

CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY

by Dorota Ogrodzka and Igor Stokfiszewski

Culture and Solidarity

by DOROTA OGRODZKA and IGOR STOKFISZEWSKI

This paper was prepared based on the action research carried out under the curatorial supervision of Dorota Ogrodzka and Igor Stokfiszewski by an international group of researchers and artists in Poland, Spain, Croatia, Moldova and France in 2018 as part of the Culture for solidarity project organized by the European Cultural Foundation, Krytyka Polityczna and ZEMOS98.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. SOLIDARITY.....	6
3. CULTURE	8
4. CHALLENGES.....	10
5. RESEARCH	13
6. CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY	24
Action	24
Difference	27
Frame	35
Performance.....	41
Cracks.....	46
Dramaturgy.....	53
Trap.....	69
Masque(rade)	78
7. THE POINT.....	93
Index	97
Bibliography	99

1. INTRODUCTION

The spectre of disintegration is haunting Europe. Fragmentation, alienation of individuals, disintegration of community bonds, social polarization, conflicts of values – these are the most commonly listed consequences of economic and political changes, tensions and inequalities. Escalating capitalist models and the hegemony of neoliberal institutions, the return of conservative narratives, and hard power tools are the processes draining democratic communities.

One of the phenomena most fraught with consequences was the so-called refugee crisis which painfully revealed all the prejudice and fears that had been snoozing in the minds of European societies. It has become obvious that as a civic community we are not ready to be in contact with people of different values, traditions, beliefs or needs, which only indicates that our culture is in the state of exhaustion and inefficiency. The refugee crisis, as Igor Stokfiszewski co-author of this paper, points out in his book *Prawo do kultury* [*Right to culture*]:

[...] revealed a crisis component of the system that remained unnoticeable during the economic recession and the collapse of representational democracy. [...] We failed to properly recognize that the economic, democratic and refugee crisis has been fuelled by a deep cultural crisis¹.

David Bidney, anthropologist, believes that the phenomenon of the collapse of identity-forming and community-forming abilities of culture represents “the negative counterpart of cultural integration, it [...] involves the

¹ Igor Stokfiszewski, *Prawo do kultury*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warsaw 2018, pp. 17–18.

disintegration, destruction or suspension of some basic elements of socio-cultural life.”² Pascal Gielen, cultural sociologists, on the other hand, argues that “lack of attention towards culture [...] is the main cause of the today’s political and economic crises”³. In Europe certain sensitivity towards the relations between social coherence and culture has been present for a long time now, even at the level of political authorities. Already in 2004 when the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso stated that “the EU has reached a point in its history when its cultural dimension can no longer be ignored”⁴, and reminded the words attributed to the co-architect of the European Union, Jean Monnet, who allegedly said that: “If I had to do it all over again, I would start with culture”⁵. Since 1992 at the latest programmes of “integration through culture” have been running, however, they did not manage to prevent the crisis.

Thus, it can be no longer argued that culture is an irrelevant or a peripheral area of the social life. On the contrary, we should follow the intuitions so aptly presented by Michel Houellebecq in his prophetic novel *Submission*. In his visions of future Europe and fantasies about potential political scenarios Houellebecq created a fictitious story about how a radical Muslim group takes over the power in France. The novel was meant as a provocation. It reveals xenophobic fears of Europe scared of the otherness perfectly hidden behind the veil of political correctness and apparent openness. However, Houellebecq does not stop here and takes an extra step further: in his storyline he implements the darkest possible scenario and at the same time he shows what an important tool of political agency culture is. In the narrative of the novel two ignored areas of social life, namely culture and education present main fields of interest of the new government. The winning party focuses on introducing radical solutions and reforms in these domains, leaving the neoliberal economic policy be, thus dulling the vigilance of the society. It quickly turns out that it is a brilliant and effective

² David Bidney, *The Concept of Cultural Crisis*, „American Anthropologist”, New Series, vol. 48, No. 4, part 1 (October–December 1946), p. 536.

³ Pascal Gielen, *Introduction* [in:] *No Culture, No Europe: On the Foundations of Politics*, ed. Pascal Gielen, Valiz, 2015, pp. 11–12.

⁴ As cited in: Kurt De Boodt, *Agora spotkań artystów i polityków unijnych. Przypadek Barosso* [in:] *Koniec kultury – koniec Europy*, op. cit., p. 80.

⁵ Ibid.

move designed to gain totalitarian power. A cultural coup, reinventing culture on their own terms allows them to take control over everything⁶. The novel becomes even more evocative in its prophecies when one starts to closely inspect moves of governments recruiting from the populist right who assumed national ideology, e.g. in Poland. Yes, culture and education are the areas of special focus for these governments who keep zealously reforming them in efforts to gain absolute control. In Houellebecq's novel and in countries ruled by the right, the intentions of the government are clearly negative. However, we can learn a valuable lesson here: culture is a fertile ground for systemic change, the field where the social paradigm is formed. Thus, if negative scenarios are possible, then one may also fantasize about positive developments based on coexistence and fostering social wellbeing. One thing is certain, though: culture requires care and attention, as it brings hope and potential.

We are faced with the task of reinventing culture in a version that would enable it to stand up to the challenges of disintegrated Europe and would revive values needed to move towards a new community. What should be culture based on? What values should it manifest?

2. SOLIDARITY

On 27 August 1980, Karol Modzelewski, a Polish oppositionist from the communist period, a political prisoner, one of the reformers of the Marxist thought, was on his way from Warsaw to Gdańsk, where the Lenin Shipyard workers were on strike, in which he actively participated. In his autobiography *Zajeżdżimy kobyłę historii* (English: *We'll Ride the Mare of History to the Ground*) Modzelewski recalls:

⁶

Michel Houellebecq, *Submission*, Picador, Translation edition, 2016.

Looking from the window on the train [...] I noticed [...] a big plant in Pruszcz Gdański. On the front wall of the big factory hall a banner was placed. A standard kind of a banner: white letters on the red canvas [...]. It carried a laconic message: »MKS – solidarność« (English: MKS – Solidarity). It was there to show that this particular plant participated in the common, sympathy strike as a show of solidarity, together with other factories and had its own representative in the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee seated in the Gdańsk Shipyard.⁷

In that instance Modzelewski got the idea to use the name “Solidarity” for the trade union that was to be formed based on the Gdańsk strike, because, as he argued, “the slogan was extremely resonant”.⁸ Thus, the word “solidarity” became synonymous with opposition of the weak against the strong, of consolidating efforts in the face of malicious political authorities, of the fight for justice, equality, dignity of common people, for civil rights not only in Poland, but also in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. It also started to signify compassion and mutual assistance, everyday activities to help others, because there were two solidarities involved here: the Big Solidarity, and the small one.⁹ The term was first coined by the Lenin Shipyard strike heroine, Henryka Krzywonos, a tram operator. After 1989, when with the vital contribution of the Solidarity Trade Union and the social movement that formed around the Solidarity Poland became a democratic country, Henryka Krzywonos opened a “family-type” children’s home. “Small Solidarity” in 1970s and 1980s meant e.g. material, legal and emotional support for the sacked workers and their families, mobbed for their participation in strikes, it also comprised of distributing underground press and other forms of active resistance against the authoritarian government.

In recent years the word “solidarity” has reclaimed its “power to resonate”. To name one famous example, a Greek organization Solidarity4All is trying to provide comprehensive grassroots response to disintegration

⁷ Karol Modzelewski, *Zajeżdżimy kobyłę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca*, Wydawnictwo Iskry, Warsaw 2013, pp. 262–263.

⁸ Ibid., p. 263.

⁹ Cf. Agnieszka Wiśniewska, *Duża Solidarność, mała solidarność. Biografia Henryki Krzywonos*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warsaw 2010.

processes and social polarization. The goal here is to create solidarity networks consisting of community clinics, pharmacies, kitchens, farms, little shops, workshops or time and skill banks that without any middlemen provide goods and services to everyone in need, regardless of their legal or material status, or their descent and cultural background. Solidarity also manifests itself in common acts of blocking evictions by the activists from the Spanish organization PAH (La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca) or in the approach of a French farmer, Cédric Herrou who helped refugees cross the Italian-French border.

The sympathy strike and blocking evictions are both well in line with the specific economy of solidarity. In both cases the support for others does not generate any direct benefit for the supporters. Neither a blue-collar worker sympathizing with the plant on strike in another part of the country, nor an activist trying to block access of policing services to people threatened with eviction will gain nothing, if the strike succeeds and the family keep their home. This is not to say that their actions are purely selfless. Economy of solidarity contributes to the common wellbeing, to the social transformation, the common good, thus catering to the future justice¹⁰. Therefore, the future and non-material wellbeing are inherent elements of solidarity. How can you support solidarity efforts? And how can culture contribute? How can you sympathize with solidarity?

3. CULTURE

“We are finding our way back to solidarity like wayfarers coming back home from a distant journey on the trails of freedom”¹¹, these are the opening words of the mission statement of Krzysztof Czyżewski called *Kultura*

¹⁰ We wish to express our gratitude for sharing her thoughts on economy of solidarity to Lara Garcia Diaz of Culture Commons Quest Office at University of Antwerp.

¹¹ Krzysztof Czyżewski, *Kultura i solidarność* [in:] *Małe centrum świata. Zapiski praktyka idei*, Fundacja Pogranicze, Sejny–Krasnogruda 2017, p. 163.

i solidarność (English: *Culture and Solidarity*). Czyżewski, a community art representative, raised on the counterculture experience of 1970s and 1980s, has been running with his associates the Borderland (Pogranicze) culture centre in Sejny, north-east Poland, for almost three decades now. The centre aims to integrate the multi-cultural local community consisting of Poles, Lithuanians and Belorussians. The culture practised by the Borderland people is based on private archaeology, supporting and highlighting local identities and biographies, building bridges between different lifestyles and languages and creating tools for communication with others. In 2018 the efforts of Krzysztof Czyżewski were recognized by the European Cultural Foundation Princess Margriet Award. In his keynote address the artist called for the need to develop a new solidarity-based cultural paradigm. He argued that:

For the humans of the new era [...] the true liberation will come from empathy that they will fight for with the same determination and courage as they did before in their fight for freedom, and that they will develop internally without ever running away from their freedom, but rather by voluntarily renouncing their freedom, or, which is really one and the same thing, by sharing it wisely. This is a harbinger of the total shift in the cultural paradigm¹².

The horizon for this paradigm, in Czyżewski's words, is the ability to understand each other, being dialogue-oriented. In the face of the above described social crises the attempt to summon such values might seem naive, unrealistic, utopian like a dream about a paradise island that you fantasize about from the perspective of the land consumed by a climate crisis. We all want to make it to this island; it is our goal. Meanwhile we are all castaways. Even though many of us, citizens of Europe, live in cosy homes, able to satisfy the basic needs of our own and of our families, and the fate of the refugees crossing the sea in their lifeboats and rafts is alien to us, still, in a way, we are all castaways of the crises-consumed world that we do not want to call

¹²

Ibid., p. 167.

home anymore and that we abandon in search of a new place to live. Still in order to reach the island, we need a lifeboat, a real answer. This can be provided by solidarity. Our last resort and at the same time a building block, a scaffolding for the future paradigm. Solidarity to the utopia is like a lifeboat to the island.

“[S]olidarity presents the most serious challenge before the culture which is at the turning point in time, looking for the support and legitimization for freedom in co-creation, co-responsibility, co-dependence, co-work and co[m]-passion”,¹³ argues Czyżewski, who perceives solidarity as a counterpoint for freedom, an opportunity to transform a liberal project focused on extreme individualism and oriented towards your own benefit and private interests into a model based on co-dependence. However, one can point to three major challenges that the paradigm of pro-solidarity attitudes has to address.

4. CHALLENGES

One of them is already mentioned by the author himself: „The returns to [...] the ideas of solidarity (French: *solidaire*) that promote community of interests of people above divisions [...], seem to also resonate with people who instead of »all people« rather talk about »their own people«, thus, yet again in history infecting these ideas with a nationalist and fascist-like tone”¹⁴. In his book *The Powers of Freedom*, Nikolas Rose points to same threat, and suggests that in the times of weakness of political institutions, which is unarguably what we are struggling with today in the light of the current economic situation and the problems with democracy, local community may instrumentalise its emotional bonds in order to claim monopoly on the responsibility for security, order, and even for health and reproduction¹⁵. As a result, what Miranda Jo-

¹³ Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

¹⁵ Cf. Nikolas Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999.

seph suggests, the community may resort to practices of discipline, exclusion, racism, sexism and violence¹⁶. Because of populist governments who adopted national ideology, the communal thinking that used to have positive connotations and counterbalance the selfishness and individualism, has been more and more showing its oppressive and xenophobic potential. This is only a step away from hermeticity, from the community closing itself, from defining the community in opposition and placing it in antagonism with different values or unknown subjects. This attitude that is in line with the romantic paradigm represents a real threat in the landscape of the Central Eastern Europe, resembling a dormant volcano with the lava roaring underground. This xenophobic fear of everything coming from the outside is aptly expressed by Guślarz (Sorcerer) from Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*Forefather's Eve*) in his first words: "Close the doors to the chapel"¹⁷. His demand becomes the key to understand not only to the entire storyline of this romantic poetic drama, but also the key to the contemporary social drama unravelling before our eyes in modern Europe. It is a prophetic harbinger of high impact mechanisms operating to date in the European culture. This closed chapel can serve as a metaphor for the community that is so afraid and resentful, and so convinced about its own normative disposition that it builds a wall to separate itself from any form of otherness. It makes use of solidarity (*sic!*) as an internal binding force, a conspiracy, a source of excluding energy. Like a stronghold under siege, it rejects more and more any chance to have amicable contacts with the outside world. It is a serious threat, the dark side of solidarity. Thus, the first challenge that the solidarity-based cultural paradigm has to face is the need to relate to the community that cracks hermeticity, opens it, and, as Czyżewski himself would put it, makes it xenophilic.

The second challenge was blatantly exposed by the refugee crisis. According to an Italian political scientist, Massimo Livi Bacci, we are currently living in the era of *homo movens*, a man on the constant move¹⁸. The refugee crisis highlighted the fundamental truth about the modern condition of

¹⁶ Cf. Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2002.

¹⁷ Adam Mickiewicz, *Dziady. Część II* [in:] *ibid.*, *Wybór pism*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1951, p. 244.

¹⁸ Cf. Massimo Livi Bacci, *Our shrinking planet*, English translation by David Broder, Polity Press, Cambridge 2017.

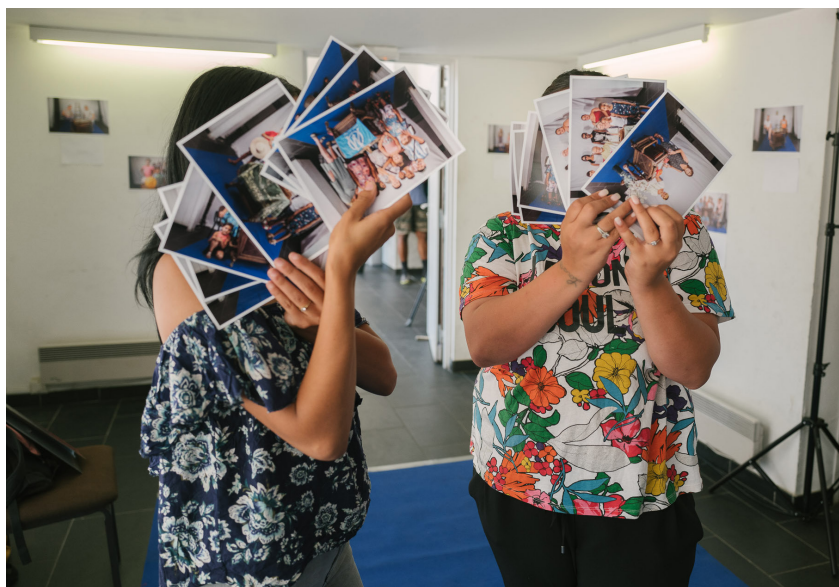
individuals and communities, about ceaseless and intensifying movements of people, migration, the constant flow of persons. The mobility we dreamt of as citizens and which we are constantly trying to achieve represents the bright side of freedom and independence. However, the capacity to move as the foundation of our condition has been increasingly showing its darker face. Life insecurities, weakened local bonds, anxiety connected with the lack of communal experience based on understanding, empathy and everyday closeness is a step towards a deeper kind of darkness. How can you create a community, shape and develop solidarity within an everchanging cluster, where co-existence is always short lived, and bonds are temporary? Are the tools meant to impact the quality of relations in local communities relevant and sufficient? Is solidarity possible at all in the situation when we have enough time and attention only to interact with another subject, and not enough to forge a deeper, longer lasting relationship?

And last but not least, the third challenge is connected with the supranational space. The global structure of capitalism and political forces call for global forms of solidarity, i.e. for the ability to overcome language, cultural and geographic differences and inventing mobile practices of coexistence, superficially rooted in local contexts, however, equally efficient as those with much deeper roots.

It is essential that a new cultural paradigm is formed, focused around solidarity as a category organizing the collective imagination and impacting the shift in the quality of common life. This paradigm has to be based on “co-creation, co-responsibility, co-dependence, co-operation and co(m)-passion”. However, it also needs to find a proper formula suiting the challenges connected with the emergence of open communities with the capacity to build bridges between mobile individuals of different languages, cultures and geographies.

5. RESEARCH

In 2018 we invited researchers and artists from all around Europe, as well as an artist from Brazil, to conduct field research in order to find answers to thus formulated questions and tasks. Artistic interventions meant to contribute to the new solidarity-based cultural paradigm were carried out in nine centres, namely in the following cities: Marseille (France), Kishinev (Moldova), Warsaw (Poland), Zagreb (Croatia), Seville (Spain) and in villages: Pęciszewo, Lisewo Malborskie, Cyganek and Grochowice (Poland). In this section of our paper we will briefly present the course of the research and main issues addressed therein, followed by conclusions of the said research. We will also list all the producers of individual interventions. We wish to mention some people, who apart from the above described researchers and artists developing and carrying out field work, contributed to the



Neighbors – project's author: Paweł Ogródzki; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; place: Marseilles, France; dates: June 26th – July 4th 2018; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art. Photo: Paweł Ogródzki.



Tours de danse – project's author: Tania Alice; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; place: Marseilles, France; dates: July 4th – 14th 2018; video: Daniela Lanzuisi; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art, European Cultural Foundation. Photo: Paweł Ogrodzki.

formulation of the premises for our further work during our methodology workshops in Warsaw and an expert panel held in Seville, namely: Sofia Coca and Felipe González Gil of ZEMOS98, Lara Garcia Diaz representing Culture Commons Quest Office of University of Antwerp, Izabela Jasińska of Krytyka Polityczna, Sam Khebizi of Les Têtes de l'Art, an independent researcher Maria Ptqk, Tomasz Rakowski of Warsaw University, Sonja Soldo of POGON, Menno Weijs of European Cultural Foundation and Vladimir Us of Oberliht.

The culture as we understand it encompasses three dimensions. The anthropological dimension, where culture is defined as the entirety of human production manifested in the form of everyday practices and activities. Bearing in mind the importance we attribute to the anthropological understanding of culture, in our research not only did we focus on it extensively, but also we decided to make it our cornerstone for erecting the edifice of



Ciokana Talks – project's author: Pola Rožek; collaboration: Pavel Khailo, Kirill Semionov; place: Chisinau, Moldova; dates: July 1st – 7th 2018; participants: Tatiana Erhan, Julia Turcan, Maria Kucherik, "Mrs. Valentina"; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Oberliht. Photo: Pola Rožek.

interpretation of the solidarity potential hidden in the other two dimensions of culture, namely in the social and artistic culture. The social dimension of culture we understand as an organized cultural activity manifested in actions of informal groups, social movements and organizations, applying instruments close to artistic practices in order to influence the society. Community art, cultural animation, community theatre are but a few manifestations of culture defined in such terms. Finally, the artistic dimension invokes art oriented at creation of artistic work which is the superior goal and all applied tools, such as social intervention play a subordinate, auxiliary role.

In Marseille artistic and research interventions were carried out in cooperation with Les Têtes de l'Art in a residential building Bel Horizon located in the city centre, where the community is extremely diversified in terms of nationality, culture and religion. The international group of artists

and researchers operating in Bel Horizon consisted of four authors, namely: Paweł Ogródzki (Poland), Tania Alice (Brazil, France), Daniela Lanzuisi (France) and Aziz Boumediene (France). The artists invited Bel Horizon inhabitants to a communal photographic studio and to a series of performative activities with dance as a starting point. Both the pictures and the



Museum of migration – project's author: Agnieszka Pajączkowska; collaboration: Dorota Borodaj, Jan Mencwel, Jan Wiśniewski; video: Kamila Szuba in collaboration with Pola Rożek; place: villages Pęcziszewo, Lisewo Malborskie, Cyganek and Grochowice, Poland; date: Summer of 2018; participants: Janek Demko, Nadia Właszyn, Gizela Nowogońska, Genowefa Seredziuk, Helena Karpińska, Maria Huk, Piotr Huk, Jan Demko, Stefania Kwiatkowska, Eugenia Demko, Olga Werbowska, Paweł Potoczny; production: Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze "Krajobraz", Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Kamila Szuba.

collective fun were supposed to create environment for the very diverse group of people living in the block of flats in the centre of Marseille to build relationships and get to know each other. Apart from the social objective, namely developing greater solidarity among the Bel Horizon residents, activities in Marseille were also supposed to provoke thoughts and observations about the shape of artistic actions that may have positive effect on the wellbeing of the local, multicultural community.

In Kishinev, in cooperation with the Oberliht organization, research and art interventions were carried out in the Ciokana development, a housing estate at the outskirts of the city. Three socio-cultural animators and researchers: Pola Rożek (Poland), Pavel Khailo (Ukraine) and Kirill Semionov (Moldova) focused their efforts on discovering own cultural repertoire of the local community that would disclose solidarity practices of its residents.



Preview – project's author: Jaśmina Wójcik; collaboration: Julia Biczysko, Pola Rożek; place: Warsaw, Poland; dates: September 16th - 17th 2018; video: Jakub Wróblewski, Piotr Kucia; participants: Zofia Gościcka, Jerzy Dobrzyński, Czesław Sajnaga, Ryszard Cieślak, Henryk Goździewski, Jan Staszewski, Marianna Staszewska, Józef Dąbrowski, Mieczysław Łysiak, Tomasz Łysiak, Stanisława Drankiewicz, Wacław Włodarski, Jan Woźniak, Elżbieta Jastrzębska, Jerzy Cieśliak, Stefan Sobczak; production: Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Jakub Wróblewski and Piotr Kucia.

A map of artistic facilities created by the local community in order to increase the quality of life of Ciokana residents was drafted. These included a playground arranged in a selfless act by a local teacher for the kids living in this area or some colourful flower beds and other urban architecture features decorated by the locals in order to make the life of their neighbours more pleasant and the dull surroundings of the development more appealing.

While in Marseille the artists and researchers were trying to initiate artistic activities that would create conditions for the communal solidarity to grow, in Kishinev the already existing solidarity gestures practised by the local community through non-professional cultural deliverables were being unmasked. In Kishinev we examined the anthropological dimension of culture. In both cases solidarity turned out to be the hidden disposition of local communities, only waiting for somebody to find a way to reveal it and develop it. This inspiration coming from the local community became the driving force for activities close to art.

The action research in Polish villages Pęciszewo, Lisewo Malborskie, Cyganek and Grochowice was carried out in cooperation by and between Krytyka Polityczna and Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze Krajobraz. The research team guided by Agnieszka Pajczkowska recorded interviews with residents, displaced Polish and Ukrainian nationals, victims of the Second World War on migration and multicultural issues, on mixing with different religions and



Confession Room – project's author: Karolina Pluta; collaboration: POGON Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth team; place: Zagreb, Croatia; date: September 4th 2018; video: Nina Klarić; participants: Željko Bašković, Gaziella Bokor, Matea Munitić Mihovilović, Marijana Rimanić, Sonja Soldo, Nenad Baric, Nicola Mijatović; production: Krytyka Polityczna, POGON, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Nina Klarić.



Tired Superheroes – project's author: Dorota Ogrodzka; collaboration: Miguel López and ZEMOS98 organisation team; place: Seville, Spain; date: October 31st 2018; video: Julia Cortegana; participants: Sofía Coca, Pedro Jiménez, Felipe González Gil, Lucas Tello Pérez; production: Krytyka Polityczna, ZEMOS98, European Cultural Foundation. Photo: Dorota Ogrodzka.

on historical forms of solidarity manifesting between people of different descent, living in rural areas.

Historical forms of solidarity, this time among blue-collar workers of large industrial plants in urban areas were also examined during the action research carried out with the local community of one of Warsaw's districts, Ursus by a team headed by an artist, Jaśmina Wójcik and a researcher Julia Biczysko. The key subject of the research was the solidarity of artists, people of culture with representatives of the folk class (working class). The research in this case focused on the issue of how the community members understand the art that they participate in creating, what they draw from it, do they identify with it and how they interpret the products of cooperation with artists. These topics directly relate to one of the questions that are in the centre of our thinking: "How to create culture so that despite all the



Audio-letter – project's authors: Sebastian Świąder, Antropoloops collective (Rubén Alonso, Fran Torres); place: Seville, Spain; dates: October-November 2018; production: Krytyka Polityczna. Photo: <http://talleres.antropoloops.com>.

differences between the artists and the community you come up with activities that will have positive impact on people's lives, that will integrate them and enhance the subjectivity of the community?"

Activities in Warsaw launched a trend in research dedicated to culture as an environment that by itself may become saturated by acts of solidarity or acts defying solidarity. To this end two centres – a public cultural and youth centre POGON in Zagreb and ZEMOS98 organization in Seville were studied.

The situation of POGON is special because of the institutional changes underway. Its employees struggle with lack of stability and security regarding their future. Can they maintain their solidarity towards each other in such environment? Can they be inspired to support each other and act in a way that will help them survive the oncoming changes with limited existential costs? These are the questions raised by a researcher, Karolina Pluta, who in cooperation with the POGON team and a Croatian video artist, Nina Klarić designed the activity called The Confession Room. During the daylong event individual POGON employees were induced into a state close to meditation that allowed them to awaken ability to empathize with their colleagues. Next they were encouraged to formulate questions to their colleagues that they always wanted to ask but were too afraid, too shy or

simply did not have time to do so. Finally, the whole team met, the questions hanging on the ropes were read and answered, triggering discussions about all difficult issues connected with the work in a cultural institution and about their fear for the future.

ZEMOS98 is an organization that for almost two decades now has been active in the local context of Seville and in the international space of project cooperation. Its integrated team works in precarious conditions trying to somehow survive by constantly working on more and more projects. ZEMOS98 activists are sometimes exhausted, occasionally they even experience a state close to burn out. Is it at all possible to contribute in any positive way to the life of local communities and build strong bonds between team members in such environment? The co-author of this paper, Dorota Ogrodzka, took upon herself the role of the artist and the researcher in Seville and together with four ZEMOS98 representatives (namely: Felipe González Gil, Lucas Tello Pérez, Sofia Coca and Pedro Jiménez) and a video artist Julia Cortegana designed an activity that was meant to create some space for ZEMOS98 team members where they could integrate, have fun together, empower each other, incite some communal energy that they experienced in the early days of the organization. Four above mentioned people from the organization participated in all day performative activities dressed up as superheroes. The events were designed in a participatory mode and were the result of the needs, memories and hopes hidden in each person and revealed by the researcher in her interviews carried out during her research reconnaissance. The campaign was supposed to create a situation when ZEMOS98 members could absolutely freely and in confidence discuss their work conditions in the NGO, how their precarious work conditions affect the quality of their cooperation with the local community and about all other issues that stand in the way of building an empathy and solidarity-based society through culture.

Seville was also the arena of the research intervention carried out by a musician and performer, Sebastian Świąder in cooperation with an artistic collective Antropoloops represented by Rubén Alonso and Fran Torres. The agents of this solidarity event were kids, the tool – audio-recordings exchanged back and forth like a letter by a school in Seville and in Warsaw.



Museum of migration – project's author: Agnieszka Pajączkowska; collaboration: Dorota Borodaj, Jan Mencwel, Jan Wiśniewski; production: Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze "Krajobraz", Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Kamila Szuba.



Museum of migration – project's author: Agnieszka Pajęczkowska; collaboration: Dorota Borodaj, Jan Mencwel, Jan Wiśniewski; production: Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze "Krajobraz", Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Kamila Szuba.

The recording made in Spain contained questions to children in Poland. The Polish kids in turn recorded their answers and questions to children in Spain. Thus, the team wanted to better understand how intercultural relations between young residents of Europe can be shaped.

Based on the above described action research we aimed to better grasp how you can contribute to establishing a new cultural paradigm where solidarity is placed in the centre as a category organizing collective imagination and contributing to better quality of collective life, where “co-creation, co-responsibility, co-dependence, co-operation and com-passion”, fundamental to cultural practices, can aid in creating open communities that are able to build bridges between mobile individuals representing different languages, cultures and the geographical origin.

6. CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY

Action

Residents of the following villages: Pęciszewo, Lisewo Malborskie, Cyganek and Grochowice involved in the activity by Agnieszka Pajączkowska called *Museum of Migration* talk about how they were developing bonds in the Polish-Ukrainian community that was formed by relocations after the Second World War. They mention the community-forming function of group meals, collective work in the fields, dances. People would gather around food, share their supplies, exchange homemade cakes and pastries or rare ingredients. One of the interviewees in her moving story goes down the memory lane to recall her first Christmas after relocation. When her mother received a package with poppy seeds from her sister, she shared it with all her neighbours. Poppy seeds were the key ingredient for kutia, a traditional dish that for the Ukrainian community was so much more than merely a Christmas

treat: it would bring back memories of home, became a symbolic medium for the sense of security and continuity, source of relief and power.

One tiny gesture of sharing the poppy was enough for all this significant existential experience to come to life. The protagonists of the *Museum of Migration* give similar meaning to other everyday community practices, such as: sharing farming equipment, assisting farmers during harvest on a rotational basis, festivals and dances for everyone, regardless of their descent: all this made the hardships of life bearable, let them have something to enjoy. In their stories the motifs of simple, everyday activities keep returning. One thing is striking here though: whenever some activity is concerned, identity differences seem to have less meaning, they rarely hinder gestures of mutual co-operation, assistance, co-existence.

The stories point to the very essence of solidarity. It happens in action, during activities, in gestures available to everyone, shared by community. In this sense the basic principle of solidarity is that it has the same characteristics as performance. It is produced, not expressed. The significance of this notion can be presented by reference to the feigned solidarity manifested in often formulated “expressions of solidarity”.

Let us elaborate using an example. At the time when we were processing our conclusions from the field work, an unprecedented tragedy happened in Poland. On 13 January 2019 the mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, was stabbed in an attack. He died the following day. Right after the attack, when the doctors were still carrying out procedures and doing all they could and the question of his life and death was still open, among many comments and reactions of politicians, the Polish President, Andrzej Duda, representing the right-wing position and coming from the party openly opposed by Adamowicz, also published an official tweet: “Usually Mr. Mayor Paweł Adamowicz and I do not share the views on how public affairs and Polish affairs should be run, however, today I am unconditionally with Him and His Close Ones, just like, hopefully, all our Compatriots. I am praying for His recovery and return to full strength. I wish to express my deepest solidarity with Him and those affected by this tragedy.” The commentators reacting to Andrzej Duda’s tweet found it hard to believe that the President

really sympathized with Paweł Adamowicz and his family. Everything the ruling camp of the Law and Justice party, i.e. the party where Duda has his roots, as well as the President himself did so far regarding Paweł Adamowicz's political activities suggested otherwise. President's solidarity was not credible, because he did not take any real steps, no action to change this image after the attack of the stabber. "Expressions of solidarity" are not



Preview – project's author: Jaśmina Wójcik; collaboration: Julia Biczysko, Pola Rożek; production: Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Jakub Wróblewski and Piotr Kucia.



Preview – project's author: Jaśmina Wójcik; collaboration: Julia Biczysko, Pola Rożek; production: Krytyka Polityczna, European Cultural Foundation. Photo: Jaśmina Wójcik

actions. “Expressions of solidarity” mean ineffective solidarity. This is why solidarity manifests itself through sharing poppy seeds, collective farming, dance, blocking evictions, sympathy strikes, running clinics for people without insurance or moving refugees across the border.

The culture, just like politics, needs to be based on action, and not words, if it wants to affect solidarity.

Difference

In response to Andrzej Duda’s tweet a wave of comments critical of the first part of the Presidents statement followed. Internet users and journalists reproved it as tactless and petty. How can anyone talk about differences and focus on them in a moment like that? they were asking with outrage. However, paradoxically we see a certain value to it. Solidarity is born out of difference, it means transgressing the difference, not annihilating or ignoring it. To be honest, one should not really be surprised that difference and solidarity are placed in one basket. It is quite understandable, really:



Audio-letter – project’s authors: Sebastian Świąder, Antropoloops collective (Rubén Alonso, Fran Torres); production: Krytyka Polityczna.
Photo: <http://talleres.antropoloops.com>.



Audio-letter – project's authors: Sebastian Świąder, Antropoloops collective (Rubén Alonso, Fran Torres); production: Krytyka Polityczna. Photo: <http://talleres.antropoloops.com>.

solidarity is needed when there are gaps, incoherence, discord, because it brings the answer. Polish residents of villages where the *Museum of Migration* activity took place many a time emphasize when talking about their neighbours: “It does not matter if they are Polish, Ukrainian or German...” “They are all humans”. “We co-create, co-operate and empathize” despite our differences. But should not we go even a step further?

Jaśmina Wójcik is an artist who since 2011 has been working with the community of former employees of the closed tractor factory that used to operate in one of Warsaw's districts, Ursus. Co-author of this paper, Igor Stokfiszewski, has been accompanying her in these efforts for years. Together they carry out creative and social activities aimed at saving working class identity. During one of the exhibitions presenting also the *Ursus Factory Project*, hosted by the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw in late 2017 and early 2018, a debate was held where Igor Stokfiszewski problematized their work together as follows:

One [needs] to start by revealing a paradox inherent to community-engaged artistic practices. We, the artists and activists who produce this kind of art, are attracted by communities exactly because their exotic, different from the environment that we live in every day. What is more, during the course of our work which often takes us years to complete, this exoticism seems more and more alluring, and the work itself is not meant to level it in anyway, but rather to highlight and nurture it.

Examining the activities that Sebastian Świąder proposed in cooperation with Rubén Alonso and Fran Torres to children from a school in Seville (San José Obrero) and in Warsaw (Democratic Free School Bullerbyn), we can feel how much the cultural, language and geographic differences can drive curiosity, interest and exchange, while ignorance and lack of any knowledge of realities that other people live in works like an empty notebook demanding to be filled in with words in other languages.

The idea to run this project in two educational facilities emerged from the experience of previous work of the Antropoloops team in the San José Obrero school and experience of Sebastian Świąder, who works as a theatre educator and culture animator, involving people in many different ways in creative musical, theatre and participatory processes. Methods proposed by Rubén Alonso, Fran Torres and their team in the year preceding the cooperation described herein, were based on the assumed integrating potential of music. Children from one class together reflected on the diversities of their group, their own origin and cultural background. They explored the differences and tried to talk about them, eventually embracing them through music associated with places and situations they found in the history of their families. A remix of sounds, consonance, clashes, harmonies, cacophonies was a live metaphor of intercommunity processes and intercultural integration. Children who found out they could combine melodies started to wonder how people of different origin, different background and social class could meet, live together or reside next to one another.

As a result of their meeting with Sebastian Świąder, Rubén Alonso and Fran Torres decided to continue their relationship with the San José

Obrero school and follow up with exploring ways how music could contribute to integration, but this time on the international level. Having consulted teachers from both schools, Alonso, Torres and Świąder decided to organize a musical exchange of sounds and questions between Warsaw and Seville. Two distant cities, two completely different facilities, young people of similar age, mutual curiosity that can be satisfied only by asking questions, making recordings and pricking up your ears. At first the creators organized a series of workshops in Seville where they invited the kids to join them in the action aimed at meeting somebody “other”, somebody their age, but from a different part of Europe, from Poland. “What would you like to hear from the world of kids living in another country, what would you like to ask them, how would you introduce yourselves and your world using sounds?” was the question workshop managers asked their young associates. They used their wishes as a starting point, and together generated a list of issues they were interested in and recorded an audio message, a sort of original radio show that was supposed to present their story and encourage further communication. Their idea of the remote Poland, the thought that there are people of the same age living in another country, attending schools, dealing with their own problems, joys and customs, turned out to be extremely stimulating and inspired them to fantasize, which eventually gave rise to a series of questions: “What is the sound of your school bell? What is the sound of your voices? Of your breath? What does your teacher sound like when he or she tells you off? What does your school corridor sound like? And your homes? Your laughter? What is your favourite music? What are the voices of your friends in the playground?” Young Spaniards recorded their questions on an audio tape that they later sent to Poland, where the Bullerbyn school students prepared similarly their own list of intriguing issues. “What do animals in Spain sound like? What is the sound of wind, rain in your city? What games do you play? What do advertisements sound like? What songs are your earworms?” Such questions inspire universal ideas, while at the same time they allow you to cross boundaries of intimacy. The voice itself, as the only sign of presence, also creates opportunity for a specific kind of a meeting: very close, because connected with the sense that has an

immensely strong effect on your imagination and is traditionally associated with self-expression, while on the other hand, an indirect one because of the recording, which to top it, all was made on an archaic, quirky medium. This combination of closeness and strangeness, familiarity (introduced e.g. by questions about everyday life, things connected with their mundane life experience) and exoticism (an audio cassette, sound of the unknown language) turned out to be the key to mutual curiosity and creative tensions driving the work. This red cassette travelling across Europe became the vehicle of children's curiosity and imagination.

The question of imagination as the key component of the anthropological approach that facilitates not only meeting with the "other", but also understanding him or her was explored by a Polish cultural anthropologist, Andrzej Mencwel in his book *The Anthropological Imagination*. He believes that imagination is what helps us "open our eyes, direct our look, focus our vision"¹⁹ in a way that lets us see subjects in others. Imagination inspires will to know the others better, it suspends any and all judgement, lets us be with the other side by side.

In the already cited words, Krzysztof Czyżewski suggests that the ideas of solidarity promote "community of interests of people above divisions". However, today solidarity should mean something more. A community, or using the term coined by a Polish columnist and activist Anna Bikont, the *differnity* (Polish: różnота) formed because of the divisions. An opportunity to tap into the diversity. Cooperation based on recognizing contrasts and divergences. Solidarity means also helping people exactly because they are different from us, not despite the fact that they are Ukrainians, Germans, but precisely because they are Ukrainians or Germans. Cédric Herrou was driving refugees across the border not despite the fact they were refugees, but BECAUSE they were refugees. In Polish there is a word that probably most aptly expresses this meaning of solidarity. The word is: "obcowanie" ("close encounter"). It means coexistence and closeness and refers both to the sexual encounter and to the belief

¹⁹

Andrzej Mencwel, *Wyobraźnia antropologiczna*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 2006, p. 17.

that an extraterrestrial reality exists were the souls of the dead stay and you can get in touch with them. The root of this term contains the word “obcy” (English: strange, other, alien). Thus, “obcowanie” is a close, intimate coexistence with others, with strangers. Solidarity means ability to have such close encounters.

Children from Seville and Warsaw have such close encounters with each other by asking questions and preparing answers in the second part of the workshop. Their imagination allows them to creatively draw from the difference, and as part of the cognitive process to generate in a fun way energy directed to understanding and empathy. We can definitely talk about solidarity here, about the sense of experiencing common problems and something that those groups experience, something that lets them communicate: a common ground, fate, moment in life, recognizable elements of the world, even though the language of their communication is different, and sometimes it seems strange, funny, difficult to understand, with some statements really bewildering. In the process of asking questions and answering them the kids discover common rituals and customs (e.g. Halloween), even though sometimes celebrated differently, they notice that the space at school is organized differently (some have wooden floors, others tiles or lino, which is a surprise to others). Chairs in their schools creak differently, however, what they share is the fact that both the Spanish and the Polish students spend many hours a day in those chairs. When listening to their own voices, students feel that they laugh at the same kind of jokes. The task proposed here by the creators has a format that fosters development of imagination and understanding: these are questions that themselves surprise you, force you to abandon clichés, to find some less than obvious meeting points, to balance between what is common and what is different.

And here again the comparison with performative arts offers itself. The Socio-Theatrical Lab is a Warsaw creative collective headed also by the co-author of this paper, Dorota Ogrodzka. They work where the activism and theatre meet, looking for forms of expressions applicable to significant social issues and dilemmas, and trying to dress them up as performative activities. Activities that involve the audience and create space for participatory



Ciokana Talks – project's author: Pola Rožek; collaboration: Pavel Khailo, Kirill Semionov; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Oberliht. Photo: Pola Rožek.

experience. In one of the shows called *Empathy*, the performers invite the audience to an experiment called *The Question Machine*.

The audience members receive randomly assigned identities referring to various, hypothetical aspects of life: economic status, existential experience, skin colour, gender, life views, health, age, and various roles: fictional or public figures. They sit on numbered chairs, while performers show them boards with clues, such as: “As if you were a CEO”, “As if you were a black catholic priest in Poland,” “As if you just got divorced”, “As if you had cancer”, “As if you had 3,5 thousand PLN in loans”, “As if you were Donald Trump”, “As if you were from ONR [a Polish far-right organization]”, “As if you were from Krytyka Polityczna”, etc. Then the audience is confronted with questions. They refer to various areas and include intimate questions crossing boundaries, but also questions meant to provoke reflection about the modern world: “What are you afraid of?”, “Whom do you trust?”, “What are you counting on when you vote in elections?”, “Whom wouldn’t you like to have as your neighbour?”, “What do you do when you are upset?”, “What is the view from your window?”

The audience members are faced with a difficult task: they have to try to address the question and relate to the assigned board, deciding what dispositions to use in order to combine those two requirements. Some abandon the first, stereotypical association, some apply popular clichés, some use their imagination trying to access a remote, unknown experience they are faced with during this experiment.

The creators facilitating this activity decided to work with questions, because they believe that questions have ability to move imagination, they let you abandon the primacy of your own perspective for a moment. The “As if you were...” format does not mean you have to identify with the person/role or role-play. It is rather designed to provoke understanding and empathy. However, the described task is not a naive training in sympathy, but rather an ambivalent test, when both the ability to empathize and the boundaries, aporias and paradoxes of empathy are examined.

Maybe in such case, coming back to the activity carried out between Seville and Warsaw, instead of empathy we can rather talk about solidarity

that paves way for acting in difference, for crossing barriers posed by languages, places and communities. It does not assume the relation will be deep, but rather opts for a momentary connection. It does not have to lead to standardization but allows for a close encounter.

Kids from Seville and Warsaw in their common activity set out on a journey using, again, solidarity and a chance to make a connection as the vehicle. This journey whetted their appetite for more such endeavours, suffice to say that a group of Seville teachers together with the Atropoloops team decided to have another, similar project with a school in Turkey.

Frame

Since we are confident that culture aiming to spark solidarity in Europe should be compatible with social practices, it should derive from these practices, draw on them, perceive them as an example to be followed and developed, we started referring to historical examples of solidarity forms manifested in rural communities and in big city communities of working class. What are the implications of the research examining self-organization of people for the greater common good today? Pola Rožek, a researcher and culture animator tried to find the answer to this question together with a Ukrainian artist Pavel Khailo and a Moldovan researcher Kirill Semionov by studying gestures of solidarity at the Ciokana housing complex in Kishinev. In the field notes from her activities Rožek wrote: "Walking [...] around the complex I had a chance to observe various forms of grassroots activities of the residents in the public space: the playgrounds they constructed themselves, gazebos, barbecues, flower gardens, benches"²⁰. From all the DIY initiatives the researcher's attention was caught mainly by those that were not designed to improve the life of an individual, make it more comfortable or pleasant, but rather by those implemented out of concern for the others. Based on the research Rožek, with the support of Khailo and

²⁰

All field notes of the researchers quoted herein are filed in the archive of the Culture for Solidarity project at the disposal of Krytyka Polityczna and their authors.

Semionov, reconstructed three grassroots strategies of transforming public space with other people in mind.

The first one Rožek calls “together, supervised”. It refers to a situation when residents of one of the blocks of flats built gazebos, playgrounds, flower beds and bird feeders together. In her field note Rožek describes and summarises the said strategy as follows:

Major painting and creative projects as part of community-engaged activities unite (almost) all residents who convene, first to have a discussion, raise funds, and then – to assign individual tasks. During the *subbotnik* anyone can create their own thing, decorate it as they wish. For more than ten years now. The person who cements the community is its leader, a no-nonsense administrator. She commands this community; she is the lady of this land. Their motivation is to keep the common space around the block pretty and clean. Their dream is to enclose it, so that it would not be vandalized.

Among many observations that one could make on the issue of grassroots solidarity gestures based on the example above, let us focus on the fact that the quality of block residents’ co-existence is signified by the surrounding infrastructure that they make use of every day.

The second strategy applied to reshape the space of the Ciokana complex in Kishinev observed by Rožek, Khailo and Semionowa the researcher called “a little kingdom of their own”. An example of this strategy Rožek describes in her field note as follows:

Another spot that drew my attention was the meticulously cultivated front yard garden by the block of flats. We soon found out who was the driving force behind it. People exiting the block would only say: »Maria, 9th floor«. No wonder we found our way to Maria in no time. She turned out to be very open to conversation. You can tell that the space she looks after with her sister and her husband is very close to her heart, she talks about it very emotionally. Everything started 10

years ago, when a littered space right in front of the block was designated to be developed into a parking space. Maria rebelled and even though her windows are way above this space (9th floor), she did not want to see any cars parked right outside their front door. She managed to save this space (in the name of the common good) and appropriate it in full (a picket fence was immediately raised) by creating her own private flower garden for her neighbours to admire (she planted lots of roses that exude wonderful smell when in bloom), they are even allowed to stay in it with her consent. However the result is that neither the neighbours, who probably recognize the amount of effort Maria has to put in nurturing it, are not too eager to pitch in and contribute money to buy plants, nor Maria, who seems to appropriate this space more and more, does not feel like encouraging and inviting her neighbours to co-tend to the garden, and then to co-use it. She not only buys the plants, but also gets them by way of exchange with other block-based gardeners.

The issue of the fence draws attention here and may even raise some concerns. How can any fence have positive effect on bonds between the residents?

Maria fencing her block garden seems to represent rather an appropriation gesture, privatization of public space, and brings to mind the issue of enclosing common goods. A well-known American philosopher, Garrett Hardin, in his classic paper *The Tragedy of the Commons* used an example that, in his opinion, showed the superiority of private property over common property. If there is cattle of different herdsmen held on the commons, then each such herdsman will look after the cattle, and none after the pasture. As a result, the cattle won't have enough food to eat. However, if you divided the commons between the herdsmen, each of them would surely do their best to regenerate grass on their part of the commons. Conclusion — enclosing things that are common is more effective because it appeals to the selfish interest of the owner²¹. Does this example mean that there are things

²¹ Cf. Garrett Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons*, „Science“, vol. 162, no. 3859, pp. 1243–1248.

that can be even more detrimental to solidarity among Ciokana residents than Ms. Maria enclosing her front yard garden? David Harvey approaches the issue of fencing differently than Hardin. In his book *Rebel Cities* he observes: “There is much confusion also over the relationship between the commons and the supposed evils of enclosure”. Harvey continues:

In the grander scheme of things [...] some sort of enclosure is often the best way to preserve certain kinds of valued commons. That sounds like, and is, a contradictory statement, but it reflects a truly contradictory situation. It will take a draconian act of enclosure in Amazonia, for example, to protect both biodiversity and the cultures of indigenous populations as part of our global natural and cultural commons. [...] So not all forms of enclosure can be dismissed as bad by definition. [...] [E]nclosure of non-commodified spaces in a ruthlessly commodifying world is surely a good thing.²²

Enclosing the garden provides a frame, cuts out some space from the commodifying and selfish world thus allowing to nurture solidarity. The need to establish a frame in order to develop practices oriented towards the others is a significant conclusion that can be made based on the description of the second strategy analysed by Rožek.

Finally, the third strategy of reshaping the space of the Ciokana complex the researcher calls a “step by step planning and implementation”. This is how Pola Rožek describes and characterizes it in her field note from her action research in Kishinev:

The last place and at the same time a strategy I had a chance to explore was a playground with a palm merry-go-round made of plastic bottles. Already during our first reconnaissance in May we came across this extraordinary object with Pavel. Then we managed to find

²²

David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, Verso, London 2012, p. 70

out that its author is a teacher living in the block of flats (formerly known as *obshtchezhiye*) right by the playground. We decided to track her down in July. It turned out to be an easy task, even though not all people on the playground (mainly mothers with children) were aware who was the artistic supervisor and the attendant of this place. It only confirmed the declaration of our interviewee later on, who stated that the playground was open not only to a small group of residents of one block of flats, but also to others. In a moment we were already talking to the author of this work, Ms. Tatyana Erkhan. She turned out to be the most interesting interviewee, because she had a broad vision in her mind regarding this place and had more plans for the future. The first motivation to take creative action and change the closest space was the daughter of Tatyana. At the time, in front of the block of flats cars would park or kids would play ball, breaking somebody's windows every now and then. Tatyana came up with the whole strategy: she decided that the playground needed to be moved further into the yard (further away from the windows), flowers had to be planted (to keep the cars away), surrounded by car tyres (which would also work both as a fence and a place to sit for the kids) and a playground suitable for her daughter needed to be planned. It was 15 years ago and since then every year some new pieces, new improvements appear every spring on the playground in front of their block. It all started with a bench, then a slide followed together with some other equipment. Most elements are prepared by Tatyana's husband and her godson, motivated and encouraged by Tatyana, who once a year in spring plans everything out and organizes a fundraiser among the residents of her block and the block next door. The residents see the results and so they are happy to contribute the money, but not so much to help construct the playground. However, throughout the years, step-by-step, Tatyana managed to win their trust, so she is not really worried if she'll get the money. The key piece here is the merry-go-round shaped like a palm, that was made last year. It all started with a plastic

ready-to-use palm that Tatyana noticed and decided to make one of her own in a DIY, enhanced version. First, she needed to think about the project, so that it would be safe for the kids and would look like a palm. Then a fundraiser followed, then a pause, and finally – implementation. Everything is thought out comprehensively here: no sharp edges so that the kids don't cut themselves, seats on the merry-go-round are small, perfect for the kids and impossible for adults to sit in and damage them. In summer and in autumn the playground is regularly cleaned by approx. 5 families on the roster. Tatyana is also trying to involve the musclemen to work on her project. She believes that if you do something with your own hands, then you are more emotionally invested in it, thus, you will look after it. Another strategy which Tatyana was very clever to apply (although she never talked to us about it in this way) in order to prevent any damage to the playground was having it blessed by a *batyushka* (an Orthodox clergyman). Tatyana's daughter is already an adult, but Tatyana herself is making further, bolder plans, she sees the surrounding space as a coherent whole, she wants to do something nice for everyone, e.g. mount a volleyball net (so that kids and adults can play), clean waste around the trees by the neighbouring block of flats (it would make a great shaded place to relax), build a gym (for adults, to keep them busy so that they wouldn't drink), introduce some order to parking (so that cars don't go where kids are playing), to enclose the playground (to keep the kids safe), to plant some pines (to hold community parties outdoors). Of course, sometimes the plans go up in smoke because of the red tape and some top-down decisions. However, I feel that it only motivates Tatyana more to do her thing. Her vision is a total one: her solidarity gestures (even if some of them have been made only in her mind for now) are extended towards everyone around, for the common good, because *if my neighbour has a better life, then so do I*.

In the above example, similarly to the “together, supervised” strategy, what becomes immediately conspicuous is that it affects the material tissue of the

residential complex: its infrastructure, created together to form a foundation to grow the coexistence of Ciokana's residents. But also, the enormous amount of organizational work. In this case, similarly to other examples taken from the research headed by Pola Rožek, solidarity does not seem like a reflex, reaction to an impulse, but is rather a consistently carried out strategy requiring an organizational machinery to launch it.

Looking at grassroot social practices aimed at improving the existence of others one can observe three significant characteristics of solidarity projects: they need a framework that will allow for their development and will enclose them in order to separate them from the world opposing solidarity; another crucial pro-solidarity factor is infrastructure that provokes cooperation which needs to get organized – and this is the third characteristics of how to have positive impact on solidarity.

Performance

The stake in the context of the relation between culture and solidarity is reshaping a solidarity-oriented activity from a reaction to reality (which is usually the starting point) into a sustainable action that transforms reality. Kishinev examples are different here from the community-engaged activities presented in previous paragraphs of this paper. Solidarity manifested itself there as a response to an event: a strike, threat of eviction, displacement, closing of a factory, a wave of refugees. In this sense, it was more a reaction than a relation. Self-organization in the Ciokana residential complex, on the other hand, is a sustainable, planned activity designed to exert impact on the neighbourhood. This brings us to the following question: Is it at all possible to establish solidarity through artistic activity as a protagonist in real life, and not an antagonist with the goal put up opposition against the negative aftermath of successive crises? Yes, if one acts on the already mentioned statement that solidarity is the same as performance art. By creating a certain type of performance we manage to develop the ability to have close encounters with others, to act in solidarity. On what conditions can

it happen? Do you have to be somehow predisposed? Undergo thorough preparations? Or do you have to, in a way, demonstrate talent for solidarity? If that was the case, we would be doomed to fail and inspect each other suspiciously asking questions: Are we really competent enough to practice solidarity? Does solidarity necessarily have to be based on internal coherence and attachment to a certain type of morality? But what about difference and diversity then?

These questions are by no means abstract. They directly relate to a serious debate taking place in the public sphere. Let us revisit the example we have already mentioned. The attack on Paweł Adamowicz happened during the final concert of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, which is an unprecedented phenomenon as far as its scope and extent is concerned. The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (GOCC) was founded in 1993 by a Polish journalist and activist, Jerzy Owsiak, in order to improve conditions of medical care in Poland, especially for children. GOCC organizes fundraisers for specialised hospital and clinic equipment country wide. Its grand finale takes place each year in early January and consists of concerts organized in all the towns and cities in Poland. On this very day the foundation was raising money to special cans to finance medical equipment. Final concerts of the Orchestra enjoy the support of local authorities and public figures. And it was at one of these concerts in Gdańsk when mayor Adamowicz was stabbed. By making the public sector, which by definition should be a state business, a community responsibility, the foundation incites collective energy and generates a mass grassroots movement. It creates a solidarity performance while at the same time it changes the image of charity efforts: it rids them of the burden of sacrifice, and marries them rather with fun, joy, collective energy of the community getting organized around a good cause. The slogan of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity 2019 is emblematic: “Helping is easy as pie, even a kid can do it.” The accusations against the philosophy of the Owsiak led foundation, expressed by right-wing media, politicians and conservative organizations are based on undermining its financial transparency and use arguments of a moral nature (the slogan “Do watcha want”, which is the motto of the summer music festival Woodstock

Stop, also organized by the foundation and repeated during GOCC Grand Finale, is like a red rag to a bull for the Church affiliated critics and the Polish conservative faction). In the attempts to fight the movement that formed itself around the foundation, it is most often accused of hypocrisy and insincerity of Owsiak's intentions. He is accused of promoting himself, that his work is not based on the selfless need to help others, and the ideas he preaches are dangerous and appropriate real solidarity that can be manifested only and exclusively in the spirit of Christian mercy. The conservatives very often use arguments about the truth, authenticity and sincerity of intentions, attributing normative meaning thereto. However, with respect to performative gestures the sincerity of intentions and authenticity of the motivation are meaningless, while the truth does not precede the gesture. Erving Goffman, a sociologist, in his classic paper *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* uses the theatre imagery as the metaphor to describe the way people operate in the public sphere, how they perform their social roles and actualize them. He believes that every act made in public is a performance, with all relevant attributes, such as a script, costumes, props, stage set and a specific draft for the role. Social actors, familiar with this cultural repertoire, do not need to make the effort and take the risk of inventing all the practices from scratch every time they want to act. In a sense, this repertoire is a limitation, on the other hand, it is also a safe base, a launchpad you can use to carry out your own plans, wishes and desires, to speak your own voice and actualize your own subjectivity. In other words: in case of a performance it is does not make any sense to ask questions about authenticity or artificiality. Because both these traits are inherent therein. A recognizable, repeatable and restricted form gives the subject a chance to come into existence, and moreover, to meet others, for two subjects to get closer. In Goffman's approach, which presents the key to understand the performativeness of the public sphere, the performance itself is neither sincere, nor insincere, it can only be effective or ineffective²³. Its effectiveness means that it facilitates action, encounters and communication. Thus, if solidarity is an

²³

Cf. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, University of Edinburgh, Social Sciences Research Institute].



Confession Room – project's author: Karolina Pluta; collaboration: POGON Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth team; production: Krytyka Polityczna, POGON, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Nina Klarić.

act of performance art, then first and foremost it has to be effective, serve as a vehicle for meetings and openness, for overcoming barriers, for common operation in difference, for close encounters. Solidarity becomes a vehicle in the journey undertaken with the objective to discover an island where the deep empathy paradigm is possible.

After Paweł Adamowicz's stabbing President Andrzej Duda expressed his solidarity referring to the assumed obligation, unity and a utopian community that does not exist. And this is what really annoyed the observers. Meanwhile the collective subject, a community emerging as a reaction to the death of mayor Adamowicz, did not resort to any declarations, but rather to action, very familiar indeed, simple, being nothing more than staying together in the same space, body to body, vigils, lighting candles, fundraising, and last but not least, getting involved in preparations to the funeral and turning the state ceremony into a communal and social one. Local restaurant and eatery owners in the vicinity of the cathedral where the funeral was held, served hot tea and provided chairs for the attendees. Solidarity is not necessarily about expressing any life truths or a motto, it does not have to derive from any deep friendship and absolute identification with the person it is directed to. It emerges the moment one takes action. It is not secondary to any original inner life or idea. It simply allows one to set on a journey towards the other person.

Let us repeat: it is such actions like lending a chair, common participation in a demonstration, a fundraiser, blocking evictions, strikes or serving tea that translate into the practice of social life, into transiently formed bonds, shallow and short-lived, maybe, but giving trust a chance to bud. They are a response, not really a relation yet, however, they have a potential to open gates for developing bonds. Solidarity does not assume limitless empathy or blurring differences, but rather calls for creating common space. These short incidents of experiencing commonness in difference, in a very real, specific gesture or action, stir the life juices of the social blood flow, they bring a faint spark of hope, a tiny bit of light for survival. They are the last resort. The lifeboat of solidarity towards the new land, new paradigm of culture and social life.

Cracks

On the 4th October 2018 Karolina Pluta, a researcher and an artist invited employees of Zagreb POGON to an activity called *The Confession Room*. On the video shot by Nina Klarić²⁴ we see a room with a square stage in the middle and ribbons hanging down from the ceiling, forming a sort of open-work cube. At one side of the stage there is a chair where individuals sit one by one. Each person is induced into a meditative state where they can focus on their body and feelings evoked thereby, and then they are asked to note on a piece of paper a question or questions they have always wanted to ask their colleagues from POGON, but never had a chance. The notes are then hanged on ribbons. During this activity seven people phrase the total of couple of dozens of questions. At the end of the day they meet again in the performance space in order to read the questions and discuss them. First thing one notices is the laughs, jokes, but also a hint of ambivalence. The atmosphere is very relaxed, however, the personal topics they touch give rise to a subtle tension. At first sight it seems that the activity failed. Instead of creating deep empathy, encouraging people to serious *being-with*, it provokes amusement. The participants seem to be looking for ways to somehow deal with the awkwardness of the situation, to somehow distance themselves from it and find the funniest answer to the given question. Most of them really succeed. When to our question: “What do you fear most?” they answer “Deadlines”, the participants of the event seem to be most amused. Later other, some really personal, and some trivial questions appear still provoking most unusual replies. Paradoxically it is the laughter that unites them. Those who follow the situation on the video record immediately notice the magic of the relations between the POGON employees who, during their thunderous explosions of joy, drop their masks. In our working language we like to call such moments “solidarity cracks”, the moments when people expose themselves and open up to real close encounters. The laughter does not discredit the authenticity. On the contrary, it helps bring people together, intertwines somehow those who

²⁴

All video documentation of the artistic research events referred to herein are available at <<http://cultureforsolidarity.eu/>>.

work together, share similar professional worries and work-related tensions, however, they are different from one another: in their attitudes, kinds of life challenges, commitments, character, mindset, opinions. In laughter these differences become irrelevant for a moment, people meet, and briefly, though authentically unite. How is it possible that a simple formula allows for this kind of experience?

During a study carried out in Seville by the co-author of this paper, Dorota Ogrodzka, Felipe González Gil, a participant in the performative activity underlying the research analysis suggested that the sense of closeness should be somehow initiated and organized, that just like a film it needs a director and a producer. In the reality that pushes us away from each other, events that may lead to emergence of “solidarity cracks” should be created consciously. And this is what happened in Zagreb.

Such cracks can of course emerge accidentally, in passing, however, it is much better if we facilitate them by intentional design and creation. The stage design and time frame for the event define the field of “play”. They allow for the principles of everyday to be suspended, they are the signals triggering another set of principles. Johan Huizinga in his classic essay *Homo ludens* about the play discussed this topic very convincingly. He argues that the play exceeds our everyday life, is in a way a conclusion of a contract where all the parties are subject to rules other than normally applicable. By agreeing to enter the space of the play, they accept the rules it is governed by²⁵.

The performative activity proposed by Pluta touches upon a very sensitive area: here you see participants that are interdependent and interrelated professionally in various ways in their everyday life who now are supposed to ask each other questions they have never asked before. Thus, they take the risk connected with the violation of a taboo, with leaving the comfort zone of their regular style of communication, sometimes they reveal sensitive areas of their identity that stay hidden in everyday life. The script allows the participants to feel safe. Everything seems to be defined in advance, formulation and writing of the questions were defined as a task in a game. Such format only seemingly does not leave much space for intervention and self-expression of

²⁵

Cf. Johan Huizinga, *Homo ludens*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949

the participants. Everything may seem to hinder spontaneity which in the first impulse we might associate with the deep impromptu *being-with*. However, in real life the opposite is true: an artificially designed situation, very specific aesthetics that almost creates distance to itself, successfully establishes a frame where it is possible to unmask, to open towards others.

The task assigned to the participants of *The Confession Room* activity may seem imposed. Nobody asks them if they really feel like confessing and getting closer. The decision is made by the artist, she is the one moderating, thus, in a way releasing the participants from the awkward initiative that one of them would have to undertake in order to start a team discussion about needs, emotions and hidden though deeply connected with subjectivity registers of life. Any initiative of this sort in itself reveals a need thus, it requires the professional relationship boundaries to be crossed. The artist is someone from the outside, somebody situated outside the relationship framework. Thus, without any burden or risk she is able to initiate the process of developing personal relationships in the group, since she has nothing to lose and nothing to gain. Her role is to provoke solidarity reactions between employees, to have them empathize with solidarity.

The participants have a task before them, with a clear script and action path. They have to choose, whether they want to get involved or not. Whether they will lie or speak the truth. External rules, even though they seem artificial, generate quite real emotions. And here we get to the bottom of the whole concept of solidarity as performance. Performance as a rule is artificial, it applies a formula of a restored behaviour, if we resort to the terminology used by Richard Schechner, using props, stage design, costumes provided by the culture (in this case personified as the artists and the researcher). This limits the repertoire, but at the same time creates a reliable foundation that can spark authenticity. In the solidarity crack a moment of an organic encounter appears. It is easier to expose yourself in a group in a safe, pre-defined environment, where the person coordinating it is supervising the situation as a whole.

Eugenio Barba, the founder and the leader of the Odin Teatret theatre group, also an anthropologist and a researcher of creative and social processes,



Bel Horizon building in Marseilles. Photo: Paweł Ogródzki.



Tours de danse – project's author: Tania Alice; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene;
production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art, European Cultural Foundation.
Photo: Paweł Ogródzki.



Tours de danse – project's author: Tania Alice; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art, European Cultural Foundation. Photo: Paweł Ogródzki.



Tours de danse – project's author: Tania Alice; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Daniela Lanzuisi.



Tours de danse – project's author: Tania Alice; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Daniela Lanzuisi.

discussed it convincingly, relating to the conditions that make an improvisation possible:

For an actor or a performer to improvise, they need to perfectly know the techniques and the rules. They are like a safe scaffolding, like a support that gives strength and confidence, sense of security, that make it possible to risk, to fill empty spaces with invention, existential truth, individual perspective.²⁶

This is yet another similarity between solidarity and performance. Although solidarity is associated with a reflex, a spontaneous reaction, still it is far more possible that it will happen exactly in the situation when the conditions are prepared, and the structure of activity has been developed.

The fact that the participants operate in the world of imposed rules and techniques of action, gives them freedom to improvise: they can themselves decide how much they want to tell about themselves, how they want to make use of the available time. It turns out that the very idea of choice and clear rules helps them leave their comfort zone, fosters deep atmosphere of closeness. The option to say no allows you to say yes. The consent to stay silent encourages you to speak. The recorded material clearly shows that the activity works with passion, that it moves. POGON employees pluck up the courage to speak for themselves, in their own words. Even though they laugh and joke, or rather maybe because of that, their answers are expressed in a personal language and their statements often refer to private views or thoughts.

The designed performance puts them off their everyday routine, not so much allowing to express something, but rather to act for something. It also introduces essential elements: laughter and humour. According to a theatre artist, Thomas Richards:

A lack of identification can be helpful in moments in any performing situation, since one can always make mistakes. A distance filled with

²⁶

The quote taken from Eugenio Barba's presentation during the Odin Week in Odin Teatret, Holstebro, 23 August 2012. The words were noted by the co-author of this paper.

subtle humor, inner laughter and joy, can be extremely important (...) in order that inevitable difficulties pass with time. If a momentary problem fastens onto you – something occurs that you don't like, that you consider a mistake in yourself or in others – it can affect the quality of the upcoming time. A movement of humor inside might be like the reaction of a person with a lot of experience who, through a conscious way of looking, releases identification with a momentary difficulty.²⁷

Not identifying yourself too much with the situation, keeping a distance to the situation help you avoid the trap of being confined in your own perspective on one hand, and of excessive attachment to your own experience on the other hand. It allows you to make use of the solidarity crack, to get closer to others, to build trust. Even a difficult and a personal question can then become an opportunity to look at yourself with a certain dose of irony, distance in the mirror formed by other people.

Dramaturgy

“A joyful sweetness is in the air, I feel it the moment I arrive at the airport in Marseille. It is early July 2018. The captain addresses the passengers: »Smile! We have just arrived in the land of crickets«. And then we hear an imitation of the sound of a cricket coming through the speakers. Everyone laughs together. Marseille. My city, my home, my so many other things. A sleepless night. A twenty-hour journey and ...here I am”²⁸. These are the opening words of Tania Alice's essay *Solidarity dramaturgies*. It is the outcome of the *Tours de danse* activity that she carried out together with an artist, Aziz Boumediene, aimed at participation of residents of the Bel Horizon block of flats in Marseille. Once again, the pilot puts up a show to make people

²⁷ Thomas Richards, *Heart of Practice. Within the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards*, Routledge, London–New York 2008, p. 75.

²⁸ All cited Tania Alice words come from her paper *Solidarity dramaturgies* prepared as part of the *Culture for solidarity* project and published on the website <<http://cultureforsolidarity.eu/>>.

laugh that lets the Brazilian artist feel the unity with passengers, she knows she is home. The explosion of cheerfulness for a moment sets a platform of emotional flow, but not only that: it generates a special kind of understanding between people gathered in one place by pure chance. The laughter and solidarity intertwine here in a close relation.

Alice's activity took place from 4 to 15 July 2018 and was video recorded by Daniela Lanzuisi. It entailed inviting Bel Horizon residents to dance together. Day after day the artist danced individually or in small groups successively with the neighbours, in their flats or outside in the halls of the block. Adults, children, families, friends living in the same stairwell: different set, different temperature of their co-existence. Sometimes they seem clearly embarrassed when dancing, slightly camera shy, other times you can see them totally relaxed, they enjoy the opportunity to show their body, movement and presence on stage.

In the sequences shot in the first days of the activity we can see how Tania Alice together with Aziz Boumediene and the caretaker of the building, Mr. Fortes, use a red tape to line the structure of the building on the window by the entry to the staircase. Nineteen rows represent nineteen floors, each flat is a separate window. The collage looks a bit like an advent calendar, which is an association Alice uses on purpose. In each field pictures will be placed: whenever one of the residents decides to have a dance, his or her portrait will be put in the appropriate cell of the net. Advent is a period of counting down the days according to the Christian liturgy: "a cheerful anticipation."

Anticipation is what Alice has been experiencing from the moment she landed in Marseille. As she reports on her first morning, before the whole undertaking even begins, when she hears the city call, and each step feels like creating space, Tania Alice expresses a specific kind of tension that she experiences. It is a kind of excitement that makes you move from the usual everyday energy towards an intensified, concentrated dynamics of the performance art. The artist describes the moment she has the first look at the architecture of the building. "A tower! [...] I feel moved, as if I was about to have my first kiss. Making a performance is like being constantly two

seconds away from your first kiss, and from all the next ones that follow. Is performance a dramaturgy of the first kiss?" This comparison points not only to the specific state of the performer starting her action. This state involves trembling muscles, a decision to get involved, a leap into the unknown, excitement. In the description it is also a clue that lets us understand what the relations she is about to trigger during her project will be about: about being ready, feeling of getting closer, catching moments of understanding, tension on the verge of intimacy and adventure. This fleetingness and intensity of relations is a characteristic that yet again reveals the nature of solidarity as a performance. It is created in consolidation, in common adventure, in moments of unusual contact, when unexpectedly a channel of understanding opens.

Eugenio Barba talks about conditions of effective performance:

In the instant which precedes the action, when all the necessary force is ready to be released into space but as though suspended and still under control, the performer perceives her/his energy in the form of *sats*, of dynamic preparation. The *sats* is the moment in which the action is thought/acted by the entire organism, which reacts with tensions, even in immobility. It is the point at which one decides to act. There is a muscular, nervous and mental commitment, already directed towards an objective. It is the tightening or the gathering together of oneself from which the action departs. It is the spring before it is sprung.²⁹

The subject of artist's anticipation is the encounter, closeness, the dance. But also, the horizon of the action: final event, collective festivity that will represent co-presence, celebration of being together. Before it happens however, there will be low-key meetings held in individual apartments. Encounters are the "solidarity cracks" where authenticity manifests itself, and the differences become irrelevant. In a building such as Bel Horizon, where

²⁹

Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe. A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*, Eugenio Barba, Translated by Richard Fowler, Routledge, London 1995, p. 54.

the ethnic, class, language and economic span is enormous, an activity that pushes these differences into the background presents a real hydraulics of community: all contact and understanding channels are cleared.

When Alice describes her first moments in Marseille, she immediately presents them as an activity with a performative quality. “The street is calling me”, she reports. “I wake up early. I go outside, I feel the happiness coming from walking the streets without fear. [...] I simply feel love. I am filled with life and the feeling that a project is about to begin. On the other hand, the body that was trapped on the plane, now demands help. I practice yoga, I dance, walk, I land with the entire force of love – the gravity and lightness at the same time. I decide to have a workout [...]: yoga, cycling, meditation, dancing. And most of all, walking the streets. Fear free.”

For Alice abandoning fear appears to be a physical activity. It is a clear difference between the public space in Marseille and Rio de Janeiro: places where the artists live, where her anxiety accompanies the walking constantly. It is different here, the body can switch from the vigilance and threat mode to experiencing pleasure, happiness, and even, in Alice’s words, love. Walking, which she very often refers to later on, becomes a way to discover the space, to establish it, a cartography of sorts, building an original map, outlining the field. When talking about seemingly simple, irrelevant everyday urban activities, Alice triggers a very special sensitivity towards performativity and agency of gestures: walking, running, and eventually – dancing.

A culture scholar and philosopher, Michel De Certeau refers to this register of action, perception and description as to “inventing everyday life”. Urban spatial practices for him are ways to produce own space, but also to avoid the hegemony of hard urban topography in favour of civic emancipation and existential strengthening of the subject. It rhymes with the methodological inspiration of Alice taken from an essay by three researchers: Eduardo Passos, Virginia Kastrup and Lilliana Escóssi, who refer to research and operation as a sort of cartography:

Cartography as a method of intervention research means the work of the researcher is specifically oriented, however, not as an imperative,

with ready-made rules and principles, or pre-defined objectives. [...] The challenge here means reversing the method in the traditional sense – it is not about walking with defined objectives, but about the primacy of walking, monitoring the route, its targets. [...] Cartographic instructions are merely a guideline that directs the research path, always accounting for the outcomes of the research process of the studied object, the researcher and the deliverables³⁰.

In this case, cartography is not about recreating or reconstructing a pattern, but rather a live performance, following a process, inventing your own tactics and strategies, which are categories most beloved by De Certeau.

What is the walking performance for? How does it contribute to the space and the individual apart from the pure pleasure of the movement? According to De Certeau, all variants of conscious walking in the city are connected with gaining your own voice, formulating your thoughts:

The act of walking is to the urban system what the *speech act* is to language or to the statements uttered. At the most elementary level it has a triple “function”: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of the language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic “contracts” in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an “allocation”, “posits another opposite” the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action). It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation”³¹

If walking is enunciation, then dance you may treat as an utterance that generates greater momentum, is more audible, more complex, makes the

³⁰

As cited in: Tania Alice, *Solidarity dramaturgies*, op. cit.

³¹

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated into English by Steven Rendall, University of California Press, 1984, pp. 97-98

individual present, lets him or her individually define their place in space, take their place and leave their mark. When walking and dancing in the urban space the artists assigns relevance to simple elements of everyday life, this is where her presence and utterance are manifested. In this undertaking solidarity (although the word does not occur in Alice's essay too often, still she examines it, redefines over and over again using synonyms) entails creating similar space for Bel Horizon residents for their self-expression and giving meanings to their gestures, appreciating the importance of their activities. They dance, while she brings out the meanings, keeps up the drama-turgy, enhances their voice.

As Tania Alice emphasizes, "My role as the artist is focused on discovering the field of autonomy of the participants. [It happens through] listening, making their ideas audible again, touch, unveiling their visions and thoughts." Solidarity here is understood as giving space and opportunity for being present and *being-with*. Descriptions of meetings with the residents are moving examples of "making the voice resound". Just like when the artist is dancing with Hamsa, an autistic boy, who selects reggae music and an energetic song *Karma* by Naâman. "Reggae is the only word he can say", Alice emphasizes. In this dance there is space for an equal, strong performance of a person who is very often socially considered to be different, silent, even mute. By dancing the boy has the chance to express himself in the language that is fully available to him: the language of movement.

Alice describes two other encounters: Sihem and Shaima, two teenage girls, who want to dance and ask her to join them in their moves. They have lots of ideas and suggestions, they want everything they propose to be included in the project and the video footage. Touraya, a forty-year-old lady from the Majotta island (community of the island has a bountiful representation among Bel Horizon residents), invites the artists and her colleagues to her apartment. Together with three teenage kids they propose a traditional Majotta dance to the guests. They gather in front of the TV screen and recreate the footage of a collective choreography, following their moves. This is however more than mimicking and repetition. The sequence of steps is simple, no need to study the instructions. However, watching it has another function:

dancers of Bel Horizon take on the form of the group that unifies during the festivities shown on the screen. A small, inconspicuous performance in a community flat in the middle of Marseille takes us to Majotta. The place of origin of the participants for a little while becomes the centre of the universe.

We see how something that is relevant for the people Alice meets immediately becomes relevant to her and to the dramaturgy of the encounter. Recognition of this relevance has a solidarity value; it is an expression of respect and understanding of the fragment of the life that somebody wishes to share with them and decides to reveal before others. It is also clear when together with the selection of the music and dance a sort of intimacy or otherness presents itself, when during the encounter with the artist it can be expressed and accepted.

Alice describes a situation when a teenage boy comes together with his bros, all dressed hip-hop style, but he wants to dance alone, and when the doors close behind his friends, he asks Tania if they could dance together to some classical music. „»Classical music?« He replies: »Yes, something for the piano and orchestra«. I look around and finally suggest Swan's lake. I play the music and he says that he loves it and that this is exactly what he had in mind! We dance, pretending to be fantastic ballet masters. We take a picture. He asks me not to disclose his choice to his friends. They arrive. We dance rap. We take a picture. On the first picture he has a sweet position, smiling. On the second one he tries to pose as a thug, like his friends. This discreet chauvinism comes from the social pressure. In case of male children, the entire sexist education, everything the child absorbs from the chauvinist elements of the educational process becomes so strong that it is impossible to easily deconstruct it.”

The *Tours de danse* activity has a power to free people from pressure, discrimination, formatting stereotypes, and it becomes extremely significant when you have a chance to accompany somebody in this process. Dramaturgy of solidarity that Alice sought for starts to gradually fall into categories: “a gift”, dance is a gift for the artist, something the residents of the block can and want to share; “exchange”, dancing together is about giving each other your own sensuality, joy, but also the knowledge about where

you come from and what it means for the whole group of Europeans. The clash of identities, the exchange of experience, sharing your time, offering physical closeness in the shared movement: all this we can understand us various kinds of gifts. These one-way flows, when on one hand the community provides space, shares its stories, step routines, music, while the artist offers in exchange her attention, commitment and ability to name things is only the most basic level of exchange. As Alice emphasizes on more than one occasion, the more important moment for her is when the directions of giving get effaced, the feeling that during all these shared activities a reciprocity is born, while the economy of gain and loss is no longer so obvious. At the end of her follow up essay the story behind the question that the artist was asked by a history and geography student is explained. "What is your favourite kind of music?". Alice is deeply moved, for it is the first person to ask about her own preferences and choices. She plays *Karma* by Naâman, the one she "received" from the autistic boy. She passes the gift along, the karma keeps flowing. "I am blown away. I managed to inscribe my story into the story of this building. As always in case of performance art, we give everything, but we receive even more." The gift is subject to the dynamic of the flow, there is no clear recipient or sender here. It is a gift of solidarity that comes back unexpectedly, it does not work as a simple return or logic of benefit, but rather works for the common good, for the social space of happiness and wellbeing in the broader sense. It hints of one of the thoughts formulated by a French sociologist, Jean Duvignaud, who studied how traditional communities celebrated their identity. The title of his essay, *The Gift of Nothing*, most aptly captures the proposition that the most valuable benefit of community is the sense of collective status, meaning and celebration as they become a gift from everybody to everybody³².

A Polish poet, Czesław Miłosz, approached this phenomenon similarly. In one of his poems, also called *Gift* he talks about the atmosphere, a fleeting, ephemeral power, and not about the action of giving or receiving, and especially not about a very specific, material object:

³²

Cf. Jean Duvignaud, *Dar z niczego. O antropologii święta*, tłum. Łada Jurasz-Dudzik, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 2011.

A day so happy.
Fog lifted early, I worked in the garden.
Hummingbirds were stopping over honeysuckle flowers.
There was nothing on earth I wanted to possess.
I knew no one worth my envying him.
Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.
To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.
In my body I felt no pain.
When straightening up, I saw the blue sea and sails.

The narrative of this poem is similar to the love discourse of Tania, for whom meetings with residents become the doors to experience beauty, contact, flow. This is what her version of solidarity looks like.

Some of the people invited to participate in the activity agree at once, they want to have one dance, then they return. Some need to be persuaded, repeatedly visited, dates need to be set. On the video you can see various emotions and different levels of openness to the situation proposed by the artists. The decision to dance while being watched, or even filmed, is, according to Alice an act of extreme courage, show of readiness to expose yourself in your corporeality, emotionality, your abilities and limitations. In the descriptions by the artist and shots of the video what strikes you most are the moments when the body, tense at first, starts to relax and enters into a kind of organic flow, starts to follow the course of the play, internal humour, adopts some distance to its limitations. These are the moments when close observation and attempts to create appropriate gestures give way to the elements and freedom. This is when an unprecedented bond between the dancers is formed, together with a sense of confidence, satisfaction and power. Alice brings the thought of Janet Adler to mind, a therapist and a dancer, creator of the so-called authentic movement theory who talks about an amazing emancipatory and empowering potential of the situation when in your dancing you are being observed, not judged; “A compassionate witness accepts what is, remains non-attached, and expects nothing”. Here solidarity would mean keeping company, a meeting of subjects who

open up to each other without any hidden claims, judgements, without any need to verify their intentions. Can such experience empower you? Can it give strength? Is solidarity a tool for empowerment? It turns out that it is a completely misguided category that prevents you from seeing what is the most precious about solidarity. As Alice points out: “Rather than about giving power, the *empowerment*, I’d rather talk about emancipation, in order to undermine the concept of power as something relevant. This will help us undermine the consolidated structure of patriarchy.” Thus, the solidarity experienced through dancing is an emancipatory project that helps people come into existence in their subjectivity, in the entirety of their being. But it is not really about giving them more power, on the contrary, it is about creating conditions for accepting weaknesses and awkwardness that occur ever so often while dancing. Solidarity allows you to integrate the feeling of ambivalence – of freedom and limitations, agency and weakness, expression of significant emotions and feelings in a playful atmosphere of a lark and giggle, and collective celebrations. For it is the true emancipation: to facilitate a situation when various colours of subjectivity are revealed, when the shadows and dark sides of one’s identity are acknowledged. When dancing, the body can be strong, causative, but sometimes it can also be fragile, uncoordinated, prone to stumble and be clumsy, at risk of uncontrollable moves.

Dancing helps democratise participation. It is supposed to be far more democratic than discourse. “If you can walk, you can also dance”, Alice assures one of her interviewees. The unpretentiousness of this thought is striking, it attracts as a truth about the fact that regardless of our education, communication skills or ability to formulate opinions, negotiate or articulate thoughts, we all have bodies that we can use to act. When dancing we can leave our usual role, get closer to others, overcome our loneliness, move from being passive to being active. This is its community-forming power. A French philosopher, Jacques Rancière, mentioned by Tania Alice, maintained that a dancing community is an emancipated community, as it liberates itself from passivity, frees itself from hierarchy. It heads towards a unifying experience which is not about the status, power or negotiating interests.

This potential of dancing is similarly perceived by Joanna Rajkowska, a Polish artist of critical art, who in her public projects leans towards activities with a community and situations that facilitate meetings of people from various groups. When carrying out her notorious *Oxygenator*³³ project (a functional installation, a public sculpture in a form of a pond surrounded by benches and creating a refreshing breeze) Rajkowska declared she was looking for an open form that enable people from completely different ideological and existential backgrounds be together considering the specific place it was set up in. Grzybowski Square, where the installation was placed, is a true urban melting pot: the area of former ghetto and a synagogue, the seat of the Jewish community, is next to a church with a bookshop in the basement offering ultra-catholic, anti-Semitic books. Old tenements for years occupied by multigenerational families, see their reflection in the windows of skyscrapers where corporations have their seat and where the intensive mode of hyperproduction is running 24/7. How can you create an opportunity for solidarity within such differences?

Rajkowska believes that public art should be like salsa lessons that seem to be an occasion worth far more attention than a gathering of people interested in one, specific issue or sharing an identical opinion on something. More appealing, because it allows people from various places and different orders look into each other's faces for a moment, smell somebody's sweat, feel the touch of a wet hand. "They don't know anything about themselves, they don't share the past. They come here each Friday to enjoy the rhythm and their own body",³⁴ the artist argues, and she expects the same, namely facilitation of such meetings, from the *Oxygenator*.

Since we are discussing the performative power of solidarity expressed by establishing public space, it is appropriate to invoke some examples from theatre, because this is where these mechanisms are model-constructed. In the production of *African Tales* by Krzysztof Warlikowski³⁵ the

³³ You can read more about *Oxygenator* in the archive on the website of the artist. <<http://www.rajkowska.com/pl/projekty/62>> [accessed on: 12.04.2019].

³⁴ *Flying with a ball and chain. Kaja Pawełek interviews Joanna Rajkowska*, <<http://www.rajkowska.com/pl/projekty/64>> [last accessed on: 26.04.2019].

³⁵ *Opowieści afrykańskie według Szekspira [The African Tales by Shakespeare]*, dir. Krzysztof Warlikowski, premiere: October 2011, Théâtre de la Place, Liège, Polish premiere: 2 December 2011, Nowy Teatr, ATM Studio, Warsaw.

last scene is a salsa class. The teacher, a stocky lady, a bit grotesque in her tight purple leotard, speaks Portuguese. She has students standing in rows, demonstrates the steps, watches the progress course attendees make. However, in this instruction there is more patting on the back and encouraging winks than real corrections. A Polish actress, Stanisława Celińska, playing the instructor, makes up for her clumsiness with her charisma, while her democratic praise allows everyone to enter the dancefloor. Nobody from the dancers questions competences of the instructor and on her end she does not eliminate anyone from the common dance. She utters her encouragements in Portuguese with agility and enthusiasm. It does not matter whether you understand the language well, because it is not the language that is relevant here. Just like in the Marseille activity, where the language was not necessary the common ground. In Warlikowski's play the Portuguese rustle has rather a status of elements additionally contributing to the playful atmosphere of exoticism and giggle, where being together is what really matters. You see new characters arriving on stage from previous parts of the play, now gathering together, all mixed up in the triple narrative of themes from three Shakespeare's plays underlying the performance: *King Lear*, *Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. Already outside the narrative, tongue in cheek. In all three plays, just like in *Bel Horizon*, characters with different stories, origins, social and economic status meet. In Shakespeare's plays the interpersonal differences are the main obstacle to communication and co-existence, as it also happens in everyday common real-life neighbouring. Now however, during the last scene of dance, all divergences become irrelevant. Those who previously stood against each other, fighting and destroying each other, disputing, scheming, now stay together, on the dance floor, in self-mockery. As if they knew that these roles were nothing but a script: in a sense it does not matter on which side you are on. Salsa in the play is planned as the final abandonment of the roles, this is when the actors show up in front of the audience as themselves.

At the end of *The African Tales* Cordelia, the youngest daughter of Lear, who in one of the final scenes froze in a dramatic outcry "Isolado!", now rushes onto the stage. In her moving monologue she is now trying to

invent her own language that would allow her to call for help, to start a relationship, establish contact with an imagined newcomer. However, words stick in her throat, come out as an incoherent babble, more and more clearly building a cage of loneliness and isolation around her. Eventually we see her, still lonely, sitting on the beach with her father, browsing through a summer paper, taking personality tests. Her score, always in the lowest possible range, only strengthens the verdict: “Isolado!” Find yourself some friends, a newspaper psychology expert suggests, attend a cooking class or a salsa course. Don’t talk, don’t speak, don’t look for arguments. A few sequences later, in the epilogue, Cordelia is dancing like crazy, enthusiastically shaking her hips among other class attendees. Finally among strangers, in this anonymous, yet sweet situation of being together, simply enjoying the rhythm and body. Everybody is having great fun, and the common routine is reminiscent of a staging of democratic relations that eventually allow for diversity and finally open up the public situation that throughout the entire performance was being shown as impossible, subject to exclusions on the grounds of race, gender, age, singlehood, origin, opinions or political affiliation. Dancing steps are like establishing extracommunity, public space possible only within the framework of play, anonymity, giggle. It all happens without any negotiations, maybe even without understanding of the language, in the performance that turns out to be most efficient, because it operates for the sake of solidarity.

“Dance and performance are forms of ecological care for us and for others”. With this thought by Guattari Tania Alice completes her project and summarizes her analysis. “Participation is an ideal that you cannot reduce, an ideal that requires a highly critical social and political thought on our cultural habits.” The author further notices: “This is why I intend to dance until everything is resolved. It may take some time, but until then the performance will continue, dance will be the revolution. Our revolution.” This is a political vision!

In his excellent essay *Dancing Politics* Oliver Marchart recalls the famous slogan expressing the demands of a feminist and activist, Emma

Goldman: “If I can’t dance to it, it’s not my revolution!”³⁶. This thought leads to a number of consequences, in fact, it establishes a paradigm for revolution and social change, where the stake would be not only the new laws and rules for public space, but also happiness, pleasure and wellbeing. Marchart refers to the subversive concept of politicality formulated by Hanna Arendt who believes that political activity gives life special quality and taste not only because of its purposefulness and efficiency, but also due to a kind of existential energy it generates. “Acting is fun”³⁷, maintains Arendt. And there is nothing discrediting about it. Just like performance, fun is treated seriously, they are an enormous driving force. “Joy or fun in politics, springs from the public display of one’s own virtuosity, in a performance whose end lies in itself. This is why political acting is structurally the same as dancing”³⁸, Marchart concludes his analysis.

Tania Alice works to create an opportunity for presentation, first in a personal contact, later also in public exposure of virtuosity which is paradoxically understood here differently than usual: regardless of your skills or sense of dancing competence. Residents not only dance (some of them, especially children, are definitely virtuosos of their techniques), but they also teach the artist their routines, their dancing styles. “Elas and Zayra, 6 and 8 years old come to get me. They want to do an afro dance [...]. Elsa says she used to dance, but she gained weight and now she feels that she does not like her body anymore. We start a small disco in the hall of the building. A 7-year-old Zalfata joins us. We are looking for afro dance music on Spotify. We dance. I am trying to introduce moves other than those typical for music videos. I ask the girls to teach me. I think about dancing lessons involving people from the whole building. I want to be a dance student of all of them.”

Descriptions of moments when somebody taught the artist their dance follow. Residents turn into experts. They get a right to make a performance, somebody gives value to their activity, regardless of the colour

³⁶ Oliver Marchart, *Dancing Politics. Political Reflections on Choreography, Dance and Protest* [<https://www.diaphanes.net/titel/dancing-politics-2126>, accessed: 10 August 2019]

³⁷ As cited in: Oliver Marchart, op. cit., p. 202.

³⁸ Ibid.



Neighbors – project's author: Paweł Ogródzki; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art. Photo: Paweł Ogródzki.



Neighbors – project's author: Paweł Ogródzki; collaboration: Aziz Boumediene; production: Krytyka Polityczna, Le Têtes de l'Art. Photo: Paweł Ogródzki.

of their skin, how long they have lived in Marseille, their education, competences, floor they have their flat on, implying its size and standard, and subsequently also the status of the residents. It is a true solidarity revolution when everybody wins the right to be noticed, recognized, to live well.

In the play called *Rewolucja, której nie było* (English: *A Revolution That Never Happened*) directed by Justyna Sobczyk³⁹, prepared by the theatre ensemble of Teatr 21 consisting of actors with the Down syndrome, we see the same mechanism. The driving force of the revolution here is constructed also based on performance. Actors perform their dance, musical solo acts, give their performances that are the best way to speak out, not even to express, but rather to create your own subjectivity against the others. Revolution in winning rights on one hand, and the way people with inabilities are perceived on the other is carried out without any doubts as to whether it would work. This arouses hope that such situations may happen for each subject and be yet another step towards the new paradigm of solidarity-based culture.

“It may take some time, but until then the performance will continue, dance will be the revolution. Our revolution.”

Trap

Performative scenarios, performance formats and performances themselves are the things that help you trigger energy of encounter through introducing to action. They are mobile and provoke humour, and it allows for an open community always on the move to be established. However, in case of performances collective action and organization is required. It is based on the knowledge of cultural codes and symbols. How can you design an action that does not require knowledge of these codes and symbols?

In late June – early July 2018 Paweł Ogródzki together with Aziz Boumediene opened a communal photo studio in the restroom of the Bel

³⁹ *Rewolucja, której nie było* [Revolution That Never Happened], dir. Justyna Sobczyk, Teatr 21, premiere: 7 December 2018, Teatr Soho, Warsaw.

Horizon block of flats in Marseille. In the field note of 4 July Ogrodzki describes his idea as follows:

Imagine a photo studio as a meeting point for people who do not know each other. Maybe they pass each other every day but haven't had any reason to meet yet. Now they can by posing together for their portrait. In their best suit or dressed casually. With a specially selected object, a family memento or a vase hastily grabbed off the table. All this effort only to be together in a picture, to look together in one and the same lens. What is more, a lens held by a foreigner who does not speak their language. Like many of those who have arrived in France recently and live their new, complex migrant – French identity.

It is true that Bel Horizon is inhabited mainly by foreign families: “The Cape Verde Islands, Comoros, Majotta, Algeria, Morocco”, Ogrodzki lists in his field note of 1 July. Adding: “The tenants’ turnover is relatively quick; they don’t strike roots here. Our activity is a bit like approximating a glass in order to focus rays and start a small fire in the community relations.” The artists invite Bel Horizon residents to have their photo taken together with their neighbours. However, in order to avoid shooting only people who know each other, they make appointments for different neighbours to arrive at the same time. It turns out that usually the studio welcomes people who had never had any contact before, except for the exchange of polite greetings. Because it takes a while to prepare for the photo shoot, the neighbours start talking to each other. The artists also ask them to bring along objects that are important to them. Stories behind those objects allow them to get to know each other’s biographies better and learn about the experience of the members of this multiethnic community in Bel Horizon. In his summary of the activity Ogrodzki notices that “operation of the photographic studio was a sort of artistic trap [...] where people who decided to take the photo with their neighbours would fall. These [...] efforts put them in a situation of an encounter, of a talk and a shared portrait with people whom they have previously looked at with reluctance.”

The “trap” category was taken by the researcher from the works of the British anthropologist, Alfred Gell. The co-author of this paper in her paper written with Tomasz Rakowski and Ewa Rossal, explains this notion and its links with art:

The figure of the trap turns out to be [...] useful in interpretation of artistic projects, creating new ethnographic situations. [...] Gell believes that all contemporary artwork works the same as traps. They generate questions but they do not provide answers, they provoke to trigger reaction in the audience, they create situations where not only the viewer, but often the artist himself or herself is entrapped in a network of meanings and relations between themselves and between them and the object. Traps not only tend to embody complex ideas and intentions of the artist, but also disclose traits of the potential recipient, since, as emphasized by Gell, »The trap is therefore both a model of its creator, the hunter, and a model of its victim, the prey animal. But more than this, the trap embodies a scenario, which is the dramatic nexus that binds these two protagonists together, and which aligns them in time and space«. On the linguistic level we can study traps as tools/ devices/ objects for catching and/or as a method or activity aimed at entrapping somebody in a more or less defined situation.⁴⁰

The photographic studio is a regular piece of infrastructure. In Marseille it became a solidarity trap. It was catching people who wanted to be immortalized on the picture on their own, but left the place communicated with a neighbour they hadn't known till that moment. Photographs taken thanks to the opening of the studio make up for a series of truly unusual portraits. It is a visual record of all types of relations, various dynamics, *being-with* of the neighbours. Each image can be subtitled with a question or even a few questions. On one of the photographs we can see a group of kids with various colours of their skin and a middle-aged man behind them, their neighbour. Do

⁴⁰

Dorota Ogrodzka, Tomasz Rakowski, Ewa Rossal, *Odsłonić nowe pola kultury: projekt etnografii twórczej i otwierającej*, „Kultura i rozwój”, vol. 3(4)/2017, p. 109.

they know each other? Does the slightly distanced position of the man give away his attitude towards the kids or their origin? Does the fact that he decided to pose together with them and there is something of a hint of a warm smile lingering on his face mean that the next time he sees one of the kids playing in the stairwell it will be easier for them to at least exchange greetings?

Yet another picture shows a group of Bel Horizon residents. Mr. Faissoil, a Muslim, who says his prayers as an everyday practice, brought his prayer mat. Next to him there is a boy holding in his hand a picture he drew himself. Next: a middle-aged woman, two black toddlers, two teenage girls who appear on the pictures most often, Sihem and Shaima, already mentioned above with regards to the Tania Alice project. One of them is just about to leave Marseille, during the activity she wants to have photos with as many neighbours as possible, for her it is a chance to say a personal goodbye, to collect keepsakes. Finally, a young man. On the table, next to his prayer mat, there is a ship model, an item brought by a lady, Ms. Deleville. Her husband, who came to the studio a few days earlier, had been making the model for more than a year. These props are a chance to disclose, to present a piece of your personality, very often – a quite intimate piece that the neighbours remain clueless about in everyday life, a piece that is absent from the common space (the objects people brought included also a picture of the deceased husband). The neighbours meet not only in the fleeting moment of their posing together, not only in the superficial though welcoming “here and now”, but also in the symbolic exchange of knowledge about each other, about each other’s values and practices. Everybody stands equal before the camera, the frame of the photograph accepts every setting, every story.

It is a situation that allows people to get to know each other and legitimises diversity. Many neighbours brought flags, both those from their place of origin, displayed with pride and a sense of affiliation, and those representing their favourite football club or a dream holiday destination. Thus, they not only become the declarations of identity, but also symbols of their desires, aspirations or normal wishes. Sharing them with random cohabitants create moments of communication, gives a chance to get closer and understand each other better.

This closeness emerging between the people becomes conspicuous also in their gestures. At one of the portraits we see two men, both dressed in white shirts. One of them is Pierre Louis Albert – a person of importance in Bel Horizon, also from the point of view of activities carried out in the building. A local activist, someone who introduces artists into the community, accompanies undertakings, encourages neighbours to establish first contacts with artists. Together with his partner, Florence Bal-longue, on many occasions they welcome Paweł and Aziz in their flat with a breath-taking view of the city. On the picture taken in the studio Pierre is photographed in a close embrace with his neighbour. The men are very friendly towards each other, smiling, open. Their bodies lean slightly backwards thus creating a figure resembling two swans intertwined. The flowers on the table form a similar mass. This subtlety, gentleness and intimacy create an unusual aura, a kind of crack. The gesture itself and the whole atmosphere of the photograph go way beyond the heteronormative pattern of the male behaviour and beyond the stereotypical image of relationships between neighbours alike. The picture is filled with a playful mood with an underlying hidden tension. Looking at it one feels it is a play, a perverse wink, a subtle disturbance of patterns, but also a moment of exposure revealing the closeness between two men who are friends or simply know each other. Solidarity of embrace, solidarity of closeness. A solidarity crack.

The building itself, where the activity takes place, is exceptional. Bel Horizon are in fact two tower blocks standing side by side. It was built in 1956 and originally was supposed to be much bigger. Because of its location near the sea and dangerous weather conditions it was decided that the original tower block needed to be reinforced by a twin-tower next to it. “Two towers next to each other. Mightily standing straight, cutting into the blue sky way above other high-rise buildings. There is a beautiful view stretching out from its top. You can watch water masses, the city, and even islands not far away from the waterfront,” Paweł Ogrodzki writes in his field note suggesting an analogy with another set of towers, the most significant towers for the contemporary Western imagination:

On 11 September 2001 a passenger plane hit [the towers]. They exploded, collapsed, burying thousands of people under the debris of glass and concrete. Today we remember this as a tragedy symbolic for our times. The conflict between civilizations and humans continues. The building of the western World Trade Center, filled with white collars teeming between their open space desks, collapses as a result of an act of a terrorist organization that originates from the geographical and cultural East and South, and considers the global dominance of the western American culture to be its biggest threat. On 3 July 2018 the towers [of Bel Horizon] are still standing, leaning against each other. The second one was built later in order to support the stability of the first one, which used to sway alarmingly standing alone. Inside there is a teeming mass of people of different skin colour, living next to one another. Most of them are blue-collar. Their aggregated debt amounts to approx. 300,000 EUR. It stems from the basic costs of living, and not long chains of virtual banking transactions. The towers could collapse on their own after roughly 70 years of use, if they are not included in the governmental financial support programme.

World Trade Center, as Ogrodzki points out, are towers-symbols. During their opening ceremony in 1973 the then POTUS, Richard Nixon, proposed a clear interpretation of the rationale behind the architecture of the high-rise development. They were supposed to promote not only harmony between the States, but also to embody the communication and balance between all nations⁴¹. Even the architect of the building himself, Minoru Yamasaki thought about it in the same way. When asked about the source of his concept, he replied:

We have been accused of all kinds of things, like trying to beat the Empire State Building and so forth. But I was very interested in

⁴¹

The speech was recorded in the materials documenting the so called dedication ceremony on 4 April 1973 in New York. The quoted fragment was included in the narration of the 2008 documentary by James Marsh, *Man on Wire*.

building these buildings. There was a way that we could have built a lower building, which is a wall and had a courtyard inside, but that wouldn't have been very interesting for the skyline of New York. Beyond that I think there is a significance to world trade that the Port Authority recognised and the Port of New York is the single and most important port in the United States and World Trade symbolizes World Peace. Somehow if we made these buildings important enough that we might get across the idea that we are for World Peace.⁴²

The firm tone of this declaration confirmed beyond any doubt that the building was meant to express and symbolize just values: peace and harmony, and that the US were the guarantor of these values. Their implied privileged position entailed setting the tone, ensuring the desired homeostasis, appointing the centre and watching over the global order. Thus, the form of the development was by no means accidental. It had to be a tower. Two towers, to be precise, in order to emphasize that their structure was not an accidental choice. Once the foundations were laid, the paradigm of America writing its own history was confirmed.

There are also two towers in Marseille, but for quite a different reason. The second one was built so that the first one would not collapse. In fact, they are a symbol of an economic crisis, of social inequalities, and seemingly unsolvable dilemmas that European cities face. How can we ensure a decent standard of living for our citizens? How can we support newcomers? How do we maintain our basic infrastructure? Many immigrants, people of different economic and class status, of different origin live in Bel Horizon. They are bound together, their lives touch just like the two towers epitomizing fragility, weakness, uncertain condition, a reality through and through emblematic for the contemporary civilization. There are no impertinent attempts to show off the size and strength. It is a desperate architecture aimed to ensure the minimum of safety. It is also balancing on the edge of a disaster. The shared fate is not only

⁴²

Minoru Yamasaki, *Epilogue* [in:] *Monuments and memory, made and unmade*, ed. Robert S. Nelson, Margaret Olin, University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London 2003, p. 310.

manifested in passing each other on the stairwell, meetings on the lift, maintaining corridors, keeping the quiet hours. It is also their collective debt.

Solidarity that Paweł Ogródzki's project offers seems to be a positive proposal to open up to each other as to subjects, to go beyond the horizon of common liabilities, with the perspective of a contact more friendly than anonymous passing by in the stairwell and reading notices about the debt of the building. Bel Horizon is like a vertical village, as Pierre suggests. Everybody knows everybody by sight, though the relations are very different, sometimes imbued with cold indifference or reluctant ignorance. And a shared look into the lens of the camera, preceded by the consent to stand in front of the camera together, is a step towards a meeting that goes beyond these boundaries.

In her essay, Tania Alice quotes her discussion with Paweł Ogródzki, when together they are wondering about when during the work of a photographer solidarity occurs. According to Ogródzki, he himself as a photographer and a foreigner who does not speak French, experiences solidarity and friendliness. He is in a way left to the goodwill of the people, he surrenders his skills and his perspective for them to use, and he has to trust them, since he does not have the basic tool of knowledge and power, namely the language at his disposal. It turns out that people are eager to assist him in his activity, they make effort to explain something using gestures, to communicate without words. Thus, the importance of the presence itself increases, while not speaking the language is not a belittling or excluding factor, which in turn has a huge positive impact on these people from the Bel Horizon community who as non-natives have lower competence as far as French language is concerned. The artist, being a foreigner, is in a situation similar to theirs, thus in a sense he becomes their representative, a spokesperson even.

The language of the activity again assumes a non-discursive, democratic form. Photography is democratic. However, it presents a series of difficulties, for example when not everybody fits into the frame or you need to rearrange the studio. The photo shoots are a good occasion for friendly, supportive gestures and impulses: somebody, for examples, comes with a cake

or some juice. Or lends their object to the neighbour who claims that he or she does not have anything interesting of valuable to show. Moreover, the neighbours jointly ensure that all the portraits and photographs presented at the closing exhibition crowning the project were returned to the persons they depicted or those for whom they might be important.

Tania Alice mentions yet another thought that Ogrodzki shares with her, referring to Robert Putnam's research. In Putnam's theory there are always two aspects to this kind of social intervention: *bridging* – opening one community to another and *bonding* – connecting people from the same community with each other. For Ogrodzki, bridging happens through a bond created between the artist and the residents: at first one person communicates with the artist, then comes another one, and eventually, through this indirect way everybody starts to communicate with each other. We witness something that in the discussion mentioned by the artist Alice and Ogrodzki refer to as an intimate record inside the social narrative. Writing can be understood here as creating history together, spinning a tale, marrying different motifs. Entrapped residents start to open up to the space of relations they have never even suspected.

But let us make no mistake, the horizon for Marseille activities was not to entrap the residents of the block of flats. Ogrodzki in the above mentioned field note describes the following situation:

Yesterday morning (i.e. around noon) Aziz and I arrive to B[el] H[orizon] and to our surprise the doors to the room [where our studio was in – author's note] is ajar, open. We open the door to see a smiling face of [one of the residents] Mr. Fortes taking off his football costume. The studio is massively rearranged – the background is pushed back, a flag of the Cape Verde Islands and a Cabo Verde scarf is pinned onto it. »I took the liberty to use your studio to shoot a few pictures«.

The infrastructure left by the artists got taken over by the residents. The trap got tamed and integrated into the life of the block of flats, what is more, it became the place for the original performance, the space for creating meanings.

The already mentioned Alfred Gell argues that the most important characteristic of the contemporary art is its ability to impact, but also its potential to spark reaction. One of possible reactions is exactly taking action. Susceptibility to act and overtake demonstrates that the artwork works. The artistic infrastructure, same as performance and dramaturgy, becomes a foundation for the experience of closeness to occur. Bel Horizon activity reveals the power of the seemingly neutral sharing of the base created by the artists.

Performance, dramaturgy and infrastructure can be also understood as an interface loaded with “co-creation”, “co-responsibility”, “co-dependence”, “co-operation” and “co-m-passion”. Individual persons, groups or communities join in, and once disconnected they are energized with above mentioned characteristics. It points to the necessity of having continuous presence of such interface in communities or of returning to them from time to time.

Masque(rade)

Pola Rožek – a researcher, who analysed self-organization of the local community of the Ciokana housing complex in Kishinev with the communal *being-with* in mind, and who observed that the driving force for action was a peculiar take on selfishness – finishes her field note with a question: “Is it possible to show solidarity gestures without meeting your own desires and expectations first?” When we were carrying out our action research from our partners from the European Cultural Foundation and ZEMOS98 we borrowed a metaphor that in a suggestive way answered the question asked by Rožek. During one of the team meetings they noticed that everybody who travelled by plane, must have remembered the safety instructions that advise you to put the oxygen mask first on yourself before assisting your child. During our research we noticed that one of possible barriers that culture has to face when it comes to its social impact, including impact on solidarity gestures in Europe, are the conditions in which artists and cultural organizations working with local communities operate. The conditions are of precarious nature, without any stability, with low pay and excessive workload.

All this has consequences, not only on the social level, but also on the existential one. The anxiety, dilemmas with underlying tension connected with inability to fulfil your aspirations and the feeling that you need to give up on these kinds of activity which would seem the most appropriate and choose those that are simply available: these are just some examples of the reality of cultural workers. If you add to this such factors, as parenthood, need to look after the elderly, sudden diseases or other unexpected life needs, the whole invisible area of everyday life suddenly becomes determining, starts to roar, threatening to explode.

Can a culture organized in this way efficiently activate social values that it is fighting for? Should not we put the solidarity oxygen mask first on, so that we can put it on communities that we work with? These questions inspired us to conduct research in the area of culture itself. We have already described the activity headed by Karolina Pluta addressed to the employees of the Zagreb POGON institute. The second facility we decided to invite to join action research designed in the said way was one of our partners, a Spanish organization ZEMOS98 from Seville.

Paradoxically, the world of culture, art and social activities is based on the tension between the above described working conditions and the fact that the persons shaping this world very often have sincere, deeply rooted ideological motivation, and they invest in their work a lot of energy and life resources, engaging passion, hope and thoughts. Sometimes professional activities absorb these people totally, which is not so difficult, when the profession you practice is at the same time your passion and hobby. In a simple way it helps you efface boundaries between the work and private life.

Additional factors, such as flexible working hours, high mobility, combining social and professional life, increased sense of responsibility can soon stop being a blessing, a privilege and turn to a curse instead. The problem has been diagnosed in a powerful way by Miya Tokumitsu of Pennsylvania University in her paper opening with the famous slogan, *Do what you love*⁴³. Firstly, she points to the fact we seem to often forget and refers to the

⁴³ Miya Tokumitsu, *In the name of love*, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/> [accessed: 16.8.2019].

primacy of passion: many activities essential for the society can be hardly referred to as fascinating and stimulating. Unfortunately, these are also jobs that enjoy very little recognition, both socially and economically. The researcher argues that being so lavish with the positive thinking narrative and enhancing the love motivation at work not only encourages humiliation of professionals on the positions not connected with any big passion or fascination, but can even result in a peculiar invisibility of the huge area of services and people providing such services.

This, according to Tokumistu, is just the tip of the iceberg. For her the situation in the area of seemingly privileged professions is even more treacherous: “The »do what you love« mantra has also caused great damage to the professions it pretends to celebrate” she maintains, giving as the example the way universities operate and the situation of scholars employed in academia.

There are many factors that keep PhDs providing such high-skilled labor for such extremely low wages [...], but one of the strongest is how pervasively the »DWYL [do what you love]« doctrine is embedded in academia. Few other professions fuse the personal identity of their workers so intimately with the work output. This intense identification partly explains why so many proudly left-leaning faculty authorities remain oddly silent about the working conditions of their peers. Because academic research should be done out of pure love, the actual conditions of and compensation for this labor become afterthoughts, if they are considered at all.

In *Academic Labor, the Aesthetics of Management, and the Promise of Autonomous Work*, Sarah Brouillette writes of academic faculty: “. . . our faith that our work offers non-material rewards, and is more integral to our identity than a regular job would be, makes us ideal employees when the goal of management is to extract our labor’s maximum value at minimum cost.”⁴⁴

A quite similar reasoning permeated the Polish public sphere at the time we were finalizing this paper. A mass strike of teachers and educational

⁴⁴

Ibid.

workers started in April 2019 was held under fire of arguments expressed by the government and pro-governmental conservative groups. According to them, striking professionals should drop their financial expectations and demands for improved working conditions for the sake of the so called good of their students, ethical weight of their work and its ideological dimension. Although the absurdity of such logic can be easily exposed (in front of many schools banners with slogans such as: “Mission will not feed us, ideals will not keep us warm” were put up), however, it is difficult not to notice that for years it has been the barrier that kept the wave of resentment at bay and has been the gag keeping the education professionals silent. Watching the strike and the reactions of people and groups currently in power, as well as the society itself, one could ask a question that would not only relate to the core curriculum, but rather to the vision of the world and values as such: what does the Polish school teach? It could turn out that the values and meanings declared in civics and literature, or even in religion and ethics textbooks did not translate into the way the educational facilities are organized.

This mechanism can be also observed with regards to the reality of institutions of culture and art, as well as organizations dedicated to social change. The dissonance between the *modus operandi* and the contents is like a blind spot. It often remains out of sight. What represents the essence of work in the given institution, its main mission statement, the set of values and addressed issues, very often is not implemented in production structures. Theatres producing plays on social justice operate using extremely unjust mechanisms. Progressive institutions aimed at civic society development struggle with insufficient transparency in management and lack of any internal democracy. Small organizations work on permanent take-off run, always lagging behind, uncertain, giving in to a grantosis, losing their marbles out of fear whether they will be able to maintain their open undertakings on one hand, and pay wages to their employees on the other. At the same time, they carry out projects to persuade participants about the need to look after themselves, about the value of subjective choices and that “less is more”, as the popular catchphrase assures. Can



Tired Superheroes – project's author: Dorota Ogrodzka; collaboration: Miguel López and ZEMOS98 organisation team; production: Krytyka Polityczna, ZEMOS98, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Julia Cortegana.



Tired Superheroes – project's author: Dorota Ogrodzka; collaboration: Miguel López and ZEMOS98 organisation team; production: Krytyka Polityczna, ZEMOS98, European Cultural Foundation. Film frame from a video by Julia Cortegana.

anyone imagine a more overwhelming schizophrenia? Almost all institutional cultural centres work based on habits that are a sort of default system setting. Work procedures and methods are full of contradicting and unfair rules that become translucent, absorbed by the blood flow of the system, operating on the routine level.

As a result, nobody has any first-hand experience of emancipation here, however, we always insist that we do what we love. Maybe we don't feel the cognitive dissonance, maybe we believe that this is the price to pay for this unusual privilege⁴⁵. How can it be changed? How do you keep your enthusiasm stemming from the sense of mission and absolute involvement in produced values and keep a clear head, not forgetting about your own needs and ambitions, not giving up on your basic sense of security, to put it plainly? Is it possible to work in dignified conditions in culture? Can we empathize with ourselves, knowing that we need both bold visions, as well as to be able to pay our bills without the recurring end-of-the-month anxieties? Are we able to create such ways of working that will be the best artistic and social project on its own talking about justice, equality and balance?

These are all the dilemmas that the precarious cultural workers have to face while remaining under the pressure of a peculiar conspiracy of silence: it is not easy to talk about these paradoxes, because it seems a bit like voiding one's engagement, giving voice to aporias which are not easy to integrate and include in a positive, motivating slogan. It seems that this status quo is difficult to overcome in everyday situations, to disturb the smooth surface of the narrative about our love relationship with our work where our smiling faces reflect as if in the mirror. Breaking the illusion is an act of courage, honesty and readiness for discomfort. This is when the performative power of creating cracks comes to aid.

Let us quote Miya Tokumitsu once again:

No one is arguing that enjoyable work should be less so. But emotionally satisfying work is still work, and acknowledging it as such

⁴⁵

The authors resort to the first person plural here, because it is the reality that we all experience in our everyday life.

doesn't undermine it in any way. Refusing to acknowledge it, on the other hand, opens the door to the most vicious exploitation and harms all workers. Ironically, DWYL reinforces exploitation even within the so-called lovable professions. [...] Nothing makes exploitation go down easier than convincing workers that they are doing what they love.⁴⁶

Members of the ZEMOS98 organization even though they work for the positive change, emancipation, cooperation, awareness and generally defined social welfare, joke that sometimes they wish they were the beneficiaries of their own activities. "In the house of iron the spoons are made of wood", Felipe González Gil, one of the four core team members of the organization reminds the popular saying. In the Polish and English context one would rather say: "The shoemaker's children are ill-shod." Lack of time, problems with financial liquidity that translate into insecurity in life, giving up on risky, though attractive challenges, and last but not least, paying less and less attention to oneself and one's own needs are all often mentioned as difficulties implying that sometimes the care and solidarity should be extended also to us. However, there is usually no time, space or mobilization to do so.

Co-author of this paper together with the ZEMOS98 members, namely Felipe González Gil, Lucas Tello Pérez, Sofía Coca and Pedro Jiménez, decided to explore the topic of this solidarity towards oneself. The inspiration to this action research was twofold: firstly, we wanted to include organizations and institutions as examples of cultural practices, a scaffolding of sorts for activities carried out in culture. The question whether at the bottom of the culture production, in the layer that we consider to be an organized experience, carried out consciously according to a scenario by a professional in the field, you can enjoy stability, solidarity and dignity on various levels, seemed to be one of the most urgent ones here, demanding to be asked. Does balance and bottom-line exclude each other?

The second reason, very similar really to the first one, is the personal motivation connected with comparable issues that we had to face ourselves

⁴⁶

Miya Tokumitsu, *op. cit.*

during the *Culture for solidarity* project and other activities undertaken by team members. In other words, *The Tired Superheroes* undertaking was carried out on the wave of our own thoughts and existential experience, drawing on our professional dilemmas. Well aware of the paradoxes inherent in the DWYL claim and faced with questions about the extent to which as cultural activists you should first look after yourself, empathize with one another, try to emancipate your own desires, name dilemmas, bewail losses and distance what you cannot overcome, the co-author of this paper, Dorota Ogrodzka, proposed an activity based on in-depth interviews and introspection.

The first stage comprised of interviews. Following the already described principle stating that performance in its artificiality releases authenticity, Ogrodzka created a play space: with each of the four team members she conducted an interview where the storyline was stimulated by cues from randomly picked cards. The participants could decide from which of the three categories of cards to draw. There were three options: “challenges”, “questions”, “catchphrases”. Similarly to the Monopoly board game, or rather its alternative version Commonspoly, created by the Zemos98 team themselves and dealing with cooperation, common work and ensuring common good, unlike the primacy of competition, profit and aggregating wealth, which in the original version of the game were the objective thereof. This rather limited selection with precisely specified cues, direct questions and invented tasks became the scaffolding, a framework that can be filled with sincere confessions or trite answers. The convention of the game with a bit of the tongue in cheek approach, where the role of chance and a hint of frivolity was acknowledged, paradoxically triggered serious reflection, deep consideration and openness in sharing their own perspective. It was also a chance to improvise. The respondents approached the cues in different ways: some of them mixed and matched them, creating various constellations, others were trying to build a coherent narrative out of a few answers. Sometimes they closely followed written hints, other times they negotiated meanings, treated them as a loose inspiration.

Already at this stage a characteristic of this activity that later came to be its main core, manifested. It was a special relation of the prepared

performance and the reality: dramatic proximity, almost being adjacent with the regular course of action, while at the same time a deflection, or rather a facelift thereof. The interviews are a bit like a regular conversation, they are held in a relaxed atmosphere, in the relation the listener–the speaker, with personal involvement, an attitude of curiosity, with emotions. At the same time the situation remains artificial, as if it was framed, defined by “tasks”, tense. Already at this stage it became clear that listening alone, and the time dedicated to self-analysis in the presence of another person had an empathetic dimension. A process free of judgement, conducted in an understanding company, lets you hear yourself as if from the outside, which already provides you a kind of support: this is how ZEMO98 members often described the interview stage of the action they participated in.

In recorded preliminary interviews the participants talk about their values, strategies, operations, about the intertwined professional and existential order. This entanglement leads to huge involvement, constant flow between various perspectives and life plans. Coherence, but at the same time difficulties in setting borders. Completeness, as in the Do what you love claim. These are also values that form an unusual chain: trust, care, loyalty. They are like a strong foundation, but they also have a dark side to them, for they are a liability and a burden. Last but not least, when you build on such ground, it is difficult to think about any change. The attachment and the force of habit curb any movement and any thoughts about some aspects that might be different. It is even more difficult to think about yourself in this context.

In a nutshell, the work and common activities become a strong part of one’s identity, an initial rite of passage, a fundamental experience that defines the horizon. It is a stable world, safe harbour, a family – these are the metaphors Zemos98 members use when talking about their mutual relations. These sorts of well-established systems also have their flaws; everything that happens within such systems, becomes translucent after a while, difficult to name, and even more difficult to critically examine. Thus, if any form of oppression occurs, fatigue, exhaustion, it may happen that for quite some time it remains unnoticed, regardless of good intentions and sincerity of people involved in the said system.

In situations like that an external impulse or transposition of operational principles is needed, a disruption, a consolidation. A performance. Or a tuning of reality, if one resorts to the metaphor from the world of technology and risky entertainment. Formally speaking, tuning may be understood as a performative process where the behaviour, situation and context typical for everyday life are elevated to a higher level of intensity. Key parameters become even more spectacular and clear. When you tune your car, it means you are mainly enhancing the engine, but also giving it a nice beauty treatment, improvements, overall facelift. The same applies to a performance: an upgrade may refer both to the aesthetic dimension (costumes, props, gestures, setting the space), and the dramatic aspect alike, the production of meanings itself that are elicited in greater consolidation.

If the subject of an activity is catching some rest together, then you find the most amazing place that answers all unfulfilled fantasies about recreation. When we talk about collective revision, reflecting about yourself in the past and getting rid of everything that represents a burden in this past, you need to light a real fire and burn all the signifiers of unwanted memories. A ritual, play, instructions, traps, strong gestures, forms, all on the thin line between the necessity of intense mobilization and total letting go are the allies of tuning. Tuning allows you to enter the liminoid area. It is a term used by Victor Turner, one of the most important anthropologists of the 20th century to describe a state similar to liminality which is a temporariness, space between two different states, identities or moments. A liminoid state on the other hand is something “sort of” transient, a state that resembles a transformation, an artificial reality of sorts that is supposed to facilitate the notion of change. As an example of the liminoid sphere Turner lists games, plays, various *quasi*-rituals, but also the theatre⁴⁷. Based on the agreement and a set of rules that create a kind of a parallel, imagined reality, a space to test alternative scenarios opens up. They all remain in the sphere of fantasy however, they are practised, played out, experimentally cross-checked. Their performativity is similar to what Judith Butler writes

47

Cf. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Antistructure*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1977.

in her essay on drag queens: the power of impact is based on the insecurity as to the status of the produced form. Is it fiction? Is it reality? Is it stable? Is it vulnerable? The wavering of meaning and message, free drift between various forms of identity are a desired state here⁴⁸.

Tuning is like dressing up, a masquerade. This is exactly what it is in the Seville experiment. In one of the interviews, when asked about a situation that he would consider a disruption of the habit and the routine underlying operations of the organizations and about the conditions that would facilitate solidarity towards the employees themselves and extracting their subjectivity, Felipe González Gil fantasized about a support group for tired superheroes:

We, employees of culture, are like mutants, like superheroes. We have our mission and we tend to forget about our own needs. I wish I could create a situation, a theatre play, maybe, where we would sit in our superhero costumes, tired, with our make-up melting, trying to talk about our ideals. Or maybe rather we should be discussing our weaknesses, that everybody has some, though we can rarely expose them. This is what I imagine it like: we are sitting together and then one of the superheroes says: *I'm so tired of flying...*

This image was the starting point for the masquerade that was meant to serve as a sort of solidarity experience, action research focused around the question: What needs to happen for the tired superheroes to reconnect with their desires, needs, with each other in their vulnerability and subjectivity, rather than in tasks and the productive work mode? The answer was to be reached through the already mentioned reality tuning, an intensive time of a performative city ride, made up of situations when they experience events that they previously mentioned as unusual, dream situations, disrupting the shell of values and the burden of the mission. They were roaming the city for fifteen hours dressed up as Spiderman, Catwoman, Batman and Superman,

participating in surprise events that they prepared for each other based on the knowledge collected during the interviews. A kart race together, canoeing, a ritual destruction of keepsakes, a football game, an alternative museum tour, doing various nice things for each other, asking and answering questions, and last but not least, visiting important places connected with the history of Zemos98 or reconstructing the closing speech that they addressed to the audience of their last festival which for many years used to be the key event for their organization; all these experiences, intensified and consolidated in time, gave the chance to have a liminoid transition from the familiar identity and form towards prototyping another way of working that would include time and space not only for their wishes, but even for their whims. The excess of pleasure, satisfaction and joy was meant to help people meet again in the simplest setup of me-you, to abandon clichés and face each other as real-life subjects through and through.

There was one more, key machine working at the backstage of this play: producers who as part of the project were tasked with organizing all elements of the game, releasing the team members from their responsibility for the course of events, giving them the comfort of participation, relaxed, free of any obligations. The thing that would normally burden the core Zemos98 team members as a task to do, now was working for them, as a gift, a platform set up for solidarity. Having somebody to babysit the children so that the participants can enjoy the event all day long seems like a simple task that assumes an approach in the categories of feminist economy or care economy. And these are practical equivalents of solidarity, its manifestations. Why? Because they address real needs, and not some abstract values. It is practice, not declaration. What is more, they change the mechanism of production, they are not just stories about care, but an implementation of the paradigm.

All manifestations of solidarity throughout the whole project were carried out in the similar fashion. The co-author of this paper, who was also the producer of the Seville activity and a co-curator of the entire undertaking, was able to do her job while on the maternity leave and also after the leave, thanks to the whole team's decision to finance travel costs also for her babysitters. This allowed the baby to travel together with the mother, thus

making the work-life balance a reality, instead of a notion neglected out of necessity. It became the question of choice, not a compulsion.

The Seville masquerade became a formula fostering research because similarly to a carnival it combines ease and frivolity of a dress-up with a serious operation carried out in an increasing tension. It helps ventilate the tension, relieve the system, while at the same time gives a chance to blow off some steam. It does not change the system as a whole, in fact, it only disrupts it for a moment in order to later reconsolidate and restabilize the structure. Critics of carnival believe it is a dangerous activity: it does not introduce any real change, but only provides a temporary relief that later helps fulfil the adverse pattern more efficiently. But is it really the case? Does not it boost the energy and our ideas about what the structure might look like in everyday life, if only it drew on this quirky, short-lived event? If we recognize a performance situation as an efficient tool for modifying imagination and the experience of closeness, then it becomes quite clear that even such a fleeting peak into the crack may work as an impulse for transformation.

The factors that need to change in case of ZEMOS98 are, according to its team members: lack of time, financial insecurity, debt, unequal pay, unhealthy style of working. Big aspirations and responsibility meet lack of security. A reality tuning, a sort of carnival was meant as an attempt to overcome this conflict, a kind of profanation ⁴⁹ of the everyday status. Since there is no time or money then production of an activity where each costume and each experience has its price, not to mention that you need to dedicate a whole day's work to do it, thus wasting it, making it non-productive, seems to be an act of madness, irresponsibility and nonchalance. It seems that superheroes should not allow themselves to act this way, however, by doing it they are broken out from their binding duty, they liberate themselves from the narrowed perspective of everyday operation.

Tired superheroes spent one day wandering around the city, not answering calls to save the world, thinking about themselves, spending too

⁴⁹ We use this notion in the meaning proposed by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who points to the subversive potential of play. Profanation, according to Agamben, means the use, setting in motion, checking the applications, breaking the immunity. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, Zone Books, 2007.

much time on eating, babbling and completing strange tasks which made them cheerful, made them abandon their role, made them laugh and let them see themselves in situations of ignorance, surprise, seeming weakness (when e.g. they needed help to get out of the canoe). Mutual acceptance and sympathy played the key role here. As we have mentioned above, being accepted in one's vulnerability, awkwardness and exposure is an experience that gives rise to deep solidarity, support and empowerment. "We do something completely different than what we have been doing, we leave behind the everyday life situations in which we know each other, we do something for us, this gives us strength, lets us abandon the patterns for a while," was how they commented on their activity. They also experienced their state differently, their fatigue, moments of inattention, not being able to focus on yourself, a crisis. Why is it so important? Because in the life of a superhero it allows you to define your full identity, your limits and aspirations, and as a result, to redefine your strategies. It lets you confront the burden and discomfort of your own condition, just like the costumes worn all day long become a nuisance, an annoying accessory that restricts your movements.

Tuning is not activism. It does not bring instant change. It rather provides inspiration to experiment with your awareness and imagination. "If we cannot imagine change, it will never happen," activity participants argued. Tuning is about inducing a state of crisis, of increased intensity and speed, where your thoughts flow swiftly and cannot stay in one place for too long. In such induced moments of adrenaline strong, deep words are uttered: "You are my family", "I am sorry", "I love you", expressed in their costumes and masks to each other from the stage of Alameda Theatre, where for many years they have been organizing events for other people, for another audience. The artificial performance unarguably facilitates for the authenticity cracks to appear together with solidarity gestures that may later translate into thinking about yourself and about internal solidarity in the organization that aspires to distribute it outside, to encourage and teach it.

"I don't want to be a superhero all the time", confesses Felipe. "I'd rather create things within existing opportunities, not closing my eyes to what is needed, what gives satisfaction, what sometimes lets you disconnect, and

recharge”; “I need some rest, to do something also outside the organization”; “I have given myself the consent to maybe one day change my place of work and that it will not be the end of the world or lack of loyalty, although Zemos98 is everything to me”, each participant said and Julia Cortegana recorded it on her film documenting this activity, shot while she was accompanying the whole event with her camera. Tuning allows you to fantasize about other scenarios than the only permissible superhero model, always ready, always subordinated to his or her calling. “Sometimes you need to take the cape off,” team members laughed and added: “This activity encouraged me to think about the ways how we can practice in our structures the same standards that we apply towards other people, our colleagues, participants for whom we organize our events and hold workshops.” Among habits connected with being attentive to others and working for others, the sense of responsibility and care turns out to be extremely difficult.

You need to restrain from the instinct of putting the mask on somebody else and take care of your own mask. The oxygen, the identity, the life mask.

7. THE POINT

The research carried out by an international team under our guidance assumed that a new cultural paradigm needs to be established, with solidarity at its core. Inspired by the artists of the older generation specializing in work with local communities, we believed that the paradigm has to be based on “co-creation, co-responsibility, co-dependence, co-operation and com-passion”, as Krzysztof Czyżewski put it. However, when trying to embrace the contemporary social and political processes we noticed also challenges that we face today when proposing such a paradigm: it has to lead to the creation of open communities that know how to build bridges between mobile individuals representing various language, culture or geographical background.

Therefore, we were looking for a type of intervention and artistic action, inspired by grassroot solidarity practices grounded in European societies that would provoke communal behaviour, while at the same time would account for the fact that both the people of culture, and communities they work with, can never put down their roots for long in one geography, culture or language. We chose cultural practices stemming from the community art tradition as our starting point, and wanted the practices adopting its integrating and community forming effect into the reality of the contemporary world and the sphere of the international network of socially sensitive culture practitioners to be our destination point.

As a result, our research allowed us to outline certain conclusions:

1. Solidarity may be provoked as part of a cultural and artistic activity, if the said activity happens based on a social, i.e. cultural, religious or class difference and sets in motion tensions caused by this difference by programming cooperation of people representing such difference. Active encounters of differences in order to reach a common objective (preparation of an event, artistic or cultural activity) is the first step towards rebuilding social solidarity using cultural tools.
2. It is necessary to shift the mindset from thinking about solidarity as a reaction to a crisis of another subject towards solidarity manifesting as building relations with another subject. To make it possible, organizational framework needs to be redesigned together with material infrastructure and interfaces that would form the basis for developing social solidarity. This is how we approach culture: it has greater chance of affecting how the social solidarity practices emerge and consolidate if it provides material foundations, tools that would act as a scaffold for erecting solidarity as a relation, and not only a reaction. Culture should also be able to develop and provide scenarios for social solidarity activities, a sort of dramaturgy, narrative, practical clues on how to carry out

collective processes aimed at development and consolidation of social solidarity practices.

3. Thus, we find it is an imperative to rethink the category and the practice of performance which in our opinion has incredible potential as an artistic genre that can be taken over from the avant-garde culture and adopted to serve popular social culture focused on creating communities. Performance is an activity; it stimulates all senses of the participants and has a transformational potential. If aptly applied in the area of culture dedicated to solidarity, it may bring incredible results in future.
4. Other performative genres that in our opinion bring hope as far as provoking social solidarity is concerned, are the ludic genres, referring to dance, collective celebrations, carnival-related practices. Apart from the qualities of a performance they also apply laughter and humour as tools to slightly crack identity and subjectivity.
5. *Last but not least*, before we as creators of culture take on the task of establishing the new paradigm for cultural practices that will contribute to the restoration of social solidarity we need to fight for the reform of the culture itself, for creating conditions that will allow us to focus on the positive social impact instead of the everyday struggle for survival and concern about the future caused by insecure, precarious conditions of our own work. Without cultural organizations founded on the logic of solidarity, social culture does not have any chance to impact the solidarity of European societies.

This last point that we mention has not only the sociological, but also a deeply philosophical dimension. Solidarity is a function of the subject; only by being a subject, i.e. a person who has control over his or her life, we are able

to bridge with another subject. When we do this, our subjectivity is complemented, we become even more ourselves. All in all, solidarity constitutes the subject; only if we are able to act in empathy with others, we can be certain to have control over our own life. The stake in any analysis of culture and solidarity is Europe, our society, politics, our cultures. In the end, however, the final stake here is us, our dignity and the meaning of our lives altogether.

INDEX

- Adamowicz, Paweł 25-26, 42, 45
Adler, Janet 61
Albert, Pierre Louis 73, 76
Alice, Tania 16, 53-62, 65-66, 72, 76
Alonso, Rubén 21, 29-30
Arendt, Hannah 66
- Ballongue, Florence 73
Barba, Eugenio 48, 55
Barroso, José Manuel Durão 5
Biczysko, Julia 19
Bidney, David 4
Bikont, Anna 31
Boumediene, Aziz 16, 53, 54, 69, 73, 77
Brouillette, Sarah 80
Butler, Judith 88
- Celińska, Stanisława 64
Certeau, Michel de 56-57
Coca, Sofia 14, 21, 85
Cortegana, Julia 21, 93
Czyżewski, Krzysztof 8-11, 31, 93
- Deleville 72
Duda, Andrzej 25-27, 45
Duvignaud, Jean 60
- Elsa 66
Erkhan, Tatyana 39-40
Escóssii, Liliana da 56
Faissoil 72
Fortes 54, 77
- Garcia Diaz, Lara 14
Gell, Alfred 71, 78
Gielen, Pascal 5
Goffman, Erving 43
Goldman, Emma 66
González Gil, Felipe 14, 21, 47, 85, 89, 92
Guattari, Félix 65
- Hamsa 58
Hardin, Garrett 37-38
Harvey, David 38
Herrou, Cédric 8, 31
Houellebecq, Michel 5
Huizinga, Johan 47
- Jasińska, Izabela 14
Jiménez, Pedro 21, 85
Joseph, Miranda 10-11
- Kastrup, Virgínia 56

Khailo, Pavel 17, 35, 38
 Khebizi, Sam 14
 Klarić, Nina 20, 46
 Krzywonos, Henryka 7

 Lanzuisi, Daniela 16, 54
 Livi Bacci, Massimiliano 11

 Marchart, Oliver 65, 66
 Mencwel, Andrzej 31
 Mickiewicz, Adam 11
 Miłosz, Czesław 60
 Modzelewski, Karol 6-7
 Monnet, Jean 5

 Naâman 58, 60
 Nixon, Richard 74

 Ogrodzka, Dorota 21, 32, 47, 71, 86, 90
 Ogrodzki, Paweł 16, 69-70, 73-77
 Owsiak, Jerzy 42

 Pajęczkowska, Agnieszka 18, 24
 Passos, Eduardo 56
 Pluta, Karolina 20, 46, 47, 79
 Ptqk, Maria 14
 Putnam, Robert 77

 Rajkowska, Joanna 63
 Rakowski, Tomasz 14, 71
 Rancière, Jacques 62
 Richards, Thomas 52
 Rose, Nikolas 10
 Rossal, Ewa 71
 Rožek, Pola 17, 35-41, 78

 Schechner, Richard 48
 Semionov, Kirill 17, 35
 Shaima 58, 72
 Shakespeare, William 64
 Sihem 58, 72
 Sobczyk, Justyna 69
 Soldo, Sonja 14
 Stokfiszewski, Igor 4, 28
 Świąder, Sebastian 21, 29-30

 Tello Pérez, Lucas 21, 85
 Tokumitsu, Miya 79, 84
 Torres, Fran 21, 29-30
 Touraya 58
 Turner, Victor 88

 Us, Vladimir 14

 Warlikowski, Krzysztof 63-64
 Weijs, Menno 14
 Wójcik, Jaśmina 19, 28

 Yamasaki, Minoru 74

 Zalfata 66
 Zayra 66

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Profanations*. New York: Zone Books, 2007.
- Barba, Eugenio. *The Paper Canoe. A Guide to Theatre Anthropology*. Translated by Richard Fowler, London: Routledge, 1995.
- Bidney, David. *The Concept of Cultural Crisis*. In „American Anthropologist”, New Series, vol. 48, No. 4, part 1 (October–December 1946).
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Czyżewski, Krzysztof. *Małe centrum świata. Zapiski praktyka idei*. Sejny–Krasnogruda: Fundacja Pogranicze, 2017.
- Duvignaud, Jean. *Dar z niczego. O antropologii święta*. Translated by Łada Jurasz-Dudzik, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011.
- Gielen, Pascal, ed. *No Culture, No Europe: On the Foundations of Politics*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015.
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Social Sciences Research Centre, 1956.
- Hardin, Garrett. *The Tragedy of the Commons*. In „Science”, vol. 162, no. 3859.
- Harvey, David. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso, 2012.
- Houellebecq, Michel. *Submission*. Translated by Lorin Stein, New York: Picador, 2016.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo ludens*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949

- Joseph, Miranda. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Livi Bacci, Massimo. *Our shrinking planet*. Translated by David Broder, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
- Marchart, Oliver. *Dancing Politics. Political Reflections on Choreography, Dance and Protest*. [<https://www.diaphanes.net/titel/dancing-politics-2126>, accessed: 10 August 2019]
- Mencwel, Andrzej. *Wyobrażenia antropologiczne*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006.
- Mickiewicz Adam. "Dziady. Część II." In *Wybór pism*, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1951.
- Modzelewski, Karol. *Zajeżdżymy kobylę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźcy*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2013.
- Nelson, Robert S., Margaret Olin, ed. *Monuments and memory, made and unmade*. Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Ogrodzka, Dorota, Tomasz Rakowski, Ewa Rossal. *Odsłonić nowe pola kultury: projekt etnografii twórczej i otwierającej*. In „Kultura i rozwój”, vol. 3(4)/2017.
- Richards, Thomas. *Heart of Practice. Within the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards*. London–New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Rose, Nikolas. *The Powers of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Stokfiszewski, Igor. *Prawo do kultury*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2018.
- Tokumitsu, Miya. *In the name of love*. [<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/>, accessed: 16.8.2019]
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Antistructure*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Wiśniewska, Agnieszka. *Duża Solidarność, mała solidarność. Biografia Henryki Krzywonos*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2010.

Dorota Ogrodzka, Igor Stokfiszewski, *Culture and solidarity*
Warsaw 2019

Copyright © by Authors, 2019

Copyright © by Translator, 2019

Copyright © for this edition by Stowarzyszenie im. Stanisława Brzozowskiego

ISBN 978-83-66232-84-6

Text was created on the basis of action research carried out by an international group of researchers and artists in Poland, Spain, Croatia, Moldova and France in 2018 as part of the Culture for solidarity project, implemented by the European Cultural Foundation, Krytyka Polityczna and ZEMOS98 within the framework of European Commission's Creative Europe program.

Curators of the research project: Dorota Ogrodzka, Igor Stokfiszewski
Development of research methodology: Julia Biczysko, Izabela Jasińska, Dorota Ogrodzka, Paweł Ogrodzki, Agnieszka Pajączkowska, Karolina Pluta, Tomasz Rakowski, Pola Rożek, Igor Stokfiszewski, Sebastian Świąder

Participants of the expert panel aimed at improving the research methodology:
Sofia Coca, Lara Garcia Diaz, Felipe González Gil, Sam Khebizi, Maria Ptqk, Sonja Soldo, Vladimir Us, Menno Weijs

Implementation of action research: Tania Alice, Rubén Alonso, Julia Biczysko, Aziz Boumediene, Pavel Khailo, Dorota Ogrodzka, Paweł Ogrodzki, Agnieszka Pajączkowska, Karolina Pluta, Pola Rożek, Kirill Semionov, Sebastian Świąder, Fran Torres, Jaśmina Wójcik

Title of the original text: *Kultura i solidarność*
Translation from Polish: Dorota Blabolil-Obrębska
Design: Katarzyna Błahuta

Publisher: Stowarzyszenie im. St. Brzozowskiego /
Institute for Advanced Study in Warsaw
Publishing cooperation: European Cultural Foundation, ZEMOS98
Publication co-financed by the European Union

Culture
For
Solidarity



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



krytyka
polityczna

ZEMOS98

