessarily clear.<sup>44</sup> The producer works with imported ingredients as well as imported ideas and methods, so his products can be characterised as an innovative transplantation of foreign technologies and traditions to Lower Silesia. As such, they enrich the range of regionally produced foods, but in no way fit into any defined concept of culinary and therefore cultural heritage. Since many dairy's products have imaginary names, the generic and concrete reference to the local landscape: mountains and Sudetes, might be a strategy to naturalise the product in the region.

## Conclusions

After 1989, “the ideological ballast of the state-socialist era fell from the shoulders of those searching for a homeland anew.”<sup>45</sup> In regions such as Lower Silesia, democratisation enabled discourses about the tragic history of the previous and current inhabitants without arousing suspicion of revisionism. Like the new East Prussians, the new Lower Silesians can only feel at home in their places of residence if they learn about the regional history and embrace it.<sup>46</sup> Some indeed chose a form of cultural appropriation as a strategy to domesticate the foreign. The search for and construction of roots often serve political goals and group interests, and not least the elimination of feelings of alienation and insecurity by individuals and groups.<sup>47</sup> Recently, this past has also been used as a resource for marketing the region.<sup>48</sup> One

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<sup>43</sup> See “Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo - Smaki Regionów,” Polska Izba Produktu Regionalnego i Lokalnego [Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products], accessed January 4, 2024, <https://www.produktyregionalne.pl/nkd.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Aneta Augustyn, “Sery z widokiem na Śnieżkę,” *Kuchnia* 04-05/2019.

<sup>45</sup> Andreas Kossert, *Ostpreußen: Geschichte und Mythos* (Munich: Pantheon, 2007), 395.

<sup>46</sup> Kossert, *Ostpreußen*, 394.

<sup>47</sup> Szczecińska-Musielak, “Odgrywanie powrotów,” 216.

<sup>48</sup> Reviving regional specialities was described as a phenomenon of the evolving tourism market and cultural industry in general already by Konrad Köstlin, “Die Revitalisierung regionaler Kost,” in *Ethnologische Nahrungsforschung: Vorträge des zweiten Internationalen Symposiums für ethnologische Nahrungsforschung*, ed. Niilo Valomen (Helsinki: Hotelli- ja ravintolamuseo, 1975); see also: Ulf Matthiesen, *Kulinarik und Regionale Entwicklung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von „Mark und Metropole“*, *Strukturskizzen zu einem Forschungsfeld: Antrittsvorlesung am 27. Mai 2003* (Berlin: Der Präsident der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2003).

could speak somewhat ironically of recovered<sup>49</sup> tradition and regionality. An acknowledgement of regional history prior to 1945 and an affirmation of cultural plurality in Lower Silesia are quite recent. This commitment to a shared history, but also longings for a lost and mythicised homeland or better times, lies beneath many re-creation, reintroduction, and innovation initiatives.

The construction of regionality by recognising minority cuisines as local heritage presents an exciting question, especially where minorities are not long-established. In Lower Silesia, both minorities and majority have only been at home for a short time so that hardly anyone can claim their autochthonous rights. Unlike the largest category of immigrants, who wanted to escape the poverty of destroyed cities and overpopulated villages and possibly also the excessive social control and had the opportunity to return to their regions of origin, nostalgia grew in those resettled by force. The otherness and distinctiveness of their traditions, additionally preserved by a pronounced nostalgia, was the easiest way to construct a cultural difference and transform them into culinary heritage once the regional and ethnic started being valorised in the twenty-first century.<sup>50</sup>

The processes of transplantation, re-creation, reintroduction, and innovation were presented as strategies to make sense out of a difficult history, but they are also applied to construct the culinary heritage of the region. Thus, they exemplify a global phenomenon of regionalisation and heritagisation of locally existing cultural objects and practices, and by this the human culture-forming potential. Although similar patterns may be perceived in other culturally diverse societies of recent origin, like the Israeli one,<sup>51</sup> the above-mentioned strategies of constructing a culinary heritage are also evident in societies claiming longstanding and continues traditions, such as Italy.<sup>52</sup> Thus the approach presented here can be adapted for the analysis of other cases.

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<sup>49</sup> The authorities of the Polish People's Republic coined the term "Recovered Territories" (*Ziemie Odzyskane*) for the former German territories.

<sup>50</sup> Tschoffen, "Kulinaristik," 64.

<sup>51</sup> See Zeynep Sertbulut, "The Culinary State: On Politics of Representation and Identity in Israel," *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* 10, No. 2 (2012).

<sup>52</sup> The recent origins of many traditional and typical products as well as the function of the PDOs proliferation was polemically and provocatively addressed by Alberto Grandi, *Denominazione di Origine Inventata: Le bugie del marketing sui prodotti tipici italiani* (Milano: Mondadori 2018), as well as by Michele Antonio Fino and Anna Claudia Ceconi, *Gastronazionalismo: Come e perché l'Europa è diventata indigesta, con un contributo di Andrea Bezzecchi* (Busto Arsizio: People, 2021).