1. Introduction – Cultural Heritage is a Concept We Cannot Do Away With

The journey to Aurich, Zeven, and Cuxhaven – three small towns in northern Germany – is most conveniently made by car. Although public transportation is available, it is disproportionately time-consuming and thus impractical. This is a common experience for both residents and visitors to provincial regions and is well documented in political discourse, media coverage, and academic research. Equally widespread, however, is the longstanding assumption that rural Germany, unlike its metropolitan centres, is largely homogeneous, shaped little by immigration, and lacking in cultural and ethnic diversity.

A visitor strolling through the streets of Cuxhaven, a small German town on the North Sea coast, on a sunny day in May might therefore be surprised to encounter a procession of 200 people, led by a statue commemorating the apparition of Mary in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. German and Portuguese are spoken in the procession, along with some Spanish, and a group of young adults wearing traditional Portuguese dance attire march as members of one of the town's two rancho folk dance associations. In Zeven, a small inland German town in Lower Saxony, the annual arrival of the Dutch Sinterklaas at the town hall each December is a commonly seen event for local residents. He parades through the crowds of the Christmas market accompanied by Black Peters handing out sweets – a tradition that has been the subject of heated debate in the Netherlands over its racism. Some six months later, numerous local associations and school classes gather for communal hikes, accompanied by a military brass band that travels from the Netherlands to celebrate the Four Evening Marches – a tradition introduced by a former Dutch military garrison stationed in the town. In Aurich, located in the heart of East Frisia, identifying as Frisian – a legally recognised ethnic minority in Germany – is in fact a majority position. Upon entering the town centre, one is greeted by signs of Frisianess everywhere, from East Frisian coffee houses to Frisian legal clinics and children's playgrounds. Once a year, on May 1st, residents gather to raise a decorated tree, celebrating spring and new beginnings, the so-called *Maibaum* (maypole) tradition. All three towns thus bear witness to publicly visible forms of cultural and ethnic diversity. Moreover, they are shaped by histories of migration that long predate the so-called

'summer of migration' in 2015, when large numbers of Syrian refugees arrived in Germany and were, at times, relocated to provincial areas, making their immigration experiences and cultural differences a highly debated topic in both media coverage and academic research. This book examines the dynamics of heritagisation in the pluralised arenas of Cuxhaven, Zeven, and Aurich which are explicitly not 'new immigrant destinations' but have long been shaped by (international) mobility. It explores how these dynamics are shaped by global heritage discourses, while simultaneously unfolding in ways that differ from the expectations such discourses often imply.

The research project is an empirically founded theoretical contribution to the contemporary discourse on ethnicity-related cultural heritage both in and separate to its relation to migratory experiences. It examines ethnicised festivals and associations within three small provincial towns in northern Germany as ordinary settings for the (e)valuation of culture and production of membership and belonging. Furthermore, it serves as a testament to my journey of becoming a researcher striving for a doctoral degree.

I explore a territory that has remained relatively unaffected by official heritage initiatives, international regimes, and institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Consequently, the notion of cultural heritage and an explicit heritage vocabulary are notably absent in the locales in which my research was conducted.

The term 'cultural heritage' is a slippery term that traverses the realms of academic discourse and public policy. Some view it as an analytical tool, constituting in Foucauldian terms a particular 'technology of governance' wherein the heritage objects and citizen subjects are constructed through knowledge written into cultural policies (Coombe and Weiss 2015; Geismar 2015). Conversely, for others, cultural heritage represents a means to comprehend processes of ethnic membership formation and recognition, particularly in the context of societal pluralisation, for example those which result from migration (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007; Byrne 2002; Dellios and Henrich 2020). In cultural policy-making, membership, more frequently articulated as 'identity', is portrayed as positively linked to heritage. It is posited that heritage fosters collective identity and social cohesion by fortifying culturally diverse ethnic communities, shifting away from the nation's homogeneity toward diversity. This is exemplified in the European paradigm of 'Unity in Diversity' or influential instruments like the 2003 UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (2003), ratified by Germany in 2013, which extends the protection of intangible cultural practices and knowledge alongside material and natural heritages.[1] In-

1 There are, of course, studies which show that neither UNESCO (Brumann 2018) nor the EU (Groth 2016) are monolithic actors with only one concept of culture circulating in their domains; moreover, as these international institutions are increasingly being challenged and

cluding intangible cultural elements in UNESCO conventions represents a paradigmatic shift in cultural policy that has evolved since the 1980s.[2] Everyday cultural practices and rituals are increasingly harnessed to promote tourism and heritage industries (Yúdice 2004:2). Furthermore, in times of the neo-liberalisation and dismantling of social infrastructures, they are invoked as remedies for societal conflicts and crises by recognising cultural diversity and sustainable economic development (Karaca 2009).

As Mary N. Taylor (2009: 51) points out, the resurgence of culture as a conduit for accessing economic, social, and political resources is evident in the transition from a legal emphasis that opposes to one that supports culture to rights. Policies that oppose culture to rights assume collective identities to be private and outside of the realm of law, while those such as UNESCO's heritage policies advocate 'the right to culture', binding collective identity to issues of human rights.[3] This shift is paralleled by supranational organisations' increased focus on minority rights since the 1980s. National heritage is now commonly acknowledged as being diverse within nations, encompassing various ethnic and cultural groups whose legacies warrant promotion and recognition (Bös 2025; Harrison 2013: 143). It is even arguable that cultural heritage, within specific discursive arenas, invariably pertains to ethnic heritages with local communities as their bearers.

Significantly, heritage management has expanded beyond the state, with numerous non-state actors, notably local communities, NGOs, and big corporations assuming active roles in formulating and managing official heritage. This shift signifies an expansion in the range of elements with heritage potential within the cultural domain, thereby contributing to heritagisation 'unfolding in daily lives' (Bendix 2018:127). Some scholars argue that 'doing heritage' represents the most prevalent form of 'doing culture' in contemporary late-modern European societies (Tschofen 2012). Against this backdrop, this research project engages with small-town arenas situated outside the purview of official heritage regime operations, while still drawing from a global heritage framework.

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devalued by key actors such as the United States in the context of shifting global imperial power relations and intensifying geopolitical confrontation, it is likely that their approaches to cultural policy will also once again undergo significant transformation.

2 The convention adds intangible heritage to the protection of material and natural heritages, which "means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity " (UNESCO 2003).

3 See also Karaca (2009); Soysal (1997).

In comparing three ethnically marked festivals and associations in small-town arenas, a discursive space emerges in which ethnicised cultural things and people are negotiated by both individual actors and their social worlds (Clarke 2005: 77). An 'arena' is a discursive site of negotiation and debate around a matter of concern to several different social worlds, that is, groups of various sizes that share a common interest which holds them together in organisational strategies. Through their interactions, the social worlds co-constitute the arena (2012: 89, 86). The social worlds that co-constitute the small-town arenas of Aurich, Cuxhaven, and Zeven are all involved in the (re)production of their ethnicised festivals and associations.

The study is located within three provincial small towns in northern Germany at a time when almost 60 percent of people in Germany live in small- and middle-sized towns. The definition of what categorises a small town is debated in Small-Town Research. The town of Zeven located in the Rotenburg district between Hamburg and Bremen, with 20.000 inhabitants, is small according to official German categories of spatial planning. I define Cuxhaven, a coastal town in Lower Saxony and Aurich the administrative capital of the region of East Frisia, with about 50.000 inhabitants, as small towns according to more recent discussions in spatial planning and research. These approaches renew small town categorisations against the background of their origin in the 19th century, processes of urbanisation, alongside a diverse array of indicators such as their centrality (Herrenknecht and Wohlfarth 2005b: 89; Kolb 2007; Timpe 2023). Small towns are of central importance to cultural development in peripheral areas; they provide anchor points and spaces for cultural institutions (Steinführer n.d.). Anette Kolb (2007: 13) describes small towns sociologically as places with specific cultural heritage and places that already show many qualities that are central to circulating ideas of future cities, such as short distances or mixed-use development.

The three towns with either Portuguese, Dutch or East Frisian minority populations chosen for this study were guided by the principle of comparability: all have ethnicised festivals, such as the Portuguese Fatma procession, the Four Evening Marches or the Maypole tradition and all are home to leisure associations involved in organising the festivals. But they diverge in terms of the role that migration experiences play. For instance, the Portuguese and Dutch festivals and associations in Cuxhaven and Zeven emerged due to the influx of inhabitants from Portugal and the Netherlands. In contrast, the East Frisian festival in Aurich is not associated with histories and experiences of migration. Furthermore, there are variations in the levels of ethnicisation among them, as summarised in Figure 1.1, which also enumerates the festivals and associations under investigation.

In light of an absence of official heritage initiatives, regimes, institutions, and even a heritage vocabulary in the research locales, embarking on this research project with a heritage framework may seem like a substantial leap. My reservations regarding the concept of cultural heritage run deep. In colloquial German,

Kulturerbe is frequently linked to material artefacts, such as buildings preserved by *Denkmalschutz* or aspects of high culture. Moreover, it often carries nationalist, conservative, or even *völkisch* connotations, propagated in highly normative ways to align with the culturalisation of a German nation constructed and stabilised around *Ius sanguinis*. In light of cultural heritage's essentialising core, there are valid reasons to exercise caution in its utilisation in Germany, especially from a scientific standpoint.

Simultaneously, the profound change occurring in the field of cultural policy under the label of intangible cultural heritage is already exerting influence on the perception of culture in provincial regions of Germany by governing elites and experts in provincial German territory. Anthropological understandings and less territorialised understandings of culture entered the policy arena with the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage convention. In 2022, the federal state of Lower Saxony ratified a *Kulturfördergesetz* (cultural promotion law), marking the first instance of the (financial) promotion of culture as a public task being pinned down in law (Landtag Niedersachsen 2022). This legislation represents an effort to systematise cultural policies at the state level by defining fields of action and instruments to be employed by the federal state government. Notably, preserving tangible and intangible heritages is a central focus, along with supporting institutions representing Lower Saxony's so-called *Breitenkultur* (grassroots culture), encompassing lay associations and initiatives. A researcher encapsulates the expectations on the regional level:

> 'What is needed, then, is an inventory of those forms of cultural expression that have not been the focus of cultural policy to date; it is a matter of recognising grassroots culture, and therefore, an inventory process is the most important prerequisite for the protection of cultural heritage [...] The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage offers a great opportunity to address those globally overdue reforms in national cultural policy.' (Schneider 2014: 195, my translation)

The inclusion of these aspects in law stems from the lobbying efforts of heritage experts and researchers who view Intangible Cultural Heritage identification and preservation in provincial areas, as advocated by UNESCO, as a pivotal force for a desirable paradigm shift towards the acknowledgement and support of grassroots culture at federal state and regional levels. The individuals and associations I encountered in field research inhabit regions where structured EU cultural policies, some of which encompass the promotion of cultural heritage, are in effect. However, they have not yet been explicitly recognised as bearers of specific culturally diverse heritages within the region. As of now, I am undecided on whether I would advise them to pursue this aim actively. This is a standpoint not too common in Critical Heritage Studies (CHS), an interdisciplinary field of research involving close links to

heritage management practice but also a political project engaged in solving problems to make better heritagisation processes (González-Ruibal, González, and Criado-Boado 2018; Smith and Campbell 2018).

Still, I am convinced that cultural heritage as a powerful concept will refuse to go away. Even if sociologists, anthropologists, other academics, activists, and social policy experts might rail against them. Rather than ignore the concept of cultural heritage, one should engage in the ongoing project to study and theorise it. For me, this endeavour involves maintaining a degree of openness regarding normative judgements concerning what to do 'with heritage' until the project's culmination. According to Andrew Abbott (2018: 172), sociological research should leave questions of normative judgement to a subdiscipline at the start and end of an inquiry. Nevertheless, my perspective, as may become evident in my writing, fluctuates between being a 'heritage atheist' characterised by scepticism towards 'heritage believers' and harbouring 'fundamental doubt about the value of specific heritage items or heritage as such' (Brumann 2014a: 174), and being a 'heritage agnostic' who defers the question of evaluating heritage's utility or drawbacks to empirical investigation.

The Potential for Heritage (not) to Unfold in Ethnicised Heritage Situations

> *In December 2019, I joined a small interdisciplinary conference exploring Critical Heritage Studies and its challenge to UNESCO's Authorised Heritage Discourse. Many of us questioned the reactionary and hegemonic nature of global heritage regimes, especially in relation to local practices. This critique dominated the discussion – until a researcher working in Pakistan spoke. He described how feminist activists there sought UNESCO recognition for Sufi heritage to counter patriarchal narratives. For them, heritage listing was a strategic tool for progressive change. His intervention reminded us that institutions like UNESCO can also serve as platforms for pluralist politics, and that the relationship between global regimes and local actors is more complex than it first appears.*

This book does not take the existence of local cultural endeavours as heritage for granted but rather unpacks the potential for heritage to unfold as well as reasons it might not unfold as such. Two anecdotes from the research process might help to clarify this perspective on heritagisation. The first story of my participation in a Critical Heritage Studies-themed conference shows how cultural heritage diffuses within heritage regimes through a diverse set of actors across academia, public policy, and social movements and in a field of tension between the global and the local (Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann 2012).

The second story, an excerpt from my fieldnotes in Aurich, shows how cultural heritage is only one among several, occasionally competing, criteria employed in valuing culture.

> *In 2018, a heritage expert told me how a local volunteer-run museum welcomed her with a tea table, showing little interest in professionalisation advice for their collection. 'Their objectives are different – legitimate, but not museum-like,' she reflected. I laughed, recognizing similar moments from my fieldwork: volunteers rarely framed their cultural practices as 'heritage.' In one case, a couple passionate about traditional East Frisian dance emphasized fun over authenticity. For many participants, heritage recognition wasn't a goal – the joy of doing often outweighed concerns about public dissemination.*

The heritage expert in the narrative emphasises values such as expertise, professionalisation, recognition, future orientation, and comparability with similar institutions and practices. In contrast, the museum initiative and dance association members prioritise sociability and pleasure in the present moment, with heritage emerging as an unintentional consequence of their cultural activities. From this perspective, heritage-making is not necessarily limited to heritage regime operations.

My theoretical perspective echoes this moment from the field, as I employ a comparative cultural sociology perspective (Lamont and Thévenot 2000), where heritage constitutes one evaluative cultural repertoire among many (Lamont 2012) through which individuals construct symbolic boundaries and forge a sense of belonging. Heritagisation can therefore be conceived of as a fundamental social process involving (e)valuation processes on different levels of generalisation. It involves everyday situations, a situated form of sensemaking, as well as a more institutionalised form of (e)valuation, the worldmaking aspect of the process. Placing this understanding of heritagisation within the framework of comparative cultural sociology then poses questions for this research project: *When and how is cultural heritage employed as a cultural repertoire to foster (ethnic) group membership in the (re)production of ethnicised festivals and associations in three small town arenas in northern Germany (Ethnicised Heritage Situation)? What role do migration experiences and ethnicisation play in the emergence of Ethnicised Heritage Situations?* In a more abstract sense, heritage can be conceived as a 'relational and dialectical category that emerges in specific contexts and not in others' (Alonso González 2019: 31). Alonso González asserts that heritage, as a category and symbolic form, substitutes direct and personal relations with abstract, individualised, symbolic, and metacultural relations. This perspective underscores heritage's analytically accessible rather than empirically measurable nature.

This is why I have developed the concept of *heritage situations* (fig. 1.2.) and the theoretical model of *Ethnicised Heritage Situations* (fig. 1.3.) in order to encompass and empirically analyse arrangements where heritagisation has the *potential* to emerge. These situations arise when the sense- and worldmaking aspects of heritagisation

converge. In other words, cultural heritage serves as a cultural repertoire for membership and belonging to be constructed, or when it is actively fostered by actors within national or supranational heritage regimes.

The concept of *the situation*, central to my Situational Analysis (SA) methodological approach, departs from the traditional sociological understanding of the situation as defined by the observed individuals (in conventional grounded theory) or as the observed context of face-to-face interaction[4] (Keller 2023). Unlike these definitions, SA considers an arrangement of relations between diverse categories and elements. This approach emphasises that the situation's conditions are inherent to the situation itself, eliminating the concept of an external context. Adele Clarke (2012:71) states that 'the conditions of the situation are in the situation. There is no such thing as context', implying that the context is always already a part of the situation, co-constituting it.

Additionally, SA underscores the importance of reflexivity, echoing the principles of 'situated knowledge' and the active role of the research in co-construction that is researched from feminist perspectives, as proposed by Donna Haraway (1988). Reiner Keller (2023:70), who translated Adele Clarke's work into German, emphasises that SA first and foremost reflexively shapes the research process, constructing both the research situation and the observed situation. The 'contexts' in which heritagisation emerges are therefore the primary research focus. However, with Clarke's conceptualisation of the situation, I perceive these contexts as an intrinsic part of the heritage situations traced in these three north German towns.

Symbolic boundary work and the role of migration experiences are the main foci in these Ethnicised Heritage Situations. Without designated heritage institutions and vocabularies to promote cultural diversity, the three small towns face challenges of international migration and cultural and ethnic diversity. Negotiations surrounding these diversities and the potential role of cultural heritage follow different trajectories than those observed in larger urban centres, as seen in the paths of migrant incorporation (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Porsche, Steinführer, Sondermann, et al. 2019:21).

The selection of the three towns, Aurich, Cuxhaven, and Zeven, for comparative analysis, was driven by their comparable characteristics (see Fig. 1.1.). They all function as infrastructural centres for the wider rural regions surrounding them while being small-scale locales. In German categories of spatial planning, where Zeven is categorised as a small town and Aurich and Cuxhaven as middle-sized towns, population size is the defining variable. However, in transnational mobility research, these designations are not solely based on population size but on their relatively

4 Keller (2023) notes that Erving Goffman in developing his theory further toward frame analysis did also not entirely give up this idea.

lower standing in global economic and power hierarchies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009).

Fig. 1.1: Case Studies And Rationale For Their Selection.

Aurich	**Cuxhaven**	**Zeven**
In the region of East Frisia	Significant Portuguese minority	Significant Dutch minority
Maypole celebration and traditional dance association	Fatima procession, fish festival and different associations	Sinterklaas festival, Four Evening Marches & association
No migration experience/relatively highly ethnicised	Migration experience/relatively highly ethnicised	Migration experience/not highly ethnicised

The towns vary in their most visible ethnically marked cultural expressions, which enables a nuanced examination of the roles of ethnicity and migration in the (e)valuation of cultural productions. Aurich is situated in the centre of East Frisia, one of three groups of Frisians recognised officially as ethnic minorities in Germany. East Frisian cultural initiatives are plural in the region, with East Frisian being the majority.[5] In Cuxhaven, many people with a migration background come from Portugal, so Portuguese-marked cultural productions are visible in associations and yearly festivals. Zeven has a history of being a Dutch garrison town with a NATO mission, which is why Dutch cultural productions exist.

I conducted a comparative analysis of the three towns' ethnically marked festivals and ethnic associations, which I consider integral to their cultural life. The towns operate as discursive sites characterised by multiple social worlds that converge on specific issues and are prepared to take action. My fieldwork started with the fundamental empirical questions articulated by Clarke, et al.: 'Who cares, and what do they want to do about it?' (Clarke, Friese, and Washburn 2018: 72).

I gathered different kinds of data to delve into the cultural productions related to the Dutch, Portuguese, and East Frisian histories and contemporary cultural productions within these towns. First, I analysed local newspaper articles to gain insight into the histories of the ethnically marked cultural productions and to ascertain the dominant perspectives on the festivals, associations, and their respective members under investigation. The local newspapers represent a dominant view, as

5 Membership refers to processes of individuals becoming affiliated with a social group. It is often granted to all those who live in East Frisia and identify as East Frisian and therefore not determined by birth or the longevity of residence in the region.

they represent the mainstream and are often the only actors of this kind in the area. Second, I engaged in participant observation during ethnicised festivals and other events, immersing myself within the festivals and associations and getting involved in associated social worlds. Third, I conducted narrative interviews with individuals actively involved in their (re)production. These individuals are commonly associated with ethnically marked cultural production. The selection of these three cases, each with a distinct focus on more (East Frisian, Portuguese) or less (Dutch) ethnicised groups of inhabitants, offers a deliberate strategy to explore the role of migration and ethnicity in the (e)valuation of these cultural productions (as depicted in Figure 1.1.). Notably, I avoid presupposing ethnicity and migration's importance in the studied field throughout the project. My research, grounded in SA and theories of ethnicity, explicitly refrains from treating ethnic groups as the primary units of analysis and does not assume that people who share a national origin settle in communities. Instead, I trace when and how communities and groups emerge along, or not along, with heritages within Ethnicised Heritage Situations through processes of symbolic boundary making.

Heritage as a Cultural Repertoire

As a force of worldmaking, heritage is a highly selective process of constructing a past guided by present concerns. It is always political and, against the background of the abovementioned developments, is sometimes understood as a 'project of ideology' (Kuutma 2013:32), and so cultural heritage can be studied as an international political regime. I employ the concept of heritage regimes introduced by Regina Bendix et al. (2013) to the field of Critical Heritage Studies but broaden its analytical focus by bringing it together with the idea of regimes as developed about 'regimes of migration' (Oltmer 2018) in German migration research. First, a regime involves state regulation and domination, for example, government cultural policies; second, subjectivation and dominant discourses, including the creation of subject positions of those to be governed, providing them 'places of recognition' (Taylor 2009: 41). Another terrain is the economy, which does play a role in my case studies, although not in the form of an established heritage industry (Hewison 1987).

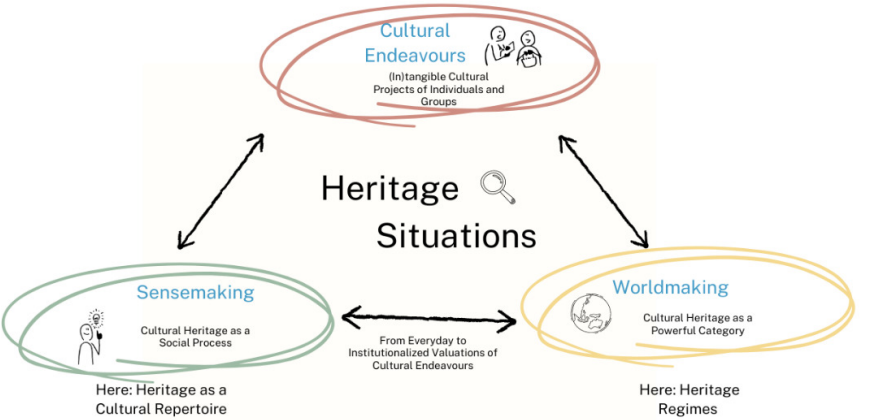
From the sensemaking perspective, heritage is an everyday form of production of what is considered valuable in a group, be it the nation, world society, or an ethnic group. Heritage in this sense can be understood as what Michèle Lamont (2012) terms a 'repertoire of evaluation'. Such repertoires refer to the shared cultural understandings, values, and symbolic resources individuals draw upon when evaluating others and making judgements about social worth. In other words, people employ cultural repertoires of evaluation and different criteria of (e)valuation therein to draw symbolic boundaries that have the potential to turn into social boundaries

and, therefore, to produce social inequality. The concept sees culture not as a system of values or something passively inherited, but places importance on the possibility for individuals to make sense of their actions in specific situations by choosing aspects of a cultural heritage repertoire. As such, heritage as a cultural repertoire functions as a resource for the production of difference and several criteria of (e)valuation, such as recognition or expertise, form the repertoire's content (Silber 2003). This goes beyond a prominent constructivist argumentation that ends rather than starts analysis by stating the constructed and invented nature of 'it all': heritage, community, the nation, etc. As Birgit Meyer and Mattijs van de Port (2018: 4) conclude, research on heritage should start from these real constructions ('Thomas Theorem') and not end up with it in asking new questions and finding new answers.[6]

In their daily lives, people do not have explicit and differing views on heritage; instead, they go about their days engaged in different frameworks of meaning-making along their life paths, which can be reconstructed from the present of biographical narratives in interviews. I met the interview participants in their towns of residence, often in their private homes, and asked them to tell me their life stories. I asked those who take part in ethnicised festivals and associations why and with whom they are engaged. As are we all, they are constantly involved in valuing certain aspects of their past, particular objects, and cultural productions over others, on the one hand to grapple with their biographical experiences, and on the other hand to create feelings of belonging to one or another group. Some of those processes of (e)valuation include elements discussed and observed as heritage by heritage researchers and experts as part of what one could consider *a cultural repertoire of heritage*. These moments of overlap, or isomorphy, define heritage situations. So, what are the criteria of (e)valuation and symbolic boundary making regarding the research participants' cultural endeavours? And what are the virtual potentialities for heritage to be actualised or, equally important, not to be actualised in these places?

6 Andreas Wimmer (2010) mirrors such an argument for research on ethnicity. He states that given the dominant focus on boundary-making in ethnicity research, one might think that the characteristics of boundaries or the 'cultural stuff' that determines them is insignificant. And yet "some authors – including Barth himself, some 30 years after that momentous introduction – noted that cultural practices might be relevant after all" (Wimmer 2010: 111, my translation).

Fig. 1.2: Concept of Heritage Situations: In heritage situations, the potential for heritagisation to emerge increases through a convergence of (e)valuation processes, such as sensemaking and world-making, in the cultural endeavours of individuals and groups.



Being set up like this, this project is more than merely speculative. It assumes there are social potentials that are easier to fulfil than others, and not everything is constructed by an imposition of strong deus-ex-machina-type actors, nor are all projections in the mind of the researcher (Alonso González 2019: 34). It is from this stance that I consider my view from the outside into heritagisation, mediated by the research participants' modes of 'doing culture' a privileged position to learn about heritage as a category in a pluralised society.[7]

7 I employ the notion of "pluralised societies" for lack of a better term to point towards the internal heterogenisation and diversity of nation-states, both as a social phenomenon and as self-narration.

A Sociological Approach to Heritage

Aurich, Zeven and Cuxhaven are well suited for analysis as a site of negotiations around cultural pluralisation. While Germany is known to be considerably late in realising its status as an immigration country, immigration to provincial areas became a topic of conversation even later. Academic discourse in German migration sociology, which cannot be said to be free of influences from societal transformations more broadly, also tends to focus attention onto migration and diasporas in cities like Hamburg, Frankfurt or Berlin. Studies analysing the consequences of the so-called summer of migration in 2015 are a notable exception. It is since this broad shift in migration and attention on migration processes that interculturality, cultural difference and ethnic diversity are being addressed more broadly, questioning prevailing ideas around the heritage of Germany and its provincial regions.

This research project contributes to the fields of Critical Heritage Studies; research on migration and diversity in small towns; and cultural political as well as migration sociology.

Amidst the 'heritage boom' (Harrison 2013: 68) in research and management, an investigation into the ethnicised heritage in three small towns in north Germany contributes to theorising cultural heritage as a category in pluralised societies, as set out by Critical Heritage Studies (Alonso González 2019; Ang 2011; Schneider 2014; Smith 2006; Tauschek 2011; Winter 2013). Using the theoretical model of Ethnicised Heritage Situations based on SA, it can be seen which form cultural heritage does or does not take in a provincial territory, where official heritage institutions or frameworks are mainly absent. I give empirical insights into when and how heritagisation emerges in ordinary cultural endeavours. In this sense, my study radically and empirically follows calls from within the Critical Heritage Studies field to study global heritage regimes 'from below' and as a 'subtle politics of the everyday' (de Cesari 2013:406), to analyse cultural heritage as embedded within socio-cultural frameworks (Groth 2015). Such sociological perspectives on heritage as a cultural repertoire of evaluation implies understanding heritage as an aspect of culture instead of a specific form of culture – metaculture – that represents its 'second life' as a downstream process of valuation (Tauschek 2011).

Calls to account for unofficial and minority heritages (Hall 1999; Smith 2017) beyond the authoritative heritage discourse are essential to the founding narrative of the field of Critical Heritage Studies. Important and innovative research strands include critiques of the ontologisation of communities as bearers of heritage in heritage regimes (Noyes 23; Waterton and Smith 2010) and considerations of the role of migration as a form of mobility in challenging authoritative discourses (Ang 2011; Dellios 2015). It is important, therefore, to reflect empirically and theoretically on how the category of cultural heritage operates in pluralised societies. This means to unpack who is involved in and why they care for the ethnically marked cultural pro-

ductions in the three towns beyond the presumption of the importance of an ethnicised community therein and beyond limiting mobility experiences to migration alone.

My research empirically contributes to scholarship on migration and cultural diversity in small towns amidst the coming into being of Small-Town Research as an independent research agenda that aims to transcend deficit-oriented views (Porsche, Steinführer, Sondermann, et al. 2019). While global cities are well-studied in the sociology of migration and ethnicity, provincial areas remain understudied. Compared to the number of people living in small- and middle-size towns in Germany, research on migration and diversity in such regions is relatively small and all too often focuses on the nation as a unit of analysis rather than the city (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011). Moreover, much field research sees migration from a demographic or economic perspective (Ülker 2022:300). Shifting attention to the under-researched and only seemingly banal site of cultural diversity and migration in small- and middle-sized towns in German society is a valuable empirical contribution to the field. The three small towns presented here confirm small towns as locales of cultural diversity and migrant incorporation. They also show the limited role of ethnic subjectivation and community building and sensitise to understand cultural diversity in small towns beyond the 'migration' and 'integration' containers. By bringing together the Small-Town Research agenda (Bell and Jayne 2006; Porsche et al. 2019) with research on migration to small-scale cities from transnational mobility studies (Schiller and Çağlar 2009), small towns should be treated as already embedded in transnational space and global cultural policy developments.

Conceptualising heritage regimes as localised in Ethnicised Heritage Situations and as interrelated with local processes of (e)valuation and sensemaking is innovative for sociology, as it bridges cultural and political sociology fields. In studying Ethnicised Heritage Situations, cultural phenomena in relation to political regimes can be considered, implicitly exploring the relationship between culture and politics through a sociological lens. This further opens up both fields to studying cultural heritage and, therefore, to Critical Heritage Studies as an interdisciplinary field. I bring novel impulses to the field of migration sociology and even more so German migration sociology as so far, much research draws general conclusions from the study of metropolitan cities rather than peripheral regions of small towns.

As such, this project is among the first attempts to open up and systematise sociology to the interdisciplinary study of cultural heritage. The study of cultural heritage decisively differs from neighbouring approaches, such as collective memory (Assmann 1995; Halbwachs 1925), as cultural heritage is understood as a situated practice and social process driven by situated concerns of the present.

In looking at cultural endeavours and criteria of (e)valuation involved therein of different people and actors in three small town arenas, this research project aims to describe the relation 'between people and significant aspects of their culture and

their environment' (de Cesari 2013: 400) and to reflect on this in the framework of global heritage. The interdisciplinary view is informed by cultural anthropology, cultural and political sociology, feminist theory, Critical Heritage Studies, and, at times, philosophy, which is broad and reflects my interdisciplinary training and approach as a researcher. At the same time, the project bears perspectives that I would designate (with awareness of the politics of disciplinary boundaries in academia) as sociological, such as my choice of methodology or my approach to comparative research.

Cultural Heritage as a Force of Ethnicisation?

The field of Critical Heritage Studies sets out to rethink the cultural heritage category along developments in current societal transformations. Central to these transformations are the primary subjects of heritage governance: nation-states as composed of diverse groups with different cultural legacies and the discursive construction of communities. This urges a consideration of cultural heritage's social embeddedness in localised systems of value and processes of symbolic boundary making.

My theoretical reflections on the ambivalent life of cultural heritage in academic research as a societal phenomenon of the (e)valuation of culture, a buzzword in public policy, and a category constituent of modern nation-states as pluralised societies prompted me to introduce Ethnicised Heritage Situations as my primary research focus. In light of these, the following research question emerges on two analytical levels:

a) When and how is cultural heritage employed as a cultural repertoire to foster forms of (ethnic) group membership in the (re)production of ethnicised festivals and associations in three small town arenas in northern Germany (Ethnicised Heritage Situation)? What role do migration experiences and ethnicisation play in the emergence of Ethnicised Heritage Situations?
b) What do these processes tell us about the category of heritage in pluralised societies?

To answer this question, I explore the following sub-questions:

- What are the dominant values of cultural heritage as a repertoire of (e)valuation dominated by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention?
- What is the role of heritage regimes and associated bureaucratic apparatuses in small-town arenas?
- Which symbolic boundaries do research participants draw on concerning their cultural endeavours?

- What are the criteria of (e)valuation people call upon concerning their cultural endeavours? Which of these overlaps with heritage as a cultural repertoire of (e)valuation?

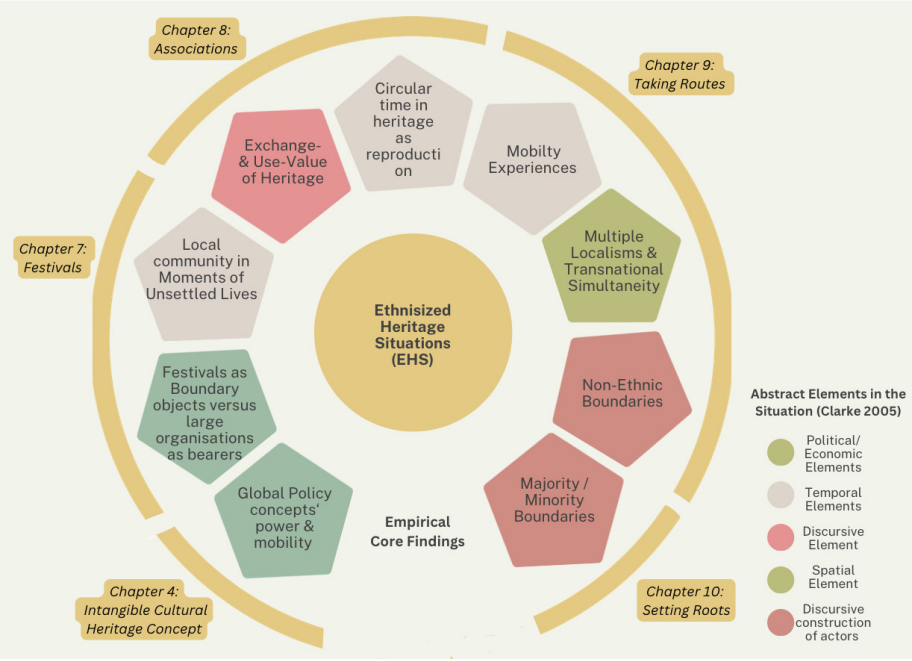
In asking these questions, this book explores how ethnicised cultural festivals and association in three small towns in northern Germany – Aurich, Cuxhaven, and Zeven – function as arenas for symbolic boundary making and for how migration experiences are expressed. Set within the broader framework of global heritage discourse negotiations in these arenas determine the sensemaking and worldmaking aspects of cultural endeavours.

Part I sets the stage for the reader to delve deeper into the project's core from three perspectives: First, the entanglements of global heritage discourse with local cultural policy through which policies shaped by actors like UNESCO always already influence local cultural policies and practices. Second, the three case studies and their most visible manifestations of ethnicised cultural endeavours – festivals and associations – are introduced in the context of their broader ecology. Third, a review of literature from Critical Heritage Studies and perspectives on cultural diversity and migration in small towns does the groundwork to position the research and its contribution to both fields. These are a further theorising of heritagisation as a social process between world- and sensemaking and an empirical contribution to the study of cultural diversity in small towns as the norm and not the exception.

Part II outlines the research project's theoretical underpinnings and develops its methodological framework. The theory part outlined in chapter five revolves around constructing a theoretical model of Ethnicised Heritage Situations as the convergence of worldmaking and sensemaking forms of (e)valuation in the research field. My model of Ethnicised Heritage Situations is built upon Clarke's (2018) 'situated concept of the situation' (Keller 2023: 67), which is the basis for her SA, my chosen methodology.

Part III and Part IV form the analytical core of the book. The question on the potential for heritage (not) to unfold in heritage situations is approached, first, from the worldmaking side of state-led and other kinds of heritage regime operations as well as civil society; and second, from research participants' boundary making and processes of sensemaking around ethnicised heritages. Each analysis chapter adds and empirically reconstructs elements relevant to Ethnicised Heritage Situations as a theoretical model. Figure 1.3. visually summarises these core elements as they appear throughout the book.

Fig. 1.3: Core Elements in Ethnicised Heritage Situations: Inspired by Situational Analysis (Clarke 2005), this graphic illustrates the main findings from empirical research as addressed in the book's chapters.



I generate the role of moments of increased societal transformation (unsettled lives) and the involvement of large organisations as national or religious heritage regime actors in settled lives (chapter 7). The prevalence of outward-oriented criteria of (e)valuation, such as recognition and expertise in the production of imagined communities (Anderson 2016), are opposed to criteria of (e)valuation oriented towards the reproduction of social life in concrete communities and associated non-linear conceptions of time (chapter 8). Then, the role of experiences of physical mobility is shown in how people attach themselves and their heritage to place in multiple, transnational, and not always ethnicised ways (chapter 9). Finally, the importance of local minority-majority relations for orientations regarding ethnicised heritages (chapter 10).

These are discursive, temporal, spatial, and political/economic elements. Set up like this, the thesis is an example of my theoretical model put into practice. In tracing and describing these Ethnicised Heritage Situations this study of three small north German towns shows the role of heritage regimes and cultural heritage as a repertoire of evaluation beyond its officialised realm. There emerge heritagisation potentialities, which hint at why it is so successful as a category and process of ac-

cumulation of symbolic resources, able to structure more relations among people in current societies. The role of migratory experiences and ethnic boundary making are necessarily left as open questions: On the one hand, their roles can be specified, but on the other there can be seen a need to 'de-migrantise' and 'de-ethnicise' research on cultural heritage while at the same time showing the continuing importance of the nation in heritagisation.