



Heritage of Migrants in a National Museum

Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła

To cite this article: Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła (21 Sep 2023): Heritage of Migrants in a National Museum, Journal of Intercultural Studies, DOI: [10.1080/07256868.2023.2244901](https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2023.2244901)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2023.2244901>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 21 Sep 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Heritage of Migrants in a National Museum

Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła 

Institute of Intercultural Studies, Faculty of International and Political Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the case of migrants' heritage inclusion into the mainstream through the lens of theoretical perspectives originating from both the heritage and migration studies fields. It presents a case study of the event *Jul på Polsk* organised by the Norwegian Folk Museum in the years 2016–2018 and compares it to the findings from the study focusing on the individual engagement with Christmas heritage by the Poles settled in Norway. The aim of the article is to analyse the various impacts of the institutionalisations of minority heritage. These include, on the one hand, the opening of the mainstream heritage to minorities and giving agency to the minorities in shaping the way their heritage is displayed to broad audiences. On the other hand, these include selling minority heritage, creating a deficit of meaning in relation to heritage upon institutionalisation and an inevitable split between individual engagement with heritage and its institutionalised imageries, even if the same people put in force both implementations. In the final section, the article discusses the responsibilities of the museums regarding the shaping of national memories as a path for the creation of more inclusive futures.





KEYWORDS

Cultural heritage; migration; intercultural heritage; museum; heritage in becoming

Introduction

The Norwegian Folk Museum of Oslo, with its past exhibitions, sets high standards for immigrant minorities' heritage inclusion within the national museums across the continent and beyond. It acknowledged how the minority culture adjusted to Norway's living conditions, presenting an exhibition called 'a Pakistani Home in Norway' (2002) that was excellently described and analysed by Naigub (2013). It also carried out a research project oriented toward the transnational livelihoods of Norwegian Turkish, Pakistani, and Bosnian minorities called *Norsk i går, i dag, i morgen?*¹ (2001–2005), with an accompanying exhibition. Almost two decades later, after a significant influx of labour migrants from Poland, the museum opened up for Polish heritage as well.

This article aims at analysing the way Polish heritage was included in the museum through a case study of an event called *Jul på Polsk* (Christmas Polish way). This analysis

CONTACT Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła  k.nikielska-sekula@uj.edu.pl  ul. Władysława Reymonta 4, 30-059 Kraków, Poland;  <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Karolina-Nikielska-Sekula>;  <https://nikielska-sekula.com/>

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

is accompanied by the presentation of the findings from a study focusing on how Norwegian Poles celebrate Christmas in a private setting. The article suggests that there is a gap between what the event displays as *Jul på Polsk*, and the way Christmas celebrations are approached and performed by Poles settled in Norway. Based on the comparison of institutionalised and private celebrations of Polish Christmas in Norway, it discusses the dynamic between the individual performances of heritage (Smith 2016) and the folklorist institutional display of so-called 'Polish Christmas' in the museum, reflecting what Smith (2016, 2021) called Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). By doing so, the article problematises the question of institutionalisation of the heritage of migrant minorities, analysing the various impacts it can produce: from the inclusion of minority heritage into the mainstream and its folklorisation, the negotiations between the minority members and the museum employees regarding the way the inherited knowledge is being adjusted to surrounding circumstances of a new homeland, to the change in the meaning of heritage caused by the institutionalisation and minority heritage marketisation. The article discusses the 'erasure' of contradicting and nuanced personal performances of heritage in favour of a synthetic, consensual narrative produced by the museum (see Macdonald 2013; Smith 2016, 2021).

I start the article by introducing a theoretical framework from the intersection of heritage and migration studies to analyse the collected data: a case study of the *Jul på Polsk* event and the findings from the ongoing study of Christmas celebrations of Poles settled in Norway. Subsequently, the cases, along with the context, methods, and findings, are introduced. The final section critically tackles the issue of institutionalisation of minority heritage. Ultimately, the article aims to bridge the gap between migration and heritage fields of study. Migration scholars tend to tackle heritage in a descriptive, rather than analytical manner, using it often as a synonym for background culture. Heritage scholars, in turn, while long interested in the heritage of those on the move, often fall into the trap of methodological nationalism (Byrne 2016) through limiting their analyses to the constraints of the nation-states. Instead, this article has the ambition of bringing together the perspectives from both scholarly traditions in order to adequately discuss the performance and display of the cultural heritage of migrant persons.

Poles currently constitute the largest immigrant minority in Norway with 121,406 individuals of Polish origin settled there (SSB 2022). The growth in the number of Poles settled in Norway dates back to the 1970s, but a significant boost in the arrivals from Poland to settle was observed after the Polish accession to the EU in 2004 (Huang et al. 2016). The majority of the newcomers arrived as labour migrants. Currently, Poles are scattered across the country. They occupy jobs in most sectors of the Norwegian economy from highly skilled professionals, service workers, and state institution employees, to low-skilled workers.

Christmas is one of the most important holidays celebrated in Poland. The celebrations, while consisting of references to religion, focus mainly on a family gathering in private houses and performing familial traditions. The content of private celebrations differs across the regions of the country and across families as a result of domestic mobility, but fits a general frame of eating together during Christmas Eve, decorating houses, singing/listening to Christmas Carols and exchanging gifts. The AHD of what is labelled 'Polish Christmas' is, in turn, quite consistent. A religious dimension of Christmas in private celebrations is brought up to varying levels according to how religious the

family is – it may take the form of a joint prayer, church visits, or bible reading. Poles settled abroad adopt various strategies for Christmas celebrations – some celebrate with their nuclear families in Norway, some travel back to visit families in Poland, and others invite their families from Poland to celebrate with them in Norway. These strategies often change yearly.

Theoretical Framework: Bridging the Gap Between Heritage and Migration Fields of Study

This article departs from a processual understanding of heritage popularised in the last two decades within the critical heritage studies (Harvey 2001; Dicks 2004; Harrison 2013; Macdonald 2013; Smith 2016, 2021; Harrison et al. 2020; Holtorf and Högberg 2021). This tradition sees heritage as a matter of meaning-making performances and practices relating to the remembering of the past but used for the very purposes of the present (Harvey 2001: 327; Smith 2016: 12–13). Harvey (2001) concluded that heritage is a verb, placing human agency in the centre of heritage analyses. Smith announced that all heritage is intangible, indicating that heritage ‘is not so much a “thing” as a set of values and meanings’ (Smith 2016: 21; see also Smith 2021: 40) and ‘a cultural and social process’ (2016: 13). What constitutes heritage are the practices of the actors engaging with the objects and imageries of the past. Had these practices been absent, the material objects designated as heritage would have been meaningless (Smith 2016: 13). Heritage has also been analysed as a discursive practice (Harrison 2013) by critical heritage scholars, and linked to Macdonald’s (2013: 268) theorisation of social and cultural memory as ‘past presencing’ (see Smith 2021: 22).

Contributing to the processual approaches to heritage, I developed elsewhere (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019) the concept of *heritage in becoming* in order to grasp the process of adjusting minority heritage to the circumstances of the urban environment of mainstream society. Heritage in becoming was inspired by Ingold and Kurttila’s conceptualisation of LTK (‘traditional knowledge as generated in the practices of locality’) (2000: 184) for the purposes of their research on the Sami population in rural Lapland. LTK relates the dynamic adjustments of inherited knowledge to the circumstances of the everyday surrounding of the actors and is in opposition to MTK (‘traditional knowledge enframed in the discourse of modernity’) – the genealogical understanding of heritage as a set of tangible and intangible elements that are passed down from generation to generation in an unchanged form. The latter resonates with an AHD concept developed by Smith (2016) within critical heritage studies. Adjusting the LTK to the urban environment of international migration, which is a focus of this study, and acknowledging the conceptualisation of heritage as a processual performance (Harvey 2001; Harrison 2013; Smith 2016, 2021), I defined heritage in becoming as referring ‘to the situational and processual character of recreating inherited practices within the current circumstances of the present’ (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019: 1113). The concept of heritage in becoming proved useful in grasping the dynamic between the genealogical heritage and the way people engage with it in a new socio-material setting, highlighting the very process of heritage change under mobility (Macdonald 2013: 214–215; Smith 2016: 15). The concept of heritage in becoming is employed in this article to analyse

the heritage performance around Christmas within and beyond the national museum's context.

Narratives around heritage used for the purposes of national identity have traditionally approached heritage in a genealogical way, contributing to the fixed, unprocessual image of certain heritage practices that are made into the common understanding of a shared national identity (see Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 2012; Hall 1999; Harrison 2013). They resemble what Wagner (1986) called a genealogical approach to history, and Smith's (2016) AHD, in which historical objects are meant to serve the purpose of consistent national narratives, hence presenting a unified meaning supporting the national myth. This contrasts with polychronic interpretations of heritage on the individual level (Smith 2021) and is consistent with the idea of heritagisation (Catrina and Isnart 2014): the making of heritage for certain purposes seen by some researchers as a political strategy to reach various goals (Ashley 2014). As the research at the intersection of heritage and national identity shows, sometimes this goal serves the legitimisation of ethnic and national diversity within the national narrations. This is salient in the case of Canada (Leung 2006; Chung and Bains 2020), Australia (Ahmed 2014), and Singapore (Goh 2011) – nations that have long advocated for their national multiculturalism, and gradually more often observable in other countries in Europe and beyond, where the multicultural ideals are refining the view on national heritage (see Gnecco 2015). Harrison (2013: 177) claims: 'heritage has been used to establish multiculturalism itself as part of a contemporary national origin myths [sic!]' in certain countries, with varying effects of sometimes masking the inequalities in the name of cultural diversity. In this article, I exemplify how a non-settler and traditionally homogeneous (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008), but contemporarily de-facto multicultural (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007: 197–198), Norway attempts to include minority heritage into the mainstream through the initiatives of the Folk Museum in Oslo.

It is not new to say that the meaning of institutionalised heritage may differ from the way heritage is interpreted by the individuals as they engage with it (see for example Harrison 2013 on official and unofficial heritage). Olsen states:

When cultural artifacts and expressions become embraced by institutions their meaning is altered. They are infused with new contents, meanings formerly attached are denied access in the transformational process, and cultural expressions and artefacts are subsumed in categories where they previously had no place. (Olsen 2004: 31)

Olsen exemplifies how the process of institutionalising minority heritage in the quest for its inclusion within the national mainstream causes a deficit of meaning. The minority community no longer recognises the context of their heritage, which in their view does not match its 'original' meaning. In this article, I employ the concept of the deficit of meaning to shed light on one of the dimensions of Polish heritage inclusion within institutions such as the Norwegian Folk Museum.

Scholars within migration studies have suggested that the adaptation of immigrants to the new homeland happens very much incidentally (Alba and Nee 2003; Morawska 2009). What they mean by this is that the acquisition of new practices, values and preferences over the time spent in the new homeland is done without giving this process much reflection by the actors: it happens 'just like this' (see Morawska 2009). In a similar mode, some researchers have suggested that migrants carry the tangible and

intangible elements of their culture and adjust them to the new homeland's circumstances, changing the landscape of the receiving society (Krase 2012; Nikielska-Sekuła 2016). This process happens without an intention to change the new homeland's cultural practices and values either, but rather as a result of adjusting individual habits to the new surroundings. The processes of negotiation between the old and the new, seen from both perspectives: of migrant actors, and from the side of a receiving society, may lead to a change in cultural practices among the members of minority and mainstream communities in the new homeland (Krase 2012; Nikielska-Sekuła, *forthcoming*).

The relationship the actors maintained between the new and old homeland, is seen in contemporary migration studies through the lens of transnationality. Transnationality refers to 'various kinds of global or cross-border connections' (Vertovec 2001: 573) and is an 'analytic optic which makes visible the increasing intensity and scope of circular flows of persons, goods, information and symbols triggered by international labour migration' (Çağlar 2001: 607). The transnational influences on the cultural practices of the actors and receiving societies, as well as the dynamic regarding the cultural change within the societies affected by international mobility, can be analysed through a theoretical framework coined by Rapoport et al. (2020). Inspired by Bisin and Verdier's (2000) model of cultural transmission, Rapoport et al. (2020) differentiate between three types of knowledge transmission between the mainstream society, migrants, and migrants' ancestral homelands: (1) assimilation²: 'diffusion of values from natives to migrants', (2) dissemination: 'from migrants to natives', and (3) cultural remittances: transmission of (cultural) knowledge acquired in the new homeland 'from migrants to their origin community'. This framework will support the conceptualisations originating from heritage studies regarding heritage performances and the inclusion of minority heritage within the heritage practices of mainstream society that I problematised at the beginning of this section. The following sections present the analyses of a case study – the *Jul på Polsk* event organised for a period of three years annually by the Norwegian Folk Museum – and compare it with the data focusing on Polish Norwegians' individual engagement with Christmas traditions.

***Jul på Polsk* – 'Christmas Polish Way' in the Norwegian Folk Museum in Oslo**

Jul på Polsk was an annual event organised by the Norwegian Folk Museum in Oslo between 2016 and 2018 (Figure 1). The event focused on Polish Christmas Celebrations and addressed a broad audience of the Norwegian Folk Museum's visitors, yet focusing especially on the mainstream society and Polish minority. It took place on the weekend close to the 11th of November, which marks Polish Independence Day, yet its programme did not focus on this significant national holiday in Poland, but rather on Christmas traditions. The event was advertised on social media and on the official websites of the museum as a glimpse into how Poles in Norway celebrate Christmas. It featured workshops and games for children including Gingerbread baking and Christmas decoration making, Christmas food tasting, a Christmas Carol concert in Polish, and hosting of *Szopka Krakowska*: a long-lasting tradition of nativity scene display originating from Kraków. The highlight of the event was the lighting of the so-called 'Polish Christmas tree' (expert interview) and the singing of carols in Polish and Norwegian.



Figure 1. *Jul på Polsk's* flyer featuring a picture of Szopka Krakowska styled as Stav Church. Credits: Norwegian Folk Museum.

The museum entered a partnership with the Polish Embassy in Oslo for the purposes of event preparations, and Scouts from the *Polish Scouting in Norway* association volunteered during the event.

The data presented in this section were collected through the analyses of the online and on-site (in the museum) materials focusing on the event such as event pages on social media and other websites including the official website of the Norwegian Folk Museum, information boards in the museum, online discussions about the event in social media and online forums in Polish and Norwegian. This was supported by an observation on-site during the 2018 event combined with photo-taking. Additionally, an expert interview with an employee of the Norwegian Folk Museum responsible for the event was conducted in September 2022. My positionality, as a member of the Polish Norwegian community, a native of the Polish language, and fluent in Norwegian, as well as an academic teacher of the Norwegian society course (*samfunnsfag*), influenced the analytical work presented below: I was a native to the Polish heritage displayed and familiar with Norwegian culture and society not only through living in Norway but also through studying it in an advanced manner. These gave me a deep understanding of the research subject combined with adequate language proficiency to analyse the collected data.

Analysing the data collected around the event *Jul på Polsk* through the lens of the theoretical perspectives presented in section two brought up five issues with very different impacts that I discuss below: (1) the negotiations between Polish and Norwegian heritage that may be regarded as heritage in becoming, yet on an institutional level, (2)

the opening of mainstream heritage to the minority culture, (3) the deficit of meaning regarding the artificial connection between the Christmas and Polish Independence Day, (4) the display of institutionalised folklore advertised falsely as a way Poles celebrate Christmas in Norway, and (5) the marketisation of minority heritage for profit.

Heritage in Becoming on an Institutional Level

It is quite clear that the event was characterised by a polyphony of influences regarding the Christmas heritage on display. Some of its elements bore the traces of what I call heritage in becoming, yet in an institutionalised form. As an expert from the museum told me, the content of the event depended very much on the choices of both the employees of the Museum and volunteers of Polish origin who were invited by the museum to help out with the event. The negotiations between the two parties were to some extent visible during the event. If we look at certain circumstances surrounding the event, we can see that they clearly refer to the tradition of Norwegian Christmas celebrations. The timing of the event – November – is a very typical month to start Christmas preparations in Norway in the form of Christmas workshops, learning Christmas traditions in child care and educational institutions, and annual Christmas meetings at workplaces, even if the ‘official’ Christmas period starts with the beginning of advent period in December. It is not the case in Poland, where the advent period itself is seen as a time for Christmas preparations. In Poland, decorating the house, Christmas tree lighting, Christmas workshops and Christmas meetings take place in December, closer to Christmas, and Christmas events continue in January. Despite the attempts of the commercial actors to extend Christmas to November, this month is not associated by the general population in Poland with Christmas and is typically seen as the month of All Saints celebrations, and to a lesser extent, a month of National Day celebrations in Poland. Setting the ‘Polish’ Christmas Day in the Norwegian Folk Museum in November was definitely influenced by the local customs regarding early celebrations of Christmas, which further shows the first influence of the receiving society on the event. The second imprint of local Christmas heritage on the event is lighting the Christmas tree and singing carols around it. This is typically done at the beginning of advent in Norway in schools, neighbourhoods and municipalities. The lighting of the Christmas tree is not a tradition in Poland, but rather a practical act not accompanied by celebrations. Finally, the *Jul på Polsk* event featured *Szopka Krakowska*, a nativity scene ordered and made in Poland. These art pieces are traditionally inspired by sacral buildings. The one imported from Poland was styled after the Stave Church, displayed at the open-air museum at Norwegian Folk Museum, and the figurines were dressed in Norwegian folk costumes. Hence, the Christmas traditions performed by the Poles were fitted into the mainstream structure of Christmas celebrations in the receiving society in terms of timing, practices, and even the artefacts resembling what I called heritage in becoming. The result of this mutual transmission of knowledge between the Norwegian national institution and the Polish community in Norway is the unique combination of Christmas traditions labelled as *Jul på Polsk* and institutionalised through the display in the national museum. It shows that the concept of heritage in becoming can sometimes relate to institutionalised heritage. It is not always possible, yet in this case, the organisation of the event resembled, from the report of an expert interviewed, a participatory project involving Polish immigrants

and native Norwegians, which caused heritage negotiations (see also Smith 2016: 15). Yet, as I present further in the text, what was on a display differed very much from the heritage in becoming produced by the Poles in Norway in their private celebrations.

Opening of Mainstream Heritage to the Cultural Practices of Minorities

Secondly, singing in Polish during the lighting of the Christmas tree, a very popular tradition in Norway, is a marker of the attempt to refine national Norwegian heritage to include a multicultural input. This being done by one of the national museums gives a message of the opening of national heritage to the heritage of new Norwegians, an idea the Norwegian Folk Museum has promoted for almost two decades through other projects I reference in the Introduction. It is salient that Norway, as a de-facto multicultural nation (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007: 197–198), seeks, yet to a lesser extent than settler and traditionally multicultural societies, the legitimisation of diversity as part of its national heritage, and does it through forming various transcultural heritages (Macdonald 2013: 192–193). I discussed this trend elsewhere using the case of Norwegian National Day celebrations (Nikielska-Sekuła, [forthcoming](#)). While the dominant norm remains clear and prioritised, the attempts to include minorities within the cultural landscape and cultural heritage of Norway are present.

The Deficit of Meaning

A third issue is setting the date for the celebrations on/around November 11th, Polish Independence Day. This was discussed in online forums and on the event page of *Jul på Polsk* on social media by Norwegian Poles, and there were posts by those who openly believed it to be strange.³ The argument was that Independence Day requires singing of the Polish anthem rather than Christmas Carols, which in Poland are never associated with Independence Day. It links to the fact that it is odd to celebrate Christmas in any form but commercial advertisements as early as November in Poland. The impression is that while celebrating Christmas in November is accepted by the Polish Norwegian community because it does not stand in contradiction to the local schedule of Christmas celebration, for many the clash lies in an artificial connection between Christmas and the Independence Day of Poland underlined by the organisers. What looks like a nice and respectful gesture towards the Polish community in Norway, sparks surprise among some. This can be looked upon through the lens of Olsen's (2004) deficit of meaning concept. The original heritage of the group was taken from them and institutionalised, changing the original meaning in the process and causing consternation.

Reproduction of Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD)

The programme of the event promised an experience of Polish Christmas and getting to know how Poles in Norway celebrate at home.⁴ Yet, some parts of the programme resembled mere folklore. The Christmas carols concert, accompanied by Polish regional dresses worn by the performers is not something people do at home, even in Poland. Such events resemble the AHD (Smith 2016) of 'Polish Christmas' available through

the TV and musical arrangements organised around Christmas, mostly financed from public money in Poland. As the expert from the museum pointed out, the concert was arranged by the Polish Embassy in Oslo and indeed financed by them. Another discrepancy regards the food served during the event. While presenting the traditional dishes served on the occasion of Christmas in Poland, the organisers overlooked the difficulties the Poles settled in Norway face in obtaining ingredients to make them. Reportedly, the museum had used similar transnational strategies to obtain the products to prepare served dishes as the Poles settled in Norway do. Yet, those who fail to organise these products (and many just do not bother to do that), modify the food served according to what is available in Norway, and this aspect of Christmas food consumed by the Poles in Norway was omitted in the museum. Macdonald (2013: 214–215) warns that the museums' 'challenge is to make sure that they do not overlook more hybrid, transcultural forms or identities, and also that they do not contribute to further reifying pristine "cultures" and so generating further "exclusions"'. In the Norwegian Folk Museum, the promise 'to experience how Poles celebrate Christmas in Norway' was not fulfilled. The picture of the Christmas traditions displayed was only partly correct, referring to the institutionalised image of Polish Christmas heritage and presented in a very genealogical form with the omission of the nuances of celebrations by individual actors.

The Marketisation of Minority Heritage for Profit

Finally, as the event was ticketed, it can be looked upon through the lens of the 'economic commodification' (Harvey 2001: 324) of minority heritage. The expert from the museum I interviewed told me that a similar, but not ethnically marked event was organised yearly but did not enjoy much popularity. The museum sought to enhance the turnout of visitors and came up with an idea to provide it with a Polish-ethnic affiliation. This proved successful – the museum, thanks to profiling the event as Polish, gained *visitability* (Dicks 2004). The number of visitors rose to several thousand and brought the museum a profit. Viewing heritage as capital and selling it is not new and was described in now-canonical studies from the cultural heritage field (see Graham 2002). The marketisation of minority heritage is part of this process, and hence what was observed in the case study aligns with the common practices of the heritage industry.

Individual Celebrations of Christmas by Poles Settled in Norway

This section builds its argument on 54 interviews with Poles settled in Norway collected in two batches: between October 2019 – March 2020 and between October 2021 – March 2022.⁵ The methods of data collection included photo elicitation 'authodriver' interviews (Clark-Ibáñez 2004) combined with in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The composition of the respondents was as follows: 12 identified as males, 42 as females, they were aged between 23–48 years old, with the majority in their mid-30s. They had lived in Norway for 1 to 18 years at the time of the interview, with a majority having been settled in Norway for 8–11 years. Those in relationships mostly had Polish partners, but some were mixed couples with Norwegian partners. All respondents were post-accession migrants, meaning that they arrived in Norway after Poland's EU accession in 2004. The overwhelming majority of the participants in the study were settled permanently or

temporarily in Norway with their partners and families or solo, but without partners left behind in Poland. A few stayed in Norway on a circular basis as commuters, with their life centres in Poland. All respondents declared some skills in the Norwegian language, with around 90 per cent declaring the skills on at least a communicative level. The sample was dominated by highly skilled professionals and service workers, while low-skilled job takers were underrepresented with only a few representatives.

The interviews focused on the engagement of the respondents with various cultural heritages on different levels. This article discusses the thread regarding Christmas celebrations and analyses the statements and images focusing on practices, routines and traditions around Christmas performed by the respondents. In other words, this section analyses heritage performances (Harvey 2001; Harrison 2013; Smith 2016, 2021) of the respondents looking at how the actors engage with traditions, objects, values, and more that relate to Christmas and to which they have access through inherited knowledge, socialised practices, practices adopted later in the life course, cultural imageries of Christmas (film, literature), commercialised images of Christmas, and more. The outcome of this engagement is a unique idea of Christmas celebrated in private settings. Due to the mobility trajectories and European cultural background of the respondents, the elements of Christmas they have access to and engage with obviously refer to local, regional and national Christmas traditions originating from Poland and Norway, the Western commercialised idea of Christmas reproduced by pop culture, and religious connotations of this event within the Roman-Catholic church (dominant in Poland), and to a lesser extent, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (dominant in Norway). These further contextualise the heritage performance of the respondents within the national discourses of the two countries, each of them regarding Christmas as an important highlight in the national heritage discourse.

Given this contextualisation, performing Christmas heritage by the actors has a certain consequence: the outcomes of the engagement with Christmas influence a de facto change of the national heritage through the *assimilation* of the new practices, *dissemination* of the inherited practices to the new communities, and *cultural remittances* of the new practices to the background communities (Rapoport et al. 2020). Moreover, the adjustment of the inherited knowledge to the current surrounding circumstances reflects heritage in becoming: ‘the performance of heritage [that] is constantly in motion, reacting and adjusting the remembered and imagined past to the present circumstances’ (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019: 1116).

As a rule of thumb, respondents, including those who shared family ties with Norwegians, either through their own intimate partnership or through more remote family connections, attempted to recreate the ‘traditional’ Christmas – that is the Christmas they remembered from their childhoods. By doing so, those celebrating with ethnic Norwegians contributed to the *dissemination* (Rapoport et al. 2020) of their Christmas traditions to mainstream society. What is considered ‘traditional’ meant different things for different people and was very often dependent on the region of Poland one originally came from as well as the traditions that were maintained within the family. For some respondents, traditions that were encountered after relocation, such as the advent calendar in its multiplicity of forms, as well as gingerbread baking and decorating were the traditions that were incorporated as completely new upon the engagement with new Christmas traditions:

What I learned in Norway and what I started to do here is baking cookies for Christmas and decorating them, because it is very easy to buy this gingerbread dough here (...). This is what I had never done in Poland, and only started to do in Norway. (Ela)

For others, these traditions were seen as a continuation (sometimes with insignificant variations) of the traditions celebrated in their families prior to migration.

Gingerbreads. This is my tradition. This is something I brought here from Poland. I decorate cookies every year. (...) Once I suggested doing it as an activity for a group of teenagers in the institution I work for. (Anna)

The gingerbread example clearly shows how what may be taken as a seemingly unified Christmas heritage of Poles, actually differs on an individual level – the same tradition can be considered foreign by one, while another claimed it as one's own.

A tradition more commonly assumed as foreign to what the respondents regarded as 'traditional' Christmas was a *Rampenissen* play – a mischievous Christmas gnome play, popular also in other countries but not that common in Poland. Many respondents reported it as something their children follow in kindergarten, and something they hoped to introduce at home too.

Rampenissen – that is, such ... it is a gnome, a little robber. And he makes funny jokes to children from the first to the twenty-fourth [of December] (...) We don't practice it yet. I was supposed to start this year, but somehow I hadn't had any inspiration yet. (Iza)

A conscious act of inclusion of new elements of heritage in Christmas celebrations of the respondents is performed during the Christmas visits in Poland when some respondents import Norwegian products on purpose to serve them on a Christmas table. This strategy of *cultural remittances* (Rapoport et al. 2020) has become a tradition for some families awaiting Norwegian chocolates and marzipan pigs, salmon and mutton, and other products to arrive and enrich their Christmas menu.

You know what, this has already become a tradition ... We always bring chocolate [when coming for Christmas to Poland] because it is good. I bring my dad blueberry jams because he just loves them and, paradoxically, I bring mustard for my uncle, because it tastes completely different. We used to bring salmon, but now we don't bring salmon anymore, because it's not of the best quality. I used to bring reindeer sausages and dry fish and I remember they [my family] were all very shocked that it existed. (Julia)

The conscious change in Christmas menus is not only done upon the visit to Poland but also when celebrating Christmas in Norway. Some respondents consciously bring new foods to the Christmas dinner: salmon and other types of fish, seafood, and Christmas porridge popular in Norway. The motivation behind the inclusion of these products, classified by the respondents as Norwegian, is usually centred around keen interest and personal taste preferences, rather than refers directly to identification with the new homeland's heritage.

Similarly, certain Christmas decorations, such as Christmas trolls and lighting stars in the windows, were absorbed by many after relocation and sometimes transferred to the origin communities in Poland, reflecting both the *assimilation* and the *cultural remittances* act as per the knowledge transmission model (Rapoport et al. 2020). Malwina summarises the motivation behind the inclusion of these elements in private Christmas

celebrations: ‘I include these Norwegian decorations just because they are pretty. It’s not that I like it because it is Norwegian. It is just pretty’.

Another tradition, popularised among the Poles in Norway through schools and kindergartens of their children, is St. Lucia day set near Christmas time. While many actively follow the events organised by educational institutions along with their kids, Kasia, for example, showed pictures of typical St. Lucia day rolls: *Lusekatter*, made at home by her and her children (Figure 2).

The examples above present great openness to new Christmas traditions among the respondents, which results in changing/alleviating the way they celebrate Christmas, even if the core of celebrations is maintained within the actors’ understanding of what traditional Christmas is. The inclusion of new habits encountered in Norwegian into private celebrations reflects the dynamic cultural adaptation, translating not only into heritage in becoming (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019) but also resembling *assimilation* – as per the knowledge transmission model (Rapoport et al. 2020) – including the cultural input into the minority celebrations. Transferring Norwegian traditions to communities in Poland, in turn, can be seen through the lens of *cultural remittances* (Rapoport et al. 2020)

Regarding the recreation of the ‘traditional Christmas’ by Poles settled in Norway, the room for a dynamic adaptation to the surrounding circumstances is great too. It is not surprising that not all products that are needed to prepare Christmas dishes popular in Poland are available *in situ* in the new homeland. The respondents have developed several strategies to obtain them, some involving transnational activity. For some, however, these strategies were not available or did not work, and the need for adaptation of Christmas habits occurred. The respondents declared the willingness to simply ‘adapt to the situation’ if needed (Julia) and, for example, modify the recipe of Christmas dishes to accommodate the local circumstances of the new homeland:

I would say that we try to keep it as close as possible to the original ingredients, but on the other hand, we do not prepare dishes that [require] typical ingredients from Poland. (Agata)

The outcome of these adaptations is a tangible heritage in becoming (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019), reflecting not exactly the inclusion of the new additions in respondents’ Christmas



Figure 2. *Lusekatter* – cookies on the occasion of St. Lucia’s day baked by Kasia and her child. Credits: Kasia.

celebrations, but rather a practical adaptation of inherited knowledge to the resources of the surrounding.

The strategies to provide traditional dishes and products for Christmas Eve, when not travelling to Poland, result in the creation of a market niche focused on catering to the heritage needs of the Poles (Harvey 2001; Graham 2002). The market in Norway started slowly adjusting to accommodate the transnational needs of Polish minorities by importing specific Christmas products from Poland (such as poppy seeds pastes). Small, ethnic shops have long been the main players here, being one of the first to mark and accommodate this demand, but soon the mainstream food chains joined in, providing some of the Polish products not available in Norway, and, closer to Christmas, a specific type of fish for Christmas Eve that is commonly served in Poland but rarely available in Norway. On top of that, the Catholic Church in Norway, served by Polish priests, sells the traditional 'opłatek': a thin wafer traditionally shared when exchanging Christmas wishes. Informal catering services provided by Poles and offering Christmas cakes, soups, dumplings and more are also popular all year round, but especially around Christmas.

As exemplified, the actual Christmas celebrations of Poles settled in Norway differ from what constitutes the AHD of Polish Christmas (Smith 2016). By necessity, the Christmas menus get adjusted to the availability of the products and resources to create time-consuming dishes. Curiously, products, dishes, traditions, and decorations common in Norway are added to private Christmas celebrations of the respondents, according to the tastes and preferences of the hosts and guests. The picture of Christmas celebrations of the Poles that I have drawn in this section is dynamic, complex, and processual, resembling what Macdonald (2013) calls 'transcultural heritage', and going beyond the AHD (Smith 2016) displayed in the Norwegian Folk Museum.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article discussed the inclusion of Christmas practices regarded as Polish into the schedule of the Norwegian Folk Museum's event programme and hence the opening of the national heritage to the heritage of the migrants. While this fits into a positive trend of involving the heritage of the migrants in the national heritage narrations, the discussed event also produced other impacts. First, based on a comparison between the content of the *Jul på Polsk* and the findings obtained from the study focusing on Norwegian Poles' engagement with Christmas heritage, I articulated the gap between AHD (Smith 2016) of so-called 'Polish Christmas' displayed in the museum and the practices of Polish families settled in Norway around this heritage. What might have contributed to this gap is the museum's partnership with the Polish Embassy, an institution that represents the official, national heritage narration (see Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm 2012; Hall 1999; Harrison 2013). The gap between the AHD of 'Polish Christmas' displayed in the museum and the individual celebrations reflect what Desille (this Special Issue) called intercultural heritage: 'a neutralised conceptualisation of migrants' heritage' and heritage practices of minorities 'that are adopted by public institutions to rebrand and legitimise their migration agenda' – be it in the city, as Desille problematises in her article, or on a broader scale. Second, the event sparked discussions about changing the meaning of Polish national heritage by linking Christmas to the Independence Day of Poland and hence reflecting what Olsen (2004) defined as a deficit of meaning in the institutionalised discourse of minority heritage.

Engagement with Christmas traditions by the actors involved in the preparations of the event resulted in producing an interesting intercultural heritage (Macdonald 2013: 193) in the form of institutionalised heritage in becoming (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019). It was done by bringing together the local imagery of Christmas celebrations with what the organisers have learnt/knew about Polish traditions and how this knowledge was negotiated between the Polish volunteers and the employees of the museum. A new hybrid created during the event is, therefore, the result of adjusting heritage knowledge to the surrounding circumstances, and this process may occur not only on an individual level, as I exemplified in this article and elsewhere (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019), but also with regard to institutionalised heritage.

As shown, individual celebrations of Christmas were much less concerned with the authorised take on Christmas traditions, fully embracing the surrounding of the new homeland, engaging with new Christmas habits and gladly adjusting existing heritage knowledge to the resources found in Norway (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019). Private Christmas celebrations of the Norwegian Poles reflected the *assimilation*, *dissemination* and *cultural remittances* dimensions of the knowledge transmission model (Rapoport et al. 2020). The actors accepted the knowledge coming from the receiving society, adding local customs and products to their Christmas festivity landscapes, and, in several cases, transmitting it further to their local communities in Poland. Norwegian Poles' Christmas celebrations were not a mere 'mix' of Polish and Norwegian traditions. They rather constituted a unique quality produced through inevitable adjustments of the inherited knowledge to the new circumstances of the present and representing heritage in becoming on an individual level (Nikielska-Sekuła 2019). This unique and fascinating heritage was, however, omitted in the *Jul på Polsk* display entirely.

The conclusion that the analyses presented in this article bring is that the institutionalisation of minority heritage is rarely done without tensions surrounding it. Does it, however, mean that we should abstain from the attempts to include minority heritage in the museums to avoid the possible negative impacts such acts can cause? I answer this question by contextualising it in the analyses presented above. In the case of the *Jul på Polsk* event, the troubling impacts manifested in the form of a deficit of meaning and through the mistaking of the institutionalised, official heritage narration presented in the museum with the unofficial one that is exercised by Poles at home. This further resulted in misleading advertising of the event as featuring heritage that was, in fact, absent during the event. What is more, the event was ticketed, resulting in unequal access to celebrate 'Polish' Christmas. On the other hand, the event added to the past efforts of the museum to open up the national heritage of Norway to minorities. The feedback the museum received after the event was very positive. The Polish embassy representatives called it 'avant-garde' (information obtained in an expert interview), and the event attendance was high, reaching several thousand attendees, the majority of Polish origin. Additionally, the organisation of the event, which resembled a participatory project involving minorities, had a very positive impact on those involved, giving them agency in the making of their heritage representation for the purposes of such broad audiences and within an official setting of a Norwegian national museum.

All these positive outcomes pursue the quest of Macdonald (2013), who claimed that museums have to shift their focus and include migrants. They are to do so because, she claims, the way societies remember the past influences the feasibility of the inclusion of

migrants in the present. If migration is included in a common memory of the nation, it is easier to justify the presence of migrants in today's vision of society. Going a step further, future heritage scholars have argued that heritage preservation is done for the purposes of the future (Harrison 2013; Harrison et al. 2020; Holtorf and Högberg 2021) and 'plural heritage ontologies' can bring us 'radically different futures' (Harrison et al. 2020: 6). Therefore, we should choose wisely what we conserve and how we do it. The museums that open up the national memories for migrants are participating in shifting the narration of migrants' inclusion, and eventually creating more inclusive futures. What they do was labelled 'futurabilities': the 'capacities of different forms of heritage practices to generate specific kinds of futures' (Harrison 2020). Heritage scholars and practitioners should work to challenge the tensions around minority heritage inclusion that were flagged in this article because the outcomes of their work give a promising future perspective that is worth present efforts (Harrison 2013; Harrison et al. 2020; Holtorf and Högberg 2021). As Harrison (2013: 27) puts it: 'It is, after all, not only that our taxes pay for the work of governments in conserving heritage, but perhaps more importantly, that our futures are imagined and made possible through the pasts which are produced through heritage in our present'.

Notes

1. Norwegian yesterday, today tomorrow.
2. I am aware of the negative connotation of the word *assimilation* in Europe and beyond (Alba and Foner 2015). Assimilation, along with other concepts indicating migrants' emplacement into the new homeland (such as integration, acculturation, and adaptation) was problematised and sometimes highly criticised in migration studies. In this text, I use the term assimilation exactly within the presented definition of Rapoport et al. (2020), whose overall knowledge transmission model is helpful for the conducted analyses.
3. For instance, the discussion on the 2018 edition's event page on Facebook had a thread in Polish opened by a user stating that singing the carols on November 11th – Polish National Day, while 'the whole Poland will sing the national anthem is out of place'. The thread was supported by around 5 individual users through commenting or liking.
4. Facebook event page advertised the *Jul på Polsk* stating: 'Get to know the Polish Christmas traditions and experience how Polish families in Norway celebrate Christmas' (author's translation).
5. The research obtained ethical approval from the Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata, reference number: 184137. The respondents gave informed consent to participate after familiarising themselves with written detailed information about the project and personal data proceeding.

Acknowledgements

The publication was supported by the Priority Research Area 'Society of the Future' under the programme 'Excellence Initiative – Research University' at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. I thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier draft of this paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie.

Notes on contributor

Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Regional Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. Her current scholarly research focuses on migration studies (Central and Western Europe, and Turkey), visual and sensory sociology, and heritage studies. She teaches courses on cultural studies, multiculturalism, migration studies, Turkey, and Norway. Nikielska-Sekuła received an MA degree in Sociology from AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow, and her PhD in interdisciplinary Culture Studies from the University of South-Eastern Norway. Her previous posts include Associate Professor in Human Geography at the University of South-Eastern Norway, and Marie Curie ESR at the Migration Research Center at Koç University (MiReKoc) in Istanbul and the Pedro Arrupe Human Rights Institute at the University of Deusto. Karolina is a member of the International Sociological Association, the International Visual Sociology Association, the IMISCOE-DIVCULT standing committee, and the Nordic Migration Research Network.

ORCID

Karolina Nikielska-Sekuła  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7311-0900>

References

- Ahmed, S., 2014. Not in the Mood. *New Formations*, 82, 13–28.
- Akkerman, T. and Hagelund, A., 2007. ‘Women and Children First!’ Anti-Immigration Parties and Gender in Norway and the Netherlands. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 41 (2), 197–214.
- Alba, R. and Nee, V., 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Alba, R. and Foner, N., 2015. *Strangers No More*. Princeton University Press. doi:10.1515/9781400865901
- Anderson, B., 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Ashley, S.L.T., 2014. Re-Telling, Re-Cognition, Re-Stitution: Sikh Heritagization in Canada. *Cultura*, 11 (2), 39–58. doi:10.5840/cultura201411214
- Bisin, A. and Verdier, T., 2000. “Beyond the Melting Pot”: Cultural Transmission, Marriage, and the Evolution of Ethnic and Religious Traits. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115 (3), 955–88.
- Brochmann, G. and Kjeldstadli, K., 2008. *A History of Immigration: The Case of Norway 900–2000*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Byrne, D., 2016. Heritage Corridors: Transnational Flows and the Built Environment of Migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42 (14), 2360–2378.
- Çağlar, A., 2001. Constraining Metaphors and the Transnationalisation of Spaces in Berlin. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27 (4), 601–613.
- Catrina, S. and Isnart, C., 2014. Introduction: Mapping the Moving Dimensions of Heritage. *Cultura*, 11 (2), 7–17. doi:10.5840/cultura201411212
- Chung, T. and Bains, B., 2020. The Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project: Possibilities and Limitations of Institutional Heritagisation from Below. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 26 (3), 221–236. doi:10.1080/13527258.2019.1620829
- Clark-Ibáñez, M., 2004. Framing the Social World with Photo-Elicitation Interviews. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47 (12), 1507–1527. doi:10.1177/0002764204266236
- Dicks, B., 2004. *Culture on Display. The Production of Contemporary Visitability*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

- Gnecco, C., 2015. Heritage in Multicultural Times. In: E. Waterton and S. Watson, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 263–280.
- Goh, D.P.S., 2011. State Carnivals and the Subvention of Multiculturalism in Singapore. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 62 (1), 111–133. doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01347.x
- Graham, B., 2002. Heritage as Knowledge: Capital or Culture? *Urban Studies*, 39 (5-6), 1003–1017.
- Hall, S., 1999. Un-Settling ‘the Heritage’, Re-Imagining the Post-NationWhose Heritage? *Third Text*, 13 (49), 3–13. doi:10.1080/09528829908576818
- Harrison, R., 2013. *Heritage. Critical Approaches*. London: Routledge.
- Harrison, R., 2020. Heritage as Future-Making Practices. In: Harrison, Rodney, DeSilvey, Caitlin, Holtorf, Cornelius, Macdonald, Sharon, Bartolini, Nadia, Breithoff, Esther, eds. *Heritage Futures: Comparative Approaches to Natural and Cultural Heritage Practices*. London: UCL Press, 20–50.
- Harrison, R., et al., 2020. For Ever, for Everyone . . . In: Harrison, Rodney, DeSilvey, Caitlin, Holtorf, Cornelius, Macdonald, Sharon, Bartolini, Nadia, Breithoff, Esther, eds. *Heritage Futures: Comparative Approaches to Natural and Cultural Heritage Practices*. London: UCL Press, 3–19.
- Harvey, D.C., 2001. Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning and the Scope of Heritage Studies. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7 (4), 319–338. doi:10.1080/13581650120105534
- Hobsbawm, E., 2012. Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In: E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, 1–14. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107295636.001
- Holtorf, C. and Högberg, A., 2021. Introduction: Cultural Heritage as a Futuristic Field. In: C. Holtorf and A. Högberg, eds. *Cultural Heritage and the Future*. Oxon: Routledge. <https://books.google.pl/books?id=NNQHEAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=pl#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Huang, L., Krzaklewska, E., and Pustulka, P., 2016. Young Polish Migrants in Norway: Education, Work and Settlement Choice. *Tidsskrift for Ungdomsforskning*, 16 (1), 63–78.
- Ingold, T. and Kurttila, T., 2000. Perceiving the Environment in Finnish Lapland. *Body and Society*, 6 (3-4), 183–196.
- Krase, J., 2012. *Seeing Cities Change: Local Culture and Class*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Leung, C.K.Y., 2006. Usable Pasts, Staging Belongings: Articulating a ‘Heritage’ of Multiculturalism in Canada. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 6 (2), 162–179. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9469.2006.tb00155.x
- Macdonald, S., 2013. *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*. London: Routledge.
- Morawska, E., 2009. *A Sociology of Immigration. (Re)Making Multifaceted America*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Naguib, S.A., 2013. Collecting Moments of Life. Museums and the Intangible Heritage of Migration. *Museum International*, 65 (1–4), 77–86.
- Nikielska-Sekula, K., 2016. Meaning and Functions of Norwegian-Turkish Vernacular Space in Drammen, Norway. *Border Crossing*, 6 (2), 325–336.
- Nikielska-Sekula, K., 2019. Migrating Heritage? Recreating Ancestral and New Homeland Heritage in the Practices of Immigrant Minorities. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 25 (11), 1113–1127. doi:10.1080/13527258.2019.1570543
- Nikielska-Sekula, K., *Forthcoming*. Can Micro Practices Change National Heritage?: Norwegian National Day Celebrations in a Multicultural Setting. In: W. Sievers, ed., *Cultural Change in Post-Migrant Societies*. Springer. doi:10.1080/13527258.2019.157054
- Olsen, K., 2004. Heritage, Religion and the Deficit of Meaning in Institutionalized Discourse. In: A. L. Siikala, B. Klein, and S. Mathisen, eds. *Creating Diversities: Folklore, Religion and the Politics of Heritage*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 31–43.
- Rapoport, H., Sardoschau, S., and Silve, A. 2020. Migration and Cultural Change, Cesifo Working Paper, No. 8547, Center for Economic Studies and Ifo Institute (CESifo), Munich.
- Smith, L., 2016. *Uses of Heritage*. Oxon: Routledge.

Smith, L., 2021. *Emotional Heritage*. Oxon: Routledge.

SSB Statistics Norway, 2022. Available at ssb.no [Accessed 9 June 2022].

Vertovec, S., 2001. Transnationalism and Identity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27 (4), 573–582.

Wagner, R., 1986. *Symbols That Stand for Themselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Exhibitions

Pakistani Home, 2003. Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo.

Norsk i går, i dag, i morgen? 2001–2005. Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo.