

Elżbieta Bojanowska
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

THE EUROPEAN NIGHT OF MUSEUMS IN WARSAW – A RESEARCH COMMENTARY

Abstract

The team of the Research Laboratory of the Polish Measurement of Attitudes and Values (PPPiW) already for the fourth time measured the participation in the European Night of Museums in Warsaw. The research was conducted during the night of 16th to 17th of May 2015. The sample was N = 1,102 respondents varied in terms of gender, age, education, place of residence and income. 20 museums, located in different districts, were selected for the research, which enabled the spatial stratification of the sample.

The research commentary refers to the following issues of communing with culture: the frequency of reaching for the sources of knowledge about it, the frequency of visiting facilities being its vehicle, and readership. At the same time, it needs to be said that participation in culture refers mainly to its passive consumption, namely by means of the cinema and television. Therefore, the source of knowledge about art lies in the image which supersedes the traditional role of text. Participation in culture becomes a characteristic feature of more and more narrow, elite social group. Participation in high culture to a greater and greater extent becomes the measure of social distances. It leads to the deepening of socio-cultural distances between the groups with higher positions and less educated social groups, also between the residents of cities and villages.

Keywords: culture, participation in culture, museums

Abstrakt

Zespół Pracowni Badawczej Polskiego Pomiaru Postaw i Wartości już po raz czwarty dokonał pomiaru uczestnictwa w Europejskiej Nocy Muzeów w Warszawie. Badanie przeprowadzono w nocy z 16 na 17 maja 2015 r. Zrealizowana próba liczyła N=1102 respondentów zróżnicowanych pod względem płci, wieku, wykształcenia, zamieszkania i dochodu. Do badania wybrano 20 muzeów, zlokalizowane w różnych dzielnicach. Co umożliwiło przestrzenne powarstwowanie próby.

Komunikat z badań odnosi się do następujących zagadnień obcowania z kulturą: częstotliwości sięgania do źródeł wiedzy o niej, częstotliwości odwiedzania obiektów będących jej nośnikiem oraz czytelnictwa. Jednocześnie należy stwierdzić, iż partycypacja w kulturze odnosi się głównie do jej biernej konsumpcji tj. zapośredniczonej przez kino i telewizję. Źródło zatem wiedzy o sztuce tkwi w obrazie, który wypiera tradycyjną rolę tekstu. Uczestnictwo w kulturze staje się cechą charakterystyczną coraz węższej, elitarnej grupy społecznej. Udział w kulturze wysokiej staje się w coraz większym stopniu miarą dystansów społecznych. Prowadzi to do pogłębiania się dystansów społeczno-kulturowych między grupami o wyższych pozycjach i niższej wykształconymi grupami społecznymi, a także mieszkańcami wsi i miast.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura, uczestnictwo w kulturze, muzea

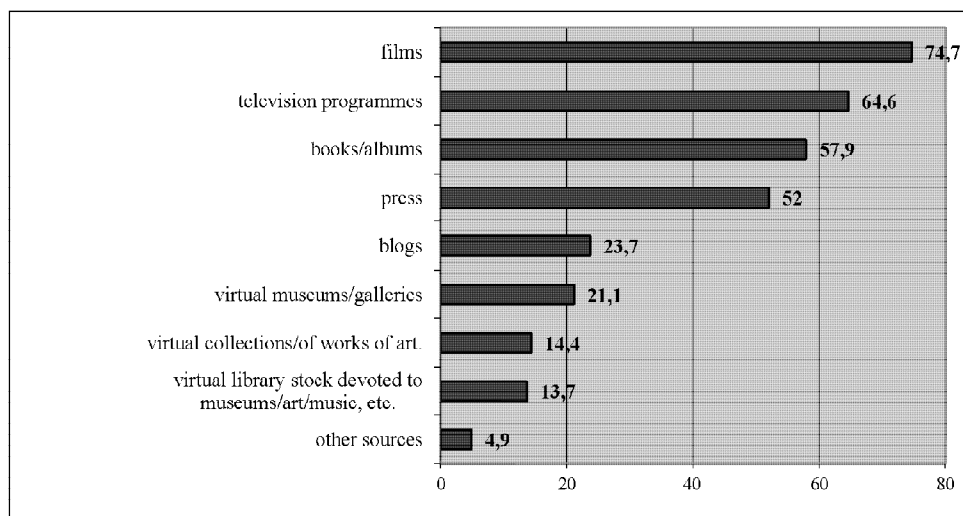
For the first time, the Night of Museums was organised in Berlin and has been held for eighteen times so far. In Warsaw in 2015 it took place for the twelfth time. Warsaw, as the capital of Poland, is the venue of numerous cultural events and the depository of cultural assets with special national and supranational significance. Warsaw is also where the national institutions of culture are located. In the capital, there are about 1.6 thousand of different culture-related institutions. At the same time, it should be emphasised that Nights of Museums are held in other European cities as well. Thus, we can say that the event has become an inseparable part of the landscape of cultural events.

Culture is the essence of social life, it determines the identity of a given social group, it is an indicator of moral and aesthetic sensitivity of man. Culture expresses man. We can claim that it is the shape of his life and the way of his existence because man lives according to the adequate culture. Moreover, ability to create culture is inherent to man and it is what distinguishes him in the world of living creatures. Man, is its subject and author. "Culture is an environment in which people are submerged in a way. [...] It is the entirety of objectified elements of social output, common for a number of groups, and, due to its objectivity, established and able to expand spatially" [Czarnowski 1956: 20]. Barbara Szacka points to the fact that culture comprises the wholeness of human life because there are no human activities and behaviours it would not regulate. The researcher thinks that one can be interested in culture as a collective social creation. The interest might be twofold: Firstly, as an objectified system, that is, something external to people who created it. Secondly, the process of creating culture [Szacka 2003: 76–77]. John Paul II, in his address to UNESCO in the UN seat on June, 2nd, 1980, paid attention to another aspect of culture, indicating that "man lives a really human life thanks to culture. Human life is culture in this sense too that, through it, man is distinguished and differentiated from everything that exists elsewhere in the visible world: man cannot do without culture" [John Paul II 1980].

Wojciech Kłosowski points out that today's culture has to be open to the present and the future, and "participation" should be its key word. Participation understood as the inclusion of each of us in the circulations of culture, not only to be able to derive from their wealth but also to bring one's own cultural values to the pool of this wealth, discovered or invented by oneself [Kłosowski 2011: 14 and 43]. According to Andrzej Tyszka, participation in culture means, in a broad sense, "individual participation in cultural phenomena – assimilating its contents, using its assets, subjecting to norms and patterns operative in it, but also creating its new values, and reproducing and processing the existing ones" [Tyszka 1971: 54]. Moreover, participation in culture prevents marginalisation and social exclusion. Therefore, it is vital to invite people to participate in culture, and through it to include them in a broadly understood social life, which is particularly important for social cohesion. Today, the access to culture means both the physical ability to visit a museum, gallery, theatre, cinema or library, and the access to virtual cultural assets. Thus, the participation refers both to passive and active forms of involvement in cultural events.

Communing with culture was also one of the threads undertaken in the research into the Night of Museums in Warsaw. What results from the analysed research is that the participants of the Night of Museums in Warsaw usually gain knowledge about art from films (74.7%), television programmes (64.6%), books/albums (57.9%), and press (52%). To a small extent, virtual resources are for respondents a source of knowledge about art.

Graph 1. The percentage of people using various sources devoted to art over the last 12 months



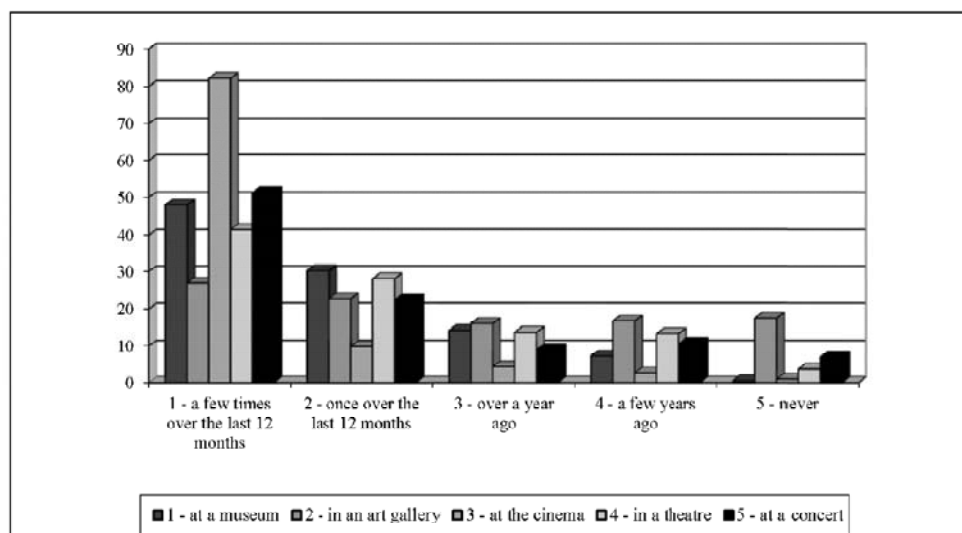
Source: own calculations based on PPPiW research 2015.

As it results from the research conducted by the Polish Measurement of Attitudes and Values, film is the main source from which respondents acquire knowledge about art. It is more often done by women (45.2%) than men (29.5%). Taking into consideration the age of respondents, most often films devoted to art are watched by people aged 19 to 24 (22.6%) and 25 to 30 (15.6%), with secondary education (25.3%), with Master's degree in humanities (14.8%) and Bachelor's degree (12.5%), residing in Warsaw (48.9%) and coming from Warsaw (29.9%), who work professionally (43%) or attend school/study (26%), living in households consisting of four (19.5%), three (18.9%) and two members (14%).

Books and albums play an important role in providing information about art to respondents. Those who use this source of information, just like in the case of films and television programmes, are more often women (37.3%) than men (20.6%), people aged 19-24, with secondary education (19.2%) and with Master's degree in humanities (12.8%), residing (39.3%) and coming from Warsaw (24.1%), working professionally (33.6%) or attending school/studying (19.3%). It should be also indicated that the circle of people for whom blogs are the source of knowledge about art is very similar. These are women (15.4%), single people (14.8%), people with secondary education (7.3%) and with Master's degree in humanities (5.4%), residing in Warsaw (15.7%) – particularly in Bemowo (3.5%) and Mokotów (3%), coming from Warsaw (26.5%), 19-24 years old (5.6%), working (13.5%) or attending school/studying (8.3%). On the other hand, in the groups not interested in art prevail people with elementary education, basic vocational education and Bachelor of Engineering degree, coming from the country, housewives, retired and unemployed people, whose net income does not exceed PLN 1,500 per capita.

Thus, one might venture a thesis that participation in art basically boils down to the passive consumption of culture in the simplest version, namely by means of films and television programmes. Thus, the source of knowledge about art lies in the image which supersedes the traditional role of text. Taking advantage of virtual museums/galleries/collections/works of art or libraries is the domain, although also to a small extent, of single people, people with secondary education and Master's degree in humanities, living and coming from Warsaw, with the income from PLN 1,501 to 3,000, aged 19–24. As it can be observed, the participants of culture on the Internet are mainly young people, making full use of the opportunities created by the new media.

Graph 2. The frequency of visits in the institutions of culture



Source: own calculations based on PPPIW research 2015.

The level of education, in the case of the participants of the Night of Museums – secondary education and Master's degree in humanities, is one of the main variables indicating the growth of cultural activity and

its social diversification. However, it should be noted that, regardless of education, the most popular institution is the cinema, and the least popular is art gallery.

What results from the analysis of the research is that the biggest group visiting museums during the Night of Museums were people who over the last 12 months had visited a museum a few times (48%) or once (30.2%). Most often those were single people, residing in Warsaw, mainly in Wola, Mokotów, Śródmieście, Praga-Południe, working or attending school/studying. The interviewers met the biggest number of people who had visited a museum a few times over the last 12 months in the Museum of Warsaw Praga, the Royal Łazienki, the Royal Castle, the State Archaeological Museum and the Neon Museum.

One of the formulas of establishing the level of participation in a given area of culture is research into readership. Studying the character and level of readership via capturing individual choices of certain types of literature is assumed the most reliable to determine the depth of participation in culture. The criterion of the level of literary competence necessary for proper, correct interpretation of a given type of text is adopted [Grad, Kaczmarek 1999: 35]. A. Kłoskowska built the classification of readership types distinguishing:

- elementary type – books for children and teenagers, primary school textbooks, devotional literature;
- popular type – entertainment literature: crime stories, thrillers, love stories, adventure novel and lowbrow satire;
- classical type – Polish and foreign classical literature, created in popularised convention;
- highbrow (elite) type – avant-garde contemporary literature, scientific and philosophical texts, artistic essays [Kłoskowska, 1972: 175].

Based on the research, A. Kłoskowska constructed three basic types of reception:

- purist – focused on the reception of contents which are selected and strictly subject to the “high level” principle;
- homogenised – consisting in combining contents of various level and character;
- limited – which refers only to most lowbrow contents [Ibidem: 205–206].

What results from the research analysis is that secondary education or Master's degree, especially in humanities, favours readership. However, it should be noted that secondary education prevails, due to the fact that it was the most numerous group visiting museums. We can guess that those were mainly people attending school/studying. In the groups distinguished in terms of age, the majority of people reading books are respondents aged 19 to 24. Among book readers we will find more women than men, which should be related to the progressing feminisation of higher education and differences in readers' socialisation conditioned by gender. It is worth observing that 90.5% of museum visitors declare that they read books. The data take on special meaning when we refer them to the readership survey conducted by TNS Polska for the National Library of Poland, from which it arises that in 2014 the fact of reading at least one book a year was declared by 41.7% of respondents, although it is still more by 2.5% than in 2012 and by 2.3% less than in 2010 [Koryś, Michalak, Chymkowski 2015: 8].

Literary tastes of people taking part in the Night of Museums are varied. Crime stories, fantasy, historical and adventure books prevailed in the readers' choices. Romances, scientific books, fiction or biographies were a little less popular. Referring to Antonina Kłosowska's classification, we can observe that a popular type prevails, although undoubtedly the classical and elite type can be found here, too. It seems that the choice of books is influenced on the one hand by the offer of new releases, and, on the other hand, as it is indicated by the authors of *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2014 roku (The State of Readership in Poland in 2014)* report, readers also reach for proven books: newer and older books of their nearest and dearest. Home libraries of respondents and their friends are important sources of books.

To sum up, it should be emphasised that in what is revealed most strongly in empirical research is the dependence between the level and type of education and cultural activeness. Participation in culture becomes a characteristic feature of more and more narrow, elite social group. Among the audience of theatrical and musical institutions there are fewer and fewer people with low education level. The interest of the society in higher culture represented by traditional artistic institutions: theatres, philharmonics and art galleries is decreasing. It deepens the cultural deprivation of citizens of villages and small towns. To a greater and greater extent participation in high culture becomes the measure of social distances. It leads to the deepening of socio-cultural distances between the groups of higher positions and less educated social groups, as well as residents of villages and cities. Contact with art takes place mainly by means of films and television programmes, books/albums.

Bibliography

- Czarnowski S. (1956), *Kultura, in Dzieła*, Vol. 1, PWN, Warszawa.
- Grad J., Kaczmarek U. (1999), *Organizacja i upowszechnianie kultury w Polsce. Zmiana modelu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań.
- Jan Paweł II (1980), *Address in UNESCO Seat*, www.Centrum.jp2.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/PRZYSZ-%C5%81O%C5%9A%C4%86-CZ%C5%81OWIEKA-ZALE%C5%BBY-OD-KULTURY-Jan-Pawe%C5%82-II-.pdf [24.09.2015].
- Kłoskowska A. (1972), *Społeczne ramy kultury*, PWN, Warszawa.
- Kłoskowska A. (1981), *Sociologia kultury*, PWN, Warszawa.
- Kłoskowska A. (1991), *Kultura*, [in:] A. Kłoskowska (eds.), *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku. Pojęcie i problemy wiedzy o kulturze*, Wiedza o Kulturze, Wrocław.
- Kłosowski W. (2011), *Kierunek kultura w stronę żywego uczestnictwa w kulturze*, Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki, Warszawa.
- Koryś I., Michalak D., Chymkowski R. (2015), *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2014 roku*, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa.
- Rokicka E., Kruczkowska P. (2013), *Instytucje kultury i ich wykluczeni*, [in:] E. Rokicka, P. Kruczkowska (eds.), *Ekskluzja w dyskursie pracowników instytucji kultury*, University of Łódź, Łódź.
- Szacka B. (2003), *Wprowadzenie do socjologii*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa.
- Tyszka A. (1971), *Uczestnictwo w kulturze. O różnorodności stylów życia*, PWN, Warszawa.