

PART I: From Global Cultural Policy to the Three Small-Town Arena Case Studies

This research project investigates how cultural heritage functions as a repertoire for group construction and individual boundary work in three small towns in northern Germany from a framework of global cultural heritage discourses. I approach Ethnicised Heritage Situations from two perspectives: the worldmaking power of heritage regimes and the sensemaking of everyday cultural endeavours and their (e)valuation. The project is innovative empirically, exploring migration and cultural diversity in settings often perceived as culturally homogenous and conservative. The study is theoretically engaged, exploring the potential for (international) cultural heritage to emerge in previously unexplored territories. This involves my engagement in the complex task of theorising cultural heritage within pluralised societies.

Part I of this thesis introduces the central aspects of the research from various perspectives. Although the content presented here does not form part of the central analysis conducted in the empirical study, readers should become acquainted with the research field and the central research questions.

In chapter 2, I delve into political and economic elements that shape the Ethnicised Heritage Situation under study, thus laying the first groundwork for the theoretical framework developed throughout the thesis. Initially, I expound upon significant shifts within the global discourse on heritage, characterising it as a “*project of ideology*” (Kuutma 2013:32). These shifts pivot from national heritage narratives towards recognising and valuing culturally diverse ethnic heritages within national contexts, with a pronounced emphasis on communities as central bearers and actors within the field (2.1).

Moreover, while official international heritage regime operations may be absent from the small-town arenas under examination, they remain integral to the overarching ethnicised heritage situation. This assertion is underpinned by the diffusion and entanglement of these regimes with influential regional cultural and economic development policies. These policies, primarily informed by global discourses, can potentially influence heritagisation within the studied situation of research (2.2).

In chapter 3, I introduce and describe the case studies – Zeven, Aurich, and Cuxhaven – selected for analysis. The Dutch, Portuguese, and East Frisian festivals and associations serve as the most visible manifestations of the ethnicised heritages within these small-town arenas. Through ethnographic descriptions and additional information from literature research, I illuminate the coming into being of the festivals and associations. Additionally, I introduce vital actors who are involved and participating. I delve into the organisational and financial infrastructures that underpin the festivals and associations, delineating the mechanisms through which they are (re)produced and sustained over time. I aim to introduce the festivals and associations within a broader cultural ecology of the small-town arenas by touching upon all these aspects.

In Chapter Four, I embark on a comprehensive literature review and present my contribution to the ongoing project of theorising the category of cultural heritage within Critical Heritage Studies and my empirical contribution to the field of small-town research.

Firstly, I align myself with scholars who approach the endeavour to theorise and learn about the cultural heritage category from empirical research, adopting an “outside-in” perspective, as advocated by Susan Ashley and Sybille Frank (2016). This approach entails starting from the vantage point of migrated, ethnicised, and minority cultural endeavours, thereby offering a possibly novel perspective on the functioning of cultural heritage as a category in pluralised societies (4.1) Secondly, I make an empirical contribution to the research on cultural diversity and migration in small towns. Here, I bridge the independent research agenda of small-town research (Bell and Jayne 2009; Steinführer, Porsche, and Sondermann 2021; Wagner and Growe 2021) with research on migration to small-scale towns within the field of transnational migration studies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2008) (4.2).

Through this dual contribution, Chapter Four aims to prepare the way for my engagement with theoretical discussions within Critical Heritage Studies while shedding light on cultural diversity and migration within small-town contexts I empirically encounter and interpret in my thesis.

2. The Entanglement of Global Heritage Discourses with Local Cultural Policy

In global cultural heritage discourses, cultural heritage is seen as a resource for constructing community and collective identity which then creates social cohesion. While official heritage institutions and vocabulary are not present in the three case studies, global heritage discourses have an impact or are shaped by developments beyond the realms of their production, as do heritage regimes (Bendix et al. 2012: 14; Durrer et al. 2023: 2; Lysgård 2019: 12). In other words, global heritage discourses might seem a far-fetched choice at first sight, as the people from the three small towns do not use this discourse or heritage vocabulary when they define the situation. They are, however, part of the situation's 'contextual whole' (Keller 2023: 76), which leads me to develop the theoretical model of Ethnicised Heritage Situations.

This chapter discusses how global heritage discourse and policy, as political and economic elements in the situation, are immersed in the Ethnicised Heritage Situations I study. Economic elements here are, for example, structural and regional development plans that explicitly or implicitly address the potential of the promotion of local intangible heritages for tourism and regional development. A political element would be expert discourses that lobby for intangible heritages on a local level, for example in the parliament of Lower Saxony.

Lower Saxony, located in the northwest of Germany is the country's second largest federal state when it comes to land area, stretching from the North Sea Coast to the Harz mountains. It is also a major agricultural region. The three towns chosen for this study are all located in the lowlands, the northern part of the federal state, with Cuxhaven having a direct access to the North Sea. Cuxhaven and Aurich are situated some 100 kilometres away from Bremen as the next big city, while Zeven lies 80 kilometres southwest of the metropolitan area of Hamburg. All three towns are considered *Mittelzentren* (medium-size centres), according to German planning standards. Although they are located in regions with peripheral and relatively low socio-economic status, the towns themselves are central to the surrounding rural areas that are subject to structural development programmes by the European Union. One of these programmes is to promote the region's cultural development.

The small town of Cuxhaven is one of Germany's largest fishing ports, home to approximately 48.000 residents as of 2017. As offshore industry has gradually replaced fishing in economic significance, the town increasingly operates as a seaside and spa resort town. Tourism has become one of the largest economic sectors, employing 6000 people the town in 2016. Cuxhaven's population has shrunk for many years as a result of demographic change and young people migrating to structurally stronger regions. But the town is still home to a significant number of inhabitants with Portuguese family histories and a diverse array of Portuguese-marked cultural activities take place in the town.

The town of Zeven is an economic centre of the surrounding rural area which consists of the collective municipality, also called Zeven, and the broader district of Rotenburg, which borders directly on the Hamburg metropolitan region. With a town population of 14.000, and 23.000 in the wider municipality, Zeven is repeatedly described as 'in the middle' between Bremen and Hamburg, giving the town supraregional significance as a tourism destination for day visitors. The town's main economic activities are the food industry, mechanical and plant engineering, and rubber works. Like many towns and villages in rural areas, the social infrastructure has been significantly dismantled in recent decades. For example, the local hospital was cut away amid great protest. The town is home to almost 600 inhabitants with Dutch family histories, which makes up 21 percent of inhabitants with a non-German family history, and it hosts Dutch cultural festivals. Zeven cannot be considered as much of a tourist hotspot as can Aurich and Cuxhaven. The Dutch festivals are, however, one aspect of the town's strategy to attract tourists as day visitors from Hamburg, along with the natural landscape surrounding the town.

Aurich is the second biggest town in the region of East Frisia, with 42.000 inhabitants in 2017. While the region no longer exists as an administrative union, it plays a significant role in tourism. Historically, Aurich was the residence of much East Frisian nobility; today, it serves as an administrative centre, colloquially named the secret capital of East Frisia. Its administrative institutions also coin parts of its residents' social milieu as educated public servants. Other economic spheres of importance are tourism and commerce, as well as the presence of a supraregional energy company. In this sense, the town's social fabric differs from the rest of the much more rural and agricultural region. The town is also considered the infrastructurally worst connected town in Germany, with no railroad or autobahn.

At the heart of these three towns' structural development programmes is a paradigm shift from national heritage as a homogenous entity to one of cultural diversity, ethnic and migrant heritages, and the expansion of actors involved in official heritage-decision processes beyond the nation-state. The structural work being undertaken around the towns' culture enables us to see how policy concepts from global heritage discourses 'work' on the ground, the reach it has into people's

everyday lives and livelihoods. The policy work being enacted in these three small-town arenas have Ethnicised Heritage Situations at their core.

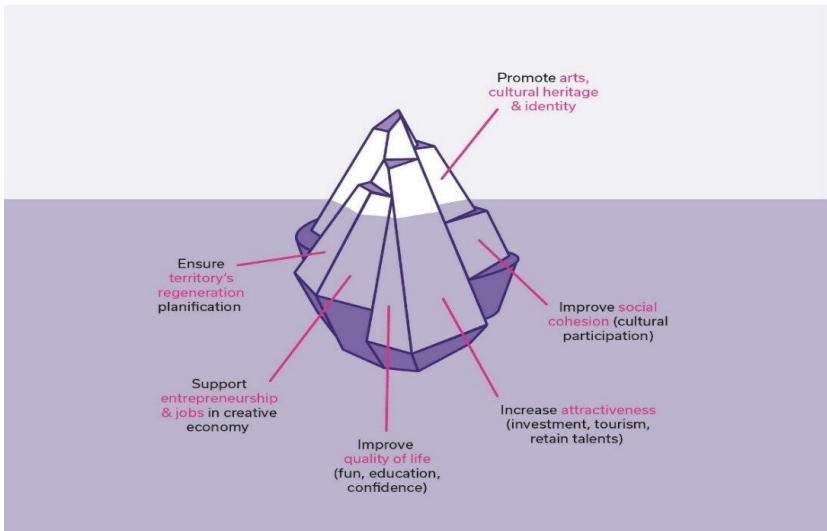
In order to see how these Ethnicised Heritage Situations is playing out in the three small towns, this paradigm shift in cultural heritage discourses needs to be outlined in the context of broader changes in cultural policy and changing understandings of what constitutes the culture that needs to be governed. The diffusion of these policies and discourses can then be seen in the daily lives of residents of Lower Saxony, including my research participants' lives. Through discursive connections to local debates among cultural policy experts and regional policies for cultural and economic development, it is possible to see the influence of global discourses around cultural heritage as elements in the researched situations that increase the potential for cultural heritage to emerge therein.

2.1 Paradigm Shifts from National to Ethnic Heritages

Preserving artistic and historical heritage is one of the main policy rationales in developing cultural policies in European nation-states (Dubois 2015: 9). While many scholars agree that contemporary cultural policies go beyond mere arts patronage, cultural policy's definition and borders as a specific policy domain are increasingly challenged and unclear. Hopes in promoting cultural heritage have entered a number of policy areas beyond promoting the arts, as the European Union's representation of cultural heritage shows (Fig. 2.1.). The iceberg model stems from a project titled 'Cultural Heritage in Action' and visualises the potential for developing towns and regions. Promoting cultural heritage is supposed to help develop regions and towns in diverse areas, such as through urban regeneration and creative economies, increase attractiveness for tourists and investments, and improve social cohesion and general quality of life, health, and well-being (Cultural Heritage in Action Project 2021).

Vincent Dubois (2015: 7) identifies three main factors driving such changes, which can be found more specifically in heritage policies. First, Dubois notes that elitist notions of culture are increasingly challenged by the existing diversity of societies and counterculture movements of the 1960s in an attempt to redefine the understanding of culture. Second, access to culture is no longer guarded by specific institutions alone but is increasingly provided through, for example, the Internet and social media. Last, the borders of cultural fields have been extended to include new spheres, such as creative industries. Moreover, these factors vary over time and, significantly, across nation-states, whose national histories of nation-building deeply influence current state-driven cultural policies.

Fig. 2.1: European Union (2021). Cultural Heritage: A Powerful Catalyst for Cities and Regions



In earlier historical phases, starting with the Enlightenment in European countries at the end of the 17th century and their development of the World Heritage concept, intellectuals and elites in Great Britain, France, and Germany began to incentivise 'national treasures' in a process to build homogenous nations and to bring across a set of universal values to its members. This is also when the public sphere with citizen subjects was emerging (Bös 2025; Harrison 2013: 44). Throughout the first half of the 20th century, nation-states took increasing control of these processes to govern and educate their citizens. Cultural Heritage in these phases were mainly understood as national heritage. In a third phase since the 1970s, 'world' heritage organisations entered the floor, and the idea of 'universal' heritage values came to prominence in more vernacular contexts (Bös 2025; Harrison 2013: 43). In the context of globalisation, migration flows, economic restructuring, and New Social Movements, nation-states as primary bearers of heritage invested in new forms of World Heritage but simultaneously responded internally to a growing realisation that nations are ethnically and culturally diverse: 'The term 'multiculturalism' came into popular use in the 1970s to describe the development of a series of government policies to manage the 'problem' of the existence of a wide number of different ethnic groups within a single nation' (Harrison 2010: 143).

Consequently, nations are composed of ethnic and cultural groups whose heritage should be recognised and protected. The ways in which these global discourses take form in local and national contexts differs and is influenced by pre-existing discourses and practices. In Germany, cultural pluralism or multicultural models

gained influence later than in countries such as the UK or Canada. Up until today, models instead focusing on integration and social cohesion are most prominent in Germany and most other European countries (Dahinden 2012). In cultural contexts such as UNESCO debates diversity is often employed and has been adopted to German language discourses as *Diversität*. However, Sharon Macdonald (2023) observes that more often than the direct translation of the term diversity as *Diversität*, the notion of *kulturelle Vielfalt* is employed in the German context. Macdonald states that though often used interchangeably, both terms ‘carry subtly different connotations. *Vielfalt*, which might be translated as ‘variety’, has a less politicised tone, putting its emphasis, particularly on the multiplicity of kinds, whereas the differences between the elements seem more central in *Diversität*’ (Macdonald 2023: 24)

Next to the pluralisation from national to other forms of heritage (ethnic, diasporic, migrant, multicultural) and new cultural groups as bearers of heritage, the types of actors (supposed to be) involved in heritage decision-making processes has increased since the 1990s: From nation-state control to the involvement of NGOs, in some cases companies and most centrally laypeople and communities (Adell et al. 2015). More and more non-state actors are getting involved in the World Heritage regime.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, ratified in Germany in 2013, is the culmination of this significant ideological paradigm shift in global heritage discourse and the much slower institutional regime change. The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage followed a notion of high culture and focused on preserving mostly material cultural heritages such as buildings with ‘outstanding universal value’. Since the early 1990s, efforts from some member countries (e.g., Japan, Morocco) and new groups of academic experts from disciplines such as anthropology led to a broadening of the concept of culture on the UNESCO floor to include cultural landscapes in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (in 1992), to relativise ideas of authenticity and originality in the Nara Document on Authenticity (in 1994) to, finally, intangible cultural heritage in an extra convention in 2003. Within this process, a broad modern anthropological notion of culture entered the context of UNESCO (Brumann 2018: 1211).

Anthropologist Christoph Brumann describes the cohabitation of different concepts of culture within UNESCO:

The conventional, elitist notion – edifying and aesthetically pleasing accomplishments, from good manners to the canonical works of great men and women and the anthropological notion – everything socially shared within a group, down to the most pedestrian customs for which at best a collective creator can be identified – cohabit in most people’s minds, in variable combinations (Brumann 2014: 1206).

Dubois describes the consequences of such new understandings of culture for heritage-making that is no longer monopolised by the public sector as other actors enter the arena. He states that heritage policies tend to ever more “invent” rather than only protect heritage’ (Dubois 2015: 463). Valdimar Hafstein describes this process as broadening cultural policies into more policy fields:

The rise of cultural heritage is perhaps the chief example of a newfound (e)valuation of cultural practices and objects in terms of their expediency for economic and political purposes. This is culture as a resource: a novel configuration in which culture is now a central expedient in everything from creating jobs to reducing crime, from changing the face of towns through cultural tourism to managing differences and conflicts within the population (Hafstein 2012: 503).

They are, Hafstein shows, invested and involved in the ordering of socio-symbolic difference.

To summarise, as a project of ideology, the World Heritage regime has seen significant discursive shifts: when an anthropological concept of culture broadens the aspects of culture-designated cultural heritage, attempting to democratise the heritage-making processes and promoting rather than preventing cultural diversity, the participation of communities as laypeople in heritage-decision-making processes became central. Communities are constructed as primary subjects of heritage policies with a right to culture and cultural identity (Soysal 1997: 513); they are mentioned 13 times in the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage convention. Moreover, cultural heritage is increasingly seen as a driver of economic development and a producer of social cohesion. Both aims are often discussed as if in a related, win-win situation. With these changes in global heritage discourses and regimes, cultural heritage has become a powerful global phenomenon, increasingly shaping the ‘relationship between people and significant aspects of their culture and their environment’ (de Cesari 2013: 400). The politics of heritage in the context of UNESCO-driven heritage regimes then have become a subtle politics of the everyday.

2.2 The Diffusion of Global Heritage Discourse

One way in which this paradigm shift in global discourse immerses itself into people’s everyday lives is through national and regional cultural policy. Local expert debates and regional development policies expose how the discursive connection between national and regional policy emerges in the three towns’ Ethnicised Heritage Situations as political and economic elements.

German cultural policy is, characteristically, comparatively decentralised, which stems from its federal history. Principal competencies lie with federal states and municipalities, who often claim their sovereignty in cultural issues without necessarily having explicit cultural politics (Burns and van der Will 2003: 134). Structured cultural policy on the federal state level often focuses on high culture and the socio-cultural, and specific laws are a relatively new phenomenon. Against this background, paradigm shifts in global heritage discourse might diffuse more slowly to local levels of heritage governance. However, they already are part of the three small towns and, therefore, have to be considered an element of Ethnicised Heritage Situations.

The discursive shift towards the promotion of intangible cultural heritage has been employed since the early 2000s by local cultural policy researchers and experts in Germany and Lower Saxony to lobby for better and more structured support of what they term *Breitenkultur* (grassroots culture) in rural Germany. The experts making these calls stem from cultural and political institutions such as the Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft (Cultural Political Society) or the Deutscher Kulturrat (German Cultural Council), as well as academia (Drews 2017; Götzky 2013; Schneider 2014; Schneider, Kessler, and Koss 2017). Grassroots culture is closely related to socio-cultural, pop, or lay cultures. Still, it includes hitherto undeveloped (in terms of cultural policy) fields of cultural and leisure association activities, particularly in rural areas. Grassroots culture includes everyday cultural and artistic activity with individual participation and civic engagement on a non-commercial, cross-policy level (Schneider et al. 2017: 31). Essential actors in grassroots culture are municipalities, while the phenomenon is based on voluntary work (Schneider 2014: 24). Researchers have, importantly, focused precisely on those areas my case studies are in, both in the geographical sense and in their focus on cultural activities in everyday life on the ground. In an edited volume on the cartography of grassroots culture in Lower Saxony, cultural policy scholar Wolfgang Schneider (2014: 196) propagates grassroots culture as a prototypical intangible cultural heritage. He argues that to catalogue forms of intangible cultural expressions, as in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, which have previously been overlooked by cultural policies presents a significant chance to implement much-needed reforms in national cultural policies worldwide.

The convention, Schneider writes, opens up discursive opportunities for reform in the cultural policy governance of grassroots culture in Lower Saxony as its conceptual edge largely overlaps with the aim to safeguard and support previously unrecognised Intangible Cultural Heritage practices. He goes on to underline that Intangible Cultural Heritage is all about cultural and social transformation in light of phenomena such as migration or digitalisation: 'Society is changing, it is changing, and it can no longer be localised, but is exposed to global influences. Trying to prevent this by maintaining the status quo would be anachronistic' (Schneider 2014: 196,

my translation). Cultural heritage, understood as that which protects diversity and transformation, versus that which covers what should stay the same forms a central paradox that is embedded with UNESCO's latest paradigm shifts.

In 2022, some of Schneider's and others' hopes were successful as Lower Saxony passed its first-ever *Kulturfördergesetz* (law for promoting culture).¹ One paragraph of the new law explicitly mentions the protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a task for cultural policy. Another paragraph is dedicated to promoting and supporting grassroots culture via the support of Lower Saxony's *Höhere Kommunalverbände* (cultural parliaments)² and other umbrella organisations.³

Another driver of the paradigm shift on a localised scale is the tourism industry, which is an essential factor in the economic development of rural regions. The town of Cuxhaven is the most clearly dependent on the tourism industry out of the three small towns, and develops cultural events accordingly. As Katja Drews notes, '[t]raditions, customs, and rites are also perceived as desirable, no longer just material cultural assets. They are thus becoming the focus of the tourism industry' (2017: 95–96). At the same time, the (e)valuation of such assets has to be socially and culturally sustainable (ibid: 90).

Economic aspects are also the central focal points of different structural development policies and programmes for rural areas. These are called LEADER (Links between actions for the development of the rural economy) or ELER (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) on the EU level, or they relate to the Commission for Equitable Living Conditions put into place by the national government in 2018, the *Gemeinschaftsaufgabe 'Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Küstenschutzes'* GAK (Improvement of the agricultural structure and coastal protection) or *Integrierte Ländliche Entwicklung ILE* (Integrated Rural Development) programmes on the municipal level. The three small towns are all involved in one or more regions with specific development concepts under the umbrella of ELER, LEADER, or related national concepts of ILE, primarily mentioned in their essential function as *Mittelzentren*, regional economic middle centres.

1 The juridical text can be found here: <https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/sites/default/files/2022-07/Nieders%C3%A4chsisches%20Kultur%C3%B6rdergesetz%20%28NKultF%C3%B6C%29%20vom%2028.%20Juni%202022.pdf> (accessed June, 4th 2024).

2 The so called 'cultural parliaments' are municipal government associations that work in the fields of culture and education. An example is the *Ostfriesische Landschaft* (East Frisian Landscape Association).

3 The experts' calls for immaterial heritage and grassroots culture to be recognised includes not only an ideological paradigm shift but also a demand to redistribute financial resources, as cultural policies and associated financial resources are still overwhelmingly directed towards urban areas. They state that 'more than 70 percent of the German population live outside the big cities, but less than ten percent of public funding for culture goes to small communities' (Schneider 2014: 19, my translation).

In such structural development programmes, culture is a central field of intervention, and the (e)valuation of cultural heritage is seen as an engine for a region's economic development and attractiveness. Consequently, all of these programmes engage aspects of cultural policies and development goals under the prism of the economy (Groth and Sutter 2016: 230). LEADER, the European Union programme, is probably the most influential and agenda-setting among the programmes. It is also explicitly mentioned as a potential funding resource by the German UNESCO Commission in a manual for funding measures for the (e)valuation of intangible heritages, which showcases another way global cultural heritage discourses diffuse to local arenas. The LEADER programme anchors its activities in local working groups and significantly focuses on participation and civic involvement. It thereby targets the region's inhabitants' everyday lives as a site for transformations (ibid: 232).⁴

These programmes played little explicit role in the three small towns' ethnicised festivals and associations, however. While the development plan for Zeven does not mention a Dutch minority or the region's Dutch cultural heritage (Samtgemeinde Selsingen n.d.), the Cuxhaven programme does mention its inhabitants with Portuguese family histories. These are considered good resources and points of attraction for meeting the shortage of skilled labour by recruiting professionals from Portugal (LAG Wesermünde Nord 2015: 51). In contrast, the development concept for Aurich and its surrounding region explicitly demarcates its cultural and touristic development from other areas of East Frisia (Region Mittleres Ostfriesland 2015). East Frisia, in general, is considered a best practice model by cultural policy experts and actors, two of which are the Ostfriesische Landschaft (East Frisian Landscape Association) and the Ostfriesland Tourismus GmbH (East Frisia Tourism GmbH) (Drews 2017: 77).

In their attempt to shape and propagate regional development, constructing regions as 'imagined communities' (Anderson 2016) with definable collective identity markers is a part of regional development plans. In this sense, the programmes actively promote membership formation through cultural diversity and migration. Such processes become visible in rural regions' application documents for LEADER funding, which struggle to underline their homogeneity and boundary making as a distinguishable unit. The region of 'middle East Frisia', of which Aurich is a part, is, for example, constructed in a development plan via reference to a history of peatland colonisation, which in historical reality was not limited to that specific part of East Frisia: 'They [the people in middle East Frisia] are closely linked culturally by

4 Groth and Sutter (2016) further conclude that at this point, the LEADER program can be considered following a liberal market ideology, in that its main aim is to mobilize regions' endogenous resources (e.g. its cultural heritage, voluntary work, and regional identities) to transform them into competitive sites within the European market.

a shared pioneering history of peatland colonisation and settlement' (Region Mittleres Ostfriesland 2015: 5, my translation). Another region, the joint municipality of Selsingen, that Zeven is considered part of is distinguished via allegedly unique landscape characteristics, working as a functional unit in economic terms (Samtgemeinde Selsingen n.d.).

The local discursive, legal, and structural developments in the three towns can be seen to be influenced by the global heritage discourse on intangible cultural heritage, namely the instrumentalisation of its paradigm shift by local cultural policy advisers. Being significantly shaped by the new cultural promotion law as well as the presence of EU structural development programmes such as LEADER, cultural heritage became part of the three towns' agenda, increasing the potentialities for heritage, as understood in its current global project of ideology, to emerge in this hitherto 'untouched' territory.

3. Festivals and Ethnic Leisure Associations in Small-Town Arenas – Case Descriptions

The territories hitherto ‘untouched’ by global heritage discourses can be described as small-town arenas. They are discursive sites of negotiation and debate around a matter of concern to different social worlds. That matter is in this case the ethnicised festivals and associations as cultural heritage of the towns (2012: 89, 86). The social worlds most relevant in the co-constitution of the small-town arenas of Aurich, Cuxhaven and Zeven from that perspective are diaspora and ethnicised local communities and associations, but also local businesspeople or the media. It is mainly the former social worlds that heritage makers and researchers consider to be relevant communities of practice; those groups of people who are the primary bearers or promoters of intangible cultural heritage.

To build up full descriptions of the small-town case studies, I relied on my participatory observation field notes, newspaper articles, and background library research on the festivals. There has otherwise been little research conducted on the three ethnic groups in these small-town arenas from a sociological or anthropological perspective. This might have to do with the relatively small number of immigrants from the Netherlands and Portugal to Germany overall, which on first sight can implicate less significance. Moreover, people moving to Germany from the Netherlands are rarely categorised as immigrants and more often as expats. Research on officially recognised ethnic minorities in Germany mostly focuses on the language of Low German, its most defining feature, and lies in the field of linguistic research. Some research on Dutch migration to Germany around short-distance and cross-border migration (van Houtum and Gielis 2006; Strüver 2005) shows some similarities with my research participants’ realities, such as circular migration patterns, although they have to be considered a different type of group. This is because they do not commute daily between their places of residence in Germany to their jobs and lives in the Netherlands, which is a defining feature of short-distance migration in the former sense. There is little anthropological or sociological research on East Frisia and the East Frisian minority: Most of the research is linguistic (Bosse 2019; Reershemius 2017), discusses the tourist economy (Drews 2017; Fleßner 2004), or has been conducted by lay researchers (Hennig n.d.). In the 1990s, Rainer Danielczyk

et al. (1995) analysed the region's endogenous development potential from a regional development perspective. Research on Portuguese emigration is a vast field, though Germany as a country of immigration is often not the focus of such studies. Andrea Klimt (2000) traced temporal processes of identity formation among Portuguese communities in Germany from a transnational mobility studies perspective. Such processes have met changing historical conditions, from the 1960s' so-called 'guest worker' status over becoming long-term residents, the often violent arguments and actions after German reunification in 1991, and Portugal's incorporation into the European Union (ibid). The opening up of possibilities that came with becoming European also plays a considerable role in my research field, where much of the Portuguese-marked cultural landscape came into being. Nina Clara Tiesler and Nélia Alves Bergano (2012) researched expressions of cultural belonging and attachment among Portuguese communities in large cities and small towns to find their multiple attachments to local environments and the Portuguese nation of origin. They found a decline in Portuguese associations and participation, which was also narrated in my research field. Dietrich Tränhardt and Jenni Winterhagen (2012) historically reconstructed the Catholic Church's influence on Portuguese immigrants, among others. Teresa Pinheiro (2010) edited an interdisciplinary volume of aspects and trends of Portuguese emigrations, and Félix Neto et al. (2005) conducted a study on Portuguese acculturation. Other than Klimt (2005), expressions of Portugueseness in Germany, for example through public festivals, have not been studied.

Festivals and cultural associations are considered key factors in cultural heritage by cultural institutions and researchers alike. There are hundreds of festivals listed by UNESCO under the 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (as can be seen, e.g., in this interactive map: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/div>). Sociological and anthropological approaches to studying festivals consider their broader social and political contexts. Festivals are shown to be economically, politically and culturally situated, with no straightforward relationship between their past and present or their impact on local communities (Bendix 1989). They play a central role in shaping group formations and can serve as political platforms, making them pertinent for understanding heritage regimes in cultural contexts (Cornish 2016; Kockel et al. 2019; Leal 2015; Noyes 1995).

Key to understanding the role of festivals in rural heritage contexts is how they are 'embedded in the local ecosystems of sports, culture, business and other types of associations' (Hjalager and Kwiatkowski 2018:2). Leisure associations' central role in the cultural and heritage sectors is not a recent development (Swenson 2013). Leisure societies have been active since the late 19th century, outnumbering professional societies in promoting heritagisation. Many of these societies preserved and created heritage as a byproduct of other activities, such as cycling or photography. Astrid Swenson (ibid: 128) argues that associations' activities contributed to a specific form

of heritage consciousness that diverged from elitist and ‘high’ understandings of culture.

But characteristic of festivals in rural areas and small-scale towns is how they become embedded into local associational life. Many of the ethnic leisure associations in the three small towns are founded upon some story of loss and preservation: the withdrawal of the Dutch troops in Zeven; the closure of the Portuguese Catholic mission in Cuxhaven; and the impossibility of an ‘ungebrochene’ (continuous) tradition of East Frisian folk dances in Aurich. Evoking a sense of loss and nostalgia is part of the founding myth of these associations, and it is also criterion of cultural heritage as a repertoire.

The ethnic leisure associations and festivals offer themselves for the study of heritagisation in pluralised societies as they are publicly visible engagements of the migration- and ethnically diverse history of the three towns of Cuxhaven, Aurich and Zeven. On the other hand, to study heritagisation one is well advised to consider the (re)production of these festivals in their broader social ecology. This study takes them to be part of small-town arenas composed of different, and not necessarily ethnicised social worlds.

3.1 Aurich: A New Maypole for the Town’s Centre

The setting up of maypoles to welcome spring is a tradition widely practised throughout Europe, where wooden poles erected as part of yearly festivals take on various forms and are accompanied by local stories. The East Frisian storytelling around the Maypole tradition is closely entangled with one of the most influential myths of the region’s overall imagined community: The East Frisians as a historical, freedom-loving and democratic people.¹ This myth stems from the history of the so-called ‘Frisian Freedom’, which describes privileges the local population gained from the Middle Ages on, including being freed from feudal and military obligations vis-à-vis the nobility. Instead, the region was supposedly ruled by councils elected by (a specific male group of) inhabitants. In this tradition, an author in the local newspaper is keen to point out that the East Frisians would not lead any authority to forbid the potentially subversive festivity (ON 04/2011).²

1 Historian Tobias Weger (2013) points out another side of this myth of East Frisian culture and history: its groundedness in the German concept of tribes and how this was employed for colonial purposes and ‘völkisch’ dreams. This was never discussed during my field visits as a field of conflict. Neither were such ‘völkisch’ categories of membership employed by research participants.

2 I decided to reference newspaper articles including the abbreviation of the newspaper title, month and year of publication throughout this thesis for lack of information often given (e.g.

Fig. 3.1: Setting of the maypole in Aurich 2018. Photo by Romuald Banik, ON 20.02.2023



The Maypole ritual in Aurich proceeds as follows: A few days before the End of April, volunteers decorate a birch tree with colourful pieces of paper. On the April 30, the tree is set up in a central square of the community in a festive march through the neighbourhood (Fig. 3.1.). The march often also includes dancing, as the community or specific groups, some of them in East Frisian traditional dress, dances around the tree to transition into the month of May. After being set up, the maypole has to be guarded until the sunrise of May 1st, as the games of stealing other community trees begin. These other communities stem from part of the city and neighbourhoods that de-centrally organise their own festivals, most of them much smaller than the central one in Aurich. A tree is successfully ‘stolen’ when a group from another neighbourhood manages to touch the tree, the tree then belongs to one’s group. It can be released to its original owners when these deliver a crate of beer the following day.

Until 2016 the municipality traditionally set up the maypole in Aurich town centre, with local politicians, associations, and administration workers taking on the task of decorating it. However, after the pole was criticised for being six metres shorter than in previous years – ‘an early sign of cutbacks?’ (ON 05/2015) – 2017 was the first year without a maypole in the town’s central marketplace, as the municipality’s cuts in funding to cultural activities hit the festival. After protests, the local council set up a much smaller maypole in a pedestrian street nearby (ON 03/2017). However, there was no money left for a celebration of any kind. A public discussion followed about whether or not a central maypole is needed in a small town, where

no names of authors) and for reasons of anonymization. All quotes from newspaper articles are my translation.

many districts organise their maypole tradition on a voluntary and decentralised basis, and around the role of such traditions for the local youth (ON 03/2018).

When I visited the event in 2019, an association of local café and restaurant owners had organised it for the second year. While they invested some money into the celebration, it was partly donation-based. To make the festival economically profitable, they transformed it into a two-day celebration that included a live music stage, several food stalls, and a traditional 'Maischollen' dinner that involves a dish with plaice caught in spring. The association generally does not withhold its economic interest in organising the festival; its primary purpose is to make the town centre more lively and attractive for its inhabitants and tourists. The maypole was then back to its impressive height and set up with the help of a local business able to provide the infrastructure to do so. One of the association members was keen to underline the different and comparatively more challenging circumstances of organising the event in the town centre due to rules and administrative claims made by the municipality. He contrasted it with all the smaller Maypole celebrations in the town's outer districts, which are much less regulated. The character of the Maypole celebration in the town centre was quite different from the ones of smaller and more provincial celebrations.³

The big Maypole celebration in the city centre of Aurich felt commercial. While the afternoon on the first day of the celebration was dominated by families and friends, the later the day became, the more partygoers attended and danced to a cover band performing. Young people and punks sat in small groups and drank in the park next to the area. The catering stands sold food from local restaurants whose menus were not limited to northern German dishes but varied from Bavarian to Swabian. The setting up of the maypole and the accompanying speech by a member of the gastronomic association was documented by a local TV and radio producer, as were all the events of the association. On the second day of the celebration, May

3 The smaller maypole celebration in one of the town's districts stands in contrast to the bigger one described until now. It is organised on a volunteer basis by a local heritage society, the shooting club and fire brigade as well as horse riders from a nearby stable. The traditional march which accompanies the pole to its final place is dominated by the local population handing out drinks to their neighbours in many of the front gardens at the edge of the road, a track length of a kilometre quickly takes more than an hour to pass. Much of the march seems to be an attraction for children, who specifically enjoy the performance of the local traditional dance group. In an opening speech a member of the Heimatverein (local heritage society) as well as the local major underline the importance of the donation-based celebration for social cohesion in the village. Interestingly then, both celebrations taking place within the town of Aurich take different form and function: While one celebration is supposed to make the urban centre more attractive, the other one serves the production of a rural and village-like community in one of the towns districts (Fieldnotes; student research assistant).

1st, a representative of the German Union Association took the stage for a speech on Worker's Day.

Even though the municipality was no longer funding or organising the Maypole celebration, the district mayor took a prominent role as a volunteer paramedic and was the first one to guard the tree on the day of my visit. This reminded me that while the festival is professional and commercial, the town is also provincial, signified by social proximity even including people in official functions. A group of young people from the local sports club provided the second round of guarding the tree.

While the return of the tradition in the town centre was welcomed in the local newspaper (ON 04/2018), the association still had to react to criticism of their disregarding traditions around the festivity, such as the involvement of volunteer associations, traditional dances around the pole, or the conventional place for the maypole, the market place, which was unavailable for that year's celebration – a point that a member of the gastronomic association felt like he had to justify in his opening speech. The association of restaurant and café owners reacted to the outside criticism by promoting the involvement of a local sports club in setting up the maypole and booking a traditional dance group.

Although I did not engage with this specific dance group, I did meet and interview some members of an overall network of folk dance associations who meet regularly. The network's leading members are actively interested in lay research into the history of East Frisian dance and traditional costumes. As one of the members explained, their practice was only taken up by the association in the 1970s, when the EU provided some funding for local cultural initiatives. The founding narrative of some of the network members is related to the discovery and invention of traditional East Frisian songs, dances, and dresses since the 1970s. The association's self-description does not include the role of traditional dance during the Nazi regime; it does, however, refer to the fact that there is no 'ungebrochene' (continuous) dance tradition in Germany, as in other regions of Europe. 'Certainly, our ancestors also had their dances for certain occasions, such as weddings or harvest festivals, but unfortunately, most have been lost.' (East Frisian Traditional Dance Association homepage, my translation). One of the association's main aims is therefore to collect and reconstruct these dances. The costumes are inspired by exhibits from the town's historical museum. Moreover, a state-wide association catering to the interests of different traditional costume associations is involved in cataloguing specificities of local costumes, which, as another member was eager to explain to me, differ from region to region.

The broader small-town arena is composed of people living in the regions of North Frisia and East Frisia in Germany and West Frisia in the Netherlands. In Germany, Frisians are one of three officially recognised ethnic minorities in Germany. The region of East Frisia is increasingly dominated by tourism providing it with a broadly funded arena of cultural and heritage institutions situated in the region.

The most prominent one in East Frisia is probably the Ostfriesische Landschaft (East Frisian Landscape Association), a municipal organisation with a certain amount of autonomy and self-organisation taking on the promotion of culture, education, and research in East Frisia. Comprised of different departments working on archaeology, museum, education or the Low German minority language also hosts an extensive regional library, the 'Landschaft', with an annual budget of over 4 million Euros, can be considered the most crucial actor and funder in the overall region. However, it is by no means the only actor. The promotion of East Frisia as a brand for the tourist industry is supported by the Ostfriesland Tourismus GmbH (East Frisian Tourism Company), among others. In some ways, East Frisia is a pop cultural phenomenon, with stereotypical depictions of East Frisians as a little backward and provincial but talkative and friendly and it being possible to order East Frisian passports online.⁴ The local TV and radio programme regularly hosts shows in the region's second language, Low German, and many associations promote East Frisian culture and language. The Friesenrat (Frisian Council) is an interest group with chapters in East, North, and West Frisia. A party called Die Friesen focuses on, among other things, ecological issues in the region.

In terms of cultural heritage, the cultural practice of drinking East Frisian Tea was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2016. There also exist many large and small 'Heimatmuseen' [local heritage societies] and cultural events all over the region. Few of these actors, though, play a significant role in the annual tradition of setting up maypoles in Aurich town centre, an issue that is dealt with in more detail in the methodology chapter in part II.

3.2 Cuxhaven: An Original Fatima Statue and a History of the Fishing Industry

Since the early 1990s the Catholic church and its Portuguese members in Cuxhaven have organised an annual 'Procession of our Lady Fatima', celebrated worldwide and dedicated to the apparitions of Godmother Maria in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. According to the myth, the apparition intended to bring peace to the world and renew the Catholic community, as well as producing several prophecies regarding the near future. One of the volunteer organisers and local Catholic church council members told the story of how the Portuguese priest brought an original sculpture to the German town from Portugal in his tiny car. In 2018, when my student research assistant attended the celebration, around 200 people participated (Fig. 3.2). Some representatives from the Portuguese Consulate and the local Catholic church led the celebra-

4 East Frisian Embassy: <https://www.botschaft-ostfriesland.de/amtliches/ostfriesenausweis/>, accessed June 4, 2024.

tion. One of the Portuguese folklore dance associations, also called rancho groups,⁵ took part fully dressed, and as the local newspaper later noted. While Portuguese was the primary language in the procession, the rosary was recited in five different languages. Some people stood on the side of the street taking pictures of this 'very unusual sight', as the local German newspaper noted (CN 05/1999).

Fig. 3.2: Fatima sculpture in front of Church door in Cuxhaven. Foto: Carola Steenhof



Another Portuguese festival in Cuxhaven is the local fish festival, which has an overall commercial character. Due to the history of Portuguese workers in the town's fishing industry, this festival can, as one blogger phrases it, 'not be thought of without thinking of Portugal as well' ('kuestenglueck.com', April 10, 2020, my translation).⁶ The festival occurs once a year in the historical buildings of the fish auction hall, the active fish industry having moved to a new part of the harbour. The auction hall is itself a tourist attraction, playing host to gastronomy, tours of specific ships in the harbour, and music performances, some of which were by the local Portuguese rancho dance associations. Organised by a local fishing industry interest group, the festival also offers several fishing-related attractions such as a tour through the harbour.

5 Ranchos Folclóricos means folk dances and is a dance practice originating in Portugal's rural areas.

6 <https://www.kuestenglueck.com/cuxhavener-fischerfest/> accessed last June 26, 2024.

The Catholic church and Caritas are central to the (re)production of ethnically marked cultural productions in Cuxhaven in the otherwise more Evangelical-Lutheran region. At the end of the 1960s, Caritas tried to find a place of residence for the immigrant workers. Responsibilities for social counselling of foreign workers and family members were informally distributed along the lines of religious affiliation in the 1960s, so Caritas was declared responsible for Catholic migrants. In 1967, a Spanish centre was established. 'At last, they will be given a place in this Stranger Land where they may feel truly at home' (CN 04/1966). Since the increase in the Catholic community was so significant (today around 1200 people), Portuguese masses began to be held in 1975. This is described in the local newspaper as the 'birth of the Portuguese community' (CN 11/2000). While the Portuguese mission used to be responsible for several towns in the region, it has since closed and no longer plays a significant role. There is no other evidence of organised protest at the time of the mission's closure being eminent. Today, in addition to the weekly Sunday service, there is a Portuguese service every Saturday, which is held in German but in which the Hail Mary, the Our Father, and the songs are spoken and sung in Portuguese. In addition, communion classes for children with Portuguese family backgrounds are held in Portuguese, to teach children the Portuguese language and culture.

Cuxhaven's Portuguese community also projects an element of the Portuguese state via the Portuguese government representative, who resides in neighbouring Hamburg, taking part in community-relevant events. Moreover, children can take Portuguese language classes in one of the local schools financed by the Portuguese state. In 2008, a theatre play was developed and performed by students in cooperation with a school from Cuxhaven and a school from the Portuguese Twin Town, which caused a small sensation. The project occurred within the EU education programme COMENIUS (CN 12/2008). In this context, local newspaper articles repeatedly referred to the process of European unification that was already being practised so successfully in the town.

Cuxhaven began developing a differentiated landscape of Portuguese associations and gastronomy with the first explicitly Portuguese folklore festival in 1988 (CN 04/1988). Thus, various cultural associations and folklore groups were established from then on. The Portuguese Centre and a German-Portuguese association are the most significant Portuguese cultural associations in the town. The Portuguese Centre is part of events such as the Fishermen's Festival and is mainly run and organised by people with Portuguese ethnic heritage. Every Saturday, the centre offers members the opportunity to have dinner together, an offer also open to non-members and non-Portuguese people. Several times a year, there are concerts with Portuguese bands and other cultural events. During Football world cups, the centre regularly hosts a public viewing for all interested people. In 2019, the centre celebrated its 25th anniversary. The other cultural association in Cuxhaven is run and organised mainly by German citizens who do not have a Portuguese migration history, even if a Cux-

havener with a Portuguese family background usually appears publicly as its representative. The research assistant soon found out, the centre, in contrast, holds a high status as a meeting place and is certainly present in the town with events. Newspaper articles from the local newspaper show that the association is mentioned regularly and is, therefore, much more visible to the public than the Portuguese centre. It is visibly involved in Portuguese issues and cultural exchanges between the countries. For example, the cultural association is part of a cooperative project engaged in plans for the town's urban development (CN 07/1998); it promoted a town twinning with a Portuguese port town which concluded in 2000; it makes speeches at official anniversaries, and organises book donations for the local library as well as promoting an exhibition on the history of the fishing industry in a local museum. Besides these two Portuguese associations, Portuguese cultural forms are represented in the town by two rancho groups that practice and perform folkloric dances. The associations along with Portuguese food and music are sometimes represented at festivals in the town, such as at the opening night of the Intercultural Week organised by the town under the banner of promoting civil participation in an 'Engagierte Stadt' (Engaged City).

3.3 Zeven: 'Little Nijmegen'

Remnants of Dutch historical military presence in Zeven are still evident today: A Dutch café operates in the town's pedestrianised area, and an online store sells Dutch goods (most successfully selling Indonesian food) in the neighbouring town. The most famous local hotel is the site of the annual 'Matjesfest' (Soused herring festival), celebrating the start of the pickled herring season. It offers descriptions of the rooms in Dutch, English, and German. A local school still has its original Dutch name. Moreover, when the Dutch military left the town in 2006, a sculpture was given as a present, still standing on one of the town's squares.

Historically, the Dutch military strove to maintain a good reputation in the town and, probably as part of this, organised a series of festivals that are still part of the town's annual calendar: Four Evening Marches, Sinterklaas visits, and King's Day (the birthday of the Dutch monarch). In 1969, more than 5000 people attended the Four Evening Marches, a multi-day walking event with an international music show. It was described as a festival with radiant power in the broader region (Jubiläum-sausgabe. 50. Zeven 4-abend Märsche 2017, Beilage der Zeven Zeitung). Municipal politicians regularly emphasised the Dutch military administration's excellent cooperation with the local administration in the local newspaper and at such events. Even today, after the Dutch military was withdrawn from the town and replaced by German soldiers, it still plays a vital role as an institution. After all, almost all Dutch people still living in Zeven have a direct biographical connection to the military, and

living in the barracks as a sort of independent enclave of the military has a specifically strong influence.

When the Dutch military left the town, there were large protests from its inhabitants. The local newspaper's headlines in 2003 are witness to this conflict as they tell the story of protest being organised: 'Impressive Solidarity With the Dutch' (ZN 06/2003) or 'Zeveners Take to the Street for the Preservation of the Casern' (ZN 06/2003). Local and national politicians advocated against closure, mainly as they could see the economic repercussions for the region's population (see chapter 7.2.3.). A compromise was found in that the Dutch military left the barracks, but a German garrison moved in. But more than 300 retired military personnel or ex-military members from the Netherlands decided to stay. In 2007, an ex-general well-connected with communal politics, initiated the founding a Dutch association and the group were provided with a clubhouse in the area of the ex-barracks, as the local newspaper titled: 'Basis for a good start. Huge Dutch traditional club opens small clubhouse' (ZN 03/2007). Since then, the club has been regularly open for coffee, Dutch national holidays are celebrated, and events, some of them of a self-help nature, are organised. A women's group organise regular excursions in the region. In this sense, the association, whose main aim is to give back to the Dutch people to whom the casern was a 'big part of home', a 'small piece of home, a place to go for coffee and a chat' (Association homepage, my translation). For the Dutch national day for the remembrance of the dead on May 4, representatives organised an event in the neighbouring memorial for a Nazi work camp in which many Dutch citizens died during the Second World War. The association informs its members and the broader public about all these activities in a small publication.

Moreover, after the withdrawal, the mayor, in collaboration with a Dutch general, suggested creating a new association to promote the town's cultural development, which nowadays is a central actor in this field in Zeven. It has a political agenda in commenting on the dismantling of the social infrastructure or the memory of preserving the town charter. At the same time, the association does not necessarily focus on this in their public image; financially and organizationally, there are a lot of mainly local businesspeople involved. An important aim is to make the town attractive for their potential employees by promoting arts and culture in the region (Homepage of the association). The association plays a pivotal role in the town's arena, among them the Dutch festivals that take place nowadays in public spaces. The association organises annual Sinterklaas processions at the Town Hall and the Four Evening Marches, with the Dutch association only being a collaborator.

Sinterklaas is one of several Dutch-marked festivals and events might be the Netherlands' most popular cultural tradition, but it is the most contested one (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016). Each year in November, Saint Nicholas, an imaginary Catholic bishop called 'Sinterklaas' visits the country from Spain on board a

steamship and is accompanied by his helpers, 'Zwarte Pieten' (Black Peters). The latter wear black makeup and dress in servants' costumes. Sinterklaas is publicly welcomed in many towns across the Netherlands; some broadcast the spectacle live on TV with thousands of children and adults in attendance. Maybe unsurprisingly, Black Peter's figure sparks outrage among many in the Netherlands and abroad. Its critics point out the tradition's racism and symbolic representation of colonial relations. Since some activists first publicly protested the festivities in the Netherlands in 2011, the controversy around the celebration quickly intensified, to the point where even the United Nations urged the Netherlands to stop the portrayal of Black Peter in 2015 (Sengupta 2015).

In Zeven, this Sinterklaas also arrives annually as a unique attraction at its Christmas market. The festival was first organised by a Dutch military brigade when they were stationed in the town. While the event receives no financial support from the municipality, the town hall building is provided for free. When I witnessed Sinterklaas's arrival on a rainy day in 2018, a big crowd of families were awaiting its arrival quite nervously. A member of the Dutch traditional association was already standing on stage next to a big green chair and trying to make the children in the first row sing Dutch Christmas songs. When they did not follow this call, maybe because they do not know the songs or the Dutch language, he started to play them from the sound system. Sitting in a carriage, Sinterklaas and some black-faced helpers made their way through the pedestrian streets of the town centre. The Peters handed out 'Pepernotjes', small cookies typical for Dutch Christmas times, to children. Some of the market's visitors were surprised as to where one could buy these weird 'dog cookies'. After the performers reached the town hall, they disappeared for a while, only to show up on the building's balcony. While the Sinterklaas performer read a poem, two Peters climbed along the building on rope, which enthused the children. A member of the Dutch association later explained to me that these two performers were German soldiers, while visitors from the Netherlands played the other Peters. The ordinary Sinterklaas wandering the market each day seemed rather pale and dull compared to this event. Seemingly, the escalating debate around Black Peter in the Netherlands had not yet reached this small town.

Another Dutch festival held Zeven is the International Four Evening March, which has taken place in the Dutch town of Nijmegen every year since 1910. While it was intended to be a military event for the troops' health, many civilians soon started to participate in the four-day-long daily marches.

In Zeven's version of the festival, almost every relevant local business appeared to be an official sponsor. Still, the festival's appearance was military-dominated, with marching music and a parade of flags (Fig. 3.3). Military participation in the marches has always been a point of attraction for the wider public. However, in the Netherlands it has also sparked protests in the past, especially during the peace movement in the 1980s (Dijksterhuis 2020). The biggest Four Evening Marches happen annu-

ally in Nijmegen, a city in the Netherlands, which brings reporters from a Dutch newspaper to title their visiting report with 'Zeven a small version of Nijmegen' (ZN 06/2017).

Fig. 3.3: Four Evening Marches in Zeven, view of central starting and end point. Foto: Deborah Sielert



The festival in Zeven is organised by a civil association mainly consisting of local businesspeople, but a festival visitor explained to me that it is supported by the new German military brigade. The military provided one of the leading attractions for children by hanging up a rubber army boat, transforming it into a gigantic swing and giving essential logistic and infrastructural support to the overall festival. Dutch soldiers and a military musical corps came to visit for the event, and people dressed in military clothes. The whole event felt like a typical parish fair with a note of military style, with food stands and some information provided by local associations. Every year, the march highlights a different cause: when I visited in 2018, the campaign against the closure of a local hospital was the centre of attention. An impressive number of groups participated in the march, ranging from soldiers to school and kindergarten classes to local businesses and groups of friends and families. The

members of the Dutch traditional association were visible in their orange accessories. However, other than one or two flags and the march facilitator's accent, the event's 'Dutchness' was not particularly obvious in its symbolism.

The ethnicised festivals in the annual calendars of Aurich, Zeven and Cuxhaven are embedded in the wider arena of these towns, involving not only engagement from ethnic leisure associations but also a broader social world of volunteering and a number of other worlds, such as the media, municipal politics and the local economy. They are influenced by global and national discourses and supraregional actors as well. All of these discourses and social worlds are considered in an analysis of the (re)production of the festivals and association in Ethnicised Heritage Situations as developed and put into practice in this book.

Naturally, the cultural and ethnic diversity of peripheral small towns appears more limited than in bigger cities and metropolises, it takes different forms as well. The diversity of small towns has, therefore, been subject of discussion in the growing field of Small-Town Research. Cuxhaven, Zeven and Aurich with their cultural diversity are not isolated in the periphery, but always already embedded in transnational processes crisscrossed by the mobility of people, things and ideas, as the field of transnational studies shows. Both, Small-Town Research and transnational studies are, therefore, fields of research this book aims to take from and give back to, in addition to Critical Heritage Studies.

4. Studying Cultural Heritage from the 'Limited Diversity' of Small Town Arenas - Literature Review

The field of Critical Heritage Studies emerged in the early 2000s as a response to the limitations and exclusions inherent in what Laurajane Smith (2006) termed the 'Authorized Heritage Discourse'. This framework, institutionalised through national heritage agencies and global bodies such as UNESCO, privileges expert-led, state-authorised understandings of heritage – emphasising monumental, architectural, and tangible forms rooted in Western and colonial concepts of space and time. Critical Heritage Studies points out how, through instruments like the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO's heritage management practices reinforce a top-down model that prioritises universal values over local meanings, and conservation over lived experience. Moreover, heritage researchers describe the processes through which communities are excluded from decision-making processes about the heritage that shapes their collective identities and everyday lives.

Critical Heritage Studies challenges these processes, exposing the political, cultural and ideological underpinnings of how heritage is selected, conserved and interpreted. Today, the field is thriving and interdisciplinary at its core, built on the consensus that cultural heritage's value is not inherent to heritage objects or practices but must be understood as constructed in processes of valuation. Moreover, heritage is understood to always be political and responding to societal challenges in the present, as selected elements of an (imagined) past and future are linked to the present.

Studies from the field of Critical Heritage Studies have empirically and programmatically challenged assumptions and practices of the Authorised Heritage Discourse from the perspective of lived experiences in small-scale settings. They prominently focus on the conflicts arising after a cultural endeavour has been officially listed on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

While there are no official cultural heritage listings in Zeven, there is a history of festivals as part of the city's annual calendar that have taken place since the 1960s, when the Dutch military stationed in the town invented them to shape local civil-military relations. Nowadays, the festival organisation can no longer be said to be in 'Dutch hands', as many different actors, such as local associations, businesspeople

or the municipality are involved in their (re)production. Although the festivals are part of Zeven's Dutch history, neither all visitors nor all inhabitants of the town are aware of this history. They show up for the food, the fun, the childrens' activities, plain and simple. The festival is the draw – not the heritage it might honour. Though historically billed as a celebration of a Dutch tradition, many see it through other lenses: a German-flavoured folk festival, or a respectful nod to the town's military past. Few seem invested in the event's historical narrative. The appeal lies in the ease of it all: come, march, eat, play, leave – no strings attached. 'Heritage', then, is, if at all, implied and demonstrated in multiple ways.

A Critical Heritage Studies perspective advocates taking up pluralistic perspectives in order to consider the socially constructed nature of heritage as well as the social fabric of all cultural endeavours. It is, therefore, much more apt to adequately understand small town cultural pluralism than the 'God's view' perspective from above taken in Authorised Heritage Discourse, which would have likely unquestioningly considered the Four Evening Marches the cultural heritage of Zeven's Dutch minority meant to be commemorated and performed. As Leidulf Mydland and Wera Grahn formulated for their research on volunteer initiatives preserving schoolhouses in Norway:

[...] local understanding of cultural heritage becomes a social process rather than a physical object to be preserved. In other words, cultural heritage is seen as an instrument for the development of social experiences, relations, exchanges and so forth (2012:583).

As in their case as well, local understandings of heritage tend to be pluralistic and differ from what Authorised Heritage Discourse implies, namely a harmonious congruence of A heritage with A community and A collective identity.

To understand heritage as a social process also questions the role of place understood as a territorialised entity in processes of heritagisation. Denis Byrne developed the concept of the China–Australia migration 'heritage corridor' in order to underline the ways in which a Chinese heritage in Australia is constituted in a transnationally distributed and connected network of sites and objects, which include houses back in China as well as the local history of Chinese immigration to Australia. Byrne states: 'The notion of transnational simultaneity jars with the conventional idea of the heritage place as fixed, stable, and firmly situated inside the space of the nation's sovereign borders.' (2023: 342).

For a church member in Cuxhaven, to participate in the local Portuguese language mass is also a moment of transnational simultaneity that one would possibly not expect in such small-town settings. To pray in her first language and in front of a Fatima statue imported from Portugal in the 1990s produces a feeling of actually being in her country of birth. For a second-generation migrant from the Netherlands,

Dutch heritage is closely related to a family history that spans across national borders. And the debate around the racism of the Sinterklaas festival, which has globally reached the UNESCO floor, is being taken up by members of the Dutch traditional association in Zeven only to underline that such matters do not matter in their diaspora situation and rather belongs to the 'big debates' back in the Netherlands. These are just some instances of small-town cultural pluralisms sparked by mobility experiences that constitute their cultural expression as 'places in transnational meshworks' (Byrne 2023:342).

Such needed confrontations of the international Authorised Heritage Discourse with reality is what has made Critical Heritage Studies as a field thrive in recent decades.

Transnational migration studies offer a conceptual vocabulary to more adequately understand the role of mobility experiences in heritagisation processes, some of which have already been taken up explicitly in Critical Heritage Studies. However, specifically in the German context, the field has its own limitations. Much research focuses on migration and cultural diversity in big cities and metropolises, such as Frankfurt, Hamburg or Berlin. The cultural pluralism of small towns and peripheral regions, therefore, remains something of a blind spot, which can be enlightened by studying ethnicised cultural heritages located in small Northern German towns.

4.1 Critical Heritage Studies

Cultural heritage in the field of Critical Heritage Studies is often researched as an economic resource and source of valorisation or as a resource in a symbolic and social sense, a source of (e)valuation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006:189). This latter sense is most important for my research, as it includes the mobilisation of heritage in processes of in- and exclusion. This interrelation is described as heritage being '*intimately linked with identity*' (Smith and Akagawa 2009:7), as a constant '*borderwork*' (Ashley 2020:22), or as something put to strategical use to produce difference and belonging (Ashley and Frank 2016:501). Cultural heritage is always the heritage of a group, be it the national, global or ethnic community. In this context, issues of cultural diversity, such as migration and multiculturalism within the field, have prominently been addressed.¹ This study empirically explores key

1 Other axes of difference, such as the relation of gender and heritage, are much less prominent. Vanessa Whittington (2021) and Ellen Hertz (Hertz 2011), both addressed the profoundly gendered nature and contradictions of heritage regimes in their propagation of human rights, gender equality among them, and processes of gender representations and the impact of heritage policies on local cultural practices often (re)produced by women are two among few. Anna Reading (2015) analysed gendered processes in heritage curation and con-

themes addressed in Critical Heritage Studies literature. These include the role of local communities (4.1.1), the dynamics between international heritage regime operations and local communities' grassroots cultural endeavours (4.1.2), and the complexities surrounding ethnic and migrant heritage (4.1.3).

4.1.1 The Coupling of Community with Identity and its Critics

Up until the 1990s, cultural heritage was something almost exclusively attributed to nation-states, constituting them as imagined communities (Anderson 2016). Since then, many nation-states have been challenged by their internal diversity, with multiculturalism becoming an undeniable fact, as minorities speak out to be heard. Increasingly, heritage is being attributed to ethnically diverse groupings within nation-states, which goes hand in hand with a shift in the types of communities being addressed in cultural heritage policies. These are no longer abstract imagined communities but concrete communities of practice becoming the bearers of heritages, as some scholars such as Adell et. al (2015) or Noyes (2006) also note. It is in this context that the concept of heritage came to be intimately entangled with the idea of communities and their identity, the three syncing with one another in seemingly unproblematic and harmonious ways. While this conceptual triad has been influential in cultural heritage discourses and policies of the last decades, it has been a matter of critique within some corners of Critical Heritage Studies research.

The paradigm shift from national heritage to cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and community participation that culminated in the Intangible Cultural Heritage convention was a significant new phase in global heritage discourses and cultural policy (Gnecco 2015; Harrison 2013: 69). This shift is often described as being a result of interventions by non-Western nation-states to decentre Eurocentric understandings of heritage (Brumann 2018: 1210) and human rights movements (Coombe and Weiss 2015). It also occurred within the broader context of globalisation processes and neoliberal economic restructuring and policy-making (Alonso González 2019; Coombe and Weiss 2015; Geismar 2015; Kockel 2007), with some pointing at heritage policies as being a culturalisation of socio-economic inequalities and their solution (Noyes 2006:48; Taylor 2009).

As bearers of heritage and as participants in heritage decision-making processes, it was communities that became central to global discourse on heritage. As Chiara de Cesari (2013: 401) points out, communities are 'the cornerstone of recent

sumption and the potentialities for methodology in heritage research from a feminist perspective. Finally, some research suggested the usefulness of an ethics of care approach, such as developed by feminist authors Joan Tronto (2013) and María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) for heritage preservation (Pantazatos 2018; Veldpaus and Szemző 2021).

UNESCO policies' although she emphasises how ill-defined they are in these policies. Nicolas Adell et al. (2015) describe a shift in heritage discourse from the nation-state as an imagined community to 'communities of practice' taking over, while not completely replacing the role that nation-states had before (see also Noyes 2006: 33). The turn to community can also be interpreted as a turn to civil society involvement (van der Auwera and Schramme 2011). Since the 1970s, participatory ideologies have gained significance in cultural policy and beyond, ranging from their neoliberal orientation to attempts to democratise political and social processes (Dubois 2015: 10). Much research within the field of Critical Heritage Studies deals with the entry of communities into heritage ideologies and praxis.

One of the debates that emerged in the field disentangles the meanings of 'community' in cultural policy and some heritage research, criticising its potential for homogenisation and the supposedly unproblematic linking of community with identity. Proponents of this perspective criticise the idea of local communities as 'the bottom' (Hertz 2015: 25), or 'the people' (González-Ruibal et al. 2018: 508) as idealised, reified, and homogenised in the process, leaving aside intragroup differences and the fuzzy boundaries of communities in empirical reality (Bendix 2018: 106; Hertz 2015; Waterton and Smith 2010: 5). The multiplicity of communities involved in heritage-making processes, as opposed to the idea of heritage in a single community, is also often disregarded (Labadi and Long 2010). Despite these common-sense observations, Adell et al. find that '[w]hat has been transferred successfully into the UNESCO policy-making realm is, [...] the productive version of cultural identity.' (2015: 9). Heritage in this realm is always connoted positively, a position Christoph Brumann (2014) named 'heritage believing' and compares to attending church. Some go so far as to argue that it is possible to integrate reactionary and populist political positions into these notions of heritage and communities as bounded and inherently good (Galbo 2019; González-Ruibal et al. 2018).

In their conceptual history of the notion of community, Stefan Berger et al. (2020) originate heritage management's affirmative use of the concept to its historical appropriation by left-wing social movements in Britain. They argue that the idea is rarely employed by scholars in France (Durkheim, republican state) and Germany (Tönnies, National Socialism). However, this is changing, as sociologists Tine Haubner and van Silke Dyck (2021) show in the German context, where what they call 'community capitalism' is gaining ground and making invisible much unpaid but necessary labour formally provided not by civil society but by the state.

While Critical Heritage Studies is agreed on the problematic notion of community and its linking to identity in UNESCO policies and research, some scholars phrase this problem as an epistemological shortcoming, while others see it as an ontological problem. The former tend to focus on how local communities are misrepresented and misrecognised in heritage decision-making processes and call for their peers to be more strictly inclusive (Waterton and Smith 2010). Elizabeth

Crooke (2010) found that some voices can be more powerful than others within different conceptualisations and negotiations of community and heritage in UK community heritage-oriented museum projects. Brumann (2018: 1223) found that while a rhetoric of community 'as good' is present in the official realm of UNESCO policy-making, there is no actual space for local communities, the most potent communities involved are still experts and diplomats. Laia Colomer (2017) and Alexandra Dellios and Eureka Henrich (2020) find that community constructed in the name of cultural diversity is an emancipatory ground for minority concerns. Epistemologically, these scholars claim a perspective 'that shifts community from the realm of explanation to something in need of explaining' (Waterton and Smith 2010: 12). But the scholars do hold on to the concept of communities as a normative ground for political claims, often in the realm of community participation (cf. Groth 2015).

From a perspective on heritage regimes as 'technologies of governance' (Burchell et al. 1991), the other approach critiques the ontologisation of community in the heritage field. Scholars reveal how communities are produced as intelligible subject positions through a politics of truth (Coombe and Weiss 2015; Gnecco 2015). They go so far as to say that experts in the heritage field, such as archaeologists, co-produce communities in the first place (González-Ruibal et al. 2018), or that communities are a pure artefact of UNESCO conventions and regimes (Hertz 2015: 51). These authors often stress the active role of researchers in this respect and call for their reflexivity in their role as knowledge producers (Meskell 2005: 77; Noyes 2003: 8). These positions can also be considered part of the position that underlines the radical alterity of minority positions vis-à-vis regime claims on diversity (Gnecco 2015: 268).

4.1.2 Local Grassroots Communities and (Inter)National Heritage Regimes

Critical Heritage Studies often focuses on what happens when UNESCO and other heritage regimes operate in locations through officialised listing processes. While many impact studies of World Heritage exist, some of them conducted by UNESCO themselves (e.g., Galla 2012), in-depth anthropological studies are more likely to centre local processes and knowledge in order to find the frictions and points of conflict in such processes, where heritage experts often take over the definition of what constitutes specific cultural practices.

Often, this line of research concludes that heritage regime operations dismiss local knowledge and structures, act in culturally imperialist ways, and, therefore, dispose of the bearers of cultural traditions of their culture (Alonso González 2019: 42; Salemink 2016: 337). In his documentary film *Flight of the Condor* (2018), anthropologist Hafstein asks: 'When is protection not a means of dispossession?' As he is keen to underline, this is not merely a rhetorical question. The editors of *Heritage Regimes and the State* (2012) also conclude that while regime operations might create space for empowerment, they most often create conflict among those partic-

ipating in the process by commercialising culture or fostering particular collective identities, thereby excluding others and making invisible internal heterogeneity (cf. Kuutma 2013: 27; Saleminck 2016: 338). Other studies also show the creation of conflicts locally (Kuutma 2013; Owens 2002; Tauschek 2013; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Weineck 2015). Mary N. Taylor's (2009) analysis of the Hungarian folk revival movement in Romania exemplified how regime operations in the European context are intended to be liberal, co-produce ethnonational boundaries, and homogenise as an (unintentional) consequence. Graeme MacRae (2017) focuses on the unintentional consequences of World Heritage regime operations. All these empirical studies agree that global heritage regimes and discourses have much power to stir up conflict in local cultural processes, mostly with oppressive effects. However, they do not necessarily find a consensus on the role of local agency in these processes. Many underline that regimes always co-produce spaces of autonomy and creativity for local actors (Coombe and Weiss 2015: 58; Fraser 2020: 182; Kuutma 2009: 10). De Cesari (2013) explicitly calls for heritage researchers to go beyond the top-down perspective that heritage regimes are always oppressive and that the languages of heritage are always foreign to local actors. Many studies follow this lead and take a more actor and agency-centred approach. Some show how local actors challenge regime operations and logic, how they explicitly reject or escape them (Chalcraft 2015; Geismar 2015; Svensson and Maags 2018), how alternative modes of relating to one culture coexist with metacultural regime relations (Foster 2015), or how local actors and heritage custodians strategically employ heritage to serve first and foremost local needs (Ashley 2020; Cheng, Li, and Ma 2014; Galbraith 2015; Isnart and Cerezales 2020; Salzbrunn 2015).

Most of these studies look at the coming into being or the aftermath of official UNESCO heritage listing processes being undertaken locally. But those studies that look beyond or before such official listing processes can expose more general processes of the (e)valuation of culture. Doing so from a framework of heritage can highlight the prominent role of value-regime precursors to international regime operations; it also asks us to rethink heritage starting from alternative concepts of heritage and preservation.

Regina Bendix et al. (2016: 17) point out that UNESCO value regimes always have national, religious or other precursors. Monika Salzbrunn (2015) shows that value regimes are not limited to the national scale but might also pre-exist on the town scale, and Cyril Isnart and Nathalie Cerezales (2020) show this for a Catholic religious minority. In empirical research in Bali, MacRae (2017) shows the importance of local government agencies and their regimes of value, underlining the role of scale in heritage-making processes. Anthropologist Brumann brings in an important geographical note, arguing that value-regime precursors are stronger and more institutionalised in Europe. He argues that while in non-European countries, regime intervention often prompts dramatic changes, this is

less so in European countries, where ‘world heritage often adds only rather thin layers to long-established national conservations frameworks and decades- or even centuries-old local adaptations to a heritage regime’ (Brumann 2016: 14). Still, ideas and concepts of culture and preservation of pre-existing regime interventions exist everywhere. A few studies from a decolonial perspective, primarily conducted on the African continent, contrast global regime ideology and values with local and alternative understandings of heritage and heritage preservation (Röschenthaler 2011; Ugwuanyi 2021). They thereby make interesting contributions to a critique and theorisation of heritage by, for example, questioning the linear model of time so inherent in it. These findings should sensitise the researcher to value-regime precursors both on an institutional and discursive level.

Critical Heritage Studies therefore presents a dichotomous approach to analysing the dynamics between heritage regimes’ operations, the official UNESCO listing process, and their repercussions at the local level: they are either oppressive interventions that disrupt or even dismantle local grassroots cultural initiatives and social life, or they are narratives emphasising local actors’ agency in challenging and subverting regime operations. One way to depart from this binary approach is with the concept of Ethnicised Heritage Situations, wherein the worldmaking power of heritage regimes and the sensemaking projects of local actors are interrelated in complex ways.

4.1.3 Cultural Heritage Between Roots and Routes

Even though Critical Heritage Studies leave behind an understanding of heritage’s value as being intrinsic to objects, they agree that its construction is bound to place-making processes – of rootedness – and that nation-states as actors and ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 2016) remain important in the field. Michael Dylan Foster (2015) as well as John Schofield and Rosy Szymanski (2010) point to the importance of the local in UNESCO discourse around intangible heritage. Sibylle Frank (2009:1 49) defines heritage as a process that localises a constructed and collectively negotiated past in places. Berger et al. point out that even though, in reality, strong transnational links always existed between national elites involved in the construction of national heritages, it still also remained ‘often intensely vernacular and local’ (2020: 325). Kristin Kuutma points to the similarly ambiguous nature of heritage as often being related to claims of ‘fixed identity’ (2013: 10). Hafstein (2012) states that heritage provides a sense of place and belonging on a diachronic level, while simultaneously also often being mentioned in relation to active verbs that denote change, such as to mobilise or to reshape. The rootedness of heritage-making in places understood in territorialised terms implies the West is central in constructions and understandings of cultural heritage. In this context, the connection of heritage to place is also critically recalled to underline the dominance of some places (Europe)

over others (Asia, Africa) as places of enunciation and contrasted with the 'desire to undo and "pluriversalitise" interpretative principles' (Ugwuanyi 2021: 358). Moreover, Dellios and Henrich (2020: 8) note that heritage studies scholars, often trained archaeologists or geographers, tend to privilege spatial applications of the concept over temporal ones.

Many scholars discuss heritage as being bound to the nation-state, which influences its meanings (Ang 2011; Gnecco 2015; Graham 2002; Hall 1999). However, some of these contributions were written before the paradigm shift from seemingly homogenous nation-states to culturally diverse nations; since then, ethnic groups within states have become more dominant. Others do justice to the ongoing importance of nation-states despite the supposed postnational paradigm shift. By now, ethnic groups seem to be the most important bearer of cultural heritage in policies and research alike, even though this is rarely made explicit. Instead, notions of migrant, multicultural, and diasporic heritage dominate Critical Heritage Studies research in this context.

Critical Heritage Studies is deeply committed to pointing towards power relations in heritage-making processes, and many proponents are therefore taking the perspective of those marginalised and excluded from dominant heritage regimes, doing research 'outside-in', as Ashley and Frank (2016:501) call it. In this context, migration has led to many studies combining migration and minority studies with Critical Heritage Studies. They show how the actual presence of migrants and global flows of migration challenge both the dominant imagination of heritage being rooted in place and the dominant status of nation-states as homogenous, as well as dominant ideas on the multicultural nation-state.

Stuart Hall (1999) is an early and often quoted theorist who, when speaking to heritage professionals from British cultural institutions, underlines the active but silenced role that postcolonial and other migrant populations always had in constructing British national heritage. Antonia Noussia (2003) takes a similar perspective, focusing not on national heritage but on other local heritages, and Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (2005), in an edited volume, explore the role of 'race' in British national heritage. It is no accident that such research focuses on the British state, with its solid decolonial movements and cultural studies tradition.

Other scholars taking a more affirmative stance show the importance of cultural heritage for migrants in countries of arrival and host societies. A crisis of continuity is involved in the process of leaving and arriving elsewhere (Gergova et al. 2017: 81; Giglito, Ciolfi, and Bosswick 2022: 77). Countries of origin also play an active role in managing their emigrants' cultural practices and heritage, as Christopher Cheng and Hiu Ling Chang (2016) showed for the case of China, Sonja Gsir and Elsa Mescoli (2015) for migration within Europe, and Laurence Gouriévidis (2016) for emigration out of Scotland.

Focusing on heritage institutions like museums, Critical Heritage Studies shows and criticises how migration and migrants are represented and included in immigration museums and thematic heritage projects (Arokiasamy 2012; Naguib 2013; Smith 2017), as well as in public heritage places like the Mariannenplatz in Berlin (Stapel 2015). It is in this context of looking at how nation-states diversify their national heritage narratives to include minority positions that the notion of multicultural heritage comes up in research. If addressed, it is mostly in two ways: First, multicultural heritage is shown to be a mere trope of such narratives (Dellios 2015: 1081; Leung 2006: 172), leading to superficial inclusion of diverse heritages on the level of folklore (Arokiasamy 2012; Gnecco 2015; Leung 2006; Nikielska-Sekula 2016). Second, multicultural heritage is sometimes addressed as a utopian ideal yet to be actualised in socially just ways (Ashworth 2007: 21; Gnecco 2015: 269).

What all research on migrant and multicultural heritage introduced so far has in common is that it implicitly or explicitly researches heritage from a national framework. There is another vibrant strand of research in Critical Heritage Studies on migration that expressly rejects the 'methodological nationalism' of such frameworks (Berger et al. 2020; Byrne 2002; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), which tend to reduce the process of migration to moments of settlement and arrival. These scholars advocate transnationality, deterritorialisation, and multilocality (Byrne 2023; Dellios, 2015). They do research in both sending and receiving countries (Amescua 2013; Cheng et al. 2014). Ashley and Frank (2016) edited a special issue that focused on the impact of experiences of transcontinental mobility on countries of origin or settlement. Denis Byrnes (2023) developed the concept of heritage corridors to describe the transnational simultaneity of heritage-making in migration experiences. Salzbrunn (2015) has taken up the town and neighbourhood scale in migration research and transferred it to her study of heritage festivals in Switzerland. Colomer (2017) and Byrne (2023) have underlined that the role of mobility in heritage-making in migration should be seen not as a moment before renewed settlement but as a constant way of life for mobile subjects. While mobility is limited to its form of international migration, different kinds of mobility, some unrelated to international migration, do play just as much a role in heritage-making as this book will show.

It is the notion of diasporic heritage which most explicitly conceptualises heritage as both the setting of 'roots' and the coming to terms with 'routes'. This formulation engages the probably most used metaphor to describe diasporic situations and subjects' consciousness in diaspora studies (Gouriévidis 2016: 279). Roots and routes are critical processes of ethnicised heritage-making in the three small north German towns beyond the two cases of Portuguese and Dutch migrants but also involving East Frisian cultural practitioners without migration experience.

Diaspora heritage is also the concept that most explicitly hints towards the relation between dominant national heritage concepts and minority positions. In a

study of Alevi heritage initiatives in Turkey and Germany, Matthew Weineck (2015) describes the becoming of an explicit oppositional diaspora. In an influential paper, Ien Ang (2011: 86) opposes the concept of the diaspora to national heritage, pointing to the tensions involved in applying the concept of heritage to the diaspora due to heritage's nature as an 'essentially territorialized concept.' Ang notes that there is a danger in this conceptual fusion to look at diasporas' moments of settlement rather than moments of unsettlement. Furthermore, she hypothesises that some aspects of the diasporic experience cannot be heritagised. Her discussion ends with the need to work on seriously rethinking heritage from a diasporic standpoint.

Many heritage scholars explicitly engage with concepts and research from migration and diaspora studies. For, example, Martin Wobst (2010) recalls that diasporic understandings of cultural heritage are often more essentialist and stereotypical than imaginations of heritage in the homelands. Karolina Nikielska-Sekula (2016), referring to Rogers Brubaker (2005), focuses on diasporic moments in cultural practices and argues for an understanding of heritage in becoming. Marc Scully (2018) points to diaspora's heterogeneity when trying to find common patterns in diasporic heritage-making. In doing so, Scully explicitly references the work of Pnina Werbner on diasporas. Werbner researched, among others, the Pakistani diaspora in the UK and underlines their appearance as a bounded community situated in specific moments in time, some of whom are connected to cultural translocation processes (Werbner 2005). Moreover, she argues for the existence of a non-elitist, vernacular form of cosmopolitanism (Werbner 1999).

The diasporic and migration heritage concepts fit only two of the three small towns in my research. At the same time, the idea of ethnic heritage as argued above is not explicitly developed in heritage studies and is often taken for granted. In leaving open the role of both migration and ethnicisation in the (e)valuation processes of the three towns' cultural endeavours, I do justice to the constructed nature of ethnicity that never exists 'in itself' but always ever 'for itself' as a dependent variable (Bös 2015: 138).

In summary, Heritage scholars increasingly engage with the dynamic phenomenon of 'heritages on the move' within migration processes, challenging traditional notions of heritage tied solely to the nation-state, place-making, and rootedness. Instead, they advocate for reconceptualising heritage that encompasses the fluidity of mobile lives and routes, thereby framing heritage within transnationality, deterritorialisation, and multilocality.

4.2 Cultural Diversity and Migration in Small Towns – Between the Rural and the Urban

My research makes a significant empirical contribution to the study of cultural diversity and migration within small towns. I extend the scope of inquiry to include ethnic and migrant minorities, such as the Portuguese, Dutch, and East Frisian populations, in small-town settings. Adopting a novel perspective, I bridge the independent research agenda of small-town research with the influential research conducted on migration to small-scale towns within transnational mobility studies, as proposed by scholars such as Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar (2009) or Janin Dahinden and Emmanuel Charmillot (2022). This approach sheds light on processes beyond viewing migration solely as a demographic or economic phenomenon or a challenge to social cohesion.

The key findings of my study address several aspects of the research agenda: they contribute to the broader understanding of small-town dynamics as places of *'limited diversity'* (Nell 2022:30) in pluralised societies (4.2.1), elucidate the specificities of cultural life within small-town pluralised societies (4.2.2), and provide nuanced insights into the cultural visibility of migrant and ethnic minorities within three northern German small towns, along with the sensemaking processes of local actors (4.2.3.). Building on this, I recommend, in line with scholars like Tim Leibert (2021:202), that the field of small-town research engage with the new mobilities paradigm.

Furthermore, my research addresses a significant gap in migration sociology, which has predominantly focused on urban and metropolitan centres while neglecting provincial or small-town arenas. To study small-scale settings as places also minimises an ethnic lens often so prevalent in migration sociology.

4.2.1 Small-Town Research as an Independent Research Agenda

In the early 2000s, urban theorists began to criticise the field's focus on global and metropolitan towns, leaving small- and mid-sized towns unexamined (Bell and Jayne 2006, 2009; Ofori-Amoah 2006). Importantly, they underlined the need to examine these areas not as smaller versions of big towns or simply as part of rural areas but as separate types of settlements with the potential for having specific socio-economic and cultural dynamics. Small-town research has gained momentum in the European Union, with research projects such as the Espon Town Project (Atkinson 2019) or the European Commission of Regions focusing on the integration of migrants (Gauci 2020). This development in the European context relates to the increasing significance of the idea of a Europe of regions in times of globalisation (Kolb 2007: 70). More than 50 percent of people in Europe live in small and mid-sized towns, which makes them the most common form of urban life. In

Germany, 30 percent of people live in small towns, that is, between 5000 and 20.000 inhabitants (Timpe 2023).

Twenty years after these first research initiatives, 'Kleinstadtforschung' (small-town research) as a separate research agenda is being developed by researchers and urban planners in Germany, often funded or initiated by the national government (Vennemann 2022). The field traces its roots back to different waves of sociological 'Gemeindeforschung' (community research) in small-town settings in Germany from the 1950s on (Herrenknecht and Wohlfarth 2005a; Kreichauf 2012). Importantly, rather than a real gap in research in small-town settings, there is shown to be a gap in attention and reception of research in/on small towns. While Wolfgang Herrenknecht and Jürgen Wohlfarth (2005) published an extensive bibliography of such research in Germany since the 1950s, my own preliminary research on the specific topic of migration and ethnicity in small towns hints towards a similar gap of attention, rather than a research gap.

This attention gap necessarily makes any literature review of small-town research incomplete. While it is possible to give an overview of culture, cultural policy and migration and ethnicity in small-town research, much of the research on small-town settings is empirical rather than theoretical (Robinson 2002: 549).

Urban theory has long focused on big cities and, as Robinson points out, on Western cities. The 'world towns' approach leads to urban theory seemingly being unlocated while also permeated by a Eurocentric view from the Global North (Robinson 2002: 531). David Bell and Mark Jayne add that this view from the Global North is even more limited as it only includes those big cities on top of a globally uneven hierarchy of towns. In a paradigmatic sense, they urge researchers and planners to 'think big about thinking small', and for urban theory and not to be 'wowed by the spectacular' (Bell and Jayne 2006: 5). Small towns do work in this global and neoliberal urban hierarchy. They are global and local as much as any other town or city. Building on this, John Bryson et al. (2021) point to the extraordinary geography of ordinary towns.

Research on small towns often frames such places in either a deficit-oriented view (Hannemann 2004) or as essential places with the potential to strengthen a surrounding rural economy (Steinführer et al. 2021). In both cases, small towns are not seen as separate settlement types but are positioned in opposition to big towns or peripheral villages (Steinführer 2021). What defines a small town is under debate in the field of small-town research. The most often and most institutionalised categorisation is by size. In official German administrative terms, even today small towns are defined as having 5000 to 20.000 inhabitants, a category used in statistics since the end of the 19th century. Due to urbanisation and urban growth processes, scholars like Herrenknecht and Wohlfarth (2005b: 59) consider small towns instead as settlements of 20.000 to 50.00 people, which makes all three case studies located in small towns. Other points of definition for small towns are town profiles, centrality or so-

cio-demographic characteristics, for example they are shrinking or growing (Timpe 2023). Among small-town researchers, there is a consensus to go beyond size and economic growth to define what a small town is and to consider the heterogeneity of this type of settlement (Bell and Jayne 2006; Mayer and Lazzeroni 2022; Steinführer 2021; Timpe 2023). In the German context, two types of small towns are broadly distinguished: those in the surrounding areas of metropolitan towns and those serving as important infrastructural and cultural centres in the surrounding peripheral area. Moreover, there are attempts to positively define small towns independently from other types of settlements. Anett Steinführer et al. (2016: 327) propose several structural features of small towns as either analytical or lifeworld related:

- smallness / reasonable size;
- persistence of historic urban fabric / identity of being an urban dweller;
- centrality / proximity to the open landscape;
- formal town status / symbolic relevance of urban history and town status;
- functional specialisation (residential, spa, industrial) / limited amount of opportunities for advancement;
- specific social capital / social proximity and safety in contrast to the perception of the town;
- a high share of long-established home occupiers / emotional bonds to place.

Rurality and urbanity should also be integrated as perspectives in small-town research (Steinführer 2021). The two are often seen as a dichotomy in scientific research, with small towns in between. However, rurality and urbanity should be seen as poles on a continuum, since the congruency of a place/territory with culture/lifestyle dissolves in modern societies (Bell 2010; Steinführer 2021) and places are socially constructed. Louis Wirth (1938) argued that urban lifestyles are not limited to towns. Herbert Gans (1996) later radically questioned whether it made sense to take towns as an independent subject of research. Nevertheless, the rural-urban continuum is vital to how people define the situation of and self-positioning in small towns. In the German context, small towns are most often constructed as belonging to the rural sphere or as 'places lacking urbanness' rather than as places for the construction of other and alternative forms of urbanity (Steinführer et al. 2021: 11).

Images of whiteness, traditions, homogeneity, and backwardness prevail in small towns' social and cultural imagination (Nell 2022: 37). Small-town researchers oppose this view with exposing the actual heterogeneity and diversity of life in small towns. They have long been modern, it is claimed, as processes of globalisation and mobility do not stop at town borders, and the multicultural reality clashes with common cultural imaginations. Small towns therefore challenge such cultural and national imaginations and have the potential to create room for more inclusive

views of peripheral spaces (Radford 2016). In an edited volume on 'post-traditional forms of communisation', Franz Liebl and Claudia Nicolai (2009, my translation) show how leisure associations that seem traditional for rural areas are much more post-traditional in how they actually function (e.g., regarding a growing differentiation in terms of scenes and the associational ecology or voluntary and free chosen membership in associations). Janin Dahinden (2009: 1383) points out that in her small-town research experience, all participants thought of themselves as having a culture and sometimes ethnicity, which also speaks to a globalised and modern subjectivation. Although small-town socio-cultural diversity in Germany is demonstrably increasing (Steinführer et al. 2021), it is rarely explicitly researched (except Kolb 2007). In an essay on small towns being situated 'between "organised" and "incomplete" modernity', Werner Nell argues that from a cultural studies perspective, small towns have to be understood as 'a field of action and place of negotiation of (civically) limited diversity.' (2022: 30, my translation). They are, Nell claims, characterised by an attractive but also limiting mixture of differentiation and stability, diversity and restriction. In international debates, concepts such as rural cosmopolitanism (McAreevey and Argent 2018), rural multiculturalism (Alam and Nel 2022; Krifors 2022), or translocal ruralism (Hedberg and do Carmo 2012) are sometimes developed in or applied to small-town research.

Much small-town research revolves either around demographic factors (e.g., immigration and emigration or ageing populations), with a simultaneous lack of valid statistical data, or around questions of economic development (e.g., economic growth, gentrification, positionality in the global market) (Steinführer et al. 2021; Ülker 2022; Wagner and Growe 2021). This leaves a desideratum of research on mobility, multilocality, citizenship, or sense of place about small towns, specifically in terms of theoretically 'thinking from' such places.

4.2.2 Small-Town Research on Culture and Cultural Policy

As we have seen cultural policy trends in small towns mirror more global cultural policy discourses. Generally, there is a tendency to view cultural policy not as the planning of culture but as a broader cultural approach to planning, that is, expressed in the concept of an 'economy of culture', wherein cultural policy expands into the socio-economic sphere (Barrado-Timón, Palacios, and Hidalgo-Giralt 2020; Cruickshank 2018). The English-speaking Global North, for example, has made an observable turn to community-led development and governance (Edwards, Goodwin, and Woods 2003; Grossmann and Mallach 2021; Theodos, González, and Hariharan 2021). These culture-led policy approaches are increasingly adopted by municipal governments, introducing new developments to local cultural policy (Lysgård 2016).

Bell and Jayne point out that, by definition, culture is still solely associated with big-town life, while small towns are marked by 'something less' (2006:12). Michael Fehn (2005) also states that often, there is no critical mass of local elite demanding cultural events. Culture in small towns tends to be seen as conservative and traditional, which can be a source of conflict over change but often is re-packaged as a marketing strategy (Bell and Jayne 2006: 11). The current aim of cultural policymakers is not to adjust to a national and metropolitan mainstream but to focus on endogenous potential and outstanding heritage, such as local monuments and town history. These latter movements can also be seen as a response to town planning focused on economic development alone (Kolb 2007: 63). The scarce research that explicitly addresses cultural heritage in small towns privileges the role of material heritage preservation for declining or degrading towns (cf. Klusáková and del Espino Hidalgo 2021). An article by Salzbrunn (2015), analyses local neighbourhood dynamics following the taking up of a vocabulary of heritage by the government of a Swiss city.

Anette Kolb (2007) argues that culture in small towns, if popular and leisure forms are included, is much less backwards than the dominant cultural imaginations seem to imply. Kolb suggests that in the German case cultural policies were necessary for small towns' modernisation, which was driven primarily by the influx of companies and their highly qualified workers, as well as an active cultural policy. High cultural institutions, festivals, and town celebrations are a regular part of small-town arenas (*ibid.*). Of course, small towns' financial and infrastructural resources are much less than big(er) towns. The Epson town research project concluded that policy resources, recognition, and support from higher-scale organisations such as the EU can never be distributed to all small towns, which is why hierarchy and competition are necessary (Servillo, Atkinson, and Hamdouch 2017).

A perspective on economic growth and processes of economic restructuring dominates much research on culture and cultural policy in small towns. Studies understand culture-led regeneration policies and the propagation of creative industries for economic growth as being adjusted to the small-town context, where corporate interests in culture and cultural heritage are often absent (Bell and Jayne 2009; Cruickshank 2018). The focus on local cultural policy is historically more participatory and communal rather than being focused on fine art and cultural capital (Lysgård 2019). Other studies focused on branding strategies (Neo and Pow 2015), public and semi-public events for the boosting of local retail (Hilpert and Merz 2020) or difficulties in the cultural development of town centres (Herrenknecht and Wohlfarth 2005b), cultural tourism (Mayer and Lazzeroni 2022) or the overall cultural political economy of small towns (Lorentzen and van Heur 2012). Çağlar (2007) compares the nomination for the European Capital of Culture of a German town and a small Turkish town; both focusing their nomination on cultural

diversity due to migrant populations and town incorporation. Çağlar found that their success in converting culture into an (economic) resource is not dependent on sophisticated marketing strategies, nor the town's demographic composition, but on their positioning within global capital flows and globally uneven hierarchies of development.

The most important finding for this study is the extraordinary role that limited associational ecology (and other 'third-sector' actors) and social proximity play in reproducing small-town cultural life. While there is a limited number of cultural milieus in relation to big towns that characterise the picture of small-town culture (Hannemann 2004), existing structures primarily based on leisure and volunteer associations, large organisations, such as the church, and local businesses all play an essential role in the field (Götzky 2013; Kolb 2007).

Local festivals are another characteristic part of small-town cultural life. Some research that does not explicitly focus on cultural policy shows that there are 'short distances' between different municipal, entrepreneurial, or volunteer actors in small-town arenas, underlining the relatively high role of single central people (Semperebon, Marzorati, and Bonizzoni 2023). In researching four small Norwegian towns' cultural policies, Hans Kjetil Lysgård (2019) points out that the objective of local cultural policy is to directly increase its inhabitants' social rather than cultural capital. In cities, cultural capital is typically assembled by witnessing culture as produced in professional institutions, such as museums or theatres to, thereby, enhance social capital. In rural places, to participate in the (folk) cultural arena is to directly engage in communitarian social interactions and enhance social capital and social cohesion. In this context, amateur choirs and theatre groups, local sports associations, and different idealistic/political associations become pillars of local cultural activity (ibid: 13). Accordingly, small-town cultural policy materialises not as spectacular cultural palaces but as participatory arenas. Lysgård describes this as one of three highly relevant localised policy and knowledge regimes in a situation of policy mobility from global to local, grasping this mobility with the help of assemblage theory. Assemblage theory is an innovative approach combining the study of global cultural policy discourse, cultural policy and cultural activity as realised locally. His approach may be the closest I have found to my conception of Ethnicised Heritage Situations.

Small-town research underscores the alignment of cultural policy trends in small towns and regions with broader global discourses. No longer conceived solely as planning cultural activities, cultural policy is rather a comprehensive approach that integrates culture into broader policies to foster political and economic development. Despite this, small towns are often perceived as lacking cultural vibrancy compared to larger towns and are sometimes considered conservative and traditional. However, small-town research seeks to transcend deficit-oriented views and embrace a cultural understanding that transcends a focus on the cultural scene of

bigger cities, comprising of theatre and museums alone. This includes acknowledging the significance of popular and leisure culture in small towns and recognising that cultural policy in these contexts extends beyond establishing cultural institutions to encompass the creation of participatory arenas, as scholars like Kolb (2007) and Lysgård (2019) emphasise.

4.2.3 Small-Town Research on Migration and Ethnicity

Research on migration and ethnicity starts from and ends with urban centres. This is true internationally, but even more so in the German-language context, with often only the biggest urban areas such as Berlin, Munich, or Frankfurt am Main the site of study. This leaves the majority of Germany as an under-researched and under-theorised immigration country. At the same time, while empirical research on migration has been conducted internationally in rural areas, including small towns, only a tiny part explicitly addresses scale and town size questions as an essential context. There is also need to focus on research that expressly starts from the insight that locality and the size of migrants' places of arrival and origin do matter for processes of incorporation of migrants and of membership formation (Morén-Alegret 2008: 549). What little research there is on ethnic minorities and ethnic membership in small towns is presented here.

Two kinds of immigration have historically dominated migration to small towns in western Germany. First, the recruitment of workers from Southern Europe and Yugoslavia between the 1950s and 1970s and the additional arrival of their family members in the 1970s (Kreichauf 2012: 12). Second, the immigration of civil war refugees, asylum seekers from the post-soviet countries in the 1990s, and Syrian refugees in 2015. Migrants often do not voluntarily choose to move to small towns but are driven there by nationwide dispersal politics that dictate the initial location and settlement of migrants with neither the migrant nor the places of settlement having a choice to contradict. Migration to small towns is still increasing nowadays (Kreichauf 2023). When it comes to research on immigration to rural areas (where small towns are often included), a boom can be seen after the so-called 'summer of migration' in 2015 (Alisch et al. 2022; Schammann, Younso, and Meschter 2020). Moreover, there is research on the effect of international migration to rural and peripheral places with hitherto little such experiences taking place under the concept of New Immigration Destinations (Erel 2011; McAreavey and Argent 2018). Less research focuses on the diversity of membership formation in small towns beyond such new or recent immigration movements.

As in small-town research in general, demographic and economic perspectives dominate research on migration (Alam and Nel 2022; van Breugel 2020; Gauci 2020). Annegret Boos-Krüger (2007) and René Kreichauf (2012) conducted research in Germany and show that ethnic segregation on neighbourhood levels does exist in small-

size settings but in different and less stark ways. A strand of research focuses on migration governance in small towns, often associated with 'integration' and integration policies in the German context. Kreichauf (2023) argues that dispersal policies on the national level leave many small towns as only temporary destinations for migrants, as 'places of containment, waiting zones and transit sites', or even 'dumping grounds' (Kreichauf 2023: 351). Peripheral areas on the one hand legitimise dispersal policies as places with space to live in. On the other hand, these policies further peripheralise towns, because immigration there has a relatively bigger effect on the local socio-economic fabric, which is rarely adequately backed up by financial help from the nation-state level of governance. This might be why some research focuses on motives for migrants to stay in rural and small-town settings more long term in order to structurally adjust (Nadler 2012; Nguyen 2020; Rühmling 2023). In 1996, Michael Bommers and Frank-Olaf Radtke analysed the different kinds of immigrant groups that municipal governments face. They show how the reaction to immigration is discursively constructed as a technical problem of the welfare state or a semantic problem of cultural integration and multiculturalism. In practice, politics is dominated mainly by political pragmatism (Bommers and Radtke 1996: 82). Heiko Geiling et al. (2011) underline the heterogeneity of Turkish immigrants and immigrants from the former Soviet Union in their milieu study of Lower Saxony. In 2023, Michela Semperebon et al. started to study the third-sector organisational ecology of small towns and their effect on local governance. They state that there is limited associational heterogeneity to be found, and smallness does not always entail increased inclusivity. Still, it is relatively easy for third-sector actors to access other public and municipal actors.

Short distances between state and civil society actors are also found by Monika Alisch et al. (2022: 155) in a study on spaces for encounters with inhabitants and newcomers in German municipalities. Associations are often discussed as an essential element in small-town membership formation. In the German context, this is most often discussed in the context of heightened social proximity in small-scale settings. Gudrun Kirchoff and Claudia Bolte (2014), for example, underline the importance of civil society actors in the form of large organisations such as church welfare organisations or volunteer associations for migrant integration. Alisch et al. (2022: 162) show that there are fewer social publics for migrants in small towns precisely because much discourse is limited to the care and support of new town members. Paola Bonnizzoni and Roberta Marzorati (2015: 14) mention that issues such as gossip and social control are often more strongly perceived in small-town settings. Martin Åberg and Ann-Kristin Högman (2015) studied the role of civil society in Swedish small towns and find high numbers of civil and political engagement among migrants that had not been previously noted. However, this engagement generally gets little government support and often takes the form of religious associations. They also find that the permeability of boundaries to dominant Swedish culture is higher in

small towns, and there is less ethnic segregation, so transnational ties are important to migrants (ibid: 199).

The role of associations and migrant and ethnic self-organising is also an essential point in research that bridges transnational migration research and urban theory. This strand of research, established by Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009: 190), which approaches space and place as socially constructed and therefore not strictly territorialised, is not yet established in German small-town research, a bridge that I aim to build with my research. Glick Schiller and Çağlar criticise migration studies' focus on metropolitan areas and argue for the need to theorise locality and place-making in migration research. They build on urban theory, theorising scale and showing the globally uneven but interconnected capitalist developments of towns of different scales. Moreover, starting from the town as context is an opportunity to overcome the ethnic lens of migration research, which creates from, and therefore reiterates, a specific group of people as research subjects. A focus on global capital and spatial contexts is also an attempt to go beyond the methodological nationalism of migration research (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 197). It is important to note that what they call small-size cities are cities, not towns in the German statistical sense, which is a witness not only to the definitional challenges of small towns as discussed above but also to the dominance of global cities in migration research.

Glick Schiller and Çağlar ethnographically studied a number of non-metropolitan cities to explore multiple pathways of local and transnational incorporation, including familial, non-ethnically organised businesses, friendships, and charitable and religious networks. They find that ethnic pathways of incorporation are less viable in small-scale settings because often there are fewer ethnic concentrations as well as fewer or no ethnically organised social services, political funds, or constituents to sustain ethnic organisations (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 195).

Bonizzoni and Marzorati (2015) also studied incorporation processes in small towns in Italy and argue that both ethnic and non-ethnic pathways of incorporation do exist, dependent on the degree of social relationships and claims to common culture or descent. Small towns are more hostile grounds for migrant self-organisation, and their incorporation is more dependent on non-ethnic organisations and support. Juan Carlos Carrero de Salazar (2008) researched the political mobilisation of migrants in small towns and finds that if migrant organisations exist in this context, they are most often not located in the immediate local context. Amandine Desille et al. (2023) build on Glick Schiller and Çağlar's claim to counter the effect of towns turning into self-contained spaces, such as nations used to be, precisely as happens in governance-oriented research on migration. They argue that what is local might as well be national and global at the same time and, therefore, address the role of locality as simultaneously an international socio-spatial process. Krzysztof Jaskulowski (2020) takes up this strand of migration research, specifically focusing on the particularities of urban sociabilities in two semi-industrial Pol-

ish towns, focusing on middling migrants as a subcategory of highly skilled migrants. He finds that migrant sociabilities are not organised along ethnic lines due to a lack of salience in ethnic networks and instead take place in everyday places such as kindergarten or workplaces and are shaped by class as a factor of differentiation rather than by ethnicity.

Dahinden (2009: 1383), a transnational scholar who studies small towns, takes an approach very close to Glick Schiller and Çağlar. She shows that ethnic socialisation does play a role in small towns, but mainly in the form of the nation-state. Against the diagnosis of postnational processes, the nation-state possesses a considerable role in infecting hetero- and auto-identification processes. In a later study with Charmillot (2022), Dahinden shows how a small town and immigrant destination in Switzerland is continually peripheralised as an imagined community by the symbolic boundaries drawn by its inhabitants. Those boundaries are characterised by socio-economic rather than nation- or ethnicity-based markers. They depend on the specific place as much as its position in the global economy. The authors, therefore, call for the de-migrantisation of research. They, instead, study the role of mobility beyond migration in place-making, as they look at 'those who live and pass through the place' (Charmillot and Dahinden 2022: 369). Charlotta Hedberg and Renato Miguel do Carmo (2012), who employ the term 'translocal ruralism', also moved towards the mobility paradigm in migration research of small towns. In the German context, Leibert (2021) calls for integrating the mobility paradigm in German small-town research, not because he refers to a transnational mobility studies approach but because he wants to put into the focus of research the phenomenon of rural staying, meaning those immigrants that decide to stay in a town. All in all, the move from migration to more forms of mobility and on different types of migrants in research is an increase of differentiation in this strand of research, which has shown its innovative and likely development, if not yet in Germany, then in the English-speaking context.

Small-town research on migration to small towns has addressed various issues, including governance of migration policies, segregation, factors influencing migrants' decisions to stay or leave, and migrant participation in local politics. However, this research often implicitly conceptualises small towns from a functional perspective, implying an understanding of them as territorialised places.

Conversely, transnational studies view small-scale towns as socially constructed entities rather than strictly territorialised spaces. This perspective enables an understanding of how small towns and ethnicised cultural endeavours within them are situated within and influenced by transnational spaces and national and global power dynamics, including the impact of boundaries between majority and minority groups.

To approach cultural heritage as a social process of valuation as practised in Critical Heritage Studies, no longer leaves experts or global institutions such as UN-

ESCO to decide what is or is not to be valued as heritage, but focusses on negotiations around such constructions in specific settings. The theoretical model of Ethnified Heritage Situations is developed in order to empirically and analytically get a grip on these settings, wherein small towns serve as arenas to negotiations around processes of the (e)valuation of culture.