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Art as a Means to Produce Social Benefits and Social Innovations

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Introduction: Changes in the Artistic Field

These days the predominant political and economic assumption concerning art and culture is that they should be used for profits. This assumption is implicit in such notions as "economy of culture," "creative industries," or "urban renewal," as a part of so-called post-Fordism, cognitive capitalism, or knowledge economy. A number of development advocates, including UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) experts, have argued that art and culture can be profitable in a neoliberal, market-oriented, commercial sense. For this reason, contemporary societies are expected to support "creativity" and "innovation" (two catchphrases of the day) in order to stimulate economic growth, especially in such sectors as information technology, tourism, advertising, art markets, design, fashion, film, mass media, and music.

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Some artists and modern art proponents have responded to this trend by reviving the elitist "art for art's sake" argument that "true" art has to be divorced from any utilitarian function. Though speaking mostly in defense of their particular interests, and in the first instance trying to secure the state financing of "autonomous," "avant-garde," or "experimental" artistic production, they have pointed to the central problem of "cultural capitalism." The presumed creativity of cultural industries is in fact very limited, for it is bound to support the cultural hegemony of the new global economic order. Unless commercializing dissent, the cultural markets gradually marginalize the role of critical thinking, radical action, counterculture, alternative lifestyles, and creative communities.

There is also another group of artists who see art as essentially useful, although not in a commercial but social sense. These artists are supported by many other social actors, such as cultural animators, educators, social workers, activists, and just ordinary citizens. The practices they have been collectively introducing at least since the 1970s (dubbed a decade of participatory revolution) fall into a number of theoretical categories: public art, new genre public art, street art, activist art, community art, participatory art, social practice, collaborative art, dialogic art, and cooperative art.[1] What these practices have in common is at least partial abandonment of the art world frames and turn toward meaningful interactions with nonartistic individuals and communities, in order to provide art with social importance and impulse. They are strongly influenced by democratic imagination, often following Joseph Beuys' idea that "every man is an artist," not so much a creator of artworks as a conscious subject of social change.

To complete the picture, it is perhaps necessary to see the above domains of artistic practice, commercial, vanguard, and social, not only in mutual conflict, but also in contrast with the canonical or legitimate art world and its consecrated artistic traditions. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1995), the artistic field has a fourfold structure, which is marked by constant struggle for social positioning within the field. These conflicts encompass not only aesthetics (styles and conventions), but also the issues of arts production, accessibility, utility, discourse, reception, participation, and recognition. The boundaries, rules, and roles of the artistic field are historical and changeable. Thus, they should not be taken

for granted. Neither should they be treated as disconnected from other fields of social life. Although, since the nineteenth century, the field has enjoyed relative autonomy, it remains responsive to shifts in outward power relations. Bourdieu (1995, 127) writes:

> If the permanent struggles between possessors of specific capital and those who are still deprived of it constitute the motor of an incessant transformation of the supply of symbolic products, it remains true that they can only lead to deep transformations of the symbolic relations of force that result in the overthrowing of the hierarchy of genres, schools and authors when these struggles can draw support from external changes moving in the same direction.

For that very reason, from the moment the artistic field won its relative autonomy, the relationship between the four modes of symbolic creation enumerated by Bourdieu has been many a time disturbed and reconfigured. Already in the first decades of the twentieth century, artistic vanguards not only rejected conventional artistic media, such as painting or sculpture, but also discarded purely aesthetic innovations. Dada in Western Europe and constructivism in Eastern Europe were all about experiments, both artistic, and social, while modernist architecture made a practical step into social utopia. Since the 1950s, adoption of "environments," "happenings," and "actions" has turned artists' attention to the everyday as an art's material, and the everyman as an art's participant. In the following decades, in the Western countries, art has literally been taken to the streets and intermixed with the life politics of new social movements. Feminism and postcolonialism have questioned the legitimacy of cultural canons, norms, and representations. In the late modern age, the patterns of art reception, although still serving distinctions, are gradually shifting toward individualism and "omnivorousness" (see Peterson and Kern 1996), and the Internet is transforming everyone into a cultural producer. From this perspective, artistic practices described by such notions as Suzanne Lacy's "new genre public art" or Beuys' "social sculpture" may be seen as resulting from wider social processes of democratization.

When one looks at the present-day artistic field, it becomes clear that for each of the quarters of Bourdieu's grid, the consequences of democra-

tization vary. While in the case of legitimate art, democratization comes with a wider popular access to public arts institutions, such as museums, galleries, theaters, and even arts schools, avant-garde art, whether formally radical or socially critical or both, makes use of democratic rights, such as freedom of speech and expression, to create a necessarily political impact or, as Jacques Ranciere (2004) argues, to redistribute the sensible. Nonetheless, both legitimate and vanguard artistic creations remain oriented to the art world and cater mostly for the sophisticated taste of the upper and upper-middle classes. They also establish cultural values that are imposed on the rest of society.

On the other hand, commercial and social art seem to be more egalitarian in their outreach. Because commercial art is by definition profit driven, it provides mostly for the common taste of the middle and lower classes (the majority of society), and its democratic dimension is reduced to mass access and reception. By means of reproduction, appropriation, and popularization, commercial art feeds on the legitimate and even avant-garde art, creating additional channels for their circulation. It might be seen as opposed by both avant-garde art and social art; however, the sources of these oppositions are not the same. While avant-garde art tends to be critical of the commodification of art (hence the development of performance art, concept art, and such), social art constitutes itself as a form of grassroots engagement. It is directly connected to the ideas of public participation and social benefits, as contrasted with mere arts participation and artistic effect of many a practice of contemporary art. Hence, as far as democratic systems are concerned, today's social art, rather than bringing about revolution, serves as a means to reproduce the democratic conditions, including empowerment (participation in decision-making, countering discrimination), pluralism (multitude of worldviews and lifestyles), and criticism (readiness to reflect upon the *status quo* and to introduce changes).

Social Art: A Theoretical Framework

This chapter is focused on the notion of social art, introduced as a theoretical model and further developed on the basis of qualitative research conveyed in Poland between 2010 and 2012, with the main focus being

on in-depth interviews with animators, participants, and observers of the practices under scrutiny.[2] The term "social art" is derived from Joseph Beuys' idea of social sculpture (*soziale Skulptur*), among other inspirations; however, it is given a more scientific, sociological, and empirically rooted meaning. The adjective "social" suggests a parallel to social activity and social organizations, as social art takes place in the same sector of society. Furthermore, it highlights the theoretical distinction of social art from public art, community art, activist art, and other partly similar phenomena.[3] I have decided to introduce this term into sociology also to avoid getting involved in disputes over the aesthetic or artistic value of the so-called "social practice" (Lind 2012), held by art theorists and critics.[4]

I propose to define social art as a combination of five interrelated elements: (1) the aim or result of an activity (social change or public benefit), (2) the addressees of the activity (broad social groups or categories, such as a rural community, an urban neighborhood, immigrants, women, and youths), (3) the way the addressees are engaged in the activity—as creators or recipients of art (no requirements of artistic skill, or other intended barriers of participation or reception), (4) the place where the activity is undertaken (public, noninstitutional sphere,[5] within the middle-level structures, outside both the art world and public cultural institutions), and (5) the quality of the activity (bottom-up, spontaneous, self-organized, responsive, oriented toward civil and democratic values).

Social art may be created by individuals or groups, including professional artists working solo or in collaboration, as well as by communities, and even spontaneous collectives, such as crowds or social movements, that act in the mezzo-sphere, between the microprivate and macropublic structures, and beyond "traditional" political, cultural, and economic institutions. It is usually set in the context of an open public space, local community, or minority group, that is, a group of lower social status with limited possibilities for citizen or political action. In comparison with other forms of civil activity, social art may be characterized by a broader scope of participants' creativity, fuller recognition of their agency, and a higher level of spontaneity in action. It also meets two basic standards of civil society: empowerment and subsidiarity. As a civil activity, it rests on the idea of engaging "with people," and not merely "for people"; it operates through reciprocal communication, interaction, and exchange.

Encouraging equal participation, social art prepares individuals for independent, creative, critical thinking and conscious interference with one's environment (be it material, social, or political). It does not provide participants with ready solutions, nor does it supply them with goods, or services. Instead, it equips the participants, either creators or recipients of art, with intellectual and conceptual tools, which, by changing the way they think and act toward their surroundings, enable them to achieve the changes they desire on their own.

Defined as above, social art constitutes a specific area (enclave) of civil society or, in other words, the third sector of society (separate from both the state and the market). It comprises all sorts of activities linking artistic creation with social activism. The instances of social art include participatory artistic practices, interventionist strategies within public art, street art and street culture (including adbusting and culture jamming), artistic "new communities,"[6] community art, Internet collective projects, associations of amateur artists, unconventional theatrical practices, grassroots creation of cultural spaces, contemporary folk art, as well as individual unprofessional artistic creativity (boosted by electronic media) and beautification of one's surroundings. The research findings presented in this chapter show that social art serves a number of crucial civil functions, such as social articulation, creation of social bonds, and social mobilization, to mention but a few, which makes it a vehicle of social benefits and changes, both on the structural and on the cultural level.

Social Benefits and Social Innovations

Social benefits and social innovations may be understood as any activity that strengthens civil society, and, as such, refer to both the purpose and the process or performance of a social action. According to Piotr Gliński (2007), one of the most prominent Polish theorists and researchers of civil society, social or public benefit indicates any socially useful activity, which either provides a society with some goods or services they need, or indirectly serves the development of some desired features of society, such as openness, pluralism, or democracy. Defined as this, social benefit can take two forms: external (when it affects broader social collectives) or

internal (when it is constrained to the members of a certain group or organization[7]). Peter F. Drucker (2011) stresses that in the nongovernmental, nonprofit sector, innovation should be seen as a new dimension of performance, rather than merely the intent of change. Looking at social art from this perspective, one needs to focus on the effects it may possibly produce on the level of civil society.

However, the effects of social art are not easy to count or measure. Professionalized nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) usually formulate their aims as SMART: specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, and time-bound. The problem with this tactic is that it reduces the meaning of their social efficacy to countable results and short-term perspective, while changes caused by NGOs (as well as other forms of civil activity) are mostly of a social and cultural kind; they concern attitudes,[8] social relations and networks, and collective concepts (identity, memory, imagery, values and norms, mentality). Hence, the effects of civil enterprises, first, are difficult to isolate; second, they should be observed over an extended span of time. Consequently, the number of recipients or participants should never be used as the ultimate measure of the efficacy of social art, especially because, in comparison with other forms of civil activity, the practice seems to have a greater potential for indirect influence on society, showing a certain "radiating" quality.

The feminist performer and activist Suzanne Lacy (in Roth 1989) points to three dimensions of her socially engaged artistic practice that she considers as indicators of its social effect or success; these are: (1) the quality of the performance experience for its participants and audience; (2) the potential of the networking inherent in her practice as a model that could be applied elsewhere—in other communities, to other issues, under different circumstances; and (3) the continuity of the processes started by the performance in time. Still, when it comes to self-assessment, she remains critical of the efficacy of her art, especially as far as its networking and continuity possibilities are concerned. On the other hand, the art historian Deborah J. Haynes (1997) points to the capacity of art, such as Lacy's, to provoke emotional response and social actions, including those aimed at suppressing the effect of a certain artistic piece. She matches this capacity to the "power of image" as an attribute of any art, from painting to performance, and concludes that "especially when created in collaboration and with both

aesthetic and political savvy, art is a powerful tool for changing consciousness and creating social change" (Hayness 1997, 48). Yet, neither the artist, nor the historian propose any methodological means that would allow a more systematic empirical access to the enumerated aspects of art's, in particular social art's, efficacy.

An attempt at a more scientific, in this case quantitative, questionnaire-based evaluation of the social benefits of participation in the arts[9] was made by a British think tank Comedia and François Matarasso (1997). Between 1995 and 1997, the researchers explored the social impact of artistic practices in six different, though partly overlapping, areas: (1) personal development, (2) social cohesion, (3) community empowerment and self-determination, (4) local image and identity, (5) imagination and vision, and (6) health and well-being. The empirical material they collected allowed them to enumerate 50 different social outcomes that can be produced by participatory arts projects, on the level of both individuals and society. On the part of individuals, such projects are reported to result in increased self-confidence, the learning of new skills, and interest in something new, while their societal outcomes include the creation of social bonds, learning about diverse cultures, and getting involved in other community activities, to mention but a few examples. The researchers attribute the social benefits brought about by art to such qualities as creativity, openness, and elasticity. Although methodologically and ideologically disputable (see Merli 2002), their research does provide evidence that the changes set in motion by art can be observed, evaluated, and planned in community contexts.

Still another, and in my opinion, the most adequate approach to art as a means to produce social benefits and social innovations can be derived from the civil society theories and research, and it is connected to the sociological notion of social functions. Gliński (2005) specifies such functions of the civil sector as identification and articulation of various social groups' needs and interests, expression of social protests, citizen control over governments on various levels (local, state, global), participation in legal procedures and decision-making (through voting initiatives or social consultations), warning against social hazards and conflicts, generating middle-level structures and actions, formulating alternative visions of social development, education, and creation of a citizen cul-

ture. If social art is a specific enclave of civil society, as it was stated above, it must, at least to some extent, fulfill these (and perhaps some other) civil functions.

Social Art in Poland: Research Findings

The civil functions of social art, seen as benefits and innovations brought about by this kind of activity, and as indicators of its efficacy, can be divided into three categories, according to the typical contexts in which they occur: the public space, local communities, and social minorities. The limited space of this chapter does not allow a detailed presentation of the research findings for each of these categories; hence, the analysis provided below takes the form of a synthetic, even sketchy, account of the field observations.[10]

Social Art in Public Space

Social art is by definition a public activity. Hence, it either is undertaken directly in some public, shared space, or in some way, be it conceptual, performative, or interactive, actively refers to the public sphere, especially by involving the notions of discourse, opinion, communication, conflict, consensus, and representation. Within this empirical category of social art, one may enumerate: murals, graffiti and other forms of street art, theatrical actions, performances, happenings, Situationist interventions, relational projects (based on encounter and interaction), social actions, informational campaigns, subvertising, Internet projects, public events (such as parades, games, or dances), and even collective rituals. In terms of civil functions, social art in public space may serve the purposes of social protest, articulation, critique,[11] communication, and mobilization. It is generally oriented toward constructing, broadening, and reclaiming public space.

The interviewees define public space as an alternative field of artistic practice, which in turn becomes more open, interactive, and participatory, or as the arena of civil activity that resorts to art to introduce changes in

people and their environment, or, perhaps most interestingly, as the domain of spontaneous emergence of social and cultural structures. "It's just that I am always going out with my work—says one of the interviewed artists—and I talk to people, because people are afraid of going to galleries, and don't understand contemporary art" [IA33].[12] Another interviewee, an artist-activist, states: "There is no reason that we shouldn't think of public space as our own field to cultivate" [PS7]. Furthermore, public space is treated as common property, which everyone is entitled to use: "In public space you can act yourself […], do what you like, and not necessarily the others. But, of course, any other person has the right to come and change what you've done. It's the risk of acting in an open space, our space" [IA17]. Seeing public space as "ours," some interviewees elaborate on more participatory models of its organization, such as "city 2:0" (like web 2:0, which is created and controlled by the users). "The city should be available to be changed, so that some percentage of this space would be 'soft', so that everyone could paint, or move, or bring something, or reconstruct it in some way" [IA11]. And finally, the interviewees with subcultural background, such as punk or hip-hop, consider public space as a "tissue" that, through noninstitutional creative activity (in music, dance, performance, or graffiti), spontaneously generates social bonds and norms:

> They identify with each other—says the leader of a punk band—there is certain loyalty, and certain rules. It's civil, as far as it results from a contact with another human being. These groups act very organically—I can count on you, you can count on me […]. I think that nowadays there is more civil society in the streets, than in all those socially perceptible, acceptable and legitimized structures. [KN5]

However, the civil quality of such subcultural social capital seems questionable because of its bonding, excluding, and closing nature (see Putnam 1993).

Most interviewees match the concept of public space with the city. This assumption implies that modern civil life is a necessarily urban phenomenon. Yet, public space is not only identified with streets, plazas, squares, and parks, but rather seen as elastic. It is equally associated with pubs, cafés, and shops, providing that these are not exclusory sort of places. Public space is defined in terms of open, easy access and the pos-

sibility of meeting other people, rather than public ownership. The interviews also show innovativeness in relation to the places of arts creation and presentation, with preference for nonart spaces, from private apartments, through backyards and bus stops, to billboards, which are available to people who normally do not attend art museums, or even cultural centers. One of the interviewees explains: "We can do art on the street, as well as at the theater. Literally everywhere. Or in a private apartment" [KK1]. In this way, social art not only transcends conventions of gallery art, but also broadens the scope of public art.

On the other hand, in small-town and rural contexts, the notion of public space is rarely referred to directly, except for projects that deal specifically with the aesthetics of the common spaces in a town or village. Yet, in these contexts, social art is often oriented toward bottom-up creation of community cultural centers that are supposed to fill in the "cultural void,"[13] which is characteristic of a Polish province. This is connected to another typical rationale for social art, which is reconstruction of local customs and traditions, such as decoration, song, and music, which are vanishing under the pressures of modernization and globalization. It is important to note, however, that this reconstruction is not aimed at the revival of a traditional community, but at strengthening local bonds by creating a new kind of "civil community": modern, open, culturally self-aware, and self-governed.

Apart from urban and rural references, the category of public space becomes extended due to the development of new, electronic, largely social media. Consequently, material space and cyberspace are seen as equivalent sites of public artistic practice. "We live in a digital world—says a promoter of street art—so the truth is that one can paint a picture on his own waste container, and it may live on the Internet, and 99% of its audience is on the Internet. Thus, in my opinion, street art is really done mostly on the Internet" [KKl3]. To some extent, the new media replace cultural institutions, such as galleries or cinemas; they allow access to wider audiences and encourage nonprofessional creative practices and spontaneous changes in the social definition of art. A net artist explains: "So it actually means that we can understand art in any possible way, and a work of art is, as if, a material that you are given to create your own meanings from" [PS2]. Moreover, social art in the cyberspace utilizes new possibilities for interaction (such as gamification) and news circulation

(from independent media to mediatization of social issues), which the electronic media offer.

A number of interviewees point to the correlation between the quality of public space and the development of civil society. They perceive art as a means of grassroots reclamation of public space, both in its aesthetic and in its social dimension. This process of reclamation is described as manifold. First, it is associated with the recovery of public space as an agora or forum, a site of democratic, public debate. This perspective is voiced, for instance, in the following passage:

> That's why I do street art and socially engaged graffiti. Because it is a superb vehicle for different ideas and opinions. This is my way to transmit these ideas and deliver them to the public, hoping that I can inspire them to act for the benefit of the others. [PS22]

Second, the quality of public space is connected to the Aristotelian notion of "philia," so it is seen as a site of socializing and fostering of the spirit of community:

> I have no intention of delivering any artificial workshops here—declares an interviewed artist. I simply want the things that will happen here during this month, the things that we'll do together, for which people will come here, things that we'll experience, I want these things to give fruits. [IA33]

Third, social art is adopted as a tool for decommercializing public space. However, in Poland, the radical tactics of adbusting or subvertising are not so popular as in Western Europe and North America. In Polish public space, anticapitalist attitudes are usually expressed through critical murals, stencils, or billboards. We are told, for example:

> One may say the optimistic option is overrepresented, while no one speaks about the real problems that are shaking this world. […] Because of the underrepresentation of the reflexive element, the problematic element, our projects are largely devoted to such issues. [IA18]

Fourth, the reclamation of public space takes the form of community organizing—engaging citizens in a variety of artistic activities, usually

held within a neighborhood, and enabling participants of these activities to collectively reshape their immediate environment:

> Look at this project. It isn't spectacular at all. We may take this stuff, and everything is gone, it becomes a lawn again. What's going on here is a kind of magic: people enter, get emotional, open up, experience something, and so on. And they start to create this reality on their own. [IA33]

Finally, the notion of reclamation is associated with the revitalization of public space, but one which is founded on alternative, postmaterialist values, such as ecology or community (see Inglehart 1990). Social art practitioners typically distance themselves from commercial revitalization and the gentrification that follows. Instead, they aim at raising the quality of local life and nurturing local identities.

In comparison with institutionalized public art, social art in public space follows a different logic. An individual artist tends to become less important, the creative process, often participatory, is seen as equally relevant as the artistic effect, and the art is primarily aimed at engaging people—intellectually, emotionally, and practically. As reported by the interviewees, social art in public space allows: making new social contacts; creating community; provoking reflection; overstepping mental barriers; communicating ideas, opinions, needs, and social problems; exposing hidden commercial messages or taboo social issues; commenting on public policies; broadening of the repertoire of collective action; inspiring social engagement; creating educational situations; supporting the everyday work of NGOs; animating the public space; and, last but not least, upholding grassroots creativity. Hence, it might be concluded that in public space, social art draws its potential for producing social benefits and innovations from the alternative, unconventional possibilities of expression, communication, and participation that it opens.

Social Art in Local Communities

In the local context, social art may address any of the four dimensions of a local community: spatial (attitudes toward the place), social (character of social bonds), mental (identity, sense of belonging), and civic (self-

organized activity). It may be used for the sake of creating positive connections to locality, strengthening social bonds, or constructing collective identity. It may also help to mobilize community members around their common interests. A wide range of strategies, methods, tools, and means of expression may be applied to achieve these ends, including street art, performance, psychogeography, theater, photography, and video-making, to mention but a few. In local communities, practitioners of social art typically resort to history, ethnography, and local cultural resources, such as customs, traditions, symbols, legends, songs, designs, and other elements of folk art or street culture. The activities are necessarily interdisciplinary—combining artistic expression with education, social work, or simply entertainment—as well as participatory and community based. Hence, social art in local contexts also creates an alternative to more conventional, usually event-oriented, cultural offers provided by public cultural institutions; it broadens people's access to cultural activity and education, and supports grassroots initiatives in the cultural domain.

Within the research framework, social art was observed in four types of local communities: village communities, which often experience economic deterioration caused by transformation (e.g., former State Agricultural Farms), small peripheral ("provincial") towns, and large cities: either in residential districts consisting of large blocks of flats or in high-poverty neighborhoods (ghettos). In such locations, economic deprivation goes hand in hand with cultural barriers, such as passivity, resignation, and dependence, while participation in public life requires the opposite—activity, engagement, and self-reliance. Hence, socioartistic activities that address these conditions often focus on the "change in human beings" (Drucker 2011) and deal with the way in which community members perceive their surroundings (the place, the people), and their own role in modeling it.

The research allows us to divide the practices under scrutiny into three categories: intervention projects (one-time, ephemeral, led by "landing troops" of artists/animators), "portable" or "nomadic" projects (multiplied, following the same concept and pattern of action in various communities), and "being in a community" (based on permanent presence and work in a local environment, rooted in a specific local context). The interviewees see "being in a community" as the most desirable model of

activity on the local level, which, however, due to structural blockades, such as lack of stable funding, or local elites' disengagement, is rarely implemented, and for many an organization remains unreachable. This explains, why, in spite of the advantages associated by the interviewees with this model, such as the possibility of long-term and multidimensional participation and stronger connection to the community based on trust and personal bonds, it is intervention that predominates in local contexts. In addition, the interviews reveal that the dependence of social art projects on annual granting schedules, which is typical of the Polish subsidizing system, not only makes long-term engagement impossible, but also limits art's efficacy by leading to the so-called phantom activity (see Gliński 2006).[14]

However, the major obstacle to the desired functionality of social art in local communities is their dependence on external resources. A young participant in an arts project notes: "For children, it was fascinating, and for the community in general, that something was happening in the village. Everyone knows that the countryside is a dead place. But if you start something, it's getting cool" [PS20]. A participant of another project shares this opinion: "No one was interested in our village before. No projects were proposed. Nothing. […] No one came here. […] I wish there were more projects like this" [PS27]. Her twin sister adds: "Exactly. In summer, for example, what could we do with our time? It was boredom. The village is small. I wish another project was done here" [PS27]. A village leader makes a similar observation: "The youngsters […] had a lot of fun, played different games, some new ideas were born, and suddenly it all stopped. […] Nothing's going on. Now they're waiting for some new action" [PS39]. The artists and animators working in local communities perceive them as "an extremely immature society" [PS21]. It is symptomatic of the village communities that they tend to await support, intervention, or inspiration from the outside. Usually, the villagers are eager to help, but are incapable of initiating their own actions. Most of the communities are unable to self-organize and tackle common tasks, which results in an underuse of their own potential and possibilities for development. Consequently, small-town and village communities tend to rely on some kind of outsourcing. Artists and animators come to a place, bringing knowledge and skills, as well as material resources (grants

of various kind), with them. When they are gone, the community returns to its usual passive ways.

When comparing different arts projects carried out in local contexts, we find a close connection between the level of a community's participation and incorporation of the members' own experiences within the project's framework. If a project or program engages the people inside their everyday practice, it is more likely to be accepted and thus becomes an important part of the community's life. I propose to call such projects "affirmative," as they require recognition of the community and the members' own experience, be it historical or cultural. On the other hand, if artists or animators try to introduce something "vanguard" and detached from the local cultural, historical, and social context, they often meet with mental, cultural, or social obstacles. However, "being in a community" allows gradual enrichment of the action repertoire: from means that are close to the community's experiences that are accessible, and intelligible, to those that are more demanding, and unfamiliar, but, because of that, also appealing. With this in mind, it is important to stress that rejection of a project by a community is often determined by the project's very characteristics, such as separation from the local context, limited participation of the community members, incomprehensibility of the project's rationale, imposition of expert "treatment" upon the community, dismissal of the community's voice, or priority given to the artists', not to the community's, interests. Under these circumstances, social art may become a source of conflict in the community, or between the artists and the community, or the artists and the local government.

As regards the notion of development, it is addressed by the interviewees either from an individual or from a social perspective. In the first case, social art is reported to foster one's cultural capital (see Bourdieu and Passeron 2000), to help enhance skills necessary to adapt to the modern world, increase self-esteem, break the circle of deprivation, isolation, and passivity, as well as to develop creative talents and artistic skills. In the second case, it is stated that social art increases community capacity, especially in such aspects as cooperation, self-governance, participation, self-organization, and creativity. Among the functions of social art that are related to community development, the interviewees point to: regional and local education, strengthening of local patriotism, maintaining (and

building upon) positive local identity, appreciation and promotion of the locality, social inclusion, developing the habit of civic engagement, and changing attitudes to being more community oriented. Nevertheless, I would argue that in spite of such a wide array of possible (and apparently achievable) effects, boosting community capacity through social art is not an easy task. First and foremost, it does take time, and also, it requires active involvement by the community.

Social Art in Minority Groups

Social minorities constitute a wide sociological category which encompasses racial, national, ethnic, religious, and language groups, as well as groups that are distinguished on other grounds, such as social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, place of living, health, disability, homelessness, being a member of a subculture, profession, or identification with an ethos group. In fact, any social or cultural characteristic may become the reason for differentiation from the sociocultural background and result in division into minority and majority. According to Louis Wirth's (in Marshall 1998, 420–421) "classic" definition, a minority group is "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."

Against this background, social art constitutes a class of noninstitutional practices that form a base for cultural democracy and inclusive social structures. The functions it may fulfill in this context include the broadening of the public sphere, creation of social discourse and imagery, expression of social conflicts, construction of situations of reciprocal communication (dialogue), facilitation of the process of learning about the Other, reorganization of public space, either symbolic or material, and facilitation of the process of social therapy. Analysis of art's efficacy in relation to social inclusion should not be narrowed to art created by the excluded (from different aspects of social reality, including art itself), but rather focus on the possibilities of changing the rules of social exclusion, extending the chances of democratic participation, and stimulating cre-

ative and reflexive subjective action. The research encompasses three types of minorities, defined by their cultural status (women, the elderly, children and youths, gays, and lesbians), economic status (underclass, communities of former State Agricultural Farms, and of urban ghettos), or specific circumstances (disability, health problems, especially mental illness, imprisonment, refuge, and immigration).

Nearly all cases of social art engaging minority groups that were approached in the research fall into the category of assistance and/or advocacy. Such undertakings are intended to create opportunities for participation in culture in the narrow sense,[15] and for expression of the group's experiences, needs, and interests in the public sphere with the use of artistic means, and—not so rare a case—also of the engaged artist's social capital (access to art institutions, position within artistic circles). To a varied degree, these activities fulfill the subsidiarity rule, which means that the support provided is supposed to strengthen the citizens' activity, and not to lead to their dependence. In the case of social art, this rule operates through the (1) creation of situations in which participants act on their own, and receive support only when it is necessary; (2) delegation of creative prerogatives and decision-making to the participants; and (3) recognition of their initiatives, proposals, and opinions. Hence, fulfillment of the subsidiarity rule is connected to the democratization of the action, of the artistic process, and—in the end—of art as such. This, in turn, allows a better understanding of local or environmental conditions, a higher level of accuracy of the initiated actions (their correspondence with social needs), and acceptance on the part of the group, which results in wider participation and positive reception by the audience or community. This is how an artist engaged with a group of disabled people explains this rule:

> There's a place for their ideas. The group is open. I'm the one who puts on the fire. […] The one who makes sure that the energy is flowing. This is mutual satisfaction. […] In case of this group, provoking some experiences meets with friendly openness. They join, they cooperate, sometimes they only follow, other times they create by themselves. I can see their transformation, and this makes me feel that the whole thing is important. Because

> I can see that they don't get reliant on me. They just feel well in a situation, in which they can do what they want. And they can do a bit less than when they were in good health. And they are excluded, too. Due to their creative activity they join in different circles, which are normally beyond their reach. An art piece of theirs was presented abroad, and it gives me satisfaction that I can be used as a multipurpose door. We were invited, as a group, that is me and the group. Somebody accepted this formula of work, and few days ago our sculpture was bought at an arts fair. [KN13]

Subscribing their actions to the subsidiarity rule, practitioners of social art define their goals in terms of: (1) greater fulfillment of cultural needs of diverse social groups, which in turn allows counteracting cultural deprivation[16]; (2) strengthening of informal social networks within a group or community, and opening channels for exchange with the outer environment, which can be seen as creating positive social capital (see Putnam 1993); (3) providing participants with tools that they may use to change their own life, such as therapy, education, assistance, and chances for self-development; (4) broadening participation—in artistic endeavors, and—via art—in public life; and, finally, (5) representation of the excluded, dependent, and stigmatized social categories. Above all, social art in minority groups is aimed at: involving these groups in public activity, broadening their repertoire of activity with artistic means and forms, and strengthening their conviction that they can act, that is, can shape their own situation and their environment. Thus, in minority contexts, social art practitioners pay a lot of attention to participants' self-esteem as a base for feeling worthy, their social competence as a base for integration, and public performance as a base for empowerment. A street worker explains:

> One of our tools is a kids' project. They may take pictures, or make a film, but they always have to do something complex, […] and take it to the end, achieve some result. […] And then comes this moment [of public presentation] when they can feel really proud of themselves, and this is extremely important to them. And still another reason to run these projects is to teach them some social skills […]. So that they can see, after months of work, that they can deal with it on their own. [KN10]

On the other hand, the empirical material collected in the research presents a wide spectrum of cases in which social art is applied as an advocacy tool. Within this framework, art is used to prevent stereotyping; bring minorities into public view; symbolically elevate their social status; mediate their needs, problems, and interests; or show alternative visions of social reality (as tolerant, inclusive, multicultural). However, it is important to note that advocacy usually means performing in somebody else's name. An artist photographer points to this problem:

> It seems to me that after all it is my voice, not theirs. They do participate in it, they do agree with it […], but still each of these two statements [photographic participatory projects] is a statement of mine, and I don't give voice to individual persons. These are my reflections, my vision of the world, rather than giving voice to someone else. [KN8]

Hence, advocacy, as a function of social art, does not pair with full empowerment of the participants. However, in the case of some groups, such as the intellectually disabled or mentally ill, it is perhaps the only possibility for including them into the public sphere. Therefore, the interviewees claim advocacy to be an important function of social art. Especially that, by advocacy, they mean not only representation of particular disadvantaged groups, but also articulation of more general issues, values, or ideas. Considering this, antidiscrimination actions (workshops, campaigns) or intercultural education may well be seen as advocacy.

Compared with public space and local communities, social art in the minority context implies a different set of goals, such as assistance and advocacy; specific strategies, such as participation, therapy, integration, education, and expression; as well as distinguishing ethical questions, such as how to help, and not hinder, who has the right to represent a minority, if not themselves, or how to ensure empowered participation. Seen as "art for multiculturalism,"[17] social art broadens possibilities for exerting cultural rights, which refer to participation in culture, as well as civil rights, which are connected to participation in public life, of diverse groups, including those who normally cannot take part in the democratic process, such as the intellectually disabled.

Conclusions

Generally, my aim in this chapter has been to propose and briefly describe an alternative approach to art that problematizes its civic functions (effects), regarded as the social benefits and social innovations that it may produce. The picture of social art in Poland that I have drawn here, partly with the use of interviewees' voices, allows us to see it as an innovative civil practice, in which art is used to bring about pro-democratic social changes. Fulfilling a wide array of civil functions, which have been analyzed in this chapter in the contexts of public space, local communities, and minority groups, social art practices exert an observable and noticeable influence on civil society and, ultimately, improve the quality of democracy—defined not as a system of government based on majority rule, but as a form of organization of social life in all its dimensions that stems from common participation.

Scrutinizing these sort of practices, one has to acknowledge that they constitute a very wide and varied empirical category, and that the civil effectiveness of these practices depends on a number of factors, which include framing the aims of action (expert vs. participatory), mobilizing strategies (top-down vs. bottom-up), modes of participation (manipulation vs. delegation), continuity (one-time vs. long-term), the ability to make use of the participants' potential (dependence vs. inner resources), and power relations (advocacy vs. empowerment). Nevertheless, I believe that the research findings presented in this chapter clarify that economic utility or profit, which nowadays is more than often expected of artistic and cultural practices, is not an adequate measure of their social relevance. Art proves to be effective in many a socially oriented way, which brings it closer to the ideas and practices of civil society rather than of economic markets. Hence, to look at the social benefits and innovations introduced or enhanced with the use of art, I have proposed a return to Bourdieu's notion of social art, as opposed not only to canonical, and avant-garde, art, but also to commercial art, and a revision and operationalization of this notion as a form of civil practice defined by its aims/results, participants, modes of engagement, sphere of occurrence, and qualities.

Notes

1. See, for example, Bishop (2006, 2012), Burnham and Durland (1998), Finkelpearl (2001, 2013), Lacy (1995, 2010), Kester (2004), and Thompson (2012).
2. The research was based on interpretative methodology and theoretical sampling. The cases that fell into the research sample were presumed instances of social art, as it was theoretically modeled beforehand, approached from the perspective of their different partakers. The research sample comprised 115 interviews, which were carried out both in big and mid-sized cities, including Białystok, Bielsko-Biała, Gdańsk, Lublin, Suwałki, and Warsaw, as well as in small towns and villages, such as Brok, Hieronimowo, Ładne, Krasnopol, Mieleszki, Mursk, Sejny, Szamocin, Teremiski, and Wigry. However, it is important to note that the research sample was framed neither on a given geographical pattern, nor on the socioeconomic characteristics of the interviewees. Instead, I resorted to the techniques of snowball and triangulation. The only frame for building the sample was the division into three contexts of social art: the public space, local communities, and minority groups, which I also refer to in the subsequent parts of this chapter. Finally, because the practices of social art tend to be largely diversified, I decided to use as a research tool the unstructured interview, facilitated through a list of research questions and instructions for the field researchers. Apart from myself, the interviews were carried out by my students: Izabela Adamska, Paulina Sadowska, Jolanta Antosiak, Katarzyna Klimaszewska, Magdalena Rynda, Anna Sierocka, Urszula Walukiewicz, Dorota Dmochowska, Kacper Kirej, and Jan Wyspiański.
3. For analysis of the distinction between social art and public art, community art and activist art, see Niziołek (2009).
4. Practices that combine artistic expression with social or civil intention have frequently been dismissed by the art world as nonart, even if they were adopted by professional artists (see, for example, Lacy 1995).
5. See Offe (1985).
6. The term “new communities” has been introduced by Peter Drucker (2011).
7. Especially, if the group or organization represents a minority or supports creative individuals.
8. Note that attitudes are complex phenomena in their own right and can be analyzed in terms of their cognitive, emotional, or behavioral aspects.

9. The research was focused on the practice of community art.
10. As I have already mentioned, within the research framework, information was collected using in-depth interviews, to enable the researcher—in accordance with a Weberian interpretative paradigm—to better understand, and not simply measure, the phenomena under scrutiny.
11. Using Alberto Melucci's (1985) term, the critical function of social art is connected to the creation of a symbolic challenge.
12. The codes in square brackets are used to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. The citations from the interviews have been translated from Polish by the author.
13. This popular term refers to the shortage of state-sponsored cultural institutions in the Polish province, as well as their anachronistic modes of operation, which make them insufficient in supplying for communities' cultural needs.
14. We speak of "phantom activity" when the potential of an organization cannot be fully exploited.
15. In a broad, anthropological sense, participation in culture refers to the entirety of human social experience, while culture is treated as a general pattern of this experience that is characteristic of a given society or some part of it (e.g., ethnic group or social stratum). In this sense, one cannot be excluded from culture; each human being participates in some culture and adheres, not necessarily in a conscious manner, to some cultural patterns. In a narrow sense, participation in culture is linked to such categories as cultural consumption, cultural activity, and lifestyle. Hence, it refers only to selected aspects of participation in culture in the broad sense, in particular: creation and reception of art, contact with cultural institutions and choice among their offers, consumption of products of cultural industry, as well as cultivation of cultural traditions and preservation of cultural heritage.
16. By "cultural deprivation" I mean here an incapability to fulfill cultural needs that are connected to access to culture, participation in creation of culture, and cultivation of cultural differences, which is determined by the social position and social capital of an individual.
17. "Art for multiculturalism," as contrasted with "multiculturalism in art" (seen merely as a topic of art), is art that refers to diversity as the primary and indispensable human condition, and feeds on the experience of cross-cultural contact and communication (see Niziołek 2011).

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IA11: Male, 31 years old, higher education, street artist, active also as a cultural animator, curator, and editor, conveys street art workshops, cofounder of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that operates in this field (interviewed in 2011).

IA17: Male, 35 years old, secondary education, graphic designer, cofounder of an NGO that operates in the field of street art, initiator of community actions, urban activist (interviewed in 2011).

IA18: Male, 33 years old, higher education (sociologist), freelancer, author of collaborative murals, stencils, and billboards, as well as net-art and film projects, occasionally engaged in community and participatory actions (interviewed in 2011).

IA33: Female, 40 years old, higher education in arts, painter, initiator of socio-artistic activities in the fields of street art and community art, educator, founder, and leader of an artists' collective (interviewed in 2011).

KK1: Male, 30 years old, higher education, dancer, choreographer, cofounder of a dance school and of an NGO that promotes street culture (interviewed in 2010).

KKl3: Male, 44 years old, secondary education, cultural organizer, documents and promotes art in the public space, leader of an NGO that operates in this field (interviewed in 2010).

KN10: Male, 32 years old, higher education (philosophy), street worker, works in a poor neighborhood of a big city (interviewed in 2010).

KN13: Male, 43 years old, higher education in arts, sculptor, initiator of community projects in a big city, instructor of an art therapy group (interviewed in 2010).

KN5: Male, 26 years old, higher education (sociologist), cultural organizer, independent musician (interviewed in 2011).

KN8: Male, 28 years old, higher education in arts, photographer, implements photographic projects in various minority contexts (interviewed in 2011).

PS2: Female, 32 years old, higher education in arts, visual artist, also creates performative actions in the public space and participatory Internet projects (interviewed in 2011).

PS20: Female, 15 years old, pupil, lives in the countryside, participator in a community photographic project (interviewed in 2011).

PS21: Female, 34 years old, higher education in arts, cultural animator, leader of a cultural NGO in a big city, implements projects oriented toward the aesthetics of public spaces in the countryside (interviewed in 2012).

PS22: Male, 40 years old, technical secondary education, graffiti writer, ecologist, social activist (interviewed in 2011).

PS27: Twin sisters, 16 years old, pupils, live in the countryside, participants in creativity workshops and aesthetic interventions in a village space (interviewed in 2012).

PS39: Married couple, sołtys (43 years old, vocational education) and his wife (36 years old, secondary education), observers of a socioartistic project implemented in their village (interviewed in 2012).

PS7: Male, 33 years old, higher education in arts, artist, curator, lecturer in an arts school, creator of net-art projects and interventions in the public space (interviewed in 2011).

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