

As a relevant and visible component of consumer culture, food has become more than just a way to provide fuel to individual bodies. **Food is profoundly entangled with economic dynamics, social structures, and power negotiations that determine where our products come from, how they get to us, why we have access to those and not to others, and where they end up if we don't buy them or throw them away.** Undoubtedly, food has an immediate and unavoidable impact on who we are and how we live.

As in other post-industrial societies, food in Poland has become a relevant site for the formation, negotiation, and performance of individual and collective identities. A renewed interest in “**traditional**,” “**authentic**,” and “**regional**” Polish foods (adjectives often used to describe such foods) is now visible in media, restaurants, stores, events, and culinary fairs in Poland. Such products and dishes are rediscovered, reinterpreted, and embraced as important elements of private and public practices, as well as in material culture (from design to the architecture of public eating spaces) and in representations, from cookbooks to TV and social media..

This is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until recently, the upwardly mobile middle classes in Polish cities expressed their refinement, connoisseurship, and desire for distinction through forms of cosmopolitanism that focused on the consumption of “exotic” foods: French haute cuisine, Japanese sushi, Italian risotto. Now new forms of cosmopolitanism are emerging that instead hinge on the valorization of the traditional and the regional. This shift has already taken place in other parts of the world: as a reaction to globalization, the global middle classes are creating a new sense of place where individuals and communities move beyond geography to create different perceptions and experiences of locality. Through transnational networks, media, and travel, communities are created that share aspirations, experiences, and worldviews around food. The Polish middle class seem to be participating in these worldwide trends, which however interact with homegrown social dynamics, such as cultural omnivorism and social mobility, to create unique Polish phenomena.

For these reasons, the study of food-related objects spaces, discourses and practices can provide a unique lens into cultural, social, and political dynamics that otherwise would be ignored or undervalued in their multilayered complexity. This development is particularly interesting due to Poland's recent history of post-socialist transition towards a market economy and a consumer society, which has created tensions among the segments of the populations that adapted and flourished in the new arrangement, and those who feel left out or even cheated of what they feel as previously acquired rights.