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The Transformation Model of Seniors' Participation in the Regional Culture of the Past Two Decades

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Abstract: The culture promotion emerges from an active, creative life which gives basis to fulfil oneself. The individual character of activity is a very significant feature of participating in the culture process. We form new virtues in accordance to traditional ideas and reconstruct and transform existing ones to bring about emotions. A creator of culture could be an active participant, a creator of the culture world who plays a social role related to a social position.

The text is about the culture and the education associations promoting the music culture in Piotrków Trybunalski such as: The Association of Friends of Art Centers, Senior Club and University of the Third Age affiliated to Local Centre of Art in Piotrków Trybunalski. The article tries to answer the following questions: What types of artistic activities do they offer? Which ones are the most popular among local people?

The associations have been active and successful for many years in spite of economic and political transformations. The subsidies enable to develop varied local activities for instance: education, artistic, publishing activities. Every association has its own achievements as far as the forming of the region culture is concerned. The associations have great influence on the culture increase in Piotrków Trybunalski. Therefore, they should be supported in conducting their animation.

Keywords: seniors, associations, a regional culture.

1. Introduction

Regional and local cultures are filled with contents and forms produced on the basis of everyday life. It is therefore a culture of each and every resident in the spatial and social proximity. Everybody in this space comes into the world, grows,

falls within this culture as an entire person. This culture is close to one's heart. He understands and respects it as a whole. It shapes his personality, and he enriches it with new creations, or at least gives a new individual interpretation of existing ones. In this way, a local and a regional culture are becoming an important factor in shaping the individual features of each culture to understand and respect another culture. The history of a mankind shows that only those who know and understand their own culture are able to respect and understand the culture of others [Dyczewski 1998, p. 43].

The preparation for an active and creative life, creating the conditions for the process of self-realization could be made through the promotion of culture. All axiology of this promotion comes down to a very general assumption: "... the dissemination of productive and rich cultural activity, which provides a high quality of life and the realization of humanistic vision of a man and human social relations" - D. Jankowski wrote [Jankowski 1996, p. 38]. Other aspects of participation in the promotion of culture emphasizes A. Siciński, here's what he says on the subject: "... by participating in a culture one understands the intensity and extent of participation (passive and active) in the national culture" [Siciński 1976, p. 41].

Thus, an actual participation in culture is a function of a very complex system of factors. On the one hand, there are objective needs of meeting cultural opportunities guaranteed by the culture system (supply of goods and cultural values, and their availability). On the other hand, certain personal characteristics and properties of the same customers in culture are dependent on the nature of needs and aspirations, the scale of tastes and interests, as well as on the level of intellectual qualifications, profession, financial and family situation.

2. The Evolution of Cultural Needs and Interests of Poles

The research on participation in culture showed worrying signs of changes in the cultural consciousness of Poles. The generation that completed his school education in the postwar years was not interested in the realization of the pattern of human culture. They limited their hours of cultural activities for the sessions spent on watching TV. This state-specific cultural impoverishment of adults is a more stable trend, associated with changes in the cultural model of participation (from written culture to audiovisual culture), the situation weighed on the socio-economic crisis, forcing the energy to focus on the acquisition of funds [Stefanowska 1988, pp. 35-50].

The moving process from written culture to audiovisual culture is not specific for Poland, or rather one should say that in relation to the developed countries we are "retarded". In the West the notion of "universal cultural collapse" appeared. There has been a cultural discontinuity, the world's great literary works have lost their price, and the centuries-old symbols have become unintelligible [Koprowska, Milczarek 1991, pp. 7-8].

The surveys of the Central Bureau of Statistics, which emerged in participating in the culture over the years 1972-1985 changed the participation of Polish society in various forms of culture. The first most general conclusion from the comparison of the data is the finding of decreasing public participation in the various fields of elite culture, more difficult to understand, requiring a greater intellectual effort, cultural competence, as well as organizational effort. Thus, there was a decline of participation in three institutions: the theatre, the opera and the operetta, with the largest emphasize on dramatic theatre. Only the interest in music concerts - in and outside the concert halls - remained almost on unchanged level. However, we must remember that the attendance at classical music concerts is declared only by a few percent of respondents, and in most it is a participation type "once a year".

The official data from the study of the Central Bureau of Statistics indicates a shrinking public participation in such fields as cinemas, theatres and concert halls. At the same time these forms of leisure time are considered to be important, prestigious cultural synonyms. In addition, education, age and place of residence are the main determinants of cultural participation. There are natural differences in tastes between generations, as well as preferred forms of cultural activity. It is known that a cinema audience for the most part is made up of young people while theatres and symphony halls are accessible mainly to the residents of the cities. City dwellers have an easier access to theatres and concert halls than the rest of society - which clearly affects the rates of participation in these institutions. Books are available regardless of the place of residence, although there may be no equality. Cinemas have a greater geographical scope than theatres and music venues, but for the residents of the village it is combined with a stay in the city.

Cultural needs, habits and perpetuated cultural activity are stronger than current social position, even though it was rated as very difficult. It also means that the improvement of mental health of society and the improvement of quality of life on a daily basis could contribute to the growth of cultural activity. But these findings relate to systematic cultural audience, equipped with a permanent preservation as a consequence of early initiation of culture. At the moment, there are certain areas of risk or social circles in which the burden and the hardships of everyday cultural activities eliminate cultural activity. This primarily applies to people with lower levels of education, growing up in difficult living conditions and occasional consumers of culture [Falkowska 1991, pp. 62-76].

The transformation expanded the range of cultural offers, eliminating ideological constraints at the same time, however, there has been a process of commercialization of culture. Cultural goods have become a commodity and the distribution of rights began to rule the market, which affected an access to the culture in terms of material conditions. According to A. Przeclawska: "The nineties brought Poland to change the conditions of participation in culture. This applies to participants of all age levels ...". It manifested both in shrinking audiences of elite

cultural institutions and in courage of declaring them as uselessness or in a low demand for their usage and valorizing the culture provided by the mass media. The socio-economic problems of the last few years opposed a narrow cultural elite to the growing circles of people limiting their cultural activities to the use of the mass media [Koprowska 1991, p. 114].

A participation in culture, which is considered as any form of contact with the culture, relationship with it, the use of its products, all forms of media, institutions and facilities - today is mainly based on the acquisition and use of the goods. Once a participation was based primarily on the use of various forms accessible to the public, but also - and most important - on the creation of culture, the participation in the formation of the goods. It is much more important and valuable contribution in the creation of culture – what is more, this phenomenon is disproportionately less common than simply consuming its goods [Łagodziński 2004, p. 7].

3. The Cultural Animation of Adults on the Example of Associations that Promote the Arts in Piotrkow Trybunalski

The issue of reviving, activating, stimulating the creative behaviour of individuals and small groups is referred to a collective way of animation. It is clear that positive behavioral changes in the cultural arts such as an increased reading literature rate, a participation in events, artistic and creative activities in the field of art (in amateur bands, creative associations, cultural institutions), changes that are seen in relation to the period before taking action by animator activation are generally the result of this animation. The activity is defined as a system of cultural and creative activities organized during free time of children, young people and adults. It requires the use of various forms in limited time, within the system of the cultural and educational life. It is frequently run by institutions such as community centers, public libraries, clubs, associations, local community centers, churches, etc. Thus, it is an important element of the functioning of the local community [Kargul 1993, pp. 262-263; Karcz 2005, p. 23].

In every major city regional cultural associations operate, set up to live by the local “restless spirits”, or - as said before - the so-called social activists. The factors that contributed to this phenomenon were: the increasing number of residents with at least secondary education, and the opportunity to receive budget grants for statutory activities. The issues with the rules of this activity focused on themes related to the history, culture and current life of the village and the environments in which these associations operated [Gąsior 1996, p. 103].

This paper is devoted to the cultural and educational activities that promote the culture of artistic associations for old people in Piotrkow – The Association of Friends of Art Centers, The Senior Citizens Club of ‘Quiet Haven’ acting at the Municipal Cultural Centre and the The Association of University of the Third

Age. The paper is an attempt to answer the following questions: What do the activities offer? Which ones are the most popular among the local community in Piotrków Trybunalski?

The Association of Friends of Art Centers was founded in 1958 as a branch of the social group in Lodz. The branch became independent on 14th July 1962 by a decision of the Office of Internal Affairs Bureau of the Provincial Council in Lodz and entered in the Register of Associations and Unions - Office of the Interior Bureau of WRN in Lodz item. 675 called "The Association of Friends of Art Centers in Piotrkow Trybunalski". The consecutive presidents were: Wilhelm Witek, Jerzy Krzewinski, Bogdan Pingot, Wanda Bierzyńska, Marian Błaszczynski and Jerzy Patora. The members of the Association have been the parents of learners in the Social Music Centre. The Association receives income from the two main sources: the grants from the City Council - The Department of Culture and Arts in Piotrkow Trybunalski and the fees from the membership. The Association is a social organization with an educational care, supervising the Social Music Centre in Piotrkow and since 1972 its branch in Sulejow. The association purchases musical instruments, prepares musical performances of students, donates books awards, organizes sightseeing tours, trips to the Philharmonic Hall and the Grand Theatre in Lodz. Since 1965, the association has been organizing the county music preliminaries and partly donating trips for the most talented students' national festivals such as: The National Competition for Young Pianists Sulechow (Zielona Góra region), The National Auditions for Classical Guitar Krajenskie Strzelce, The Russian National Music Competition in Stargard Szczecinski. Since 1967 it has been also organizing the auditions for primary school pupils in Piotrkow who take part in the children's co - regional song contest "Tomaszowska Spring" . The main organizer of the event is the city Tomaszow Mazowiecki, where the final concerts are held [Błaszczyk et al. 1996, p. 4; Kuciapiński 2004, pp. 22-61].

In 2001, under the auspices of the office of the city Piotrkow Trybunalski, The Piotrkow Chamber Orchestra was founded. The orchestra consists of teachers, students and graduates of the I.J. Paderewski National School of Music I and II degree. Tomasz Guz and Ewa Izydorczyk Grzelak conduct the orchestra. Its main goal is making music together with teachers and students, and the dissemination of music in different environments and places. The members of the orchestra take part in music competitions, workshops and festivals. The orchestra has gained some experience during numerous concerts including France, Germany and the Ukraine. They keep expanding and developing a new repertoire which resulted in recording and releasing two CDs of compositions by A. Vivaldi, Mozart, Saint Saens C., J. Strauss, W. Killar and the special guest in the recording of their third album - the Academic Choir of the Swietokrzyska Academy - a branch of the Academy in Piotrkow Trybunalski. Next year the orchestra will be celebrating its decade activity [Wnuk 2008].

Thanks to numerous generations of socially engaged activists of the Association and with over fifty years of tradition it constitutes a strong link of music education system outside schools in the city. The economic crisis of the eighties and nineties did not save this unique European public institution of music education. It is believed that the problems of dissemination of music culture in the aesthetic education of the younger generation will have the status they deserve and enough support from local society and authorities. This will improve the current situation not only of the association, but also other institutions disseminating culture, stimulating the effectiveness of their educational impact.

Older people who are retired have a lot of free time. It is important to make proper use of it. The elderly are active intellectually and physically. They need social and cultural activities too. Their favourite forms of leisure activities are: reading books and newspapers, watching TV, walking, going to the theater, cinema, crafts, working on the plot, tours, performances in amateur bands (choirs, theaters).

In The Senior Citizens Club a lot of various activities happen in various fields of art. They form spontaneous groups with talented lovers of literature, music, singing and dancing, with a view to meet their expectation they are engaged in improving the club's life, as well as their social and neighborhood surroundings. The groups from Senior Clubs generally want to perform both inside and outside. The existing of many choirs is a great chance to improve and expand people's skills within the structures of cultural centers. For many it is the only chance to continue singing and an individual development. The cultural institutions provide structures to support choirs such as a place for rehearsals, payment for the conductor, the repertoire needed for classes and performances and means of transport to concerts. Encounters during rehearsals turn into long-term friendships, integrate the environment for choral singers, and are an important incentive to come to classes. Choirs centers provide a sense of security organization. Today, members of the choirs are mostly elderly people. These are mainly people who want to continue meeting and singing for their own pleasure. There is no business of predatory competition for choirs, "at all costs", as one may witness on the example of professional teams [Janik 2002, pp. 67-68].

A notable example is the choir 'Joy of life' at the Senior Club, founded in 1971 in Piotrkow Trybunalski working at the Municipal Cultural Centre in Piotrkow. The first conductor of the choir was Tadeusz Struck, and since 1987 Tadeusz Małz.

The seniors perform songs of different style ranging from folk, through popular to classical and romantic music including Brahms Lullaby, "A Waltz Beyond the Mountains" by Tchaikovsky or some parts of Verdi's opera Nabucco. The team prefers a cappella music as well as the piano accompaniment. The choir participates in the Regional Review of Artistic Seniors Movement, The Provincial Review

of the Senior Clubs Artistic Achievements, The Bałuckice Music Meetings and The Meetings "Ars" in Bydgoszcz, which are a nationwide review of Senior Clubs activities [Stępień 1995, pp. 7-8; Dawidowicz 1996, p. 20].

Every day, the choir of the Senior Club "Joy of Life" plays an important function in integrating the local community adding splendor to occasional performances taking place in the town. A possibility to participate actively in the cultural life is not only a great entertainment, but also an effective means of impact on public awareness of the audience. These concerts are the best proof of how much can be derived from life when singing along. They give new meaning to life singing with life. The spirit and the love of choir are reflected in the words of the team members - Wanda Kaczorowska: "The singing comes from inside and it is my prayer" and Ireneusz Tworek: "We just feel an inner need to sing" ["Tydzień Trybunalski" 2004, nr 23, p. 4].

The changes that occurred in the length and quality of human life mean that seniors live longer. On the other hand, better education made that after bringing up children, retirement, the need of leisure time activities arise. Thus, Universities of the Third Age are the most popular forms of education in recent years, a form of education for older people, disseminating in this way educational initiatives.

Ewa Miskiewicz initiated the creation of the Association of the University of the Third Age in Piotrków Trybunalski together with a founding group of: Adam Bieniek, Halina Borowska-Kopytek, Alicja Brzozowska, Józef Gajos, Marianna Gaworczyk, Urszula Goska, Eleanora Grzegorzczak, Barbara Kruz, Janina Oleksińska, Jerzy Pokutycki, Urszula Rusi n, Bogusława Szczegielniak, Alina Szczepaniak and Danuta Wierzch. 20th January 2006 is the date of the legal existence of the association. The inauguration of the first academic year 2006/2007 was held with the participation of local authorities and representatives of higher education institutions operating in Piotrków Trybunalski [Szymczyk 2012, p. 4].

The University's activities included organizing lectures with a wide range of subjects every two weeks. The extra courses included a tourist section, a cultural course in English, and sports and recreation. In subsequent years, the plastic and literature classes were introduced [2007], the psychological and photographic classes and the cabaret, "Trzeciaki" [2009], the cycling and chorus classes [2010]. Among many achievements of the University one is worth noting that is a grant of 8000PLN from the Polish-American Foundation, "Freedom" for the project: "An active senior and a co-founder of the cultural life in the integration of the grandchildren's generation" [www.utw-piotrkow.pl/?historia, 17].

During more than six years the number of students has increased to about 220 people. The activity of such a large group of students requires a lot of commitment and an extraordinary individual passion of members of the Board of Directors. The Association continues inviting people who are open to new challenges. Retired teachers make up a large group of students. They see clearly the need to maintain the mind in a good condition.

Conclusions

The social movement concerning associations in Poland has a rich tradition. In the face of loss of independence in the period of the partitions it was inextricably linked with the fate of the country and the nation. The associations were formed in a variety of organizational forms and they served society as the centers struggling to keep the national language, the native culture and customs. So it is a cultural movement with a long historical duration, with an intact line of continuation and continuity. And regardless of any restrictions, which it has been subjected to in recent decades. At the time of initiation this historical movement toward socialization and cultural self-determination had usually a local, particular dimension before it increased in the regional, national movement. Therefore, in the memory of local communities and further sequences of the traditions of affiliating, these compounds are still alive and considered as an important component of continuity, they are a living bond of the movement [Omelaniuk 1998, p. 8].

The societies in Piotrków are "getting older". The average age of the active ones and the members is quite high. Young people, even if they feel the need for social actions, they prefer taking part in the work of professional societies, professional associations, or types of creative and collector clubs. The Association of Friends of Art Centres, The Senior Center "Quiet Heaven" are organizations which were not founded in the last two decades (except for UTA in Piotrków built in 2006), but in spite of socio-economic and political transformation successfully continue their activities with a measurable success. The obtained grants, though low, were generally greater than the sum derived from membership fees and allowed to develop diverse business environment - from education to concerts. Practically each of these associations has significant achievements in the creation of what might be termed the regional culture. In societies with a long tradition in Piotrków Trybunalski, one should see a genuine social force that causes the increase of cultural and intellectual activity. Therefore, it is a necessary to create the conditions for further continuity and development.

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