PTJ Polish Theatre Journal

**Igor Stokfiszewski**

# On Social Culture

www.polishtheatrejournal.com

Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego

**Igor Stokfiszewski**

# On Social Culture

Past years have been the period of substantial revision. Cultural activities of public institutions have been undergoing transformation due to artistic practices reaching beyond producing artefacts and in view of influential aesthetic theories supporting these practices (such as relational aesthetics in visual arts, raising the status of shaping human relationships rather than producing artworks,[1] and performative aesthetics in theatre, where the main means of expression becomes the event designed to affect its participants[2]). Artists do not supply objects; they create situations, build relations, organize events, strive to have an impact on reality (political and social included).[3] Audiences no longer contemplate works or performances; they have become active subjects of events, they experience artistic situations and are transformed by them, they are influenced by the course of events. Mainstream institutional culture is being scarified by the subversive approach of artists, it is changing under the surge of disputes within the field of culture (including the most publicized ones: labour and democratization disputes[4]) and research on the mechanisms of producing culture within institutions[5] and at their meeting with the social field.[6]

The institutional mainstream of cultural activities is supported also by the achievements of organizers of cultural activities, and by artists influenced by experiences in the field of cultural education, pedagogy and rehabilitation through art. These people usually function within a specific subfield of public institutions (cultural centres, education

1 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002).

2 Erica Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance,* trans. by Saskya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

3 Artur Żmijewski, 'Stosowane sztuki społeczne', *Krytyka Polityczna* 2007, 11–12, pp. 14–24; 'To nie sen awangardy. Z Arturem Żmijewskim rozmawia Piotr Kosiewski', *Didaskalia* 2012, 112, pp. 47–80; 'Sztuka działa. O tym, jak sztuka staje się faktem politycznym opowiada Artur Żmijewski – kurator niedawno zakończonego w Berlinie Biennale – w rozmowie z Igorem Stokfiszewskim z Krytyki Politycznej', *Przekrój* 2012, 28/29 (3497/8), pp. 70–71; effectiveness of contemporary art was a subject of 'Nie lękajcie się', a special issue of *Krytyka Polityczna* 2012, 30.

4 Katarzyna Górna, Karol Sienkiewicz, et al (eds.), *Czarna księga polskich artystów* (Warsaw: Obywatelskie Forum Sztuki Współczesnej, 2015); Iwo Zmyślony, 'System nas wykorzystuje. Rozmowa z Winter Holiday Camp', *Dwutygodnik.com*, 2014, 1, p. 124 [accessed: 6 November 2015]; *Krytyka Polityczna* 2015, pp. 40–41.

5 Michał Kozłowski, Jan Sowa, Kuba Szreder (eds.), *Fabryka Sztuki. Podział pracy oraz dystrybucja kapitałów społecznych w polu sztuk wizualnych we współczesnej Polsce* (Warsaw: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2014) [accessed: 06 November 2015].

6 Teresa Wilk, *Rewitalizacja społeczna poprzez współczesną sztukę teatralną w ocenie reprezentantów (twórców i odbiorców) sztuki dramatycznej Legnicy, Nowej Huty i Wałbrzycha* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2010); Maciej Gdula, Przemysław Sadura, *Klasowe zróżnicowanie stylów życia a stosunek do teatru* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, commissioned by the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, 2013) [accessed: 6 November 2015]; Wojciech Józef Burszta, Krystyna Duniec, et al, *Badanie publiczności teatrów w stolicy* (Warsaw: Fundacja Generacja, Fundacja Obserwatorium, Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, TR Warszawa, 2013) [accessed: 6 November 2015].

departments of central and local artistic institutions or in academia). And the last observation: challenging the sufficiency of mainstream culture for satisfying the public's cultural needs also comes from research conducted in recent years in anthropology, sociology, economy and culture studies. Disclosure by rural sectors with little access to mainstream culture of 'their own cultural repertoire',[7] recognizing culture practices of folk classes as well as models of self-regulation and illegitimate institutions of folk culture, revealing the processes of adjusting and aestheticizing of urban spaces by their users, clearing the identity-forming potential lying in collective performance – ceremonies and protests – and many other phenomena visible in recent years indicate the insufficiency of mainstream culture in sustaining, stimulating and the organization of cultural expression of social communities.

See through these lenses, cultural and artistic institutions become the object of criticism that corrodes their framework and demands reform of their practices. Looking at the network of these institutions from the outside reveals a different picture. In view of the insufficiency of official circulation of culture, an autonomous circle of cultural practices and institutions emerged from various forms of social self-organization: a field of grassroots, organized social production of culture, characterized by a substantially different approach in this field to cultural practices, defining functions of culture and structuring organizations than mainstream culture.

This paper is an attempt to characterize this field. One of the reasons for attempting to describe the field of social production of culture is the fact that it is a rich reservoir of practices arising from anthropological and philosophical foundations and may direct our thinking about culture (including mainstream institutional culture) towards its deeper social roots and liberating creative potentials for identity, community and development. For the sake of simplification, I shall call this field 'social culture'. Similarity to the category of 'social economy' is not without significance here. In both cases, it is about an autonomous field of producing goods and values as well as operating philosophy, sociology of culture and economy, and anthropology of a cultural subject different from the ones developed in the area of public activities, since the main focus here would be on the social aspect.[8]

**The map of social culture**

Meeting the challenge of characterizing the field of social culture requires revealing the process of its mapping. The story behind drawing the map of culture covering the territories independent from the 'jurisdiction' of mainstream institutional culture was told by Edwin Bendyk in his paper 'Metakultura rozwoju' ['Metaculture of Development']: 'The Polish Culture Congress 2009 organized under the heading "Culture Counts!" released a broad debate concerning relations between culture

7 Tomasz Rakowski, *'Etnografia/Animacja/Sztuka. Wprowadzenie'*, in Etnografia/Animacja/Sztuka. Nierozpoznane wymiary rozwoju kulturalnego, ed. by Tomasz Rakowski (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013), p. 29.

8 The expressions 'social culture' appears in the title of 'Artistic Culture – Social Culture' in *No Culture, No Europe: On the Foundation of Politics,* ed. by Pascal Gielen (Amsterdam: Valiz/Antennae Series, 2015). The authors of the volume do not explain this notion but their observations suggest that their understanding of 'social culture' is close to the one I propose in this paper.

and dynamic social and economic development' and this resulted in the wide influx of sociological, anthropological, economic and cultural research that had been continuously conducted over the past six years while looking for an answer to the question about culture practices shaping the social community and their position related to institutional circulation of culture.[9] They are nowadays the resources based on which we can recognize the widened field of culture or outline its autonomous areas. I also believe they are the reservoir for our knowledge about social culture.

Bendyk has also contributed to this mapping of culture. The objective of research programmes he conducts is to deliver knowledge about peripheral culture that has real transformation and development potential.[10] These issues are also the subject of extensive anthropological and ethnographic research conducted by Kolektyw Terenowy [Field Collective]. *Action research* conducted in two villages, Broniów and Ostałówek, in the south Mazowsze region, revealing 'their own cultural repertoire' in rural communities and indicating practices supporting self-expression, creating community, becoming a driving force of social and cultural activities as well as transforming material manifestations of rural life, are a mine of knowledge about social creativity and production in peripheral areas functioning without access to official circulation of culture and which, according to indicators, should be characterized by social collapse.[11] Inspiring studies have been conducted on rural environments and small towns in terms of cultural diversity not understood as cultural production but rather a 'cultural offer'[12] and on urban culture in all its richness of forms and aspects.[13] These explorations demonstrate the variety of cultural circulations with their own particular institutional autonomy, reception habits, participation patterns and – last but not least – their own aesthetics.

Research analogical to Field Collective studies but applied to urban areas revealed the existence of 'invisible cities', i.e., a self-organized and aestheticized layer in the urban tissue. These express expectations of its users and thus fall outside notions of aesthetic, architecture and urban planning, organization and development of public space.[14] Grassroots cultural production led researchers to take a closer look and analyse probably the most common form of self-expression: mass-produced photography. The 'radical programme of visual sociology' formulated by Marek Krajewski and Rafał Drozdowski enables one to see the advanced universality of the impulse to create cultural representations of reality

9 Edwin Bendyk, *Metakultura rozwoju*, unpublished.
10 Detailed descriptions and results of the programmes 'Kultura i rozwój', 'Spisek kultury' and 'Fraktale. W stronę metakultury rozwoju' conducted by Edwin Bendyk can be found on https://spisekkultury.wordpress.com/ [accessed: 06 November 2015].
11 Rakowski.
12 *Stan i zróżnicowanie kultury wsi i małych miast w Polsce. Kanon i rozproszenie*, ed. by Izabella Bukraby-Rylska, Wojciech Józef Burszta (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2011).
13 Wojciech Józef Burszta, Mirosław Duchnowski, et al, *Kultura miejska w Polsce z perspektywy interdyscyplinarnych badań jakościowych* (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2010).
14 *Niewidzialne miasto*, ed. by Marek Krajewski (Warsaw: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2012).

and at the same time the complicated nature of the only seemingly banal impulse of 'taking photos'.[15]

Other investigated areas include cultural production in the digital environment[16] and subcultures such as reconstruction groups.[17] Our knowledge of means of cultural expression according to social differences had been enhanced by studies conducted by sociologists Maciej Gdula, Mikołaj Lewicki and Przemysław Sadura. Their *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* [*Cultural Practices of the Folk Class*] reveals the cultural stratification according to distinctive and economic lines (i.e., according to social codes and symbols and according to economic resources).[18] The idea of competing institutional circulation – an official network of cultural centres versus self-organization and illegitimate folk institutions, including fire departments and rural women's associations, also emerges here.

There are studies on institutions and 'non-institutions' of culture (including squats)[19] and 'social museums'.[20] Performance studies as the research field encompassing the theatricalization of collective actions that have identity-forming power and that can give meaning to the social experience of reality, revealing deep roots of Polish cultural performances in the pre-Christian tradition and Romantic messianism, also deserve attention.[21] The catalogue of studies on the instances of cultural activities not limited to the institutional network cannot fail to mention the work of Obserwatorium Żywej Kultury [Observatory of Living Culture], the research network clustered around Prof. Barbara Fatyga (University of Warsaw), aiming at developing the complete methodology of description, analysis and evaluation of 'living culture', understood anthropologically and sociologically.[22] Last but not least, the wide framework of research described includes long-standing projects undertaken under the supervision of economist Jerzy Hausner, based on the hypothesis that culture is a collection of practices, initiatives and organizational solutions that can become the flywheel of social and economic development. On one hand, they result from observations concerning the exhausting development

15 Rafał Drozdowski, Marek Krajewski, *Za fotografię! W stronę radykalnego programu socjologii wizualnej* (Warsaw: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2010).
16 Mirosław Filiciak, Alek Tarkowski, *Dwa zero. Alfabet nowej kultury i inne teksty* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2015).
17 Tomasz Szlendak, Jacek Nowiński, et al, *Dziedzictwo w akcji. Rekonstrukcja historyczna jako sposób uczestnictwa w kulturze*, (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2012).
18 Maciej Gdula, Mikołaj Lewicki, Przemysław Sadura, *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, 2014) [accessed: 6 November 2015].
19 'JASKÓŁKI: nowe zjawiska w warszawskich instytucjach i nieinstytucjach kultury' was implemented by the Association of Creative Initiatives "ę" in 2014 [accessed: 6 November 2015].
20 'Social Museums, Local Collections: Dynamics of Changes in the Cultural Landscape' was implemented by the Ari Ari Foundation in 2013 [accessed: 6 November 2015]; 'Social Museums, Local Collections: Report from the Research', ed. by Monika Maciejewska, Longin Graczyk, the Ari Ari Foundation [accessed: 6 November 2015]; Krzysztof Żwirblis, *Muzeum Społeczne* / *Social Museum* (Zielona Góra: BWA Zielona Góra, Galeria Arsenał Białystok, 2014).
21 Dariusz Kosiński, *Teatra Polskie. Historie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2010); Kosiński, *Teatra polskie. Rok katastrofy* (Warsaw–Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2013).
22 Information on the activities of Obserwatorium Żywej Kultury is available at http://ozkultura.pl/ [accessed: 6 November 2015].

potential of previous social and economic ideas and, on the other hand, from the belief in the innovative character of approaches characterizing grassroots initiatives in the area of culture that go beyond the paradigm of culture industries and ideas of the creative class.[23]Along with typically scientific-research projects, activities combining practice and theoretical reflections deserve special attention. A special place belongs to Mazowiecki Instytut Kultury [the Mazovian Institute of Culture] and its project 'Kierunek kultura' ['Direction Culture'], which included organizing cultural events around the Mazovian region as well as three theoretical publications edited by Wojciech Kłosowski.[24] The approach proposed by culture animators engaged in the project, characterized by empowerment, enhancing community bonds, participation, individual change and transformation of reality, was reflected in many activities that I classify as social culture.

These explorations complement the institutional map of cultural activities with 'cultural "hot spots"',[25] creating a multi-layered image of practices, organizational forms and circulations that constitute current cultural space densely 'populated' with 'cultural subjects': individual practitioners, initiatives, informal groups, NGOs, institutions, etc.[26] It is impossible to enumerate all subjects that drew attention from researchers within the past six years, participating in analysis, animation and *action research*. These include social centres, NGOs, rural women's associations, urban movements, social libraries, public cultural institutions, cooperative enterprises, grassroots, non-institutional action makers, cultural centres, station houses of volunteer fire departments, squats.[27] This list should be supplemented with foreign centres linked with Polish establishments and initiatives or coinciding with them by

23 *Kultura a rozwój*, ed. by Jerzy Hausner, Anna Karwińska, Jacek Purchla (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013).
24 *Kierunek kultura. Promocja regionu poprzez kulturę*, ed. by Wojciech Kłosowski (Warsaw: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, 2009); *Kierunek kultura. W stronę żywego uczestnictwa w kulturze*, ed. by Kłosowski (Warsaw: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, 2011); *Kierunek kultura. Uwaga na podmioty!*, ed. by Kłosowski (Warsaw: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, 2012).
25 Rakowski, p. 12.
26 *Kierunek kultura*, p. 51.
27 nitiatives worth mentioning include: Autonomiczne Centrum Społeczne Cicha4 (Lublin), Hackerspace (Warsaw), Cohabitat Foundation (Łódź), Stowarzyszenie De-novo (Dynów), Stowarzyszenie Kulturotwórcze Nie z Tej Bajki (Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski), Stowarzyszenie ToTu – Akademia Twórczych Umiejętności (Czaplinek), Stowarzyszenie Terra Artis (Lanckorona), Raft Association (Olsztyn), Village Theatre 'Węgajty' (Węgajty), Political Critique (Warsaw) with its network of community centres and clubs organizing, for example, grassroots celebrations of the anniversary of 1905 Revolution in Łódź, forums of culture in Cieszyn and conducting long-term work on preserving the heritage of industrial culture in Ursus, a Warsaw district, in the Gdańsk shipyards, in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski and Gniezno, the Rural Women's Association (Lesznowola), the social movements Kultura na Sielcach (Warsaw) and Otwarty Jazdów (Warsaw), Praska Biblioteka Sąsiedzka (Warsaw), Łaźnia Nowa Theater (Nowa Huta, in Kraków) and Zamek Cieszyn (Cieszyn), 'The Districts' studio of socially engaged art (Lublin) and collectives gathered on the Off Piotrkowska premises and in other places around Łódź.

virtue of comparative studies,[28] and many others operating in the field of creating new 'perspectives on commons and culture'.[29] And this list cannot even begin to outline the scale of these phenomena. Przemysław Sadura estimated that the NGO sector in Poland includes about ten to twelve thousand organizations concerned with culture. As Sadura concludes, the collection of studies 'reveals the image of the cultural sector dominated in the financial dimension by the state and public institutions and in terms of initiatives by formal and informal self-organization'.[30] Obviously not all these places are 'cultural "hot spots"', but the most distinctive subjects of the social culture support the claim that 'this is the [...] dimension that has the most innovative and pro-development character'.[31]

**Independent culture and social culture**

The Polish Culture Congress organized in 2009 by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage was a catalyst for studying unofficial circulations of culture. The grassroots movement of social production of culture, however, was developing independently from the ministry's involvement, since this was also when the book opening the cultural-anthropology perspective changing the idea of centres and peripheries was released: *Łowcy, zbieracze, praktycy niemocy. Etnografia człowieka zdegradowanego* [*Hunters, Gatherers, Practitioners of Powerlessness*] by Tomasz Rakowski, analysing people of culture digging in Wałbrzych district bootleg-mine shafts, farmers from Świętokrzyskie district and hunter-gatherers living by the open-pit mine near Bełchatów. The same year, the Brave New World Cultural Centre opened – a social cultural institution active until 2012, one of the most ambitious attempts at establishing the institutional model within non-public circulation.[32] In Kraków, along with the Culture Congress, an ephemeral cooperative, Goldex Poldex, rooted in the situationist spirit, hosted an anti-congress of culture initiated by circles associated with the Ha!art Corporation, one of the most dynamically developing publishers in the third sector.

These three events reveal a different approach to culture than the mainstream one – while at the same time varying among themselves – and which gained importance in the past several years. Rakowski's book demands special attention for grassroots cultural production, self-creativity and cultural production rooted in local communities; the opening of the Brave New World Cultural Centre focused on establishing social cultural centres as the key culture-formative subjects; and the

28 Including Teatro Valle Occupato (Rome), culture commissions of the 15-M Movement (Spain), autonomous social centres such as ESC Atelier and Cinema Palazzo in Rome, cultural centres deriving from the domain of social economy such as Les têtes de l'art (Marseille) or Platonique (Spain), social movements such as Culture2Commons (Zagreb), hybrid establishments , for example the cultural centre Pogon in Zagreb (social-public) and Subtopia in Stockholm (social-public-private).
29 From the title of the book describing these organizations and institutions, *Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture*, ed. by Charles Beckett, Lore Gablier, et al (Warsaw-Amsterdam: Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation, 2015).
30 Przemysław Sadura, *Inicjatywy nieformalne, NGO-sy, hybrydy: zróżnicowanie poszerzonego pola kultury*, unpublished.
31 Sadura.
32 Tomasz Rakowski, *Łowcy, zbieracze, praktycy niemocy. Etnografia człowieka zdegradowanego* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2009).

anti-congress emphasized the power of non-institutional circulation of independent culture.

The point in mentioning the anti-congress is not to weaken the legitimization of the ministerial initiative of the Polish Culture Congress as the catalyst for new approaches to culture. The anti-congress contributed to the search for self-definition on the part of the artistic environment that recognized its values and practices as different and often alternative to mainstream institutional culture. It resulted, for example, in the publication of *Kultura niezależna w Polsce 1989–2009* [*Independent Culture in Poland 1989–2009*].[33] 'The report of the history of enthusiasm', as the volume is described by its editor, Piotr Marecki, shows how nine areas of artistic activities (literature, visual arts, theatre, comic books, music, Net art, cinema and the circulation of zines) were developed during the first two decades after Poland's political and social transformation in the third and 'fourth' sectors, that is, created in NGO working conditions or in the situationist model, as ephemeral activities based on resistance to the dominant cultural, social and economic patterns. From the perspective of five years after the publication of this volume, it is interesting to notice that the 'independence' of the culture described in the report was related particularly to the system of artistic production, but not to the philosophy of creativity. Independent culture, as perceived by the writers of the volume at the time, still remained the domain of artists who produced and exhibited their works. The fact that they were operating outside mainstream institutional culture allowed them to present content and formulate criticism in ways that could not find their legitimization in official culture. Therefore, if 'independent culture' would result from the transformation of cultural production, social culture would result from the changing approach to the functions of culture, its objectives, its social roots, i.e., approaches to such issues as subjectivity, community, locality, resources, ecological responsibility, democracy.

The foundation for emergence of social culture is the 'democratic turn'[34] and its manifestations are visible in politics (for example, in the form of implementing participatory instruments), social sphere (the renaissance of social movements, which in Poland manifested as urban movements or the labour-democracy movement), as well as in culture. Here it is related to the idea that cultural production is the domain of each and every one of us, and that its functionality depends on the way it implements social values and extra-artistic objectives of these practices. This distinction may seem a sophism designed to multiply discursive entities. However, we are now in the heart of the debate about the future of non-institutional circulations of culture. I want to clearly state that the difference between systems of cultural production (whether art is created in public, private or non-governmental, or even informal institutions) does not guarantee the release of creative potentials and says nothing about the social impact of culture. The fundamental issue is the change of approach to who creates culture, how and by what means, within which organizational and institutional framework and, most importantly,

33 *Kultura niezależna w Polsce 1989–2009*, ed. by Piotr Marecki (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010).

34 Christina Flesher Fominaya, *Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations and Uprisings Are Changing the World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 187.

for what purpose. If culture created outside institutional circulation is to have the right to demand recognition and legitimization, it must be a form of counterculture, i.e., it must present an alternative anthropology of an artist, attribute them with different qualities, skills and functions, build bridges between their creative activities and social space, demand other approaches to art than the mainstream ones.

The sphere of social culture I am interested in encompasses organized forms of activities (within the limit of the widened field of independent culture) aimed at practices exceeding artistic production or works. The circulation of social culture includes independent movements, organizations and institutions oriented towards democratic, pro-subject, pro-community and pro-development social impact by means of cultural instruments.

**Manifestations of social culture**

Mapping manifestations of social culture is a risky undertaking, since the borders are unclear. It may result from the inner dynamic of its development as an autonomous area of social and cultural activity or from cognitive limitations (meta-culture of research that still creates analytical barriers). The fact remains that cultural activity in the area of my interest is not easily distinguishable from other types of social activity. It would not be easy to explain why an urban movement aiming at neighbourhood integration and objecting to its opinions being ignored in making decisions concerning the repurposing of an old preschool building and its adjoining area on one housing estate in Warsaw called itself Kultura na Sielcach [Culture in Sielce]. There was, indeed, an appeal in the neighbourly postulates for 'more culture in Sielce' (in the sense of community culture centres), fewer new blocks and apartment buildings, but hardly any practice applied by the collective (protests, legal interventions, meetings) is rooted in the sphere of culture.

Why do we include the activities of the Łódź Cohabitat Foundation into the sphere of culture? Most distinctive among its operations is creating and providing access to prototypes of green building. In this sense, it is a proposition of alternative lifestyle and, therefore, indirectly a different culture. These practices could be successfully analysed as stemming from architecture or even digital culture, if the main resource of the foundation is the community of their Internet platform users.

Alternative life cultures can also be found in squats and autonomous social centres, and happening-type instruments used by urban movements (such as the parade among wood houses organized by Otwarty Jazdów [Open Jazdów] collective activists in the Warsaw city centre) are to some extent a legitimized methodology of social resistance in both social-movement theory and art theory.[35]

Moreover, these 'cultural "hot spots"' are not differentiated according to their organizational form. They include public establishments, NGO institutions and informal groups. It is possible to defend a claim most of them stem from the grassroots activities. For example, the Łaźnia Nowa Theater from Kraków–Nowa Huta was an association before it became a municipal institution. Nevertheless, it seems that today the area of social culture falls outside this type of classification and its borders are more like vast lands rather than borderlines or border posts.

35 See 'Cultural Resistance in a Globalized World', in Fominaya, pp. 81–104.

Therefore, any attempt to name the autonomous area of social culture has to be based on designing a catalogue of approaches, values, operating philosophies and, only further on, include institutional forms or organizational structures.

The catalogue of approaches, values and operating philosophies is composed of practices and determinations reflected to various extents in initiatives, organizations and institutions of the cultural sphere. Nonetheless, in my opinion it is the foundation of activities of every initiative, organization and institution recognized in recent years as a 'cultural "hot spot"'.

The following list includes the most characteristic qualities of social culture:

- Expression of subjectivity. Initiatives within social culture are directed at creating platforms for individual expression of its participants. The relation of a given practice to individual ways and content of these expressions becomes the measure of its openness. Mechanisms of limiting them are eliminated and instead mechanisms of absorption and inclusion are developed. The form and content of individual expression are not evaluated or described according to artistic criteria. Enabling it is treated as an axiom. Individual creativity. Practices within social culture are oriented towards creativity rather than imitation, performing according to a score or repetition of a previously proposed scenario (in the case of theatre performance, they result in common work on content proposed by participants).
- Individual resources. For that reason, the ability to extract and use individual resources of participants becomes so important. I have in mind mostly immaterial resources: skills, knowledge, cultural competence, but also material: objects (becoming props or costumes), spaces (becoming the space of collective work), devices (to create stage design, objects, etc.).
- Interaction. In the area of social culture, individual creativity is only a component (or starting point) for collective expression. The effect (event, activity, work) is the result of collective creativity. This collective creation is possible due to the richness of interactive practices, from being together to exchange of experiences and collaboration.
- Communication. Initiatives in the area of social culture generate rich means of communication, information exchange and maintaining contact. It is not necessarily related to digital communication, though in some areas this is highly developed. Nevertheless, a constant communication, irrespective of its form, is characteristic for all groups, organizations and institutions of social culture.
- Collaboration. The effect of a given practice does not result from the composition of individual expressions but rather from co-creation, cooperation, collaboration.
- Trust. Achieving the result in the form of common creation requires building trust within an initiative. It is about developing strategies of interaction that exclude (or minimize) mutual distance and prejudice, and that base cooperation on belief in open motivations. Interactive practices mentioned above also contribute to building mutual trust: spending time together, exchange of experiences, etc.

- Conciliatory approach. Initiatives, organizations and institutions developed their own mechanisms of reaching consensus related to undertaken activities, reconciling differences, antagonisms and conflicts.
- Mutual practices. One of such mechanisms, which also performs other functions, is practising mutuality: exchange of goods and services between individuals, repaying, offering gifts, barter, disinterested sharing, popularizing individual skills or knowledge.
- Respect for individuality. Initiatives in the area of social culture developed their own mechanisms of respecting individual qualities, desires, preferences and interests. The mechanism of recognition is not related here to authority, skill or achievements; it is rather treated a priori – recognition comes from being a person (or a non-human actor, an animal or plant[36]).
- Focus on diversity. Such practice is by definition focused on diversity of its participants in terms of age, nationality, gender and other identity parameters.
- Common resources. Social culture developed the mechanisms of sharing individual resources (for example, through mutual practices, interaction, collaborative activities) and, therefore, defining common resources: skills, knowledge, competence, identity and memory shared by all participants.
- Communal ownership. This leads to redefining the issue of ownership. A given initiative, organization or institution in the area of social culture belongs to all its participants. The ownership is a resultant of identification with the initiative, cooperation, consensus.
- Participation. Social culture is focused on participation. It is not addressed to consumers, but rather to participants and (co)creators of culture.
- Shared decision-making. Participation leads to shared decision-making in all aspects of activities of an initiative, organization or institutions of social culture. They developed decision-making chains enabling the making of decisions to take into account many participating subjects. This also allows avoiding situations in which decisions are made by some and implemented by others who do not identify themselves with these decisions.
- Co-management. Participation and shared decision-making are reflected at a formal level in co-management. The legal foundation for co-management in the area of social culture remains an open issue. Nevertheless, internal regulations of initiatives, organizations and institutions unambiguously move in this direction. Inclusiveness. As with mechanisms of interactivity, initiatives in the field of social culture developed a rich set of instruments enabling the inclusion of new subjects (participants, performers).
- Accessibility. Widespread accessibility is one of the most important parameters of activities within the area of social culture. It can be achieved through various communication methods and with different results, but the characteristic feature of planning activities within these projects is aiming at the widest scale of accessibility, which is related to the belief in the necessity of inclusiveness.

36 Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy,* trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

- Openness. It is understood as the mechanism of various levels of engagement. Simply put, initiatives, organizations and institutions in the area of social culture plan their activities so as to allow for participation, perform support functions, accompany them, be their 'spectator' or casual witness, according to individual preferences and capabilities.
- Responsibility towards stakeholders and respecting their position. Social culture operates in an environment saturated with many stakeholders. Cultural activities in public spaces, in social areas, at the meeting of various circulations require precise definitions of stakeholders and mediates between them.
- Diversification of funding and remuneration. One of the most complex aspects of operating within social culture is the issue of its stability and sustainability. Financial resources (as far as they are necessary) come from public and private sources, membership fees, other fees, crowdfunding. There are resources that are treated in the framework of practices as financial (for example, equipment). Remuneration for participation is a separate issue. There is an observable tendency towards financial gratification taking into account also other immaterial benefits of participation.
- Institutionalization. In the area of social culture, there is an observable tendency towards institutionalization, enabling further development of activities but at the same time retaining the organic, separate nature of initiatives within social culture. Still, this area has been institutionalized, but the pursued model is set by common good institutions – co-managed by their participants, open and inclusive, with mediatory approaches and common ownership.
- Social mechanisms of sustainability. In the case of loose organizational structure or lack of institutionalization the area of social culture, social mechanisms of sustainability are developed, such as continuous communication and frequent meetings, achieving short-term objectives integrating the group and sustaining vital collaboration.
- Self-sufficiency. Aiming at self-sufficiency or treating self-sufficiency as an idea guiding activities is a noticeable tendency within social culture. I have in mind both resources at the disposal of a group or community allowing it to operate without external support, as well as social and ecological responsibility.
- Social and ecological responsibility. Social culture takes into consideration such parameters as the quality of life, social security of its participants and high quality of relations between them. It also takes into account their well-being, dignity, sense of fair treatment, appreciation of efforts and contribution. It also considers its impact on the environment and its sustainable development. Natural resources, energy and pollution are used reflectively. Recycling – reusing materials used in a given action – is a very important practice. There is a preference for local resources and locally available products, skills, etc.
- Multigenerational horizon. Social culture attempts to postpone the time horizon of their practices. The ambition is to take into consideration long-term consequences and the quality of life of future generations.

- Critical attitude. The ideal guiding activities within social culture is the critical attitude towards their own practice and surrounding reality. The ambition is also to develop instruments for correcting the direction of activities according to initiative development and changing external – social – parameters.

**Philosophy of social culture**

The foundation of approach to culture within social culture is belief in the transformative power of everyone's self-expression. Transformative, that is to say, enabling the inner change of a human being and making a change in reality. Social culture is based on the anthropology of a powerful subject and the instrument of its implementation is empowerment of others. These are the three elements of the fundamental practice within social culture and its organizations and institutions establish a platform for expression of non-professional creators, setting the framework (and supplying basic material resources) for self-expression of others. Also aiming at self-sufficiency, achieved through self-organization and establishing their own institutions, is a manifestation of the anthropology of a strong subject.

Strong subjects establish strong communities. The sociology of social culture enables recognition of the idea that the grounded subject does not lead towards weakening community bonds by conflicting individuals. On the contrary, uncertain and weak individuals are more inclined to conquer territories of recognition by means of conflict. The strong subject is open to collective experiences. Being deeply set in oneself allows seeing others as separate, authentic entities rather than some kind of danger. The community such subjects create through interactions within the practices of social culture is integrated, dense, emphatic.

It does not happen naturally. The area of social culture developed protocols that strengthen tendencies towards creating collective bonds. They are based on co-management and democratization of decision-making processes. Participation is not understood here as simply including 'members of their audiences' in activities in the field of culture, but rather co-determination of the overall process in social culture.

These approaches translate into questions of agency. The transformative foundation – the idea that culture can transform individuals and reality – leads to an increased level of the potential of collective agency in communities bound by social culture. This is why cultural groups are also at the same time social or urban movements attempting to achieve political goals.

Social culture attaches importance to sustainability processes – innovative approaches to funding, but also triggering mechanisms of sustainability based on conscious shaping of group relations, for example, by circulating leadership, including new subjects into practices, intertwining various areas of activities (from creating culture to social activism, towards producing knowledge and coming back to creating culture).

Thus social culture is heading towards production of common good, i.e., immaterial values shared by all people, values essential for living, which cannot be appropriated by anyone. I have in mind both natural resources and cultural heritage, language and human relationships. Creating the common good is achieved by institutions of social culture that should reflect the idea of common good: they should belong to all

participants, shared, democratic, adjusted to expanding resources of commonwealth.

**How to develop social culture?**

I am convinced that the philosophy of social culture based on practical manifestations of its implementation in the form of initiatives, organizations and institutions, which have been the objects of analyses, studies, animation and action research in recent years, are at present the most valuable manifestations of culture as the process of collective creation of social reality existing, due to negotiating of values and meanings reflecting objectives of social community. Social culture can definitely become a model for other cultural circulations (institutional and independent). The autonomous area of social culture, however, needs to be allowed to grow as an original domain of cultural practices.

Discussions concerning the de-hermeticization of cultural institutions, pluralizing the system of cultural production and organizational diversification of the field of culture seem to be dominated by the idea that building bridges between various approaches to culture is the right direction. It is true, but in view of the advantage of the public sector and operating potential of the private sector, before we decide to include social culture into interaction with both these sectors, it should be allowed to enhance its power as an autonomous area of activities. Only then can it develop its own practices and strengthen its approaches, and only then can it have an impact on the shape of the culture in general. Therefore, in conclusion, I would like to express my strong belief that today we can develop social culture most effectively by creating frameworks supporting its self-development: enabling grassroots cultural production, organization and functioning in service of practising social culture and, last but not least, establishing social institutions of culture.

Translated by Monika Bokiniec

This article was written for the essay collection *Kultura i rozwój. Analizy, rekomendacje, studia przypadków* [Culture and development: Analyses, Recommendations, Case Studies] edited by Jerzy Hausner, Izabela Jasińska, Mikołaj Lewicki, Igor Stokfiszewski (Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych w Warszawie, Fundacja GAP, Warsaw–Kraków 2016).

## WORKS CITED

Bendyk, Edwin, *Metakultura rozwoju*, unpublished

Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002)

*Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture*, ed. by Charles Beckett, Lore Gablier, et al (Warsaw-Amsterdam: Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation, 2015)

Burszta,Wojciech, Duchnowski, Mirosław, et al, Kultura miejska w Polsce z perspektywy interdyscyplinarnych badań jakościowych (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2010)

Burszta, Wojciech, Duniec, Krystyna, et al, *Badanie publiczności teatrów w stolicy* (Warsaw: Fundacja Generacja, Fundacja Obserwatorium, Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, TR Warszawa, 2013)

Drozdowski, Rafał, Krajewski, Marek, *Za fotografię! W stronę radykalnego programu socjologii wizualnej* (Warsaw: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2010)

Filiciak, Mirosław, Tarkowski, Alek, *Dwa zero. Alfabet nowej kultury i inne teksty* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2015)

Fischer-Lichte, Erica, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, trans. by Saskya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routledge, 2008)

Flesher Fominaya, Christina, *Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations and Uprisings Are Changing the World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Gdula, Maciej, Lewicki, Mikołaj, Sadura, Przemysław, *Praktyki kulturowe klasy ludowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, 2014)

Gdula, Maciej, Sadura, Przemysław, *Klasowe zróżnicowanie stylów życia a stosunek do teatru* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych, Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, 2013)

Gielen, Pascal (ed.), *No Culture, No Europe: On the Foundation of Politics,* (Amsterdam: Valiz/Antennae Series, 2015)

Górna, Katarzyna, Sienkiewicz, Karol, et al (eds.), *Czarna księga polskich artystów* (Warsaw: Obywatelskie Forum Sztuki Współczesnej, 2015)

*Kierunek kultura. Promocja regionu poprzez kulturę*, ed. by Wojciech Kłosowski (Warsaw: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, 2009)

*Kierunek kultura. W stronę żywego uczestnictwa w kulturze*, ed. by Kłosowski (Warsaw: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, 2011)

*Kierunek kultura. Uwaga na podmioty!*, ed. by Kłosowski (Warsaw: Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, 2012)

Kosiński, Dariusz, *Teatra Polskie. Historie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2010)

Kosiński, Dariusz, *Teatra polskie. Rok katastrofy* (Warsaw–Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2013)

*Kultura a rozwój*, ed. by Jerzy Hausner, Anna Karwińska, Jacek Purchla (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013)

Kultura niezależna w Polsce 1989–2009, ed. by Piotr Marecki (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010).

Kozłowski, Michał, Sowa, Jan, Szreder Kuba (eds.), *Fabryka Sztuki. Podział pracy oraz dystrybucja kapitałów społecznych w polu sztuk wizualnych we współczesnej Polsce* (Warsaw: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2014)

'Nie lękajcie się', a special issue of *Krytyka Polityczna* 2012, 30

*Niewidzialne miasto*, ed. by Marek Krajewski (Warsaw: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2012)

Latour, Bruno, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy,* trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2004)

Rakowski, Tomasz, 'Etnografia/Animacja/Sztuka. Wprowadzenie', in *Etnografia/Animacja/Sztuka. Nierozpoznane wymiary rozwoju kulturalnego*, ed. by Tomasz Rakowski (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013)

Rakowski, Tomasz, *Łowcy, zbieracze, praktycy niemocy. Etnografia człowieka zdegradowanego* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2009)

Sadura, Przemysław, *Inicjatywy nieformalne, NGO-sy, hybrydy: zróżnicowanie poszerzonego pola kultury*, unpublished.

*Stan i zróżnicowanie kultury wsi i małych miast w Polsce. Kanon i rozproszenie*, ed. by Izabella Bukraby-Rylska, Wojciech Józef Burszta (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2011)

Szlendak, Tomasz, Nowiński, Jacek, et al, *Dziedzictwo w akcji. Rekonstrukcja historyczna jako sposób uczestnictwa w kulturze*, (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2012)

'Sztuka działa. O tym, jak sztuka staje się faktem politycznym opowiada Artur Żmijewski – kurator niedawno zakończonego w Berlinie Biennale – w rozmowie z Igorem Stokfiszewskim z Krytyki Politycznej', *Przekrój* 2012, 28/29 (3497/8), pp. 70–71;

'To nie sen awangardy. Z Arturem Żmijewskim rozmawia Piotr Kosiewski', *Didaskalia* 2012, 112, pp. 47–80

Wilk, Teresa, *Rewitalizacja społeczna poprzez współczesną sztukę teatralną w ocenie reprezentantów (twórców i odbiorców) sztuki dramatycznej Legnicy, Nowej Huty i Wałbrzycha* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2010)

Zmyślony, Iwo, 'System nas wykorzystuje. Rozmowa z Winter Holiday Camp', *Dwutygodnik.com*, 2014, 1, p. 124 [accessed: 6 November 2015]; *Krytyka Polityczna* 2015, pp. 40–41

Żmijewski, Artur, 'Stosowane sztuki społeczne', *Krytyka Polityczna* 2007, 11–12, pp. 14–24

ABSTRACT

**Igor Stokfiszewski**
On Social Culture

The article analyses the area of cultural activities outside the institutional circulation of culture, or within that framework but focusing on social values of art. Culture is understood here in its wide anthropological and sociological sense; by the subjects of culture, the author means individual producers, informal groups and social movements, NGOs, subjects of social economics, etc. The class perspective is very important for the author and he puts special emphasis on those phenomena of culture which are manifestations of cultural practices in folk class. The author demonstrates how culture built primarily on non-institutional foundations influences empowerment, communication and cooperation skills, shaping community, and how it achieves inclusiveness, openness and responsibility, increasing the level of participation, achieving self-sufficiency and contributing to accumulation of common goods. The author believes that adopting the perspective of social culture as the foundation for thinking about culture in general creates an opportunity to strengthen culture and democracy.