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*Jacek Poniedziałek**

Managing dissonant cultural heritage in regional and local development policy in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (Warmia-Masuria)

Abstract

This article aims to analyse how cultural heritage is addressed in documents defining the objectives and directions of socio-economic development in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, in light of their practical implementation. This paper seeks to determine whether and how these documents and practices acknowledge that, due to the region's complex history, this heritage is characterised as dissonant. The analysis reveals that authorities often manage this awkwardness by remaining silent about much of its ethnic and religious provenance or by employing generic terms, obscuring its meanings. This approach reduces the level of dissonance associated with the heritage, leading to attempts to transform it into a resource in the form of tourist attractions (sites and festivals) to contribute to the region's development, rather than engaging in discussions about its significance or remember traumas that generate social conflicts.

Keywords: dissonant cultural heritage, Warmia and Masuria, regional and local development strategies, tourism, commodification of culture

* Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, ORCID: 0000-0003-3757-2750, j.poniedzialek@umk.pl

This article explores the cultural heritage of contemporary Warmia and Masuria, focusing on how it is treated by the authorities of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship local government, regional local governments collaborating in this area (the three largest cities in the voivodeship – Olsztyn, Elbląg and Ełk, and the district governments), as well as the private entities implementing its heritage management policy. I consider this statement the main research question, and to answer it effectively, I intend to analyse how cultural heritage is defined in policy documents, given that the region possesses cultural resources that must be categorised as dissonant heritage due to its complicated history. I also aim to ascertain the role assigned to dissonant heritage in the voivodeship's socio-economic development processes. To this end, I employ the method of analysing official documents by examining the development strategy and programmes, following them where possible. My analysis is also informed by participatory observation, focusing on the creation, consultation and implementation of the strategies outlined here. The first part of the paper presents my understanding of dissonant cultural heritage, followed by an examination of how it is defined in the aforementioned documents and the roles attributed thereto in the region's life. I aim to demonstrate that it is treated as a 'deposit from the past', 'unuttered' and 'blurred', enabling it to be commercialised as a tourist attraction. Finally, I attempt to answer the research questions.

Definitional framework

Heritage is not defined by the object that constitutes the essence of heritage, but by the subject that establishes it. More precisely, it can be defined as what social actors consider it to be. People regard tangible and intangible resources, such as cultural deposits, as legacies, shaping their perception of the past, defining their contemporary condition and projecting their future (Ossowski 1966: 64–65). This perspective may raise concerns about resorting to constructivist radicalism, where, according to Robert Hewison, 'heritage can mean anything you want' (Hewison 1987: 32). However, this is not the case; what is crucial in such an approach to heritage is whether there exists a strong relationship in people's minds between the past, present and future. This relationship is the primary mechanism for shaping collective memory, and herit-

age constitutes the body of content that comprises it. Intersubjectively shared memory reflects a pervasive sense of a shared past in a social group, which, in turn, is fundamental for shaping the social identities of its members. The awareness that past values and patterns constitute the specificity and integrity of a social group compels individuals to act to protect and transmit them intergenerationally. These values are also instrumental in determining the identity-important intergroup distinctions that clearly delineate who 'we' are and who 'others/foreigners' are (Szacka 2006: 51).

Heritage, as a correlate of collective memory for the formation of social bonds, is not the passive preservation of material, symbolic artefacts or content to retain the knowledge of 'how things really were', but rather an active social practice that occurs 'here and now', being 'oriented towards the present consumption of the past' (Ashworth 2002: 12–13). Collective memory, of which heritage is an essential component, 'does not store the past as such'. The past is constantly reorganised by the changing frame of reference of the present. Further, what is new 'must always appear in the form of a reconstructed past' (Assmann 2008: 57–58). I concur with David Lowenthal's view that 'heritage is a process, not a type of resource' (Lowenthal 1998: XIII). It involves the constant reconstruction, interpretation, affirmation, invalidation, negotiation, reinterpretation, and even reshaping of content that serves to form the cultural memory and identity of specific social groups. In the 'continuous now', an idea of the past is formed through selectively chosen or recreated content used in the present (Ashworth 2015: 31).

The reconstruction or creation of heritage occurs through performative social practices and is based on the emotional engagement of the social actors involved (Smith 2006: 68). Like collective memory and social identity, heritage, due to its performative and discursive nature, is multi-layered, internally incoherent and extremely fluid, often antagonising social actors who claim to be the depositories of all or part thereof. Social groups and formal and informal institutions ascribe different values to heritage, influencing its significance and the aforementioned characteristics (Ossowski 1966: 65). Cultural heritage is dissonant in that it is 'a constitutive social process that on the one hand leads to regulation and legitimation, and on the other involves the elaboration, contestation and undermining of a set of cultural and social identities, a sense of place, collective memories, values and meanings that dominate the present and can be transmitted in the future' (Smith 2006: 82).

The processual and discursive nature of heritage creation, through the attribution of meanings to tangible and intangible objects that form collective memory and, consequently, the social identity of human collectivities, prompts the use of the term 'heritagisation'. This concept refers to the process of consciously not valuing objects, places, activities and symbols related to the past within the framework generated by contemporary demands. According to Małgorzata Zawiła, it is 'not only the process of assigning values to objects by people and the inclusion (discursive and performative) of the former by the latter in the collection of those worthy of preservation for future generations but they are complex co-dependent processes – occurring with social actors and other (non-human) elements of reality – of heritage forming and creation through heritage. Within these processes, the attribution of meanings and the taming of elements of reality is performed, but also the building of new networks around these elements understood as collectivities' (Zawiła 2019: 103).

'Inheritance' almost always entails disagreement on what should matter. Consequently, inconsistency in defining what should constitute heritage leads to heritage dissonance (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996: 20–21). This dissonance becomes evident when the dominant narrative of heritage, the official version formed and disseminated by social actors with the power to impose legitimate interpretations, is not accepted by various social groups, who, in the process of 'inheritance', ascribe different meanings to the same elements. Dissonance can also arise when two or more social actors in an area possess similar potential to shape public discourse and performative actions directed at heritage. To quote Robert Traba, a difficult legacy 'is a legacy characterised by dissonance in the interpretative strategies created by the various actors who value it' (Traba 2021: 27). The contestation of the past and attempts to remodel the narrative of what was and is important for today's and future generations can lead to rivalry and often conflict, dividing social collectives into antagonistic groups.

In social collectives where one or more social groups contest narratives about the past, there is a lack of 'harmonisation of time and space between people and their heritage' (Ashworth 2002: 363). The dissonance of heritage is generated by questions of belonging. Participatory interpretation becomes a game of domination, of establishing who can and should impose a legitimate narrative about it. In response to such questions, the social actors in-

volved in the game called the inheritance process assert that those who are full heirs hold this power. This entails the exclusion or disinheritance of those who do not fall into the category of heirs but claim the right to do so (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996: 84). Understanding this dynamic requires considering those who are disinherited, the reasons for their exclusion and the consequent objectives of heritage management processes (Traba 2021: 43). When one narrative is dominant and accepted by the collective as legitimate, rivalries and conflicts may not arise, but this is exceedingly rare. As a rule, the dominant narrative is opposed by minority groups seeking to participate in the inheritance process, either openly or covertly. In the absence of 'legitimate heirs' or when they are disinherited and marginalised from the community, cultural resources defined as heritage may be appropriated and remodelled. It is also common for such resources to be physically and symbolically erased or a 'common heritage' to emerge, where non-antagonistic social groups interact, or where 'heritage without heirs' is appropriated by collectives occupying abandoned spaces (Owsianowska and Banaszkiewicz 2015: 11).

Heritage dissonance also occurs 'when the dominant narrative does not resonate with the interpretations of the various interest groups because it omits aspects they consider important or highlights those that should not be given such prominence' (Banaszkiewicz and Semik 2019: 9). The challenge lies in determining what should be heritage and what should not. Those involved in the inheritance process valorise elements to be granted heritage status. Consciously or not, they compete to see whose narrative achieves legitimacy. They adapt to current emotional, socio-cultural, political and economic needs. According to Gregory Ashworth, all social actors in the inheritance process, both collectively and individually, but bearing in mind that the changing context redefines needs, may find some deprived of the power to impose legitimate narratives while others are equipped with it (Ashworth 2015: 32). The process of 'inheritance' can not only embroil the participating social actors in conflict, but can also lead to dialogue, where common definitions of the situation are established, and values and meanings attributed to heritage are negotiated. By engaging in dialogue about inheritance, social actors may modify their goals and perceptions in response to non-antagonistic proposals from other participants in the process (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007: 54–68). Lowenthal aptly stated, 'there is, however, no prede-

termined end state to this process, and its objectives can be multiple and variable today' (Lowenthal 1998: XIII).

Every heritage leads to unease, antagonises and violates the ontological security of those who do not recognise it in whole or part, are compelled to enter the orbit of its socialising influence, or, conversely, are excluded from its sphere (Rusek 2012: 10). This inevitably leads to the phenomenon of dissonance, which is 'an inherent feature of heritage, so that any person or institution managing it can expect that some aspect of the interpretation of the past will eventually cease to resonate with others' (Tunbridge 2013: 69). The dissonance generates a 'dissonant heritage', where overlapping, often contradictory, and antagonistic narratives and interpretive paths render the past story uncertain, negotiated, diffuse and different in various social groups. Drawing on Tunbridge and Ashworth's concept of 'dissonant heritage' and Sharon Macdonald's notion of 'difficult heritage', I conclude that 'dissonant heritage' refers to any material object, value or social norm, the pattern of action, habit or custom, or idea or symbol that creates a sense of dissonance in the minds of social actors (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Macdonald 2013).

Traba, in one of his texts on heritage, observed that dissonance can render heritage not only difficult and dissonant but also unwanted (Traba 2020: 17). Paradoxically, however, the dissonance of difficult heritage can lead to revised perceptions of the past and the establishment of interpretations of heritage common to mutually antagonistic social groups. Dissonance can catalyse initiating discussions on difficult heritage, which, if it does not escalate into violent social conflict, can facilitate the processing of collective traumas, contributing to the commonality of collective memory and the formation of social identities that enhance social cohesion (Macdonald 2015).

Departing from a static and universalistic view of heritage has enabled a processual interpretation thereof. 'Heritage has become object and action; product and process' (Fairclough 2009: 31). Its establishment and legitimacy have ceased to be the exclusive domain of power, and its institutions personified in expert figures; it has extended to other actors and ordinary people. The process of inheritance is encapsulated in the idea of broad interpretive participation. Pierre Nora observed that the classical mechanism for shaping, storing and distributing the content that formed collective memories was based on a hierarchical order, where institutions associated with power were the creators and distributors. The recipients of this content were social

groups subjected to the socialising influence of such institutions. The social change that decomposed this hierarchical order has resulted in a significant decentralisation of heritage creation. Apart from schools and government-affiliated cultural institutions, new creators and distributors of content forming collective memory, and thus new 'producers' of cultural heritage, have emerged. These include private media, businesses, local initiatives, NGOs and social movements, institutionalised or not, whose actions may violate centrally formed and memory practices imposed top-down (Nora 1989).

Dissonance can also be induced by attempts to convert cultural resources into economic capital. Through commercialisation, heritage becomes a product for sale, a trivialised object, action or idea stripped of its ontologically significant identity-forming functions. Material and symbolic resources treated as heritage 'entering the market' begin to lose their cultural significance for the community, and when treated in a mercantile manner, they become commodified. The commercialisation process involves planning the use of heritage elements for sale, which entails intentionally exposing or concealing certain content, depending on the choice of the target audience ('segment' – in marketing terminology). The same place, facility or event is marketed to different consumers, and therefore, the offer is shaped according to the demand-side needs structure. Giving meaning to a place involves the addressees of the message on the one hand and the visitors on the other, who are not, however, a homogeneous mass but a collection of individuals following their desires and pursuing their own goals' (Owsianowska and Banaszkiewicz 2015: 10–11).

According to Gordon Mathews, culture parcelled out into commercialised elements becomes a product for sale in the cultural supermarket, where heritage is one of the products available. The postmodern 'me', in the context of the marketisation of heritage, becomes fractured, generating uncertainties, as it is torn between the need for commonality once provided by a collectively established heritage and the commercialising cultural supermarket that transforms it into a collection of unconnected items for sale, the acquisition of which is always an individual act (Mathews 2005: 47).

In the modern world, identity, always based on some form of heritage, becomes an object of individual choice, a task that shifts from communities to individuals, who, according to the 'do-it-yourself' principle, must attempt to make sense of their existence by tapping into the goods of commercialised

culture. 'This identity draws its building blocks from a variety of traditions, from many different ways of existence, a conglomerate made of the patterns of different cultures' (Rusek 2012: 10). Commercialised heritage is, therefore, a complex issue, a nuisance, because it forces individuals to make choices, making them responsible for their memory and identity. Paradoxically, however, many potential depositors see value in the commercialisation of heritage. Intensified tourism and the commodification of heritage in the form of market discourse (e.g. films dealing with the past and the specificity of space) can arouse the interest of those who should be affected by 'inheritance' processes but are not, for various reasons. This can lead to active involvement in shaping heritage and forming one's memory and identity based on it, directed towards the past and the newly discovered community.

'Blurring' and 'unutterance' – heritage in strategic documents

In light of the concepts and definitions cited in the previous section, one might conclude that much of the cultural heritage of Central and Eastern Europe exhibits a certain level of 'dissonance' due to the convoluted history of this part of the continent. This is particularly true concerning the Western and Northern Territories of Poland, taken over from Germany following the arrangements concluding World War II. After World War II, the area of German East Prussia was divided between the Soviet Union and Poland. The southern part of the province fell to Poland, while the northern part was assigned to communist Russia (now the Kaliningrad Oblast). A small north-eastern fragment of former East Prussia lies in present-day Lithuania. The change in the nationality of the former German East Prussia, which became Polish Warmia and Masuria, along with the population exchange, the rupture of cultural continuity in the region and the need to legitimise the actions of the new authorities, initiated a strategy of Polonisation of cultural heritage by providing it with new meaning referring to the Polish cultural universe or by erasing (pushing into oblivion or destroying) elements associated with the German past (Sakson 2000: 51–52; Mazur 2000: 813; Poniedziałek 2011: 134).

The political system changes of 1989 brought about an institutional and narrative decomposition of the primary social actor (the state) managing cultural heritage in the region. The collapse of the People's Republic of Poland

created a new social context in which, alongside a hierarchical and power-subordinated method of determining what is important for social memory, a space emerged enabling the emergence of new social actors and new narratives. The decentralisation of state governance, the democratisation of socio-political life and economic change generated new needs and objectives for these social actors, who began to engage in a process of 'inheritance'. Apart from the central government institutions, opportunities have been created for regional and local authorities to manage their cultural heritage. Consequent to the reform of the country's territorial administration, which took effect on 1 January 1999, government-autonomous voivodeships began their operation. In Chapter II of the Act of 5 June 1998 on regional government, the legislator mandated the voivodeships to create a regional development strategy, one of the tasks (point 2 (7)) being the management of cultural heritage and its rational use (Journal of Laws of 1998 No. 91 item 576: 11).

The document suggests that the heritage it describes is treated as a static resource, a deposit inherited from the past, which the regional authorities must carefully preserve and pass on as intact as possible. Such an understanding does not reflect the processes of 'inheritance', i.e. the actual establishment, abolition or reinterpretation of what is regarded as inheritance at a given moment. Nonetheless, it defines areas of tangible and intangible culture that, considering Polish legislation, may be regarded as heritage, concurrently setting the framework and directions for potential action regarding its protection and use. In the case of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, strict adherence to the Act's provisions is extremely difficult, if not impossible, because the law states that the task of regional governments is to take care of Polishness and national and local identity (there are no provisions on the need to manage regional identity) (Journal of Laws of 1998 No. 91, item 576: 9). Strict adherence to the statutory provisions on the need for the strengthening of national identity in the region may exclude taking care of a significant part of its heritage, since, as mentioned, a large part thereof was generated by representatives of an ethnos that is not Polish, and its physical and symbolic forms perceptually available in the region refer to the German cultural universe. Thus, the Act pushes the cultural heritage of contemporary Warmia and Masuria into the framework of what is known as dissonant heritage.

In the document adopted on 18 February 2020 by the regional assembly (Polish: Sejmik) of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship titled 'Warmińsko-

Mazurskie 2030. Strategia rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego' [Socio-economic development strategy of Warmia and Masuria – 2030] (hereafter WiM 2030), its authors recognised that the social reality of the region was escaping the homogenising vision of an ethnically homogenous Poland. The SWOT analysis diagnosing the strengths of the region indicated that these include, *inter alia*, 'rich tangible and intangible cultural assets, cultural heritage, including of European significance, resulting from the national and ethnic diversity of the region' (WiM 2030: 23). However, it is not specified whether this wealth of heritage refers to what, according to the spirit of the aforementioned law, is to be regarded as a 'deposit from the past', which would imply that heritage also encompasses the past and its material and symbolic remains linked to the Baltic Prussian tribes, the Teutonic or later Protestant legacy, or, finally, to what is unambiguously associated with East Prussia or even the times of National Socialist domination in the district – in a word, with the region's entire past. This, in turn, would undoubtedly generate a high level of heritage dissonance because at least the heritage associated with the history of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century is largely associated with Germanness, understood in an ethno-nationalist manner. The document, therefore, addresses the awkwardness of heritage through 'unutterance', which allows its ethnic and cultural provenance to be blurred. The regional authorities consistently employ such action, as a similar method was employed in previous versions of the strategy, for example, in the 'Strategia rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego do roku 2025' [Socio-economic development strategy of Warmia and Masuria – 2025] (the document was adopted in 2013) (Sokal 2015: 12).

The regional authorities and the document's authors emphasise that cultural heritage is a valuable resource for the region. A weakness identified in the strategy is 'a weak regional identity, especially among the young and educated, who do not see their future in the region' (WiM 2030: 24). The diagnostic section does not specify why the regional identity is considered weak. Sociological research in the region indicates that at least one element of identity, understood as identification with the region, its space and its people, has remained high for years, while the tendency to leave does not necessarily weaken this identity, as it is now possible to maintain links with the region without residing there (Łukowski 2003: 173–225; Poniedziałek 2011: 304–312; Sakson 2011: 741–773; Poniedziałek 2018: 65; Łukowski 2023: 138–144). Anoth-

er element of social identities beyond identification is valence, i.e. knowledge of the cultural codes contained in a commonly accepted, institutionally legitimised and disseminated cultural canon. Antonina Kłoskowska pointed out that a strong identity can function when identification is strong and valence weaker, although stronger valence can reinforce identity. Generally, valence does not imply knowledge of the entire canon but rather of its fragments, individual elements or different interpretations. Thus, we are dealing with the reproduction in human consciousness and social practice of a palimpsest, rather than a cultural monolith (Kłoskowska 2005: 89–112).

The region;s development strategy until 2030 states that one of the weaknesses of regional identity is 'the low level of knowledge about regional heritage' (WiM 2030: 24). Unfortunately, the authors did not indicate how this level was measured, as there is no reference in the document to supportive sociological studies. The publications cited by sociologists studying regional issues showed that knowledge of the cultural heritage of a region resembles that of most varieties of collective identities, which are fragmented and palimpsest-like. Kłoskowska stated that cultural heritage becomes a canon when institutions in power, with legal and financial resources, form a certain body of interpretations of the past, readings of the meaning of manifestations of material culture and knowledge of collective myths and values. Such a canon of cultural heritage, through media discourse, institutional and family socialisation, becomes binding (Kłoskowska 2005: 108–112).

The region's authorities have not developed a heritage canon in their strategic documents, and there is no characterisation of heritage in the region's development strategy for 2025 and its version for 2030. In 2018, the voivodeship regional government adopted for implementation the 'Program wsparcia rozwoju kultury województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego do roku 2025' [Programme of support for the development of culture in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship until 2025] (hereinafter referred to as Programme 2025). It states that 'the programme sets out the basic planning elements of regional cultural policy. These include the need to protect cultural heritage and develop regional identity, based on the achievements of generations of inhabitants of Warmia and Masuria' (Programme 2025: 1). The document contains numerous statements contrary to logic. While, ostensibly, cultural heritage should be protected according to its postulates, it goes on to assert that the wealth of Warmia and Masuria 'is not nature or cultural heritage, but the peo-

ple of culture and the dormant potentials of local communities' (Programme 2025: 8). The deprecation of cultural heritage in this programme may be surprising, as the Strategy for the Development of the Voivodeship until 2030 clearly lists one of the objectives of the implementation of the strategy as managing 'the common cultural heritage of the region' (WiM 2030: 44).

'Unutterance' or 'blurring' of the ethnic and historical provenance of the region's cultural heritage, as well as the lack of precise elaboration and dissemination of the cultural canon by the region's authorities and its institutions, leads me to consider the provisions on the need to protect the heritage and build a strong regional identity based thereon as mere efforts at sympathetic magic. The creators of planning documents believe that including the importance of heritage in the strategy must bring it to life. These practices are an elementary part of the bureaucratic habitus, where documents that are essentially bureaucratic ornamentation are believed by their authors to possess the power to produce real effects in social life. Heritage thus becomes a vague construct, fuzzy and perhaps even hollow. The lack of a precise definition of this heritage, what it consists of, and what needs to be eliminated from it, along with the absence of any indication of the institutions that are to carry out the desired preservation, complicates the regional authorities' ability to set a clear objective for heritage. The regional government, as a potentially dominant social actor in this process, has deprived itself of significant potential for legitimate notions of heritage (Ashworth 2015: 32).

'Blurring' and 'unutterance': the region's dissonant cultural heritage significantly undermines the possibility of making it a cultural regional construct that would enable mobilisation around one of the development goals indicated in WiM 2030, namely the strengthening of regional identity. As the definition of heritage is not clear, it is also not clear how it is to be protected and how to achieve – through its protection – the goal of social change, which is to strengthen regional identity. In analysing this issue, one should refer to the studies of Johannes Moser, who depicted the incompatibility of formalised strategies and social adjustment practices. Strategies are created by entities autonomous from the social environment, in this case, the regional marshal's administration operating within the logic of a closed bureaucratic habitus supported by commercial strategy-writing institutions external to the region. Social adjustment practices are always undertaken by people involved in specific social relations, representing different identities, cultures or worldviews.

Strategy, through its apparent objectivity, generates the illusory impression that everything is possible and that every goal can be achieved, while social adjustment practices compel individuals to take concrete actions to change social statuses, redefining axionormative systems each time related to real life (Moser 2002: 44–55).

Considering the provisions of the documents indicated, cultural heritage can be protected, and the regional identity of the population strengthened through it, even if it is 'blurred' and 'unuttered'. This assumption does not seem feasible, given the barriers identified earlier. This 'blurring' and 'unutterance' of the region's dissonant heritage does not enable concrete measures for establishing a canon of regional heritage and thus, through measures in school education, the practices of cultural institutions or in public discourse, to achieve a stabilising heritage dissonance consensus. In a region which, due to the processes described above, is a social space where problematic heritage is found in abundance, one of the primary tasks of the region's authorities, and therefore the objectives of various strategies and other planning or implementation documents, should be to counteract potential social traumas resulting precisely from the dissonance of dissonant heritage. Its neutralisation could contribute to the commonality of a dissonant heritage, which, by reinforcing cultural valence, would cause a consolidation of the existing sense of regional identity. This, in turn, is known to generally increase the social cohesion of territorial communities (Macdonald 2015).

Tourist attractions – the commercialisation of tangible cultural heritage

In 2016, the region adopted the 'Strategia rozwoju turystyki województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego do roku 2025' [Strategy for Development of Tourism in Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship until 2025] (hereinafter referred to as Tourism 2025). This document is still current and duplicates the provisions of the Tourism Development Strategy until 2020 (adopted in 2010). It asserts that 'tourism is becoming a leading, synergic area of the economy of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, exerting a positive influence on the development of many other economic sectors of the region', and one of the strategic directions of development is 'the synergy of culture and tourism' (Tour-

ism 2025: 31). The new regional development strategy until 2030 assigns cultural heritage the role of a tourist attraction. The strategy declares that the authorities will support the research, protection and provision of 'tangible cultural heritage resources (including archaeological sites, palace-park complex, sacred buildings, cemeteries) for educational purposes and the creation of tourism products based on them' (WiM 2030: 46).

The document identifies elements of tangible cultural heritage with places potentially attractive to tourists, including sacred architecture, not only Catholic (e.g. Święta Lipka Sanctuary) but also churches of other denominations (e.g. the Evangelical Church in Rychnowo). Castles and manor-palace-park complexes are mentioned without any indication of their ethnic or historical provenance. Significantly, the document, unlike its predecessor, identifies a certain type of material resource associated with the region's dissonant cultural heritage. It states that 'important cultural and social assets of the region include cultural and social diversity, including the interpenetration of diverse cultures and religions (multiculturalism and multi-religiousness), reflected e.g. in the character of sacred monuments, necropolises' (Tourism 2025: 10).

The Culture Development Strategy to 2025 indicates that the regional government's activities should aim, *inter alia*, at learning about cultural heritage resources and conduct research projects thereon, as well as 'to protect monuments and cultural heritage as a basis for the development and dissemination of culture, and to adapt cultural infrastructure (and its management) to contemporary global standards and trends' (Programme 2025: 15). The document, therefore, contains statements contrary to logic, on the one hand, emphasising, as in the sentence quoted above, the importance of cultural heritage as a resource for the region, while elsewhere stating categorically that heritage does not constitute such a resource, as stated on page 8. The document outlines extensively the culture of the region, which is understood as artistic activity, and postulates the development of education in this area, as well as financial and expert support for institutions operating in this field. Cultural heritage, again understood as a stable deposit from the past (also not defined here in any way), is assigned the role of an attraction to stimulate tourism (Programme 2025: 8–9).

A consistently similar role for cultural heritage is assigned in the publicly consulted Regional Operational Programme 2021–2027 (hereafter referred to as ROP 2027). Simultaneously, it is clear from the observations of the au-

thor of this text that the discussion over the document takes place mostly within the voivodeship authorities, representatives of its agencies, lower-level local government officials and external experts invited and paid by the regional authorities. Discussion on the document as a regionally relevant issue in regional public discourse is almost absent. Thus, it can be expected that such a programme, as mentioned by Moser, which is supposed to set the directions for regional development, will largely become a document with insignificant influence on the assumed directions of socio-cultural change (Moser 2002: 44–55).

There is a priority 11 in the programme called 'Tourism and Culture', which states that activities funded thereunder must be directed towards the preservation 'development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services' (ROP 2027: 249). In fact, the measures included in priority 11 boil down to assigning heritage a role as a tourist stimulator, as it is to become a tourist attraction. However, ROP 2021–2027, specifically in measure 12.01, 'Revitalisation of urban areas', states that 'in justified cases, it is allowed to reconstruct buildings to restore historic buildings, contributing to the restoration of original and characteristic spatial arrangements in the area, preserving the climate appropriate to the heritage of the region and considering the regional identity of the area (i.e. its history, traditions)' (ROP 2027: 266).

The previous Regional Operational Programme 2014–2020 planned to allocate part of the funds under sub-measure 6.1.1 – 'Cultural Heritage'. Due to the detailed provisions, all projects planned for implementation had to demonstrate that the indicated places, entities and institutions would increase their tourist attractiveness thanks to the funding. This applied to various types of sites: there were castles and palaces, such as the project titled 'Teutonic Castle in Szczytno – a new tourism product on the map of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship', which was co-financed in 2017 (implemented by the Szczytno municipality); sacred buildings – the tourism potential of Olsztyn was to be increased by the project 'Exposing the architectural and historical qualities of St. Jacob's Cathedral' in Olsztyn through its revitalisation; or technical infrastructure facilities – the project 'Revitalisation with adaptation for tourism purposes of the historic bridge of the former railway line in the town of Glaznoty (Ostróda municipality)'. Institutions running hotels in the region's castles and palaces received funding from the regional government under the 'tourism' priority axis. One example is the reconstructed Teutonic

Knights' castle in Ryn, where a four-star hotel operates, which also houses elements of museum exhibitions.

The development strategies of the region's largest cities lack precise provisions defining heritage. The Development Strategy for Olsztyn until 2030 states that tourism and cultural heritage constitute significant development potential for the city (Olsztyn 2030: 11). The strategy for Elbląg asserts that 'relationships between people should also stem from respect for the area they inhabit. Building local identity means caring for degraded areas as well as local cultural heritage' (Elbląg 2030: 21). The Ełk Strategy declares its aim to 'preserve valuable cultural heritage resources and to highlight areas and objects of significant cultural value' (Ełk 2030: 91). However, none of these strategies specify the role of cultural heritage, nor do they have provisions outlining directions for tourism development based on such resources. These provisions reflect not a well-considered vision of urban development or a reworking of the dissonant heritage issue, but rather a ritualistic bureaucratic incantation included in the strategy due to pressures from higher authorities or prevailing intellectual trends in regional and local development economics that guide the experts drafting it.

In the nineteen district development strategies in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, there are indications of the importance of cultural heritage, sometimes equated with culture in general. However, it is nowhere defined in the district strategies and is always treated as an attraction that can stimulate tourist traffic, contributing to the district's economic development. This can be combined with the potential of sacrotourism, as seen in the Gietrzwałd Sanctuary in the Olsztyn district, or post-military tourism, as exemplified by the Teutonic Knights' castle in Kętrzyn or the Prussian Boyen fortress in Giżycko. Here, too, elements of cultural heritage are either not defined at all (unutterance) or defined with succinct phrases such as 'inherited from the past', 'a legacy of previous generations', 'an asset of all', or 'a resource produced by different national, ethnic or religious groups', without specifying the cultural provenance of such resources (blurring). Some tourism entities also redefine the functions of places or sites, transforming them into tourist attractions. For instance, a hotel complex is being built on the site of the Lehndorff Palace in Sztynort. This hotel will provide accommodation for the nearby sailing marina, while the outbuildings will house the Museum of Sailing and the Environment, which is already operational. The palace itself is to become

a centre for European dialogue after renovation. Another example is the open-air museum Wilczy Szaniec, administered by the State Forests, which features the remains of Adolf Hitler's former headquarters in East Prussia.

The aforementioned strategic documents and the practices constituting their implementation reveal that the only role attributed to the region's cultural heritage – historically a difficult and dissonant heritage – is that of a tourist attraction. As its material and symbolic manifestations become resources for generating profits in the market, their protection and popularisation are therefore subordinated to a primarily mercantile purpose. In Warmia and Masuria, a general trend is noticeable, where 'a characteristic phenomenon is the recognition of the value of one's own cultural heritage the moment it arouses the interest of tourists arriving there' (Banaszkiewicz and Semik 2019: 9). The commercialisation of tangible cultural heritage can lead to increasing levels of heritage dissonance. For instance, the Interactive Museum of the Teutonic State in Działdowo presents the Teutonic Order in a rather positive light, showcasing an efficient apparatus that built a prosperous state, which raises objections from nationalist circles (e.g. the Święta Warmia and Debata associations from Olsztyn), who perceive such projects as glorification of 'Germanness'.

To a much greater extent, however, the commercialisation of heritage resources obscures their awkwardness. By transforming them into tourist attractions – commodities that sell and places on the map of holiday peregrinations – they are not discussed as resources that could potentially generate social conflicts. Further, in light of the documents analysed and practices of the regional or district authorities, heritage is not regarded as a potential marker of regional identity. If formed by the local government and its agencies as a regional cultural canon, it could serve as a mechanism for social integration embedded in a specifically interpreted past. It is evident that such a policy reflects broader trends where, although we refer to cultural heritage, 'we refer to the past, heritage tourism by its very nature refers to life, duration, belonging and change – from the past to the present and future – and implies a performative act of taking over, interpreting and communicating the past through performance, story, place and material artefacts' (Jamal and Kim 2005: 58).

Heritage has become a significant resource for the development of regional tourism, which is expected to be a major industry. There are, of course, sites in the region supported by regional and local governments that create

a certain tension between experiencing difficult history and consuming the sensations that tourism entails – namely, leisure and carefree living. A good example is the Museum of Stalag IB and the History of Olsztynek, described as a tourist attraction, which showcases a prisoner of war camp where German authorities held approximately 6,500 soldiers from all over Europe during the war (many of whom were murdered). A visit to the museum shatters the idyllic mood of a holiday or weekend trip. It can also intensify the awkwardness of heritage by giving away its 'authenticity'. This is counteracted by subjecting it to specific 'interpretation', i.e. making it a tourist attraction that links the past with the present, different ethnoses and religions, social groups and even individuals. One example is the Museum of Archaeology and History in Elbląg, touted by city authorities as one of the city's main attractions. With one of its exhibitions showcasing the region's complex history, the potential for awkwardness seems to be bridged by recognising that contemporary Elbląg citizens are the rightful 'heirs' to this history while simultaneously creating an attractive point on the city's tourist map.

'Blurring' and 'unutterence' of heritage, along with attempts to commercialise it, often lead to a trivialisation of the message about the past. The narrative of the Teutonic state becomes a comic story when, in the post-Teutonic castle in Ryn, guests at dinner during the holiday season can watch shows of knight combat or purchase plastic toys related to knightly culture, with the words 'Made in China' embossed on them at the stall next door. It loses its authenticity amid the fair and tacky exhibitions of the open-air museum in the former German army quarters in the Masurian Mamerki. Crowds of summer holidaymakers on the Great Masurian Lakes take a few dozen minutes to visit the site, where the message of the past is offset by grotesque exhibitions featuring shop mannequins dressed in tattered Wehrmacht uniforms, standing alongside military souvenirs from various armies and periods, and booths selling lowbrow snacks. All this aligns with the assumptions in the previously indicated strategies, as authorities permit such aggressive commercialisation of heritage, transforming it into an intensively exploited resource. This, combined with the failure to define cultural heritage and what it cannot include, paradoxically blurs the awkwardness of heritage. Such places cease to be sites of remembrance and become objects of tourist consumption.

'Festivalisation' of intangible cultural heritage

Intangible heritage can be defined as the story of the past functioning as a legitimate account of what was (often linked to regional memorial sites); it also encompasses myths, values, specific customs or patterns of behaviour. The regional development strategy until 2030 points to the necessity to 'develop knowledge of the region historically, but also in the present and the context of its future'. The authorities aim to 'preserve and popularise intangible heritage (including dialect, folk dances, traditions, beliefs, traditional professions); including their inclusion in the creation of tourism and leisure products' (WiM 2030: 46). Further, the tourism development strategy sees intangible cultural heritage as a tourism potential (Tourism 2025: 10). The programme for the cultural development of the voivodeship until 2025 states that the region possesses 'a great, extremely interesting, largely unique and unknown-in-Poland resource of tangible and intangible cultural heritage' (Programme 2025: 3). The strategies for the development of major cities or nineteen districts provide for a generally understood identity, which is to develop based on the knowledge of history stimulated in the consciousness of the inhabitants, as seen in the Olsztyn strategy (Olsztyn 2030: 12).

The regional government attributes a significant role to its network of regional museums in generating interest in knowledge about the region. On the one hand, this knowledge is intended to educate the population about its past, and on the other, serves as a tourist product. One consequence of the blurring and unutterance of the dissonant heritage is the more or less conscious adoption of the dominant pre-1989 strategy of its Polonisation. In this case, the regional authorities participate in the processes of inheritance by selecting the carriers of memory in a manner that unambiguously links the region's culture to the unambiguously Polish cultural universe (Poniedziałek 2024: 111–112). Museum institutions run by municipal local governments often shape their messages differently, arranging exhibitions to counter the Polonising narrative of regional local government institutions. I mentioned the municipal museum in Elbląg; a similar multifaceted, multicultural and palimpsest-like account of the region's complex history can be found at the City Museum in Ełk or the Centre for Technology and Regional Development 'Museum of Modernity' in Olsztyn, located in the former sawmill of the Raphaelsohn brothers, German businessmen active in the city before 1945.

These modern establishments are organised in line with the latest trends in museum studies and regularly host events to engage residents and tourists. Supported by new technologies, the exhibitions differ considerably in their attractiveness compared to the old-fashioned, somewhat coarse displays of regional establishments. Such offerings mitigate the need to establish a difficult dialogue with the past. By accepting it, one seeks to level the awkwardness of heritage, which, in tandem with its commercialisation, can reduce the inherent potential dissonance.

In the performative dimension, the authorities also adhere to the strategy of Polonising cultural heritage, imposing their own vision of what regional heritage should resemble in the process of inheritance. In public discourse, institutions associated with regional and local authorities highlight events from the past that refer to the Polish cultural universe and Polish collective memory. Official ceremonies often select memories of the past to convey the impression that the non-Polish elements of heritage are an insignificant margin (Poniedziałek 2024: 112). The largest undertaking organised by the regional local government in collaboration with the local museum in Stębark is the reconstruction of the Battle of Grunwald (1410). In the context of the constant depreciation of cultural resources at the expense of regional nature, the re-enactment of this battle is a key cyclical event for regional tourism development. This exemplifies the 'festivalisation' of heritage, where a festival relates to events, places or people where the religious character of a ritual assumes a ludic form while the profound meaning becomes a quickly experienced, fleeting impression. The meaning ascribed to the phenomena indicated is replaced by a commodified culture in mercantile terms. Attending a festival does not yield a rich experience of heritage; as Waldemar Kuligowski observes, 'typical festival behaviour nowadays is reduced to walking, eating, drinking, smoking, having fleeting conversations and – last but not least – being on holiday, away from work, on a free day (and night)' (Kuligowski 2013: 7). Festivals, therefore, as an integral part of the culture of consumption, are becoming a crucial tool exploited by the tourism industry.

Heritage, understood as the transmission of the past, is 'festivised' not only by the re-enactment of the Battle of Grunwald; the voivodeship authorities support at least a dozen similar undertakings, such as the re-enactment of the battle of 19 May 1311 at Wopławki (Karolewo, Kętrzyn municipality), fought between the Teutonic Knights and the Lithuanians, the battle of 8 Oc-

tober 1656 between the allied armies of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Tartars and the Brandenburg-Swedish army, and the reconstruction of the battle of 3 February 1807 fought by the army of Napoleon I at Jonkowo near Olsztyn (Tourism 2025: 11). Thus, the narrative of the past is transformed into a tourist attraction. Some local authorities are also following the path set out by the regional government, such as the municipality of Frombork, which organises a re-enactment of the naval battle of 15 September 1463 in the Vistula Lagoon in Tolkmicko between the Teutonic Knights' fleet and the army of the Polish King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk.

An analysis of the programmes of the annual European Heritage Days, co-organised by the authorities in Warmia and Masuria, shows that the festivals and events occurring within this framework cover a broad spectrum describing various periods in the region's history and the various ethnic and religious groups that have lived there in the past and live today (e.g. from a presentation of Polish Warmia and the German persecution of Polish activists before 1945 to presentations of the heritage of the Protestant Masurians, the history of the Teutonic Knights' fortresses and figures, the history of the Prussian Junkers' families or the fate and customs of the settlers and displaced persons who settled the region after the end of World War II). These include, for example, Kaziuki Wilniuki, which popularises the culture of the inhabitants of the Vilnius Region who settled in the area after 1945, and the annual Regional Ukrainian Folklore Fair 'From a Painted Chest' held in Kętrzyn (which promotes the folklore of the Ukrainian minority displaced during Operation Vistula in 1947). The regional local government, together with the Pruthenia Scientific Society, organised three editions of the Baltic Festival between 2009 and 2011, which presented the history and culture of the region's former Prussian tribal inhabitants (Dobrosielska 2018: 213–221).

Cuisine is one element of the region's intangible heritage, characterised as 'traditional'. In this context, 'festivalisation' serves as a useful tool for regional authorities, local governments and private actors to 'play the heritage game' of commodifying it (Purchla 2013: 46). The concept of regional cuisine is nowhere precisely defined, nor is its scope specified; it is essentially limited to calling it traditional and referring to the 'traditions of the region'. Its function, however, is clearly indicated; as an element of intangible cultural heritage, it is intended to enhance the tourist attractiveness of the voivodeship (Tourism 2025: 10). The voivodeship's government takes concrete steps

to popularise it, supporting or co-organising 18 events known as regional culinary festivals, such as the Culinary Heritage Festival of Warmia, Masuria, and Powiśle in Olsztyn, the Regional Borderland Festival 'Kartaczewo' in Gołdap, or the Masuria Morcinki in Kętrzyn (ibid: 12). Kartacz is a type of potato dish, a large dumpling with a meat filling, which arrived in the region with the new inhabitants after 1945 from the Vilnius region and northern Podlasie.

The 'Culinary Heritage of Warmia–Masuria–Powiśle' network, part of the 'European Culinary Heritage Network', aims to protect and promote regional cuisine. It includes serving and producing food according to regional traditions, as evidenced by a special certificate awarded for meeting certain 'traditional' standards. These include dozens of entities, food producers (e.g. Kormoran Brewery of Olsztyn, which brews beer sometimes reproduced from old Warmia and Masurian recipes in collaboration with regional historians) or restaurants (such as Gościniec Ryński Młyn, serving fish dishes from Masuria lakes). Although one of the standards is indicated as 'the preservation, protection and care of the culinary heritage of Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle'[1], regional food producers or restaurateurs and the committee awarding the certificate and membership in the network define 'regionality' very flexibly. This refers not only to pre-war Warmia and Masuria food but also to the traditions of borderland, Ukrainian and Kurpie cuisine, or 'inventing tradition'. A good example of such measures is a dish called *dzyndzałki z hreczką i skrzeczkami*, a type of dumpling with crackling. The recipe is based on the traditions of Warmia and the borderlands and was included in the region's list of traditional products in 2019. The creation of new regional cuisine, namely 'regional culinary fusion', is a common practice observed in many regions in Poland and worldwide. As tourism becomes one of the most important branches of regional economies, and as we know, tourists eat during their stays, culinary products are becoming a primary aspect of tourism. To enhance their appeal, these products are labelled as 'culinary heritage' and 'traditional regional dishes', often having little in common with the actual history and culture of the places they originate from (Czarniecka-Skubina 2015: 25).

[1] https://dziedzictwokulinarne.pl/o-sieci/ [05.03.2024]

Summary

In answering the questions posed in the introduction, I must state that the regional authorities are aware of the existence of a resource of tangible and intangible culture, which they call cultural heritage. They recognise its importance for the formation of regional identity, essential for the integration of the voivodeship's population. However, they do not clearly define what it is, assuming it to be a 'deposit from the past', thus 'unuttering' most of its ethnic or religious provenance. It is sometimes additionally defined as a resource generated by different national and religious groups, without a clear indication of what constitutes legitimised heritage. Thus, its 'blurring' occurs. This procedure aims to undertake a non-antagonistic 'game of heritage', which, on the one hand, succeeds in lowering the tension of dissonance, allowing each inhabitant to consider as heritage what they wish (although the authorities themselves employ a strategy of Polonising it in some of their practices). On the other hand, this allows the authorities to become intensively involved in the heritage process, with the aforementioned efforts attempting to transform heritage into'no-fuss' tourist attractions that can contribute to the regional economy. This strategy is, of course, driven by the desire to raise the standard of living of the region's inhabitants, making the region itself more attractive so that they too, through regional peregrinations, can enjoy pleasant experiences and attractive products, rather than become embroiled in traumatic discussions about the past that could lead to social conflict. It further aligns with megatrends associated with economic development practices towards the commodification of culture. It also reflects a trend in which modern individuals, to use Johan Huizinga's words, are playful beings, 'homo ludens', who, in a trivialised and infantile culture of mass consumption, strive, as Neil Postman wrote, for unrestrained, hedonistic play (Huizinga 2022; Postman 2002).

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