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Artistic Means of Social Change: Arts-Based Interventions for Addressing Marginalisation in a European Context

Meios artísticos de mudança social: intervenções baseadas nas artes para abordar a marginalização num contexto europeu

Medios artísticos del cambio social: intervenciones basadas en las artes para abordar la marginación en un contexto europeo

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present the analysis of a state-of-the-art review made as part of the Horizon 2020 EU-funded project AMASS (Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture), which aims to address challenges of marginalisation in Europe through arts-based interventions. This study analyses researched-based materials on the social impact of the arts, theoretically underpinned by an understanding of the role of the arts in conjunction with the problematisation of social marginalisation. We found three ways to understand the social impact of the arts in the material; as a participatory means to agency and empowerment, identity and expression, and learning and development. These categories are related to analytically derived positions of marginalisation as predominantly structural- or more individual-based. Art is conceived of as a way to bridge these positions through an understanding of its educational qualities. These categories offer a fruitful but also potentially limited role of the arts in society.

keywords: literature review, grey literature, socially engaged arts, cultural policy

RESUMO

Neste artigo, apresentamos a análise de uma revisão do estado da arte feita como parte do projeto AMASS do Horizonte 2020 financiado pela UE (Agindo nas Margens: Artes como Escultura Social), que visa enfrentar os desafios da marginalização na Europa através de intervenções baseadas nas artes. Este estudo analisa materiais de pesquisa sobre o impacto social das artes, teoricamente sustentados por uma compreensão do papel das artes em conjugação com a problematização da marginalização social. Encontramos três maneiras de compreender o impacto social das artes no material; como um meio participativo de agência e empoderamento, identidade e expressão, e aprendizagem e desenvolvimento. Essas categorias estão relacionadas a posições analiticamente derivadas de marginalização como predominantemente estruturais ou mais baseadas no indivíduo. A arte é concebida como uma forma de transpor essas

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posições por meio da compreensão de suas qualidades educacionais. Essas categorias oferecem um papel frutífero, mas também potencialmente limitado, das artes na sociedade.

Palavras-chave: revisão de literatura, literatura cinzenta, artes para a transformação social, política cultural

RESUMEN

En este artículo, presentamos el análisis de una revisión realizada como parte del proyecto AMASS (Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture) financiado por la UE Horizonte 2020, que tiene como objetivo abordar los desafíos de la marginación en Europa a través de intervenciones basadas en las artes. Este estudio analiza materiales basados en investigaciones sobre el impacto social de las artes, teóricamente sustentados por una comprensión del papel de las artes en conjunto con la problematización de la marginación social. Encontramos tres formas de entender el impacto social de las artes en el material; como un medio participativo de agencia y empoderamiento, identidad y expresión, y aprendizaje y desarrollo. Estas categorías están relacionadas con posiciones de marginación derivadas analíticamente como predominantemente estructurales o más basadas en el individuo. El arte se concibe como una forma de tender un puente entre estas posiciones a través de la comprensión de sus cualidades educativas. Estas categorías ofrecen un papel fructífero, pero también potencialmente limitado, de las artes en la sociedad.

Palavras clave: revisión de la literatura, literatura gris, artes socialmente comprometidas, política cultural

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Introduction

The notion of the positive effects of art is traced to Aristotle's' Poetics, where he coined the term catharsis (Belfiore and Bennett 2007). The arts are understood to redefine people's relationship to the world by being an extension of themselves (McLuhan 1964). Today, the understanding that the arts can positively impact individuals and societies is still widespread (Birchall 2015). This article presents the result of a state-of-the-art literature review made within the AMASS (Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture) project involving researchers and artists from the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Sweden, UK, and Portugal. The review aims to survey existing knowledge on the role of the arts in tackling social marginalisation. It accompanies a systematic literature review (Lindström Sol et al., coming) made within the project that evaluated current research on the social impact of the arts. The present article is based on complementary summaries of so-called "grey" literature, research reports, dissertations, government documents, and research in languages other than English. With this article, we analyse the role of the arts as it is understood in our material in relation to the positioning of the problem of marginalisation. We ask the following questions:

-What are the social problems identified in the material, to which the arts can function as a solution or as a way to address the identified problem?

-Where is the cause of the problem localised, i.e., what understandings of the root of the problem arise in the material?

The analysis is not to be interpreted as actual or given evidence of the effects of arts but rather a reflection of common understandings of the role of arts in relation to social issues of marginalisation.

Data collection and method of approach

When collecting the data, fellow researchers in each country in the AMASS project (excluding Sweden and the UK as they are not part of the AMASS testbed for artistic interventions) collected data through a template for abstracts (see Appendix), searching literature through databases of their own choice, based on their knowledge of where to find relevant literature in their language. However, we asked them to use a model for understanding populations, interventions, and outcomes in the material (c.f. Arguelles

2011). This model, with variations, is used in systematic literature reviews, and was chosen to help our partners generate limited and focused key words for search strings, and relevant hits in databases, in the data collection process.

Populations are those targeted by artistic interventions, which are projects involving art in various contexts. Outcomes are understood as the intended or perceived results of the interventions. The material included peer-reviewed research articles in all languages except English, research-based reports, and monographs in English not included in the systematic literature review to avoid duplicate findings. In total, the review is based upon 234 abstracts of research.

Thus, our interpretations are based on research material interpreted and translated by the members of the AMASS project. Our understanding of marginalisation is not derived from a "reality" independent of the empirical material submitted by project members, who selected research relevant following the predefined criteria. The material analysed is thus chosen to highlight the themes and problematisations targeted in the AMASS project and partially reflects studies made by the members of the AMASS consortium. For example, our partners in the data collection process displayed varying understandings of the categories population, intervention, and outcome, which we "untangled" in the analysis by creating subcategories in several interpretative levels. The material may show a bias towards ideas of the positive impact of the arts and culture on social issues such as marginalisation. The majority of abstracts from Finland and Hungary may also skew the data in the direction of the kinds of research performed in these countries.

According to the previous model of population, intervention, and outcomes, the first step of the analysis was to understand descriptive patterns in the data. We also studied what kinds of art forms were present in the material. This interpretative stage is not displayed in the results of this study as it focuses on an additional stage of analysis; a second step where we engaged in a thematic approach inspired by the works of Carol Bacchi (2009; 2010). In this framework, social issues are problematised or represented as social problems, which in a Foucauldian sense would signify the "unexamined ways of thinking" that guide the practices of governance (Foucault 1994, in Bacchi 2010). Thus, instead of addressing social problems as though given and obvious, we look at the way they are given shape such that certain solutions are desirable to come to terms with a problem. The representation of problems helps us understand the arts as a means of making a social impact on marginalised communities.

Results

In the analysis, we found a variety of art forms in interventions; design, participatory arts, narrative arts, music, dance, theatre/drama, and visual arts. These were incorporated into interventions that often targeted communities, such as in segregated areas of cities or rural places. Specific target groups were typically children and young people, migrants, minorities, elderly, women, and people with physical or cognitive handicaps. Thus, there are many ways to understand and address social marginalisation problems in the material. Next, we turned our analysis to the understanding of these problems and their localisation. Below, we present the analysis with examples of representative studies to demonstrate the width of research in different national contexts and languages.

The positioning of the problem of social marginalisation

The analysis identified one broad problematisation in the data, social exclusion, which takes different forms of expression. At a general level, social exclusion is understood as the marginalisation of minority communities and vulnerable citizens in society. Social exclusion is perceived as a lack of participation in the arts from parts of the community or parts of the demography. The analys found two, very typical for social analysis, positions of the problem of social exclusion; as a structural issue, and in the marginalised, on a group/community and individual level. These positionings are not clear-cut; they overlap but are roughly related to different understandings of the role of art in society, as a means to agency and empowerment or as a means to identity and expression. There are attempts in the material to form bridges between structural and individual problematisations, mainly through understanding art as learning and development. In the following, we will elaborate on how these positions are expressed in the material.

Social exclusion positioned as a structural problem

Social exclusion is understood as caused by negative perceptions among the wider community towards minorities and other marginalised social groups, i.e., discrimination, racism, and segregation (Csongor 2017; Molnár, Peták, & Vercseg, 2014). The material critically responds to negative and stereotyped representations of minority residents and other underrepresented populations as outsiders. The notion of marginalisation does not necessarily represent "the marginalised'' but may be defined by an unproblematised

majority society and its normative structures. There is a desire to include on the terms of the majority society, which raises questions as to inclusion for what and whom.

Minority cultures are described in terms of considerable disadvantage vis-à-vis the wider community. To this end, arts-based projects aim to understand the realities of marginalised communities, tackle harmful social divisions, act for social justice and diversity, and promote participation and cultural expression (Bodo, de Milano & Mascheroni 2009). However, it is also pointed out with reference to Szontagh (2010) that strengthening social inclusion should not be confused with the fight against segregation. The latter is described as momentary solutions causing tensions in ethnic and cultural division (Szontagh, 2010). Authors such as Buttu (2017) and Molnár, Peták, & Vercseg (2014) problematise the idea of community development as a solution to tackling social problems and claims that support must be continuous and not remain a temporary intervention. Although the structural position of the problem of marginalisation problematises the scope of the arts as a means to address social exclusion, the role of the arts is largely understood as a means to empowerment and participation.

Interventions based on participatory art have been considered an innovative approach that supports change, which requires awareness of the wider context in which social change occurs. An example of a structurally oriented approach is how the school system is problematised as poorly adjusted to disabled pupils and how educational inequality requires efforts to come to terms with parental poverty (Nagyné Árgány, 2015; Rajnai, 2012). Action or practice-based methods are standard in our material (e.g., da Silva, 2017; Hiltunen, 2017; Sarantou, Akimenko, & Escudeiro, 2018; Mason & Buschkuehle, 2013; Sprünker, 2008; Butt 2017; Irwin et al., 2006).

Community interventions are often carried out with an eye to the social and communitarian aspects of art, as indicated by terms like social/community art or theatre. The more these socially engaged aspects of art tend to promote the interests of community members, the more impact they are deemed to have and the more they may give voice to community members creativity, experiences, interests and needs (Ghiglione & Pagliarino, 2007). Also, small grassroots museums in areas labelled as socially deprived may carry out various socio-cultural events that empower the community in close cooperation with local groups (Vella & Cutajar, 2019). For much the same reason, it has been claimed that "a successful museum of the future should be wholly participatory through meaningful collaboration between curators and communities" (Debono, 2016). In several projects, the purpose is to explore the sense of European citizenship among children and young people (Vella, 2016; Brown & Sammut, 2013; Manninen, 2015; Richardson, 2016; Jokela, 2008; Ahonen et al., 2008). Engaging young people in the development of democracy and exercising their rights as citizens have been put forward to contribute to a higher level of awareness of European priorities such as citizenship, participation, cultural diversity, and inclusion (Brown & Sammut, 2013).

Social exclusion positioned as a problem in the marginalised

Inequality caused by social exclusion is understood to hamper not only opportunities to learn but also to develop critical individual skills and competencies and improve individual quality of life. Weak social and communication skills of people caught in social and economic deprivation is understood, in the material, to be due to lack of educational means, not only in a formal sense but also in the sense of facing barriers to community participation and limitations as regards self-sustainability (Vella & Cutajar, 2017; Szíjártó, 2018). The individualistic perspective can be taken concerning groups of identified common marginalised positions, such as the elderly, migrant, or children, deemed in need of societal support or greater access to societal resources, such as the arts. However, in contrast to the structural positioning of the problem, the problem here lies in the (in)ability of the individuals in the group to enhance their lives.

Contributing to and learning more about how to secure the welfare of children and youth in a vulnerable situation is a concern in many projects. Outreach activities concerning the young have aimed at letting young people express their identities. The opportunity for children to experience the arts is said to "develop a sensibility that projects them towards a future as adults conscious of the importance of dreaming" (Liotta, 2018).

Studies have called continued attention to the need to rethink pedagogical methods to ensure equal opportunities for learning for disadvantaged groups, ensure that no talent is wasted, and reduce early school leaving (Nagyné Árgány, 2015). The process of learning through artistic creation is sometimes thought to be built into the personality of the individual pupil (Ritók, 2008). There is a belief that each pupil may be motivated to learn and develop with the right kind of training tailored to his or her individual needs. Above all, musical activities have been a frequent method of intervention to help the learning and development of young Roma talents (Antal-Lundström, 2008; Dezső, 2010; Kazareczki, 2017; Krenedits & Pásztor 2010; Ritók, 2008; Udvari Katalin, 2011;

Wagner, 2017). The question remains how to secure equal access and eliminate what has used to be a highly segregated character of education (Balogh & Imrei, 1996).

Expression of the role of the arts to this more individualised positioning of the problem is a matter of giving marginalised groups and community residents the tools for telling their own stories on their terms – hence to take upon themselves an active role as agents of change (Sarantou, Akimenko, & Escudeiro, 2018; Hyttinen & Taskanen, 2018; Miettinen, Sarantou, & Kuure, 2019; de Oliveira Jayme, Monk & Tremblay, 2016; De Piccoli et al., 2019). As a cornerstone in the preservation of Roma culture and heritage, it is also argued that, through art, the Roma can speak for themselves and create self-images in contrast to mainstream media representations of Roma people (Gunther, 2014). Agency is constructed as a way to provide these groups with better livelihoods, and in general, this positioning of the problem allows for a more positive understanding of the scope of the arts as a means to address social exclusion.

With increasing migration to Europe in 2015 and onwards, migrants have frequently been represented either as victims or invaders (Musarò & Moralli, 2018). Some projects have been claimed to allow migrants to build links to their new community while also remembering their home countries (Pisani, 2017). The preservation of cultural identities as part of the majority society is a central point regarding the social inclusion of people with an immigrant background. Yet, interventions directed towards migrants and minorities have also focused to a great extent on reactions and ideas about the experience of Otherness (Gil-Glazer, 2019) and thus targeting the means to express an identity, rather than structural racism. Furthermore, elderly or retired people are another identifiable target group whose well-being, quality of life and life management are the concerns of several projects aimed at assessing and improving the care and services for seniors – either in sparsely populated areas or in the cities (Almeida et al., 2017; Rossi Ghiglione, 2017; Jumisko, Jänkälä & Piekkari, 2013; Colliander, 2017; Tähti, 2017).

The problem can also be positioned as a problem for the ones trying to reach out through the arts. An issue mentioned in one of the abstracts is how to overcome barriers between social and artistic domains (see Almeida et al., 2017). Thus, the issue is patterns of non-participation in the arts, interpreted as barriers that hinder the marginalised to access the arts as a means of self-expression and self-development, on an individual, group or a community level. For example, one project summary implies that it is difficult for non-Roma people to manage the process of empowering this group. Unless there is a permanent presence in the community and the community members' trust may be gained, it is said to be difficult to become accepted and be able to influence the Roma (Kállai, 2019). Thus, several projects aim to explore practical tools and artistic methods for reaching out to vulnerable communities since a lack of political action to provide guidelines for tackling these issues in their entirety is pointed out (ECCOM & Compagnia di San Paolo di Torino, 2003).

Connecting the structural and the individual levels

The analytical separation between positionings of the problem does not imply, as earlier stated, that researchers and practitioners cannot imagine social problems as multifaceted and complex. On the contrary, attempts to overcome structural and individual perspectives dominate the material.

The concept of connective art suggests that the social actions of the people who inhabit collective spaces contribute to the construction of the community's collective memory and experience and thus expresses the identity of a community and its members (Chiarelli & Novak, 2019). Connectivity through meetings between community members allows for exchanging such collective experiences (Muñoz, 2017; Regatão et al., 2017). Other activities such as wall painting are described to allow communities to "express their interests and identity creatively, with a critical and interventional eye, and understanding that the society could participate in their development in an equal way" (Brito & Mansos, 2017). Such projects are said to set the ground for future development through the opportunities for collaborative meetings of various kinds that transformed marginalised places (Chiarelli & Novak, 2019). Policy development efforts to achieve diversification of cultural services and removal of barriers to access and inclusion have been exemplified by continuous community consultation, outreach programs, partnerships with local agencies, training courses, et cetera. These interventions have been claimed to have an impact on the individual, community, and institutional levels, resulting not only in increased cultural exchange and participation but also improved well-being, trust and self-esteem, a sense of identity and belonging to a community as well as reduced social isolation (Bodo, Da Milano & Mascheroni, 2009; De Piccoli et al., 2019).

Above all, the artistic interventions summarised in the abstracts attempt to interlink the structural and individual domains through various educational efforts. Art education aimed at learning and development in a community context may provide community members with a self-reflexive awareness that further supports agency, emancipation, empowerment and sense-making (Hiltunen, 2009;

Sarantou, Akimenko & Escudeiro, 2018). The arts are seen as possessing a certain kind of knowledge production apt for understanding complex social issues. Art is primarily described as a means of generating knowledge and enriched learning outcomes in response to major social problems (Muñoz, 2017), as a way to understand the lives of marginalised subjects better and to promote more inclusive environments for them to subsist (Roberts 2018; cf. de Oliveira Jayme, Monk & Tremblay 2016). Securing equal learning opportunities may be interpreted as a precondition for equal access to the arts and vice versa since art and learning are interpreted in the abstracts as interwoven. It is nevertheless argued that a traditional educational structure does not always give much room for arts education: learning opportunities within the arts and culture need to be extended into the community as a whole to be a means to the empowerment of marginalised groups (Takács, 2008; Terra & Medina, 2017).

Targeting particular groups of community members is seen to connect personal narratives with social interaction by focusing on the societal issues that affect personal everyday life (Cf. Calvo, 2017). For instance, seniors may be actively engaged in cultural activities but are considered at risk of marginalisation as experiencing loneliness and isolation. According to one abstract, there is "potential for participatory arts with older people to address loneliness and social isolation" (Dadswell et al., 2017), and by extension, it strengthens ties to the community and facilitates social interaction and cohesion. Likewise, young people and their well-being are tied to structural changes and community needs. In times of increasing urbanisation, there is an urge to keep the remote areas of the North alive, and the young are seen as key to this endeavour (Hiltunen & Huhmarniemi, 2010). In one project, visual art activities involving metal sculpture, photography, and wall art with young people in Lapland were reported to support young rural Finns' well-being. Finally, another theme in the abstracts is to link the history, traditions, and ways of earning a living for women in particular settings and understanding the appreciation of women in society at large (Härkönen & Vuontisjärvi, 2017; Vasques, Falcão & Gaspar, 2017). Traditional crafts have often been vital not only to the sense of female agency but also to national identity. As these crafts have become obsolete, the abstracts describe a struggle to raise awareness and keep these women's movements alive (Camilleri, 2016; Ritók & Bodoczky 2012). Thus, there is a link between self-expression and representation that, in turn, affect social participation through education.

Conclusion and discussion

This review has covered collected arts-based research and policy materials concerning social issues of social exclusion and marginalisation. The themes have been distinguished in a spectrum of projects ranging from the ones being described as targeted at specific groups of individuals to those directed towards whole communities and, in extension, structural levels of social problems.

The interventions in the material are often practice-oriented and characterised by the approaches to the contextualisation, analysis, evaluation, and communication of the perceived results of interventions. In relation to these positionings of the problem, two ambitions emerge in the data regarding outcomes; 1. to add to existing knowledge regarding the role of arts concerning societal challenges, or 2. address the social challenge and be part of a solution. These positions broadly reflect a debate in social research, whether science (and the arts) should have a normative agenda or 'merely' offer insight.

In the material, the arts are understood to address problems that arise on structural, individual, and, in some ways, practice-based levels. To bridge these levels, art is associated with learning skills, and in turn, learning skills are associated with an agency to change things on multiple levels. We found three ways to understand the social impact of the arts in the material; as a participatory means to agency and empowerment, identity and expression, and learning and development. These all have in common that they represent art's perceived potential to connect the social and artistic domains and, to some extent, challenge traditional conceptions of art as a matter of purely aesthetic objects (Birchall 2015). The material studies reflect an idea that the performative potential of art to achieve social change lies in its way of expressing and extending ourselves to a diversity of social realities (c.f. McLuhan 1964). Importantly, art is understood as situated and thus a product of a socially and historically specific context in which humans themselves are the agents capable of transforming their lives and reality.

However, in this type of meaning-making of art, the root causes of marginalisation are sometimes left unaddressed. Abstracts discussing the problem of marginalisation on the structural level adds an analysis of causes, yet the interventions are still targeting those affected by the causes, not those forces that cause marginalisation. Artists and arts educators risk partaking in the responsibilisation of marginalisation on the marginalised (c.f. Bacchi 2009). What more, the arts become limited to helping the marginalised cope with their situation rather than problematising taken-for-granted structures in European societies that cause issues of marginalisation.

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Appendix: Template for abstracts

WP1, D1.1. Comprehensive literature collection, template for abstracts

The following template is based on the PIO model for a literature review: identifying Population, Intervention, and Outcome.

Genre: peer-reviewed research articles in all other languages but English, conference proceedings, research-based reports, and monographs in English and all other languages. Please indicate genre.

Languages:

a)Czech, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Maltese, Portuguese (peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, research-based reports, and monographs).

b)English (non-peer-reviewed research articles, conference proceedings, research-based reports, and monographs).

Please indicate in the abstract from which language you are translating into English!

Database: please indicate.

Period: 1990-2020.

Total amount of words: 500 words (max).

Template for abstracts

•Title:

•Population (aim): 100 words (max)

•Intervention (methodology/approach): 150 words (max)

•Outcome (findings): 150 words (max)

•Originality/value: 100 words (max)

•Key words: 1-6

If you have any questions, please contact Sofia Lindström Sol, sofia.lindstrom@hb.se

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