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FARMING IS A GRIND. A GÓRALE'S PERSPECTIVE ON LABOUR AS A LOCAL HERITAGE

Gazdówka to harówka. Podhalańskie spojrzenie na pracę jako lokalne dziedzictwo

Abstract: During my recent ethnographic fieldwork research in Chochółów in the western Podhale region, I got the impression that the work of the Górale, inhabitants of the Podhale region of Poland, was one of the most valuable issues in everyday life. Although my research was about heritage, not directly about work, I decided to follow my interviewee's voice and look specifically at work. I concluded that work is one of the most important references in the local value system. Not only is hard work valued and held up as a model, but it is also often presented as inherited. Even in 19th-century texts, one can read that Górale worked hard and that work was significant to them. Modern Górale also emphasise that they have diligence in their blood, that it is something setting them apart, and that it has always been so. Drawing on various theories from heritage studies, I aim to demonstrate that labour in the Podhale region can be viewed as a form of cultural heritage. This heritage juggles between the authorised and the unauthorised discourse, between the tangible and the intangible. Above all, it is linked to the production of locality, community, and a sense of uniqueness. It can, therefore, be seen, as Rodney Harrison wanted, as heritage in action.

Keywords: work, heritage, Podhale, Chochółów

Streszczenie: W czasie ostatnich etnograficznych badań terenowych w Chochołowie na zachodnim Podhalu (2020-2023) odniosłam wrażenie, że dla Górali Podhalańskich praca jest jednym z najważniejszych tematów codzienności. Choć badania te dotyczyły dziedzictwa, nie zaś bezpośrednio pracy, postanowiłam podążyć za głosem rozmówców i przyjrzeć się pracy właśnie. Doszłam do wniosku, że praca stanowi jedno z najważniejszych odniesień w lokalnym systemie wartości. Ciężka praca nie tylko jest doceniana i wskazywana jako wzór, ale też często przedstawiana jako dziedziczna. Już w tekstach z XIX wieku można przeczytać, że Górale ciężko pracują i że praca jest dla nich ważna. Współcześni Podhalanie także często podkreślają, że pracowitość mają we krwi, że to coś, co ich wyróżnia i że zawsze tak było. Odwołując się do różnych teorii z zakresu *heritage studies*, chcę pokazać, że pracę na Podhalu można traktować także jako dziedzictwo. Dziedzictwo, które lawiruje tu między tym, co usankcjonowane i oddolne, tym co materialne i niematerialne. Przede wszystkim zaś łączy się z wytwarzaniem lokalności, wspólnotowości i poczucia wyjątkowości. Dlatego też można je traktować, jak chciał Rodney Harrison, jako dziedzictwo w działaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: praca, dziedzictwo, Podhale, Chochołów

‘Whatever skill one has, they use it to earn their living. They are an enterprising, hard-working, calculating folk by nature,’ this is how in his notes from the first half of the 19th century (Kamiński 1992: 5), Ludwik Kamiński vel Kamieński wrote about the Górale people – a subethnic group of the Polish nation inhabiting the area of the Tatra Mountains and the adjacent region of Podhale. Half a century after Kamiński, also Oskar Kolberg, although he did not always speak highly of the inhabitants of the Podhale region, noted their extraordinary industriousness (Kolberg 1966: 24).

Almost 200 years later, I also find that the Górale of Podhale, among whom I have been conducting fieldwork since 2011, work a lot. They see work as an extremely important part of their daily lives. And I think

it influences their view of the world. The Górale take pride in their industriousness. What is more, I have often heard people suggest that this industriousness is somehow innate, hereditary. Speaking of work, my interviewees talked about the past of the villages in the Podhale region, the long tradition of labour migration, the changes in family and neighbourhood cooperation, and the upbringing of children. It should perhaps not come as a surprise because, as Amanda Krzyworzeka argues, 'labour is closely linked to other phenomena of social life and cannot be understood in isolation from them, and to some extent it can even be presented indirectly, for example by describing a system of neighbourly reciprocity' (2014: 140). In contrast, listening to and observing my Górale field partners, I concluded that work in Podhale can also be perceived as a local heritage. For work connects the past with the future, the tangible with the intangible (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2011), shows what is important (Gillman 2010), serves to perform history and values (Laurajane Smith 2006), and thus contributes to the active production of locality (Harrison 2010).

And if the previous sentence sounds mysterious – that is fine. I will try to explain and illustrate all these questions on the basis of ethnographic field material. This text is intended to present selected dimensions and spaces of the contemporary work of Górale women and men, mainly those living in and around Chochółów. I will show how they are rooted in the past, how they reflect ways of perceiving and valuing reality, and how they can be interpreted as local heritage.

The Field

However, I must first state that I have never conducted research directly related to work in Podhale. First, between 2011 and 2014, I studied the music of the region and its identity dimensions (Małanicz-Przybylska 2018). Between 2020 and 2023, together with a group of students from the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, we carried out a project in Western Podhale entitled *Heritage in the*

*Borderland: Chochółów.*¹ And it is this recent research that I will refer to in this text.

In my view, Chochółów represents an optimal setting for heritage research. In this sizable village, situated on the Slovakian border and at the intersection of a heavily trafficked route connecting Czarny Dunajec and Zakopane, the various potential contexts and dimensions of heritage interpretation converge like in a lens. The village evinces the characteristics of an open-air museum, its principal thoroughfare lined with wooden Górale cottages dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These structures can be considered a tangible manifestation of material heritage. It should be noted that these structures are under the protection of the conservation officer.

Additionally, Chochółów is notable in Polish history for its role in the Chochółów Uprising of 1846, which is still commemorated in the village.² Thus, the area has its historical heritage. As would be expected of a Górale village, many people are engaged in the active maintenance of Górale traditions, manifested in the forms of dialect, singing, dancing, costume, etc. These traditions may be regarded as intangible heritage. It would be possible to multiply these examples of heritage and to invoke further historical figures,³ the distinctive natural environment around the peat bogs, the attachment to religion or the land in the Chochółowska Valley. I will undoubtedly return to this subject on more than one occasion. In this context, however, I have elected to present another reflection.

¹ We conducted our research as part of an ethnographic laboratory at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw. During these two years, we made four field trips to Chochółów, lasting between one and two weeks. We conducted our research using ethnographic methods, i.e. we talked to the Górale (about 140 interviews), participated in their daily and festive life, tried to get involved, observed them, and also conducted ethnographic workshops for primary school children.

² On the anniversaries of the uprising, reconstructions or performances are held, a solemn mass is celebrated, and various institutions bear the name of the Chochółów Insurgents (e.g. a school, a museum, a tourist trail).

³ Among other notable figures, there are accounts of Father Wojciech Błaszyński, the renowned architect of the imposing neo-Gothic church, who met an untimely demise, and the Tatra couriers who originated from Chochółów.

When I asked my respondents about the issues mentioned above during my interviews and conversations, I found that the subject of labour emerged repeatedly, even though I had not intended to focus on it. The Chochołowians kept talking about work, relating all aspects of their lives to it. In part, my research was conducted using the biographical method, whereby narratives about life are often narratives about work. Furthermore, through direct observation of the daily lives of our male and female interviewees and by attempting to get actively engaged in it, I concluded that these individuals were perpetually engaged in labour, constantly having something to do. They perform waged labour (often doing more than one job), work at home, work for a living, and work for the local community. Work is very important to them, arguably constituting one of the most fundamental tenets within the Górale value system. I thus elected to follow in Anna Zadrożyńska's footsteps a little. During her investigation of the family, she noted that work was the primary focus of interest among the subjects.

Consequently, she dedicated her book, *Homo faber i homo ludens* (1983), to the subject of work and its transformations. I do not intend to abandon my principal topic, which is heritage. Instead, I aim to demonstrate that for the people of Chochołów, work is also a form of heritage.

Gazdówka – Farmstead

Nowadays, a minority of the Chochołów population works in agriculture. In the past, the village was predominantly agricultural. The village was particularly renowned for its milking cow breeding, which was extensive by Podhale standards. Some of my interlocutors even asserted with pride that it was from Chochołów that the local state milk collection centre received the greatest quantity of milk during the communist era. Despite my inability to corroborate this information, it is clear that the number of farmers in Chochołów is now minimal. And yet, in almost all my conversations, the topic of a traditional farm, a *gazdówka*⁴, as my

⁴ The word *gazdówka* stems from the word *gazda* which means the owner and host of the farm.

interviewees referred to it, was inevitably raised. It is noteworthy that the majority of adults had prior experience with cattle rearing or agricultural work, at least from their childhood. However, the concept of the *gazdówka* was not solely evoked as a recollection; it was frequently employed to illustrate a range of content. Primarily, the *gazdówka* serves as a symbol and synonym for the concept of hard work, a grind:

You have to work hard on the farm, and you never have time off because you have to... you have to tend the cattle, you have to feed them, you have to milk them, that's the truth, unfortunately. You can't just go on holiday, because how can you leave them? No way [w. 80]⁵.

We encountered a great many similar statements. Farming is associated with an inalienable duty and responsibility. Cow rearing, which, as previously stated, was the primary occupation of Chochółów farmers, is a full-time job — work from which there are no breaks. Cows, as living creatures, need constant care and attention, offering no respite.

Until the evening. We would rake until ten o'clock. You'd arrive with the cows still being led on a chain because the fields here are terribly narrow. You can't have them range over your neighbour's land, or they'll have a go at you. They grazed while chained and only on one's own pasture. Cows at home, you had to milk them, you had to, and there was no time. Only on Sundays, [you would go] to church and then it was better to lie down to rest. And you still had to go to the barn, whether Sunday or holiday, or no holiday [m. 70].

This sense of bondage (this is also a word often quoted by Chochółów residents) and hard farm work wasn't depicted as a nightmarish memory from the past but was instead seen as an ideal form of labour connected to positive values and through which such values were cultivated. Firstly,

⁵ In order to indicate the gender and age of the speakers in my work, I will use the following abbreviations: w for women, m for men, and a number for the respondent's age.

a significant number of respondents indicated that farm work was a multi-generational activity. Parents were obviously in charge of the whole farm, but children actively helped from an early age. As one woman observed, children's involvement in farm work commenced as early as they '*could lift the potatoes in a basket.*' Before the potato basket could be lifted, however, the children had already been watching the adults at work from the cradle:

The work had to be done, and [...] so you took the children with you into the fields, bringing along a cradle for them to sleep in while you worked [w. 80].

Did such small children work?

You know, toddlers did not work, but still, they would see what [to do] and how from such an early age, how to twist straw ropes, by God's wounds! [m. 70].

These statements emphasise the significance of work as a collective duty for the entire family unit. In the 1990s, Frances Pine posited that the concept of home, understood as both a physical space and a reflection of familial relationships, held a significant position within the Górale value system. It was due to the fact that the home was an integral component of the local social identity, with individuals primarily defined by the homestead they came from (Pine, 2007: 79). As the British researcher argued, this sense of belonging and connection to the home was expressed, among other things, precisely through work on the farm (ibid.: 80). Consequently, work for the home has always been regarded as a matter of great importance. This importance was previously widely acknowledged, including by teachers, who were willing to excuse children from their lessons during haying or other farm tasks that required many hands: '*Everyone knew, the teachers also came from the farmstead and knew that they had to help*' [w. 75].

Secondly, the values transmitted and developed while working together on the farm were a factor in shaping the formation of young people's

character, an excellent means of education that is definitely in short supply nowadays. Today, according to my interlocutors, children have no responsibilities, a situation that is not unequivocally regarded as beneficial.

The kids are set on electronics. [...] We just ... there were chores. Nowadays, children don't have any duties any more. We used to come [home], then you had to do everything, and there was just this *gazdówka* [farmstead], and that had to be done too, and in the summer, you had to mow the hay, and it wasn't all so easy [m. 70].

It obviously does not mean that the people of Chochółów would like their children to return to hard agricultural work. They simply recognised the educational function of such work that nothing replaces today. The rigours of farm work instilled resilience in children, fostered a sense of attachment to home and family, and provided a source of motivation for pursuing one's aspirations.

Have you ever seen a kid working or doing something now? It's not allowed. How can you put a kid to work like that? [says with a scoff – author's note] And we ran with rakes because if you wanted to have money for bread, for anything, for a ball, for shoes, I had to go, or else I had to serve another family because that's how it was. [...] With the farms and everything, you know. So today it's not like that, no. Today, you rear banana babies, you huff, you blow, so he doesn't do anything to himself. Sometimes, do this, do that, but work, no, never... [m. 40].

Despite the fact that the children do not work on the farm, they have a surprisingly extensive knowledge about this work. It was revealed during a workshop conducted at the local Chochółów Insurgents Primary School in 2022. During the two-day workshop, we investigated the concept of heritage and the specific heritage of Chochółów with students in the fourth and fifth grades. Additionally, the children were instructed to assume the role of ethnographers and engage in discourse with their grandparents regarding the experiences of their childhood. It became

evident that the ethnographic conversations were not wholly pertinent, as the students showered the researchers with information about their grandparents' work on the land even before the interviews commenced. The children provided vivid descriptions of specific farm activities, were able to name long-abandoned farming tools, recalled seasonal work, and even children's games that took place in the context of agricultural work (such as jumping in the hay or playing in the meadow while grazing animals, etc.). The information provided by the children was not derived from their direct experience. Instead, it was acquired from their grandparents, parents, and, as it subsequently became evident, from their teachers at school. It is noteworthy that the children exhibited a genuine sense of pride in their ability to respond to our inquiries and demonstrate their extensive knowledge.

Given that the knowledge of the agricultural past of the village and its inhabitants is transmitted from one generation to the next and that both adults and children perceive value in it and consider this knowledge and memory worthy of preservation, it seems reasonable to conclude that from my perspective as an anthropologist, this can be considered a form of local heritage. Laurajane Smith would likely inquire as to whether this heritage belongs to an authorised discourse or a bottom-up one (2006). There are similarities between her field and mine, but also a fundamental difference. During her research in Castleford, a British town with a mining past, Smith observed that Castleford residents struggled to incorporate the town's working-class, labour-related memory of the majority of the population into the local heritage. These endeavours were in opposition to the official discourse, which sought to portray a markedly different content from the past on the banners of local heritage (e.g. the ruins of the baths represented the Roman past) (ibid.: 240). In addition, the necessity to restore and revalue the labour-related past was predicated on the observation that children were largely uninformed about it. Some of the children did not even know what coal was (ibid.: 248). In Chochołów, this memory is already well established and, therefore, does not require restoration. While the agricultural heritage of the region is not officially presented on a daily basis (here, the Chochołów insurgents and the historic

buildings are the clear winners), the institutions do, however, pass on this knowledge to the younger generations. Outside of school and home, one can gain insights into agricultural tools and farmwork by visiting the local Chochołów Uprising museum.⁶ Only a portion of the exhibition is devoted to this event. The Bafia homestead, as the museum building is designated, has been arranged in a manner that also presents grassroots history, specifically the history of traditional work and ways of life in wooden cottages during the nineteenth century.

Therefore, I presume that the legacy of agricultural labour in Chochołów is oscillating between the authorised and the unauthorised (Smith, 2006). However, it is undoubtedly a living tradition, regarded as worthy of being passed on and sustained, as it evokes the courage and resilience of past generations and serves to transmit (even if only discursively at present) the preferred values of the local community.

Cooperation and Multi-professionalism

The work for the home, which Pine (2007) places so high in the Górale value system, obviously applies not only to agricultural activities. For as long as we have any material on this subject, the Podhale Górale have been characterised by undertaking the most varied tasks to ensure the survival or prosperity of the home. Difficult, capricious climatic conditions and infertile soils⁷ – these factors prompted the Górale to seek a variety of possible jobs and often undertake many of them simultaneously (Lehr, Tylkowa 2000). Economic migrations, trade journeys, and

⁶ <https://muzeumtatrzańskie.pl/filie/zagroda-baflow-w-chocholowie/> [access: 11 April 2024].

⁷ [The] local peasants collect granite and stones two and three cubits deep in the fields and shake off the dust from the boulders crushed for centuries, so that they can use them to scrape out a piece of ground on the deeper parts of the deposits, where they can sow oats or press in potatoes, which they cannot always harvest because the snows here are too early. Laborious cultivation! The time and the land itself are ungrateful! What the length of a harsh winter does not take from them, the shortness of summer does not allow them to finish' (Kolberg 1966: 34).

service to visitors (very intensive from the second half of the 19th century onwards) are activities that should also be considered traditional in the Podhale reality (Górz 2003: 35-38). Full-time jobs in state-owned workplaces (factories, spas, Cepelia, shops) – these, in turn, were the spaces in which Górale found employment during the Polish People's Republic (Malewska-Szałygin 2002, Górz 2003: 89).

What seems to me to be characteristic of the Podhale region is precisely the fact that people have taken up, and continue to take up, many different jobs there at the same time. Thus, something that can be described as multiprofessionalism is typical and rooted in the past. Kamiński, already mentioned above, thus wrote about this: *'The object of their occupation is, for the most part, to earn money from what the land provides, using their mental faculties to make the most of it, and with the money they earn they buy what they lack in their countryside. Selling and earning an abundant income for their expenses, such as buying and selling iron, salt, flax, linen, cloth, etc., which the land provides and which they can easily buy and sell well from near the edge of their mountains'* (Kamiński 1992: 6). In the past, as follows from this quotation and the statements of our interviewees, this multi-professionalism often consisted in combining work on the farm with other activities.

Q: Did your father also have a farm?

R: He did. He passed it down to me. He was a Gazda [a farm owner]. We had two hectares, sixth category by the way, so it wasn't easy to live off that. So, he still worked in Zakopane. Here you worked; you made some milk. You got a bit of milk, and there were chickens and ducks. And they bred sheep because they wove jumpers. There was still flax for shirts. My mother would still sew shirts [m. 70].

For such a multi-tasking arrangement to work, help from other family members was needed:

[My parents] ran a farm. My mother worked in a shop. A grocery, general grocery shop. And what it was like in the old days, I remember, eggs were sold, people sold [them], well, because times

were what they were, hard times, difficult times. They bought sugar. Because I often filled in for my mum in the shop when I was such a youngin. I went to high school, and during holidays, my mum would work in the fields, and I would fill in for her [w. 75].

It is also worth noting that nowadays young people also start working at a very young age.⁸ We were able to see this during our first research trip in the summer. It was difficult for us to meet young people in Chochółów. We saw children and talked to adults, but young people of secondary school age were almost completely absent. One lady told us that they all worked during the day. Holidays are the perfect time to earn money for their entertainment or to help the family budget. High school (and even the last years of primary school) students, therefore, hire themselves out to work in cafes, restaurants, hotels, at various tourist attractions in Zakopane (souvenir stalls, jelly sweets, fair ticket offices, festival staff), at weddings, and less frequently as farm hands on larger farms.

As is evident, the tourism sector offers the most opportunities for additional work today. It is also, and perhaps especially, the case for adults. Most of our respondents were also directly or indirectly employed in tourism. Next to their main jobs, they rented rooms and cottages to tourists or contracted to work in hotels and pensions during the season. Many found employment at the Chochółów Thermal Baths, which is now the largest employer in the area. Not only did people work in a variety of places, but they also emphasised the importance of this multi-professionalism, which turned out to be synonymous with diligence, resourcefulness, well-meaning cleverness, perseverance, and resilience (including physical endurance). Any extra work was also viewed positively and shown to be of value, echoing Pine's observations, *'the gains from this 'outside' work, however, are often channelled back into the maintenance, improvement and perpetuation of the house'* (2000: 74).

In a sense, tourism is also part of Podhale's traditional labour market. Timothy Cooley even wrote that tourists, who have been flocking to

⁸ This was also the case in the past. Many people said that they started working at a very young age: "I worked from the age of 16. And I worked for 44 years".

Podhale since the mid-19th century, should be called the last great migratory wave to have influenced the population structure of the region (2005: 121). These tourists, in turn, were served by the Górale from the very beginning of their stay in the Tatras – they organised their accommodation and food, drove them around, worked as guides, and finally entertained them with their music (Małanicz-Przybylska 2018: 218-221). And yet, it was the increasing involvement of tourism in the daily activities of the Górale that our interviewees most often criticised.

I think tourism has spoilt people a bit because money is just coming in. Of course, you have to invest, but then it goes on nicely. [f. 35].

The tourism industry is occasionally the subject of criticism, with the accusation that it has a demotivating effect on people. It seems to be an overly easy way of generating money. It is sufficient to invest once, and then it ‘works by itself.’ It, therefore, undermines the cult of hard work. However, our interviewees frequently emphasised that Chochołów is unique in this respect, as it is less affected by the tourist business.

I think people have other sources of income here, and tourism is sort of on the side[f. 30].

Now, from the Zakopianka side, there [...] towards Biały Dunajec, they made more of a living from guests, didn't they? That's where the guests used to go. Here, hardly anyone before. It's only now, when they made these warm waters, these bathing establishments, these thermal baths, that guests started coming here, right [m. 70].

Migrations

It can be concluded that tourism does not represent the primary source of income for the inhabitants of Chochołów, although a significant proportion of the population does derive additional income from this sector. Conversely, a considerable number of individuals are employed abroad,

predominantly in Austria, but also in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, i.e. locations readily accessible from Podhale. One respondent indicated that it is faster to reach Vienna than Warsaw. He enters the Slovak motorway just across the border and arrives in Vienna in four hours. Such a distance allows one to effectively leave for work from Monday to Friday and return to the family at the weekend. Currently, it is mainly men who work in this way, either as truck drivers or in construction. Indeed, the Górale take pride in being the best builders (Górale dialect: *budorze*) in Europe and are employed to build wooden guesthouses and hotels everywhere, particularly in the Alps. What is the source of this uniqueness?

Górale builders are highly respected abroad for their opinions, as this tradition is often passed down from son to son. They learn what to do from childhood [m. 20].

While the construction process, the resulting structure, and the materials and tools utilised are not traditional, it is the craft itself that is of primary importance in this context. This would be the position of Regina Bendix, who posited that the field of understanding of the concept of heritage necessarily encompasses not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills manifested in the form of work, namely the work of human hands (Bendix, 2022: 43). Bendix argues that thus understood heritage is not immutable and unchanging. On the contrary, to endure and align with the conditions of the modern world, modifications and adaptations are essential (ibid.: 46). The construction of Alpine guesthouses, therefore, does not contradict the inherited tradition of the Podhale builders (in local dialect: *budorze*).

The change in the space of work abroad also applies to gender issues. Pine's research demonstrates that during the transitional period, particularly following the opening of borders and Poland's accession to the European Union, it was predominantly women who migrated to European countries to perform care work. Despite having left their homes and children in the Podhale region, these women were still regarded as exemplary and good mothers, as the income they earned abroad contributed to the overall

well-being of their multigenerational families (2007: 84). Currently, in my opinion, this perception has undergone a significant transformation. As previously stated, it is mainly men who engage in employment further from home. In contrast, women are predominantly involved in local and home-based work. The responsibility for the care of the household and children falls to them.

Furthermore, on several occasions, statements were made that were strongly critical of mothers who had left their children in the care of other family members to work away from home. Confronting these statements with Pine's observations, I concluded that an evident shift in worldview is occurring in this context. If previously, as the researcher posited, the roles of men and women within domestic and economic spheres were relatively balanced in Podhale, this is no longer the case. Men assume greater professional responsibilities and earn more, while women are primarily engaged in domestic duties and extra work outside the home.

It does not change the fact that economic migration remains a significant and frequent phenomenon. One of the primary destinations, with a longstanding tradition, for these migrants is the United States. One of my interlocutors was able to provide a detailed account of the migration of his family members to America, beginning in the late 18th century! However, large-scale overseas migrations commenced in the nineteenth century following the 1873 cholera epidemic. The process was influenced by the prevailing difficult economic conditions, poverty in Galicia and land fragmentation (Górz 2003: 35). Without delving too deeply into the historical context of migration, it is notable that during the communist era, there was a significant increase in the number of people migrating to the United States. Men, women, and sometimes whole families would leave. This migration movement was very intense, particularly in western Podhale, where the majority of the population relied on agriculture for their livelihood:

Here, every other house went to the United States. From this side, Chochołów, Czerwone, Koniówka, and Witów all went to America [m. 60].

At that time, travel to the United States involved lengthy periods of residence, often lasting several months, years, or even indefinitely. While the return movement gained momentum after 1989 (Bird 2019: 80), nearly every individual interviewed had relatives residing in the United States. Additionally, many had firsthand experience of working in America, which was consistently described as exceedingly challenging.

You haven't been to America, so you don't know, but everyone should go, get a job, and do some work, and then they would know how much needs to be done every day [...]. Sometimes, a week wouldn't be enough to do what you'd do in a day there, and no one would give you a cent for free there [m. 40].

The experience of working in the USA was frequently highlighted by our interviewees as valuable, not only in financial terms, which were considerable during the communist era but also because the experience made one hardened and accustomed to hard work, as evidenced by the above quote. It is also noteworthy that our research indicates that Górale migrating from Chochółów and the surrounding area to the United States frequently engaged in manual labour. Men were employed in construction, butchery, or as commercial truck drivers, while women engaged in office cleaning or provided care for the elderly. One woman, in a metaphorical reflection, thus summed up her work in the United State:

Nowhere is there bread without a crust, only with a crust. [...] And the crust is thick [w. 70].

Working for the community

One of the interviewees we befriended contacted me one evening and stated, *'You still absolutely must talk to Stasia. She has done so much work for Chochółów'* [w. 70]. I find this sentence to be of particular significance. Not only does it corroborate my previously posited thesis regarding the significance of work among the Górale, but it also indicates another

crucial aspect thereof: the community. This is because the Chochołówians frequently emphasised the importance of working for the benefit of the local community, presenting this as a distinctive feature of their local identity. I frequently heard that the villagers were particularly adept at utilising available resources. For instance, they established a water supply company that provided water to every residence. They were able to indicate individuals involved in activities for the village who had held positions on the village and district councils over the years and contributed to the construction of a car park in front of the church and shop, a ski jump, the laying of pavement along the road (a very busy and dangerous road, which is the only pedestrian and cycle route along the whole of Chochołów), and so on. Furthermore, the notion of working for the benefit of the village as a whole manifested itself in a number of activities that were particular and unique to Chochołów. These activities could be considered examples of active heritage production, as defined by Harrison (2010).

The first of these activities is the meticulous care for the external presentation of the historic wooden houses. As previously stated, the wooden architecture of Chochołów is the village's most notable feature. It is the defining feature and visual emblem of the village. The houses are protected by the provincial conservation officer, who is responsible for inspecting and approving all renovation projects. Nevertheless, an unwritten obligation, which the overwhelming majority of proprietors adhere to, is to clean the wooden facades at least once a year.⁹ It is typically undertaken during the week preceding Corpus Christi, which falls in late spring, in May and June. According to residents of Chochołów, unpainted wood loses its attractiveness after the winter months, acquiring a grey hue that is deemed unappealing. To prepare for both Corpus Christi, which is one of the most important religious holidays for the people of Podhale, and the subsequent holiday and tourist season, houses are washed. The process is performed by hand, using grey soap and a scrubbing brush. Some employ

⁹ Some even wash the houses twice a year, once at the end of summer: "At our place, we wash the houses twice: first at Corpus Christi to make it look nice, and then after haying, because when you haul hay, it all goes on the house, and you have to clean it. And when there used to be a harvest, it was even worse" [w. 35].

the services of professional cleaning companies, but the majority do the work themselves.

Because you have to – well, they wash, these wash, like they say, these companies come, but I don't know what it is they use... You have to have warm water and boil grey soap in this water, and now you have to add a wood protection concent... well, the kind that protects the wood. [...] And you have to have cold water to rinse it off, you wash it with this soap and water, then you rinse it off with clean water, and then you wipe it off with a cloth wrung dry, and that's it [w. 80].

The process of scrubbing houses is a physically demanding task that requires a combination of strength, experience, and perseverance. A team of four individuals can complete the cleaning of a house in a single day.

Throughout the day. It is very hard work. I don't know if you ladies ever took a bucket of water and scrubbed all day, but the next day, you can't even comb your hair, your hands shake so much. It's labour-intensive and really takes a lot of effort to clean properly [w. 35].

Everyone, without exception, emphasised the effort and difficulty of cleaning:

But it's really hard work. If I wash the house for a day, I'm sick for a week. I can feel it in my body, such fatigue [...]. It's even harder than construction work; not everyone will do it [w. 40].

Nevertheless, the majority of residents make this effort to ensure that the village's main road looks dignified for the Corpus Christi procession and that a beautiful Chochołów can be enjoyed all summer long and presented to visitors. In response to my inquiry about the underlying motivations, numerous individuals cited tradition as the primary factor. It is the right thing to do. The attachment to the old houses is, therefore, manifested through care and maintenance, which require a significant investment

of time and effort. By washing their houses, the Chochołówians engage in the practice, which they perceive as a continuation of the activities of their ancestors. They, in a way, perform the past, which is also the present, which is directed towards the future, indeed, as the maintenance of the houses ensures their continued survival. The combination of these three perspectives allows for the designation of activities as cultural heritage, as argued by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2011).

Furthermore, these activities are firmly embedded in the local context (Appadurai 2005), encompassing the visual and spatial attributes of the village. Everyone knows who washes the houses, who does not, which houses are taken care of and who requires assistance. Furthermore, those who fail to maintain the cleanliness of their houses may face social criticism. Nevertheless, neighbours assist one another, frequently washing the houses together. Concurrently, the context of the washing – the period preceding Corpus Christi – imbues the process with a religious dimension. By washing their houses, Chochołówians exemplify their dedication to particular values and worldviews. They actively manifest their heritage (Harrison 2010), which encompasses an affinity for religion, an attachment to village traditions and history, and an attachment to hard work.

In my opinion, setting up and decorating altars for Corpus Christi, which, in a way, crowns the process of preparing the village for the procession and this special feast, has a similar dimension. Furthermore, it is a task that necessitates a considerable investment of time, perseverance, strength, artistic ability, and collaboration of numerous individuals. In 2022, we took part in the preparations for the celebration of Corpus Christi in Chochołów, which included the assembly and decoration of the altars. Our assistance with these tasks enabled us to observe the gravity with which the work was undertaken. The precise positioning of the letters on the altar background material, the numerous corrections required to achieve an optimal visual presentation, and the draping of the decorations with hands held up for an extended period – these were the aspects we observed and began to comprehend the importance of this work. During this process, the residents of Chochołów reflected on past celebrations of Corpus Christi, discussing significant events that had transpired

and recalling individuals who had passed away. These recollections were shared in a public setting, effectively re-enacting the local history and traditions that hold significance for the community (Harrison, 2010).

The last community space of work, which also bears features of active production of heritage rooted in the locality, is the annual joint planting of trees in the Chochołowska Valley. It is because the inhabitants of Chochołów, in addition to those of seven other surrounding villages, are the proprietors of the forested areas within the Tatra National Park, specifically the section designated as the Chochołowska Valley. Since 1819, the members of the Community of Eight Entitled Villages have been entitled to use this land, in particular to harvest trees from it. Still, they are also responsible for its maintenance. It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a detailed account of the history of this specific instance of forest ownership by the Górale. Those interested in pursuing this topic further are directed to the organisation's website, which is mentioned above.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is important to note that, as part of their collective responsibility for the upkeep of their forest, the representatives of the community undertake an annual expedition to their forest to plant new trees in place of those that have been felled.

It's twice a year or once a year, and the planting is always in the spring. Well, all these people gather from the village of Chochołów [...]. In the past, they used to drive tractors, sit on trailers, and go by tractor to plant. Now they drive up to the Chochołowska Valley by minibus, and they get hoes and go planting [m. 50].

This way, people take care of the common forest, which is of significant importance to them due to the tangible benefits it provides. The forest is a primary source of wood, which is a crucial material for construction and carpentry in the region. Furthermore, the upkeep of the forest can be viewed as a form of care for future generations. The forest is not solely intended to benefit the current population; it is also meant to serve the

¹⁰ <http://www.wspolnotalesna8wsi.pl/> [access 11 April 2024].

needs of the generations that will follow. A sense of ownership is important in this case. It is THEIR forest, as has been emphasised many times. Encompassing a range of symbolic meanings, the significance of one's own forest is distinct from that of any forest. When the Chochołów inhabitants wanted to erect a monument to commemorate John Paul II's visit to Podhale, they drove a tractor at night to transport a boulder from their forest to the Chochołowska Valley.

Furthermore, the forest serves as a reminder of the region's long history of land struggle. This history is known to all members of the community. It is also recalled on the organisation's website in an entry which commences as follows: *'The community has existed since 1819, and its history exemplifies the attitudes of the Górale, the Polish peasant, in the pursuit of property and personal freedom.'*¹¹ Therefore, a forest that has been under the stewardship of the local community for over two centuries and serves as a testament to a history of courage and resilience must be safeguarded as... it represents the community's heritage. As Sharon Macdonald observed, heritage is also so intertwined with notions of property, whether metaphorical or tangible. This association shapes perceptions of who is entitled to claim heritage. One of the key contributions of heritage is to transform the past into a type of marketplace where choices can be made and values can be drawn (Macdonald, 2013). Furthermore, the act of planting trees can also contribute to the formation of local and community ties.

Well, it's also social, because you light a bonfire, roast a sausage, have a drink or a beer after work, and people are more together, you know! One talks to the other. Otherwise, nobody ever has time to talk to each other because people are busy, right? [m. 50].

A heritage of industriousness

To tie up my text, I will conclude with the words of Ludwik Kamiński: 'He has to earn a living, and so these industrial toilings have become

¹¹ <http://www.wspolnotalesna8wsi.pl/informacje/historia> [dostęp 11 April 2024].

a second necessity of life for them so in the villages if there are any care-less people who do not multiply their wealth by earning a living, they are generally all mistreated' (1992: 6). The Górale's industriousness and attachment to it appear to be the heritage in itself. The Górale are forthcoming when discussing the strenuous labour of their forebears, encompassing the arduous work undertaken on emigration reaching back to the nineteenth century. It is not done to elicit sympathy but rather to demonstrate the toughness, courage, resourcefulness, and enterprising spirit of the Górale people. The narratives of past labour also serve to disseminate and articulate pivotal values within the Górale community. These encompass not only the attributes mentioned above but also a sense of local closeness. Because in the past,

(...) people were nicer, kinder. One met with another, and they chatted. Whether they were mowing or raking one next to the other. Now, everyone's busy with money, with everything, hardly anyone, just 'hello, hello' [m. 70].

The statement above serves to demonstrate that the economic dimension of work is not the most significant factor in the Podhale region. Work is regarded as a value and an attachment to specific content, as evidenced by the observations made during the workshops at the primary school, among other instances. Frances Pine also emphasised these social and cultural meanings of work. She posits that work is the basis for building both individual and community identity and, in my opinion, local heritage. Pine also echoes Kaminski's words: *'To comment positively on someone's industrious nature, their strength, and their skill at any kind of work is to give the highest possible praise;'* (Pine 2000: 83).

As I have endeavoured to demonstrate, work as heritage traverses the divide between the authorised and the unauthorised (Smith, 2006). Furthermore, it flows from the tangible (wooden architecture) to that associated with craftsmanship, the work of the hands (Bendix 2022). Therefore, in Podhale, work can be considered a practice that, as Rodney Harrison posited, contributes to the production of locality and may be perceived as

a means for individuals to engage in the production of culture. '*This active engagement in production of culture as it allows the individual to build up cultural capital*', that is, the skills and knowledge that enable one to operate within a culture (2010: 245). It is a form of cultural know-how, an ability to engage with one's own and the group's past by evoking and acting out specific memories or stories. It is a form of cultural capital that is strongly linked to heritage. Consequently, work heritage can be something that people create and actively use on many different levels.

Above all, during my research, I gained the impression that the Podhale people simply enjoy working: 'And today I like to work, I don't want to rest on my laurels like that,' [w. 70] – said the 70-year-old lady. After all, heritage is something we value positively and want to be spoken of and thought of (Gillman 2010).

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