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SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION – THE IDEA AND METHOD OF CHANGES IN LOCAL STRUCTURES

In the recent period, the category of social action that is to reinforce or change the unfavorable living conditions of people, has gained importance, not only in Polish social pedagogy. It can be said – Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka writes – that the category of activity is constantly present in the reflection and practice of social pedagogues, but it is not implemented directly, but through examples of practical solutions (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2006, p. 93). The author points out that the action, and especially its socio-pedagogical dimension, can be analysed and interpreted from the perspective of creating reality and understood as creating an institution. And so: “every organized practical activity is an action directed at a previously identified community and is based on a number of related elements,” says Marc-Henry Soulet, believing that social action expresses itself in structuring the present via the future and giving sense to anticipation (Soulet, 1998, p. 104). Therefore, the goal of an initially predetermined [vision] of social [pedagogical] action is to reshape and transform social reality into an anticipated final state. In the found reality, social or cultural change is often implemented by means of methods and techniques of socio-cultural animation.

ANIMATION AS A HAPPENING CHANGE

The need for socio-cultural animation appeared in modern European societies, when there was a desire to return to local micro-worlds lost as a result of organizational and technological changes; in civil societies, where the spontaneous activity of various groups is a necessary condition for the existence of democracy. Animation itself has become a type of practice aimed at reviving, stimulating, strengthening individual and social activity used by employees of state, local government, social and private institutions, as well as by informal or non-institutionalized activists (Nycz, 1999, p. 15-16, p. 95-111).

The development, role and place of animation have been significantly conditioned by the problems, transformations and crises of industrial and post-industrial society, generating various movements and forms of social activity, which through real

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participation in social and cultural life sought to achieve individual and group autonomy. Animation responds to the needs of mass society, anonymous, alienated, in which it is a type of practice aimed at reviving, stimulating, strengthening social activity, used by employees of state, local government, social and private institutions as well as by informal activists. This practice is characterized by specific methods and techniques of activity and some ideological assumptions (Schindler, 2004, p. 20). The concept of animation as a socializing, educational and cultural category is connected with post-war France (see Besnard, 1988; Kopczyńska, 1993). The animation movement was formed in France as a result of combination of various trends and activities: environmental, religion-related, of trade unions, non-religious associations and youth organizations, which initially was associated with various communities that tried to solve their problems themselves and to overcome barriers of their own development (overcome the isolation, creation of ties, co-existence, participation, auto-expression). In the 2nd half of the 20th century there emerged specialized institutions and roles oriented on activation of individuals and communities. From the beginning, the animation was of an integrative-emancipatory character, postulating direct participation of the community in social, cultural and political decisions.

As a result of practical experience, methods and techniques were developed, which were then used by socio-cultural animators to activate various environments. Specialized educational institutions were created, which prepared for the profession of animator. The French experience was used in other Western European countries, taking into account the local specificity (Jedlewska, 1999, p. 58n). Also the animating methods are methods used in the United States (*community action, community development*) aimed at stimulating various communities to be active in solving their own problems and achieving goals set by the community (see Bartoszek, 2008, p. 27-29).

Changes within the community should be made with all the forces and undertakings by the community itself. This is evident in the Polish pedagogical thought suggesting the transformation of the social environment with the forces of the environment itself (Olubiński, 1996, pp. 91-104). At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, in the Polish territories, the animating character can be attributed to the tradition of cooperative movement, self-help and self-organization ("we to ourselves"). The animation character in the interwar period (1918-1939) in Poland is also included in the provisions of the socio-cultural work by Kazimierz Korniłowicz (Korniłowicz, 1976) or the principles of social and cultural work by Helena Radlińska, transforming the social environment with the forces of the environment itself in the name of the ideal and (later) organizing the local community by Aleksander Kamiński (see Żukiewicz, 2017). In contrast to cultural and educational work, dissemination of culture, cultural services and creativity in animation activities, it is assumed that the given environment has its own cultural contents. That is why the animation is focused on intensifying these contents, activating behaviors based on existing models, developing existing interests, stimulating the implementation of existing goals, satisfying existing needs.



THE ESSENCE OF ANIMATION

Animation is a multidimensional social phenomenon, in which the subject is not the very essence of culture or social life, but the social, educational and cultural activity of a human being that makes it possible for people to reach the world of values (especially those that open to truth, beauty and good). There is a noticeable national-regional diversity of animation activities, from new ones (deciding on the diversity and specificity of animation, e.g. adaptation – integration, mobilization – participation, liberation - emancipation, cultural democracy – civic consciousness) to continuation and application of traditional socio-cultural activities (upbringing, education, dissemination of culture, organization of the local community, communitarianism). Activation of individuals is an essential goal in the animation, and the nature of the desired activity is not predetermined and should be defined by animated groups, which distinguishes it from traditional types of practice (organized culture, institutions), where the desired activity is determined in some way before starting actions. The essence of animation consists in creating the subject (authentic, active and creative) in the subjective relation “I and YOU,” and not the actualized and dominating contemporary (20th/21st century) situation “I and IT” (Buber, 1992, p. 45). To paraphrase another thought of Martin Buber, one can point out that “animation is a meeting” of people and groups.

Defining socio-cultural animation – from the perspective of the author’s own experience – it can be considered as conscious encouragement, support, stimulation of individuals and groups to independently decide, design and implement activities that they jointly recognize as desirable and cooperate in their implementation.

Researchers of the everyday social life emphasize that the effectiveness of animation depends on the capital and social resources that the community has. In practice, these can be: institutional and organizational forms as well as human resources (mentality, qualifications, knowledge, skills, cultural capital). These elements create the “compulsive pressure” of our behavior and create social facts and collective performances. For the moderators of social life, identification of social capital, including social ties, social networks, social structures, social communication, values – social norms, cooperation, trust, and social integration, becomes important. Sources of local capital that builds the subjectivity of society should be seen in the involvement of animators in creating the local reality. Commitment may be conditioned by the regional tradition of social work, the experience of civic cooperation, the occurrence of local social forces (individuals, associations). The conditions mentioned may build a local climate supporting modern political economy (including civic education, projects for activation and revitalization of socio-economic backwardness), however, the deficiencies of the above-mentioned resources may determine the marginalization of regions or local communities, as well as social groups (Bartoszek, 2006, p. 35-38; Nycz, 2008, p. 137-156).



ANIMATOR – THE SUBJECT OF ACTIVITY

In contrast to pedagogy – animation has virtually no own behavior patterns, because they are to be shaped by the animated communities themselves. Unlike service activities, animation does not satisfy specific needs, it only stimulates individuals, groups or communities to independently satisfy them, which is why animation is not a creation, but only an activation of creative behavior in the social, cultural, religious, sport, educational, communicative and integration fields. In this sense, the animator only stimulates, encourages people's activity, being a cross between a function or role: an organizer, leader, instructor, adviser, and promoter. In this sense, the animator is, for example, an educator who does not conduct a youth or a group, but skilfully stimulates their own activity. In Poland, after 1990, there was visible institutionalization of the animation movement (from social work to profession) and methods of animation education (see Jedlewska, 2006).

Animation changes are carried out by an unprofessional or professional animator who, according to Jan Żebrowski, is a person who spontaneously or vividly enlivens the environment, stimulates the desire for knowledge, influences the development of various interests, understands and appreciates the importance of teaching and education in the life of the individual, and is aware of own social role (Żebrowski, 1987). Regardless of the field in which the animator works, his work is undoubtedly dynamic and creative, his task always consists of reviving and stimulating activity in various areas of life and its development. He is a person who discreetly inspires to take useful actions and initiatives in all areas of human activity. The animator's duty is not to be creation, but to create conditions for others to become creators or social workers. Wider definition of the animator is given by Leon Dyczewski – stressing the empathic attitude and the pedagogical intention. The animator of culture is the one who completes knowledge, life experiences and experiences of people with whom he comes into contact, stimulates their interests, reveals new ideals and patterns of life, conducts a dialogue on the possibilities and ways of satisfying the revealed and yet hidden cultural needs. He clearly sees a new and better life, he loves these visions, but he loves people even more. He accepts them as they are, in the hope that they can be better. He respects every manifestation of their good will, the least interest in what is new and better, supports their efforts for a better life. The method of his work is not to command people, but to mobilize the forces that are dormant in them. The value of his activity manifests itself not so much in what he invents and does, but in what he can extract from the people he works with (Dyczewski, 1993, p. 209).

URBAN-RURAL COMMUNE AS A PLACE OF ANIMATION

Paraphrasing the phrase by John Ruskin, that everyone knows what should be, but not everyone knows what can be (Ruskin, 1997), we can point to the need to discern





people who can realistically, not idealist-utopian or populist, point to the needs and possibilities of solving urgent social problems in rural communities. For the organizers of social life, the identification of problems (diagnosis) and social capital becomes important. The sources of local capital that builds the subjectivity of society should be sought in the involvement of local animators in creating the local reality. Commitment may be conditioned by the traditions of social activism, experience of civic cooperation, occurrence of local social forces (leaders, organizations, associations). The conditions mentioned may create a local climate supporting the modern social economy (see Kazimierczak, Rymsza, 2007). A local leader, animator, and social worker should, however, remember about social traps connected with activating the community and related to, for example, a local power game or preferences of these power elites, real institutional influence, institutionalization of irresponsibility, diagnosis without consequences, defeatist realism of citizens.

In 2017 as part of the *Program of the National Centre for Culture. House of Culture+. Local initiatives* research was carried out among residents of the urban-rural commune of Dobrodzień (Opole province, Oleski powiat). The commune now has almost ten thousand inhabitants ($\frac{2}{3}$ of them live in villages), who are characterized by a diverse ethnic identity, because these areas until the Second World War were in the area of the German-Polish border. In the years 1975-1998, the commune was located in the Częstochowa province. In 2009, the German language was introduced as an auxiliary language in the commune. The description and results of the research can be found at the Internet address: <http://dobrodzien.pl/1630/7548/dom-kultury-inicjatywy-lokalne-2017.html>. The results of the research confirmed certain trends occurring in small-town and rural (not only) environments in the Opole region. For example, the residents indicate that they themselves solve emerging problems through: involvement of residents (meetings, elections, help in the situation of misfortune, disaster, etc.) for the benefit of their own town. A stronger involvement in the communal projects of the residents is declared, the "determinism" of the type of residence shapes neighborly cooperation, up to the maintenance of a greater order on their own premises and public space. In this case sometimes tiresome neighborly control has positive effects in everyday life of the safe well-being of the entire community.

In the case of rural areas, a large number of projects from various programs (e.g. *Village Renewal, Leader+*) are often applied, which change and modernize the life of rural residents. In the processes of change in the rural environment, direct contact and hierarchical message of innovation or the idea of change play a significant role. As research shows, in rural communities, however, the authorities or leaders of the indicated processes do not always appear (see Kocik, 2001; Gorlach, Foryś, 2005). For example, surveys conducted among the mayors of the Opolskie Province indicate that they are the voices of the community's opinion and animators of activities in their administrative units, but rather not persons creating innovativeness and entrepreneurship in an economic and ecological perspective (Nycz, 2008, p. 319-377).



In the studies of the provincial and rural environment of the Opole region in 2017, people and institutions appear that become natural leaders or animators of modernization changes in communities. The studied commune is the so called commune inhabited by the former indigenous population (Silesian, German minority) and the immigrant population, which, in time, has integrated with the local element.

Tab. 1 People or institutions assisting in solving social problems (N: 181)

Subjects		Variable (environment)		Total
		Dobrodzień (town)	Administrative units (village)	
Commune Council	Count	18	14	32
	% with total	9.9%	7.7%	17.7%
Mayor	Count	18	26	44
	% with total	9.9%	14.4%	24.3%
Council of the residential area / administrative unit	Count	16	35	51
	% with total	8.8%	19.3%	28.2%
District policeman (police)	Count	7	7	14
	% with total	3.9%	3.9%	7.7%
Priest (parish priest)	Count	5	6	11
	% with total	2.8%	3.3%	6.1%
Neighbours	Count	13	16	29
	% with total	7.2%	8.8%	16.0%
In total	Count	77	104	181
	% with total	42.5%	57.5%	100.0%

Source: own research.

Data in the table (tab. 1) shows the synergy of action – institutions, organizations and individuals. Activities are usually initiated by individuals who are leaders in their small environments. Their activity is supported or strengthened by social organizations and then only through local self-government or political systems. The indicated research was conducted among leaders and animators of socio-cultural and economic life, who pointed to the resources of “their own” local communities, most often indicating their strengths, in which they emphasized the activity of the residents themselves and the historical and cultural resources of the community. The communities themselves, however, are socially and culturally diverse, but the element that links them is the activity of leaders and groups mobilizing residents to act. Historically shaped social capital is an element differentiating specific communities, but it determines their “local beauty.” In the case of the examined commune, the needs of technical and social infrastructure were visible, and the attention of the residents and animators-leaders in the direction of the largo of cultural goods and the organization of free time, that is elements enhancing the well-being of residents. Local government authorities should support emerging and implemented local initiatives,



because it builds social capital (values, bonds, trust) and minimizes the conflictogenic costs of social development.

Summing up the role of animation in the study, description and operation of social problems, it must be stated that in practice it should fulfill human needs and dreams. Following the descriptions of animation interactions, it can be concluded that "animation is a change that is happening" (Nycz, 2013, p. 187-227). Therefore, the method of animation should answer (simple) questions: whether to do, what to do, who to do with, how to do in a given situation and environmental conditions. The beginning of the animation is the diagnosis (obtaining information + project) that changes into the operation and implementation of the project. The research experience gained during the implementation of (not only) the cited project indicates that the need for animation is born where people need to adapt to new challenges, socio-cultural and artistic activation, integrate in the place of life and support, aid, build a social partnership, but also appreciate the fun and holidaying, raising the overall quality of individual and collective life.

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Keywords: socio-cultural animation, animator, change, rural environment

Abstract: The article has discussed the civilizational context of the creation of sociocultural animation, its determinant factors, indicating the development of its tasks and functions. Animation means a change which takes place in groups and local communities, becoming the nerve of democracy and civic society. The article ends with results of rural environment research.

ANIMACJA SPOŁECZNO-KULTURALNA – IDEA I METODA ZMIAN W STRUKTURACH LOKALNYCH

Słowa kluczowe: animacja społeczno-kulturalna, animator, zmiana, środowisko wiejskie

Streszczenie: W artykule omówiono cywilizacyjny kontekst powstania animacji społeczno-kulturalnej i jej uwarunkowania, wskazując na rozwój jej zadań i funkcji. Animacja to dzierżąca się zmiana w grupach i społecznościach lokalnych, będąca nerwem demokracji i społeczeństwa obywatelskiego. Artykuł kończąc wyniki badań środowiska wiejskiego.

