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Numer 3

On the Sociology of Art

Edited by
Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz
Dominik Porczyński
Agata Rozalska

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On Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Art: Introduction

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Abstract: In the introduction to this issue of *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej*, we undertake an attempt to characterize the contemporary field of the sociology of art in Poland. For the point of departure, we took four generations of the sociology of art as defined by Nathalie Heinich as well as the identification of the following four elements: an artwork and its reception, an artist and a creative process, an audience, and a social-institutional framework. We try to draw the timeline of this sub-discipline by means of indicating works of Stanisław Ossowski (the sociology of art *sensu largo*) and Florian Znaniecki (the sociology of artist) as its beginning in the country. We also define the unique status of art sociology in Poland as a sub-discipline of the sociology of culture, as well as its mutual relations with different sciences. We analyze the emergence of scientific communities and the appearance and disappearance of research specializations during the period of over 80 years. Additionally, we indicate missing pages as well as thematic fields and perspectives that are still developing. We are aware of the fact that it is difficult to exhaust the problem of the history and status of art sociology in Poland within one article, which is why our objective is, rather, to indicate problems, perspectives, and ideas that can begin the discussion on the topic.

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Culture And Society 63(3):75-92; Zimnica-Kuzioła, E., & Wejbert-Wąsiewicz, E. (2019) "Polish female directors of contemporary theater and cinema (selected examples)," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Sociologica* 71:121-137.

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The state of the sociology of art in Poland¹

The first generation of art sociologists, as Nathalie Heinich (2010) claims, involves sociologizing aestheticians (see: Ossowski 1966; Francastel 1973; Gołaszewska 1984), the second generation consists in social historians (see Hauser 1974), and the third generation includes empirical sociologists. Heinich wonders whether a fourth generation is emerging (2010:147-148). According to the author, the fourth generation would complement the previous ones by means of using their methodological, theoretical, and empirical achievements. An explicit element of their work would be to see art not through its re-

¹ This part of the text is based on scientific papers prepared by Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz and Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła for the following international scientific conferences: 'International Scientific Conference on Slavonic and East European Studies', London, 23 June 2018, University of London (the paper: "Theater and Film as a subject of Polish Sociological Research"); International Scientific Conference 'Emerging Trends in Economics, Culture and Humanities (etECH)', Riga 26-28 April 2018, University of Economics and Culture in Riga [the paper: "Polish Sociology of Art. (Theatre and Film). Traditions and Trends"]. See Wejbert-Wąsiewicz and Zimnica-Kuzioła 2018a, 2018b.

lationship with society but, rather, to look at art *as a society*, and perhaps even perceive the sociology of art as a product of social actors. Art world perspectives developing within the tradition of sociological pragmatism (see: Fine 2004; Becker 2008), Pierre Bourdieu's (1996; 2007) field theory, or Niklas Luhmann's (2016) autopoietic system theory seem to be a step in that direction.

Studies within the sociology of art focus on four essential elements: the work of art and its reception; the artist and the creative process; the recipients; and the institutional and social frames of art (Kłoskowska 1981; see also Zolberg 1999). When Stanisław Ossowski was designing a new discipline in Poland in 1936², what he had in mind was first and foremost the sociology of works of art (Ossowski 1966:359-360; see also Stępnik 2010). The sociology of the creative process or reception issues were on the fringes of the author's scrutiny. He would also

² Through the first edition of "U podstaw estetyki" in *Dziela*.

write about works of art as a factor in social and economic change. An important issue for modern sociologists is how art is shaped by social settings as well as by the postindustrial economy. Claiming that a producer of a valuable work of art is not an artist, but a participant in the field of production, Pierre Bourdieu (2005) started the process of separating the sociology of art and esthetics on the one hand and the philosophy of beauty on the other (see also: Sułkowski 2008; Matuchniak-Krasuska 2010).

Stanisław Ossowski explains the concept of aesthetic value by an analysis of human responses and human motivations to certain objects. His work is on the border of philosophy of beauty (what is an aesthetic experience?) and psycho-sociology. His study is empirical. According to him, esthetics, like sociology, focuses on three aspects: the work of art, the creator, and the receiver. The difference between esthetics and the sociology of art is that sociology replaces the esthetic situation with a communicative situation, and the esthetic value is substituted by the semiotic concept of the artistic sign (see: Ossowski 1966:371; Sułkowski 1996:52-53). For the sociologist, the pragmatic function of the sign remains the most important one. Designing sociology as a “special” cultural science, Florian Znaniecki draws a line between this discipline and other fields of study. He argues that *[s]ociologists cannot compete with economists, students of material techniques, linguists, historians, and theorists of literature, art, music, philosophy, and science in their respective realms* (Znaniecki 1963:385), and further: *[i]f sociology is essentially the science of human or social relations, as experienced by those who participate in them, then the primary phenomena which sociologists have to investigate are social actions, just as the primary phenomena investigated by religionists, students of material technique, economists, and theorists of art are religious, technical, economic, artistic actions* (Znaniecki

1963:389). This does not mean that sociologists cannot study art, only that the disciplines with longer history have developed their own traditions, perspectives, and approaches which are not compatible and exceed the scope of interest of sociology as Znaniecki defines it, namely as the science of order among social actions. Artistic, religious, or technical practices focus on different values, but these values are the object of evaluation. Artworks and artists themselves are compared by other people interested in them. This means that particular systems of symbolic references exist, and people can invoke in their collective practices. Art as a value becomes a component of social action.

For over twenty years, Znaniecki was consistently developing an approach toward the study of social roles and groups (1945; 1954; 2011). He applied his terminology to the study of artists. In his analysis (Znaniecki 1937), he utilizes inductive reasoning in order to discuss the emergence and growing independence of the social role of the artist in history. Further development gives more detail as to the participation of the artist in different sections of society and the transferring of values between them, as Znaniecki shows based on the example of an artist involved in a religious group and a municipal group (1963:398).

In addition to semiotics, the hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer (1993) as well as by Paul Ricoeur (1975) is a useful tool for an art sociologist. Hermeneutics does not demand a transcendental approach to art from the general audience. In this philosophical approach, the dialogical nature of the communicative situation is emphasized: the work of art asks the recipient questions and the recipient does the same with the work of art (Sułkowski 1996:54). The sociology of art also uses other interpretive ap-

proaches in the humanities: psychoanalysis, symbolic interactionism, ethnology, and findings of art historians, estheticians, the so-called psychologists of reception, as well as art critics. Stanisław Ossowski considered art as a social phenomenon. According to him, a work of art can connect people in various ways, fulfilling its communicative function. This specific communicative approach is already visible in Ossowski's views. The chapter titled "The work of art as a center of social relations" in his seminal work titled *U podstaw estetyki* [*The Foundations of Esthetics*] elaborates on this social conditioning in relation to works of art. Ossowski included in the field of the sociology of art also the issues of art as a product of social life, in particular the issues of art development and its correlation with other fields of culture. This postulate of research directed at the social functions of art was more often developed by art sociologists in Poland than the one mentioned before. Ossowski designed the future sociology of art as a discipline that would also deal with the superstructure, i.e. with the question of the origins of art and the social conditioning of esthetic theories. In this way, the sociology of art will be like the "sociology of esthetics" (Ossowski 1966:391–392). Some of the paths of Ossowski's sociology of art are still awaiting continuators among sociologists and estheticians; the legacy of Ossowski in terms of the sociology of art can still inspire researchers.

The sociology of art in Poland was initially treated as a sub-genre of the sociology of culture and as such did not draw significant attention among sociologists. Sociology of art scholars in the world and Poland were first and foremost sociologists of literature, music, in rare cases fine art and theatre. An essential part of theoretical and empirical work of art sociologists oscillates around genetic structuralism or communicative perspective of art. In Poland,

the list of important books dealing with sociology of art opens with the names of literary scholars, cultural experts (i.e., Jerzy Kmita, Sław Krzemiń-Ojak, Andrzej Mencwel, Stefan Żółkiewski, Michał Głowiński, Maryla Hopfinger). And in the circle of culture and art sociologists (including literature, theatre, fine arts, and film), the most eminent authors of theoretical and empirical studies are, among others, Aleksander Wallis, Antonina Kłoskowska, Bogusław Sułkowski, Marian Golka, Andrzej Siciński, Mieczysław Gałuszka, Kazimierz Kowalewicz, Cezary Prasek, Kazimierz Żygulski. Aleksander Wallis and Anna Matuchniak-Krasuska represented the sociology of fine arts. Kazimierz Żygulski, Mieczysław Gałuszka and Cezary Prasek were sociologists of film. Kazimierz Kowalewicz was interested in the sociology of theatre and film. Bogusław Sułkowski and Andrzej Siciński studied literature as a field of culture. Marian Golka became famous as the author of handbooks of sociology of art, including *Socjologia artysty* [*Sociology of the Artist*] (1995) and many theoretical works on the sociology of art (Golka 1991; 1995; 1996; 2008; 2013). The most prominent scientist was Antonina Kłoskowska. She created an empirically oriented "Lodz school" of sociology of culture covering fields of literature reception and visual arts research (See: Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2019). Her students made a significant contribution to Polish sociology of art, sociology of literature, sociology of film, sociology of theater, and visual sociology. They formed the Sociology of Culture Department, founded by Antonina Kłoskowska, and later a new entity – Sociology of Art Department. One of Kłoskowska's students, Bogusław Sułkowski, established the first department of sociology of art in Poland in the 1990s. To this day it is the only such department in Poland. Two decades earlier (at the beginning of the 1970s) he published the book *Powieść i czytelnicy* (*Novel and*

Readers), an empirical treaty on the sociology of literature (Sułkowski 1972). The queen of Polish sociologists of culture, Antonina Kłoskowska (1956; 1976; 1992; Kłoskowska and Rokuszewska-Pawełek 1977), studied reception of literature representing national Polish canon, and her assistant Alicja Rokuszewska-Pawełek (1983) – social circulation of popular and entertainment literature. Subsequently, sociological studies of painting emerged in Lodz (by Anna Matuchniak-Krasuska³), artistic film (Mieczysław Gałuszka and Kazimierz Kowalewicz, Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz), photography (Tomasz Ferenc), theatre and music (Kazimierz Kowalewicz and Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła), interactive art (Izabela Franckiewicz-Olczak). The Department of Sociology of Art scholars developed research in the field of symbolic culture (see Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 2015).

Art sociology, like any discipline, is subject to institutionalization. The researchers are active in the field of art sociology and in the Polish Sociological Association. Warszawa, Poznań, Kraków, Katowice, Łódź are strong centres of art sociology in Poland. The Section of Sociology of Art of the Polish Sociological Association was established in 2016. Przemysław Kisiel is the chairman of this section. The first section meeting took place during the 16th Polish Sociological Congress organized by Polish Sociological Association in Gdańsk (2016). The Section brings together members and supporters. In 2020 the section consists of forty-seven members according to the information received from Przemysław Kisiel. In addition, more than a dozen associate members, i.e., people who do not belong to Polish Sociological Association, but sympathize with the Section and

they are interested in art sociology and events (e.g., The Conference of the Section of Sociology of Art and the other scientific conferences or seminars).

The sub-disciplines of art sociology in Poland developed gradually over different periods. The empirical sociology of art first focused on literature and music. It seems that currently the former is the neglected field of study (Bokszanski 1966; Sułkowski 1983; 1994; Łęcki 2000; Ćwikła 2006; Stetkiewicz⁴ 2011; see also: Ślęzak⁵ 2009). However, Krzysztof Łęcki (2012; 2019) and Paweł Ćwikła (2012) are still active sociologist in this field. The processes of reception of literature are more interesting to translators and literary scholars than sociologists (see: Fabiszak, Gibińska, and Nawrocka 2004; Jankowicz and Tabaczyński 2016). A pioneering and highly successful attempt to apply sociological tools – Bourdieu's theory of the literary field in 21st century was the project of an interdisciplinary team of culture scholars and sociologists focused on Polish literature after 1989 (Jankowicz et al. 2014).

According to Barbara Jabłońska (2014), a sociological reflection on the meaning of music in peoples' life began with the birth of sociology as a separate scientific discipline. However, the founding fathers of sociology's interest in music were rather insignificant. In the case of Poland, the topic of music appears only in Stanisław Ossowski's works (Jabłońska 2014:78). Until 1989, the Polish sociology of music was developed by Paweł Beylin (1974), who was the first to conduct quantitative research on the perception of music. Another important person was

⁴ Lucyna Stetkiewicz died in April 2017.

⁵ Izabela Ślęzak analyzed the social world of art in terms of poetry and the process of becoming a poet. The concept and theory of the sociology of literature and the sociology art was used by her to a limited extent (Ślęzak 2009:8-13), as she preferred Howard Becker's theory above all.

³ Dagna Kidoń from the Department of the Sociology of Art, University of Lodz, is preparing her PhD dissertation about reception in modern art museums in Poland. Her doctoral supervisor is Anna Matuchniak-Mystkowska.

Elżbieta Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, who researched the working-class music culture and composer's social milieu in the 1960s and 1970s. Also worth mentioning are Mieczysław Gałuszka and Kazimierz Kowalewicz (1979), who in the 1970s studied the styles of music perception using a technique called listening protocols.

After 1989, there was a significant decrease in interest in music-related research yet a number of scholars somehow tried to fill this gap. Two researchers deserve special attention: Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski and Mirosław Pęczak (1991), who research informal youth culture and the role that rock music played in this group. Wertenstein-Żuławski (1990) dealt with youth musical culture while Pęczak (1992) started from researching rock music and its social contexts and moved to the research of youth subcultures (Choczyński, Rozalska, Drzewek 2019).

Among the people important for Polish sociology of music there are also two anthropologists, Wojciech Burszta, who studied music in the socio-cultural context (Burszta and Rychlewski 2003), and Waldemar Kuligowski (2001), who deals with ethnic and folk music in the context of creolization.

Music was also present in the research of Marcin Rychlewski (2011), a researcher of rock and popular music, Krzysztof Abriszewski (1998), writing about hardcore music, and Tomasz Szlendak (1998), who studied techno music fans communities. Bogumiła Mika (2010) and Barbara Pabjan (2010) dealt with the reception of classical music. In his doctoral dissertation, Michał Libera (2013) undertook the problem of the reception of musical work and the contexts of its creation, and Igor Pietraszewski (2012) put under scrutiny the economic situation of Polish jazz musicians during the communist period.

In recent years, the sociology of music in Poland has been developed by Barbara Jabłońska (2014) (the author of the first textbook on the sociology of music in Poland) and Katarzyna Wyrzykowska (2017), who once dealt with the music market, the dynamics of musicians' careers, musical culture of young people, and now with musical distinctions and stratification.

Nowadays, it seems the sociology of the fine arts finds no followers, rather, the field of cultural production is examined (Możdżyński 2015). The important works in the field of the sociology of fine arts were studies of Anna Matuchniak-Krasuska (1984; 1988; 1999⁶) written many years ago, and Marian Golka's sociology of the artist (Golka 1995; 2013). Anna Matuchniak-Krasuska popularised Bourdieu's theory in Poland (Matuchniak-Krasuska 1988; 1999; 2010). It is worth mentioning that Marian Golka (1991; 1996; 2008) is the author of three sociology of art handbooks. Another Poznań sociologist Marek Krajewski (1995; 2004; 2005; 2011; 2012) represents the sociology of visual art oriented towards the object, and institutions of culture (cultural institutions, public art, recipients). The researchers from Poznań and Toruń are strongly focused on visual sociology (Olechnicki 2003a; 2003b; Kaczmarek 2004; 2008a; 2014; 2020; Drozdowski and Krajewski 2010). They deal with images in a broad sense, including film and photography.

There is no rich tradition in Poland in the field of the sociology of theatre, (while the history of the theater and theater studies (theatrology) developed well, Polish sociologists began to study the theater only at the end of the 20th century). Polish sociologists

⁶ The book titled *Publiczność wobec metafory plastycznej. O recepcji groteski Jerzego Duda-Gracza* (Matuchniak-Krasuska 1999) was dedicated to Professor Antonina Kłosowska.

(e.g. Kowalewicz 1979) wrote about the theory of reception of theatrical performance, they studied the social structure of the audience of specific theaters, they studied the colloquial and critical reception of the performance (those are the main topics of Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła). Sociology of film in Poland was derived from film studies, differently than in Western countries, where the film was the subject of sociological studies even before the First World War. In the 1970s sociology of film remained the best-developed field of sociology of culture, mainly thanks to Kazimierz Żygulski, who sketched its program and conducted numerous empirical studies. Like in other countries, they focused mostly on cinema audiences. It is worth mentioning that film sociologists usually invoke not art sociology concepts or theories.

Architecture is regarded as a “fine art” at least from the 17th century (Tatarkiewicz 1991:393). Paradoxically, among other fields of art sociology, it has the shortest history. As Magdalena Łukasiuk (2011) argues sociology of architecture, despite some considerations made by Georg Simmel in 1909 develops from the 1970s. In Poland, this field of study is poorly explored, and it seems it needs time to fully develop as a fairly independent subdiscipline. At the moment its history bears some resemblances to the history of art sociology itself (Heinich 2010). At least in Poland it is more often discussed by art historians or architects than sociologists. The problems of the social role of architecture, its relationship with social class or lifestyles, and the social responsibilities of architects are more often undertaken by the formers (cf. Nowicki 1980; Basišta 1995; 2001; Rybczyński 1996; 2003; Stachura 2009; Wiszniowski 2011; Jędrisko and Sieńsko-Dragosz 2015; Kilanowski 2017; Ziółkowska 2017). There is a lack of empirical studies of social actors: creators

and users of architecture, their practices, attitudes, evaluations, etc. This does not mean that Polish sociologists ignore or do not recognize those issues. More proper to say is that they are rather distributed among a significant number of studies from the fields of urban sociology (Wallis 1967; 1977a, 1977b, Majer 2020), sociology of space (Wallis 1970; Jałowicki and Szczepański 2002; Jałowicki 2005; Jałowicki and Łukowski 2008; Jałowicki 2010; 2012; Wańtuch-Matla 2016; Łukasiuk 2017), revitalization and gentrification (Sinewali 2010; Gądecki 2012; Groyecka 2015, Przywojska 2016; Sosnowska 2016; Drozda 2017), sociology of local communities (Łukasiuk 2015), landscape sociology (Łukasiuk 2011; Porczyński and Gajdek 2019), territorial branding (Kajdanek 2017; Porczyński 2017), sociology of the architectural profession (Jałowicki 2011; Frąckowiak 2018), social anthropology (Karpińska 2000) or collective memory (Czajkowski and Pabjan 2012). This is not surprising, since architecture is a complex phenomenon and connects the problems of the organization of space and its use with the sphere of aesthetics. When concerning this “aesthetic” component of architecture it is analyzed as a factor of class distinction (e.g., Wallis 1979; Gądecki 2009; 2012; Jałowicki 2012), identity (Gądecki 2005; Czajkowski and Pabjan 2012; Porczyński and Gajdek 2019), or expression of values shared by a society (Jałowicki 2012). Last but not least, along with the sociology of the artist, some remarks about the sociology of the architect emerged (Jałowicki 2012).

The current sociology of architecture is driven by a so-called spatial turn (Łukasiuk 2011; Rogowski 2015). After decades of ignoring material aspects of spaces inhabited by human collectivities, objects we possess, produce, and use are treated as non-human actors in social processes. This somehow corresponds to Jeffrey Alexander’s (2010) idea of cultural

sociology – culture is not only what human produces but it is also what makes ‘bald ape’ human.

Among the Polish sociologists practicing art sociology for many years are: Bogusław Sułkowski, Anna Matuchniak-Mystkowska, Marian Golka, Kazimierz Kowalewicz, Marek Krajewski, Krzysztof Łęcki, Paweł Ćwikła, Przemysław Kisiel, Paweł Możdżyński, Jerzy Kaczmarek⁷, Tomasz Ferenc, Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła, Małgorzata Stępnik, Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz, Izabela Franckiewicz-Olczak, Elżbieta Nieroba and other sociologist of culture. The researchers, sociologists of culture and art were various thematically oriented in the 21st century. They interested the cultural promotion, the cultural policy, and the participation in culture, e.g. Rafał Wiśniewski (2016; Wiśniewski and Kukołowicz 2017; Wiśniewski and Bukalska 2020), Barbara Fatyga, Rafał Drozdowski, Marek Krajewski, Mirosław Filiciak and Krzysztof Olechnicki (Drozdowski 2006; Drozdowski et al. 2014; Szlendak and Olechnicki 2014; 2017; Afeltowicz et al. 2020); the museums and other institutions of art and culture and their recipients, e.g. Przemysław Kisiel (2003; 2013; 2016), Dominik Porczyński (Porczyński and Vargova 2019; 2020), Elżbieta Nieroba (2018; 2019), Izabela Franckiewicz-Olczak (2017; Franckiewicz-Olczak and Grunwald 2019); the art of war prisoners: Anna Matuchniak-Mystkowska (2014:140-182); the artistic careers, e.g. Izabela Wagner (2015), Tomasz Ferenc (2012; Józwiak, Ferenc, and Różycki 2020); the social art, e.g. Katarzyna Niziołek (2015), the interactive art, e.g. Izabela Franckiewicz-Olczak (2016a; 2016b; 2017), and the detailed sociologies of art, including literature, music, theatre, film: Paweł Ćwikła (2006; 2012), Krzysztof Łęcki (2012; 2019), Paweł Możdżyński (2011; 2015), Jerzy Kaczmarek (2008b; 2014), Bar-

bara Jabłońska (2014), Katarzyna Wyrzykowska and Ziemowit Socha (Wyrzykowska 2012; Białkowski et al. 2014; Wyrzykowska and Socha 2016; Domański et al. 2020), Marcin Darmas (2014), Beata Łaciak (2013), Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz (2017; 2019), Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła (2018; 2020), Kamila Lewandowska (2018; 2020). There is also a young generation of cultural sociologists willingly addressing the above-mentioned issues and those related to art, its disciplines, as well as artists: Agata Sulikowska-Dejena (2017; 2020), Marcin Choczyński (Choczyński, Rozalska, and Drzewek 2019; Choczyński 2020), Agata Rozalska (Choczyński, Rozalska, and Drzewek 2019), Stanisław Krawczyk (2015). Some of them are the authors of the texts in this issue.

An overview of themes within this issue of *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej*

This issue of the Journal presents contemporary sociological reflections and research on the sociology of theater, the sociology of art, including the role of art and cultural institutions, cultural animation, the sociology of artists, and the sociology of film and cinema.

Marek Krajewski and Maciej Frąckowiak discuss the very actual problem of Polish theaters' situation during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The researchers reconstruct the representations of the role as well as the importance and diversification of the theater field shared by managers of those institutions. This knowledge is defined by the authors as the *positioning* (or *situating*) of a theater institution. The qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with Polish theater managers allowed the researchers to position these institutions among other cultural units and describe their unique traits. The reconstruction is then strengthened by the discussion of how per-

⁷ Jerzy Kaczmarek died in April 2021.

forming arts are different from other spheres of aesthetic practice and what the relationships between various types of theater institutions are. As the authors summarize their discussion, the introduced concept proved to be very useful in their explorations. It turned out that one of the most significant resources in the theater field is safety (and, more specifically, the lack of it). It strongly influences relationships between particular institutions – especially public, independent, and private ones. According to the authors, the concept of positioning effectively complements different theoretical approaches, particularly those connected with the notion of network and related ones. It also develops the Bourdiean perspective by means of introducing to the dynamics of the field the concept of actors possessing certain agency and influencing the social world with his/her ideas.

The question of the theater during the pandemic was undertaken also by the team composed of Katarzyna Kalinowska, Katarzyna Kułakowska, Maria Babicka, and Michał Bargielski. The authors focus on the sphere of alternative theater and locate their approach within the social world perspective. The paper is based on the qualitative mixed-methods approach and as such it includes participant observation, netnography, in-depth interviews, and a qualitative survey research carried out via the Internet. The research was conducted among members of alternative theaters' staff. According to the interviewees, the pandemic is another difficulty to overcome, similarly to the breakdown of the alternative theater world that affects various spheres of its existence. The new situation leads to a re-thinking of the relationship between the market and the sphere of culture embodied in the public grant system. Another outcome is understanding the importance of community and

developing the ability to function in a turbulent environment. The new situation leads to suspending some of the activities and focusing on different ones, even if they are not directly connected to theater jobs, such as face-masks-sewing. Other ideas concern switching between waiting for the general situation to improve or going online. The authors show how, paradoxically, the pandemic that led to the merging of private and professional lives separated those spheres in the case of alternative theaters. The researchers conclude that members of the studied social world are, in fact, used to the difficulties and are trying to organize their lives under the new conditions.

The article titled "The Process of Becoming a Professional Actor" refers to the social world of actors. Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła reactivates the field neglected by Polish theater sociologists. In her two most recent publications, she has studied dramatic public theaters (Zimnica-Kuzioła 2018) and theater actors (Zimnica-Kuzioła 2020). In the paper contained in this very issue, the author focuses on the processes of building the professional identity of actors, motives for choosing the acting profession, and the role of significant others in the life of actors. Zimnica-Kuzioła points to different identity-related activities, negotiations with regard to identity, and the cultivation of professional identification. Based on empirical data, she distinguishes between five categories of people important to the professional role: stimulator, activator, stabilizer, symbolic authority, and demotivator. The author shows that the choice of the acting profession is a result of defensive and offensive motives, and the consequence of the long process of both primary and secondary socialization. A separate part of the article involves a comparison of facts and stereotypes regarding entrance exams and education in a public drama school. In

the process of becoming an actor, passing the exam to a public drama school (e.g. Warsaw or Cracow) is an extremely important moment. Zimnica-Kuzioła discusses many factors conducive to the development of professional identification, e.g. the attitude to the profession, motivation to work, responsibility for one's own actions, satisfaction with the results of one's own involvement in the implementation of professional tasks, etc. The author proves how important professional identification is in the process of becoming an actor, determined by a sense of connection with people in the particular profession as well as the interiorization of norms, patterns of behavior, and values specific to the particular profession.

Kamila Lewandowska looks into the problem of esthetic judgment with the use of the approach grounded in the tradition of sociological pragmatism. The author follows the turn that, according to her, is taking place in the sociological research into arts. A number of scholars in the field no longer treat artworks only as products of artistic practices or objects of the human-actor manipulation. Some of the sociologists include in their analyses the content and meaning of artworks and – following developments in different disciplines – start treating them as non-human actors influencing the course of interaction. The pragmatically-oriented sociology of art focuses on particular acts of art appreciation and esthetic judgment. It studies not only the perspective of authorities in the field, but also the reception of common participants. In the approach discussed by Lewandowska, meanings and values are not pre-defined, but emerge during interactions. Apart from presenting current developments in the pragmatic theory of art, the author also considers some possible directions for future studies.

Agata Sulikowska-Dejena's portrayal of Polish art worlds utilizes different sources of data: interviews personally conducted by the author, records of talks carried out by other people for different purposes, and press articles. The paper is an example of regular contemporary qualitative research, a *bricoleur*-like approach supported by the methodology of grounded theory. Sulikowska-Dejena focuses on the practices of differentiation in the Polish artistic environments. In her paper, art, its form, and its contents become a boundary object, around which social networks emerge, partially separated yet mutually aware of each other. The author calls them peripheral modernity and mainstream contemporariness in order to provide a syncretical description of values that both collectivities are up to. The discussion shows different perspectives on art developed in groups related to more peripheral Art Exhibition Bureaus and Contemporary Art Centers. The former community remains faithful to the ideals of the 20th-century Paris avantgarde, while the latter focuses on youth and on critical and groundbreaking efforts.

Ewa Grigar concentrates on the relationship between art museums and galleries and their audiences. The author draws a picture of the field controlled by the elites and their trustees. However, more recent observations show the emergence of a new type of audience: young people demanding more agency in the museum context, and for whom new technologies are a significant element of everyday life. The study is based on research conducted in Prague by the author on the one hand, and another one carried by Przemysław Kisiel in Cracow. The outcomes are then compared, with Grigar utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. The results give an interesting feedback on young visitors' perspectives on contemporary art museum exhibitions. While the

majority of participants confirm their interest in art, a significant part show dissatisfaction with the museum experience. Some answers are not surprising; young people would like to see more new technologies in museum environments, more information videos, or interactive contents. At the same time, they undermine the popular idea of youth who are constantly glued to their smartphone screens; the majority of interviewees do not need this during their museum experience. The most disturbing outcome of the research is, however, that even half a century after Bourdieu and Darbel's study had been carried out, schools do too little to encourage lower- and middle-class children to visit museums. The museum can do a lot to adjust to its audience, but without systemic support for the attendance, only few visitors would experience the new faces of the institutions.

Dominik Porczyński and Agata Rozalska's paper locates itself at the intersection of the sociology of locality, sociology of objects, and, obviously, sociology of arts. The authors assume that the study of contemporary collectivities, social practices, and identities should rely on the understanding of the past. Museums are considered here as one of many actors contributing to the development of local identities. They are an institutionalized way of making the past present in the life of contemporary communities. The study is based on the assumption that collections – and particularly exhibitions – are more or less faithful representations of culture and as such they contribute to today's understanding of the local past. In their considerations, Porczyński and Rozalska focus on artworks as both objects of collecting practices and components of the original context in which they had been produced and used. They are understood here as objects bearing unique esthetic qualities,

but also showing documentary significance. Because of that, they are used in the museum's meaning-making practices. Esthetic objects are analyzed in reference to their gradable 'power' in invoking the past. This feature of artworks is the object of debate among different members of museum staff. Since art is only a fragment of the inherited past, it competes with other artifacts as a way of describing the essence of the locality. This makes the construction of locality representation a discursive process, while artworks – boundary objects.

Rafał Wiśniewski and Grażyna Pol's contribution to the issue touches two problems simultaneously. Firstly, it analyzes possible applications of hybrid ethnography and, secondly, it discusses factors influencing culture animators' careers. The paper focuses on selected outcomes of a broader research project utilizing methods combining more traditional approaches with new technologies. The hybrid methodology applied by the authors is based on the involvement of recruited animators. They were responsible for keeping a journal and taking photographs for a period of a week. In addition, their movements were tracked by GPS. Data collected through these methods allowed the researchers to analyze the spatial practices of the participants. It turns out that cultural animators are mobile and often work in several places. Their professional responsibilities strongly intertwine with voluntary work and household duties. They also maintain social bonds in their private lives. The authors provide a critical analysis of the applied methodology, suggesting that there is a need for longer periods of data collection, which would have made it possible to notice some regularities in research into the participant's spatial activity. The problem of unsystematic data entries by some of the animators might have also influenced the outcome.

The article by Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz is a study into traveling cinema. The film project titled “Polska Światłoczuła” has been operating since 2011. The author describes this informal institution and its creators, participants, and audiences from the interactionist and functional perspective; she relies on her own field studies, interviews, observations, the analysis of data, and both collected and induced materials. She invokes the atmosphere of meetings, rituals, broadcasting, as well as receiving attitudes. Wejbert-Wąsiewicz returned to her findings after four years and has now enriched them with a new perspective. Traveling cinema in Poland is an attractive form of entertainment as well as a cultural institution. The screening in the traveling cinema continues to have a festive value. The author shows the motivations of the film viewers and participants of meetings, creating a typology of viewers/receivers: naïve, consumer, passionate, erudite, and professional. Their revealed attitudes to film-meeting can be different: entertainment and play, esthetic experience, meeting with the film creator, affiliate reasons, film-meeting as a celebration, a desire to present themselves in the social arena, an incidental case, or random onlooking. Wejbert-Wąsiewicz provides insight into individual and combined practices – collective, that of broadcasters, that of audiences, and that of the organizers of the film culture. She classifies these cultural practices and points to the types of local communities as well as groups involved in the traveling cinema project. The criteria taken into account consist in the degree of the manifested public diversity as well as the motivational criterion of the members of the group or collective.

The article by Tomasz Ferenc is an example of biographically-oriented sociology of art, specifically a study in the sociology of the artist, one at the intersection of sociology and art history. It should

be added that Ferenc collaborated on a book about an iconic figure for the Polish and European art of photography of the second half of the 20th century, namely Zofia Rydet (Józwiak, Ferenc, and Różycki 2020). Although the artist left behind an enormous creative legacy, her biography remains a mystery in many respects; the field studies by Józwiak, Ferenc and Różycki constitute a thorough investigation. In *The Sociology of the Artist in the Post-Modern Era: Pride and Uncertainty* (2013), Marian Golka stressed the role of artistic mythologization in different times. The greater the artist and the more famous he/she is, the more often the process of mythologizing his/her creative attitudes and works occurs. Tomasz Ferenc draws attention to those interpretations of Zofia Rydet’s works which differ from the artist’s original intentions. Biographically-oriented sociology of art requires research to use archives, analyses of various collected materials, and interviews with witnesses. The main question that the author focuses on is – ‘How was Zofia Rydet remembered by her colleagues, friends, photographers?’ Owing to such research, one can learn about the artist’s creative attitude, her basic and creative personality, as well as her way of living and functioning in the field of art.

Sharaf Rehman’s article titled “Dilip Kumar: An Auteur Actor” is another case study in the sociology of the artist. Dilip Kumar is a prominent Indian actor and filmmaker. Sharaf Rehman conducted a meticulous analysis of his career path, paying attention to collective action in film production, specific feedbacks in the period of an artistic career, and moments of success and failure. The article is situated at the intersection of film studies and the sociology of the artist. The author does not explicitly refer to the sociology of art or its sub-disciplines, nor is it straightforward sociology of film or cinema, or the very the sociology of an artist. Rather, his article

should be considered as an outline of a broader sociological perspective within the field of sociology of the artist, namely that revolving around the figure of the actor. Dilip Kumar is an icon of the Indian cinema, and Sharaf Rehman's intention was to dedicate a sketch written about him for *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* specifically. The author died at the age of 72 on March 4, 2021; he did not manage to read the reviews or supplement his text with sociological readings of the described artistic phenomenon. He was a media scholar and sociologist employed at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, associated with the University of Lodz's Faculty of Economics and Sociology since 2016. He was passionate about photography and film.

An attempt to analyze the phenomenon of the acting role in the sociological terms involving the concept of a social role was made in the "Afterword" by Dominik Porczyński, who has interpreted Kumar's biography and combined it with theory. The author describes the difference between the film role and the social role, and he shows how a sociologist should study the film actor role. "Afterword: The Sociology of a Film Actor" highlights several mutually-supportive perspectives (role theory, biographical perspective). Porczyński adapts the events that make up the trajectory of the actor's life in the social world of cinematography with the activities of film culture as such, as well as with the sphere of social practice. It turns out that practices, negotiations, social circles, institutions, and values all define the status of an iconic actor. This perspective was lacking in Rehman's text about Dilip Kumar. The proposed "Afterword" is one of the sociological interpretations of Sharaf Rehman's conclusions about the Indian cult artist and the author of the cinematography, namely Dilip Kumar. As the Editors of this issue, we hope that if the author of the

article were still alive, he would have accepted this supplement. We are convinced that by publishing Rehman's last article without editorial interference together with the said "Afterword," we are in line with the author's request.

Summary

The sociology of art in Poland has its own history, which we tried to describe. With this overview of the field, we do not want to close the discussion but, rather, to provoke it. Since the topic is quite broad, we are certain that we were not able to completely describe all groups, trends, and perspectives, and, above all, to list all the important publications. As every scientific discipline at the intersection of several sciences, the sociology of art struggles with various methodological and identity-related problems. It is not our aim to analyze them here. However, it is worth emphasizing that in Poland representatives of different theoretical and empirical sociologies of art exist, as well as scholars specializing in the history of art sociology as well as, finally, representatives of particular sociologies, namely that of theatre, music, literature, film and cinema, artists, institutions of art, and culture. The sociology of art in Poland is characterized by an unequal development of its sub-disciplines. There can be at least two reasons for this. Some of the sub-fields can be considered as self-centered, while others are treated as supplementary. The scientific community of art sociologists is quite dispersed and represents different theoretical and empirical approaches. It is necessary to emphasize which topics and fields are poorly explored by Polish art sociologists; there is, for instance, a weak representation within the field of sociology of literature, film, and cinema. There is also a lack of contemporary sociological research on the reception of painting. We also recognize analytical deficiencies in the aspect of women's careers in the

field of art (the sociology of the artist). The sociology of architecture is also poorly developed in Poland; it is usually conducted by architects and lacks empirical research engaging people. In order to become a more significant research area, it should establish contact with sociological theories. As Magdalena Łukasiuk (2011:100) notes, a sociologist of architecture currently borrows concepts from the neighboring fields of study. Another weakness of the sociology of art in Poland is too much attachment to the analysis of creative activities and the achievements of individual artists. The phenomenon of creative collectives rarely appears in art sociologists' areas of interest. Only single publications appear, such as the one about Małgorzata Pelkowska's 'Super-Honorable Girls' [Pol. 'Dziewczęta Przeszanowne'] (2010). Moreover, there is a lack of description and analysis of artistic groups in the country (see Leśniak 2019), as well as works about places of creation and art studios.

Marian Golka (2017) admits that it would be difficult to unequivocally and responsibly show thematic gaps in sociology, or at least to compile those that are noticed by other sociologists. Due to the fact that this is a particular feeling of researchers and it is difficult to even argue with it, it is probably more important to initiate a discussion and reflect on why some research areas are not willingly taken within sociology. There might be several reasons. First of all, it happens that the ideology and the context of authority do not favor particular subjects, or that limitations are caused by broadly understood correctness. On the other hand, if certain paradigms and practices hardly relate to potential research areas, it will most likely result in giving up ideas or interests, e.g. due to the lack of financial support for this type of research. Also crucially important is the problem of access to the relevant literature (Golka 2017:8).

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O współczesnych problemach w socjologii sztuki. Wprowadzenie

Abstrakt: We wstępie do niniejszego wydania „Przeglądu Socjologii Jakościowej” podejmujemy próbę scharakteryzowania współczesnego pola socjologii sztuki w Polsce. Punkt wyjścia stanowią cztery generacje socjologii sztuki zdefiniowane przez Nathalie Heinich oraz identyfikacja czterech podstawowych elementów: dzieła sztuki oraz jego recepcji, artysty i procesu twórczego, odbiorców oraz ram społeczno-instytucjonalnych. Podejmujemy się próby zakreslenia ram czasowych subdyscypliny, wskazując jako jej początki w kraju prace Stanisława Ossowskiego (socjologia sztuki sensu largo), Floriana Znanieckiego (socjologia artysty). Definiujemy także specyficzny status socjologii sztuki w Polsce jako subdyscypliny socjologii kultury oraz jej wzajemne relacje z innymi naukami. Analizujemy wyodrębnianie się środowisk naukowych, pojawianie się i zanikanie specjalności badawczych w ciągu ponad 80 lat. Dodatkowo wskazujemy białe plamy oraz obszary tematyczne i perspektywy, które dopiero się rozwijają. Zdajemy sobie sprawę, że w ramach jednego tekstu trudno jest wyczerpać problem historii i statusu socjologii sztuki w Polsce, stąd naszym celem jest raczej wskazanie wątków, perspektyw i idei w celu rozpoczęcia dyskusji na ten temat.

Słowa kluczowe: socjologia sztuki, socjologia w Polsce, światy sztuki, tradycje badawcze, kierunki badań

Gdzie jest teatr? Czyj jest teatr? O sytuowaniu instytucji teatralnych. Badania eksploracyjne

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Słowa kluczowe:

socjologia
sztuki, teoria
pola, instytucje
teatralne, COVID-19,
sytuowanie

Abstrakt: Artykuł oparty jest na wynikach ogólnopolskich badań dotyczących strategii działania polskich instytucji teatralnych w pandemii, realizowanych w okresie lockdownu. Badań, które – jak się okazało – dostarczyły także danych pozwalających formułować szersze wnioski. Celem artykułu jest odtworzenie wyobrażeń, jakie na temat roli, znaczenia i zróżnicowania pola teatralnego mają osoby kierujące tego typu instytucjami. Dodatkowym celem jest konceptualizacja pojęcia sytuowania, by w ten sposób lepiej dostrzec znaczenie, jakie dla funkcjonowania relacji tworzących pole teatralne ma postrzeganie ich przez aktorów, którzy w nim uczestniczą. Posługując się kategorią sytuowania w interpretacji treści przeprowadzonych wywiadów jakościowych, wskazujemy między innymi na obecne w wypowiedziach naszych rozmówców, kontrastujące ze sobą modele myślenia o instytucjach teatralnych (menadżerski i autorski), przywiązanie do tradycyjnej roli teatru na tle innych sztuk, a także na szczególną rolę bezpieczeństwa jako kluczowego wymiaru różnicującego pozycję teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej.

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codzienne Polaków w czasie pandemii wirusa SARS-CoV-2 i po jej zakończeniu. Przeobrażenia praktyk i społecznych oczekiwań”.

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wzięciu „Życie codzienne Polaków w czasie pandemii wirusa SARS-CoV-2 i po jej zakończeniu. Przeobrażenia praktyk i społecznych oczekiwań”.

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Maria Shevtsova (2011), autorka jednego z nielicznych podręczników z socjologii teatru i performansu, zwraca uwagę, że przez długi czas ta subdyscyplina budziła uśmiech politowania. Działo się tak głównie dlatego, że teatr traktowano jako sferę działań, która jest skrajnie oddalona od prozy życia społecznego, zaś socjologię jako praktykę w pełni w niej zanurzoną. Było tak również dlatego, że teatr utożsamiano z tym, co złożone, wzniosłe, uduchowione, zaś socjologia była postrzegana jako skrajnie redukcjonistyczna nauka proponująca głównie upraszczające, statystyczne reprezentacje rzeczywistości, a więc też jako niezdolna do mówienia o sztuce (Shevtsova 2017). W Polsce przytoczone wyżej rozpoznanie angielskiej badaczki słusznie może się wydawać przesadzone, ale – paradoksalnie – dowodzi to jedynie jego słuszności. W rodzimym kontekście teatr uznawano bowiem za pełnoprawny i doniosły przedmiot badań, nie tylko w socjologii, ale też kulturoznawstwie czy antropologii, właśnie dlatego, że dostrzegano jego zintegrowanie z życiem społecznym, transgresją, oporem wobec systemu PRL czy oporem i kulturą alternatywną (zob. np. Jawłowska 1988; Tyszka 2003; Skórzyńska 2007).

W ostatnich latach, także za granicą, socjologiczne spojrzenie na teatr uległo znaczącej zmianie. Nikt już nie kwestionuje tego, że teatr jest integralną częścią życia społecznego, wobec niego zależną i zdolną do jego przeobrażania; jedną z wielu instytucji, wytwarzającą specyficzne dobra kulturowe, relacje i formy uczestnictwa (zob. np. Tepe, Vanhuysse 2014; Szkolczai 2015); obszarem reprodukcji wzorców kultury dominującej i ich transgresji (zob. np. Levannon-Mordoch 2008; Ingraham, So, Moodley 2015); czy miejscem pracy i przestrzenią spotkania, sporu i konfliktu poddaną unikalnym regułom (na temat pracy emocjonalnej zob. np. Lazaroo, Ishak 2019). Kiedy spojrzymy na ewolucję innych nauk zajmujących się sztuką (historii sztuki, teatrologii, muzykologii, literaturoznawstwa i innych), to dostrzeżemy też, iż włączyły one perspektywę socjologiczną do swoich skrzynek narzędziowych: nie interesuje ich już tylko teatr jako dzieło, ale też kontekst powstawania tego ostatniego oraz sposób zorganizowania procesów kreacji, układ relacji, który umożliwia powołanie do życia artystycznego artefaktu i jego upowszechnianie, stosunki dominacji odpowiedzialne za obowiązujące sposoby wartościowania dóbr kulturowych i legitymizujące ważność sztuki ideologicznej (Leach 2013; Balme 2016; Freebody i in.

2018). Paradoks polega jednak na tym, że usocjologicznienie nauk o sztuce nie podniosło rangi samej socjologii sztuki. I choć dyscyplina ta nie wywołuje już pełnych pobłażliwości uśmiechów, to dla wielu osób zajmujących się sztuką wydaje się niepotrzebna. Proponowana przez nią perspektywa stała się bowiem wiodąca w dzisiejszych badaniach nad zjawiskami artystycznymi.

W naszym artykule chcielibyśmy podążać wspomnianym szlakiem, a zatem analizować współczesny polski teatr z perspektywy socjologicznej. Główne pytanie, na jakie chcemy odpowiedzieć, brzmi: jak *sytuowane są* instytucje teatralne w polskiej rzeczywistości społecznej. Odpowiadając na nie, mamy zamiar zrealizować dwa cele. Pierwszy z nich ma charakter empiryczny – polega na próbie rekonstrukcji współczesnego statusu teatru w Polsce. Drugim celem jest sformułowanie pewnej propozycji teoretycznej umożliwiającej przeprowadzenie takiej rekonstrukcji oraz jej zweryfikowanie w toku analizy zebranego materiału badawczego.

Bardziej szczegółowe wyjaśnienie powodów postawienia wspomnianego pytania badawczego wymaga przedstawienia kilku dodatkowych założeń. O teatrze proponujemy myśleć w kategoriach pola zaproponowanych przez Bourdieu (2001), a więc rozumieć go jako zbiór instytucji teatralnych, stosunków łączących je ze sobą oraz z otoczeniem, a także reguł porządkujących te stosunki. Przyjmujemy więc, że teatr, wbrew temu, co twierdzą niektórzy jego teoretycy i praktycy (Dudzik 2007; Kosiński 2015; Suzuki 2012; Balme 2016), nie ma swojej istoty, a to, czym jest, określane jest właśnie przez pozycję, jaką zajmuje w rzeczywistości społecznej. Zakładamy też, iż teatr (jak każdy nowoczesny, wyspecjalizowany kontekst wytwarzania dóbr kulturowych, zob. Dickie 1997; Bourdieu 2001; Becker 2012) okre-

ślany jest, z jednej strony, przez swoiste dlań instytucje, osoby, procesy, zjawiska, a więc przez wszystko to, co – za Dariuszem Kosińskim (2015) – można rozumieć jako *kultura teatralna*. Z drugiej zaś strony przez aktorów całkowicie zewnętrznych wobec tego kontekstu, ale wpływających nań w oparciu o logikę nazwaną przez Bourdieu (2001) mianem heteronomii. Zakładamy ponadto, że relacje wiążące teatr z rzeczywistością społeczną mają charakter dwustronny. Instytucje teatralne dysponują znaczną zdolnością określenia swojej pozycji w polu oraz rzeczywistości społecznej, jak i kształtowania tego typu stosunków (zob. np. Mutibwa 2016).

Przyjmujemy jednocześnie, że istotną rolę we współkształtowaniu pozycji teatru w polu teatralnym odgrywa zjawisko, które określamy *sytuowaniem* instytucji teatralnej. Nazywamy w ten sposób wyobrażenia tych, którzy tego rodzaju podmiotami kierują, są w nich zatrudnieni lub w znaczący sposób określają ich działanie na temat pozycji teatru rozumianego jako aktor obecny w obrębie pola teatralnego. *Sytuowanie* odzwierciedla wiedzę, jaką osoby tego rodzaju posiadają o tym polu i o swoim w nim miejscu, ale jest też wyrazem przekonań i pragnień na temat tego, czym teatr miałby w tym kontekście być i tego, jak chciałoby się, by postrzegali go inni. *Sytuowanie* współokreśla pozycję zajmowaną przez daną instytucję w rzeczywistości społecznej, ponieważ wyznacza to, jak osoby praktykujące ten proces działają, jakie cele wyznaczają temu teatrowi, strategię jego działania czy też relacje, jakie on zawiązuje i zrywa z innymi aktorami obecnymi w polu i poza nim. Oczywiście *sytuowanie* nie jest jedynym czynnikiem decydującym o pozycji instytucji teatralnej w polu. Przeciwnie – jest zaledwie jednym z wielu. Wpływają nań przecież także stosunki łączące daną instytucję z innymi podmiotami, prawne, materialne czy technologiczne śro-

dowisko jej działania. Niemniej pojęcie sytuowania wydaje się nam o tyle istotne, że zwraca uwagę na aktywny charakter podmiotów obecnych w polu teatralnym, na to, iż ich pozycja nie jest tylko konsekwencją struktury tej całości, obecnych w niej napięć, relacji wiążących poszczególnych aktorów tu obecnych, ale też skutkiem podmiotowych działań opartych na wyobrażeniach dotyczących tego pola.

Pytając więc, *gdzie jest teatr?*, będziemy się starali odtwarzać przede wszystkim to, jak prowadzący poszczególne instytucje teatralne *sytuują* je wobec innych sztuk, wobec innych instytucji kultury, ale też aktorów funkcjonujących poza wąsko rozumianą sferą kultury. Wymienione tu typy relacji same w sobie są produktem pola teatralnego, jego umiejscowienia w rzeczywistości społecznej oraz cech instytucji, której kierujący czynią takie wyobrażenia. Doprecyzowując zatem wspomniane wyżej zagadnienie (jak *sytuowane* są instytucje teatralne w rzeczywistości społecznej), do listy pytań, na jakie zamierzamy odpowiedzieć, dopisać należy kolejne: Wobec jakich zjawisk *sytuowane* są instytucje teatralne, charakteryzując swoją pozycję w polu i w rzeczywistości społecznej? Czy i w jaki sposób odmienne relacje wobec tych zjawisk różnicują pozycję instytucji teatralnych w polu i w rzeczywistości społecznej?

Zakładamy, że zagadnienie *sytuowania* instytucji teatralnych w rzeczywistości społecznej jest istotne przynajmniej z trzech powodów. Po pierwsze, pomaga ono połączyć dwie tradycje socjologicznej analizy zjawisk artystycznych: strukturalistyczno-funkcjonalną perspektywę Bourdieu z elementami interakcjonizmu symbolicznego i teorii strukturalizmu (Giddens 2003; Becker 2012). Obie koncepcje są żywe i ciągle rozwijane w obrębie socjologii sztuki oraz socjologicznych analiz teatru (zob. np. Shevt-

sova 2002; Hanna 2016; Serino, D'Ambrosio, Ragozini 2016; Kubina, Musilová 2018). Jednocześnie nie znamy prac, w których próbuje się integrować obie wspomniane tradycje, by w ten sposób móc lepiej uchwycić relacje między jednostkowym sprawstwem a strukturą, a co za tym idzie – efektywniej wyjaśniać dynamikę badanych procesów.

Po drugie, dlatego, że wskazuje na pewien rodzaj niepewności obecnej w sztuce, a związanej z jednoznaczным wskazaniem tej lokalizacji. Niepewność ta wydaje się być zresztą jednym z najważniejszych czynników odpowiedzialnych za specyficzny rozwój nowoczesnej i ponowoczesnej sztuki, którego rdzeniem jest kwestionowanie lub dekonstruowanie dotychczasowych odpowiedzi na to pytanie, udzielanie nowych, transformowanie tych, które już padły, w nowe całości (Bürger 2006; Groys 2013; North 2015; Cottington 2017 i wiele innych). Sztuka, w tym teatr, czerpie swoją żywotność właśnie z wciąż ponawianego pytania o to, gdzie jest jej miejsce w społecznej rzeczywistości, czym ma w niej być, jakie ma wobec niej powinności, zakres swobody i praw. Ten uniwersalny model rozwoju ma też swoje lokalne, polskie wykonanie, znaczone w ostatnich dekadach niezwykle gorącymi dyskusjami, z których część daleko wykracza poza kulturę teatralną i staje się areną bardziej generalnych sporów dotyczących obowiązującego modelu kultury i życia społecznego. Spory te dotyczyły w ostatnich latach między innymi: modeli finansowania teatru; zakresu jego autonomii, granic wolności artystycznej i obyczajowej transgresji; statusu widza i jego obecności w ramach teatru; ekonomizacji kultury i forsowania przez władzę menedżerskich modeli zarządzania teatrami; praw pracowniczych i demokratyzacji tych instytucji; społecznego zaangażowania teatru oraz silnie obecnego w nim w ostatniej dekadzie nurtu aktywistycznego, krytycznego, a w końcu też

tego, jakie jest miejsce instytucji teatralnych w różnych rodzajach zbiorowości (na temat tych dyskusji zob. Kosiński 2015; Zimnica-Kuzioła 2018; Adamiecka-Sitek, Keil, Stokfiszewski 2019; Fox, Głowacka 2020 i wiele innych).

Trzeci powód, dla którego to właśnie zjawisko *sytuowania* instytucji teatralnych w rzeczywistości społecznej wydaje nam się ważne dla określenia współczesnego statusu teatru, ma bezpośredni związek z projektem badawczym „Strategie i cele działania instytucji teatralnych w czasie pandemii”, który realizowaliśmy na zlecenie i we współpracy z Instytutem Teatralnym im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego w Warszawie. Badania te przeprowadzone zostały w czasie czasowego zamknięcia instytucji kultury na skutek decyzji Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z 12 marca 2020 roku. Przystępując do ich realizacji, nie zamierzaliśmy analizować, jak instytucje teatralne *sytuowane* były w rzeczywistości społecznej, ale odtworzyć, w jaki sposób radziły sobie w czasie pandemii Covid-19 (Krajewski, Frąckowiak 2021). Okazało się jednak, iż nasi respondenci bardzo szeroko i wielowątkowo opowiadali o prowadzonych przez siebie teatrach, a także o tym, jak myślą oni o teatrze w ogóle, o jego powinnościach, o relacjach łączących go z władzami państwowymi i samorządowymi, ze sferą ekonomii i polityki. Objasniając podejmowane strategie radzenia sobie w pandemii, tłumaczyli, jak ich instytucja *usytuowana* jest w rzeczywistości społecznej, mówili o relacjach, jakimi jest ona powiązana z innymi aktorami, a także o tym, jak relacje te określają status, sposób działania, zakres autonomii prowadzonego przez nich teatru. To właśnie zauważenie w toku badań obecności intensywnego procesu *sytuowania* stanowi zasadniczy powód, dla którego zdecydowaliśmy się na powrót do zebranego w nieco innym celu materiału badawczego.

Metoda i przebieg badań

Studiowanie pozycji teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej z perspektywy tego, jak sytuują się w niej prowadzący instytucje teatralne wymaga badania zróżnicowanych podmiotów. Dlatego analizowaliśmy zarówno największe publiczne instytucje teatralne o kilkudziesięciomilionowych budżetach, jak i teatry prywatne, niezależne inicjatywy środowiskowe czy jednoosobowe przedsięwzięcia aktorskie. Po drugie, by ustalić, w jaki sposób teatry *sytuowane* są w rzeczywistości społecznej, analizowaliśmy wywiady przeprowadzone z osobami kierującymi teatrami. Oparliśmy więc swoje badania na analizie informacji pozyskanych tylko od jednej z wielu stron uczestniczących w konstytuujących teatr relacjach. Warto jednocześnie zauważyć, iż dyrektorzy i dyrektorki teatrów to *aktorzy silni*, mający niewspółmiernie większy wpływ na konstytuujące teatr relacje niż inni nimi spleceni. Założyliśmy dodatkowo, iż kierowanie teatrem wymaga wiedzy o wszystkich aspektach jego umiejscowienia, a więc świadomości tego, jakie relacje je kreują i jaki mają one charakter. Po trzecie, materiał empiryczny gromadzony był w okresie pandemii koronawirusa, a więc w warunkach, w których wszyscy, także nasi badani, doświadczali załamania rzeczywistości jawiącej się dotychczas jako oczywista. Wzmagало to refleksyjność, narzucało konieczność przemyślenia raz jeszcze sposobów działania, celów i priorytetów, modusów zorganizowania instytucji teatralnych, ale również wytwarzało potrzebę wzmożonych interakcji i rozmów tak, by w nich szukać odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak teatr może i powinien działać w tej nowej sytuacji. Możemy więc przyjąć, iż kryzysowy charakter pandemii paradoksalnie sprzyjał prowadzeniu badań na interesujący nas temat.

W badaniach, do których się tu odwołujemy, korzystaliśmy z dwu technik: sondażu i indywidualnego wywiadu pogłębionego; przy czym rola pierwszej z nich dla prowadzonych w tekście analiz polegała jedynie na dostarczeniu informacji pozwalającej celowo dobrać próbę osób, z którymi realizowaliśmy wywiady jakościowe (Babbie 2008). Sondaż realizowaliśmy między 25 maja a 26 czerwca 2020 na ogólnopolskiej próbie osób kierujących instytucjami teatralnymi (N=223), przy użyciu kwestionariusza dystrybuowanego za pośrednictwem internetowej platformy Webankieta. Ważnym celem badań sondażowych było rozpoznanie i kategoryzacja podstawowych rodzajów działań adaptacyjnych podejmowanych przez instytucje teatralne w czasie pandemii (na temat wyników zob. Krajewski, Frąckowiak 2021), ale, jak wspomnieliśmy, z perspektywy tego tekstu istotniejszą ich rolą było dostarczenie informacji pozwalających poznać zróżnicowanie polskiego pola teatralnego, sformułować kryteria doboru oraz pozyskać kontakty do uczestników jakościowej fazy badania. Faza ta realizowana była za pomocą techniki indywidualnego wywiadu pogłębionego (z uwagi na panującą pandemię rozmowy prowadzono przez telefon). To właśnie materiał z wywiadów stanowi główne źródło danych empirycznych, które wykorzystujemy w artykule.

W okresie 16–30 czerwca łącznie zrealizowano 18 wywiadów z dyrektorami i dyrektorkami teatrów. Każda taka rozmowa trwała około 45 minut i była ustrukturyzowana wedle następujących zagadnień: rodzaje działań podejmowanych przez teatr w czasie pandemii oraz źródła wiedzy, na których aktywności te się opierały; nowe formy współpracy zawiązywane w trakcie lockdownu; obecność teatru online; rodzaje wsparcia, jakimi cieszyła się w czasie lockdownu kierowana przez respondenta instytucja i wsparcie, jakiego udzielała ona innym

podmiotom; czynniki różnicujące sytuację teatrów w Polsce w czasie pandemii i współpraca wewnątrzśrodowiskowa, przyszłość teatru i inne.

Jak wspomniano, decyzja o formie prowadzenia wywiadu (przez telefon) motywowana była głównie kwestiami logistycznymi, przede wszystkim zaś bezpieczeństwem prowadzących i rozmówców. Zdecydowaliśmy się na wywiad jakościowy, ponieważ zależało nam na partnerskiej i bezpośredniej rozmowie, w której uczestnik ma szansę opowiedzieć o własnych doświadczeniach w dobranych przez siebie kategoriach i języku. Zналиśmy specyfikę wywiadu telefonicznego, wynikającą z charakterystycznej dla niego dynamiki interakcji – zwykle rozmowy takie trwają krócej, a prowadzący mówi w nich więcej niż w wywiadach bezpośrednich, a także wiążące się z tym ryzyka, do których należy przede wszystkim mniejszy zakres i szczegółowość poruszanych przez uczestników wątków (por. Irvine 2011). Ryzyka te były wprawdzie w przypadku naszych badań ograniczone, zarówno z uwagi na specyfikę rozmówców oraz okresu, w jakim zbieraliśmy dane. Osoby kierujące instytucjami to zwykle ludzie o dużym poczuciu sprawstwa i kontroli, często prowadzący rozmowy telefoniczne dotyczące działalności prowadzonych przez siebie ośrodków. Sama zaś pandemia upowszechniła, a przez to „oswoiła” zapośredniczone formy komunikacji. Niemniej jednak podjęliśmy także dodatkowe starania, by wspomniane wyżej ryzyka jeszcze obniżyć. Procedura ta obejmowała umieszczenie w scenariuszu wywiadu wstępu oraz pytań na „rozgrzewkę” (pomagających „przełamać lody”, o co trudniej w rozmowie przez telefon), a także wielu pytań pomocniczych – zadawanych w przypadku udzielania przez rozmówców fragmentarycznych bądź ogólnych odpowiedzi. Pomocna okazała się także w tym względzie wieloetapowość badań, a zwłaszcza fakt,

że wywiady nie były pierwszym „spotkaniem” badaczy i badanych, ale powrotem do wcześniej zainicjowanego kontaktu.

Uczestników wywiadów, jak już wyżej wspomniano, rekrutowaliśmy spośród tych respondentów badań sondażowych, którzy wyrazili w kwestionariuszu wolę uczestnictwa w drugiej fazie badań oraz pozostawili dane do kontaktu (uczyniło tak 69,5% respondentów), a także odpowiedzieli na nieobowiązkowe pytanie znajdujące się na końcu kwestionariusza. Pytanie to dostarczało dodatkowych informacji o refleksjach, sytuacji teatru czy sposobie doświadczania przez nich czasu pandemii (swoje odpowiedzi pozostawiło 29,6%). Próba dobierana była następnie w oparciu o zidentyfikowane podczas badań sondażowych sposoby działania teatru w czasie pandemii – zawieszenie (4 teatry w próbie) lub brak zawieszenia działalności programowej (14 teatrów). Tę drugą podgrupę skonstruowano tak, by znalazły się w niej instytucje teatralne deklarujące włączenie się w działania wspierające walkę z pandemią oraz na rzecz innych podmiotów działających w sferze kultury (7 podmiotów) oraz te, które nie podejmowały podobnych działań (pozostałe 7 instytucji). Wreszcie, próbę kontrolowano także pod kątem statusu teatru (8 rozmówców kierujących instytucjami publicznymi, 7 – społecznymi oraz 3 – prywatnymi), wielkości zespołu (5 teatrów z zespołem do 10 osób, 11 z zespołami między 10 a 50 osób, pozostałe 2 teatry o zespołach większych, niż 50 osób), a także miejscowości, w której działają te instytucje (12 teatrów z największych miast, 5 z miast poniżej 200 tys. mieszkańców oraz jeden teatr ze wsi), a w dalszej kolejności (jeśli było to możliwe) także ze względu na województwo (w jakościowej części badań udział wzięli reprezentanci teatrów z 9 województw), rodzaj teatru (9 teatrów niezależnych, 4 dramatyczne, 2 lalkowe, 1 muzyczny, 2 innego ro-

dzaju) oraz płeć i wiek rozmówców (14 mężczyzn i 4 kobiety, w wieku od 32 do 64 lat).

Wywiady były nagrywane, a następnie transkrybowane oraz zanonimizowane. Treść wywiadów analizowaliśmy zgodnie ze wskazanymi wyżej zagadnieniami, kodując transkrypcje najpierw na podstawie teorii (wątki ze scenariusza), a potem na podstawie danych (kodowanie otwarte) (por. Gibbs 2011). Na użytek tego tekstu część z tak uporządkowanego materiału poddaliśmy następnie wtórnej kategoryzacji (wybraliśmy zagadnienia najbardziej powiązane z celami artykułu oraz zidentyfikowaną na wstępnym etapie opracowywania danych kategorią sytuowania). Pierwszym etapem tej dodatkowej systematyzacji było wyodrębnienie typów zjawisk (wymiarów), wobec których osoby prowadzące teatry odnoszą swoje instytucje, kiedy sytuują ich pozycję w rzeczywistości społecznej. Kolejnym – identyfikacja różnic w obrębie tych wymiarów, a więc podstawowych sposobów sytuowania teatrów w rzeczywistości społecznej. Poszukiwaliśmy także czynników (charakterystycznych reguł pola teatralnego), które miały wpływ na różnicowanie wspomnianych sposobów sytuowania.

Gdzie jest teatr? Ustalenia badawcze

W tej części artykułu prezentujemy wyniki poczynionych przez nas ustaleń. Rozpoczynamy od identyfikacji *relacji konstytutywnych*, a więc tych typów związków, które badani traktowali jako kluczowe dla zdefiniowania specyfiki kierowanej przez nich instytucji teatralnej. Po drugie, staramy się uchwycić, co według badanych różni teatr od innych sztuk. Po trzecie, staramy się odtwarzać czynniki różnicujące według respondentów sytuowanie teatrów w społecznej rzeczywistości.

Relacje konstytutywne

Pytanie inicjujące wywiady prowadzone z osobami kierującymi instytucjami teatralnymi brzmiało: „Czy może Pani/Pan powiedzieć kilka słów o sobie oraz teatrze, którym Pani/Pan kieruje?”. Myśleliśmy o nim jako o wstępie do właściwej rozmowy, ale okazało się niezwykle przydatne dla rekonstrukcji procesów *sytuowania* instytucji teatralnych w rzeczywistości społecznej. Nasi rozmówcy, odpowiadając na nie, wskazywali bowiem na takie rodzaje relacji, które traktowali jako konstytutywne dla tego, czym jest ich instytucja i kim są oni sami. Analiza tej części wywiadów prowadziła do wyodrębnienia następujących rodzajów stosunków tego rodzaju.

Po pierwsze, część z respondentów używała dla scharakteryzowania teatru bardzo technicznych informacji, opisujących przede wszystkim jego formalny status, wielkość zespołu, wysokość budżetu, jakim dysponuje teatr i charakter dotacji, jaki on otrzymuje. Przykład takiej wypowiedzi zamieszczamy poniżej.

Teatr miejski. Zatrudnionych jest ponad pięćdziesiąt osób. Zespół aktorski to kilkadziesiąt osób. Dotacja podmiotowa z urzędu miasta: ponad 5 milionów zł. Tak, teatr dramatyczny podległy miastu [...] więc miejska samorządowa instytucja kultury. (IDI 12)

Takie zobiektywizowanie sposobu portretowania teatru, dokonywane w duchu i języku sprawozdawczości, zdawało się też wskazywać na te rodzaje relacji, które są najważniejsze z punktu widzenia osoby zarządzającej tego typu instytucją. Z jednej strony na związki ekonomiczne generujące środki pozwalające działać, z drugiej zaś na wielkość i złożoność instytucji, którą się kieruje. W ten sposób nasi rozmówcy określali precyzyjnie, od kogo/czego

są najbardziej zależni, kto jest aktorem utrzymującym przy życiu ich teatr oraz z jakimi wyzwaniem wiąże się zarządzanie nim.

W tej pierwszej, sprawozdawczej i zobiektywizowanej, perspektywie teatr jest przede wszystkim podmiotem, bardzo podobnym do innych instytucji kultury czy przedsiębiorstw. Czymś, czego funkcjonowanie zależne jest od pieniędzy, co ma swoją załogę, którą trzeba zarządzać, czego istnienie i sprawne funkcjonowanie zależne jest od dobrych relacji z tymi, którzy go dotują i generują jego przychody.

Na przeciwnym biegunie należy umieścić te opisy teatrów prowadzonych przez rozmówców, które wskazywały na bardzo swoistą drogę życiową tych ostatnich jako coś, co ma wyjaśnić, z jakim rodzajem instytucji mamy do czynienia. W tym drugim wypadku teatr nie definiuje specyfika gatunkowa, statut czy jakiegokolwiek zobiektywizowane miary, ale jego powiązanie z niepowtarzalnym losem konkretnej osoby, która go założyła i prowadzi.

Nazywam się (imię i nazwisko respondenta), jestem absolwentem jeszcze PWST w (miasto). Skończyłem szkołę teatralną w (data ukończenia) roku, potem byłem w teatrach państwowych, po czym w 1989 roku [...] działaliśmy po kościołach [...] to była działalność taka mocna, po Klubach Inteligencji Katolickiej jeździliśmy, graliśmy po kościołach, aż nam zabroniono, takie to było. Ale przejdźmy do rzeczy – zakładałem kilka różnych teatrów, kiedy po 1989 roku usłyszałem, że „weźmy sprawy w swoje ręce”, to się właśnie wypisałem z teatru instytucjonalnego, no i założyłem swój własny teatr, razem z kolegą. [...] były działania, z jednej strony, warsztatowe, począwszy od przedszkolaków poprzez szkoły podstawowe, ale tak najintensywniej, oczywiście, takie długofalowe, bo na

przykład w jednym liceum kilka lat trwały warsztaty [...]. Nawet wykształciłem niektórych, że grali jako pełnoprawni partnerzy z zawodowymi aktorami. [...] No to powiem tak, że od (liczba) lat miasto wreszcie doceniło nas po tym szmacie czasu [...]. (IDI 14)

Ta rozległa relacja, z której przedstawiamy tylko fragmenty, jest sposobem, by odpowiedzieć na prośbę o scharakteryzowanie teatru, którym się kieruje. Chociaż dużo w niej odniesień do konkretnych zdarzeń, miejsc, wydarzeń historycznych, to podstawową relacją definiującą specyfikę instytucji prowadzonej przez respondenta jest ta łącząca ją z jego własną biografią. W tym wypadku teatr jest więc rodzajem dzieła jednostki, bardzo autorskim przedsięwzięciem, tak silnie splecionym z biografią i jej momentami zwrotnymi, że trudno określić, czy rozmówca opowiada wciąż o teatrze, którym kieruje, czy po prostu o sobie samym. Podobną narrację znajdziemy też w przypadku innych osób, które kierują instytucjami prywatnymi lub społecznymi o silnie autorskim charakterze. Kolejny przykład stanowi poniższa wypowiedź, w której większy nacisk zostaje już położony na relacje o charakterze profesjonalnym, ale gdzie opisywany teatr również jest określony przez biografię jego założyciela, odzwierciedla jego ewoluowanie jako osoby i jako twórcy.

Nazywam się (imię i nazwiska respondenta), jestem aktorem po PWST. Mam (wiek respondenta), kończyłem studia gdzieś na przełomie (data ukończenia), stworzyłem grupę, na początku jako grupę teatralną, która miała połączyć koła naukowe teatrologii i szkoły teatralnej, aktorów i teoretyków teatru w taką wspólną grupę poszukiwawczą. Patrząc z dystansu, to grupa miała raczej klimat poszukiwań zbliżonych do Grotowskiego – to były nasze inspiracje. Naszym pierwszym spektaklem był (nazwa

spektaklu), który wtedy jeszcze na studiach pokazywaliśmy przy różnych okazjach [...] w paru takich inicjatywach, które wtedy były takimi studenckimi offowymi inicjatywami. Ale przez to, że szkoła teatralna zobowiązywała, starałem się, żeby to miało jak największy profesjonalny wymiar, no i miałem nawet sukcesy w tej kwestii. (Ta grupa) stała się moją pracą dyplomową [...] i grupa teatralna zaczęła ewaluować, ludzie z grupy trochę się zmieniali, potem jedni zostali teoretykami teatru, inni zajmują się tym teatrem do dzisiaj. (IDI 3)

Część naszych rozmówców jako relację konstytutywną dla kierowanego przez nich teatru wskazuje, po trzecie, na jego specyfikę gatunkową. Tym, co sprawia, iż instytucja ta ma określony charakter, jest więc rodzaj zdarzeń scenicznych (i pozascenicznych) w nim obecnych. Poniżej kilka przykładów wypowiedzi lokujących się w tej kategorii.

Jestem dyrektorem teatru w (nazwa miasta). To jest mały teatr lalek. (IDI 9)

Głównym zakresem naszej działalności artystycznej są komediowe spektakle uliczne, które odbywają się głównie w okresie letnim. (IDI 13)

Dlatego, że to nie jest typowy teatr, tylko to jest część programu interdyscyplinarnego, czyli takiego, który składa się z bardzo wielu elementów. [...] W ramach działalności teatralnej już kolejny rok prowadzimy program, który nazywa się (nazwa programu). Używamy takiej nazwy, żeby podkreślić, że w swoich zamierzeniach jesteśmy pełnowartościową sceną teatralną, a nie amatorską. Dlatego, że to jest program, który jest skierowany do osób z (grupy defaworyzowanej), oni tworzą grupy teatralne i prezentują co roku premierę, grają wznowienia, a oprócz tego zapraszamy zespoły z zagranicy. (IDI 16)

Jak można zauważyć, tego rodzaju deskrypcje teatrów kierowanych przez naszych rozmówców, których rdzeniem było próba osadzenia tych instytucji wśród różnorodnych rodzajów działalności scenicznej, były dosyć zdawkowe. Zupełnie tak, jakby określenia takie jak: teatr lalkowy, dramatyczny, impresaryjny, komediowy czy stosowany (a więc społecznie zaangażowany) były wystarczające dla usytuowania instytucji w polu teatralnym. Dodatkowo, nawet jeżeli, jak w przypadku ostatniej z przytoczonych wypowiedzi, buduje się swoją tożsamość na częściowym kontestowaniu reguły *kultury teatralnej*, na próbach pokazania jej wykluczającego charakteru, to w dalszym ciągu to właśnie relacja z nią jest najważniejsza dla zdefiniowania tego, gdzie osadzona jest instytucja kierowana przez rozmówcę.

Ostatnim ze zidentyfikowanych sposobów *sytuowania* teatru przez osoby biorące udział w wywiadach było określenie jego formalnego statutu, a więc wskazanie, w jakiego rodzaju porządku instytucjonalnym funkcjonuje prowadzony podmiot. Jak pokażemy w dalszej części analizy, tego typu relacja wydaje się kluczowa dla umiejscowienia teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej, to ona bowiem wyznacza sposób pozyskiwania środków na działalność, specyfikę relacji spajających zespół, jego trwanie w czasie, a także etos. Wskazanie na status jako sposób wywiązywania się z prośby o przedstawienie teatru i siebie samego na początku wywiadu obecne było zwłaszcza w wypowiedziach kierujących instytucjami prywatnymi.

Ja jestem reżyserem teatralnym po (nazwa szkoły wyższej), jestem też cały czas przedsiębiorcą – posiadam jednoosobową działalność gospodarczą [...] co mogę powiedzieć jeszcze o teatrze, tak w kilku słowach? Głównie to, że po pierwsze – właściwie do tego

roku była to instytucja utrzymująca się z własnych środków. Czyli taki eksperyment, można powiedzieć, że to drugi sektor był tak naprawdę, mimo że w Polsce prawie nie ma takich zjawisk, to my żeśmy usiłowali to tak robić. (IDI 4)

Oraz instytucjami niezależnymi, offowymi, czasami skrajnie nieformalnymi.

Jest to teatr, który w zasadzie nie jest obciążony niczym, co normalnie zdarza się w teatrze, czyli nie posiadamy sceny w stricte fizycznym wymiarze, nie posiadamy zespołu rozumianego jako stała ekipa ludzi zakontraktowanych w taki czy inny sposób [...]. My po prostu nie odczuwamy potrzeby konstytuowania się w jakiejś grupie i tworzenia tego, czego grupa artystyczna tworzyć nie powinna. Co teatr powinna obchodzić księgowość, kadry, wszystko inne? Nie stać nas na zawodowców, a sami nie możemy się tym zajmować. (IDI 18)

Zwracanie uwagi na status pojawia się więc przede wszystkim tam, gdzie rozmówcy są w jakiś sposób przekonani o wyjątkowości pozycji kierowanego przez nich teatru. Wyjątkowości, która wynika z tego, iż dominującym rodzajem tego typu instytucji, wyznaczającym również to, jak o teatrach myślimy, są te o publicznym charakterze. Odstępstwo od tego rodzaju modelu traktowane jest wciąż jako odważna deklaracja ideowa, ale również jako powód do swoistego poczucia wyższości wobec teatrów publicznych, które rozmówcy poddają krytyce (wrócimy do tego wątku w dalszej części artykułu).

Podsumowując ten wstępny fragment analizy, warto zauważyć, iż nasi rozmówcy wskazują na dwa wymiary jako szczególnie istotne dla usytuowania prowadzonej instytucji teatralnej w rzeczywistości

społecznej. Z jednej strony jest to jego status i wynikający stąd sposób finansowania instytucji, stabilność funkcjonowania teatru lub jej brak. Jak się wy-
daje, tak silne akcentowanie tego właśnie aspektu odzwierciedla bardzo trudną sytuację, w jakiej od kilku dekad znajduje się kultura w Polsce, jej borykanie z tak podstawowymi problemami, jak: chroniczne niedofinansowanie, obarczenie instytucji kultury koniecznością zarabiania na swoją działalność, prekarność w sferze kultury, silne upolitycznienie procesów zarządzania kulturą oraz ręczne, bardzo doraźne nią sterowanie. Z drugiej zaś strony istotne jest także to, czy teatr ma menedżerski, czy autorski charakter. O ile bowiem w tym pierwszym wypadku relacja łącząca instytucję i osobę, która nią kieruje, ma charakter kontraktowy, silnie sprofesjonalizowany, bezosobowy, to w tym drugim teatr staje się dziełem swojego dyrektora, zaś relacja, która ich wiąże, jest ważniejsza od wszelkich innych połączeń i kiedy przestaje istnieć, znika też teatr.

Czym się różni teatr od innych sztuk?

W tej części artykułu chcielibyśmy się skoncentrować na przedstawieniu tego wymiaru *sytuowania* teatru, w którym zostaje on przeciwstawiony innym rodzajom sztuk. Wątek ten szczególnie mocno podejmowany był przez naszych rozmówców w odpowiedzi na dwa rodzaje pytań. Po pierwsze, tam, gdzie pytaliśmy o aktywność teatrów w czasie pandemii: „W jaki sposób funkcjonuje aktualnie prowadzona przez Panią/Pana instytucja (teatr)? Co działa po staremu, co zaś uległo zmianie?” oraz „Jak można byłoby ogólnie scharakteryzować strategię działania przyjętą przez Pani/Pana teatr?”, a zwłaszcza przy okazji dyskusji o stosunku wobec przenoszenia działań teatru w przestrzeń online. Po drugie, tam, gdzie prosiliśmy naszych rozmówców o porównanie sytuacji teatrów i in-

nych instytucji kultury w czasie lockdownu, pytając: „Czy sytuacja, w jakiej znalazły się teatry, jest w jakiś sposób wyjątkowa, jeżeli ją porównamy z innymi instytucjami kultury (na czym ta wyjątkowość polega)?”.

Symptomatyczne jest to, że niemal wszyscy nasi rozmówcy zgadzali się, iż cechą wyróżniającą teatr spośród innych sztuk jest unikalny rodzaj relacji zawiązywanej pomiędzy twórcą a odbiorcą, uczestnikiem, widzem. Jej odrębność definiują dwie cechy: bezpośredniość, a więc stawanie wobec siebie twarzą w twarz, a także jednoczesność – przebywanie w tym samym miejscu oraz czasie.

Teatr, jak powiedział Grotowski, jest spotkaniem międzyludzkim, nie oszukujemy się. [...] możemy ograniczyć teatr do dwóch elementów – do widza i tego, kto tworzy ten teatr, performera, aktora. I to spotkanie między widzem a tym performerem czy aktorem jest teatrem. Możemy mieć jedną świeczkę i tak damy radę, możemy grać na zewnątrz i też damy radę, i ten spektakl nastąpi. (IDI 3)

Niektórzy z rozmówców podkreślali, iż tego typu relacja ma charakter unikalny, bo jej rdzeniem jest bliskość i wynikające z niej silne emocje towarzyszące doświadczaniu siebie nawzajem w sposób wielowymiarowy: oparty na słuchaniu opowieści, słowie, ale też głęboko ucieleśniony. To właśnie bezpośredniość i jednoczesność czynią teatr atrakcyjnym, zwłaszcza dzisiaj – w świecie głęboko za pośrednictwem technologicznie i asynchronicznym.

U nas widz nie tylko widzi, ale też widzi, jak pluje-
my, płacemy [...] to jest taka sztuka, która wymaga kontaktu. [...] my bardzo wierzymy w słowo i bardzo wierzymy w dramat, i w taki teatr klasyczny. To zna-

czy nie robimy klasyki, bo robimy współczesne opowieści, ale bardzo wierzymy w klasyczną opowieść, w klasyczne słowo i w klasyczny kontakt z widzem. Bo też wierzymy, że paradoksalnie ludzie mogą teraz tego bardzo potrzebować. Dlaczego? Bo mają teraz w domu Netflixa z najlepszymi aktorami, z najlepszymi efektami specjalnymi. W związku z tym myślę, że rywalizowanie teatru z Netflixem skazane jest na porażkę tego teatru właśnie. (IDI 4)

Postrzeganie opisywanej relacji jako konstytutywnej dla teatru staje się szczególnie mocno widoczne, gdy badani relacjonują odczucia towarzyszące przenoszeniu działalności swoich instytucji do sieci, rozważając, czy w takim przypadku:

[...] mamy do czynienia z nagraniem, czyli nieobecnością tu i teraz. Na ile próby streamingowania spektaklu to jest tu i teraz? Cały czas się zastanawiamy, czy możemy powiedzieć, że działalność w Internecie to jest teatr. Czy to są powidoki, jakies pocztówki z teatru, klipy i tyle. (IDI 11)

Inny respondent, opowiadając o namiastkowym charakterze teatru online, zwraca uwagę, że zapośredniczenie zaprzecza istocie teatru, którą rozumie jako spotkanie widza i performerera.

[...] ale to nie jest obcowanie z teatrem, to jest oglądanie teatru przez szybę, to jest oglądanie relacji z teatru. A teatr [...] jest spotkaniem międzyludzkim, nie oszukujemy się. [...] fundament teatru to jest spotkanie międzyludzkie, że możemy ograniczyć teatr do dwóch elementów: do widza i tego, kto tworzy ten teatr – performerera, aktora. (IDI 3)

Wtóruje mu kolejny badany, który zauważa, iż zapośredniczenie teatru przez coś innego niż głos, ciało czy wyraz twarzy aktora, a więc media presenta-

cyjne (por. Fiske 2008), to nie prosta zmiana miejsca pokazywania spektaklu, ale zupełnie nowy rodzaj twórczości, różny od teatru i wymagający dodatkowych umiejętności.

Spektakle, które się zna z rzeczywistości, a pokazane na ekranie, to są zupełnie inne wydarzenia. My na przykład mamy zapisane wszystkie nasze spektakle, ale po ich obejrzeniu i dyskusji na początku pandemii, czy je udostępnić, stwierdziliśmy, że nie. Dlatego że ten zapis dokumentacyjny nie nadaje się do wywołania tego typu potrzebnych emocji, relacji, znaczenia, jaki powinien mieć spektakl. To musiałaby powstać zupełnie osobna gałąź sztuki. (IDI 16)

W wypowiedziach osób kierujących instytucjami teatralnymi może uderzać dosyć powszechna zgoda co do tego, iż można wskazać istotę teatru. Co więcej, środowiskowy konsensus dotyczy również jej definicji, jakby wprost zaczerpniętej z pism Grotowskiego (1999) i Suzukiego (2012). Zgodnie z nią, by powstał teatr, potrzebne są dwie osoby i przestrzeń, w której w tym samym czasie doświadczają one nawzajem swojej obecności. Z tego konsensusu wyłącza się tylko jeden rozmówca, który wskazuje, iż istotą teatru jest performatywność oraz prognozuje, że w przyszłości rozwijać się będą te formy teatru, które realizują się poza formułą bezpośredniego spotkania aktora i widza.

Zyskały teatry, które zaczęły działać, robiły coś kreatywnego w Internecie, eksperymentować z innymi formami sztuki. [...] Uważam też, że przed pandemią mieliśmy takie delikatne podejście do tego, żeby teatr również był w Internecie, żeby otworzyć jakiś portal do prezentowania spektakli w Internecie. I nikt nie był do tego przekonany. A myślę, że w obecnej sytuacji... Szczerze mówiąc, czekam na rozkwit tego sektora. (IDI 5)

Ten głos jest jednak odosobniony, zupełnie tak, jakby kierujący instytucjami teatralnymi ortodoksyjnie podchodzili do kwestii oddzielenia prowadzonej w nich działalności artystycznej od innych rodzajów sztuki. Podkreślenie bezpośredniości i jednoczesności jako konstytutywnych cech teatru przepełnione jest przekonaniem o wyjątkowości tych atrybutów, czemu towarzyszy ich obrona za wszelką cenę. Nasi rozmówcy nie są jednak artystycznymi luddystami, wrogami technologii, nowych mediów, Internetu czy zdalności. Przeciwnie – zdają sobie sprawę, że bez wykorzystywania tych narzędzi prowadzone przez nich instytucje nie mogłyby istnieć, ale nie myślą o nich w kategorii medium tworzenia, lecz sprowadzają ich wykorzystanie do działań promocyjnych albo – jak się niżej okaże – do budowania i podtrzymywania relacji z widownią.

Co według badanych różnicuje pozycję teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej?

Już podczas doboru próby okazało się, że teatr w Polsce to pole niezwykle wewnętrznie zróżnicowane, hybrydyczne, obfitujące w wielość form instytucjonalnych, ideowych, gatunkowych. Każda z nich jest nieco inaczej usytuowana w rzeczywistości społecznej, zaś pozycja ta wyznacza odmienny sposób działania, relacje z widzem, cele, jakie ma wypełniać teatr. Dlatego też ważnym aspektem, pozwalającym na rekonstrukcję procesów *sytuowania* teatru przez prowadzących tego typu instytucje, było uchwycenie, jakiego rodzaju zróżnicowania tych ostatnich są widoczne dla tych osób. Nasi rozmówcy mówili o tym wątku przede wszystkim tam, gdzie mowa była o środowisku teatralnym, o formach współpracy w jego obrębie obecnych, a więc odpowiadając na takie pytania jak: „Czy istnieją jakieś teatry/instytucje kulturalne, z którymi aktualnie Państwo współpracujecie, próbując radzić

sobie z sytuacją, w jakiej się znalazł Pani/Pana teatr?” (ewentualnie: „Dlaczego do takiej współpracy nie doszło?”) oraz: „Część osób twierdzi, iż czas pandemii ujawnił duże zróżnicowanie w sytuacjach różnych instytucji kultury w Polsce. Czy zauważa Pani/Pan tego rodzaju zjawisko w świecie teatru?”. Ważne były też w tym kontekście odpowiedzi na pytanie: „Do kogo skierowane są działania aktualnie podejmowane przez Pani/Pana teatr?”.

Dyrektorzy i dyrektorki teatrów wymieniali takie czynniki różnicujące pozycje teatrów, jak miejsce działania instytucji (zwłaszcza chodziło tu o wielkość miejscowości, przychylność lub brak przychylności władz samorządowych, posiadanie własnej siedziby lub jej brak); specyfika repertuaru (np. dyrektorzy teatrów lalkowych podkreślali jawną dyskryminację tych instytucji, nietraktowanie ich jako prawdziwych teatrów); charakter publiczności, dla której grają (podkreślając szczególną pozycję teatrów grających dla grup zorganizowanych, dzieci czy młodzieży) czy też stopień obecności w teatrze nowych technologii komunikacyjnych i umiejętność posługiwania się nimi (czynnik ten okazywał się kluczowy w czasie pandemii, gdy teatry zmuszone były do przejścia ze swoją działalnością do sieci).

Rozmówcy dosyć zgodnie wskazywali jednocześnie, iż kluczowym czynnikiem odpowiedzialnym za określoną pozycję zajmowaną przez teatr w rzeczywistości społecznej jest jego formuła organizacyjna. Zgadzała się też co do tego, że w Polsce funkcjonują zasadniczo trzy rodzaje teatrów. Po pierwsze, niezależni twórcy, działający na własną rękę, poza jakimikolwiek strukturami organizacyjnymi. Po drugie, teatry zorganizowane, ale niezależne od instytucji państwowych lub samorządowych (np. prywatne, społeczne, środowiskowe). Po trzecie wreszcie, te o charakterze publicznym. Funkcjonowanie

w każdej z tych formuł wyznacza nieco inne miejsce w rzeczywistości społecznej, zwłaszcza jeżeli chodzi o stabilność funkcjonowania, bezpieczeństwo, względną pewność co do istnienia w przyszłości.

[...] pandemia dotknęła najbardziej tych, którzy działali niezależnie, czyli na pewno pojedynczych twórców, którzy działali jednostkowo lub w jakiegoś rodzaju spółdzielniach, w samorodnych organizacjach uzależnionych od wpływów z biletów przede wszystkim, bez innych źródeł dochodu. I myślę, że tutaj najbardziej pandemia dotknęła takie jednostki, które po prostu z dnia na dzień zostały bez pracy, i to się skończyło dramatycznie. Drugi rodzaj działalności, no, to są już organizacje, które, tak jak moja, działają w jakichś strukturach i mają takie, powiedzmy sobie, podejście zdywersyfikowane wobec budżetu. Czyli z jednej strony wspierają się jakimiś dotacjami, z drugiej strony – muszą łączyć środki własne, na przykład z biletów albo z jakiegoś komercyjnego grania. I takim jednostkom bardzo trudno się rzeczywiście utrzymać, ale jednak łatwiej tym, którzy stawiają tylko na ten model związany z taką komercyjną działalnością bez wsparcia samorządu czy państwa. I trzeci typ jednostki, najbezpieczniejszy, to są jednak jednostki publiczne i samorządowe, które w zależności od samorządu czy państwa ten byt, co by się nie działo, mają jednak zapewniony. Mogą sobie pozwolić na opłacenie czynszu, na pensje, nawet jeżeli to jest minimalna pensja, jednak mają obowiązek ją wypłacić. Tutaj samorządy czy państwo mają obowiązek jednak te instytucje utrzymać, tak że tutaj to zagrożenie było minimalne, moim zdaniem. (IDI 7)

To podkreślenie związku pomiędzy formułą organizacyjną teatru a jego trwaniem w czasie, bezpieczeństwem, jakimi mogą się cieszyć osoby w nim zatrudnione, jest, jak wspominaliśmy wyżej, dosyć symptomatyczne. Nie wyraża ono, jak moglibyśmy

przypuszczać, wyłącznie stanu wysokiej niepewności, jaką przyniosła ze sobą pandemia, ale raczej podstawowy problem relacji wyznaczających miejsce teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej w polskim, rodzimym kontekście. Są one względnie stabilne wyłącznie w przypadku teatrów o charakterze publicznym. W pozostałych przypadkach cechuje je wysoka labilność, chwiejność, brak gwarancji co do ich trwania, łatwość, z jaką są zrywane. Być może właśnie dlatego nasi respondenci wskazują, iż sytuacja pandemii w istocie niczego nie zmieniła w przypadku teatrów niezależnych.

Działalność teatru niezależnego wymusza postawę elastyczności, otwartych oczu, takiego aktywizmu obywatelskiego i tego, że bardzo dużo rzeczy w naszym teatrze my i tak robimy za grosze od dawna. Bardzo duża część naszej pracy jest po prostu wolontaryjnym zaangażowaniem związanym z misją naszej działalności. Więc o tyle może – nie chcę powiedzieć, że łatwiej przetrwać – jesteśmy zaprawieni w bojach. Lata braku funduszy. (IDI 7)

Podobną obserwacją dzieli się również osoba kierująca teatrem publicznym.

Patrzyłem na kolegów z tego nurtu pozainstytucjonalnego, jak oni sobie radzili, bardzo im współczując w tej trudnej sytuacji. A tutaj okazało się, że mimo że oni znaleźli się w trudniejszej sytuacji, chyba już przyzwyczajeni do tego, że trzeba sobie coś wypracować, dzielnie to znosili. Miałem takie wrażenie. (IDI 9)

Bezpieczeństwo, różnicujące umiejscowienie teatrów w rzeczywistości społecznej, wyznacza też relacje pomiędzy poszczególnymi instytucjami tego rodzaju, co wyraża się w głębokiej krytyce teatrów publicznych dokonywanej przez przedstawicieli tych niezależnych.

Nie wiem, jak to nazwać. Taki brak podejścia kreatywnego instytucji teatralnych, które są teatrami stacjonarnymi i które podczas pandemii w ogóle nic nie zrealizowały. To było dla mnie bardzo ciekawe zjawisko, że pomimo finansowania publicznego i pomimo tego, że aktorzy są na etacie i że repertuar teatru jest bardzo duży, to niektóre teatry nie zdecydowały się na jakiegokolwiek realizację. To było bardzo ciekawe. To moim zdaniem świadczy o złym zarządzaniu i braku kreatywności. [...] Wydaje mi się, że nie zależy im na poszerzeniu publiczności. [...] Bo teatry prywatne i teatry niezależne szalały wręcz, bym powiedziała. Codziennie widziałam jakieś nowe rzeczy, nowe projekty albo prezentacje starych projektów, które były kiedyś nagrane. Tysiące ludzi to oglądało. Natomiast myślę, że jeżeli chodzi o teatry stacjonarne, które mają takie pewne finansowanie i nie muszą się starać o tego widza tak naprawdę, bo mają swój stały budżet, myślę, że one urządziły sobie wakacje. Taka jest prawda i to jest bardzo smutne. (IDI 5)

Czynnik ten uwidacznia się też w podenerwowaniu niektórych rozmówców tym, że to właśnie sytuacja teatrów publicznych, a więc podmiotów uprzywilejowanych pod względem bezpieczeństwa i stabilności, ogniskowała uwagę decydentów, nie zaś tych teatrów, które szczególnie mocno odczuły skutki lockdownu, a więc tych niezależnych, prywatnych i społecznych.

Irytuje mnie też to, że jest jakaś taka tkliwość nad instytucjami publicznymi, które przecież i tak przetrwają, i tak dostaną z definicji wsparcie, i tak są zupełnie inaczej rozliczane niż organizacje trzeciego sektora, które działają w ramach dużo mniejszych środków, dużo bardziej się zawsze rozliczają. (IDI 7)

Istotność omawianego tu aspektu, a więc bezpieczeństwa, uwidacznia się także w specyficznej *sa-*

tysfakcji obecnej w wypowiedziach przedstawicieli teatrów publicznych, którzy zwracali uwagę na to, iż freelancerzy i osoby działające w instytucjach niepublicznych nie miały nigdy poczucia stabilności, ale działało się tak na ich własne życzenie, bo rezygnując z etatów, mogły zarabiać więcej. Teraz zaś, w sytuacji kryzysowej, ich położenie jest dużo gorsze niż innych, a więc płacą cenę za swoją wcześniejszą postawę.

Natomiast wolni strzelcy zarabiali wielokrotnie więcej, dwa przedstawienia dawały im zarobki na poziomie miesięcznych zarobków aktorów etatowych w teatrze. No ale to się wiązało z ryzykiem, no i w tej chwili oni są w dramatycznej sytuacji, to trzeba jasno powiedzieć. Przenosząc, myślę oczywiście o muzykach, o ludziach całkiem wolnych zawodów. To też oczywiście dotyczy dużej grupy reżyserów w Polsce, bo niewielu reżyserów jest związanych etatowo z teatrami. Więc ten podział na takich ludzi, którzy byli i są związani z jakimś miejscem, i tych, którzy nagle znaleźli się bez środków do życia. (IDI 10)

To, że to właśnie bezpieczeństwo albo jego brak są rozpoznawalne jako podstawowy czynnik odpowiedzialny za usytuowanie teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej, wydaje się dosyć znaczące i świadczy o daleko posuniętej pauperyzacji środowisk twórczych. Bezpieczeństwo, nie zaś bogactwo, sława, wysokie miejsce w hierarchiach, jest w tych warunkach głównym rodzajem nagrody, o którą toczy się gra w obrębie kultury teatralnej. Dopiero jego zdobycie umożliwia zabieganie o innego rodzaju benefity.

Trzecim wyodrębnionym przez nas czynnikiem, różnicującym według badanych pozycję teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej, jest sposób rozumienia misji publicznej tego typu instytucji. Dla niektó-

rych polegała ona na prowokowaniu krytycznego myślenia o świecie, dla innych – na dostarczaniu rozrywki dającej odskocznnię od codziennego życia. Przywoływano też działania mające owocować intensyfikacją społecznej inkluzji zmarginalizowanych grup lub osób czy też takie, które miały stwarzać preteksty do międzyludzkich spotkań i nieść pomoc środowiskową. Mówiono też o bezpośrednim udziale teatru w sferze publicznej, choćby przez bronienie demokratycznych wartości.

Specyfika badań prowadzonych w pandemii sprawiła, że łatwiej było artykułować rolę misji publicznej, ale też dostrzegać, iż jej odmienne rozumienie różnicuje poszczególne instytucje. Niektórzy, wskazując, iż polega ona na wywoływaniu u widza katartycznego wstrząsu, wątpili, czy misja ta jest w ogóle aktualnie możliwa do zrealizowania.

Jeśli nie ma klimatu na teatr, a jest klimat na maseczki, na dezynfekcję, na strach, to jak ten teatr ma się robić? Przecież wiem, że performerzy mogą się cieszyć, mają teraz kupę takiego fajnego materiału do tego. Tylko że, finalnie rzecz biorąc, ludzie nie będą chcieli tego oglądać, bo teatr powinien dawać odskocznnię od tego, co widzimy w rzeczywistości, jakoś ją przetwarzać, dawać więcej możliwości katharsis. A jak znaleźć katharsis w tym świecie, który jest teraz? (IDI 3)

To powątpienie jest silnie powiązane z formułą organizacyjną teatru. Osoby kierujące teatrami, które dysponują rozbudowanym zapleczem kadrowym, lokalowym i o w miarę stabilnej sytuacji finansowej, częściej sprowadzały ich misję publiczną do przygotowywania profesjonalnie zrealizowanych spektakli. Przywiązanie do specyfiki teatru, polegającej na bezpośrednim kontakcie aktora i widza, ale przede wszystkim do jakości produkcji, było także

kolejnym powodem, dla którego z rezerwą podchodziło się do możliwości przeniesienia tego typu działań do Internetu.

To znaczy, jednak mam tak, że oglądając realizacje nawet najlepszych słuchowisk teatralnych, względnie spektakli teatralnych w Internecie, zdaję sobie sprawę, że ktoś zna ten język i wie, że podkastowa muza wymaga jednak troszeczkę tuningowania, że się tak wyrażę, tych rzeczy i nie pozwoli sobie na tak dojmującą ciszę, o której wspominałem wcześniej, jak w przypadku teatru w sali. I myślę sobie, że ci wszyscy, którzy są biegli w takim najlepiej pozytywnie pojmowanym PR-ze własnej działalności, mogą przez jakiś czas mieć z tym problem, że to niekoniecznie efektywność idzie z jakością, efektywność sprzedawania czy mówienia o tym, że mamy coś. (IDI 6)

Mimo podobnych obaw w części teatrów uruchomiono działania przeznaczone do prezentacji w Internecie. Podejmowanie tego rodzaju działań nie wynikało jednak z potrzeby przedstawiania czegoś wartościowego widzom, ale ze świadomości tego, iż zagrożone jest reprodukowanie się w czasie samego teatru.

Jest jedna katastrofalna rzecz, której najbardziej się obawiam w długiej perspektywie – teatr (...) jest zespołowym teatrem repertuarowym i nie grając, po pierwsze – powoli nam się rozsypuje zespół. Bo zespół to jest współpraca, zespół to jest codzienna praca. Dlatego już teraz wprowadziliśmy słuchowiska, już prawie cały zespół grał w tych słuchowiskach, powiedziałbym, że niemalże cały zespół, tylko dwie osoby nie wzięły udziału w słuchowiskach, jeśli dobrze pamiętam. I prawie wszyscy aktorzy są zaangażowani w te cztery spektakle, które w najbliższym czasie będą powstawały. To jest po to, żeby ten zespół nie zardzewiał. (IDI 10)

Misja publiczna, do której odwoływały się instytucje teatralne, polegała w tym wypadku nie tyle na produkcji wysokiej jakości przedstawień, ale także na trosce o zasoby pozwalające zachować tę zdolność na przyszłość. W tych kategoriach widzieć można wysiłki na rzecz podtrzymywania budowanych latami sieci łączących instytucje teatralne z odbiorcami, a także te nakierowane na utrzymanie zespołu na możliwie najlepszym poziomie.

Troska o realizację misji publicznej w okresie pandemii polegać może także na odstąpieniu od wypełniania podstawowych dla teatru działań (zwłaszcza, jeśli nie można ich realizować na oczekiwanym, wysokim poziomie), by własne zasoby przesunąć w inne konteksty, do realizacji celów odmiennych od zwyczajowych. Dostrzeganiu tej roli instytucji teatralnych sprzyjało *sytuowanie* kierowanego przez siebie teatru w obrębie szerszej, pozateatralnej rzeczywistości społecznej.

Ja nie ukrywam, że w tych pierwszych tygodniach to bardzo dużo osób rzeczywiście korzystało z możliwości opieki nad dziećmi, bo mamy zespół, w którym pracują rodzice, więc to było dla nich też zrozumiałe. Część osób wykorzystywała zaległe urlopy czy za nadgodziny, które nam już się zgromadziły w przeciągu tych miesięcy. Natomiast te osoby, które były tutaj na miejscu, to rzeczywiście zaangażowaliśmy się w taką akcję dotyczącą szycia maseczek i rzeczywiście skończyliśmy to tydzień, dwa tygodnie temu. Przez cały okres epidemii nasze pracownice krawieckie szyły maseczki w ramach akcji społecznej, te maseczki były przekazywane do lokalnych szpitali, miały na celu pomóc medykom, którzy walczyli o zdrowie osób zakażonych koronawirusem. (IDI 17)

Rekonstruowany tu sposób rozumienia misji publicznej charakterystyczny był raczej dla teatrów

publicznych, dysponujących zapleczem oraz stałą dotacją gwarantującą zatrudnionym pracownikom minimum bezpieczeństwa. Teatry, którym takiego zaplecza brakowało, choć świadome tego rodzaju społecznych zobowiązań, po prostu nie były w stanie takiej pomocy świadczyć.

Oczywiście wiem, że wiele teatrów znajduje w sobie jeszcze taką siłę i moc, żeby jeszcze wspomagać inne organizacje. Natomiast, tak jak mówiłem, i mówię to uczciwie – ja też wierzę trochę, że żeby pomagać, trzeba mieć siłę pomagać, trzeba mieć minimalne moce i energię, żeby zrobić to dobrze. Bo można też źle pomóc albo można też oferować pomoc, z której nie można się później wywiązać, co jest, myślę, o wiele gorsze od nieudzielenia pomocy. Ja powiem wprost – my w tej chwili sami potrzebujemy pomocy. Tak że jak tylko staniami na nogi, to na pewno będziemy się starali pomagać innym i jak żeśmy normalnie działali, to żeśmy też od tego nie stronili, ale w tej chwili musimy sobie sami pomóc. (IDI 3)

Podsumowując tę część rozważań, warto raz jeszcze wskazać na silny związek między wszystkimi trzema czynnikami, które według badanych różnicują pozycję teatru w rzeczywistości społecznej. Sytuacja pandemii wyeksponowała tę zależność. Dysponowanie zasobami kadrowymi, stałą dotacją, etatowymi pracownikami oraz bycie częścią sektora publicznego przekłada się na bezpieczeństwo i powiększa możliwości działania na rzecz innych, ale jednocześnie wiąże się ze zobowiązaniem do utrzymania tych zasobów oraz przywiązaniem do teatru pojmowanego jako dziedzina sztuki wymagająca odpowiednich warunków jej prezentacji. Teatry, które podobnymi zasobami nie dysponują, mają większą możliwość, ale też konieczność dopasowywania się do zmieniających się warunków i eksperymentowania z przenosinami teatru do sie-

ci. Jak można się było przekonać, czytając przywołane wyżej wypowiedzi, wskazywana silna zależność między formułą organizacyjną, bezpieczeństwem i rozumieniem misji publicznej może sprzyjać fragmentacji polskiego teatru czy wręcz grozi nieporozumieniami i konfliktami w polu teatru, co zresztą bardzo silnie widoczne było również w wypowiedziach naszych rozmówców, gdy mówili oni o braku środowiskowej współpracy i solidarności czy też kiedy przedstawiciele teatrów niezależnych poddawali druzgocącej krytyce zachowania instytucji publicznych w pandemii.

Podsumowanie

Zaproponowana przez nas w tym artykule kategoria *sytuowania* okazała się bardzo użytecznym konceptem z trzech zasadniczych powodów. Po pierwsze, dlatego, iż dzięki jej użyciu udało nam się poczynić cały szereg istotnych ustaleń pozwalających przybliżyć sytuację, w jakiej znajdują się teatry działające w Polsce. Istotne jest zwłaszcza zidentyfikowanie bezpieczeństwa (a dokładniej jego braku) jako najważniejszego zasobu, o który toczy się gra w polu teatralnym, zasobu organizującego silnie relacje pomiędzy poszczególnymi rodzajami instytucji teatralnych, zwłaszcza zaś pomiędzy tymi publicznymi i niezależnymi czy prywatnymi. Nie mniej istotne i silnie powiązane z kwestią bezpieczeństwa było odkrycie dosyć konsekwentnego trzymania się tego miejsca teatru wśród innych sztuk, które wyznaczają klasyczne jego ujęcia, a więc te sprowadzające go do bezpośredniej i jednoczesnej relacji zachodzącej pomiędzy widzem a aktorem. Udało nam się także wyodrębnić skonstrastowane ze sobą modele myślenia o instytucjach teatralnych, które można rozpisać przez takie opozycje jak teatr menedżerski i autorski, profesjonalizm artystyczny i zaangażowanie społeczne,

koncentracja na sobie i koncentracja na innych. Po drugie, kategoria sytuowania okazała się wartościowym pojęciem z powodów teoretycznych. Pozwala ona bowiem uzupełniać ujęcia sieciowe i relacyjne w socjologii, dla których kluczowa jest identyfikacja połączeń pomiędzy poszczególnymi aktorami i które z tego powodu swoje analizy opierają na obserwacji, o takie spojrzenie, w którym jednym z ważnych czynników określających tego typu związki jest to, jak postrzegają je ci, którzy są w nie uwikłani. Jak pokazuje analiza przeprowadzona na potrzeby tego artykułu – sposób, w jaki osoby kierujące instytucjami teatralnymi sytuują je w rzeczywistości społecznej, daje wgląd w to, jak z perspektywy tych osób wyglądają sieci, w których funkcjonują ich teatry, a także pozwala dostrzec, iż tego typu wyobrażenia są ważnym czynnikiem sieci te kształtującym. Uważamy więc, że pojęcie to warte jest dalszego rozwijania. Po trzecie, kategoria sytuowania pozwala również wprowadzić do klasycznej koncepcji pola sztuki Bourdieu taką koncepcję działającej jednostki, która nie jest tylko obiektem sił napięć je kształtujących, ale też kimś, kto ich doświadcza i kogo wyobrażenia współkształtują to pole, ponieważ przekładają się na praktyki w jego obrębie przedsiębrane. Wartościowe wydaje się nam więc to, iż pojęcie to stanowi jeszcze jeden most pozwalający przełamywać silnie obecne w socjologii dychotomizmy, takie jak struktura/działania czy obiektywne/subiektywne na rzecz bardziej kompleksowego i odzwierciedlającego złożoność społecznego świata spojrzenia.

Na koniec chcielibyśmy się zastanowić nad ograniczeniami naszych badań. W pierwszej kolejności warto wskazać na moment i okoliczności ich prowadzenia. Identyfikacja relacji określających umiejscowienie jakiegoś aktora w sieci zawsze jest rodzajem stopklatki bardzo dynamicznych pro-

cesów kształtowania się tego rodzaju stosunków (Fox, Alldred 2017). W przypadku naszych badań owa stopklatka była szczególnie znacząca: ramą i punktem odniesienia dla rozmów była sytuacja pandemii, która sprzyjała dyskusjom nad kwestiami ważnymi dla życia teatru na co dzień (bezpieczeństwo zatrudnienia i status ekonomiczny uczestników pola, poszerzona definicja produkcji artystycznej obejmująca także relacje ze społecznością czy kontrowersje technologiczne). Jak wynika z naszych ustaleń, co także stanowi o zasadności ich prowadzenia, pandemia okazała się w procesie formowania się pola teatralnego nie tylko stopklatką, ale także „zbliżeniem” – pozwoliła wyartykułować konsekwencje niektórych z dawna obecnych procesów i mechanizmów (prekaryzacja warunków zatrudnienia, wady systemu grantowego, niedofinansowanie instytucji itp.). Jednocześnie jednak rama ta mogła też zniechęcać do dyskusowania o tym, co mogło być istotne dla prowadzonych badań, ale bezpośrednio nie wiązało się z sytuacją spowodowaną pandemią. Po drugie, zdajemy sobie sprawę z ograniczeń, jakie dla naszych badań stwarzał dobór próby. Spojrzenie decydentów jest zawsze stronnicze, nie uwzględnia perspektyw wielu innych aktorów, a czasami wręcz celowo je marginalizuje lub unieważnia, by możliwe było podtrzymanie wysokiego statusu (Smolarska 2017; Zimnica-Kuzioła 2018; Fox, Głowacka 2020). Warto przy okazji wspomnieć inne badania, realizowane przez Instytut Teatralny, które ryzyko to pozwalają poniekąd ograniczyć, uzupełniając prezentowane w tekście spojrzenie o to, które jest udziałem aktorów i aktorek (Ilczuk i in. 2021), pracowników i pracownic technicznych, administracyjnych czy działu edukacyjnego (Bargielski i in. 2021), krytyków i krytyczek teatru (Ćwikła i in. 2021), amatorskiego ruchu teatralnego (Babicka, Dutkiewicz 2021), a także publiczności (Kietlińska 2021).

Mysząc o powyższych ograniczeniach w kontekście potencjalnej użyteczności zaproponowanej tu perspektywy, następujące kierunki przyszłych badań wydają się obiecujące. Empiryczny obraz sytuowania teatrów w rzeczywistości społecznej pomógłby uzupełnić badania celowo nakierowane na zgłębianie tego zagadnienia oraz konceptualizujące je w kategoriach praktyki, a więc czegoś, co zachodzi w określonym dyskursywnym, interakcyjnym i materialnym środowisku (techniki wywiadu czy sondażu trzeba by uzupełnić obserwacją i badaniem śladów działania instytucji). Z pewnością dodatkowej wiedzy dostarczyłyby także badania realizowane po pandemii, które mogłyby dowieść aktualności opisanych wyżej prawidłowości także w „normalnym” rytmie funkcjonowania pola teatralnego. Zrozumieć to pole z perspektywy koncepcji usytuowania pomogłyby także badania realizowane z aktorami spoza niego, ale posiadającymi wpływ na jego kształt i reguły, jak na przykład politycy państwowi i samorządowi, projektanci i architekci czy twórcy technologii i oprogramowania. Wreszcie, w rozwijaniu zaprezentowanego tu modelu usytuowania dopomogłyby także badania porównawcze, a więc realizowane poza dziedziną teatru.

Podziękowanie

Przygotowano na podstawie badań zainicjowanych i sfinansowanych przez Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego. Pozostali członkowie zespołu badawczego: Kamil Pietrowiak, Waldemar Rapior, Janina Zakrzewska. Autorzy artykułu pragną podziękować także wszystkim osobom kierującym instytucjami teatralnymi, które zgodziły się na udział w badaniu w trudnym okresie pandemii. Wyrazy wdzięczności kierują także do Recenzentów, których uwagi pozwoliły ulepszyć pierwotną wersję artykułu.

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Where is the Theater? Who Does It Belong to? On the Situating of Theatrical Institutions

Abstract: The article is based on the results of nationwide research on the strategy of Polish theatrical institutions in the COVID-19 pandemic, conducted during the lockdown period. As it turned out, the research made it possible to formulate broader conclusions. The aim of this article is to reproduce the insight into the role, meaning, and diversification of the theatrical field that the persons managing such institutions have. An additional objective is the conceptualization of the notion of situating, which allows for a better recognition of the significance that the actors' perceptions of the relationships forming the theatrical field have for the functioning of these relations. Using the category of situating in the interpretation of the contents of the conducted qualitative interviews, the authors describe, among other things, the contrasting models of thinking about theatrical institutions (managerial and authorial), the commitment to the traditional role of theater when compared to other arts, as well as the pivotal role of safety as a critical dimension differentiating the position of theater in the social reality.

Keywords: sociology of art, field theory, theatrical institutions, theatre, COVID-19, situating

Cytowanie

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A Community in Quarantine: The Social Worlds of Alternative Theater During the Pandemic

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Abstract: The article describes the functioning of alternative theater community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theoretical framework of analysis is determined by the social worlds theory, allowing us to capture the processual nature of reconstructing the social world of alternative theater in the era of COVID-19. We explore the ways in which independent theater is coping with the threat to its practice, understood as a tool for building a community “here and now,” i.e. its main technology, values, and the primary activity that organizes communication within the social worlds of alternative theater. We take into account changes brought on by the pandemic (the inability to build relationships via direct interaction with audience members/participants) and the constant, everyday experiences of people working in alternative theater (their ability to function in a crisis). Our analysis is based on empirical data collected in the course of socio-anthropological studies into: (1) the working conditions of Polish theater workers during the pandemic, carried out by the Zbigniew Raszewski Theater Institute in Warsaw; and (2) the *modus operandi* of the Węgajty Theater from the perspective of its participants’ experiences.

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Theater Life and the Pandemic

When the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11th, 2020, the Polish Governmental Crisis Management Team made the decision to order a temporary closure of all cultural institutions, libraries, local cultural centers, philharmonics, art galleries, cinemas, museums, operas, operettas, theaters, as well as schools, universities, and art education institutions. Every theater in Poland, regardless of its statute, character, or organizational structure, faced the consequences of that sudden decision. The 'freezing' of the cultural sector – and in particular those areas that operate in direct contact with audiences – should be considered both in terms of economic losses and the weakening of relationships with audiences, of-

ten fostered over a number of years. Theaters faced a twofold challenge: to stay afloat and maintain financial liquidity on the one hand, and maintain contact with their audiences, perhaps even attracting new ones, on the other. The analysis of the first months of theater closures around the world conducted by Krystyna Mogilnicka (2020) shows that despite many differences across theater structures in individual countries, there are many similarities in the functioning of the theater sector during the pandemic. As a result of limiting offline activities, both globally and in Poland, previously unpopular (or viewed skeptically) initiatives appeared online. These included making archival recordings of performances available online, premiere screenings of video recordings of performances from recent seasons, live broadcasts of performances played to

an empty audience, talks with artists, viral campaigns, serialized plays, readings, performances, and online workshops. This proves that during the pandemic, some theaters – often reluctantly and rarely enthusiastically – transferred some of their activities online. Mogilnicka also writes about the common universe of concerns shared by various institutions: “Theaters are being re-opened in the final phase of easing the so-called lockdown, accompanied by a sense of great social responsibility and uncertainty about the possibility of maintaining old practices or artistic shape of performances, as well as profitability when forced to apply the recommended security measures” (2020).

More than two months after restrictions on cultural institutions had been imposed, on May 19, 2020, guidelines were given for the reopening of theaters, operas, and philharmonics. This phase assumed a gradual resuming of activities, at first without the participation of the public, in order to create safe conditions for the resumption of administrative work and rehearsals. The guidelines allowed the organization of events with audience participation at a later stage and only under certain sanitary conditions. At the end of August 2020, when this article was written, one could see various strategies for resuming artistic activity of theaters. Some theaters have just reintroduced live performances. These usually take place outdoors and with a reduced number of audience members. While the unexpected but essentially quite short phase of total lockdown leveled the circumstances of various theaters, generating similar emotions, difficulties, and doubts, the return to offline activities seems to largely depend on organizational capabilities of particular institutions, their technical facilities, legal issues, and ways of financing their activities.

The latest data recorded by the Documentation Laboratory of the Theater Institute showed that there are 909 active theaters in Poland – theater institutions and organizations of different statutes, character, or organizational structure. According to the *Teatr w Polsce [Theatre in Poland]*, public theaters and departments of municipal and communal cultural institutions account for 26,7% of all theaters in Poland; private theaters account for 19,3%; theaters operating as foundations and associations account for 47,1%; and informal groups are estimated at 6,9% of all theaters (Buchwald 2019:XXVIII–LV). The vague definition of *alternative theaters*, which are the subject of our research, does not allow us to clearly define which sectors of the economy they belong to. The original non-institutional character of alternative theaters ceased to be their dominant feature when some of them gained the status of cultural institutions. However, this is a rare occurrence and the alternative character should be sought mainly among theaters from the third sector or independent groups. As the data shows, this is quite a large and diverse sector of the Polish theatre.

Because of lockdown and safety restrictions, alternative theaters appear to find themselves in an extremely worrying predicament. The reasons for this are threefold. First of all, resuming events with the participation of the audience is more difficult for theaters that, more often than not, lack their own premises, are traveling theaters, are constantly “on the move,” do not perform in large enough venues where it is possible to seat viewers at a safe distance, and usually do not have back-up technical facilities enabling the registration of artistic events. For alternative theaters, sanitary restrictions sometimes mean a complete end to their activities, both offline and online. The second reason concerns financing. In most cases, alternative theaters do not have ac-

cess to permanent subsidies. They are dependent on grants, ticket sales or public fundraising, as well as the fees for performances and artistic events. Because they have to rely on such precarious sources of income (i.e. sources that are less stable than a permanent subsidy), the beginning of March 2020 and the prolonged suspension of artistic activity is even more severe for artists working in alternative theater. The last issue, and perhaps the most important from the point of view of our analysis, is related to the fact that it is considerably difficult or even impossible to carry out activities that constitute the alternative and simultaneously distinguish the initiative from non-alternative theater. In the new, pandemic-struck reality, it is difficult to create an alternative by practicing theater within the community and for the community – and this is what the members of the alternative theater movement do on a daily basis.

Alternative Theater – the theater of dreamers

What is the dividing line, as Jan Kłossowicz wrote, between “normal” theater and its “alternative” if, from its very beginning. “its path cannot be determined in any meaningful way” (1987:67)? How can one understand this difference, especially now that the boundaries of alternative theater are not merely blurred, but impossible to define? What distinguishes alternative theater from other kinds of theatre results directly from a different way of *being-in-the-world* – understood, in phenomenology, as conscious presence that encompasses both an understanding of one’s own existence and that of the surrounding world (Heidegger 1962).

The discussion on the definition of alternative theater has been running continuously since the end of the

1980s, although the adjective ‘alternative’ – attempting to capture the essence of this movement – first came into use at the end of the 1970s and gained peak popularity in the 1990s (Ostrowska and Tyszka 2008:7). At that time, alternative theater was mainly recognized for its **organizational and ideological differences**, distinguishing it from the “subsidized repertoire theater” dominant in the Polish theater life (Gołaczyńska 2002:13). Tomasz Kubikowski wrote about the alternative movement in the following way: “The gesture of disconnecting from the «mainstream» in the name of certain values and the institutional separateness resulting from this gesture should be considered as [its] necessary (although also vague) and fundamental distinguishing feature” (2000:227–248). With time, when the non-institutional nature of the alternative began to be questioned¹, researchers began to treat it primarily as part of the cultural project of an alternative society, emphasizing its **opposition to the existing socio-cultural reality** and a simultaneous belief that this reality could change. The conviction that it is indeed possible to arrange this world in a better manner – both in terms of political and economic systems and interpersonal relations, and thus making a definite **move beyond theater** – became the main distinguishing feature of alternative theaters, making them something “more than just theater” (Jawłowska 1988).

One of the most important sources of inspiration for the Polish alternative theater were social move-

¹ With time, some alternative theaters gained the status of cultural institutions. A good example is the legendary alternative theatre called the ‘Theater of the Eighth Day’ in Poznań. It has been a municipal cultural institution for almost thirty years, yet still cultivates the idea of independence, open politics, and countercultural attitudes – both in professional life and in personal life. Another example is the ‘Kana Theater’ in Szczecin, which gained the status of a cultural institution in 2007 and continues with the notion of an alternative, culture-forming center, established in the 1970s by Zygmunt Duczyński.

ments – active in the West in the 1960s and in Poland in the early 1970s – that used academic community theatre as the most obvious area of their activities. According to Aldona Jawłowska, the Polish alternative theater – striving to effect a profound change on the existing reality – has certainly transformed into a social movement that became a significant element of cultural change (1988:19). Jawłowska based her diagnosis on Alain Touraine’s concept of conflict as one of the basic elements of the social reality understood as a struggle for models of culture that define the framework of cognitive activity, productivity, and morality within each community (Touraine 1985:749–787). Therefore, alternative theater could only be **engaged theater**. “Theater that does not progress and does not strive to fulfill dreams of an ideal world in its (artistic and everyday) activities, is not alternative theater” – emphasized the researchers (Ostrowska and Tyszcza 2008:9). Simultaneously, they noted the two extremes of countercultural activities – broadly understood **politics** on the one hand, and **anthropology** on the other (Kornaś 2007:4). Groups that clearly opposed the existing order, expressing disagreement in their performances, were quickly identified as “one of the most sensitive social seismographs” (Puzyna 1974:169). Groups that refused to participate in the field of dominant culture undertook “paratheatrical” activities outside that field. Despite the choice of various paths of countercultural contestation, themes such as opposition to the existing social relations and conventions, a critical diagnosis of the social reality, and a sense of being responsible for the world as well as the belief that it is possible to rearrange it have remained common among alternative artists. “They are people who, through theater, pursue the dream of building their own lives. A theater of the different, then? Of dreamers?” (Barba 1979:161).

An important feature of the early stages of alternative theater was the fact that it based all its activities on the idea of the **inseparability of life and art**. In organizational terms, this definitely distinguished it from institutional theater. In alternative theater, “there is no difference between a personal and professional life, since how theater is made takes precedence over what is produced” (Watson 1993:21). Thus, theatrical alternative constructed not only an alternative model of work, but above all – an alternative model of life that required adopting a creative attitude in terms of “being with others,” rejecting the existing stereotypes, and undertaking creative explorations that would make the “succession of taboos, conventions, and sacred values tremble” (Grotowski 2012:223). Efforts to alter behavioral patterns in interpersonal relationships and to establish new forms of relations were made during workshops and the acting training, which was based on the belief that **self-improvement is only possible within the community**.

It is worth noting that what distinguishes the alternative is the practice of a kind of **countercultural ethos**. It consists of three activities that stem from, and drive, one another: (1) the creative contestation of the surrounding reality; (2) the need to drive a social change in order to (3) create a space where the unity of thought and action is possible, understood as the ‘authenticity’ of the individual. Thus, the aim is to implement a new vision of culture and society, in which an individual could develop as a fully integrated, ‘authentic’ being, avoiding being torn between values and performed roles, reflecting on customs and forms adopted in culture, with a strong sense of identity and their own way of being present in the world that is consistent with their inner voice (Jawłowska 1988:6). The practice of countercultural ethos is, therefore, not so much an **alternative to the**

system (Kolankiewicz 2002:55) as a **path leading toward revolution**.

Some researchers see the alternative as generational theater, and thus a **one-off episode in the history of theater** (Dziewulska 1994; Gramont 1998; Nyczek 2001). However, subsequent generations (heirs) in the Polish theater still value the origins of that alternative, i.e. activities based on the search for individual forms of creativity and life. Toward the end of the previous century, Tadeusz Kornaś wrote that this milieu was defined by “fewer common values, more and more heterogeneity, and increasing ideological chaos and age differences between individual theaters” (1999:10). And yet, in the first two decades of the 21st century, the alternative is still active; remains “alternative in terms of organization, program, and artistic content” (Semil and Wysińska 1980); forces the viewer “to evaluate oneself, one’s attitude towards life and the surrounding world, and liberates [them] from the daily routine” (Jawłowska 1988:16); is keenly interested in “human existence in the «here and now»” (Ostrowska and Tyszka 2008:88); is an alternative whose goals go far beyond artistic activity, one that wants to act “through theater – beyond theater” (Kosiński 2010:206); and is focused not only on practicing art, but, above all, on “social action, stimulating activity, expanding of social and political consciousness of one’s own circles” (Jawłowska 1981:11).

Understood in this way, alternative theater appears to be a **particular type of cultural center** that aims to implement its program through activities that go beyond performances, and prioritizes “working on the ground” with the community rather than creating new artistic forms. “[A]ny attempt to define the scope of the theatrical «alternative» will inevitably [...] be arbitrary” (Kubikowski 2000:227), but close

to the alternative worldview, whose “statements and life practices are oriented toward re-education, growth, and self-actualization of a human being, and as a result – restoring their autonomy and inner-control” (Wyka 1990:49). It seems, however, that these aspirations are much less utopian than that of the generation associated with the birth of the Polish counterculture. “It is never possible to be «outside society». One can only diverge from its norms,” as Eugenio Barba wrote in the late 1970s (1979:168). His words were eventually fully understood by the various heirs of the 1970s alternative (such as ‘Komuna Warszawa’, ‘Teatr Brama’ from Goleniow, ‘Teatr Krzyk’ from Maszewo, Warsaw’s ‘Teatr Remus’ and ‘Teatr Akt’, Poznań-based theaters such as: ‘Teatr Porwaczy Ciało’ or ‘Usta Usta Republika), or its veterans (such as the ‘Teatr Ósmego Dnia’ in Poznań, ‘Teatr Kana’ in Szczecin, ‘Teatr ZAR’ in Wrocław, and ‘Teatr Pieśń Kozła’, ‘Chorea’ in Łódź, or theaters named after the places where they operate, e.g. ‘Teatr Węgajty’, ‘Teatr Gardzienice’).

Social worlds of alternative theater

The above brief ideological history of the alternative theater movement in Poland indicates a number of processes that have been taking place for several decades. It appears to be a diverse field of culture with indistinct borders, full of internal disputes about its own identity, simultaneously adjacent to values proclaimed by its founders and far removed from its historical roots. The independent theater environment is characterized by an intense internal dynamics and a continually evolving socio-cultural environment. In our study, we wanted to take into account this processual nature of this particular field, as well as its distinctiveness from other spaces of the contemporary Polish culture and art. In order to explain the crisis faced by

alternative theater as a result of the pandemic, we reached for the **social worlds theory** (Cressey 1932; Strauss 1978; Becker 1982; Clarke 1991; Kacperczyk 2016), which makes it possible to describe both the variability and the specificity of fragments of social reality, and simultaneously provides well-established analytical tools to explain the ontological status of cultural trends and formations, as well as to study identity processes that take place in artistic environments.²

According to Anselm Strauss, the basic feature of a social world is the fact that among the numerous activities undertaken by its members, there is one key activity – the so-called **primary activity** – that enables effective communication and organizes all processes in this particular world. It is then possible to distinguish a social world (Strauss 1978:22), understood very broadly as a set of practices, processes, and interactions focused around this particular activity. All other analytical categories described by theorists of social worlds are subordinated to the maintenance of that primary activity (cf. Kacperczyk 2016:34–57): **technologies** (means enabling the activity to be performed in a particular manner), **arenas** (spaces of various debates around different problems existing in the world), **boundaries** (fluid dividing lines; their precarity can be seen in how the social world intersects with other formal subjects and social structures), **values** (unique and

bonding ideas that construct discourses and patterns of behavior), **commitment** (identifying with the world that strengthens the participants' dedication to discourses and upholding values), and **auxiliary activities** (sub-processes that ensure the evolutionary character of the social world). The constant development and changeability of each world is described by four specific sub-processes: budding off, segmentation, intersection, and legitimation. As part of these processes, there are attempts to specify and define the boundaries of social sub-worlds. However, the **primary activity** is constitutive in nature, which means that a social world exists as long as the primary activity can be performed. With all this into account, the very central activity that constitutes the world of the theater alternative is under serious threat under the current circumstances. This is because the main focus of alternative theater is not on providing audiences with entertainment, providing an encounter with culture or spiritual experiences, or creating new artistic qualities (which could be considered as the main aspiration of non-alternative theaters, either public or private). Rather, the central activity around which the social world of alternative theatre is organized is the production of alternative models of culture and community life in opposition to the formalized, de-subjectified relations within contemporary societies. It is about creating a new model of authentic, intimate relationships on a micro-social level as well as taking responsibility for the community in the macro-social terms. The way to achieve this goal – i.e. the main technology that sustains the existence of alternative social worlds – is through theatrical and para-theatrical activities based on building close, profound bonds with the participants of theatrical events. Similarly to primary activity, this technology is under threat during the pandemic. It is difficult to practice theater that 'weaves' an alternative

² It is worth noting that the theory of social worlds was created during research focusing on artistic cultures. It was Paul G. Cressey who – describing the milieu of dance school participants as “a separate social world” – coined the very phrase (Cressey 1932:31). Later, Howard S. Becker used the theory of social worlds to describe the functioning of artistic circles. He defined the art world as “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce(s) the kind of art works that art world is noted for” (Becker 1982:X). His view of art as a collective product is considered seminal in the study of social worlds.

order of social bonds. The way in which the representatives of this environment function in the pandemic turns out to be focused on, above all, a struggle to preserve the boundaries of the social world of the alternative theater movement and the identity of its participants. When it comes to alternative theater, the struggle to survive the pandemic is not just about financial or organizational 'staying afloat', but also about maintaining its countercultural distinctiveness and harnessing the current crisis into the mechanisms of producing alternatives.

This article is the first study to focus on the organizational nature of the social worlds of the theatre alternative during the COVID-19 pandemic³, thus making an original contribution to the literature on the subject. Our research goal is to find out **how these worlds function and how they are constructed when it is difficult to do theater as a tool for producing alternatives in relationships, community, and being together in the 'here and now'**. We discuss the activities and processes taking place within the studied environment in relation to the theory of social worlds, which allows us to capture the processual nature of reconstructing the elements that make up the social worlds of the alternative. In our study, we look at the changes brought on by the pandemic and lockdown (the inability to build relationships during direct encounters with viewers/participants, the loss of basic technologies supporting the primary activity), as well as continual elements of everyday life of people working in alternative theater, i.e. those areas that did not undergo any significant change during the pandemic (sense of uncertainty, lack of control,

³ Based on the same research, we also wrote an article on selected online and offline initiatives undertaken by "the social theaters of ambulatory care" during the pandemic (Kułakowska et al. 2020).

security; a tendency to rebel, fight, and disagree). We focus on the tactics that help maintain consistency within the alternative theater movement. We also point to new and old arenas responsible for the processes of segmentation taking place in the field of alternative theater. The result of our research is a set of hypotheses concerning the further development of the theater alternative in Poland.

About the research

At the end of April 2020, the Zbigniew Raszewski Theater Institute initiated a series of studies on the functioning of the theater life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the project was to paint a broad picture of the Polish theater in 2020. This article is based on data collected during one of the seven modules forming that research project⁴ – a study of the experiences of theater staff during the pandemic – part of which was an analysis of circumstances faced by those working within the alternative theater movement.⁵ The study was qualitative, and we used sociological and anthropological methods and fieldwork techniques, including: open participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Lofland and Lofland 1995), netnography (Kozinets 2010), in-depth interviews conducted individually or in groups, inspired by the formula of comprehensive interview proposed by

⁴ The project included research into: (1) the situation and strategies of theaters as seen by people managing theater institutions and organizations in Poland; (2) the experiences of theatre employees and collaborators; (3) the online presence of theaters; (4) the changing practices and preferences of audience members – a survey conducted shortly after all the theater closures; (5) the amateur theater movement; (6) theatrical artists; and (7) theatrical critics as well as writing about theater during the pandemic. Each of the studies had its own methodology and a separate research team.

⁵ The research project was carried out by the team composed of: Michał Bargielski, Anna Buchner, Katarzyna Kalinowska, Katarzyna Kułakowska, and Maria Wierzbicka. Maria Babicka joined the team at the stage of analysis and writing the article.

Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2007), as well as an analysis of the existing data (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) and a qualitative Internet survey (Braun et al. 2020). The objectives and research questions were aimed at capturing the views of people working in different theaters, describing their experiences, emotions, difficulties, concerns, and tactics during the pandemic. We focused on identifying changes that took place in the theater world during the lockdown. We asked about the professional work of theater employees during the pandemic, about how their everyday life has changed, and about emotions accompanying the professional changes they experienced. Our research included all professional groups working in theaters, namely: actors, other artists (directors, stage designers, choreographers, composers), administration, producers, technical staff, box office and customer service employees, promotion, education, and archive departments. The respondents worked in various types of theaters (public, private, and alternative) and at the time of conducting the research they had been employed for several to several dozen years. In this article, we analyze the data collected from people involved in the alternative theater movement. Most of the respondents are 'one-man orchestras' who know the theater life inside out and often take on multiple roles – from administrative work and fundraising, through technical, marketing, and promotional tasks, to artistic activity.

From mid-May until the end of July 2020, we conducted **field research** among people working in alternative theaters. These included **online and telephone research** activities (three individual interviews and one group interview conducted via instant messaging tools; six individual telephone interviews; ongoing netnographic observations in the social media channels of twenty alternative

theaters), and **offline research** (five participant observations in theater groups, during face-to-face meetings, numerous ethnographic interviews accompanying the observations, and two individual in-depth interviews). The sample selection was purposive; our intention was to include different sub-worlds of alternative theater. We conducted research among different groups: from strictly theater-oriented and para-theatrical groups working with circus pedagogy or dance, through musical theaters – both traditional and contemporary – to visual theaters which engage contemporary art practices. The respondents included representatives of groups operating in the non-governmental sector and theaters with the status of cultural institutions, as well as completely independent creators orbiting different theater formations.

The field research was accompanied by the collection of **the existing online data** on the functioning of independent theaters in the pandemic. We collected and analyzed articles and analyses at various stages of the pandemic in Poland. We also sent out a **qualitative online survey**, which was carried out among theater employees (all professional groups) in June 2020. Most of the questions were open-ended; we asked the respondents to describe their daily tasks both prior to and during the pandemic. We also asked them about the difficulties they faced as a result of the new situation, and about their expectations for their professional future. Altogether, we collected and analyzed 39 questionnaires completed by members of alternative theaters. The data from the surveys and the analysis of online resources made it possible to capture initiatives launched by theaters and make an initial diagnosis of different approaches to the pandemic, which helped collect a qualitatively diverse sample during the field research.

An additional source of data included fourteen free-form targeted interviews (Konecki 2000:170) conducted during the pandemic as part of the project titled 'The Węgałty Theater – 35 Years of Anthropological Theater and of Social and Cultural Exploration'.⁶ Although the research is devoted to the Węgałty's original method of work – described from the perspective of the experiences of the participants of the Theater's undertakings – the interviews conducted as part of grant between March and June 2020 turned out to be a unique source of knowledge about the situation of the alternative world during the pandemic. The interlocutors involved in the workshops and expeditions of the Węgałty Theater often conduct their own artistic activity within the framework of broadly understood Polish independent theater, and as such have an insight into various areas of the theater alternative. The **intensive interview technique** used in the research (Lofland and Lofland 1995:17–18; Charmaz 2006:25–30) begins with a free-form exploration of topics that are of interest to the researcher and ends with them asking focused questions. The flexible formula of the interview allowed us to use the current professional situation of artists – which changed dramatically during the lockdown – as the starting point. We used the themes raised in the first phase of the interviews in the initial mapping of the problems and reactions of alternative theaters during the pandemic.

Conducting qualitative research during the pandemic was challenging from the methodological and ethical point of view (Lupton 2020). For safety reasons, in order not to endanger the health of the

researchers and research participants, we decided to conduct most of the interviews remotely, adjusting the choice of online communication tools/platforms and interview times to suit the interviewees. Apart from logistical problems (the elusiveness of some interlocutors) and technical problems (the quality of equipment, the range, and the Internet connection), we were concerned that we would not be able to create an atmosphere of intimacy and trust, and that we would lack the freedom of expression that is characteristic of face-to-face conversations. However, we were positively surprised by the open-minded, easy-going nature of the exchanges. We even had the impression that our interviewees enjoyed participating in the research, were keen to share their experiences, and that some of them felt as the facilitators of the interviews. This helped to overcome the initial doubts related to online research. We believe that despite the inconveniences, we managed to hear and understand all the stories; some of them were comforting, others full of sadness and difficult emotions. Owing to personal and professional relationships of one of our research team members, we were able to carry out some research face to face during meetings and activities undertaken by some alternative theater groups following the end of lockdown. The anthropological insight and the sharing of pandemic experiences and emotions with alternative theater crews were really valuable to us. Physically accompanying the respondents during this difficult time helped us feel the atmosphere among the theater alternative.

We analyzed the materials using the coding paradigm used in the process of generating grounded theory (Konecki 2000:47–57), taking into account all its elements: the causal conditions (historical background, dynamics of development) of the studied phenomenon (social worlds of the theater alternative),

⁶ Research financed by National Science Center in Poland under the project no. 2017/26/E/ HS2/00357, carried out by the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences from April 2018. The interviews were conducted by Katarzyna Kułakowska.

the current context, i.e. the pandemic and other intervening conditions (lockdown, national quarantine, restrictions in the cultural sector, sanitary regime, etc.), as well as the strategies and tactics of alternative theaters' artists during the pandemic, and the consequences of their choices. An important factor in our analysis was the time dimension of the processes taking place within the social worlds of the alternative. In our interpretation, both the past of the independent theater movement and the current (pandemic-related) fate of alternative theatre were important. The subsequent stages of the coding process were subordinated to the dynamics of conducting research during the pandemic. The consecutive months of research fell on different phases of the pandemic-related reactions and policies concerning theaters, which was constantly revealing new circumstances to the respondents, and also to us. We believe that the coding paradigm proved to be the right analytical framework for conducting research during such a crisis. On the one hand, owing to being disciplined when collecting and segregating data, we managed not to 'lose' any interpretations that continuously appeared and disappeared, while on the other hand, it allowed us to be flexible when generating theories.

An alternative in the pandemic – *Everyday Life and To Be or Not To Be*

"Alternative theater was born of the spirit of rebellion [...]. It had a certain ethos embedded in its practice – struggle, resistance, transformation, defeat," wrote Lech Raczak (2004:64), the founder of the Theater of the Eighth Day [Pol. *Teatr Ósmego Dnia*], whose performances expressed direct disagreement with the reality of the totalitarian state of the People's Republic of Poland. From the very beginning, searching for an answer to the world's crises was part of the activity of countercultural theatrical groups. The

horizon of their activities – both in life and in art – was determined by the struggle with the crisis of the state and society, and the resultant crisis of individual freedom. The alternative has been established as a remedy for neglect in the field of social relations, the weakness of interpersonal relationships, and the problems of the dominant culture. This is also the case today, but something else now affects community and freedom: not the communist system, but the capitalist one, as it tests humanity and undermines mutual trust (Jawłowska 1975). The crises affecting individuals and communities are the *genesis* of alternative theaters. Socio-cultural crises do not absorb the alternative; on the contrary, i.e. they feed it, provide it with topics, mobilize it to a counterattack, and justify its existence.

Similarly, the crisis brought on by the pandemic is perceived by some as an **opportunity** to reflect on the foundations and the condition of contemporary culture – as something actually **desirable**, because it reveals the true condition of the human existence. A crisis can be turned into something good; acknowledging and processing it creatively can bring people closer to reevaluating their lives so that they can move closer to visions of the world that countercultural theater communities strive to realize. The artists we interviewed referred to the current situation as follows:

In truth, the pandemic with all this "pause for a moment, look at yourself, think" in a sense can be treated as a threat, as a curse, but on the other hand it can be seen as the confirmation of this crisis faced by the world and humanity. (IDI_5)⁷

⁷ The quotations are identified by codes referring to the given kind of research activity (IDI – in-depth individual interview, FGI – focus group interview, ETNO – notes from observations, NET – online accounts, A – survey) as well as numbers as-

The need to stop made people realize how fast they are going. It was necessary to slow down, the world slowed down, the street slowed down, consumption slowed down. The priorities of what people consider important have changed. (FGI_1)

Observations of the world, one mired in various crises during the pandemic, were – for some theaters – an awakening, a **driving force for new initiatives**. After all:

The driving force behind all art (and especially theater) is crisis, threat, and conflict. It's just that much more often a crisis occurs in the conditions of alternative theater. Maybe it is easier for alternative theater to deal with crisis, because if it fails to deal with the crisis, it will not survive? [...] Maybe now, in theater, we are on a rising wave? We have something to fight against. (IDI_6)

This natural – or innate, as one might say – inclination toward the crisis shaping a “particular **crisis identity**” (ETNO_3) of the theater alternative was also expressed in the declarations concerning the need, or even the necessity, to enter into the pandemic crisis in order to **learn from it**, and “to turn defeat into a gain” (IDI_11):

The pandemic was too short-lived to force people to step out of their comfort zone; after all, it wasn't enough of a shock. We are now acting as if the pandemic is gone, as if it were a closed chapter. Maybe the second wave is about to come and that will be a real shock? (IDI_6)

For the alternative, being in a crisis is something normal, also in terms of organizing artistic work. In the past, this crisis manifested itself in a constant

fight against censorship, efforts to obtain permission to participate in international student theater festivals, day-to-day struggles with the lack of space for rehearsals, and, finally, surveillance and harassment by security services. Nowadays – i.e. before the pandemic – the ‘crisis identity’ of independent groups was associated with the lack of stable employment and thus the necessity to constantly apply for new (most often short-term) grants, constantly being on the road, struggling on a daily basis to find a rehearsal space and create conditions for encounters with the audience, everyday tensions around technical difficulties, underfunding, bureaucracy, as well as “managing the mess, the difficult art of bilocation and reading tea leaves...” (ETNO_1). **The normalization of chaos** – this is what the Polish alternative theater is facing today.

“I would risk saying that we are prepared for a crisis, because we simply live in a constant crisis” (IDI_7) – this declaration shows that crisis is not only an **identity feature** of the alternative resulting from some adopted ethos, but also a **familiar, everyday occurrence** brought on by working at the intersection of culture and non-governmental activities. The strategies of coping with crisis developed over the years – flexibility, openness to constantly redefine one's work, tendency to experiment with the used tools, and, finally, the cunning ‘armor’ in the form of courage and persistence in constantly starting anew – can be used as a proven **weapon** during the pandemic. As one interviewee said: “The creativity of these people when finding themselves in difficult situations has always been part of their job” (IDI_2). One's ability to function in a world that constantly makes surprises and the ability to circumvent everyday absurdities and fight for each smallest thing turned out to be a valuable **capital** of alternative theatrical circles:

signed to subsequent materials collected within a particular category.

In such situations, we cope better than institutions or permanently employed actors. We are more resourceful, more self-reliant, more inventive, we are used to the fact that there are times when there is nothing – and you just have to grit your teeth and wait, and in the meantime really think about what to do next... (IDI_3)

I had to resort to a series of tricks to survive this pandemic. And I received the anti-crisis shield [government support for businesses – K.K.], but [...] I had to describe my circumstances in such a way, so that I would get it, otherwise I would not have survived. In the cultural sector, we sign the contract on the day of finalizing the project or even later, nobody signs the contract earlier. I have a lot of friends, theater artists, who couldn't access the shield because of this.⁸ (IDI_6)

The organizational crisis related to the lockdown was also seen as a trial – i.e. a time **to test oneself** under new circumstances – and the awareness of being able to cope during the crisis made our respondents feel stronger:

The situation forced us to become a bit more flexible, to find something new, a new path and some new tools. I am proud of what we have achieved. (IDI_6)

Paradoxically, the pandemic gave us a sense of security that if something bad happened, some people would be able to act and do it differently than in the

theater. This does not have to be a pandemic situation; it can be different situations, for example no room, no space, temporary renovation. We do not have to be afraid of it; we do not have to stop working, because we have tools to deal with this. (IDI_4)

If so – if the crisis is an identity experience and a daily occurrence – why would a pandemic crisis threaten alternative theater? Despite the positive – reflective and creative – dimension of hardships and struggles in the narratives (which have been accompanying the researched alternative theater members since the beginning of lockdown), the dark side of the current situation cannot be overlooked. The pandemic is a big blow to the alternative in two dimensions: existential (i.e. the economic survival of both the institutions and the artists' livelihood) and symbolic (i.e. the essence of the alternative-theater culture).

Firstly, the crisis seriously **strained the budgets** of most groups and threatened the existence of others, i.e. those which are the most niche, local, non-institutional theaters in a worse financial situation, without the possibility to access the government or local government support programs. "The economic basis of alternative theater is presenting performances at festivals and these, as we know, have been canceled" (FGI_1); "The pandemic has taken away our performances, and that's how we make money, we live on this" (IDI_3); "Our tours and co-productions have been canceled, so our income will fall massively this year" (IDI_1) – such statements peppered almost every interview. On the other hand, after the restrictions had been partially lifted, the lucky ones who returned to work stated: "We perform in this [sanitary] regime and can sell 50% of tickets, which is difficult" (IDI_1). In the face of the systemic lack of financial security, artists creating outside insti-

⁸ "In order for a contractor or the performer to be entitled to the payment, they must prove that the contract was concluded before February 1, 2020" – this provision from the "anti-crisis shield" does not take into account situations where the contract is signed not in advance, but, rather, after or immediately before an artistic event. See: *Postojowe w czasie epidemii. Kto i ile dostanie? Dla kogo elastyczny czas pracy?* [Furlough during the epidemic. Who is entitled to what?] <https://www.gov.pl/web/tarczaantykrzysowa/postojowe-w-czasie-epidemii-kto-i-ile-dostanie-dla-kogo-elastyczny-czas-pracy>, 28.03.2020.

tutions, without permanent employment and no steady income, felt “a great **fear** related to financial stability” (IDI_4) and “a lot of **frustration** [connected with being] treated unfairly” (IDI_6); they had “a feeling of being last in terms of the pandemic **losses**” (IDI_1). Some said: “the **defeat** is imminent, because we live on an island ... and it is about to sink” (ETNO_4). Sometimes, alternative artists were simply forced to completely and definitively suspend their theater activities:

Because one has to make a living in a different situation, in which a) there are no performances, no new projects; b) you cannot carry out workshops that are a significant source of income, you have to think about finding another job. (IDI_11)

Thus, the pandemic threatened the existence of some on the alternative scene, and it **threatened the very essence** of the alternative environment – that which constitutes the symbolic layer of its social world. Alternative theater has its own, unique **geography of relations**. The processes initiated during theatrical and para-theatrical events are organized around meetings, being together, physical contact, building intimacy, sharing space – all this happens in direct contact when a person is close to another person, they can feel their presence, spend a moment together, share experiences. Here, there is often no sharp division between the stage and the audience; most of the activities do not take into account anything such as ‘distance’ between the participants. This is what the alternative geography of relations is all about – bringing people closer, initiating contact, and using shared space, the **proxemics of intimacy**. Theater-related instruments, which are the primary technology in the social world of alternative theatre, recognize neither safe distances between people nor the new sanitary regime. Therefore, the pandemic

brought on “**the end of the world of alternative theater**” (ETNO_4). Poignantly, our interlocutors made statements such as:

[...] The lockdown took away the opportunity to meet, and without that there is virtually no theater (IDI_7)

The pandemic took away the opportunity to play shows, the opportunity to speak out, it took people away from me on this physical level. (IDI_6)

[...] Contact with another person; the actor-audience relationship is what is the most painful to lose. (IDI_5)

I struggled with the thought that I have to accept the fact that this entire year is a write-off. (IDI_6)

They also spoke about the emotional effects of the lack of closeness in theater – about resignation, torpor, fears, longing, and frustration:

The inability to work with people in real life results in a loss of energy. (A_20)

Frustration is the emotion of this year. Something was planned and someone canceled it, on all levels. (IDI_7)

The pandemic arenas – old and new dilemmas faced by the alternative

The sudden change in the conditions of making theater and not being able to follow the previously chosen ideological and artistic path initiated a series of changes and divisions within the social world of alternative theater. The pandemic prompted artists to seek, yet again, new answers to old questions and to pose completely new and unexpected questions – questions about how to live and make art during

the pandemic. Some of the problems that came to the fore at different stages of the development of the social world of alternative theater seemed to have been resolved a long time ago, or at least seemed to have ended with a generally accepted compromise (e.g. reactions to the marketization of culture, combining theater work and personal life, or being independent from institutions). Meanwhile, we have observed that some of these seemingly 'muted' debates have returned as arenas of heated disputes, helping to redefine the boundaries of the social worlds of alternative theater. At the same time, new arenas have emerged – new areas of discussion (such as the need to make a stand on online activities) that are further dividing this social world. Old and new dilemmas present the theater alternative as a mosaic of various sub-worlds.

In this chapter, we discuss the major arenas created by the social world of the theater alternative during the pandemic. The role of the arenas is to create a space to argue, (re)define, negotiate, and discuss. They arise out of a disagreement with the established way of behaving in the social world. The pandemic 'checks' the alternative identity choices made so far; it revises the paths followed by theater artists operating outside the mainstream. It is a time to reconsider the fundamental values of alternative theater, the most important of which involve: "fraternity, equality, freedom, authenticity, community, bond, direct democracy, shared decision-making and responsibility, a search for new forms of social organization, the coexistence of different cultures and ideologies, reconciling the individual with the community, a unity of life and art, freedom of all forms of expression, and a harmonious development of [one's] personality" (Szpakowska 1983:280). The point is to stay true to these values, and the pandemic arenas of the social world of the alternative theater movement are created around their upkeep.

How to save a community in times of social distancing?

Małgorzata Szpakowska reduces the above-mentioned catalog of common tendencies and slogans – repeated in the programs of alternative theaters from the beginning of their existence – to a common denominator, which she considers to be a "**break with the contemporary crisis of social ties**" (1983:281). Although almost forty years have passed since that diagnosis, this is one of the key tasks that the alternative sets itself today, especially in view of the need to maintain social distancing measures, when it is impossible to apply the existing means of supporting the community. The sense of being responsible for the isolated theater community at every stage has set the basis for reflection and explorations:

We must re-learn intimacy which will take safety into account. How to trust yourself and be more careful at the same time? (FGI_1)

We cannot say: "we cannot implement the project now and we're going on vacation for two months." (IDI_7)

A human being always came first for us, so the question arose: What do we have to do in order not to lose him/her, to stay in touch with him/her, to be with him/her? (IDI_4)

The main dividing lines between strategies adopted by theaters in the pandemic were drawn by two variables. The first is the attitude to **online activities** (reluctance toward online communication or an attempt to learn and use digital tools for theatrical or animation activities), while the second – **the decision to continue or suspend theatrical**

activities during the pandemic. The intersection of these variables has allowed us to see four types of strategies adopted by alternative theaters during the pandemic. Online communication skeptics chose: (1) to continue the previous theatrical activities in direct contact with sanitary restrictions; or (2) to cease theatrical activity and the undertaking of other activities (animation, social, support) in direct contact. The strategies of online artists include: (3) transferring the theater to the virtual space and conducting theatrical activities based on new technologies; (4) the suspension of theatrical activities, maintaining the animation activity and keeping in touch with viewers online.

The majority of alternative theaters have decided to **continue their previous theatrical activities with the community**, taking into account the new **sanitary regime** and accepting the fact that not all events will be feasible in the pandemic. “Everything is in the context of ‘here and now’, alertness whether something will happen or not” (FGI_1) – said one of the interviewees. Artists working with inmates in prisons, where the ban on visits was introduced one week after theaters had been closed, faced great difficulty:

We were practically cut off from working with a group in a prison where we have been working locally for years. Connecting online [with inmates] is virtually impossible. So we returned to the traditional form: writing letters. (IDI_7)

Theaters that regularly initiated events that brought together the environment also had to demonstrate creativity in inventing a new formula for theatrical activity not mediated via the Internet. The team organizing an important, annual festival, which “has always been based on the

fact that we invite you, we are together, we build a community, we are close, we have fun together,” realized that

if this festival is to be organized, it must change direction. The narrative that has accompanied us for many, many years is now in conflict with the reality that completely changes the way in which we think about how to build such events at all. (FGI_1)

Although the festival will take place in late fall, it is already known that the organizers will give up all forms of workshops that take place in closed spaces as well as crowded meetings and the busy schedule in favor of one event a day, which will additionally be streamed for those who decide not to attend in person. These decisions were reached after a long group discussion that led the respondents through a series of important questions:

Perhaps we need this single meeting more? Let’s do less, but let’s really build an encounter around this one event, and mindfulness around the issues it touches upon. [...] One also has to learn that this does not have to be spectacular and that perhaps smaller things are more important now. (FGI_1)

Building a community around small meetings and small things was also the focus of those theaters that **ceased workshop or theatrical activities** and implemented projects to **activate the community** based on the diagnosis of its current needs. An example of such action is the group that – even before the nationwide campaign of sewing face-masks emerged – had mobilized over forty people in its community who were willing to help, could sew, and had sewing machines. “We came up with initiatives that could revolve around making connections in order to start with things that could bring

us closer” (IDI_2) – recalls the organizer, for whom activities connecting the community are the basic element of theatrical activity, and had been such also before the pandemic.

After many years of work and introducing many things into a small local community – festivals, performances, meetings – we can see that we are this link, whatever we do. (IDI_2)

So far, the coronavirus epidemic did not change the direction and mission of theatrical activities, although it forced them to adapt the form, themes, and the scope of activities to suit the new needs and possibilities of the local community. The activities of alternative theaters have always been tailored to the recipients and circumstances; in the era of the pandemic, the main need is to be together despite being 2 meters apart.

Initiating theatrical activities online **proved to be a helpful strategy for maintaining bonds between people** (Kułakowska et al. 2020). In this context, as one of the respondents said, “being together was taken away from us, but at the same time – rebuilt” (FGI_1). Despite the conviction of a significant part of the independent theater community that “direct contact cannot be replaced by a screen” (IDI_5) and that “the essence of theater is live contact and [...] one cannot think of reformulating theater as not being theater...” (IDI_3), some made experimental efforts to transfer theatrical activities to the virtual space due to the need to save what was essential for the alternative: the indissolubility of the community:

We wondered how to keep what is the most important to us online. We had to adapt quickly and it just happened. At first I thought it'd be impossible, but

then I thought I had to. First, for financial reasons; second, to keep the group dynamic; and most of all, to give kids some support during this pandemic. And I just got to work. (IDI_4)

Concern for the local community seems to be the first moral obligation of the alternative, which prompted them to **stay in touch with the audiences**, even if they were not sure about remote work and generally **opposed online theater**. The idea was “for people to feel taken care of and for them to know that we are here, that we are not going anywhere” (IDI_4). “We sometimes tried to make them feel better, with a post or a kind word,” said one of the interviewees, and after a moment she added – “Besides, they also wrote to us” (IDI_3). When the events’ participants initiated contact, it was a signal for many theaters that the theater–community bond is strong and valuable for both sides, and it is all the more reason why it must be maintained under the conditions of social distancing.

How to remain honest online?

Due to the limitations caused by the pandemic, which robbed the alternative of the well-established tools of theatrical work (close physical contact) and imposed an ‘alien’ (isolating, non-community) creative climate, the environment faced the dilemma of losing its main technology of work. For a period of time, some people abandoned theatrical activity that included “contact with another human being” (FGI_1), openly expressing their disapproval of online theater and the opposition to online activities, arguing that:

The essence of theater is live contact and online is a kind of ersatz, just one-tenth of what you can give. (IDI_3)

I don't believe in online relations when it comes to theater, workshops with people, being. I missed the contact. (IDI_2)

It seems to be a negation of theater, a negation of the proximity of contact, on which all my workshop work is based. (IDI_6)

Those who did not give up theatrical activities resorted to remote work or introduced social distancing in direct contact with others. In both cases, the **unique geography of relations**, the technological *modus operandi* of the theater alternative, has suffered. Theater practiced by independent artists, present within community and physical proximity, is a key element of the professionalization of the social world of the alternative. Alternative-theater artists have become a group of experts in strengthening social ties in close contact in a localized relationship, and without this technology, without the space to meet – as one respondent said – “we are in the same place that we were 10 years ago” (ETNO_2). The pandemic, attacking the main technology of the social world of the theater alternative, somehow reversed the process of its professionalization. It was a “time of reset” (IDI_11); it forced independent artists to look for replacement technologies, new spaces to work, and other ways to stay active. “If one wants theater to truly be a way of being with yourself, partners, and guests, one has to be honest” (Hajduk cited in Jawłowska 1988:147). But how does one achieve such honesty in online communication that lacks personal, deep, close connection? How to do that without “sensitivity full of wonder and mutual curiosity” (ETNO_4), which can only be generated during an intimate meeting? Artists who undertook online theatrical activities were often accompanied by the conviction that the pandemic “simply forced them to work like this” (IDI_6). They felt uncertainty, a lack of conviction about the

chosen path, or a sense of frustration at the loss of possibilities offered by theater:

In my work, I pay a lot of attention to detail, and working online took that from me. I was able to adjust, but I felt that somehow what I was commenting on was incomplete. There was some inner frustration. (IDI_4)

On the other hand, those who decided to do live theater in line with the sanitary regime, had to abandon “the driving force of alternative fashion in recent years, i.e. group action: we run, we focus, we make bodies that mingle with each other, these bursts of energy, how wonderful!” (FGI_1) and look for a more conservative, less expressive formula for their encounters. Despite the loss of important theatrical techniques, they generally thought that the change caused by the pandemic was a fact that forced them to search for new technologies:

It's not our language anymore; it's going to ring false now. Not because it is bad, not because it is ineffective, but because it is not relevant to the situation. We have to wait for the right tools to be created. [...] The basic driving force of the alternative is some kind of honesty that there is no faking here. Because there are no other profits here, except that you have the feeling that you are doing something important, that it is real, that you want to do it, that it is some kind of activity that is important to you. And precisely because there is no faking here, it is very difficult to get into the fact that now [in the pandemic – K.K.] we operate at 150%. (FGI_1)

And it is all about honesty, authenticity, truthfulness, and avoiding anything that might be false. Alternative artists perceived both offline (but no longer so close) and online theater work as a loss of the independent theater's toolbox.

How to maintain quality in the era of overproduction?

The pandemic generated two closely related threads pertaining to the subject of the marketization of culture, which had already been an important arena of the social world of the theater alternative. The first issue concerns the expected drop in overproduction in independent theaters, while the second one is about a certain reevaluation related to the pace of life and the quality of work.

The currently dominant form of organizing the work of the alternative means that instead of grassroots initiatives and rebellious turmoil, bureaucratic newspeak leads the way. Creativity is being slowly exterminated by the grant system and project management, over which the specter of overproduction hovers. An important economic pillar is the grant-based financing system for alternative theater. With theaters closed in the first half of the year 2020, artists could not fulfill their contracts and obligations toward the funding bodies/grant-givers. The signed contracts, however, must be honored. This means that spring and summer programs, as well as activities planned for the fall, will all have to be realized in the second part of the year. Because of this, the respondents expected a buildup of theatrical activities following the forced closures:

Everyone has left everything for the fall. After all, they have to complete projects, they have to stage performances, they have to do this, they have to do that and it will be a nightmare, but it also shows that there is simply a lot of it all. (IDI_1)

We are told to accumulate everything, nonsense, we are producing all this just so that the paperwork is in order. This rush is simply sick. (FGI_1)

Although the question of being entangled in the free market system is a well-rehearsed topic in the social world of the alternative, the fact that it was aggravated by the onset of the pandemic has prompted some to continue to ask questions about the meaning and quality of actions inspired by the mechanisms of supply and demand. The daily routine of constant explorations and activity, which for years has been forcing people to live in a massive rush, has been replaced by pause and reflection. Seen as a collective break from playing the game (cf. Drozdowski et al. 2020:29–30), the pandemic sharpened the contours of the arena for caring for the quality of work, whose high artistic values are, after all, associated with nurturing alternative values, and not with “fulfilling the contracts” (ETNO_4). The current situation allowed people to take a look from a distance at the union – one which is unwanted and regularly criticized, but renewed every now and then – between the alternative and the market. Stopping “constantly doing things” (ETNO_5) launched a debate that verified these things’ meaning, provoked the respondents to think that “it’s better to do nothing than do something shitty” (IDI_3) and that “it is not necessary to say right away that we will do this, that and the other, okay – let’s go!” (FGI_1). Because this “pandemic break” is accompanied by a clear view of the future game on the horizon, resuming the debate on quality and overproduction might have a real impact on the future development of the alternative-theatre scene.

How to be independent outside and within the institution?

As Jerzy Grotowski said, “It is not better not to eke out; it is better to have a space where work and life intersect” (2012:678). For a large part of the society, lockdown was associated with the need to combine

the private and professional lives; the quarantine left many people locked in their homes along with their families, remote work, and remote education. Suddenly, the boundaries of work and family life got blurred. Paradoxically, however, for people from the alternative theatrical circles, this time was associated with the **separation of the professional and private roles**. Members of alternative theaters not only had to physically part with their theater companies, but also were not able to fulfill their professional roles in private spaces. Abandoning them meant abandoning the mission that constitutes their entire life. Those who were left in the worst financial situation had to decide whether it was more important to provide for their loved ones or to implement the ethos of an independent theater. “People who don’t have enough to eat don’t think about art. For someone who is an up-and-coming artist, the pandemic was a nightmare” (IDI_5). Somewhere, one of the main principles of the alternative culture has faltered. As Jawłowska once stated:

The inseparability of life and creativity, a coherent image of the surrounding world, the unity of thinking and acting. Culture, in which an individual could develop as a fully integrated, “authentic” being, avoiding being torn between values and performed roles, reflecting on customs and forms adopted in culture. (1988:6)

The community of alternative theaters has always been based on close relationships of a group of people, in which everyone felt fully committed to all the components, i.e. everyday, family, professional, and creative life. The participants of the independent theater movement did not separate life from work – they treated them as a system of interconnected vessels; the alternative was not a “theater-institution,” but a “family theater” (Nyczek 1980:16–17); for them

theater is not a profession, but a vocation, a way of life. “This is not an ordinary workplace with work-life balance” (IDI_8), but the space-time continuum of human fulfillment as a whole. This system of closely interconnected roles performed in the personal, artistic, and public spheres has been severely damaged by the pandemic crisis. From a unified “community view,” the alternative has moved to the perspective of a constellation of roles that need to be somehow balanced and reconciled.

Quarantined during their travels, scattered around various towns and countries – because anyone without the means to survive made use of the resources of family or friends – theater people had to rebuild their worlds away from the physical and social space that has so far justified their actions. Sometimes this meant changes in their professional or personal life: “the pandemic has changed the roles you enter while doing theater and educating your child, trying to avoid working for Uber Eats and counting on a grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, or Stoart...” (ETNO_2).

The ways of earning money have changed. Some people had to abandon their artistic identity in order to face new roles: food delivery couriers, salespeople, cooks, handymen. “Anyone needs something?” – one of the artists wrote on Facebook – “I can make memes about your theater or run its website. I will also undertake repairs, painting and decorating, and transport jobs” (NET_4). The positions of directors or those responsible for the organizational side of alternative theatrical activities were safer. Where the previously funded projects had already begun, the pandemic strengthened the position of the coordinator. In a world where new interpretations of new government policies emerged on a daily basis, those who efficiently navigated the maze of regu-

lations grew into leaders, regardless of their previous function or position within the team. The role of a theater group member, which used to translate into particular duties and practices of participation in various forms of gatherings, has now turned into a set of activities maintaining interactions 'despite' the circumstances.

The pandemic provided an opportunity to verify to what extent membership and participation in a theater collective constitutes the basis of one's identity, and to what extent it imposes the basic social roles performed by an individual. It also forced further considerations on whether and to what extent life and art remain inseparable, or whether and to what extent this indissolubility can be temporarily suspended in the face of any unexpected turmoil in the social world. In other words – to what extent is it possible to maintain the beautiful but utopian idea that life is theater and theater is life?

Such dilemmas raise another question as to whether independence from institutions – which is one of the founding myths of the Polish alternative theater – is still a desired path that proves 'true' independence. For some time now, certain sub-worlds of the alternative have been going through a slow process of getting used to the broadly understood institution. Some groups are financed by the state and their actors are permanently employed by state institutions; other groups operate on the basis of obtaining grants from public subsidy programs; members of some theaters work in different professions on a daily basis. According to Kornaś, "Theater audience ceased to pay attention to any institutional complexities of the functioning of theaters and how they are governed" (2010:65). Thus, the long-standing discussion on the organizational independence of alternative theaters seems to be veering toward

opening up to more or less formal relations with institutions.

During the pandemic, institutionalized theaters – i.e. the alternative that moved beyond financial precarity and entered the sphere of local government-funded cultural institutions (although with respect for basic values) – found it relatively easy to function. "We are an alternative that functions close to the institution, we take what the institution offers us while giving them some of our energy that is missing there. It is a kind of symbiosis" (IDI_3) – this is how the social worlds of alternative theaters intersect with the world of cultural institutions, becoming "organizational hybrids" (IDI_1). In these kinds of theaters, activities during the pandemic did not require any additional formal measures, which was in line with the belief that "institutions will somehow survive" (IDI_6); it was easier for artists to support themselves and continue their theater activities:

We were saved by the fact that we are permanent grant recipients [...]. It's not a lot of money, but the fund allows us to cover the daily costs of accounting and some operational costs. Thanks to this, we are not in some terrible position now. (IDI_6)

The fact that we have grant support is an advantage. (IDI_1)

Running an independent theater is good when everything is going well, because we are not earning [enough – K.K.] money to have some kind of a financial cushion. (IDI_3)

Theaters which continue to dogmatically attempt to operate within the narrowest possible limits of an alternative, once understood as being independent of the institution, found themselves in a much

worse position during the pandemic crisis. Independence has rewarded them with total dependence on the living conditions that came with the pandemic as well as the recognition that an institution can give them independence rather than just restrict it. In this context, efforts to expand the alternative to institutional activity, made over the past two decades, seem to be a process strengthening the social worlds of alternative theaters rather than a process that would pose a threat.

It is worth noting that in the face of the loss of spaces and funds supporting the activities of some theater groups, the alternative theater community expressed solidarity by providing help to those who found themselves in the most difficult situation.

This pandemic has not affected us economically, but there are people who have lost everything. If we had the opportunity to invite such people to join in our activities, that was the first thing we did, we helped those who were really at risk. Sharing wherever possible, our first moves were to help others. (FGI_1)

Although there were more community-based aid initiatives “to give people jobs” (IDI_1), it does not change the fact that the dominant feeling of members of non-institutional theaters was the belief that when it came to systemic solutions, they were “in all honesty left to fend for themselves” (IDI_1). It is difficult to freely enjoy independence under such conditions.

Conclusion

Our research made it possible to describe how the existence of the social worlds of alternative theater is being maintained in times of the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. In this particular envi-

ronment, this crisis was perceived, on the one hand, as another difficulty faced by the alternative, while on the other, as a unique breakdown of the alternative theater world, affecting the primary activity, technologies, and values around which this world is built. We found that **the pandemic interferes with the development trajectory of the social worlds of the theater alternative in four ways**: it *alters* or *strengthens* the previously observed directions of development, and it *accelerates* or *slows down* the pace of processes that have been taking place in the independent theater movement from the very beginning of its existence.

A visible **change** occurred within the perception of the coupling of the social world of alternative theater with the mechanisms of market culture. For some, the enforced slowing down of the pace of work was a time for a sober re-evaluation of the so-called grant-art, practiced by them for over a dozen years – the widespread implementation of projects ordered by the public sector, which in the neoliberal system is subject to market mechanisms (see Marecki 2010:4–6). Some perceive the intersection of the social world of the alternative (and the entire cultural sector) with the world of commerce and bureaucracy as a necessary evil, but it seems to be a path from which it is difficult to turn back. The pandemic verified this process and raised the question whether this is a threat to the social world of alternative theaters. There is a certain potential to change the functioning of the world of alternative theater, but it cannot be said now whether reflections born during the pandemic will permanently steer the alternative toward new paths of ‘slow’ creativity/art and avoiding overproduction. It might also be the case that thinking about ‘slowing down’ will lose in favor of the trend for acceleration that cultural employees are so wary of.

The **strengthening** of the existing choices and practices was related to two areas. Firstly, the time spent in isolation as well as socially-distanced interactions confirmed the respondents' belief that putting community first is the right course of action. They remembered what was really important, and felt overwhelmingly that it was impossible to make alternative theater without a community. Secondly, the period of pandemic turmoil emphasized the identity crisis of alternative artists and showed that functioning in chaos is something that alternative-theater people understand and know quite well. Thus, community and the ability to function in a crisis both seem to be the strongest – and reinforced by a sense of mission or by circumstances – identity traits of the contemporary theater alternative.

Acceleration took place primarily in the area of expanding the social boundaries of alternative-theater worlds to include institutional activities. The social world of alternative theaters has long intersected with the sector of cultural institutions. However, getting to know the new area – and going beyond the founding myth of organizational independence of alternative theaters – was slow and gradual. It seems that the pandemic-related financial crisis, having posed a serious threat to the existence of some artists, might lead to the community adapting to the process of building independence within institutions.

In turn, **slowing down** relates to the matter of tools and methods of theater work. The high level of professionalization of the social world of alternative

theater was connected with the continuous and intensive development of the main technology of producing alternatives, namely practicing theater in close physical contact and being together 'here and now'. The closure of theaters, sanitary regime, and the transfer of theater work to the virtual space are all reversing the achievements of the alternative in the field of theater practices based on proximity. They block further professionalization and force artists to search for new technologies that would allow the existence of the social world of the theater alternative to be maintained.

The pandemic shook the foundations of the alternative theater movement and put its very essence at risk. However, accustomed to functioning in a crisis and despite doubts and frustration, alternative artists keep "doing their thing," i.e. they keep looking for new solutions and keep fighting so that "humans are more human to one another" (FGL_1) and "are stubbornly enthusiastic about the world" (ETNO_4). In the face of such a *credo*, no threat to alternative theater seems to be final. "The crisis seen this way is not a transition level, so it cannot be valorized only by what will emerge after it ends. Its value is the paradoxical permanent instability, the certainty of uncertainty, and being permanently open to flow" (Kosiński 2010:486).

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Wspólnota na kwarantannie. Społeczny świat teatru alternatywnego w pandemii

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest opisanie funkcjonowania środowiska teatru alternatywnego w czasie pandemii COVID-19. Ramy teoretyczne rozważań wyznacza teoria światów społecznych pozwalająca uchwycić procesualny charakter rekonstruowania świata społecznego teatralnej alternatywy w dobie pandemii. Problem badawczy dotyczy tego, jak radzi sobie teatr niezależny, gdy zagrożone jest praktykowanie teatru alternatywnego jako narzędzia budowania wspólnoty „tu i teraz”, a więc główna technologia, wartości, a wraz z nimi centralne działanie organizujące komunikację w społecznym świecie alternatywy. W artykule uwzględniamy zarówno zmiany spowodowane pandemią (brak możliwości budowania relacji podczas bezpośredniego spotkania z widzem/uczestnikiem), jak i stałość w codziennym doświadczeniu ludzi teatru alternatywnego (kryzysowa tożsamość ludzi alternatywy). Empiryczną podstawą analiz są materiały zgromadzone podczas dwóch badań socjoantropologicznych: (1) sytuacji zawodowej pracowników i pracownic teatrów w Polsce w czasie pandemii, realizowanych przez Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszelewskiego w Warszawie; (2) modusu pracy teatralnej Teatru Węgajty z perspektywy doświadczeń jego uczestników i uczestniczek.

Słowa kluczowe: socjologia teatru, teatr alternatywny, teatr niezależny, społeczne światy teatru, pandemia COVID-19

The Process of Becoming a Professional Actor

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Keywords:

theater actor,
motives for choosing
a profession,
significant others,
theater education

Abstract:

The article concerns the process of becoming a professional actor; the author investigates the motivations of young people who decide to study acting. She is particularly interested in the impact of their significant others at various stages of the career path. The text is also an attempt to look at the stereotypes related to education in public theater schools. The empirical basis of the work involves free interviews conducted by the author with actors from Polish public drama theaters (in the period of 2015–2017) as well as journalistic interviews with theater artists published in books and popular monthly magazines in the period of 2011–2016.

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The analysis carried out in the article contributes to the work devoted to the social process of “becoming” – e.g. a cannabis smoker (Becker 1953), a doctor (Strauss et al. 1985), an employee of an industrial plant (Konecki 2007), an academic teacher (Marciniak 2008), a poet (Ślęzak 2009). In this article, I attempt at discussing the social conditions of becoming a professional actor. However, my aim is not to identify and name individual stages that lead to the crystallization of the coherent identity of the actor, but, rather, to try and answer the question about the motives for choosing this difficult profession; I will also make an attempt at investigating the role of significant others in consolidating and con-

firming the professional self-identification of theater actors. I am interested in the socio-psychological process of identity construction with emphasis put on the *significant others*. The problem of identity was an important subject of scientific reflection for many theorists (including G. H. Mead, M. H. Kuhn, T. S. McPartland, R. H. Turner, W. Blumer, A. Strauss, E. Goffman, E. Erikson, S. Stryker, G. J. McCall, J. L. Simmons). It is not easy to define the concept of identity. In the literature on the subject, various terms appear, such as “self-conception,” “role identity,” “self-attitude,” “self-image,” “personal identity,” “social identity,” “Situational Self,” etc. In general, it is about self-definition and about a relatively permanent concept of oneself, with the assumption that identity can be negotiated and susceptible to other people’s influence. An important work on the subject of identity is the work by A. Strauss titled *Mirrors and Mask The Search for Identity* (1969). A detailed reflection on the concept of identity in the tradition of symbolic interactionism was undertaken by Andrzej Piotrowski: (1998:47-68).

My goal is also to look at stereotypes and common opinions on the subject of entrance exams to drama schools, as well as to identify the ideas and simplifying judgments regarding acting, which are not always in agreement with facts. Admission to studies and professional education, culminating in a diploma, is a turning point in the process of becoming an actor. The process of constructing identity continues, but it is intentional that my analysis here does not develop the problem of an acting career itself; this is an issue that I have devoted in another article (Zimnica-Kuzioła 2020:48-69).

It is worth emphasizing that in the Polish sociology of theater, the issue of acting is neglected and ignored. The last works concerning this theme ap-

peared in the 1990s (Wilski 1990; Hera 1993). My goal is to reactivate this scientific discourse. In this, I had a cognitive purpose – I wanted to take into account the actors’ perspective. My work is thus based on qualitative research techniques and I use the existing sources, namely: about 60 press and online journalist interviews with theater artists (the research sample includes all the issues of two monthly magazines from 2014 and 2015, and randomly selected issues of four other popular magazines from 2011–2016); published books (autobiographies and interviews dedicated to actors of Polish public drama theaters). I am aware of the special nature of these sources: artists’ statements should be treated with caution and a critical attitude, because they are part of image creation of public figures. Undoubtedly, such sources have a greater heuristic value: in the years 2015–2017, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews with actors representing six Polish theater centers. My respondents were recruited by means of the “snowball” method; artists from both younger and older generations participated, among whom were fourteen men and six women.

In-depth interviews constitute a conversation, and the researcher does not prepare specific questions, but merely a list of issues that will be discussed. Usually, new threads appear during an interview and the researcher can follow his/her interlocutor in a completely new, previously unforeseen direction. The advantage of this research technique is openness and the possibility of an in-depth analysis of research problems. In fact, during the conversation, I was able to get to know the perspective of the research participants, their point of view, and their way of seeing reality. Most often, I conducted the interviews in theaters (a buffet, a dressing room, a rehearsal room), several conversations took place in cafes, and some others in the Institute of Sociolo-

gy of the University of Lodz. Due to the anonymous character of my research, I do not provide details as to the theaters in which my interlocutors work, or the cities in which these theaters operate. The longest interview lasted 3 hours, while the shortest one was 45 minutes. In the process of analysis, I used qualitative content analysis.

In my work, I adopt the perspective of interpretative sociology; I am particularly interested in the symbolic interaction approach, which emphasizes the formation of a personal “I” under the influence of social influences. Symbolic Interactionism asks questions about the meanings that arise in everyday interpersonal interactions. In interactionism, the social world is dynamic; it is not a rigid structure, but a constantly changing one as a result of the actions of social actors. The basic conceptual category here is “the self,” which is associated with the reflective ability of the individual to recognize himself/herself as the object of his/her own thinking, and the ability to perceive himself/herself. Social reality is “constructed,” maintained, and transformed out of symbolic processes occurring in the course of mutual interactions between individuals and communities.

It is common that people want to be appreciated and accepted, and want to see admiration in the eyes of others (the concept of the reflected self): their subjective self changes under the influence of the assessments and opinions of persons important to them. The individual looks in the “social mirror” and what they see there greatly affects their self-knowledge and self-esteem, and the way they think about themselves.

It is not easy to answer the question about what factors determine the choice of an artistic career path.

Some theorists (e.g. the French philosopher Louis Lavelle) consider the desire to be permanently registered in the history of humanity and to gain immortality as important motivations behind artistic creativity. Ancient creators in particular strove for “posthumous fame,” however, is this motivation relevant to young people nowadays? The fact is that there has been a significant increase in interest in acting studies – the high number of candidates for the first year of studies in public schools preparing for this extremely difficult profession leads to questions about the reasons for this. Józef Koziński (1997) introduced into the humanities the concept of hubristic explanation as a motivation to manifest one’s own self and emphasize its significance, separateness, and uniqueness. Young people want to be accepted, admired, and noticed. This need used to be naturally fulfilled in primary groups, i.e. in the family and among friends. Perhaps in the era of the dominance of the virtual culture, *homo internetikus* does not establish cordial ties in the immediate environment and does not receive any confirmation of his/her validity. Potential fame will allow him/her to “appear” in the minds of others. A neurotic and narcissistic personality, as Karen Horney (1981) wrote, demands attention and admiration. Certainly, many young people dream of a career in the style of Hollywood stars, i.e. achieving a high social and economic position, that would provide unlimited possibilities of consumption and “control over life.” This motivation is combined with a myth that is not cited in the literature on the subject and rarely appears in the statements of the creators. However, it functions in common knowledge and opinions in the form of the myth about artists’ easy life. In the popular imagination, fame translates into status and the possibilities for “the chosen ones.” In fact, however, great careers involve very few artists, as most of them operate on an average financial level. Also,

if work is their passion, and if they are guided by an internal imperative, artists put art “above other matters of life,” i.e. they simply create, work intensively and are not interested in ostentatious consumption. It is characteristic that actors do not think about retirement (i.e. the time when they could “cut off coupons from fame”), as most would like to work as long as possible. Their biggest problem seems to be the fear of being forgotten:

I am the most afraid of only one thing – that one day I can be like an old rejected dog, this is the worst thing that can happen to an actor. The fear of being inefficient, unnecessary. (Interview no. 7)

In the process of creative work, theater artists can hypothetically orientate themselves to the recipient, to the work (performance), or to themselves. Considering the recipient (viewer) is an attempt to satisfy his/her supposed expectations or to convey his/her own artistic vision; considering the work involves thinking above all about creating a good spectacle, with high esthetic and ideological value; and self-respect is associated with the expression of personality, with the desire to express emotional experiences and reflections on the world, as well as with the desire to get a favorable opinion from professional critics and everyday viewers alike (see Gołaszewska 1986:200). This analytical distinction is of the ordering character, for an actor can be guided by all these considerations in one creative act.

Motives for choosing the acting profession

According to the findings of Janina Hera, in the 19th century, the decision to choose the profession of an actor was influenced by numerous factors: a genuine interest in theater as a field of art; faith in one's

own talent and vocation for the profession; a desire to achieve fame and to gain importance; the desire to escape a monotonous life; a lack of prospects in life (due to a loss of property after national uprisings or having no work); being fascinated with an actress/actor appearing in a theater group; or the desire to avoid military service (employment in Warsaw's permanent theaters provided such an opportunity). For children who grew up in the theater, it was obvious that they would continue this profession: they had known no other life and would have been unable to pursue anything else. This led to a natural biographical reproduction which replicated the fate of parents (cf. Hera 1993). Young people who were questioned half a century ago (in the 1970s) about their motives for choosing the profession of an actor admitted that they had been attracted by the prospect of an interesting, intense life, as well as the opportunity to discover the truth about themselves and the realization that they had a passion (Romanowski 1978:179-190). Despite the passage of decades, the answers to the question about the motivations accompanying the choice of acting remain similar.

Jolanta Kociuba (1996:26-27) identified two basic types of motivation when choosing the acting profession: defensive one and offensive (development-oriented) one. In the first case, the individual does not accept himself/herself; his/her identity is not grounded, which is why studying and working onstage is a remedy for these deficits. “Acting can be treated as a defense mechanism, practiced out of the necessity of self-defense (defense against the lack of self-knowledge or the lack of self-acceptance)” (Kociuba 1996:26). Here, going too deep into acting roles can generate personality disintegration states. In the second case, the individual accepts himself/herself and acting is his/her way of realizing “external”

values that are not related to the “I.” There is also the possibility of combining self-knowledge and the lack of self-acceptance, since it produces interesting results and intensifies creative processes.

Offensive motivation accompanies many choices made in the acting profession. The theme of a talented child appears in numerous interviews; the actors reinterpret their own childhood in light of the present, and in their biographical discourse they uncover a continuum – they identify activities (*post factum*) which prepared them for their future profession: from performances in kindergarten, through reciting competitions at subsequent levels of education, to drama school and working in the theater. Talent is giftedness – innate or acquired – in a particular field, manifesting in the ability to learn quickly and with a high degree of mastery of its requirements. These are extraordinary skills, i.e. individual predispositions that must be developed, otherwise they might become dystrophic and dormant.

There is this typical story of a child who dresses up in mum’s dresses, puts on high heels, and imagines a different world. Many actors showed a predisposition for this profession from a young age: “The greatest fun was creating choreography for Chopin’s music. I had vinyl records, I turned the record player on, invited my grandmother, grandfather or mother, and put a show” (A41:25). Engaging in projects that “lead to acting” is a permanent feature in the biography of actors:

There was a community center of the Machulski family in the Ochota theater, my mother enrolled me in it. Then there was the Student Rehearsal Theater, in which we explored the secrets of the Stanisławski and Chekhov methods. When I look at my past now, I can see the path I have followed more or less consciously.

I didn’t tell myself: “I have to be an actress.” Suddenly, before graduation, it turned out that I could express myself on stage. (A42:30)

Not all actors refer to the cognitive script according to which a talented child, eager to show off and possessing personal charm, becomes an actor/actress. Sometimes defensive motivation, related to an attempt to break with stigmatization and a desire to free oneself from complexes, is dominant. The story of one of the actors concretizes the fairy tale motif of the ugly duckling that turns into a swan. While at school, he was a small, fragile boy, and stronger students asserted their superiority over him:

I was an invisible and overlooked child [...]. Malignant friends caught me at the end of a long break and forcibly put me in a wardrobe that was standing in the hallway at school. I was afraid to jump down because I might break a bone or something [...]. I was a boy from the countryside, a bumpkin. I looked terrible – small, thin, ugly. Everything was wrong [...]. (A38:72-73).

However, when he recited poems and controlled his listeners, he was important: “I really wanted to shout to the whole world that I exist. I could only do that on stage” (A38a:72). At such moments, he felt really appreciated. In high school, he won a nationwide recitation competition, which greatly boosted his self-esteem. Thoughts of becoming an actor had occurred to him at an early stage in childhood, but his social environment did not support such aspirations. First, he was made aware of the lack of the necessary physical characteristics (“My father was afraid that I would not succeed, that only tall and handsome men succeed in this profession”); secondly, his loved ones thought that this path was in-

accessible to “the boy from the village near Częstochowa.” And yet he achieved his goals:

I live in great amazement all the time that what is happening is really happening. Then it turned out that these conditions are not so important, that other things are also important. I graduated from acting school, became an actor, and then I constantly received offers for roles in films, theater and television. And so there is this constant amazement that it this is happening all the time. (A38b)

The situation of a child from the lower social class reaching social advancement owing to great effort and great abilities breaks the vicious cycle of reproducing the habitus that Pierre Bourdieu (2005a) referred to as a “miracle.” The above-mentioned artist finally said goodbye to the drama school complexes. He worked hard to prove to educators that he deserved to pursue artistic studies. With the help of books, he developed his imagination; reading was his cultural capital and it strengthened his self-esteem. The narrative of the “ugly duckling” is unique, but it should be strongly emphasized that for many actors their profession became a catalyst for change; it allowed them to stand out from the crowd, released their confidence, and enabled deep introspection.¹

Regardless of the type of motivation behind choosing the acting profession – i.e. defensive or offensive – the previous considerations show that the rudimentary factor behind acting is a natural talent and an innate predisposition, which is why one of the actors states: “It’s a profession for the chosen. The drama school only teaches workshops, breathing

techniques, etc. You must be born with the ability to play” (A38a:74). Many participants in the social world of theater confirm the common view that talent is an essential prerequisite for the acting profession:

Even as a small child I felt that I had a gift that allows me to play various roles. I remember that when I was a little boy, and I was always a little boy (laughs), when I entered the stage I was the happiest man in the world. I was a soloist in the choir, I would recite poems. I wasn’t even interested what the occasion was, all I cared about was that I could perform. On stage, I wasn’t a small gray man in the crowd of students, but someone important. I felt that I meant something. When I was reciting the poem and paused, there was dead silence in the room. I had the impression that I was floating two centimeters above the ground. And then I finished the poem and the whole school applauded. I was very happy then. In one such moment, I decided to become an actor. (A38c)

There are exceptions to each rule and this also applies to the process of “becoming an actor”; the story of one artist shows a different biographical variant. He was not a wonderful child; he did not dream of acting; and he did not “handle” school celebrations, reciting, and declaiming. He did not attend a club or theater center; he did not know anyone from theater circles and did not even graduate from drama school. He became interested in the theater relatively late and he found himself in theater circles due to the influence of an affectionate girl:

I took various classes. I worked in a steel mill. Then I sat in London for a while. I served breakfast and carried suitcases at the Notting Hill Gate Hotel. Then I worked at BWA. I wanted to go to Szczecin and boarded the ship. I’ve defined myself for a long time.

¹ This is confirmed, among others, by Stanisława Celińska and Magdalena Pawlicka’s ‘Zacisze Gwiazd’ program in the Polish TV (TVPI online edition, March 8, 2016).

And if it wasn't for the impulse of love, I wouldn't be an actor [...]. It was proposed that I write something. I did it and then played it. The director of the Legnica theater saw me, he thought it was good, he offered me a role in the theater. I was an apprentice for some time, then I started playing and got an invitation to join the group. I did not graduate from drama school, I passed the exam as an extramural student, years later before the ZASP commission. Beautiful time. Legnica theater was then in the avant-garde. It was a real theater work camp. Jacek Głomb built the group on the principles of the dirty dozen. Young, fantastic actors ready for anything. He led the theater out of the building: to castles, factory halls, squares and parks. Nobody did that at the time. It was happening [...]. (A1:62)

It is also worth noting that amateur actors – who are talented but have no formal theater training – are scorned by professional actors. This is not a unique situation in the social world of theater; the story told by one of the externs is indicative of a certain regularity. The actor created the first stage role in his life in a professional theater. Due to the fact that he was not a full-time employee and did not have a diploma, he came across great disapproval from the acting team and there was even a revolt. A professional colleague said that playing an amateur was “taking a hoe to the sun.” He appeared onstage despite everything and that situation greatly strengthened him (A1:68). Externs must show great determination and consistency to practice this profession. An example is provided by an actress who took the drama school exams three times and was rejected each time:

The first time they rejected me because, as they said, I am already a complete and conscious actress, and they welcome people they will only be able to

improve and shape. When I passed a year later, it turned out that I had an “admirer” among the university professors, he had it in for me and thanks to his efforts I did not get to the coveted faculty [...]. It was some higher reason. I don't know where that strength came from. I did what I thought was right without thinking about the consequences. From the street I found out – because someone had read the announcement – that they were recruiting at Krakow 38 Theater. I went. And what? They rejected me the first time because I had a bad day. And after a year I succeeded. (A2:78)

The woman later passed the extramural exam in order to free herself from the amateur status and fight for a higher position in the profession.

For actors who did perform on a professional stage but did so without a graduation diploma from a theater school, it became necessary to negotiate their identity. The dispute concerned the definition of “the real actor.” Self-defining uncertainty forced actions aimed at confirming the concept of oneself as a fully-fledged participant in the social world of theater, i.e. one situated in its center and not on the periphery.

Currently, there is a lot of talk in the social world of theater about acting as a media temptation (e.g. Stanisz 2011:64-67). The young people filling the acting faculties of Polish state universities each year are credited with hubristic and mercantile motivations – dreams of fame and great money are said to be the main factor generating interest in this profession. However, the cited example of the artist who became an actor out of love for a girl-actress shows that sometimes interest in the profession is also determined by non-artistic considerations.

The role of significant others at various stages of the process of becoming an actor

It is necessary to emphasize – after George Herbert Mead – the relevant role of “significant others” in the biography of the individual – these are the people influencing the individual’s behavior and shaping the person’s social personality and identity. In childhood and adolescence, “important others” involve parents. They influence the person’s choices, behaviors, and the way of seeing the world. The child identifies with them and adopts their perspective as the only possible one. The emotionality of this relationship makes it easier to impose a definition of a situation. Primary socialization is the most important stage in human development, followed by a phase of secondary socialization. Other important people appear at this stage, influencing the individual, shaping the person’s cognitive and axiological horizon, and modeling his/her behavior (Berger and Luckmann 1983:202-214; Szacka 2003:152-154).

Significant others play an important role in the professional path of all people. In the case of actors, a role-specific significant other (Denzin 1976) is usually an environmental authority that gives a clear message in terms of seeing potential, appreciating the talent, releasing energy to work, encouraging the prospective actor to take the exam at drama school, advising, confirming the decision, and supporting. Sometimes this person helps to prepare for the entrance exam, paves the way in the profession, etc. Joanna Żółkowska recalls:

My case is a confirmation of a certain, quite common rule in our environment. I became an actress thanks to a Polish teacher. The professor [...] was an unrealized director, she constantly organized performanc-

es, theater groups, and I was her star. She saw me and promoted me. (2015:432)

The positive opinion of an authority from her social circle, namely Jacek Woszczerowicz, who came to her high school by special invitation, also encouraged her. Meeting him became an important event for this young girl who thought seriously about acting. The actress received great support from a significant other: “I remember that after talking with him I was unable to sleep, due to my emotions. It seemed to me that I had gained the acceptance of someone who was absolutely most important” (Żółkowska 2015:434). What is more, Woszczerowicz did not limit himself only to praising her performance, but also helped her choose texts for the entrance exams: “Indeed, he chose incredible texts, I would never have come up with them by myself. For example, I prepared Ophelia from the Wyspiański Hamlet Study. Very ambitious” (Żółkowska 2015:434).

I distinguish between five categories of people important to the professional role: the **stimulator**, the **activator**, the **stabilizer**, the **symbolic authority**, and the **demotivator**. What follows is their characteristics:

- **the stimulator** – a person catalyzing interest in Melpomen’s art, noticing the potential of a young person, mobilizing the person to start theater education. She/he is not rooted in the theater environment;
- **the activator** – a professional providing artistic care, facilitating entry into a specific environment, and appearing on the professional stage;
- **the stabilizer** – a kind and supportive person fulfilling the role of a therapist and guide in

the local social world, and knowing the specificity of the profession and environmental problems. This is the type that cushions failures;

- **the symbolic authority** – a mentor, a master who is a point of reference and sets the direction of professional aspirations. They can be a physically available theater creator particularly valued by the environment, or a historical figure referred to in the environmental discourse;
- **the demotivator** – a person who hinders the process of building an actor's identity, cuts his/her wings, and deprives him/her of faith in the rightness of his/her own choice. Paradoxically, this type can strengthen the person's will to continue the process of becoming an actor as well as it can make the person immune to future criticism, which is inherent in public performances.

These categories emerged during the analysis of the collected empirical material, which is why they are not speculative and deductive, but strictly inductive instead. They explicitly show the social aspects of constructing a professional role. Stage actors really appreciate the help of those who contributed to the strengthening of their acting identity; it is not the case only with those whom I interviewed, as the respondents spoke a lot about their gratitude toward other participants of the social world of theater who believed in their talent, supported them in their difficulties, and facilitated their professional start.

The first category – the stimulator – is represented by people who are not rooted in the professional theater environment, but who stimulated the indi-

vidual's interest in the world of theater. These can be parents, neighbors, educators, or theater instructors in community centers (sometimes with an acting school diploma). Anna Dymna described the catalyzing role of her neighbor – the actor who lived in her tenement house:

He invited me to his theater for children and youth, I played a lot of roles with him. Only I thought it was fun. Never in my life did I think I would be an actress. I couldn't imagine being on stage all my life and people staring at me and judging me. When Mr. Jan found out that I was going to take psychology, he caught me on the stairs and started shouting: "What are you thinking! You are to be a great actress, not a psychologist! Anyone can be a psychologist." And he told me to apply to PWST. So I submitted my papers for acting and psychology. (A9:26)

Dymna's parents accepted her choice, although they themselves had "solid professions." They felt that it was necessary to do that which gives satisfaction in life: "They both often said that no matter what, we must not betray our own dreams and beliefs. And here they were consistent. It is good because I love my profession very much" (A9:26). Most often, however, the stimulator is a teacher:

[A Polish teacher in high school – E.Z.K.] was the first person to notice this element in me and named it specifically. (A33:45)

In high school, I performed in a theater circle, my Polish language teacher Urszula Kraka pulled me into it almost by force. Me – the shy stuttering Arek. (A13:40)

Sometimes the significant other is the juror in a recital or theater competitions, whose good opinion is

a decisive factor in the person taking up the acting studies:

I agree that the choice of the path that we will go on often depends on the people that fate puts in our path. Of course, I'd heard approving voices before, I collected prizes at various competitions, but there are plenty of such kids. They think I want to take acting classes, but in fact I only started to share this with the world after the words of the Master [i.e. Wojciech Młynarski, juror at the French Song Competition]. (A27:8)

The activator, in turn, is a professional who facilitates the entry into the profession in a specific theatrical environment. The support of a significant person for the pursuit of a professional role cannot be overestimated in the acting school. A professional authority indicates the direction of development, mobilizes the effort, and sometimes makes it possible for the prospective actor to appear on a professional stage when he/she is still at school. The artistic care of a master, usually a director, who engages in the performances is an extremely comfortable situation. A positive, spontaneous expression by a professor at a drama school, who positively assessed the skills of one of the actresses, helped the individual build her acting identity and boosted her confidence regarding the suitability of the chosen professional path:

I really wanted to work in this profession. I felt his magic for the first time in my fourth year. I was cast in two main roles in diploma performances [...]. I remember one day a professor came to the rehearsal while I was walking on stage with a cigarette. I pretended to do something, tried something out. She looked and said: "It's unbelievable what a feeling you have for the stage." It was a breakthrough moment. From that moment on, I slowly began to think of myself as an actress. (A41:25)

The opportunity to participate in professional ventures at the school stage eliminates uncertainty and can translate into being anchored in the social world of theater as well as into specific gratifications related to the profession: "I had the opportunity to debut in the second year with Mrs. Barbara Sass, I got good reviews, I saw that what I do makes sense. Then I received a scholarship funded by the director of the Bagatela theater, with a full-time guarantee" (A18:55). It should be noted that today the interviewed actors regret the fact that there are fewer and fewer great individuals—artists who stimulate widespread admiration and a desire to imitate:

We were lucky to study and experience the presence of great actors, the senior members of the Polish theater scene [...]. They were people who carried a certain ethical program with them [...]. Their very presence built orientation, clarified a viewpoint and generated reflection, and it was very valuable. They taught in a drama school in a way that others certainly do not teach today. (A7:55)

In the next stage of the actor's career, when they get involved in a particular theater, the role of significant others does not diminish. This can involve authorities within theater circles, esteemed masters, superiors, or colleagues – they become guides around the local social world, offering support in difficult times. When an actor enters a new situation, it largely depends on his/her emotional intelligence whether she/he will be accepted by the group members. This is when the help of an introductory person – who minimizes the tensions associated with the interiorization of the social role – cannot be overestimated. I have called such a person the stabilizer. One actress was lucky enough to become acclimatized to the Bagatela Theater in Kraków:

I was lost, fortunately I received a lot of support from my older colleagues. If I had found myself in a hostile environment, I would not have been able to cope. Thanks to them, it was easier for me to take my first steps, I was accepted at the beginning [...]. My group – today I can call it this – knew that a younger friend may have problems with emotions, stress and composure on stage. I received great help from Dorota Pomykała, who tried to go with me through all the stages of entering the profession. Thanks to her, I overcame successive degrees of initiation. It happened that before the premiere of the performance Dorota took me on so-called city breaks. We sat or lay down in the meadow, she said to me: “Relax, don’t be nervous, it’s important that the sun is shining, birds are singing, flowers are blooming.” She was right, it is important in life, you can not succumb to the pressure of the upcoming premiere. These emotions pass, we cannot allow them to dominate life for a moment. I am grateful to Dorota for teaching me these principles. She took my hand, pulled me along, sometimes I even laugh that she “adopted me.” (A43:51-52)

The situation is extremely comfortable when the actor can count on good advice from a competent person who knows the theater world and is kind. All artists can probably indicate such a person or people who were important from the point of view of acclimatizing the individual into the new environment (stabilizers) and boosting the person’s professional development (activators). It is worth emphasizing that sometimes it is the same person who plays the stabilizing role and the activating role. Ewa Kasprzyk mentions several such people: the director Barbara Sass, whom she calls “artistic mother”: “I consulted her many times when I got other suggestions from other directors (...) There is a bond between us today” (Kasprzyk and Kędziak 2013:99); Professor Ewa Lassek: “Years later, I appreciate our

meeting. Student-Master. It was beautiful, difficult, sometimes strange. I know that I will remember her for the rest of my life. My professor” (Kasprzyk and Kędziak 2013:114). It is uncommon for a “mentee” to be in the orbit of a role-specific significant other on a daily basis, i.e. outside the professional context. Kasprzyk had the opportunity to live with Professor Lassek:

The professor was at a crossroads and preferred not to be alone at home. We spent a lot of time together, not only in classes, at school. These home “lectures” were in fact the real university [...]. At this home university she passed on her knowledge of acting in a natural way. Long discussions until morning in the kitchen, the analysis of poems. She made me realize the importance of verbal sphere. Maybe that’s why I often pick on my younger colleagues when I don’t understand what they are saying from the stage [...]. (Kasprzyk and Kędziak 2013:113)

When discussing important people (in the professional context), this particular artist also mentions a professor who played an important stimulating role: owing to him she got to the drama school (the professor believed in her very much). Before the political transformation and the expansion of the Internet, a significant other for the professional role – be it a “great actor” or a “great director” – had inspired respect and had been treated as someone special, almost a superman “from another dimension.” The interviewed artists talked about this a lot, and what follows is a characteristic statement:

I remember my first entrance to the drama school when I saw Jan Łomnicki, Jan Englert, Maja Komorowska, lots of people from the screen, and I had treated them as completely isolated from life. As outstanding characters. And it remains so today, al-

though when I once went to the toilet and met Lomnicki in it, I was shocked: “How is this? Does he have to pee too?” I couldn’t understand it, but I finally felt relieved [laughs]. (A21:89)

Recalling her debut, episodic role, but one performed among great actors, Magdalena Zawadzka emphasizes the state of euphoria caused by being among eminent actors: “I was a girl, an amateur. And on the set the stars themselves: Aleksandra Ślaska, Gustaw Holoubek, Andrzej Łapicki. It was like a fairy tale, like a dream” (Zawadzka 2015:420). Particularly older actors speak with great appreciation and esteem about their masters and directors with whom they collaborated. They value their working methods, talent, and a serious but friendly attitude toward the profession and their mentees alike. The master–student relationship is characteristic of artistic education. According to the interviews, however, younger actors are more restless and do not want to use the experience of older colleagues, which is a sign of our times. Meanwhile, Dorota Segda talks about the important role of mentors in the following way:

Authority in this profession is extremely important. You must have masters from the first year; observe how seriously they take theater, how they work on the role. Watch them on stage and even how they behave in a cafeteria. You can also learn a lot from them. (2015:281)

The cooperation with recognized professionals and masters is connected with the phenomenon of career coupling (Wagner 2005:22). The reputation of, for example, a director affects an actor’s good reputation; a creative relationship with an outstanding person is not only a source of pride, but it can also help in achieving professional success. The famous actress emphasizes the “value of important, artistic

meetings” and underlines that contact with remarkable people who taught her the theater has marked her career path. She gratefully remembers professors from her drama school – Jan Peszek, or Krzysztof Globisz, as well as directors – Jerzy Jarocki, Tadeusz Bradecki, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, and Andrzej Wajda. She also mentions her fellow actors from the ‘Old Theater’ [Pol. *Teatr Stary*] who influenced her artistic education:

Meetings with such people build the personality of a young person. Acting is not only a workshop and the ability to speak beautifully, talent alone is not enough. It should be developed and enriched. I think that even the greatest talent can be wasted if you work in a bad theater with actors that are not the best. If you don’t meet masters. (Segda 2015:281)

Out of the people important for the profession, she remembers Jerzy Jarocki above all – she talks about having full confidence in the director and about his readiness for the greatest professional sacrifices:

Jarocki was the first, maybe that’s why he is the most important. I played two huge roles with him at school. And then in the theater six more wonderful meetings. He shaped me incredibly. The first meeting with him was actually a kind of love. Mutual, it must be said. If he had asked me to jump out of the window, I would have jumped without hesitation. I felt like a plasticine ball in the hands of a demiurge. (Segda 2015:279)

Jerzy Jarocki is also remembered with sentiment by other actors (e.g. Jerzy Trela), who, interestingly, recall not only what was good, but also remember extremely difficult moments of cooperation with him. Therefore, it turns out that the activator does not necessarily have to strengthen the “ego” of the mentee; sometimes he/she uses the strategy of

“a stick” rather than “a carrot.” One of the artists always remembered the moment that undermined her sense of value [for an hour she tried to say one word and, according to the director, she did not do it well – E.Z.K.]: “I thought I should go to the wardrobe, take my purse, coat and never be again an actress (...) It was a test in which I felt completely destroyed by Jarocki” (A29:78). Ultimately, even difficult experiences pay off in professional life. Despite this incident, the actress emphasizes that she owes a lot to the director. She understood that every spoken word, the stage awareness, and full commitment to the production process are all important. Owing to Jarocki, she started to approach the played character intellectually and not just emotionally: “Working with him made me think logically, encouraged me to look into studies that can help prepare the role” (A29:78). The directors who shaped theater life in Poland also had a significant impact on the professional condition of many actors. The interviewed artists also consider their employers and teammates to be important people for their professional role:

I was very lucky with people. Wojtek Kościelniak, the first director of the “Capitol” Musical Theater in Wrocław, gave me my first artistic home and enrolled me in so many music and dance classes that I went to them from morning to evening. I learned a lot about acting skills working with the great Kinga Preis at the Polski Theater in Wrocław. (A3:82)

It is worth emphasizing that a significant other for the professional role may be a person that the actor has never encountered personally (a legendary actor or director): the narrative environment evokes the person’s merits, acting style, great roles; the prospective actor becomes fascinated by the person’s personality and artistic activities in the social

world of theater. Such a figure can be a reference point, a role model, an ideal for the creator. A model image of the representative of a given profession is needed from the point of view of establishing the normative framework for action in every social world. Therefore, another category of people important for the professional role appears: a symbolic authority that inspires admiration and respect. Similarly to how a compass works, it helps to set the direction of artistic aspirations and becomes a catalyst for development.

Finally, it is worth analytically separating the category of a significant other that demotivates people – this applies to people who not only do not help, but who even hamper the role, take away actors’ faith in their own abilities (Zimnica-Kuzioła 2018: 12). Many actors have encountered such an ‘anti-authority’ on their artistic path, e.g. Ewa Kasprzyk mentions a professor from the drama school who made a “demonic” impression on her: “I was terribly afraid of him, [...] he closed me and blocked me,” she declares (Kasprzyk and Kędziak 2013:113). One of my interlocutors also did not have good memories of the theater education period:

School was one gigantic disappointment, many – now I see it, after many years – professors who had not succeeded in their professional lives, had some chips of their shoulders, some bile, who clipped our wings. Maybe there is a deeper meaning in this: “we’ll see who is the toughest,” maybe... but I think differently. (Interview no. 9)

The actors would have preferred to avoid meeting such “demotivators;” their devastating remarks were a real trauma for them. However, one might ask whether people who are perceived as toxic – and

as those hindering the building of the actor's identity – ultimately contribute to the increased effort, and whether they harden young people for future criticism.

Entrance exams and education in a public drama school – facts and stereotypes

In the process of becoming an actor, passing the exam to a public drama school is an extremely important moment. Completing major studies is associated with obtaining formal legitimacy for stage work. Amateurs without a diploma have no chance of working in a theater, and the few exceptions only confirm this rule. At this point, I would like to emphasize that numerous popular opinions often do not have any grounds in the reality. Contrary to stereotypes, it is not only handsome brunettes and beautiful blondes that get into acting studios. The most important requirement is talent, the ability to attract attention, and personality. Characteristic people who do not necessarily represent the classic type of beauty also have a chance, as evidenced by the following statement:

In Warsaw I dropped out after the first stage. Warsaw chooses tall, big brunettes, with a low-set voice, and I was of a very small size and had a boy's face. My mother knows Wiesław Komasa, who was on the committee, my mother called him: "Wiesiek, you could tell me what was wrong, it could be useful for him at exams in other cities." And he told my mother that Komorowska supported me, but I was still too young, I had an unformed vocal apparatus and that I was not the type they were looking for. And he advised my mother: "Let him come to Lodz, because they are looking for weirdos." I did not blame him, because he was not malicious, he spoke with sympathy to help me. (Interview no. 10)

The next stereotype concerns the need to have 'support' in the form of a social and family capital (P. Bourdieu), i.e. connections in the social circle. There is, indeed, a phenomenon of professional reproduction, i.e. acting is often a family tradition. This can be exemplified by one of the interviewed actresses; she was being prepared for this profession since childhood, as the father was the technical manager in three theaters in Kraków, while the mother did folk dance choreography. In her teens, the actress performed at the Bagatela Theater in the play titled *Blue Bird*. In high school, she was involved in an inter-school theater, and then she got into the theater school at her first attempt. And – as a friend from school says about her – she was a top student (A35:76). For my interlocutor, who was exceptionally "at home" in the social world of theater, it was quite natural to choose acting as a professional path:

I am from an acting family, my mother is an actress, my father is a composer, and my stepfather is also an actor [...]. I was often in the theater, behind the scenes [...]. I often went to technical masters and electricians – I sat in the booth and watched performances from there. And I remember the theater buffet very well [...]. I lived with my mother and stepfather in a theater flat at the back of the theater. Administrative facilities and theater structure – it was my "daily bread." The actors I met in the cafeteria were simply my mother's friends, uncles, and aunts. (Interview no. 10)

However, being "at home" in the theater universe is not necessary for it to become an object of fascination or a recognized value. An actor who has had only occasional contact with the art of Melpomene can exemplify this. As a child, he used to visit theaters in Kraków with his parents (they came to performances from Andrychów, 60 km away), but also in his town, cultural groups from Kraków used to

host bands sometimes (A31:98). An authentic interest in this field of art was enough to make his dreams of acting studies the reality. The lack of environmental “empowerment” can be seen as an obstacle, but this is not necessarily the case. An actress from Racibórz, although she attended a theater community in her hometown, was concerned that she would not pass the entrance exams. Her parents supported her choice, but they also did not hide their surprise that a person “without adequate resources” could become a professional actress (A43).²

Another stereotype is associated with the conviction that one must necessarily attend preparatory courses as well as practice diction in order to achieve the goal of getting into one of several public theater universities in Poland: “Considering my problems with diction, stuttering, shyness and low self-esteem, acting seemed like a dream, pie in the sky,” as one of the actors stated (A13:40). He passed the course at his first attempt and is doing well in his profession. It is worth emphasizing that imperfections in theatrical skills that can be eliminated do not disqualify a potential actor.

With all that in mind, I am aware that my attempt to falsify selected stereotypes without statistical data is doomed to failure *a priori*. Stereotypes do not explain all events and we can always find exceptions that challenge stereotypical ideas. Therefore, I cannot invalidate the prevailing opinions based on individual examples. On the other hand, it is worth

² Joanna Stanisł – who examined the first year of students from the Acting School of the National Film, Television and Theater School in Lodz (the beginning of studies in the academic year 2005/2006) – noted that out of 24 people only 2 came from actors’ families. The researcher argued that the fact of being part of an actors’ family “does not facilitate getting into school, nor does it facilitate graduation” (Stanisł 2011:282).

noting that there is a certain unpredictability and indeterminism in the discussed processes.

The large number of applicants for state drama schools means that it is extremely difficult to get into these dream studies the first time round.³ In the memories of many great artists, the rejection by the Examination Board is a sad experience that tested their level of determination and perseverance. One actress’ statement exemplifies this well:

My profession has never let me down. The only painful event was these two failures at the entrance exams. As I tried to get into Krakow, Anna Polony told me for two years in a row that I looked like a twelve-year-old, so I could wait. Before the exams in Warsaw, I went to consultations during which I heard that I sounded bored and that I lisp. And this was right after I received the main prize at the National Festival of One Actor Theaters, where a critic wrote: “This girl interprets Bernhard even better than Łomnicki.” I didn’t know who to believe, I got conflicting information. After the consultation, I cried in the hallway of the drama school and thought it was over. Fortunately, I met a friend who studied there, and he reassured me that they intentionally discourage candidates in such a brutal way so that only those who truly believe in themselves would turn up for the exams. It gave me a kick to keep fighting until finally the third time I succeeded. (A8:76)

One artist who was given four bad grades at the entrance exam “for everything” was discouraged, but sticking to her choice paid off (Kasprzyk and Kędział 2013:19). Many of the candidates rejected by the recruitment committees, who nevertheless realized

³ In the mentioned study by Joanna Stanisł, the majority of the drama students – i.e. 14 out of 24 people – passed the exam at their first attempt (2011:42).

their life plan, later met their examiners at work, during a performance, or on a film set. Their praise was of utmost importance to them, because it eliminated the previous – perhaps too hasty – opinion. The memory of failure from years ago was not so devaluing. It is worth noting that some candidates for actors get into university “conditionally,” and during the education process they have to undertake intensive learning of pronunciation, improve diction, and strengthen self-esteem.

Cultural and economic family capital determines the way an individual functions in the education system. Pierre Bourdieu (2005b) drew attention to the phenomenon of the easier life start for individuals that come from materially-wealthy and culturally-active families. The habits of participating in symbolic culture, especially in the culture of the second system (according to Antonina Kłoskowska’s concept) – acquired through the family home – pay off in the future and are a heritage that is reproduced. Some of the actors come from rural environments in which access to the so-called higher forms of cultural activity – theater, museum, philharmonic – is restricted. In fact, at the beginning of a course in a drama school, students from villages and small towns have a more difficult start, and thus have a weaker orientation in the field of artistic culture. The awareness of deficiencies forces them to make greater effort and generates the need to catch up. It is much easier for people rooted in the social environment, whose relatives or friends are connected with art and/or with the theater, not necessarily the acting profession itself.

Conclusion

The choice of the acting profession results from both defensive and offensive motives. Sometimes

the decision to take exams to get into drama school is dictated by an attempt to change the negative image of oneself, is associated with the desire to break complexes. However, it is much more often the result of a long process of primary and secondary socialization. It is impossible to imagine an actor who has no natural predisposition for stage performances, i.e. talent, which is heavily valorized by the social environment. However, talent as an essential condition for professional success is not enough if it is not backed by work, support from the social circle, and the personal involvement of the individual. In many of the interviews, there was a motive of interest – already in childhood – in the phenomenon of theater. Dressing-up, performances at family celebrations, reciting poems at kindergarten and elementary school were all the beginning of this path. It must be clearly stated that many actors “inherited” talent from their parents (often also artists), but also received support from the social environment in the form of orientation and the strengthening of natural predispositions. Participation in theater groups operating in schools or community centers, visits to children’s theater and then to regular theaters, conversations about art with a “significant other,” and many other environmental factors all mobilize young people to start a career. The good opinions expressed by the social environment, the perception of the individual as a talented person – all of this shapes the individual’s self-esteem and mobilizes her/him to be active. Neither talent nor socialization would be sufficient without internal commitment and specific actions, i.e. without the individual decision and the conscious development of creative dispositions. Therefore, it is not about determination, but about the free choice of a person who makes an autonomous decision about his/her professional future.

A similar explanation of the process of becoming an artist can be found in the work by Maria Gołaszewska, who isolated the conditions determining the realization of the creative attitude: personality conditions, social conditions, and individual conditions (1986:199). In the empirically-oriented esthetics represented by Gołaszewska, artistic creativity is the result of the disposition (creative attitude) of an individual, realized in a specific social environment. Therefore, esthetics meets sociology, because both areas emphasize the impact of exogenous factors, without which the abilities and interests of the individual would only remain in the sphere of pure potentiality. The interactive concept of "significant others" explains the mechanisms involved in the external confirmation of an individual's creative predispositions, building a professional identity.

The sociological concept of identity assumes its social bestowing, confirmation, and transformation (Berger 2012:96). "Identity is not something 'given'. But it is broadcast in the acts of social recognition. So we become what others recognize us as" (Berger 2012:97). Therefore, it is worth emphasizing that "each identity requires specific social affiliations to survive" (Berger 2012:99). If identity is processual and depends on social situations, then we can talk about its "discontinuity" and dynamics (this was the conclusion of researchers representing the Chicago school). For G. H. Mead, the significant other is a person from whom an individual adopts patterns of social behavior in the process of socialization and who influences his/her personality and identity (M. H. Kuhn used the term "orientational other"). At the stage of primary socialization, significant people consist of parents and guardians, while at the stage of secondary socialization, these are other people with whom the individual establishes lasting interpersonal relationships that serve

such a role. They become a relevant point of reference for the individual.

Professional identification is very important in the process of becoming an actor. It is about a sense of bond with people involved in a specific profession, as well as about the interiorization of norms, patterns of behavior, and values specific to this profession. Many factors contribute to the development of professional identification: the attitude to the profession, motivation to work, responsibility for one's actions, satisfaction with the results of one's own involvement in the carrying out of professional tasks, etc.

In this article, I distinguished between five categories of people who are important in the dynamic process of becoming a professional actor, namely: the stimulator, the activator, the stabilizer, the symbolic authority, and the demotivator.

To become a "consecrated" actor, one needs to gain theater education, preferably in one of several public drama schools operating in Poland. The exam for a drama academy is a groundbreaking biographical fact – the beginning of an intensive process of acquiring competence for stage work. It is also the stage at which the actor acquires a role and when the actor's identity is supported by the environment. There are many stereotypes about the entrance exams to the drama school; based on my conversations with the actors, I looked at them more closely and identified phenomena that undermine the thesis about these claims' universality. Completing major studies is not only related to the acquisition of workshop skills. A diploma is a formal and symbolic sign of belonging to the professional world of theater and provides (at least potentially) the opportunity to work in one's dream profession. The analysis of

the process of becoming an actor can be completed at this point. However, this process will continue – some events will involve conscious career-building, the consolidation of the actor's identity, and an in-

crease of his/her position in the social world of the actor, while others will generate states of uncertainty and ambivalence. This, however, is a topic for another study.

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Proces stawania się zawodowym aktorem

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest rekonstrukcja procesu stawania się zawodowym aktorem. Autorka stawia pytanie o motywacje, jakie kierują młodymi ludźmi decydującymi się na studiowanie aktorstwa. Interesuje ją także oddziaływanie znaczących innych na różnych etapach drogi prowadzącej do zawodu. Tekst stanowi też próbę przyjrzenia się stereotypom dotyczącym egzaminów wstępnych i edukacji w publicznych szkołach teatralnych. Bazę empiryczną pracy stanowią wywiady swobodne przeprowadzone przez autorkę z aktorami polskich publicznych teatrów dramatycznych (w latach 2015–2017) oraz wywiady dziennikarskie z artystami teatralnymi opublikowane w pozycjach książkowych i popularnych miesięcznikach w latach 2011–2016.

Słowa kluczowe: aktor teatralny, motywacje wyboru zawodu, znaczący inni, edukacja teatralna

Evaluation in Interaction: The Pragmatic Approach to Artistic Judgement

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Keywords: artistic evaluation, interaction, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss the pragmatic approach to studying artistic evaluation. The paper engages with recent literature and examines current trends in research on amateur and expert artistic judgement, arguing that the pragmatic scholarship has much to offer to the sociology of art and culture. It demonstrates the growth of qualitative research inspired by interpretivist approaches and symbolic interactionism, highlighting the main areas of researchers' interest, such as (1) (Social) interaction between evaluators and artistic objects, or (2) Pragmatic rules and the situational character of artistic evaluation. This paper also identifies research gaps and provides directions for future research.

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There has been a growing interest in evaluation among sociologists, manifested in the proliferation of studies in very diverse empirical fields. Since performance evaluation has increasingly pervaded many aspects of social life, including public policies, organizations, and markets, it has become a major issue for social scientists, leading to the emergence of a new subfield called "the sociology of valuation and evaluation (SVE)" (Lamont 2012a). Within this field, a number of scholars have examined mechanisms of classification and measurement that sustain hierarchies – such as commensuration (Espeland and Stevens 1998), quantification (Espeland and Sauder 2007), or standardization (Timmer-

mans and Epstein 2010) – and analysed the impact of public sorting processes on communities and organizations. A different line of work has focused on the practices of evaluation (Lamont 2012a) and investigated evaluative activities, techniques, and devices, including evaluation criteria, procedures, settings, or the role of interactions in group judgement-making. In particular, there has been a considerable growth of research on scientific evaluation and peer review, shedding new light on the norms of fairness and rules of behavior in expert assessment (e.g. Langfeldt 2004; Lamont 2009; Huutoniemi 2012).

Among many different sociological subfields where valuation and evaluation are systematically explored, economic sociology and cultural sociology (including the sociology of the arts) have experienced particular growth in recent decades (Beljean, Chong, and Lamont 2015). While *valuation* has become a central topic in economics-oriented sociology (Hutter and Stark 2015) – focusing on the valorisation of unique and incommensurable products (music, fine wine, artwork, etc.) (Karpik 2010) – *evaluation* has been associated with the work of critics, experts, or connoisseurs, i.e. people who possess the “license to judge” (Lewandowska 2019) and evaluate the work’s quality, and as such has stood prominently within the sociology of culture and the arts. Under Pierre Bourdieu’s influence (1993), researchers of evaluation have long been interested in the question of legitimacy, expert power, and symbolic capital, studying the role of critics and specialists as “gatekeepers” who establish the standards of quality in artistic fields. With the spread of Bourdieu-inspired cultural sociology all over the world (Lamont 2012b), the question of evaluation in the cultural sector has gained considerable interest and has been tackled from an increasing number of perspectives.

In recent decades, some new perspectives on evaluation have received attention of scholars and encouraged new developments in the field of SVE. In opposition to Bourdieu, scholars in Europe (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) and the United States (Friedland and Alford 1991) have highlighted the existence of plural and parallel grammars of worth and evaluation logics. Work by Boltanski and Thévenot – particularly influential for the sociology of art – emphasizes the plurality of evaluation criteria and analyzes the ways in which people refer to different logics (e.g. market logic, domestic logic, civic logic) to justify their positions. Many sociologists of art drew inspiration from this work, including Nathalie Heinich, who studied the plurality of logics underlying judgments in decision-making panels (1997), and Pascal Gielen, who used the notion of different “value regimes” (2005) to explain heterogeneous standpoints in artistic evaluations. Much less scholarship has engaged in studying how hierarchies are created and sustained through public systems of artistic evaluation. Examples include the analysis of quantification and expert assessment of the arts within performance-based research funding systems – the “implicit” form of artistic evaluation (Lewandowska and Kulczycki 2021).

Beyond the scholarship mentioned above, there has been a dynamic and productive growth of studies focusing on the micropractices and sub-processes of evaluation. Considered to be “pragmatic” (Heinich 2012) or “post-Bourdieuian” sociology of art (Beljean et al. 2015), this line of research owes much to symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the creation of meanings through communication and reciprocal influence of persons and objects (Mead 1932; 1934; Blumer 1969). Drawing on the symbolic interactionist perspective, sociologists have been involved in the “close-up and inductive empiri-

cal analysis” of evaluative processes (Beljean et al. 2015:46), focusing on real-life practices instead of social categories or distinctions. The prominence of this approach and the energy involved in its development suggest a shift toward more practice-based sociology of art.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on this new sociological perspective by discussing recent empirical work on artistic evaluation. First, the paper analyzes the shift from the critical to the pragmatic sociology of art and highlights the key tenets of the latter. Second, it offers a discussion of research that has made an important contribution to our understanding of the processes of artistic evaluation. The concluding section suggests directions for future scholarship.

From the critical to the pragmatic sociology of art

For a long period, sociology of art has been driven by the so-called “critical” approach (Heinich 2010), which aims at demonstrating the collective nature of artistic activities (Becker 1982) and social determination of the artistic value and taste (Bourdieu 1984). In this approach, sociological research focuses on revealing that – behind the creation, genius, and the work itself – there are social conventions and mechanisms of discourse production that make an object appear to be a work of art. This critical sociology deals with what Hennion and Grenier (2000) call a “false consciousness syndrome” – a putatively false belief in individual talent and intrinsic values of artistic products. From the critical perspective, artistic value is not inherent to an object, but to a social construction, the issue of group distinction or identification. A sociological analysis is “an act of unveiling which leaves the king naked” (Hennion

and Grenier 2000:348) by putting under scrutiny the practices and identities of intermediaries – professions, organizations, markets, etc. – who attach value to cultural productions, at the same time upholding public belief in the alleged autonomy of art.

The role of intermediaries and evaluation processes in structuring the social space has been one of the central concerns of cultural sociologists. By asking “Who creates the ‘creator’?” (1980) Bourdieu spotlights the practices of the authorities of legitimation (1993) and conceptualizes artistic value to be a result of social games between the “makers of the work of art” (1980:265). For Bourdieu, an evaluation of art is a production of belief, both in the value of the work and the judgement of the arbiters of taste. Artistic objects and their users are reduced to vehicles of social categories (status, identity, or distinction), and sociological work focuses on the latter, leaving the art object and artistic experience outside the scope of its analysis.

Under the influence of Bourdieu’s work, many present-day sociological studies follow the critical line of reasoning and emphasize the importance of evaluators in cultural consecration and legitimation (Lizé 2016). Key to these studies is the conviction that the social characteristics of intermediaries play an important role in how and what they evaluate, and, therefore, artistic value is socially conditioned and structured (e.g. Janssen 1997; De Nooy 1988; 1999; Guiffre 1999; Gemser, Leenders, and Wijnberg 2008; Cattani, Ferrari, and Allison 2014; Pénet and Lee 2014). In contrast to Bourdieu, Becker (1982) considers artistic evaluations from a more symbolic interactionist perspective and posits that value-making is an *activity* performed collaboratively by members of an art world. Artistic principles and theories that underlie evaluation are developed collectively by

specialists (critics, aestheticians) and used by members of the art world to legitimate artistic work. For Becker, artistic value is not as much determined by social dispositions of evaluators as it is a product of interactions between actors tied into a set of direct relations by conventions – common artistic principles and beliefs tacitly shared by the participants of an art world. Members recognize and learn conventions implicitly: through experience, observation, or embodied cognition. Because conventions guide choices of art world's members and structure artistic practice, individuals who interact with each other develop relatively stable patterns of relations. At the same time, artistic evaluation takes the form it does in a particular situation because of many circumstantial decisions made by artists and intermediaries during interactions. Therefore, Becker's interactionist concept of art world integrates the more deterministic perspective that emphasizes patterns of relations structured by conventions with a more pragmatic, non-prescriptive approach highlighting emergent forms of practice and organization (Gilmore 1990).

The work by Becker has proved very fruitful, significantly improving our understanding of how artworks emerge at the pragmatic and collective level. However, it was the trend that appeared in the French sociology of the 1990s – associated with the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) – that gave rise to what scholars came to call the “pragmatic sociology of art.” “Pragmatism” refers both to the American philosophical tradition and linguistic pragmatism, which analyzes the effects of context on meaning (Heinich 2012). Unlike the critical approach that sees cultural practices and choices as mere expressions of social status, the pragmatic sociology of art inspired by Boltanski and Thévenot has investigated how people mobilize different

socio-cultural registers of evaluation (“orders of worth”) to justify their choices and actions. This approach has been advanced especially by Nathalie Heinich, who conducted studies of artistic intermediaries, such as contemporary art purchasing commissions or heritage expert panels (2007; 2011). To unveil the criteria of judgement that underlie artistic selections, Heinich investigates values that are both privately-held by intermediaries and produced during group evaluations. Through field observations of expert panels and interviews with evaluators, she registers how people justify their particular choices and engage in argumentation to defend their points of view. Instead of directly interrogating participants about the “criteria of evaluation,” she asks them to describe particularly difficult situations and problematic cases (because the analysis of crisis “tells us a lot about social norms” [Heinich 2015]) and derives the respondents' value logics from how they explain and rationalize their decisions and judgements. In this fashion, she reveals the “axiomatic structures embedded in judgements expressed by social actors” – their value orientations, beliefs, and evaluation criteria (Heinich 2015).

By shifting the attention from social positions of evaluators to their personal values, Heinich has been able to develop a sociology of art that points to the situational and practical character of artistic experience. At the same time, by considering evaluation as governed by value systems, her approach is a continuation of previous sociological efforts to explain social action using mental structures that determine its course (habitus, conventions, norms, internal logics). Although this perspective seems to dominate the sociology of art, most recent developments in this field show a growing interest in a different approach – the sociology of artistic micro-practices. This new sociological movement focuses

on “the practical operations through which culture is put into action” (Acord and DeNora 2008:226) – the ways in which people actually interact with, interpret, and make use of the arts in real time. Rather than seeing artistic evaluation as a process regulated by habitus or conventions, which “function as black box into which sociologists dump all unexplained things” (Acord 2010:451) “microsociologists” of art explore mechanisms and actions (how people interact, both with each other and artistic objects) through which evaluation and meaning-making actually take place. From this perspective, the new sociology of art aims at “highlighting local and often haphazard sense-making practice rather than tacit mastery of a normative cultural code” (Acord and DeNora 2008:234). The arrival of this approach has been described as a “performance turn” (Eyerman and McCormick 2006), as it considers artistic experience to be a performative social practice in which practical circumstances of action play a decisive role in how artistic judgements are formed and expressed.

Key to the new microsociological approach is that it expands the sociological analysis to incorporate the content and meaning of artworks. Traditionally, sociologists of art have left the analysis of art objects aside, considering it as something that pertains to art history and criticism, not sociology (Eyerman and McCormick 2006; Acord 2010). Artistic objects have been reduced to social markers, “mere proxies of other social variables” (Beljean et al. 2015:42), or considered as cultural resources and “toolkits” upon which people can draw to construct different strategies of social action (Swidler 1986) (for example, a teenager might use popular art forms, such as industrial metal music, to express his/her individuality within the family). The dominant sociological approach treats the meaning of artworks as

an “epiphenomenal outcome of the process of production itself” (Eyerman and McCormick 2006:2), not as something that emerges in the interaction between the work and its viewer. In contrast to this approach, the new sociology of art “brings objects back in” by acknowledging their performative capacity and context-dependent particularity (Beljean et al. 2015). The point of this work is not to return to the pre-Bourdieuian cultivation of the “charismatic ideology” and the belief in the intrinsic value of the artistic oeuvre. Rather, it is to recognize that art perception and art-making are performative actions, and that it is *in the interaction with art objects* that people’s tastes, judgements, and appreciation habits are redefined and transformed. Under the influence of symbolic interactionism, the new sociological research does not analyze artistic object in the manner assumed by art historians – who focus on content and meaning as given, inherent to the object, or informed by cultures and societies – but, rather, it explores the ways in which meanings and judgements emerge in real-time communication (Vom Lehn, Heath, and Hindmarsh 2001).

The turn toward micropractices and materiality in the sociology of art was mainly inspired by theoretical developments in the neighboring fields. Sociologists of art have built in particular on science and technology studies (STS), including research on the practical and material dimensions of knowledge production. Within this field of research, ethnographers who examined laboratory routines of scientists (e.g. Knorr-Cetina [1999], who focused on molecular biology and high-energy physics) have shown that scientific knowledge emerges from an interplay between cognitive-evaluative frames (epistemic cultures) and materiality (how objects mediate action). Instead of seeing material objects as mere results or records of human actions, those studies have high-

lighted the role of non-human actors in interaction, as well as the interdependence of cognitive and material components of knowledge-making. The agency of material objects was further conceptualized by the actor-network theory, which provided the term *actants* to describe all non-human entities that can be granted to be the source of an action (Latour 1996). As actants, material objects can influence and enable action – not because they “cause” action in the literal sense, but because they provide opportunities for perception and/or action (Acord and DeNora 2008). This perspective has been enhanced by sociologists of art who proposed that the agentic power of objects lies in their capacity to “lend themselves to,” or “afford,” uses (DeNora 2003:28). As Acord and DeNora argue, “It is through their access and use that [objects] can be understood to enable forms of activity. It is through the intersection of a dancer’s movement and the given choreography that an interpretation of the scene, and the ballet, is aroused” (2008:228).

By recognizing the agentic power of objects – their capacity to influence practices and shape human activity – these studies have elucidated the concrete “pragmatics” of art-making and taste, providing useful tools for the new sociology of art (Griswold, Mangione, and McDonnell 2013). This line of work has powerfully contributed to research on artistic evaluation, traditionally concerned with all-encompassing and often sociologically vague types of intermediaries (institutions, professions, organizations), by turning sociologists’ attention to more realistic and physical processes of mediation in action. Unlike “intermediaries,” typically used by sociologists for deconstruction purposes, “mediations” are of pragmatic status (Hennion and Grenier 2000) – one studies them not to *expose* anything, but to better understand the interplay between multiple

devices and procedures of art-making, physical features of an artwork, and techniques and rituals of perception within which specific value judgements become associated with particular works of art.

The pragmatic approach to artistic evaluation – examples from the field

New works in the sociology of the arts offers empirically-oriented studies investigating artistic experience “in action.” They are based on methodologies that allow detailed, qualitative, and inductive analyses of evaluative practices. Informed by the symbolic interactional perspective, the pragmatic sociology of the arts puts emphasis on (i) (social) interaction between evaluators and artistic objects, and (ii) the pragmatic rules and the situational character of artistic evaluation.

(Social) interaction between evaluators and artistic objects

Focusing on ordinary activities and circumstances in which people experience artistic objects, the current sociology of art demonstrates that artistic evaluation is an interactional achievement. Instead of building upon theoretical models of art consumption or socially-deterministic concepts of dispositions, sociologists engage in studying “practical aesthetics” (Heath and Vom Lehn 2004) – the actual ways in which people come to appreciate works of art. Through observations and interviews with participants of evaluation processes, they pinpoint small-scale actions, words, and gestures that mediate group and individual assessments. In opposition to the view that aesthetic judgment is primarily a cognitive or mental construct, these studies highlight the role of situated and *ad hoc* conditions in which judgments are made, including the material-

ity of objects, the physical presence and behavior of other people, the characteristics of settings in which the perception takes place, etc.

One of the topics studied by the new sociology of art is how verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal communication mediates aesthetic evaluations. The process of communicating artistic judgements is by no means trivial. Researchers demonstrate that even professionally-trained critics often find it difficult to verbalize their judgements and, in order to convey their opinions, they use bodily gestures and vague expressions – “container words” (“it swings,” “it works,” “it feels right,” etc.) (Abbing 2002) – referring to locally shared and intelligible standards. This has been observed across different artistic fields. For example, in his study of jazz auditions, Nylander (2014) looks at how jury members make and justify their selections of candidates for music school programs. He shows that in their justifications, experts revolve around the question of whether the candidate “does something,” and they use bodily gestures such as “finger-snapping” to recreate performances of successful applicants (Nylander 2014:79). The vague and abstracts notions of “musicality,” “personality,” or “artistry” play a much more significant role in evaluations than more objective competencies, such as technical skills or harmonic knowledge. Moreover, instead of comparing music performances against high-quality standards, the judges use negative referents and evaluate candidates in opposition to what they frame as “epigones” (conventional and unoriginal musicians) or “heretics” (eccentric and rule-breaking). Research in other artistic fields seems to support this finding. Focusing on the literary field, Merriman (2017) also recognizes that experts draw on shared conceptions of bad (instead of good) work to evaluate artistic

productions. Through the observation of an editorial board’s meetings during which experts select stories for publication, the researcher finds out that humorous talk about what panellists consider as “bad fiction” allows to produce shared evaluation standards and is a source of social interaction. The exchange of witty and negative comments about the “amusingly bad” material establishes power hierarchies in the group, as the most sharpened-tongued members are usually those who enjoy the highest group status.

Studying visual arts, Acord (2010) offers a neo-phenomenological analysis of contemporary art curators. She examines how they go about creating meanings and evaluating artworks in the practical and physical process of exhibition installation. Her analysis shows that exhibition production is a situated decision-making process that involves mixing and matching different elements of artworks in the gallery space, and evaluating whether the particular combination “feels right.” When curators and artists discuss installations, they use “container words” and gestures to achieve mutual verification of their perceptual abilities and convey their shared understanding of the embodied codes and conventions.

The above-mentioned studies concern expert evaluations, but much pragmatic-sociological work has been dedicated to more “ordinary” users of culture. Specifically, there has been a growing interest in how museum and gallery visitors experience artefacts in daily circumstances, and how those circumstances affect their perceptions and judgements. Scholars have examined how physical constraints of exhibitions, as well as the presence of other people (their bodily orientation, gestures, and talk) influence the ways in which artistic content is encountered and received. For example, Bruder and Ucok (2000) an-

analyze talk and discussion among visitors to an art gallery. The analysis of conversations demonstrates that evaluative statements – expressions of (dis)like, appreciation, or criticism – are the essential part of people’s interactions in art spaces and that evaluations are interactive accomplishments, as they arise through communication. Adipa (2019) explores the role of interaction in evaluation at “talking events” (exhibition openings, talks by artists, etc.) and illustrates how both the behavior and the talk of other people frame the lens through which one sees art. Her case study shows that, for example, suggestions of strangers to “stand farther away from the piece,” or critical comments accidentally overheard during a gallery visit, can re-direct people’s physical and cognitive orientations, leading to a reevaluation of one’s reactions to objects and artefacts.

While some authors focus primarily on verbal communication between museum visitors, others take a more holistic approach and investigate how different elements of socially-organized artistic experience – i.e. talk, visual orientation and, bodily conduct of participants (including visitors’ companions, strangers, or museum staff) – as well the materiality of the exhibit and the space all condition the ability to experience and appreciate art. Drawing on video-based field investigations and ethnographies of social interactions in museums and galleries, Heath and Vom Lehn (2004) analyze how visitors accomplish collaborative evaluations through practical action (also see Vom Lehn et al. 2001). They offer many examples of how visitors shape each other’s orientations to paintings or artefacts, and encourage one another to look at and react to objects in particular ways. In the fragment cited below, the researchers analyze how two women, Annie and Freda, examine a display of 18th-century porcelain at the Victoria and Albert Museum:

Freda begins by explaining what she is trying to find in the cabinet. As she says “I was trying to see . . .” – she points to a particular object in the display cabinet. The gesture is momentarily held over the surface of the cabinet and Annie moves closer, but does not immediately turn towards the object. Freda slightly orients towards Annie and, finding that she is not looking at the object, transforms the projected course of her utterance. She refashions what she is about to say, turning it into a question: ‘You’ve seen these called Bellarmine Jugs?’ rather than a statement. With the restart, she thrusts the gesture back and forth towards the object, providing Annie with a more specific reference and encouraging her to look at the object. With the thrusting gesture, Annie turns and looks at the jug. (...) Moments later, Annie turns away from the jugs, looks down, and moves to touch one of the porcelain fragments on the shelf below. Freda notices the gesture and immediately grasps the very object that Annie has tentatively approached. Annie takes hold of the adjoining fragment and comments ‘Yes all these bits, isn’t that good?’ (Heath and Vom Lehn 2004:47)

The fragment demonstrates that participants’ bodily and visual conduct serves to establish the mutuality of visual alignment and provides resources through which the object is discovered, examined, and evaluated. In a similar vein, Steier, Pierroux, and Kränge (2015) investigate episodes from a national museum where groups of visitors interact with different art objects; the authors illustrate how talk and movement both facilitate collaborative meaning-making and evaluation. They trace how two friends, Wendy and Rita, examine *The Thinker* by Auguste Rodin with the use of gestures to direct the friend’s attention to particular elements of the sculpture (hands, the chin, etc.), thus collaboratively producing interpretations and evaluating the artist’s skills in communicating the meaning:

Wendy's comment that *The Thinker* "doesn't appear to be thinking" opens the meaning of the work to different levels of interpretation. (...) Rita, in turn, focuses on the figure's chin to construct an interpretation that he *is* thinking [emphasis added]. When Rita attends to the figure's chin in this process of evaluation, she employs a series of embodied and gestural acts (...). She moves directly into a posing gesture by bringing her hand to her own chin to mimic the pose of the figure. In forming this pose, she is able to construct a representation for her friend of what thinking should look like. (Steier, Pierroux, and Krange 2015:32–33)

By providing rich descriptions of the interactional dynamics taking place in art spaces, these studies demonstrate that the ways of seeing art are constituted mutually and in an ongoing exchange and negotiation between participants. They also underline the role of non-human agents by showing how the physical characteristics of objects and environments shape people's perceptions and actions. In their study of gallery visitors, Griswold and colleagues argue that artistic experiences are determined by relationships not simply between people and artefacts, but, rather, among "physical, spatial, textual, and temporal factors" (2013:351) that mediate the encounter of people and art objects. The authors provide an example:

If an exhibition's audio-guide features an extensive discussion of a particular work, visitors with the guide congregate around that work as they listen. Their clustered bodies impede other visitors from viewing the work, thereby producing two rings around the art object: a temporarily stable inner ring of people who are experiencing the work in some depth and a shifting outer ring of those who are catching only fleeting glimpses. Neither the characteristics of the visitors (demographic, prior experience with art and/or with

museums, motivations for coming to the exhibition) nor the characteristics of the object will predict this; it is a material outcome produced by the relationship of bodies in space, a relationship itself produced by words (the audio-guide) and the object (size, fixed position, importance attributed to it). (Griswold et al. 2013:351)

Physical location – that natural and built environment in which the object is shown and where evaluations are formed – also matters. Babon's (2006) analysis of people's reactions to urban sculptures emphasizes the role of context (the sculpture's relationship to the environment) in individual and public (press) evaluations. She demonstrates that art in urban spaces is assessed primarily in terms of how it interacts with the environment and resonates with the identity of place. In line with Griswold et al., she underscores the multiplicity of actants in human-art encounters, adding to the general understanding of how materiality informs action.

Pragmatic rules and the situational character of artistic evaluation

An important constraint on evaluation is how experts define judgement criteria and rules that govern the evaluative process (Lamont 2012a). Sociologists have shown that evaluators in cultural fields adopt the pragmatic approach to evaluations, i.e. instead of relying on a fixed and consistent set of quality standards, they define the quality of a piece in relation to other productions being evaluated (Lamont 2009). They also give priority to different points of reference at different times, as the selection of criteria depends on the features of productions under consideration. This evaluative approach is clearly at odds both with the "charismatic ideology," which emphasizes intrinsic qualities of art, and the critical

sociology of art, which privileges social factors (status, race, gender, etc. of evaluators, artists, etc.) and conceptualizes them as the determinants of evaluative choices.

Those sociologists of art who work with the pragmatic perspective (be it explicitly or implicitly) have investigated the criteria and rules of evaluation in different contexts, ranging from expert panels to individual critics and amateur consumers. In their study of panellists from a theater competition, Lewandowska and Smolarska (2020) find that the rules and norms that experts feel obliged to obey are not defined *a priori* but emerge when groups coordinate themselves in the deliberation process. What feels to them as fair decision-making is defined through the lens of practical concerns of the evaluation process, including the fact that they need to reach an agreement within a short span of time and that they have a limited number of prizes to award. Panellists think strategically rather than idealistically about their work, and hold the pragmatic understanding of group democracy. The criteria of evaluation are neither formalized nor universal – each production is assessed with the use of categories that experts consider relevant to it (see Lewandowska 2020). The criteria change over time, as reviewers evaluate performances with reference to those seen before, and discover new dimensions of comparability.

Pragmatic rules of evaluation are not restricted to group judgement-making. Chong (2013) demonstrates that literary critics engage in different strategies to assure the validity of their opinions and sustain their desired self-concepts as fair reviewers. Her study highlights different factors that critics take into account (e.g. whether or not to review a book by someone they personally know) in order to achieve and maintain the reliability of their judgements.

Hanrahan (2013), in turn, reveals the situated nature of evaluative rules and criteria in music criticism. Drawing on interviews with critics, she concludes that music reviewing is a combination of an analysis of the work's properties, its contextualization within the existing musical canons, and communication of the personal experience of hearing the music. This characteristics suggest that artistic evaluation is not really about the application of prescriptive aesthetic categories that guide cognitive processing. Rather, a critic's reactions to artwork's singularities play a leading role in how art is experienced and perceived.

The situational character of artistic experience has also been studied by scholars focusing on amateurs. A growing body of research has acknowledged everyday circumstances in which people e.g. listen to music or watch television, and has brought attention to different forms of practice and engagement involved in those activities (Heath and Vom Lehn 2004). Particularly useful here is Hennion's theory of attachment as well as his studies of amateur music lovers (2001; 2007). Hennion disagrees with the view that people's tastes and listening practices simply reflect their social categories. Instead, he emphasizes the performative aspects of taste and evaluation, i.e. the fact that amateurs engage in various "strategies for personal listening" which allow them to appreciate music, create attachments, and be "taken over" by a musical piece. These strategies include various ways in which people prepare their bodies and minds for perception: how they use media (radio, discs, concerts, etc.), arrange spaces for listening, and put themselves in the right frame of mind to enable moments of intense concentration and passion. By focusing on those rituals, the author highlights the embodied processes in which people and objects coproduce one another; music

moves and transforms the listener, while the listener shapes the environment for the musical experience.

Along similar lines, Benzecry (2011; see also Benzecry and Collins 2014) examines how opera fans enact various “microtechniques of listening” and self-train themselves to achieve a deeper experience of music appreciation. He observes how opera fanatics engage in a range of consumption micropractices, including bodily self-absorption and self-cultivation (e.g. closing their eyes and tuning out the surrounding), and how they achieve collective attunement by taking part in group rituals and experiencing affective reactions in close resonance with others. The basis for these practices is the local community of opera fans rather than an external macrosocial structure (as the critical-sociological theory would suggest).

The process of becoming an opera lover is interactional and takes place through practice, as new opera fans take into account the gestures and talk of experienced admirers, and compare other’s responses and evaluations to their own.

Personal reactions to the singularities of artistic objects also play an important role in group identification. In her study of erotic arts clubs, Wohl (2015) finds that members confirm or deny feelings of group belonging on the basis of aesthetic evaluations. Her study shows that people feel attached to those who share their reactions to particular characteristics of artworks and distance themselves from those who judge art differently. Commonalities and distinctions are discovered and sustained through face-to-face evaluations of aesthetic objects, strengthening or weakening feelings of group belonging. Rather than being about social origins of evaluators, it is the

situated process of judgement-making that bounds and constitutes social groups.

Conclusion

While many new paths of the pragmatic research on evaluations are still emerging and it is premature to try to define its boundaries, there are some common features shared by the studies discussed in this review. Firstly, they are based on qualitative, interpretive approaches. Inspired (sometimes implicitly) by symbolic interactionism, they explore how meanings, interpretations, and evaluations are being created and change through interaction. This review has demonstrated a broad array of settings and circumstances in which interactionist judgement-making takes place. Pragmatic sociologists have investigated various types of evaluators, from art critics and panel experts who define and negotiate evaluation criteria collaboratively, to “ordinary” museum visitors forming judgements through verbal, para-verbal, and nonverbal exchange. Secondly, research presented in this paper rejects the objectivistic and structuralist perspective of critical sociology, which considers artistic taste as a measure of socio-professional status according to predefined categories (Hennion 2001). At the same time, it is not relativistic; as Fine puts it, “while a pragmatic approach denies that anything necessarily goes, it examines outcomes without presuppositions” (1993:66). The pragmatic sociology of art aims to be mostly descriptive and analytical, and refrains from normative statements, breaking with Bourdieu’s essentially critical “sociology of domination” (Heinich 2012).

The field of research into artistic evaluation has been growing dynamically, but there remain important gaps in literature, which should be ad-

dressed in future investigations. A number of significant evaluation constraints have not been examined in depth so far, such as evaluators' self-identities, i.e. how they understand their social roles and act to verify their ideas of who they are (Stets and Burke 2003). Related to this issue is the question of emotional work. Researchers have demonstrated how emotions are performed and managed in group evaluations (Lamont 2009), but little is known about how these mechanisms work in artistic fields. Finally, there is much work to be done in what Fine (1993) calls the "macrointeractionist" research. Symbolic interaction is typically viewed from a micro-sociological perspective focusing on face-to-face interactions as opposed to

macro-sociological issues: systems, organizations, institutions, etc. (Becker and McCall 1990). Becker's (1982) idea of art as a "collective activity" made it possible to bridge social interaction and social organization, but much remains to be done in order to understand artistic evaluation from a macro-level interactionist perspective. This issue could be addressed by studying public systems of evaluation in the artistic sector as well as "the effects of webs of meaning and culture" (Fine 1993:79) those systems are grounded in. Since meanings and cultures emerge from small-scale negotiations, many large-scale systems can ultimately be viewed as interaction systems and studied from the symbolic-interactionist perspective.

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Ewaluacja jako interakcja. Pragmatyzm w badaniach ocen artystycznych

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest omówienie pragmatycznego kierunku w badaniach ewaluacji artystycznych. Praca opiera się na pogłębionych studiach literaturowych i analizuje najnowsze trendy w badaniach nad amatorską i ekspercką oceną artystyczną, a także pokazuje użyteczność podejścia pragmatycznego dla socjologii kultury i sztuki. W artykule omówiono badania jakościowe czerpiące z paradygmatu interpretatywnego oraz interakcjonizmu symbolicznego i zidentyfikowano główne obszary zainteresowań socjologów pragmatycznych, między innymi (1) społeczne interakcje między ewaluatorami i obiektami artystycznymi, (2) pragmatyczne reguły i sytuacyjny charakter artystycznych ewaluacji. Ukazano ponadto luki w literaturze i zaproponowano kierunki dla przyszłych badań.

Słowa kluczowe: ocena artystyczna, interakcja, pragmatyzm, interakcjonizm symboliczny

Two Paradigms – Two Art Worlds: On Constructing the Difference as a Strategy for Validating the Concept of the Artist and Art

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Abstract: The subject of the article is two art worlds in the field of visual arts which currently exist side by side in Poland. These worlds operate as part of two different paradigms of art, which is why two different definitions of the art and artist apply to them, and, in consequence, also different models of operation. What is important in the case of both communities is the process of constructing the difference and separating out their own communities of meanings, being a strategy to lend credence to their own concept of the art and artist, as well as their position in the art world. The aim of the article is to describe the process of constructing internal boundaries in the Polish art world and its division into two separate worlds, what means have been used in that process, as well as what are the consequences of belonging to the two separate art worlds for their participants.

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To an average observer, the art world described by Howard Becker as “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce(s) the kind of art works that art world is noted for” seems to be quite uniform. He/She will easily separate out in the public space specific institutions and actors which make up the contemporary art world, which, in turn, will appear to him/her to be simply another manifestation of the centuries-old tradition. However, what that observer will see will merely be, to quote Anthony

Cohen, “the common mask,” i.e. “the public face” of the contemporary art world, which pretends to be uniform but masks “the private face,” which is full of diversity and full of visible boundaries between individual communities (2001:73–74). Artists also “mask the differentiation within itself by using or imposing a common set of symbols,” which is why it is important to “discriminate between the common mask and the complex variations which it conceals” rather than describe and analyze this public medium (Cohen 2001:73).

In this article, I focus on artists who create in the area of visual arts as well as on the process of constructing difference, which is an internal boundary between the artistic communities which construct it. The difference results from two different art paradigms – i.e. the modern paradigm and the contemporary one – which exist side by side in the Polish art world and define art and the artist so differently that they, in fact, divide that art world into two separate and incompatible art worlds.

The first paradigm – the modern one – is predominant in the concept of art taught at prestigious universities and practiced by a significant part of professors of fine arts in art schools; it is also common in exhibition programs of the BWA galleries (Artistic Exhibitions Bureaux), which operate in the capitals of the former voivodeships, as well as among the artists associated in the ZPAP (the Association of Polish Artists and Designers) and among continuators of the tradition of plein-air workshops and artistic symposia. I would refer to that model of art and the artistic community connected with it as “the peripheral modernity.” The peripherality does not refer to the geographical location of the individual centers but, rather, to their marginal significance; continuing the modern paradigm, but without

avant-garde ambitions, these artists hold a secondary position with respect to the mainstream art in Poland and in the world.

The second model, i.e. the contemporary paradigm, is something that I would call “the mainstream contemporariness.” The paradigm has originated as a result of criticism of modernity, which is said to be too academic and devoid of avant-garde ambitions. It involves artists connected with the so-called mainstream, i.e. represented by such institutions as centers for contemporary art, avant-garde galleries, and foundations. In the article, the concept of the mainstream will be understood as related to the main, dominant discourse and its circulation in contemporary art worldwide.

The aim of the article is to demonstrate the process in which the artist and art are constructed, and, owing to it, the internal boundaries in the Polish art world as well as divisions within it. It is important to present the means used in that process as well as the consequences – for the participants – of belonging to the separate art worlds. What will be crucial to achieve this purpose is to determine which actors and in what capacity participate in the processes which are important to the art world, as well as who has been authorized to construct valid definitions of the artist and art, what values are involved in the construction processes, what actions and interactions are then initiated by the actors, and what meanings they assign to those actions and interactions.

Research material and methodology

When writing about the “peripheral modernity” in this article, I use the results of the empirical research conducted in the years 2017–2019 among the visual

art artists living and working in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. It was qualitative research: I conducted over 60 one-to-one in-depth interviews with artists as well as over 100 hours of participant observation at art institutions in the region. Furthermore, I conducted a qualitative analysis of the contents of the publications accompanying exhibitions as well as of radio programs (in the form of an interview in the artist's studio) prepared by the regional branch of the Polish Radio.¹

What I adopted as the main analytical strategy in my research was the grounded theory methodology (Konecki 2000; Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 2009). The choice of the grounded theory resulted from two factors. First, the research concerned the process and personal experience of the actors participating in it, and the above-mentioned theory focuses on the importance of the analysis of actions and processes. The constructivist grounded theory put forward by Kathy Charmaz makes one sensitive to the multi-faceted nature of constructivist practices. Second, the decision resulted from the need to limit the projection of my own professional knowledge and experience on the direction of the research and the subsequent analysis of data. For over ten years, I worked as a curator of exhibitions, a theoretician, and an art critic, as well as I cooperated with artists based both in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and in places considered to be centers of contemporary art. It allowed me to gather knowledge of the unique character of the individual milieus, but also involved the risk of formulating conclusions based on intuition rather than data.

¹ The radio programs were attached in the form of a CD to three volumes of the *Sztuka Podkarpacia* album; volume 1, volume 2/2011, volume 3/2013 (ed. Magdalena Rabizo-Birek, Rzeszów: Podkarpackie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych).

In the case of the second art world – the “mainstream contemporariness” – I used the collective case study method (Stake 1994). In the article, I present the study of three cases, namely three institutions connected with contemporary art: the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art (UC CCA), the Raster Gallery, and the Foksal Gallery Foundation (FGF). At the time when they began their activity, each of them was something completely new and unprecedented in Poland. Additionally, their activities dominated the public debate on art and art institutions in the short term. I did not include other significant but less influential institutions in this group, such as the Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, because the status of a national gallery meant that it was also obliged to present conservative art. Choosing between the Wyspa Gallery in Gdańsk and the UC CCA in Warsaw, I was guided by the criterion of the extent of influence on the artistic life in Poland in a given period. Thus, the lack of institutions such as the CCA Łaźnia in Gdańsk (inauguration in 1998), the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (inauguration in 2008), the MOCAK in Kraków (inauguration in 2010) is due to the fact that they were founded when certain changes had already taken place. In my opinion, the three selected institutions illustrate all the changes and their chronology in the best possible way.

As part of the research, I analyzed the content of the available materials: the texts which accompanied the exhibitions and the critical texts published in *Obieg* (the magazine about art published by the UC CCA), the collection of texts titled *Raster. Macie swoich krytyków. Antologia tekstów*, edited by Jakub Banasiak (2009), and the texts published on the websites of the institutions covered by the research. During the analysis, I used the categories developed earlier, and focused on the definitions of the artist

and art, the social actions taken by the actors, and the values recognized by them.

In the article, an imbalance regarding the depth of the exploration of both art worlds can be perceptible. In the case of “the mainstream contemporariness,” I present the results of the first stage of the research (I am planning to conduct one-to-one in-depth interviews with artists at the next stage), which is why they are preliminary, but in my opinion sufficient to outline the specificity of this art world.

Moreover, I analyze the initial periods of these institutions’ functioning, as they have changed over the past two decades (i.e. the UC CCA has lost its leading position to the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, and the anti-system Raster Gallery has turned into a commercial gallery).

Two art paradigms

Nathalie Heinich (2014; 2019) distinguishes between three leading paradigms in the history of the Western visual art: the paradigms of classical, modern, and contemporary art.

The paradigm of classical art strictly adhered to the academic rules of depiction shaped for several centuries, and it concerned the principle of correct composition, perspective, and use of colors. Modern art (modernism) – associated with the emergence of such movements as impressionism, expressionism, cubism, abstraction, etc. – broke with these rules, and it made expression of the artist’s inner life the art’s main task, but the changes in the rules of depicting were only formal (Heinich 2019:34-35). Piotr Piotrowski (1999:266) defines modernism as “an international style based on the autonomy of the artistic subject and dominance of

esthetics.” According to the author, the main strategy of modernism was to neutralize the framework (context) and to melt the art work into “the uniformist world of the common *artistic idiom*” (Piotrowski 1999:266), which, in consequence, led to the situation in which modernism demonstrated features of formalism and supported the “utopia of the universal language.” Piotrowski believes that such a style was always convenient for any type of authority, because it was a style which “avoided critical references to the reality, and was, in fact, decoration which could be defended against trivialization only by discourses of esthetics. History, which was sometimes incorporated in it, tended to be quickly disarmed, and the modernist art work triumphed with the apparent power of its autonomy” (Piotrowski 1999:266).

What is useful in understanding the paradigm of modern art is the concept put forward by Niklas Luhmann (2016), who perceived art as a social system. According to this notion, art is a closed system in terms of its operation, and it produces for itself all operations it needs for its own continuation. In this approach, the history of art is “the conversation of some art works with others,” and “does not contain anything imported from outside”; the autonomy of the art system consists in the fact that “the artist is well-oriented in the world of works created earlier and his/her own creative programs” (Piotrowski 1999:278). The differentiation takes place in the context of works which are already recognized and theories which already function; what is more, it requires a limitation of the social factors which apply to the way in which works are created and received, as the art work must be able to differentiate itself from something else; “it must be able to identify that it is about art” (Piotrowski 1999:276); the reduction of contacts with the sur-

rounding environment is aimed at protecting the boundaries of one's own definition of art.

Heinich also describes two significant changes which took place in the history of art. The first one was the transition from the classical paradigm to the modern one, and the second change was the appearance of the contemporary paradigm, which replaced the modern one as the main trend. The process of the change began in the 1950s and the early 1960s, when pop-art, New Realism and Viennese Actionism emerged (Heinich 2014:35). The precursor and originator of those changes in art was Marcel Duchamp, who was interested in ideas rather than in visual products. In 1917, he created his most significant ready-made work (*Fountain*), considered by art historians to be iconoclastic in an innovative way and to have the biggest influence on the development of art in the 20th and the 21st century. Duchamp's gesture initiated the conceptual movement, which became crucial for contemporary art at a later stage, but, as Grzegorz Dziamski indicates, what gained advantage as early as in the 1920s was the modernist concept of art, which was embodied in abstraction, whereas the critical avant-garde was pushed off to the margin, outside the main developmental trend of the 20th-century art (2010:10). Various formulas of modernity developed as part of modernism, but what has been the leading formula up till now is different varieties of abstraction, such as geometric abstraction, organic abstraction, structural abstraction, or gestural painting.

In the contemporary paradigm, in turn, the only function of the boundaries is for them to be crossed, as the art is annexing more and more areas, such as politics, religion, or social problems. Artists take intermediary actions, create in alternative spaces outside the framework of traditional institutions,

put emphasis on the process-oriented nature of projects, sometimes resign from a material art work, and are satisfied with their role in leading to a given situation or experience. The very structure of the art world and popular practices constitutes a medium in their hands, at the same time changing the rules of participation of the viewer, who not only establishes the meaning of art works and actions, but also influences their final form and course.

Peripheral modernity

What is characteristic of the artistic community which believes that the modern paradigm is still binding and inspiring is its striving to make the art work and artist as autonomous as possible. Its members believe that the art work is the creation of isolated individuals. Furthermore, in their opinion, only artists are experts in the field of art, so it is them themselves who perform most of the tasks connected with the functioning of the art world. In addition, the fact that they are employed by art institutions and schools helps to sustain the myth of the disinterestedness of art, which is created and exhibited during leisure time, and that its optional sale is not the main source of income.

In the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, most galleries and exhibition rooms are managed by artists who hold the position of institutions' directors or specialists in a given exhibition program. In such a case, those artists also play the role of curators of their colleagues' exhibitions, but the way in which the curator's task is understood here is different than in mainstream institutions. Usually, the author himself/herself chooses the works, arranges the exhibition on the gallery's premises, whereas the curator is merely the author of the *text* to the catalog which had been agreed with the artist, as well as

he/she officially opens the exhibition. The inclusion of another person, i.e. a curator, seemingly makes the operation of peripheral galleries similar to the mainstream ones. However, the attitude toward curators is definitely negative; their actions are associated with manipulation and distortion of art:

Well, now it's the curator will tell you what art is. Curator's position is a bit similar to law. Unfortunately, often it isn't important if somebody is guilty or innocent, but if we can prove it. I'm sorry that I'm saying so, but it sounds as if it was cynical and nonsense. But here this is the case. (22W54)

It is the same with the willingness to make money on art:

I know that the curator is a nice institution, but he/she wants to earn. (51M51)

Curators are perceived as a threat to the existing order and to artists who are in charge of art institutions:

Once I've heard an opinion that "if you want to have curators, why would anybody need you?" (51M51)

Artists who are authorized to construct valid definitions of the art and artist are those, who are recognized by its participants and have the status of the "master," which, in practice, means professors of academies of fine arts as well as artists who have achieved formal mastery confirmed by awards in international competitions. Curators and art theorists do not play a major role either in the process of creating the definitions or in new strategies of institutions' activities, as is the case with critics, who tend to be popularizers of artistic events rather than an important voice in the discussion.

What constitutes the point of reference in the Podkarpacie Voivodeship for all actions and processes is not avant-garde institutions, but the milieu of professors of academies of fine arts who are in charge of traditional art studios and galleries which present traditional art. In a broader perspective, which can be concluded from the examples provided in the statements, what inspires is not the contemporary art capitals, such as Berlin or London (or even Warsaw), but, rather, Paris of the first half of the 20th century, which has been the model of true art for traditional milieus for many decades.

What proves these professors' high status is the fact that as experts they are jurors in art competitions, and the BWA galleries take pride in having their works in local collections, as well as they are particularly cherished as participants of plein-air workshops (their presence raises the status of a plein-air workshop, competition, or collection).

In terms of the values considered to be the most important in artistic practice, truth ranks first. The statements of the artists covered by the research suggest that it is understood as sincerity of the statements and consistency with one's own personality, which is quite significant in that paradigm – art's main task is to express the artist's internal states:

I appreciate truth. The truth which allows looking inside oneself in a reflexive way. It's not always the case that my truth is the only truth. What's important is that someone owns a mistake, [important] to looking for the truth. Admits that they miss it. I appreciate the fact that somebody doesn't pretend anything while creating. That they aren't coy. (18W50)

Looking for truth in expressing oneself is not a fast and easy process, which is why the creative process is often described as a struggle or even a fight:

What's the most important to me is sincerity. Sincerity toward the painting, toward oneself. I also appreciate the process of struggling with creative work. (21W50)

What also appears in the statements in the context of truth is intuition and spontaneity, because the interviewed respondents believe that truth can be achieved through succumbing oneself to emotions and turning off the thought process, whereas any strategies of actions and rational decisions which are intentional and planned in advance are considered to be something insincere and are associated with negative values:

What's the most important to me now is to have some sort of truth, I don't want to invent something, some symbolisms, I'm not interested in trends, or that I will paint something in and it will be nice and striking... It was done to win acclaim, to say something, now I want it to be sincere. (08M42)

The artists from the group covered by the research distinguish themselves mainly through the form rather than the content of their works. The latter is only the pretext for the "formal search" in which, apart from truth and sincerity, esthetic values are important:

I appreciate sincerity and strictly esthetic values. I wouldn't like to come up with any message or philosophy to it, the only important thing to me is the visual aspect of the painting. (28W40)

In fact, I don't raise any topic. The topic is included in the form. (19W31)

Formal values are appreciated because of their timeless versatility; artists separate their works from the current social problems and politics, and tend to focus on existential issues, making them the main content of their message:

To me, art is a sort of escape from what's outside, it brings me closer to what's inside me. It's the essence of the entirety. I'm more interested in what's inside than in what's outside. (14M62)

[The most important thing is – A.S.D.] a worthy message which is aimed at something good, certainly quality of work and how the art work is understood... I think I want to move people and encourage them to think about the issue of sacrum and about themselves, about what we do and experience. (15M35)

One of the interviewees accurately summed up the rules which apply to the creation and presentation of art among artists from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship:

It's classical rather than avant-garde art. It features a lot of safe activity which might appeal to people. There are few actions which I appreciate in art, that is art which has something to say. Most things here are intended to be presented and not to convey a message. They are supposed to look good rather than carry a message. (04M44)

The art-related actions which are taken and promoted by artists refer to the model developed in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Artists study at academies of fine arts or faculties of art at other universities (the former are considered to be the most prestigious) in the field of traditional media (painting, graphic art, sculpture),

and they learn skills as a part of this process. Then, artists develop their formal skills participating in plein-air workshops, symposia and competitions. Local groups of artists keep when being in touch with similar groups in other cities and professors teaching at academies of fine arts, in the process of inviting each other to plein-air workshops and competitions.

What is problematic for them in the reception of contemporary art is not its controversial contents, but, rather, its insufficient formal and esthetic values of art works. On the one hand, artists respect the “Marcel Duchamp’s gesture” and are aware of its consequences for the development of art. On the other hand, however, they still use modernist, formal criteria of assessment:

That world (I call it “false,” where artists play roles from various other disciplines) is sanctioned, because such channels and such possibilities have appeared as expression by those artists through that art, which has ceased to make references to pure art, and it is based on sociology, philosophy, history, music, on some para-theatrical activities, and now we participate in a huge, mad system which has legalized fiction, inconsistency, sloppy work, ignorance... Everything heads toward a disaster, and heading toward a disaster has been, somehow, completely excluded from the genuine, sincere circulation which has shaped the human being who would like to understand the language of visual arts, to make it his/her own language and learn on its basis. (25M60)

The analysis of artists’ opinions about contemporary art leads to the conclusion that they are based mainly on information about scandals which is taken out of a broader context:

In the contemporary visual arts there is a lot of trash, vile behavior, because somebody is promoted because he/she has sold an unremarkable painting for 250 thousand pounds, and there is a huge hype in media about it. There should be more humbleness and respect. A group of installation artists; they make some idiotic things, give birth to Barbie dolls, defecate from a ladder on the Mother’s portrait, such actions are later filmed and shown in museums as great art. It’s really bad, there are no role models... There’s a lot of dishonesty. Somehow they take money from the Ministry of Culture for something that ends up in a bin. I’m simply disgusted. (Radio program no. 15, vol. 1 of *Sztuka Podkarpacia*)

The artists interviewed in the research consider themselves to be the continuers of the best European artistic traditions, as well as guardians of genuine values in art:

A friend of mine said that we still paint with a brush and it’s amazing. There must be something in it... that such art tends to go in the direction of intermedia, or such new art, and we are somewhere stuck in such a tradition, which is a bit connected with modernity. (Radio program no 42, vol. 3 of *Sztuka Podkarpacia*)

Art has boundaries when it ceases to be art. And it ceases to be art when it resorts to strange things in order to surprise us with something... I just believe that paints should be sufficient for certain things, really. (22W54)

What is also characteristic of artists who represent the model of peripheral modernity is peripherality in perceiving institutions for art circulation. It is a closed circuit within the borders created before the transformation of the political system in 1989, and as such it focuses mainly on local artistic milieu:

The galleries which operate have easier contact with local artists and willingly exhibit their works, because they are also connected by social relationships. The galleries which are here are private, and not only private, and their exhibition activity is, to a significant extent, based on local artists, because they are in contact with them. At galleries located in Kraków, we usually can see Kraków-based artists, apart from those from other cities or countries. In our city such exhibitions also sometimes take place, but that local focus is something natural. (04M44)

The members of this environment take into account mainly big state institutions (the BWA, city galleries, and galleries owned by the ZPAP) as well as private, independent galleries, but they completely disregard centers for contemporary art or public space as a place for artistic activity. Many artists dream about an exhibition at the 'Zachęta' National Gallery of Art, but none of them strives for an exhibition at any of the CCAs.

Mainstream contemporariness

The mainstream connected with the contemporary paradigm is an art world created mainly by curators, critics, and art historians, then by artists and designers, the founders of innovative galleries, as well as the audience taking part in participatory projects. The process of the model's inception in Poland can be reconstructed if one analyzes three institutions which were crucial to its creation and operation, and which revolutionized the manner in which art and artistic institutions are perceived in Poland. According to Howard S. Becker, "an art world is born when it brings together people who never cooperated before to produce art based on and using conventions previously unknown or not exploited in that way" (2008:310).

The first institution, which began its operation at the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s – i.e. at the moment of the aforementioned political transformation – is the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, for which the contemporary paradigm becomes the basis of the program and, at the same time, a strategy to build its brand as an art institution. What was an advantage of the Centre, which started its functioning from scratch, was the absence of earlier commitments toward the artistic milieu as well as the absence of the need to break with the previous forms of operation.

The activities taken by the Centre covered the organization of exhibitions of contemporary Polish artists (the new element came in the form of employing curators and problem-focused exhibitions), the creation of a museum collection consisting of the artists' most important works, the organization of exhibitions of the most important contemporary art phenomena, and the promotion of contemporary art by means of publications (e.g. the *Obieg* magazine, which has been published since 2004, as well as the Website, which has been the main platform for information and discussion about new phenomena in art).

The analysis of the contents of *Obieg* shows which phenomena in contemporary art were indicated as worth "mainstreaming," and which ones were disregarded (their absence in the magazine suggested they were unimportant). In the 1990s, the magazine clearly indicated the avant-garde movement in the 20th-century art as the tradition which deserves to be maintained (the theme of an avant-garde museum and the process of collecting is discussed) and continued. What was also initiated was a discussion about the need to develop a new artistic policy. Accounts from artistic events in Poland (initially, mainly in Gdańsk) and abroad (reports from New

York, Paris, Berlin, and from international art biennales: Venice, Shanghai, Taipei) reveal which art centers are considered to be opinion-forming. The artists presented in the pages of *Obieg* include mainly authors of installations, objects, performances, social interventions, and video. When analyzing their biographies, one can come to the conclusion that two factors had been decisive for their choice: the avant-garde nature of the created art and the affiliation with the new, young generation of artists. The magazine published texts about artists from the older generation provided that they had gained the status of classicists of avant-garde. The articles were written matter-of-factly. The leading Polish art historians and critics contributed to the magazine (Monika Branicka, Paweł Leszkowicz, Adam Mazur, Piotr Piotrowski, Piotr Rypson, Stach Szablowski, Magdalena Ujma, and others). In 2004, articles written by the FGF curators started to appear in it. *Obieg* presented contemporary events in the context of art history and the latest theories in the field of both philosophy of art and culture.

The UC CCA was involved in the presentation of critical art, performance, new media art, feminist art, socially-engaged art, and in promotion of artistic interventions or participatory projects. In all these artistic trends, traditional esthetic values have gone to the background, giving way to activities of ethical values, in which artists repeatedly cast themselves as activists or leaders of local communities. The artists also addressed the issues of exclusion, discrimination, injustice, identity-related differences, or sexuality. The most famous mainstream artists who cooperated with the UC CCA include: Katarzyna Kozyra, Zbigniew Libera, Artur Żmijewski, Joanna Rajkowska, Paweł Althamer, Elżbieta Jabłońska, Julita Wójcik, Mirosław Bałka, Zuzanna Janin, and others.

In 1995, two independent art critics – Łukasz Gorczyca and Michał Kaczyński – launched a magazine about contemporary art titled *Raster*, and in 2001 they officially opened a gallery under the same name. The texts published in *Raster* were completely different in style when compared to *Obieg*. The young critics put emphasis mainly on topical and up-to-date art, which draws on contemporariness and refers to young people's way of thinking and sensitivity. Initially, *Raster* assumed a generational character and attracted young artists, primarily painters, such as Wilhelm Sasnal, Marcin Maciejowski, or Rafał Bujnowski.

Importantly, when talking about art, they used new language, one created from ironical neologisms, which became known within the circles of the artists and institutions cooperating with *Raster* and *Raster's Artistic Glossary* (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009). Depending on the extent to which they were imbued with irony, the employed linguistic terms included assign positive or negative connotations to contemporary art phenomena. That attempt has created a visible boundary between what is acceptable and desirable in the new art world (i.e. in line with the contemporary paradigm), and what does not belong to it, as it is a "relic of the previous period" from the organizational and artistic point of view.

The most ironic terms refer to the framework and rules of operation of the "peripherally modern" art world and its values. The terms used by the young critics are a pun which makes references to unappetizing foodstuffs, popular culture, rural areas, or natural suspensions and secretions. In such a way, they construct the mainstream which establishes new trends with the vision of "folksy" peripheries, in which time had stopped before the political

transformation. The terms which appear here include, *inter alia*:

- “Arte polo” – i.e. paintings by masters such as Zdzisław Beksiński, Jerzy Duda-Gracz, Franciszek Starowieyski, here compared to popular dance music (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:22-24);
- “Błoto” [“Mud”] – a painting whose typical feature is the technique of “the brush which gets bogged,” i.e. “poking in paint as if it was mud” (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:27);
- “Gluciarz” [“A snoter”] – a Polish abstractionist sculptor (“bronze snot” means an abstract sculpture made of bronze) (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:34);
- “Stolec” [“Stool”] – a figural sculpture made of bronze (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:50);
- “Buła” [“A tasteless bun”] – the Artistic Exhibitions Bureaux, the “synonym of artistic junk,” according to the critics (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:28);
- “Zakalce” – [“Sad layers”] – exhibitions (salons, reviews, triennials) organized by “tasteless buns” (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:29);
- “Lack of Content Syndrome” – “the most common disease among Polish painters” who believe that art is a separate, autonomous world, which is why the art work’s form is its content (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:52);
- “Ambit” – i.e. the most ambitious type of a collective exhibition, the so-called “problem exhibition,” based on the curator’s idea and selection (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:21);
- “As” [“Ace”] – a pun, as the ace is the highest card in the deck and, in Polish, it is also the abbreviation for the “Network Artist” (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:25);
- “Kowalnia” – the sculpture studio run by Professor G. Kowalski, which educates students in the contemporary paradigm (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:38) (a pun associated with “a forge of talent”);
- “Foxes” – i.e. the curators of the FGF (a pun using the similarity of the word “fox” and the name of the gallery, which connotes the curators’ cunning) (Gorczyca and Kaczyński 2009:39);
- “Sieć” [“Network”] – a system upon which the operation of contemporary art in Poland is based, i.e. a network of institutions throughout the country which cooperate with the “Network Artists” and top curators, among which the central position is held by the UC CCA.

The concepts bearing positive associations, related to the phenomena which critics believe to be worth promoting, include:

What was the most important for the new art world which was taking shape at that time was separation, by the Raster critics, of a new network operating in Poland – an “integrated circuit” of institutions which connected by a shared vision of art would cooperate with one another, implementing similar programmes with participation of the group of artists and curators “consecrated” by them. In such a way, the polarisation has taken place as part of which peripheries, that are faithful to modern tra-

ditions and distance themselves from the “circuit,” oppose the “network of institutions,” which follows the contemporary paradigm and has gradually secured the mainstream position.

The actions taken by the curators of the young Foksal Gallery Foundation, which focused on the introduction of Polish artists to the global art circulation, have deepened that polarization even further. The Foksal Gallery Foundation was created at the avant-garde Foksal Gallery in Warsaw in 1997, and in 2001, its creators – i.e. Joanna Mytkowska, Andrzej Przywara, and Adam Szymczyk – separated the Foundation from the Foksal Gallery, changing it into an independent, commercial art gallery. Since the very beginning, the Foundation’s founders have built their reputation by means of acting as experts in the field of the latest trends for visual arts in the world. The works created by the artists whom they subsequently represented as an independent gallery followed the above-mentioned trends. What confirmed the competence of the young curators was a number of successes at international art fairs (e.g. the Art Basel in Basel and the Frieze Art Fair in London), as well as positions held at prestigious art institutions (in 2003, A. Szymczyk became the director of the Kunsthalle Basel, whereas in 2007, J. Mytkowska became the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw).

The FGF started to collaborate with artists from different generations; the criterion was whether their work fitted in with the global trends in visual arts. The Foundation ensured the effective promotion of the represented artists (such as Paweł Althamer, Robert Kuśmirowski, Wilhelm Sasnal, Monika Sosnowska, Piotr Uklański, Artur Żmijewski, and others), who quickly entered the world of art circulation.

Since the very beginning, the FGF’s curators have been active in the international circulation, eliminating the differences between the Polish and international contemporary arts, which is visible in the manner in which texts about the organized exhibitions and the artists represented by the Foundation are constructed. The texts feature references to global trends in visual arts, the leading theories, events such as the biggest global art exhibitions and biennales, as well as concepts put forward by world-famous curators. From this perspective, local milieus from outside of the “network” become doubly peripheral, and their activities are located completely outside the major canons of art.

Conclusion

The process of the creation of a new art world in Poland begins with the change of the political system and the opening of the borders, and the three above-mentioned institutions determine the three stages of that process. The following elements are created at the first stage: a new canon of contemporary art, innovative strategies of its dissemination, new concepts to describe it, new intermediaries (curators), and, most importantly, a “network” of institutions which operate in accordance with the new rules. The second stage involves separation by means of clearly indicated differences and, owing to it, drawing the line between the two art worlds. The third stage is about the inclusion of the new art world into the global network of contemporary art.

From among the texts on art written at the three above-mentioned stages, one can identify the main categories, on the basis of which the distinction is made. First, these are categories of novelty, youth, avant-gardism, and contemporariness. Then, the term “topicality” is added (a selection of art which

is a direct dialog with “here and now”). The third stage involves the “dynamism of change” (giving an account of the phenomenon of “fluidity” in the global art world). Curators are the directors of the whole process, and it is them who, through institutions which they represent, are authorized to create new definitions of art and the artist.

In the “mainstream contemporariness” model, art is a space for discussion about the contemporary times which is attended, apart from the artist, by numerous “intermediaries,” and what is accepted is even the de-materialization of the art work itself, or a resignation from its authorship in order to highlight relations in the art world. The artist resembles an intellectual who is often committed to political and social affairs. The members of the new art world compete on a free global art market, subjecting themselves to its processes and requirements.

The second model, i.e. the model of “peripheral modernity,” which exists through the shape which has been unchanged for decades, protects its identity by highlighting the tradition’s continuity (Academy, masters, the improvement of techniques). Professors and masters create valid definitions of art and the artist in it. In that world, the assessment of art is made on the basis of esthetic categories and values such as truth and sincerity. The relevance of the romantic myth about disinterested art leads to the separation of creative activity from gainful activity as well as mistrust toward the art market. Above all,

this model highlights the autonomy of the art work and the artist.

Even if the two art worlds do not seem to be completely separate for researchers, they are such for the participants of these worlds. Art worlds are social worlds constructed by their participants, and, in this particular case, the participants construct them as two opposite communities of meanings.

Statements by Piotr Bernatowicz (the director of the UC CCA since 2020), seem to confirm the profound polarization of the two art worlds in Poland. According to him, “In every large gallery we have the same thing – socially engaged art, feminist art, art defending minorities and criticizing the Church... art is more diverse, but institutions do not show it” (Bernatowicz 2019). His new idea for the UC CCA is to present conservative artists and to “make the dominant art less dominant” (Bernatowicz 2019). He is criticized for his beliefs, but in his opinion, “the reason for these attacks is that [his – A.S.D.] conservative views break out of the monolith of directors of major art institutions and curators” (Bernatowicz 2019). As he explains, “[his – A.S.D.] views have indeed evolved toward conservatism, but the artistic mainstream has also radicalized. This mainstream art world has begun to drift strongly toward the left, neo-Marxism” (Bernatowicz 2019). Bernatowicz notices a polarization among Polish artists, curators, and institutions, and explains his own actions as resulting from the need to weaken the mainstream and strengthen that which has been marginalized.

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Dwa paradygmaty – dwa światy sztuki. O konstruowaniu różnicy jako strategii uprawomocnienia koncepcji artysty i sztuki

Abstrakt: Przedmiotem artykułu są dwa światy artystyczne w obszarze sztuk wizualnych, które obecnie działają obok siebie w Polsce. Światy te funkcjonują w ramach dwóch różnych paradygmatów sztuki, przez co obowiązują w nich dwie różne definicje sztuki i artysty, a co za tym idzie, również różne modele działań. W przypadku obydwu wspólnot istotny jest proces konstruowania różnicy i wyodrębnienia własnej wspólnoty znaczeń, jako strategii uprawomocnienia własnej koncepcji sztuki i artysty oraz własnej, zajmowanej w świecie artystycznym (ang. *art world*) pozycji. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, jak przebiega proces konstruowania wewnętrznych granic w polskim *art world*, a także jego podział na dwa odrębne światy oraz to, jakich środków użyto w owym procesie i jakie konsekwencje niesie przynależność do odrębnych światów artystycznych dla ich uczestników.

Słowa kluczowe: paradygmat nowoczesny, paradygmat współczesny, konstruowanie różnicy, świat sztuki, sztuki wizualne

Inventing the New Art World: On Art Institutions and Their Audience

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Keywords: new museology, museum sociology, new audience, art worlds, audience development, Becker, Zolberg, art institutions, the Czech Republic, Poland, inclusive platforms of gaining knowledge about art, museum digitalization

Abstract: Howard S. Becker (2005 [1982]) and Vera L. Zolberg (1990) suggested the advent of new audiences to be one of the main common motors of change in artistic practice, where art institutions play an important role in delivering both aesthetic and educational experiences, but can also be criticized for persistent exclusivity and for how they create a participatory environment.

The aim of this article is to examine the present-day relationship of art museums and galleries with their audiences while taking into account the role played by the advent of a *new sociology of art*, *museum sociology*, and the *audience development*, with all of them questioning the role of museums as socio-cultural institutions focused on the democratization of culture. By employing empirical research conducted in selected art institutions in the Czech Republic and Poland, I will examine how young visitors view art institutions in light of their recent quest for becoming the *inclusive platforms of gaining knowledge about art*, which promote and facilitate active participation rather than passive consumption.

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Most sociologists of culture regard art institutions, such as galleries or museums, to be an integral part of an institutionalized cultural system, which has been shaped to cultivate and promote socio-cultural values of a given society. This system has not been randomly designed but, rather, it presents a well-organized network of power structure between the interrelated art world composed of artists, art institutions, and the audience. Growing criticism of this system appeared in the 1980s and came from the sociologists of art, such as, among others, Bourdieu (1984), Zolberg (1981), and

Becker (2008), who equally criticized the ingrained mechanism of art world control in the hands of trustees with money and power, or those who have been appointed by them (Becker 2008). That new shift within the critical approach toward the mechanism of art production, distribution, and consumption – associated with the above-mentioned scholars – was later referenced by Eduardo de la Fuente as the “new sociology of art” (2007). Although it may seem that the issues occupying the precursors of the new sociology of art are remote in some respects, some of the current concerns remained the same, e.g. the role of digital technology in the art museum experience and distribution of art knowledge, or the fundamental need – professed by these scholars – to continuously adopt the existing “art world” to socio-cultural changes in a given society. I would like to argue that what is at the core of critical issues today is how effectively digital technology is used within the art museum context in creating democratic and participatory art experience space for its diverse groups of audience. What is the attitude of the art museum audience toward enhancing their viewing experience with digital technology? Is it more effective at the individual or the collective level? And, lastly, what role does the audience play in constructing the neutral social art space of the museum, where personalized experience can take place? I am using the word “personalized,” as the latest scholarship on museum digitalization praises the ability of digital technology to create more personalized, data-driven experience (Devine and Tarr 2019), where the visitor has transitioned into being an active “user” or, as argued by Ross Parry, an “actant” of a digitally-induced experience (Parry 2019).

The numerous quantitative and qualitative sociological research studies, which followed the course set by Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper (1991), noted

the persistence of a discriminatory character of art institutions in the cultivation of a specific artistic taste, which, being socially conditioned, as argued by Bourdieu (1984), presents a major obstacle in the democratization of art institutions. Introduction of digital technology into the artistic institutional setting can offer a myriad of added values to the audience’s experience (e.g. more information on art works, virtual-reality and augmented-reality experience, interactive games), yet the content of the material provided for the audience and the means of its absorption is still regulated by a given facility. Indeed, more recent studies conducted in Polish art institutions (Warczok and Trembaczowski 2011; Jagodzińska 2017; Kisiel 2018) have been critical of the continuity of institutional captivation regarding the content of distributed art knowledge by timidly hinting the important role that the emergence of a new audience can play in deciding the future course of art institutions, not gatekeepers.¹ My conviction is that we are already witnessing the emergence of a new type of audience: one represented by young visitors demanding truly participatory and engaging role of art institutions which foster learning through interaction – visitors who are familiar with digital technology, as it permeates every aspect of their everyday life. By setting new demands for institutional participation – which is what art institutions must consider in maintaining their status as socio-culturally-oriented institutions – this new audience can bring more hope for institutional change than the willingness of institutions themselves can. These continue to be reluctant, since their fundamental mission – as was well-argued by Zolberg in her

¹ Gatekeepers in the art world represent key individuals – the mediators between artists, their work, and audience – who have power in deciding over who gets an access to high art, which individuals will achieve success as artists, which works can be considered artworks and which will be displayed in art museums, etc.

critique of American art museums (but adequately applies to the case of the Czech Republic) – was “never really designed to be ‘democratic’”; instead, their public mission used to be about legitimizing support from public funds (Zolberg 1984:377).

In this article, I will examine the present-day expectations of one chain of the art world, namely the audience, as it is the one which can most likely force a change of the highly criticized system of cultural knowledge production and distribution, as argued by the precursors of the new sociology movement, i.e. Becker (2008) and Zolberg (1981; 1990). The latter author suggested the advent of new audiences to be one of the main common motors of change in artistic practice, where art institutions play an important role in delivering both aesthetic and educational experiences but can also be criticized for persistent exclusivity and how they create a participatory environment (Zolberg 1990). Similarly, for Becker (2008), the emergence of a new audience commences the beginning of a new art world.

Within the realms of art institutions in the post-communist countries, the new art world considered here is the new structure of art institutions after the fall of the communist regime in 1989 – one seemingly freed from the shackles of intense political censorship lasting over four decades and challenged by the pressure of the new digital world and digital beings. Although the censorship of artworks has not completely ceased to exist at the institutional level, its nature has changed from political struggle to cultural struggle. Art institutions continue to hold strong control over the content and the context of displayed works of art, and most of the time they give a minimal chance for the audience to take part in their selection. Art institutions frequently use novel technological tools which promise more ac-

tive engagement between the work of art and the visitors, but its efficacy has not been adequately measured.

While these may claim to shape an active rather than passive type of audience and, thus, establish more democratic and participatory space – which I would call the *inclusive platform of gaining knowledge about art* – the empirical research studies conducted in post-communist countries, particularly Poland and the Czech Republic, continue to question the following aspects: the dimension of artistic knowledge and the audience’s understanding of it; the degree of freedom given to the participants in their active engagement; and, most importantly, the socio-cultural value of tools – particularly digital tools – used to effectively enhance the knowledge-gaining process during a visit as well as in creating a democratic space within the walls of art institutions. There are many risks involved in an effective and democratizing use of digital tools if the digital strategy of a given museum had not been well-prepared. These risks have already been noted by museum educators themselves, as expressed in the recent publication by the Museum of Art in Olomouc, in which the authors pointed to the visitors’ reluctance to download an app designed only for one institution (based on the statistics issued by various app stores, such as Google Play); poor interactive app content; limitations in sensory perceptions of taste, smell, and touch; and the lack of interpersonal communication, which can deepen social and digital isolation instead of enabling social interaction (Hudec et al. 2020).

This article seeks to present the analysis of the present-day relationship of art museums and galleries with their audiences while taking into account the role played by the advent of a *new sociology of art, muse-*

um sociology, and the *audience development*, with all of them questioning the role of museums as socio-cultural institutions focused on the democratization of culture. I used a manifold research strategy, one involving literature review, comparative analysis, participant observation, and data collection from field questionnaires composed of five open-ended and eleven closed-ended questions as well as the metrics part with six questions measuring the demographic structure of the sample group: gender, age, mother's education, father's education, city and country of residence, and the financial status. The combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions allowed a better understanding of the expectations of digitally-savvy audiences toward art institutions today. The closed-ended questions and metrics helped to measure correlations between the respondent's age, gender, and socio-economic background with the frequency of visits and the visiting habits (e.g. alone, with somebody, as a group, or with no preference) with regard to art museum/gallery, as well as with the preference to view artworks inside or outside art institutions. Open-ended questions enabled the respondents to provide more in-depth answers and supply them with particular examples. For instance, the respondents were able to list and describe five interesting features offered by the art museum/gallery, describe recommended changes to the art museum/gallery space, or elaborate on the ways in which art institutions should take advantage of the Internet. The comparative analysis focused on tracing similarities and differences between the young audience's expectations in Poland, where a similar research study took place and was explored by Przemysław Kisiel (2018). Indeed, the combination of qualitative research with quantitative data allowed the author of this article to probe deeper into the respondents' answers and establish interesting patterns and contradictions between the expecta-

tions of the visitors and the perspective of the art institutions.

I would like for this article to not only provide a deeper look into the current relationship between art institutions and their audiences, but also to contribute to the scholarship within the inchoative sociological field of *museum sociology*, a relatively young discipline promoted by Volker Kirchberg (2016) as a "middle range" discipline which involves methods from social philosophy and empirical research in the hope of alleviating the self-doubt about the social side of art institutions by strengthening reflection on their activities and taking affirmative steps to change them. Empirical findings and the theoretical discourse offered by sociology when investigating art institutions can form a mutual relationship between museology and sociology in a way which would enable the two to feed each other's interests. In return, this would solidify the social importance of art institutions in society and change their image from an exclusive public space to an inclusive one.

The making of an Art World

When analyzing the changes taking place in the institutional role of art museums within the society, Katarzyna Jagodzińska (2017) points to the 1980s as a period recognized by cultural scholars as the age of "new museology" or "museum age," marked with a clear shift within art institutions toward promoting education, participation, and inclusion within its walls. Among sociologists of art, this period witnesses the formation of a new direction, now known as *the new sociology of art*, which was attributed by Eduardo de la Fuente to the publication of the two texts: Howard S. Becker's *Art Worlds* (2008) and Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984), and which made

a great impact on the work of American and European sociologists who were currently working on the arts (de la Fuente 2007:410). What made Becker and Bourdieu stand out in this regard was the move to abandon a dominant concept in the sociology of art, based on the traditional view of artists and their work, but without focusing on all participants, which Becker described as “the network of cooperation as central to the analysis of art as a social phenomenon” (2008:xi). Both scholars recognized the existence of a controlled space in the world of art, one regulated by a specific mechanism created by its participants. While Bourdieu called this space “the field,” with a limited amount of area where its competitive participants fight over that space, Becker named this metaphorical space “the world” and treated its participants more as collaborators who respond to each other actively, adjust their behavior accordingly, but, more importantly, have the ability to move beyond the confinement of one space by creating “the new world” (Becker 2008). The scholar summarized the existence of an art world as being dependent upon a collective, artistic endeavor:

An art world is born when it brings together people who never cooperated before to produce art based on and using conventions previously unknown or not exploited in that way. Similarly, an art world dies when no one cooperates any longer in its characteristic conventions...To understand the birth of new art worlds, then, we need to understand not the genesis of innovations, but rather the process of mobilizing people to join in a cooperative activity on a regular basis. (Becker 2008:310–311)

The concept of *art worlds*, as noted by David Inglis, is a relatively recent development, dating from the middle of the 19th century and regarded by Kadushin (1976) and Williams (1981) as a “sphere being

made up of networks of cultural production, distribution and consumption” (cited in Inglis 2005:24). The approach of the *new sociologists of art* to this concept has been, however, directed toward more expanded understanding of art worlds in comparison to the classic study on this subject offered by Harrison White and Cynthia White (1965) in their book titled *Convassers and Careers*. Focusing on tracing the occurring changes within the institutional structures of French academies and the resulting emergence of countermovements, especially Impressionism, the authors presented an insightful analysis of the late 19th-century art system as being subjected to the transformation of the existing art world and contributing some factors to it (e.g. the need for alternative exhibition spaces, which were introduced by early Impressionists). Although providing an analysis of a particular art world structure, the book lacks a discussion of the specific inner relations existing among artists outside the realms of the official French academy, as well a discussion of the role played by the artistic institutional audience. The works by Bourdieu and Becker attempted to fill this gap.

Along with the emergence of *new museology* in the 1980s in the field of museum research, sociology has witnessed the emergence of the *new sociology of art*, which also included a specific focus on the social role of art museums and galleries, and their relationship with the visiting audience, who for a long time have been erroneously treated as a universal group (Zolberg 1990). Kirchberg (2016) suggested that this shift in the sociology of art and museum research should be studied under new intermediary discipline which he named *museum sociology*. Among important sociologists of that time whose work represented the canon of the *new sociology of art* one can include Blau (1988), DiMaggio (1987), Halle (1993),

and Zolberg (1990). The work of Zolberg (1981; 1990) has been particularly important in investigating the role played by the audience or, rather, specific groups of audience who constitute a support structure for the arts. Zolberg (1990) criticized the myopic consideration of audiences as a constant social category analyzed from two simplistic perspectives: (1) audience as autonomous actors on the one hand, and (2) audience as the manipulable sheep of mass society on the other. Instead, the author contended that the relationship of the audience to the arts is a complex social process which involves the development of different ways of receiving and using the symbolic culture. She also asserted that audiences have been oriented by historically-grounded processes and traditions, whose traces continue to be felt today (Zolberg 1990:138).

In tracing the shift of art institutions, one characterized by developing greater awareness of the social context in which they are embedded, Kirchberg (2016) recognized two phases. The first phase was marked at the beginning of the 1980s, when more art institutions started to doubt their social legitimization. The second one emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, when art institutions became criticized for their social role as public institutions and opened up to new possibilities in establishing a better inter-relationship with society.

The collection of data on cultural consumption and nascent empirical-based results started to be employed as the most legitimate way to promote the need for changes, starting with the local cultural policy amendments. However, while the idea seems to be applaudable in forming theoretical resolutions, their practical adoption to better address the nurturing problem of the democratization of culture in the art audience discourse continues to

be highly questionable. Steven Hadley (2021) and Robert Hewison (2014) both argued that wider availability of data related to cultural consumption in the United Kingdom since the late 1990s contributed to broadening knowledge on audience development in the country. However, the changes in local cultural policies continue to be problematic when measuring their efficacy in practical application. One of the arguments pointed by Hadley is that “although policies of the democratization of culture are perceived to serve elites, they are nonetheless presented as being of benefit to everyone” (2021:191). On the other hand, Hewison extended his critique over publicly funded cultural institutions, which failed to open up to the wider public, because no access to democratic cultural engagement has been offered (2014:215). For Hadley, the failure of policies regarding the democratization of culture has been rooted in the neglected measurement of demographic shifts in patterns of cultural engagement in the UK. As an example, he cites the *Taking Part* survey (based on three years of longitudinal data) from 2016 – carried out by Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) on cultural participation and its relationship with social stratification – which has been used by the Arts Council to publish a flawed conclusion regarding the overrated engagement with arts of the local adult population (Hadley 2021:191).

Indeed, individual governments and the objectives set in their national cultural policy are key components in stimulating a dialog on the democratization of arts. The Czech Republic has not been immune to the call set by the European Commission during the conference titled ‘European Audiences: 2020 and Beyond’, held in October 2012, which called all EU members to focus more on the “audience development” – a wholistic approach to greater engagement

of a broader public with cultural works by integrating cultural, economic, and social dimensions (2012).²

The Czech Republic has already been focused on implementing changes to its cultural landscape under the auspice of the Czech Ministry of Culture, which brought to life the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS) to monitor the cultural development of the country. The NIPOS was established just over a year from the fall of the communist regime, on January 1st, 1991, with the mission to collect essential data on local and regional cultural institutions in order to strengthen cultural development in the new, post-communist republic. The statistics collected by the institution encompass a perfunctory data, such as the number of cultural institutions and their visitors, number of publications, finances, etc. However, as has been the case with DCMS's *Taking Part* survey discussed by Hadley, what is missing is a more in-depth analysis of the drivers behind the increased or decreased number of visitors to specific art institutions, and their demographics. The summary report of the thirty years of cultural statistics gathered between 1989 and 2018 reported a marked increase in the number of art institutions and their visitors since 1989. The number of museums increased from 200 in 1990 to 477 in 2019, while the number of visitors grew from 13.8 million in 1989 to 14.3 million in 2018 (Novak 2019:11).³ Yet, the closer reading of secondary data and the analysis of tourism in the Czech Republic unveils that the increase in the number of visitors to the local art institutions stems from a surge of foreign tourists,

² The European Commission was inspired by the concept of "audience development," introduced by the Arts Council England in 2006.

³ Novak pointed out that the compound annual average growth of visitors to art institutions since 1989 was only 0.1% or 3.6% for the entire period. For more information, see https://www.statistikakultury.cz/wpcontent/uploads/2020/09/Tricet_let_objektu_kulturniho_dedictvi_2019.pdf.

not from the heightened interest of local residents. In fact, the supplement for the Working Study on National Cultural Policy from 2009–2014, published by the Philosophical Faculty of the Charles University for the Czech Ministry of Culture (2014), listed several weak points in the country's cultural development, including a slow process of digitalization and a long-term absence of cultural policy:

The cultural development in connection to utilization of information and communication technologies is also considered a weak point by subjects active in the field of the Czech culture. In this respect an out-of-date technical equipment is often mentioned together with slowly progressing digitization and low level of modernization that do not enable to fast reaction to new users' requirements. Another weak point is also a long-term absence of cultural policy and a support of the main priorities on both the state and regional levels and the missing evaluation system. (p. 21)

The latest, third policy document on the culture, published by the Ministry of Culture and encompassing the activity set for 2015–2020, did include more focused agenda on the need for the country's cultural digitalization by means of the introduction of the eCulture program, which, as the document states, "combines digitalization as an important means to ensure equal access of specialists and non-specialists to the cultural content and to its use" (The Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic 2016:46). However, what the third policy document also emphasizes more than its first two predecessors is the need to re-think the cross-generational approach to instilling cultural values when paying attention to the young generation:

To stimulate the development of cultural habits already in the young generation is of key importance; without

them the continuity of the national culture cannot be preserved. At the same time, productive and post-productive segments of the population often seem to be indifferent both to the safeguarded and the newly created cultural values, lose their bearings in the information deluge and yield to the pressures of globalization. (The Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic 2016:11)

In response to the changing needs of the new type of audience, the recognition of the necessity to adopt digital technology by art institutions on a broader scale – acknowledged in the policy document – should be praised, yet no specific recommendations have been given on the most effective methods and tools which would adequately answer cross-generational needs, particularly that of young adults. This lack stems from a rather scarce availability of qualitative and quantitative research on the audiences' expectations.

By relating to the empirical research findings of different social contexts, one can measure how successful art institutions have been in their cathartic path to serve the public. In the following part, I will use the case study of the audience to art institutions in the Czech Republic and in Poland, focusing particularly on young visitors who demand participatory art museum/gallery engagement and, as I would argue, represent the utterly important voice in setting the direction that cultural policy across countries should take in order to be continuously gaining cultural participants.

The research concept – visitors' participation and expectations in art institutions

Open accessibility of art to a wider audience has been one of the main issues among sociologists of

art and culture, who criticize the failing role of particularly public institutions in creating easy access to experiencing art (DiMaggio and Useem 1978; Zolberg 1990; Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper 1991; Becker 2008). While DiMaggio and Useem (1978) believed that inequalities concerning public access to art constituted an important structural component in the reproduction of the class hierarchy in modern capitalist society, Zolberg (1990) was concerned with the elitist practices in exhibiting art, which render art institutions ineffective in serving the public. In her book titled *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts*, Zolberg proposed three interrelated sources with the strongest potential to bring changes to the social role of museums: the advent of a new audience (as first mentioned by Harrison White and Cynthia White in 1965), political transformation, and professional pressure. If one analyzes the outcome of the political transformation in the post-communist Czech Republic and Poland at the structural level of art institutions, with its gatekeepers represented by art professionals, one can view the two sources of hope for a change – namely political transformation and professional pressure as proposed by Zolberg back in 1990 – to be the weakest in their manifestation. In the case of the Czech Republic and Poland alike, some changes were sparked by the opening of the private sector of artistic institutional ownership after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, which enabled the emergence of new private museums and galleries. However, the new forms of institutional ownership did not necessarily change the elitist character of art institutions. Indeed, the advent of a new audience, which was also suggested by Becker, brings more hope for a change, as it feasibly threatens the collapse of the system if the audience ceases to exist. In this respect, I would propose that increased attention is being paid by sociologists of art to the studying of the audience and the vital

role it plays in forming or breaking the structure of the *art world*.

To understand the role which the audience plays in the art world's construction, it is necessary to investigate its nature in a specific cultural context. For this reason, I carried out field research in the Czech Republic, while data with regard to Poland has been solicited from the research conducted by Przemysław Kisiel. I admit that this comparison of the museum–audience relationship in post-communist countries is limited to only two countries; however, it is a unique one in its geographical comparison. In fact, the empirical research in Prague's institutions ran concurrently with that in Poland under the direction of Kisiel, where a similar survey was used to measure the participation and expectations of the visitors to art institutions.⁴

My empirical research was conducted between 2016 and 2018 in eight art institutions in the Czech Republic (mainly in Prague) and as such was vital in forming a critical argument as to whether art institutions facilitate (or not) the unbiased reception of artworks in the realms of the post-communist decade. The distribution of on-site surveys in the form of questionnaires took place from September 2016 to May 2018. There were 281 complete questionnaires collected from eight art institutions, more specifically museums and galleries, which were randomly selected to obtain the most representative sample. The

⁴ The study of Przemysław Kisiel took place in only one museum, namely the National Museum in Cracow (between 2017 and 2018), and focused on a specific group of young visitors aged between 15–19 (sample size included 132 respondents). The greater majority of similar questions was used in the surveys in both countries. In the Czech Republic, the survey did not focus on a specific age group, but was distributed to all visitors regardless of their age. Each visitor was asked to write his/her age, thus the cluster age group segregation took place *post factum*.

selected art institutions included five state-owned museums/galleries (Kinsky Palace, Rudolfinum, Stone Bell House, National Museum, and Trade Fair Palace) and three private ones (DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Museum Kampa, and Meet Factory). The choice of the most popular art institutions in the Prague's art scene rather than small art galleries was driven by the need to collect responses from the most diverse groups of audience, which can be challenging in the case of small art galleries, as these often tend to be 'more visible' to selected groups of audience, predominantly those composed of actively engaged art professionals or connoisseurs of the local art scene.

The collection process of questionnaires took place during different days and times in order to reach a broad range of visitors. The questionnaires were available in Czech, Polish, and English, as the composition of visitors consisted of Czechs, foreigners living in Prague, and tourists. The questionnaire was composed of 16 questions: five open-ended ones, eleven closed-ended ones, and the metrics part, which asked respondents to provide information pertaining to their profile (age, gender, city and country of residence, education level of parents, and economic status based on the income). For the purpose of this article, I will mainly focus on the analysis of selected answers concerning the visitors' expectations.

An important factor involved participation in the local culture, and my argument regarding the emergence of a new audience is age. For the measurement of the age of visitors, I had to use distribution within the controlled group, as no other data is available on the large scale. The National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS) provides statistics on the number of visitors to selected museums

and galleries in the Czech Republic. However, the data supplied by the NIPOS does not provide the breakdown of the specific age or age groups of visitors. I acknowledge that my own data represents a relatively small sample of visitors attending Czech art institutions, yet it can be used for the purpose of generally understanding their expectations, since the sample derives from eight different institutional settings. The collection of data in each art museum/gallery took place during two annual intervals (four in total for the entire research period), which made it possible to reach the respondents attending different temporary exhibitions.

The aesthetic experience and visual culture both play a very important role in the life of Czech young visitors, who declare they visit art institutions due to their interest in art (82%). At the same time, significantly lower satisfaction is expressed with visiting art institutions involved in the study (46%), which reveals interesting parallels. These, however, were possible to measure by implementing the qualitative research approach of asking open-ended questions. First, a much lower 'liking' in visiting art institutions was measured as a sign of displeasure with the setting where an encounter with art and aesthetic experience took place. This setting relates to the organization of exhibition space, display of art works, and tools (such as new technology, guides, educational workshops, etc.) provided by the institution to enhance the museum/gallery experience. The assessment was based on the responses to the three open-ended questions included in the questionnaire, namely: 1) In your opinion, what could improve the conditions of visiting the museum/art gallery?; 2) If you had a chance to introduce new changes to the museum/gallery space, what would they be?; and 3) In your opinion, how museums/art galleries should take advantage of the Internet? The

most common shortcomings shared by the local visitors related to the navigation through the museum space, more information on individual artists, free entrance, more informative videos, as well as more digital and interactive contents. Second, the exhibited art objects did not fulfil the visitors' expectations about the aesthetic kind of experience. Last, little encouragement to visit art institutions came from these visitors' teachers (only 4% declared to have received a recommendation from their teachers), indicating poor involvement of school educators in forming art competence of young visitors, but much better one in the case of the social environment, i.e. friends and family (21%). The last parallel reflects the findings of Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper (1991), who argued that one's art literacy is strongly linked to his/her rich cultural capital gained from friends and family who provided greater contact with culture, rather than associated with formal school education.

For a comparative analysis in Poland, I will use the research findings of Kisiel, generated from the collection of open-ended survey which took place in the National Museum in Cracow between 2017 and 2018, and involved 132 high-school students. By using a functionalist perspective, Kisiel analyzed the perception of art museum institutions by young visitors aged 17–19. This particular age group, which I have also followed in my own research, was based on the categorization used by the PEW Research Center. In his survey, Kisiel focused on issues such as content (preferences in the style of visiting particular museum exhibitions), presentation (opinions of the visitors about the organization of the visited exhibition), new technology, and the experience of the museum space (along with proposed changes for the improvement). The timeline of research in the Czech Republic represents a data collection stretched over two years and gathered from eight

institutions, while in Poland it covered only one museum within the period of one year. However, the lower institutional count in Poland still enabled to outline general views of the respondents at the cross-geographical level.

The young visitors researched in Kisiel's study displayed a higher level of cultural activity when compared to older generations (e.g. Millennials and Generation X), and expected modifications regarding the museum's visiting, taking into account the possibility of using new technologies.⁵ They expect art museums to maintain the traditional patterns of viewing art objects in the museum setting as well as they underline the presence of art institutions as being very important for the society. The need to have video presentations explaining viewed works was expressed by 46% (n=132) of the respondents, indicating that young visitors expect museums to provide education (Table 1). It would be erroneous to think that young visitors in Poland need active on-line presence during their museum visit. Kisiel's study revealed that 72% of the respondents marked the lack of need to listen to music and/or be active on social networking sites. In fact, the active use of the Internet for the museum activity has been recommended by visitors for the museum propagation and education through their website, giving preference to a direct contact with the works of art, as expressed by 55% of the survey participants.

Similar patterns could be observed in the research findings from the Czech Republic, where 77% of visitors (n=281) feel no desire to be active on their mobile devices during their art museum/gallery visit. How-

ever, a much higher number of visitors in the Czech Republic (30%) when compared to Poland (14%) expect the use of new technologies in the exhibition setting. The qualitative measurement in the form of the open-ended questions asked in the Czech questionnaire allowed me to collect more specific examples pertaining to the type of new technologies that the respondents would like to see in art institutions. The examples included interactive boards, audio recordings (which still are not offered in many Czech art institutions), an educational video assisting the exhibition, QR codes, and Virtual Reality. Some examples of new technologies often adopted by museums worldwide include Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), immersive exhibitions, QR codes, and interactive spaces for creativity. These technologies are promoted not only as enhancing the viewing experience, but, more importantly, as those which better aid the visitors' learning process. What is rather worrying is that despite the increased educational efforts and activities introduced by many art institutions to comply with the national cultural policy activities, about 54% of Czech visitors express that art institutions should provide more education with regard to general art history and more information about the displayed art objects (37%). In fact, the need for educational videos assisting the exhibitions was listed most often by 36% of the respondents, while the need for VR was mentioned only by 2% of them. Furthermore, for 46% of the Czech visitors, the main role which art institutions should play in the society today is to provide equal access to contemporary and historical art objects; however, this role does not seem to be fulfilled yet. These findings clearly illustrate that a long-standing and persistent problem in providing equal access to the art world has been rooted in the institutional level (school and art museums/galleries), as already criticized by sociologists conducting research in different countries – name-

⁵ The source of this information is Kisiel's presentation titled "Museum of Art and the Expectations of Young Visitors" and presented at the European Sociological Association (ESA) Conference in 2018 in Malta.

ly Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper (1991), Zolberg (1990), DiMaggio and Useem (1978), and Hanquinet (2016) – who exposed the issue to be universal and not local.

Table 1. Expectations of visitors – comparative answers provided by the visitors of art institutions in Poland and the Czech Republic, based on the study by Kisiel (for Poland) and Grigar (for the Czech Republic)

Expectations of visitors	Poland	Czech Republic
Visitors who do not need to listen to music and/or be active on social networking sites during art museum/gallery visit	72%	77%
Art institutions should provide more education on art history and contemporary art	N/A*	54%
Art institutions should provide equal access to contemporary and historical art objects	N/A*	46%
Art institutions should organize more educational workshops and seminars for visitors	N/A*	42%
Visitors who need more information and/or video provided (next to art objects)	46%	37%
Visitors who expect art institutions to offer greater interactivity and the use of new technologies	14%	30%
Visitors who are satisfied with the way in which art object are displayed	29%	23%
Visitors who would like to have the possibility of touching the art object	7%	12%
Visitors who agree that art institutions should provide more seats inside the gallery space	22%	11%

*Country data is not available.

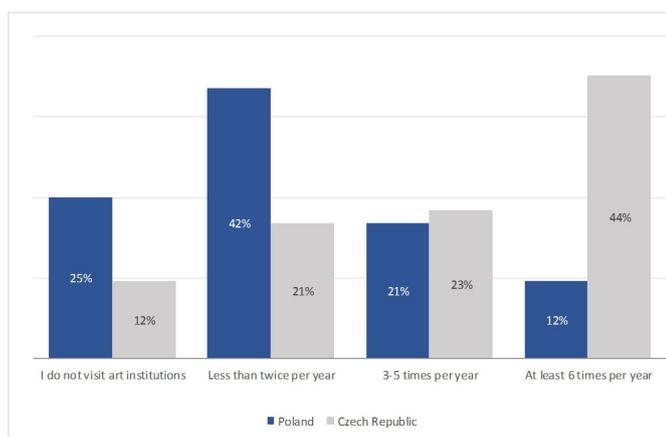
Source: own study based on the research results in the Czech Republic (n=281). Sample size evaluated for Poland (n=132) includes data supplied by Kisiel

While regular visits to art institutions have been seen as strengthening one's cultural capital, the greater majority of Polish visitors (42%) attend them less than twice a year. This contrasts with the data gathered on visitors to art institutions in Prague, where 44% claimed to visit them at least six times a year (Figure 1). Significant factors which contribute to such a disparity and make Czech visitors more active participants in the art world are rooted in the social environment linked directly to their upbringing. First, in comparison to the rest of the Czech Republic, Prague distinguishes itself as a city with the richest art environment (regarding the number and diversity of art institutions) as well as a dense concentration of individuals with strong cultural capital. According to a study conducted by Czech sociologist Daniel Prokop (Prokop et al. 2019), the secured middle class and the emerging cosmopolitan class (combined together, they represent 34% of the country's population) have the highest percentage of the cultural capital among six social classes recognized in the Czech Republic; approximately 34% of the members who represent the secured middle class and 23% of the emerging cosmopolitan class live in Prague. Second, visiting art institutions is regarded by some as a sign of social class status (cultural refinement as a mark of elites), which also explains why 7% of young visitors in the Czech study claimed to visit art institutions out of the social pressure "to show interest in art."

Indeed, the place of one's residence and the presence of cultural institutions in its close vicinity also play an important role in shaping the visitors' cultural capital. This link between cultural capital and geographic space has been a subject of a research study by Laurie Hanquinet (2016). The sociologist's investigation of six art museums in Belgium (the study involved 1900 respondents) tested the configuration

of visitors' cultural capital and their place of residence, suggesting that place should be perceived in relational terms (Hanquinet 2016:77). The example of Prague and Cracow illustrates Hanquinet's argument through a similar correlation in terms of the urban characteristics of each city and the composition of the cultural capital of their visitors.⁶ Thus, the aesthetic competence of audience is not only conditioned by just social, but also geographical space of residence, further solidifying the classic findings of Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper (1991) – and their successors – with regard to the utmost importance of the relationship between one's social origin and his/her aesthetic competence.

Figure 1: Frequency of visits to art institutions in Poland and the Czech Republic



Source: own study based on the research results (n =101). For the Czech Republic, only visitors aged 17–19 were considered for comparable data measurement with Poland

⁶ According to the study issued by Narodowy Instytut Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zbiorów (NIMOZ) for the year 2018, the percentage of art museums in relation to all museums in Cracow is 4%, while in the capitol city Warsaw (which would be a comparable example to Prague) it is 6.8%.

Concluding remarks

Kenneth Hudson (1975) argued that from the very beginning of their establishment, museums were institutions which were rather less amicable and affected toward the plebeian public. Apart from the accusation that artworks stored in the museum are taken out of their original context and lose their aura (Dewey 1934), the museum's function, as argued by Merleau-Ponty (1952), might not always have a positive character:

The Museum gives us a thieves' conscience. We occasionally sense that these works were not after all intended to end up between these morose walls, for the pleasure of Sunday strollers or Monday "intellectuals." We are well aware that something has been lost and that this meditative necropolis is not the true milieu of art—that so many joys and sorrows, so much anger, and so many labors were not *destined* one day to reflect the Museum's mournful light. (p. 99)

While seemingly over-exaggerated, Merleau-Ponty's morbid view of the museum as a necropolis is not a far cry from the general view of museums as places with sacred aura and museum objects as sacred. Just as religion and its props are accepted and not questioned by most of its religious devotees, objects present in art institutions are accepted by most visitors as art at face value. An institution opening itself to the public translates into it breaking the traditional character and becoming an "autonomous sphere," as observed by Max Weber, who argued that "the more art becomes an autonomous sphere...the more art tends to acquire its own set of constitutive values, which are quite different from those obtaining in the religious and ethical domain" (1978:608).

The view of museums and art institutions as places with embedded traditionalism has prevented many

sociologists of art to look beyond the façade of its power into the fundamental parts that make that system function. The unique perspective offered by Becker on the nature of the art world not only unveils the system's vulnerability, but also points to the power that the audience have in creating the new world and annihilating the old one. For Becker, it is not artworks, artists, or art institutions that decide on their faith, but, rather, the audience. "Audiences select what will occur as an artwork by giving or withholding their participation in an event or their attention to an object, and by attending selectively to what they attend to" (Becker 2008:214). Thus, the audience give meaning to works of art and can ultimately decide on its faith. On the other hand, Becker underlines that what constitutes his idea of the art world is collective action with different actors who participate in the process. As he stated, "[T]he people engaged in collective action might be fighting or intriguing against one another... The nature of these relations between people is not given *a priori*, not something you can establish by definition" (Becker 2008:383).

The latest objective of contemporary art institutions is to transform themselves into educational spaces of active character, yet as the findings of my empirical research unveil, the educational part remains the weakest chain of the latest institutional transformation in the eyes of Czech and Polish visitors, who would like to have more information on art works provided and new technologies used in order to aid learning. Art institutions which fail to accommodate the needs of the new audience face the loss of popularity, visitors, and eventually artists, who would rather display their work elsewhere. One danger which art institutions can soon face comes from alternative venues of art display, particularly the public sphere. When the artwork is produced for a display in the public sphere, it is not directed to an elitist group

of art connoisseurs or individuals with some knowledge of art, but, rather, to a broad range of individuals with varying degrees of cultural capital, who will ultimately decide on the faith of the artwork without the involvement of institutional intermediary, thus shaking and redefining its role in the wholistic process of art production.

Becker's idea of an *art world* presumes that collective activity is equally supported by its all structural pillars – the artist, the art institution, and the audience – while the unequal division of labor can cause the fall of that art world as a new one emerges. Using this postulate, the presented article offers the analysis of the role that art institutions play in the making of the art world by means of questioning a degree of audience engagement, which these institutions are sometimes reluctant to facilitate. The results acquired from empirical research conducted by Kisiel in Poland and myself in the Czech Republic advocate expectations to be considered by art institutional application of audience development initiatives in order to answer the needs of the changing audience of art institutions. As suggested by Kisiel (2018), the new type of cultural recipients is likely to inflict the crisis of the traditional authorities, requiring new models of knowledge distribution along with a new dimension of participation in culture. These factors do not only force changes to the traditional institutional setting – one focused on passive consumption of culture – but they also foster *inclusive platforms of gaining knowledge about art*, as well as active participation. Employed interaction and visitors' active participation will doubtlessly answer the call of the new museology. As a closing remark, I would like to expand Kirchberg's appals (2016:235) that it is not only that "[m]useums can no longer act autonomously and independently from social contexts in which they are imbedded"; the same goes also for the cultural policy writers.

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Tworzenie nowego świata sztuki: o instytucjach sztuki i ich odbiorcach

Abstrakt: Howard S. Becker (1982) i Vera L. Zolberg (1990) wskazali na pojawienie się nowej publiczności jako jednej z głównych sił napędowych zmian w praktyce artystycznej, w której instytucje sztuki odgrywają ważną rolę w zapewnianiu doświadczeń zarówno estetycznych, jak i edukacyjnych, ale mogą też spotkać się z krytyką dotyczącą ekskluzywności i takiegoż budowania środowiska partycypacyjnego.

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie współczesnych relacji muzeów i galerii sztuki z ich odbiorcami, z uwzględnieniem roli, jaką odegrało pojawienie się nowej socjologii sztuki, socjologii muzeum oraz rozwój publiczności, kwestionujących rolę muzeów jako instytucji społeczno-kulturalnych nastawionych na demokratyzację kultury. Posługując się badaniami empirycznymi, które zrealizowano w wybranych instytucjach sztuki w Czechach i Polsce, poddam namysłowi, jak młodzi zwiedzający postrzegają instytucje sztuki w świetle ich niedawnych dążeń do stania się inkluzywnymi platformami zdobywania wiedzy o sztuce, które promują i ułatwiają aktywne uczestnictwo, a nie bierną konsumpcję.

Słowa kluczowe: nowe muzealnictwo, socjologia muzeum, nowa publiczność, światy sztuki, rozwój publiczności, Becker, Zolberg, instytucje sztuki, Czechy, Polska, inkluzyjne platformy zdobywania wiedzy o sztuce, digitalizacja muzeum

Past Presencing in Local Museums: Remarks on the Use of Art in the Creation of Representations of a Locality

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museum,
musealization, art,
local community

Abstract: Museums and art are both phenomena strongly connected with collective identities. During the process of development of modern nations in the 19th and 20th centuries, museums were actors (or tools, depending on the context) of the process of the construction of collective representations. This relates to a certain link between collectivities and objects, in which the latter contribute to the emergence of social roles and the organization of social worlds. Artworks as collective representations, and memory carriers significantly participate in these processes.

Since 1989, the importance of local identities has been growing. Local actors undertake organized activities to develop a sense of community and attract the attention of outsiders. Museums also participate in these processes, yet in the changing context the question arises as to whether they play a role similar to the national ones or, perhaps, different situations introduced new ways of museum involvement.

The paper examines the practices during which representations of a locality are constructed to be displayed in the museum context. We are interested in how art pieces contribute to this process and how they are used in comparison to non-aesthetic artifacts. The study is based on 50 in-depth interviews collected during two projects conducted in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship in Poland and in the Kosice Region in Slovakia. Concentrating on the practices of collection building, exhibition designing, and interpretation, we discuss different classes of objects used in the process, analyze their effectiveness in representing the original context – the main topic of museum narratives – and indicate some of them as boundary objects around which arenas emerge.

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Since¹ sociology is a discipline devoted to the study of *people* and their collective practices, making inquiries about museums – institutions in common knowledge dedicated to collecting and preserving *things* – might be perceived as a misunderstanding. However, even a simple analysis of such an entity allows one to designate at least two fields that make the museum an interesting topic for a sociologist. Firstly, a museum is not just a classical-style building in which old things are displayed and visitors are asked not to touch them. It is predominantly a system of organized and institutionalized roles and practices that promises a fruitful field of inquiry for a pragmatically-oriented social scientist. Secondly, the objects that are preserved, studied, and displayed within a museum space reflect the social order existing at many levels in both past and present society. This also makes museums a promising field of study for a scholar interested in practices of meaning-making.

¹ The paper contains data collected during two projects: *Muzea Podkarpackie 2004-2014. Globalizacja i europeizacja a przeobrażenie lokalnych instytucji kultury*, supported by Ministry of Culture and National Heritage grant (05787/15); and *Rola muzeów w konstruowaniu tożsamości lokalnych w Polsce i na Słowacji* (IA-11/2017/508), supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education grant designed for carrying out scientific research and related tasks supporting the development of young scientists and doctoral studies, participants at the University of Rzeszów, Department of Sociology and History.

Understanding museum as an institution means assuming that social order is a vital component of its functioning. A social phenomenon is institutionalized when particular cultural patterns are identified as important for a community and as such reproduced in time. A museum is about the institutionalization of the phenomenon called *museality* by Zbyslav Z. Stránský, meaning the need to preserve certain things against the rules of nature and history (Biedermann 2016:55); the need to take care of them and not allow them to deteriorate. The museum as an institution is appointed to perform three things: to preserve, to study, and to inform about the collections and practices (Weil 1990; Folga-Januszewska 2008; 2015; Borusiewicz 2012). A system of institutionalized practices develops around these three objectives.

When it comes to achieving these goals, one should recall the notion of organization. Situating ourselves within the tradition of sociological pragmatism, we prefer to think about ordered collective practices in this way rather than in terms of structure (Znaniński 1954:137; 1963:391-392). According to Florian Znaniński (1945:200), organization is a dynamic set of interrelated social roles cooperating to achieve certain ends. These roles might be institutionalized (Znaniński 1954:137) and – except small, private museums relying on individual collections – they

usually are. The development of museums brings about official positions, such as curators, educators, conservators, etc. People performing these roles have certain rights and duties to fulfill, and have to cooperate to achieve them. The more complex the organization is, the more members it includes, and the more points of interest for social sciences emerge. The sociology of organization studies staff members' collective behaviors and the social order emerging from their interactions, yet only a certain number of practices are object-oriented, and only such practices are in the scope of our investigation.

Connecting the past and the present

Switching the focus to the relationship between an actor and an artifact moves us toward the sociology of objects. This, however, poses some questions about the status of objects in such a relationship. In a more conservative approach, they are located within the scope of interest of various cultural sciences (Znaniński 1963:393), elements of rights needed to perform certain duties (Znaniński 2011:350), or indicators of certain social phenomena (Nowak 2010:176). In more recent developments (Gell 1998; Latour 2005; Krajewski 2013), the relationship between a person and an object is shown as a more complex and a more symmetric one. It is a human being who creates objects, but he/she could not do it without their applications, since they assume the form of: 1) tools; 2) media; 3) material means forcing certain use of the human body; or 4) a material, symbolic and often affective context of action (Krajewski 2013:27). The study of objects can provide certain information concerning their place in social systems and the organization of these systems. The status of artifacts in the museum context, however, is different from its everyday-life counterpart. In the museum, one can find many objects that are used

in the curator's work, but they are used differently than elements of collection and exhibits. As Marek Krajewski (2013:12–13) suggests, artifacts that underwent the musealization process are far better recognized than their everyday counterparts; their role in the human world is better known; however, they seem to be more distant. They ceased to be the element of individual life and a necessary condition of being a human. They are not used anymore; they are watched instead. Although a *thing's* life course consists of various changes in both users and uses, moving artifacts to the museum collection is the most drastic shift. The object's life ends when it becomes obsolete. However, locating the object in the museum seems to change the game's rules. A discussion is needed as to whether the museum is a rejected artifact's 'graveyard' or a space where it becomes useful in a different way. Is it a place where stories about objects are invented or where the relationship with people is re-defined?

Using Krajewski's typology of objects, *musealia* bear resemblance to memorabilia, which are not useful *per se*, yet their function is to recall something that is not present anymore. In the new context, they lose their utility function and maintain only the symbolic one. As such, they become the element of a broader process, which Sharon Macdonald called **past presenting** (2013:16). The study of contemporary groups and individuals might be often incomplete without the knowledge of their historical context (Strauss 1977:164). Preserving and interpreting the past are both important components of collective identity construction, and museums invented to perform these tasks were significant factors in the development of modern nations (Bennett 1995:36; Anderson 2006:178). Exhibitions containing artworks and artifacts connected with personae, events, and places important for the group shaped its identity and

invoked its **synthetic image**, allowing members to recognize themselves as belonging to the same community and to distinguish themselves from others (Levitt 2015:6). We emphasize the meaning of such simplification for developing a powerful collective representation. Yet the exhibition or even the collection is not a complete representation of pictured phenomena. It bears resemblance to a group stereotype discussed by Anthony Cohen (1985:74), who suggests that community members are aware of the complexity of their culture; however, they treat such a simplification as useful in intergroup relations.

The problem of the relationship between *musealia* and the context they were primarily used in is one of the basic ontological problems in museology (Gluziński 1980; Jordanova 1989; Saumarez-Smith 1989; Bal 1996; Pomian 2006; Assmann 2013; Biedermann 2016). An important question is how to construct a representation of an **original context** in a different setting with the use of a limited set of artifacts. The problem of limit should be emphasized, since a museum usually does not own – or have control over – all components of the original context. A collection is, therefore, a set of more or less **accidentally or purposely musealized artifacts**, since a museum does not have access to all artifacts from all historical periods it takes care of (nation, region, art, technology, etc). Certain objects were destroyed, forgotten, or they simply remain undiscovered. The financial factor is relevant, too. Museums often cannot afford to buy the desired thing, and curators make certain decisions concerning object acquisitions. Objects that undergo musealization are somehow important and assumed worth of preservation (sacralization). The question is, however, how this process is structured and what factors influence it. Historically, curators were often biased due to the lack of scientific method use or due to their colo-

nial perspective, ideology, or chauvinism (Ossowski 1966:355; Pomian 1990:60-64; Clifford 2000:215-217; Stránský 2005:153; Hudson 2014:66; Beránek 2020:44). This makes the final product a distorted representation of the original context. The fact is that a tool, a dress, or a weapon had a different meaning for an original user, a curator, and a visitor (Baxandall 1991:36-37). There is a significant difference between a carpenter using a plane, a member of the staff using a file template to describe the tool as an element of the collection and preparing a note for exhibiting purpose, and a visitor watching the displayed object with (or without) interest. Between the original context and the display, at least two spaces emerge for meaning-making practices: collection building and exhibition design (Porczyński and Vargová 2019).

Since this paper focuses on the problem of construction of local representations, the question arises as to how local museums contribute to the discussed phenomena. Do they speak about a locality in a way that national museums speak of a nation-state, or is there a significant difference? As we already mentioned, there is a strong relationship between a nation-state and a museum (Bennett 1995; Anderson 2006; Hudson 2014; Ziębińska-Witek 2020). However, along with the development of national museums, many local community-focused institutions also emerged (Stránský 2005:151; Stojak 2007). The situation lasted throughout the Cold War. Many Eastern-Bloc countries continue to establish regional museums, yet their narratives were connected with the official state ideologies (Stránský 2005:153,155). Recent studies which consider the post-EU accession period show that local communities become more aware of their distinction, and a kind of local Renaissance takes place. Globalization – contrary to the common belief – has not destroyed local cultures, but provided means which helped them sur-

vive and strengthen (Mach 2004:88). Museums, as gatekeepers of local traditions, can participate in that process and, therefore, develop and strengthen local identities (Kurczewska 2003; Crooke 2007; Jagodzińska 2021). The sociological pragmatism tradition provides some examples of how a city – as a material, social, and symbolic complex – might be enclosed in icons to which groups refer during their interactions (Strauss 2008:160). Joanna Kurczewska (2015:54) argues that the new period of local culture development (and its research) has much to do with objects. A locality is a space of life that contains material components shaping everyday practices. A recollection of objects important to collective identity might be seen in local branding. Promoting products as unique and significant to the local culture is a contemporary way of building local consciousness and setting the relationship with outsiders.

Describing a locality through art

Often because of its accessibility through national museum exhibitions, art has also a lot in common with the development of national cultures. Many historical events and influential people are recognized through paintings, sculptures, music, and literature. Selected artworks shape the national culture canon (Znaniński 1990; Kurczewska 2000; Kłoskowska 2012). The *Battle of Tannenberg*, Jan Matejko's famous painting depicting an important historical event, is exhibited in the National Museum in Warsaw and is reproduced in school handbooks, thus shaping a collective representation of a significant historical event. Art is localized and corresponds to the culture (Geertz 2005). Literary, iconic, and TV representations can also shape local imaginaries (Sulima 2001:133). Aleksander Kotsis' landscapes and scenes of Podhale, Canaletto's views of War-

saw, or Bruno Schultz's drawings and descriptions of Drogobych are all puzzle pieces that make it possible to reconstruct places experienced by their authors. Therefore, in the museum context, art and 'ordinary' objects can be used in the process of past presencing. The question is, however, whether they are used similarly, or if aesthetic sacralization changes the status of artworks in the museum context. This problem seems to be quite complex for two reasons. Firstly, as already mentioned, the musealization process contains a strong aspect of sacralization. Whether these are sculptures, combs, or swords, they are elevated to another level of importance. Secondly, the museum history of aesthetic objects is very difficult. As Stanisław Ossowski (1966:354-355) argues, it is permeated by class and colonial inequalities. He notes that in Europe 'art' is understood as European art, one connected with elites. Aesthetic objects produced by European lower classes or traditional crafts of Asian, African, or American authors (art with an adjective) are not considered as true art. While *the* art is a matter of interest of art museums, the latter is treated more as an ethnographic phenomenon. The problem is still relevant. As Gary Alan Fine (2004) shows, there is no *one* art world, and different worlds can emerge around different sorts of art, which leads to the development of a separate self-taught artistic social world.

Regional museums' practices cover different historical periods and various spheres of society. They put together everyday artifacts lacking aesthetic qualities as well as such which can be objects of aesthetic assessments, including artworks. A significant number of studies (e.g. Ossowski 1966; Simmel 1980; Bourdieu 1984; Szlendak 1998; Geertz 2005; Muggleton 2006) show that aesthetics might be a factor of distinction between groups or

social classes. Folk costumes and handicrafts make it possible to draw a line between separate ethnographic groups, while a careful analysis of fashion and home furnishing helps to describe different tastes of modern society's classes or youth sub-cultures. It is a significant indicator of social phenomena. Traditional cultures lack the strong distinction between objects and art, and art is more likely about aesthetics permeating all spheres of everyday and festive life (Znaniński 1937:504-506; Jackowski 2007:278-280). Modern society exhibits certain elements of traditional cultures – fashion and design somehow connect to many spheres of everyday life, but there is also a specialized sphere of 'true' art, one that is distinct from more 'profane' fields. Noting all these differences, we would like to treat all collected and exhibited things as objects. We do not want to assess the aesthetic qualities of handicrafts and artworks, as it is not the element of a sociological inquiry (Ossowski 1966:371; Znaniński 1963:389). We assume that selected artifacts bear certain traits that make them more than 'useful', 'durable', 'fragile', or 'handy'. They become 'beautiful', 'ornate', 'decorative', etc. This helps to compare them with other collection pieces and to extract unique perspectives and approaches that curators apply when dealing with them.

The study's aim and outline

The paper examines practices of Polish and Slovak museums focusing on the creation of representations of a locality. The main objective is to answer the question about how aesthetic objects contribute to the process of past presenting in comparison to different types of museum artifacts. We would like to determine how different museum staff members negotiate either to impose their points of view or to develop a coherent exhibition narrative.

The perspective negating the uniqueness of art objects and locating them within the broader set of aesthetic objects leads to thinking over the art-world approach which puts the art object in the center of social practices (Becker 2008). The artifact is linked to the locality, but its connection to the past is stronger than its relation to the present. This study focuses on the functioning of *musealia* in the institutional context, noting that a regional museum performs different functions than an art museum. Although it can contribute to the functioning of the art world, more likely it is the institution belonging to different social universes, i.e. that of a locality or that of past presenting (the one uniting people and organizations dedicated to making the past experienced today: historians, archeologists, collective memory researchers, reenactment groups, heritage institutions, etc.)

This study is based on material collected during two research projects. The first one was conducted in the years 2015–2016 in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship museum. The analyzed data consists of 34 in-depth interviews conducted with managers, curators, educators, and PR officers. The second study was carried out partially among curators of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship (8 IDI's) and the Kosice region (another 8 IDI's). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Although both projects dealt with the problem of the globalization's influence on cultural institutions, interview scenarios included question blocks concerning topics of collection building and exhibition design, fitting the scope of this paper. We focus on those practices and museum staff perspectives which are connected to the process of creating an exhibition. We do not try to decipher the complete meanings of final exhibitions. The paper tracks decisions behind the choice of certain pieces as elements of collections or displays rather than the final organization of components.

The respondents were intentionally selected according to the constant comparison approach. We selected museums of different sizes and founded by different parties to provide conditions for successful comparisons. When writing this paper, we followed the methodology of grounded theory (Konecki 2000; Charmaz 2009). We coded certain parts of interviews, selected the most promising (theoretically) parts, and then constructed categories. In order to illustrate our narratives, we cite our interviewees. All citations are anonymous and since our respondents could be easily identified, we removed territorial indicators and used only interview codes.²

The relation of an artwork to the original context

An art object seems to be more complex than other musealized elements of everyday life. They are not just 'things', but things with aesthetic traits. This situation generates more possibilities of connecting the art piece to the original context than the other *musealia* have. The artwork and different types of artifacts share a certain set of features that might be recognized by examining the museum documentation or the objects themselves. One of the museum staff's responsibilities is keeping records containing information about artifacts' features. They include the objects' physical description, **provenience**, and **authorship**, and for a sociologist, these elements are of the most vital

² The codes describing individual interviews can be interpreted as follows:

- for *Subcarpathian Museums 2004-2014* project, "Muzeum-07" means that the interview was conducted in a seventh museum on a list and "02" denotes the individual number of the interview carried out in this museum;

- for the *The role of museums in local identity construction in Poland and Slovakia* grant, codes contains the indication of the country where the interview was conducted (PL or SK) and a sequential number (e.g. SK-4).

importance, since they bind the artwork with the original context. For the purpose of this study, we call them **primary indicators**. As linkages to the locality, they are difficult to challenge, since they are grounded in the time-space aspect of reality; they were either created in the local context or used by a member of the local community, and as such they became legitimate objects of the curator's interest and care, as they allow the museum worker e.g. to tell something about the living conditions of a certain period:

The point is to make every L. citizen or tourist better know the history and not only of a particular object. For example, there are no descriptions under exhibits in a burgher sleeping room because it is about making an impression of a museum of the interior. There is, however, general information concerning that from where the furniture comes. There is a connection between these objects with a particular person, the explanation of who that person was. So, it is about showing a broader historical context using these objects as background. [PL-2]

Interior design is an example of the use of the class-related category of taste. This consequently shows our perspective as much broader than based on a more strictly understood category of fine arts. A reconstruction of the interior not only provides information about the living conditions of peasants, burghers, or aristocracy, but it also gives a snapshot of their taste and accepted aesthetics. A similar situation concerns artworks owned by people that used to live in a certain place:

[A]s for the other art collections, they point to, not just the paintings, but particularly the origin of it... not the origin but to the founders of the castle, to those owners. [SK-5]

By studying the objects one can learn about people who used or owned them. This can help to make generalizations about local representatives of a certain social class and, later, to make comparisons with members of the class at the national or international level. Art in different forms seems to permeate many aspects of life. In traditional cultures, the border between it and everyday objects is often indistinguishable. Wooden architecture, tools, kitchen utensils were all decorated. Not only were they allowed to fulfill a need for beauty in everyday life, but they also became indicators of the locality. Ceremonial costumes are usually connected with certain regions and allow their inhabitants to distinguish themselves from others as well as symbolically express their identity. They are important components of folk culture exhibitions and collections, and as such they are indicators of a locality:

[F]rom the perspective of ethnography and fashion, an incredibly precious thing is an R. [folk] costume from the period of the 19th, 20th century, preserved in a decent state. It is a jacket and a [...] vest. It may be this is one of the first costumes sewn as today's conventional R. costume? [PL-1]

Q. In the context of R. and the regions which do you study is it possible to speak about any distinction of the local community from the rest of the country, nation?

A. Distinction, well at this moment it is really difficult. Sure, we have many distinguishing features, that we can use to draw this distinction. However, I'm not completely sure [...] whether on the one hand we try to care about this locality and regionality, whether it is mentally important for us but do we show it? I don't know that. [...] So I think yes but anyway, like, some positive things happen. Since, not long ago [...] I had a conversation with a man who embroiders, and here

he uses our collections, archives and he was asked by a lady, who was getting married, for making a belt for her wedding dress, which was exactly a typical reproduction of an embroidery, here, ours, [from] R. and additionally earrings for bridesmaids, I think, and so on. And he said that the groom comes, exactly, from M. and he ought to have, in turn, patterns from M. embroidered on cuffs [...] And so it appears, this ethno-design or, [...] it was important for them to show, how, really, to show up in this [costume] which is related, here, with our region. [PL-8]

By making collections available to visitors, museums not only retain a snapshot of the past, but also provide their audiences with a certain set of references for identity construction and expression. Even stronger indicators of the locality are products of local artisans – especially in places identified as historical centers of traditional crafts (e.g. Krosno with glasswork, Medynia Głogowska with pottery, or Kolbuszowa with furniture-making). In such places, handicrafts can be treated as a value and a component of the local habitus. In these particular cases, to speak about the locality is to speak about certain craft traditions:

Our museum is a specific one. It's not a modern art museum, we generally are into the history of crafts in K. and surroundings, and the town's rank based mostly on craft development. Craft from the very beginning made the town develop well, there were plenty of great craftsmen. From time to time we do a series of workshops "From an apprentice to a master." We show particular professions, we show how many prominent craftsmen appeared here through ages, how K. based on craft. Today it is shown only from the museum's perspective. It is important to build this local identity, through repeating, showing citizens how does the history of K. influenced the

city's development, how beautiful and rich history we have. [Muzeum-07-02]

Representing handicrafts in museum narratives makes it possible to distinguish another vital factor: the importance of **authorship** and the author's persona. Among a large number of hand-made objects, usually created by more or less anonymous artisans, certain artifacts are produced by craftsmen of high skill or status, i.e. by masters. The question of authorship is even more important when it concerns objects identified as artworks *per se*. Local museums often include in their collections works produced by a more or less famous author, born or living in the neighborhood. It is a common strategy of many towns to be recognized by their relationship to a famous person, and artists are not the exception. Thus, representations of a locality include elements whose role is to convince the audience that the given place is special, because it is, e.g., the hometown of Zdzisław Beksiński (as is the case with Sanok). Institutions either provide space for the author's exclusive exhibitions or they display their artworks among other artists' pieces. Therefore, the museum in Stalowa Wola collects and exhibits works of Alfons Karpiński, the museum in Jasło – Ignacy Pinkas' paintings, and the museum in Michalovce owns a large collection of pieces by Theodor Mousson.

We try to do that [to build an image of the town as a living place of a famous painter] in the town as well. The town is simply... even though the local government wants M. [to be perceived] as a town of sports, which I do not agree with, and I keep saying that M. – a town of knight and painter, hey, so I promote this idea, because as it was in one Slovak film “you can chop wood when on command but you won't paint the picture”, they won't force me to talk about M. as M. – the town of sports. [SK-3]

Artworks, especially photographs and realistic paintings, might as well be a form of **documentation**, i.e. capturing past events, street views, or people's appearance. As such, they are also strong indicators of local representations.

A common material existence. The same through ages. I speak about peasants. There weren't significant differences. There were richer, poorer peasants but more or less [their living conditions were the same]. This entailed way of dressing, which might be seen in W. photographs. These are also vanishing elements of folk culture. Fashion is universal now. Second-hands did the thing. [PL-1]

These visual representations can interact with other exhibits, helping to understand their meaning, significance, processes of production, and use. They might be valuable when the displayed objects are difficult to interpret without some support or context. Depending on the museum's resources, they might enrich the exhibition based on original artifacts or substitute them in a situation when the institution lacks them.

Secondary indicators require some serious effort from the curator to become a legitimate rendering of the original context. It usually concerns a situation when artwork or an artist is not directly connected to the locality. In such cases, through meaning-making practices the museum tries to validate a connection between the object and the local representation. Such a convincing link might be, e.g., a historical period, art trend, or industry sector important to the place. Stalowa Wola is a town which was founded in the late 1930s. Since an important part of its heritage is the steel industry and modernist architecture, the local museum undertook many projects to commemorate, preserve, and promote this legacy. Many

of these events were connected directly to the local architecture, but others are linked to more general ideas of modern art and deco art and design. Thus, the museum built up the collection of the interwar Polish design and art:

As for the art department, we have two directions, so: regional artists but also Alfons Karpiński, who was born here, Stefan Norblin, an artist from the interwar [period], a period when Stalowa Wola was founded, so we collect his paintings. [PL-4]

Norblin was not born in Stalowa Wola and he never visited it, yet his art was found iconic for the interwar period, during which the town was developing, and as such it became an element of the locality's image. In comparison – Bronisław Chudzyński's watercolors are more significant as representations of the locality, since the author depicted local architecture while at the same time being the local 'Southern Works' construction's director. It seems, however, that as works of an amateur, they are not as 'sound' as the renowned Norblin's oil paintings. Having a famous artist's artwork strengthens the feeling of pride. Some curators recall visitors' disappointment caused by a lack of 'canonic' artists' works in museum collections; having and displaying one is a matter of prestige and a potential lure for tourists.

This documental aspect draws attention to a unique quality of artworks as exhibition components, namely **aesthetics**. A painting, a photograph or a piece of furniture might be put on display not because of their importance to the original context, but because of their beauty or illustrative qualities. Curators analyze them using a framework of aesthetics, focusing on the author's skill, composition, and color palette. They compare the object with similar

works from the period to tell whether they are of greater or lesser quality than the others:

But arts can be not only painting, sculpture, or drawing but also film or photography. W.'s photography is artistically ingenious. Of course, there are mistakes in it but they result from the equipment he had. He overexposed some, or did not see, or did not keep an eye on the light. All W.'s are composed [in advance], these are not reportage photos [...] All people here are set, gestures, gloves are put on, portraits are set, profile here... It's a high level of photographic art. [PL-1]

From the perspective of representation-making, aesthetics is considered along with other indicators:

Q: [D]o you think that art may concern, shape the sense of locality, local identity?

A: It might be, since we had, for example, a painting exhibition, a lady who is [a person from here] and lives in S. [now]. And she painted, among others, a few landscapes from [here]. They were very popular. Yes.

Q: Because it was art or because she came from [here]?

A: First of all because [she came from here] and it was of good quality. A lot of people came. [PL-3]

What binds a visitor with the exhibit is predominantly the sense of communal solidarity with the author. Identifying the artist as the person "from here" is an important element in accepting the display as a way of speaking about the locality. However, the artwork also contains aesthetic qualities and in this particular example they strengthen the object's importance. The excellence of the painting fills visitors with pride that such a gifted person can be counted as a fellow citizen. The relationship with the art of a famous outsider is a different case. While creations of the local artist support the con-

struction of imaginaries reflecting a given reality (documentation of the past), including the artworks of a creator from beyond the community is a matter of current practices oriented toward the future. Although in both cases the process of interpretation takes place, the former example does not need a significant amount of work to gain legitimacy. The practice of legitimizing a famous person as a “resource” for a community has to do with historical policy or regional marketing, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Representations of the locality’s past as a boundary object

In many heritage institutions, artworks are only a portion of stored artifacts. Regional museums’ collections usually compose of natural, archeological, historical, ethnographical, and artistic objects. This, of course, corresponds to the complexity of the original context that they speak about. Lacking burgher or working-class traditions, rural localities will not have access to memorabilia relating to the class. The depiction of the period is based on different types of objects, yet before they become part of the exhibition, several decisions are made. As previously mentioned, there are at least three stages during which a curator (or another authorized member of the museum staff) makes decisions concerning the choice of artifacts.

Susan Star and James Griesemer (1989) introduced the notion of a “boundary object” to describe certain elements that are evaluated and interpreted differently by involved social actors. The emergence of such a phenomenon invokes a discursive field, i.e. a social arena where antagonistic interactions take place (Strauss 1978; 2008; Clarke 1991; Kacperczyk 2007). This concept can be applied to the analysis

of the construction of a representation of a locality’s past in museums. Besides the original use of the term describing differences between curators and the audience’s perspectives on exhibitions, it can be applied to all phases emerging during the preparation of the display. At every stage of the musealization process, the curator makes certain decisions to include the element into the collection or the exhibition, and these decisions are often preceded by negotiations with other curators and museum officials, who may have different perspectives and agendas.

In the fragment where a curator expresses his/her negative opinion concerning the rejection of the heritage of a famous artist in the practices of identity-building, two perspectives on locality clash. This situation provides two important pieces of information. Firstly, an element of the past through certain meaning-making processes can be treated as a main motif of the local representation. Secondly, different motifs exist and under specific circumstances they can compete in the arena of local representations. Although this particular situation concerns discourse between different institutions (heritage versus politics), similar competitions can appear in organization itself.

Q: If you had a choice between an item, less attractive from a universal perspective, but valuable from the perspective of your collection building guidelines and, eventually, an object that is of universally high value, an artwork, for example, a painting, but not necessarily related, and you would have money. What would you choose?

A: Probably I would choose a regional thing. Another [regional painter’s] or [famous Polish painter’s] piece would not impress me. We have so little here, it isn’t a history that I may compare to Cracow’s history. Every artifact found here moves our [work] forward,

begins to speak about this place's history. I'm also a fanatic, so it makes me difficult to say. Every prewar citizen's visit card makes [me] happy. [PL-4]

The first stage of musealization during which decisions and negotiations take place is the building of a collection. James Clifford (2000) provides an apt metaphor of ethnography, defining it as a practice of collecting.³ During fieldwork, an ethnographer makes decisions concerning elements of culture that should be included in the developing theory. It is difficult to completely recognize local cultures (as extremely complex phenomena) during the limited time of the fieldwork. The researcher's personality, theoretical approach, or even random factors might significantly influence the process. In effect, museum collections are not complete sets of items representing the original context. Certain conditions – such as financial capacities, access to important objects, deciding which pieces are important, storage spaces, collecting strategies, scientific approaches – can all influence the collection status at every stage of its making (Porczyński and Vargová 2019). As museums usually have insufficient funds, each purchase is preceded by negotiations:

We have such an entity, called The Commission of Acquisition. Of course, it's me, who – from all these offers, that come to me – choose these most interesting [objects], which I know, are missing at the moment, or that will be useful at the exhibition, or what's important. This my proposal of acquisition I introduce to the commission, and the commission accepts it, although the director accepts this decision finally. These are also financial considerations. She knows we can afford something or not. [PL-4]

³ Clifford recalled Margaret Mead's statement about gathering particular pieces of culture during her research.

During this process, artworks compete with other types of objects. Curators representing different museum units have their own ideas about the significance of the artifacts (e.g. a historian might prefer documents, an ethnographer will favor elements of folk culture, etc.):

From ethnography, through archeology, history, numismatics, phaleristics, to the... Everything is here. Every piece, even the art department. We are creating the art department at the moment. In the past, my predecessors didn't pay attention to art, saying that the gallery of the Town Cultural Centre is for it. They [the gallery] should take care of pictures, sculptures and they [museum] will have peace of mind. But, their collections come from all corners of Poland and me, here, not often but from time to time, do exhibitions about art, from religious to super modern, of artists associated with the region, associated with our areas, or exquisite artists coming from Subcarpathia. [PL-5]

Functioning in the conditions of scarcity, lacking storage spaces, and having different statuses in the organizational system of the museum, representatives of different units negotiate upon the selection of artifacts. They decide which piece would best represent the original context at the given moment. They act collectively in order to reach the most satisfactory conclusion.⁴

The subsequent stage of the process includes the selection of artifacts that would be put on display. Assuming that the exhibition is the representation of locality with which the audience can directly interact, this stage has a greater influence on the im-

⁴ We allow the possibility of the existence of a more antagonist approach where the curators compete on the arena of representations to enforce their own point of view, but we lack sufficient data to make such a statement.

age of the original context when compared to the collection itself. It is because people from outside rarely have the opportunity to see the stored artifacts. During this phase, curators are even more restrained than during the process of gathering items. They rely on the collection, which is not the original context itself. Rather, due to its incompleteness, it is a distorted image of the context.

In order to make the past present in a more accurate manner, curators are sometimes forced to seek some alternative indicators:

Undoubtedly, the underappreciated family in L. is the first family of P., which has outstanding merits, members of which made the closest entourage of Polish kings. Because of the lack of objects related to this family, it is very difficult to say something more about this family. It is difficult to build some identity basing on this family, or tradition. It stays rather in this sphere of narratives. [PL-2]

Therefore, during this stage, different ways of visualizing the locality compete, and from the point of view of museology, they are not equal. Stránský's theory includes three types of representation: authentic, iconic, and informative (Stránský 2005). The most valuable are the first and the second ones, since they have an authentic connection to the people they represent on the display. As such, they bear resemblance to relics. When there is a lack of such objects, curators need to use different means to construct a representation of the past. Since there is also a lack of faithful images of people from the Middle Ages, some 19th- or 20th-century representations are used.⁵ Their power to represent the original context

⁵ The most popular representations of the Polish kings are Jan Matejko's portraits from the 19th century. It is not known how e.g. Mieszko I or Boleslaw Chrobry really looked like.

is not as strong as the authentic ones'. Narratives, which our respondent recalled, are the weakest indicators. They are applied instead of authentic and iconic ones, or to support the representation build with their use. Art can be used either as an authentic representation or as an iconic one. It can be a relic – a thing owned by – or “witnessing” the life of – a historic person, or it can be a sort of documentation, i.e. a portrait helping to visualize the person's looks, or an important scene in which he/she took part.

The question of the collection's and exhibition's (in) completeness might be resolved in various ways. Besides “telling the stories”, different methods – such as artifact reconstructions, use of pictures, or multimedia – are utilized to provide more or less accurate representations of the locality. Another part of the interview provides more information on the factors that shape the final form of the exhibition:

Q: What decides that one object finds its way to the exhibition and the other one to the storage room?

A: Definitely its state of preservation. Having a choice – considering for example an ethnographic exhibition – between two benches, which are from the same period, I choose the one which looks more attractive. Besides, such *musealia* were selected for the exhibition to create an attractive arrangement. Very often something ends up in a storage room because of a lack of place for exhibiting it. Although the building is spacious, only four rooms were designated for display and this space is very limited. Wanting to say more about the town we had to make multimedia presentations. They display themselves, scroll on monitors. Yet exhibits were selected to speak about the town in a reasonably attractive way. These are the best-preserved objects and the most beautiful ones, however, there are many interest-

ing fabrics, costumes in wardrobes and, unfortunately, there is no place for them. [PL-2]

From the perspective of the exhibition as a whole, not only the significance of the artifacts but also their attractiveness is considered. The display is, therefore, a configuration of objects that are significant as elements allowing to make the past present, as well as an aesthetic phenomenon. Curators transform chosen elements of the collection into a medium that makes it possible to represent the past in the most attractive way. A similar aspect relates to the completeness of the thesaurus as a base for the exhibition. The lack of key artifacts hampers the representation of the original context during the exhibition design. Thus, it seems that it is not only important that the exhibition should faithfully represent the original context, but also how attractive the way of doing it is. While preparing the display, curators balance between their interpretations of the past, the possibilities of representing it with *musealia*, the available exhibiting space, and, finally, the capacities to satisfy the taste of the audience. The strategy which might be called “a scientific” one competes with a different – aesthetics-oriented – approach, which relates to the fact that the exhibition might be treated as a work of art (Świecimski 1992). Thus, the organization of *musealia* in space and their choice are two aspects connected not only to the faithful representation of the original context, but also to the creation of an aesthetic, “good-looking” organization of objects and space. The exhibition’s design and all practices that come after it (guided tours, education) include the practices of selection and, if there are more people involved, also discursive practices:

We here, from every department, were supposed to select the five most valuable exhibits, but I said no,

we should better promote less, for example, although they know about this museum, it has the largest collection of M.’s paintings and let them come to look at them and they will see also different things. [SK-5]

Two perspectives were applied here. The first one includes the notion of value, which might be about several traits of the artifact: its importance to the original context, its uniqueness, or (rather doubtfully) its market price. This approach clashes with a more market-oriented idea of the main motif based on a renowned artist. As such, it is even more synthetic than the exhibition itself. In this case, other indicators of the original context were subordinated to the main one. It means that the perspective of the curator as an expert in the field challenges not only his/her colleagues’ approaches, but also confronts with the audience’s needs and abilities to participate and interpret the exhibition. Since the audience encompasses a broad spectrum of people with different levels of education, the display needs to be designed in a way which allows people with low cultural capital to understand mediated meanings. As our interviewees noted, better-educated visitors are those who can fully perceive both the aesthetic and the symbolic meanings that the given artwork communicates. For this reason, art might be less influential if compared to different artifacts:

Looking at L.’s citizens I’m not convinced it would have any broader response. Even if, it still would be this small group looking for something. [PL-2]

When dealing with less-educated visitors, aesthetic object may be treated as an “ordinary” artifact, or only its documentary traits might be utilized:

[O]ne may talk about art on several levels. If I have a more sophisticated visitor – I like to guide [him]

very much [...] when I have such a visitor, like a... clot, sometimes I host even such politicians – nothing gets through to them... you know, this basic, historical information should be told, or what is in the picture... 'In the picture is a lady with flowers, and a dove that flies to her'... you know? 'Mother of God Hodegetria' and now a few words about the topic... But if we have a more sophisticated visitor I prefer to show, that this Pantokrator, which we talked about, what this kind of representation is... 'Please, look how subtle the face is painted... Please, look at the color palette...' I could bring him into the painting. I could tell something more... Similar things happen on other exhibitions [...] this gallery linked to the French painting. It is, practically, more historical information, that P. – the founder of the gallery, was Piłsudski's legionnaire, and then he fought in Polish-Bolshevik war, and... 'here you see him on the self-portrait'. They aren't interested in whether this self-portrait is artistically worthless or is it a masterpiece, right? They don't know it. So... a piece of short historical information gets the whole of such an exhibition done and nothing more makes sense... [Muzeum-02-01]

Therefore, artwork in the museum context is a boundary object at three levels of interpretation at the very least. A decision is to be made whether it is to be treated as an aesthetic object or as a more "ordinary" object. In this context, it challenges perspectives shared by different parties (curators or visitors) during collection-building, exhibition design, or educational practices. As an aesthetic object, it can be analyzed according to the rules of different art disciplines and as such it competes with other pieces of art. When it is treated as an object or as a document, its aesthetic traits are not relevant; it is compared with other items in relation to their power to represent the original context.

Conclusion

Local culture is a symbolic knot binding local, national, and global cultural patterns (Wojakowski 2006), and as such, under certain circumstances, it can be interpreted either as an element of a broader phenomenon or as a unique manifestation of it. The peasantry, bourgeoisie, aristocracy, certain life- and art styles are phenomena existing in various time and spatial frameworks. Their general characteristics are elements of scientific and everyday discourse, but historically they existed in various forms as local varieties of broader phenomena. When analyzing local collections and exhibitions, one can learn more about those forms. This also allows the application of the discussed secondary indicators of a locality. Rooting the primary ones in the local context is not difficult; they are self-explanatory. The use of artwork to make a representation of the original context – when the piece a) was made locally; b) was authored by an artist connected to the place; c) documents an element of the original context; d) was owned or used by someone connected to the place – does not need an elaborate justification. Only a deep understanding of the local context makes it possible to find connections between it and personae, events, or artworks that were not created or used in a certain place, thus allowing one to build a convincing narrative on this basis.

However, the arena between the scientific and the aesthetic ways of displaying objects is only a part of a broader problem. Looking from a somewhat different perspective, local cultures have in many cases been noticed and appreciated through globalization. It has yielded a multitude of diverse benefits, primarily the opportunity for these cultures to present themselves to the world and promote their little homelands, but it also allowed them to

learn something new. This process is significant for various types of institutions, including museums, which are tasked with strengthening and cultivating tradition and representing local communities to outsiders. This is because museums not only collect artifacts of all kinds, but also organize and interpret them. All the tasks discussed above precede the processes of interpretation and communication, which correspond to the developing museum tourism, i.e. a branch of cultural tourism whose importance grows in the globalizing world (Wieczorkiewicz 1996; Kranz-Szurek 2012; Stefanik and Kamel 2013).

Until recently, culture and tourism had been treated as two separate entities. Cultural resources were perceived as part of the heritage of a local community, related to education, or as a foundation of that community's identity. Tourism, on the other hand, was seen as a form of leisure-oriented activity, clearly distinct from everyday life or local culture. This approach had been gradually transformed until culture became recognized as a factor enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of a given region. In light of the role it plays in bringing in tourists and economic growth, it began to be considered in terms of the driving force behind tourism (WTO 2001; OECD 2009), while the risks involved are not fully realized. A hasty and selective consumption of cultural heritage by tourists can lead to its value being lowered (Purchla 2013). Therefore, whether a place becomes an important point on the cultural map of a country is determined not only by the mere fact of possessing certain resources, but also by their skillful interpretation which must take into account both the symbolic layer of resources and their market dimension (Ashworth 2002). The demand for the same product can vary depending on how it was "packaged" (Broński 2013).

Cities are enthusiastically searching for cultural resources that could be included in their tourist offer, contributing to their recognition at the same time. Local authorities use acclaimed figures, including artists, to convince the audience that their locality is unique. Museums have also become part of such a strategy and have begun to provide space for individual exhibitions or for presenting pieces by selected artists among other displayed works. They are becoming an arena of struggle for the attention of the viewer and decision-makers alike. Renown names not only ensure greater attendance, but also boost chances of receiving various kinds of subsidies. Moreover, to meet the requirements of modern tourists, museums ceased to function as mausoleums or places of art and history cult, where a collection is the only thing that matters. They became a well-arranged representation of the original context, making art an integral part of life and enriching it with various forms of entertainment (Adorno 2005; Newhouse 2005; Broński 2013). As an important part of the tourist industry, they were intended to encourage visitors to spend money not only in the museum itself, but also to visit restaurants, use accommodation services, etc. (Myerscough 1988). The museums becoming significant players in the tourism industry target a specific audience, i.e. an audience that is no longer so keen on contemplating works of art in silence and solitude, but, rather, is focused on exploring leisure opportunities and taking advantage of offers that meet their recreational needs, as well as providing unusual experiences (Bauman 1993; Stephen 2001; MacCannell 2002). Therefore, although museums continue to maintain to some extent the image of temples of art and knowledge – drawing the attention of visitors to the exhibits and imposing on them an attitude of complete concentration – they mainly strive to generate new and attractive scenarios of the past, comple-

mented with contemporary art (Folga-Januszewska 2011; Pomian 2014). The rank and value of a given work are both more and more often determined by various accompanying events, such as concerts, readings, and shows. On the one hand, this attracts a mass audience and places a given institution on the aforementioned cultural map, but on the other, there is a fear of crossing the thin line that separates the museum as a cultural institution from an entertainment facility, and artists from entrepreneurs in the financial industry (Boltanski 2011; Pomian 2014).

One of the key channels through which museums – and by extension cities – can communicate their assets and attractions is through exhibitions. They are not always all-encompassing or ideal representations of a locality; they are often the outcome of random choices, different kinds of negotiations, and also the influence of external factors. The shifting social, economic, and political realities compel museums to modify not only their scope of activity, but also their exhibition planning (Hooper-Greenhill 2007). There are times when exhibitions are reduced to a mere combination of random notions of locality, or to an interpretation that employs objects that are devoid of any cultural or historical context and only pretend to form some kind of whole (Clifford 2000). Also, those in charge of arranging exhibitions deliberately shift away from presenting a given phenomenon in a one-to-one fashion and, rather, they transform it, for example, into a highly aesthetic medium. Decisions of curators and directors who have the final word on what

will be put on display, in what configuration, and when are not only manifestations of their power, but also their means of imposing a specific image of the world (Szczerski 2005). Over the course of this process, works of art compete against diverse kinds of artifacts. Not only are they more complex objects when compared with the rest of museum collections, but they also have aesthetic qualities. Many pieces showcased in museums are plucked out of their original context. This is especially true for the early sacred and ecclesiastical art. Typically, visitors see only the final result, which is the outcome of arbitrary decisions taken by museum professionals, and, usually, they do not know what the purpose of such a selection was. Sometimes they even do not know if it is a work of art they are perceiving, since the curator does not inform them that a certain traditional mug or plate might be an object of aesthetic contemplation. After all, museum professionals are the ones who, based on their knowledge and experience, distinguish handicrafts and works of art (Zgodzińska 2018).

In light of our analysis, Krajewski's statement that objects become suspicious means nothing more than objects moving from the sphere of use to the sphere of symbolization. In the original context, they had been used by people. When on display, they invoke the past. They are still used, but differently. This does not mean that the approach of the sociology of objects is not applicable; one first needs to reconstruct the past in order to analyze the practices of its representation in the present.

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Uobecnianie przeszłości w muzeach lokalnych. Uwagi o wykorzystaniu sztuki w kreowaniu reprezentacji lokalności

Abstrakt: Zarówno muzea jak i sztuka silnie wiążą się z tożsamościami zbiorowymi. W procesach rozwoju nowoczesnych narodów, w XIX i XX wieku, muzea były aktorami (lub narzędziami, w zależności od kontekstu) procesów konstruowania wyobrażeń zbiorowych. Odnosi się to do pewnego powiązania między zbiorowościami i obiektami, w którym te drugie mają wkład w wyodrębnianie się ról społecznych i organizowanie światów społecznych. Dzieła sztuki jako wyobrażenia zbiorowe i nośniki pamięci znacząco uczestniczą w tych procesach.

Od 1989 znaczenie tożsamości lokalnych rośnie. Aktorzy lokalni podejmują zorganizowane działania, aby rozwinąć poczucie wspólnoty i przyciągnąć uwagę z zewnątrz. Także muzea uczestniczą w tych procesach, jednak w zmieniającym się kontekście pojawia się pytanie, czy odgrywają one rolę podobną do ich narodowych odpowiedników, czy też może odmienne okoliczności wymagają nowych sposobów zaangażowania muzeów.

Artykuł analizuje praktyki, w ramach których reprezentacje lokalności konstruuje się w celu wystawienia w kontekście muzealnym. Interesuje nas jakie dzieła sztuki mają wkład w ten proces i jak używa się ich w porównaniu z artefaktami niemającymi cech estetycznych. Studium opiera się na 50 wywiadach pogłębionych zgromadzonych podczas dwóch projektów przeprowadzonych w województwie podkarpackim w Polsce i kraju koszyckim na Słowacji. Koncentrując się na praktykach budowania kolekcji, projektowania i interpretowania wystaw, omawiamy rozmaite klasy obiektów używanych w tych procesach, analizujemy ich efektywność w reprezentowaniu oryginalnego kontekstu – głównego tematu narracji muzealnych – oraz wskazujemy niektóre z nich jako obiekty graniczne, wokół których powstają areny.

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość zbiorowa, uobecnianie przeszłości, muzeum, muzealizacja, sztuka, społeczność lokalna

Acting for the Local Community: Hybrid Ethnography in the Careers of Local Culture Animators

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Keywords: culture animator, diary method, hybrid ethnography, spatial analysis, social role, career

Abstract: This article focuses on the innovative methodology used to collect data. We describe how we have utilized the diary method and what analytical potential it contains. We also flag the limitations we have perceived during the research. At the same time, so as not to refrain entirely from a discussion of the study findings, we recreate selected shared attributes in the careers of culture animators. A hybrid research method was used to report and interpret the reality of our surroundings. This involved the use of a diary in which the animators described facts and events from the previous day while also plotting data concerning their location on the Google map; they enriched their notes with short essays, pictures, and video clips. Then, the animators as subjects in the research took part in one-on-one in-depth interviews to summarize their experience. Deliberations on the utility and innovativeness of these ethnographic methods are accompanied by considerations as to the variety of experience held by culture animators and the factors driving their occupational choices.

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This text is two-pronged: on the one hand, it contributes to the discussion on the possible applications of hybrid ethnography; on the other hand, it advances an opinion in the debate surrounding the factors shaping the careers of culture animators.¹ It serves both of these functions while referencing the data obtained as part of the comprehensive research on local-government cultural centers.² Local-government institutions of culture that frequently provide space for the activity of animators play a special role in local communities: they develop a feeling of community and accountability for shared matters, they build an awareness of causation, and they shape the competences required to participate actively in a civic society. The research discussed in this article responds to the need for more extensive research into

¹ In its original meaning, animation denotes 'initiating action'. The word comes from Latin: *anima* – 'soul', *animatio* – 'enliven', and *animare* – 'enlive, give life to something'. In turn, we as the authors will understand the type of animation that is of particular interest to us – namely cultural animation – as follows: first, creating conditions in which people – individuals and groups – can satisfy their needs as part of culture which they discover or find on their own. "The goal of animatory activity conceived of in this manner is, therefore, not in any way to be understood as the dissemination of the so-called "high culture" or the most valuable products of mass culture; [...] Here the fundamental frame of reference is the entirety of a person's cultural potentiality, the entirety of his or her cultural personality" (Godlewski et al. 2002:64). In turn, an animator is a person who inspires others to discover their own potential, an inspirer or initiator; a person who 'raises interest in something, who encourages'. He or she is a person who has the capacity of apprehending the problems encountered by a given community and responding to them in a skillful manner. The local activities initiated by such a person also stimulate mechanisms that are characteristic of a civic society.

² This research was launched and funded by the National Centre for Culture. The subject matter of the research involves the functions discharged by cultural centers: starting with the ones that are *stricte* related to culture, to those concentrated on the local social capital, including local institutions involved in building the community and, as a consequence, a civic society.

the environment of social workers. "There is a need to engage in more extensive research into the community involved in non-profit activity than to date. This type of research will make it possible, in our opinion, to obtain knowledge about the 'morphology' of the Polish civic society while also possibly becoming a component of the collective identity of activists involved in non-governmental activity (Nowosielski and Nowak 2008).

Local leadership is also included among the local resources capable of strengthening the mechanisms of a civic society on top of the strong bonds linking members of the community or the community's access to personal and material means. The latter element is directly associated with the activity of culture animators, because the terms "cultural leader and "culture animator" frequently have an overlapping meaning.³ For this reason, the tasks of a leader in the context of local cultural activity can in practical terms be treated as tantamount to being that type of activity which is also ascribed to a culture animator. With this convergence in terms of their definitions and meaning in mind, we made the decision during the research to link leaders and culture animators, and treat them as people fulfilling the very same function.

³ As Magdalena Dudkiewicz and Marek Dudkiewicz have observed, "Leaders of culture deliberately 'create culture' in their local environment which constitutes their natural backdrop and strengthens the force of their impact having regard for the possibility of effecting factual (conceptual, mental, educational, social) change and fulfilling the postulate of local adjustment, chiefly through discovering and taking advantage of local cultural resources" (Dudkiewicz and Dudkiewicz 2017:4). When defining a culture animator in her lexicon entitled *Słownik Teorii Żywej Kultury* [*The Lexicon of the Theories on Living Culture*], Barbara Fatyga states as follows: "The distinctiveness of an animator's charisma stems from his or her authority, whose requisite constituent element is the skill of being able to withdraw into the shadow when the animatory activities start to accrue results" (2014).

The purpose of this article is to present an innovative methodology enriched by a reflection on the advantages and imperfections of the adopted solutions. For these deliberations to be fully graspable, the text includes a reference to analyses in order to recreate the characteristic elements of the activity of local culture animators and map their activity. The research questions focused on two issues. The first one pertains to the advantages and disadvantages of the presented methodology. The second one concerns the activity of culture animators. It investigates issues related to what inspires and motivates them to work for the benefit of the local community. It also concerns spatial analyses, namely the locations and the conditions in which animators carry out the duties entrusted to them. The portrait of the prosocial activity of local culture animators reconstructed in this manner has been used to ponder on their professional position.

Multiple scientific texts have been published on the careers of selected occupational groups⁴; for this reason, we will not focus on analyzing this term. We would merely like to emphasize that we understand a career to denote the vocational path of a person, in particular during those periods of life when that person is professionally active (see Domecka and Mrozowicki 2008). As Howard S. Becker and James Carper (1956) have observed, the notion of a career can be examined twofold: an objective aspect related to promotions within an employee hierarchy or the role of a given person in an organization, as well as a subjective aspect related to how an individual per-

⁴ The concept of a career in an interactionist sense pertains to its objective aspects (Goffman 1961) as well as the subjective ones (Hughes 1958; Goffman 1961). Krzysztof Konecki (1988), Markieta Domecka and Adam Mrozowicki (2008), as well as Ewa Krause (2012) were among the Polish researchers who have made contributions to the body of theory regarding this subject matter.

ceives the situation in which he/she is placed, and to what extent this situation is consistent with his/her expectations. In this article, we have concentrated on the subjective perception of a career path, because the compiled material shows many similar elements in the interlocutors' narratives. We devoted the sub-section IV to the shared components of their activity.

Recognizing the activity of animators in terms of professional activity does not exhaust the subject. The tasks of a leader are identified with stimulating mechanisms that are characteristic of a civic society: "According to Max Weber's well-known division, a culture animator is a calling and – let us add – *a social role*, not a *professional role*. It is also possible to use Weberian inspiration by characterizing a culture animator as a special type of charismatic leader in a local community or group" (Fatyga 2014). In the case of the persons taking part in the research under scrutiny, this special type of charisma appears to ensue from their multiple competences and positive work ethics.

The next section is devoted to the applied research techniques and the strategy for selecting the individuals to participate in the research into local culture animators.

The methodological framework of the project

This research consisted of four modules, namely one based on quantitative techniques and three based on qualitative techniques, as has been portrayed in detail in Table 1. For the purposes of this text, we distinguished between the material collected during the diary research and the one-on-one in-depth interviews conducted with local culture animators to summarize the said material (see row 3 in Table 1).

Table 1. Modules of the comprehensive research into cultural centers in Poland

No.	Technique	Sample size and information regarding the participants/respondents
1	Mixed Mode Survey Design CAWI, CATI, CAPI nationwide sample of cultural centers in Poland	N=1076 interviews with the directors and employees of cultural centers with the greatest amount of work seniority and the most extensive knowledge about the operation of their institution
2	IDI	40 interviews with representatives of institutions from the environment of the cultural centers: schools, non-governmental organizations, offices of the communes and parishes; 3 interviews and 1 short poll (brief conversation in a public spot), completed with the representatives of a school, non-governmental organization, office of a commune, and a parish in a commune in which there is no cultural center in operation
3	Diary research (7 days) with elements of ethnography and IDIs to summarize	6 interviews with local culture animators, with the use of the diary method
4	FGI online	2 focus group interviews with the directors of cultural centers (10 participants in total)

Source: Wiśniewski et al. 2021

Before we conducted the diary research, it had been necessary to pick the animators. The research procedure consisted of several stages. Above all, communes were picked. The starting point was the analysis concerning the activity of communes⁵ and

⁵ Data of the Local Data Bank pertaining to the cultural activity of local government entities in 2017.

their spendings on culture.⁶ We defined the cultural activity of a commune as the total sum of artistic groups, events, affiliations, and clubs per resident, while the expenditures - as the budget per resident. Then, we employed the following rule by assigning communes to six different ranges:

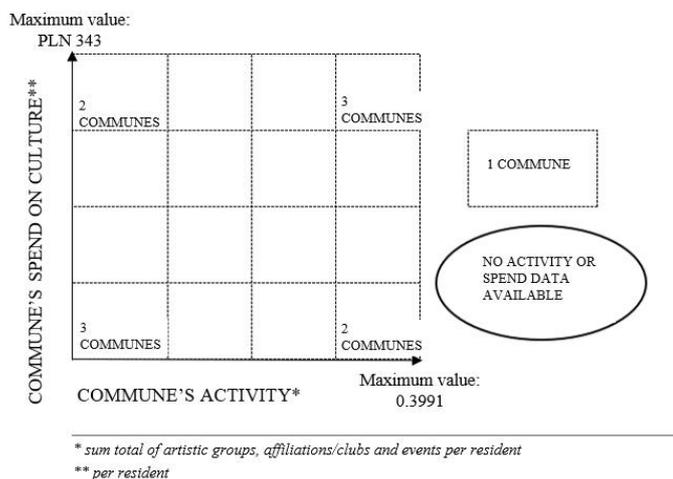
1. Activity 1. Quartile and Budget 1. Quartile → (1) low activity and low budget;
2. Activity 1. Quartile and Budget 4. Quartile → (2) low activity and high budget;
3. Activity 4. Quartile and Budget 1. Quartile → (3) high activity and low budget;
4. Activity 4. Quartile and Budget 4. Quartile → (4) high activity and high budget;
5. Activity 2 or 3. Quartile and/or Budget 2 or 3. Quartile → (5) other;
6. No data available in the category Activity and/or Budget → (6) no data available.

On the basis of the table of values for the above two variables, communes were selected from the first and fourth quartiles having regard for their characteristic ratio of expenditures incurred for cultural activity to the cultural offer accessible in those communes. This made it possible to identify communes under the following schematic: (1) low activity and low budget (n=3); (2) low activity and high budget (n=2); (3) high activity and low budget (n=2); (4) high activity and high

⁶ Data pertaining to the income and expenditures in the budgets of local government entities in 2017. At the stage of designing the research, these were the most recent full records of annual data available.

budget (n=3).⁷ The schematic for selection has been presented in Figure 1. The tentative analysis of the information regarding communes' expenditures and activities made us realize that on top of communes reporting their activity to the Statistics Poland there is also a group of entities whose budgetary data and number of cultural events organized in their areas are unavailable. We considered that to be an indicator of how differently those communes conduct their cultural activity. This is also why we selected one commune on top of the previously chosen ten local government entities; it had not furnished information about its activity and expenditures, and in its territory there is no local state cultural center. Therefore, category (6) was formed on account of the absence of information on activity and budget, and the lack of a cultural center within the territorial limits of the commune (n=1).

Figure 1. The visualization of the selection of communes



Source: Wiśniewski et al. 2021

⁷ The inspiration for utilizing this split came from the analyses conducted by the Institute for Educational Research under the BECKER Project (Research into the economic determinants for the goals and targets of allocating capital expenditures to education pursued by public and private entities in Poland). See <http://eduentuzjasci.pl/becke.html>.

After selecting the communes, one-on-one in-depth interviews (IDIs) were held with the representatives of schools, non-governmental organizations, the offices of communes and parishes, or the entities that undertake cultural activities in the confines of the very same administrative unit as the studied cultural centers. We recruited people to participate in the ethnographic research from among the leaders discovered during the analysis of the data originating from the qualitative research (IDI) in a given commune.⁸ We posited that a person we intended to recognize as being a local leader should be mentioned in at least one of the four one-on-one in-depth interviews conducted in the territory of a single commune. We conducted a diary measurement with one animator from each type of commune distinguished from among the 11 communes selected for participation in the research: (1), (2), (3), (4), and (6). The participants of the interviews in one of the selected communes failed to identify any local leader, while in a different commune they listed several of them.

We chose to employ diary research on account of the ability it provides to observe animators during their daily activities. This method also facilitates the recording of contents at the time they appear naturally, and the persons can share their observations over a longer period of time. In such instances, some researchers

⁸ The research team made this identification on the basis of recordings or transcripts of individual in-depth interviews. In the interview script, the body of the question was worded as follows: "In your community or in its closest vicinity, is there a person who exerts a significant influence on culture and the local community? I am thinking about a person (not about an institution) who gathers others around him or her and who has clout. A person who initiates and co-organizes many cultural events in your parts. Are you capable of identifying someone like that? Perhaps, there is more than one such person who acts as an animator of cultural life? Please tell me why you consider this person or persons to be a leader or leaders? [If no spontaneous response is given, one might ask about local activists, well-known people associated with the region and acting to the benefit the local community, artists, celebrities]." In reality, the wording of the question could have slightly deviated from the adopted template.

stress the significance of participatory research (Stage, Eriksson, and Reestorf 2019). Changes in technology and people's attitudes have meant that the set of skills needed to run modern field research has undergone transformation, because it calls for developed digital competences, including IT skills (operating hardware and software) and information-related skills (searching for content, selecting content, and critical evaluation). Internet ethnography is one of the newly-formed research techniques. Some studies suggest that it is a type of a shortcut to obtain multiple-source data, but thinking about ethnography as using the Internet as a certain shortcut or facility can evidence that the essence of the issue has not been perceived correctly (Kozinets 2006). This type of research method is part of hybrid ethnography. According to Liz Przybylski (2020), hybrid ethnography⁹ should be understood as a researcher's work with the interviewee's multiple sources of expression that have various distinctive attributes and which the researcher must interpret to grasp the meaning conveyed by the participants (see Seim 2019).

The research reconstructed in this article contains elements of the hybrid approach. We chose to utilize the classic method of structured diaries, which entailed the animator writing down their activities related to a chosen type of activity in a specially designed questionnaire.¹⁰ Additionally, however, the participant

⁹ Many areas of life, especially those that are related to expressive culture, exist in both digital and physical space. Liz Przybylski's book abounds with pragmatic hints on how to prepare, run, and analyze ethnographic research situated in a hybrid field reality. Special emphasis is placed here on media and the visual layer, including images and sound as elements constituting an inseparable part of modern research into the culture of expression.

¹⁰ Over a period of seven days, the respondents copiously documented the events from this period. During the research, they described their observations, feelings, and thoughts related to the method of organization and execution of cultural events held in their nearest vicinity. They also documented their contacts with the representatives of institutions of culture, communes, schools, parishes, and non-governmental organizations, as well as their informal relations with the residents of

supplemented this information on the performed activities by taking pictures or noting his/her location on the map. The entirety of the data was placed on an Internet platform devoted to this research.¹¹ The one-on-one in-depth interviews with the aim of summarizing the work crowned the measurement. The multimedia structure of the diary contributed to the comfort and freedom of the participants who selected the time, the venue, and the breadth of what they wanted to convey. This also gave them the possibility to construe a narrative utilizing media and streamline the data collection process whereby they could upload those materials onto the server immediately after compiling them. The multimedia aspect made the process attractive and may have inspired the participants to portray phenomena or events which they would not have had an opportunity to reference in a classic qualitative interview (Pink 2008).

Utilizing a visual message helps one understand and illustrate the practices of the person without having to give extensive explanations thereof (Gibson et al. 2013). We perceive that as an advantage, because an image replete with the respondent's commentary potentially provides more information than the very same description, even if it is highly detailed. Another undeniable advantage of the diary method is also the immediate capturing of the person's events, thoughts, or observations at the time when they occur, which minimizes the possibility of distortions related to retrospection. Similarly to any other method, this one does have certain inherent limitations, including the most important one, namely that keeping a diary may affect the interviewee's behavior, as he/she mod-

the same community/commune. Every day, the subjects filled out several fundamental information sheets with regard to the people with whom they spent their time, what they did, and where they had been. Additionally, every day they received one task calling for more work.

¹¹ See: <https://softarchitect.pl/flyblog>.

ifies that behavior and endorses socially acceptable attitudes or portrays himself/herself in a better light. Moreover, the researcher can hardly control the conscientiousness with which the participants perform their assignments (for example, the researcher can merely verify whether a research participant performs the assignments every day or whether he/she does that belatedly). Since the researcher has few tools to check whether the person reports all of the activities performed in an accurate manner, this method does require the research participants to demonstrate a lot of commitment. For this reason, many actions need to be taken to minimize the time intensity. Above all, the structured questionnaire must be duly designed to limit the number of questions recurring every day, as well as the more demanding open questions. For the greater comfort of the participants, one should always give consideration to shortening the number of the days of measurement, as well as the option to participate in the research through a mobile app or a special online platform (Laughland and Kvavilashvili 2018).

The Polish tradition of research diaries extends back to the first half of the 20th century, when Józef Chałasiński and Bronisław Malinowski were performing their work.¹² At present, the diary method is going through a renaissance and is inscribed in the broader stream of research focused on the relativistic notion of reality. In this project to adjust the structure of the diaries to the distinct nature of the group under research, and also to align this project with research trends, the diaries kept for the purpose of this research of ours were uploaded onto a platform for online research (Online Bulletin Board). Therefore, the research participants could complete them in a virtual form, which made it possible to write down opinions and report them on an ongoing basis in any place and time, thus par-

ticipating in social processes. This also enabled the respondents to add photos with captions and record short video clips containing their commentary. The researchers were observing the entries appearing in the diaries on an ongoing basis, as well as they remarked on the uploaded material and posed questions. This made it possible to gain a better grasp on the areas under scrutiny.

The hybrid nature of ethnography creates an opportunity to employ the diary method in order to secure a number of digital materials (photos,¹³

¹³ The research participants took pictures during special assignments which formed a part of the diary method. One of these assignments involved illustrating regular activities which the person usually performed every day. In the second assignment, in turn, the participant assumed the role of an ambassador for the local community and was supposed to tell a stranger about the local community. The instructions were as follows:

I. "Please take several photos to illustrate five regular things you usually do during the day. Please prepare captions for the photos and tell us why these rituals are important to you."

II. "Today we would like for you to start telling us about the local community's life. Your assignment is to play the role of an ambassador for your local community and tell a traveler about that community. Please provide thorough answers to the following questions and document your story with several photos:

1. What does your local community mean to you?
2. How would you describe your local community? Please characterize it in several sentences.
3. How long have you lived here? What kind of people live in your near surroundings? How well do you know your neighbors and other residents of the community? What is the important thing for you in neighborly relations? How frequently do you meet with other residents of the community? Under what circumstances? What do you do when you meet? What do you talk about?
4. How are you involved in the activities of the local community? Why do you devote your time to the local community affairs? What have you managed to accomplish recently? What would you like to brag about?
5. How much of your private time do you devote to actions for the local community?
6. What gives you the greatest pleasure when you are involved in local activities? What causes you the greatest difficulty?
7. Which institutions' representatives do you have contact with the most frequently? Why exactly do you have contact with them?
8. In your opinion, which institutions are the most important to the development of your community? What makes them so important? What type of undertakings do they carry out? Which of them appear to you to be the most interesting and the most beneficial from the viewpoint of the local community?"

¹² See Malinowski 2007.

video clips,¹⁴ and GPS locations) as well as blend the secured data with information coming from the individual in-depth interviews. The participants used the diary research chiefly to recount events and memories. During the measurement that lasted seven days,¹⁵ the animators reported all of the activities they performed and the locations where they were (imposing the coordinates on the Google map), as well as they estimated the duration of the various tasks and identified the persons accompanying them during the day. Moreover, they performed several additional tasks, for the completion of which more time was anticipated (2-3 days), as each one of them was a non-recurring task.¹⁶ After the completion of the diary research, one-hour-long one-on-one in-depth interviews were held with the persons,¹⁷ during which the contents of the diary were summarized and follow-up questions were posed concerning the material obtained through them. This conversation added themes compiled during the interviews with other peoples from a given local community, enriching them with the perspective brought by the animators. It also offered

the opportunity to verify the researcher's original interpretations.

Common elements in the actions of local animators

As was already mentioned, we have observed several recurring patterns of activity in the interviews and the diaries. What appears to be important in the description of the animators' careers is the category embodying the **motivation to act for the benefit of the local community**, involving the assumption that certain personality traits of an individual (disinterest, resourcefulness, communicativeness, kindness, and diligence) – combined with specific determinants in this person's surroundings – direct that person to become engaged in animation activities. We identified situations in which there are numerous and active non-governmental organizations in a commune under study, or in which there is a rich local cultural heritage (particular valuable historical monuments or natural assets, etc.) and deemed them favorable. Access to infrastructure enhancing the attractiveness of animation activities can provide support, as can the relatively high financial means of a commune, making it possible to focus activity on animation activities:

This is very work-intensive and very much engages the employees of the cultural center [statement concerning one of the activities of cultural centers – R.W.], but I believe it is worth it, because that is the purpose we serve. [A2]

Another similarity is **activity in many areas of life and not restricting activity to one selected local organization**, but multi-pronged activity for the entire local community:

¹⁴ On account of its modest share and form (self-presentation of the subject), the video clip has not been included in the analyses presented in this article.

¹⁵ In research techniques requiring greater involvement – and there is no doubt that the diary method is one of them – what appears to be key is: 1. maintaining (for the full length of the measurement period) the greatest number of persons who have elected to participate in the measurement; and 2. maintaining the motivation of the people to work with the tool with commitment. In the described project, the decision was made to collect data for seven full days, as this time period makes it possible to fulfill the two foregoing conditions, and additionally capture the person's routine activities.

¹⁶ Some of these assignments have already been mentioned in footnote no. 13. The animators were also asked to report a local event (especially a cultural one) that had taken place during the week covered by the measurement.

¹⁷ Representatives of the company doing business as 'Danae' conducted the conversations, as the business is responsible for running the entire project under the name of 'Comprehensive Research into Cultural Centers in Poland', including the research modules described in this article.

In my local community, I organize events jointly with the KGW¹⁸ and the OSP,¹⁹ e.g. Mother's Day, Women's Day, Grandmother and Grandfather's Day, Carnival, Caroling, Spring Day, Easter Egg Meetings, Christmas Eve Meetings, craftsmanship workshops (e.g. weaving an Easter palm, the art of decorating with macaroni, decoupage, and paper baskets). Our community also gets involved in various social campaigns: 'Renovating Saint Florian's Chapel', 'Driver for Jakub', 'Give your heart to a single mother', 'Collection for flood victims from the [name] commune', 'Collection for fire victims in [name of the commune]'. There is no shortage of celebrations such as the Jubilee Days of the KGW and the Celebration of Firefighters' Day. Nor is there a shortage of matrimonial gates, building altars for Corpus Christi, or cleanup in and around the Saint Florian's Chapel. [A6]

The **extensive network of informal contacts with local decision-makers**, civil servants, directors of local cultural institutions, city council members, and business owners is an accompanying element. The rule of reciprocity²⁰ (Cialdini 1995) also plays a significant role in forming a contact network. Animators amass social capital by providing support in the form of their knowledge and creativity to the organizers of various events. The bond created in this manner is sometimes utilized by animators when they organize subsequent undertakings:

Since I have always been involved in local matters and I taught in school, I met many people in town and have good contacts with them. Nor do I have any difficulty with neighborly relations, though they are not very close. Nevertheless, I can count on their [the neighbors – R.W.] assistance in need (and vice versa). [A2]

¹⁸ 'Kolo Gospodyń Wiejskich' ['Rural Women's Group'].

¹⁹ 'Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna' ['Voluntary Fire Brigade'].

²⁰ See the social exchange theory according to Peter Blau (1964) and George Homans (1967).

The network of people favorable to the interviewees is being build steadily, but it does not constitute an end in itself. The desire to get animators involved in many local affairs testified to their multiple competences and their personality traits:

[...] a few neighbors were in attendance and they said to me: [first name], you will do it the best. You handle it. [...] There is no common room, this is missing, that is missing. How would you see that? [...] There are also [...] many different pieces of advice. Some of them are strange and have nothing in common with culture [...]. Our MGOPS [Urban Commune Social Aid Center – R.W.]²¹ frequently calls me: 'there is this lady – what do you think about how we can help her?' [A5]

The statements of the research participants simultaneously allude to the fact that even though they are active people, they do not have a sense of great control over their professional choices. Their social activity is sometimes dictated by their feeling of internal emptiness, while their activities to benefit the local community are a way for them to fill that emptiness.

[...] Perhaps you have to have that something to [feel that – R.W.] something was lacking. In that manner, however, for that to affect their work, their commitment, their dedication, to how they devote their time, on how they treat that way of living, for there is certainly no financial dimension, for there are many [such moments – R.W.] that you have to give something from yourself, also when it comes to financial affairs, to dedicate your own devices, not to mention time [...]. [A5]

When reporting their involvement in the cultural activity of their own children, on the one hand the research participants expressed their concerns, especial-

²¹ Urban Commune Social Aid Center.

ly when referring to the financial sphere. On the other hand, their words indicated that they had a sense of pride in the fact that they have managed to inculcate in them the **positive work ethos of a local leader**,²² characterized by his/her work commitment, especially the work done to benefit the local community.

Some of the animators also talked with great reverence and commitment about the local activity of their ancestors. They talked about how – as successors of ideas and accomplishments in the field of their relatives' social activity – they feel an obligation to continue their work, or at least disseminate knowledge about their creativity. Above all, however, one can speak about the **intergenerational inheritance of social activity**:

The Regional Team [*name*] was established in 1966 as part of the KGW²³ [community – R.W.] by my grandmother: [*first and last name*]. [...] On the basis of relations with persons born before 1900, my grandmother wrote the screenplay for [*name of the play*] containing rituals, melodies, and typical songs from the area of [*name of the community*] and the surrounding villages. This program has won many highly-regarded awards at various folklore reviews. [...] Purveying the Regional Team's archives gives me the opportunity to learn more about my grandmother's work and inspires me to continue working with the Regional Team. My grandmother [*first and last name, date of birth and death*] was a social activist; she organized various contests for women, culinary and embroidery courses. She cared about women and she endeavored for them to have piecework to do. She was a member of the KGW in [*name of the community*] and then she was the chairwoman of the Group. [A3]

²² See the definition of ethics according to Max Weber (2011) and Maria Ossowska (2020).

²³ 'Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich' [Rural Women's Group].

Sometimes, inheriting social activity does not refer to activity in a particular local organization or team, but is manifested by the passions or talents of artistically-gifted family members:

My daughter also sings, plays, and dances. [...] On the one hand, that pains me because I know that that work is not profitable. [*laughter*] On the other hand, it is genuinely beautiful. As that is, after all, human development. A person devoid of culture is merely half a person to me. [A2]

In this article, we have employed the voluminous category of social activity. We define it – using Weber's conceptual framework – as an "action that according to the intentional sense of the agent refers to the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber 2002:6). Therefore, we are operating within the area of the sociological theory of action for the good of others, rooted in the collective context (Nowak 2015). Among the four types of action distinguished by Max Weber – namely: rational action on account of purpose, rational action on account of values, affective actions, and traditional actions – the activities undertaken by local leaders reflected by the statements made by the research participants belong to more than one type of action. Above all, we interpret them as rational actions on account of values. Here, we are thinking about activities aimed at preserving the memory of certain persons and events, and upholding local traditions or encouraging local artistic groups to act. In the statements made by the animators – including those referring to shortfalls or emptiness – one can also identify the leaven of affective actions.

One of the female research participants is also an instructor for a local folklore group historically connected to her family. The social activity of her family is precisely what had shaped her adult life:

I am involved in the Troupe's life, because I have been participating in it since my childhood. As a 3-year-old girl I was prepped by my grandmother and my mother to appear in local performances. You can say that I have grown into this culture and now I have a need to continue what my grandmother had started. It is certainly thanks to the fact that she inculcated that passion in me that today I am where I am and I like doing it [...]. I completed a two-year-long course to become an instructor of regional groups and this helps me in my work with the Troupe. [A3]

The history of this female animator is not an isolated case. Here, one should explicitly state that the key importance for the emergence of a future animator may stem from his/her family environment:

I completed a local-government administration school [...]. That local government was always of interest to me. I joined a family that also operated in the local government, it [has – R.W.] traditions and I have to see that [this – R.W.] is how things started. I went to attend a rural meeting with my father-in-law. He was the local village superintendent and he did not want to continue serving in this capacity because of his age, especially when he looked around and saw computerization, one knows those projects, we are members of the European Union and here I am as a newly acquired family member who would run and would be capable of running all of that. [A6]

An intensive exchange of experience leading to the **acquisition of new competences** can also sometimes take place within animators' families. At times, the flow of skills also takes place between active members of the local community:

[...] Husband who deals with a form of promotion taught me to be active in promotion. Because that is

not easy. [...] He gave me the basics, he showed me how it is done, and he gave me some ideas. Without the support of the family, nothing can be done. [A2]

However, zeal and having the appropriate family support would not produce any effect without an individual being **deeply rooted in the local community**. Persons associated with a given community since birth, or long-term residents in a given area, are the named animators the most frequently:

My integration with the local community [*name of the community*], I have been living here for 62 years, it started when I was 9 years old, I think, and it has lasted to the present day. [...] My mom bought me a Bambino record player and a few records at the same time [...]. There was one television set in our village at that time and it was owned by one of the farmers. It was usually there on Saturdays or Sundays that we would meet for film screenings. There was also a children's club in the village where the youth would congregate in the evenings. Sometimes a mobile cinema would arrive, and usually on Saturdays an accordion player would show up to play as best he could and it was good fun. After one such open-air concert I was hired out along with my record player and records to the children's club for a dance. So one guy carried the record player and the records and one guy carried me piggyback. I sat at the table with my record player and I played everything as it came out, Hungarian, German, Polish, and then things started all over again. It was a grand party. I was supposed to be carried home by 8 p.m. but the party was such a great time that ultimately my dad came to intervene, but after imbibing several hefty drinks, his intervention proved to be ineffective, but then my mom thought that things were taking too much time, and she came to collect her young musician, and then no negotiations were admissible. [...] There were many such dances, but they ended before 8 p.m., I would go

home, and the rest would stay behind to play cards, checkers or simply talk with one another; they also had dates, things were merry, and that's how I became part of the community which surrounds me to this day; on account of all of these years it has become one big family to me. The time came when what is known as the RUCH clubs were established and my young one was the manager of that club for many years, and then I was in the club every day. [A5]

The commitment demonstrated by the male and female animators in their work to benefit the well-being of the local community would not ordinarily be possible if it were not for the attitude of openness to others and drawing satisfaction from fulfilling their function. In nearly all of the interviews with the participants, it was noted that on top of the vocational work they perform (related to cultural animation), they devote at least several hours a week to activities related to the local community:

It would be difficult to count the number of hours devoted to activity, because that is not something that is countable for me. Every day [there is – R.W.] the Senior+ home for at least three hours, plus an additional two hours on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, and participation in the [name] choir's practice sessions for three hours. [A1]

The animators participating in the research are well-known in their local environment. This is evidenced at the very least by the fact that they were identified as leaders by representatives of the local institutions. Since in the past they had completed the tasks entrusted to them many times, they have also gained great social trust:

[The name of the river] flows through a historical park that has been beautifully revitalized, the park also

houses a historical castle from the 12th century, private owner. We have a permit to use the castle. Many things take place there. The owner [first name] gave me the keys and said, Mr. [first name], please do what you like just as long as you don't burn the joint down. [A5]

The participants usually do not glean any financial benefits from their animation activities and they also sacrifice their leisure time. This is why one can say that a culture animator is chiefly a social role, not a professional role.

Pictures as a testament to animators' commitment

As access to digital techniques becomes more widespread, the trend of using pictures or video clips as source material in research has become more pronounced. Researchers came to widely recognize visual material as a valuable source of primary data. Some scientists even state that "some contemporarily important research problems may be explained in full only by using such 'soft methods'" (Żuchowska-Zimnal 2013:100).

In the project discussed in this article, we have secured a small representation of visual materials (47 pictures and 6 video-clip recordings of several minutes in length). This is also the reason why we did not choose to interpret these photographs as part of visual sociology, or to discover hidden meanings and sense (Stańczak 2007; Konecki 2012). Nonetheless, hybrid ethnography facilitates the compilation and analysis of visual materials. When designing the research, we included elements of the sociology of pictures (Olechnicki 1999), recognizing that visual techniques – although they have many meanings and are difficult to interpret – are the best at painting the picture on the daily activities of cul-

ture animators. In the obtained visual material, we looked for illustrations of the animators' activities described in the article, and of scenes showing the local dimension of their work. We perused the pictures constituting a testimony of the animators' direct commitment to coordinating events, which depicted the work done in the "background" of these projects and revealed their contribution, which is not obvious to the majority of the residents of a given community. These collages provide examples of the animators' activities during cultural events (Photograph 1) and their day-to-day work for local communities (Photograph 2).²⁴

Photograph 1. Animators at work for the local community



Source: proprietary material – photographs provided by the culture animators participating in the research

²⁴ In his 2011 article, Tomasz Ferenc points out that English-language literature uses the terms 'visual anthropology' and 'visual sociology', which – when translated into Polish – fail to fully convey the underlying sense of these disciplines. In this author's opinion, at present, i.e. in the day and age of audio-visibility, visual culture forms the principal field of interest in visual sociology and anthropology. That is also why the Polish terms proposed by Krzysztof Olechnicki (1999), namely "socjologia obrazu" and "antropologia obrazu," appear to be more suitable.

Photograph 2. Preparations for local cultural events



Source: proprietary material – photographs provided by the culture animators participating in the research

Mapping the activity of local animators

A relatively new element in sociological analyses is geolocation of individuals using GPS, followed by mapping their movements (Krzysztofek and Bomba 2011). Research employing geolocation is conducted in logistics, transport, or geography (information and planning) (Voilmy, Smoreda, and Ziemlicki 2008; Šveda and Madajová 2015). In the social sciences, geolocation research is used e.g. to analyze the movements of participants in protests and demonstrations (Rodríguez-Amat and Brantner 2016). Here, it is noteworthy that the 19th-century social researcher Charles Booth had already employed maps to depict the areas of wealth and poverty in the vicinity of London (Bales 1994). His work exerted a significant impact on the development of research methods in sociology. In this approach, a map was used to visualize data; it was

supposed to facilitate the process of grasping the data. The sources for conceiving of this function can be traced back to the 17th-century Cartesian idea in which space was a “vessel” filled with objects, persons, or phenomena (Poczykowski 2006; see also Wiśniewski 2012:156–158).²⁵ Mapping problem areas in the city was also a tool used in the work done by sociologists belonging to the Chicago School. Edward Hall (1976) as well as Derek Gregory and John Urry (1985) were developing more and more new themes over time in the sociology of space initiated by Georg Simmel in 1908 (1997); contemporarily, Martin G. Fuller and Martina Löw (2017) are among those who merit attention. For some time now, people have been reflecting on the new opportunities which new technologies have contributed to social research into space (Logan 2012). In the maps presented in this article, we have concentrated on accurately rendering the spatial activity of the persons. For this purpose, we have used the geolocation data provided by the culture animators participating in our research. Based on this, we construed maps depict-

²⁵ Contemporarily, many publications are devoted to slightly different aspects of perceiving space –, creating mental maps or the supporting technique of photographic walks (see Nózka and Martini 2015:34–50). In turn, in the book titled *Socjologia przestrzeni* [*The Sociology of Space*] written by Martina Löw (2000 and 2018), space appears as a complicated and dynamic structure undergoing incessant change. As Marta Bucholc relates, “(There is) not only space as such, but rather the processes of constituting or forming space. Thus, the assumption is that we are dealing with a dynamic, process-related, syncretic and (in the broadest sense) constructionist approach. However, what is considerably more important is the relationary approach. On the one hand, therefore, the author opposes visions of space which she calls ‘absolutistic’, in which space is grasped as inflexible, an empty receptacle for things. Instead, she proposes thinking about space in terms of a system or order of living bodies and social goods that maintain certain relationships with one another” (2018:17). In this theory presented by the German sociologist, people are not the only ones to shape space. They are also joined by institutions, things, and even certain symbols. She does not directly present the hypothesis regarding the causality of inhuman factors, contrary to what Bruno Latour (2010) did; nevertheless, she does expand thinking about relationships.

ing the persons’ movement and we superimposed on that information regarding the type of activities performed as well as their sequence. It should be emphasized that by applying elements of spatial analysis, we scrutinized the distribution of the institutions with which the local leaders participating in the research collaborate, and the reciprocal relations they have fostered in this capacity. The data created by the local animators has been used to carry out an intersubjective verification aimed at searching for the possibility of generalizing the schematics for their activity or comprehending their motivation to work for the local community.

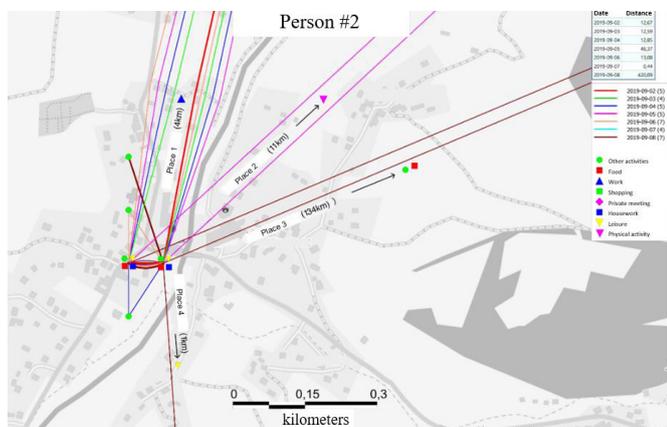
In the analysis of the maps, we focused on recreating the network of links (relations) tying the local male and female leaders of culture with the specific venues, as well as their daily activity measured by the number of traveled kilometers,²⁶ and the potential recurrence of those behaviors.

At the same time, it should be underlined that the participants retraced their activities and meetings with other people on their own. For them to be able to carry out that task accurately, we equipped them with the FlyBlog platform, which is customized to input geographical data. By collecting that information in a single location, it was possible to identify the key spots of the animators’ daily activity. At the same time, we could identify the interrelated points as well as those which were bypassed or isolated. We have marked the visualization with information regarding the intensity of these relations, the dates of contact, the distance covered, and the variety of activities performed in a given venue. The maps presented below illus-

²⁶ We estimated the number of kilometers traveled in a straight line.

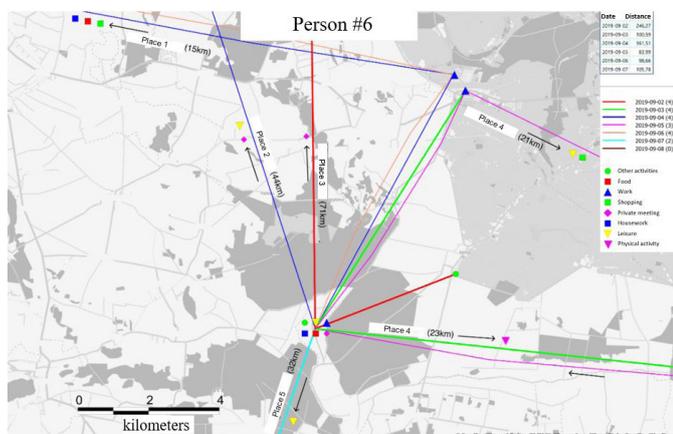
trate the weekly activity of two female leaders who stood out from the rest of the respondents in terms of their relatively extensive spatial activity. At the same time, since the persons who shared their data covered large distances, they exemplify scalability-related problems. They depict the compromise stemming from the equilibrium between precision and the holistic nature of data.

Map 1. The weekly activity of Animator 2



Source: Vectoss on the basis of data collected through diary research

Map 2. The weekly activity of Animator 6



Source: Vectoss on the basis of data collected through diary research

Six local animators from five different communes reported their entire weekly activities. Persons at different ages, of different genders, and originating from different regions from around Poland mapped their activities. The geolocation data obtained from the participants – when superimposed on maps – makes it possible to formulate some reflections regarding the respondents’ spatial activity:

- Animators usually perform their vocational work in many locations. Five out of the six persons performed their business duties during the week in at least three different locations. These persons are mobile and capable of acting efficiently and flexibly, and they frequently change the place where their activities are undertaken.
- Vocational work strongly penetrates the work they do socially as well as their household duties. Four out of the six participants performed some of their vocational activities as well as their household tasks and spent their leisure time in one venue. When examining the compiled spatial data in the context of the animators’ other statements, this can evidence their flexibility, great work motivation, and organizational skills. It should be stressed that this research material was compiled in 2019, i.e. prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, so remote work was not commonly available as a form of carrying out professional duties.
- Four persons had at least one social meeting during the week. These meetings were usually held with many people in attendance and were different in character, including e.g. family BBQs, canoe trips, and funeral ceremonies. Some of these activities were socially beneficial and involved helping others. The remarks re-

corded by the participants reporting some of their calls in their journals are a testimony to this aspect: "Taking a walk with a lady friend and helping her get home (she uses a cane)" [A1]. Thus, these were (at least partly) rational actions on account of the values attached by the persons.

- Activity measured by the number of traveled kilometers varies greatly, both when one looks at the activity of a single person on various days and when one considers the weekly data of all of the interviewee. Within a week, the research participants traveled between 130 and 800 kilometers. During this time, they visited from 4 to 10 different sites. It would be difficult to identify uniform patterns of activity among the persons based on these places. Only the way in which two people move about can be described as constant, meaning that their movements oscillate between several permanent points. Additionally, the average number of kilometers traveled by these participants was lower than that of the persons who had different routes with no clear daily pattern. Nor did we observe any impact exerted by variables depicting a commune's activity. A female animator from a commune characterized by its high level of activity and high budget (category 4) demonstrated the lowest spatial dynamism, as well as one from a commune for which there was no data available concerning the activity and budget, and in whose area no cultural center was operating (category 6). The differences did not ensue from the nature of the vocational work. This is evidenced by the fact that two of the female animators taking part in the research – both of them serving as directors of their cultural centers – had an extremely different level

of spatial dynamism. Therefore, one can surmise that the activity of female and male leaders is highly heterogeneous and that it strongly hinges on a commune's calendar of events. One of the things that points to this is the fact that each one of the persons completing the journal spent a portion of his/her leisure time preparing for the cultural events scheduled in a given commune.

- The centers of these communities were the main area where the professional animators participating in the research were active. This area is usually where institutions of culture, schools, commune offices, and churches can be found, and the institutions, whose field of operation was where the animators carried out their professional duties. The place of residence of the animators exhibits the greatest multi-functionality; this is where they perform some of the professional duties, but also where they spend their leisure time and where they do their household chores.
- Private meetings were treated as a separate category in this analysis. These meetings (on top of professional work) were the reason for covering the largest number of kilometers, which can evidence the participants' great commitment to cultivate relationships with other persons.

The spatial analyses made it possible to affirm the respondents' declarations behaviorally. The ensuing portrait depicts people who are mobile and can perform the duties entrusted to them under varying infrastructural conditions and at different times of the day. The environmental determinants and the spatial layout of the community both appear to be

of significance. However, the theme surrounding the impact exerted by space and the available infrastructure on the activity of local leaders does call for lengthier and perhaps more automated analyses. On the basis of the compiled research material, we have concluded that the time of observation envisaged by the research was too brief for us to gain a grasp on possible regularities in the animators' spatial activity. The observations should be longer and last at least two or three weeks. This conclusion might also serve as an indication for other researchers who will choose to delve into the topic of the activity of local culture animators.

Conclusion

The presented forms of autoethnography were helpful in recreating the characteristic elements of the activity of local culture animators. The method of structured diaries enriched with visual and geolocation elements offers a number of new interpretative possibilities. It is also attractive to the participants of the research themselves, as evidenced by the precision of the geolocation indications and the variety of the visual materials provided.²⁷ However, the method of data delivery can arouse some doubts, as it depends on the participants responding to the diary method. The dates of conveying various batches of material might testify to some of the people filling out their diaries in an unsystematic manner. This may have resulted partly from technical difficulties or from the level of digital competences demonstrated by individual participants, but there are many elements that suggest that motivation and conscientiousness were both of significance, too. The high commitment

shown by the animators in preparing local cultural events had a positive impact on the quality of data. Despite the utilization of multimedia elements and the transfer of the diary into the Internet, we did not manage to entirely eliminate the doubts concerning the level of research participants' engagement. Above all, the fact that some people reported their activity in an unsystematic manner revealed reservations, and this might have translated into a less detailed reproduction of the events of a given day. On the other hand, the advantage offered by online diaries comes from the fact that they provide knowledge about the delays experienced by particular persons.

Even though the core of the article pertains to methodological issues, we did succumb to the temptation of presenting preliminary analyses in the text. One fact deserves attention, namely that the family environment appears to be the factor driving an individual to become a local leader to the largest extent, and, to put it more precisely, the question of other family members being actively involved in work to benefit the local community. The theme of inheriting from grandparents, parents or parents-in-law a feeling of having certain commitments to the local community emerged in several interviews. On top of some of the elements conveyed in the process of primary socialization, the skillful utilization of a commune's permanent resources and the diligently construed informal contact network are both of importance. The creativity of local animators and the motivations associated with the inherited social activity prevent others from seeing the value of their work. Their commitment is often seen as something obvious. The dearth of support from members of the local community can lead to a lack of appreciation for the work done by local leaders and, as a consequence, to their diminished motivation to work for others.

²⁷ This article focuses on the project's methodological assumptions and the opportunities for utilizing geolocation data in the analysis. The other visual materials (photos and video recordings) were used in the main publication (Wiśniewski et al. 2021).

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Działanie na rzecz społeczności lokalnej. Etnografia hybrydowa karier lokalnych animatorów kultury

Abstrakt: Artykuł, skupia się na nowatorskiej metodologii, jaką wykorzystano do zbierania danych. Wskazujemy, w jaki sposób wykorzystaliśmy metodę dzienniczkową oraz jaki niesie ona z sobą potencjał analityczny. Sygnalizujemy również ograniczenia, które dostrzeżliśmy w trakcie badania. Jednocześnie, by nie rezygnować zupełnie z dyskusji nad wnioskami z badania, odtwarzamy wybrane cechy wspólne w karierach zawodowych animatorów kultury. Do relacjonowania i interpretacji otaczającej ich rzeczywistości posłużyła nam hybrydalna metoda badania. Polegała ona na zastosowaniu dzienniczka, w którym badani opisywali fakty i zdarzenia z dnia poprzedniego, a dane o swojej lokalizacji nanosili na mapę Google; notatki wzbogacali o krótkie eseje, materiał fotograficzny i filmowy. Następnie badani animatorzy wzięli udział w podsumowujących indywidualnych wywiadach pogłębionych. Rozważaniom nad użytecznością i innowacyjnością zastosowanych metod etnograficznych towarzyszy refleksja nad zróżnicowaniem doświadczeń animatorów kultury oraz czynnikami wpływającymi na ich zawodowe wybory.

Słowa kluczowe: animator kultury, metoda dzienniczkowa, etnografia hybrydowa, analiza przestrzenna, rola społeczna, kariera zawodowa

Meetings with the Polish Cinema: An Outline of a Sociological Study into Traveling Cinema Based on the 'Light-Sensitive Poland' Project

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world, contemporary
Polish cinema, mobile
cinema, 'Light-
Sensitive Poland'

Abstract: The presented study aims to describe the outdoor movie project called 'Light-Sensitive Poland' [Pol. *'Polska Światłoczuła'*] in two perspectives – functional and interactive. During the qualitative field research, the author tried to find out what motivations drive the different sides of the project. The sociological study is based on scientific and statistical sources as well as on the material collected in the period 2012–2014 during the six touring cinema routes in Poland within the 'Light-Sensitive Poland' project. The specific objective is to attempt to include the author's own sociological observations made during the fieldwork in the broader context of the traveling cinema phenomenon. The collected materials provided an opportunity to sketch the socio-cultural atmosphere of meetings between the audience and the works and their creators, in particular the expectations and motivation of both the creators and recipients. The article refers to the author's own ordinary and participatory observations (both open and hidden). The article used 50 ordinary observations from the screening and from the meetings with the audience (conversations with the audience after the screening and about 100 short recorded conversations with the audience about the movie impressions and motivation to participate in the screening), as well as the insider experience from several dozen days in touring cinemas. The research is not representative of the overall audience of the screenings during the six tours. The author does not discuss the results of the research on the reception of contemporary Polish movies (discussion after screenings), but, rather, focuses on the institutional and interactive approach to mobile cinema.

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The study is intended to describe the activities and functioning of an informal cinematic institution as it tours and meets audiences from the interactive and functional perspective. The titular wording "meetings with the cinema" is a broad, vague, and general phrase. The expression includes elements of communication, social and personal organization, institutional commitment, attitudes and interpersonal relations, attitudes toward the touring cinema, relationships, relationship networks, emotional states, interactions, and activities. The traveling cinema and the audience around it is the empirical social world of human beings. It manifests itself through people's group life. Nevertheless, I do not use the concept of the social world here. My theoretical backgrounds are classics of interactionism, functionalism, and hermeneutics: the position of Georg Herbert Mead (1975) and Herbert Blumer (2007), the institutional analysis of Bronisław Malinowski (see Dyoniziak-Olszewska 1966), the functional approach to the study of the work of art proposed by Roman Jakobson in 1960 (1989), and the philosophy of art by Hans Georg Gadamer (2007; see also Czakon 2012). The hermeneutical view of Gadamer's art presupposes a multiplicity of interpretations of the work and ennobles the colloquial viewer of cinema. Gadamer saw art through the prism of two tasks: communicating the truth and building communication. According to him, art enables, initiates, and sustains communication. I understand interactivity broadly, i.e. as people's actions based on the meaning mutually assigned by participants, particularly partners of interaction (Blumer 2007:61–69). The interaction with oneself in the way in which Mead understood it was not considered in this study. Symbolic interaction occurs when people seek to comprehend each other, to interpret each other's

actions. "This meaning sets the way in which he sees the object, the way in which he is prepared to act toward it, and the way in which he is ready to talk about it" (Blumer 2007:11). According to Mead (1975), a pattern of society refers to the self, action, social interaction, objects, and connected activities. In my circle of interest, interaction, procedures, and activities are combined; I would like to show them through the prism of motivation, interaction, and the actions of the participants of events. As Mead saw it, the object is the product of the individual's disposition to act, not the stimulus that the action invokes. The subject matter is, therefore, all that can be identified or recalled: physical objects (e.g. a building, a movie poster, hall, audiovisual equipment, chairs for spectators, screen, movies, commemorative entries); social objects (e.g. journalists, culture animators, audience, family, associations, local communities, peers, friends); abstract objects (e.g. interpretation, reception, rules of discourse, rituals, movie reception, standards of hospitality, etc.) According to Herbert Blumer, in turn, group action is the result of concerted individual action, i.e. the outcome of interpreting and taking into account the actions of others. People are involved in coping with the situations they face; individuals perceive and interpret the characteristics of the situation in which they operate; each activity is constructed rather than triggered (Blumer 2007:64–65). An encounter with a work of art, audience members' meetings with other audience members, dialog, and interaction all resonate especially with regard to touring institutions. In the present case, there is a meeting of the creators with the audience, with a colloquial interpretation of the work and the fact that the activities are carried out away from large cultural centers. Not all aspects can be described in the pages of a single article. This is a task that I could undertake in a broader study, hoping for a thorough examina-

tion of the reception of movies by different audiences, including the mechanisms of its construction in the discourse about movies. I will then include the collective analysis of the movie in the audience discussions after the screening. However, this material is not the source for the presented sketch herein.

This article is the fourth contribution in a row in which I refer to my own research on ‘Polska Światłoczuła’. Traveling cinemas are a phenomenon which I have already highlighted in my earlier publication (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2019), where I discussed the history and the status of contemporary “detours” and cinematic participation in the country, pointing to the uniqueness of the participatory movie project called ‘Polska Światłoczuła’. Several years have passed since that research was carried out. Owing to this, I have had the opportunity to distance myself to the initiative itself as well as to the data and the people I then met. I found out that scientific “hot” writing can be burdened with subjective emotions, impressions, the Światowid’s syndrome,¹ or fatigue (travel hardships), which is why I had to step back for a while. My field research resulted in two attempts at thematically similar texts² (about the ‘Polska Światłoczuła’ and cinema audience) presented at two national scientific conferences³ in 2014, shortly after the field studies had been completed. One of them is an outline of a case study of touring cinema and its audience, written

¹ I wrote about this at the end of one post-conference text (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2016).

² Some passages are repeated in these texts.

³ National Scientific Conference ‘Homo Peregrinus. Człowiek w drodze. Człowiek i jego wędrówka’, 5-6 December 2014, organizer: the Faculty of Philology of the University of Białystok, paper: “O podróży z kinem polskim (z badań terenowych)”; Scientific Conference ‘Przyszłość kultury od diagnozy do prognozy’, Białystok, 7 March, 2014, organizer: the Institute of Polish Philology of the University of Białystok, paper: “Polska Światłoczuła – kino objazdowe i jego publiczność w XXI wieku.”

still under the influence of involvement in a movie project. I use some of those proposals in this article, greatly expanding them. The second publication focused on the subjectivistic perspective of travel, the road, liminality, and personal experience, fulfilling my volunteer and researcher roles simultaneously (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2016⁴). After the tour, I tried to write impressions for myself⁵ based on photography, travel routes, notes, the journal of observations, and my own feelings, as I wanted to express and reflect on my personal experience – but also my understanding of the observed phenomena – in a way that would not be processed into sociological terminology.⁶ A fragment from such a tour diary could be a separate annex to this article. The specificity of scientific and research work, and its connection with university didactics, requires involvement in various research projects. This is where I see the secondary factor that contributed to my sluggishness in terms of analyzing data and writing up the results for publication. During the pandemic period, the cinema project was suspended, but in the future I do not rule out a return to the same research techniques to expand the analysis, verify the conclusions, and update the data on Polish traveling cinema audiences.

⁴ My post-conference publications have been delayed for several years as a result of the lengthy publishing process. In my 2017 publication, I did not highlight that a part of it had already appeared in 2016, as in reality the earlier text that not that one. Papers delivered at two different conferences in 2014 were sent to their organizers in 2015, but without assurances about a possible publication (due to a lack of funding). In the end, both texts appeared late, i.e. in 2017, one of them with an earlier date, i.e. 2016. In this article, I am drawing on selected threads taken up earlier, but I am greatly expanding them.

⁵ I wrote for myself, but sometimes the readers were the organizers of the movie event.

⁶ At the time, art-based research approach was not so popular. *The Handbook of Arts-Based Research* was first published in 2009, but it was Patricia Leavy’s revised version of the book in 2015 that made it famous. The Polish translation was published in 2020.

It is also worth mentioning that traversing the country to reach potential audiences from the “provinces” is not an innovative idea. Zofia Rydet’s stunning photographic register of people, region, and the country is second to none. More contemporarily, Tadeusz Rolke and Agnieszka Pajęczkowska (2019) have presented activities in the field of photography on the intersection of photography, animation, cultural education, as well as anthropology and sociology. Also, Rolka’s 2011 journey was an inspiration for the travel diary *Dziennik z podróży* (dir. Piotr Stasiak 2013) to be created.

The article addresses issues specific to the subject of interest of two sub-disciplines: the sociology of cinema and the sociology of film. The sociology of film in recent decades has focused on the studies of various auditoriums and audiences. The study of the role of movie institutions in society, their activities and conditions of development is a task that Polish sociologists had tended to avoid, although this goal fits with the sociology of cinema and movie program of the Polish author Kazimierz Żygulski (1966). This direction of research has only recently been an area of exploration for Polish filmmakers and historians of cinema (Adamczak 2010; Zajiček 2015). Traveling cinemas are attractive for audiences, as an out-of-home movie screening is something to be celebrated, even if it does not occur on a mass scale. It is a different viewing experience from watching movies at home. “Going to the cinema,” “going out for a movie,” “attending a screening” are phrases conveying cultural practices and, above all, an opportunity for interaction. Direct contact with others and interpersonal communication both entail that a movie screening is not just a transmission (Citko 1997:284; Adamczak 2010:98-99). This is confirmed by the latest report on attitudes toward Polish movie productions (Cześniak et al. 2020). Admittedly, the

most common motivations of Poles going to the cinema involve the opportunity to watch new movies (28.6%) as well as better picture and sound quality (23.6%) when compared to movies viewed at home. Other aspects are mentioned, too: the symbolic values of cinema magic, i.e. escapism (23.4%) and the charm of the cinema auditorium (10.9%), as well as social, interactive values, i.e. watching a movie with friends (8.3%) and experiencing the movie together with a large audience (5.3%) (Cześniak et al. 2020:143). Similar conclusions in this respect come from the report titled “W małym kinie” (Bargielski et al. 2013:106-109).

Comments on the fieldwork

This sociological study is based on scientific and statistical sources, and on material collected during the period 2012–2014 in the course of six traveling cinema tours in Poland, as part of the ‘Polska Światłoczuła’ [‘Light-Sensitive Poland’] project. During the field research, I mainly tried to observe the reactions of viewers, interactions, and human relationships during events, and to find out what motivations guide the different aspects of the project. I believe that the data has not lost its relevance. This argument is supported, firstly, by the unchanging nature of the organization of the cinematic event and its audience (various audiences and local cultural animators). Secondly, it is confirmed by the analysis of the materials after the year 2014 (i.e. after the completion of the research), which I also use in this article to describe strategies, organization, functions, interactions, people-to-people relationships, movie repertoire, and the selection of guests. According to symbolic interaction, the course of a combined action is known and the participants share its common identification. Hence the regularity, constancy, and repeatability of the action – in

this case the course of movie events as part of the tour of the country.

I started field work as part of an experiment in natural conditions. The article is an attempt to capture my own sociological observations which were made in the course of field research of an exploratory character. I used several techniques for compiling the material: direct observation, participatory observation, conducting conversations with people, listening to their conversations, looking into other rooms at the projection site, reading noticeboards, commemorative books, post-show entries, collecting the stories of local participants of movie meetings, and counting audience attendance. The data collected in this way may appear random, but, in a non-obvious manner, it provides an insight into the community, the visited places, and meetings with the traveling cinema. From the "thick description" inside a particular case (Geertz 2005:19-47), I accumulated materials that offered the possibility of a specific diagnosis regarding the meetings of viewers with movies and their creators.

The fieldwork during the six tours is not representative of audiences in their entirety. In addition, due to the conditions of the present time, and because of my status of a volunteer, it was impossible to carry out quantitative studies (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2016; 2017a). Every conversation with the audience was recorded by the team of the 'Polska Światłoczuła' project (archive), but I did not use those recordings. I do not discuss the results of research on the reception of selected contemporary Polish movies, but, rather, I focus on the institutional and interactive aspect of traveling cinema. A detailed overview of the screening settings and the movie reception⁷

⁷ Reception is one of the elements of communication and as such it includes the perception of stimuli, mental and emotion-

can be found in a separate publication. As I have already mentioned, I return to some of the proposals and view them from a distance, after a several-years-long break. In this article, I refer to my own unstructured participatory observations (explicit and implicit). I used about 50 unstructured observations from the screening and from meetings with the audience (conversations with the audience after the screenings as well as brief talks) and (insider) experience^{8, 9} from several dozen days on the tour with the cinematic project.

Between analysis and experience¹⁰

The 'Polska Światłoczuła' project is the name of the award-winning movie event at the 37th Polish Feature Film Festival in Gdynia (2011). It is a project of the director Dorota Kędzierszawska and the cinematographer Artur Reinhardt. In an interview Kędzierszawska recalled 'Film Polski' (state enterprise in Poland), which organized a tour of Poland with movie screenings (DKF-y, AKF-y) (Kaszuba 2011). Perhaps that experience was behind the decision to set up an informal cinema institution. The activity is aimed at promoting the Polish movie culture. The organizers use the institution of traveling cinema to prevent cultural exclusion, encourage education about movie, and promote Polish movie and creators. Viewers take part in a movie screening and a live meeting with filmmakers. The non-commercial movie tours of the country organize free screenings of the con-

al activity, and the memory of the show (Matuchniak-Krasuska 1988:35).

⁸ The material was not subject to recording, but I made notes (observation log).

⁹ There were about a 100 short recorded conversations with the audience about the movie experience and the motivation to participate in the screenings.

¹⁰ In this section of the article, I reiterate the research findings and expand on themes undertaken earlier (see: Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2016:70-77; Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2017a:196-202).

temporary Polish movie. The meetings take place in various venues: performance halls, cultural centers, common rooms, libraries, schools, churches, prisons, etc.

Photograph 1. The Hel Cinema in Wschów is closed – entrance



Source: the author's archive.

Most often, the filmmakers go to places where there is no functioning stationary cinema. My observations indicate that the events tend to take the following form: 1) the arrival of the team and the preparation of the projection; 2) the screening; 3) a conversation of the guests with the audience; and 4) a cosy dinner.

Discussions with the audience after the screening are conducted by organizers or local culture promoters, journalists. There are several dominant ways of organizing the discussions: 1) a list of questions prepared by local culture animators; 2) a list of questions drawn up by the coordinator of 'Polska Światłoczuła'; 3) open floor taken by viewers and Internet users; and 4) the creators' stories. In practice, two arbitrary ways of conducting meetings after

the session tend to be combined. Post-show interviews are usually subject to registration and most of them are broadcast live on the Internet so that other guests can join (by video and chat).¹¹

Photograph 2. The 'Polska Światłoczuła' van in the area of the visited prison



Source: the author's archive.

The project is financially supported, e.g. by sponsor funding or donations. The coordination of the event requires a cooperation with local actors and institutions. Employees and volunteers of the foundation organize events, support the screening, and deal with the behind-the-scenes technical aspects. It is the responsibility of the hosts to provide accommodation and food to the guest (or guests) and to the team coordinating the whole project (3-4 people). The movie tour takes place every day in a different place and lasts from a few days to about a week and a half. It should be noted that from the technical point of view the screenings are extremely professional; the quality

¹¹ Through the Website: <http://www.polskaswiatloczula.pl/home/live/>.

of the projection is considered better than that in cinemas, as evidenced by the words of filmmakers watching their own work. Organizing such an event requires not only overcoming the hardships associated with touring, but also dealing with logistical factors: ensuring safe transport, correct settings, the synchronization of a huge amount of cinema equipment (the screen, speakers, projector, lighting, microphones, sound system, computer, cameras, etc.), which is additionally complicated because of the fact that every day the screening takes place somewhere else and in different buildings (rural recreational rooms, cultural centers, offices, schools, closed establishments, etc.)

Herbert Blumer drew attention to the stereotypes developed by researchers to understand social worlds and social phenomena (2007:31–33). To some extent, participatory observation counters such stereotyping. I approached the experiential social world of traveling cinema to the fullest extent possible, i.e. I was a volunteer in the team during six tours (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2016; 2017a), a researcher, and a spectator of each show. During that time, the team traveled several hundred kilometers every day. I saw with my own eyes that each repetition was as original as the work itself (Gadamer 2007:185).

The first short tour I took part in was organized in November 2012 with the movie *Cześć Tereska* (2001), featuring its director, Robert Gliński. The last of my tours took place in 2014 with the movie *Deep Love* (2014), directed by Jan Paweł Matuszyński, and this time the guest was the editor, Przemysław Chruścielewski. The focus of my observation was, among other things, the artistic strategies of the creators in their relations with the audience, the interactive rituals of places, and, finally, the public's analysis of the work (discussions of viewers with the creators after the screening); the latter one I do not include in this text.

The data gathered from 2011 to 2014 gives an idea of the scale of the project: 52,000 driven kilometers, 77 places,¹² almost 250 projections and meetings.¹³ A common feature in terms of the filmmakers visiting these places was strong local initiative and the activity of promoters of culture. As I could see, the lack of cinema was not an important factor for the organizers' choice of locality. In many of these places, 'Polska Światłoczuła' has been hosted several times or even a dozen times (e.g. in Kętrzyn – more than 20 times). In each of the voivodeships, there have been several towns and villages that were visited by filmmakers; only the Opole and the Lubuskie voivodeships had one place only that was visited.

The project was funded by the Polish Institute of Film Art as well as by a grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Funds from private sponsors were also used (e.g. in the form of a car hire for the duration of the route or partial coverage of travel expenses, such as a fuel card). The traveling cinema visited local communities in Poland with 18 Polish movies, including 6 contemporary documentaries during the indicated period. The feature movies included the latest domestic productions, such as: *Jutro będzie lepiej* (dir. D. Kędzierszawska, 2011), *Imagine* (dir.

¹² The visited cities and towns include: Białogard, Białostok, Damasławek, Darzewo, Dębak, Drohiczyn, Dublin, Gidle, Górzno, Gródek, Bytom, Czarne, Grójec, Gryfino, Inowódz, Jaczno, Jaworzno, Kamienna Góra, Kazimierz Dolny, Kętrzyn, Konin, Kluczbork, Krasnobród, Krasnystaw, Kromnów, Lubochnia, Miasteczko Śląski, Miastko, Mikołów, Miłków, Mszanowo, Nowy Wiśnicz, Nowy Sącz, Oborniki Wielkopolskie, Olszanica, Opatów, Ostów Wielkopolski, Piła, Piwniczna, Potulice, Przecław, Radoniów, Radajowice, Rytro, Sanok, Sępólno Krajeński, Sokołowsko, Stary Sącz, Supraśl, Szafarnia, Szarlejka, Szczecin Dąbie, Upper Temples, Świeszyno, Świdwin, Toruń, Tuchola, Tykocin, Uherce Mineralne, Offices, Wałcz, Limestone, Wągrowiec, Wschowa, Zamość, Zawiercie, Zabłocie (k. Kodnia), Zduńska Wola, Żnin, and Żytkejmy.

¹³ Currently, the scale of the event amounts to 89,327 kilometers driven in Poland, 159 places, 433 meetings, and the projection of 56 movie titles. Official data source: <http://www.polskaswiatloczula.pl/> (accessed: 01.09.2020).

A. Jakimowski, 2012), *Lęk wysokości* (dir. B. Konopka, 2011), *Obława* (dir. M. Krzyształowicz, 2015), *W ciemności* (dir. A. Holland, 2011), *Wymyk* (dir. G. Zgliński, 2011), *Miłość* (dir. S. Fabicki, 2012), *Jesteś Bogiem* (dir. L. Dawid, 2012), *Ida* (dir. P. Pawlikowski, 2013), and *Chce się żyć* (dir. M. Mole, 2013).¹⁴ The Polish contemporary documentaries shown as part of the 'Polska Światłoczuła' tour included: *Argentyńska lekcja* (dir. L. Staroń, 2011), *Droga na drugą stronę* (dir. A. Damian, 2011), *Koniec Rosji* (dir. M. Marczak, 2010), *Ojciec i syn* (dir. P. Łoziński, 2013), *Inny świat* (dir. D. Kędzierzawska, 2012), *Powroty Agnieszki H.* (dir. K. Krauze and J. Petrycki, 2013). There were also screenings of two older movies, namely Andrzej Wajda's *Wesele* from 1972 and Robert Gliński's *Cześć Tereska* from 2001. The 36 acclaimed creators and implementers of the Polish cinema that took part in the tour and the meetings with audiences were mostly directors, operators, and actors, but set designers and the composers of soundtracks also participated at times.¹⁵ On the basis of my nearly three-year-long (2012–2014) observation of the activity of 'Polska Światłoczuła', I can conclude that Polish filmmakers primarily promote Polish cinematography and educate viewers through conversations about the movie workshop, and are happy to talk about being on the set and working on the script, as well as about the stages of production, working with actors, and the director's role.

During the period of conducting my own research, the staff of the 'Polska Światłoczuła' consisted of 10

¹⁴ The production dates of the movies are given, not that of the premieres (which took place much later).

¹⁵ The attendees of the movies meetings with viewers in the period 2012–2014: R. Gliński, Bodo Kox, P. Łoziński, D. Kędzierzawska, A. Reinhardt, D. Szaflarska, K. Sobańska, M. Sławiński, J. Petrycki, M. Pieprzyca, A. Kulesza, E. Lubos, A. Nehrebecka, L. Dawid, A. Jakiowski, T. Gąssowski, J. Kyiv, E. Płocieniak-Alvarez, S. Fabicki, A. Holland, K. Tkacz, M. Krzyształowicz, A. Staszko, Ł. Żal, E. Jungowska, B. Konopka, E. Pluta, M. Dorociński, A. Dabrowski, A. Ustynowicz, W. Sobociński, A. Tomiak, R. Ładczuk, P. Chruścielewski, J. P. Matuszyński, and J. Kamiński.

people and volunteers accompanying the creators on the route (a cameraman, a journalist). The one-room office of the 'Polska Światłoczuła' was located in the building of the National Audiovisual Institute in Warsaw. Despite the funding at the time, the movie initiative faced economic difficulties. One embarrassing barrier (local promoters of culture rarely openly admitted this to the team members) included the expenses incurred by the organizers in connection with the invitation of the traveling cinema. I am referring here to the funds used to provide food and accommodation for several people (usually 5–6). For some institutions, this turned out to be a considerable expense and without the support of private, local sponsors (the owners of motels, restaurants, bars, hotels), the artistic events could not have happened. It is difficult to promote movie culture without even small financial backing.

The touring cinema in the institutional formula as described above is operating its tenth year. According to data published on the Website of 'Polska Światłoczuła', 8 to 15 routes per year were organized over the course of a decade. Over the last three years, objective difficulties with limited operating funds could be noticed. What indicated this problem is rotation among employees and collaborators (volunteers), the reduced number of routes and shortened distances between them, and a preference for established screening places on the route. These unfavorable changes are due to a lack of ministerial funding; the activity is mainly carried out owing to private sponsors.¹⁶ According to the collected data, the invited guests are still predominantly filmmakers of the so-called "leading" artists responsible for directing, scripts, and acting. However, sound engineers, set designers, cameramen, editors, and spe-

¹⁶ <https://polskaswiatloczula.pl/> (accessed 03.06.2020).

cialists for characterization and costume also take part in the tours.¹⁷ The movie repertoire over the past five years is presented in Table 1.¹⁸

Table 1. Movie titles

	During the 2015–2017 period, viewers were able to watch these movies:	Movie type
2015–2017	<i>Królowa ciszy</i> (dir. A. Zwiefka, 2015)	documentary
	<i>Ziemia obiecana</i> (dir. A. Wajda, 1975)	feature
	<i>Signum</i> (dir. W. Giersz, 2015)	animation
	<i>Ida</i> (dir. P. Pawlikowski, 2014)	feature
	<i>Moje córki krowy</i> (dir. K. Dębska, 2015)	feature
	<i>Body</i> (dir. M. Szumowska, 2015)	feature
	<i>Jestem mordercą</i> (dir. M. Mole, 2016)	feature
	<i>Konwój</i> (dir. M. Żak, 2017)	feature
	<i>Sztuka kochania</i> (dir. M. Sadowska, 2016)	feature
	<i>Trzy rozmowy o życiu</i> (dir. J. Staniszevska, 2016)	documentary
	<i>Bracia</i> (dir. W. Staroń, 2015)	documentary
	<i>Baraż</i> (dir. T. Gąssowski, 2016)	documentary
	<i>Więzi</i> (dir. Z. Kowalewska, 2016)	documentary

¹⁷ In 2015, the movie tour was hosted by: the animation master Witold Giersz, director-operators duo Małgorzata Szumowska and Michał Englert, costume designer Julia Jarża-Brataniec, actor Janusz Gajos, and documentary filmmaker Agnes Zwiefka. Guests of the touring cinema in the period 2016–2017 included editor Zbigniew Osinski, the directors: Kinga Dębska, Grzegorz Brzozowski, Maciej Żak, Jarosław Stypa, actors: Anna Nehrebecka, Magdalena Boczarska, Tomasz Włosek, and production manager Anna Waradzyn. In 2018–2020, the movie tour included: the sound directors Anna Rok, Katarzyna Szczerba, Mirosław Makowski; the actors Andrew Seweryn, Gabriela Muskała, Jan Marczewski, Grażyna Błęcka-Kolska, Bożena Stachura, Tomasz Ziętek, Robert Sokiewicz; the directors Piotr Stasik, Jan Jakub Kolski, Piotr Domalewski, Raphael Lysak; the editor Przemysław Chruścielewski; the make-up artist Tomasz Matraszek; and the heroine of the documentary Janina Ochojska.

¹⁸ Routes in 2020 (from March) have been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

	During the 2018–2020 period, viewers were able to watch these movies:	Movie type
2018–2020	<i>Jestem mordercą</i> (dir. M. Pieprzyca, 2016)	feature
	<i>Ułaskawienie</i> (dir. J. J. Kolski, 2019)	feature
	<i>Fuga</i> (dir. A. Smoczyńska, 2018)	feature
	<i>Jak pies z kotem</i> (dir. J. Kondratiuk, 2018)	feature
	<i>Obcy na mojej kanapie</i> (dir. G. Brzozowski, 2018)	documentary
	<i>Zimna wojna</i> (dir. P. Pawlikowski, 2018)	feature
	<i>Miłość bezwarunkowa</i> (dir. R. Łysak, 2018)	documentary
	<i>7 uczuć</i> (dir. M. Koterski, 2018)	feature
	<i>Cicha noc</i> (dir. P. Domalewski, 2017)	feature
	<i>Ostatnia rodzina</i> (dir. J. P. Matuszyński, 2016)	feature
	<i>Janka</i> (dir. A. Kaczmarek, 2018)	documentary
	<i>Komunia</i> (dir. A. Zamecka, 2016)	documentary
	<i>Nawet nie wiesz jak bardzo cię Kocham</i> (dir. P. Łoziński, 2016)	documentary

Source: Self-elaboration.

What does traveling cinema provide? Observations from the field

In terms of attendance, traveling cinemas are both individual events and local, collective celebrations. The former type is mostly private and the latter one takes place in the community (meetings of residents). In rural areas, citizens rarely engage in interactive elements of the local “festival” program (such as competitions or workshops), preferring the role of passive observers; their dominant “festive” activities come down to sitting, looking, eating, drinking, listening, and talking (from: Charycka, Dworakowska and Gumkowska 2017:73).

Research by the Klon/Jawor Association shows that in the period 2015–2016 less than half of Poles participated in local celebrations (Charycka, Dworakowska, and Gumkowska 2017:8). Other reports point to similar estimates of participation in festivals and related local initiatives (Drozdowski et al. 2014:180-189). Meanwhile, the arrival of 'Polska Światłoczuła' is most often transformed into grassroots meetings of residents, local associations, and support groups. This requires an organizational effort not only from local culture animators, but – as evidenced by observations and free interviews – also from the audience themselves, who often want to prepare for the conversation (reading the resumes of guests, getting acquainted with interviews with the creators, and learning about the movies). As a result, there were often intense arguments with the artists about creativity or a particular movie image. This was especially the case with the movie *Ojciec i syn*, directed by P. Łoziński, as well as *Powroty Agnieszki H.*, directed by K. Krauze and J. Petrycki. In several places along the route, there were heated disputes focused on morality, politics, and the past (history). Both critical and flattering audience opinions were expressed in the group discussion and in individual conversations after the movie screenings. These observations of the audience and the collective movie analyses in post-screening discussions will be used in an in-depth case study.

On the individual scale, the arrival of Polish filmmakers remained a private, festive moment in the lives of some viewers, mainly due to the unique atmosphere, which consisted of personal confessions made by the filmmakers as well as some viewers. A particularly confessional character could be observed with various artistic esthetic experiences and life experiences of the audience, including the

emotions, wishes, and stories that were attempts at attracting interest in their own lives and requesting advice. There were times when someone in the audience offered to the director their own story or the story of people close to them so that it could be used for a movie or screenplay workshop. Some viewers recommended their own works to the creators, including poetry volumes, diaries, and letters.

Sometimes, the show was a private "lesson of the Polish cinema." The public mentioned this directly in post-screening discussions or in individual interviews, citing the names of Polish directors or actors whom they particularly value. There were also bitter words about the domestic cinema of the 1990s, or about the dominance of contemporary Polish TV series over works of cinematography in prime time. The public contemplated reflections on movies made by Andrzej Wajda, Wojciech Has, Krzysztof Zanussi, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Marcel Łoziński, and others, which was done in the atmosphere of remembering the youth, the first love, and the magic of the cinema. It was not uncommon for the past to be compared with the present; the good traditions of the Polish movie were emphasized. Among mature viewers, there was a feeling that the Polish cinematography is currently in crisis, or is trying to escape from one. Questions examining the knowledge of Polish productions (movie titles, directors' names, plots) revealed complete ignorance in this field, which did not prevent the formulation of harsh judgments about new Polish productions (from the period 2012–2014). Among young people (15-25 years), contemporary and old Polish movie were equally unknown (see also: Konieczna 2007:174; Bargielski et al. 2013:100). These observations are worth supplementing with data from the latest studies of Poles' cinema-related habits. The authors of the report – prepared

under the auspices of the National Audiovisual Institute – demonstrate that “more than half of Poles (59.4%) do not know the repertoire of cinema on an ongoing basis, checking the currently played movies only when planning to go to the cinema (48.2%) or not at all (11.2%)” (Cześnik et al. 2020:149-151). This is probably a more complex problem concerning the relationship between national culture and pop culture. During the discussion after a screening, two main observations were made and they clearly corresponded to the age variable. Audiences over 45 years old were more likely to appreciate the contemporary Polish cinematography. The audience members confirmed to each other that the Polish cinematography retains a high artistic level. In this context, the public mentioned the works of great Polish filmmakers. The younger audience, in turn, expressed opinions which were close to “a surprise” that Polish movies are “not so bad.” Both types of opinions resulted from only occasional contact with the native modern cinematography. An additional confirmation of this thesis can be provided by the fact that often during group meetings the audiences are better educated (local notables, sociometric celebrities, journalists, teachers), which draws attention to the small influence of valuable national movie productions (on television and in cinemas as well as in the media) and the resultant ignorance with regard to the present-day national cinematography among the citizens of Poland (see also: Cześnik et al. 2020:89-90). In many places that are located a considerable distance from cities offering a cinematic repertoire, ‘Polska Światłoczuła’ was the only way for the local people to get to know the contemporary Polish cinematography. Hence, in the official discussions, the informative and educational value of traveling cinema was raised. These opinions were later confirmed in private conversations.

Viewers – interaction participants

The structure of the audience in a stationary cinema is variable and dynamic. The viewer going to the screening is guided by different dispositions. On the other hand, the typical audience of a ‘Polska Światłoczuła’ screening has no choice in terms of repertoire, because it is selected by the movie team, namely Dorota Kędzierzawska, Artur Reinhardt, and coordinators.

Due to the age of the audience, some traveling cinema routes can be divided into “the cinema of younger viewers” and “the cinema of older viewers.” The highest attendance could be seen at screenings of the movies *Jesteś Bogiem* and *Chce się żyć* (about 1200 viewers). The share of young people in these shows also remained proportionally higher than during other screenings. About three-quarters of viewers are under the age of 35. However, Polish documentaries enjoyed much less popularity among this audience; it was the mature audience who tended to come to these screenings. It is a trend I myself could observe over those six tours. There were places where only a handful of viewers sat in the projection room.

It was not just adults who participated in the movie screenings; the youngest generation celebrated their holiday in June (the Children’s Day). At that time, as part of the traveling cinema, there were screenings with Polish animated movies (e.g. *Zaczarowany ołówek*, *Bolek i Lolek*), together with creative workshops under the supervision of time-lapse animation professionals. Movie screenings and animation lessons were very popular among children (movie projections and workshops were organized three times a day). For generations who had been brought up on Disney productions, the workshops were particularly educational.

According to the statements obtained through the interviews, some of the audience members traveled dozens of kilometers to see a screening. As an example, I can point to one passionate young couple who traveled 70 km to meet a documentary filmmaker that they appreciate. There were also trips made by whole families, married couples, partners, and groups of friends. For many audiences, the show was not only a "festive" way of spending leisure time, but a moment of joint departure from home, a cultural event in which to participate. The screenings also had an inclusive and promotional function. Participation in the screening and movie meetings created a kind of distinction (elevating oneself in the social arena). This situation affected not only those involved in the life of the local community, but also the culture promoters, the local plutocracy and politicians, educators, and people connected with the cultural and educational or public institutions. Marking one's presence at the event or showing support for the filmmakers' project (e.g. providing accommodation or issuing an invitation to dinner) testified to social prestige or reflected the involvement of a local authority. The mechanisms behind the functioning of local, diverse institutions, which were revealed in the interviews, provided the opportunity to reconstruct the processes of cultural transmission according to individually inherited cultural systems (Kłoskowska 1972; Sułkowski 2011). Sometimes, the movie events were subject to celebration and pathos, and sometimes some exaggerated seriousness was revealed. In one of the places visited by a team of filmmakers, the theatricality of the event was further strengthened by the costume and props of the host of the local cultural center (tailcoat suit, top hat). Therefore, it can be concluded that the audience was guided by various reasons to participate in those movie meetings. Most often, they see screenings as an opportunity to break away from

everyday life and "go to the cinema." Besides the attitude of escapism (prevalent mainly among young people), there was also a desire to participate in a local cultural event, an attractive program, a meeting with a "star." Other, associated reasons for appearing at the show complement the needs of secondary socialization.

The traveling cinema was a part of the resocialization policy, as some screenings were held in what Erving Goffman called "total institutions," i.e. in centers for addiction treatment or in prisons). In such situations, the audience stayed after the screening to meet the creators, but they had no choice in this matter. In the event of inappropriate behavior, however, they were led out by the guards, which happened in every of the total institutions. In this case, one can also identify those audience members who were involved in the conversation after the screening, and those who were not. According to interviews with service officers, the detainees had to demonstrate good behavior in order to be allowed to participate in the movie screening and the meeting with the guests.

Photograph 3. Movie meeting at the Center for Addicts in Darzewo



Source: the author's archive.

Observations and interviews during my tour with the 'Polska Świątloczuła' lead me to a distinction between two types of attitude to the movie among the audience. In the study of theater-related reception, Emilia Zimnica-Kuzioła (2003) also distinguished two dominant attitudes to the artwork (see also Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2017b:121-124). The first and less frequent type of movie audience from the study includes those who come *for the movie*, while the second type involves people who come *for the event*.

Table 2. Discourses about movie

DISCOURSE ABOUT MOVIES	
<i>vital discourse</i>	<i>vital-critical discourse or critical discourse</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • naive viewer • egoistic viewer • random viewer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumer • passionate viewer • erudite viewer • professional viewer

Source: *Self-elaboration*.

Table 1 and Table 2 include several categories which represent the general arrangement of viewers' attitudes based on selected materials. The typologies are based on observations and declarations made in an interview or unstructured conversations. Therefore, one should consider here not an esthetic movie experience, but a certain relationship.

Discourses about movies are represented by two categories. The first one is about making a "pontification on a movie," while the second one is critical, with elements of life experience involved in the approach to the movie. The viewers of the first type analyze movie content through their own life experiences. This is characterized by diverse competences, but not the highest

level of linguistic, cultural, and movie competence. It is usually an amateur report on the movie plot and the individual's own existence (naïve, egoistic). For the vital discourse, a characteristic element is the fact that in this group, the viewers tend to declare they came for the movie, and not to the event as such (naïve, egoistic, random viewers). The second type of vital-critical or critical discourse (passionate, erudite, professional) involves a deeper consideration of the movie and not about oneself (the "I am" thread is not dominant here).

The most scarce type of viewer was a professional, a movie critic, a journalist, or a filmmaker, who would expect good work in formal and esthetic terms, evaluating the individual layers and elements of the work as well as its whole. Usually, such a recipient not only participated in the discussion, but also arranged a private interview with the guest of the meeting. This person was an intellectual, one well-prepared for the interview (familiar with the resume of the movie-related interlocutors and their creative output). Such professionals are passionate about the movie and its creators, 'high movie', and technical competence. They have extensive knowledge of the Polish cinematography. They are well-prepared to meet with all guests, which they demonstrate in the discussion after the show. They are also admirers of the work of a particular director (on the declarative level). However, it is worth noting that when choosing movies to watch, the least important factor for Poles is the earlier movies of the same director (Cześniak et al. 2020:149). The professional, on the other hand, is distinguished not only by the above-mentioned skills, but also by a proper attitude toward the interesting plot and the form of the movie. He/She can discuss the movie form of other creators, particular movie schools, details of the plan, the set design, camera shots. The enthusiasts and erudite people dominate among local culture promoters, members of movie associations, and DKF's (Polish movie discussion clubs),

as well as participants in literary and movie circles, Polish filmmakers, and amateur filmmakers. Contrary to this, the naïve viewer expects an interesting storyline above all, talks about the movie in a literal and referential way, his/her movie competence remains at a low level, and he/she evaluates the movie intuitively. It is not uncommon to hear such a person making a comment such as "I liked this movie" or "I didn't like it."

[...] A nice movie, showing the problems of young people... so in life. I have problems with my younger daughter. I do not know who she was born into. And one psychologist after the other, and nothing... [after the movie *Cześć Tereska*]

A good movie, started as she jumped out of the window, so I also once had to run away. I know what it means. [after the movie *Ida*]

Egoistic viewers look for confirmation of their impressions, they remain open to metaphor, although they often interpret the movie literally. His movie skills can be differentiated (from low to higher).

[...] Impressions after the movie and during the movie are very intensified, very diverse, but not yet discerned. I feel like I have escaped from this wardrobe, as if something was blinding me suddenly. The light is strong, and I do not quite see everything yet. I do not know, I do not know, I do not know, but I know it was a good movie, it was what I needed, but I do not know yet what I will pull out of it. So ambiguous. I know it looks like I am getting smart, but it is just such a movie basically about everything and about... Certainly not about anything. About everything, but I do not yet know exactly what, because I did not expect such an ending. And I like such a deactivating movie... and today I feel like I have come out of the wardrobe a little bit. With the rest of the paneling here is, Ficus trees. [...]

- Did you know anything about the movie, about the director?

- No, nothing. I like to know nothing, especially when I go to the cinema [...]. It is unnecessary for me, because the movie is such a whole. There is such a cool passage in the movie, something about the multiplicity of parallel worlds, and it was a movie that allowed me to move into the parallel world [...]. And that is how I wonder if I would like to live in such a world? A bit like that. [after the movie *Dziewczyna z szafy*].

This next consumer-viewer is characterized by insufficient knowledge of the movie or creators, faithfully interprets the movie, evaluates (good movie, not good movie), and seems to be a viewer focused on cinematic attractions, entertainment, fun. He/She watches a lot of movies on television and on the Internet. The consumer comes for the sake of the screening (not to see the guest) or accompanies friends.

There was not enough action, slow, but it was lifelike. [after the movie *Ida*]

I like movies and I will also come to another show. [after the movie *Powroty Agnieszki H.*]

Altogether, the attitude to the traveling cinema is determined by two variables: the viewer's level of verbal behavior and his/her motivation to participate in the screening and/or a meeting. The category of engagement includes active or passive participation in post-screening discussions, and sometimes also participation in a short conversation. An uninvolved viewer is one who has not participated in any of the above-mentioned activities in ways other than being physically present. In Table 3, the empirically verified fields are marked with an "x," while the blanks remain active as hypothetical. Most of the spectators attended both the screening and the post-screening meeting. In

this group, viewers are most likely to represent the vital-critical or critical discourse about the movie.

Table 3. The attitude to traveling cinema and typologies of spectators

RELATION TO TOURING CINEMA		
motivations to participate in the session and/or to attend the movie meeting	level of the viewer's verbal behavior	
	involved viewer	uninvolved viewer
spectator focused on entertainment, fun	X	
viewer focused on meeting the filmmaker	X	
viewer focused on esthetic experience	X	
celebrity viewer	X	-
festive viewer	X	
random viewer	X	X

Source: Self-elaboration.

The first three categories of viewers in Table 3 highlight their attitude toward movie and the idea of traveling cinema. The interviewees openly indicate the possibility of satisfying the need to watch a good work of cinematography, see movie creators and actors in real life, but also the desire to experience something that will touch their imagination and their emotions. Celebrity viewers draw the attention of the rest of the audience to themselves. In the local environment, they are sociometric stars, respected persons. They engage in the discussion with the movie creators and other viewers. They perform among the audience and often in the back rooms (private conversations, dinners with guests and with local culture promoters). To the festive

viewers, the cinema resembles a celebration. They emphasize the importance of the movie event and the visible conversation with the movie creator, but also the participatory nature of the project for the local community or a given group. Random viewers are either engaged or not active. Most often, they came for someone or with someone, and they are not always interested in the meetings. In the course of the short interviews, they showed ignorance about cinema, movie in general, the particular movie screened during the event, and the event as a whole.

Table 4 shows the intersecting types and motivations presented on the basis of my field studies. Cells without an "x" are empirically empty categories that are not logically excluded.

Table 4. The type of viewers of the traveling cinema and the motivation to participate in the event

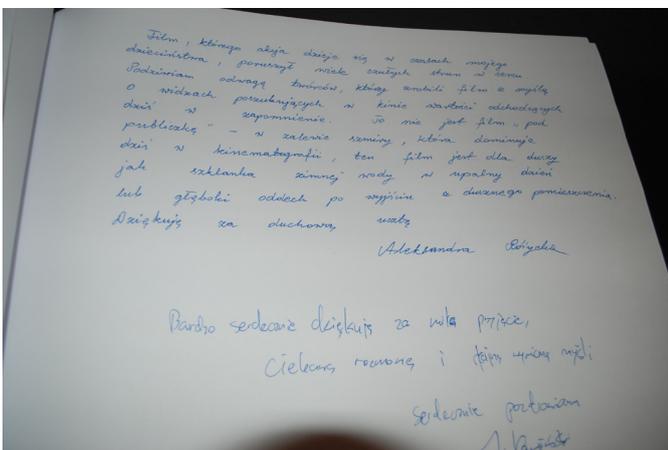
THE TYPE OF TRAVELING CINEMA AUDIENCE AND THE MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EVENT						
MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SESSION AND/OR IN THE MEETING	VIEWER TYPES					
	naive	consumer	egotistic	passionate	erudite	professional
spectator focused on entertainment, fun	X	X	X			
viewer focused on meeting a filmmaker				X	X	X
a viewer focused on esthetic experience			X	X	X	X
celebrity viewer	X	X	X	X	X	
festive viewer	X	X	X	X		
random viewer	X	X				

Source: Self-elaboration.

Rituals and interactions

The “cinematic celebrations” are similar in each place (the arrival and setting up of equipment, the movie screening, the meeting between the filmmakers and the audience, packing and loading the equipment, dinner, accommodation, departure). The last days of the tour are characterized by the lack of dinner with the organizers as well as the lack of accommodation. The screening, in turn, involves highly anticipated, repetitive, well-known interactive rituals. These are: announcing the movie review competition among the audience; handing out autographs; gifts from the audience and the local promoters, local artists, and craftspeople; taking photographs, and interviews conducted by the local media (press, radio, television). In this case, a specific exchange of symbolic values takes place. The movie screening with the participation of guests provides an opportunity to manifest their presence for local communities. The folklore, the activities of various artistic groups, and local cultural initiatives are all very often represented. The most engaged social actors are always the local activists, politicians, and educators.

Photograph 4. Comments in the memorial book



Source: the author's archive.

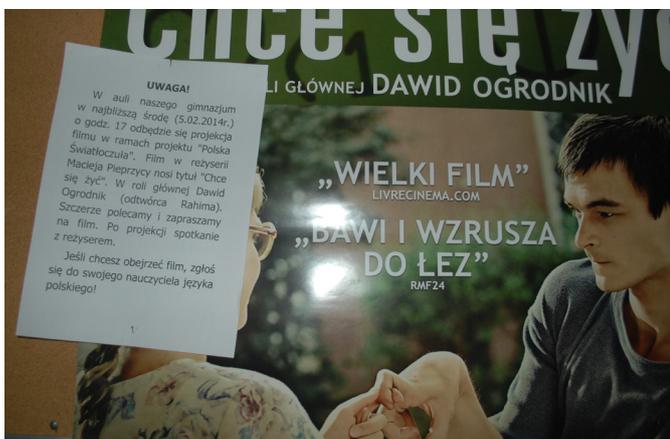
When guests accompany the movie screening, this has a festive, prestigious value for the organizers and culture promoters. This is evidenced by their commitment, and by the attention that filmmakers attract. While the “movie team” prepares technical conditions for the movie screening, the “hosts” organize visits to the institution by guests, as well as walks, sightseeing tours, and refreshments. They offer gifts such as handicrafts, postcards, books, and gadgets that are related to the village, as well as local specialties and liquors, crafts, and guides to the surrounding monuments and hiking trails. Other permanent activities accompanying social interactions in the institutions include entries in memorial books, photographing, individual conversations and interviews, a solemn but cosy dinner, stories and anecdotes from the life of local communities, and other integration activities.

The most coveted guests from the “movie world” were actors and actresses who are well-known. Such meetings were of the greatest interest, as evidenced by the crowds of spectators and the lack of seats and standing places. The presence of well-known “stars” – who seemed to be in conversations with the audience – created the impression that the barrier between the movie guests, performers, and the audience was being broken, producing a specific atmosphere of interaction-oriented solemn meetings.

Unstructured interviews with filmmakers as well as observations provide the opportunity to conclude that the traveling cinema was also a festive occasion for the movie creators themselves. In their personal accounts, they emphasized not only the uniqueness of the informal cinematic institution of Polish filmmakers, but also the personal dimension of meetings with urban, village, and provincial audiences. Above all, the highlighted the opportunity for real interaction with the public, the opportunity to engage in dialog about their work with

the spectators, to observe them and their reaction to the movie, to acknowledge socially-excluded groups (the disabled, the sick, prisoners, the homeless). It should be emphasized that the screenings were viewed mainly by sympathetic audiences, but these audiences also included ardent critics of the works (i.e. viewers representing the vital discourse about the movie as well as those holding the critical or vital-critical view). In their everyday life, creators are usually deprived of contact with viewers in a small town and villages, although – as they themselves emphasized in the conversations – they make movies “for ordinary viewers, not critics.” Actors, directors, and other filmmakers who decide to confront the audience from non-urban communities declare in public and behind-the-scenes that these meetings are of great value to them. For actors, these are usually one-off performances on a multi-day tour, and for some directors they become a recurrent element of communication with the audience (e.g. Agnieszka Holland, Małgorzata Szumowska, Maciej Pieprzyca, Paweł Łoziński). However, there is no data that would make it possible to determine whether such meetings with the audience have become rituals in their overall creative process.

Photograph 5. A poster on the information board at the John Paul II junior high school in Miastko



Source: the author's archive.

The movie tour can be compared to a feast for the staff of the traveling cinema, because after a long period of preparation, the trip finally takes place. ‘Polska Światłoczuła’ operates in a certain manner, i.e. it consists of certain permanent elements, ritualized meetings, and esthetics of the projection, but due to mobility, the variability of the team of filmmakers and the diversity of visited places, each route seems different, because each is filled with new entities and contents.

The sociologists acts like a contemporary Światowid¹⁹ when calculating the attendance at the screenings; collecting the comments of movie directors; observing the behavior of the movie creators and that of the audience; observing the attitude of the movie crew and of the organizers; travelling to more culturally-excluded places; watching and photographing culture centers, a former recreation room, or a failed cinema; and analyzing movie discussions. The researcher collects rich quantitative and qualitative material which goes far beyond the narrow framework of the sociology of film or art. The problem of a methodological and technical character is the selection of ethnographic material from a “thick description” (Geertz 2005). Participation in the journey with ‘Polska Światłoczuła’ also had an anthropological dimension, such as the discovery of the only rural AKF,²⁰ namely ‘Klaps’ in Chybie, which has been operating continuously for 45 years. The anthropologist Wojciech Burszta (cited in Bargielski et al. 2013:3) does not mention the functioning of the only AKF in the rural regions. Here, I mean to draw attention to the phenomenon of the broken tradition of the movie movement, i.e. the disappearance of this particular and committed participation in

¹⁹ The Slavic God.

²⁰ The AKF in Poland Amateur Film Club.

cinema. The arrival of 'Polska Światłoczuła' allows professional filmmakers to be hosted in the AKF's 'Klaps', with whom the oldest inhabitants may, as in the past, engage in a dialog. It should be emphasized that the project continues and 'Klaps' has become an important point on the map of the traveling cinema. The memories of Franciszek Dzida (the source of the protagonist of K. Kieślowski's²¹ movie titled *Amator*) – the founder of the 'Klaps' club centered around the sugar mill in Chybie – were intertwined with the complaints about the present. "It used to be better, but... maybe it was because we were young?" – as one of the oldest amateur filmmakers began the conversation. A group of pensioners recalling meetings in 'Klaps', their own productions, the movie festivals for amateurs, and the big names of the Polish movie community who visited "their place" – gave in to the mood of nostalgia (see Bargielski et al. 2013:109-112).

Summary

The outlined case study of an informal cinematic institution provides insight into the individual, collective, combined practices of the senders and receivers, of the audiences and of the organizers of a specific movie culture. Their preliminary classification includes different levels of cultural practice (see Fatyga cited in Drozdowski et al. 2014:23-24):

1. the practices of a movie culture organizers ('Polska Światłoczuła', culture animators, institutions):
 - facing inwards (top-down, bottom-up);
 - directed outwards (senders, recipients, subjects, objects, social relations)

²¹ See: <http://www.polskaswiatloczula.pl/> (accessed 04.10.2019). The 'Polska Światłoczuła' movie project has been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. the individual practices of the sender (guests):
 - self-directed (for presentations, for physical appearance, for internal experiences);
 - directed at subjects, objects (professional creation, reception, broadcasting and reception, participation, etc.);
 - aimed at social relations
3. the individual or collective practices of the public:
 - self-directed (the "I" perspective);
 - directed at subjects, objects (professional and amateur work, reception, broadcasting and reception, participation, etc.);
 - social relations (the "We" perspective);
 - directed against other individuals, the groups (the "Us-They" perspective);
 - distributed presence, anonymous audience, silent majority/minority (cf. Fatyga cited in Drozdowski et al. 2014:23-24).

The entertainment and the cultural functions remain important from the perspective of the audience (most often indicated in interviews and short conversations). On the other hand, it is apparent from the collected material that the arrival of Polish filmmakers provides an impulse for local groups to make the local community integrate. This is evidenced by observations, some of the individual interviews, and moderated group discussions after screenings. During the screenings and meetings with movie creators, the power or impotence of the community is manifested (poor attendance, the lack of willing interlocutors). During the cinema tour, the organizers experienced either low interest in the movie (few viewers), or medium or exceptionally high interest (viewers could not fit in the rooms). In each of the trips, only one screening was held in each town or village. The visited cities can be classified according to audience types: small, large, sin-

gle, and closed (support groups, associations, clubs, social groups, and professional groups), open, and diverse. I consider each of the visited places from the perspective of the domination of one type during the movie meeting. Such power or importance or specificity of a given group or community remained a constant emblem of the site, regardless of the number of tours in a given place, the guests, or the movie repertoire.

The local communities and groups involved in the traveling cinema project can also be divided according to the extent of audience diversity as well as the incentive criterion:

1. open communities or groups (large or small) strongly directed toward cognitive (Jakobson 1989:81-82) and participatory function, where the most important aspect of the meeting is participation, mutual communication of information about the meaning of the work, and distinguishing the work in the context (e.g. Kętrzyn, Jaworzno, Nowy Wiśnicz, Wągrowiec, Miasteczko Śląskie);
2. open communities or groups (large or small) strongly oriented at the phatic and emotive function, where the essence is mutual experiencing, perception, expression, contact between creators and recipients, and the participants in meetings (e.g., Damasławek, Górzno, Drobin, Zabłocie, Radziejowice);
3. closed communities or groups with strong self-creation tendencies, where the main attraction for the audience and meeting participants involved the presentation of social actors (e.g. Szubin, Miastko, Opatów, Urzędów, Kamienna Góra).

Moreover, certain other types of audience can be identified within the above types, which can be classified as specific enclaves, often demonstrating their differences from other audiences (e.g. a group of inmates, a group of representatives of a local association or supporters of the circle, foundations, a group of movie amateurs, politicians, etc.) It is also worth recognizing the role of individuals/leaders in the individual groups, because sometimes during the meetings the discussion was dominated by one or two spectators. In general, active viewers (at the level of verbal communication) are in the minority. The distinction between groups oriented at the phatic and emotive function, and groups with strong self-creation tendencies needs to be defined. In fact, there were individuals in the group with self-creation tendencies who not only dominated the discussion, but the group or community itself (through its other members) endorsed and even emphasized the status of these individuals, their experience, their knowledge of culture, the role of sociometric celebrity, their professional or political position. These groups were more likely to include critics, professional audiences, local journalists, and cinema managers. On the other hand, the collected testimonies of the reception about the movie allow viewers representing the vital discourse about the movie to be distinguished: egotistical, naïve, random, and life-critical or critical discourse versus consumer, professional, erudite, cinephile (enthusiasts).

Hans Georg Gadamer “tried to restore to modern man knowledge of the integrating power of art and community, which is an area of life, dialogue, culture,” as Dominika Czakon emphasized in the thesis (2012:149). In hermeneutic thinking about art, Gadamer (2007) uses the terms ‘feast’, ‘symbol’, and ‘game’. In a big way, the first case – i.e. open com-

munities or groups (small or large) with a strong cognitive function – is like playing a game of interpreting a work of art (directing to common participation). The second situation – i.e. open communities or groups (small or large) which are strongly

oriented at the phatic and emotive function – recalls a festival where the essence comes in the form of community and contemplation. The existence of the feast consists in becoming and returning (Gadamer 2007:186).

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Spotkania z kinem polskim. Socjologiczne studium kina ruchomego

Abstrakt: Prezentowane studium ma na celu opisanie plenerowego projektu filmowego „Polska Światłoczuła” w dwóch perspektywach – funkcjonalnej i interakcyjnej. W trakcie jakościowych badań terenowych autorka próbowała dociec, jakie motywacje kierują różnymi stronami projektu. Socjologiczne studium opiera się o źródła zastane: naukowe i statystyczne oraz o materiał zebrany w okresie 2012–2014 w trakcie sześciu tras kina objazdowego w Polsce w ramach projektu „Polska Światłoczuła”. Cel szczegółowy stanowi próba ujęcia własnych obserwacji socjologicznych, czynionych w trakcie badań terenowych, w szerszym kontekście, jakim jest fenomen kina objazdowego. Zebrane materiały dały możliwość naszkicowania społeczno-kulturowej atmosfery spotkań widzów z dziełami i ich twórcami, w szczególności oczekiwań, motywacji twórców i odbiorców. W artykule odwołano się do własnych obserwacji zwykłych oraz uczestniczących (jawnych i ukrytych). Wykorzystanych zostało 50 obserwacji zwykłych z projekcji oraz ze spotkań z publicznością (rozmowy z publicznością po seansie oraz około stu krótkich, nagrywanych rozmów z widzami na temat wrażeń filmowych oraz motywacji do uczestnictwa w seansie), a także doświadczenia (*insidera*) z kilkudziesięciu dni w trasach z kinem objazdowym. Badania nie są reprezentatywne odnośnie do całościowej publiki seansów w trakcie sześciu tras. Autorka nie omawia rezultatów badań dotyczących recepcji współczesnych polskich filmów (dyskusje grupowe po projekcji), lecz skupia się na ujęciu instytucjonalnym i interakcyjnym kina ruchomego.

Słowa kluczowe: socjologia kina, socjologia filmu, świat sztuki, współczesne kino polskie, kino ruchome, „Polska Światłoczuła”

Remembered: Zofia Rydet in the Biographically-Oriented Perspective of the Sociology of Art

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Abstract: Zofia Rydet is one of the most outstanding Polish and even European artists of the second half of the 20th century. She left a huge artistic legacy, but her biography still in many respects remains a mystery. The memory of a great artist is often mythologized, and the interpretation of the work after his/her death begins to separate from the original intentions of the creator. These are processes of great interest to art historians and sociologists alike. They can be studied by adopting the methods of the biographically-oriented sociology of art. This article uses some of these methods, namely the analysis of the existing documents, archival research, and interviews. The analysis of the collected material has revealed how Rydet was remembered by those who had the opportunity to meet her, accompanied her during field trips, and talked with her about art and photography. The aim of such research is to try to get to know the artist better, as well as to understand her work and the social functioning in what was a very specific time and environment.

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Zofia Rydet is considered one of the most outstanding Polish artists of the second half of the 20th century. Her immense creative output, despite its extremely varied nature, is a consistently developed artistic project, in which key themes are recurring. Regardless of whether Rydet used a document or surrealistic convention in her work, whether she used the so-called straight photography, made collages, or portrayed elderly people or children, the key issue was the very human existence, memory, and transience. Her attention was concentrated on what was inevitably nearing the end of its existence and what, in her opinion,

should be preserved in some way. Photography became her way to preserve it while her belief in the power of photographic image was of a truly mystic character.

Zofia Rydet was born in 1911 in Stanisławów, in the areas that are now part of western Ukraine, while before World War II they had belonged to the Second Polish Republic and had been called the Borderlands. The artist's family was connected to the strict elite of the city. Rydet's father, former Piłsudski's legalist, lieutenant colonel, was a lawyer with the soul of an activist, ready to support those who could not afford to hire an attorney. Her older brother Tadeusz, from whom she took over her passion for photography, ran the Orbis travel agency in Stanisławów. Apart from possessing the house in the city, the family owned a summerhouse in the heart of the Gorgan Mountains, in the town of Yaremche. Young Zofia Rydet quickly began to take over her artistic talents, but she was transferred to the Lviv Academy of Arts and graduated from the Private Institute of Rural Farming in Snopków near Lviv. In 1933, she obtained a diploma of a business school teacher and started working in this profession at the business school in Stanisławów. In 1935, she switched to travel agency. During this time, she not only began to visit Galicia, but also traveled around Europe (Jóźwiak, Ferenc, and Różycki 2020:68). In a film devoted to the artist and made by Andrzej Różycki, Zofia Rydet describes the pre-war period of her life as extremely happy.¹ The outbreak of the war marked the end of this stage of her life. The

¹ Andrzej Różycki's 1989 film titled *Nieskończoność dalekich dróg. Podpatrzona i podsłuchana Zofia Rydet (The infinity of distant roads...)* has become the most significant source of information and knowledge about the artist. At the same time, it is known for being a very important Polish documentary devoted to art and photography in general.

subsequent Soviet, German, and Hungarian occupations, and the escalation of the military operations of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) – directed against Polish citizens – impacted the entire Rydet family. The artist's father and brother barely escaped imprisonment by the Soviet NKWD services and German purges among the Polish intelligentsia. In Stanisławów, the terror of war took on a particularly strong and brutal form. Shootings, arrests, deportations, and public executions became the everyday life of the occupied city.² In 1944, the whole Rydet family managed to leave for Rabka, a city in southern Poland, almost 500 kilometers from Stanisławów. Thousands of Poles who left Kresy (former Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic) and went deep into Poland or to the so-called recovered lands, which were incorporated into the territory of the state in 1945 after the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, were forced to set out on a similar journey. The post-war fate of Zofia Rydet led her through Bytom, where she ran a haberdashery shop for a short time, to Gliwice, where she settled until her death in 1997. She began to engage with photography in a serious manner in 1951, and her commitment and talent soon led to her being accepted into the Gliwice Photographic Society. As a result of her moving to Gliwice in the 1960s, she started working at the University of Technology as a lecturer in photography. At that time, she was already an artist recognized in the Polish photographic community. In 1965, her first album titled *Little Man* was released. Since then, Rydet made her subsequent photographic series: *The Time of Passing*, *Transformations*, *The World of Feelings and Imagination*, *The Infinity of Far Roads*, and the monumental *Sociological Record*. She began

² The description of the war horror in the occupied Stanisławów can be found in the book by an outstanding Ukrainian author Jurii Andruchowicz (2019).

creating the last of these cycles at the age of 67 and continued it for the next 12 years. The main core of the artist's magnum opus consisted of images of towns and villagers portrayed most often inside their homes. The whole thing is formally consistent in terms of composition; the majority of the photos have the subjects positioned in the center of the wide-frame, while the real depth of field was achieved by using flash.³

"The artistic and documentary project of the Polish artist is stunning with its volume, and thus also its universality" (Dziewit and Pisarek 2020:41). And although it was carried out both in urban and rural areas, both at home and abroad, it remains a great portrayal of the Polish countryside, one depicting an inevitably dying world that disappears along with the processes of progressive modernization.⁴ During the production of the *Sociological Record*, Rydet took nearly 30,000 photos, many of them still in photographic negatives. Today, despite the vast and diverse legacy of the artist, this very cycle has become her trademark, often regarded by critics as the most important work in her output. Therefore, one can say that she is an artist of a complex biography and extraordinary artistic achievements, but also still very (present) vivid in the memory of people who knew her personally. It was the memory of the artist that became the subject of this article's author's research, the course and results of which will be discussed below.⁵

³ The works can be seen at: zofiarydet.com/zapis/pl/pages/sociological-records/intro. The site has been systematically developed by the Zofia Rydet Foundation.

⁴ The analysis of this aspect of Zofia Rydet's work can be found in the book by Jakub Dziewit and Adam Pisarek (2020).

⁵ The complete report from the research is published in the book titled *Zapisy pamięci. Historie Zofii Rydet* (Jóźwiak, Ferenc, and Różycki 2020).



Source: Zofia Rydet, 1950s/1960s, author unknown, from the archive of the Zofia Rydet Foundation

The biographically-oriented sociology of art

The phrase: 'life and works' often appears in biographical notes on artists. As a rule, authors assume that one is connected with the other in a necessary, permanent, and undeniable way. In the biographies of artists, authors are looking for a key to understand their works, and do so by analyzing the fate of artists, getting closer to the essence of the creative process, the style, and the method of work, as well as looking for reasons for choosing the topics undertaken by the artist. In the case of outstanding artists, this phenomenon seems to be

intensifying, which results, among other things, from the belief in their unique, almost supernatural talents. Authors thus reflect on the mystery of individual conditions and predispositions of being an artist, look for the social factors influencing the formation of a creative personality, and try to discover the mechanisms behind the success of some artists and the failure of others (Ferenc 2014:91–100). The key to understanding the phenomenon of a creative personality is looked for, both in the artist's works – marked by a certain individuality – and in his/her unique life. Biographers try to define the influence of the family, social environment, education, and upbringing; they analyze the impact of historical factors on the artists' lives.⁶

However, in the perspective of the biographically-oriented sociology of art, adopted for the purposes of this text, the author/biographer does not seek the key to interpreting the work in the artist's life, or at least it is not the main or the only goal. What matters is sociology in the context of a human being, i.e. a social unit conditioned by a number of environmental and historical factors, and making an effort to be an artist and to implement his/her work. This type of reflection can be practiced in several ways by referring to various existing and evoked data. First of all, these can be the existing materials, such as letters, notes, diaries, published and unpublished texts, interviews with artists, video recordings, and film productions from various archives (nowadays also blogs, photo and video blogs, original websites). In the case of Zofia Rydet, there is access to each of these 'traditional' materials, as the Zofia Rydet Foundation made most

⁶ A fine example of sociology understood this way is the analysis of the biography of Mozart, conducted by Norbert Elias (2006), who stressed the role of the composer's father in shaping Mozart's personality and career. The author also pointed to class differences that Mozart had to face throughout his entire life.

of them available.⁷ The second possibility is for the researcher to call up the data by interviewing the artists; these can be free-narrative or biographical interviews.⁸ Such an interview was never conducted with Zofia Rydet. This does not mean, however, that at the end of the artist's life no attempts were made to engage in such talks. It was mentioned by Jerzy Lewczyński, among other authors. "During our conversations, we repeatedly persuaded Zosia to provide us with explanations and comments on her work. She constantly replied that it would be possible when she gets better. She was becoming more and more suspicious" (Lewczyński 1999:18). The third possibility refers to the study of collective and individual memory. The socially-functioning image of a deceased artist usually consists of three main components: an artistic achievement recorded in the form of various critical and memoir studies, the biography, and memory of people who can testify. The first two elements are objectified, as they circulate in various ways and are more or less available. Memory remains in the subjective sphere and it must be evoked in the course of an appropriate interactive situation; if it is to be the subject of research, it should be recorded in the traditional way. It was this third possibility that was used in the study devoted to the memory of Zofia Rydet.

Memory of the artist as an object of reflection

The article analyzes the memories of the respondents, who were related to Zofia Rydet. For this reason, it is justified to refer to the concept of social memory, which Marian Golka defined as socially-created,

⁷ For more information, see the Zofia Rydet Foundation's Website at <http://fundacjarydet.pl> (accessed: 12.09.2020).

⁸ The theme of the biographical narrative interview is present in multiple texts, among others in authors such as Marek Prawda, Gabriele Rosenthal, or Kaja Kaźmierska.

relatively unified and accepted knowledge relating to the past of a given community, assuming various forms, fulfilling various functions, and reaching the consciousness of individuals from various sources (2009:15). This knowledge is passed on orally and through various cultural products, which the author of this article would classify as the most important texts and images. Importantly, social memory is unified through the influence of the mechanisms of social life, and thus the images of a given group relating to the past become relatively similar. The concept of memory in the social context has been referred to with several terms, e.g. group memory, collective memory, or historical memory. Collective memory includes all past events that took place during the period of the group. Defining collective memory, Andrzej Szpociński writes that “it is what remains from the past in the experiences of group members or what they make their past – a collection of memories about events (real or imaginary), experienced directly or those about which knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through oral and written tradition and all other information channels” (1999:43). Barbara Szacka draws attention to the changeability and dynamics of social memory and the fact that it is a constant area of clashes and the mixing of different perspectives. Taking into account the recent past – and this is what will be of interest in the case of Zofia Rydet – collective memory comprises three elements: the memory of individuals about their own experiences, the memory of the community resulting from the personal experiences of many individuals and from officially communicated images of the past, and celebrations commemorating these events (Szacka 2006:44–45). In this case, the main analytical category is individual memory. Taking into account the above remarks, it is worth referring to the idea of communicative memory, proposed by Jan Assmann (2008:66).

Its content becomes what has been personally experienced and remembered as part of an individual biography, and told to others. It is a kind of short-term memory (the limited life span of an individual), anchored in the immediate past and dependent on personal experiences and emotions (Krajewska 2016:23). This kind of memory was activated during the interviews dedicated to Zofia Rydet. Analyzing the interviews, the focus was primarily on what directly concerns Rydet in the context of her style of work, relations with others, and opinions expressed by her about photography, life, old age, and passing away. Thus, a kind of portrait was created based on the memory of those who knew her and had the opportunity to spend time with her and participate in her photographic expeditions. In many cases, these were long-term relationships, sometimes turning into friendships. The research focused on how Zofia Rydet was remembered and whether recurring themes or elements were revealed in this rich collection of memories, allowing the reconstruction of the artist’s socially-preserved image. Also, it is these interviews that made it possible to look for the new, unknown, undiscovered Zofia Rydet. An excellent example of discovering what is situated next to the official image of the outstanding artist is the photo-essay based on the memoirs and photographs of Anna Beata Bohdziewicz (2017:49–67). Here, one can meet Rydet as a person full of sense of humor, distance to herself, but also as a person capable of establishing close, almost intimate contacts with her models. Such testimonies are extremely valuable for the biographically-oriented sociology.

The organization of the study and the analytical procedure

The main purpose of interviewing people who met Zofia Rydet was to find out how the artist was re-

remembered and what elements dominated this recorded experience of meeting her. In other words, the main research question was: is there a certain community of memories related to the artist? It should be explained that the level of familiarity of the respondents with Zofia Rydet varied from case to case, as it ranged from long-term friendships, through more or less formal acquaintances, to one-time but important – from the respondents' point of view – meetings. The collected material in the form of over twenty recorded free interviews allowed for an insight into how Rydet was remembered, but also gave an opportunity to look at the artist's life through unknown or poorly recognized biographical episodes. At this point, it becomes necessary to add one more comment, which concerns the biographical research procedure, but which is important also in relation to the material analyzed in this case. Piotr Filipkowski points out that when referring to the testimony of witnesses, "you are not looking for an answer to the question of how it really was, but about what and how it is remembered and told by the interlocutors, how they judge it, what they attribute the meaning to the events cited" (2006:15). When handling this type of material, one must remember about the subjectivity of memories and about the constant work that people do to give meaning to their experiences. Each of the memoirs about Zofia Rydet is also a fragment of the respondents' personal experiences, many a time assessed by them as biographically-significant. Already during the interviews, a set of recurring issues was identified. There were also questions and doubts, as well as attempts to clarify which required reference to other existing data, such as letters, recordings, and various texts. Several categories that emerged from the analysis of the interviews will be described in the article; the categories reflect the most frequently appearing threads resounding in

the consecutive interviews. The procedure of isolating them was inspired by the grounded theory methodology (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Konecki 2000). The beginning of the analytical process was about systematically getting acquainted with the gradually accumulated material. Already at this stage, the preliminary coding of interviews and the separation of categories began. Each of them was saturated with assigning codes to individual categories. These were, respectively: *relationships with people* (both people related to the photographic environment and people photographed by Rydet), *photography* (recorded memories of the respondents regarding the artist's thoughts about the medium and the practice of photography), *fieldwork* (ways of organizing fieldwork, methods of establishing contacts with people – both met and photographed – conversation, interaction strategies), *home* (the functioning of the artist's home as both a workplace and a meeting place for the artistic environment), and *personality traits* (openness, courage, repeatedly emphasized Zofia Rydet's extraordinary activity and vitality, diligence, discipline, and meticulousness in the creation of her works). In this article, the categories will be presented together with theoretical concepts that allowed the anchoring of the selected categories by referring to concepts such as mythologization, interactive ritual, and terrain. In order to deepen the possibilities of interpreting the categories, reference was also made to other data, including, *inter alia*, letters, interviews, publications, fragments of films in which Zofia Rydet spoke, or in which people who knew her recounted their experience. Interviews were given by artists, theoreticians, and critics of photography, as well as friends of Zofia Rydet, i.e. those not directly related to the world of art and the photographic community. The vast majority of registrations were carried out in the interviewees' private homes, which was often

accompanied by a presentation of photos and souvenirs related to Zofia Rydet that are in the possession of the interviewees.⁹ Since one of the results of the project carried out by the research team is the publication of a book containing the conducted and authorized interviews, the anonymization of statements would not make much sense. For this reason, in the article below, each quote from the interviews has been signed with its author's name.¹⁰ The article will describe the categories that make it possible to present Zofia Rydet as an artist while omitting those that characterized the environment in which she functioned, her home, and the workplace, which was extremely important to her, namely the dark-room. Therefore, the issues selected for the analysis herein relate to the artist's creative work and artistic attitude, her sphere of opinion about photography, and her method of working in the field.

Rydet's artistic attitude and creative output

When examining the photographic legacy of Zofia Rydet, it is difficult to avoid a simple question about how one person could create such a huge photo archive. What kind of hard, long, and constant work was required to complete these creations? What amount of internal discipline and determination did Rydet have so that she could make consecutive photographic series, prepare exhibitions, send her works abroad, organize field trips, develop negatives, and prepare prints? It is known today that

⁹ The interviews were conducted by: Andrzej Różycki, Mariusz Gołąb, Karol Józwiak, Stefan Czyżewski, and Tomasz Ferenc. All the interviews have been recorded and transcribed with the respondents' consent. The interviews were published in the book edited by S. Czyżewski and M. Gołąb (2020)

¹⁰ If a quoted part of an interview was not published in the book, the author asked for an individual consent to quote this fragment.

Rydet photographed intensely, but not compulsively. Looking at her photos, also those that remain in the form of developed and protected negatives, one can always reflect on the frame, but also think in terms of simultaneously created photo series. This is how Anna Beata Bohdziewicz characterizes the artist's photographic strategy:

She never took random pictures. She did not take pictures like photographers do, to have a good one. No. She was taking pictures to keep them in individual drawers, for individual projects that she had in mind. Sometimes several at the same time. (A.B. Bohdziewicz)

The above observation does not exclude a similar one, made by Krzysztof Cichosz about Rydet's constant desire to photograph. It is probable that one of the above-mentioned drawers contained documentation of the social life of the Polish photographic community.

Rydet always had to register. Never did I see her without her camera, maybe during later talks, in her flat, that camera was put away. Whenever she appeared she would always carry her camera on her chest, taking photos nearly every step she took. (K. Cichosz)

How can this compulsion to photograph be explained? Cichosz mentions a sense of mission, a deeply internalized inner conviction that photographing and documenting is necessary and important. Similar comments appeared in other interviews as well:

She said that time passing must be noted down. Then one can think what to do with it but if one doesn't note down, there is nothing left. (W. Jama)

A similar way of thinking about the work of Zofia Rydet and her understanding of photography can also be found in the interview with Piotr Wołyński. According to this artist, Rydet distanced herself from the neo-avant-garde thinking and this way of using photography, which does not mean that she rejected it. However, as Wołyński emphasizes, the scientific and rationalist context of the neo-avant-garde was alien to her, because it resulted from a completely different outlook and way of thinking about the world:

The attitude of Zofia Rydet was derived primarily (...) from the point of view that was shaped in André Bazin's photographic thought, that was the embalming of time. It was something that brought an extra-rational element to imaging, above all it brought some kind of problems of mythology, myth, and existential problems to imaging. (P. Wołyński)

Rydet's first two series of photos, namely *Little Man* and *Time of Passing-by*, clearly show the artist's interests. At their center there is a person experiencing emotions. The consequence of this was the humanistic perspective and style of photography she adopted during the realization of these cycles. They also point to existential themes concerning childhood on the one hand and transience, old age, and the passage of time on the other. Her view of children was neither sentimental nor superficial. She saw in them little people, "with all the complicated multi-shape of experiences and reactions, both joyful and sad, even tragic" (Ligocki 1965). When she portrayed old people, in turn, her gaze was also devoid of slackness. Once Rydet took these pictures, she was still far from entering the period of biographical experience of old age. She had been, however, sensitized to the topic she was about to start exploring fourteen years later in the *Sociological Record*.

On the other hand, *The World of Feelings and Imagination* is a manifesto of thinking about photography in terms of myth and symbol. It is probably for this reason that Piotr Wołyński emphasizes that "for her, photography was something magical, it was the magic of the image." Not accidentally, therefore, he invokes the concept of André Bazin. According to this French theorist, from a psychological point of view, the history of fine arts is the history of similarity, the search for the most realistic forms. This need for embalming time became for him an essential feature of art, an attempt to "save existence by saving its external appearance" (Bazin 1963:10). According to the French theorist, photography was the culmination of this long process. Although its essence is realism, it often serves a deeper, metaphysical concept, freezing the image, opposing the passage of time and, finally, what the artist often repeated to be fighting death and passing away.

A fragment of the interview with Wojciech Prażmowski also seems to be important for understanding Rydet's creative attitude, as her way of thinking about photography is very close to Prażmowski. Here, again, there is this mythical sphere, something that remains beyond purely intellectual reflection and is based on intuition and deep faith in the role of photography, which for Zofia Rydet has become "a medium connecting the spiritual and material world" (Józwiak 2013:48). It was a world of absolute values, in which one cannot lie, and the act of photographing must be anchored in the sensitivity of the photographer.

I often visited Zosia, listened to such long, wonderful stories about love, about feelings, about sensitivity not to lose it, this repeated like the mantra: "take photos with your heart," which is outstanding to me today and what I repeat to my students. (...) She always

talked about it, it was ringing in my ears all the time: “truth, truth, truth, there must be a real story here, you cannot lie.” (W. Prażmowski)

In one of the artist’s texts about her own work, one published in 1993, Rydet wrote that she had always wanted to create something that “would have the power to move people and make them think” (1993). This thought can be key to interpreting the artist’s work, understood as a great photographic story about people: sometimes realistic, at other times oneiric or surreal, but always deeply humanistic. Rydet wanted to combine two aspects of the perception of reality and it seems that in her beliefs she could have been close to Susan Sontag, who was convinced that “thought is a form of feeling, and feeling is thinking” (2014:76).

Reading the interviews allows one to discover the increasingly complex picture of the artist. From the following stories there emerges a person who, as Krzysztof Cichosz emphasized, was extremely complex and internally complicated. What has been mentioned many times when describing Zofia Rydet was her great activity, diligence, and energy. In his interview, Józef Robakowski in several places emphasized her extraordinary vitality, openness, constant readiness to undertake new artistic tasks, but also a great willingness to continue the already started projects. Her artistic attitude showed signs of hyperactivity. All this, however, was accompanied by the awareness – growing with age – that it would not be possible to implement all the ideas into life.

Just like this she would produce more and more new cycles, which have not been realized, still in films, thousands of films. It was very typical for her, if it hadn’t been for the fact she was getting older and lacked that energy she would have worked more. Always had that appetite for being a photographer. (J. Robakowski)

Her creative attitude, unusual activity, and diligence also resulted from what Waldemar Jama pointed out in his interview. Namely, Rydet was racing against time, so she wanted to use it as best and as intensively as possible. She could not afford to waste time. In the film by Andrzej Różycki, she said: “A human being should know that their life is limited. So that they have to take every hour into account, every day, because every day lost is actually priceless.”¹¹



Source: Self-portrait, 1950s/1960s, from the archive of the Zofia Rydet Foundation

¹¹ The fragment comes from the film titled *Nieskończoność dalekich dróg...*

Photography and the mythologization of the artist

By analyzing the interviews devoted to Zofia Rydet, one can create a portrait that allows a better understanding of the artist's life and work. However, equally interesting and useful from the sociological point of view is the study of the processes of mythologizing the attitude, tasks, and the role of the artist. The concept of a myth is understood here after Marian Golka, i.e. as "a form of consciousness characterized by a subjective sense of truthfulness with the impossibility of objectively verifying both the degree of its truth and falsehood" (1996:41). This interpretation places it beyond truth and falsehood, and beyond mystification and rationalization. According to Golka, it responds to the need of a social group to comprehend a given phenomenon. An important feature of a myth is that it is situated in the area of what is knowable, but also of what eludes cognition, or even what is completely beyond the possibilities of explication. It can, therefore, provide a sense of understanding where one can only rely on premises and imagination. An artist's fate, work, and legacy all seem to be an area not only provoking mythologization, but even forcing this process to some extent. The biographies of many artists contain numerous unexplained episodes; their works do not always lend themselves to exegesis, and their heritage changes its meaning with time. Thus, in order to learn and understand an artist's actions, it is easy to enter the area of myth. Characterizing the creative attitude of Zofia Rydet, Tomasz Tomaszewski draws attention to two key features of her artistic attitude, namely the autotelicity of motivation and absolute commitment.

The power of Zosia's photography stems from two things, two immensely important for a photographer features. First of all she was really truly motivated,

not by desire to earn fame, money, success. Nothing of this kind. The other thing, she was seriously engaged in the process. Despite the lack of resources, the daily difficulties of the time, she did this work with incredible consistency; after all, she was a physically fragile woman, moving her camera on public transport in search of remote villages, places and people connected with them – the photographic themes of her Record. (T. Tomaszewski)

As a reporter and documentary filmmaker with extensive professional experience and creative output, Tomaszewski probably describes Rydet's attitude in an accurate way. However, there also appear mechanisms that are interesting from the perspective of the sociology of art. They are mentioned by Marian Golka in his examination of artistic myths. Each profession is associated with specific social perceptions, and each social world creates its own mythologies. Of all the various areas of professional activity, perhaps the social world of art is one of the most mythologized. Artists and other active participants in the field of artistic production create specific ideologies, thus legitimizing their actions and creating or maintaining the existing myths. Several of them were revealed in the analyzed interviews. Tomaszewski's statement contains traces of two such myths. The first one is the myth of selflessness, inherited from the Romantic era, praising the suffering, poor, often mad, and almost always unhappy artist. It carries the conviction, or even the expectation, that the artist should deal with art out of passion, honestly and selflessly, and the results of creative processes should not be converted into commercial success. Tomaszewski assumes that Zofia Rydet was alien to thinking in terms of artistic success, recognition, and even financial gratifications resulting from her creative work. However, one can also look at this matter from a different perspective.

Firstly, depreciating the potential material benefits of the works seems unjustified, and it is contrary to the perfectly fine desire to make a living from one's own profession. Zofia Rydet sold her works, as she had contacts with collectors, art dealers, and museums that would purchase them. In the above-mentioned interview, Jerzy Lewczyński said that Rydet "was a woman for whom satisfaction from her artistic success was paramount."¹² The desire to completely devote oneself to art does not mean giving up the desire to obtain various benefits from it, both material and symbolic, in the form of recognition and prestige. And prestige is the second important element that Rydet allegedly did not strive for. As I see it, however, it is exactly the opposite. Rydet made efforts to include her works in the collections of important, prestigious cultural institutions, and for this reason she donated many photographs to such important institutions as, e.g. MoMa (Museum of Modern Art in New York). Another one was the National Library in Paris, to which the artist donated a huge collection of her photographs. She did it on her own initiative, being aware that the survival of the legacy also depends on the collection of her works.¹³ Sometimes it is an institution that initiates the purchase of works, but sometimes it happens that the artist tries to include their works in a selected collection. Zofia Rydet herself made efforts to locate her photographs in such institutions. This proves her belief in the value of her own work and her knowledge of how the art world works. Rydet's desire to go beyond local art collections and the efforts associated with it only confirm the uniqueness of her creative strategies. The

desire for the work to survive is understandable, the actions taken for this purpose seem fully justified, and it probably makes no sense to place them in the area of a lack of interest or, rather, deliberate actions aimed at securing artistic achievements. It is worth exploring this issue, as it was important to Zofia Rydet and was raised, among others, in the story of Wojciech Prazmowski:

I remember such conversations, appearing quite often at the end of her life, these are the conversations from the 90s that: "Oh, all this will be flown in the garbage after my death (...). I just wanted one thing to stay, one thing. She took one sheet of paper out of the bookcase - it was a thank-you letter from the National Library in Paris, thanking you for donating the photo collection to the National Library. "This is what I am happy about," she said, "it is the most precious thing for me that they are in Paris, in the National Library. Because she offered them. She offered, not sold. (W. Prazmowski)

Zofia Rydet tried to locate her works in as many places as possible. In an interview conducted by Krystyna Łyczywek, the artist declared: "To be sure, I send my works to different places – I'm not stingy. If the bomb falls here, maybe not in Moscow and Rome."¹⁴ In another interview, Anna Kwiecień talked about Rydet's reaction to the purchase of her works by the photography department of the Museum in Gliwice:

I also know that she was happy, first, that her photos will be in the museum, and second, she just bought herself a color TV. It was so trivial, but she couldn't afford it back then in 1992. (A. Kwiecień)

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEX4FMCMNQo&t=350s> (accessed: 02.03.2019).

¹³ Letters of Zofia Rydet are archived by the National Library in Paris and were confirmed by Karol Józwiak. They clearly prove that it was the artist who initiated the cooperation.

¹⁴ The complete interview is available at the Zofia Rydet Foundation's Website: <http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/pl/pages/sociological-record/discussions/rozmowy-o-fotografii> (accessed: 02.03.2019).

Thinking about preserving one's own work is understandable, as are concerns about what might happen to it after the author's death. Many prominent filmmakers have experienced similar anxiety. It could result not only from the lack of people or institutions ready to take care of the creator's legacy, but also from what Arlie Hochschild calls "deep history" (2017:129). Getting to know it allows one to understand the views and actions of others, also when the analyzed actions seem incomprehensible or unjustified. It is precisely in the deep biographical history that one can find the fear of another irreversible loss. Jerzy Lewczyński wrote about it in a short biographical sketch, emphasizing the extremely dramatic nature of the experiences during the occupation (2005:13). In another text, he mentioned the arrest of Zofia's father and brother by the Soviets and how, after numerous efforts, both of them were bought back (Lewczyński 1999:13). In Andrzej Różycki's film, the artist says: "My childhood was very beautiful, very good. My father was rich, we had everything we needed, my mother didn't work, there was a lot of service. And then the whole tragedy began."¹⁵ Rydet experienced occupation, forced abandonment of her family home, and migration to the distant southern and western territories of Poland, where she moved several times. There does not seem to be any autobiographical record in which Rydet would refer to these experiences. However, there are some fragments of the story that make it possible to talk about this kind of experience in terms of trajectories. "The core of trajectory experience is the sense of the individual that he is under the control of forces independent of his will, the inability to control them and act freely, and in the peak phases – a sense of suffering, deep disorientation and separation from the world of others" (Rokuszewska-Pawełek 2002:79).

As Rydet's life came to an end, the vision of losing all her artistic output became real. Photography, as Lewczyński emphasized when recalling joint journeys and conversations, "changed her life and gave her satisfaction in making her dreams come true" (1999:16). The vision of losing it all must have been very disturbing to Rydet.

(...) she was afraid that all these negatives, all her work, (...) that it would all end up in the trash, that nothing would come of it. (B. Saucha)

The second thread undertaken by Tomaszewski, which also appears in other interviews, concerns Zofia Rydet's absolute focus on work and art. There are clues to the myth of suffering and sacrifice. In his reflections on the artist's mythologies, Andrzej Osęka writes that "the artist must suffer, this is what the legend requires" and then "he/she makes joy and relief out of his/her own pain and bitterness – for others" (1975:165). Tomaszewski mentions Rydet's numerous journeys, titanic work, and her steadfastness in the creation of the *Sociological Record*. All this is undoubtedly true; her enormous effort demands recognition and respect. The effect of the work is so stunning that Bohdziewicz probably expressed it best when talking about a psychedelic record, based mainly on the enormous strength of the author's psyche, but also on a kind of obsession and internal compulsion to continue the project. Urszula Czartoryska spoke in a similar vein by asking the right question: "So what is the role of the sociological adjective here, since there are more psychic sparkles between the model and the author that attract each other (...)" (1999:19). Coming back to the undisputed, fully committed dedication of Zofia Rydet, one must remember, however, that many assistants were present when Rydet was working on *Record*, and without them it would have been difficult for the

¹⁵ From the film titled *Nieskończoność dalekich dróg...*

artist to develop her project on such a large scale. It was mentioned, among other authors, by Waldemar Jama, a representative of the Silesian photographic community:

As far as I know, Zosia involved many people from all over Poland, who helped her a lot. For example, Ms Bohdziewicz. On the other hand, other members of our union, who had better photo studios, made copies of the negatives. (W. Jama)

It was also the case that the people who assisted Zofia Rydet very often accompanied her during the legendary field trips. As a rule, this help consisted of arranging a means of transport or being a guide in an area that Rydet did not know. When examining this aspect, it is worth asking oneself to what extent it would have been possible to create the *Record* in the form in which it is known today without the support of all the people involved, ready to help at various stages of the process. Estimating the scale of participation of persons supporting the artist would be a difficult task, or even an impossible one. What is certain, however, is that the artist's need to work with someone who could become an assistant in the fieldwork increased with age. Bogusław Saucha, who himself traveled with Zofia Rydet many times, also mentions this aspect:

Zosia was quite ill, she had a spine disease and suffered from mobility limitations. But that didn't stop her from her trips at all. (...) She traveled around the nearby villages of Gliwice, but traveled either with one of the young students, whom she had a wreath around, or with a friend. (B. Saucha)

This part of Rydet's story brings one closer to another important category in her life, namely fieldwork and

meetings with photographed people. The collected stories make it possible to reconstruct what one can call the interactive ritual of Zofia Rydet. Perhaps this explains the secret of the *Sociological Record's* success.

Fieldwork

When thinking about Zofia Rydet and the photos she took, it is impossible not to reflect on the style and method of working in the field. The foundation of her success and effectiveness was her talent to establish contacts and to carry on a conversation, evoking the sympathy and interest in the people she met. In this case, interviews with respondents who participated in this type of plein-air are particularly valuable. Their memories allow a better understanding of the phenomenon of the *Record*. However, before I proceed to the report on Rydet's fieldwork, it is worth considering an accompanying idea, which did not involve documenting everything but, rather, was based on a thorough selection. It is not surprising, because entering the field with a research intention or in the open air for the same reason is always connected with specific expectations and, therefore, always intentional and planned activities. In the open air, the artist wants to produce art, similarly to how the scientist wants to generate knowledge in the field. Simply put, they both want to get something out of the situation. In both cases, this type of activity can be a source of satisfaction on the one hand, and disappointment on the other. This is, among other things, due to the fact that the terrain exists independently of the agents, i.e. neither the researcher nor the artist can control it; on the contrary, the terrain exercises considerable control over those who try to explore it (Fatyga 2011). Incidentally, it is worth noting that, to a large extent, the documentary photographer finds themselves in an interesting position between the artist and the field researcher. Entering the field is, therefore, about entering an area

of imagination, ideas, expectations, fears, and hopes. It is always associated with an attempt to master such a space, with the willingness to use it for one's own purposes, to transform it into something describable or suitable for showing in the form of a film or a photograph, or presenting it in the form of a research report. Finally, this kind of confrontation with reality always entails the risk that the encountered people will not submit to the will of the researcher or scientist, will not want to cooperate, and will be even less willing to reveal their world to strangers. Taking into account all the difficulties associated with this type of work, what Zofia Rydet managed to achieve is unusual and unique. Like everyone who goes into the field, Rydet was looking for something out there. She repeatedly emphasized the importance of the meetings with the protagonists of her photographs. In the text prepared for the Museum in Gliwice, she wrote: "These meetings with people, still new and so interesting, gave them strength. At the same time, they taught me a new philosophy, a new valuation, attitude towards the most important matters of life and death."¹⁶ At the same time, her choices of what to photograph were dictated by preliminary assumptions related to their selection, as pointed out by A. B. Bohdziewicz:

When Ms. Zofia was walking through the village, it was not, for example, that she would photograph all the old cottages, but she photographed those she liked, in which she thought that something interesting would be there. (A.B. Bohdziewicz)

Therefore, Zofia Rydet was looking for houses that intrigued her in some way, and in which she expected to find people of interest to her. Looking at her photos, one can see that the frequently used key was the se-

lection of huts and farms that resisted various kinds of modernization, to which new aesthetics did not yet arrive, and whose inhabitants did not want to become like city residents. The artist chose places where the village resembled, at least visually, that which she might have remembered from before the pre-war times. Such a statement must remain an unverifiable hypothesis based solely on the photographs she took.



Source: Zofia Rydet around the time of working on her project *Sociological Record*, 1970s/1980s, author unknown, from the archive of the Zofia Rydet Foundation

Without any doubt, she was focusing on places that she felt were about to disappear. In order to be able to take pictures, the artist developed an effective interaction scheme. The fullest description of this type of situation can be found in the interview given by Anna Beata Bohdziewicz. In August of 1988, herself

¹⁶ <http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/pl/pages/sociological-record/notes/o-swojej-tworczosci> (accessed: 17.08.2020).

and Zofia Rydet spent two weeks visiting the villages around Rabka.

(...) here is what we did. We would go through the village and then let's say there is a cottage she would like. She had this feeling there was something that she would find interesting. So we are coming in, the entrances are different, back then the estates were not always fenced so sometimes you have a wicket and sometimes you have to ring a bell, sometimes you just enter right from the road, so we enter, and that is the way it was, August but still warm, let's say summer, doors most often open so we just knock on that door, Mrs. Zofia goes first, then we follow. Knock, knock, "Good morning, can we come in?". So either someone goes out saying why who what for. "We want to take photos" she would use the plural (...). She would not say "I would like to," she would not use conditional, just straight forward: we want and she would add immediately that we are not paying for these photos. There were all sorts of reactions: what? Why? What is it about? By this time we are already inside the house, in the kitchen or even better. We see this parade chamber. "it is so beautiful here, so beautiful here." "But where? What are you talking about? I am not even dressed," "no it is beautiful" and that was it, she was a hypnotizer. She was a kind of a despot and had these eyes, and this charm, and she would hypnotize. If she got you, you were hers. Caught in the net, end of story, one did all she wanted, no discussion. It was a lot if she allowed someone to wear a clearer apron. So this is how it all looked like. (A.B. Bohdziewicz)

The above testimony says a lot about the method used by Zofia Rydet, in which the ability to establish contact was combined with a delicate form of pressure exerted on the householders. The description of this method is developed in the story of Anna Kwiecień, who did not participate in the fieldwork, but learned it from the artist herself. It could be said that a combination emerged

in which pressure and charm, when applied in the right proportion, gave the effect that Rydet wanted.

This is what she told me, that when she entered the house (...) it was impossible to ask her out. Of course, it did happen that she failed. She was first taming her object, saying nice things, making compliments: Oh, how beautiful! You look so beautifully! It is so beautiful here! And she got them, she tamed them. Anyway, she was a very open person. And this is when she took these photos of hers. (A. Kwiecień)

Both accounts clearly show a repetitive pattern, the strength of which was based on ritualism. Erving Goffman defines ritual as actions "through which, due to their symbolic aspect, the action shows to what extent it deserves respect and to what extent then, others deserve it" (2006:19). It is crucial here to establish the place of all parties in the interactive ritual in such a way that it is generally acceptable. Looking at Rydet's photos, and knowing the account of these meetings, one can see that the realization of the said idea was possible only because she was able to control the situation and direct it toward taking the photo. Iwona Kurz points out that the characteristic tension between a meeting and instrumentalization is present in many frames of the *Sociological Record*. "Looking for what is valuable to her heroes, she does not give them the field – it is she who decides how and in what to pose, for example breaking away with the festiveness of a photographic gesture, against the expectations or needs of her models" (Kurz 2015). Did Rydet really break with the festivity of this gesture, or on the contrary, did she make it the axis of the whole meeting? If one selects the second option, one must nevertheless recognize that Rydet defined this festivity in her own way. In order to grasp it, one should refer once again to the already cited text prepared for the Museum in Gliwice, in which the artist writes: "A man who was supposed to be only

an element, but was the most important, at the same time looking into the lens creates a very strong thread between us, model-camera-photographer. The model was aware, looking straight into the lens, of the importance of the moment, this kind of capture, of retaining his personality specific to him, of ennobling him to some symbol, although he himself was not great" (Rydet 1993). Understanding the importance of this gesture came directly from how Rydet defined photography and from how she perceived the essence and meaning of her work in the field.

The artist described the style of work she adopted several times in various texts, revealing the usual course of meetings with people who posed for her photos. In the already quoted interview conducted by Krystyna Łyczywek, there is an interesting fragment on this issue:

"Entering the apartment I look around carefully and I see something beautiful, something special so I praise loud it right away. The owner is caught up in it so I take the first photo. Everybody has something at home that they find the most precious. If I manage to identify that object then that person is already mine. And this is the moment I take advantage of. I ask them to be seated (very often married couples) in front of the main wall, this most interesting, most decorated one and I shoot. I photograph."¹⁷ Also, the film made by Wiesław Głowacz, titled *The Portraits: Zofia Rydet*, shows her describing the ritual of a handshake. This is how she puts it: "I realized that if I shake hand with this man he will never refuse to me and truth be told these people are becoming close."¹⁸ Tomasz Tomasz-

wski draws attention to the artist's commitment to rural areas and her talent to talk to their inhabitants. Rydet, a pre-war graduate of the School of Farming in Snopków, understood these people and was genuinely interested in their lives. She also had some kind of charisma, owing to which she was able to convince thousands of people to let themselves be photographed. Tomaszewski describes it as follows: "She also had something magical about her, which made people attractive to herself. It is not easy to enter someone's home like this."

All of the above into account, Zofia Rydet developed what today can be called an interactive scheme that she successfully used throughout the years of working on the *Sociological Record*. The collection of photographs created over 12 years proves the effectiveness of this strategy. One of its elements was the persuasive use of something that can be tentatively described by the papal argument. Bogusław Saucha, a friend of the artist, who participated in many photographic expeditions, reports it very clearly:

(...) it was practical for her because it was the key to the hearts of people houses of whose she wanted to enter. Some didn't want her to take photographs, especially in the village, poor host in her dirty apron, bare footed. But when Zosia said she was making those photos for the Pope so that he sees her too, the door were wide open. People would sit in central part of their houses because that was the idea to seat them in their natural environment, so they would look straight in the camera, and she was taking a photo. (B. Saucha)

It should be added that it was not only a rhetorical trick calculated toward the effect, as evidenced by the letter to Krystyna Łyczywek from July 18, 1983, in which Rydet describes her stay in Rabka. She also writes about her decision to photograph for the Pope:

¹⁷ <http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/pl/pages/sociological-record/discussions/rozmowy-o-fotografii> (accessed: 12.08.2020).

¹⁸ From the film by Wiesław Głowacz, available at: <http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/pl/pages/sociological-record/media/portrety> (accessed: 12.08.2020).

“Now, however, I am doing primarily for the Holy Father – this is my task, I want to give these hundreds of people to him, so that he can see how the nation loves him. And now there are almost altars in every house. If only I had enough strength to bring it all up later.”¹⁹ Therefore, it is possible that a strong impulse to start working on the *Record* was the beginning of the pontificate of John Paul II. This can be confirmed by the fact that Rydet started taking pictures for this series in the same year.

Finally, it is worth picking up one more thread related to fieldwork, which, at the same time, fits in with the earlier considerations on the mythologization and demythologization of the artist. Taking into account the huge number of meetings that Zofia Rydet had to initiate, it is not surprising that there were cases of not granting permission to take photos. The interviews demonstrate that these were not frequent, but they did occur, and in the collected material there were also such testimonies. One of them reads as follows:

Once one lady did not let us come in her house, she was standing in the doorway; I also have her photographed, very neat, wearing her headscarf, a hen right next to her; Zosia was explaining to her the whole thing, she mentioned the Pope but that lady said no anyway. One denial in two weeks. (A.B. Bohdziewicz)

Concluding remarks

The collected interviews had provided a lot of valuable material, from which merely a few threads were selected for the purposes of this article. What was omitted concerns, among other things, the extremely interesting accounts of Zofia Rydet and Jerzy Lew-

czyński. These two outstanding artists and friends, living in Gliwice, held an intense discussion about photography and art. Also, the interviews provide a lot of information about the photographic environment in which Rydet was actively involved. A colorful description of such a functioning emerges from these fragments; using the term by Pierre Bourdieu, it is about “the field” (Bourdieu 2001; Matuchniak-Kasuska 2010) of photographic symbolic production, its diversity, activity, and dynamics. Furthermore, the interviews contain very interesting threads about the contemporary functioning of photography as such. Finally, various interpretations of the individual cycles created by Zofia Rydet are also revealed, with a strong thesis regarding the necessity of reading the artist’s output as a whole, and not as separate sets. What image of Zofia Rydet emerges from these collected stories? Krzysztof Cichosz emphasizes that the artist “was internally very complex and it can be seen from many threads of her work.” It is worth refraining from giving in to the image of Zofia Rydet as an elderly lady traveling through Polish villages with a camera around her neck. In fact, her actions were marked by a kind of artistic madness in the non-impregnated form. Writing about great Christian mystics, Jean-Noël Vuarnet sees the uniqueness of their madness, which he describes as “not impregnated” (2003). It is synonymous with the madness of brilliant artists such as Dostoyevsky, Kafka, or Rimbaud, for whom it was a pretext and the cause of deep experiences and visions, as a result of which outstanding works of art were created. “Excessive thinkers, extreme poets, mystical patients – the great experimenters have always been madmen beyond madness” (Vuarnet 2003:23). Therefore, eminent mystics remain faithful to their dogmas, form, and goals. However, Dostoyevsky does not go beyond the novel, van Gogh does not go beyond the painting frame, and the holy mystics do not go beyond their faith, while

¹⁹ <http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/pl/pages/sociological-record/letters/krystyna-lyczywek-18-07-1983> (accessed: 12.07.2020).

Rydet goes beyond the photographic frame. Madness becomes necessary to break free from the supremacy of reason, and at the same time it does not need any diagnostics and treatment. The situation is different when it comes to impregnated madmen, as they remain in the domain of medicine and they are identical to their madness, for which they cannot go. Zofia Rydet was faithful to her medium and the goals she had set herself. She expressed it clearly in the film by Andrzej Różycki: "I cannot live without photography. Because I have nothing else but it. Just this photo. It is now my greatest passion, my greatest love, well, the greatest of all that I have."²⁰ Moreover, the fact that she was consistent in her attitude is evidenced by the text she had written 14 years earlier. "I don't like writing about myself: I prefer my works to speak about my artistic credo. I can only say that photography is my love, possession, fascination and obsession. Photography is my work and my leisure, it takes away every thought, but it also gives me strength to live" (Rydet 1976:10). Considering the two above-mentioned statements, Tomasz Tomaszewski is probably right when he says that "Lewczyński said *I changed my life into a photograph*, but maybe in relation to Zofia Rydet it is more adequate." Her madness was about devoting her life to photography in its fullest and about being absolutely committed to it, as evidenced by both her biography and her work. In the materials about Zofia Rydet – those collected during the research and those recorded earlier – there appears the conviction that most narrators believe that the artist was outstanding. When referring to the typology of the personality developed by Florian Znaniecki, the described stories reveal something that the eminent sociologist called "supernormality," i.e. inexplicable individual eminence. "Abnormality occurs ... when an individ-

ual in a given role, once ingested into it, does more or better than the personal pattern used in such roles by normal people" (Znaniecki 2001:268). According to Znaniecki, such a human being is able to enrich cultural systems, gather social circles around them, and become a personal role model. In the social memory of people associated with the world of art and photography, Zofia Rydet has remained someone "supernormal," i.e. completely devoted to her work and passion and fully committed to her role.²¹



Source: Zofia Rydet at home, with the boards with the Sociological Record; author unknown, from the archive of the Zofia Rydet Foundation

²⁰ Taken from the film titled *Nieskończoność dalekich dróg. Podpatrzona i podsłuchana Zofia Rydet A.D. 1989*, directed by A. Różycki, Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych, Łódź, 1990.

²¹ Article translated by Katarzyna Cierniewska-Grudzień.

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Zapamiętana. Zofia Rydet w perspektywie biograficznie zorientowanej socjologii sztuki

Abstrakt: Zofia Rydet jest jedną z najwybitniejszych polskich, a nawet europejskich artystek drugiej połowy XX wieku. Pozostawiła po sobie ogromną spuściznę twórczą, ale jej biografia pod wieloma aspektami wciąż pozostaje tajemnicą. Pamięć o wielkim artyście/artystce jest często mitologizowana, a interpretacja dzieła po jego/jej śmierci zaczyna odrywać się od pierwotnych intencji twórcy. Są to procesy niezwykle interesujące dla historyków sztuki i socjologów. Można badać je, przyjmując metody biograficznie zorientowanej socjologii sztuki. W artykule wykorzystano niektóre z nich: analizę istniejących dokumentów, badania archiwalne oraz wywiady. Analiza zebranego materiału pozwoliła wskazać, w jaki sposób Rydet zapamiętali ci, którzy mieli okazję poznać ją, towarzyszyli jej podczas wypraw w teren, prowadzili z nią rozmowy o sztuce i fotografii. Celem takich badań jest próba lepszego poznania artystki, zrozumienia jej twórczości i funkcjonowania społecznego w określonych czasach i środowiskach.

Słowa kluczowe: artysta, fotografia, sztuka, biografia, praca w terenie, mitologizacja

Dilip Kumar: An Auteur Actor

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Howard Becker; Dilip Kumar; Film Studies; Art and Culture; Sociology of Work; Film and Culture

Abstract: Dilip Kumar has been praised for his sublime dialog delivery, for his restrained gestures, and for his measured and controlled underplay of emotions in tragic stories as well as in light-hearted comedies. His debut in 1944 with *Jwar Bhata* (Ebb and Tide) met with less-than-flattering reviews. So did the next three films until his 1948 film, *Jugnu* (Firefly), which brought him recognition and success. Unlike his contemporaries such as Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand, who propelled their careers by launching their own production companies, Dilip Kumar relied on his talent, his unique approach to characterization, and his immersion in the projects he undertook. In the course of his career that spanned six decades, Kumar made only 62 films. However, his work is a textbook for other actors that followed. Not only did he bring respectability to a profession that had been shunned by the upper classes in India as a profession for “pimps and prostitutes,” but he also elevated film-acting and filmmaking to an academic discipline, making him worthy of the title ‘Professor Emeritus of Acting’. Rooted in the theoretical framework of Howard S. Becker’s work on the “production of culture” and “doing things together,” this paper discusses Kumar’s approach to acting, character development, and the level of his involvement and commitment to each of his projects. The author of this article argues that more than the creative control as a producer or a director, it is the artistic involvement and commitment of the main actors that shape great works of art in cinema. Dilip Kumar demonstrated it repeatedly.

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Ever since the invention of moving picture in the late 1890s, movies have been labeled as a global mass medium. Through the iconic figures of the silent screen – such as Mary Pickford as ‘America’s Sweetheart’ or the lovable tramp portrayed by Charlie Chaplin, and during the talking-pictures’ era, from the Jungle Boy and James Bond to the Superman and the Spiderman, movie screens around the world have presented images created by Hollywood. It had been difficult for European countries to compete with the studio system of Hollywood until after WWII when the European governments, in order to protect and rejuvenate their local film industries, imposed restrictions on American movies.¹ It was now harder for the Asian and the African movie-producing countries to gain any distribution or recognition in the US or Europe. Both India and Nigeria produce more movies annually than Hollywood or Hong Kong, yet most European and North American movie audiences would be hard-pressed to name an Indian or African movie director or movie actor. As is commonly the case for the distant and developing countries, their achievements and accomplishments go unnoticed. The same is true of film artists and filmmakers from those countries; they remain unrecognized and unnoticed by the Western audience.

As Ernest Hemingway commented, “Chekhov wrote about 6 good stories.... But he was an amateur writer” (cited in Chung 2010). Despite Hemingway’s labeling, Anton Chekhov redefined the short story and playwriting. Chekhov’s characters were not driven by their circumstances (the plot), but by their innermost desires and fears. It was Chekhov’s plays that became the foundation of method acting. Sim-

¹ These came in the form of screen-time quotas, restriction on the number of films that could be imported, and the profits that could be taken out of the country. See Guback 1969.

ilarly, it was an untrained (amateur) actor in India, Dilip Kumar, who laid the groundwork for a style of film acting that became the reference point for actors in the subcontinent. An acclaimed screenwriter and social critic Javed Akhtar has argued that Dilip Kumar employed “method acting” before Marlon Brando did in the 50s (Ahmad 2019). Indian film director Satyajit Ray credited Dilip Kumar with being the ultimate method actor, who influenced generations of actors in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh – three countries that account for nearly one-fourth of the world population.

This paper is an effort to draw the readers’ attention to the work and contributions of the Indian film actor Dilip Kumar, who holds the Guinness World Record for winning the most (seven) Best Actor Filmfare Awards² and one for Lifetime Achievement in a career spanning more than fifty years. In his career that ran nearly sixty years (from 1944 to 1998), Kumar appeared in sixty-two movies. In itself, the quantity is not impressive, as his contemporaries such as Raj Kapoor or Dev Anand had much greater output.³ However, it was Kumar’s approach to filmmaking as a collaborative art – and his involvement in all aspects of a project – that helped him leave his special stamp both on his films and the Indian cinema as a whole. His scrupulous attention to detail and the desire to immerse himself in his characters have both been his trademarks. This paper is limited to the elaboration on Kumar’s early films, i.e. from 1944 to 1961.

² *Filmfare* is a popular English-language tabloid-sized magazine about the Bollywood cinema. Established in 1952, the magazine is published by the Worldwide Media, a subsidiary of The Times Group. *Filmfare* Awards are the Indian equivalent of the Oscars, i.e. the annual Academy Awards given to individuals in recognition of their work in cinema.

³ During the 1950s and the 1960s, Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor, and Dilip Kumar were the three top leading actors.

From Muhammad Yusuf Khan to Dilip Kumar

Muhammad Yusuf Khan alias Dilip Kumar was born on 11 December, 1922, in Peshawar, British India (now Pakistan). His father, Lala Ghulam Sarwar, was a fruit merchant, while his mother, Ayesha Begum, was a housewife. Khan was the fourth of twelve siblings. During his school years, he became a close friend of Raj Kapoor. Kapoor's father was a stage actor, and the three Kapoor brothers went on to become superstars in the Indian movie industry in Bombay. Khan had no interest in – or inclination for – movies or acting on stage. After a brief career as a canteen operator for an Army Club in Pune (India), Khan moved to Bombay, where he met the owner of the Bombay Talkies Company, Devika Rani (Lent 1990). The Bombay Talkies had established itself with light comedies (Chakravarty 1993:42). Rani was impressed with Khan's command of English and Urdu, and encouraged him to work as a dialog writer. Soon after, she offered him a contract as an actor and suggested he should change his name to Dilip Kumar – a name that was much easier for Indian movie audiences to remember, and short enough to fit on the movie marquees.

Devika Rani introduced Kumar to her company's most successful movie director Amiya Chakravarty, who cast Dilip Kumar in a supporting role in *Jwar Bhata* [*Ebb and Tide*], a 1944 production of the Bombay Talkies. Without any interest or training in acting, Kumar received less than flattering reviews. Baburao Patel, the undiplomatic and corrosive editor of the now-defunct *Filmindia* magazine, called the movie amateurish, unoriginal, and, unexciting. Patel wrote in his review that the story of '*Jwar Bhata*' had been many times on the Indian screen. He saw Kumar's character as anemic, gaunt, and reminding

one of a "long-ill-treated convict who has escaped from jail. His appearance on the screen creates both laughter and disappointment. His acting effort in this picture amounts to nil" (Kahlon 2019). Several years had passed before Patel reviewed his opinion on the actor. The film was not a commercial success, though Amiya Chakravarty and Dilip Kumar would collaborate in the years to come.

In 1945, Devika Rani and the Bombay Talkies cast him in another movie, *Pratima*, opposite a successful leading lady, Swaran Lata. Not unlike *Jwar Bhata*, this movie too did little for the studio or the actors, and went unnoticed. Rani had faith in Dilip Kumar's potential and put him in *Milan* [*Union*] (1946), an adaptation of a short story by Rabindranath Tagore. The movie was acknowledged mainly for its music and cinematography. However, groomed by the movie's director, Nitin Bose, Kumar's acting began to take shape. Kumar recalled in his autobiography:

While working with Nitin Bose during the making of *Milan* (1946), I understood how vital it is for an actor to get so close to the character that the thin line between the actor's own personality and the imagined personality of the character gets blurred. [...]. An artist can never be bigger than the source – literature. (Dilip Kumar Interview 2018)

Kumar and Bose would also partner on two important projects in the years that followed.

Cinema – a partnership of collaborative arts

Cinema is a medium of convergence. It brings together music, literature, architecture, design, theater, and dance. Many musicians perform together to produce a piece of music that can then be used

as the theme or background music for a movie. Visually, what is seen and heard on the screen is the work of the writer, cinematographer, editor, a host of performers, and countless technicians as well as their director. The work of a cinematographer depends on his/her lighting crew, the crane and camera operators, and the laboratory that develops and prints the movie. An actor's performance, in turn, is the outcome of a collaborative effort of the actor, the writer, the director, the sound recordist, and the editor. Similarly, a dance sequence in a movie is not only the work of a dancer or a group of dancers, but a collaboration of the choreographer, the music composer, and the entire crew that films and edits the sequence.⁴ This is how various art forms converge in cinema, making it a hyper-collaborative art. It is, therefore, a misstatement to credit an individual for the creation of a movie or any other work of art, e.g. when auteur theorists claim that a movie is the expression of its director's vision.

Howard S. Becker (1986), who advanced the idea of "doing things together," approached art as a "collective action" and studied it as an occupation, arguing that a work of art is formed through the coordination of many individuals, and without each of the individuals who produce materials necessary to construct art, it becomes difficult if not impossible to create art. Becker emphasized how the division of labor played a role in the creation of works of art, i.e. that it is the work of many individuals which results in the production of the tools and routines of the artist. The list of credits that ends a typical Hollywood feature movie grants explicit recogni-

⁴ For instance, see the dance sequences in Busby Berkeley's MGM films such as *Footlight Parade* (1933) and *Dames* (1934); Robert Wise's *West Side Story* (1961); Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movies such as *Top Hat* (1935), *Swing Time* (1936); John Bordham's *Saturday Night Fever* (1977); and, most recently, *La Land* (2016), directed by Damien Chazelle.

tion to such a finely divided set of activities (Becker 1986:21). Through the cooperation of a large number of persons, any work of art one can eventually see or hear comes into being and remains in existence (Becker 1982). Using a 1978 American movie, *Hurricane*, as an illustration, Becker elaborated:

The film employed a director of photography, but Sven Nykvist did not actually operate the camera; Edward Lachman did that. Lachman, however, did not do all the jobs associated with operating the camera; Dan Myhram loaded it and, when the focus had to be shifted in the course of filming a scene, Lars Karlsson "pulled" the focus. If something went wrong with a camera, camera mechanic Gerhard Hentschel fixed it. The work of clothing and making up the actors, preparing and taking care of the script, preparing scenery and props, seeing to the continuity of the dialogue and the visual appearance of the film, even the management of financial matters during filming—all these jobs were similarly divided among a number of people whose names appeared on the screen. (1982:7-9)

Becker also pointed to the importance of shared meaning ascribed to the value of a work of art. In addition to doing things together, the sociologist believed that all participants in the creation of a work of art had to share a common understanding of the worth and value of that work.

Howard S. Becker's "sociology of work" and the Indian cinema

Becker shifted the spotlight away from individuals and to social structures and relations, which allows for the social forces at play in producing works of art (Cole 2019). Becker held that works of art "are not the products of individual makers, artists who possess a rare and special gift" (1982:35). Instead, as

the author argued, “All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people” (1982:1).

Dilip Kumar did understand the insightfulness of Becker’s notions of the “production of culture” and “doing things together.” When Kumar’s fourth movie, *Jugnu* [*The Firefly*] (1947) became a commercial success, he realized that he needed to be more than merely an actor for hire. From that point forward, he accepted only one movie at a time and only if he could be a part of the entire creative process, i.e. from scripting and casting to editing (Rangan 2014).

I had made up my mind in the early years of my career itself that I would not accept a film for the remuneration offered. The script and the director had to meet my expectations.... I remained selective in my choice of scripts and directors.” (*The News* 2013)

In the introduction to Dilip Kumar’s autobiography, his coauthor, Udayatara Nayar, describes how Dilip Kumar went beyond being merely an actor, highlighting his management skills in particular. She writes:

As the young actor progressed from *Jwar Bhata* (1944), his first film, to *Jugnu* (1947), his first hit at the box office, he began to grasp the essential secret of making a successful film. By his own study and observation of the process of film making and marketing of the end product, he arrived at the conclusion that an actor’s responsibility did not end with his work as an actor. The actor had as much of a stake in the quality and finesse of a film, which ensured its commercial success. It meant an efficient and dedicated management of the infrastructure and resources of the production as

well as creative management, which started with the writing of the script and the screenplay. (Kumar 2014)

The writer, producer, and music composer Naushad Ali, who produced two of Kumar’s movies— *Babul* [Paternal Home] (1950) and *Uran Khatola* [*Flying Cart*] (1955) – said the following in a video interview directed by Aman Chadha:

From very early in his career, the special thing about him was that whatever role he was doing, he would study it and become absorbed in it. He studied his part meticulously and didn’t accept a second film while he worked on the first. He used to memorize his lines the night before, he would rehearse his lines and action in front of a mirror. He was dedicated to his art. He deserves to be called a true artist. He could communicate with his eyes only, or with his facial expressions. In *Kohinoor* [*Mountain of Light*] (1960), he was supposed to play the sitar. He practiced the movement of his fingers on the instrument for two months until his fingers bled. On the day he did the scene, I met him for lunch. His fingers were bandaged. I ask him what happened to his hands. He told me that he just got done doing the close up of his fingers running over the sitar strings. We had offered to use the hands of the actual sitar player, but Dilip would have none of it. He didn’t want a double. He wanted his hands to move on the strings like those of a Sitar player. (*Bollywood Aaj Aur Kal* 2020)

As his filmography in Appendix I reveals, Kumar repeatedly paired with the same directors, writers, players, and music composers. Music plays a pivotal role in the success of Indian movies (author). During his formative years, four of Kumar’s movies were scored by Anil Biswas. Three were composed by S.D. Burman, three by R.D. Burman, and four by C. Ramchandra. In his later career, three

of the films were scored by the Shankar-Jaikishan team, three by the Kalyanji-Anandji team, five by the Laxmikant-Pyarelal team, and fifteen by Naushad Ali. A similar trend is also apparent in Kumar's collaboration with writers and directors. In a 2010 interview, Kumar said that his favorite directors were:

Amiya Chakrabarty, Nitin Bose, Bimal Roy, Zia Sakhadi, Mehboob Khan, K. Asif, and, last but not the least, Tapan Sinha. They all understood my full depth as an actor and extracted the best out of me. (Gupta 2010)

On his own, Kumar made a study of the production process of American movie studios and learned about the division of labor, streamlining the process, and managing all aspects of a movie as a "product." Kumar applied the same practice and principles of management to filmmaking in India at a time when the terms "sociology of work" and "management" had not yet entered the Indian consciousness. Reflecting on his involvement in movies beyond being an actor, Kumar said: "Nobody taught me this, but I came to the conclusion that I should consider a film in its entirety as a product" (Kumar 2014). His advice to filmmakers is no less Aristotelian: "The attempt should always be to make a film with good stories, sound conflicts, characters that make it entertaining."

The making of Dilip Kumar – 'the Tragedy King'

While working as a writer for the Bombay Talkies, Kumar visited the sets of films that were in production in the studio. He watched an older actor, Ashok Kumar, act for the camera in a natural and relaxed manner. Ashok Kumar told the young fellow actor

that acting in front of the camera was "not acting but feeling" (Nazir 2019).

Kumar has called himself an "accidental" actor. The source for this inspiration may have been Ashok Kumar, who had a lasting influence on the young and upcoming star. The 'Tragedy King', as Kumar came to be known, had been unconsciously developing method acting before the term itself was even coined or applied to movie work by Stela Adler and Elia Kazan. Kumar explains his approach to acting in the following way:

I do not approach the character as a different person. If you are directing the drama, there may be 20 characters in your drama. As the director, you are dealing with all 20 of them. But as an actor, I only have one character to play. If you choose me for a character who is 30 years old, as a director, you can only give me data beyond 30 years. It is my job to prepare the character's data until the age of 29, within the framework of your story. It helps me understand the foundations of the character.... My "method" is simple. For instance, if the director comes up to me for a scene and says 'This is your mother. And she is dead'. But I know this is not my mother. This is the actress, Lalita Pawar, and she is just acting. And every faculty of yours is against the idea that this woman who is lying down is your mother and she is dead.⁵ In a situation like that, regardless of whether you think she is your mother, your imagination needs to function, asking, 'What if⁶ she was my mother? What then?' And that is when the brain starts to bring in memories of your own mother, and sometimes directly, sometimes in-

⁵ This was an actual scene that Kumar played in *Daag by Stain* (1952).

⁶ This is the magic *if* that has guided the *Method Acting* as taught by Stela Adler and Elia Kazan.

directly, puts you in touch with your emotions. (Kumar 2014)

Such a judicious and intelligent ability to dissect and comprehend characters comes from his lifelong love of studying literature and poetry. In his autobiography titled *The Substance and the Shadow*, his wife, actress Saira Banu, revealed that Kumar “spent hours reading the literary giants of the West and East – Writers as varied as Shakespeare, Chekhov, O’Neill, Dostoevsky, Conrad, Tennessee Williams, Premchand, and Ghalib”. As to his preference for types of roles, Kumar says:

I like all forms of acting. I like doing comedy. I like doing tragedy. I like doing these different characters because it is a drill. It builds character, shapes your work, skill. Otherwise, you become a one-dimensional personality. From the perspective of individuality, or acting, it helps you become a better person.... With every film, I discovered my own potential as an actor. Every film added to my understanding of the medium. (cited in Nazir 2019)

It was *Babul* [*Paternal Home*] (1950) – a movie directed by S.U. Sunny – that sowed the seed for establishing Dilip Kumar as the ill-fated lover and a tragic hero. In *Babul*, he is caught between the affections of two women. On the surface, the movie seems like a simple love story of a village postmaster Ashok (Dilip Kumar), who wins the hearts of two women, played by Nargis and Munawar Sultana. The subtext of the movie, however, is an exploration of deeper issues. Sultana represents modernity, while Nargis stands for tradition. Neither is painted negatively. The two women also embody class differences – Sultana is a rich landowner’s daughter, while Nargis belongs to a poor family. Kumar loves Sultana, but feels an obligation to help Nargis’ father. He sacrifices his

feelings and love for Sultana, and agrees to marry the poor girl connected to the rural life; the girl symbolizes a young India that was being led by the socialist leader Jawahar Lal Nehru, struggling to establish the new nation’s place in the post-WWII world order.⁷

Babul is also the movie that finally convinced Kumar’s harshest critic, Baburao Patel, of Kumar’s acting abilities. In his review of *Babul*, Patel wrote, “It is a great work and the ease with which Dilip Kumar portrays the role makes one wonder whether the man himself has lived through similar moments of pathos and frustration in his private life!” (Farookh 2020).

Dilip Kumar and S.U. Sunny worked together on four projects: *Mela* [*County Fair*] (1948), *Babul* [*Paternal Home*] (1950), *Uran Khatola* [*Flying Cart*] (1955), and *Kohinoor* [*Mountain of Light*] (1960). Their last collaboration won Kumar the Filmfare Award for Best Actor.

Kumar’s third movie with the Bombay Talkies, *Milan* [*Union*] (1945), was directed by Nitin Bose, a writer and a cinematographer who had matured into directing. It was Bose who encouraged Kumar to underact and refrain from the theatrical acting. Kumar and Bose made two more movies together – *Deedar* [*Glance*] (1951), a noted tragedy that cemented Dilip Kumar as the ‘King of Tragedy’ (Rishi 2012), and *Ganga Jamna* (1961),⁸ for which Kumar was

⁷ While Nehru was Kumar’s hero, Kumar, in turn, was Nehru’s hero. A world-famous economist, Meghnad Desai, terms Kumar as the star of the Nehruvian era of social activism who would suffer, sacrifice, lose his girl, and die in film after film [*Andaz* (1949), *Deedar* (1951), *Devdas* (1955)], and thus earned the title of the ‘Tragedy King’ (Desai 2005).

⁸ In Hindi, *Ganga* is the great river Ganges and *Jamna* is the second major river in India. The movie was one of the biggest hits of the 1960s and one of the most successful films domestically and overseas. It also remains the most celebrated film directed by Nitin Bose.

nominated for the Filmfare Award. Acknowledging Bose's influence, Kumar said, "He changed the way I interpreted and studied my scripts and roles" (The News 2013). *Deedar* [*Glance*] (1951) is an important movie for three reasons.

First, it paired Dilip Kumar with his mentor, Ashok Kumar – the first "film star" of the Hindi cinema and the leading man at the Bombay Talkies, who had advised Kumar: "Acting is all about not acting. I know it's a confounding statement and will perplex and haunt you. But you will understand when you face the camera yourself" (Nazir 2019). It is generally agreed that in *Deedar*, Dilip Kumar – as a sightless and poor street-musician – outperforms Ashok Kumar.⁹ Ashok Kumar plays the doctor who restores Dilip Kumar's sight. Dilip Kumar opens his eyes to see his long-lost love. Nargis is engaged to be married to Ashok Kumar.

Secondly, as a poor man, Dilip Kumar loses his girl to the rich doctor, which further enhances his image as a tragic hero. If that was not sufficient, Dilip Kumar chose not to "see" in the world in which his beloved belongs to another man, and burns his eyes in order to return to his world of darkness.

Thirdly, and most importantly, his portrayal as a blind man became a model for other actors (both male and female) that were called upon to play a blind person.¹⁰

As mentioned before, Kumar's first movie, *Jwar Bhata* (1944), directed by Amiya Chakravarty, had

⁹ The film's credits list Ashok Kumar (the bigger star at the time) and the leading lady, Nargis, above Dilip Kumar's name.

¹⁰ Dilip Kumar played the blind man with his eyes open. Prior to this film actors would traditionally close their eyes in order to be able to play a blind person.

flopped. In 1952, the duo collaborated on yet another movie, *Daag* [*The Stain*], which deals with a social problem, namely alcoholism. It tells the story of a man who battles not only alcoholism but also poverty – as well as the caste system – in order to improve his status in the society and win the love of the woman he loves. Kumar's performance as a simple and somewhat naïve artist who makes clay dolls and toys, and drinks irresponsibly, serves as a textbook performance for all Indian actors who are called upon to play someone intoxicated for the first time, or someone struggling with alcohol dependency.¹¹ Under Chakravarty's careful molding, Kumar's performance won him the Filmfare Award for Best Actor. It was the very first year the awards had been held. In the years to come, Kumar would go on to win the title seven times. The movie, i.e. *Daag*, was also a commercial success – the 4th biggest box-office hit of the year, thus making up for the losses incurred by *Jwar Bhata*.

However, the movie that defined Dilip Kumar as 'the tragedy king' was *Devdas* (1955), based on a famous Bengali novel of the same title by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. The story had already been adapted for stage, movie, radio, and television in the sub-continent more than thirty times. According to the *Wikipedia*, it is the most filmed story in India. The 1955 version was directed by Bimal Roy, who had served as an apprentice for Nitin Bose on the 1935 version of *Devdas*.

In this movie, Kumar's affection falls victim to the caste and class system. The titular Devdas belongs to an upper-class Brahmin family. He is in love

¹¹ A landmark film about alcoholism is *The Lost Weekend* (1945) by Billy Wilder, a film about an alcoholic writer. It went on to win four Academy Awards – Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Adapted Screenplay.

with Parvati, a girl from a lower caste. His family disapproves of the marriage and Devdas, following the cultural traditions, is unable to stand up to his family. He leaves his village and goes to Calcutta. Meanwhile, in the village, Parvati is married off to an older man. In the city, Devdas takes to drinking and finds refuge in the arms of a courtesan, Chandramukhi, a dancer and entertainer¹² who falls in love with him. She is “the fallen woman with a heart of gold.” He uses and abuses her, but due to the social traditions, he cannot accept Chandramukhi as his companion/wife. He drinks with a suicidal ambition. Chandramukhi is unable to make him stop. Realizing that he is nearing his end, Devdas returns to Paro’s village only to die at her doorsteps. He does not get to see her, or she him.

The novel was and remains a strong criticism of the caste system and the arranged marriages in India. With Dilip Kumar’s performance, the story of Devdas has become the *Romeo and Juliet* of the Indian culture. When Bimal Roy approached Kumar with the project, the actor was unsure, as the 1935 version had been a big hit and had elevated cinema from mere entertainment to a medium of social concern and literature. Roy urged Kumar to read the novel that was published in 1917.¹³ Kumar recalls in his memoirs:

I read the novel quite a number of times. Familiarized and refamiliarized myself with the novel, it also helped me to read his other novels too. The characters, the culture, the ethos that was depicted in the novel *Devdas* grows on you, and you could develop a relationship

¹² Traditionally, in the Indian cinema, this has been a thinly veiled euphemism for prostitution.

¹³ Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay (1876–1938) wrote *Devdas* in 1901, i.e. when he was 25 years old. However, he was unable to find a publisher until 1917.

with that way of life. So, gradually I got familiarized myself and identified with Devdas. (Kumar 2014)

Bimal Roy (1909–1966), who was inspired by Italian neo-realism and Vittorio De Sica, was a master at casting and extracting the best out of every actor. In a career that was cut short by cancer, Roy won eleven Filmfare Awards: four for the best films and seven as the best director – a record that remains unbroken to this date. Kumar acknowledged that he learned a great deal about acting and restraint in displaying emotion from Bimal Roy. Kumar wrote: “I think Bimal Roy was one of the most significant motion-picture makers, not only of the ‘50s but in the history of Indian cinema” (Kumar 2016).

Kumar rendered a memorable performance as an indecisive Devdas who destroys his own life as well as that of those who loved him. Yet, there is no hint of self-pity or despondence in the doomed Devdas. For his work on the movie, Kumar was awarded the Filmfare Award for Best Actor. A nearly seven-minutes-long scene where Kumar (as Devdas) offers justification for his alcohol abuse¹⁴ is as much a part of Indian culture as Clark Gable’s final line in *Gone With The Wind* (1939) – “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn” – and Humphrey Bogart’s “Here’s looking at you kid” in *Casablanca* (1943) are for the Western audiences.

Dilip Kumar’s iconic portrayal of Devdas as a tragic hero with yet another failed love has become a cultural staple of the Indian folklore. Ever since Kumar’s Devdas, any lover suffering from or agonizing over his lost love has been labeled as suffering from the “Devdas Syndrome.”

¹⁴ The monolog goes like this: What does a foolish person drink to tolerate life? I drink to breathe... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlnoKzGiDc>.

Kumar and Roy worked on two other movies, namely *Yahudi [Jew]* (1958) and *Madhumati* (1958). The former one dealt with the persecution of Jews by the Romans, while the latter one, containing a touch of noir, dealt with the theme of reincarnation. *Madhumati* was Roy's most successful film. It won nine Filmfare Awards, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Music Director, Best Female Playback Singer, Best Dialogue, Best Art Direction, and Best Cinematographer, which equals the biggest number of awards for a movie at that time. It also won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi.

The scene that etched Kumar's name in the collective memory of the Indian movie audiences is the one from the 1968 movie *Aadmi [Man]*, where his performance dwarfs all other actors. Here, Kumar plays a cripple who is confined to a wheelchair. He describes a shockingly tragic instance from his youth to his wife about the death of a young girl, Meena, his subsequent affection for a doll that substituted Meena, and his rage that made him kill his childhood friend who tried to steal the doll. The purpose of the scene was to foreshadow what was to follow in the movie; however, the scene has become the most talked-about scene of the movie.¹⁵

Though it should be acknowledged that it was the director's imagination that created the scene, there is no denying that it was Kumar's mesmerizing dialog delivery that lifts the scene into a hauntingly charged experience that remains preserved in the viewers' memory. However, the scene contained a dozen other significant elements, e.g. the words by

¹⁵ There are numerous parallels in the American films where a film is remembered for a particular scene, e.g. the "shower scene" in *Psycho* (1960), a crop duster chasing the protagonist (Cary Grant) in *North by Northwest* (1959), and James Cagney pushing a grapefruit into Mae Clarke's face in *The Public Enemy* (1931).

the dialog writer, the background music that highlighted the lines, the choice of camera angles, and the editing of pictures and sound. All the elements – combined with the range of Kumar's facial expressions and tonal inflections of sarcasm, pain, guilt, and rage – rendered a hauntingly captivating scene (Mahaan 2010).

During the pre-production stage of *Ganga Jamna* (1961), the only movie that Kumar produced, he called upon Nitin Bose to direct. It is the story of two impoverished brothers. One is a police officer, the other a highwayman. Kumar's real-life brother, Nasir Khan, played the younger brother, Jumna, and Kumar played the elder brother, Ganga, the bandit. For this movie, Dilip Kumar abandoned his native language, Urdu, and learned the Awadhi language. An avid admirer and a highly accomplished actor, Amitabh Bachchan, who is an Awadhi speaker from Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, said he was amazed to hear Dilip Kumar's pronunciation and delivery of every nuance of the Awadhi dialect. In order to prepare for Ganga's death scene, Kumar ran around the studio's premises to the point of collapse. Many years later, Dustin Hoffman would do something similar for *Marathon Man* (1976).

It is not without reason that Dilip Kumar is considered to be an institution in himself, a "school of acting" that so many actors have drawn their inspiration from (Ahmad 2019). Dharmendra – a highly successful actor during the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s – inspired by Kumar's performances, reflected poetically: "Dilip Kumar is the brightest star whose shine I stole to light my desires" (Ayaz 2018).

Ganga Jamna earned Kumar his eighth Filmfare Awards nomination for Best Actor. He would go on to earn eleven more nominations with three more

wins before retiring from acting in 1998. Among all his movie, *Ganga Jamna* is his favorite. He calls it “essentially my baby.” The movie became a trendsetter in the Indian cinema. Dilip Kumar’s performance as Ganga inspired many other Indian actors, one of them being Amitabh Bachchan. The movie’s theme also generated many replications. The screenwriting duo Salim–Javed wrote several movie scripts, exploring “the two-brothers plot” in hits such as *Deewar* [*Wall*] (1975), *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977), and *Trishul* [*Trident*] (1978). There were rumors that the movie was directed by Dilip Kumar.¹⁶ It remains Nitin Bose’s most celebrated movie.

Shah Rukh Khan, who is considered to be the biggest star in Bollywood at the time of writing this article (2020), received the following piece of advice from Kumar during the 2001 Zee Cine Award ceremony.¹⁷

No actor can be bigger than the substance which he portrays, For any good or an enduring performance, Shah Rukh. You have to have a good story, good character equations, sound conflict, and enough opportunity for you to then wade through it. Because then you have substance to deal with, not just shadows. (Ayaz 2018)

Dilip Kumar approaches his autobiography the same way, i.e. from the outside in, and with similar meticulousness. He builds his story brick by brick, the way he had built his characters, carefully choosing what he wants to show people and carefully concealing the rest (Rangan 2014).

¹⁶ Kumar has systematically refuted that rumor. He has said, “The director, Nitin Bose, was 64 years of age when we were making the film and it was physically difficult for Bose to supervise the demanding shots involving horses, horse carts, and trains. For such scenes, I guided the film crew as I have done in many other projects in the past.”

¹⁷ See Cine Awards 2001, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb7YGoITpkw>.

Throughout his career, Kumar is noted for his consummate skill in taking any role and bringing it to life. He has always gotten a wide variety of roles, diverse plot structures, and complex climaxes that gave vent to his acting talents. Dilip Kumar admits that he does not know how he came to be known as a method actor. “The epithet was used for me much before it was used for Brando,” as he says, adding that:

The truth is that I am an actor who evolved a method, which stood me in good stead. I learned the importance of studying the script and characters deeply and building upon my gut observations and sensations about my own and other characters. It was always meaningful for me to study even those characters who would be close to me or opposed to me. (Kumar 2014)

Conclusion

The actor and producer Dharmendra said about Kumar’s dealing with his crew members and technicians on his sets: “He greets everyone with the same humility, warmth, and smile that he offers his costars and directors.” The humility and greatness of Dilip Kumar are best demonstrated by two of his own statements:

When I look at the body of my work and the kind of roles I have played, I see my limitations. When I see the breadth and range of some of the other actors, I realize that I’m not what the media have painted me to be. I see my limitations. (Kumar 2014)

You consider me the last word in acting? In a nation that has seen great actors like Ashok Kumar, Motilal, Balraj Sahni, Uttam Kumar, and Sivaji Ganeshan, I am certainly not the greatest actor. I consider myself just a competent. (cited in Gupta 2010)

Generally, it is the directors who are credited for the entire work. However, everyone involved in the making of *Deedar* (1951), *Aan [Pride]* (1952), *Devdas* (1955), *Ganga Jamna* (1961), and many of Kumar's other movies knew the actor's involvement in writing, staging, music, and the selection of other key players. In this regard, Kumar was already practicing in the 1940s and the 1950s what Howard S. Becker would come to preach almost three decades later. Like a sociologist using phenomenology to observe and predict human behavior, Kumar did observing, and using instinct and common sense, he developed his approach to filmmaking, which strikingly resembles Becker's theories of the production of works of art and "doing things together" to achieve the common goal. Nor would it be an exaggeration to say that Kumar has been as much the *auteur* of many of his movies as were his directors.

Martin Scorsese claims that the American cinema can be divided into two periods: before Brando and after Brando. Similarly, the Indian cinema can be divided into "before Dilip Kumar and after Dilip Kumar." Indians often claim that "their gift to humanity is cultural synthesis." In making this claim, the Indians refer to the pre-British time, i.e. the time of Muslim rule – especially the Mughal era of Akbar and Jehangir (Naipaul 1977:112). A true renaissance man – i.e. a man of culture, literature, poetry, and ultimate sophistication – Dilip Kumar is India's gift to humanity, the last of the moguls with old-school values as well as a man with a vision for the future.

To paraphrase Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire, Dilip Kumar found Indian acting a brick and left it marble.

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Dilip Kumar: autor-aktor

Abstrakt: Dilip Kumar był chwalony za wysublimowane prowadzenie dialogów, opanowaną gestykulację oraz za wyważone i kontrolowane wyrażanie emocji zarówno w opowieściach tragicznych, jak też w beztróskich komediach. Jego debiut w 1944 w *Jwar Bhata (Odplawy i przyplawy)* spotkał się z niezbyt pochlebnymi recenzjami. Podobnie było z kolejnymi trzema filmami, aż do filmu *Jugnu (Świetlik)* z 1948 roku, który przyniósł mu uznanie i sukces. W przeciwieństwie do swoich rówieśników, jak Raj Kapoor i Dev Anand, którzy napędzali kariery, uruchamiając własne firmy produkcyjne, Dilip Kumar polegał na swoim talencie, unikalnym podejściu do charakteryzacji i zaangażowaniu w projekty, których się podjął. W ciągu swojej sześćdziesięcioletniej kariery Kumar nakręcił tylko 62 filmy. Jednak jego praca jest podręcznikowa dla młodszych aktorów. Nie tylko przyniósł szacunek zawodowi aktora, traktowanemu przez indyjskie klasy wyższe jako zawód „alfonsów i prostytutek”, ale także podniósł aktorstwo filmowe i filmowanie do dyscypliny akademickiej, co uczyniło Kumara godnym tytułu emerytowanego profesora aktorstwa. Artykuł ten, zakorzeniony w ramach teoretycznych pracy Howarda S. Beckera nad „produkcją kultury” i „robieniem rzeczy razem”, omawia podejście Kumara do aktorstwa i rozwoju postaci oraz poziom jego zaangażowania w każdy ze swoich projektów. Autor tego artykułu przekonuje, że to artystyczne zaangażowanie i poświęcenie głównych aktorów kształtują wielkie dzieła sztuki w kinie bardziej niż kontrola twórcza producenta czy reżysera. Dilip Kumar wielokrotnie to zademonstrował.

Słowa kluczowe: Howard Becker; Dilip Kumar; film studies; sztuka i kultura; socjologia pracy; film i kultura

Afterword: The Sociology of a Movie Actor

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For a sociologist, studying the art of an individual seems to be a peculiar idea. In the discipline that makes social collectivities its subject, focusing on one person would not tell much about, e.g., class or nation. Yet the tradition of the sociology of art contains a significant number of works concentrating on prominent individual representatives of creative professions. Beginning with Georg Simmel's analyses of works by Rembrandt van Rijn (Simmel 2005), through Theodor Adorno's essays on Arnold Schönberg and Igor Stravinsky (Adorno 1974), to Norbert Elias' (2006) study

of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, sociologists used individual artists and their works as points of departure for the depiction of broader social phenomena. The artist's life and work can be an example of broader collective practices or their ideal types. Within the tradition of sociological pragmatism, studying individuals through inductive reasoning, comparing the cases, and building categories upon the results of these comparisons is actually an example of a methodical approach. Qualitative research often focuses on unique cases, which is in stark contrast to its quantitative counterpart, which focuses on a statistical distribution of features in the population.

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The idea of studying an individual actor somehow corresponds to the sociology of the artist, but not without several objections. Although this approach is more about building generalizations about the artist as a member of society, certain components of this perspective can be applied to the case study of a concrete person working in a creative occupation. There is even a discussion about the scope of such generalizations, since the application of socio-demographic traits to the analysis shows that there is a significant difference between careers of women and men in the artistic

field (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2018). The artist's status is also related to the historical context (Golka 2012; Luhmann 2016), thus it is difficult to write a 'pure' sociology of the artist. A minor lack lies in the fact that the phrase 'the sociology of the artist' usually relates to visual artists and writers, which is why it needs to be reconsidered in order to fit the specifics of performing arts.

Marian Golka's (2012) approach [despite its lack noted by Ewelina Wejbert-Wąsiewicz (2018)] makes a good point of departure for further analysis. His idea of the sociology of the artist utilizes several perspectives that – if used simultaneously, i.e. as a kind of theoretical triangulation – have the potential to strengthen the study. Artists are connected to the period in which they live and work. They are perceived through certain collective representations (e.g. artistic myths) existing in different historical periods. Those cultural objects also influence the way in which they perform their social roles. However, the sociology of the artist is not only about 'being' the artist, but also about 'becoming' one, as well as about whole careers. Finally, the sub-discipline does research on the social environments in which artists function. Building on these, I will discuss my own approach to the sociology of the artist, one which remains in accord with that of Sharaf Rehman and which will be driven mostly by the tradition of sociological pragmatism (e.g. Znaniecki 1965; Mead 1972; Fine 2004; Blumer 2007; Becker 2008; Strauss 2008).

There is one more specific circumstance related to the topic that might be a source of uncertainty. Sociological literature maintains that the concept of a (social) role, one of the most fundamental terms in the discipline, derives from theater or movie context. Florian Znaniecki (1939; 1965) provides

a clear link between a theatrical role and a social one. Erving Goffman (2000) applies to his analysis of social self not only the role itself, but also some other theater-related terms, such as front stage or backstage. Borrowing the term from other fields is nothing unusual. Sociologists use concepts derived from everyday language or different scientific disciplines (e.g. 'field' or 'capital'). However, in this particular case, the notion of a social role, conceptualized and designed as a tool for the analysis of social phenomena, is moved back to the study of the social world of movie. This brings some theoretical and practical issues that will be the topic of my considerations.

A pragmatic perspective on the sociology of the artist

The moment of recognizing the relationship between the film role and the real-life role makes a good starting point to the whole analysis. With regard to this, the following issues need to be discussed:

1. What is the difference between a movie role and a social role?
2. Is the role theory adequate to analyze the role of a movie actor?
3. How should a sociologist study the role of a movie actor?
4. How can the role of a movie actor fit into the broader context of sociological considerations?

With regard to the first question, Znaniecki provides some remarks which an art sociologist can find useful:

Like a theatrical role, a social role involves continual interaction between the performer and other people. The analysis of both roles shows that they are systems of values and activities practically standardized in accordance with a certain pattern in the theatrical role, these are aesthetic; in the social role, social. A further important difference is that in a theatrical drama the role is created by the dramatist once and for all: Hamlet is the same role in each particular performance though different actors may play it differently. In social life each person enacts his own separate role; the roles of many particular physicians, merchants, or housewives are only similar because, and in so far as, they follow the same cultural pattern recognized as binding in certain collectivities. (1939:806)

The themes which should be considered include the **actor's agency** and **cultural references** that shape the performance and are a subject of evaluation. What is also important in Znaniecki's input is the **processual aspect** of the role, i.e. it is performed and needs constant **cooperation** with other people (a social circle). In another comparison (Znaniecki 1965), the author describes the difference between the two role types in a more elaborate way. Two factors are of importance here: types of references and the extent of agency, both of which remain in correspondence. Since the most significant source for a theatrical performance or a movie actor's performance is a script or a literary work, he/she is more limited than the real-life person, who is guided by some moral obligations toward other members of his/her social circle. Using Antonina Kłoskowska's (1981) typology, the former is guided by elements of symbolic culture, while the latter – by social culture.

However, for a researcher of a movie role, this simple difference between the theatrical role and the

social role is not enough, since the actor is engaged in several social circles (Zimnica-Kuzioła 2020). For example, one should consider the distinction between the **actor as a character** and the **actor as a participant in a certain social world**. In both cases, he/she cooperates with some people – often with the same ones – e.g. fellow actors playing different Shakespeare characters in the same stage drama, although they use various references in different situations. People and cultural patterns organize interaction and help to define situations. In his study into role-playing games, Gary Alan Fine (1983) applied Goffman's frame theory to structure different contexts in which participants enacting their everyday roles and their fantasy characters function. This can be helpful for understanding how both the theatrical role and the social role work. One person can voluntarily switch between frameworks. A good example is a rehearsal, i.e. when actors try to enact a scene and then discuss it. First, they are their characters who perform by means of addressing the other personae (e.g. Hamlet speaks to Ophelia); second, they analyze their performances by referring to the script and the actors' workshop (e.g. too expressive, too quiet, too little emotions). Besides this context, however, they can also be mothers, fathers, members of the society for the care of homeless animals, etc.

With regard to the second of the aforementioned questions, by studying social roles, one can distinguish, understand, and describe different systems of values. A movie actor's performance is evaluated by other actors, directors, fans, critics, or discussed during theatrical academy classes. A sociologist's task is not to judge the enacting process itself, but, rather, to study it as a cultural object constituting a central point for a system of social practices (Ossowski 1966). As cultural systems, the theater and

the movie are both objects of interest of different sciences (Znaniecki 1963). As organized conglomerates of values, they are references for the people involved in particular social worlds. For sociologists, however, they are interesting as values recalled by actors and other participants of those different social worlds. Every such configuration needs to be analyzed separately. I will follow this issue in the further part of the paper.

Contrary to the critics of the role theory [Raewyn Connell (1979) even states that it is not a sociological theory at all], I assume that its proper conceptualization makes it a useful analytical tool. Since there is not much space for a detailed analysis of all allegations against its use, I would like to enclose all of them in one statement: the criticism concerns the functional-structuralist idea of the social role, i.e. a perspective that builds upon the ideas of Ralph Linton (1936; 2000). Social roles are assigned to fixed positions located within a social system. Such a position has a predefined status as well as patterns regulating actions undertaken by the person who assumes a certain role. Society compares the performance with the pattern and decides whether it reflects it or not – an ahistorical story about socialization to a conservative society that exists in equilibrium. The question of people who do not fit in their role requirements – or the issue of ‘role innovators’ – takes little or no space within this narrative. It is, therefore, not surprising that it becomes an object of attack from more critically-oriented authors. Although the theatrical role or movie role – the types that use an already existing cultural text as a reference – seems to be close to the functional-structuralist concept, there still is much room for individual or collective interpretations. This is not enough to accept it as a theoretical framework for this analysis.

Znaniecki’s contribution to the role theory allows one to avoid the above-mentioned weaknesses of the structuralist perspective. His inductive, empirical approach is based not on the idea of a role itself, but, rather, on its actual performance. This also refutes the allegations of ahistoricism, since Znaniecki studied the development of roles manifesting in specific historical contexts. He also criticizes another component of Linton’s contribution, namely the fixed status – as discrepant from the dynamic fundamentals of social phenomena. According to George Herbert Mead (1972), it is more about ‘role-taking’, and, as John Urry (1970) suggests, it is more about ‘improvising’ on the basis of certain social and cultural references than about enacting something from a cultural script. The actual enactment of the role is the result of negotiations between the person and his/her social circle. A successful performance of one’s duties needs the support of others, which corresponds to certain rights granted toward that person. Znaniecki (1963) rejects the axionormative understanding of the social order and includes not only those aspects of social relations that support harmony and are positively evaluated from society’s power structures, but also those that are perceived as a threat to the order thus understood. His perspective might be called ‘constructivist’ or ‘discursive’.

As to the third of the aforementioned questions constituting the point of departure for this article – following Znaniecki’s ideas, a sociologist needs to study particular enactments of a role in order to distinguish all possible variations. The author used to do it in three different ways. Firstly, he compared different contexts in which the role is performed, e.g. the university student as a person attending the regular lectures, a member of a circle of peers/friends, or a participant of a particular seminar (Znaniecki 1997).

Secondly, he compared the historical development of certain roles as well as their different duties in various periods (Znaniński 1940). Thirdly, he made a distinction between different sizes of a role enactor's social circle, introducing a set of people mediating between the person and other members of the circle (Znaniński 1965). This provided the grounds for developing the network theory.

Znaniński's contribution corresponds with the methodological postulates of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (2009). An active selection of samples (in the case of the movie actor – particular enactments) and their comparison makes it possible to develop a (grounded) theory. The quality of this enterprise depends on triangulation (Konecki 2000; Denzin 2009). When one wants to focus on an individual actor, the situation can be considered theoretically futile, but the discovery of different contexts in which he/she acts provides data for comparisons. The introduction of the biographic perspective allows the researcher to distinguish both constant and variable elements of the role. A comparison of movie roles from an actor's different periods of life – along with a comparison of different frameworks constituting the reference for the role (the actor in his/her movie role, the actor as a member of a movie crew, or the actor as an idol for his/her fans) – opens up various possibilities for a successful development of the theory. Additionally, analyzing the actor's own remarks and that of other members of his/her various social circles enriches the analysis.

Finally, *with regard to the last question out of those introduced in the beginning of this article*– Howard S. Becker (2008) noticed that the creation of artwork involves more people than the artist himself/herself. A movie with its long list of credits is a particularly good example. The cinematographic work as a case for

analyzing the role raises the possibility to study negotiations as the basis of the division of labor. Focusing on the actor's involvement results in defining his/her actual extent of agency in the creation of the final version of the movie, i.e. is how much his/her actual performance depends on his/her own ideas and skills, and how much of that has been accomplished owing to other people involved in the process. To what extent is it the director's vision of the role and how much of a say does the actor or actress have? The final result emerges from *fine-tuning* (Farrell 2001; cf. Schütz 2007), which is why the observation of the process can be a subject of the study. However, the introduction of the biographical analysis can lead to the discovery of trajectories – e.g. the actor's or actress' growing influence on different members of the staff (fellow actors, screenwriters, directors, etc.) – resulting from the experience and respect accumulated through the years of their work. A comparison of particular enactments (both movie roles and professional roles) offers insight into the networking aspect of the social role. This allows the researcher to study the person's impact in different contexts. The interesting topic would be how the rank of an actor acquired due to his/her well-evaluated enactments under particular conditions invokes positive reactions in others. A good performance in a movie becomes a value, a form of capital transferred between different social circles. It can help the actor to be cast in another work, negotiate contract details, and grow the social circles of his/her fans.

An analysis of the performance as a value is a good place to indicate the point in which actual actions are transformed into cultural objects. While the relationship between a movie role and a cultural text it is based upon (a script, a novel, a theatrical piece, etc.) seems to be clear, the process during which the

enactment becomes an element of the culture needs a more elaborate discussion. As Wendy Griswold (2013:11) defines it, a cultural object is a *shared significance embodied in form*. While a movie as a whole, complete piece might be perceived as such, its selected components (scenes, music scores, particular roles) also include such values. Certain movie figures carry meanings that are used to interpret everyday situations. Keanu Reeves' Neo from *Matrix* or Hugo Weaving's "V" from *V for Vendetta* were adopted as anti-system symbols, while Louise Fletcher's Nurse Ratched from *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* epitomizes the oppressive system. A particular enactment becomes a reference for aspiring young actors and actresses, a topic for scientific and critical debates and analyses, or an inspiration for fan cosplays. As such they become a cultural currency in the cinematographic social world, but also in other social worlds: fandoms constituted by popular culture enthusiasts. Using Pierre Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) terminology, they become a form of cultural capital. They also might become boundary objects, as different evaluations of the role can be the basis for the emergence of arenas. It can be assumed that – similarly to the social world of theater – movie productions produce a number of contexts in which conflicts can arise (between the director and the actor, between different aesthetics, recruitment, etc.) (Zimnica-Kuzioła 2018). Since the movie is a more democratic and accessible medium than theater, another arena for conflict can be identified: that between educated taste and popular taste. Performance can be evaluated differently by different parties, and accepting institutions as gatekeepers in defining certain pieces as legitimate works of art is outdated. Social worlds are 'reproduced' rather than 'exist', thus manifesting in discursive forms. The enactment as a cultural object is discussed by professional critics, but also by unprofessional ones.

Esthetic values applied by institutions are often not accepted by fandoms (Fiske 1992; Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002). A movie or a performance rejected as it is considered as 'unworthy' of being called true work of art by institutional judges can be accepted as such by fans. This is how some works gain the status of 'cult movies'.

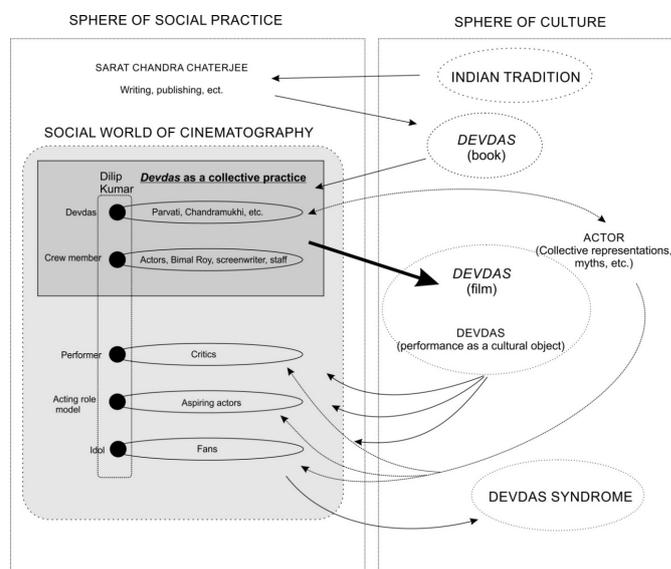
Sharaf Rehman's study of Dilip Kumar as an example of the sociology of the artist

The discussion about the social role of the actor as both the performance and the cultural object might be the point of departure for further analysis of the social worlds of cinematography. Focusing on one movie actor can lead to the discovery of multiple roles, circles, networks, organizations, and institutions that are involved in his/her different social role enactments, as well as his/her influence on the rest of the system. While the social world does not emerge around a certain person but, rather, is organized around a certain social process (Fine 2004; Strauss 2008), the study of one's career can be a particularly good example of socialization to the social world and of activities leading to its change. As Sharaf Rehman writes, "the Indian cinema can be divided into before Dilip Kumar and after Dilip Kumar," which makes this actor's life and work a particularly interesting object of study in the sociology of the movie actor. However, not only the topic, but also Rehman's approach makes his paper a fine contribution to the field. While it remains close to the secondary biographical data on the author and media interviews with him – and does not strive to build theoretical generalizations – it still contains the elements specified above as proper components of the pragmatically-driven study of the artist.

Based on the actual record of Kumar’s life, the author undertakes the analysis of the actor’s career, underlining certain collective practices that Kumar was involved in. Rehman recalls Becker’s approach to the art as a collective enterprise, but he puts the emphasis on the Indian artist’s agency, i.e. the influence exerted on the developing artwork, but also his reflectivity on – and understanding of– the collective effort: “He realized that he needed to be more than merely an actor for hire. From that point forward, he accepted only one movie at a time and only if he could be a part of the entire creative process.” It shows the perspective of a movie actor as a participant in a social world. However, there are also other cases located in the biographical chronology that allow one to make a comparison and build up a complete view of Kumar as a significant actor of the social world of Indian cinematography. Rehman introduces different frameworks and social circles which he was involved in during his work: as a dialog writer, as an actor, as a producer, as a collaborator for both crew members and technicians, and as an idol both for actors of a younger generation and for people who watched his films. Through the introduction of critics’ voices, a place for a social arena is made, yet Rehman does not follow this way.

After providing this theoretical framework, Rehman does something that might be called the study of the social ‘becoming’, which is often the topic of research within the tradition of sociological pragmatism (Becker 2009; Byczkowska 2012; Konecki 2012; Porczyński 2013; Kacperczyk 2016). He undertakes the analysis of consecutive cases of “doing things together” on movies in which Kumar starred. It is a study of the development from an “accidental actor” to the status of “India’s gift to humanity.” Every movie cooperation impacts both culture and the social world of cinematography.

Figure 1. Dilip Kumar in the social world of cinematography



Source: Self-elaboration.

The figure shows the conventional distinction between the spheres of social action and culture; they influence each other. Culture is reproduced by social practices, but also provides references and helps to organize them. As Znaniecki (1963) argues, symbols are transferred between different cultural systems through human action. Here, Dilip Kumar is the center of several social circles that emerge due to his work on the movie (*Devdas* as a collective practice) as well as the centers of the circles constructed in reference to a certain cultural object (the *Devdas* movie and Kumar’s performance as *Devdas*). He plays the role of an actor, whose performance is evaluated by critics, a role model for colleagues in the field, and an idol for fans of his acting. Simultaneously, all these social circles can intertwine and overlap.

Sarat Chandra Chatterjee wrote the book title *Devdas* as a critique of traditions existing in the Indian society, particularly the *varna* system. As such, it be-

came the inspiration for the movies (other than earlier *Devdas* movies). The social system is represented by the characters, their relationships, and experiences. They are recreated by actors' performances; in this case, we are not interested in Kumar himself, but, rather, in *Devdas* and his actions.

However, in the case of cinema, 'being' the character is not enough. It is also important 'how well' the actor 'is' the protagonist. For a sociologist of the movie, studying meanings embedded in a picture would probably be sufficient, but to make such an analysis in the context of the sociology of art, the esthetic component needs to be discussed (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz 2020). With this into consideration, culture provides many symbolic resources. Among them are the cultural representations and myths relating to the role of the actor; they also include the acknowledged esthetic components of acting. They are references for the actual actor and for other crew members' work on the picture. The final effect of their work is the movie (with all its components), here understood as a cultural object. The actual performance can also influence the ideas about how a good actor should perform (see the bidirectional arrow in Figure 1). Here, Kumar is a member of the staff, working on the final product. The actor's status and the extent of his agency form the basis for evaluations of his former collaborations (e.g. on *Daag*), but they are also negotiated during the whole process of working on the picture.

A movie and an actor's performance both become cultural objects which are evaluated by the participants of the social world of cinematography. Critics make an assessment using their knowledge and convictions (based on cultural representations) about how a good actor should enact a movie role. The result of their evaluation influences the status

of the actor in the social world. The performance is also evaluated by other actors (including members of the younger generation, such as Shah Rukh Khan) as well as by the movie audience, whose members can become fans. Their appreciation also impacts the meaning of the actor in the whole field. Due to the importance of the topic and the success of the picture, the issue of *Devdas* also becomes a reference for real-life situations similar to the cases of the characters such as Baron Munchausen, Faust, or Werther (Griswold 2013).

This is how the evaluation of the role performance influences not only the status of a person in a particular social circle, but also in others. In this paper, I have described only one instance. To make the study of Dilip Kumar a complete case of the sociology of the artist, the analysis must include comparisons of successive collaborative enterprises building up his career. It is due to the fact the final assessment of the particular performance makes an impact also on different cases of participation in a movie as well as performances evaluated as social objects. By analyzing the problem in chronological order, a sociologist can indicate, e.g., the improving status of the actor in the social world, or his/her 'ups and downs'. Although in the case of Kumar, his importance was increasing through his career (when comparing his enactments from different periods), he is more accepted as the actor who played *Devdas*, or Shankar from *Daag*— than as the actor who played Jagdish from *Jwar Bhata*.

Conclusion

Although a meticulous approach to the sociology of the movie actor represented by Sharaf Rehman's study of Dilip Kumar does not allow one to build up generalizations about actors and actresses-

es as a social category, it is far from simplifications forced by the specifics of statistical procedures. Supporting the study with tools described in this afterword makes it possible to take a step toward a more elaborate social theory. The application of several mutually-supportive perspectives (role theory, biographical perspective) to historically

accurate events forming Kumar's life trajectory allows one to conceive of a complex and multidimensional space (a social world) shaped by practices, negotiations, social circles, institutions, and values, all of which somehow define the actor's status and which the individual modifies due to his/her agency.

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