

CRAFTSMANSHIP AS A DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE REGION - A CASE STUDY OF CRAFTSMEN FROM OPOLE SILESIA (POLAND)

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to present craftsmanship as a development potential of the region, including a regional tourist product that influences the attractiveness of the Opole Voivodeship.

Design/methodology/approach: A case study of craftsmen from Opole Silesia specializing in the production of handicrafts was presented, with whom in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted in April 2023.

Findings: The research results present craftsmanship as a regional product that can make a significant contribution to the cultural heritage of the region and constitute a significant development potential that is not yet fully utilized.

Originality/value: The article attempts to demonstrate the significance of craftsmanship in the Opole Voivodeship in terms of its impact on regional development.

Keywords: crafts, Opole Silesia, regional development, development potential, economic culture, cultural economy.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

One characteristic of craftsmanship is, among others, small-scale production, a local character, and the harmonization of industrial-driven economic development. Craftsmanship is also considered as an essential complementary element to industry, influencing economic growth (Cegielski, Milich, 2017). Man-made attractions in tourism include cultural, historical,

and artistic elements (Lew, 1987). Craftsmanship is sometimes treated as a tourist product and a component of cultural tourism, where culture is the subject of exchange. The exchange process is related to the tourist's experiences and the economic effects obtained by producers of products and services for tourists (Zmyślony, 2009). Tourism is an economic phenomenon linked, among other things, to employment, income generation, and money transfer (Nieżgoda, 2009). Furthermore, research conducted by T.J. Moagi, C. Ivanovic, and M.C. Adinolfi indicates that craft suppliers from areas not typically associated with tourist attractions still attempt to benefit from the tourism value chain (Moagi et al., 2021).

Craftsmanship plays an important role in the economy of the region. The focus of tourists is often on folklore and artistic craftsmanship (Kosmaczewska, 2011), although local industrial heritage may also be considered among the attracting elements (Cudny et al., 2022). The attractiveness of a particular place is linked to plans for meeting specific tourist needs. It reflects feelings, beliefs, and attitudes associated with those needs (Ćorluka et al., 2021). In undertaking a tourist journey, the experiential process and the needs that cultural tourism aims to satisfy are of great importance (Nieżgoda, 2013).

The connection between tourism and craftsmanship is also evident in the implementation of projects aimed not only at preserving traditions and increasing the attractiveness of traditional crafts but also at enhancing tourist traffic. Similarly, the creation of thematic tourist routes, such as culinary trails or honey trails (e.g., the Podkarpacki Honey Trail), aims to enhance the regional offer and link it with other economic entities and collaborating institutions, as well as promote sustainable cultural tourism (Krupa, Młynar, 2016). Examples of such projects include:

- Life Composed of Tradition (Regional Development Agency in Bielsko-Biała),
- Craftsmanship Trail (funded by the National Centre for Culture and the Marshal's Office of the Małopolska Region),
- Traditional Crafts Trail of Podkarpacie (Museum of Folk Culture in Kolbuszowa with financial support from the Minister of Culture and National Heritage),
- Historical Recipes Trail (Interreg Poland-Slovakia Program, partners: Podkarpacka Regional Tourism Organization and Slovakian Carpathian Euroregion Slovensko-Sever),
- Wallachian Culture Trail on the Polish-Ukrainian Borderland (Cross-Border Cooperation Program Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, partners: Association for the Development and Promotion of Podkarpacie 'Pro Carpathia' and Association of Self-Governments 'Euroregion Carpathians-Ukraine'),
- On the Way of Culture and Craftsmanship - Sakiiai-Budry (Interreg Lithuania-Poland Cooperation Program 2014-2020, partners: Zanavykai Museum and Budry Municipality),

- Centers of Ancient Crafts on the Via Fabrilis Trail (Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020 Interreg V-A Czech Republic-Poland, project partners: City Municipality of Bolesławiec, City Municipality of Kłodzko, and Město Jaroměř).

As part of the Life Composed of Tradition project, the Crafts of the Borderland application was created, allowing not only to explore the craftsmanship of the Polish-Czech borderland but also to use of a map showing the tourist trail. In the application, users can search for crafts located nearby, artisan workshops, objects along the local crafts trail, information about crafts in Polish and Czech lands, as well as the tourist attractions and cultural heritage of the region (Medway, 2018).

The Craftsmanship Trail project is aimed at tourists interested in discovering forgotten occupations on the map of Małopolska (Foundation From Culture, n.d.). The Traditional Crafts Trail of Podkarpacie project focuses on documenting, preserving, and promoting traditional craftsmanship, its creators, cultural heritage, and the Podkarpacie region. The project partners note that traditional crafts and their creators are often located outside the main tourist routes, which is why a tourist-cultural trail with six tourist routes was developed as part of the project (Migut-Ciuba, n.d.).

Another project, the Historical Recipes Trail, is associated with a trail passing through the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and northern Slovakia. It marks places related to the artisanal production of regional products (Wilk, 2018). The Wallachian Culture Trail on the Polish-Ukrainian border is connected, among others, with the development of an integrated tourist product and the protection and promotion of the cultural and historical heritage of the borderland, including craftsmanship (PL-BY-UA 2014-2020, n.d.).

The On the Way of Culture and Craftsmanship - Sakiai-Budry project focuses on increasing the sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage in tourism in the transboundary area of Sakiai-Budry (Bulletin..., 2021). The main goal of the Centers of Ancient Crafts on the Via Fabrilis Trail project is to highlight the region's craftsmanship tradition and utilize its potential for developing thematic tourism throughout the transboundary area (Bulletin..., 2019).

Craftsmanship can be a tourist attraction of the region, a tourist product that responds to the 'yearning for bygone years', an idealized and mythologized yearning associated with a sense of lost continuity between the past and the present (Wieszaczewska, 2015; Nieroba et al., 2010). Therefore, the focus of this text is on craftsmanship treated as a tourist attraction. The aim of the article is to present the craftsmanship of the Opole Voivodeship in the context of its attractiveness and potential contribution to regional development.

2. Material and Methods

The article presents the results of a qualitative study conducted among craftsmen operating in the Opole Voivodeship. From April 17th to 28th, 2023, eleven individual, open, in-depth, and structured interviews were conducted using a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions. These questions were divided into three groups. The first group focused on understanding the craftsmen's opinions regarding consumer interest in craftsmanship and the directions for the development of craft products. The second group aimed to characterize the main recipients of local craft products and identify differences in preferences between domestic and foreign recipients. The third group was related to the possibilities of supporting the sale of regional craft products, including activities carried out by units representing local and regional authorities. The study assumed that craftsmanship, treated as a regional tourist product, influences regional development.

Analyzing the relatively few published materials on contemporary craftsmanship, statements have been encountered indicating that accessing craftsmanship is not a straightforward matter, partly due to craftsmen being the least represented group on the Internet (Wielkopolska Izba Rzemieślnicza w Poznaniu, n.d.). Furthermore, contemporary craftsmanship undergoes numerous dynamic transformations, making it difficult to confine it within strict definitions and rigid categories. Craftsmanship is also associated with ‘bodily knowledge’, knowledge acquired outside institutional frameworks of vocational education and guild structures (Malesińska, 2022). Craftsmen represent different disciplines and have varying levels of education. In Poland, compared to countries like Germany, there are no absolute requirements for validating craft skills (Jóźwiak, 2011). This contributes to the difficulty of creating a comprehensive list of individuals who identify themselves as craftsmen—professional craft creators actively engaged in the craft sector. Due to the complex nature of compiling such a list, which is not merely a roster of members affiliated with specific organizations or individuals with confirmed skills (completed formal education), the following contact path was planned when reaching out to craftsmen:

- Visiting events or fairs organized in the region where craftsmen from the Opole Voivodeship conduct workshops showcasing local craftsmanship techniques or exhibit their products.
- Contacting craftsmen who are actively involved in research and networking during scientific conferences, such as the International Scientific Conference on Crafts (CILRAID) organized by the Faculty of Economics and Management at Opole University of Technology.

- Searching the resources of the Internet to find craftsmen who have their own websites or profiles on social media, as well as websites of craft groups and associations.
- Reaching out to creators through e-commerce platforms that offer the sale of craft products.

The first access path, which involved participating in the craft workshops held at the Museum of the Opole Village [Muzeum Wsi Opolskiej], proved to be particularly useful in conducting the interviews. Craftsmen met at the workshops recommended contacting others, using the snowball sampling method, which is a non-random sampling technique applied when researchers have difficulties reaching respondents (Central Statistical Office, n.d.).

Six interviews were conducted in direct contact at the location of the craftsmen's workshops, while the remaining five were conducted via phone conversations, as preferred by the respondents. The interviewed craftsmen represented the following crafts: blacksmithing, leatherworking, artistic ceramics, hand-painted porcelain decoration, gingerbread making, crochet, handmade sewing of bags, backpacks, and similar accessories, and embroidery. The respondents had the choice of anonymous interviews or allowing their personal information to be mentioned in the text. Three respondents opted for anonymous interviews. For the purposes of this study and for uniformity, the respondents were assigned numbers from 1 to 11. These numbers were given in the order in which the interviews were conducted. The answers were transcribed by the researcher and then presented in the article in the form used by the craftsmen. It included the following elements: selection and arrangement of the data, breakdown of the responses to each of the research questions (respondents often answered questions from other thematic sections within one of the themes), interpretation of the data, and indication of the conclusions within each section. As part of the data obtained, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. Nine craftsmen sustain themselves through their represented craft (by offering goods and/or services) or supplement their retirement income, while two are no longer exclusively engaged in craftsmanship but pursue it more as a hobby than a source of income.

3. Results

3.1. Craftmanship as a support for demand side

When asked whether there is an increasing interest in local craft products, the majority of respondents indicated that they have noticed a positive trend both in the short and long term. 'Yes, definitely. It seems to me that many people are now buying and moving away from cheap Chinese products. I have been sewing for two years, and in my opinion, this trend has

been present for the past 5 years', said respondent 1. 'There is a significant growth, more interest than 20 years ago. You can see this growth', stated respondent 3.

According to the craftsmen, workshops showcasing craft art have also become very popular in recent years, especially among young people. There are usually more eager participants than available spots in the workshops. The motivation to participate in craft workshops is primarily driven by:

- Stress relief,
- Trying something new and unique. 'Only craftsmen cultivate this craft', mentioned respondent 6,
- Personal development of their own interests,
- Exchange of experiences,
- Learning about history,
- Engaging in hands-on manual creation. '(...) the opportunity for manual work', mentioned respondent 2,
- The trend of returning to certain traditions. 'In the past, this knowledge was passed down from mother to daughter, from grandmother to granddaughter, but it has been abandoned, and now the new generations are learning everything from scratch in workshops', explained respondent 10,
- Unexpected encounters with craftsmen. 'Sometimes it's people who come across a project and one of the points is a visit to the forge, but it doesn't always stem from their own need', described respondent 5.

Just as craft workshops were described by the creators as highly successful, craftwork and products made by craftsmen were associated with two contrasting opinions. Some craftsmen used terms like *in demand (...), you can notice the high number of products sold during events...* (respondent 9). The second group believed that craftwork is declining. *Craftwork (...) is neither promoted nor subsidized by the government. Last year, 220,000 small craft businesses went bankrupt. There is no help available, let alone considering the current economic hardship. Customers come, inquire about the price, thank us, and go to IKEA or Jysk for something cheaper. Our products are being sold but with difficulty. No one has control over it. Artistic crafts are at the bottom. Almost nothing is currently popular, maybe carpentry, windows, doors, not even furniture is popular* (respondent 7).

The modern consumer who chooses artisanal products is primarily interested in their practical application - items that are *not necessarily decorative (...), that I can use in everyday life* (respondent 1), and the desire to own unique and exceptional products, handmade in small series or made to individual order – *In manual work, no two pieces are the same. The creator does not reproduce previous art, there are no two identical items* (respondent 11). Despite this, consumers prefer their subsequent purchases to possess the same characteristics – *(...) repeatability, if they purchase a certain item, the next batch should have the same shape*

and colors. We move away from the artistic aspect and embrace a more artisanal approach (respondent 6). However, not all craftsmen currently produce products intended for practical use, so their products are aimed at people with special needs – (...) *the things I create are 80% based on my own design, and the client must have a certain spiritual need. I don't create first necessity projects; one can live without them* (respondent 5).

In addition, natural products made from recycled materials are also chosen. Craftsmen notice that traditional craftsmanship is embracing modernity, combining it with what is defined as traditional. Craftsmanship is heading towards ethno-design. *This can be dangerous for the tradition of craftsmanship because we are moving with the times. In 1996, Cepelia collapsed. Craftsmanship was an export commodity, and it can happen again. It's worth preserving tradition, on the one hand, we want tradition, but we consider it too cumbersome'* (respondent 8). *'I had contact with England and Ireland. Craftsmanship is valued differently there. They don't have it; there are no schools or workshops. Foreign delegations that come to Poland envy us for cherishing and safeguarding our tradition* (respondent 7).

Recipients of regional craftsmanship can be divided into several groups. The first typology proposed by the respondents distinguishes buyers as local residents and those from outside the area/region, primarily tourists. *In my town, many people buy and support me because I'm from here. They come here. It was supposed to be challenging in a small town, but many people come back and make purchases. My products are most commonly acquired by residents from the immediate vicinity, the local market* (respondent 1). The second division includes Polish and foreign recipients. The third division highlights primarily men and women, as well as children, young people, and adults. *There may be a minimal difference in age groups; porcelain connoisseurs are usually the older age group (...). Opolskie Dziouchy (regional craftswomen) have ethno-design aimed at younger people. It involves transferring a traditional pattern fragment to other products. However, it is not chosen by veterans and connoisseurs. The younger generation likes it when only a fragment is present; it is much 'lighter.' In the past, the entire surface had to be painted, but that is popular among the older generation* (respondent 9). For example, connoisseurs prefer Opole porcelain not only signed by the craftsman but also marked with a date.

In summary, the most common characteristics of recipients of Opole Silesia craftsmanship include groups such as Poles, local/regional population, women and children regardless of age.

Within the second typology, artisans observe that there is no specific rule or pattern distinguishing the preferences of Polish and foreign customers. *There are no rules whether it's a Pole, a German, or a Ukrainian, it depends on the need for a particular item. If someone cares about the aesthetics of their interior, they seek coherence and buy a detail that fits with something else they already have* (respondent 5). *Hitting the taste and aesthetics is important* (respondent 8). There are also collectors referred to as 'enthusiasts, collectors' (respondent 7). In addition to individual customers, craftsmanship is also acquired by institutions. *Entities*

that resell it, galleries, gift shops, especially in tourist cities such as Kołobrzeg, Kraków, Kazimierz Dolny, or Białystok. They find us online, some during major fairs. They come and look for creators who can fulfill orders (respondent 6). Other larger orders come from universities or government offices that plan foreign visits or expect guests and want to promote regional products. Young Poles living in Sweden and the UK, who have taken over sales points and want to sell Polish handicrafts abroad. *One lady in Ulm bought a tenement and opened an art gallery, and there is a legend about sparrows, and she buys many of my sparrows, which are sold there as their tourist product* (respondent 6).

The respondents were asked which countries their works/products are sold to, and they mentioned: England, the Netherlands, the USA, Canada, China, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, Sweden, and Norway. *I have many friends in the Netherlands, my acquaintances, my friends, they order products and take them with them. Many people from my surroundings have moved to the Netherlands and England, they come during the pre-Christmas period and buy for themselves and their loved ones* (respondent 1). *There were also individual customers planning to travel with Opole handicrafts to Africa, Brazil, Hong Kong, Iran, or the Hawaiian Islands. The peak of Polish handicraft sales (among foreigners) occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. Cepelia had a lot of foreign orders* (respondent 11).

Foreign recipients are attracted to Opole craftsmanship not only for its aesthetic value but also for the price of the handicraft, which *is a very significant factor that encourages and often determines the purchase. It discourages customers in Poland, but it attracts foreign recipients. Tourists are often willing to spend more on a product than local customers* (respondent 2). Both Polish and foreign recipients pay great attention to the quality of craftsmanship and the quality of materials, *whether the product comes from organic cultivation, how it tastes, how many active ingredients it contains, whether it is made using traditional methods* (respondent 4). Sometimes, the phrase ‘handcrafted product’ itself is an enticing factor – *People from abroad are more fascinated by the fact that it is a handmade, artisanal product* (respondent 8).

3.2. Craftmanship as support for the supply side

The surveyed craftsmen were eager to discuss the importance of external support, particularly related to:

- Organizing fairs and markets: *I think there should be more fairs and markets to reach customers. Not everyone can visit a specific workshop or store. It can be difficult to access craftsmanship at times* (respondent 1); *In our region, there are attractive markets and fairs of all kinds. It is challenging for every craftsman to open their own shop because online sales can be impossible, especially for the older generation. However, there are always many people at fairs and markets who will find something for themselves. Thousands of people attend these events* (respondent 9).

- Increasing awareness of regional traditions: *Among the local population, it is necessary to increase awareness of traditions in the region. An excellent foreign example is Bavaria, where people walk around the city in traditional costumes. It is challenging for us to find out how such costumes looked. When it comes to Poland, promoting local traditions is crucial* (respondent 2).
- Establishing a regional craft museum: *The best solution would be to create a craft museum! A strictly craft-oriented museum* (respondent 7).
- Educating future generations: *Education is crucial, starting from a young age, from childhood. I see it in my grandchildren; some are interested, and others are not. It depends a lot on the values transmitted at home* (respondent 3); *Creators must promote and showcase their work, organizing workshops on a broader scale* (respondent 10).
- Conducting marketing campaigns: *Promote through advertisements in newspapers, television, and participate in thematic events* (respondent 4); *Online promotion works very well...* (respondent 6).
- Introducing new legal solutions: *There must be new legislation regarding craftsmanship. New aspects should be associated with greater interest from the government to recognize this significant job market* (respondent 7); *In Poland, running a business is already expensive from the start. If there's a creator who also works an 8-hour job and creates handmade items, wanting to have their own booth, they would have to bear the cost and hire an accountant for help with tax returns, which could cost 700 PLN just to enter, not to mention the space to work and taxes. These are enormous expenses* (respondent 2); *Lower taxes* (respondent 3).

The discussion about the possibility of registering trademarks took two directions. One line of argumentation was primarily related to the cost aspect of such actions: *Everything is associated with costs, so obtaining a patent that can be easily invalidated because another company slightly changes the shape or color, and you can't accuse them of copying...* (respondent 6); *A trademark must be registered and patented, and it's not easy. Registration is possible, but patenting is costly. It costs around 2,000 PLN for two years. Most craftsmen cannot afford it... It can't be that one craftsman patents something that is produced in the entire region; it should be the region (Marshal) who patents it, for example, kroszonka¹ or hand-decorated porcelain* (respondent 7).

The last discussed topic was the design pattern, and it was described as difficult and complicated to provide a definitive answer: *This is a tough topic, not the design pattern itself. In most cases, these things are listed on the national cultural heritage list, accessible to everyone. Folk creators cannot copyright their painting patterns on porcelain or kroszonka. By copyrighting something, you cannot pass it on to future generations. Each person has their*

¹ Easter egg.

own developed style, but formal trademark registration does not allow for that. However, everyone can develop their own brand. Otherwise, it will disappear at some point if we continue to operate this way (respondent 10).

In particular, the first aspect was related to the involvement of local/regional authorities in promoting or supporting the sale of regional craftsmanship products: *Yes, by organizing fairs, markets (respondent 1); All kinds of entertainment events are good occasions to present local products or services. In the municipality where I live, cooperative fairs are organized every year, where companies showcase their local services and products (respondent 4); For example, cooperation with the city council and the regional office, representing them at various events in the country and abroad. It requires years of work and establishing contacts (respondent 5).*

In connection with local/regional authorities, the promotion aspect highlighted by craftsmen also involved using regional craftsmanship products to promote the region beyond its borders, including outside Poland, and during visits by people from 'outside' the region: *Of course, they do that. When they go anywhere, they visit partner cities or new institutions with which they want to collaborate (respondent 6).* Promoting the region through craftsmanship products was also discussed in the context of the need to develop 'promotional packages'. Municipalities could create such 'promotional packages', for example: *Each region has its own costume, a type of embroidery. There's wickerwork, and it could be a small basket made of wicker with herbal tea in a sachet and something embroidered. A local gadget with the municipality's logo magnet (respondent 10).*

The current situation and support from the authorities are appreciated by artisans: *The municipality has done a lot for me by commissioning the creation of huge kroszonka and making giant cups, with the largest one standing in the center of Gogolin. They promote my work and its elements abroad. I attribute a significant role to both our municipality and the county (...) (respondent 11).* Municipalities provide places for selling regional craftsmanship products: *Yes, they do that, but I don't have specific examples from the Opole Voivodeship. In Lower Silesia, the Chamber of Crafts proposed offering free exhibition spaces to creators like me. They created such places to promote these units and make the city more attractive. There are costs involved, which often eliminate creators like me at the start. The costs can be as high as 15,000 PLN, and craftsmen often don't have goods worth that amount. During Christmas, 5-10 cottages were made available for the entire duration of the fairs, free of charge for 7 days. Only a deposit was required to ensure the cottage wouldn't be damaged, and despite that, there are artisans who don't want to take advantage of it because it's cold or they think no one will buy, etc. (respondent 6).* Furthermore, *there are designated marketplaces in every municipality. I think a craftsman would like to set up during various events, and there are no issues with that. Christmas markets, Palm Sunday markets, Easter markets. Older people are accustomed to receiving personal invitations to such events, but unfortunately, that's changing. If there's an event, they need to apply for it. We make*

posters for Easter, asking who wants to exhibit, but older people don't respond to such things. Younger generations use Facebook, websites, and other social media, but older people still need personalized paper invitations (respondent 10).

Regarding the question about the possibility of selling their own products under the patronage of a specific institution/organization, among the seven craftsmen, there were negative responses with various arguments: *Not yet, for now, I want to sell on my own, and it's going well so far* (respondent 1); *Not me, I can't keep up with production* (respondent 3); *Only under my own name, higher-level institutions increase prices without informing the craftsman* (respondent 7); *No, due to previous experiences* (respondent 9). Other individuals either already sell their products that way: *That's mainly how it happens. Some people mention and provide my information, while others claim it's their work because they fear competition. When selling my work, I have to consider that wholesalers also buy it, produce it, and sell it to other florists. Small products, ceramic elements that will be used in floral arrangements* (respondent 6). Some are already working on such solutions: *We have been considering having a showcase with products at the House of Culture for some time now, but it's a process to get residents and tourists used to the idea* (respondent 10). Others are considering the possibility: (...) *I think if an organization provided conditions that greatly facilitate such activities, I could consider it. Having my own brand but within an association. I would like to work under my logo and not mold myself under someone else's logo* (respondent 2).

3.3. The impact on regional development

All surveyed craftsmen recognize the opportunity in regional products as a tool for promoting the region in Poland and beyond its borders: *Definitely, for example, the association I belong to is going to our twin city in Germany to promote the city with my products* (respondent 2); *Of course, one of our local products is already available for purchase in Krakow* (respondent 4); *Of course, yes. If the government uses porcelain, they can certainly use artisanal porcelain decorated by craftsmen. Municipalities prepare gifts and presents, and they could use artisanal products instead of just flowers* (respondent 7); *Of course, it's essential. It has always been that way. In the 1970s, international delegations always took folk artists for shows to introduce the culture of the country they were visiting. They traveled a lot. I wonder why it doesn't happen now* (respondent 8); *Of course, yes. Not everyone may recognize me, but they recognize the choice - Opole!!! They didn't know the language, but they said Opole has come again, Opole is here! Opole products. Opole porcelain is very suitable and is often chosen by regional/city authorities* (respondent 9).

The respondents also proposed their suggestions for products that could promote the Opole region, including:

- Keychain cases and shopping bags,
- Ceramics and jewelry,
- Clothing items,
- Products adorned with patterns,
- Food products, including honey,
- Miniature coats of arms,
- Stained glass,
- Herbal medicine and herbalism,
- Wicker products.

In addition to specific products, there is also a recognized need for the creation of craft tourism routes, such as a wicker route along the Oder River or others centered around regionally characteristic products, including: (...) *kroszonka, honey, and I would really like traditional embroidery, wickerwork, herbalism, and herbal medicine to be included...* (respondent 10).

In summary, craftsmanship is perceived by the craftsmen themselves as a field that quickly adapts to economic realities. They expressed the opinion that craftsmen will find their place in the current trends. Attention was particularly drawn to issues related to the higher quality of artisanal products compared to mass production. It seems natural that demand for certain products/services diminishes while new demand emerges. The perception of artisanal products and their social function is also changing. Coexistence with cheap mass production means that craftsmanship now more often occupies the niche of original and unique products. Furthermore, social transformations mean that many people are seeking activities based on manual labor, natural materials, and close interaction with the community. In this regard, craftsmanship offers appropriate opportunities such as workshops, demonstrations, and education to promote traditions in a given region. It should also be noted that craftsmen are custodians of cultural heritage and contribute to local identity. These functions are primarily recognized and supported by institutions and public bodies involved in the field of crafts (museums, centers, fairs, exhibitions, etc.), and thanks to their efforts, craftsmanship creatively transposes traditional values, enriching contemporary communities.

4. Discussion

The topic of the 'return' to craftsmanship, the 'craft renaissance', the 'new craftsmanship', or the impending 'second wave' is a new but increasingly discussed subject in

the media and literature of the field (Property Design, 2022; Museum of Warsaw's Praga, 2019; Herman, 2019; Nowe rzemiosło, 2019; Polich, 2022; Sadowy, Brodowicz, 2021; Basuki et al., 2022; Mazur-Włodarczyk, Drosik, 2019; 2022). The recent changes in the craft landscape include identity transformations (changes in craftsmen's identification with regard to the traditions of dual education, manual labor, the use of specific tools and machines, the nature of craft work, and the socio-economic and cultural mission of craftsmanship). Additionally, effective communication tools of the 'new craftsman' are being utilized, including marketing skills, such as storytelling (Malesińska, 2022, pp. 14, 16).

On the other hand, craftsmanship plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, representing the culmination of a master's expertise and artistic expression. It encompasses the transfer of knowledge, skills, and craft culture to the succeeding generation of artisans. The education and training in craftsmanship rely heavily on the trust between the master and their apprentices, as well as the master's dedication to the craft. Young individuals benefit greatly from the master's commitment, as it allows them to acquire the necessary qualifications and expertise in their chosen craft (Bielawska, 2016).

Moreover, craft is not only a means of creating objects, but it also encompasses a unique mindset characterized by collaboration, inclusivity, and adaptability to the evolving natural world. In the context of shifting away from the prevailing 'take, make, and waste' production model towards a more circular approach, craft becomes indispensable (Crafts Council, 2023). Traditional knowledge and practices hold significant importance in discussions surrounding the planet and the urgent issue of climate change.

Craftsmanship can be a regional potential that contributes to the development of a particular area. According to Klasik (2013, p. 45), regional development policy encompasses four thematic areas that consider the region as:

- a territory that possesses its natural and cultural heritage,
- a community that has human and social capital, including complex capital, which refers to creative and entrepreneurial capital,
- a network of institutions, connections, and flows,
- a structure of activities composed of industries with varying levels of technological advancement and creative industries stemming from knowledge, research, creativity, and culture. Transitioning from the classical approach to specialization, understood as engaging in selected industries, to smart specialization, understood as the process of effectively and efficiently utilizing the region's endogenous potential, requires the creation of networks and connections among various entities, both from the public and private sectors, operating in the region (Badanie potencjałów..., 2014). As emphasized by Klasik (2013, p. 48), the areas of smart specialization in Polish regions will become increasingly linked to the creative economy, including culture and heritage.

Table 1 shows the sectors and potentials of crafts, and the observed multiplier effects and inspirations in economic activity.

Table 1.
Craftsmanship as a stimulator of regional development

<p style="text-align: center;">Sectors and potentials of the crafts industry. Crafts directly generating economic activity.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Observed multiplier effects and inspirations (in economic activity). Indirect impact of craftsmanship.</p>
<p>Cultural tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traveling and visiting places to discover heritage, such as cultural routes, historic sites, galleries and museums, open-air museums (skansens), park and garden areas, archaeological sites, battlefields, and industrial heritage. • Staying in hotels located in historic buildings, and visiting traditional gastronomy venues. • Activities of tour guides and tourist guides. • Activities related to tourist information services. 	<p>Tourism</p>
<p>Creative cultural heritage industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing activities (museum catalogs, posters, heritage institution informational materials). • Music industry (folklore groups, traditional or local music). • Photography (archaeological photos, panoramas, pictures of historic sites). • IT (databases, e-museums, museum websites, geoportals, digitization of heritage resources). • Organization of fairs. • Intellectual property industry: revenues generated from the sale and use of recipes, patents, traditional and regional names. • Craftsmanship is often associated with the production of unique and original products that serve as a hallmark of the region. 	<p>Creative industries</p>
<p>Traditional crafts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of traditional professions (cooper, shoemaker, blacksmith, baker, etc.). • Traditional textile products. • Leather production. • Handicraft. • Basketry. 	<p>Small and micro-enterprises encompassing traditional crafts</p>
<p>Popularization, information, and education of craftsmanship, craft conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational activities: lessons, museum workshops, craft and heritage days, teaching traditional professions. • Craftsmanship can be a tool for learning about local history, culture, and traditions. • Artistic education. • Entertainment activities based on heritage: historical reenactments, festivals, fairs. • Activities of government entities, private organizations, and associations aimed at popularizing craftsmanship. • Craft as a learning organization. Passing down knowledge from generation to generation. 	<p>Education. Craft as a learning organization</p>
<p>Art and Antiques Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying and selling of craft products in the market. • Activities of private entities (collectors, investors) and public institutions (museums, galleries). • Gaining foreign investors. 	<p>Commerce or Trade</p>
<p>Craft Heritage Protection Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of institutions involved in supporting craftsmanship. • Craftsmanship can help build regional identity and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. • Conferences, exhibitions. • Maintenance of regional traditions. 	<p>Culture. Craftsmanship perceived through the prism of cultural heritage</p>

Cont. table 1.

Promotion of the region on the international stage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of institutions involved in supporting craftsmanship. • Conferences, exhibitions. • Integrating the local community around common activities. • Collaboration in crafting and promoting local products can build a sense of community and pride in regional identity. • Contribution to increasing the attractiveness of the region for investors and tourists by promoting regional identity and culture. 	Promotion and integration
Economic development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating new jobs and increasing economic activity in a specific field. • Craft production often requires specialized knowledge and skills, which promote the development of local businesses and have a positive impact on the local economy. • Attracting tourists who want to learn about traditional production methods and purchase unique handicrafts. • Creating and promoting local products. Communities can foster a strong sense of unity and pride in their regional heritage. • Promoting regional identity and culture can also enhance the region's appeal to investors and tourists, contributing to its overall attractiveness. • Increasing the investment attractiveness of the region. • Craftsmanship as an element in regional development strategies. Craft can contribute to improving the quality of life for residents in the region. 	Economy

Source: own elaboration.

The starting point for identifying regional specializations is associated with developmental potential, which is also linked to the strengths of a given region. Developmental potential refers to a characteristic or set of characteristics that currently or potentially influence the possibilities, directions, and nature of regional development. We can understand the potential as features that currently constitute the strength and dynamism of development but also as features that require support to enable the achievement of the desired developmental state (Dziemianowicz et al., 2014, pp. 7-8). Developmental potential can be incomplete if it represents lost potential (permanently or temporarily) or dormant if it is not fully and effectively utilized. In regional development policy, it is important to focus on stimulating dormant potentials, that is, shifting from passive to active, as with appropriate interventions, they can generate satisfying multiplier effects in the near future (Węclawowicz, 2005, p. 7).

Regional potentials can be divided and grouped in various ways. According to Dziemianowicz et al. (2014), there are five groups of potentials that mutually intersect. These include:

1. Demographic-Social Potentials: They relate to the characteristics and human resources in the region, such as population size, demographic structure, education, skills, and social capital. These potentials have a significant impact on community development and the region's growth opportunities.

2. **Natural-Cultural Potentials:** They encompass unique natural resources, such as natural materials, landscapes, protected areas, as well as cultural heritage, traditions, art, and the region's culture. Utilizing these potentials can contribute to the development of tourism, creativity, and environmental conservation.
3. **Economic Potentials:** They refer to the region's ability to generate income and create employment opportunities. These include economic sectors such as industry, services, agriculture, tourism, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship. These potentials are essential for economic growth and employment in the region.
4. **Institutional Potentials:** They pertain to the institutional structure of the region, including public administration, social organizations, universities, research centers, and financial institutions. Strong institutions and cooperation among them can stimulate innovation, knowledge transfer, and regional development.
5. **Spatial Potentials:** They concern the physical and spatial characteristics of the region, such as infrastructure, transportation accessibility, environmental quality, and spatial planning. Proper spatial planning and infrastructure development can influence the competitiveness and attractiveness of the region.

The identified groups of potentials, namely demographic-social, natural-cultural, economic, institutional, and spatial, highlighted by Dziemianowicz et al. (2014), form the basis for regional development analysis and planning.

Building on the previous findings, it can be indicated that craftsmanship is a regional potential that permeates all the mentioned groups.

Craftsmanship plays an important role in regional development in several ways. Firstly, it can contribute to the region's economic development by generating new jobs and increasing economic activity in a specific field. Craftsmanship can also attract tourists who want to learn about traditional production methods and purchase unique handicrafts.

Secondly, craftsmanship can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and the maintenance of regional traditions. Products crafted in this way are often associated with local history and culture, and their production requires specialized knowledge and skills that are passed down from generation to generation.

Thirdly, craftsmanship can contribute to sustainable regional development by utilizing local resources and production techniques, reducing environmental impact, and increasing self-sufficiency in comparison to imported products.

Therefore, supporting craftsmanship can have a positive impact on regional development, contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and traditions, as well as promote sustainable development.

Craftsmanship can also influence the social development of the region by integrating the local community around common activities. Collaboration in crafting and promoting local products can build a sense of community and pride in regional identity.

Moreover, craftsmanship can also provide an alternative to mass production and consumption, encouraging people to appreciate the value of handmade work, quality, and product durability. In this way, craftsmanship can bring about cultural change by reducing consumerism and promoting a more sustainable lifestyle.

It is also worth noting that craftsmanship can be used as a tool for social integration and combating social exclusion by creating job opportunities for people with disabilities, older individuals, or the unemployed.

Ultimately, the development of craftsmanship can contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the region for investors and tourists by promoting regional identity and culture. In this way, craftsmanship can be an important element in regional development strategies and contribute to improving the quality of life for residents in the region.

Additionally, craftsmanship is inseparably linked to regional identity and culture as it is based on local traditions and production techniques. For this reason, regional development perspective of craftsmanship is crucial for preserving cultural heritage and building regional identity. Craftsmanship is often associated with the production of unique and original products that serve as a hallmark of the region. Products crafted in this way are often connected to local history, culture, and landscapes, forming an integral part of the local cultural heritage. Supporting craftsmanship can contribute to the preservation of this heritage and its transmission to future generations.

Craftsmanship can also contribute to regional development by increasing employment and economic activity in the region. Craft production often requires specialized knowledge and skills, which promote the development of local businesses and have a positive impact on the local economy.

Supporting craftsmanship can also increase cultural awareness and education among residents of the region. Craftsmanship can be a tool for learning about local history, culture, and traditions. In this way, the development of craftsmanship can help build regional identity and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.

At the same time, the development of craftsmanship can also pose challenges for regions that need to respond to changing trends in design and the market. To meet these challenges, regional organizations and businesses must become more innovative, open to change, and willing to adopt new technologies.

In summary, craftsmanship has many positive effects on regional development, including generating new jobs, preserving cultural heritage, promoting sustainable development, social integration, cultural change, and attracting investors and tourists. Craftsmanship is an important element of local identity and can contribute to promoting the region as an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

Overall, these above-mentioned characteristics of craftsmanship contribute to the sustainable development of the region, particularly in economic, social, educational, and environmental aspects. Craftsmanship has the capacity to serve as a regional asset that plays a role in the advancement of a specific locality. As a result, it promotes long-term economic growth through synergistic effects, considering the collaboration among diverse market actors within the region (Karaś & Łukaniszyn-Domaszewska, 2022).

5. Conclusion

Some of the regional resources and capabilities are exploited but not always fully utilized in regional development. Craftsmanship is one of these endogenous resources (Gałązka, 2017). Regional products, including handicrafts, shape the image of the region where they are created and made available. They play an important role in regional development and encourage visits to the region, serving as its hallmark (KARR, 2021) and advertisement.

The article characterizes the reasons for the interest in regional craftsmanship and identifies the main target groups for crafts in the Opole Silesia region, as well as the characteristics of popular handicraft products, primarily those with practical applications, handcrafted, and characterized by high quality. The paper also highlights the direction of development for handicraft products, which are based on tradition but feature modified designs. Craftsmen surveyed perceive an increase in interest in local handicraft products, including workshops run by craftsmen. No significant differences were observed between the preferences of foreign and domestic craft recipients. Opole Silesia craftsmanship is a regional tourism product that is utilized not only within the Opole Voivodeship. Craftsmen emphasize the importance of support from local and regional authorities, particularly in terms of enabling consumers to access their workshops/products through the organization of fairs and exhibitions, disseminating information about regional traditions, education, and implementing new legal solutions. Proposed solutions aimed at the development of craftsmanship include establishing a regional craft museum, developing packages of craft products that can serve as promotional items at the local and regional level, further promoting regional crafts through educational workshops and the use of regional craft products during delegations, as well as creating craft routes within the voivodeship.

However, it should be emphasized that the conclusions are preliminary in nature, resulting, among other things, from the small number of interviews conducted and the diversity of specialized respondents recruited. This indicates the need to continue exploring the chosen topic and increase the number of interviews, ensuring a balanced representation within various craft specializations. Moreover, the study covered only one side of the market

participants - the producers of craft goods and services. Therefore, for a broader and more multi-faceted representation of the chosen topic, consideration is being given to conducting a survey of other market participants in the future, such as consumers of craft goods and local government agencies.

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