# STIRRING THE POT IN POLAND: TRADITIONAL PLUM JAM, REGIONAL IDENTITY, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LOWER VISTULA VALLEY

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# STIRRING THE POT IN POLAND: TRADITIONAL PLUM JAM, REGIONAL IDENTITY, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LOWER VISTULA VALLEY

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This dissertation uses Polish Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley (Powidła Śliwkowe z Doliny Dolnej Wisły) as a case study of a regional food product seeking a geographical indication from the European Union (EU). Thereby it serves as a lens onto the seemingly contradictory nature of the EU's different policies: harmonizing and standardizing on the one hand, particularly in the area of food and agriculture; and promoting "diversity" on the other, whether in food, languages, or regional identities. This neoliberal project of defining sellable "identities" and "traditions" plays out in the lived experience of EU citizens, leading to negotiations and conflicts over the definitional ownership of these concepts. Here existing local social conditions and hierarchies come to bear. Whether teachers define a regional identity to imbue in their impoverished students or producers debate the authenticity of different jam making practices in order to register their product for a special designation, some voices are privileged while others are silenced. Advantages of cultural and social capital give a regional elite the upper hand in these negotiations. Thus the EU's attempt to promote diversity in the area of traditional food products has an ambivalent effect. On the one hand, it is creating markets and consumer awareness and supporting the identification and development of traditional foods through such avenues as Local Action Groups. On the other hand, the demands of the registration process are leading to the exclusion or withdrawal of participants and the narrowing of traditional practices to those supported by the most influential voices in the debate.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Olivia Margit Hall was born in Dortmund, Germany in 1979. As the daughter of a Black American and Japanese mother and a German father, she became curious at an early age about the cultural and social forces that shape her family and identity. Pursuing a career as an anthropologist is a professional extension of a role she has played throughout her life as a participant observer in a variety of cultural and linguistic contexts.

She graduated from Harvard College with an AB *cum laude* in psychology in 2002 and was awarded an MA in anthropology from Cornell University in 2007. Her academic interests include food and culture, agriculture, identity, regionalism, Eastern Europe, and the European Union.

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Finally, I would like to thank my husband Andrew and my parents for their unwavering support.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AOC | Appellation d'origine contrôlée, appellation of designated origin |
| ARMA | Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture |
| DOC | Denominazione di origine controllata, appellation of designated origin |
| EC | European Commission |
| EU | European Union |
| FAPA | Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture |
| GI | geographical indication, or geographically indicated food product |
| KGW | Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich, a type of rural women's organization |
| LAG | Local Action Group |
| LGD | Lokalna Grupa Działania, Local Action Group |
| LVV | Lower Vistula Valley |
| MET | Muzeum Etnograficzne w Toruniu, Toruń Ethnographic Museum |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NKD | Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo, Our Culinary Heritage |
| NDS | National Development Strategy |
| ODR | Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego, agricultural consulting agency |
| OriGIn | Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network |
| PDO | Protected Designation of Origin |
| PGI | Protected Geographical Indication |
| PLN | international abbreviation for Poland's currency, the złoty |
| PREPARE | Partnership for Rural Europe |

| | |
|---|---|
| PROW | Program Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich, Rural Development Programme |
| SE | Super Express |
| TPDW | Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dolnej Wisły, Friends of the Lower Vistula Society |
| TRUEFOOD | Traditional United Europe Food project |
| TSG | Traditional Specialty Guaranteed |
| TVP | Telewizja Polska, Polish Television |
| ZPKChiN | Zespół Parków Krajobrazowych Chełmińskiego i Nadwiślańskiego, LVV Landscape Park |

## GUIDE TO POLISH PRONUNCIATION

Based on: Nagengast (1991, xiii)

### The Vowels

| | |
|---|---|
| *a* | as in *far* |
| *e* | as in *get* |
| *i* | approximates the *ee* in *feet* |
| *o* | as in *lot* |
| *u, ó* | like the *oo* in *good* |
| *y* | like the *i* in *pit* |
| *ą* | nasalized like the *on* in the French *bon* |
| *ę* | nasalized like the *in* in the French *matin* |

### The Consonants

The following consonants are specific to Polish.

| | |
|---|---|
| *c* | like the *ts* in *cats* or the *tz* in *blitz* |
| *cz* | approximates the *ch* in *choice* |
| *ć, ci* | approximates the *ch* in *cheese* |
| *ch* | as in *loch* |
| *dz* | as in *adze* |
| *dź* | like the *j* in *jeep* |
| *dż* | like the *dg* in *bridge* |
| *j* | equals a *y* |
| *ł* | equals a *w* |
| *ń* | like the *ny* in *canyon* |
| *sz* | approximates the *sh* in *shelf* |
| *ś* | approximates the *sh* in *sheep* |
| *w* | equals a *v* |
| *ż, rz* | like the *s* in *measure* |
| *ź* | like the *s* in *amnesia* |

**Some examples:**

| | |
|---|---|
| powidła śliwkowe | paw-veed-wa shleev-kovay |
| oscypek | oss-tsuh-peck |
| Dolina Dolnej Wisły | Dol-ee-na Dol-nay Vees-wuh |
| Jarosław Pająkowski | Yah-ross-waf Pah-yon-kof-ski |
| Świecie | Shve-chuh |
| Związek Jaszczurczy | Zvion-zeck Yash-chur-chuh |

**A note on names:**

Last names that end in "-ski" are declined as adjectives. Take, for example, the male *pan Cholewski* and female *pani Cholewska,* who together are *państwo Cholewscy* (all forms nominative). I use the original Polish declension throughout the text.

## PREFACE

The names of most individuals (and some villages), with the exception of public figures, have been changed in order to protect their identities.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Plums are everywhere in the Lower Vistula Valley. In the spring, orchards all over the region abound with delicate white blossoms; in the fall, the trees' branches hang low with ripe, sweet fruit. Throughout the year, plums play a prominent role on the valley's culinary stage. My landlady in Chełmno arranged halved plums on rich yeast dough and sprinkled them with streusel. I mixed chopped dried plums into yogurt or enjoyed them in a chocolate coating. At our first meeting, the Kaczmarek family poured homemade stewed plums (*kompot*), thinned out with water, into our glasses. I also drank them as deceptively sweet plum liquor (*nalewka śliwkowa*) and as a more straightforwardly alcoholic plum brandy (*śliwowica*). Most frequently, I spread thick, smoky plum jam (*powidła śliwkowe*) onto buttered bread or ate it by the spoonful straight from the jar.

Plum jam, specifically *Powidła Śliwkowe z Doliny Dolnej Wisły* (Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley), is at the heart of my study of class, development and Europeanization in the Polish countryside. My choice of this traditional product as a case study was fortuitous and, in hindsight, foreshadowed aspects of what my analysis would later reveal. When I began my fieldwork in Poland's capital Warsaw, I set out to understand the regulatory framework that surrounds traditional food products in Poland. I had plans to move to the southern mountains after a few months to delve into a case study on *oscypek* cheese, but I always asked my interlocutors at the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other institutions and businesses what other traditional food products in Poland they might recommend as interesting examples. In response to my question, Urszula

Budzich-Szukała, Polish coordinator for PREPARE,[1] immediately spoke appreciatively of *Powidła Śliwkowe z Doliny Dolnej Wisły* as a well-coordinated and successful project, a reaction that was confirmed by my contacts at the Ministry.

What happened next is telling. After my conversation with Urszula, I emailed the person she had recommended I contact, Jarosław Pająkowski, director of the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park and driving force behind the plum jam project. Within twelve hours, he called me on my cell phone, inviting me to visit the region. He planned to be in Warsaw in two weeks for a conference and would take me there in his car. And so, at the beginning of March, park workers took me on a two-day whirlwind tour of the beautiful valley, its food, and people. *Pan*[2] Pająkowski's enthusiasm for plum jam and our cooperation was infectious.

I relay these events in order to illustrate not only the park director's charismatic personality but also his keen sense for recognizing and seizing opportunities. As a man in a position of power, he was well-connected to organizational leaders at the national level; having earned a doctorate in geology, he understood the potential publicity benefits of having a foreign scholar study and write about powidła;[3] and, directing an office full of park workers, he had the power to put on a show that would woo me. In short, pan Pająkowski was a most charming example of a member of the regional elite.

Over the course of the next eight months as a participant observer in the Lower Vistula Valley (LVV), I began to understand the park director and his activities in the broader social and economic context of the valley's rural society. I was based at the offices of the Lower Vistula

[1] PREPARE is a multi-national partnership of civil society organisations with a focus on central and eastern Europe that aim to strengthen civil society in rural areas and to promote trans-national cooperation.
[2] *Pan* is Polish for "Mr.," while *pani* denotes "Mrs." or "Ms." I will use the Polish versions of the honorifics throughout the text.
[3] Susan Terrio (2000) reflects on this question of the anthropologist's subjects (in her case, French *chocolatiers*) being fully aware of the influence she may wield through her narration of their lives and craft. Already during my fieldwork, I was invited to talk about plum jam and my findings at local conferences.

Valley Landscape Park in the centrally located town of Świecie, where I had frequent access to pan Pająkowski, a major hub of activity and information. Venturing out daily in an old, gray Volkswagen Golf (a popular car in the region for its reliability even on rough dirt roads), I interviewed dozens of plum jam producers and local leaders; chatted with community members over coffee and homemade cake; got up early to stir heavy pots of jam; mingled with organizers and visitors of a number of food and plum festivals; attended other community and private celebrations; toured the countryside's natural and historical sites; and, as a particular highlight, served on the jury of a *nalewki* (cordial) competition with fifty-three entries.[4]

***Framework for Analysis***

Before I delve into the details of my discoveries in the Polish countryside, I will briefly situate this research within the broader context of the anthropology of food, Eastern Europe, and the European Union (EU).

Rural areas, agriculture, and food production have long been primary foci of Western ethnographies of socialism and postsocialism (Caldwell 2009, 13)[5], especially as they have been exposed to the forces of globalization. Similarly, Cole (1977, 365) notes that after initially virtually ignoring Europe as a site for research, the anglophone anthropology of this part of the world overwhelmingly turned to rural areas. Considering the centrality of agricultural policy to the European Union (European Commission 2008), the countryside continues to be a key site for studying the ongoing transformations in Eastern Europe and the impact of EU policies after such countries as Poland joined the EU in May 2004.

[4] The palate cleanser between tastes of all fifty-three entries was beer.
[5] Polish examples of such ethnographies are Hann (1985), Nagengast (1991), and Schneider (2006).

Popularly, the EU is often accused of being a force of standardization and homogenization of cultures and economies in its territory, and the European Commission, in particular, frequently becomes the "scapegoat" in national political discourses (Bellier and Wilson 2000). One example frequently used in newspaper articles is Rule 1677/88, which regulates the classification of cucumbers according to the arc of their curvature (BBC 2002).[6] Nevertheless, the EU – conceived and grown among the tensions between supranational ambitions and intergovernmental caution (Weiler and Kocjan 2004, 81) – is a multifaceted, constantly evolving and negotiated entity. For example the EU promotes a complex mixture of both Keynesian and neoliberal economic models (Gille 2009), of which the often tense negotiations around bailouts and fiscal austerity during the economic recession after 2008 are evidence.

As Gille demonstrates with her study of Hungarian paprika, analyzing highly local processes can shed light onto larger dynamics such as the Europeanization of the former eastern bloc. Conversely, just as socialism and postsocialism need to be viewed as processes that had greatly differentiated effects in different countries (Caldwell 2009), these local practices affect how the impact of the EU is felt on the ground. That is, the experience of the EU is rarely direct but usually mediated, filtered, and complicated through the interests and intentions of national and state governments (Wilson 2000; see Bellier and Wilson 2000, 3; Herzfeld 2004, 209) as well as local conditions of class and power. For that reason Berdahl (1999, 13) called upon anthropologists to "transcend the 'village-study paradigm'...by exploring the effects of long-term and extralocal processes as they are manifested and refracted in a multiplicity of small-scale processes, local practices, and individual actions." By heeding this call, I also hope to link this study to the spirit of early works of European, including Polish, social scientists who tended to

[6] A closer look at the cucumber case, however, reveals that the EU rule merely unifies previously existing national regulations that help large-scale producers, packers, and sellers of the vegetable to efficiently describe and package their wares (Geiger 2007).

examine rural areas within the context of larger social entities and historical processes (Cole 1977), as well as to other ethnographies of Europe that, by the mid-twentieth century, turned to studying rural people not as isolated "passive recipients of Great Traditions but active entrepreneurs and decision-makers" (Parman 1998, 189).

The lens of food, in particular, lends itself to examining these intersections of macro and micro processes; of regulation, power, compliance, and resistance. Food is a substance of daily lived experience, connecting our bodies intimately with the outside world as each bite is literally incorporated into our being. How we grow this substance that allows our continued existence, where we obtain it, what we choose to eat and in whose company – all these aspects are determined by food's deep embeddedness in our society and culture. Thus food – in its sensual characteristics, presence or absence – has the ability to "evoke visceral responses that transform external, anonymous social processes into intimate, immediate, and personal experiences (Caldwell 2009, 3; see Nestle 2009, xi). "Food," Dunn (2009, 208) adds, "has the almost magical property of jumping scale: as it moves, it links the global economy and household economies, political bodies and the bodies of individuals, the world and the self. To study food, then, is to study power" (see also Mintz 1996).

Images of citizens waiting in long lines for bread are evocative confirmations of this link between power (the regime) and food during socialism in Eastern Europe (Verdery 1996, cited in Dunn 2009). Food was "a primary means" for socialist regimes to regulate citizens (Dunn 2009, 212), but empty shelves were evidence of their failure. While reports by one Western visitor that "(f)inding food in Eastern Europe was a problem," even in larger cities, and the "food one stumbled upon was barely edible" (Nestle 2009, ix) are certainly exaggerated, several Polish friends did tell me stories of regularly empty counters at the local butcher shop, and Wedel

describes an informal economic system that developed in Poland in order to provide goods and services that the formal structures were unable to supply (Wedel 1986).

In today's EU, food is an equally powerful symbol and experiential node between the regulatory system and the citizenry. It is an important way in which the EU's influence is evident in material form (Welz 2006) and lies at the center of many processes of regulation, negotiation, and resistance (see also Dunn 2004; 2005). From the early days of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) through food hygiene laws and regulations on the protection of traditional food products, Europeans have encountered the EU on their farms, in their supermarkets, and in their restaurants. Thus, "food and identity are becoming like the 'Euro,' a single common discursive currency through which to debate Europeanness and the implications of economic globalization at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Leitch 2003, 442).

### *EU Policy on the Ground*

In the Lower Vistula Valley, plum jam is, for its producers and many others, such an experiential node, a "European product" (Welz 2006, 10) – a point at which their daily lives intersect with the intentions and regulations of the European Union, in this case for specially labeled regional food products.

It is here that they experience what Elizabeth Dunn calls the EU's neoliberal or normative form of governmentality (Dunn 2005, 175). Looking at the area of food processing, primarily industrial, she describes how the EU targets a variety of spaces. First, there are the members of the EU themselves, which are brought into closer regulatory and technical relationships (Dunn 2004, 163), a project that reflects similar efforts at the global level, for example by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Secondly, this form of governance attempts "to integrate new

geographic spaces and populations not by overt coercion, but by instituting a host of 'harmonized' regulations, codes, and standards" (Dunn 2005, 175). Very frequently, these apply to agriculture, food, and food products.

Seremetakis (1994, 3), for example, bemoans that certain types of foods such as fermented cheeses have disappeared from the market due to the hygienic restrictions of the EU's precursor, the European Economic Community (EEC), and that as a result "(sensory) promises, memories and histories are being pulled out from under entire regional cultures and the capacity to reproduce social identities may be altered." Thus, popular fears of cultural homogenization have a basis in actual EU policies and goals, though, as Dunn's (2004; 2005) and other studies (e.g. Gille 2009) show, their concrete effects are results of complex interactions with local interpretations and reactions.

At first glance, it may seem contradictory that the EU would advance such standardizing regulations while simultaneously promoting diversity as a mainstay of its agenda. "United in diversity" is the EU's official motto, joining a flag and anthem as the union's primary symbols. This emphasis on diversity – originally aimed at the EU's multinational makeup – in the meantime concerns not only such issues as ethnicity, gender, and language, but also the many regions that make up the EU. The importance of this subnational level of governance and identification is evident from the establishment in 1994 of a Committee of Regions, an assembly that gives regions a voice independently of their national governments. It is also manifested in the special designations of origin that the European Commission grants to selected regional, traditional food products – an honor that the producers of plum jam seek.

This focus on regional diversity and specificity fits into Michael Herzfeld's *global hierarchy of value* (Herzfeld 2004), which describes how some ideas gain the global traction of

universality. As we will see in later chapters, the idea of the value of regional identities and characters has indeed gained a foothold in many places, just as diverse "ethnicities" have garnered remarkable importance around the world as products that can be sold in the global marketplace (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Thus, as Herzfeld (2004, 2) argues, "(s)tartlingly, even 'diversity' can become a homogeneous product. So, too, can tradition and heritage: the particular is itself universalized." Taken in the EU context, this would mean that standardization and harmonization can take place not only through regulations targeted explicitly at this effect, but also through those ostensibly furthering diversity, particularly in a sellable form such as traditional food products.

In the following chapters, I want to examine more closely to what extent such homogenization and universalization of the particular truly takes place on the ground. To what extent does the EU's apparent support of diversity in the form of regional and traditional food products, as well as Poland's own promotion of regional identities through educational programs, in truth have a homogenizing effect on those who originate, produce, receive, and live these products and identities? Put differently, I ask what happens when the values of diversity and regionalism encounter existing local conditions in one particular region, the Lower Vistula Valley. What forces or agents translate these values into local practice? What role do the unequal distribution of power and various forms of capital play in determining who fills these often abstract notions with content (Shucksmith 2000)? To what extent are such practices and ideas contested?

In this study, powidła will serve as a lens onto these questions and thereby onto overt and hidden structures and processes in the Polish countryside, almost twenty years after the fall of socialism and in the wake of the country's ascension to the EU in May 2004. Jam is where

supranational EU policy and Polish legislation on traditional food products as well as broader rural development meet the most local of objects – a regional food, rooted in decades, even centuries-old orchards of the Lower Vistula Valley. Between them the people of the valley work as intermediaries and translators of policy into practice – processes that are strongly affected by local hierarchies and disparities in social and cultural capital. Thus the following chapters will document and analyze the often contentious negotiations around the past, present, and future of regional tradition and identity.

### *Chapter Overview*

Chapter 2 sets the stage for the following analyses by introducing the place, people, and plum jam of this study. I give an overview over the history and socioeconomic conditions of the Lower Vistula Valley (LVV), which struggles with the same issues of poverty and transition as much of the Polish countryside, and close with the story and production of powidła śliwkowe.

As chapter 3 describes, cooking the jam is one tool that some teachers in the LVV employ within the framework of government-mandated "regional education." Bringing back a (re)invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1984) that was nearly lost in the aftermath of World War II, they hope to imbue children, especially those from an impoverished socioeconomic background, with a sense of local history and pride. Defined by the teachers and some other producers as a tradition tied more to the valley than to its people, the plum jam and regional identity become disengaged from the children's' own families and experiences. Nevertheless, local pride is meant to counteract inherited pathologies of poverty and, placed at the center of a concentric model of nested identities, form the core of better Polish – and European – citizens. Thereby, the teachers define a past that they hope will form the basis of a brighter future for their students.

In chapter 4, I describe the rediscovery of plum jam in the Lower Vistula Valley, which occurred simultaneously in the Landscape Park under the leadership of its director, Jarek Pająkowski, and the village of Strzelce. The ensuing conflict over the ownership and future of this potential economic development tool lends credence to Dunn's (2009, 208) assertion that "(to) study food…is to study power." My analysis of the warring parties' performance of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) in the media coverage of the event gives concrete ethnographic content to Shucksmith's (2000, 214) more abstract analysis of bottom-up rural development in Europe, in which he concludes that "treating social or cultural capital only as a collective good in theories of endogenous development masks the way in which these assets are appropriated by those who *individually* already have social and cultural capital, whether through their social connections, their ethnicity, their formal and informal education, or their style, taste, presentation and language."

In the early years of capitalist transition, Nagengast (1991) argued that class divisions that long preceded the advent of socialism had persisted in the Polish countryside throughout the past decades of socialist rule. Similarly, my analysis of the Powidła Wars indicates that local and national elites – such as the park director – and a less privileged class of rural people approach each other with suspicion. Those less equipped with cultural, economic, and social capital feel less empowered to break through established social power structures in order to access resources – including from the EU – that could help them to realize their own aspirations.

One of these aspirations is described in chapter 5, which analyzes the European and Polish legislative frameworks within which such traditional foods as plum jam are being developed as specially registered and labeled products, sellable in the European and global markets. While most studies of traditional food products in Europe focus on their positive economic and rural

development potential (e.g. Barjolle and Sylvander 2000; World Bank 2002), few examine social aspects (e.g. Marescotti 2003; Leitch 2003), and little attention is paid to the effects of developing the product in its region of origin, as well as to the influence of existing social conditions on the realization of the product's potential. I argue that the EU's project of defining essentialized "authentic" Traditions creates a competitive and normative framework within which producers are almost inevitably set up for conflicts.

Finally, chapter 6 looks more closely at the future that powidła producers hope to build with their traditional product. I outline how the EU's labeling scheme for geographical indications fits into its larger rural development goals, which recently ascribe a multifunctional role to agriculture. Beyond higher profits for the value-added jam, hoped-for spillover effects in the LVV include agrotourism and a recognizable profile or brand for the region. Difficulties in fulfilling the EU's ideals of broad-based participation in such projects as Local Action Groups, however, lead back to the question who determines the agenda for the countryside's future.

# CHAPTER 2

## PEOPLE, POVERTY, AND PLUM JAM IN THE LOWER VISTULA VALLEY

Figure 1. Vistula bend in the Lower Vistula Valley (Source: LVV Landscape Park)

The Lower Vistula Valley is a place of subtle beauty. Apple blossoms, meadow flowers, old farm buildings, and rare but unassuming birds are typical examples of its assets. But from the top of the river valley's high banks, these understated details unite into a sweeping view that draws the eyes over the Vistula River's[7] shimmering, curving waters to a patchwork of fields, orchards, and small forests; medieval brick castles and churches; and a string of villages and small towns (see Figure 1). It is here, in a northern Polish region stretching 120 kilometers along the Vistula from the modern regional capital Bydgoszcz in the south to the medieval town of Gniew in the

[7] The Vistula (Wisła) is the longest Polish river, flowing 1047 kilometers from its source at Barania Góra in the western Beskidy mountain range to a delta estuary into the Baltic Sea, near Gdańsk. On its way, the river flows through several major Polish cities, such as Kraków and the capital Warsaw.

north, that I conducted the main part of my field research from March to October 2008 (see Appendix A for a map).

I will use this chapter to set up the backdrop against which the events and processes that I encountered there unfold. I begin by describing the Lower Vistula Valley (LVV) with a brief historical overview and by introducing the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park and its sister organization, the Friends of the Lower Vistula Society, which impact the cohesion of the valley and its activities in important ways. Next, I delve into the socioeconomic challenges of the Polish countryside in some detail in order to provide a framework for discussions of power, class, and economic development in the following chapters, and to develop the motivations of many of the actors in this narrative, some of whom I present below. Finally, I tell the story of plums and plum jam in the valley – the lens through which we will study this example of the eastern European countryside in the following chapters.

### *Historical Overview*

It is difficult to assemble a straightforward and cohesive chronological narrative for the Lower Vistula Valley, as it is not a historically grown region. Rather, it is based on a geological unit and has more recently been constructed within the outlines of the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park. This administrative entity, which I will describe in more detail below, draws together segments of several traditional subregions of Pomerania, most notably Kociewie on the left river bank, as well as Ziemia Chełmińska (Chełmno Land) and a corner of Kujawy on the right bank (see Figure 2). However, as I will outline in chapter 3, for historical reasons such as population displacements after World War II, many inhabitants of these areas are barely aware of which region surrounds them. They are, in fact, often more likely to have heard of the LVV.

Further, the complexity of the task of telling the story of this region is indicative of the wealth of narrative strands that are interwoven in its historical fabric. Many populations – listed in a regionally issued publication as including Prussian tribes, Poles, Germans, Mennonites, Jews, Dutch, Catholics, and Protestants (Tubielewicz and Gonia 2007) – have left their archaeological, architectural, cultural, religious, and linguistic marks on the LVV landscape.


Figure 2. Map of cultural regions in and around the LVV (Source: LVV Landscape Park)

Past and current archaeological excavations have produced insight into life in the LVV since prehistoric times, when the valley developed into an important migration and trade route. Evidence places reindeer hunting camps and groups of farmers and breeders in the region as early as 5000 BC. Some areas, such as the Unisław Basin, became heavily populated in the Bronze and early Iron Ages, hosting stone box and bell-shaped graves typical for Eastern

Pomeranian culture. Gzin, a village on the right Vistula bank, has been identified as a Lusatian-Pomeranian cult center from around 500 to 300 BC,[8] based on evidence of ritual cannibalism found in sixty-one caves (Tubielewicz and Gonia 2007).

The Middle Ages, in particular, have left a lasting impression on the region. It is dotted with castles and fortifications, and during this period both the left and right river banks fell under the influence of different powers. The left bank was linked mainly to Gdańsk Pomerania and is considered a "secular land" (Tubielewicz and Gonia 2007, 38), while the right bank, Chełmno Land, had close ties to the Christian Piast dynasty.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, both fell to the Teutonic Knights, a German order that erected several castles and dikes, many of which still exist today. The order's administrative and war expenditures were a burden to the people of these lands, leading to the establishment of an association of Chełmno knights and nobility, the Związek Jaszczurczy (Lizard Union) that aimed to reconquer Chełmno Land for Poland. In 1410, in the Battle of Grunwald, the Teutonic Knights were defeated decisively by Polish king Władysław Jagiełło. To this day, some residents of Chełmno recall the glory of the Związek Jaszczurczy by dressing in medieval clothing and armor to participate in battle reenactments and parades.

The following centuries were characterized by significant economic development, brought on by the settlement of groups from northwestern Europe, including Mennonites, persecuted in their homeland for their religious beliefs that stressed the role of free will for man's salvation, and populations from the Netherlands and German Friesland. Collectively, they are often referred to as "Olenders." Their traces include so-called street villages that run parallel to the river, wooden

[8]Some of the patterns found on excavated objects are now used in contemporary ceramic designs around Gzin, an interesting example of how contemporary artists and entrepreneurs reach back into history and tradition for inspiration.

architecture, and several cemeteries. A well-preserved *chata*, or cottage, in Chrystkowo displays the Mennonites' unique style of architecture and often hosts Landscape Park events.

In 1772, with Poland's first partition, the region was annexed by the neighboring Kingdom of Prussia, and German settlers took over much land that had previously belonged to the king, nobility, and the church. The castle of Ostromecko, in the southern part of the valley, was one stop on the journey of the first postal stagecoach from Berlin to Królewiec (Kaliningrad), as well as the spot where General Ney and Napoleon's army crossed the river in 1806.

Jan Michalski, a cherry farmer with century-old roots in the valley and a passion for local history, told me that during the partition many Poles also moved into the area. In response, he said, the Prussians split many farms into holdings smaller than ten hectares – still quite sizeable at the time – to attract more Germans, including from Bessarabia, "balancing" the German and Polish populations to about equal proportions.

The late nineteenth century brought the development of roads and the railway, as well as industrialization. Because value-added products were more profitable than simple farming, alcohol distillation plants, brickyards, breweries, and a sugar factory in Unisław sprang up. At the same time, from the early nineteenth century, in the run-up to World War I, and during World War II, the Prussians, and later the Germans, established a wide-ranging system of fortifications. A brochure published by the Friends of the Lower Vistula Society guides curious visitors to numerous well-preserved examples and traces of these infantry and ammunition shelters and depots tucked away in fields and forests.

The Prussians are also credited with strengthening the banks of the Vistula and regulating its flow. A dominant force in shaping the geology, climate, flora, and fauna of the valley, the region's eponymous river used to flood regularly, probably several hundred times over the past

millennium.[9] Now, the water level still rises and falls with the seasons, but floods are much less frequent and extreme. 117 lakes with a total surface of 239 hectares, and two streams that feed into the river – the Wda and Mątawa – are what remains of the former channels and beds of the Vistula.

The two world wars marked incisive changes in the valley, as in all of Poland. After the country regained its sovereignty in the interwar period, some of the German population left, and the LVV became more agricultural. In the wake of World War II, massive population shifts took place, which I will describe in more detail in chapter 3. As the Soviet army approaches from the east, most of the remaining Germans fled, leaving behind empty farms and houses which were soon filled with refugees from southeastern Poland.

In 1945, the region became part of the newly created Pomeranian voivodship. Former nobility's possessions became communist state-owned farms, and some towns developed quickly, absorbing nearby villages. Since the administrative reforms of 1999, the LVV is now part of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian (Kujawsko-Pomorskie) voivodship.

### *The Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park*

The main feature that unifies the disparate cultural regions of the LVV is the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park, which covers large parts of what is in truth a geological and ecological corridor (see Figure 3). Hugging itself closely to the bends of the Vistula River, the valley, at its narrowest point, reaches three kilometers across, at its widest – fifteen kilometers, covering a

[9] Jan Długosz, a famous fifteenth-century priest, diplomat, and chronicler, noted in his *Annales Seu Cronici Incliti Regni Poloniae* that as a consequence of an ice dam the village of Czarże on the right Vistula bank was suddenly and devastatingly flooded by the river. The waters deposited so much sand that only "(m)any years after, the remains of drowned people's bodies, their houses, bricks and stones were found" (Tubielewicz and Gonia 2007, 74). But the village's large, beautiful church that had floated away "was never found. It might have remained hidden under the sands of one of the hills surrounding Czarże" (ibid).

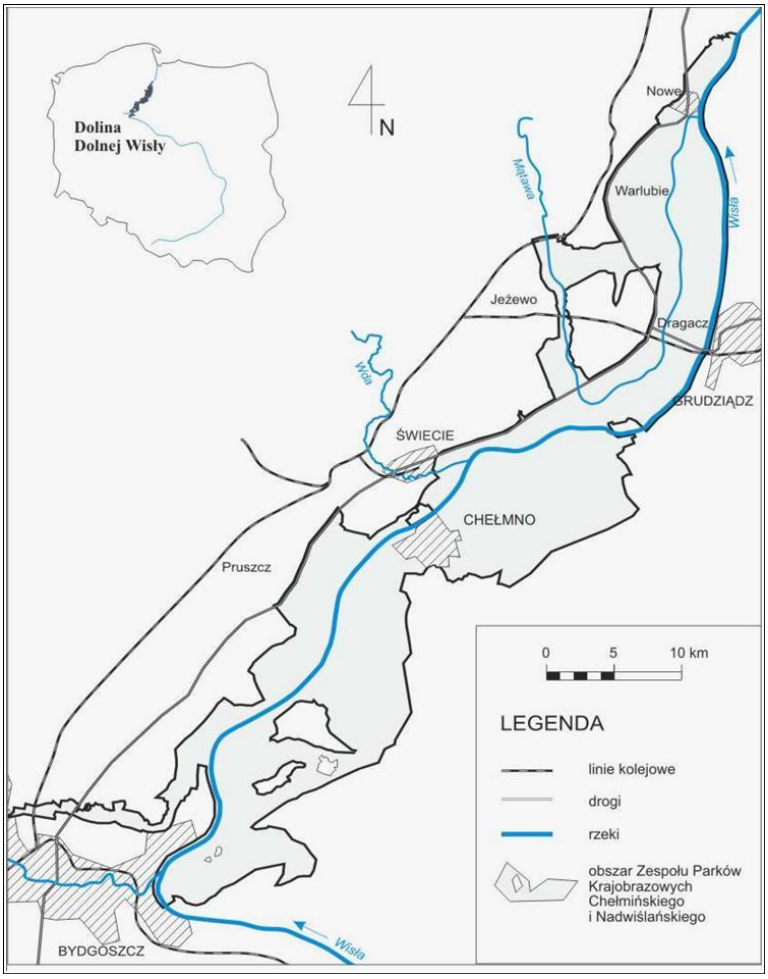


Figure 3. Map of the Lower Vistula Valley and the Landscape Park (Source: LVV Landscape Park)

surface of about 333 square kilometers. The corridor was first established about 16,000 to 17,000 years ago at the end of the latest ice age as the Scandinavian Ice Sheet withdrew. Intense erosion has continued to deepen and shape its characteristic high banks, rising fifty to seventy meters above the flat basin. The resulting microclimate is typified by high humidity, reduced rainfalls, and frequent fogs and frosts. Great temperature amplitudes deliver many hot days in the summer, particularly in June and July, but also cold winters. The Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park[10]

[10] The Landscape Park's English name belies its complex structure, better reflected in the Polish Zespół Parków Krajobrazowych Chełmińskiego i Nadwiślańskiego (ZPKChiN), literally Complex of the Chełmno and Nadwiślanski Landscape Parks. The Nadwiślanski Landscape Park was founded in 1993 and was joined in 1999 by the Chełminski Landscape Park. Together they underwent several administrative iterations and name changes until

serves to protect its area "in consideration of its natural, historical, cultural, and scenic values, for the purpose of preserving and popularizing these values in conditions of balanced development," as the founding documents for such parks in Poland state.[11] Although farming, small-scale fishing, and other economic activities may continue, the status of "landscape park" limits construction and conveys special protection of flora, fauna, water, and other natural features onto its territory.

The Landscape Park prides itself on the valley's highly diversified flora and fauna, on which its sister organization, the Friends of the Lower Vistula Society, has issued several books and postcard series. Scientists have identified at least 1000 plant species, of which eighty-one are partially or fully protected. Of special note are xerothermic plants, adapted to both hot and dry conditions. Once common in the valley's ecological corridor as the last glaciers withdrew at the end of the Pleistocene, they are now a rarity in Poland and protected in certain areas of the LVV, for example on the slopes of the Zbocza Plutowskie reserve. Ironically, preserving this type of flora requires some human intervention. The Landscape Park has hired a local farmer to herd a flock of sheep on the slopes. Kept in check by his dog, the black sheep[12] munch on invasive plants such as common hawthorns and locusts that would otherwise succeed the grasses.

Fewer studies exist on the LVV's fauna, although several protected species of fish have been identified, and the Park has undertaken a number of projects to aid protected birds, currently the most closely studied type of animal in this area. It is likely that up to 123 species of birds live in or migrate through the LVV, sixteen of which are protected in the EU, twenty-eight partially or

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the park acquired its current form in 2005. Each landscape park is a separate entity, administered together by ZPKChiN from its headquarters in Świecie.

[11] Statute of April 16, 2004 on Nature Conservation, article 16, paragraph 1. http://www.abc.com.pl/du-akt/-/akt/dz-u-04-92-880.

[12] The sheep are of the old and now rare *wrzosówka* (Polish Heatherhead) breed.

fully in Poland. The Vistula and its valley are important as a corridor from migrating birds as they make their way from northern Europe to the Black and Mediterranean Seas (Kajak 1997).

On the right bank of the Vistula, the Landscape Park stretches from Bydgoszcz to Nowe, a small, historic town about twenty kilometers south of the LVV's northern border. On the left bank of the river, the Park begins near Ostromecko, famous for a historic palace and garden complex, and ends near the city of Grudziądz. In total, the Park has a length of circa one hundred kilometers. With an area of over 60,000 hectares, the complex is the largest of eight landscape parks in the Kuyavian-Pomerian voivodship. It encompasses four *powiaty* (counties) and sixteen *gminy* (municipalities), as well as fourteen nature reserves and nearly a hundred natural monuments. At the Park's helm in the town of Świecie stands director Jarosław "Jarek" Pająkowski, a man who will figure prominently in the events to come.

### *The Friends of the Lower Vistula Society*

Many of the projects executed by the Park's staff are in fact implemented under the name and funding of the Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dolnej Wisły (TPDW), the Friends of the Lower Vistula Society. The idea for this partner organization to the Park arose in 1997. Officially registered as a non-profit in February 1998 with Małgorzata Figas as its president and park director Jarosław Pająkowski in the position of vice president, the group currently comprises around sixty active members, some of whom will, like the park director, play an important role in future chapters.

On its website, the society lists among its objectives the promotion of natural, historical, and cultural values of the LVV; sustainable development; the protection of biological, landscape, and cultural diversity in the region; and strengthening local and regional identity. Working towards

these goals, TPDW aims to complement the efforts of the landscape park by engaging in activities not covered by the Park's mandate.

Unlike the Park, the society is able to own land and buildings, such as several parcels of natural interest across the valley. Several years ago, TPDW acquired a late-nineteenth-century mill (Stary Młyn) that serves as the group's headquarters in Gruczno, a village ten kilometers south of Świecie. There TPDW employs a fulltime caretaker, Justyna Ziemniewska, daughter of the last miller to grind grain in this facility. Most administrative work, however, is conducted directly from the Park's offices in Świecie.

Since its inception, TPDW has published dozens of books, brochures, fliers, posters, tourist maps, and photo postcards, portraying and promoting natural and cultural features of the LVV. One book, for example, describes the language of the Kociewie sub-region, while another serves as a handbook for traditional orcharding. The society often gives its colorful postcard booklets, showing landscapes and other natural motifs, to important visitors to the region or as prizes in local competitions. In 2009 TPDW supplemented these publications with a professionally produced promotional DVD that shows off the best features of the LVV.

In addition, TPDW organizes lectures, exhibitions, performances, and conferences; cooperates with local, national, and international organizations to study and protect the region's natural diversity; and works to influence planning decisions that affect the LVV. Major projects include cataloguing and promoting old varieties of fruit trees and grain; celebrating an annual food festival, the Festiwal Smaku, at the Old Mill; setting up an outdoor exhibition on traditional beekeeping; marking bike trails throughout the valley; and cooking plum jam every fall. These activities are aimed both at the local population and the slowly growing number of tourists that visit the region. Several regional and national organizations have recognized TPDW for its

efforts and awarded the group a number of prizes. For example, its traditional plum jam won highest honors in a 2001 Polish regional foods competition.

### *Poverty in the Polish Countryside and the LVV*

The activities that the Park and TPDW launch in the LVV, particularly in the arena of traditional foods and tourism, are an important contribution to the diversification of the regional economy, which I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 6. Currently, the LVV is a mostly agricultural region, interspersed with a number of smaller and larger businesses. For many farmers, growing grain and raising livestock is not the primary source of income but rather an addition to the jobs that one or several family members may hold in nearby towns such as Świecie or larger cities such as Bydgoszcz and Grudziądz.[13]

Like much of the countryside in Poland, this largely rural region has faced difficult challenges after the fall of the socialist government. Considering that thirty-three percent of households are rural and that fifteen million people or thirty-nine percent of the population live in the countryside, this is a particularly pressing problem. In its National Development Strategy[14] for the years 2007-2015, the Polish government notes that rural areas "often constitute a region of economic, social, educational and cultural marginalization of the country" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 73) and observes drily that for residents of the countryside, the "level and quality of…life is much different than the one observed in the cities" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 131).

[13] In this section on rural poverty, it is important to note that because of the complex administrative composition of the LVV, it was not possible to obtain exact data (e.g. poverty and unemployment rates). Therefore I draw on more general or larger-scale data and anecdotal observations.

[14] Poland's National Development Strategy is the country's principal strategic document for development, developed with the input of, among others, numerous social scientists.

While socialism had an "ideological commitment" to developing the countryside, imposing industrialization to the detriment of agriculture (Hann 1985), capitalism's focus on profitability has led to much industry in rural areas being shut down and thereby to "the active underdevelopment of peripheral areas" (Schneider 2006, 137) and an increasing spatial polarization along the dimensions metropolises-rural areas and east-west. In Poland, the most developed regions are the capital and cities with over 500,000 inhabitants or mineral-based industries (Gorzelak and Smętkowski 2010).

In the Lower Vistula Valley, I noticed a number of defunct factory complexes. When I visited Paweł Olszewski, the mayor of a LVV town, and his family at their *działka*[15] one afternoon in July, he told me the story of the now shuttered sugar factory that loomed above on the hill and marred the otherwise pastoral landscape. It was one of four in the region that where bought up by an English company in the 1990s. The new owner built up production capacity in the factory in Świecie, which now produces more than the four together in the past.[16] The other three factories have been closed. "We all would have done the same in the English man's place," pan Olszewski acknowledged, "but I regret the loss of jobs."

Similarly, the jam factory in Fordon, to which some current producers in Strzelce used to sell their plums, closed in 1993. Czesław Fałczyk, a retiree in Wałdowo, told me that pani Sienkowicz, a beekeeper near Nowe, found a silver lining to the factory closings. She attributes some of the trust customers place in her honey to the fact that they know it is "clean," because few industrial producers remain in the area.[17]

[15] A *działka* is a small plot of land, often with a small hut or house on it and frequently located outside of cities in rural areas. It was particularly important during socialism, when families supplemented their food purchases with homegrown produce. Dunn (2004) provides an excellent analysis of the social and symbolic significance of działki.
[16] The Świecie sugar factory holds back and stores beet syrup during harvest season in order to continue production in the winter. Unlike in the past, the factory therefore functions year-round.
[17] According to data from the Ministry of Regional Development's 2006 report (Ministry of Regional Development 2006), the Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodship – an average-sized administrative unit (2.1 million people) with a

One of those that have endured is the South African Mondi Packaging Group in Świecie, a modern town of 27,000 in the center of the valley and directly across the river from historic Chełmno.[18] A former communist industry that has been taken over and resold several times, Mondi's paper factory with its mountains of logs and wood chips dominates the first impressions – visual and olfactory – a visitor approaching from the south receives of the town. The company also puts up its logo frequently as a sponsor of local events.

Although the countryside has caught up to urban standards of living in some regards (for example the number of bathrooms, telephones, cars), it continues to be at a significant disadvantage on a host of socioeconomic and educational measures, as the Polish Central Statistical Office's 2007-2008 report on "Incomes and Living Conditions of the Population in Poland" (GUS 2009)[19] shows.

The countryside ranked lowest[20] in the amount of disposable income available to households. The less urban the environment, the more likely households were to declare "no possibility to cover unexpected expense(s) in the amount of PLN 600 [ca. $200] from own resources."[21] The more rural the setting, the greater the difficulty households faced in making ends meet, including

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slightly lower than average population density (115 per square kilometer) – has an extensive but slightly more modern than average agricultural sector, in which ninety-six percent of arable land is privately held. The voivodship's GDP was below the national average (89.7%) but improving. The service sector was growing, while industry and construction were on the decline. Agriculture, too, was growing but constituted only a small part of the voivodship's income (4.1 percent).

[18] A favorite joke among the inhabitants of Chełmno is repeated on every city tour. Standing at a medieval wall overlooking the Vistula and Świecie in the distance, the guide will tell us that this is "*najlepszy widok na świecie*." This can be translated both as "the best view in the world" and "the best view onto Świecie." Chełmno's cobblestone streets, old market square, and red brick buildings make this a rather ironic statement on Świecie's more modern face, marked by industry and communist architecture.

[19] The CSO's report was put together as a part of EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions). This multi-national European Union study "provides comparable, cross-sectional and longitudinal multi-dimensional data on income, poverty, social exclusion and living conditions in the European Union'" (EUI 2010).

[20] Rural areas were compared to towns and cities with populations of over 500k, 200-500k, 100-200k, 20-100k, and under 20k.

[21] 57.7% of rural households made this claim, an improvement of ca. 3% over the previous year. Of the remaining 42.3% of rural households which declared that with the present income position they "make ends meet," 43% did so only "with difficulty" or "with great difficulty" (GUS 2009, 132). All statistics cited are from 2008.

the inability to take a one-week annual holiday (over seventy-five percent in rural areas) or replace worn-out furniture (over eighty percent). In addition, the government has identified the need to improve a weak infrastructure, such as the number of collective sewage systems in villages, the energy distribution network that is often decades old, rural roads, and the number of households (in 2006 only nineteen percent) that have access to the internet (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 132). In the Statistical Office's report, rural areas further ranked last in the amount of education its inhabitants have enjoyed. While even from 2007 to 2008 the numbers improved, large percentages of the rural population had little more than a primary or elementary vocational education.[22]

Next to the lack of educational opportunities, unemployment is a key problem in the Polish countryside. For a decade after the fall of communism, Poland's overall unemployment rate was one of the highest in Europe[23] and moved in the range of fifteen to twenty percent, dropping below ten percent only after 2009. During the years of particularly high unemployment, the Kujawy-Pomerania voivodship was one of the areas most afflicted. At twenty percent, it had the fourth-highest unemployment rate in the country in 2006. Young people are particularly affected, as in 2007 Poland had the lowest employment rate for this population group in the EU (Ministry of Regional Development 2006). In practice, the absolute number of young people is very high, as nearly fifty percent of the Polish population is under thirty-five years old, with many individuals entering the job market.

Compared to other EU countries, Poland's employment rate in agriculture is also very high – over seventeen percent in 2005, compared to the EU average of about five percent. To the

[22] A higher percentage of individuals had completed no education (3.2% versus 0.6 to 1.3% in towns and cities); almost a quarter (24.7%) had only a primary education, while the national average (incl. rural areas) was 16.4%; and only about one third (33.8%) had finished a secondary (26.4%) or higher (7.4%) education, while in other parts of the country no less than 50% and up to 73% (in large cities) had at least a secondary education.
[23] In 2006, Poland had the highest unemployment rate in the EU, with 16% in the first half of the year.

government, this is a concern, because agriculture not only "does not fulfill production functions but accommodates overt (1.2 million people) and disguised (estimated at around 1 million people) unemployment" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 124). That is, the country's official unemployment statistics do not fully reflect the reality of the rural labor market, because agriculture absorbs many individuals, usually young men and women who, after finishing school, could not find work or affordable housing in urban or rural areas (Schneider 2006), often returning to redundant (i.e., not economically necessary) employment on farms (Rosner 2001).

Among those who find themselves on the social and economic margins, "poverty and social exclusion are [too often] reinforced by alcohol abuse, which is, generally speaking, a serious problem in Poland" and of "dramatic proportions" among the unemployed.[24] As will be evident in the following chapter, alcoholism figures prominently in narratives of rural poverty pathology.

Not surprisingly, people with some financial and intellectual capital have adapted much better to the challenges of the emerging market economy (Gorlach 2001, cited in Gutkowska 2003). In line with these circumstances, about a decade after the fall of socialism, more highly educated individuals perceived more positive changes since 1990 than their less educated counterparts (Gutkowska 2003). More highly educated individuals are also more likely to profit from Poland's accession to the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004. While most rural youth, for financial and access reasons, attend free state schools that teach Russian because they cannot afford German or English teachers (Schneider 2006), a few young individuals, equipped with some financial and intellectual capital, linguistic skills, and an optimistic outlook, are mobile enough to enter the EU's open labor markets (Gutkowska 2003; Szafraniec 2000). So far, according to different estimates, 800,000 to 1.2 million Poles from both the city and countryside

[24] 23 to 30% of these were alcoholics; 65 to 70% regularly abused alcohol (Karwińska 2002, 99). In 2006, the number of alcoholics in Poland was estimated to be about 860,000, almost 80% of these men, although the fastest growing group of alcohol abusers consists of women aged 18-29 (PARPA 2011).

have found legal temporary employment in various EU countries (Czamarski and Slay 2006). Until the countryside has been more thoroughly restructured, such employment may offer some temporary relief for the rural labor market, especially for agriculture and the many farms harboring hidden unemployment.[25]

### *Bringing Home the Bacon – by the £: Labor Migration in the LVV and Poland*

In the LVV, the phenomenon of temporary labor migration became apparent early on in my fieldwork, coming up repeatedly in conversations. Indeed, as I visited people's homes and met them at events, it seemed that almost every family had at least one member or close friend who currently lived abroad or had done so in the past, and priest Kamecki of Gruczno remarked to me that a number of his parishioners were working in foreign countries.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Poland has been a net emigration country (Fihel and Okólski 2009). Due to travel restrictions imposed by the socialist government until 1990 and visa restrictions from receiving countries, however, Polish migrants – predominantly from the labor-saturated rural areas – often engaged in "incomplete" migration for a few months at a time.

In the 1980s, when numerous Poles left the country to escape the repressive martial laws of the communist regime, emigrants could not be certain that they would be able to return, although many did after 1990. Cyryl Jabloński – a farmer who "does a little bit of everything" including milking a couple of dairy cows, cooking plum jam, smoking trout from the Vistula, and hunting – told me that his family was very relieved when in 1986 he decided to stay in Świecie, even

[25] However, during the recession after 2008, many young Poles have returned from their foreign jobs, as positions in other European countries have disappeared and the exchange rate with such currencies as the British pound has been less favorable.

though he had already lined up all his paperwork to leave the country. “Now I’m happy I didn’t,” he concluded.

Jan Michalski, a cherry farmer who also grows plums and cooks powidła, was a taxi driver in New York City for a year in the late 1980s but was able to return to Poland. Now his son was just finishing up his studies and expecting to work for Intel in South Carolina in the near future.

While pan Michalski’s son will be working in his field of study and may choose to remain in the USA, many young Poles take jobs that are below their qualifications but still grant them more income than they might earn at home. Mirosław Sokołowski, in his late twenties and working for television station TVP 3, explained that he and his brother had worked at an American restaurant in Brighton, UK for three years. During our conversation at a gallery opening in Bydgoszcz he took the opportunity to ask me, an American, whether “jambalaya” is really an American dish. I confirmed that it is.

Leaving one’s family behind to earn a greater income may be painful, but many of the individuals I spoke to do so with the hope for a more secure and prosperous future in Poland upon their return, using the savings they have accumulated abroad (Galgóczi and Watt 2009). A family in Świecie told me their son was abroad in Scotland at the moment, while his wife and little daughter remained at home. With the money he made, they might be able to build a house later. Similarly, Łukasz and Katarzyna Wiśniewscy who moved from the city to start an agrotouristic farm, reported that their daughter and her boyfriend do not like living in England but could not find work in Poland. They are saving up money and hope to return to start an agrotouristic farm of their own.

The Polish state sees the increased labor migration as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it can help to alleviate the shortage of employment opportunities for young people within Poland,

but on the other, it signifies the loss of human capital – particularly school and university graduates – and its potential benefits for the pension system, GDP growth, the birth rate, and cost of work (Ministry of Regional Development 2006). However, historically migrants have often returned with both increased monetary and cultural capital. For example, Pine (1997) describes southern Poles bringing new wealth and commodities from the United States, which allowed them to build nicer houses, buy modern tools and equipment, and produce lavish displays at celebrations. In addition, those who have been abroad bring back their exposure to foreign cultures and languages and perhaps an expanded cosmopolitan awareness. Often, such returning migrants provide impetus for technological, cultural, or social innovation in their home region (Dargan and Shucksmith 2008).

### *Orchards, Plums, and Plum Jam in the LVV*

The story of plum jam in the LVV is evidence of the far-reaching impact one person's exposure to foreign ideas can have for a community and region. One man's trip abroad provided a major impetus for the rediscovery of a traditional product that through the vagaries of history had been nearly forgotten.

In 1995, Norbert Jasiński, a farmer in the village of Strzelce Dolne, had the opportunity to travel to France on an EU fellowship. As the former Rural Solidarity[26] leader for the voivodship and a founding member of the Towarzystwo Rolnictwo Turystyka (Association for Agriculture and Tourism), one of the first of its kind in the country, he was one of twenty individuals chosen from Kujawy-Pomerania to learn about agrotourism in the voivodship's French "twin region."

[26] NSZZ Rolników "Solidarność Wiejska", the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers "Rural Solidarity," grew as a sub-organization out of the workers' Solidarity movement in the Gdańsk shipyards and was registered with the government as a trade union on May 12, 1981. In 2007 Norbert Jasiński was awarded the Krzyż Kawalerski Ordery Odrodzenia Polski (Knight's Cross of the Order of Rebirth of Poland) by the Polish President for his service.

During his two week internship in Cher on the Loire, pan Jasiński saw that "they have a festival every week," whether to celebrate wine, cheese, pâté, or snails. He recognized the potential of such events to advertize their localities and brought this idea back to Poland. Given his region's long history of growing orchards and processing their bounty, what better product to promote than plum jam?

Indeed, as I watched the seasons change in the valley, the landscape offered ample proof that growing fruit has long been an integral part of local agriculture. Shortly after I arrived in the spring, I was charmed by the delicate blossoms on apple, pear, and plum trees along roads, in gardens and meadows. As I prepared to take leave in the fall, the branches of those trees were bent low with ripe fruit, dropping any unpicked offerings to the fruit-speckled ground. Whenever I visited friends in their homes, homemade apple sauce, plum jam, and pear compote were part of the welcome spread.

Local farmers and residents often told me that they owe this bounty to the specific microclimate of the valley. Relatively mild winters – compared to southern Poland[27] – are complemented with good soils. Most importantly, the steep banks expose the trees growing on them to more sun and warmth than they would receive on the upper or lower plateaus. In the southern village of Strzelce Dolne – "Lower" Strzelce, which lies near the river, while Strzelce Górne or "Upper" Strzelce sits atop the plateau – farmer Paulina Król pointed out that the fruit growing on the steep part of her garden often ripens two weeks earlier than that just a few dozen

[27] Most plums, particularly the common purple plum (*węgierka zwykła*), were traditionally grown in southern and southwestern parts of Poland with their rich soils and high levels of precipitation, as well as in the north and northwest of the country, where severe winters are less frequent (Lucka 1968). Recently plum cultivation has been "dislocating" from these regions to the west and to more modern varieties (Grzyb 1998). It should be noted that "stovetop versions" of plum jam are cooked throughout Poland and that copper pots have been and are sometimes still used in other regions, as well. For example, I witnessed a similar revival of powidła śliwkowe in the area around Krzeszów in southeastern Poland, though on a smaller scale.

meters farther up on the plateau. In good years, the result is sweet, heavy fruit that beckons to be eaten straight from the tree.

As early as the fifteenth century, historical documents show local families paying rent for plots of land on which they grew fruit, at that time mostly cherries (Sobieralska 2004, 21). Orcharding was, however, not yet systematic or well-developed. Sixteenth-century inspection documents for leveraging state taxes mention only a few small, often neglected orchards near castles, such as Gniew and Rogoźno (Sobieralska 2004, 21). A century later, parish and diocese documents speak of orchards, vegetable gardens, and drying houses near castles and the oligarchy's granges, and sales documents prove that towns held orchards, usually outside their walls (Sobieralska 2004, 22). All these developed into the basis of fruit trade in Świecie, advantageously overlooking the mouth of the river Wda into the Vistula. The town's market is mentioned in a late-seventeenth-century archival source that cites one merchant testifying in the matter of spoiled fruit that another merchant had brought from Toruń to Świecie (Sobieralska and Pająkowski 2001, 5).

Not until the second half of the nineteenth century, however, did the inhabitants of the LVV begin to develop their orchards systematically, beyond a mere supplement to other agricultural activities. Their new approach placed more emphasis on the productivity of trees and profit from their cultivation. Particularly under the auspices of the Prussian administration, research and commercial orchards with selected new and improved old varieties flourished, and this area became the largest fruit producer in Pomerania (Szelągowska 2006, 25). At the turn of the twentieth century, the LVV boasted over 2000 house orchards (Gonia 2006, 24) of 0.5 to 2 hectares (Sobieralska and Pająkowski 2001, 14). Growers transported any fruit they did not consume themselves to other cities for trade, for example in Nowe, Świecie, Toruń, and Gdańsk.

Orcharding maintained its strong position in the valley beyond World War I, when interest in commercial fruit growing further increased, as evidenced by the number of growers' associations and journal and book publications. In 1931, the Polish Ministry of Agriculture founded a Pomological Commission that recommended planting particular modern varieties most suited to given climate and terrain conditions. However, as Sobieralska states, "in the Lower Vistula region, traditions of house orchards and fruit processing were so strong that new orcharding trends [especially after World War II] did not interfere with old customs. Only the transformations of the 1970s and 1980s resulted in the rapid destruction of old house orchards; women spent less and less time on food processing" (Sobieralska 2004, 30). At this time, many old, higher-growing trees were uprooted and replaced with lower, modern varieties that are less well adapted to the microclimatic conditions of the area, i.e. less resistant to disease and adverse weather events (Sobieralska 2004, 7).

As modern fruit varieties have been planted, seventy percent of old trees have disappeared or are in bad condition (Gonia 2006, 24). According to a count in 1996 and 1997 by means of aerial photos, today only about half of the original 2000 house orchards remain. Of these, about a third (thirty-five percent) is in good condition, forty-one percent in bad condition, seventeen percent were cut down, and seven percent are being restored or newly planted (Sobieralska and Pająkowski 2001, 7). In its publications, such as tourist brochures, the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park bemoans the reduction of avenues lined by fruit trees to a mere three, but since the mid-1990s, it has begun a concerted effort to restore the tradition of orcharding to the region.

The Park aims to identify and preserve old varieties of fruit trees, of which in some cases only a handful of exemplars remain. Since 1995, the Park has collected ninety-one varieties of apple trees and numerous types of pears and plums. In 2000, the Park created eight orchards of

thirty trees each, hoping to increase this number to eighty over the coming years. In addition, it has taken forty varieties and planted them in a Park-affiliated orchard in Chrystkowo, next to the Mennonite chata, which will serve as an outdoor teaching museum. These collections are to function as an *in situ* local gene bank, used to select as well as create varieties best adapted to the local microclimate and soils (TPDW 2012).

Among the abundant fruit trees in the LVV, plums and plum jam have achieved a special status in recent years, thanks to the initiative of Norbert Jasiński and the Park's activities that ensued, as I will show below. Boiling fruits down to thick, spreadable jams or pastes was widespread in Pomerania before World War II, along with drying or smoking. Other incarnations of the plum, such as the potent brandy known as *śliwowica*, continue to be more popular in southern Poland.

Regional ethnologists have found abundant evidence for the importance of plum processing in the LVV. Drying is one of the oldest and simplest methods of preservation, mentioned by Anzelm Gostomski, one of the first authors of Polish agricultural handbooks in the sixteenth century (Szelągowska 2006, 22). Desiccation was practiced for centuries in the sun, over fires, in bread ovens, or in specially built drying buildings. A study by the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń (MET) discovered the presence of many drying sheds (*suszarnia*) near houses or orchards (Szelągowska 2006, 25), and inhabitants of the area remember such brick buildings. Two can still be viewed today in Topolinek and Gruczno (Sobieralska and Pająkowski 2001, 16). As Czesław Fałczyk, a retiree in Wałdowo Królewskie, explained to me, this method can further be divided into drying and smoking, a distinction that few people are still aware enough to make. His ancestors usually smoked plums, and he claimed this method may go as far back as the Vikings.

Stored in an attic, dried fruit could last for several years. An early eighteenth-century list of a peasants' goods to be distributed among his heirs contains "51 ½ barrels of [dried] plums" (Sobieralska 2004, 23). Most frequently, dried fruits were used in holiday cooking, especially around Christmas, and in everyday fruit soups and porridges, and as additions to meats and sauces (PARTNER 2007, 67).

Fruit and particularly plum powidła have a similarly long history in the LVV. The drawn-out cooking process is first mentioned in sources from the sixteenth century (Szelągowska 2006, 24), such as the city of Chełmno's list of expenditures for the visit of Bishop Jan Lipski in 1636 (Biskup 1968, 151). By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many memoirs describe powidła, and the majority of nineteenth-century household and farm handbooks present recipes for plum jam (Szelągowska 2006, 24). Orcharding grew in importance in the LVV during this time, so that fruit and fruit products not used in household consumption could be sold at the Świecie market or in other cities along the Vistula.

Ethnographer Władysław Łęga, who began his data collection in 1916 as the vicar of Gruczno parish, describes the pottery production of the village Gruczno, highlighting a special "bowl" or pan with two handles and hole perforations, which was used to strain apple or plum seeds out of fruit butters (Łęga 1960, 70-71). Similarly, he mentions powidła in a list of regionally typical dishes (Łęga 1961, 35). Further evidence for the presence of powidła comes from the MET, which documents that many drying shacks also had a hearth fitted for a *kocioł,* the type of large copper pot in which powidła are traditionally boiled (Szelągowska 2006, 25). Several of the individuals I interviewed remembered powidła from their childhood and the stories of their parents and grandparents. Cyryl Jabloński in Świecie reminisced that "in the past, everyone was making powidła, the smell was everywhere. "

The upheavals of World War II brought an end to the prolific production of plum jam and other fruit products. As we will see in the following chapter, much knowledge about the practice disappeared with those people who were killed or displaced or with the German population that fled from the approaching Red Army at the end of the war. I was told by locals that the Nazis confiscated and melted down many of the copper pots employed in cooking the jam, as copper was an important raw material for the war effort. Finally, when Poles from eastern parts of the country moved into the abandoned German farms, they often did not know what purpose the few remaining copper pots served and used them to feed their cows.

After 1945 the new socialist government discouraged such home production and instead mandated that all fruit be sold to the nearby processing plant. Such factories brought mass-produced jams onto the market, providing year-round what once had been a method of preserving produce and enlivening otherwise monotonous winter menus. As many people moved to cities or were encouraged by the state to work in factories, industrial products seemed to eliminate the need for investing the time and effort required to cook jams at home.

By the late 1980s, only very few families still harvested and cooked their own plums. The influx of capitalism in the 1990s and its ready consumer products at first did little to improve the lot of homemade plum jam. In 2001, the Landscape Park counted only three villages in the LVV where individuals remembered and fostered this tradition. “Who today wants to spend several days frying powidła when one can buy ‘similar’ products cheaply?” Renata Sobieralska asks in her book on traditional orchard techniques (Sobieralska and Pająkowski 2001, 15). Norbert Jasiński bemoaned this dire state of affairs in our interview: “Young country women no longer know how to make powidła; there’s only fast food.” Łukasz Wiśniewski, a retired shop owner

who now runs an agrotouristic farm with his wife Katarzyna, summed up the desires of Polish people today in three words: "*łatwiej, szybciej, prościej*" (easier, faster, simpler).

Yet, plums and powidła have made a significant comeback in the LVV over the past decade, and the smell of thickening plum jam and wood fires now wafts again through the valley every fall. As we will see in chapter 3, children learn about jam for special school projects, and communities celebrate small and large plum and powidła festivals that attract visitors from outside the region.

### *The Powidła Renaissance*

This remarkable rediscovery and revaluation of plum jam began in the mid-1990s on two separate but related fronts – in Strzelce, with Norbert Jasiński, and in the offices of the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park under director Jarek Pająkowski.

Farmer Norbert Jasiński and his experience of food festivals in France provided a major spark for rethinking the value of traditional orchards and their products as a potential tool for promoting a village or region, resulting in the first Święto Śliwki (Plum Festival) that took place in Strzelce Dolne in 2000. By the time I attended the festival in 2008, what at first had been a tiny village party had turned into a two-day event with radio and newspaper sponsorships and an estimated 35,000 visitors from the entire LVV, nearby Bydgoszcz, and beyond.

When Norbert Jasiński first considered a regional product to promote, only two or three families in Strzelce Dolne were still cooking plum jam for their own consumption. Pan Jasiński explained that "those powidła were always being made, but no one sold that stuff." As the Plum Festival grew to burst out of the seams of a backyard onto an entire cleared field, more and more families recognized the economic potential of cooking and selling the jam, not only at the

festival but throughout the year. While it is now quite difficult to find and purchase the requisite copper pots, in the early days of the plum jam revival, families dug the old pots out of their basements and attics or bought them from neighboring towns. Now, eleven families in Strzelce cook and sell powidła, making the village the largest production area in the LVV.

Around the time when pan Jasiński took his trip to France, in 1994, Jarek Pająkowski[28] began his work as the LVV Landscape Park's first director. According to his own words, unlike many other landscape park directors across the country, whose focus is mostly on preserving their area's nature, the young and highly motivated director took very seriously his mandate to preserve not only flora and fauna but also historical and cultural values.

As part of the Park's orchard project, begun in 1995, the director sought to learn as much as possible about the different varieties of apples, pears, and plums that grow in the valley and how they had been processed and preserved in the past. Pan Pająkowski became aware that in several villages, including Gruczno, Kozielec, and Strzelce, several families were still cooking plum jam in old copper pots. During my research, I had the opportunity to meet pani Kasprzyk of Gruczno. Another woman in Kozielec had already passed away, but not before donating her copper pot to the Park. It is now the most widely and perhaps most frequently used pot in the valley, as the Park lends it out to anyone wanting to cook jam.

A few years later, the tradition of processing plums in this manner received its first coverage in the media, though at this point primarily as a historical curiosity. In 1998, one of Poland's main television channels, TVP, showed the process in its program Antywkariat (Antique Shop). During the same year, TPDW published a set of postcards on the "Orcharding Tradition by the Lower Vistula," which contains a photo of a copper pot, this one borrowed from Strzelce.

[28] "Pająkowski" is a name with its root in the Polish word for spider, *pająk*. Jarek Pająkowski sometimes makes an ironic fashion statement on this fact by wearing a shirt with a large spider web and spider design on its shoulder.

However, when the director had the idea to produce and promote the product on a small scale, he focused on Świecie, the seat of the Park offices. In an interview, he explained to me that in some books he had read an anecdote about a man who had sailed on the Vistula and stopped in Świecie to buy some copper pots with cooked plum jam. For this reason pan Pająkowski chose to name the jam from this Park project *świeckie*, "from Świecie." Each of the 180 jars of jam was individually numbered, and every recipient was asked to date and sign the line next to the corresponding number in a list. The Park upholds this practice to this day.

Plum jam from the LVV, and specifically from Świecie, gained further exposure in the first edition of the Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo (Our Culinary Heritage) food competition in 2001. Organized by the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products (Izba Produktu Regionalnego i Lokalnego), the competition aimed to identify traditional and regional products in Poland, promote awareness of such products in consumers and vendors, and show traditionally produced foods as an alternative to industrial products. The annual events have identified over 1500 such traditional foods, many of which have been entered into the Polish List of Traditional Products. The competition also serves as a selection channel for products to be nominated by the Polish government for an EU designation as a protected traditional or regional food, an important topic for chapter 5.

Świecie plum jam had already received enough attention that the Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodship's agricultural consulting agency ODR (Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego)[29] contacted Jarek Pająkowski and suggested entering powidła into the competition. The Park director told me that he had been happy to comply, "and then it just so happened that the jam won every possible

[29] The Kuyavian-Pomeranian ODR employs specialists to advise farmers on agricultural production and technology, economics, and other relevant topics. It has three centers in the voivodship as well as twelve offices – one in each county – and advisers in different communities. In recent years, ODR's focus has expanded to include advice on seeking income outside of agricultural production.

prize.” And thus the misunderstandings and conflicts began in the LVV. The “Powidła War“ between the village of Strzelce Dolne and park director Jarek Pająkowski warrants a more in-depth treatment in chapter 4. Suffice it to say at this point that a producer in Strzelce accused the director of entering one of her jars of plum jam into the competition under the *świeckie* rather than *streleckie* (“from Strzelce“) name. The resulting conflict became front-page news in a national tabloid and a few other newspapers.

The conflict eventually died down, but the director and the villagers of Strzelce are in complete agreement that the media coverage their plum jam received was better advertising than either of them could have afforded to pay for. Looking back, Jarek Pająkowski seemed very pleased at the “lucky coincidence" that within a short time period plum jam from Świecie won not only a prize in the Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo competition but also received recognition as the best plant product of the year from the National Food and Nutrition Institute (Instytut Żywności i Żywienia), while at the same time, independently, Strzelce organized its first Plum Festival. Ardently fought as the Powidła War may have been, it brought Strzelce and the Landscape Park into a productive synthesis.

### *Cooking Powidła*

Finally, I would like to introduce the product at the heart of this study of society and culture in the Polish countryside – powidła śliwkowe, plum jam. It is important to understand its labor-intensive production process in order to appreciate the potential value it holds as a traditional food product. In addition, the copper pot that gives it much of its specificity has been a significant anchor of tradition in the region, as will become apparent in the following chapter.

Lastly, partaking in cooking the jam as my fieldwork drew to a close in the fall, helped to integrate me further into local society through the camaraderie of hard work.

As in any agricultural region, the late summer and autumn months are a busy period in the LVV. Farmers spend long days in the fields bringing in crops, making hay, and processing their produce. Harvest and plum festivals fill up the weekends to celebrate the bounty.

Late August rang in an equally eventful period in my research as the plums ripened on the trees and I spent several weeks making my rounds on the jam cooking circuit. I joined producers on their farms, at village festivals, at the TPDW's Old Mill, even at an active cloister in Topolno, to watch them cook the jam and occasionally stir the pot myself (see Appendix B for an illustrated overview over the cooking process).

Cooking plum jam, or rather "frying" it, as the Polish word *smażyć* suggests, whether at home on the stove or outside in a copper pot, is a time-consuming and labor-intensive undertaking. When I was invited to observe and participate in cooking powidła, I was usually told to arrive early in the morning, sometimes at six or seven o'clock, to begin preparing the plums.

The number of hours the jam needs to simmer depends on the variety and water content of the fruit. A proud *gospodyni* (farmer's wife or countrywoman) expects to spend no less than a full day or two vigilantly thickening her powidła in the kitchen. Jan Dąbrowski, the only man I witnessed cooking jam at home rather than in a copper pot,[30] once showed me a pot of

[30] With one exception, I saw only women cooking plum jam on the stovetop, while the process in the copper pots was shared by men and women.

mirabelle[31] jam he had been heating, reheating, and stirring regularly every day for nearly a week to thicken it to the desired consistency.[32]

Production in large copper pots also requires intense labor for at least a day. Most producers work outside, covered at most by a simple roof. Thus, producers are dependent on dry weather to begin cooking jam, or a batch could be ruined by rain. Only one, Paulina Król, has set up a separate, two-room building to house multiple pots, workers, and tables with crates of glass jars.

I heard different explanations why the pot should be made from copper rather than any other material, although a handful of producers reported good experiences with enameled vessels as well. Copper is known to conduct heat very efficiently, quickly, and evenly. More vaguely, one producer explained that this metal has particular chemical qualities that combine with the acids in the jam to preserve it for longer. I have not been able to verify whether this is an accurate assessment.

Before plums turn into jam, the fruit must, of course, be harvested. Some traditionalists asserted that the old *węgierka* (lit. "Hungarian") variety yields the best flavor, but other producers also employ newer varieties such as *łowicka* and *dąbrowicka*.[33] Ripening at different times in the season, the fruits are harvested by hand and stored in crates for one to several days until they can be processed further.

The first step on a cooking day is to wash the plums. Usually, the fruit is laid into the pot and covered with water from a hose to remove dirt, insects, and leaves. After the water has been poured off, the heavy pot – the largest hold up to 150 kilograms of fruit – is dragged over to the

[31] Mirabelles are a yellow, aromatic subtype of plum. These are not traditionally used to cook powidła.
[32] Plum jam cooked outside, on the other hand, is generally cooked in one sitting rather than letting it cool between sessions.
[33] The now-popular *dąbrowicka* plum was released in 1991 by the Research Institute of Pomology and Floriculture in Skierniewice, a small town halfway between Warsaw and Łódź. It aims to create and introduce new, more disease-resistant cultivars adapted to Poland's transitional climate that produces both mild and harsh winters and dangerous spring frosts (Lucka 1968).

fire, usually by two or more strong men. Some producers have a metal tripod to prop up the pot over the flames, while others use a section of an old steel barrel with a hole cut into its side so that more wood can periodically be fed into the fire.

All producers agreed that only wood from deciduous trees should be used for the fire, because the smoke from evergreens such as pines could impart too distinct a flavor to the jam. The best wood, several asserted, comes from fruit trees.

Another piece of equipment that should be made from a deciduous wood is the large stirrer called *bocian*, literally "stork" (see Figure 4). The device owes its name to the beak-like, slim piece of wood that is attached to the end of a long wooden pole with a diagonal strut. Of the two main shapes I saw, I preferred the type that had an additional hole at the end of the "beak," as this reduces the resistance of the increasingly viscous mass in the pot.[34]

Figure 4. Copper pot with *bocian* or "stork" stirrer. Photograph by Olivia Hall

[34] I did not receive any information on whether either model is older or can be considered more "authentic."

From the first minutes that the pot is on the fire, the bocian needs to be dragged incessantly through the plums. If any of the thickening jam sticks to the bottom of the pot and burns, the entire batch may be ruined. Krystyna Falaszek in Wałdowo remembered that once someone left the pot just to get the newspaper, and by the time he returned, the jam had already burnt.

Within the first hour or two, the plums begin to shed their juices and lose their shape. Slowly, the reddish-purple soup begins to gurgle, crescendo-ing, accelerating to a full, violent boil, large bubbles bursting and splattering hot liquid. It is advisable to wear old clothing and protect any floors and walls indoors. Fortunately, the length of the bocian allows the stirrer to stand a meter or two away from the hot pot.

Nevertheless I found myself sweating as I pulled the bocian through the jam for an hour at a time, walking around the pot to reach every centimeter of its interior, feeling the sun beat down on my head, the fire spreading unwanted heat to my legs. Some teenagers enlisted by their parents to watch and stir the pot during the day, pulled off their shirts and tried to get comfortable by moving the bocian from a chair.

A great variety of people minds the powidła pots. Some families have parents and children take turns at the bocian, some producers request help from relatives in the city, while others hire individuals to take over the labor. At community events and festivals, members of a group may alternate or allow curious onlookers to try their hand at this traditional but unfamiliar chore.

As we will discover in chapter 5, there are as many powidła recipes as there are producers. One important distinction is whether or not to leave the stones in the plums when they are initially placed into the pot. In part, węgierki became the plum of choice because their flesh releases the pits more easily than other varieties. Still, many producers choose to let the stones boil with the jam for the first few hours in order to allow their particular flavor to seep into the

liquid. Just as grape skins and seeds give wine tannic, complex notes, the plum pits provide a slightly bitter edge to the jam. A simple metal or ceramic sieve helps to strain out the stones. Pitcher by pitcher, the plum juice flows through the small holes, swirled around the sieve by a wooden tamper, and is then returned to the pot and the fire to be stirred once more.

Purists insist that nothing else should be added to the jam, because the ripe plums contain sufficient amounts of sugar. In a less sunny year, though, even traditionalists might add a bit of sugar, perhaps one kilogram per hundred kilograms of plums. Those who prefer a sweeter jam use up to five times as much sweetener for the same amount of fruit. Other variations include adding a pinch of salt, some cloves, cinnamon, vanilla and, less frequently, two green walnuts per pot of jam, which contributes another layer of bitterness, as Piotr Majewski from Nowe recommended.

After no less than twelve hours, the powidła may be ready. Depending on the plums' original water content, a producer might choose to cook the jam for several more hours or reheat and continue to stir the pot the next day. Some producers offer strong opinions on how thick the jam must be in order to be considered done: They insist that when they lift the bocian out of the pot, the jam should drop off only in thick clumps or, better yet, not at all. Another test is to stick a spoon in a jar of jam, where it should remain upright and never fall over. In reality, the viscosity of powidła varies between producers across the LVV, due to personal preferences or, as some traditionalists scoffed, laziness. In most cases, more than 1.5 kilograms of plums are needed to boil down to one kilogram of powidła.

Once the plum jam has been determined to be ready – at whatever thickness – several people carefully carry the hot pot over to the jarring area, where palettes of rinsed glass jars are already waiting. Most producers, particularly the prolific jam-cookers of Strzelce Dolne, order their glass

jars as a group in bulk to achieve an economy of scale. I attended a producer meeting in Strzelce where each family put in a request for several hundred or thousand jars. Local leader Mariusz Kaczmarek then ordered these and several more for the Park from a large manufacturer, and a few weeks later I rode along as Park worker Jurek picked up the Park's share that would be sold or passed on to various group who make plum jam under its auspices.

Filling the still steaming mass into the small, usually 300-gram glass jars is most easily accomplished with a small assembly line. The first person prepares the jars, insuring that they are clean and dry. Next, another scoops jam out of the pot with a ladle, fills the jars up to about one to two centimeters under the rim, and pushes them to the third person. She wipes the rims clean, seals the jars with a metal twist-off lid, and collects them in plastic crates.

Although the jam will keep as it is for several days, even weeks, producers extend its shelf-life by pasteurizing the jars in a boiling water bath. After they have cooled and dried off, labels are added on the front and back to identify the producer and his or her village. The powidła are ready for the market.

# CHAPTER 3

# TEACHING REGIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH PLUM JAM

*"I hope that all our activities have the effect that the children feel connected to their region of origin." – Lucyna Kucharska, principal of the elementary school in Nowa Wieś*

*"They begin to talk about this region a little differently, to think a little differently." – Urszula Maciejewska, teacher in Gruczno*

## *Introduction*

On a sunny Tuesday morning in September, I drove a few villages over from Chełmno to Nowa Wieś, not much more than a few houses and a school around a country road east of the Vistula. The elementary school (*szkoła podstawowa*) was celebrating its fourth annual Plum Day, and the school's principal, Lucyna Kucharska, had invited me to observe the occasion.

In her office, at the end of a hall full of colorful student art, the principal supplied me with black currant juice and food left over from last Saturday's harvest festival, and explained how Plum Day worked at her school. Park director Jarek Pająkowski had lent the school one of its copper pots, which was currently in demand "jak gorąca bułeczka," or like a hot roll, i.e., very much. It had already been set up on a metal frame over a fire next to the playground by the school building. Over the course of the day, each class would get a chance to stir the pot for one period, instructed by several parent volunteers. In the evening, these parents and some teachers would fill the jam into jars that would be sold the next day to parents and the community for 5 PLN a piece.

After a brief tour of her school, pani Kucharska led me outside to the powidła site. A number of children in dark blue, simple uniforms were lined up to take turns stirring the pot under the guidance of a mom. She gave each child a minute to stir the bubbling mass and then

Figure 5. Students stirring the powidła pot at Nowa Wieś elementary school. Photograph by Olivia Hall

ushered him or her to the back of the line (see Figure 5). The long bocian looked enormous in the children's small hands, and they sometimes required adult help to drag it through the jam.

When the bell rang, the class filed back into the building, and another group of younger kids who had been playing on the playground was led over by their teacher, a blonde woman with glasses. As they stood at a safe distance from the pot, she asked them: "Remember what I told you before about what we're doing here?" – "*Kompot*[35]*!*" a little boy called out. His classmates giggled. "Not kompot" she laughed. "Powidła," someone corrected.

After the main break, all nine classes gathered outside around the pot, grouped by class. Principal Kucharska addressed the students briefly and told them that "our powidła from the Dolina Dolnej Wisły are even known far away in other European countries. They're known in

[35] *Kompot* is simple jam.

the UK, they're known in Germany..." Gesturing towards me, she said: "There's even a pani here from the United States who's interested in our powidła." The children eyed me curiously.

Then followed the highlight of the event: "For the work you've been doing, parents baked some cake as a reward." And several parents and teachers presented platters piled high with square pieces of plum cake – juicy plum halves embedded in fluffy, rich yeast dough, covered in crunchy streusel and icing.

I was amazed at the orderly fashion in which the children helped themselves to pieces of cake. In fact, once everyone had had a piece, the teachers were actively encouraging the kids to have more and finish it off. "*Śmiało*! Come on, don't hesitate!" Some even refused. Only a blonde little girl with a ribbon in her hair held a large piece of cake in each hand, biting with gusto into one of them.

When I later showed a photo of this scene to Lucyna Kucharska, she laughed but then told me that this girl and her sister are from one of the poorest families in the area. "They have nothing at home, not even proper conditions to do laundry. So for them school is fun."

### *The (Re)Invention of Plum Jam*

The events of this Plum Day provide a glimpse of the complex stew of issues – poverty, regional identity, pride, and rural development – that boils in the pots of powidła cooking at some of the LVV's schools. Such plum celebrations are some of the most anticipated annual events in several schools in the valley. Every year, the middle school in Gruczno devotes an entire week to all things "plum." Any class that can possibly incorporate the fruit, does so. In language classes, students write little stories about plum jam; in history, they learn about the valley's tradition; in art, they paint pictures of themselves stirring the large pots (see Figure 6); in

Figure 6. Picture drawn by a student at the Gruczno middle school as part of Plum Week. Photograph by Olivia Hall

math, they might calculate the jam yield of various amounts of plums. Only religious studies and sports have some trouble using the theme, I was told.

In this chapter, I will explore how teachers in the LVV employ plum jam as a tool for imbuing young people with a sense of regional identity and tradition. While the practice of cooking jam in copper pots is at least two centuries old, displaying and celebrating it today, after the disruptions of World War II and socialism – which I will describe below – can be termed an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm 1984). Whether at the level of schools' plum days, the Plum Festival in Strzelce, or other, smaller community celebrations centered around plums and jam, residents of the LVV have taken a formerly mundane practice, widespread across the region and other parts of the country, and made it the focal point for ambitions to create or recreate a regional identity.

In the context of schools, this (re)invention has characteristics of all three types of invented traditions defined by Hobsbawm: "a) (T)hose establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior" (Hobsbawm 1984, 9).

The concept of the "invention" of tradition" has been criticized for privileging elite actors (Herzfeld 2004), but in the LVV the three described strands come together usefully and descriptively to point to an imbalance of power and agency between middle-class teachers and some of the less privileged students and their families in the region. Plum jam is one tool in the larger kit of government-mandated regional education, which not only tries to counteract the historical disruptions of cultural transmission of World War II and the standardizing aspirations of socialism but is central to creating proper Polish citizens. Their correct functioning is based on a model of nested identities with a firm regional core and, more importantly, "healthy" modes of behavior. Trying to correct intergenerational pathologies that they see in the rural poor, both the state and LVV teachers place themselves in positions of authority vis-à-vis the people they intend to help. As we will see, then, feeding children cake is a significant gesture of power.

### *Loss of Regional Traditions after World War II and during Socialism*

Before I delve into teachers' discourses on poverty, shame, and identity, I want to show the very tangible displacement of local knowledge that took place several decades ago. Maria Pająkowska-Kensik, a well-known scholar of Kociewie's language and traditions (and park director Jarek Pająkowski's mother), explained that relatively low levels of knowledge about

regional traditions in this area and across Poland can be blamed on the often dramatic population shifts that occurred during and after World War II.

Having spent over a century partitioned among neighboring powers, Poland found its borders redrawn after both World War I and World War II in a manner that led historian Norman Davies to declare that "the history of modern Polish frontiers makes for sad reading for anyone who may have imagined that the map of modern Europe had been drawn with regard either to magnanimity or precision" (Davies 2005, 380). After the most recent war, the country in essence shifted westward, losing eastern territories beyond the Curzon line[36] to the Soviet Union and incorporating western, formerly German territories up to the Oder-Neisse line.

Pomerania, the overarching historical region to which the LVV belongs, had been part of the Kingdom of Prussia until the end of World War I, so that even up to the end of World War II a German minority remained alongside Poles in the region. As the Red Army approached from the east at the end of the war, the German population fled or was expelled in large parts of the region.[37] Cherry farmer and local history buff Jan Michalski added that the Soviets then sent many local residents to Siberia, some of whom returned, and some of whom did not. Davies recounts that with the deaths and expulsions of the war, Poland's population fell by a third from the pre-war number, to 23.9 million. More yet, "only a small proportion of the population inhabited the places where they had lived before the war" (Davies 2005, 365).

Like many other Polish towns and particularly the western territories, the villages of the LVV were repopulated by refugees from eastern parts of the country. Pan Michalski told me that many

[36] The Curzon line, based roughly on the former border between the Prussian and Russian empires after the third partition of Poland in 1797, was the line of demarcation between the Second Polish Republic after World War I and Bolshevik Russia.

[37] Wilfried Strasburger, a German man in his mid-sixties, told me vivid stories about how he had fled with his family from his native Gruczno on a horse-drawn cart when he was four years old. Now a resident of the Lüneburger Heide in Germany, he returned to Gruczno in 1972 with his mother. When I met him in 2008, he was in the LVV for his thirty-fifth annual visit in a motor home, bringing shopping bags full of gifts for his many Polish friends.

of them arrived from the area around Lublin and Podhale. "There are lots of *Górale*,"[38] he said. The newcomers took over the farms abandoned by the fleeing Germans. In fact, I was told that entire villages, such as little Kosowo, near Gruczno, consisted of people who had arrived from other regions. In Strzelce Dolne, farmer Norbert Jasiński estimated that before the war eighteen German and eight Polish families had resided in the village. All German families were replaced by new arrivals from eastern Poland.

Often, professor Pająkowska said, the incoming populations knew and to this day know very little about the history and traditions of their new home region. Davies (2005, 365) supports this view by stating that "(in) all those localities where uprooted newcomers outnumbered the indigenous inhabitants, former social traditions survived with difficulty." For Jadwiga Cholewska, an active member of the TPDW, this served as a primary motivation for researching and writing a *Guide to Gruczno* (Bedeker Gruczeński), describing the history, people, and customs of one of the prominent villages in the LVV. In an interview she explained: "During the war, people were killed and dispersed, so hardly anyone remembers the history of the area. I wrote this so people who live in Gruczno know about their history…I wrote about one village, but this problem concerns all of northeastern Poland."

In my interviews with powidła producers, I learned that several of them had arrived in the LVV as children as part of these migration shifts. They varied greatly in their amount of knowledge about their new home. Some had very little to say about regional history and culture. One woman in Strzelce Dolne, whom I had asked what region we are in, seemed stumped.

[38] The Górale are mountain people in the Podhale region of the southern Tatra Mountains. Straddling the Polish-Slovak border, they speak several dialects of a language that is heavily based in Polish but contains influences from Slovak and other languages of the Carpathians.

"Pomorze?" she said tentatively. "No, Kujawy, I think. But no, I think that begins behind Bydgoszcz."[39]

Those producers who had moved to the LVV as children but spoke with great enthusiasm and knowledge about regional history, notably Paulina and Ryszard Król, and Anna and Mariusz Kaczmarek, were the exceptions. It is probably no coincidence that in both cases the presence of copper pots[40] in their new homes played a key role in leading them to plum jam. When, for example, I asked pan and pani Król about the concept of "tradition" in their production, pan Król leaned back in his seat, thought for a while, and then said: "That's not such a simple issue." He went on to explain that his wife, Paulina, is from Rzeszów in southeastern Poland.[41] He contrasted the lived and lively traditions of her hometown with the LVV: "Here, there isn't too much tradition. When we came, the copper pot was here." Because plum jam is cooked in a similar way in the Rzeszów region, they knew what the pot served for and began to cook jam, sometimes lending the pot to their neighbors.

Similarly, Dorota Kaczmarek's family arrived in the LVV after the war. While her father had not cooked jam before, she told me, his natural curiosity and interest in history drove him to find out what to do with the pot and special cooking tools he found on his new farm. Again, the

[39] Regional maps generally show Strzelce firmly in the "Kujawy" region.

[40] The exact origin of the earliest copper pots is nebulous. Those who owned old specimens usually inherited them from their family or had bought them more recently from some old farmer nearby. Most frequently, they believed that their parents or grandparents had bought the pot from traveling gypsies from southern Poland. A few producers also mentioned that the Prussian army had used copper pots and smaller copper bowls in this area in the nineteenth century. Grażyna Szelągowska, an ethnologist from the Toruń Ethnographic Museum who helped producers research the history of powidła for their application to be a registered traditional food product, confirmed both of these possible origins. Now that copper pots have become rarer, many potential buyers have had to cast a wider net and acquire newly made pots for a significantly higher price. An eco-initiative in Kwidzyn bought a small, 80-liter pot from the southern Tatra Mountains for 3500 PLN (over $1100 at the time), and another couple had unearthed a vendor in Hungary with similarly high prices.

[41] Pan Król did not specify where he himself was born, but it seemed implied that he had also arrived from elsewhere.

artifacts gave the impetus for the continuation of the jam cooking practice, though here the flow of information from previous regional inhabitants to the new arrivals was also important.

Thus, both couples think of plum jam as a tradition of place rather than of people. Arriving to abandoned farms, the Króls experienced the LVV as a space voided of lived tradition. Yet, the copper pot they found in their home served as a permanent artifact[42] that became a transmitter of regional culture, and, in their case, a link to the traditional practices and knowledge they brought from their own home. The pot, then, tied to the space of the LVV, embodies and relates tradition rather than an intergenerational flow of knowledge between people. It becomes an impersonal crystallization of tradition.

Yet, not all copper pots in the abandoned farms were filled with a bubbling mass of plums. Norbert Jasiński reported seeing several feeding cows instead. Thus, it is the personified knowledge – whether in locals that explain the custom or in the newcomers who remember similar practices from home – that brings the necessary spark that lights the fire under the pot and puts it back to its intended use, cooking jam. As we will see, many teachers who cook jam in school hope to provide this spark of personified traditional knowledge to their students.

After the population upheavals of World War II, the communist education system aggravated the lack of regional cultural transmission. The socialist government placed great emphasis on education, giving higher numbers of individuals access to courses of learning than Western countries (Davies 2005). However, as Davies (2005, 452) describes with perhaps some overstatement, "pupils (were) trained rather than educated, and (were) frequently alienated by the exhortatory tone of their teachers, by compulsory Russian lessons, and by excessive doses of political propaganda.

[42] The copper pot is permanent in the sense that it was too heavy to be packed onto the carts that fleeing Germans used to escape.

Maria Pająkowska-Kensik echoed this criticism: "During communism, everyone had to be the same, except maybe some groups such as the Górale." According to the professor, the state sent many teachers to regions other than their own to teach and create a generalized Polish culture and identity. "Yes," professor Pająkowska's husband Roman Kensik agreed, "during communism no one could do their own thing." Kociewie, in particular, lacked local teachers as early as after World War I, so that for the next decades a good number of teachers came from the south.

### *Government Framework for Regional Education*

By contrast, over the past decade Polish educational strategy has taken the opposite tack. It has replaced the socialist quest for uniformity imposed from above with an approach that places regional cultures and identities at the heart of the model of the ideal Polish citizen. Through regional education (*edukacja regionalna*), students across the nation are to be familiarized with their regional heritage. As I will argue, this approach, which on the surface dignifies diversity, may in practice hide, maybe even create, standardizing discourses by those in power – such as teachers.

The concept of regional education was introduced to the public education system in 1995, shortly after the demise of the socialist regime and Poland's transition to democracy. The Ministry of National Education and Sport asked schools nationwide to work out how to incorporate this theme into a variety of subjects. Over the course of several years, regional education was integrated systematically into the educational program and became mandatory in 2002.

In the Core Curriculum for Pre-School and General Education, the Ministry of Education decreed that "cultural heritage of the region" (EURYDICE 2008, 19) be introduced in the fourth grade and be part of students' curricula through the end of their education.[43] This means that students are exposed to between six and ten years of regional topics, as compulsory education in Poland consists of a six-year primary school (*szkoła podstawowa)* and a three-year middle school (*gimnazjum*) as well as additional, non-compulsory education ranging from two to four years at a variety of general or more specialized technical and vocational schools *(licea*).

Regional education is one of several themes – among them philosophical, media, ecological, and health education, civil defense, "Polish culture in the context of Mediterranean civilization," and European education – that the government mandates be covered in regular school courses or special modules. Principals are responsible for their implementation, and teachers may follow set curricula or use Ministry-approved textbooks (EURYDICE 2008, 29). Regional education may therefore be spread across subjects such as Polish language, history, nature, art, technology, and music.

### *Nested Identities*

Regional education's place in this lineup of special, Ministry-mandated topics to be taught in schools hints at the goals the national government hopes to achieve. Philosophy, media, ecology, and health, as well as civil defense, Polish culture as part of Mediterranean civilization, and European education firmly situate Poland and the citizens its government wants to shape in the realm of modern and (Western) European nations. Within this effort, regional education is one medium for raising not only generally educated individuals but also Polish citizens who know

[43] This includes the general and technical *licea*, as well as the upper secondary technical school.

and love their region, their nation, and Europe. Regional education is to effect this both directly and in a process that grows the national citizen layer by layer from a regional identity core.

Such nested identities are evident in a book that professor Pająkowska introduced to me as a typical textbook for regional education and the premier course book for the Kociewie region. *Kociewie: moja mała ojczyzna* (Kociewie: My Little Homeland;[44] Adamiak et al. 2002) was one of the first such works, published the year regional education was mandated. To pictures of typical Kociewian furniture and costumes it adds sections on "Polish national symbols" and "getting to know the events around the creation of the Polish national hymn" (Adamiak 2010). According to the lead author's description of the textbook in a presentation, these regional and national threads come together to "(create) a patriotic attitude based on the principle that love for one's region is love for one's homeland" (Adamiak 2010, 3).

Adamiak opens her presentation by asking: "Is the word 'patriotism' an expression that has fallen out of use? Why is this?" (Adamiak 2010, 1). Her response links patriotism to the younger generation's frequent inability to answer the questions "Who am I? Who can I be?" In her estimation, it is the individual's lack of identification at the local or regional level that prevents him or her from partaking in national life as a fully identifying citizen. A quote by Janusz St. Pasierb, a Pomeranian priest, poet and historian in Maria Pająkowska-Kensik's introduction to the Kociewie textbook underlines this concept of identity as existing in nested layers: "The path to participation in international culture leads through experiencing one's own identity – regional, national" (Adamiak et al. 2002, ii).

[44] *Mała ojczyzna* refers to a person's home locale or region.

In this paradigm, experience and conscious participation are important components of creating regional attachments. Former educator Izabela Kloc[45] proposes a psychopedagogical model to support this view. Author of several presentations on regional education published by Metis, a publically run teacher education center in the Silesian voivodship, Kloc proposes that individuals have an innate need to be rooted in their environment – a desire that is addressed by regional education. Direct experience of regional culture through, for example, dance or food, has the power to create positive emotions towards and lasting knowledge of society and objects in the region.

That is, these authors – both proponents and shapers of regional education in Poland – view the Polish region as a foundation for the Polish nation, not only administratively but also psychologically, culturally, and for identity. An individual is whole only when he taps into each possible layer of identity, beginning with his village or region of origin. In this model of identities that nest into each other like Russian dolls, a feeling of closeness to one's region is a prerequisite for and gateway to a national, Polish identity and citizenship. Not only that, but a national identity is viewed as a positive outcome and desirable.

Such a model of the multilayered citizen fits squarely into the philosophy that is emanating from the main shapers of European policy, the bureaucrats of the European Commission. As Chris Shore lays out in his work on their drive to build a European identity, "(the) Commission view, spelled out repeatedly in interviews with officials, is that people possess multiple identities (local, ethnic, regional, national, religious) and that these tend to be complementary and

[45] Izabela Kloc is a former teacher and current member of the Polish parliament or *Sejm*. She represents the conservative PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - Law and Justice) party. According to her website (www.izabelakloc.pl), she began her career as a teacher, then principal and consultant on matters of regional education. Since 1998 she has worked in politics, initially in the Silesian voivodship and since 2005 in the national *Sejm*. Kloc places particular emphasis on her Catholic roots and her values: family, homeland, mutual goodwill, hard work, and especially respect for tradition.

segmentary, connecting different orders of ascending 'levels' of belonging," so that "forging an over-arching 'European identity' was simply a matter of grafting a higher collective identity onto and above existing regional or national identities, like so many Russian dolls or Chinese boxes" (Shore 2000, 51; see Bellier and Wilson 2000).

In addition, Zabusky (2000) found that among professionals from across the EU, working in the highly European context of the European Space Agencies, "national identity remained important as a category of belonging significant both to the production of unity and to the preservation of differences…In other words, having a national identity is a key component of developing a European identity" (Zabusky 2000, 196).

Thus firmly rooted in their Polishness, this model contends, Polish citizens are ready to become Europeans and are able to gaze openly outward to the rest of the world. Kloc, for example, closes by stating that "the transfer of cultural heritage is the first and fundamental condition for sustaining a given culture while at the same time opening oneself to the pluralism of various human cultures" (Kloc 2010, 5). She does not specify how exactly knowing her regional and national identity prepares a student to be accepting of difference.

Similarly, it is unclear how the proponents of nested identities understand the relationship between the tiers of identity, other than that they build upon each other. At the regional level, they seem to assume a functional equivalency between the cultures of the various regions of Poland that allows them to be subsumed into an overarching Polishness. Like Shore's Commission bureaucrats, Polish nested identities "(rule) the possibility of conflict between these strata…out of the equation" (Shore 2000, 52), ignoring that "tiers of loyalty become enmeshed in sensitive issues of power and sovereignty" (Shore 2000, 225).[46]

[46] Perhaps historically highly visible and distinctive groups such as the Silesians, Górale, and Kaszubi would figure differently into the model.

***Plum Jam against Poverty***

On the ground, in the LVV, many of the teachers I spoke to shared the idea that regional roots are fundamental to a child's personality and identity. Urszula Maciejewska, a middle school teacher in Gruczno, stated this belief most passionately. Having grown up in a family for whom tradition is "terribly important," she has a strong sense of regional identity that she wants to share: "Man can't live isolated from his own roots…What happened in the past – all those words spoken by my grandmother, grandfather, all those before us, all those memories, pictures – are so important to me that I can't even imagine that it's possible to live so separated from that which was before me. After all it is these people who created my identity and my personality. That is what I try to teach the children." Each child should be able to say: "I am here and come from here."

It is less clear from our conversations whether pani Maciejewska and others think in the same tiers of identities as the authors of the textbooks they may be using. Nevertheless, these teachers are very much in line with another government project – fighting poverty and its ill social effects in the countryside. In the following sections I will explore how teachers use plum jam as one device in their regional education tool kit, which in turn they employ in their efforts to improve the lot of their socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

In order to understand how some teachers[47] hope to effect change through plum jam, it is important to examine their discourse around poverty and identity in the LVV. They blame their students' lack of regional awareness not only on historical disruptions but, more recently, on their socioeconomic status. Two main mechanisms are at play: First, teachers believe that lack of

[47] While I draw on a relatively small sample of teacher interviews, I do believe that the evidence of the government program on rural development and regional education supports that their statements are not individual opinions but rather point to a more wide-spread mode of thinking about identity and development. However, when I write about "(the) teachers," I am referring primarily to those whom I interviewed.

time and social ills such as alcoholism lead some parents to devote less attention to their children, so that they pass on less knowledge. Second, they assert, children are ashamed of being from the impoverished countryside and therefore show little interest and do not identify with it. One solution, then, is to imbue students with a greater knowledge of and pride for their region. As we will see, this pathologizing discourse and its top-down solutions echo government language and strategies.

In chapter 2, I described in some detail how the Polish countryside as a whole still finds itself greatly disadvantaged compared to more urban parts of the country. The LVV certainly feels these effects. For example, the little girl so thoroughly enjoying the luxury of unlimited cake at Lucyna Kucharska's school in Nowa Wieś was one of sixty-three students – over one-third of the student body of 175 – whose families were poor enough to qualify for free school lunches. These are available to families who can prove to the municipality that they earn less than 351 PLN (about $120) per person per month.[48]

The language that accompanies descriptions of this poverty often speaks of pathologies that are being passed on from generation to generation.[49] One morning in May, I accompanied Sofia Sawicka, the landscape park's outreach coordinator, to a high school in Świecie that serves

[48] Principal Kucharska regretted not being able to provide free meals to all her students, but in the meantime she applied for all available funds from the voivodship and the EU, with much support from the mayor. The devotion and pride that she and her colleagues dedicate to improving their elementary school and the lives of their students was apparent from the well-maintained, colorful halls (swept after every class, I was told) and the passion with which pani Kucharska told me: "Leadership is very important, also from the mayor. I don't care if we're doing better or worse than other schools, just that I am doing everything I can for our school."

[49] According to the Polish State Agency for Prevention of Alcohol Related Problems, families are particularly affected by the negative outcomes of alcoholism, as fetuses are developmentally impaired in the womb of a drinking mother and children may grow up in less stable social environments. The organization summarizes the problem of drinking mothers as follows: "Another type of health damage are fetal defects caused by alcohol consumption by pregnant women. Among the most frequent problems is FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) observed as a result of alcohol consumption by a pregnant woman. About 70% of children diagnosed with FAS are not capable to live an independent life. Poland-wide surveys commissioned by PARPA in 2005 showed that almost 33% of pregnant women aged 18–40 drank alcohol. This result indicates that a very high risk of alcohol-related fetal defects and low level of awareness in this scope is observed in Poland. About 70%–80% of children at children's homes originate from families of alcoholics, where the risk of FAS is very high" (PARPA 2011).

students with learning disabilities and other special needs. After she had taught them for an hour about natural features of the LVV, Sofia spoke with the attending teacher about the teenagers. I gleaned that many of these children came from poorer families with what the teacher called "*patologia*" – alcoholism and other problems. Sofia nodded, because she knew several of the students by sight from her own hometown Tuchola, where, she said, such problems are particularly prevalent in certain neighborhoods.[50]

According to Urszula Maciejewska, this and other social problems impact how much students learn about their region. Parents, she explained to me, often have little time to spare for their children as they try to make ends meet, whether in agriculture or other jobs. "In the countryside, children are generally more neglected," she declared. According to pani Maciejewska, reduced family interactions entail that little knowledge about or pride in local culture is passed from one generation to the next. In addition, due to the countryside's negative image as backward and poor, the dialects and traditions associated with rural areas have had a lower status than a "general or standard Polish" language and culture. When pani Maciejewska tells her students that they are inhabitants of the Kociewie region, "they don't want to hear about that at all." Shame of their rural provenance, not pride, "is still being passed on from generation to generation." As Mariola Karczewska of the NGO Partner put it, "no one tells them that it's great out here in the countryside."[51]

The countryside's negative self-view can be traced back to the decades of socialism, when "the media may (have elicited) a particularly negative response in the rural population, for they

[50] Hann (1985, 132) describes the patterns of alcohol consumption in southeastern Poland three decades earlier. Heavy use was associated with unproductive farms, old housing, larger than average farms, and early teen drinking in the family's children. However, at the time villagers laid the blame primarily on the socialist state rather than individuals.

[51] Because of the nature of my fieldwork, which primarily focused on plum jam producers and which did not have IRB clearance for work with children – I did not have the opportunity to interview students directly on their own views of rural identity and shame.

(tended) to heighten the feeling of relative deprivation vis-à-vis the towns…The bias of the media (reflected) the commitment of the regime to urbanisation and industrialisation, with little attention paid to farming or forestry etc." (Hann 1985, 121).

To make up for the current lack, teachers hope to convey regional knowledge, appreciation, and pride to the pupils through regional education lessons in school. Principal Kucharska and teachers at other middle and high schools in the LVV told me that powidła had become a key element in their efforts. The educators hope that if young people were no longer ashamed of coming from an economically disadvantaged area, they might stay in or return to their region and help to improve it in the future. That is, they expected benefits from their efforts that would pay off into the future and for the region as a whole.[52]

The teachers' language regarding their role in helping their students strongly echoes that of the Ministry of Regional Development's National Development Strategy (NDS), which worries about the consequences of increasing material stratification in the "social sphere," such as "the danger of pathological phenomena, or inequality of development chances, which means 'inheritance poverty'" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 126). For this reason, the NDS's authors – many of them social scientists – propose the "prevention of an intergenerational transmission of negative social tendencies, i.e. taking over by the teenagers the values and attitudes characteristic of the 'learned helplessness' syndrome" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 70). It is clear that the solution is intended to be primarily a centralized project, as the Ministry generally views economic growth and civilization emanating from urban centers to the countryside, as the "civilization gap between the city and the rural areas has been growing bigger" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 67).

[52]Although the teachers' stated goal is to educate and retain their students in the area, ironically young people's higher education achievement can "lead to their being 'educated out' of the rural areas, where suitable jobs for the highly qualified are rare" (Shucksmith 2004), as the experience with other parts of Europe shows.

The following chapter will deal more explicitly with perceived differences of power between urban and rural areas and people and more generally within the countryside. Here I want to focus on the top-down narratives of hierarchies of power and development that permeate the accounts of teachers. While the NDS makes no mention of regional education, the teachers in the LVV themselves draw a link between instilling a regional identity in their students and improving their socioeconomic lot. That is, by reaching back into a version of history, teachers hope to mold individuals with bright futures as socioeconomically stable regional, Polish, and European citizens.

### *Regional Education in Practice*

Actual practices of regional education in the LVV vary between schools and teachers. Usually, educators combine lessons from regional education textbooks with a range of activities in and outside the classroom. Students might fill in the blanks of exercise books that show drawings of regionally distinctive architecture and furniture with dialect names for these objects. With their teachers, they identify their region in maps and discover in which villages and administrative units they live. Adamiak, lead author of the *Kociewie* textbook, suggests that such theoretical components be supplemented with cooperations with and visits to regional institutions, such as museums, parks, libraries, local government; reading literature from and about the region; fieldtrips to craftsmen and artists; participation in regional events and festivals; and exhibitions and performances of student projects.

In this spirit, groups of students in Nowa Wieś regularly visit monuments in and around their village, and principal Kucharska showed me photos of a group of girls performing traditional

regional dances they had learned in an extracurricular group.[53] In Gruczno's elementary school, on the other hand, students learned about regional Christmas traditions by performing a play, which, according to Urszula Maciejewska, was very popular with parents and locals. This experiential approach conforms to ideas about regional education that suggest that direct experience of regional culture is an important method of leaning through both emotions and knowledge (Kloc 2010, 4).

Plum jam, of course, plays an important and distinctive role in these efforts. Dragging a stirrer through the heavy, bubbling mass of plums is a full-body experience and one that is repeated annually in plum celebrations. Teachers can also link it to natural features of the region, such as old orchards, and students finally get to consume their own product.

### *Teachers as Authorities of Place*

The revived tradition of cooking plum jam maps rather awkwardly onto the patchwork of historical regional fragments, such as Chełmno Land, Kujawy, and Kociewie, which make up the Lower Vistula Valley. Thus plum jam is used to different regional identity effect in different schools. What the approaches have in common is a conception of regional identity and tradition that is heavily folkloristic and de-emphasizes other forms of identification and lived tradition that the poor of the countryside themselves might bring to the table.

Urszula Maciejewska thinks of her school being firmly rooted in Kociewie, while the LVV is an artificial construct. Thus, the school teaches plum jam as a part of *kociewskie* traditions, along with the region's traditional dress. Students are thereby invited to identify primarily with a *kociewskie* community.

[53]The group did not, however, limit itself to traditional dances. Recently they had acquired some rare funds from the local government and been able to buy some pom-poms, "like you have for your – what do you call them?," pani Kucharska asked me. "Cheerleaders," I supplied.

Principal Kucharska, on the other hand, spoke of her school as belonging to Pomorze and "the area around Chełmno." She sees these areas as devoid of a specific regional culture, referring to music and traditional clothing. She told me that "we don't have any such regional tradition of our own." Therefore she uses regional education classes to teach primarily history, including visiting and taking care of local monuments and sites dedicated to national commemoration. Students learn about plum jam in nature classes, which encompass the flora and fauna of the LVV, as well as discussions about family, rural buildings, the Landscape Park, and cultural centers. Thus, plum jam and personal identity are more closely related to the idea of a natural rather than historical entity.

The principal's view of the local area explains why she emphasized that the primary goal of many of her efforts is to give her students a sense of community within their school rather than a vague notion of a region. Through such activities as cooking plum jam, she told me, "the children identify with our school, they say about it 'our school,' 'our powidła.' The children should know that our school has such a tradition…(When we sell the jam), it characterizes us." She believes that the school has been successful in creating a sense of belonging and pride in children. "Children cry when they have to leave the school because their family is moving." Pani Kucharska smiled self-consciously but proudly when she said that an alumna in her twenties had told her she was very happy that pani Kucharska is still the principal of the school, because the alumna's own time as a student had meant so much to her.

Thus, while one teacher focuses on folklore costumes and dances, the other erases even such historical traces by declaring the countryside empty of tradition. The teachers, instead of other rural people themselves, are deciding what can be considered "traditional."

In the same way, it should be noted that, as far as I could tell at the powidła celebrations I attended in Gruczno and Nowa Wieś, little reference is made to the older area residents who have been cooking the jam since childhood. That is, the teachers do not recreate an intergenerational link between the children and the technical embodiment of the plum jam tradition in the hands of a *babcia* stirring a pot.[54] Rather, they themselves take on the role of transmitters, though in some cases, such as pani Maciejewska's, they have indeed learned about jam from their own parents and grandparents. Yet, even in her case, she refers to herself and her family – not students' parents or grandparents – as those people who represent regional history and knowledge, as authorities. Perhaps even more so than other teachers, pani Maciejewska thereby stakes her claim to legitimacy as a holder of tradition and more authentic regional resident than the students she is teaching. One could argue that the individuals who have produced plum jam over the decades thereby escape being cast in the ambivalent role of preservers of culture – praised but marked as backward (Herzfeld 2004, 31). However, in this context, the fate that befalls them is one of invisibility.

Further yet, by trying to compensate for intergenerational pathologies of poverty that have led to a perceived, regrettable lack of knowledge in children, teachers are moving into the roles of parents – or at least the role they believe parents should play. They believe that they are empowering the children, but based on an assumption of the superiority of their version of regional identity and tradition, erasing the agency of parents to create and transmit their own definitions.

[54] I was rather surprised at this, given how pani Maciejewska talked about the intergenerational flow of traditional practices. I would have expected that older individuals with knowledge of regional traditions would be seen as "personify(ing) tradition and the 'old ways'" (Eberhardt 2006, 162). Similarly, in other contexts, artisans – makers of "traditional" products – are upheld as the embodiment of cultural heritage or national pride (Herzfeld 2004, 30; Terrio 2000).

Even though some parents are involved in plum jam events, they do so under the direction of the school's teachers. Those parents who are considered most economically deprived, ostensibly with little time for their children, are also the least likely to be able to afford the 5 to 15 PLN to buy the jam their children have cooked at school. Thus they are excluded in multiple ways from this celebration of identity - in the process, outcome, and consumption.

The fact that plum jam is a food adds another interesting dimension to this usurpation of power by the teachers, many of whom are women. The Polish construction of femininity strongly emphasizes a woman's role as a mother, particularly the aspect of feeding her children (Dunn 2004). By cooking jam with children and feeding them cake, as in Nowa Wieś, the teachers are taking over duties seen as intrinsic to motherhood. By extension – and especially considering the distribution of school lunches to many poor children and the civilizing goals stated in the National Development Strategy – the state is assuming a portion of parental power over the rural poor. Ironically, in this project of modernization, the food being offered as a buy-in to civilization is not western, industrial (e.g. Gillette 2000; Watson 2005) but a (re)invented tradition.

### *Conclusion*

"Unity in diversity" is a key concept promoted by the European Commission (Shore 2000, 53). Through its initiatives in the cultural domain, it hopes to create popular awareness of a common European heritage that on the one hand celebrates a mosaic of national cultures but on the other also transcends them to transform Europeans into "European subjects...who accept the EU's supranational institutions as a legitimate political authority" (Shore 2000, 31). It is thus a cultural glue and legitimizer for the already established economic and political framework.

As we have seen, the Polish government is promoting a similar philosophy. Building on but also transcending regional identities, it strives to create well-functioning Polish subjects through initiatives in regional education and by disrupting ostensible pathologies of poverty in the countryside. These citizens are to look out to the world with an open gaze, ready to be cosmopolitan and, of course, European, though, one suspects, the Polish government is not aiming to yield its own significance to the supranational institutions of the EU.

As members of a middle-class elite – relative to the poor of the countryside – and as educational representatives of the government, teachers in the LVV are a case study in how this centralized project of endorsing a standardized diversity of regional cultures can silence alternative narratives of tradition. That is not to say that regional knowledge was not truly lost in the valley, as seen in the very real disruptions of war and authoritarian government. But the story that is used to replace it is based heavily on folklore and (re)invented traditions such as plum jam. Teachers are thereby reaching far back in history and narrating tradition through artifacts such as copper pots instead of acknowledging the living and lived experiences and everyday practices of the actual people who reside in the area. This also completely erases the contribution of those who were forced to move to the LVV from eastern Poland after the war, focusing on place rather than people. Through these practices, teachers have the power not only to interpret the past but also to shape the future, as they are creating a new version of history and tradition that may now become replicated[55] by future generations.

Thus, plum days are not merely rural celebrations of traditions and fun learning. They put on display a centralized civilizing project with an elite, urban tinge. In the next chapter, I will show how these dynamics were replicated more widely in the LVV during the rediscovery of powidła śliwkowe.

[55] This idea arose from a discussion with Jane Fajans.

# CHAPTER 4

# PLUMGATE AND OTHER BATTLES

*Success has many fathers; failure is an orphan.*[56] *– Polish proverb*

## *Introduction*

I knew I had found my research topic when I heard about Plumgate. It was the first, cold March evening I spent in the Lower Vistula Valley, visiting to learn more about the traditional plum jam I had been told about by one of my interviewees in Warsaw. LVV Landscape Park director Jarek Pająkowski had been attending a scientific conference in the capital and had picked me up from the city center, along with his Russian friend and frequent visitor to the valley, Tatiana.

Now, following a six-hour drive, we were sitting in the warm kitchen of an agrotouristic farm, eating *bigos*[57] and fresh bread. After some chatter about the region and plum jam, pan Pająkowski announced in a joking tone that several years ago a man had made headlines for stealing the powidła recipe. He called this event Plumgate. Sensing my confusion, Tatiana leaned over and explained in English: "He's talking about himself." Together they recounted the story of how the LVV's plum jam became famous once again.

At the time, some local farmers brought to the attention of several newspapers that the park director had "stolen" the plum jam recipe from them. Large-font front page headlines and much publicity followed. With apparent glee, pan Pająkowski described an interview in which a

[56] Sukces ma wielu ojców; porażka jest sierotą.
[57] *Bigos* is a Polish national dish based on sauerkraut and white cabbage. Also known as a hunter's stew, it is cooked for hours, sometimes repeatedly for several days, with an array of meats, frequently sausage, venison, and smoked pork, but also veal or beef. Other ingredients – varying by region and chef – include dried plums, wild mushrooms, tomato paste, juniper berries, pepper, caraway, marjoram, and other spices. Sometimes the stew is served in a hollowed-out bread bowl.

journalist asked him how much plum jam is produced every year. “180 jars” was his answer. “What!?” the journalist exclaimed, “not 180 trucks?” As individuals and groups in the LVV undertook efforts to patch up their relationships, the media attention waned within a few months, and the conflict returned from its outburst to a smoldering. What the warring parties could agree on without hesitation was that this free publicity had been an invaluable marketing push for their product.

Slightly guilty about my excitement at other people’s conflict, I realized that a product that had the potential to create such strife and to boost the otherwise low-profile Lower Vistula Valley into the spotlight of the national media must be significant. It was meaningful to at least some groups of people in the region, and it seemed to present a lens onto deeper, underlying issues simmering in the valley. This scene from the farm kitchen also shows varying reactions displayed by the players involved in the conflict. While the farmers complained vociferously and – judging from some photos featured in the newspapers – rather grimly to the newspapers about the alleged theft, director Pająkowski appeared to react with an almost impish humor to the allegations. As we will see, these responses are not mere expressions of individual personalities but represent broader divisions of class in this part of the Polish countryside.

In the preceding chapter, I described how some teachers act upon their students from a higher class position, conveying a particular, place-based and folkloristic form of regional knowledge and thereby taking definitional ownership of the area’s regional identities. In this chapter, I will expand my view on class and *habitus (*Bourdieu 1977, 1986) to take a closer look at the forms of capital that various actors deploy in a more concrete – and overt – conflict over the ownership of tradition.

Bourdieu (1977, 78-79) defines *habitus* as "the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations," that is, objective structures that individuals absorb and internalize from an early age and use to guide their everyday preferences and actions. Groups of people that become unconsciously harmonized around the same objective, taken-for-granted structures can be called a "class."

In their everyday interactions, individuals are never free of their position in the social structure, so that "'interpersonal' relations are never, except in appearance, *individual-to-individual* relationships," instead "(bringing) together, in an *interaction* defined by the *objective structure* of the relation between the groups they belong to…systems of dispositions…such as linguistic competence and a cultural competence and, through these habitus, all the objective structures of which they are the product, acquired in the course of a particular history" (Bourdieu 1977, 81). Based on this postulation, the interactions of the park director and the people of Strzelce are very much tinged by their respective class habitus.

My analysis of class in the Polish countryside has an antecedent in Carole Nagengast's (1991) study of the peasantry in southeastern Poland during socialism. Similarly drawing on Bourdieu's theories, she argues that the convertibility of different forms of capital – educational, cultural, social, symbolic – particularly in conditions of socialism that restricted the overt transmission of economic capital, helped to hide from view the class stratifications among Polish peasants that reached back into the nineteenth century and persisted through the socialist era. The conflict in the LVV, on the other hand, takes place in the postsocialist era in which the forms of capital are equally convertible but less concealed. On the contrary, unlike Nagengast, who delineates peasant households into clearly defined strata based on such criteria as the amount of land owned and number of workers hired, I rely on the conflict parties' own perceptions and

performances of class to divide them roughly into "the country people" and "the elite." That is not to say that the local elite does not live in or stem from the countryside. Rather, "we, the country people," often view "them, the elite" as a well-connected group with disproportionate access to resources and power.

After giving an overview over the events in the Plumgate affair, I will delve into a more detailed investigation of the evidence and enactment of habitus in the choice of "weapons" in the conflict and how it has been narrated and framed in the aftermath. This will lead into a broader discussion of class and power and their consequences for plum jam's future in the LVV.

### *A Timeline*

It is not easy to establish a clear sequence of events in the Plumgate affair. Accounts from the parties involved vary, and some people were more eager to speak about the conflict than others. What I could garner from conversations and newspaper clippings is this: The rediscovery of plums and plum jam began simultaneously in several places in Lower Vistula Valley in the mid-1990s. As outlined in chapter 2, farmer and community organizer Norbert Jasiński learned about the marketing value of food festivals in France and brought the idea of promoting his village with a plum festival to Strzelce Dolne. The Święto Śliwki (Plum Festival) started as a village celebration in 2000 and has since grown into a two-day, media-promoted event on a mowed field across from the Kaczmarek farm that attracts tens of thousands of people from nearby Bydgoszcz and beyond. Given a venue to sell their jam and add income to their households, the number of families interested in cooking jam grew quickly from the handful that had previously continued the tradition on their farms.

Simultaneously, the director of the Landscape Park began to rediscover plum jam from another angle. Starting in 1994, pan Pająkowski developed an orchard project for the park and unearthed as much information as possible on related fruit products. According to his own account, he learned during this first year that two older women in the villages Gruczno and Kozielec, both south of Świecie on the left Vistula bank, were still cooking a traditional form of plum jam, powidła. As the park director's interest in the product grew, the woman in Kozielec donated her copper pot to the park in order to help showcase the tradition and make it available to others interested in trying their hand at powidła. It is now probably the most frequently used pot in the valley.

The plum jam became known to a wider audience in 1998 when it was featured for the first time on television during the popular television show *Antykwariat* (Antique Show). The following year, the TPDW published a postcard set showing off the local orchards and a photo of a copper pot borrowed from Strzelce Dolne. At that time, pan Pająkowski also developed his relationship with families in Strzelce, where he learned about their experience with the jam and commissioned two or three pots over a couple of years – whether for his personal or the park's use was not clear. But, as he pointed out in various newspaper interviews, this was not the only place he consulted about powidła*;* there were as many as seven families in different villages.

Finally, the director conceived the idea of reviving the tradition in his own home town and the seat of the park, Świecie. He explained in a conversation that he had read in historical accounts that a trader had stopped in Świecie to buy plum jam cooked in copper pots and that therefore the historical linkage was well established. Thus, when in the year 2000 workers from the voivodship's agricultural consulting agency OSR (Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego) called and suggested that jars of plum jam be entered in a national competition for traditional foods,

Our Culinary Heritage (Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo)[58], pan Pająkowski did not hesitate to submit jars from Świecie. Not only did the plum jam win highest honors in the competition, but it also earned the distinction as the best plant product of the year by the National Food and Nutrition Institute.

The conflict arose out of this success. Because pan Pająkowski had both bought jars of jam in Strzelce and received many as gifts, several villagers assumed that the submissions to the competition must have been theirs. He, however, asserted that he had given away those jars, always giving credit to their Strzelce producers. Instead, the winning jam had come from a lady in Gruczno, administratively part of Świecie. Several residents of Strzelce, notably *sołtys*[59] Marek Białecki, Norbert Jasiński, and farmers Maria and Ryszard Król, were outraged and took their complaints directly to the media.

Their case received its first public attention on January 2, 2002 in the regional *Gazeta Pomorska*[60] under the title "Appetite for Powidła" (*Apetyt na powidła,* Rystrykowa 2002*)*. Mixing information with quotes from an interview with pan Jasiński, pani and pan Król, and sołtys Białecki at the Króls' house, journalist Emilia Rystrykowa paints a picture in which the plum jam tradition is evident in the very landscape of Strzelce's orchards. Her relatively balanced account tells of the villagers' accusations but also lets director Pająkowski defend his actions and acknowledges that the he helped promote Strzelce in the past, for example by sending over a television team that had inquired with him about the jam.

[58] Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo began in 2000 under the auspices of the women's magazine *Gospodyni*, the Polish Radio (Polskie Radio), and Agrolinia 2000, an EU-funded program aiding Polish agriculture and countryside. The competition – now directed by the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2010 (see chapter 6).
[59] A *sołtys* is the elected head of a *solectwo*, a village subunit of a rural *gmina* or municipality. In this case, the *solectwo* encompasses Strzelce Dolne. Marek Białecki was the *sołtys* for several years, followed by Elżbieta Saj, who held this post during my fieldwork.
[60] *Gazeta Pomorska* is a daily newspaper headquartered in Bydgoszcz, directly adjacent to the village of Strzelce Dolne. Published since 1948, it has a circulation up to 88,000.

About a week later, the story went national. The tabloid *Super Express*[61] pasted the story on its front page on January 10, 2002, turning a regional spat into a "Powidła War" (*Wojna o powidła,* Dudziński 2001). Displaying pictures of Paulina Król with her copper pot and the sołtys pointing at a Świecie plum jam label, the headline screams in large letters: "They stole the powidła recipe from us" (*Ukradli nam sekret powideł*; see Figure 7 below). Correspondingly, the article spends most of its column space reporting the complaint of the Strzelce residents, who describe how the park director betrayed their trust and used their recipe, perhaps even their jam, to win 50,000 PLN. Pan Pająkowski defends himself in the latter part of the article, arguing that he managed to employ proper marketing techniques and is really only working for the welfare of the entire region. Finally, in a separate text box, a legal expert takes the social and moral side of the Strzelce residents but says that perhaps the highest court in the country will have to decide on this issue of the ownership of tradition.

A week later, the park director sent a letter to the editor of *Super Express* to correct some misinformation. A copy that I received from the TPDW states that he did not receive 50,000 PLN in prize money for the jam but rather 500 PLN for the National Food and Nutrition Institute prize, to be split between two parties. Furthermore, he asserts that he only met the producers of the Świecie jam – a pani Górska and a pani Lukasik from Gruczno – during the prize ceremony. After these ladies had won these honors in 2000, they sent the equipment and recipe (which, he asserts, differed from that used in Strzelce) to him personally, so that the claim of recipe theft is "absurd." Furthermore, pan Pająkowski mentions several examples of the prior use of the name "powidła *świeckie*" in publications and the postcard set, to which no one had objected. Finally, he points out that the traditional product was hardly being sold now under the Świecie name but

[61] *Super Express*, founded in 1991, has a circulation of ca. 370,000. Since 1996, it also issues a separate version for Polish-Americans from a New York office, as well as since 2010 from Chicago.

rather given away for promotional purposes as part of a larger strategy of regional profiling. As far as I know, these corrections were not acknowledged or published by the newspaper. Instead, radio interviews and more newspaper articles followed, throwing powidła into the national spotlight (or at least a few watts of it) for several weeks.

A side effect of this fight carried out in the newspapers was that the park director's dual role as the park's top representative as well as the vice-president (and founder) of the Friends of the Lower Vistula Society (TPDW) was called into question. In "Two in One Pot" (*Dwa w jednym kotle*, Jadzińska-Zgubieńska 2002a), published in the regional paper *Express Bydgoski Magazyn* on January 18, 2002, residents of Strzelce accuse the director of blending the role of public official with his private interests, a position supported by Maria Dobrowicz, the director of the voivodship's environmental department in Bydgoszcz. The park director defends the work of the organization as a necessary addition to the park's activities to promote the environment and region. Although Professor Wojciech Radecki of the Legal Institute of the National Academy – at the request of pan Pająkowski – advises in a legal opinion that he does not see any legal difficulties in one person holding both positions, a note at the end of the newspaper article states that shortly before the publication of this issue director Pająkowski resigned from his post as vice-president of the TPDW.

As the conflict died down, members of Strzelce's women's club, the Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich (KGW),[62] participated in the TPDW's fifth anniversary celebration in October 2002 – exactly nine months after the media hype had begun – and presented a demonstration of plum

[62] Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich literally means Circle of Rural Women, where "women" is only a very loose translation of "*gospodyni*," which can mean "hostess," "landlady," proprietress," "farmer's wife," or "housekeeper." KGW operate on the basis of legal acts concerning the social and occupational farmers' organizations, either as branches of local farmers organizations or independently. Activities might include organizing local festivities and courses. In Strzelce Dolne and the nearby village of Kozielec, some of their primary endeavors focus on cooking and promoting plum jam.

jam cooking. Two years later, finally, they received recognition for their own plum jam in the 2004 edition of the Our Culinary Heritage competition. Since 2005, all of the valley's producers share a common system of labeling their jam.

One point that all parties – the park director, members of the TPDW, and the villagers of Strzelce – could agree on is that all this hubbub in the media created unprecedented publicity for the Lower Vistula Valley, Strzelce, and, above all, powidła. As Ryszard Król put it: "Such advertising …no firm could have done that for us." In fact, it was so useful that, according to Norbert Jasiński, one radio show later accused the warring parties of staging the conflict to garner publicity.

***Plum Jam's Many Parents***

One of park director Jarek Pająkowski's favorite aphorisms is: "Success has many fathers; failure is an orphan." He cited it frequently, usually stopping after the first half, as the plum jam revival in the LVV has, for the most part, been a great success. And many fathers (and mothers) have indeed gathered around the pot, vying for their share. The park director has not been alone in his assessment. One of his antagonists in this conflict, Norbert Jasiński, cited the same words during our interview.

As the outline of the Powidła War's main events and media coverage shows, the conflict was one of misunderstandings, lack of communication, hurt feelings but also unexpected success for the plum jam at the center of this story. Despite this positive outcome, however, an underlying sea of deeper issues shimmers through the occasionally comical veneer of the overplayed articles, false and half-baked accusations, arguments and defenses.

It is important to remember in this context that the Lower Vistula Valley is a rural area that is confronted with many of the issues of the Polish countryside that I outlined in chapter 2. While the cities of Toruń and Bydgoszcz anchor the southern end of the valley and along with a few small towns provide non-agricultural employment, many households are farms that must deal with the transition of Poland away from small-scale farming to alternative rural employment – whose implementation is not always yet clear. Cooking plum jam is one strategy for some households to produce additional, value-added income, which will be the topic of chapter 6. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is also one way in which teachers try to foster a sense of regional pride in a population that at times feels shame for its rural provenance.

In the following analysis, I will examine the statements, arguments, and actions of the warring parties more closely to show that plum jam has become not only a vehicle for local pride and economic ambition but thereby also a lens back onto the people who cook, care about and fight for it. Through the magnifying glass of this traditional product, we can detect social and economic structures, tensions, and fissures, as well as dynamic changes that have taken place over the past ten years since plum jam has been rediscovered.

### *Choose Your Weapons*

Much of the Plumgate conflict played out in the media, primarily newspapers. Most articles first focused on the Strzelce villagers' complaint and then let the park director react and defend himself. That is, the main space was taken up by the villagers, who were driving the narrative. One could say that the newspapers thereby became a place for them to tell their story, a stage where, even for a brief moment, they could perform their identity (Terrio 2000).

It is telling that the newspaper *Super Express* became one of the primary vehicles for the villagers' accusations. While their first appearance was in the regional newspaper *Gazeta Pomorska*, headquartered in neighboring Bydgoszcz, *Super Express* (*SE*) soon picked up their story. The newspaper's interest is not surprising, as the storyline fit very well into its current agenda. In competition with the highly successful *Fakt*, "a noble version of the tabloid daily" and to this day "the newspaper of considerable influence among the less-wealthy and less-educated social classes," *Super Express* "changed itself into a sharp, sensational, and to some extent erotic, tabloid for a few years, according to the rule: *if it bleeds, it leads*" (Filas and Płaneta 2009, 144). In this, *SE* usually took the "perspective of an average man, distrustful of political elites, hunting for power abuse (or even provoking it)" (Nalewajk 2003, summarized in Filas and Płaneta 2009, 144).[63]

Both *Gazeta Pomorska* and *Super Express* conform to the categories of regional and omnibus newspapers that Bourdieu (1986) identifies as the type most likely to be read by individuals in the lower class strata, with less educational capital. At the time, *SE* was second only to the more serious *Gazeta Wyborcza* in terms of readership (Filas and Płaneta 2009, 142), so that Paulina and Ryszard Król, Marek Białecki, and Norbert Jasiński voiced their anger through a widely received newspaper bullhorn that claimed to speak for the masses, to the masses. Indeed, the story the newspaper's articles tell of the LVV's powidła wars amplify the narrative I heard from not only these Strzelce villagers but also many other rural people in this and other contexts. They paint a picture of estranged fragments of society – the wealthier, more educated and powerful and often more urban elite on the one hand; and the rural, less educated and disempowered country people on the other. By turning to the popular press, the Strzelce villagers were most

[63] *Super Express* began to change in 2007, when several journalists and the new editor-in-chief switched over from *Fakt.* Since then, *SE* has become more similar to its competitor in both layout and content (Światłowska 2008, cited in Filas and Płaneta 2009).

likely to be portrayed sympathetically and gain a broad audience for their cause. "Their" newspaper, rather than an elite paper such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, would be their booming voice, giving them a sense of power and stature nationally that they felt they did not have in their own region.[64]

Conversely, the fact that *Super Express* picked up the plum jam story shows that its editors believed that it would appeal to a large enough swath of population to make its publication worthwhile. More yet, they recognized enough fodder for front-page headlines, which serve to catch the eye of potential readers and entice them to buy the paper. That is, this publication, whose target audience consists mainly of a conceived average person who distrusts elites, deemed that the regional conflict around plum jam contained enough universal appeal so that its readers would be able to identify with its protagonists – evidence that the underlying issues in the conflict are not merely typical for the LVV but are recognized in broader segments of Polish society.

Park director Pająkowski, on the other hand, responded to the accusation of theft by turning to tools that were available to him as an educated person of influence and manifold connections grown through his academic and work careers.[65] While he spoke directly to journalists who asked to interview him, for example for the *Gazeta Pomorska* and *Super Express*, he chose to put his rebuttals in writing, citing point by point the alleged inaccuracies in the latter's article. In academic fashion, pan Pająkowski numbered each paragraph and attached copies of relevant documents as evidence.

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[64] The contrast between the "serious" *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the sensationalist *Super Express* fits Bourdieu's analysis which posits that "the difference between the 'sensational' press and the 'informative' press ultimately reproduces the opposition between those who make politics and policy, in deeds, in words or in thought, and those who undergo it, between active opinion and opinion that is acted upon" (Bourdieu 1986, 444).

[65] Already tenured as the director of the Lower Vistula Valley Landscape Park since 1993, in 2007 pan Pająkowski completed a PhD with honors in geology at the Geological Institute of the National Academies in Warsaw.

In the same vein, rather than courting popular opinion in the media, he defended his dual role as park director and vice president of TPDW by commissioning a favorable legal opinion (*opinia prawnicza*) from Prof. dr. hab. Wojciech Radecki, a member of the Research Group on Environmental Science at the Institute of Legal Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences.[66] Professor Radecki was presumably either one of director Pająkowski's academic acquaintances from his time at the National Academies, or access to this legal authority would have been eased by their shared academic affiliation and social positions of influence.

Even Gruczno's Catholic priest, Franciszek Kamecki, chimed into the debate as an "eyewitness," coming down on the park director's side in *Pielgrzym* (Pilgrim), a Pomeranian Catholic magazine. In a widely Catholic country in which visitors to Sunday mass still regularly spill out of crowded churches, this voice would have carried a certain amount of weight. In his open letter, the priest explains that during his five years as the vicar in Bydgoszcz-Fordon, to which Strzelce Dolne belonged at the time, he never saw or received a single jar of plum jam. Only in Gruczno has he received plum jam and jam-filled donuts and *rogaliki*[67] from Bernadeta Kasprzyk for twenty years. In Gruczno, he witnessed jam being cooked in old copper pots. Priest Kamecki ends his letter by inviting those involved to reconcile and praise God for "the taste of what nature provides and what Polish women manage to conjure up from nature."

In short, the park director deployed his superior capital – his connections to a nationally recognized legal expert and a locally popular priest – and he did so in a style fitting to his class.

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[66] In his legal opinion, prepared with a turn-around time of only one week on January 28, 2002, Prof. Radecki answers the question whether holding both the position as park director and vice president of the TPDW is in accordance with both the laws for government employees and economic law. Written in legal jargon and citing pertinent paragraphs of the law, the opinion states that while TPDW makes money it is mainly through the sale of "popular scientific" publications, and the funds are used according to the statutes of the organization for statutory goals, i.e. the purchase and protection of naturally and culturally valuable properties in the LVV. Prof. Radecki therefore concludes that he has "not even the smallest doubts" that the work as director of the landscape park as well as economic activity as vice president of the TPDW does not violate any applicable laws.

[67] *Rogaliki* are crescent-shaped baked goods, similar to croissants.

***History Is Written by Victors - Framing and Preserving the History of the Powidła War***

According to the article "Appetite for powidła," the residents of Strzelce accused the park director of "stealing tradition and falsifying history" through his claim that the plum jam was traded in Świecie and therefore should be called "świeckie." In this section, I look at the artifacts of Plumgate – the conflict's physical traces left in the form of newspapers and magazine articles – to explain how differently the park director's friends and the villagers wrote history about the conflict itself. During my round of interviews in the LVV, both groups were equally willing, even eager to provide copies of the articles to me, but they did so in different formats.

Some Strzelce plum jam producers had clipped or torn articles from the newspaper and placed them together in plastic folders, organized roughly by date. While I sat in the Kaczmareks' farm kitchen, Dorota Kaczmarek sent her daughter-in-law to make copies of these pages (and others covering their plum-related activities in general) for me on the printer-scanner in their upstairs home office. On another day, Paulina Król served me cake and tea while I took photos of her article clippings. For these producers, the media coverage of the conflict was physical evidence they could point to in order to prove to me that they and their version of events had received public approval. No matter what had followed and how – in the case of the Króls, as I will discuss later – their social position may have been damaged, for a brief moment in 2002, they had wielded the power of public opinion on their side.

By contrast pan Pająkowski only dealt with the coverage indirectly. All significant activities and events surrounding the Landscape Park, orchards, and plum jam are inscribed into the *Kronika* (chronicles) of the TPDW. I first paged through their impressive tomes when I visited Jadwiga and Andrzej Cholewscy in their apartment in Bydgoszcz, sent there by the park director. These gentle and welcoming retirees are founding members of the TPDW and good


Figure 7. Cover and page of the TPDW's *Kronika.* Photographs by Olivia Hall

friends of the park director. Jadwiga, who became one of my closest friends during my time in the LVV, often acts as the TPDW's photographer at events and historian of the association.

I was impressed by the two large albums Jadwiga placed in front of me on the table she had carefully cleared and wiped. Each was bound in dark, embossed leather with golden letters and contained thick pages of cream-colored paper (see Figure 7). Jadwiga had neatly glued in photos, annual Christmas cards sent out to members, and copies of founding documents, meeting protocols, and letters by the park director. Her meticulous script in black fountain ink dated and commented on the clippings. The conflict articles from *Super Express* and other newspapers received the same treatment. Copies and originals of the clippings were lined up precisely on the pages. The red and black screaming headlines from the tabloids appeared incongruous with the expensive paper and created an almost ironic effect.

Interspersed between the clippings were letters that pan Pająkowski had sent out to all TPDW members to keep them up to date on the newest occurrences as the conflict unfolded. In one, he included copies of the newest articles "connected to the battle about powidła (and not only about powidła)." The comment in parentheses may simply refer to the additional criticism that had been launched at the park director for his dual role as public official and board member of the TPDW. However, it could also suggest director Pająkowski's acknowledgement of more deep-seated issues of power and class at stake.

The next sentence is an excellent example of the park director's humorous treatment of the entire episode, both during its occurrence and six years later when I spoke to him. He invites TPDW members to a meeting on the morning of January 26 "because the level of polemics is beginning to stand out even from Central European standards." Similarly, in another mailing about a month later, he announces "the next act of the 'Powidła Opera." His joking reference to an "opera" is an expression both of his group's access to high-brow culture and the lightness with which he can afford to treat the conflict.

Thus, both Strzelce villagers and the TPDW collected and safeguarded evidence of the plum jam conflict in the form of newspaper articles. In contrast to the loose papers that Paulina Król points to as proof of bygone, briefly held power, the TPDW's chronicles, however, represent a well-organized form of curating a narrative and encasing the conflict as only one chapter into the association's growing history. What better means to preserving this than chronicles whose dark leather already looks and smells like times gone by and which puts on display the high-class taste (Bourdieu 1986) of the TPDW members.

Jadwiga Cholewska later also wrote a brief summary of this conflict into a TPDW-sponsored publication, the *Bedeker Gruczeński* (Luterek-Cholewska 2007), a guidebook to Gruczno, the

village near Świecie where two elderly ladies had demonstrated their plum jam cooking skills. The book, aimed mainly at regional residents, outlines the village's history, culture, traditions, and important contemporary and historical figures under ca. 150 key words, including "*powidła gruczeńskie*."

In this version of the plum jam saga, which essentially summarizes Jarek Pająkowski's narrative, the park director decided to reactivate the traditional production of plum jam and received his first lessons in Strzelce Dolne. Wanting to promote the formerly existing name of "świeckie" powidła, he convinced residents of Gruczno to submit some jars to the Our Culinary Heritage competition, where they won. Pani Cholewska stresses that these ladies had been cooking plum jam according to their own methods "for ages" (*od dawna*). As evidence, she cites priest Kamecki's entire letter.

The guidebook entry goes on to tell of the "war (that) reverberated with an echo throughout the country" (162), being discussed even in Jerzy Urban's magazine *NIE*.[68] The account ends with the harmonious outcome that the ladies of Strzelce's women's club (KGW) took part in the TPDW's anniversary event in the fall of 2002 and received their own recognition for powidła in the 2004 edition of the national food competition.

Even more than the TPDW's chronicles, which will be viewed only seldom by the association's members, the *Bedeker* represents a tangible version of the park director's account of the plum jam war. In book form, it carries the added weight of the printed, bound word that evokes truth. It is preserved for the future on glossy paper, accessible to anyone who buys the book or finds it in the library. I saw many Gruczno and other regional residents purchase copies

[68] *NIE*, literally "no," is a center-left, weekly magazine published in Warsaw since 1990 by Jerzy Urban, a well-known Polish journalist and commentator. On the magazine's website, he lists his likes as: eating, money, drinking, sleeping, Jaruzelski, publicity, laziness, and Russia. His dislikes include: sports, religion, physical exertion, boredom, nationalism, carrots, the Pope, romantic poetry, patriotic prose, dumplings, children, and president Bush (http://www.nie.com.pl/redakcja, accessed 2011-02-25).

at local events. The Strzelce villagers' newspaper articles and thereby their side of the story, on the other hand, have disappeared primarily into their own folders, to be brought forth on occasion for interested ethnographers and other visitors.

That is not to say that plum jam producers in Strzelce have not, as well, benefited from the publicity of the powidła wars and have seen their reputation and business grow. As I will explain further down, however, most of these now cooperate closely with the Landscape Park. The three parties at the center of the conflict – the Króls, Marek Białecki, and Norbert Jasiński – continue to operate on the margins of the region's and their village's society.

***Plum Power***

In my analysis of the weapons and artifacts of the Powidła War, I have hinted at the power relations that become apparent in the conflict. In this section, I want to make them more explicit, showing how the dispositions (Bourdieu 1977) on display in the public, observable performances discussed above are evidence of divergent classes with different amounts of capital at their disposal. Because of this disparity in power between the park director and other members of the regional elite on the one hand, and frequently less educated, socioeconomically less advantaged rural villagers on the other, the relative impact of the conflict on their lives differs greatly.

Unlike the most vociferous Strzelce villagers, the park director remains in his position of leadership. His joking referral to the plum jam conflict as "Plumgate" is a shorthand that says a lot about the park director's standing. In contrast to Watergate president Nixon, pan Pająkowski made it through the plum jam scandal unscathed and probably even benefited from it, as powidła's renown and sales grew in the aftermath. In our casual conversation about various

aspects of plum jam in the LVV, this statement exemplified to me the socioeconomic and educational class from which the park director was speaking.

First, I believe that few of the rural producers I spoke to would have understood such a reference to foreign historical events. He, on the other hand, comes from an educated family and acquired the highest academic qualifications and thereby cultural capital in the shape of a doctoral degree. In addition, as a man of at least secure financial means and a certain social position, he can and does travel abroad. There he maintains many professional and possibly personal contacts with individuals, groups, and institutions as far away as in the United States, where he was once invited to give a lecture on Mennonites in the LVV. [69]

Second, while it was intended as a joke, the comparison to a presidential scandal evokes the position of power that came under attack at the time. In his own realm, Jarek Pająkowski holds a position of considerable influence and connections. At the time of the conflict, he had been able to work in this domain for just short of a decade since he became the park's director in 1993 in his mid-twenties.

The park director underscored that he is aware of this power. When in another conversation I asked him about his current relationship with producers in Strzelce, he asserted that the main problem had been with the sołtys, Marek Białecki, who had tried to rile other community members up against Jarek Pająkowski. "There have," the director stated, "been three people with whom I've had conflicts, who've tried to…" – here he made a throat-cutting motion – "but I'm still here." The sołtys, on the other hand, "got caught up in his own net of scheming" and no longer holds that position. Neither do the other two, whom he did not specify.

[69] My own subject position as an Ivy League researcher – that is, as a similarly educated person – surely influenced how the park director and other TPDW members interacted with me.

Further, according to Bourdieu (1977, 187) academic and other types of credentials, such as pan Pająkowski's doctoral degree and his title as park director, define permanent positions that can be occupied interchangeably by agents holding sufficient credentials. That is, displays of class in this conflict point to more permanent, underlying relations of power. By calling on a legal expert to defend his inhabiting important positions in the Park and TPDW, pan Pająkowski invoked the laws that "symbolically consecrate – by *recording* it in a form which renders it both eternal and universal – the structure of the power relation between groups and classes" (Bourdieu 1977, 188).

Although park director Pająkowski gave up his position as vice-president of TPDW, he did not in fact lose any of his decision-making power. In practice, TPDW's office is one room in the LVV Landscape Park's suite in Świecie, filled with a small warehouse of the association's book and brochure publications and jars of pickles, marinated mushrooms, and of course plum jam. Most of these will be given as gifts to visitors or for promotional purposes. When I was about to visit my family in Germany, the park director personally unlocked the door and handed me several jars to bring home as gifts. Most mailings to association members also continue to be signed by him. Thus it is evident that pan Pająkowski still runs the TPDW's everyday operations.

Some of the Strzelce villagers appeared to be aware of this arrangement or at least the authority that the park director wields in the organization. Two Strzelce villagers who generally cooperate closely with the park on buying plum jam supplies and promoting local festivities spoke with a hint of disdain about "him and his TPDW," as if of a mafia boss and his gang – "cooperation" is the only real option. One of them, in keeping with this image, described the park director's attempts to animate more villages and groups to cook traditional plum jam as "a command."

In a similar vein, Norbert Jasiński barely stopped short of a direct accusation but mentioned that because much of the LVV lies within the LVV Landscape Park, major changes to land and structures have to be rubber-stamped by the park's leadership. Paulina Król, he told me, has been waiting for more than two years for approval to build a shed – a direct result of the conflict, in his opinion.[70] Whether the park director is indeed purposely withholding his permission to punish his former adversary is practically irrelevant, as the Strzelce villagers' perception of the situation suffices to reinforce in their minds their relative social positions.

Paulina Król herself complained bitterly that park director Pająkowski worked in a very self-interested manner. In the supposedly collective process of designing and deciding on a common jar lid for all powidła producers in the LVV, she told me, he ignored a template into which she had already invested 5,000 PLN. In a new, postsocialist economy, jars of plum jam were some of the first value-added products that producers such as pani Król sold on a larger scale. And thus the jars' labels represented a unique opportunity for creating a personal or village brand, empty spaces or "symbolic objects" to be filled with expressions of self and identity (Yurchak 2000). But the director chose a design that matched his own (i.e. Świecie's) purple front label. "*Jemu pasuje*" (it works for *him*), pani Król scowled. But the color did not match her label and looked ugly, in her opinion. Plus, the money was wasted. As pani Król recounted this anecdote, I sensed her frustration at feeling helpless in the face of the park director's decisions. Like in his alleged denial of approval for her shed, his color preferences limited her power to express and fulfill her own choices and needs. She felt that she was being subsumed – not against her will but more than she had bargained for – into the park director's producer group, where he put his mark on her jam.

[70] This sentiment is reminiscent of Hann's (1985, 91) description of "links of vertical dependency" that Polish peasants under socialism were forced to create with a bureaucratic system that controlled the resources necessary for agricultural production and a wide range of goods and services.

Pan Pająkowski's control, real or perceived, of the producer group is significant, because this is where the jam is being developed as a regional product on a larger scale. It is here that the villagers fear that the park director will use his dominant cultural and social capital to claim greater amounts of economic capital from the plum jam's success, i.e. that the forms of capital will convert in his favor. In "Appetite for powidła," Norbert Jasiński describes the jam's economic potential as a traditional food product registered with the European Union and his fear of losing it: "We from Strzelce, we won't go to the EU with pigs and milk, but with plums we could. And that's exactly what they want to take away from us." In "Powidła War," Marek Białecki concurs: "We're not concerned with the 50,000 PLN prize. Powidła with an EU certification could insure our future. And this way Świecie and its environs will benefit." Several other articles agree that plum jam, for example as part of an agrotouristic offer, could be a valuable asset in attracting tourists.

Jarek Pająkowski's response is evidence that he has already consciously begun the process of marketing the jam. In "Powidła War," he asserts that "today it's not enough to make something traditionally. One has to promote the product professionally. I succeeded in that, and this success now has many fathers." Although he states in the same article that "anyone could have entered the competition," his status and social connections played a vital role in his knowing about it in the first place. The voivodship's agricultural consulting agency contacted him about the traditional food competition in his function as park director. The villagers in Strzelce, on the other hand, did not have the necessary connections to receive information about the contest. Instead, in one interview, Norbert Jasiński expressed surprise that this competition had taken place.

Yet, the park director's interest, at least in the short term, is not to profit financially from plum jam. Instead, he gives away the 180, individually numbered jars of jam that are produced every year by the TPDW, handing them to important visitors, the members of the TPDW itself, and groups and institutions visited by representatives of the association. Every recipient, without fail, is asked to sign and date next to the jar's number in a list. This practice could be considered a form of formally acknowledged gift-giving, which has "certain strategic parallels" to "more ostensibly 'economic' practices" (Bourdieu, summarized in Appadurai 1986b, 12). More immediately and evidently, however, the park director acquires not economic capital but prestige, a "symbolic profit" (Bourdieu 1977, 184) that reinforces his status as park director, the objectification of his social and cultural capital, and thereby "reproduces the structure of the relations of domination and dependence."

### *Conclusion: The Godfather and his Cronies*

"He snuck in like a fox to the hen house." This is the descriptive accusation that Marek Białecki launches against pan Pająkowski in a newspaper interview. In the same article, Paulina Król makes the park director sound more like a wolf in sheep's skin as she bemoans that "we trusted him. We welcomed him like one of us." Much of the ensuing conflict was based on and reinforced the recognition that he is, in fact, not one of them. Perhaps the increased possibilities of expression in the postsocialist era as well as the lessened ideological need to hide from view the kinds of class stratifications that Nagengast (1991) uncovers among peasants during socialism, helped to bring into the open the villagers' and park director's displays of their respective class habitus.

Norbert Jasiński summed up most eloquently his understanding of class in the LVV and more generally. In our interview at his farm, he covered all the basics of plum jam with me but then launched into a lengthy soliloquy about the evils of powerful administrators. He pitted them, "who all know each other and often finished school together," against himself and his fellow villagers, "simple people from the countryside" who are "at a different intellectual level." That is, he identified some of the social and educational capital that differentiates "the elite" from "the country people."

In the practice of rural development, he said, two kinds of groups exist: "Real" groups that form around an idea, and those that come together to "go after their own interests" and exploit available funds. Norbert Jasiński founded his own non-profit, the Towarzystwo Rolnictwo Turystyka (Association for Agriculture and Tourism), with Marek Białecki as a means for promoting agrotourism in the village and as the first of its kind in Poland. But like other "real" groups, he asserts, it is relatively weak because they have little access to money, thanks to their lack of necessary connections.[71] The second type of group, in contrast, usually has a "Godfather," such as a voivode,[72] local mayor, or landscape park director who has influence and knows how to play the grant game in order to obtain funding, often from the EU. Indeed, another example from Sweden (Dahl 2007) shows that applying for EU grants requires not only connections and knowledge about the availability of money but also skill and patience for dealing with complicated applications and labor-intensive administration of projects. With a tone that wavered between frustration and resignation, Norbert Jasiński concluded: "They take care of their own, these groups, and they have a future."

[71] This came as a bit of a surprise to me, because Norbert Jasiński has, in fact, gained access to European Union resources in the past, for example when he traveled to France on several occasions for educational purposes.
[72] A voivode (*wojewód*) is the head of a voivodship, comparable to a governor.

Paulina Król reflected this perspective when I asked her about her participation in the association of plum jam producers. "We go to the meetings," she said, but her attendance is half-hearted and without much expectation of substantive involvement or profit, because she thinks the park director wants to obtain EU funds to promote only his own goals. After a moment she mused: "Maybe we (the villagers) should do that, too."

As described above, Mariusz Kaczmarek had similar disdain for the park's administration and clear resentment for the fact that he felt forced by his relative position to the park director to cooperate with his plans. In some cases, producers choose not to participate in groups or events at all. Only two plum jam producers – Jan Michalski and Jan Dąbrowski – attended a conference organized by the Local Action Group (LAG)[73] Vistula Terra Culmensis on local products and European Union funding. Instead, local and voivodship administrators listened to each other's presentations and crowded around the heavily laden food tables. Cherry farmer Michalski, a founding member of the LAG, pointed this out to me and explained the lack of rural people's participation with their distrust of leadership.

Thus the conflict about the ownership of plum jam has been a double-edged sword for the parties involved. On the one hand, it produced nationwide publicity that gave powidła an unexpected and invaluable marketing push, opening up new avenues and ideas for developing it as a sellable product. On the other hand, the consequent work that the director and producers have attempted to complete together has been full of suspicions on the part of some producers that have reduced the effectiveness of the cooperation. The association has not met with great regularity. A meeting that was to take place during my stay in the valley never materialized, and some producers sounded disinclined to go back. Krystyna Witkowska, for example, claimed that

[73] A Local Action Group is an EU-funded vehicle for rural development, intended to bring local stakeholders together for bottom-up improvement of rural areas (see chapter 6).

at last year's meeting the director had "forbidden" the use of cloves in the jam. When I asked pan Pająkowski about the group's progress in applying for special EU labeling for traditional products, he just shook his head and told me that "it's up to the producers to figure some of these things out for themselves. I don't want to direct their activities anymore."

For the director, plum jam is just one of many – often very successful – projects that he initiates and runs through the park and TPDW. Some producers, on the other hand, such as many in Strzelce, are more dependent on the economic profit that the plum jam already produces and promises for the future. Hence, the plum jam's potential as an EU-labeled traditional food product is considerably more important to them. Therefore, as I will explore in the next chapter, the new opportunities that plum jam and a potential EU recognition present are leading to further, producer-internal discussions on how to define an authentic tradition.

# CHAPTER 5

# YOU CALL THIS JAM?: DEBATING THE AUTHENTICITY OF TRADITIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS

*"The powidła case…it's just like with oscypek…it's not so simple."- powidła producer Ryszard Król*

## *Introduction*

Ask anyone in Poland, and it's very likely he or she will know *oscypek* and might even have tried it. This raw sheep's milk cheese from the Tatra Mountains in the southern Małopolska region is the country's best-known regional food, not least because its "authentic" production and ownership have been hotly debated in national and even foreign media. Thereby oscypek has become a symbol for Poles' growing interest in traditional products. Even in the Lower Vistula Valley, oscypek set an example to which powidła producers compared themselves and often aspired. More than once, park director Pająkowski bragged jokingly to other people that their powidła had beaten out oscypek, since I had switched my research topic from cheese to jam.

Indeed, I had chosen jam over cheese for several reasons, including accessibility to and cooperation with the community, and interesting features of their region. Most importantly, powidła's producers were still in the early stages of trying to establish it as a traditional food product in Poland, and even in their region. While powidła and oscypek are separated by some important differences, their cases share many similarities that make the cheese a valuable example for illustrating the Polish and European regulatory contexts in which the plum jam producers of the LVV are working to create a profile for their product. Using oscypek's long path to a designation, I will explain the broader motivations and potential benefits that drive the

legislation around traditional foods and show some of the challenges that eager registrants encounter along the way.

I focus the bulk of my commentary on the second part of the chapter, where I will move from conflicting claims to ownership of tradition, examined in chapter 4, to the debates in the LVV around the question what truly constitutes tradition and "authentic" plum jam. How do the producers fill the concept of a "regional product" with content?

### *Poland Lagging*

When I began my fieldwork in 2007, my contacts in the Ministry of Agriculture proudly handed me a List of Traditional Products (Ministerstwo Rolnictwa 2007) that was over 300 pages thick and profiled as many foods registered in the years 2005-2007 from all sixteen voivodships. Evidently, interest in the topic of traditional foods in Poland was growing on both the political-administrative and popular sides. Only a few years before, the brochure had been much thinner, listing perhaps one sixth as many products, hinting at the difficulties Poland had getting out of the starting block. Despite the significance of agriculture in Poland, the country lagged behind the European Union it was about to join and its central and eastern European neighbors in creating protective legislation, whose rationale I will discuss below.

About a year after Poland's accession to the EU on May 1, 2004, the country had entered only very few applications for designations as traditional or regional food products. Of applications submitted by new member states, Poland could only claim five percent (Pogoda and Szkiruć 2005). This number is grossly disproportionate to Poland's size, population, and the

importance of rural areas and agricultural lands, particularly as compared to much smaller countries such as Slovakia and Slovenia.[74]

The same explanations for the near-disappearance of powidła in the Lower Vistula Valley apply to regional food products across the country. Ties between foods, people, and places were broken during and after World War II, as borders and populations shifted. As Dopierała-Konkołowicz (2010) points out, some traditional dishes migrated with their cooks and continued to exist in a new region, but often they became nameless. Fifty years of standardized industrial food and frequently empty shelves under socialism further disengaged Poles from their previous foodways.

In the postsocialist era, the website of Slow Food Polska (an organization whose role I will explore in the following section) attributes its country's slow start into protecting traditional food products to a "Polish mentality" that likes to look to the West and forget about what is valuable in one's own country or region. While the group may be overstating the case, after 1990 Polish dietary habits have indeed taken on an increasingly Western flavor (Sznajder and Senauer 1998). What Slow Food Polska does not point out, however, is that the philosophy and strategy it has adopted regarding traditional food products is equally Western.

### *Slow Food Polska – Hastening towards Change*

Slow Food Polska is the Polish branch of an international food movement that was on the forefront of calling attention to the value of traditional foodways. Created in 1986 in northern

[74] The Czech Republic had submitted over 50% of applications by new members, while Poland was just ahead of Estonia (3.3%) and Cyprus (1.7%) but lagging well behind Hungary (16.7%) and Slovakia (18.3%) (Pogoda and Szkiruć 2005). However, as Jakub Jasiński and Magdalena Głodek at the Ministry of Agriculture pointed out in an interview, the Czech Republic's farms were largely collectivized and industrialized during communism. The products that have been registered are, according to them, produced at a much larger scale, and the producer groups were easier to form based on this recent history. Polish farms, in contrast, were mostly in private hands, and farmers may be less used to working together.

Italy by Carlo Petrini, Slow Food aims to "preserve distinctive foods that reflect regional culture and heritage, skills, and economies" (Stacey 2002). Worldwide, the organization has grown to include over 100,000 members in 132 countries, working through 800 local groups called *convivia*. While its headquarters remain in the small Piedmont town of Bra, Slow Food's growing importance and influence are evident from its rate of expansion worldwide and opening of a Brussels office in order to lobby the EU (Leitch 2003).

Poland's national group was founded in Kraków in the Małopolska region. When I first spoke with Jacek Szklarek, Slow Food Polska's president, in 2005, he told me that the organization began to take shape around 1997, forming officially on January 4, 2002. Three years later, it had attracted about 200 members. By the time I left Poland in 2008, the original convivia in the major cities of Kraków, Warsaw, and Łódź had been supplemented by newly founded chapters in the tricities area around Gdańsk as well as in the smaller Toruń and Bydgoszcz near my field site. Pan Szklarek hopes to expand Slow Food Polska's membership further in the future.

Slow Food has sometimes been accused of a measure of elitism, as its philosophy promotes discovering traditional foods in their places of origin and consuming regional products that are usually more expensive than standard, "industrial" foods. Local convivia vary greatly in their activities, but many meet for gourmet meals and pricey excursions to events and wineries.

The Polish group's reputation is no different. Jacek Szklarek described its membership as comprising mainly restaurant owners, lawyers, agricultural specialists, scientists, students, and also some food producers.[75] That is, much of its membership belonged to educated and better-off

[75] Slow Food Polska offers several membership levels. The most basic membership is quite affordable, at 60 PLN per year, of which one third each goes to the local, national, and international Slow Food organizations. Members receive the annual Polish "Ślimak" (Snail) magazine and other publications. Higher levels include membership in the international Slow Food organization.

segments of the population.[76] Thus, although Slow Food pursues goals in line with what many plum jam producers seek, many I spoke to were only vaguely, if at all, aware of the organization's work.

Of course the director of the LVV Landscape Park, Jarek Pająkowski – well-connected and known in traditional foods circles for his work with plum jam – was acquainted with Slow Food Polska's president. Therefore Jacek Szklarek was one of several speakers at the Landscape Park's fifteenth anniversary conference in Chełmno in May 2008. Starting that year, the Strzelce Plum Festival and the Festiwal Smaku in Gruczno began to be advertised under the "events" tab of Slow Food's website.

Perhaps it is precisely this level of education and connectedness that enabled Slow Food Polska to make its mark on traditional foods legislation in Poland, lobbying politicians and administrators – whom they accused of acting too slowly on the issue of traditional foods – and using the internet and other modern forms of organization and communication for publicity.

On the government side, Marek Gąsiorowski, director of the Agrosmak project for several years, admitted that his organization and Slow Food overlapped in many of their goals. He stated that they "liked each other," "hold good contact" as two separate programs, and continue to work together whenever possible and appropriate, although he does not attribute as much of a role to the group in giving Poland traditional foods legislation.[77]

[76] This type of membership – "non-manual workers as well as new middle class members" – is in line with earlier, ecological movements from the 1980s described in Gorlach and Lostak (2004, 18).
[77] Magdalena Głodek and Jakub Jasiński at the Ministry of Agriculture agree that they have some overlap in interests with Slow Food but think of the NGO as a group that is "slightly apart," because they promote not only traditional food products but an entire philosophy and lifestyle.

***Oscypek – The Big Cheese***

What drove Slow Food Polska in its lobbying efforts was not simply a philosophy adopted from Italian food activists but specific concerns its members encountered in their own region. Founded in Kraków, the southern Polish city "most associated with culture and good taste," (Slow Food 2011) the organization initially focused on southern regional projects.[78]

Oscypek cheese vendors clad in traditional *góral* (mountain highlander) clothing are a common sight in the cobblestone streets of central Kraków. But the authenticity of their products came into question when Slow Food decried many of the cheeses as "forgeries" made from cow's rather than sheep's milk[79]. Thus oscypek became the flagship product in Slow Food Polska's campaign to protect traditional foods from "inauthentic" fakes through legislation and public awareness.

With all its similarities to the powidła case, which I will discuss below, oscypek is unique in many ways. Even its shape – a spindle-like form, dark brown from the smoke that cures it in the back corner of a shepherd's hut – sets it apart from other cheeses. Its distinctive form has become not only a symbol for the cuisine, even identity, of its producers of Podhale in southern Poland, but, as Slow Food Polska's website (2002) declares, one of "the main symbolic pillars of Polish culinary tradition."[80]

[78] The tendency to focus on southern Poland for projects persists to this day. Slow Food Polska's website, for example, so far only profiles Małopolska under its "Polish regions" tab. Perhaps the fact that the first Healthy Food Association focused on the environment and food was organized in the southern city of Tarnów (Gorlach and Lostak 2004) has contributed to a heightened awareness in the south.

[79] It takes the milk of about twenty-five sheep to produce one cheese, so using cow's milk is significantly cheaper and more convenient. Cow's milk is also available year-round, whereas the pastured sheep lactate only during the summer months.

[80] This point is interesting for two reasons: Not only have the Górale been acknowledged as a somewhat distinct group within Poland over the past few centuries, but since the transition from socialism, they have elaborated their culture in "an almost visible process of collective remembrances and forgetting, punctuated at times by a self-conscious fabrication of what can only be considered an 'invented tradition' [in the spirit of Hobsbawm and Ranger]" (Pine 1997, 63).

This jump to national significance is surprising in so far as the shepherds of Podhale belong to Poland's few distinct minorities. The Górale inhabit parts of the Tatra Mountains and their foothills, straddling the national border of Poland and Slovakia. They speak *góral*, a separate (though mostly intelligible) language, and cultivate traditions such as góral music, dress, and cuisine.[81] Thus, unlike in the case of plum jam, the practice of making oscypek cheese during the summer months on the mountain pastures continued through the centuries and survived recent historical upheavals. Yet it is precisely this clear regional link and cultural and visual recognizeability that made oscypek an ideal first mission and symbolic representation for Slow Food Polska's goals.

Two main threats needed to be addressed. First, anyone could sell cheeses as "oscypek" with impunity, whether they met standards of "traditional" production and ingredients, i.e. of "authenticity," or not. (I will critically examine this concept of "authenticity" later in this chapter). Second, since the 1950s Polish legislation on raw milk products essentially declared the customary production of oscypek – made from unpasteurized milk – illegal and placed its sale in a legal gray zone. Postsocialist laws and EU regulations on milk and food hygiene did nothing to lift the cheese from this status.

Yet, according to traditionalists, it is essential to oscypek's distinctive flavor that it be created *in situ* in the simple wooden huts – usually without electricity or running water – where the shepherds spend the summers pasturing their sheep. About 120 such huts exist in the Podhale region, each led by a main shepherd (*baca*) aided by four or five assistants (*juhas*).

[81] The Górale are often the butt of Polish jokes that depict them as alcohol-loving and quarrelsome. Nevertheless, they have also been one of the largest groups of emigrants to the United States, sending and bringing home visible affluence (Pine 1996).

The men[82] milk the sheep in the mornings and afternoons, ripen the raw milk over night, add rennet, and knead the curds for several minutes, dipping the cheese in hot water to give it its typical elastic texture. They shape the curds into a spindle and press it into a wooden mold that leaves a characteristic design on the cheese.[83] After soaking in brine for twenty-four hours, the cheeses are smoked on racks over a permanent fire for a week or longer. On average, each hut produces up to forty oscypki a day. Most cheeses are sold in the region itself, for example in the streets of Zakopane or Kraków, but some are also available in specialty shops of large Polish cities.[84]

Starting in the early 2000s, oscypek began its ascent to the top of the traditional foods heap. It did so with the help of several parties with very different intentions. As part of the Slow Food campaign, Jacek Szklarek used his personal and business experience with Italy to organize the first international exchanges between oscypek producers and Italian winemakers.[85]

In 2002, Poland's restrictive laws might even have done Slow Food's cause a favor. Traveling for two days by bus with Jacek Szklarek, five Górale smuggled their oscypki to the international food fair Salone del Gusto (Taste Salon) in Torino, Italy. The cheeses sold out like hot cakes, and, as journalist Hilary Davies (2003) describes it, "the press seized on the story, and Jacek [Szklarek], not to miss any chance of promotion, pumped it for all it was worth." With his media savvy, Szklarek led the oscypek producers to their first international fame.

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[82] I don't know of any women in this occupation.

[83] Many huts have their own design.

[84] When I was living in Warsaw, I discovered that a small food shop around the corner that sells a little bit of everything also offers real oscypek cheese. The shopkeeper told me that an older man comes every Thursday from Nowy Sącz to distribute his and other producers' oscypek and other traditional cheeses to her and similar stores around the city. A few weeks later I met him early in the morning as he was dropping off ten large and a few smaller *oscypki*. He explained that he travels ten hours by train and bus every Wednesday night, arriving early on Thursday morning.

[85] During my first research visit to Poland in 2005, I participated in one of these exchanges that brought together representatives of the international Slow Food headquarters in Bra, Italy, Italian winemakers, and *góral* cheesemakers. The winemakers offered generous samples of their craft, lending a boisterous atmosphere to the sheep BBQ we celebrated in the picturesque Pieniny foothills.

Around the same time, a conflict among some Górale turned Poland's own attention to its famous cheese. It is noteworthy that the Oscypek War (wojna oscypkowa) in Podhale broke out almost simultaneously with the first Powidła War in the Lower Vistula Valley – evidence that a few pioneers had begun to recognize the potential value of traditional food products and hoped to take a leadership role, whether for their own or a common interest.

In Podhale the frontrunner was Adam Bachleda-Curuś, the former mayor of Zakopane. When he tried to patent oscypek for himself with the Polish patent office, he became known as a "thief" and "hijacker" of tradition. Newspaper commentary chided him for not even knowing how to milk a sheep and declared that "he's lost his mind!" (Sadecki and Federowicz 2002). Faced with such resistance, Bachleda-Curuś transferred the rights to the regional Sheep and Goat Herders' Association, with which they reside to this day.

As in the plum jam case, the media coverage of the conflict proved to be invaluable. It drew the nation's attention to oscypek in a way that a high-paid advertising agency could probably not have managed. It also helped proponents of traditional foods to state their case for products endangered by national and EU legislation. Thanks to the conflict and the work of Slow Food, the survival of oscypek became such an acrimoniously discussed issue in Poland's negotiations for EU accession in 2004 that the government was able to secure an exemption from certain standards for traditional products. Legislators were also more motivated to review Poland's complicated and contradictory laws regarding food hygiene, although, I was told in 2008 by many of my interlocutors, it has not yet been fully rationalized. Finally, the Polish Sejm brought more clarity to the issue of traditional food products with the Act of December 17 2004 on the Registration and Protection of Names and Indications of Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs and Traditional Products.

### *The Polish Feeder System*

Poland's traditional foods legislation streamlines the process of registration in Poland, updating a system under which products with geographical indications (GIs) had previously been registered under the Intellectual Property Law. At the center of the new process is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Office for Geographical Indications, part of the Department of Promotion and Communications is charged with receiving and evaluating applications for registration as traditional food products from around the country. It administers a national list that collects all accepted submissions. From those, it aids selected products in forwarding an application for EU-wide registration to the European Commission. At the time I interviewed its staff, it was led by Jakub Jasiński, a former journalist for the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*. His Master's thesis on the economic potential of traditional food products made him one of the few individuals with any expertise on this topic, so that he was put in charge of developing this potential.[86]

The Ministry is supported by an advisory body, the Council for Traditional and Regional Designations of Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs (Rada do Spraw Tradycyjnych i Regionalnych Nazw Produktów Rolnych i Środków Spożywczych). The council consists of six members "appointed from a group of persons with extensive knowledge on matters related to regional and traditional products, especially as regards industrial property rights, Polish tradition and culture as well as ethnography" (Dopierała-Konkołowicz 2010, 6). These experts examine the registration applications and make recommendations that the Ministry usually follows.

The Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products (Polska Izba Produktu Regionalnego i Lokalnego) similarly aids the Ministry by assisting in the formation of producer associations and

[86] During my stay in Poland, I heard Jakub Jasiński had been assigned to the Polish embassy in Italy. Magdalena Głodek took over his post at the Ministry and currently still works in this position.

a certification and control system, as well as promoting traditional foods among consumers (Polska Izba Produktu Regionalnego 2007). The Chamber's main office, which I visited a handful of times during stays in Warsaw, is a slightly smoky room along one of the long corridors of the Ministry of Agriculture. Led by Grzegorz Russak, a large, bearded, impressive and friendly man, the Chamber is a frequent co-publisher of informational materials with the Ministry and organizer or participant in food-related events.

At this point, it is important to differentiate between the Ministry of Agriculture's national list of registered foods and those that have undergone the more rigorous EU registration process. This detail needed clarification among Polish producers and citizens as well, so that the Ministry published an explanation on its website.

The Ministry's List of Traditional Products, established with the 2004 law on traditional foods, collects "products whose quality or exceptional properties and characteristics result from the use of traditional methods of production and constitute an element of the cultural heritage of their region of production as well as of local social identity."[87] A food is considered "traditional" if it has at least twenty-five years of documented history, which overlaps with the EU's criteria. Entry into the list does not result in any additional food quality controls but also does not grant the product any protection. Instead, the goal is simply the "identification and promotion" of such products.

Registration with the EU, on the other hand, requires additional steps at the European Commission level and confers a legally protected status onto the product name but also requires quality controls. Compliance with the specifications submitted in the original application is

[87] Statute of December 17, 2004 on the Registration and Protection of Names and Symbols of Agricultural Products and Foods as well as Traditional Products, article 8, paragraph 47. http://www.minrol.gov.pl/pol/content/download/1142/5826/file/ustawa%20z%2017%20grudnia%202004.pdf.

checked by inspectorates of agricultural and food quality in each voivodship, overseen by the Chief Inspector of Agricultural and Food Quality and Minister of Agriculture.

When I spoke to representatives of the Traditional Foods department within the Ministry, it appeared to me that while the country-internal list was taken quite seriously for its own sake, it was most important as a holding tank or sorting place for identifying as many foods as possible for an EU registration. Next, I will outline the EU's registration process and goals in some detail before returning to Polish efforts to gain EU protection and status for its products.

### *EU Registration System*

Europe has a long history of regulating the production of certain traditional and regional food products and ennobling them with special labels. In the vanguard, France passed its first modern Law for the Protection of the Place of Origin in 1919 and has been regulating wines since the 1930s and giving out the Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC) seal since the 1950s. A decade later, Italy modeled its own Denominazione di origine controllata (DOC) label on this French example. In 1992, the EU unified a hodge-podge of national regulations into a Europe-wide labeling system whose three logos are intended to help increase interest among consumers in regional and traditional food products and to make these more recognizable. Over 700 products – not including wines and spirits – currently carry one of three different geographical indications and indications of origin. Forerunners France and Italy have registered the largest number, followed by Spain, Portugal, and Greece and growing numbers from other countries. The laws cover virtually any type of agricultural product, such as cheeses, meats, oils, seafood, beer, breads, fruits, and vegetables, and even non-food items such as flowers, cork, wool, and essential oils.

The EU envisions a variety of benefits from the labeling system.[88] In a publication describing the "European Policy for Quality Agricultural Products" (European Commission 2006), the Commission notes an increasing interest of consumers in the quality and qualities of traditional food products. Beyond basic features such as taste, healthfulness, and safety, the EU defines "quality" as a product's specific characteristics that are linked to its geographical origin, special ingredients, local expertise and traditions in production, adherence to high environmental and animal welfare standards, and an attractive presentation and labeling of the product for the consumer.

The labels are therefore intended to enable consumers to identify products from their own or other regions of interest; help them to understand the "specific character of the products" (European Commission 2006, 5); guarantee these particular qualities of the foods; and thus protect buyers from "inauthentic" imitations. On the producer end, the EU considers it in its interest to protect the added value that traditional food products provide for producers by preventing fakes that would pose unfair competition.

By these means, the EU further hopes to change the agricultural landscape and contribute to sustainable rural development. It encourages a more diversified agricultural production to implement its vision in which "[the] future for many of Europe's farmers lies less in bulk commodity production, and more in quality products, which maximise the value of agricultural output" (European Commission 2006, 5). As I will elaborate in the following chapter, the EU intends for the economic and social benefits of added value to spread throughout the food chain, thereby further encouraging the regeneration of the countryside, preservation of local biology,

[88] I will discuss the potential and described benefits of product registration in greater detail in the following chapter on traditional foods in rural development.

involvement of local people, rural diversity, "social cohesion," improved employment opportunities, and other "spin-off" rural activities such as tourism on farms.

Finally, because "[food] and drink products, together with fine cooking, are a major part of the cultural identity of Europe's peoples and regions," supporting traditional and regional foods, their producers, and regions is a means for the EU to play "a major role" in preserving local practices and identities (European Commission 2006, 3).

Thirteen years after the inception of the labeling system, the EC streamlined the application process in its updated 2006 "Council Regulation on the Protection of Geographical Indications and Designations of Origin for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs." The regulation offers three types of labels (see Figure 8 below), two of which strongly emphasize geographical origin, the third traditional production methods:

- The Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) demands the strongest link of a product to its terroir. The food must have "proven characteristics resulting solely from the terrain and abilities of the producers in the region of production with which they are associated" (European Commission 2006, 6). All stages of the production process must take place in the region. Some famous examples of food products registered under the PDO label include Prosciutto di Parma (Parma ham from Italy) and champagne, which may only come from the Champagne region in France.
- Foods labeled with the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) "have a specific characteristic or reputation associating them with a given area" (European Commission 2006, 6). Unlike the stricter PDO, the PGI demands only that at least one stage of production be carried out in the region; the raw materials may be sourced from elsewhere. Examples include German Dortmunder beer or Scotch beef.

- The smallest category, Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG), currently includes only twenty products "with distinctive features which either have traditional ingredients or are made using traditional methods" (European Commission 2006, 7). Any food that is proven to have been made in the EU market in a certain way for at least twenty-five years – enough time for transmission from one generation to the next – can apply. Thus, even though Kriek beer was registered as a TSG by Belgium or Jamón Serrano by Spain, any producer who follows the registered specifications has the right to use these names, whether in Denmark, Greece, or Poland. However, if a TSG is registered with restrictions, products that do not correspond to the described specifications can no longer use the name, even without the EU label.

Registration for any of these labels is voluntary. The producers themselves are required to form an association, as the EC does not accept individual applications,[89] and draft the application for registration. In this process, the product specification is a key element. It must contain a geographically unambiguous traditional name and description of the product, including physical, chemical, microbiological, organoleptic, and biological details; a definition of the geographical area, whose limits can be "defined by natural or human factors, and sometimes by administrative boundaries," in exceptional cases an entire country (European Commission 2006, 11); strong causal evidence for the product's reputational ties to this area and how its qualities are influenced by the characteristics of the region; a detailed description of production process; and labeling and other requirements of the EU or national levels. The consequences of this required collective action to define tradition will be the subject of my analysis below.

[89] The EU does not allow individuals to register a product alone, because this could give them a "*de jure* monopoly" (European Commission 2006, 13).

The producer association sends an application to its national authority, which publicizes the details adequately for other interested parties in the Member State to have an opportunity to object. Once the EC receives the application from the member state authority, it scrutinizes the main elements of the application for its adherence to regulations and in turn publishes it in the Official Journal. If no other member state objects within six months, the EC adds the newly registered product to a published list. The producers now can and must use the label on all registered products.

Even in the best case – i.e., that no member state raises objections – the entire registration process from the national through the EU levels demands much patience from the applicants. Within Poland, the process of evaluating the submission and giving the public time for feedback takes up to seven months. The EU process demands no less than twelve months. Finally, producers are responsible for ensuring that these labels are used according to the regulations, a "strong element of self-policing in the systems" (European Commission 2006, 10). They themselves pay national control bodies to carry out enforcement of the rules.[90]

### *Oscypek War II*

Oscypek was one of the first Polish products to run through the national and EU registration procedures described above. After the initial conflicts surrounding its registration in Poland, the Sheep and Goat Herders' Association officially held the rights to authentic oscypek. But the controversies were not over yet.

[90] In the revised regulations of 2006, the EU responded to an intervention of the WTO to bring EU regulations into conformity with multilateral trade agreements. As a result, producers from non-EU countries are now also able to apply for labels directly from the EU rather than from their national authorities, which might be unwilling to process the request.

In practice, complications can and do arise in the EU registration process. Next to fights about Greece's national rights to "feta" cheese,[91] the second oscypek war is one of the most prominent cases in which one EU member state challenges another's application. During the official comment period for oscypek, Slovakia challenged Poland's right to claim the cheese for itself. After all, the *Gorali* (as Górale are called in Slovak) on the other side of the border in the Tatra mountains[92] make a cheese just like it. Slovakia had already entered an application for its *slovenský oštiepok*. My contacts in the Polish Ministry of Agriculture – which is responsible for dealing with objections launched by other member states – declared the cheeses to be quite different from each other. Indeed, after lengthy fighting and much media coverage even in other member states, the countries agreed that they would each be able to use their own name (oscypek and oštiepok) for their cheeses, which shared a common origin and tradition but were distinct in the ratio of cow's and sheep's milk and the degree of technology involved in production. Both cheeses received the EU's PDO designation in 2008.

***Hunting for Traditional Foods in Poland***

Oscypek and a handful of other products, including a related soft sheep's milk cheese called *bryndza* were the first and most prominent Polish submissions for EU registration. Already well known and distinctive as regional products, they were obvious choices for a PDO designation, and the publicity around the conflicts may have helped the Ministry of Agriculture with its larger task of unearthing more and less well-known foods from around the country.

[91] "Feta" has been designated since 2002 as a Greek, brined cheese made from sheep's or sheep's and goat's milk. Other countries, for example Bulgaria, are no longer allowed to use that name for similar salty cheeses based on cow's milk.

[92] In many places the border in the High Tatra consists only of an occasional stone marker along a walking path. A hiker can literally stand with one leg in each country.

Once the legislature had established the new registration system, the Ministry had to overcome a lack of both producer and consumer awareness in order to identify regional products; establish producer associations to determine traditional methods of production; animate common action; defray costs of participating in the registration scheme; establish a system of veterinary and phytosanitary measures; and guide producers through a lengthy registration process with high requirements (Dopierała-Konkołowicz 2010).

Interestingly, the competition that has become the main feeder into the Ministry's national list of traditional products was not a government initiative, although it now takes place under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Union of Voivodships of the Republic of Poland.[93] Instead it was the editor of the weekly magazine *Gospodyni* who came up with the idea for a competition to help promote regional and local Polish foods. She recruited the cooperation of an EU-funded project for rural development,[94] Polish radio (*Polskie Radio*), and a few other organizations and individuals, including Dr. Grzegorz Russak, later the president of the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products (which I will refer to as Izba).

The first edition of Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo (Our Culinary Heritage, NKD) in 2001 was still limited to a few voivodships, but the public's interest far exceeded the organizers' expectations (Polska Izba Produktu Regionalnego 2011). By the third edition, all Polish regions participated, and the winners received their awards, called Perła (Pearl), at Polagra, Poland's most important annual, agricultural trade show in Poznań. Since its inception, NKD has grown

[93] The *Związek Województw RP* (ZWRP) was founded in 2002 by the marshals of Poland's sixteen voivodships and the presidents of each voivodship's *sejmik* (regional assembly). It aims to represent and work for the interests of the voivodships in Poland and on the international stage.

[94] Agrolinia 2000 was the continuation of an 1991-1996 PHARE-funded program, helping inhabitants of rural areas adjust to the economic conditions of Poland's upcoming EU membership. Agrolinia 2000 later transitioned into Agro-Smak, which focused more specifically on traditional foods and was funded in part by US American money.


Figure 8. Food personality Robert Makłowicz, holding an oscypek cheese and mold, on the cover of a brochure animating producers to "register your exceptional product!" The Polish versions of the three EU labels for traditional and regional products are shown at the top.

and identified over 4000 regional specialties, including cooked dishes in a category separate from food products. Further, the cooperation between interested institutions and individuals in organizing the competition led to the formation of the Izba in 2004 under the leadership of Dr. Russak.

While identifying products for a possible EU registration is among the stated goals of both NKD and the Izba, the most explicit information campaign on the EU's traditional foods labels

was organized by the government. From 2005 to 2007, the Ministry used EU funds to educate the Polish public about the meaning of the PDO, PGI, and TSG labels that were beginning to show up on their supermarket shelves, but it also aimed to inform and motivate producers of such foods. Tools included brochures and fliers; articles and ads in magazines and on TV; and over fifty special events and seminars for producers, local governments, and students at gastronomic schools (Dopierała-Konkołowicz 2010). A special campaign, Oryginalność pod Ochroną (Originality under Protection), plastered the smiling face of famous TV chef Robert Makłowicz[95] on EU-blue billboards and the cover of a flier (see Figure 8). In his hands, he holds oscypek cheeses – more evidence of their recognition and symbolic value.

Dopierała-Konkołowicz (2010) judges the Ministry's publicity efforts to have been quite successful, as about half of the forty-two applications for registration with the EU lodged by 2010 can be attributed directly to the campaign.[96]

### *Disciplining Tradition*

These many steps that took a smoky sheep's milk cheese from the Tatra Mountains all the way to Brussels are a vivid example of the encounter between the EU's ideal of harmonization, particularly in regard to food (Dunn 2005), and the messy reality of everyday practices. Here, the EU's seemingly conflicting goals of creating unified standards in its old and new territories while promoting diversity come to bear on Welz's (2006) "European product." Yet, as we will see, the EU's concept of diversity demands that each unique, diverse food product be described and defined into a disciplined entity.

[95] Robert Makłowicz, a Polish-Armenian journalist, is best known for a public TV show in which he travels to regions in Poland, Europe, and the world and samples and cooks local cuisine.
[96] Of those 42, the Ministry passed 36 on to the EU, and by 2010 23 had been registered: 5 PDOs (3 cheeses, 1 cherry, 1 honey), 12 PGIs (3 bakery products, 2 honeys, 1 cheese, 1 strawberry, 1 bean, 2 prunes, 1 sausage, 1 apple), and 6 TSGs (4 meads, 1 camelina oil, 1 bakery product) (Dopierała-Konkołowicz 2010).

What, then, does it mean for plum jam to turn from masses of boiling plums in people's backyards into a newly conceived "product"? How do the standardizing demands of the EU and the Polish government affect how producers think about and create plum jam? Previously, I discussed how conflicts over the ownership of tradition can arise. Now I will turn to debates about plum jam itself, which center around defining the "authentic" tradition.

### *Authenticity*

*"That's sour soup!" – Henryk Chaczko about the plum jam cooked by fellow villagers*[97]

Powidła producers had many and often strongly worded opinions about each other's jam. Although I do not remember hearing any of my interlocutors in the LVV use the word "authenticity" or "authentic" when discussing their own and other producers' products, the question of what kind of plum jam can be considered traditional, tasty, and real often resonated in the background of our conversations and frequently came to the fore.

In a brief but important essay on the concept of "authenticity," Appadurai (1986a, 25) points out that authenticity is normative, measuring the degree to which something is more or less what it *ought* to be." Wilk, in his study of Belizean cuisine and class concurs that "(t)radition is crafted, just as much as modernity is manufactured" (Wilk 2006, 155), and, referencing Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1984) concept of invented traditions, Herzfeld (2004) notes that "all traditions are in some sense 'invented.'"

But who does the inventing? Who sets the norms? Not surprisingly, the content of tradition and the question who has the authority to define it are both heavily contested. As a consequence,

[97] "Kwaśna zupa to jest!"

in the LVV, deciding what can be called traditional plum jam is another arena in which various struggles – whether about class, power, or interpersonal dislikes – are carried out.

It is significant that in the LVV these debates erupted when the economic potential for powidła became apparent through its success in a food competition. Appadurai argues that authenticity only matters to native participants in a culinary tradition when it is transposed to a new context, whether through export or tourism. These new activities begin to act as a foil to set the tradition off from its native environment. The food competition certainly would provide such a new perspective, lifting something taken-for-granted into a new, defined space. Additionally I would argue that the economic aspect of selling a traditional product not only serves as this type of context but also sharpens the ensuing conflict. Imagining a market for powidła lets producers see plum jam with the outsider's gaze of a potential buyer, heightening the jam's profile against the backdrop of regional culinary traditions where it used to be seamlessly integrated.

Applying for a protected status in Poland and especially in the EU is the logical next step. It also provides the framework within which powidła makers are asked to turn themselves into producers, within which plum jam becomes a defined product.

### *Framing the Debate on Authenticity*

Labeling systems such as the EU's are built on the assumption that a clearly defined "authentic" product truly exists. "Purchasing an EU quality labeled product guarantees not only its quality but its authenticity..." (European Commission 2006, 5), according to the European Commission. The opposite, of course, is an "imitation product" from which buyers are to be protected, as its characteristics are presumed to be less desirable.

At first glance it may seem inconsistent that the EU also paid for programs that intended to modify traditional products, such as the Traditional United Europe Food (TRUEFOOD) project. TRUEFOOD was implemented from 2006 to 2010 under the leadership of SPES GEIE, a European economic interest grouping of food and drink associations across the EU. Eleven "centers of excellence" in food-related research and development cooperated with small and medium traditional food producers – which constitute the majority of traditional food producers in the EU – to meet conflicting consumer demands: On the one hand, states a TRUEFOOD newsletter (Kettlitz, Resio, and Rimbert 2007), consumers want to be assured of the safety of the traditional food products they buy (e.g. microbiological qualities); on the other, they prefer minimal processing and excellent taste and textural qualities.

TRUEFOOD participants therefore aim to identify and introduce innovations into the traditional food production process that both comply with EU safety regulations and fulfill consumer expectations. They hope to meet and increase consumer demand by enhancing "desirable" characteristics of foods (e.g. nutritional content) while reducing "undesirable" compounds (e.g. salt and fat) without impacting the qualities that consumers identify with particular traditional products.[98]

TRUEFOOD's work on traditional products implies that these foods should not simply be grown and processed in a transfer of customary methods to the present but can be developed further and adapted to current consumer needs. At the center of these efforts lies a belief that tradition has a timeless, ossified essence from which researchers seek to remove undesirable or

[98] In order to achieve these objectives within the forty-eight months allotted to the program, TRUEFOOD organized eight "work packages" that each address one aspect, such as research on consumer expectations and attitudes; the transfer of innovations into production processes; and developing markets and supply chains. Students – future researchers – got involved through Trophelia, a student competition won in 2008 by a Spanish team for innovations in producing a traditional milk and lemon juice drink.

otherwise external characteristics. Tradition becomes uniform and sterilized.[99] Within this logic, it makes sense to look for methods that reproduce tradition's essence while applying acceptably modern techniques, a practice Welz (2006, 17) describes with the sociological term "qualculation," in this context, "the cultural mechanisms that transform a local food staple into (a) European product."

Consequently, the EU's traditional foods framework leads producers through a registration process that at several stages demands consensus on the "authentic" norms that define the essence of a product. Studies of the potential and already existing benefits of traditional food products have identified mostly positive economic and related outcomes. Only Marescotti (2003, 15) notes in an aside that "in some situations the activation of the application procedure may alter social cohesion and cause conflicts among producers in the construction of the Code of Practices." While Lampland (2004, summarized in Gille 2009, 68) points out that "models of economic and social transformation never materialize in a pure form untainted by local conditions," the converse social processes set off locally by the EU's disciplining model of traditional foods have gone largely unstudied.

As the following examples of negotiations about such issues as recipes and the use of innovative technologies demonstrate, the EU's requirements set potential registrants up for debates amongst themselves that – in the worst case – have the potential to cause and exacerbate existing rifts among rural people, resulting in protracted conflicts and inhibiting the potential of the targeted traditional food product.

[99] During Poland's negotiations for accession to the EU in May 2004, oscypek became one poster child for Euroskeptics who feared that the EU would prohibit the production and sale of unpasteurized cheese. Perhaps in part because "the people in the southern Tatra mountains hinged their support of accession to the EU on [oscypek's] being allowed" (Agence France Press 2004), the EU and Poland (along with other new member states who faced similar issues with their traditional food products) agreed that Poland may produce oscypek from raw milk, as long as certain minimal sanitation requirements are fulfilled (Roser 2002).

### *Defining the Limits of Tradition*

The most important step in creating a regional product such as powidła śliwkowe is to form a producers association that defines not only the geographic limits of the region for the purpose of registration but also who qualifies to be a member. The European Commission advises that "(g)enerally the limits of a production/processing area are defined by natural or human factors, and sometimes by administrative boundaries" (European Commission 2006, 11). These broad directions leave much room for interpretation, negotiation, and possibly conflict.

In our oscypek example, the association that holds the rights to the PDO designation for the cheese defined its production area according to administrative lines, including the Tatra, Nowy Targ, and Żywiec districts.[100] As seen above, drawing such precise lines and declaring ownership of the cheesemaking tradition caused numerous conflicts throughout the registration chain at the local and not least at the national level between Poland and Slovakia.

In the LVV, the production region's boundaries generally coincide with the limits of the Landscape Park, since the Park has had a major role in reviving the tradition in many locations. Although some towns such as Kwidzyn lie just beyond, so far no one has challenged the rights of the Kwidzyn ecological initiative to consider its jam part of the LVV brand.

### *A Recipe for Conflict*

The next step in the registration process is for members of the producer association to define a recipe, which lies at the very core of what a food product is. Yet in this area it is most obvious that despite the EU's best efforts any attempt at pinning down a tradition will always be only incomplete, as cultural practices and norms evolve over time. "How," asks Appadurai, "is one to

[100] Other, select regions (Bieszczady, Beskid Slaski and Beskidu Cieszyński) may later apply for the territorial definitions to be expanded (Kupiec and Wszolek 2004).

define stable criteria of authenticity for traditions that are always changing?" (Appadurai 1986a, 25).

The primary initiative to enter plum jam from the LVV into the Ministry of Agriculture's List of Traditional Products came from park director Pająkowski, and the application was filled out by his friend Marek Szczygielski, chief inspector of food quality in the Bydgoszcz region.[101] A self-declared renegade among food inspectors, pan Szczygielski championed the cause of traditional foods and was dismissive of overly fussy and bureaucratic hygienic requirements by the Polish government. He was very pleased when I told him that responsible Ministry officials had considered his application one of the best – maybe *the* best – they had seen. Given the food inspector's position, perhaps it should not surprise us that his expertise and style conformed happily to the requirements of the Ministry's bureaucracy.

The official description of Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley (Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi 2006) describes the product as a "formable substance assuming the shape of the dish (it is in)." It has the consistency of a "thick mass – in the case of conservation by baking – with a hard, glossy surface." The taste is "slightly sweet, tart, with a perceptible delicate bitterness in the case of cooking plums with their stones; the fragrance (is) characteristic of cooked plums, with a slight aroma of smoke and plum pits." The color, finally, is a "dark bronze with a tint of crimson, in the cross-section lighter, with visible purple fragments of plum skin."

This description is broad enough to cover most of the plum jam that producers across the valley served to me. Some versions were sweeter, others tarter; in some, the smoke was pronounced, in others a faint whisper. The jam almost flowed from some jars, while I could stand others upside down without the thick mass inside budging a centimeter.

[101] Marek Szczygielski's official title is *Wojewódzki Inspektor Jakości Handlowej Artykułów Rolno-Spożywczych w Bydgoszczy*, or loosely translated, Chief Inspector, Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection, Bydgoszcz Region.

Although the official definition of plum jam has provoked little overt protest, on the ground the discussions continue over what constitutes acceptable, real powidła. The debate begins with the type of plum that represents the raw material of the jam.

### *All Plums Are Not Alike*

One of my standard interview questions of plum jam producers was what type of plum they use. Only one family, which runs an agrotourism business, was not sure what variety they bought from a nearby village. Everyone else told me about their favorite varieties, sometimes coupled with strong opinions about why they are preferable – and why other producers have got it wrong.

Agreement was widespread that a type called *węgierka*, "Hungarian" plum, is the traditional variety used before the war. Some individuals also referred to it as *staropolska* (old Polish) or *zwykła* (common). In the valley, they usually come from old orchards, but a few trees have been planted in villages such as Wałdowo Królewskie by a community group and in the town of Kwidzyn by an eco-initiative.

As the practice of cooking plum jam has spread again over the past decade, scarcity of such old plum trees may be one reason producers opt to use other varieties. Paulina Król, who has experimented with different types – including one that made her jam look like cooked red beets – bemoaned that all of the really good plum trees were destroyed in a very cold winter in the 1980s. "We never had such good plums again."

*Łowicka*, a Polish variety which originated in the area around Łowicz west of Warsaw, was mentioned most frequently as a new variety that works well for plum jam. It is included in an illustrated list of traditional orchard trees grown in the LVV, published by the TPDW, although no exact age is given (Sobieralska and Pająkowski 2008). Other types include *Wagenheimer* and

*dąbrowicka*, a newer variety. Some producers prefer these fruits for a number of reasons besides availability.

One producer explained that łowicka has larger fruits than zwykła – twenty-eight to thirty-four grams for the former, compared to fifteen to eighteen grams for the latter, according to the orchard guide. Łowicka also ripens earlier and thus is cheaper to grow. One drawback, however, is that it contains more water and must therefore be stirred longer over the fire, perhaps an hour or two more. Jam made from this type has a darker, to some producers "nicer" purple color compared to the brownish tones of zwykła and a "more distinguished taste," as Kasia Lech said. Two or three producers reported that often older clients preferred the traditional plum's flavor, because they remembered it from their childhood. Jam made from "traditional" and other varieties of plums found plenty of buyers, so many producers make jam from both. Most do not, to my knowledge, mix both varieties but rather sell them as separate products.[102]

Even though jam made from almost any plum variety finds happy customers, some purists insist that only węgierka zwykła represents true tradition. Ewa Boroń, while not disparaging any other type, pointed out that she and her fellow KGW Kozielec women use only this variety, which in her village grows in old orchards overlooking the Vistula, left by German planters. Henryk Chaczko, in Wałdowo Królewskie, however, shook his head at fellow villagers who used modern varieties.

### *The Sweetness of Adding Nothing*

Plums of any variety are sweetest after they have had ample time to ripen on the trees. A few producers – and interestingly these were only from families who had lived in the area before the

[102] One interview partner, Alicja Kwestarz, told me anecdotally that a neighbor - I suspect it is Paulina Król – adds other varieties to batches of *węgierka*, such as *reines-claude* plums. Pani Boniecka did not appear to be criticizing this practice and in fact thought it could be useful, because other varieties can add extra sweetness.

war – pointed out that the plums make the sweetest jam after their sugars have been concentrated by the first frost,[103] sometime around the beginning of October, according to Cyryl Jabloński. Mariusz Kaczmarek (whose parents came from the east) declared it "unrealistic" to wait until the first frost to harvest the plums these days. Only ten years ago, during the first Plum Festival, he remembered, they had been harvesting until late September. "But now, forget it." Plums were ripening earlier nowadays.

Paulina Król provided anecdotal evidence for the improved flavor that frozen plums impart. One year she had run out of her own plums, so she continued cooking jam with bought, frozen fruit to meet customer demand. Her clients, she told me, raved that the taste was even more flavorful than usual. I am not aware, however, that any other producer takes advantage of artificial frosts, and even pani Król only relies on frozen plums in a pinch.

Under normal circumstances, the amount of sugar in plums depends on the variety, time of harvest, and such environmental factors as location and weather. The jams I sampled across the LVV varied just as much in their sweetness.

My interlocutors agreed that in the past little to no sugar was added, probably because it was less readily available and more expensive, and because the plums – of the old variety and tree-ripened into the fall – had not required it. In the present, I witnessed a wide range of practices. The largest number of producers reported adding sugar as needed, depending on the year and plum variety. They commonly add one to two kilograms of sugar per pot.[104] Pani Izdebska, who owns an agrotourism business with her husband, cooks the sweetest jam, with "only" three kilograms of sugar per hundred kilograms of plums. She seemed to consider this a small amount,

[103] This principal is well-known from wine-making. *Eiswein* for example, is a famous German dessert wine pressed from grapes that have frozen on the vine. Because the ideal conditions for such a harvest occur only rarely, Eiswein tends to be expensive.
[104] This is not an exact measure, as pots vary in size.

although park worker Tadeusz Krzywicki, who visited the farm with me, discreetly pulled a face and judged them too sweet.

A handful of producers cook up different batches of jam to cater to diverse customer tastes and needs. Paulina Król noted that several of her customers are diabetics who enjoy being able to eat her plum jam without worrying about added sugars. All of her jars have "BC" (*bez cukru* – without sugar), "NS" (*niskosłodki* – low sugar), or nothing written on them in black pen. The latter is the sweetest, which pani Król herself likes best and labels with the LVV stickers. Marek Białecki added that he only uses węgierki for unsweetened powidła because they are sweet enough to stand on their own.

Purists, however, insist that no sugar be added. They – among them Adam Guzy, who grew up in the Mennonite house that the TPDW now owns in Chrystkowo – widely overlap with those who use only the sweeter węgierka variety and often also add no spices.[105]

### *Spicing up the Jam*

At least one third of producers use spices in their powidła. Additives include salt – usually about a teaspoon per pot – cinnamon, and cloves. This component of the jam recipe, like so many others, is contentious. Krystyna Witkowska claimed that at a valley-wide producer meeting called by pan Pająkowski, the park director had "forbidden" the use of cloves, which did not, however, stop her from putting some in her jam, along with cinnamon and salt. I was not able to confirm this report, and I would be surprised if that had been his intention. For I watched Justyna Ziemniewska, who oversees the jam production for the TPDW, add first one, and after some

[105] Pan Zająkała, another native to the region, was adamant that the jam his wife cooked contained "not a gram of sugar." In his case, it is a necessity, because, as his wife added, he is a diabetic.

tasting and consideration, another kilogram bag of sugar to the Park's jam, followed by about fifteen cloves and three or four teaspoons of ground cinnamon.

Even if the park director were to insist on plums as the only ingredient – as does his friend and TPDW founding member Bartek Bednarczuk – the historical sources that supported his case for registration with the Ministry of Agriculture would show past practice to be more varied. According to the historical summary by Grażyna Szelągowska of the Toruń Ethnographic Museum, T. Wolicki, in his 1831 book *Nauka dla Włościań* (Science for Farmers) recommends the addition of black currant juice and twelve green walnuts, which gives the jam a black color and helps prevent burning (Szelągowska 2006, 24-25). Several producers mentioned that they have heard about others using green walnuts, and Piotr Majewski remembered his grandparents adding them to the pot. Only one person, Dominik Sudoł of the Ekoinicjatywa in Kwidzyn, reported sometimes adding nuts to jam he cooks nowadays.

Mixing plums with other fruit, such as apples, is a much more controversial practice. I heard two main complaints: first, that making powidła with anything but plums is simply inauthentic and should be called something else, such as *marmolada*, as Kasia Lech told me. The second issue was more indicative of some of the underlying frictions existing in Strzelce. A few individuals accused Paulina Król of stretching her jam with apples without labeling the final product accordingly, in effect cheating her customers and threatening the Strzelce brand.

Pani Król, in turn, launched counter-accusations against her attackers, telling me that it was impossible that so early in the season (in August) they were making jam without sugar. "Right now, the plums don't have enough sugar yet to do that." She herself had been adding sugar throughout the first batches, labeling her jars accordingly. In her assessment, through such deceit "clients are lost."

While it is difficult for me to verify the claims these Strzelce residents made about each other, they are in agreement on the issue of labeling jam honestly so that customers know what they are buying and do not lose trust in the Strzelce or powidła brands. That is, if the battling factions follow their own guidelines, they have little to fight about. Thus it is more likely that any snide comments launched at each other are actually signs of underlying frictions carried out in discussions about authenticity and proper, traditional recipes.

***Technology***

Paulina Król drew ire on another important issue, the use of new technologies. Although, as the funding of TRUEFOOD illustrates, the EU is supportive of the use of certain modern production methods, among many producers this question is heavily debated. Even makers of such widely known, established traditional foods as Italian *parmigiano reggiano* cheese, registered in Italy in 1955 and forty years later with the EU, continue to debate allowable styles of production and the extent to which technological innovations may be considered sufficiently traditional and therefore "authentic" (Roest and Menghi 2000).

In some instances, such as the production of *halloumi* cheese in Cyprus, small producers have adapted their tools and methods to serve a more commercial market, incorporating stainless steel equipment in the place of wooden vats. Following the basic procedures of traditional *halloumi* manufacture and contrasting themselves with large-scale industrial factories, such cheese makers can still make strong claims to traditional production (Welz and Andilios 2004). The makers of Comté in France have abandoned certain labor-intensive methods such as hand-turning cheeses and hand-milking cows "because they do not add value or specific characteristics to the product" (Gerz and Dupont 2006, 83).

In the LVV, I did not meet a single producer who still bakes plum jam in stoneware pots in a bread oven, as was the custom before World War II. Pasteurizing jam in glass jars with metal lids instead of a seal of wax or lard is universally accepted as a technological improvement to the tradition, and no one appeared to question whether the tradition was therefore tainted or less genuine. Similarly, Mariusz Kaczmarek built his own version of a straining device to separate plums' stones from the flesh a few hours into the cooking process. Instead of a ceramic sieve, he uses a large metal bowl with holes and handles. "There aren't many ceramic sieves left anymore. They're good for exhibitions, but not so much in practice," he explained.

Metal sieves may not be a new invention. Krystyna Witkowska of Kozielec showed me an old metal strainer that she still uses for her powidła. In fact, I only saw one or two old clay sieves in use, one of them at the house of pani Kasprzyk in Gruczno, who had been instrumental in teaching park director Pająkowski about jam cooking and who lent the device to the Park during the plum season. No one was able to tell me exactly how old the sieve is. Its glaze was chipped in spots, and as I watched park workers agitate the hot mass of plums and stones in the old ceramic sieve with a heavy wooden stirrer, I worried that it might break at any moment. This diversity of straining devices and the fact that producers vary widely on whether they de-stone plums before cooking them or strain them out later – some do it differently in different years – is evidence of the range of accepted practices among regional jam producers.

I did, however, hear several, frequently snide comments about the use of other technologies. As I will show, these discussions are yet another expression of local, social rifts exacerbated by the economic stakes in the powidła game. Whether the divides were initially caused by discussions about plum jam is difficult to determine, but it is clear that they frequently played out in the arena of plums and plum jam.

As in the larger Powidła War of chapter 4, the village of Strzelce Dolne and Paulina Król are prominent in the dispute. With an estimated 11,000 jars a year, pani Król has by far the largest jam production in Strzelce, if not the LVV. She is able to achieve such a volume by hiring three or four women from nearby villages such as Strzelce Górne. For 5 PLN an hour, they spend a week or more cooking jam in the hot powidła building.

The production area was the most extensive I saw in the LVV. The low, two-room building stands a few meters away from the main house and a nearby furniture workshop. Pani Król explained that it used to be the sleeping quarters of a German family that worked on the farm before the war. Outside, under an awning, green and blue plastic crates are stacked high with jars, as well as a very large pot of water with a wood fire underneath that serves to pasteurize up to 300 jars at once (see Figure 9). They are lowered into the boiling water with a pulley that hooks in three places into a large, round tray. There the jars stay for about fifteen minutes until they seal completely. "My husband takes care of the pasteurization," pani Król told me, "it's almost industrial."

An excess of technology and industrialization is precisely the complaint of some fellow villagers, who accuse the Król family of working almost like a little factory. Indeed, the floors of the building are covered in tiles, and several crates of empty glass jars were stacked on a long, stainless steel table when I visited. In the corner of one room a steel pot of jam – still thin during the first hours of cooking – was being agitated by a motor that sat on top of a bar that spanned the pot (see Figure 10). The wood fire that burned underneath created a slightly jarring contrast to the machinery above. In the adjacent room, three women took turns stirring two very large

Figure 9. The Króls' powidła building. Photograph by Olivia Hall

Figure 10. Motorized stirring pot. Photograph by Olivia Hall

copper pots filled with the thickening mass of plums that had started out earlier in the day in the other room. They sat or walked slowly with the long wooden stirrers, chatting occasionally, and trying to stay out of the way of the scorching hot, deep purple splatters shooting out of the pots and speckling the walls and floors.

After only twenty minutes in the Króls' powidła building, my clothing, skin, and hair were infused with smoke, and I was sweating from the heat. While the family had obviously come up with several means to ease and streamline their work, it had not eliminated the intense and hard labor of stirring the jam for hours until it thickened. This hardly seemed like the breach of tradition and authenticity that a few fellow residents of Strzelce Dolne complained about. Specifically, Mariusz Kaczmarek told me about the Króls that this is "the only family where tradition doesn't play a role. They don't feel the tradition." This statement is rather ironic, because, as we learned in chapter 3, the Kaczmarek family itself came to the LVV from another part of Poland after the war, as did Paulina Król. Both now make claims to the tradition, having appropriated it since their arrival several decades ago.

Pan Kaczmarek's sister also maintained that Paulina Król's jam lacks the typical smoky note because of the use of technology, but in my sampling of powidła, I could, quite frankly, not tell the difference. It remains to be seen whether the use of technology, which the Kaczmarek family considers "cheating" or "fraud," will have "short legs" (*krótkie nogi*) and whether "(the Króls) will only hurt themselves." Paulina Król herself insisted that she has more than enough customers and sometimes has even had to use frozen plums to fill the demands – which, no doubt, invited the scorn of other villagers.

In our meetings, pani Król brought up the various conflicts in which she was embroiled without my prompting. In regard to her powidła hut, she seemed proactively defensive and spent

several minutes justifying herself to me. She placed the issue of sanitation front and center: "In the beginning, we used to cook the jam outside, but now we want different hygienic conditions." Her customers, she argued, want to know that what they eat is produced cleanly. "It's the same with me. I want to know what the farm looks like where I buy my *twaróg*.[106]" In a separate conversation, her husband Jan declared that "tradition is tradition, but the awning is necessary." Interestingly, Paulina Król had used almost the exact same words earlier, suggesting that they have some practice making this argument.

The practical advantages the powidła building and motorized devices bestow on the Króls' production are equally important. Pulleys lighten the heavy lifting required in moving and emptying the large copper pots, especially for some of the slighter women, and the cover the building and awning provide allow them to work in any weather conditions. Given how ripe some of the plums were that I saw go into copper pots across the valley, I imagine much fruit can be saved from spoilage by not having to postpone cooking jam for a day or two due to rain. For a moment, pani Król reminisced about stirring the pots in the past, working outside in small batches. "It was a pleasure, with all our kids running around." But now, "even though we're deviating from what others are doing, I prefer our setup."

Ironically, cooking jam in covered buildings probably does not diverge from older methods used in the area before WW II. The official entry for Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley in the Ministry of Agriculture's List of Traditional Products provides the following evidence for the historical provenance of the jam: "Terrain studies carried out by employees of the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń in the area of the Lower Vistula Valley confirmed the existence of a great number of buildings for drying fruit, in which fireplaces were the source of heat...[They] had

[106] *Twaróg* is a white farmer's cheese and staple of in the Polish kitchen. Among other things, it is the basis of delicious *sernik*, Polish cheese cake.

spaces for pots for cooking powidła, which gives evidence that powidła were also cooked in these buildings."

### *Author(iz)ing the Recipe*

The disagreements above can have practical consequences for certain producers. Paulina Król, for example, found herself on the outskirts of Strzelce's Plum Festival in 2008, selling jam away from the central circle of stands where most visitors milled about. But for the most part, the manifold festivals, special events, and other marketing avenues – such as selling from home or at markets – in practice allowed all producers to operate much as they pleased.

The power struggles had more profound consequences when it came to taking powidła up a notch to a national market and to Brussels. Debates around recipes became most apparent at any mention of the producer meetings that had taken place a handful of times since plum jam had regained some traction in the valley. Organized by Jarek Pająkowski and the TPDW and intended to bring all powidła producers together to discuss a common brand and strategy, the last such meeting had taken place the year before I arrived for my research. During my stay in the area, the park director mentioned several times that another meeting was imminent in a few months, but it never took place.

Photos of earlier meetings in the TPDW's chronicles depict a few dozen individuals, including many faces familiar to me from across the valley but by far not all who cook jam. The Strzelce faction was well represented. The meetings came up in conversations and interviews mainly as part of a complaint. Several producers decried that at these meetings certain procedures and recipes were being imposed on them from above. For example, as previously described, Paulina Król was angry that the park director's labeling scheme for all producers

clashed with investments she had previously made in a different design and color for her own jars. Similarly, Krystyna Witkowska believed that she was now officially forbidden to use cloves in her jam.

By others, the village of Strzelce was implicated as an overwhelming faction that wants to impose its standards on other producers. Piotr Majewski from Nowe accused Strzelce producers of wanting to prevent him and others from adding sugar to their product, even though he just makes the jam "for fun." Given Strzelce's strong numerical presence at the assemblage, the fact that the TPDW organized the meetings, and the pre-existing suspicion with which some groups regard each other in the LVV, it is easy to imagine how those present might have perceived the weight of these two groups trying to influence plum jam's future.

This impression would only have been reinforced by the strong and sometimes loud voice of TPDW member Bartek Bednarczuk. I can only guess that he might have stated his own opinion but seemed to be speaking on behalf of the TPDW, and, by association, for the park director. Certainly in our interview at his house he laid out strong opinions that painted a normative picture of what was supposed to have come out of the meetings: "It is like this with this recipe: We here cook according to a recipe that I'm very strongly trying to preserve, so that [the farm women I work with] don't diverge one step from that recipe – from [the recipe] established back then at the meeting [of all producers in the LVV] and written by the association of those cooking jam in the LVV." I asked him who decided on the recipe. His response was: "That was everyone together. You know…when we had the meeting in Chrystkowo [one of the TPDW's meeting spots]."

When I pointed out that producers in Strzelce, for example, use different plums, he pulled a face. "Yes, they use them, and so it looks like they accepted the recipe, but they do their own

thing…Because they think that they are the precursors of cooking powidła; they think that they were the first down there, well…even if they were the first, that doesn't mean that they do everything well."

Pan Bednarczuk's normative statements ruffled many feathers, particularly in his village, Kozielec. A few years ago, the KGW Kozielec (women's group) began to work with the TPDW on the revival of plum jam in the LVV. Their main contact was park worker Tadeusz Krzywicki, and, according to their estimation, the cooperation was going well. Member Ewa Boroń, for example, noted that "Tadeusz Krzywicki helped me so nicely with my labels." The problems began when pan Krzywicki called the KGW and told them that Bartek Bednarczuk, as a representative of the TPDW, would have to stop by to check how they produce powidła.

"What makes him the expert?" I exclaimed, not very neutrally, while interviewing the KGW board members. "Exactly," the ladies all clamored, "that's what we said! Is he an expert? He's only been living here for a few years." Pani Leszczyńska blustered: "I've been leading the Koło Gospodyń for twenty-one years, and it's existed for forty-five already. Bartek Bednarczuk moved here from the city only seven years ago. We started making plum jam much earlier than he." Pani Boroń chimed in: "We have been making jam for three generations. I know the sanitary rules! In Strzelce they would laugh if someone wanted to check their powidła. Anyway, I don't even know if he's officially registered here." Pani Leszczyńska summed up their indignation: "Never was it the case that some man inspected a farm woman's cooking pot!"[107]

In addition to expressing outrage at outside interference, this exclamation is notable for alluding to the role of gender in the context of plum jam – a topic that my interlocutors only

[107] In Polish, her exclamation was: "Nigdy nie było, że jakiś pan oglądał gospodyni w garnku!" It is difficult to fully translate and convey the outrage that pani Leszczyńska poured into this short sentence. Note the use of "nigdy" (never) as the first, emphatic word of the sentence; "nie było" (it was not) as a generalizing verb; "jakiś" (some, any), which implies dismissiveness or condescension; "gospodyni" (farmer's wife, country woman); "oglądać" (to look, examine, inspect).

seldom addressed explicitly. Today, cooking powidła is by no means strictly a women's job. While my rough estimate has more women involved in production – the official plum jam producer website lists about one third more women than men as primary contacts, and all workers hired by producers to stir the pots for extra income appeared to be women – many men were also active participants and initiators. However, pani Leszczyńska's comment suggests a specific reading of the situation in gendered terms.

Perhaps this should not be surprising, as the primary organization through which the producers have revived the practice of cooking jam in Kozielec is the local women's group, KGW (see footnote 64). That is, powidła are placed not only in the realm of women's work – such as the preparation of food in the home and of value-added products that can be sold for additional income – but also women's community.

By pointing out the length of their experience and the existence of the group, pani Leszczyńska and pani Boroń emphasized their perception of their domains as grounded in well-established institutional and traditional practice. Therefore they perceived pan Bednarczuk's statements and actions not only as meddling with plum jam recipes but also with the social order and their – that is, women's – established fields of power within the village.

Similarly, the notable exception to the exclusive women's membership in KGWs is the participation of Mariusz Kaczmarek in Strzelce's KGW, where his wife is the president. This was remarked upon not by Strzelce members but a woman from another village, who raised her eyebrows at this anomaly. Her implication seemed to be that the traditional role of the women's group in providing a space for women's social life and cultural and some economic activities was being superseded by the powerful interests of powidła production in the village, and

particularly of its most prominent proponents. These were going so far as to introduce a man into a KGW.

Thus, the disagreement in Kozielec shows yet another iteration of how hierarchies of power played out in the LVV. The urban, economically comfortable and well-connected pan Bednarczuk challenged the expertise, traditional knowledge, and established gender position of the women of Kozielec who saw themselves in the same category of "we, the country people" that the Strzelce villagers of the previous chapter inhabited.[108] Likewise, it is not hard to imagine producers at association meetings balking at the imposition of rules through a process in which they felt they were not heard. They were reacting to structures being imposed on them from above in a dual sense: First, the EU framework demanded the definition of tradition, which meant privileging certain practices while excluding others. Second, the process of deciding which practices – types of plums, recipes, and methods – are allowable often played out through existing social hierarchies and relationships.

As a result, many of my interview partners were dismissive of the process itself; had sometimes not even participated in it from the start, either because of lack of interest, will, or information; and did not regard whatever guidelines might have been established as binding. A few also rejected the idea of registering the jam with the EU, because they did not see how this would benefit them.

Jarek Pająkowski himself sounded frustrated with the lack of progress or unity the producers were achieving at the meetings, and perhaps this is one reason he did not call another in the year I was in the valley. Marek Szczygielski, the region's chief food inspector, attended two of the previous producer meetings and echoed some of the director's frustration. "I always tell them the

[108] While for the women plum jam provided a welcome source of additional income, pan Bednarczuk could afford to insist on strict methods (though the women in practice used these methods on their own volition) because he had no vital economic stake in plum jam. For him, it was a hobby.

same thing," namely that they should expand their production and make sure to fulfill basic legal and hygiene requirements.

With the exception of a few pioneers of technological innovation, however, powidła producers felt a sense of disempowerment from such imposed demands. This echoes how EU standards for meat processing, part of what Dunn (2005, 175) describes as "normative…governmentality" that emanates from EU "harmonization" programs, result in a feeling of disempowerment in Polish citizens, whose experience with socialism leads them to react with avoidance of this new form of power, for example by moving into black markets. This feeling of powerlessness in the process of determining what constitutes an authentic tradition for the Polish and European bureaucracies led to some producers' complete or partial withdrawal from the process. Perhaps this is why Paulina Król became an easy target for frustrations in Strzelce. As the only producer who used a motorized stirring pot and other technologies, she appeared to be an embodiment of the government's standards and demands for certain practices. Marginalized in her own village, pani Król could nevertheless be said to be cooking the most "European" jam in Strzelce: unique and specific as a regional product, but more disciplined and harmonized – by EU standards – than any other in the village.

# CHAPTER 6

# TRADITIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*"In Poland we are currently choosing our way." – Mariola Karczewska, NGO PARTNER*

*"The plum jam producers in the Lower Vistula Valley are really great. And I'm sure that it will be really something that we can show other people in the near future. As a marvelous example of how regional product can be involved with rural development." – Jakub Jasiński, Ministry of Agriculture*

## *Introduction*

"Production of cattle and pigs does not pay. In fifteen years not a single farmer has bought a tractor. Whoever can, earns money in the city – legally or 'on the black market.' There are those who work on their own farm in the summer and in the winter go to Germany for some extra income. Only those who have a source of income outside of agriculture can make ends meet." This is the bleak opening to journalist Barbara Jadzińska-Zgubieńska's (2002b) article on plum jam in Strzelce Dolne. But, she goes on to write, sołtys Marek Białecki and other residents of the village have new plans to shape their future. They want to expand rural tourism in their area by offering camping, golf, restaurants, an ostrich farm, and, of course, all things plum jam.[109] To kick off these projects, they hope to apply for development funds from the European Union.

Published just under two years before Poland's accession to the EU, this article paints a picture of some of the economic challenges faced by farmers and other inhabitants of the LVV that have parallels in rural areas of other European countries. By the end of 2009, agriculture was the main source of income for only 27% of Polish farmers, and employment in agriculture, forestry and fisheries was expected to decline from 17.4% in 2005 to 11% in 2015. In the Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodship, 70,000 farms applied for direct payments, but of these 46,000

[109] Five years later, only the plum jam projects appeared to have become reality.

were considered to have "too little potential to support a farm family" (Kamiński 2010). On 40% of smaller farms under 15 hectares, at least one person was working off the farm. Accordingly, in their study of several rural territories across the EU, Bryden et al. (2010, 7) posit that "(the) changing institutional and market environment of farm households…becomes an important driving force for the diversification of farm activities." As this article shows, EU programs and funds play a crucial role in enabling such new activities.

In previous chapters, I have alluded to the potential economic significance that traditional products can have for rural areas, heightening the salience of discussions and debates about their future. In this chapter, I will examine more closely how traditional foods, particularly those with geographical indications, fit into the EU's larger rural development framework. I begin with an overview over the EU's current agricultural policy, particularly as it addresses farms and farm households not as simple food producers but also as purveyors of multiple functions and services for the changing countryside (Bryden et al 2010). Looking at evidence for the direct and spillover effects of traditional food products on rural areas, I will then discuss how plum jam is beginning to fulfill some of these functions in the LVV, particularly in the arena of agrotourism and, through the work of Local Action Groups, as part of a regional brand. In keeping with the focus in previous chapters on issues of local hierarchies and access, I ask to what extent the fruits of these activities are spread evenly throughout the community.

### *Overview over EU Agricultural and Rural Development Policy*

From the beginning, agriculture has been a key component, even the "most important common policy" (European Commission 2008a), of the European Community and the Union it

has evolved into since the 1950s. Currently costing fifty-five billion euros per year, the CAP is projected to constitute about 32% of the budget in 2013 (EUROPA 2007).

Following World War II, the original six members of the European Community struggled to stabilize food production after decades of warfare and hunger. The main focus of the CAP was on increasing agricultural production, usually through intensification, in order to achieve food independence. Having accomplished and exceeded this goal by the 1980s, Western Europe began to turn away from addressing structural problems in farming with commodity price supports to attending to the challenges associated with this type of agriculture, such as environmental degradation, overproduction,[110] a simultaneous loss of rural populations to urban areas (Winawer and Wujec 2010), and the increasing complexity of the EU and its economic area due to successive enlargements (Thomson and Bryden 2010).

With the Agenda 2000 reform, adopted in 1999 to shape EU policy in anticipation of its eastern enlargement, the CAP now addresses agriculture as a multifunctional entity in a broader context in the so-called Second Pillar. The First Pillar continues to provide direct income support to farmers, while the Second Pillar reflects the EU's rural development policy (which also remains a component of the economic and social cohesion policy, European Commission 2000) and an increasing emphasis in Europe and worldwide on the role that agriculture can play beyond mere food production for environmental stewardship as well as economic and social development in rural areas. As Bryden et al. (2010, 9) summarize, "(in) this much wider perspective the diverse functions related to agriculture, land use and farm household activities are not restricted to externalities produced (jointly) with agricultural activity, but rather a considerably larger basket of goods, services and 'functions' – produced for non-food markets (energy, care, tourism, etc.) as well as rather distinctive niche food markets (food quality, animal

[110] Vivid descriptions of this overproduction spoke of "milk lakes" and "butter mountains."

welfare, organic products etc.)." The goal is to diversify not only rural economies as a whole but also the activities of individual farm households. As I will elaborate below, geographically indicated food products have the potential to play a role at both levels.

The EU's rural development policy, whose most recent phase of funding runs from 2007 to 2013, is based on three thematic axes that aim to improve a) the competitiveness of agriculture, b) the environment and countryside, and c) the quality of life of and diversify the economy in rural areas. Funds are to be spread between all three axes for a balanced approach (European Commission 2008b). A fourth axis that runs crosswise and applies to the three others is the Leader[111] axis.

According to Bryden et al. (2010, 19) this "relatively tiny" program can be used to address creatively a weakness in EU policies that do not always aim to improve rural quality of life or create new economic activity through the transformation of agriculture's "positive externalities." Like its two previous incarnations, Leader I and Leader II, the newest version, Leader+, is based on the principle of cooperation at the local level. The European Commission, through national governments, seeks "highly individual projects designed and executed by local partnerships to address specific local problems" (European Commission 2008b) and thereby hopes to "help actors consider the long-term potential of their local region" (European Commission 2012). As such, the approach is meant to be highly experimental, a "laboratory" (European Commission 2012) in which to test new approaches to sustainable and integrated, decentralized and bottom-up rural development.

At the heart of the experiment are Local Action Groups (LAGs), formed locally and ideally consisting of a balance of representative partners from the socioeconomic sectors that make up

[111] Leader is an acronym for "Links between actions of rural development" or, in French, "liaison entre actions de développement rural."

the territory. Typical members may include professional and union groups, trade associations, citizens, politicians, and cultural groups. They are tasked with "identifying and implementing a local development strategy, making decisions about the allocation of its financial resources and managing them" (European Communities 2006, 10). The decision-making level must include at least 50% economic and social partners and associations from the local partnership (European Commission 2000). LAGs receive funding in a competitive process within each member state. They should be chosen for their original and ambitious approaches that may be transferable to other regions. Therefore, Leader places much emphasis on the exchange of experience through local, national, and international networking.

Priority themes for the most recent funding phase include using natural and cultural resources, improving the quality of life in rural areas, adding value to local products as well as bringing them to market through collective actions, and making rural products and services more competitive through know-how and new technologies (European Commission 2012). By the end of 2006, 893 LAGs existed across the EU. As of 2011, Poland boasted 149 groups.

This is the context in which numerous LAGs are active in the LVV, several of which I will introduce later in this chapter. For many, identifying and developing value-added local products is a key activity from which they hope to derive a number of benefits for their region. I will now turn to these potential effects.

### *Regional and Traditional Food Products and Rural Development*

The European Commission (EC) professes high expectations for the positive impact of geographically indicated food products (GIs) for rural areas. First and foremost, special labeling is intended to be an economic tool that establishes a link between producers and consumers of

such foods in a system that creates trust. It protects both sides from "fakes," which guarantees quality for consumers and shields producers from unfair competition. Thereby, the Commission wants to help farmers profit from their advantage of high quality production and reputation (European Commission 2006).

In addition, the EC hopes that rural areas will benefit from spillover effects. In its main publication on the topic of regional and traditional food products (European Commission 2006) it remains rather vague on details, but the EC states that because "[food] and drink products, together with fine cooking, are a major part of the cultural identity of Europe's peoples and regions," supporting traditional and regional foods, their producers, and regions is a means for the EU to play "a major role" in preserving local practices and identities (European Commission 2006, 3).

The following, brief review of research conducted on the effects of GIs in and outside of Europe shows that many of the EC's expectations are being met, as studies have identified a number of potential economic, environmental, and social and cultural benefits. Supporting the EU's multifunctional view of agriculture, it is not always easy to clearly delineate these intertwined benefits from each other.

Several studies explicitly identify GIs as a tool in working toward the EU's rural development goals. A World Bank (2002) presentation gives glowing reviews of GIs' performance in France. GI products greatly over-performed in the country's export statistics in 2001. Even while the total number of farmers decreased from 1997 to 2001, GI producers – attracted by higher profits[112] – increased by 14%, bringing "new vitality" to rural areas. The presenter concludes that "GI (products) are an efficient development tool: the creation of value

[112] In France PDO cheeses fetch 30% higher prices, on average; GI wine prices can be up to 230% higher (World Bank 2002).

of a GI product is higher and is better distributed at (the) local level." The generalizeability of this study is, however, limited by the high proportion of wines – over three quarters – of France's GI products.

A successful example of a non-wine product is Parmigiano Reggiano in Emiligia Romagna, Italy. The EU-designated cheese contributed significantly enough to the region's economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being for Roest and Menghi (2002, 446) to suggest that the "Parmigiano Reggiano system can be considered a mature case of rural development" by means of a "European PDO product that has been able to secure a large and successful market" (450). Taking a broader view of fourteen international case studies, Barjolle, Paus and Perret (2009, 12) conclude that while "institutional GI legal frames are [not *per se*] sustainable agricultural policies (or) rural development policies," GI products certainly have significant potential to contribute to both.

GIs do so most directly by being profitable, i.e. capturing higher retail prices in the market. Based on perceived positive qualities of these products and their desire to support the region of origin, consumers are willing to buy and pay a premium for traditional products (Ittersum et al. 2007). According to a 1999 survey, 43% of EU consumers were willing to pay up to 10% more for GIs, while 8% were willing to pay 20% more (Berenguer 2004, cited in van de Kop and Sautier 2006). PDO cheeses in France, for example, fetched a 30% higher price compared to non-registered competitors (World Bank 2002; Welch-Devine and Murray 2009). As a consequence, Comté, one of these cheeses, raised its production 4% over a ten-year span, compared to a reduction of 3.5% for the non-designated Emmental (Gerz and Dupont 2006). Comté's production remained in its area of origin, while Emmental production moved to western France where milk is less expensive. In addition, the benefits of the added value were distributed

along the supply chain: Farmers supplying the raw material for Comté receive 14% more for their milk than the average French farmer, so that dairy farms have increased their profitability and are 32% more profitable than similar dairy farms in France, with more stable income and prices.

Producers are able to increase their profit further by working as a collective group and benefiting from economies of scale. The EU encourages such collaboration by requiring producers to form an association in order to apply for a designation. As we have seen in the Lower Vistula Valley, plum jam producers lower the price each party has to pay for glass jars and lids by pooling their orders. Similarly, producers sometimes share expensive copper pots, and many borrow the pot from the Landscape Park. The example of Parmigiano Reggiano (Roest and Menghi 2002) also illustrates how the amount of coordination required between the various actors in the milk to cheese supply chain may help to develop relationships that are more stable over time and reduce transaction costs, again leaving more profit in the hands of growers and producers.

Like plum jam, many traditional food products are more labor-intensive to produce than modern, industrial versions. Poor countries with many hands, in particular, may derive a competitive edge from greater labor requirements (OriGIn 2009), and an increase in GI production can lead to higher employment levels in the region (Roest and Menghi 2000). In the case of Comté, the cheese generates as much as five times more employment than Emmental along the chain of production and sales, and frequently the jobs produced are of higher quality (Gerz and Dupont 2006).

The GIs' benefits further extend beyond the immediate production chain to other rural economic activities such as agrotourism. Traditional food products enhance agrotouristic offers

both directly at the farm, where they are part of the overall package, for example at meals, as well as at the regional level where they attract tourists who then make use of local businesses for a variety of services, lodging, and catering (Gerz and Dupont 2006). Conversely, agrotourism can also serve as a means of marketing GIs (van de Kop and Sautier 2006) and creating increased demand for other locally based products and services. Plum jam, as I will show below, is closely linked to agrotourism in the LVV.

In keeping with the second axis of the EU's rural development policy, GIs enable farms to contribute to environmental stewardship. Often, sustainable practices are written directly into the PDO application, such as the use of integrated pest management for Cherries of Lari (Marescotti 2003) or special feeding practices and limited intensification for cows whose milk will be used for PDO-labeled cheeses, which leads to a reduction of nitrogen loss in soil (Roest and Menghi 2002) and checks the loss of pastureland (Gerz and Dupont 2006). Over time, GIs may thereby increase land values both by stabilizing rural areas and providing environmental benefits. In France, for example, PDO olive oil provided financial incentives to replant declining tracts of land, whose value in turn rose 2% faster than comparable plots (World Bank 2002). Similarly, the preservation of the Argan tree, used for Argan oil in Morocco, slowed down desertification (OriGIn 2009).

Finally, in the social arena, the EC hopes to stimulate "solidarity" and "social cohesion," two fundamental concepts in the Union's language. Economist Marescotti (2003) argues that this outcome can be much more significant than GIs' economic impacts. In a study of Cherries of Lari (Italy), he concludes that "the importance of the Cherry of Lari is linked to its character of 'cultural marker' for local population identity and social cohesion, while its contribution to the local economy is partly lost" (Marescotti 2003, 12), again supporting the EU's approach of

agriculture's multifunctionality. Only in an aside does the author hint at the additional local, social factors that need to be taken into account in order to fully evaluate the economic and social impact of GIs and that I have analyzed in more depth in previous chapters, namely that "in some situations the activation of the application procedure may alter social cohesion and cause conflicts among producers in the construction of the Code of Practices" (Marescotti 2003, 15).

In the same vein, OriGIn (Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network), a non-profit based in Geneva that connects international producers and organizations of GI food and non-food products, lists "collective rights" and "income distribution" as one of the potential benefits of GIs. Unlike patents and trademarks, which are usually held individually, GIs belong to all producers (or rather, members of a producer association, which should be open to all producers) in a given geographical area. However, as we have seen in the case of plum jam, existing social structures play a significant role in how the product is developed and who will benefit from its launch on the market.

I conclude from this brief review of research on the impact of GIs – primarily from agroeconomic and rural development perspectives – that specially labeled traditional food products have significant potential along the lines of the EU's multifunctional view of farming for rural areas, increasing employment, diversifying farm activities, improving farm income and stability and thereby reducing the need for off-farm employment (Welch-Devine and Murray 2009), and spilling over benefits to the region through agrotourism, sustainable environmental practices, and the preservation of traditional knowledge. However, more research is needed to identify the social, cultural, and economic factors that determine the achievement and distribution of these benefits on the ground. This research on plum jam in the Lower Vistula Valley is one such case study and example.

### *Plum Jam in the LVV's Economy*

Currently, plum jam plays two main roles in the LVV's economy. First, it provides an additional source of income to many farms and households. Second, the jam has been unfolding its potential as an attraction that draws attention to the region as a culinary and touristic destination. Both the LVV Landscape Park and the villagers of Strzelce, as well as EU-funded Local Action Groups, have aimed the revival of the jam primarily at the latter, larger goal of multiplying powidła's effects beyond individual households to the region as a whole. Strzelce's Plum Festival is based on similar festivals in France, witnessed by Norbert Jasiński, which attract tourists to small villages and gives them a recognizable profile. Similarly, park director Pająkowski looked for ways to promote traditional varieties of fruit trees as well as his Landscape Park and region.

Strzelce producers began by selling their jam "at cost," investing their labor for free in order to "attract people and show how things were in the past," as Mariusz Kaczmarek reported. "And then people saw that they can make a profit. There was one woman who ordered only 1000 jars (to fill with jam), but after selling them all at the Plum Festival, she quickly ordered more jars and started cooking powidła again. Now we make money." Pan Kaczmarek argued that economic benefits are necessary in order for traditions to continue: "Tradition has to be profitable to survive. The children will only continue if it pays."

Nevertheless, even in Strzelce, and even for Paulina Król, the most prolific producer with several thousand jars of jam each year, plum jam is not the main source of income. For many, it is simply a way to use up excess fruit, cook jam for their own needs, and make "a little extra money" in addition to growing other fruit such as apples and cherries, raising livestock, or

holding off-farm jobs in the city.[113] In the following section, I want to discuss some of the factors that presently prevent plum jam and other traditional products from playing a larger role in rural Polish household economies, before returning to the LVV's use of jam as a promotional tool.

### *Challenges for Plum Jam and Traditional Foods in the Polish Market*

There are many reasons why plum jam is currently not yet suitable to be more than an additional rather than primary source of income for the LVV's farms. Chiefly they reside in the immature traditional foods system and market in Poland, but the producers themselves, as became apparent in the previous chapters, have many hurdles to overcome within their region and association. In chapter 5, I analyzed how producers debate the "authenticity" of plum jam, i.e., the substance of the food itself. Now, when it comes to actually selling their product, they have to decide how to "package" or promote it and which geographic and socioeconomic market they want to target.

On the government side, the main push to use the potential of traditional food products comes from the Office of Geographical Indications, part of the Department of Promotion and Communications in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The department's officials see themselves as the hub of regional foods activities, driving and coordinating a complex process. Jakub Jasiński, the office's head until 2008, likened himself and his colleagues to an orchestra in which they both conducted and juggled multiple instruments simultaneously, trying to bring producers and consumers into market synergy. His predecessor, Michał Rzytki, described this challenge as a vicious circle: "There aren't any real products on the market yet, widely available to consumers, so consumers don't know much about these products, and with

[113] Because of the fragmented nature of plum jam production in the LVV, no estimates of the profits made from its sales per year were available to me.

the lack of a market we don't have real producers yet." While, as these statements show, equal attention is needed to develop a market on the consumer side, I am going to focus on the challenges faced by producers. (For more information on Polish consumers of traditional food products, see Appendix C).

In principal, Poland's many small farms are in a good position to benefit from small-scale, value-added food production, especially compared to other central European countries that underwent much more severe collectivization under communism. The technological "backwardness" that resulted from the communist state's neglect of private agriculture means that the soils and practices of small farms are more likely to be pesticide-free than former state farms or agriculture in Western Europe (Wrobel 2004; Ministry of Regional Development 2006). Thus, farmers can more easily maintain or transition to traditional methods of growing and processing foods.[114]

The government's inconsistent approach to traditional food products, however, is partly to blame for insecurities on the producer side. The promise that is signaled by the Ministry-supported competitions is not fulfilled by the lack of supportive legislation when it comes to sanitary, market, and tax issues. The legal situation for traditional products in Poland is confusing, to say the least. Producers themselves were often unsure and in several cases chose to speak about legal issues off the record. The owner of an agrotouristic farm, for example, squirmed when I addressed the question of legal plum jam sales and asked me to stop my recording. In the minutes that followed, she avoided incriminating herself by replacing the words "sell" or "sales" with "giving away" when talking about the jam. Although the producer was

[114] These "backward" conditions may also prove to be an asset in the expanding market for organic products. Without pesticides, farms can be more easily converted to organic production. The Polish Ministry of Agriculture increasingly recommends this option to producers and processors, so that this market could become a very important segment of the Polish economy (Umann 2005).

obviously under the impression that she may be acting illegally, chief food inspector Marek Szczygielski explained to me that this producer was within her legal rights to sell plum jam directly to her guests as well as at special events, such as the Plum Festival or the Festiwal Smaku, but not in regular stores.[115]

Unfortunately, from a sanitary perspective, traditional foods generally have to follow the regulations for industrial products.[116] Agrosmak director Marek Gąsiorowski criticized this strongly, asking how it makes sense that "when you produce fifty kilos you have to meet the same requirements as someone who produces fifty tons." He believes that as a result many potential producers never take up production, afraid of restrictions and costs associated with fulfilling the rules.[117]

At the same time, food inspector Szczygielski contends that many producers have not even fully grasped the economic potential of their product. At the current level of powidła production, legal sales venues such as festivals suffice to deplete an entire year's production quickly, as I saw at the popular Plum Festival in Strzelce (see Figure 11). But, pan Szczygielski said, while selling several thousand jars a year may appear like a great number to some producers, he "know(s) one Warsaw buyer who would be able to take ten thousand jars per month."[118]

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[115] I also heard off-the-record whispers about filling orders from Warsaw, Białystok, and other far-away cities by mail, but this already places producers in the legal gray zone.

[116] Occasional exemptions for traditional products are possible. Plum jam cooked in copper pots has higher limits for the amount of copper permissible in the final product. According to inspector Szczygielski, the copper in fact has beneficial properties, reacting with the jam and causing it to last longer.

[117] In practice, I did not come across any stories of crack-downs on traditional foods being produced semi-legally in Poland. Quite the contrary – producers grinned when they told me that government officials were often some of their best customers, even in questionable sales settings, and "even the police comes to me and buys powidła."

[118] Even if the farmers achieved such a high production volume, they would run into new bureaucratic hurdles. At this level, they would be forced to write bills showing the value added tax (VAT), which would require them to form a company. Yet, currently they do not pay commercial taxes, only farmers' taxes, which are governed by a different code, unlike in other European countries such as Germany. This has the advantage that the taxes can be lower, and farmers pay lower insurance premiums. On the other hand, they sometimes pay more taxes on their land than is warranted by their actual productivity from the acreage, and they could potentially receive a higher pension from the

Figure 11. Sampling powidła at the Plum Festival in Strzelce Dolne. Photograph by Olivia Hall

Yet, producers will have to decide what kind of market they hope to serve. Should traditionally cooked plum jam be a boutique product mainly affordable to an elite currently predominantly in urban areas? Or should the jam remain rooted in its region at a price that even local retirees can pay? Are the two choices compatible?

Often, the philosophy of what kind of product producers want to sell expresses itself in the price they charge per jar. Prices in the LVV vary greatly. At the low end, a jar may sell for 5 PLN in Strzelce, while the most expensive jam sold by the Park goes for three times as much. Paulina Król in Strzelce is a vocal proponent of low prices, which she says serve the interests of her clients. Many of them, she told me, are retirees who cannot afford to pay more. "How would I look to my customers that come to my house [if I charge too much]?" Conversely, she is able to

national insurance they would pay into as part of a company. Not surprisingly, simplifying the tax system is one improvement suggested to improve a country's competitiveness (Csuka 2010).

ask such low prices because she is the biggest producer in the LVV with over 10,000 jars per year, which offers her the benefits of economies of scale. In addition, pani Król uses some time- and labor-saving technologies, the controversy around which I discussed in the previous chapter. Only at the Plum Festival did Paulina Król charge 7 PLN per jar. As a member of the Strzelce KGW, she was told that in order to participate in the festival, she would have to agree to the price set by the group. "It's a war," she confided, but "I don't say anything, because I'm a bit afraid they may kick me out of the festival." Nevertheless, the village's set price is still only a fraction of what Jarek Pająkowski would like to see being the regular charge. In his vision, each jar should fetch no less than 10 PLN, and according to Czesław Fałczyk of a retirees group in Wałdowo Królewskie, he even advised them to sell for 15 PLN (they opted for 10 PLN). That is, powidła should be an elite product that fetches a significant price premium.

As is apparent from Paulina Król's economies of scale, the price per jar is often linked to the size of production, although there are exceptions.[119] Current production by individual jam makers varies greatly from a few hundred to several tens of thousands of jars a year. Hobbyists and families preserving fruit mainly for their own consumption usually fire up the pots only once during the season. Commercially, small producers such as the members of the Kozielec KGW each cook about one pot or 150 jars, which always sell out from home or at festivals. At an intermediate level, farmers like Alicja Kwestarz in Strzelce fill a few hundred to a few thousand jars every year, depending on the availability of fruit. Stirring multiple pots over the course of several days or weeks, such producers require help, enlisting family members or hiring workers. The Szumski family, at 5000 jars, hires three or four women from nearby Fordon at 5 PLN per hour. A third of the jam gets sold at the annual Plum Festival, the rest from home and at a

[119] At the elementary school in Nowa Wieś, featured in chapter 3, jam was sold to parents for 5 PLN per jar. Production was limited to one or two pots, but these rural inhabitants work with limited financial means.

farmers market in Bydgoszcz. The biggest producer by far is Strzelce's Paulina Król. At her farm, three hired women help to stir pots of bubbling liquid plums for 1.5 months at a time, filling up to 11,000 jars a year, "as much as the whole rest of the village together."

Although Jarek Pająkowski and Marek Szczygielski saw enough market potential for both small-scale artisanal and larger, more technologically involved producers at all price levels, both emphasized the need for consistency in any product that carries the "Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley" brand name. First, pan Szczygielski asserted, producers have to increase production enough to deal with the problem of seasonality,[120] as "customers want access to products year-round, (and) the worst thing is to hear about a product and not be able to access it."[121] Second, producers have to satisfy consumers' desire for consistent quality,[122] as consumers' willingness to pay the price premium for specially labeled traditional products decreases with the decline of their positive view thereof, especially if product quality is inconsistent (Landon and Smith 1998, cited in Ittersum et al. 2007).

[120] Plums ripen mainly in the late summer and fall. Because the latest harvest in November can survive in cool storage for a while, the short production period lasts from about August to December. Powidła are cooked to last, so enough jars would have to come out of those four or five months to tide the market over until the next harvest. At the local level, Paulina Król has already prepared herself for year-round sales. She told me proudly that she had a blue powidła sign in front of her house long before any of the other producers in Strzelce. Her customers know that when she takes it down, all jars of jam have been sold. She tries to leave it up year-round– for example by cooking jam from frozen plums.

[121] On the other hand, customers are sometimes willing to go to great lengths to access products they enjoy and care about. A professor of rural sociology in the city of Toruń takes turns with his neighbors to buy milk from a certain farmer in the countryside. Twice a month he also drives to a specific farm 20 km from his house to buy potatoes and vegetables. The professor explained that it would be difficult for the farmer to set up a shop in town because that would require having a steady and much larger supply of products available.

[122] Food writer Piotr Bikont told me that astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, Toruń's famous son (born there in 1473) and namesake of the city's university, "discovered more than the fact that….the earth is round and goes around the moon. He had another discovery, an economical law that says that false money has a tendency to replace the true money. The false coin is stronger than real coin, because if you have a true coin and a false coin, you'd rather spend the false coin. So this is the money that goes around...And it's the same when you want to promote a good brand, you can lose with a false brand, which has more means for promotion."

Unlike oscypek cheese, which is often "faked" by replacing sheep's milk with cow's milk or creating the characteristic coloring with black tea instead of painstaking smoking for a week, powidła are generally not subject to intentional falsification. More frequently, producers deal with defining the parameters for an "authentic" jam, as seen in the previous chapter, and, once an acceptable range of characteristics has been found, ensuring that specially labeled jam fulfills these requirements consistently. Current practices still encompass many I believe would be considered problematic under the aspect of quality control. For example, one producer demonstrated how jam is made at a local festival and sold jars of fresh powidła that had not been pasteurized. He did not accompany the sale with a warning that the product needs to be stored properly and consumed soon. Further, the complaints that warring factions launched at each other in the previous chapter, while often linked to other, existing conflicts, do point to great variations in the product. Should it be true, as Paulina Król claimed, that others do not label the addition of sugar, some customers may take issue with this practice, particularly if they are diabetics. They may also not like jam that "flows apart like water," as one Wałdowo man described the product of another village.

Many powidła producers are well aware of the need for consistency, particularly if they have an interest in developing the jam commercially. Most often, producers in Strzelce brought up this topic. Jan and Paulina Król consider the common label for powidła "strzeleckie" to be both beneficial and risky. "We already have a reputation, but we have to fight for quality." If any producer does not live up to the standards, "it's more like anti-advertising, because people will tell each other about that." For this reason, pani Król would even prefer to work with an outside quality assurance agency. Food inspector Marek Szczygielski agrees in principle but is waiting for an internal control system to develop among the producers before continuing down the path

of EU registration, which would be the next step in the commercialization of the jam."They have to agree to stick to certain rules, because news about a bad product travels much faster than that about a good one, such are the rules of marketing…It's up to the producers to implement the necessary changes."

In sum, powidła makers and other producers of traditional food products face a number of challenges in bringing their product to market, even once they overcome internal disagreements. The government is funneling significant EU and national resources into identifying and promoting these foods, but much work remains to be done in streamlining the legal requirements for artisanal foods, which create uncertainty and inaction in many (would-be) producers. While, according to some estimates, the market is broad enough to encompass both luxury and more affordable versions of LVV plum jam, the common brand will be most successful if it can offer consistency in terms of both availability and quality. Until a certain synergy between production and a larger, national market is created, powidła and similar products will be produced at a relatively small scale, sold primarily in the region, and play a supplemental role in their producers' households.

### *Agrotourism*

Both park director Pająkowski and many producers agree that plum jam's role as an attention-getter is more important in the long run than direct income. As early as in 2001 and 2002, at the height of the Powidła War, Strzelce's local leaders Norbert Jasiński and Marek Białecki spoke to reporters about their hopes that jam would draw crowds to festivals and other touristic attractions and as a symbol make the LVV memorable to recipients and purchasers of jam. Tourism and agrotourism, in particular, stand to benefit from building a regional brand, and

both men were cofounders of the Association for Agriculture and Tourism, the first of its kind, according to their own claims.

Agrotouristic businesses (*agroturystyki*) are complex, value-added products (Sznajder and Przezbórska 2002) that sell not only overnight stays but an experience that makes use of non-commodities (Bryden et al. 2010) such as the peace of a rural, unbuilt landscape; fresh air; direct contact with animals; insights into agricultural production; and home-cooked foods, posing another multifunctional contribution of agriculture to the region's development. Accordingly, Poland's National Development Strategy expresses the ambition to use the richness of the country's natural, human, and cultural resources to "draw benefits from the development of tourism, contributing to the economic growth of regions, creating new places of work and promotion of regions and countries" (Ministry of Regional Development 2006, 27).

In Poland, the tradition of countryside tourism dates as far back as the nineteenth century, and training courses for rural housewives were implemented as early as in the 1930s. Agrotourism was disrupted by the communist state's attempt to encourage Poles to take "holidays under the pear tree" in the late 1950s, as farmers resisted the influx of visitors. Since the 1990s, however, this type of tourism has been rejuvenated as part of a government policy to help rural families adapt to economic changes (Rural Tourism International Training Network 2011). Since 2000, the number of agroturystyki has grown from 5,800 to 8790 in 2007 (Maciejewska 2010).

The Polish state has received significant support from the EU in this effort. From 2007-2013, Poland's Rural Development Program (PROW), run by the Ministry of Agriculture to distribute EU funds within the country, has marked 56.4 million PLN for "touristic services as well as services connected to sports, recreation and relaxation," including many measures run through

Leader (Maciejewska 2010). The Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodship's agricultural consulting agency in Minikowo has used such funds to organize numerous educational projects, schoolings, conferences, presentations, and publications on agrotourism. In addition, farmers interested in agrotourism can turn to a number of organizations for assistance in establishing and marketing their businesses, such as the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARMA)[123] and the Foundation of Assistance-Programmes for Agriculture,[124] as well as local self-governments, agricultural chambers, the Polish Chamber of Tourism, and NGOs.

Agrotouristic businesses have organized themselves in a number of associations, most prominently the Polish Federation of Rural Tourism "Hospitable Farms" (Polska Federacja Turystyki Wiejskiej "Gospodarstwa Gościnne"), formed in 1996 from forty-five regional associations. The Federation has been instrumental in helping farmers apply for funds through ARMA to establish their businesses (Niedziółka 2005) and continues to provide important services by dispensing the quality label "Hospitable Farm" and ratings from one to three stars, as well as running a website, agroturystyka.pl, which lists agrotourism farms for a small fee. Marek Białecki, for example, former sołtys of Strzelce, runs a small, one-star-rated agroturystyka with five rooms for up to twenty-two individuals. Most of his guests contact him through the Federation's website.

[123] Founded in 1994, ARMA "deals with the implementation of instruments co-financed from the European Union budget and provides aid from national funds. The Agency, as the performer of agricultural policy, cooperates with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. At the same time, ARMA is under supervision of the Ministry of Finance within the scope of managing public funds" (ARMA 2011).

[124] FAPA, established by the Minister of Agriculture and Food Economy acting on behalf of the State Treasury in 1992, has the mission "to support actions aiming at the development of rural areas, agriculture, agricultural markets and sectors of agricultural economy. FAPA implements projects and acts as project implementation advisor, conducts research and prepares analyses, as well as renders publication services and last, but not least, functions as information centre" (FAPA 2011).

Pan Białecki's agrotourism business is one of roughly 280 in the voivodship (Maciejewska 2010).[125] They range from a rural household with a few rooms for rent to fully functioning farms with petting animals, pony rides, and other forms of entertainment. All have in common that heaping portions of regional culinary specialties are typically part of their offer. Niedziółka (2004) emphasizes that regional, and often ecological dishes – including lessons about their preparation – are important components of creating an agrotouristic brand. For this reason, one of the stated goals of the regional foods competition put on by the Chamber of Regional and Local Products is "spreading knowledge about the possibility of using the values of specific, regional products in the offerings of local farming, tourism (and especially agrotourism)" (Polska Izba Produktu Regionalnego 2011). Some farmers also choose to convey an educational component with meals. Łukasz and Katarzyna Wiśniewscy produce and eat almost exclusively ecological foods, which they also serve to their guests who "want to eat differently" while on vacation (see Figure 12). The couple hopes that by these means they will have an impact on the attitudes and future choices of their customers.

In the LVV, plum jam is one of the main foods that add authenticity and atmosphere to guests' stay on a farm. It is frequently served at breakfast with bread or baked into pastries. In the fall, guests can watch or even participate in stirring the large copper pots of bubbling plum pulp, intensifying the immediate experience of the countryside. Some arrive specifically for special events such as Strzelce's Plum Festival and other celebrations. At the end of their stay, they often buy jars of jam to take home.

[125] I do not have exact numbers for the LVV. Data from 2010 (Maciejewska 2010) show six agrotouristic businesses in the Chełmno district, five near Grudziądz, forty around Świecie, six near Toruń. It is possible that the high number near Świecie is in part attributable to the activities of the LVV Landscape Park and various actors on plum jam.

Figure 12. Home cooking at the agroturystyka "Gzinianka." Photograph by Olivia Hall

In the context of rural development, offering jam and other regional products at agroturystyki is part of a broader strategy that helps to sell the product and the region simultaneously. Marek Gąsiorowski explained that guests come, sleep, and eat at the farms. Later, in their town or city, they might recognize the food products they were served at an agroturystyka. They may buy the products for the flavor and because it reminds them of their vacation, and they will associate it with the region of origin.

The farmers, in turn, benefit from the additional income the overnight guests provide, which complements seasonal income from plum jam. In the LVV, farm stays are most concentrated in the summer, during long weekends, and during the winter holidays. Like in a similar example of Basque cheese producers, powidła makers in the LVV "have complementary activities which,

depending on the season, will allow [them] to have a revolving source of revenue and make [them] a little bit more flexible" (Welch-Devine and Murray 2009, 4).

Additional offers help to fill out the low season. Norbert Jasiński, who does not rent out rooms, allows children to meet and ride his miniature ponies for entertainment. Pan and pani Wiśniewcy have nicely landscaped their garden with a pond, a wooden hut, and a large fire pit for bonfires. Groups from nearby Bydgoszcz often come for organized grill parties. In the summer, for example, I once helped serve food to the employees of a vegetarian restaurant chain from the city. Ironically, they were happy to indulge in heaps of grilled sausages and pâté with freshly baked bread, cakes, cheeses, and, of course, plum jam.

For most farmers, agrotourism – like plum jam – nevertheless remains only an additional, not the primary source of income. At the agroturystyka "Maciejówka" in Opalenie, pan Izdebski works for a business in the city, while his son drives large farm implements and his daughter-in-law is an accountant. Yet, they also contribute minor employment to their region, as they hire helpers for organized parties and form networks with other farms, for example bringing in a neighbor to provide hayrides on his horse-drawn cart, or directing guests to a another business for horseback riding or fishing trips on the Vistula. Plum jam thus enhances but also benefits from agrotourism in the LVV, adding another component to the patchwork of strategies through which farm households in the region make a living.

### *Local Action Groups, Traditional Foods, and Rural Development*

Local Action Groups (LAGs) play an important role in promoting and aiding rural residents with these different strategies. In Poland, traditional food products are often a prominent component of their projects. Next to the Landscape Park, the LVV's LAGs are probably the

strongest proponents of powidła and other traditional food products as promotional tools and symbols.

Four LAGs were active in the LVV in 2007 to 2008. Four communities comprise the LGD[126] Zakole Dolnej Wisły (LAG Lower Vistula Bend) at a southern bend of the Vistula River, which is stylized into its logo. The LGD Vistula – Terra Culmensis also consists of four towns, including Chełmno and Grudziądz. The seven communities of the LGD Trzy Doliny (LAG Three Valleys) surround the city of Bydgoszcz, and the newest group, the LGD Gminy Powiatu Świeckiego (LAG of the Świecie Powiat Communities) was founded in 2008, also with seven communities. All of these LAGs feature regional foods prominently in their work. One of the LGD Gminy's first activities was to participate in regional food competitions, whereas the LGD Trzy Doliny showcases regional specialties on its website, and LGD Zakole has published a glossy brochure highlighting its culinary assets.

In 2008, the LGD Vistula organized the conference "Local Products and EU Funds" in the village of Lisewo, an excellent example of the important role food plays in the groups' activities and of the cooperation that exists among them. Funded within the Leader framework and supplemented with local and voivodship moneys, the one-day conference invited speakers from neighboring LGDs, producers, and local and voivodship government officials (see Figure 13). Almost as important as the official presentations was the second half of the event, during which all participants crowded around tables to enjoy a generous spread of regional foods, prepared by each invited LGD.[127] That is, food served not only as the topic of conference but also as a binding agent that brought practitioners together in a more informal setting to network.

[126] LGD stands for Lokalna Grupa Działania, Polish for Local Action Group.

[127] Foods offered included, among many other dishes, *nalewki* by Jan Dąbrowski, stuffed duck, meat loaf with egg, fresh bread with seasoned lard, *ogórki kiszone* (fresh pickles), rum and chocolate torte, and eggs wrapped in herring filets.


Figure 13. Speaker at the LGD Vistula conference. Photograph by Olivia Hall

However, this conference also gives evidence of the problems that can befall LAGs. As we were chatting, cherry farmer, LGD Vistula member, and conference speaker Jan Michalski remarked to me with some frustration that only two producers – he and cordial-producer and TPDW member Jan Dąbrowski – had attended. He blamed other producers' lack of participation on their "lack of trust" in government and its organizations.

Whether lack of trust or other factors are to blame, the predominance of local and regional government officials at many LAG events shows that as with other EU projects, one must consider how local conditions affect the implementation of programs born in the minds of bureaucrats. Examining Leader programs, Shucksmith (2000, 208) criticizes the idea of targeting communities as undifferentiated units whose various actors may in reality have "highly unequal capacities to act." As we have seen in previous chapters, such "capacities" comprise various

forms of social and cultural capital, including knowledge of funds and how to apply for them and the power to direct local resources to one's needs. In a similar example, Dahl (2007, 112) describes how EU monies targeted at regional development in Jämtland, Sweden "more often than not" were given to "already established and powerful groups and actors, including researchers and activists who had transnational connections and the language savvy required to gain funding."

The problem of participation from different levels and groups extends beyond local organizations. I attended a variety of conferences on traditional food products in the context of regional development. The largest of these was a national meeting on the "Market of Traditional Foods of Designated Quality" – the last grand production of Agrosmak 2, a non-profit whose funding ended in 2007.[128] More often than not, the attendees were primarily non-farmers. Instead, academics and bureaucrats, including a few top-level government officials, debated – sometimes passionately – how best to use the potential of traditional food products. Only the voices of a few particularly active producers chimed in to help shape debates and policies.

### *Building a Brand and Networks*

Despite these issues, LAGs are contributing to building regional brands through their activities around traditional food products and inter-LAG networking. For example, the LGD Bory Tucholskie, from a neighboring forested area east of the LVV, has consciously been developing a brand identity. Participating in the Lisewo food conference, the group presented its spread of traditional foods under a clever logo, designed by a high school student in a

[128] Agrosmak 2 was funded by the Cooperation Fund Foundation (Fundacja Fundusz Współpracy). According to its website, "(the) Cooperation Fund Foundation was established by the State Treasury in September 1990. It was founded in response to the need for a non-political, specialised and efficient organisation that would transparently manage aid funds on behalf of the Government and assist the implementation of EU supported projects" (Cooperation Fund Foundation 2012).

competition, which shows a shape that can be read as either a leaf or water drop with a tree inside. The brand covers foods, crafts, services, and social initiatives. The Bory Tucholskie forest region is well known, at least regionally, and hopes to increasingly become linked to this logo and the regional foods – particularly marinated mushrooms – it promotes. Several regional products have been distinguished in national foods competition.

The LVV's LAGs are trying to use foods to the same effect, turning plum jam into an "essentialised notion of what constitutes the region – its selling point" (Bell and Valentine 1997, 161). In his presentation, Krzysztof Nowacki (2008) of the LGD Zakole outlined the motivations that drive his group's work, such as the decline of rural communities, the outflow of young people to the cities, and low-income agriculture. The LAG regards traditional foods as one of rural areas' major assets. By means of these products, the group can sell "memories" – a rural counterpoint to a slew of modern ills, such as technological fatigue and noise; landscapes of concrete, glass, and plastic; and cheap products with preservatives, additives etc. "Crunchy bread pulled out of the oven by a grandmother," "the smell of homemade sausage (made from meat!) [sic]" or jam "mixed by a grandmother with a big wooden spoon" are what the LAG sells at "markets, markets, markets…," such as fairs and events for local foods, farming, work, and gardening, as well as at big sports and cultural events, whether regionally or abroad. Indeed, the group's work has been rewarded with recognition such as a regional prize for the best regional promotion. Pan Nowacki told me that his LAG uses at least half of the group's production of plum jam – about 150 jars per year – along with a few other products such as lard as promotional items (see Figure 14). Most jars end up in gift baskets for partners in national and international

exchanges.[129] That is, the current production serves as the foundation for inter-organizational relationships with whose help the LAG hopes to accomplish its larger-scale goals.


Figure 14. Back label of the LGD Zakole's powidła. Note the logos of the EU, the Ministry of Agriculture, and FAPA next to the group's own symbol. Photograph by Olivia Hall

Such interterritorial and international cooperations between different LAGs are explicitly supported by Leader (Meisinger 2006). At the regional level, interterritorial cooperations may address park director Pająkowski's critique that LAGs – encompassing four, maybe seven towns – are too small to have a large impact, at least in creating a regional brand or attracting tourism.

[129] The TPDW is perhaps even more explicit in its use of jam for promotional purposes. Park director Pająkowski goes so far to insist that each recipient of the TPDW's individually numbered jars of powidła sign his or her name in a special log, including ministers, special guests, and visiting anthropologists.

Several neighboring groups working together represent a much wider swath of territory and population.

In practice, all but the newest of the LVV's LAGs have actively participated in European exchanges, sending representatives – both board members and participating producers – to such events as an airport opening in Ireland, a festival in Estonia, a harmonica festival in the UK, a tourism fair in Berlin, and Slow Food's biennial Terra Madre gathering. Marcin Skonieczka, a representative of LGD Wieczno, a group east of the LVV, explained that trips to visit established LAGs in Austria and Germany helped residents of his region understand how such groups operate and be inspired to come up with their own project ideas.

The LGD Zakole has been most actively involved in international exchanges as a member of the European Taste Trail Network. A three-year project from 2005 to 2008, funded primarily by Leader, the project brought together LAGs from eight European countries.[130] Their goal, according to the description on LGD Zakole's website (LGD Zakole Dolnej Wisły 2011), is to promote typical local products, some of the "strongest strategic resources of agricultural terrains in Europe." The network aims to aid producers in bringing their products to an independently functioning market, drawing on an exchange of knowledge and experience between LAGs of the member countries.

In practice, representatives of each group – most frequently members of the leadership teams – visited each other on several occasions, such as the International Tourism Expo of Pilsen, Czech Republic in October 2007 or for a study trip in Grossetto, Italy in February 2008. The LGD Zakole welcomed its project colleagues for a conference on "Development of Rural Areas in Poland and Europe" in August 2008. Much of the group's visit was, naturally, centered on food and local products, such as a visit to the Taste Festival and local agrotouristic businesses.

[130] The eight countries are: Poland, Italy, Spain, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Wales (UK), Ireland, and Greece.

Although the European Taste Trail Network has ended as a project, it forms the basis for the LGD Zakole's plans to further expand its cooperation with LAGs in its own region. Several groups met in 2010 to discuss plans for a voivodship-wide "Taste Trail" in order to heighten the area's attractiveness for tourists.

Thus, while the LVV's LAGs are actively promoting Leader's objectives for using cultural resources, bringing value-added products to market, improving the quality of life in rural areas, and participating in international networks of exchange, participation from different stakeholders appears to be imbalanced, and it is unclear how evenly the projects' benefits are spread across the community.

### *Conclusion*

While, as Barjolle, Paus and Perret (2009) suggest, traditional foods and special labeling are, in most cases, not *per se* rural development strategies, regional products do have significant potential in a complementary role. They can diversify regional and farm household economies, elaborate touristic offerings, and attract visitors to the region. Thereby, they contribute to the EU's broadened goals for rural development as specified in the Second Pillar of the CAP.

These objectives "have become more complex at the same time as Europe itself has grown in diversity and complexity," so that "features of policy goals mapped on to rural complexity and diversity inevitably mean an increasing focus on finding local solutions to particular challenges and opportunities in each region, and a lesser focus on global solutions, decided centrally in Brussels, for the whole of Europe" (Thomson and Bryden 2010, 282). Although the "complexity" referred to here is concerned primarily with environmental and economic issues, part of the variability that needs to be considered for rural development solutions is social. As I

hope I have shown with abundant evidence over the past chapters, even local solutions require constant interrogation of who is setting the agenda and whose interests are privileged.

In the same manner, despite the success of Leader in animating international exchanges between LAGs, it must be asked who is traveling and creating networks. For EU-founded Euroregions,[131] Scott (2000, 115) concludes that as a "largely contrived and orchestrated exercise regulated by nation-states and the EU" they have created only beginnings of cross-border connections between representatives of equivalent agencies and are therefore only "weak links between processes of formal and informal integration." Given, then, the overrepresentation of administrators and other non-citizen stakeholders in LAGs, one must wonder whether it is the Europe of citizens or that of bureaucrats that is growing into an "ever closer union."

[131] Euroregions are cross-border cooperations that aim to "promote common interests and enhance the living standards of the border populations." Their specific objectives depend on individual structures. More limited goals may include promoting international understanding and culture and strengthening economic cooperation, while more highly integrated communities may strive beyond cultural projects to social affairs, health care, education and training, waste management, nature conservation and landscape management, tourism and leisure, and cooperation in the case of natural disasters and transport (Council of Europe, "Euroregions," http://www.coe.int/T/E/Legal_Affairs/Local_and_regional_Democracy/Transfrontier_co-operation/Euroregions/, accessed December 1, 2004).

# CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation by positing Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley as a node where European regulation encounters the reality of the EU citizenry's lived experience. As a "European product" (Welz 2006), the jam can thereby serve as a lens onto the processes that unfold when the EU's abstract notion of "unity in diversity" is filled with content at the local level.

The EU's drive to support cultural diversity – whether in the form of regions, identities, or food traditions – at first glance seems to be in contradiction with its many standardizing regulations (Dunn 2005), particularly in the agricultural and food sectors. Examined more closely, however, the legislation reveals an effort to define and discipline this diversity, exerting similar standardizing pressures. "Regional foods" are to become commodified units of tradition and identity, little kernels of diversity that are exchanged within the larger mantle of Europeanness.

In the case of traditional food products slated for registration with the EU for special designations, debates about the definition of the foods' geographical and culinary authenticity take place at the local level among the producers and other interested parties themselves, as required by the legislation. It is here that local conditions of power and class come to bear on the process, affecting participation and outcomes.

Analyzing these processes at the local level has been a major concern of this dissertation. The results, I believe, support Shucksmith's (2000, 210) view that "(it) is vital to recognize and manage the very real conflicts of interest which exist within…symbolically-constructed

'communities,'" as "(the) personal interests of all individuals in the area are unlikely to be simultaneously advanced." Nearly twenty years after the fall of socialism, class divisions that Nagengast (1991) identified in a different part of rural Poland, also appear to persist in the LVV. As the performance of different habitus shows in the conflict over the ownership of the plum jam tradition, individuals with greater cultural and social capital have an easier time accessing the EU's resources, in line with evidence from other parts of Europe (e.g. Dahl 2007).

The "elite" to some degree also takes definitional ownership of the concepts of tradition and identity. Because, as Herzfeld (2004, 18) points out, "all traditions are in some sense 'invented,'" they also all have the potential to exclude and silence, as "stories of invention are always simultaneously stories of loss" (Dave 2010, 597). Thus LVV teachers privilege certain narratives of regional identity, based on a history of place rather than people, while ignoring alternatives. Powidła producers' discussions of what constitutes Plum Jam from the LVV are more openly but also more contentiously negotiated, as not everyone agrees on which practices and technologies should be permitted.[132] On the other hand, many of them have withdrawn from the process of trying to register powidła with the EU because they feel that their voices are not being heard by the leadership of the Park and other members of the elite.

As a result, the EU's (and Poland's) desire to preserve diverse food cultures and identities in reality has an ambivalent effect. On the one hand, the EU's labeling scheme and funds channeled into promoting traditional products by campaigning for awareness among consumers is creating a wider market for registered foods, thereby providing more incentives for producers to continue or even begin to produce their specialties. Thus it should be noted that without the impetus given

[132] In other cases, producers of some EU-labeled foods such as Comté are using increasingly standardized processing practices, in part because of the mechanization of some stages of production (Gerz and Dupont 2006).

by Norbert Jasiński's EU-sponsored visit to France and the ultimate goal of registration, the revival of powidła might not have taken place.

Similarly, the Local Action Groups that are frequently involved with identifying and developing traditional products at the local level are projects conceived and sponsored by the EU. Marcin Skonieczka, a board member of the LGD Wieczno, described to me the sometimes slow alienation of traditional food products out of their everyday context: "Very often people in our villages, they have some traditional food, but they think that it's very common, that it's nothing. Just that the grandmother is preparing good food, it's ok, because everybody can do this. And they don't see that they can make money on it. It's a very long process to start to economize this food." Thus, the funding and framework the EU provides for the exchange of experiences at the national and international level are key ingredients in helping people to recognize the market potential of their everyday practices.

On the other hand, the demands of the registration process, whether for national or European recognition, can lead to the exclusion or withdrawal of participants and to the narrowing of traditional practices to those acceptable to the most influential members of the producer association as well as the technological and hygienic requirements of the EU.

The LVV's Local Action Groups themselves are equally hampered by existing local hierarchies that inhibit the full participation of non-elite citizens and producers. Presumably the fact that both the geographical indication program and Leader are ultimately administered through the national government, specifically the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, contributes to greater access for elites that are better connected not only within their region but also to other, national elites. For this reason, then, interregional exchanges that

take place under the auspices of official EU programs tend to involve regional elites rather than average citizens, a pattern confirmed by Scott (2000).

On the other hand, the case of powidła also shows that the successful or impending registration of a food product leaves room for alternative practices and narratives. While I have focused primarily on people who cook jam in order to sell it, some jam makers whom I interviewed emphasized that they should not be called "producers" (*producenci)* but "creators" (*twórcy*). Many families, individuals, and organized groups continue to cook jam for their own consumption and pleasure. Some are in fact quite adamant about their lack of commercial interest, highlighting instead their celebration of community. They use whatever ingredients and technologies they see fit, and for them it is a question of personal preference, perhaps also of "tradition," but not of business interest whether the jam is thick enough to stay in a jar when turned upside down.

In addition, after placing much emphasis on the reproduction of class and local hierarchies, for example in the Plumgate Affair and the attempt to form a producer association or participate in LAGs, I want to highlight moments of agency and resistance that also add complexity back into the picture. For this, I want to move from the metaphor of plum jam as a lens to plum jam as a stage on which the people of the LVV perform and tell a narrative of their identity. "Stories about the past," Edwards (1998, 146) tells us "are as much to do with forging local identities and senses of belonging, as they are with history." We saw this in the case of the teachers trying to instill a feeling of regional belonging in their students by choosing a history to tell them. Many people themselves, however, are inscribing themselves into the history of the LVV, especially those whose roots lie in eastern Poland. For this reason, it makes sense that families such as the Kaczmareks or the Króls, who arrived at abandoned farms as children, attach their narrative of

plum jam to artifacts (pots) in their possession, linking themselves and their practices to what makes the plum jam "typical."

For all producers, cooking jam can be a kind of cultural performance that "continually demonstrate(s) and reinforce(s)" an image of regional identity (Pine 1997, 66). Most concretely, they demonstrate how jam is cooked at festivals, for agrotouristic guests, or for the media. Similar to Terrio's (2000) artisan *chocolatiers* in France, they also perform and negotiate their identity through texts, or at least representations of their narrative to the media. More broadly, however, they perform their identity by making their jam available for consumption, entering into an ambiguous zone of production and consumption. Comaroff and Comaroff (2009, 26) eloquently describe this delicate dance: "(The) producers of culture are *also* its consumers, seeing and sensing and listening to themselves enact their identity – and, in the process, objectifying their own subjectivity, thus to (re)cognize [sic] its existence, to grasp it, to domesticate it, to act on and with it…Conversely, consumers also become producers, complicit in that enactment" by becoming conscious of this identity.

Thus, despite all underlying tensions over ownership and power, circulation of "Plum Jam from the Lower Vistula Valley" has started to create a new regional identity. The repeated performance and circulation of branded jam is slowly overlaying the outlines of powidła's production area onto the chunks of diverse historical regions that make up an entity that is produced and consumed by makers and buyers of plum jam alike – the Lower Vistula Valley.

# APPENDIX A

# MAPS OF THE LOWER VISTULA VALLEY

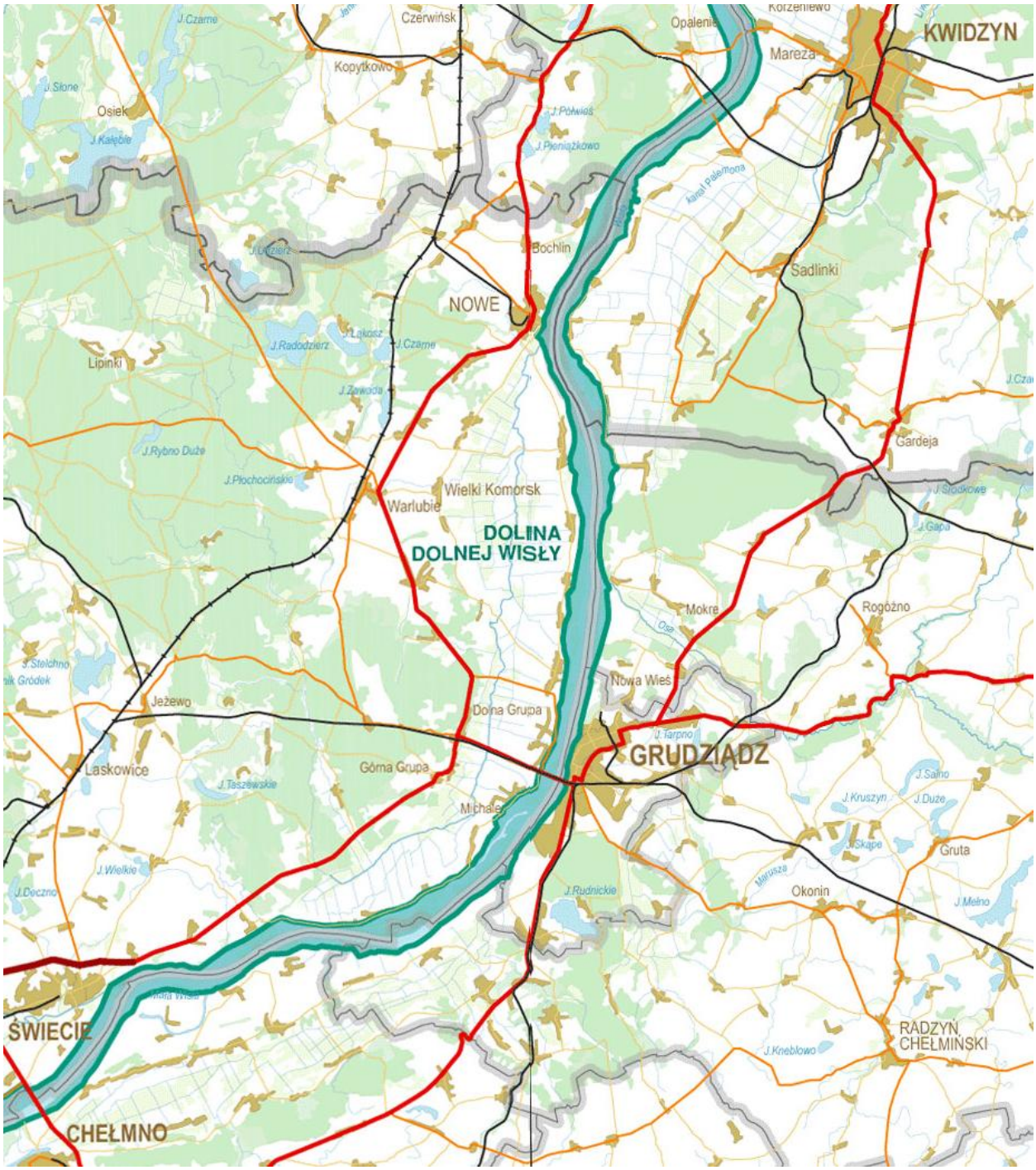


Figure 15. Map of the Lower Vistula valley, northern half

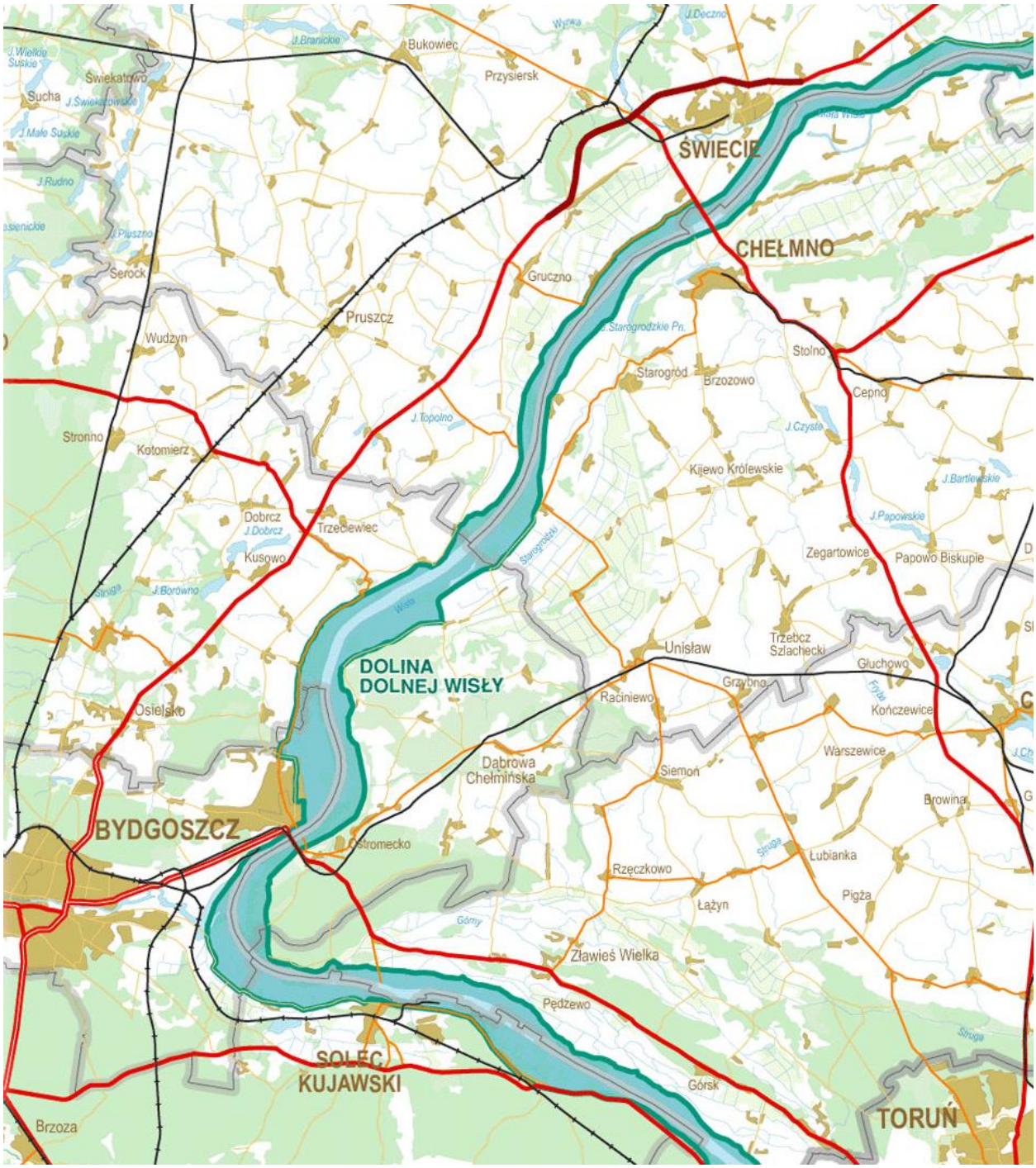


Figure 16. Map of the Lower Vistula Valley, southern half

Source: http://przyroda.polska.pl/regiony/pojezierza_pd/dolina_dolnej_wisly/index.htm

## APPENDIX B

## COOKING POWIDŁA

This series of photos illustrates how powidła are generally cooked in the LVV. This particular examples shows employees of the Landscape Park at work at the Old Mill in Gruczno.

Figure 17. Washing the plums (7 AM)

Figure 18. The plums start to disintegrate (7.30 AM)

Figure 19. Justyna stirs the pot (8.30 AM)

Figure 20. The jam is still much too thin (8.45 AM)

Figure 21. A park worker pours the jam into a ceramic strainer (10 AM)

Figure 22. The stirring continues (1.30 PM)

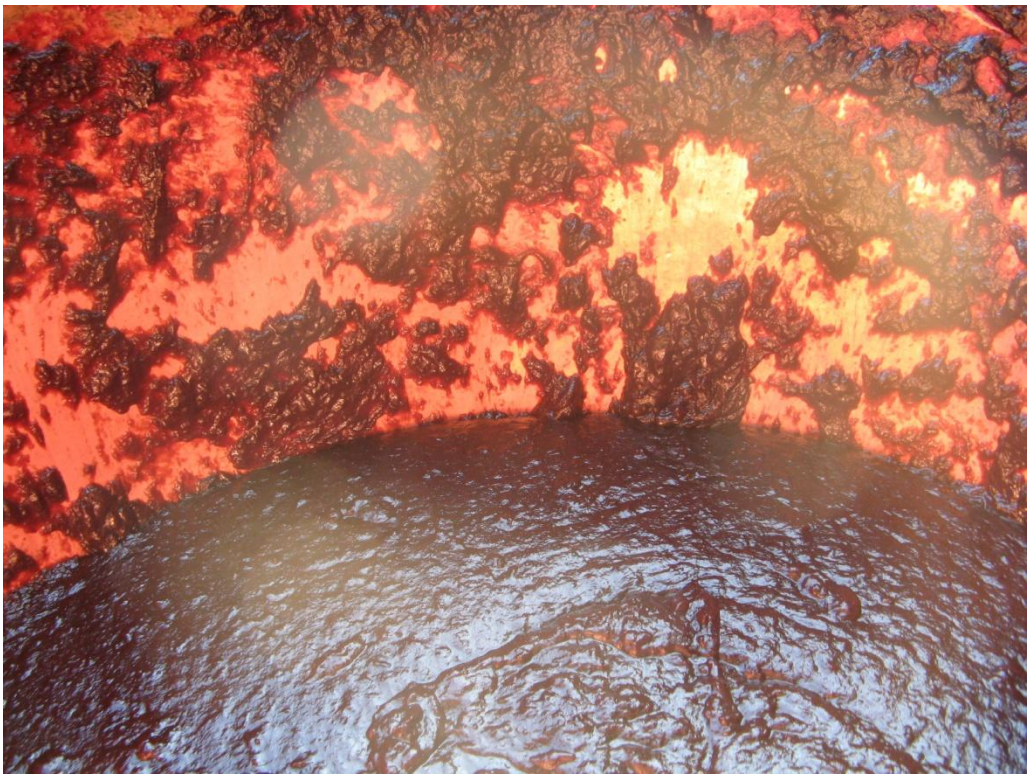

Figure 23. The plum jam has thickened sufficiently (4 PM)

Figure 24. Park workers carry the pot over to the jarring area (4 PM)

Figure 25. The jam is filled into 300 gram jars (4.15 PM)

Figure 26. The jars are wiped clean and sealed (4.30 PM)

Figure 27. Powidła ready to be pasteurized (5 PM)

## APPENDIX C

## POLISH CONSUMERS OF REGIONAL AND TRADITIONAL FOODS

Marek Gąsiorowski, head of the Agrosmak program, emphasized the need to educate consumers, whose awareness of traditional and regional specialty foods is growing but not yet widespread in Poland.[133] Unlike in some EU member states such as Spain and France, where geographically indicated foods have been well established for decades, in Poland only 39% of respondents in a survey had heard of the EU's PDO labels (TRUEFOOD 2011).[134] Given Poland's relatively late start in labeling for geographical indications, these numbers are not surprising.

The understanding of traditional products with geographical indications is greater in urban areas where a financial elite can afford to pay higher prices. As outlined in chapter 6, GIs can fetch significant premiums. Industrial plum jam for example, might cost 2 PLN in the supermarket, while copper-pot-cooked powidła from the LVV costs a minimum of 5 PLN directly from the producer, but more frequently 7 to 15 PLN.

Among Polish cities, financial differences become apparent in the availability of traditional foods. Mariola Karczewska, who works for a regional development organization in Toruń, told the story of a group of ecologically oriented producers of carrot juice who wanted to offer their product locally but were only able to find a large enough market of buyers able to afford their juice in Warsaw. Currently the capital, as well as Kraków and Gdańsk are therefore main places where one might encounter traditional food products in stores.

[133] Piotr Bikont, Poland's first prominent food writer, with a regular column in Newsweek Polska, sees himself as part of the movement to educate Polish consumers about their own and foreign food traditions. Together with his friend Robert Makłowicz, the face of the Polish educational campaign on EU-designated GI products, he promotes not only Polish regional products but also proper culinary techniques for cooking spaghetti, which he says have always been overcooked in the Polish and Austro-Hungarian tradition.

[134] Of 828 respondents, 98% had heard of PDO labels in France, 96% in Spain, and 95% in Italy. Awareness was more limited in Poland (39%), Belgium (47%), and the non-member state Norway (35%).


Figure 28. Traditional foods market in Warsaw's "Blue City" shopping mall

These stores take a variety of different shapes, from general supermarkets to small specialty shops. Even huge, foreign hypermarket chains that shot out of the ground in Poland, such as the British Tesco or the French Carrefour, offer "traditional" foods, although they tend to be industrially made versions without GI labeling. Other locations more likely to offer specially labeled products are the small, national Piotr i Paweł (Peter and Paul) chain, which specializes in up-market foods; small neighborhood kiosks such as the one in the previous chapter to which a producer hand-delivered his cheeses every week; popular one-off traditional food fairs, which ironically often take place in the middle of modern shopping malls (see Figure 28); and Specjał Wiejski,[135] a successful local chain of specialty food shops in Warsaw.

[135] "Specjał Wiejski" means "country(side) specialty."

Specjał Wiejski's eight branches are generally located in affluent residential neighborhoods such as Żoliborz or Saska Kępa and sell organic and traditional foods, mainly from Poland but also from a few other European countries. Owner Arkadiusz Szymczak is quite critical of Slow Food and the Polish Ministry of Agriculture, both of whom he believes are focusing too much on finding and creating producers, to the detriment of creating an actual market. His own focus is on bringing products to people willing and able to pay for them.

***Consumer Motivations***

With the fall of socialism, Polish consumers have been transformed from "hunters" who tried to acquire products and services that they needed or wanted through their connections (*znajomości*) or received them passively from the state into consumers – individuals who "believe that they are *different* than others and so need products especially for them" (Dunn 2001, 277).

While I did not conduct a systematic study of the motivations that drove Polish consumers to pay a premium for traditional foods, the design of stores such as Specjał Wiejski and the shelves on which supermarkets display "traditional" foods is telling. Rustic wood, parchment-style paper, and vendors in old-fashioned aprons hint at how "craft commodities satisfy the nostalgia for and appeal of localized goods and modes of production associated with a traditional past" (Terrio 2000, 38-39). Producers and vendors repeatedly identified two dimensions of this nostalgia that their customers emphasize and will pay for – health and taste.

Arkadiusz Szymczak described the customers of his stores as driven primarily by health concerns. They are mostly women, especially mothers who want to feed their children healthy foods, but also older individuals who may be in ill health. With traditional products, he said, they

know that they will eat no artificial ingredients and additives. Given the often much higher price of these "healthy" foods and their urban, well-off consumers, I speculate that one motivation for their purchase is symbolic, as the principal use of luxury goods is, according to Appadurai (1986ab, 38), "*rhetorical* and *social* [sic]." The language of health that gives the purchases a cloak of necessity can itself be seen as a display of cultural capital (Phillips 2005).

Many producers named the greater health benefits of their foods as a motivating factor in producing them, especially for their own use. Katarzyna and Łukasz Wiśniewscy, for example, are former city dwellers with an outlook similar to the customers they now serve. They moved to the countryside in pursuit of a calmer lifestyle and grow and raise much of the food they themselves consume. With their powidła and other home- and naturally made goods they, in turn, want to help others to get away from buying "Chinese dried soups with all kinds of 'E' numbers"[136] at the supermarket. In Świecie, Cyryl Jabloński complained about the quality of such basic ingredients as sugar, which "also used to be different. It was healthier. Today there are chemicals in that sugar…They add pesticides to those sugar beets." Pani Izdebska, who runs an agrotouristic farm, agreed that her customers are often tired of supermarket food "full of chemistry."

These producers are describing a perspective that contrasts industrial with more natural food grown and processed without chemical additives, which in turn is seen to make it healthier to consume. This view is occasionally supported in the media, for example by a headline that quotes Slow Food Polska as finding in a study that "healthy food costs on average 15% more than industrial equivalents."[137]

[136] "E numbers" are codes for additives listed on industrially prepared foods.
[137] In fact, the perceived value of traditional food products may derive in part from the existence of cheap, mass-produced competition, against which their "identity" can be measured (Gille 2009, 71).

The second dimension frequently identified by buyers of traditional foods is taste. Even more than health, this aspect becomes pertinent through the contrast between today's industrial foods and the flavors of the past, which are often regarded with a sense of nostalgia. Meat and sausages, in particular, seem to attract scrutiny among Polish eaters. Sausage stands, along with bakeries, always attracted the longest lines at traditional food fairs in cities, and I was told anecdotes of Poles filling their suitcases with sausages whenever they left for their work abroad.

Especially older individuals reminisced about the meat of decades past. Pan Wiśniewski from Gruczno, for example pulled a face when he thought of the lunch he had eaten earlier. "The potatoes I ate. But the goulash meat was so dry, I left it. Even the dogs didn't want it." He blamed butcher shops that freeze meat for several days and lose much of the juices. In the past, before the changes of the 1990s, he asserted, meat was much better. When family friend Rudi visited from Germany twenty years ago, he praised their Polish meat. "Not nowadays, though."[138] Bernadeta Kasprzyk, a few kilometers down the road, agreed with him wholeheartedly. Unlike the smoked pork and ham of her childhood, which lasted all year, "when you buy such meat products today, after two days they've already gone bad." The good milk, cream, and meat, she explained, can now be found in Ukraine or Lithuania. "That's how it used to taste here."

These anecdotes point to a relationship between foods and the past that is more complex than a simple division between pre-industrial and EU-industrial periods of food production. Rather, even the socialist era, whose modernizing standardizations many post-socialist consumers continue to view with suspicion, can evoke a sense of nostalgia for a "safe and reliable" socialist past (Jung 2009, 41). These Polish statements strongly echo a similar sentiment in Lithuania,

[138] More explicitly, pan Wiśniewski quipped (in German, as I sometimes spoke in German with him): "Heute ist das Fleisch zum Scheiß." Roughly translated: "Today's meat is shit."

where sausage brands using the word "Soviet" link themselves to ideas of natural foods and national traditions in contrast to the EU, targeting an older generation in particular (Klumbytė 2009). However, most consumers and the marketing that targets them seem to point to a simpler past before modern production methods.

Given such real or perceived contrasts between new, industrial foods and products of the past, "the taste of childhood is valued by many," according to Krzysztof Nowacki, of the Local Action Group Zakole Dolnej Wisły. Formerly mundane foods are now "Traditions" with premium prices, and local farmers' wives were surprised to find that the *smalec* (lard) with lovage they had always had at home could be sold for 5 PLN a jar.

More yet, food inspector Marek Szczygielski adopted an activist agenda when he argued that younger people, who are growing up with industrial foods, are not learning what "real" food tastes like but have their taste buds ruined by MSG.[139] Therefore "we need to get traditional tastes out there again," as "to the end of their lives people don't forget the tastes and smells of their childhood."

[139] MSG, monosodium glutamate, is a flavor enhancer widely used in industrial food production.

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## GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| baca | head shepherd |
| bez cukru | without sugar |
| bigos | hunter's stew |
| bocian | lit. stork, wooden stirrer for powidła |
| bryndza | soft sheep's milk cheese from the Tatra Mountains |
| chocolatiers | French chocolate artisans |
| działka | small plot of land outside of the city |
| edukacja regionalna | regional education |
| Festiwal Smaku | Taste Festival |
| gimnazjum | middle school |
| gmina | Polish administrative unit, municipality |
| gospodyni | farmer's wife, country woman |
| góral | highlander in the Tatra Mountains, also the *góral* language |
| juhas | assistant shepherd |
| kocioł | copper pot |
| kompot | stewed fruit |
| liceum | high school |
| marmolada | jam |
| nalewka | cordial, liqueur |
| niskosłodki | low sugar |
| oscypek | smoked sheep's milk cheese |
| pan | Polish honorific, "Mr." |

| | |
|---|---|
| pani | Polish honorific, “Mrs.” or “Ms.” |
| powiat | Polish administrative unit, county |
| powidła śliwkowe | plum jam |
| producent | producer |
| slovenský oštiepok | Slovak oscypek cheese |
| smażyć | to fry, term applied to cooking powidła |
| sołtys | mayor of a rural village or small community |
| staropolska | “old Polish,” type of plum |
| strzeleckie | from Strzelce (adjective) |
| suszarnia | drying shed |
| szkola podstawowa | elementary school |
| śliwowica | plum brandy |
| śmiało! | come on!, don’t hesitate! |
| śweckie | from Świecie (adjective) |
| Święto Śliwki | Plum Festival |
| twórca | creator |
| voivodship | Polish administrative unit, similar to a state or German “Land” |
| węgierka | “Hungarian,” preferred type of plum for powidła |
| wojna | war |
| zwykła | “common,” type of plum |