



Social inclusion by social arts

Tool Set – PART I

The education principle “Social Art”

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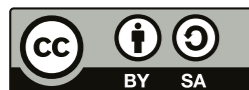
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Social art

In social art, the materials of the artists are not canvases, marble or stages, but social issues. The basic principle lies in the dissolution of hierarchies and the purpose of initiating positive change among the participants. Although classical theatre has always aspired to hold up a mirror to society, to show solutions to problems and thus to stimulate social transformation processes, social art goes one step further by dissolving the boundaries between stage and audience.



Social art is not made by an elitist circle of artists for a small group of people interested in high culture. In our goal of social transformation, it is disadvantaged target groups who enter into an artistic process and create an artistic work primarily for people from their environment. In the classical JobAct approach, theatre plays are performed by long-term unemployed, choirs are formed, puppet

theatre is performed or short performances with objects are performed. By using classical works in this process, art is opened up twice for new target groups: the performers and the audience. By engaging with the artistic process and the successful public presentation of the results, the participants will experience empowerment. Empowerment means that the target group is enabled to recognize and solve their problems - in short: to overcome biographical crises and to actively shape their lives according to their wishes.

The approach is based on the conviction that the art of the future will be social and that an artistic approach is necessary to meet current social issues. Artistic approaches and methodologies are therefore needed to solve these problems. Creativity, imagination and inspiration play central roles in overcoming obstacles.

What does science say?

Artistic approaches in the field of empowerment are based on the assumption that art has a universal level in which communication and exchange between the target group and its surroundings is possible. Social art is based on the Beuys's approach of an expanded concept of art, but in its dialogical claim it goes beyond this. The focus is no longer on a physical work, but on the artistic process of its creation perspective. The mechanisms involved are provocation, reflection and distancing (Krenn 2016). It enables the handling of unpleasant or problematic situations by a „slow indirect approach to topics and experiences“ (Kechaja 2017, S. 195), their (re-)valuation and processing. Essential elements are that art is transferred from the usual top-down approach into a participatory framework in a multi-professional

cooperation of actors from the fields of art/culture, education and social work (Heinrich 2016). In social work, biographical approaches are often chosen. Artistic expressions can thus create a space in which difficulties can be overcome, solutions to problems can be found, alternative roles can be tried out and new sides can be discovered in themselves, protected from the dangers of failure. Participants can have new experiences, change perspectives, identify unfavorable behavioral routines and initiate change (Bodenmüller 2004, S. 20). Working together on an artistic product promotes self-reflection, solidarity, teamwork and creativity and the pride of creating something of high quality. Both the artistic process and the result contribute to the development of those affected.

The presentation of the result enables an experience of success, which is important for strengthening self-esteem and which is otherwise often lacking in unemployment. Creativity and a belief in one's own abilities are essential prerequisites for success in finding a job after prolonged unemployment. It is also essential to change the perception of others and to overcome the stigma that can be achieved through artistic performance. The artistic work can thus become a kind of „lobbying for those affected“ (Bodenmüller 2004, S. 22). In particular, in the homogenization tendencies of social spatial segregation described above, this development of perspective and peer-group exchange can create a counterweight that can contribute to changes. The mechanisms involved are provocation, reflection and distancing (Larcher 2016).

Empowerment-approach for unemployed people:

- Directly labour market-related
- Development of professional competences
- Inclusion in meaningful activity

What do we say?

Social art is a new educational principle, that strengthens social inclusion and social cohesion through artistic approaches. On the basis of the conviction that previous educational approaches are too cognitively focused, social art is more holistic and also includes the training of mental, emotional and physical abilities. Especially for people who have already tried other approaches without success, social art can be very effective. Social art was born in the reality of the greatest social challenges of the present and offers the chance to empower the individual. In addition, the growth of the individual also strengthens social cohesion as a whole. Through personality development in the sense of mindfulness, empathy and creativity, not selfish people develop, but artistic minds. Together, they can shape a society based on solidarity and creativity as „we“.

Thus, social art has both an individual effect on the individual and a collective force in the context of society as a whole. Social art is therefore able to change society positively.

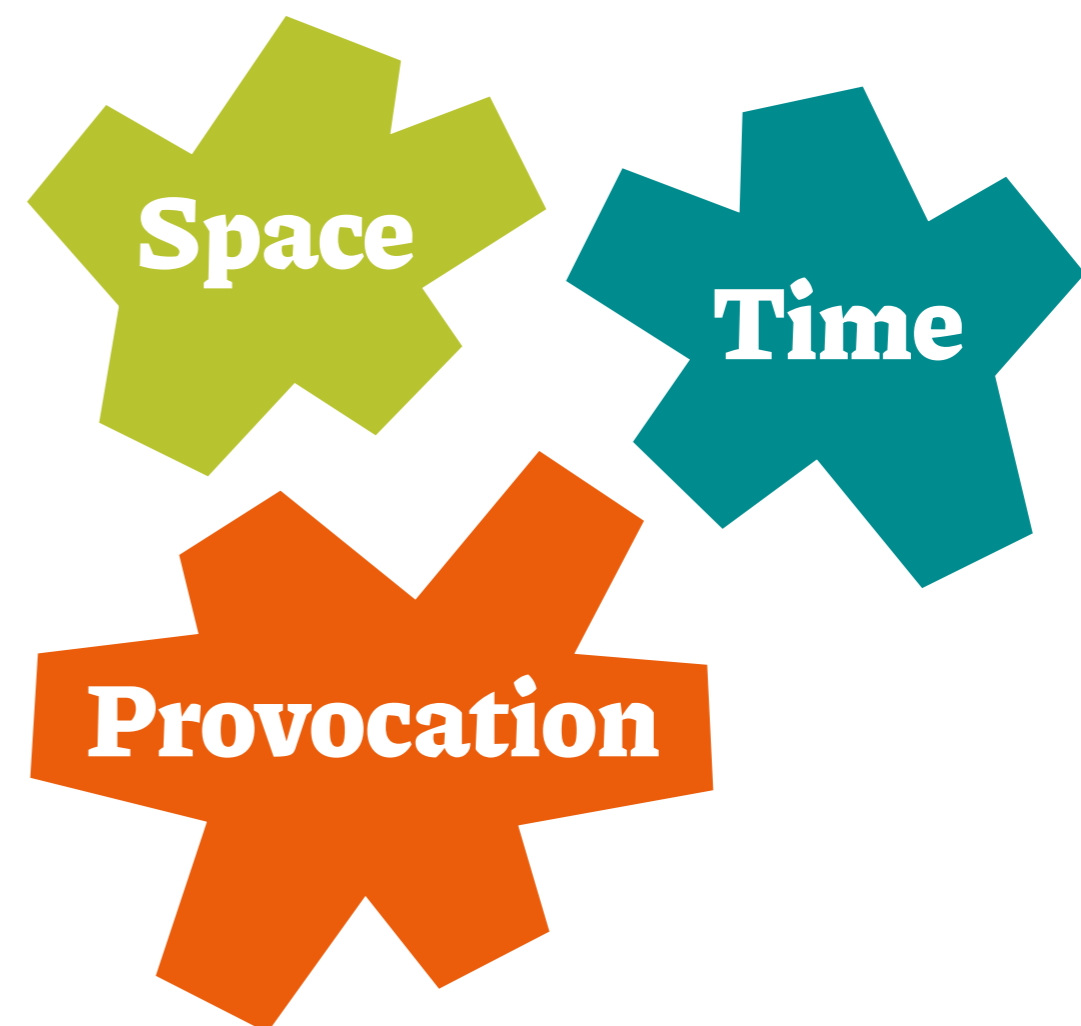
Social art is practical rather than theoretical and brings people into contact with oneself and, on the other hand, in contact with each other. It is based on interaction and encourages people to exchange ideas, share experiences and create something new together. Social art is therefore also cooperation. A rigid definition is to be expected, but rather dynamic. It unfolds individually in each person and is not planned or predictable in advance. This uncertainty must be endured, as it is within it the transformation potential of the individual.

Social art is ...

- a new education principle
- able to change society positively
- Cooperation

What do we need for social art?

The potential for transformation is already present in every human being, but three prerequisites are needed to awaken them:





Space

The factor of space means creating a bindingly defined situation in which social art can arise. On the one hand, purely practical requirements have to be considered here: As a rule, in addition to a training/group room for exercises and rehearsals, a room for the performances is also required. This means that both rooms have to meet requirements in terms of size, brightness and atmosphere. The choice of performance space is not trivial: a prestigious venue can help to increase the self-esteem of the participants, attract more/different audiences and has a better visibility.

The training room is the space in which the participants are brought to their personal limits, undergo important biographic changes and spend weeks in an intensive artistic process. This should ensure that the participants are in a space where they feel comfortable and safe and can open and drop. If creativity is to be encouraged, the practice room should not be too „perfect“, but should have something to rub on: unplastered walls, scraping on the floor, smaller chaos elements stimulate the mind, while a „flawless“ room makes it fall asleep.

The space left by the space for the unfolding of the exercises is closely connected with that of personal development. Care must be taken to ensure that elements in the room, such as chairs or tables, are easily cleared to open up the space for creativity. Processes of opening up the room, even of personal space, can be experienced by the symbolism of the opening of the physical space, e.g. by clearing away chairs for the participants. It is the responsibility of trainers to consider creative solutions if necessary and to create an atmosphere in which participants can indulge in the effects of social art without fear.

In addition, the personal space of each participant plays a major role. This means that everyone must be given the space to discover and develop freely, regardless of the pressure of expectation, time pressure, stigma or personal shame. In the physical space, the personal spaces of the participants are then connected to an interpersonal space of the group. The group fulfils important functions in the projects with social art. Ideally, it catches the participants in problems, solves internal crises, motivates them to endure hard times and inspires them to endure similar problems. In order for a group of individuals to become and remain a community, the trainers must keep an eye on the group dynamics and react carefully to changes or difficulties.

Furthermore, the factor space must be thought of as a context. This means creating a kind of positive community around the project, opening new doors and creating opportunities for cooperation and public relations. This resulting support network is important to secure the financing of projects, to increase their visibility in the public sphere and to create interesting employment opportunities for the project participants.

Finally, social art creates a kind of magical space in which the personalities of the participants unfold. Through the creative processes and the provocation, this arises unnoticed by the participants over time. In this magical space, participants can escape the constraints and problems of their biography, try out other personalities and find solutions to their problems.

Time

The time factor is very important on several levels. The success of the project depends on timing. At the project level, the first is the appropriate time, which must be agreed between the sponsors, participants and the implementing institution. The theatre project must happen „at the right time” in order to meet the interests of the participants and become effective for their further development.

The goal is the personal and biographical development of the participants. It takes time to do this: time to change, to develop and to outgrow oneself. The length of the theatre projects is closely linked to this. The original JobAct projects are relatively long at 9-12 months, which is not affordable in some countries, not least because the basic care for the participants during unemployment is not financed by the state.

Projects of different lengths pose different challenges to the participants and to the trainers. While in longer projects theatre work can aim more at personal development, in shorter projects a strong concentration on the completion of the stage play is required. The perception of the length of the projects can also vary greatly between the participants and the trainers. So even shorter projects can seem very long to the participants at first, while towards the end the feeling of not having time must be caught by the trainers and transformed into creative energy.

Trainers in particular should always be aware of and sensitive to this during project work. In shorter projects, time limitation can also be seen as a task and example of successful time management. Participants can thus learn what it means to successfully „budget” time and value it. In addition they learn in contact with the other participants that through their own behaviour and interaction they also help to shape the time of other people. Becoming aware of this responsibility is an important task in project work.

The motivation in the group changes over the duration of the project. Time is also always associated with the change of feelings: Once any resistance has been overcome, a group has been formed from the participants and the first results are visible, motivation is high. After 1-2 months there is usually a drop in energy: everything has become normal, development is stagnating and there is still so much time in the project. If the premiere is within sight, this perception usually changes quickly.

Suddenly the project work is fun again, the time passes faster and the project tends towards its climax. After the performance or performances there is a danger that the participants will fall into an emotional hole. The theatre work is over, the group breaks up and everyone starts their internship.



Here it is particularly important for the success of the project that the participants are not left alone. Ideally, further theatre training will take place on one day a week during the internship phase in order to catch and support the participants and to overcome possible crises and problems in the internship together in a playful way.

With regard to the impact of the projects, two points in time are to be noted: that before the work of social art in which the „old” life took place and that after the work of social art from which one’s own life is lived actively, consciously and self-determinedly.

In the projects, social art is used to create a new temporal structure for the participants, with which their own lives are meaningfully shaped and structured.

This is especially important against the background of time as the most important resource in today’s society. Through this experience, participants experience that their own lifetime is valuable and should be used meaningfully. It is also relevant at this point that the project time is negligibly short compared to their total lifetime. Despite its brevity, however, it can function as a decisive turning point in one’s own life and cause a kind of catharsis.

This makes it clear that sometimes it is not important how much or how little time one invests in certain things, but HOW one uses and fills this time. Short moments can sometimes be enough to change a whole life.

So it is always exciting to zoom out and look at participants from the perspective of which phase of their lives the point in time of the project is to be located. Of course, trainers can also do the same and reflect on whether their feelings have changed from project to project in the course of their lives and if so, to what extent this is the case.

Longer projects

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- more time for individual development and goal finding, the development of the play and overcoming crises, less pressure to quickly create a stage-ready play
- less quickly visible results, different learning and development speeds can lead to frustration with the faster participants, greater danger of drop-outs
- greatest challenge for the trainers is to maintain the motivation of the participants and the energy of the group over the entire period of time.

Shorter projects

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- faster visible results, continuous tension is easier to achieve, lowering access barriers for participants
- Greater risk of crises, greater pressure in the development of the play and the search for individually suitable career options and internships
- biggest challenge for the trainers: do not over-tax participants, balance different learning speeds, quick crisis management

Provocation

The third factor, provocation, is to be understood in reference to the Latin term *provoco* and means to evoke, to ask, to arouse or awaken something. Innovations, even in one's own life, often arise from processes of „creative destruction“, crises and shocks of the original state. Especially in phases of resignation, in which many participants of the JobAct projects are trapped, tensions must be deliberately created from the outside, which lead to the exit from one's own comfort zone and to the active questioning of given (thinking) structures and habits. This leads to positive stress, which creates creativity and change.

By breaking out of familiar patterns, one manages to surprise oneself positively, to discover previously unknown potentials, to find new properties and alternative perspectives in and on oneself. In short, provocation creates the energy needed to achieve one's own goals.

Provocation and tension are therefore important conditions for the emergence of creative development processes of both social art and social artists.



The JobAct projects use the principle of **provocation** at various levels

Conceptual

For many, theatre play against unemployment or other problems is a provocation in itself, which starts not only at the level of the persons, but also at that of the education system: why spend weeks on a stage, when it is in the Life there are urgent problems? The fact that many of the participants need help for personal development, which cannot be achieved through simple training courses and unconventional ways can be the more effective ones, requires a lot of persuasive work in many places.

Content

With the conscious decision for classical plays and against biographical „citizen theatre”, the participants are confronted with worldviews, life situations, milieus and language styles that are foreign to them. At the same time, however, there are always emotional connecting points in the plays; the search for meaning, team spirit, struggle for justice and recognition – the topics covered are as diverse as the life situations of the participants. The mixture of throwing into foreign realities and roles with a simultaneous hold on the known opens up spaces for testing other living conditions and behaviors that can help personal development.

Physical

The old wisdom that mind and body are closely linked is completely neglected in many concepts of training, competence and personality development. While the stage presentation of the JobAct plays are often not physically demanding, many physical exercises are built into the training phases. The expression of emotions, moods and actions about the body is anything but routine for many participants. Training physical expressions restores neglected mind-body connections and helps participants to understand themselves in their entirety.

Ideological

JobAct projects challenge values as an approach. Solving problems with social art, as the success rates prove, is a provocation for society, institutions of labor integration and education. In addition to worldviews, views on people (groups) are also shaken, which are often only perceived by their shortcomings: when stigmatized groups present classical plays ready for the stage, prejudices must be revised: by the participants about themselves, but also on the part of relatives and friends, where assessments of abilities may have been cemented, and not least among employers, institutional supervisors and other social groups.

Emotional

In the trainings, the emotions and conflicts of the protagonists in the plays are explored, recreated, and, if necessary, dissolved in the scenic representation. Emotional provocation of the participants is just as important for overcoming activity-inhibiting or negative patterns of thought and sensation as delicate, especially in traumatic biographical experiences. Here, therefore, sensitivity on the part of the trainers is required.

Social

Social art is never an individual's project, but always a community achievement. Many participants come from contexts in which they were primarily self-sufficient, may have received little help, but also had to make fewer compromises. Working out a play together, perceiving moods in the group, responding to them and bringing the diversity and similarities in the group into a creative, productive creative process requires some work by each individual in himself and is also a great opportunity for development.

In principle, social art can then work for each person as long as there is a willingness to allow its effect and the three prerequisites are met.

What does social art do?

Social art enables the discovery of the self, creates space for the development of individuality and offers a new perspective on one's own problem situation as well as on ways of dissolving it. With the help of social art, key competences are developed, space for self-development is given and the self-confidence of the participants is strengthened. In particular, taking on new roles creates objectivity and thus enables self-reflexive viewing. In this newly created space, facets of one's own personality can be discovered and unfolded on stage and in the game, which were previously hidden for the participants.



Your own identity is discovered and further developed. The things that were previously thought to define one's own person are being questioned and reinterpreted. Personality traits or biographical events that may have been rated as negative so far can be seen in a new light, so they are given positives and seen as an opportunity..

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**„In social art,
you meet yourself and
others.“**

– Beáta Nagy

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In combination with other participants on stage, one's own role is also redefined, which is why a questioning of one's own role in one's own life is initiated. This is not only limited to the self, but also to one's own role in society, for example, in the family, with friends or with the employer. In addition, the participants learn to act courageously, to present themselves and to transfer and apply the creativity discovered in the spectacle to their everyday life. In a player-like way, decision-making processes are also trained on stage, the ability to work creatively with tasks is developed, areal awareness is sharpened and thus also the skills for the active design of one's own life are improved..

Empowerment through social art

In social art, therefore, space, time and impulses are offered to discover oneself and to give a new direction to one's own life. The participants are not told what might be good for them, but rather these findings are already in themselves and are only revealed with the help of social art. In advance, therefore, predictions for individual participants can and should never be made above their development, and participants should not expect a direct „cure“ of themselves or the solution of all their problems.

Social art brings about deeper changes and offers the chance to give a new direction and meaning to one's own life. However, this requires time and patience to endure one's initially uncertain development process.

The process is more important than the result. Once you are ready to let them in the spirit and heart, happy random discoveries will follow.



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**It is not the result of social
art that is important, but the
process there.**

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Based on the combination of social work and theatre therapy, participants are empowered, equipped with the skills and competences they lack, and help them find their way (back) into the labour market.

How do we apply social art? –

The JobAct Method in a nutshell

Whether artists, educators, social workers or employees of employment agencies; in principle, social art can be applied by any person who has understood the principle and is able to apply it to other people. Social art is not limited in space, but can be used worldwide.

Since we mainly deal with theatrical work, we present our concept for the application of social art using the example of theatrical work in the following. The concept is called „JobAct“.

The practical implementation of the JobAct method consists of two phases: a six-month theatre training and a subsequent two- to four-month work placement.

In the first phase, participants receive drama training three days a week, during which a later stage-ready play is practiced, create backdrops, props and costumes one day a week, and receive an individual application coaching one day a week, in which an individualized career plan of each participant is designed after having carried out potential analyses to identify individual strengths and problem situations. In order to take advantage of the interdisciplinary nature of theatre trainers and social workers, to avoid possible loss of interfaces and to enable a holistic effect of the approach, theatre training takes place once a week in the presence of the social workers, so that questions or problems that arise can also be answered and solved at short notice.

After the end of the training phase, the play will be performed in front of a general public. Here, for example, friends and family of the participants are invited, but also employees of the employment agencies.

The JobAct Method in a nutshell

Phase 1 (6 months)

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- Focus on theatrical work
- Expanding and promoting personal strengths
- Development and formulation of the play
- Public premiere of the play

The participants are targeted for a two-fold effect, (1) the addition of the participants' self-perception, which has already changed during the training phase, by the experience of success of the performances, and (2) the change in the perception of others in the social environment of the participants. The play is always a classic play by a well-known author; each year, another is selected as the focus. We deliberately do not incorporate biographical experiences into the creation of a play, as we want to expand the horizons of the participants with new experiences.

In addition, experience has shown that participants can gain more respect in their environment by participating in a well-known play. The energy and self-confidence of the participants gained from the premiere will then be used for their transition to the second phase of the project.

Phase 2 (2 months)

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- Focus on work placement
- Strengthening key competences
- Strengthening and pursuing professional goals
- Transition to the first labour market / Training

In the second phase of the project, the key competences previously acquired, such as teamwork, personal problem and crisis management as well as language and expressiveness, will be applied and used in a two- to four-month work placement, so that self-esteem is consolidated by experiencing success in an internship. At the same time, a theatre training takes place one day a week, in which problems in the internship can also be discussed and solved. The internship is already sought during the practical phase with the help of job coaching, in order ideally to enable a seamless transition.

Often, during the internship, training or employment opportunities arise either in the same company or through previous or parallel application processes, which usually ensures the continuation of employment.



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