

WHAT SURROUNDS US NOW: CULTURAL ANIMATION AND THE PARTICIPATORY
AND CULTURAL VOIDS IN POLAND

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ABSTRACT

Brendan James Daniel: What Surrounds Us Now: Cultural Animation and the
Participatory and Cultural Voids in Poland
(Under the direction of Dr. Robert Jenkins)

Cultural animation is a practice that uses participant-led collaborative art projects to develop community cohesion. I begin by looking at an attempt to reorient post-communist studies away from elite actors and toward the agency of regular citizens, contrasting Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato's definition of civil society, Jan Kubik's "contextual holism," and Michel de Certeau's "strategies" and "tactics". Next, I recall a history of alternative community-forming practices that provide the basis for cultural animation in Poland. I then outline specifics of the practice, including project methodology and a profile of animators and participants alike. I explain how cultural animation tries to address a participatory void left by stagnating attitudes toward volunteerism, sporadic partisan outreach and a weak civil society, and a cultural void created by consumption-oriented attitudes toward cultural policy. I conclude by revisiting the points of contextual holism and explaining how cultural animation fits them.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECOC	European Capital of Culture
EU	European Union
MKiDN	Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)

INTRODUCTION

One frigid January night, scores of interested students and community members filed into the rehearsal hall of the Kenan Music Building on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The audience was treated to a show full of airings and performances of pieces by well-regarded Polish composers like Witold Lutosławski, Władysław Szpilman, and Włodzimierz Kotoński. While inspiring and entertaining on the surface, the event communicated a theme of musically reanimating a Warsaw that was decimated by war and subsequently governed by a communist regime. The aim was to look back on Poland's traumatic past and remember the great cultural figures who soundtracked the postwar years.

Indeed, Poland has a rich history of producing painters, musicians and writers that is ripe for continuously re-introducing to modern audiences. What is more, Polish heritage is a prime selling point in its culture. It is the primary mission of Poland's MKiDN to promote the historical pillars of their culture at home and abroad. Karen Hauff (2001) has written that politicians involved with cultural policy play to popular cultural preferences while cultural leaders are excluded from input toward official policy (24), and that the MKiDN seeks to repress art that is controversial (46). The portion that is not dedicated is distributed in funding schemes whereby individuals, collectives, and NGOs compete against each other for

relatively small amounts to fund their projects.¹ It seems that the more a project is likely to promote a positive face of Poland, and the less likely it is to reflect on or critique Polish society, the more likely a project is to be funded. Little money is available for fresh projects because so much money goes into funding the staples. Additionally, the government has not promoted the concept of private sponsorship as a viable source of funding (Ilczuk 2001, 82).

Hauff's study indicates that certain forms of art are less likely to get funded based on their content and whether it is in harmony with the official cultural program. In both cases needs of underserved communities have gone unmet - communities who could benefit from culture that is not necessarily officially-sanctioned. Further, the type of culture that is on offer is that of a consumptive nature. It is centered around the production of artifacts, which took place in the past. Participation consists of buying a ticket, observing, hearing, reading, and going home.

This is not to diminish the attempts of cultural programmers to promote Polish heritage, but I find that the official policy creates a void where culture is hindered from functioning as a dynamic mode of expression, or as a means of civic engagement. One view of the relationship between culture and civil society, especially in a democratic society, is that they can work in tandem; the former is meant to promote the creation of a tolerant and diverse society by developing the third sector in culture. Likewise, civil society creates a cultural offer that responds

¹ For example, see the MKiDN Funding Program for 2015.
<http://www.mkidn.gov.pl/pages/strona-glowna/finanse/programy-ministra/programy-mkidn-2015.php> Accessed 9 April 2015.

to the needs of people by implementing large-scale co-operation, stimulating individual initiative, and diminishing disproportionate access to culture by involving marginalized groups (Ilczuk 2001, 25).

Poland is a place where the level of civic engagement has been also low since the events of 1989. While the Constitution provides for the establishment of a civil society, its implementation leaves much to be desired. Issue advocacy-related organizations have had a difficult time affecting social change because important figures involved in Poland's social dialogue are reluctant to adopt progressive stances. Moreover, a combination of mobilization burnout from the communist era, lackluster outreach of political parties, and distrust of politicians have contributed to an under-representation of voices in Poland's social dialogue. The non-profit sector, whether in culture, advocacy, or service provision, is a client of the state rather than a partner (Murzyn-Kupisz 2010; Kozuch & Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek 2013). Additionally, young people are not a priority for Polish political parties. Here, a participatory void exists because there is a weak civil sector and people, especially the youth, do not have widespread access to civic education. Does an engaging, alternative cultural option exist in Poland?

The following thesis is an explanation of how cultural animation is a practice that works as a social micro-process that attempts to address the cultural and participatory voids that exist in Polish society by proposing an alternative to the status quo. Cultural animation arose in Western Europe (particularly France) as an aspect of 1960s counterculture. Those times brought a renewed urge to participate in social action and public life, and so cultural animation became a practice and

philosophy that uses “psycho-social methods to expand the capacities of people,” and that promotes “the abilities of people and groups to participate in and to manage the social and political reality in which they live” (Pollo, quoted in Lorenz 1994, 101). The rise of cultural animation in Poland comes with a twist. As I will explain, the practice there is rooted in a specific theatrical practice². It seeks to foster community interaction by creating an environment for participants to enact projects based on what they feel is culturally important to their group or community, and fostering honest interpersonal communication, which includes an expression of ideas, wants, and needs in the process.

While cultural animation³ has been written about in the discipline of social work, it has yet to be touched upon in the field of post-communist studies. I write on this topic at a time when political scientists are making efforts to stake out a new approach to analyzing areas behind the former Iron Curtain – one that shifts emphasis from comparing their economic, social and political development with an idealized form established by Western democracies, to evaluating non-elite actors in Central and Eastern Europe and the manner in which they decide how and in what ways their societies are sufficient or deficient. How they propose to do this is to shed light on the lack of focus on specific emergences of post-communist cultures. Jan Kubik’s most recent edited volume, *Postcommunism From Within* (2013), is an important work in this shift because it switches focus from the actions of elite actors

² Walter Lorenz (1994, 101) notes that the movement found its first concrete expressions in community theatre, though he does not specify exactly where or when this development came about.

³ Also referred to elsewhere as *socio-cultural animation* and *culture animation*. From this point forward, I use the term to refer solely to the Polish incarnation of its philosophy and/or practice.

to the actions of individuals within structures. In this thesis, I will contrast the idea of cultural animation with Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato's (1992) definition of civil society, and Jan Kubik's (2013) concept of "contextual holism." I find that cultural animators must "make do" in their project methodology just as they aid participants in constructing a culture out of what is inside them and around them, which is a necessity because of cultural policy. I will supplement the discussion with explaining how cultural animation fits into Michel de Certeau's (1986) interpretation of the concept of bricolage.

I find it is also necessary to establish the local context for the practice of cultural animation. Though the practice was prevalent in Western Europe in the mid-20th century, there exists in Poland a heritage of actions that have aimed to create a space that operates outside the stream of officially sanctioned political and artistic culture. I will demonstrate the influences on the current practice of cultural animation of past activities such as those of Jerzy Grotowski and his Laboratory Theater, and the Orange Alternative anti-socialism movement of the 1980s. The establishment of this timeline is helpful to highlighting how Poles have, for a long time, sought solutions rooted in creative ability to address unfavorable social conditions.⁴ Recounting this heritage of alternative action also plays into Jan Kubik's examination of legacies in his contextual holism approach.

⁴ In this paper, I use terms interchangeably. I mean the phrase "civil society" and others like it, such as "third sector." I do the same in referring to the processes of creating civil society ("civic engagement"; "community engagement"; "community formation" and the like) and in discussing the cultural sphere as well. This usage is to avoid monotony during my analysis.

Next, I will explain in detail what cultural animation is, and how such a practice addresses those voids. This description includes an exploration of the roles of both the animators and the participants in animation projects. It is important to understand who animators are and how they are educated and influenced, as well as the communities that are served by animation projects. I then outline the aforementioned voids – the participatory void because of its participatory nature, and because its potential geographic and demographic reach is larger in scope than those of the political parties or non-governmental organizations, and the cultural void because it lowers the barrier to access and because it allows members of a community to create a conversation around relevant needs. I will then further discuss how cultural animators must interact with cultural policies at the local, national, and European levels. This aspect is especially salient given the approaching celebration of the European Capital of Culture in the city of Wrocław⁵ in the year 2016. In that city, cultural animators backed by local academic and cultural institutions are petitioning the city over the consumptive nature of, and the wasteful spending on, the celebration. My analysis will include the discussion of the

⁵ Although animators enact projects all over Poland, the city of Wrocław is, unintentionally, the setting of most of cultural animation's development and heritage in this thesis. It is a place that especially seems to be a breeding ground for the practice; Gregor Thum (2011) points out that Wrocław's reconciliation with the Germans began with the everyday – with occupying the dwellings of German families following their forced expulsions in World War II and interacting with their left-behind possessions. Additionally, he points to the idea that official post-war narratives that avoided Wrocław's German history scandalized city residents morally and intellectually. Since the end of the PZPR, residents have investigated and framed the events of its local past for themselves individually, which the author sums up with a cultural animation-friendly slogan: "To each his or her own monument" (Thum 2011, 400).

European Union, both as an influence on Polish cultural policy and as a cultural policymaker all its own, in part through the European Capital of Culture program. Ultimately, I find that cultural animators, while artists and thinkers, are unheralded social actors in post-communist studies that are fueling the capacity to create another kind of society altogether, which is why I conclude by revisiting Jan Kubik's "contextual holism" to apply it to the practice of cultural animation and its addressing of civic and participatory voids.

In this thesis, I am using a combination of primary sources, scholarly articles, news stories, electoral data that I have culled from outlets such as JSTOR, ProQuest, and other Internet searches. I felt it necessary not just to draw from content on Polish politics, culture, and civic development, but also literature on urban development related to the European Capitals of Culture project. It was especially necessary to include sources relating to preparations for the upcoming ECOC celebrations in Wrocław, and these celebrations should be interesting to observe given the disagreements between ECOC organizers and animators which I will touch upon later. I have traveled a fair deal around Poland, including studying and volunteering in the cultural sphere, so my writing was also bolstered by conversations with colleagues I met there who work as cultural animators and other cultural figures.⁶

My project is not without its limits, however. Three of these limits come to mind. First, two years in a master's degree program is not quite enough time to master a complex tongue as the Polish language is. Scholarly work was therefore

⁶ The conversations I reference in this thesis all took place between the summer of 2014 and the spring of 2015.

inaccessible to me without hiring additional help, although I was able to parse websites and journalistic texts. As such, I had to rely on predominantly English-language material. Second, I understand that this thesis could also have benefitted from more extensive fieldwork. Instead, I rely on primary sources related to the practice of cultural animation in Poland: the epic *Culture Animation: Looking Back and Forward* (2001) edited by Grzegorz Godlewski et al., and the *Cultural Animation NOW!* handbook (2008) edited by Zofia Dworakowska et al. I am hopeful that the next steps in this project will be to research cultural animation in the field and expand upon this emergence of a post-communist culture. Third, I am aware that the analysis of this subject could have possibly benefitted from post-structuralism, cultural-critical, and counter-geographical perspectives. The reason I have not included them is simply that I have not been schooled in those disciplines. I invite anyone to research the impact of cultural animation initiatives in post-communist Poland through whichever perspective they choose.

As for the title of this project, I write later that Orange Alternative leader Waldemar Fydrych described the concept of “socialist surrealism,” of which his happenings were a part, as “what surrounds us, in this country, now” (Cioffi 1996, 175). His description insinuates pervasive disconnection not only among citizens, but between them and their society. He includes Orange Alternative’s public, dramatic response to interpret that dissatisfaction in that definition. I find it to be a useful title because all three social actions that I discuss in the following pages – Grotowski’s active culture, Orange Alternative’s happenings, and the cultural animation of today – all respond to those disconnections in their own ways. I think

that cultural animation in Poland, as a practice, borrows something from each of its predecessors. From Grotowski's active culture comes an emphasis on genuine interpersonal communication to build trust and achieve goals, which in its time was a fix for pervasive distrust and doublespeak during the high socialism that surrounded people. Of course, from Orange Alternative comes an emphasis on reclaiming public space. What has surrounded people in Poland for the past twenty-five years is a pervasive feeling of being left behind by culture and participation, leaving certain people to initiate culture amongst themselves. Cultural animation is not a perfect solution, nor is it the only one, but it is *a* solution to the cultural and participatory voids nonetheless.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

As soon as communism collapsed in Eastern Europe, scholars rushed to document the manner in which social transformations were taking place. Up until the last decade, comparative political scientists strove to measure the impact of civil associations (Ekiert and Kubik 1999), even as they did little to question the validity of the notion that a civil society molded in the image of Western democracies was key to development. It was seemingly assumed that the West could teach this region how to start non-governmental organizations without taking into account local conditions. When initial returns from the first decade of democracy did not live up to their promise, scholars sought an explanation and pointed the finger at civil society first. Although some literature (Howard 2003) acknowledges that the state of constant mobilization by the PZPR has soured people in the region on volunteerism, it stops short of critiquing the development of civil society vis-à-vis Western democracy.

Analysis that placed priority of local context over democratic norms began to follow (Mendelson and Glenn 2002). With respect to Poland, international non-governmental organizations were relatively unsuccessful because of the lack of attention paid to fitting Western democratic norms to local contexts. Moreover, local NGOs were formed to preside over problems that had local relevancy as opposed to transnational sociopolitical problems that have a local franchise (233), which fed

into already-existing distrust carried from the former regime to the nascent democracy to misguided non-governmental institutions. Making matters worse were the bad reputation of NGOs, who had scammed donors and absconded with their money.⁷ These insights help to puncture the empirical assertions on the matter, but does not directly discuss the realities of civic life in Poland.

Given the survey of literature documenting the early years of civil society, it seems most apt to use the definition of civil society advanced by Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato. They say that civil society “refers to the structures of socialization, association, and organized forms of communication of the lifeworld to the extent that these are institutionalized or are in the process of being institutionalized” (1992, x). They believe that political society is rooted in this civil society, and that “antagonism arises when mediation between political and civil society fails, or when leaders insulate decision making from social influence” (1992, x).

I find this definition of its functions to be imposing and extremely limiting. Though cultural animators have their ways of socializing, associating, and communicating, Cohen and Arato seem to legitimize only those collections of individuals that can transform their collective will into a recognizably elite actor, which would then be recognized by other elite actors. This might work for discussing cultural animators as though they were a single-minded professional organization, and could therefore devote the bulk of their time to becoming institutionalized. However, animators typically establish their profession in other fields, such as education. And yet, they are applying pressure to political society all

⁷ Personal communication with Marta Pawlowska, vice president of Fundacja Culture Shock.

the same. Though the jury is out on whether or not a lack of “civil society” in the Western sense is an actual problem, there is something to be said about how certain elements of Polish society have drawn on sections of their own history to address issues of interpersonal communication and community formation.

Scholars of post-communist studies, as of the writing of this thesis, are beginning to recognize the value of local non-elite actors in assessing social problems. Shifting currents in this scholarship seek to evaluate this region on its own terms instead of as an embryonic version of Western Europe or North America. Amy Linch damns past analyses in which civil democracy is misguidedly presented as a known end to achieve and “people have no role in defining democracy or choosing the method of its construction, yet their ability to become the society that democracy requires is the measure of their competence” (Linch 2013, 9). Being that the dominant view described above is neoliberal by design, a postmodern take on social justice and civic association is now being advanced wherein issues, not structures, are the focal point.

By beginning with social problems, we are able to observe local (perhaps competing) strategies of political action and the resources employed to pursue them. Placing this dynamic at the center of research recognizes people in post-communist societies as active creators and interpreters of the various aspects of collective life. It shifts concern from how adequate or well-prepared people are to respond to political and economic transformations engineered at the top, to how people enact their vernacular visions of life, politics, and justice by responding to daily challenges. Beginning with social problems enables us to identify forms of collective action that might otherwise fall under the research radar due to...insufficient attention to the level of analysis (Linch 2013, 10).

Further, Jan Kubik (2013) advances an approach that he calls “contextual holism,” which emphasizes

- relations between agents within structures;
- legacies based, in part, on asynchronal changes and policy outcomes;

- focus on semiotic practices;
- formal-informal institutional hybrids, and
- localized agents as the basic unit of analysis. (2013, 36)

Kubik says that potential problems should be analyzed through locally available frameworks, and whether and how they are used as foci of mobilization. Further, he recommends that “concrete, localized, networks of actors who devise and implement strategies of ‘coping’ within specific sets of constraints including [...] cultural contexts and political arrangements” (2013, 51); the “eminently rational” (2013, 60) use of informal networks and social capital to cope, and seeing history as a “usable past” to activate discourses (2013, 56). Through presenting the history of Polish arts-based community-building activities, the nature of culture creation, and the hybrid formal-informal nature of education, contextual holism seems an appropriate framework for analyzing cultural animation. It is a collective micro-process that helps people in Poland define and aggregate their vernacular visions of life. Animation projects address problems of community disengagement. Such disengagement exists as a result of both a lack of good faith in those directing social changes and mobilization burnout. These reasons contribute to a lack of broad social incentive to draw people closer together, to get them to exchange and communicate.

The practice of cultural animation is informed heavily by “coping” skills. Michel de Certeau (1984) built upon the existing term *bricolage*, meaning “do it yourself” (Interglot 2011), to describe the way in which ordinary people, or “the weak” (de Certeau 1984, 37), adapt to the existing reality created by the social and cultural economy to their own rules and benefits (xiv). Manners of practicing

bricolage are called “tactics” that undermine established reality and help people “make do” using their surroundings. Tactics, in his view, stand in stark opposition to “strategies” that presume command over a spatial or institutional locality. For example, a city planning commission’s strategy may be to determine street layouts and traffic patterns, but a taxi-driver knows the best tactic of navigating the streets to his benefit (Goff). While strategies assume some sort of permanence, tactics are open to constant revision.

Cultural animation makes use of tactics in two ways. First, with regard to the animators themselves, projects must make do by culling resources from a number of places. Animators may enter a competition to receive funds from the MKiDN, the local self-government, or the European Union, all of which must be accompanied by a detailed budget and paperwork. However, resources also come from establishing partners in the local community where a project takes place: churches, schools, community centers, and on occasion non-governmental organizations contribute material help such as rooms and equipment. (Dworakowska 2008, 148).

CHAPTER 2: A HERITAGE OF ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

Cultural animation is a recent incarnation of alternative community experiments, following Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre in the 1960s and the Orange Alternative movement in the 1980s, that have taken place in Poland. Each one has played with the boundaries between exhibition and collaboration, and has espoused a particular vision of what collective life could be. How each of them has been oriented toward the political sphere is the linking factor. With Grotowski, the political content is more implicit; he saw his activities as a meaningful way to heal "the many splits both within an individual and between people" (Kumiega, quoted in Cioffi 1996, 85) in the era of Leonid Brezhnev and Władysław Gomułka. Orange Alternative's program was inherently, pointedly political as their happenings subverted official propaganda messages from the government, which impacted people's thinking. In cultural animation, however, the state is an actor in the background, and something to transcend. As the practice has an anthropological background, cultural animation advocates that all social behavior be treated as cultural phenomena grounded in reality, and not as phenomena defined by "narrow, politically-conditioned rules of interpreting modern social life" (Godlewski 2002, 71) To do otherwise would be to reinforce the we-versus-they dynamic that is pervasive in Polish social relations, which is one of the issues that cultural animators are decidedly against.

JERZY GROTOWSKI AND “ACTIVE CULTURE”

Jerzy Grotowski was a visionary director in the Polish alternative theatre scene of the 1960s, and received his tutelage at the Krakow Drama Academy during the political thaw that characterized Polish October of 1956 (Cioffi 1996, 82). It was under these conditions that he spearheaded the Laboratory Theatre (initially in Opole, but later in Wrocław), a small troupe that would become internationally well reputed but little known inside of Poland. There, he and his troupe produced many plays that were acclaimed in the West, such as *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, *Akropolis*, and *The Constant Prince*, which confronted religious taboos and critiqued social norms. Of interest here are the methods and rationales of the training that the actors and others underwent to be able to perform the material.

Grotowski demanded self-sacrifice of his actors – not for the purposes of a quality production, but for the quality of their ability to work together as a team. He also did not take self-sacrifice to necessarily mean the deprioritization of other aspects of the actors’ lives. Instead, what he demanded from his troupe was the unlearning of their drama school training and the “sacrifice of their personalities” in the name of self-discovery and self-awareness. This self-sacrifice was done in order to reveal their authentic selves on stage. He called the actors’ initiative to reveal themselves the role of the “holy actor” meant to reconstruct a “ritual in theatre, in a way meaningful for our times and our society, as a way of healing the many splits both within an individual and between people” (Kumiega, quoted in Cioffi 1996, 85).

When he took this acting exercise as far as he could go with his actors, he reached out to other young people in Poland “who, simply because they need to,

would choose to leave behind personal comfort and seek exposure in work, in an encounter, in movement and freedom” (Osiński 1986, 123). Additionally, actors from the long-running *Apocalypsis cum figuris* recruited curious audience members and discussed with them possibilities for work. Such was the beginning of what he termed “active culture,” meant to be a therapeutic solution to those splits based on theatrical practice, but with an added emphasis on interpersonal communication. Active culture would ideally serve as “an alternative community, where the basis is: meeting, man-man, the act.” Most of all, it aimed to give “creative inspiration to investigate [the actors’] way, their own original means of expression [...] and expressing their real problems and psychic states (Cioffi 1996).

Through the methods of active culture, typically carried out in multi-day workshops in rural areas, Grotowski wanted to break down the barriers of the actor/spectator dynamic during induced audience-participation portions of plays. These workshops typically had participants in close contact with each other, and performed tasks assigned by the workshop director. These tasks included acting exercises, some of which were extremely physical and demanding, and simple chores like maintenance of the space that the workshop occupied. Often, these tasks were carried out in silence at the behest of the director, who would demand the utmost mental concentration. All of this was done in the name of each person developing an awareness of the physical space and the others around them. During non-silent portions of the workshop, participants were prompted to “proposition” each other with their personal needs. The combination of concentration and communication enabled the participants to feel a sense of communion with each

other, which led them to impromptu actions such as musical collaboration with the aid of instruments on hand (Ronen 1978). These participants, who would otherwise have been spectators or other consumers of culture, became creators of culture through the process of opening up to each other. The aforementioned actions may not seem extraordinary even in tandem, but as a workshop participant was quoted, “The various propositions were the initial stimuli, the basic structures that define the particular terrain of a specific experience. It is entirely up to the individual, or group of individuals, where these stimuli were to spring into a creation” (Ronen 1978, 76).

Over the span of several years in the 1970s, the Laboratory theatre worked with over ten thousand people in this way (Cioffi 1996). Following the death in 1981 of one of the main actors of *Apocalypse*, Antoni Jaholkowski, and the dispersal of other cast members around the world in the name of spreading the practices of active culture, Grotowski shut down the Laboratory Theatre (Findlay and Filipowicz, 1986).

ORANGE ALTERNATIVE’S “HAPPENINGS”

Waldemar Fydrych, nicknamed “Major,” was one of the ten thousand-plus participants in Jerzy Grotowski’s active culture experiments. In the 1980s, when Polish society was pinched between martial law one hand and the ideas and actions of the government-opposing Solidarity trade union, he created the New Culture

Movement in Wrocław, later renamed Orange Alternative⁸ which was more explicitly political than was active culture. The movement was characterized by mass street protests with a playful and theatrical flare, although the movement was in no way connected with alternative theatre, Fydrych's tutelage aside (Cioffi 1996, 175). These "happenings," as they were known, were part of the "socialist surrealism" mantle, which Fydrych (nicknamed "Major") described as "what surrounds us, in this country, now" (Cioffi 1996, 175). In reality, this phrase depicted the incorporation of their mass actions, which distorted the struggle and mundaneness of everyday life; by hijacking control over mobilization and trumpeting ironic support for existing socialism, Orange Alternative made people aware of how their lives were connected to the communist system.

To establish their opposition to both sides of the political fight, happenings would often occur on major Polish state holidays and religious holidays alike. They were held on a much larger scale than the previous active culture workshops and involved the capture of the public space in the streets. One of the more infamous happenings was a parody-laden exploit called "The Eve of the Great October Revolution" in which the Oranges restaged the storming of St. Petersburg's Winter Palace on Świdnicka Street in Wrocław, with a clock tower serving as the stand-in for the Palace. Through the distribution of leaflets, which was customary before each happening, they exhorted the public to show up wearing red (suggesting that those who had no red clothing show up with a ketchup-covered hot dog). Participants brandished traditional communist symbols, such as the image of Lenin,

⁸ In Polish: Pomarańczowa Alternatywa

and carried banners with ironic socialist-style propaganda: “I Will Work Harder” and “We Demand 8 Hours’ Work Per Day for Wrocław’s Bureau of Internal Security” were a couple on display. It was typical that the police would intervene before the happening could reach total fruition, briefly arresting and interrogating participants before releasing them (Cioffi 1996).

Orange Alternative occupied an important space in Polish public life during its existence, as it provided a cognitive escape from the duality of communist-era life. Bronislaw Misztal agrees about the movement’s importance:

The 'First' world, or the 'first project of society' as it is sometimes called is the one produced by the (until recently) official communist propaganda. It is fake, full of empty symbols and meanings and yet for the past forty years it was proclaimed the only valid and state-licensed reality. The 'Second' world, or 'the second project of society' is the one which stems from everyday experience, where the socialist values look much less gleaming, the grey reality negatively verifies every statement of the official propaganda and where people learn the emptiness of signs and symbols displayed by the 'first project'. The two worlds remain in conflict; they contradict and complement each other, thus creating a permanent cognitive dilemma for those caught in either of the two worlds. (1992, 67)

Misztal further explains that the ‘first society’ had enabled a “learned helplessness” among people that then triggered a spontaneous generation of non-state action that strengthened the ‘second society,’ even as that strength remained largely publicly unexpressed (1992). Orange Alternative was, in part, one of those spontaneous forms, and it was one that bridged official messages with private doubt, and added a touch of guts to pull it off publicly. It had a way of effectively drawing people into its happenings because they were held where they could not be ignored: the streets, where any single person could be shaken from the drear and pulled into the ongoing questioning of the official culture. In so doing, they created a temporary third culture, apart from the cultures propagated by the state and

Solidarity trade union, that energized the spirit of people far beyond Wrocław.

Activities spread to Warsaw and Łódź (Misztal 1992; Cioffi 1996) but ran out of steam shortly after the fall of communism.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL ANIMATION

Rather than having a single locus of origin, cultural animation is enacted throughout the country.⁹ It is an inclusive exploit, featuring participants of all age groups and backgrounds, that sets the lowering of social barriers as its primary goal. While a cultural activity as the name suggests, it aims to challenge social preconceptions in its products, crosses over into civic activity because of the way it shapes social relations, which happens by demystifying “the other.” This “otherness” does not only refer to immigrants entering Poland’s borders, or even to minorities that have been part of historical communities such as Lithuanians and Old Believers,¹⁰ although animation projects certainly address these issues (Godlewski et al. 2002). It can also mean the otherness between individuals of relatively similar background within the same community.

⁹ The local practice is harmonious with the social work and pedagogical principles of Polish sociologist Helena Radlińska, who believed that social work – more than simply being a remedial course of action – should aim to remove existing forces that interfere with the development of human beings, and should also be a way to inspire people to fulfill their potential (Brainerd 2001). In Poland, it serves as an extension of Jerzy Grotowski’s workshops in that it is “aimed at enlivening the desires, aims and aspirations in the individual and the environment,” which in turn will help “facilitat[e] both individual and group participation in more active and creative life, by better understanding of changes, easier communication with others and participation of life in the society”. (Zebrowski 1990, 86)

¹⁰ Old Believers are a sect of the Russian Orthodox Church who refused to accept liturgical reforms imposed by patriarch Moscow Nikon (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2015).

Cultural animation is a practice that is rooted in theatrical performance. The primary aim is to help people realize their capacities for expression and action, and the commonalities they share with the people in geographic proximity to them. The foundation in theatre is key for two reasons. First, because it is an effort to help individuals present their own narratives, and together find their intersection within a given locality. Second, theatrical exercises help participants gain a sense of awareness about their environment and other people around them. These are sometimes verbally and physically trying (Ronen 1978) and other times fun and amusing (Dworakowska et al. 2002). They prime the participants to interact, which in turn creates an environment for them to author projects based on what they feel is culturally important to their group or community, and includes a sincere expression of ideas, wants, and needs in the process.

The practice of cultural animation shifts emphasis from imposing a hierarchical structure of community action, to a horizontal model that gives participants control of proposing and enacting ideas for projects in which animators become partners and furnishers of the means to bring ideas to fruition. Though the practice has a theatrical background, the role of the animator is not so much to actively *direct* as it is to *suggest*. Once animators provoke discussion between participants and ideas are being shared, they aggregate the ideas and suggest a way to materialize them. Though this varies from project to project, a common feature of cultural animation projects is the availability of photography and video equipment, with which participants and animators alike can document the project's progress.

Polish animators also claim a variety of influences, from the United States settlement house movement of the late 19th century and community arts in the United Kingdom, to Ken Kesey and The Merry Pranksters and British punk rock (Dworakowska et al. 2008). However, cultural animation in Poland has specific context and roots within the country. It cannot be simply reduced to local franchise of an international movement. The local context of the cultural animation practice is paramount. Throughout the past 25 years, there have been many cultural animation projects that help communities enter into a dialogue with themselves about their identity. Two valuable things are gained from the completion of a project. The first is the tangible results of the work, which are not always the main focus of the project but are present nonetheless. For example, a series of workshops entitled *The Warsaw Breakfasts*¹¹ were set into motion as a way of enabling several districts in Warsaw to tell stories about themselves using the inherent interests and talents of participants, who were secondary school students in this particular case. The project instituted communal breakfasts as launchpads for citizen collaboration on how they could best get their districts to say what they wanted to say about themselves, and what should be done with the final product of the collaboration. Students then asked residents about their memories about life in the district, which enabled each neighborhood to tell a story about itself in composite. The final product consisted of presentations of these stories in conjunction with a final extra task; members of one community attached these stories to kites and let them fly away, while another imprinted them on a cardboard tree to be planted in that

¹¹ In Polish: *Śniadanie warszawskie*.

district (Dworakowska et al. 2008). During the Breakfasts, animators taught these participants how to map their understanding of their locality onto the physical space by using the tactic of storytelling.

The second thing consists of the relationships forged in the name of working together on these projects. The ideas come from the participants themselves, and the animators' accommodation of these ideas contributes to a feeling of being heard and accepted, relatively rare sentiments in participatory structures of the Third Republic. The animators' accommodation also fosters exploration and genuine interest in the project, and in turn, participants' genuine interest in each other. By using this hands-off approach to creative projects, animators believe that they have the potential to create a more inclusive environment, and also the potential to build a more interwoven community.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The *Cultural Animator NOW!* (Dworakowska et al. 2008) handbook outlines a general path that projects follow, though it is by no means restricted to this depiction in content or structure. First, a community that desires to act upon local issues in some way must express a need. Often, members of that community have motivation to act, but have neither the tools nor a specific idea to start with. They then get in touch, directly or through a community center, with cultural animators who come either as part of an association or as an informal group. They may visit the community and meet with leaders to determine the feasibility of a project. Second, animators work in concert with community members to discern the goals,

methods, and tools for the project, based on the participants' interests and talents. Animation projects are not limited to a single collective idea. They can involve multiple ideas pursued by multiple segments of a community. Of course, depending on the size of the venture, this could involve the decision to do further hiring for the project, including the decision bring in animators from other networks.

Third, funding must be secured. Animators apply to European Union cultural programs, such as the Leonardo da Vinci Education and Culture programs; the cultural department of the government at the national, voivodship, county and municipality levels; and cultural associations and NGOs in Poland. Additional financial help can be sought from the Public Benefit Organization¹² in the form of a one percent tax deduction, and possible tax exemptions in other areas. Special celebrations, such as the Year of Senior Citizen Activity and Intergenerational Cooperation in 2012, or the upcoming European Capital of Culture in 2016, can also be used as an access point for funding. Money is not everything, however; animators need a space to carry out projects. Needed equipment may also be beyond the budget's capabilities. This is where schools, community centers, churches, and other organizations are able to lend space and resources that help a project along. In some cases, community members can lend funding – a primary school history teacher once incorporated a cultural animation project into her classroom activities, which had already been financed with Equal Opportunities Funding from the European Union (Dworakowska 2008, 121)

¹² In Polish: Organizacja pożytku publicznego

Fourth, it matters as to which animators are working together on a project. As much as they are trying to help a community to cohere, the animators must do the same thing themselves in working as a team. Each one has their own interests and talents, and teams that work on projects on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, the number of animators on a project is carefully considered on the same basis. It is very important for animators to understand each other and communicate well as they work toward the goal with the project participants (Dworakowska et al. 2008, 90)

Fifth, although a team of animators may have already encountered members of the community they are working in, a number of the participants will likely be strangers. It is up to the animator to facilitate contact by playing a game, or engaging in other exercises that are meant to stimulate participants' awareness of themselves, their surroundings, and each other (including the animators). The exact activity depends on the animators' assessment of the group of participants. Animators must keep attuned to the mood of the project for its duration, and must be both ready to assuage personal difficulties and amenable to re-evaluating the project's trajectory in case of a shortcoming or personal conflict.

Finally, the project is wrapped up with a concluding event (or series of events). These could take the form of a presentation of what the participants learned, or some other thing. Most important of all is the animators' documentation of the entire project, from inception to conclusion, while being inclusive of setbacks and problems. These painstaking documentations (which can be written, photographed, and/or captured on video) are done for four reasons. First, they are

used to justify any funding the project received. Second, a true document of the project exists for public exhibition, should the animators get a chance to exhibit it. Third, it is something to share with the participants in the project who may have nothing else but their memories of the experience. Fourth, animators are continuously interested in developing their practice, and documentation is a way of teaching themselves and others about their development. They actively pore over the results of their ventures and share their findings to other animators so that the whole community may learn.

The methodology of a cultural animation project is reminiscent of John Boyd's "OODA loop,"¹³ which consists of four steps: observe, orient, decide, act. Animators observe a community when they are deciding the feasibility of a project; orient their talents and resources to the situation based on information from participants in the project, and from prior animation experiences; decide on an appropriate project together with the participants; act on the decisions made, and then observe the outcome. Additionally, these steps can be taken multiple times in the course of a single project, as unexpected situations arise. The OODA process aids documentation in the development of the cultural animation practice as a dynamic community-building approach. It is harmonious with Michel de Certeau's concept of "tactics," or acts that are open to reassessment, and stand in contrast to the "strategies" of state cultural policy, which are self-referential and static. Here, the creation of culture means the ability to adapt and evolve quickly.

¹³ See diagram in this slide presentation, "The Essence of Winning and Losing": <http://www.danford.net/boyd/essence.htm>

WHO ARE THE ANIMATORS?

A cultural animator is a facilitator or “midwife” of the cultural effect of group work. Instead of providing *content*, like an artist would, an animator’s goal is to provide *context* by provoking conversation and encouraging project participants to use a relevant mode of expression (Dworakowska et al. 2008, 9). The encouragement stops short of outright delegation, which implies that an animator is working to establish a particular goal for his or her benefit. The animator works for the participants’ benefit, to “discover the artist in others (30),” and to help people create their own culture. The heart of the culture-creation process is the facilitation of open and free communication between participants. To achieve these goals, animators must be endowed with, or must otherwise acquire, the right kind of interpersonal communication skills to complement their artistic development and knowledge of the humanities. In acquiring these skills, an animator undergoes a process of socialization into the animator community.

Animators are generally culled from all over the demographic spectrum. There are those who came out of the communist generation, which are not simply limited to those who participated in (or were otherwise present for) Jerzy Grotowski and his active culture projects or the happenings of Orange Alternative. Cultural animation is a multi-disciplinary practice that does not rely solely on aesthetics for its substance. A significant portion of individuals in the cultural animation talent pool, its proponents, practitioners, and educators, are culled from other specialties in the arts and humanities. While Leszek Kolankiewicz may be a theatre anthropology workshop-seminar leader and Krzysztof Czyżewski is a

collaborator with a number of theatre programs, Andrzej Mencwel is a historian of Polish culture who co-authors animation-related curriculum, and Maria Parczewska is a graduate of the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Warsaw who was also employed in the field of museum education (Godlewski 2002). All of these backgrounds bring unique perspectives that inform the practice of cultural animation as it relates to understanding groups of people and how they engage in creative collaboration within Poland.

Of course, the practice could not be perpetuated without new generations of curious students. Younger students have a fair chance at gaining entry to the world of cultural animation. They become aware of the animation specialty through their high schools, and can volunteer at community centers for credit.¹⁴ When the cultural animation practice caught on in Poland after 1989, it found a home in state-funded higher educational institutions. For example, the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw offers a specialty in cultural animation through their department of anthropology, which makes use of seminars and workshops alike to train animators. The basic curriculum includes an “anthropology of everyday life” course, in which student coursework in noting the phenomena of their daily subjective experiences in modern Polish society becomes the basis for future animation activities. It also includes a managerial workshop in which, as part of creating and promoting a cultural event or club, students actively engage with the problems that budgetary limitations and cultural policies pose. Students meet and converse with representatives of the MKiDN and other cultural institutions. A

¹⁴ Personal communication with volunteers at Centrum Współeczne Cicha4 in Lublin, Poland.

seminar on “designing creative situations” and a theater anthropology course are also in the curriculum. The class is a hybrid seminar-workshop that links the early experiments by Grotowski and his Laboratory Theatre with the modern day incarnation of cultural animation by replicating practices, more of which I will discuss in the section dedicated to Grotowski. These courses and their components have become the basic building blocks of animation projects as they are carried out today (Godlewski et al. 2002).

With regard to the arts, the pedagogical focus is on their communicative properties. Students take courses in literary criticism, which carry an emphasis on interpersonal sharing of preferences and experiences that a work of art conjures up, rather than on the interpretation and critique of creative texts. They can apply these skills through more practical coursework, including classes and internships on public relations and the publishing industry, which prepares them for a potential career in the media. Emphasis is also placed on documentation, as documentary and photography courses are also in the curriculum. Finally, a significant amount of fieldwork on animation projects is also required before a certificate is granted (Godlewski et al. 2002).

Cultural animation education also exists outside of institutionalized academia at cultural centers across the country. Cultural centers give animators a point of association with each other, allowing them to meet, teach together, and share expertise and experience. These centers are funded by art- and culture-oriented NGOs to the extent that it is possible to do so. One of the longest standing

centers is the Borderlands Center of Arts, Cultures, and Nations in Sejny,¹⁵ near the Polish-Lithuanian border, established in 1990. Because of its location near the borders of Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia, it is an important meeting place of nationalities and religions such as Catholicism, Judaism, Protestantism, and Russian Orthodoxy, especially the variety practiced by Old Believers. Borderlands is a center that emphasizes the teaching of intercultural dialogue and expands the concept from the immediate locality to similar regions; the education on offer draws students, not just from the aforementioned adjacent countries, but also Ukraine and Georgia. A simultaneous Borderlands Foundation was established alongside the center that stays independent of political and economic activity (Fundacja Pogranicze 2015).

Courses at Borderlands, which are taught under the “Summer School of Intercultural Dialogue,” are in some ways similar to those taught at the University of Warsaw. Educators draw attention to the managerial, promotional, and networking aspects of projects, as could be expected. However, the school aims to build its own methodology of intercultural dialogue (Fundacja Pogranicze 2015). Students learn how to overcome obstacles of animation projects that require intercultural communication, one method of which involves field trips to villages and other locations to meet with cultural, religious, and community leaders and discuss their needs and problems. The goal is to understand the cultural potential of every community, as well as the potential of those communities to be active in their culture. on the premise that it enables the students to break down any misguided

¹⁵ In Polish: Ośrodek Pogranicze – sztuki, kultur, narodów. Subsequently referred to as simply “Borderlands.”

beliefs about these and similar communities, and to understand how a lack of understanding for diversity can, at its worse, trigger an ethnic conflict like that seen in Bosnia in the 1990s (Godlewski 2002). Whether old or young, being a cultural animator requires being a constant student.

Animators supplement their association with each other through mass meetings such as conventions, in addition to typical means of communication such as social media. One such convention is called the NieKongres,¹⁶ which is a fairly new event for the community of animators. Meeting in 2014 for the first time, animators came together and shared their ideas and experiences, as well as recognized their practical shortcomings and biases, in meetings that took much the same shape as animation projects. An online messageboard component supplemented the convention, which let animators publicly document each event and allowed anyone to read the agendas and outcomes of the meetings. However, these meetings seem to be inconsistent; another NieKongres has not been scheduled despite its aims to be an annual event.

¹⁶ Literally translates as “No Congress” or “Not Congress,” but I feel a more apt translation of the term would be “UnCongress” to indicate what cultural animator Tadeusz Mincer tells me is a deformed, non-hierarchical model of proceedings.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN ANIMATION PROJECTS?

Though projects take place in urban and rural settings alike,¹⁷ cultural animation activities are defined by communities and sub-communities that exist inside administratively defined geographic boundaries. One example is that different age groups are gathered for projects. Predictably, elementary school children are one focus. However, older Poles are also invited to participate in projects. Another workshop series entitled *The Super Grandma and Super Grandpa School* focused on preparing the elderly to be volunteers for the sake of children and their development. It was predicated on developing creative ways for children and the elderly to spend time together, and to allow grandparents to learn strategies for helping children manage negative emotions. This project worked extensively with older Poles in the city of Wrocław, and it also extended to them the same sorts of activities, like theatre exercises and photography workshops, in which younger people typically partake. These exercises, meant to pique and enhance awareness of one's surroundings and of others in the surrounding space, opened up the floor for critiques of authoritative child-rearing practices and advocacy in favor of understanding children and their emotions (Towarzystwo Inicjatyw Twórczych "ę" 2015).

¹⁷The aforementioned Warsaw Breakfasts are an example of an urban cultural animation project. An example of a rural project entitled *Guide My Future* Project took place in Gozdowo (located in Mazowiecki Voivodship) where animators gave English lessons to rural, poorly-educated youth with a view to create an online guidebook of the area. The project also included workshops on "creativity (focused on: me and my place), space awareness, photography, website design, as well as dance and capoeira classes."

CHAPTER 4: VOIDS

Cultural animation projects attempt to address two voids that have been created since the transition to democracy: the participatory and the cultural. Before I begin my analysis of the participatory void, I believe a quick overview of Poland's political map would provide some beneficial background and setup.

In the country's first fully democratic parliamentary elections, which took place in 1991, the five most visible parties were the Democratic Union (who garnered 12.31% of the vote), the Democratic Left Union (11.98%), Catholic Electoral Action (8.73%), The Polish Peasant Party (8.67%), and the Confederation for an Independent Poland (7.5%).¹⁸ The most recent elections in 2011 saw the top five being the Civic Platform (39.18%), Law and Justice (29.89%), Palikot's Movement (10.02%), the Polish People's Party (8.36%) and the aforementioned Democratic Left Alliance (8.24%).¹⁹ Many parties have also been born and have died in the interim, a sign of electoral volatility. The reason for this volatility is that, in the initial years, political parties were stretching themselves thin in courting voters in the electorate. Aleks Szczerbiak (2003) and Radosław Markowski (2009) point out that the left-right political continuum is different in Poland because issues such as socio-economic class or the role of the state in the economy do not define it. Rather,

¹⁸ "Poland: Parliamentary Elections Sejm, 1991." http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2255_91.htm.

¹⁹ "Wybory 2011." <http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl/wsw/pl/000000.html>.

the divide comes down along historical and cultural lines, and attitudes toward the communist past and the Catholic Church are the primary political touchstones. Thus, party platforms have been cultivated around moral and cultural valence issues. Previously, there had been a distinct lack of a socioeconomic profile and ideological motives in Polish party politics, and most parties have based their appeal on the promise of achieving shared objectives (Szczzerbiak 2003). As such, political parties cast a wide net in elections by being as inclusive as possible. Even issue-centric parties such as the Polish Peasants' Party attempted to project a less provincial image, even as their platform has all but guaranteed that they would not grow their base beyond rural voters. The end result was that the compositions of the parties resembled each other.

As of 2011, the Civic Platform, a center-left option that increasingly attracts the wealthy vote, and Law and Justice Party, a center-right option that places historical legitimacy at the center of the state, have emerged as the two primary competitors having won by plurality, and having come in the top-two for the second parliamentary election in a row. The constant shuffling of the electoral deck until that point in time, however, did little to help solidify the electorate and give voters clear partisan choices, to say nothing of the parties' capacity for outreach.

THE PARTICIPATORY VOID

Party Politics

With regard to engagement in the democratic process, studies by Pilch and Baran (2013) have shown that young people place low value on political

engagement. Fiona Robertson's (2009) dissertation on comparative political participation among the youth in Poland shows that young people – those between the ages of 18 and 35 – are much less interested in politics, and trust their politicians and legislatures much less, than their counterparts in Germany and the United Kingdom. The process of participation has also left them wanting.

As in other democracies, political parties in Poland have established youth wings for each one to inculcate their brand of political values. Efforts by these parties to reach out have not been wildly successful. Changes in political culture have made young people less likely to participate in electoral politics (Blais et. al. 2004, quoted in Robertson 2009), and the turbulent first twenty years of the Third Republic seem only to have confirmed this. Unfortunately, though these youth wings do exist, the main parties do not often see them as an integral or unique component of electoral strategy, as they are treated as a mere extension rather than a separate organization. While this means that more young people in their twenties and thirties can become eligible for the parliamentary candidacy, they are also not given priority on the party list (Robertson 2009).

Additionally, youth party organizations are primarily based in large urban areas and administrative centers, with little to no penetration in many municipalities across Poland. Young people participate in these organizations for professional, ideological, and social reasons, and those who wish to participate in political engagement must usually travel to the nearest city with a party office. Even the urban youth suffer from limited engagement; city-based party outlets are only occasionally organized by neighborhood or district, and gather all local members at

the same meeting (Robertson 2009). Political parties' failure to organize the youth contributes to a sense of distrust toward political figures and the parties they belong to.

New outlets for partisan participation have been created to account for the failure of parties to capitalize on youth mobilization. On the right, organizations such as the Young Republic Foundation²⁰ are attempting to inculcate and galvanize patriotic sentiment in young people, while the radical umbrella group National Movement has a neo-Nazi flavor that has, for now, a small corner of support at home as well as abroad.²¹ The formation of these organizations is of particular interest in the context of the 2010 Smolensk aircraft tragedy that killed the Polish president and numerous members of the government and military, as members of these upstart organizations see it as an assassination on Russia's part rather than an accident. These groups stand in contrast to the partisan organizations that already exist on the left, such as the Political Critique²² intellectual publication and the cultural centers and activist clubs that they run nationwide. How this mobilization of the right will play out on the electoral field is yet to be determined, with both presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for later in 2015.²³

²⁰ In Polish: *Fundacja Młoda Rzeczpospolita*. <http://www.mlodarp.pl/>

²¹ Called *Ruch Narodowy* in Polish, they are alarming people in places abroad with Polish minorities. See <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/protest-mounted-in-dublin-against-polish-far-right-event-1.2171704>.

²² In Polish, *Krytyka Polityczna*. <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl>.

²³ In 2014, however, Poland did hold elections to select representatives for the European Parliament. The results saw the election of the euroskeptic Congress of the New Right to the EP. <http://pe2014.pkw.gov.pl/pl/>

Civil Society

Polish curriculum seems to have no civic education content, and for all of the political parties that have jockeyed for power in the past twenty years, not a single one has made civic education a part of their platform. Piotr Gliński condemns the “ignorance and arrogance” (2011, 285) of the Polish political elite for having never been interested in developing civil society, or for even developing a program of civic education. Negative connotations surrounding the concept of civic engagement might also explain the difficulty in changing the culture. Historically, the term *volunteer* meant to sign up for a stint in the army or to participate in aid drives in foreign countries. As state sponsored communism was built around constant mobilization, a lack of engagement could be a reaction to the mandatory community involvement faced by older generations.

Additionally, due to the limited room for political debate that existed under communism, Polish elders might lack useful civic experience – in the modern democratic sense, that is – that could be passed down to younger generations. This lack could possibly be attributed to the fatigue of permanent mobilization that comes with living in communist societies, a fatigue which was certainly passed down. In established democracies, political socialization that begins in the family is an important precursor to learning civic education (Robertson 2009). A young person who lacks opportunities for political socialization in the home and at school is a lost opportunity for a civil society to grow and evolve. Intergenerational cultural animation projects like the Super Grandma and Super Grandpa School, which promote understanding between the youth and elder Poles, might be a rejuvenating force in family-based political socialization. Even if that socialization is not partisan

or ideological, the emphasis on listening and understanding breeds human compassion and openness to diversity.

In addition to socializing the youth through education, a broad civil society could also provide them with benefits; Gliński advances that the current generation of community workers are skilled and able to take on

“...such problems and needs as: the poverty and cultural neglect of Polish children (26% of children in Poland live in socially neglected areas: street children, children from dysfunctional families, cultural blank spots, unemployment, blocks of flats, cultural peripheries etc.); the apathy and lack of cultural aspirations of many local communities in Poland; the civilizational collapse in ex-state-owned farm areas and structural unemployment; promotion of talents, activation of senior citizens, attitude modification, pressure on local and central politics etc. There is really not one social, welfare or developmental problem which (sic) could not be solved or alleviated with the help of civic activity and institutions” (Gliński 2011, 286).

The state, though meaning to provide space for an effective civil society, largely takes on the onus of rebuilding Poland. One of the first acts of parliament after the fall of communism in 1989 was to pass the Law on Associations, which led to the establishment of thousands of civil society organizations within the first few years of independence. Further, the 1997 Polish Constitution empowered the growth of civil society by guaranteeing the right for associations to form, as well as the supporting role of the state. Finally, the year 2003 saw the Act on Public Benefit and Voluntary Activity renew the government’s commitment to developing the institutions of civil society (Makowski 2010).

Despite the state’s vocal support of participatory organization, however, the institutions of civil society continue to stagnate. The state decides how to allocate money from the European Union as well as its own budget. However, their poor inter-organizational cooperation and communication is a self-defeating behavior

that prevents them from making a challenge to the state. One-third of all organizations in the country say that they have no contact with their counterparts, although they have contacts with local government figures and other community representatives (Rikmann and Keedus, 2013).

Although the Act on Public Benefit empowered civil society by giving it a legal framework, that power is derived from the state instead of letting this institution create its own mandate organize itself under its own auspices. The path of communication is top-down rather than horizontal, and it does not facilitate inter-organizational cooperation (Makowski 2010). There seems to be more of an emphasis on formulating goals and objectives than there is on methods to achieve them, and a 2013 study suggests that this emphasis derives from a heavy workload that shifts attention away from collaboration and therefore potential innovation that would assist in solving community problems (Kozuch & Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek). It seems plausible that the groups who are funded may also be saddled with tasks that the state feels are necessary to carry out, which may or may not coincide with an organization's specialty. Instead of a spirit of partnership, a clientist state of affairs is allowed to exist between the state and individual organizations. (Gliński 2011). These problems hinder civil society's ability to channel social relations and foster grassroots community-building efforts (Makowski 2010), which in turn hurts the development and accruelement of social capital. Because civic dialogue is absent among the political elite and authorities, any potentially new, progressive social dialogue is greatly weakened because those involved in Poland's current social dialogue do not want to compete with a new voice (Gliński 2011).

Millions of euros in structural funds and money from the European Social Fund have been allocated by the European Union for civic projects in Poland, which the government has distributed according to its own logic. It has also distributed them unevenly, leading to a stratification of the organizational scene. EU allocations are typically diverted toward the larger non-governmental organizations and leave out organizations of low economic potential (Glinski 2011). Additionally, the Act on Public Benefit and Voluntary Activity has a bias toward organizations that provide charitable services, an area that has typically been the domain of the Catholic Church (Szczepanski and Sliz 2010). These issues result in what Marek Rymysza (2009) calls a “two-speed” approach to civic development that also causes a breakdown in inter-organizational cooperation.

THE CULTURAL VOID

The cultural void is caused by an underrepresentation of socially progressive art, and it is affected by cultural policy at three levels. In Poland, the MKiDN sets the tone for the overall policy, while the subnational levels, such as voivodships (provinces), powiats (counties), and gminas (municipalities) have their own department of culture through which they receive state funds, but also raise their own. As such, they have more autonomy in deciding their own cultural program. Additionally, the European Union promotes its own cultural policy, most relevantly through structural funds and the European Capitals of Culture project.

National cultural policy has been beset by three characteristics that underscore an acute tone-deafness to voices in the cultural sphere (Hauff 2001).

First, most of the money earmarked in the budget for cultural purposes goes to national staples such as state museums, the Warsaw Philharmonic, and other cultural institutions of that ilk. Funds also go toward promoting access to libraries and cultural centers. Only around four percent of cultural funds have been available to non-governmental organizations, and these are typically in the form of the aforementioned competitions. Second, a new model of patronage was not introduced after decades of the socialist state patronage model, and projects have developed within government circles with cultural leaders being excluded. Cultural ministers have, at times, been lawyers and politicians, and the ones with a cultural background have barely made an impact at all. Third, the MKiDN has been willing to repress art that would scandalize religious citizens at the expense of raising social awareness of issues. Further, administrative measures against smaller institutions, such as the Center for Contemporary Art in Warsaw, which have threatened the existence and/or scope of operations have been linked to controversies over content (Hauff 2001).

In the late 1990s, Poland embarked on a series of decentralization reforms that created subnational levels of administration and devolved responsibilities to them in the area of culture, such as running local cultural centers. However, as Murzyn-Kupisz (2010) points out, the decentralization move has been more formal than substantial. Voivodship assemblies have also had a preference for focusing on cultural staples of national heritage, and local political leaders have had personal involvement with cultural matters, thus continuing a suppression of contemporary

art that answers cultural needs. Culture has been seen as a means, rather than an end, of achieving non-cultural goals such as economic development (78).

The European Union and the “European Capital of Culture” Project

The European Union has picked up a little of the slack on progressive Polish cultural policy in two major ways. First, through distribution of structural funds to both national and subnational governments, it picks up Poland’s slack in funding. More money has been available for cultural staples as well as those competing to get them for projects across the board. However, there has been no evidence to suggest that EU money has had a broadening effect on the selection criteria for who wins those competitions (Murzyn-Kupisz 2010). Even if the criteria were broadened, most, if not all, of the sponsored cultural activities are geared toward passive consumption.

Second, a municipality lucky enough to host a yearlong European Capital of Culture (ECOC) event gets an additional boost of funding from the EU, in combination with funding from other levels of the Polish government. This scenario was the case with Kraków in the year 2000, and it will once again be the case in Wrocław in the year 2016. I find that the ECOC preparations currently taking place provide a large stage for showcasing how cultural animators interact with the state, not just by vying for funding, but by making a concerted effort to insert animation activities into the official cultural program.

A major theme of ECOC is an importance of place and space in the genesis of cultural development, as localities pursue branding and international promotion of

that locality's cultural offer (Palmer et al. 2004; Sykes 2011). It is also a strategy for urban regeneration, as branding gives each locality a fresh face in order to attract tourism and investment (Colomb 2011). However, there are drawbacks. Money allocated for ECOC celebrations is typically used up by the end of the celebration year, as was the case in Kraków, leaving none to be spent on future cultural development (Hughes et al. 2003). Also, the approach to culture is instrumental; investment in cultural activities for tourism and investment possibilities is a trickle-down approach to urban regeneration. Though job creation has been achieved, as in the case of Roubaix, France, other socio-economic problems remain. Urban regeneration through culture cannot work if there is not a commitment to proactive public and political intervention. (Colomb 2011)

In the case of Wrocław, an institution created especially for ECOC ("Wrocław 2016") is managing ECOC preparations, and reports directly to the mayor's office. City mayor Rafał Dutkiewicz, in the city's application for ECOC designation for 2016, invoked the era of Jerzy Grotowski as an outstanding cultural achievement, lauded the efforts of Orange Alternative, and committed to using the benefits of ECOC to improve the school system and develop "genuine civic attitudes" with cultural initiatives having "a special role to play in this effort" (Spaces for Beauty Revisited: Wrocław's Application for the Title of European Capital of Culture 2016, 3). From reading this, it would not be unfair to suppose that cultural animation activities would be at least one focus of the celebration. However, only one such activity – involving saving a decaying building by residential collaboration on new ideas for its use – is on the program of public events (Spaces for Beauty Revisited: Wrocław's

Application for the Title of European Capital of Culture 2016). I will note that revisions to the cultural program have been proposed and possibly accepted, but not yet documented.

Indeed, the city's cultural animators have felt slighted because of being given minimal input into the preparations for the ECOC celebrations. A University of Wrocław-backed group composed of animators, artists and other activists, calling themselves "Citizens of ECOC" (2014) was formed out of this discontent. In their petition to the MKiDN, they protest the one-way nature of the communication between Wrocław 2016 and the general public, as well as the lack of transparency in spending on the planned activities. There is merit to their transparency worries; a recent exhibition of works by Picasso, Goya, and Dali, sponsored for Wrocław 2016, caused an uproar when it was found that the works on display, on which the committee spent upwards of PLN 5 million,²⁴ were low-grade reproductions (Jurgiel 2014). The Citizens demanded that the budget be subjected to public debate, and that funding be put aside to create possibilities for a lasting cultural contribution beyond 2016. They also equate the passive participation in culture to the lack of transparency and communication from Wrocław 2016.

Participation in culture. According to the proposed definition of culture, we believe that the act of participation should be understood as a form of socialization, which is the process of enabling individuals and groups in the community, within which is an important element of shared responsibility, the moment of communication and the effect of a new relationship - the reconfiguration of existing concepts and values. In this perspective, the cultural institution is not materializing selected cultural goods, cultural styles, but establishes a space for a variety of social activities in the area of culture. In this sense, animation and cultural education should focus on the "translation" of cultures (roots / pop culture / heritage) and exercise social and cultural competences. For these activities the starting point should be a local activity

²⁴ Roughly USD \$1.25 million (as of April 2015).

- everything that is going on outside institutions, especially those issues around which focuses social energy (good and bad).

Different, in our opinion, than adopted in that discussed Document, should be understanding of animation and animative role of cultural institutions. Marek Krajewski wrote about it as follows: the starting point for a dialogue between the cultural institution and the public is, first, not so much to offer the viewer an opportunity to hear someone's monologue, but as treating one seriously as a person who is creative, who can bring something to the model of institution. This implies the need to establish between the institution and the public symmetrical relationship in which both parties give something back, none of them dominates, and both are enriched. (Citizens of ECOC 2014, 5)

This petition went unheeded. As the celebration of ECOC does not begin until next year, it will be interesting to observe how the Citizens will further petition the organizational authorities between now and then. These unfolding communicative events will undoubtedly contribute to post-communist culture in this city.

CHAPTER 5: CONTEXTUAL HOLISM AND CULTURAL ANIMATION

How does cultural animation fit into the framework of contextual holism?

First, contextual holism is against focusing exclusively on elite actors, though this does not mean it is based in structuralism. Jan Kubik (2013) views social change and democratic consolidation through what he calls “relationism” or “weak structuralism,” by which he means the relations between agents within structures, and how those relations contribute to popular mobilization (2013, 36). The focus here is on how non-elite actors respond to new situations that place constraints on collective action. Localized networks of actors find ways to “cope” with political arrangements and cultural constraints (50). It is important to understand who animators are as much as the communities that are served by animation projects. If current political arrangements in Poland are such that the growth of civil society is restricted and civic education is non-existent, and the cultural constraints there are such that socially progressive art is deprioritized and ignored, then cultural animation is a practice (or in de Certeau’s parlance, a tactic) that helps Poles “cope” (or “make do”) with these lacks by mobilizing them to act for themselves, for each other, and with each other. Additionally, the way in which animators collect resources for projects – by going to multiple levels of government and the European Union, by applying for tax breaks, and by using relations with community leaders to procure spaces and other materials from churches, schools, and community centers – is also a tactic against the state’s cultural funding strategies.

Second, Kubik specifically addresses Ekiert and Hanson’s concept of “interactional time,” which promotes a contextualized study of social innovation and

subsequent policy outcomes in order, among other things, to establish and study long-term consequences of specific interactions, and exploit the significance of temporal asynchrony²⁵ in tracking changes within a country (52). I interpret the development of the animation sphere as an organizing force that *could* be asynchronous with the state's efforts to develop a civil sphere. My analysis shows that the state has attempted to direct NGOs from the top down, which has resulted in its stagnation, whereas animators are taking on the onus to aid community engagement themselves from the bottom up. The result of this discrepancy is that animators are able to faster create social relations than state-guided NGOs. Additionally, the pushback by the Citizens of ECOC against European Capital of Culture organizers in Wrocław *could also* be a form of asynchrony in that the ECOC organizers had forsaken cultural animation activities and did not foresee the development of a unified opposition encompassing prominent local organizations, including the city's university, in the interest of animation activities. The long-term consequences of these possible asynchronies, however, rely on cultural policy and third sector changes that have yet to take place, and are therefore a subject for further research in the time to come.

The third component of contextual holism is constructivism, which holds that the manner in which people envision the world around them matters for what they do politically. Common visions generate signs, ideas, and eventually social capital (Petro, quoted in Kubik 2013, 56), and Kubik advocates a scholarly emphasis on how signs and ideas are constructed, maintained, and transmitted, as well as how

²⁵ Jan Kubik (2013) uses this term to describe how social and political phenomena affect changes faster in some areas than others (2013, 53).

they influence, and are influenced by, political transformations. Solutions to collective action problems are based on actors' vernacular knowledge of historical trajectories and cultural climates (57). Cultural animation, with its emphasis on culture creation, could function as the genesis for a group of people to create signs and vernacular knowledge among each other. Animators actively encourage others to build models of the world around them, and as such are attempting to influence a Poland that is still transforming.

The fourth component assumes a permanence of formal-informal social network hybrids, which are context-specific. These networks have transitioned from being a late-socialism coping mechanism to being a regular feature of post-communist life (58). Cultural animation, on the whole, is about the formation of informal networks. However, the cultural animation specialty at the University of Warsaw, a formal education institution, could exemplify a constantly regenerating hybrid network. Although students and instructors have a predictably formalized relationship, the horizontal philosophy of cultural animation professes equal supervision and influence among all participants. Theoretically, students have the opportunity to influence how animation is instructed, based upon the talents they display and develop. Through the shift away from hierarchical working relationships, students relearn how to engage with others around them at a formative age.

Finally, context and locality go hand-in-hand in analyzing micro processes of social and political change. Kubik's basic unit of analysis is typically sub-national, though it can include the national level. He bases his rationale for this criterion on

evidence that local communities of trust are sites of mobilization (61). The fall of communism sparked the possibility for an untold number of “local micro-foundations” from which individuals and communities can exert social and political influence (63). The goal of cultural animation, intentionally or otherwise, is to provide favorable conditions for the creation of these local micro-foundations. In helping enact community projects, animators are attempting to exert indirect influence on macro-processes in Poland. Conversely, in petitioning local officials to include animation activities in the European Capital of Culture program, animators are attempting direct influence over macro-processes of cultural policy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Cultural animation is a micro-process that has developed in Poland among a subset cultural practitioners who create projects with members of a local community, and focus on process and interaction. The process stands in contrast to many state-sponsored participatory and cultural functions, contrasts that I have framed as voids in this thesis. It addresses the participatory void by making projects widely accessible across geographic and demographic scales. It also addresses the civic void by actively encouraging others to create their own forms of culture that do not rely on state-promoted ones. The hope is that participants continue to build upon the results of their projects together, and thus continue to create their own culture, after the animators depart. This is where I find an issue.

The interaction does not just take place between project participants. Animators do form bonds with project participants, though they implicitly worry that these bonds hinder the very act of culture creation independent of the projects conducted with the animators (Dworakowska et al. 2008, 116). Once the animators leave, it is unclear how much more the participants create under their own auspices. I believe such a bond is not a hindrance, but an opportunity. Animators should encourage self-guided animation projects in exchange for two-way correspondence and other forms of continued involvement as animators confer, for better or worse, a sort of perceived legitimacy onto the actions of participants. The legitimacy might

soften the agency of participants, but it could be a way to strengthen their numbers, which would be an important move in their bid to find greater cooperation with the state.

At the same time, however, they are keeping their participants separate from the politicized nature of achieving that cooperation, which might negatively impact participants' interest in animation projects stemming from their aversion to politics. We are seeing the front end of a protracted entanglement between the sphere of animators and policymakers via the debate over ECOC cultural content in Wrocław. One thing that I hope has been clear throughout this thesis is that animators do not seek an adversarial relationship with the state. Their long-term plan is to continue to reach out to local and regional governments even as they acknowledge that these governments lack a strategy for the development of culture ("Współpraca z samorządami" 2014). The barriers on the cultural level are driving the response by the Citizens of ECOC on the civic level. The outcome of this debate, of course, has yet to be decided, but animators seem to have strength in numbers as they try to expand the definition of culture.

A major theme of this thesis has been the failure of Polish partisanship versus the animation of the local; cultural animation has a chance to be a meaningful community engagement platform in the wake of partisan and civic participatory institutions that had been slacking. Yet, what would come of extended interaction between the animators and governing spheres? Could the practice of cultural animation itself become a partisan endeavor? It depends on the nature of the relationship, which must truly be a partnership. The state must be willing to realize

the active potential of animation projects without co-opting them for instrumental purposes. Also, conversations with animators have revealed to me that they see their craft as a profession, and would like to be paid as such. The threat of cultural animation becoming a partisan tool also lies in how much the animators would be willing to compromise their ideas. Their desire to be gainfully employed should also resist the path of the French cultural animation sphere, which began to offer their services on a commercial basis to those of particular interests, translating in this case to a divorce from its earlier political intentions (Lorenz 1994, 101-102). Such a move may disrupt some ideas fundamental to the function of animation projects, such as non-hierarchical co-operation structures and letting participants be the collective executors of their own ideas.

On one hand, cultural animation can be seen as something of a triumph of post-communism because it is relatively depoliticized. When Roch Sulima talks about cultural animation's avoidance of "narrow, politically-conditioned rules of interpreting modern social life" (Godlewski 2002, 71), I interpret her to mean that the practice is not informed by party politics or an organized ideology. The lack of civil society and education in Poland actually work to the benefit of cultural animation. It escapes being a politically overcharged pursuit because animators, who can be independent of the political scene themselves, work with community members from all walks of life who are strongly aware of politics but weakly partisan as a whole. Moreover, it lacks a program to turn its form of community engagement into a political institution. On the other hand, any project that attempts to influence a group of people is inherently political, though it may not be partisan.

Community engagement creates social capital that is available for members to use at an appropriate time. Using it for a future political goal is certainly not out of the question. I find that cultural animators, while artists and thinkers, are fueling the capacity to create another kind of civil society altogether. Cultural animation is an attempt to help groups of people transcend the state by creating their own culture, even as the animators themselves must interact with the state to keep the practice going.

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