

“ADULT LEARNING & COMMUNITIES IN A WORLD ON THE MOVE: BETWEEN NATIONAL TENSIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES”

UNIVERSITY OF LOWER SILESIA, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
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Bottom-up cultural initiatives in local communities - between the withdrawal and the social engagement

The presentation will refer to the results of research project “Initiatives and people in culture of Lubuskie province”. The research was carried out in 2012 in Lubuskie province, located in the Western Poland, with the use of the qualitative tools and has focused on cultural initiatives taken by various social actors outside the traditional culture institutions. For the purposes of the presentation will be used selected part of the data – namely data on 14 cultural bottom-up initiatives, collected by 32 individual in-depth interviews with organizers of these initiatives and observations of actions.

Bottom-up cultural initiatives are defined here as a form of cultural activity constituted by the non-commercial actions located in the public space. These initiatives are taken intentionally and planned by individual social actors or groups, self-organized and independent from inspiration from above (from the authorities, superiors, state institutions). Bottom-up initiatives are related to the needs of the individuals, groups, communities and problems experienced by their organizers as important.

The objective of the research was to answer the question: What meaning do organizers of bottom-up cultural initiatives give to them? The explorations was based on the social phenomenology of Alfred Schütz, who considered, that understanding of the social actors' actions, requires focusing on their subjective interpretations, meanings given by them to their experiences. In the paper will be presented three types of understanding cultural initiatives by their organizers. Thus, the organizers understand their own initiatives as:

- the fulfilment of cultural interests (passion),
- the fulfilment of cultural interests (passion) with “a pinch” of social engagement,
- the socially engaged bottom-up creating a culture.

Each of so understood initiatives are carried out in a specific local community (village, town, city area) by the people living there and being members of them. However the initiatives are in varying scope open to the local community and its affairs. They can be arranged on a continuum between the two poles: the withdrawal, distancing from needs and problems of the social environment and the social engagement for resolve problems of the local community (mostly related to the wider contemporary social problems and challenges). In the paper will be presented how the organizers of initiatives represented various way of understanding them shaped relationships between the initiatives and the local community, the way in which the organizers interfere with social reality, what problems they take and what changes they seek.

Key words: bottom- up cultural initiatives; subjective meanings; local community; social engagement

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