

HUBERT KASZYŃSKI

Coope—
—ration

as the Art of

Conver—
—sation

A BROCHURE
to STIMULATE
THE MIND

HUBERT KASZYŃSKI

Cooperation as the Art of Conversation

Translated by

SØREN GAUGER

Introduction

JOANNA ORLIK

A BROCHURE
to STIMULATE
THE MIND

Introduction

JOANNA ORLIK

Over the past few years, we at MIK have grown accustomed to the idea of “culture education.” This is something broader than the oft-used “cultural education” (preparation for appreciating culture) or “arts education” (lessons for professional and amateur artists). Culture education is development based on an immersion in reality. It allows us to respond actively to phenomena – events, statements, cultural codes – in the environment we live in. Culture education appeared in the Polish animators’ circles with the initiation of the “Very Young Culture” program. The National Culture Center (the organizer of the program) decided at the time that representatives of two vibrant sectors, culture and education – represented, on the one hand, by culture center workers (as well as independent animators), and, on the other, by school teachers of various levels – might have a great deal to tell one another if only they were to meet and set up projects together.

This premise turned out to be on the mark, and the teacher/ animator collaboration not only bore fruit in the development of worthwhile and multidimensional projects, but, above all, it provided insight into understanding the principles and limitations at work in either sector. This deeper understanding translated into a growth of mutual kindness and motivation to work together. Both sides became convinced that they had plenty to offer one another, and the benefits – after the teachers’ and animators’ eyes had been opened – were felt most of all by the children.

We could say it is no surprise that cooperation is advantageous. Except that, as so often in life, theory is one thing and everyday practice another. Though we recognize that diversity enriches us, we seldom make an effort to practice it. This was brilliantly described by Jon Yates not long ago, in speaking of the syndrome of similarity (to people like ourselves).¹ It is always easier for us to come to terms with a person who thinks like we do; who has values and habits like ours, was raised in a similar culture, works in the same business, and understands what we’re talking about. Someone with a similar frame of reference. We need not explain things; we need not change ourselves to understand someone else.

Every difference slows down communication; sets up resistance; sometimes aversion as well, and we need the tools to go beyond it. Above all, we need readiness. This is why Yates adamantly encourages us to do things together.

To do things regularly; often; systematically. To find things we share even when initially there appears to be nothing. To spend some ordinary moments together. To go on a trip. To organize meetings. To play a game. To sing in a choir. Together.

This brochure invites you to rethink shared places in industries that seldom come across one another. Culture and social aid? (High) culture and aid (for those most in need)? Ambition and charity? Elitism and resocialization? These may be our first associations. But all this, it turns out, is the wrong approach. It is a stereotype that sometimes helps us quickly find our bearings in a tangle of complex data, but it can be fatal in its oversimplification and lack of sensitivity. Meanwhile, we can tell quite a different story about culture and social aid. One in which we work for social development and look out for one another. In which including the individual in the group is our joint challenge. In which we need the same competencies to get down to work at all. In which, above all, we are people working with other people, so that we might live together better.



HUBERT KASZYŃSKI

Coope—
—ration

as the *Art of*

Conver—
—sation

THINKING IN THE BOUNDARY STRIP

We, the representatives of various institutions, involved in social policies; culture; education; the job market – we are a bit odd. Why? Because we largely take the value of cooperation between institutions for granted, yet all too seldom can we point to widespread and ongoing practices where its application might be shown. Why is this?

Above all, as Jerzy Hausner aptly showed in his excellent work on the economy of values, a special trait of the institution is the duality in its treatment of knowledge.² On the one hand, there is an openness to knowledge – the ability to accumulate it; to test it in practice; to evaluate it. On the other, there is the initially surprising selectiveness in its approach, justified by arguments such as “incompatible fields of study,” “incompatible spheres of practical interest,” or “placement in separate sectors or departments of the economy.” Coming at this dual approach to knowledge from a different angle, we might point to an immanent property of the institution, the urge to specialize, and, by

the same token, to create tangible borders in organizational competencies. An upshot of this is fencing off issues which belong to a given organization's scope from those outside its competencies, whether in terms of content or administration.

A consequence of this state of things is a blindness to the need for cooperation between institutions and an enclosure in institutional narcissism. This means, in turn, especially in assistance work, that we encounter either people acting like clients pressured by a range of specialized activities they cannot combine into a sensible whole or those who have found themselves in an institutional void "in-between." From the perspective of someone keeping themselves more outside than "within" institutions, we can clearly see the great space "between borders" that remains uncharted by institutional action.

The seemingly mundane observation that a person lives outside of institutions and not within their bounds is especially problematic when we realize that, for a good dozen or so years, we have been discussing the deinstitutionalization of the assistance system, but we still think and operate in terms of sectors and departments. We operate in the frameworks of organizations that might be compared to silos. There is too little oxygen in silos for the people inside to breathe freely and operate efficiently. If the prevailing practices are conducted in the "self-contained" spaces of various organizations, we might describe them as limited, closed, inward-looking, or rigid. If, on the other hand, they are produced and grounded in an "in-between" space, they

will be marked by unrestrictedness, openness, communality, and flexibility. Because human problems are played out between institutions, their solutions should also involve reflecting upon the boundaries of these institutions. We need to spare some thought for the border strip.

Seeing through this optic leads us to conclude that the search for resources or new potential services to meet the needs of people, groups, and local communities could take place outside the structures of existing institutions. We ought to perceive the potential for development in the inter-institutional space, outside the segment of reality defined and controlled by a given organization.

To get a picture of the unwieldiness of the present system of institutions, all broken up into specialized sectors, allow me to present this issue from the perspective of social assistance occupations in their broadest definition, mainly those in aid, education, and support for those who are distinct or have a range of special needs. This path for seeking out new strategies and models of cooperation could be valuable for institutions, and not only those that offer therapy and assistance. We ought to consider their significance for the services, for instance, of cultural institutions, which, in order to maintain and enhance the coherence and openness of the axiological space, should work on searching for methods of inviting not only cultural organizations but also agencies dealing with the job market, social assistance, or education. A no less vital task is inviting those on the receiving end to help create and structure the field of culture, to give them the chance to

participate in and create emotionally powerful experiences. As a result, the shared world of values contributing to the development of the common good will be not only recognized, but also a thing of intimate concern.

This stream of action should be supported through public funds, primarily because it is precisely in the boundary strips – the gray areas, compelling us to increase cognitive flexibility – that people have the opportunity to grow their creative potential; to develop their artistic relationship with the world.

**SPECIALIZATION
AS A SOURCE
OF SUFFERING**

In everyday life we are so wrapped up in our problems, so busy hurrying along, that we are practically incomprehensible to one another. You to me, and I to you. When does this situation begin to change? When I step out of the everyday routine, when you – my coworkers, neighbors, students – see that I behave a bit differently; oddly; outside of the norm. Then comes what the sociology of deviation calls the process of social stigmatization. This occurs in your world when I demonstrate a kind of behavior that upsets your balance and infringes upon your sense of security. This can be observable unusual behavior; it could be aggression, or a lack of concern for children or loved ones to whom I should be tending.

What is your reaction? Above all, you try to pin down the source of the disruption to the status quo: and who in my surroundings is showing a cavalier attitude? You think: Oh-ho, that strange behavior; that lack of concern; that aggression – it's him, a specific person with a first and last

name, an address, and other social attributes. That person could be me. It is me, and sometimes my family also makes you feel off-balance.

You have now made the first step – you have located the individual source of what we sometimes call a living inconvenience; a cohabitation problem. You immediately move on to step two: you try to relate the observed and localized difficulty to institutionally prescribed responsibilities. In short, you are looking for answers to who should be handling “this thing.” And finally, step three: If we now can point to the institutions responsible, then they should make an effort to recall their sphere of competence (dammit!) and put things in order! To make him less aggressive, to make him tend to his children and start acting normally.

This is where two parallel and coupled processes begin. The first is carried out by the institutions: as teachers, police officers, and psychiatrists, you would like to define what part of my “self” you can deal with; what you are accountable for; what specialist instruments you have to use. The second process concerns the “client” and their immediate surroundings. This involves an ongoing effort to maintain the optimal level of coherence for the “self” as well as a sense of control and impact on reality. Very often – especially because of the complexity of human circumstances, once referred to as “multiproblem” – the fusion of these two processes leads to a situation wherein a few specialist institutions, initiating work with the person in question (and sometimes their family as well), simultaneously strain or simply destroy their sense of co-

herence. This chiefly comes from overriding the person's capacity to understand the actions being taken; to integrate them and give them meaning. After all, we all want to understand what is going on. Why is someone new always knocking at my door? Why are representatives of strange institutions always questioning me? What do they want from me? Internally, in my own world, with my emotional problems and difficulties, I feel a need to be coherent; to keep control of what's happening, yet with your "help" this is less and less possible! I do understand that these people appearing in my private world are "specialists"; that they are taking a specialist approach to me. That's good! Yet even if I am aware of this, emotionally I have trouble accepting it.

Here we come to a paradox of sorts: on the one hand, I need your help to get through the crisis, but in fact I experience you as attacking my home, where I ought to feel secure and be left in peace. Yet the more complicated my living circumstances become, the more urgently I feel the need to consolidate them. Even if the initial assistance came in a spirit of cooperation, ultimately its excess, will be experienced as an "invasion" – always external, threatening and dismantling my identity.

At the same time, what is going on with the institution? Its representatives are quite certain that they are cooperating with a "difficult client" who rejects their offer to help; whose life is extraordinarily complex and thus incompatible with the efforts at therapy that have been attempted. This, in turn, leads to a seemingly rational conclusion: we

ought to seek other even more specialized work methods, professionals, and perhaps even organizations. It seems there is no other way out. Another professional knocks on the client's door, wanting something else from him! Something awful is happening; something truly disquieting. As a client I increasingly feel as though I am subject to utterly incomprehensible procedures. Each of them concerns a single sphere of my life, but none concerns me as a whole person. If everyone is occupied with me, then in fact no one is. As a result, I have a constant contradictory sense of being supported and simultaneously devoid of help – contentment mixes with bitterness and rage.

The professionals in the various organizations have their problems as well. They may think: in this client's highly difficult situation we have done everything that falls within our competencies. Isn't the source of our helplessness tied to the passivity of workers in other institutions who could be (but for various reasons are not) sufficiently committed, or perhaps sufficiently specialized? Perhaps we ought to compile some accusations and expectations: you should try harder, because you expose serious deficits in the aid system. The situation is, to some degree, tragic: the natural and (in many ways) desirable specialization of assistance practices in various institutions becomes the client's source of anguish.

On the other hand, committed professionals find themselves rather ineffective and seek to lay the blame on the "uncooperative" and "difficult" client, and sometimes on the unreliable institutions. The therapy system breaks

down; it lacks coherence; it is asynchronous; every subject involved plays the same “therapeutic assistance” game, but according to rules they alone know. What results from all this? The client’s needs remain unresolved. His need to feel secure is constantly undermined by the good intentions of the intervening professionals. Discovering and experiencing the significance of what is happening in his life, however, becomes more difficult to comprehend with every interview, diagnosis, assistance plan, and contract.

I should add one more potential consequence of this state of things. It should come as no surprise that, as a client in such an unfriendly (or even hostile) assistance context, I would like to find a universal solution. The kind that would be indisputable and automatic. I gradually cease to respect the existing institutional order, the aid and therapy specialties, as well as the values you employ, because my needs are not addressed. I deny the legitimacy of the existing solutions!

I need something unambiguous; perhaps a new community to carve out each of our destinies; a community that would retain its homogeneity. I need the kind of community that attacks things that are different upon their appearance, for in that sort of community my dissimilarity would cease to exist, and the source of my suffering would disappear. Only this solution could give me the sense of security I crave.

Unfortunately, a way of thinking that involves questioning and eliminating dissimilarity in others also means questioning the dissimilarity in oneself, and thus undermining

one's subjecthood. This marks the beginning of the end of the culture of cooperation. The process of annihilating cooperation is strongly tied to the formation of a homogeneous community, whose methods of physical and symbolic violence aim to rub out the differences between us. All homogeneity destroys the chance for cultural development, for which difference is a necessary condition – it is a value at the heart of a modern society that meets our society's needs and guarantees its progress.

**OF THE
COMMON GOOD**

In his well-known volume *The Sane Society*, Erich Fromm wrote that mental health cannot be defined in terms of the individual adjusting to society. On the contrary, we ought to speak of the society's level of adjustment to each individual's needs.³ Considering the significance and functioning methods of institutions created to ensure the conditions for social, cultural, and economic development, we should ask ourselves if the existing contexts and social structures provide us all with healthy, full development, satisfying a wide range of individual human needs.

The social world, as Jürgen Habermas beautifully phrased it, is a complex of practically-oriented individuals who enter relationships to cooperatively overcome the challenges that crop up in their lives.⁴ Through cooperation we create something more: diverse communities that ensure social progress, conceived as a state of society in which a variety of important social values are preserved. If we now recall the elementary concept of this community, Martin

Buber's dyadic "I-Thou" set-up, wherein "I" and "Thou" are less ephemeral relations than an indispensable part of every person's formation, we note that the "Thou" component guarantees my development as a person; it is an indispensable condition for this development. We become ourselves, develop, and create our reality in relationships.⁵

In this light, cooperation ought to be defined as consciously and intentionally structuring the world, while considering the common good – *i.e.*, the optimal conditions to ensure the development of each person's potential, whether alive today or in the foreseeable future; whether they are a resident in a social aid home, an artist, a doctor, a teacher, a parent, or a corporate worker.

This means we ought to view cooperation as including what we might call an ethical component. The point is not to keep piling on the financial capital, which I see as a function of cooperation. Nor is it to develop ourselves in a conscious direction. In cooperation, the main thing is to think in terms of the common good. This understanding fits the mission statement of many public-financed institutions.

If we work for a person to function better in their social life, we should also ensure that vital services are not assigned but co-created by the professionals working alongside the individual, who is, after all, the expert when it comes to them! In social policy, this process is called co-production, though it is better described by the term "co-creation." Working on behalf of an institution, in this relation we

are chiefly responsible for producing consent and ensuring the quality of services that are meant to be socially available and useful.

Cooperation, which I have closely tied to the open category of the common good, requires no more or less than ongoing intersubjective analyses; compromises; mutualization. A key issue is the process of defining which elements are fundamental to the common good. What institutions, social practices, and activities do we mean by this term?

Things get more complicated when we realize that “the common good” entails not only the necessity of symbolically protecting formal social agendas, but also acceptance by politicians, figures working in science, experts, and civil representatives (*e.g.*, associations and foundations) that in order to function, certain organizations need to have their value for the community publicly defined, their image reinforced, and sometimes also protection or direct involvement in their work. This also requires discussing and implementing the requisite transfers of public funds. For this reason, too, the common good requires members of a community to know how to conduct conversations about what will ensure their potential has the chance to develop. As such, cooperation might be understood as the art of discussing the common good.

**THE ART
OF THE
CONVERSATION**

When I consider the art of the conversation, I go back to works and tradition of clinical practice created by Krakow humanist and psychiatrist Antoni Kępiński,⁶ as well as to Viktor Frankl's ideas about logotherapy⁷ and the principles of client-focused psychotherapy developed by Carl Rogers.⁸ In these concepts, conversation means extracting and developing the subjectivity of its participants, who most often are tied up in a web of restricting personal or professional circumstances.

Drawing as well from my many years of clinical experience, I would like to lay out the principles that should be the basis for a conversation. These are:

- expressing agreement to cooperate,
- focusing on the partners in the relationship,
- striving to work outside of a hierarchy of statuses,
- maintaining a close proximity,
- mindfulness,

- respect for your partners,
- being non-judgmental,
- acceptance.

Agreement is the non-negotiable basic condition for initiating and participating in cooperation. It defends the subjecthood of the cooperating partners; it guarantees their autonomy, agency, and free will to collaborate. The use of sociotechnics or manipulative organization strategies, which essentially presuppose dominance and coercion, is ineffective and even harmful to cooperative practices. Agreement is processual by nature. It is not a one-time initiatory act confirming that cooperation is underway; it is a continuing aspect of mutual activity that requires updating, confirmation, and negotiation, and thus constantly upholds the significance of the extraordinary indispensability of each of the partners' participation in the space of cooperation.

Discussion requires us to focus on our partners in the relationship. Its essence is aptly described by a trait of Antoni Kępiński's recalled by his patients: an ability to summon a feeling that he, the doctor, was entirely present for the patient speaking – even if he had only half a minute, he gave himself entirely, as if nothing else existed at that moment.⁹ The ability to listen; to empathically perceive reality from many varied and sometimes mutually exclusive variables, is also a condition for a readiness to be open to the perspectives of people, groups, or communities with the least power in an institutional set-up, who are thus continually marginalized. The interlocutors' development

of these skills might be called an empowering practice, neutralizing the consequences of social stigma, directed toward listening to minority voices.

An extremely important principle in shaping a culture of cooperation is holding discussions with partners so as to neutralize the excessive impact of the social status ascribed to them. This does not mean of course, that we ignore such traits as authority or merit; we more have in mind the ability to identify, name, and monitor the power attributed to our partners and to condemn all signs of its abuse. This aspect, in assistance practice called a “bias in relations,” a hierarchical set-up, stressing a power imbalance between partners in an institutional structure, is harmful in building an alliance. When partners automatically cling to their statuses from their own organizations, this significantly hampers or may entirely preclude cooperation.

Holding discussions requires a special atmosphere, which is built by being in “close proximity.” This allows you to harmonize with your partner, to “get a feel for” their cognitive and ethical standpoint. The essence of “attentive proximity” is striving to mutually structure and name descriptions of reality as they appear, while seeking to maintain an atmosphere of understanding and security. Openness to differing perspectives and respect for other people’s diverse experiences and declared aspirations without being judgmental are the key signs of accepting your partners’ differences. This does not mean working in an axiological vacuum, of course. On the contrary, the

essence of discussion is to strive for a full articulation and intellectual confrontation with the axiological bases of the actions taken.

In its purest form, discussion is an expression of Kant's categorical imperative, whereby a person is always conceived as an end, never solely as a means to achieving it. When those in a discussion break this principle, it means absolute exclusion from the space of cooperation; its limitation, closure, and, ultimately, annihilation.

If we seek to understand the significance of this skill so crucial to cooperation, the art of conversation, let us recall the wisdom of the "old doctor," Janusz Korczak, who saw a chance to democratize social life in open dialogue between equal and mutually-respectful partners. Today, following Zygmunt Bauman, we might see Korczak's practice of "partners speaking and listening to each other" as a "laboratory for testing, analyzing, describing, and mapping roads that may lead to that community of the human race which has become, for our 'negatively globalized' world, a matter of life and death."¹⁰

**CRAFTS-
PEOPLE OF
COOPERATION**

For over thirty years, I have been working with people with handicaps and mental illnesses. They are my mentors, inspiring me to research and explore the secrets of mental health. What have they taught me? Primarily the skills required by teachers, psychologists, social workers, family assistants, instructors, and culture workers – in other words, all those who decide to be artists and craft-people of cooperation.

What competences are needed to build a culture of cooperation? Cooperation drawing from the process of a common good defined through discourse requires competencies in three main fields:

- **personal**, tied to a global self-evaluation and a sense of control over reality;
- **communicative**, drawing from the ability to participate in dialogue;

- **organizational**, focused on formulating goals of action and methods for carrying them out.

Supporting a Sense of a Meaningful Life

The first aspect of competence, which we are calling “personal,” is an amalgam of four competencies inspired by Aaron Antonovsky’s model of the coherent personality.¹¹ This presupposes that the basis for a cohesive self is a person’s inner focus; in other words, their internal conviction that life, its circumstances notwithstanding, is worth emotional involvement; that it is meaningful or tends toward revealing or bestowing meaning upon human existence. A coherent person is able to continually interpret reality and unearth its meaning.

The first personal competence supporting a sense of a meaningful life is tied to the widely applied assistance technique known as “empowerment.” It is operationalized by Sally Rogers’s empowerment scale,¹² whereby the assistance-seeker takes control of key realms of life as they are provided with therapeutic conditions to facilitate the development of personal values, the ability to affect reality, involvement in the community, a sense of control over the future, and a capacity to express social dissent and discontent.

By this above notion, empowerment in the realm of cooperation means the ability to formulate and articulate one’s own cognitive perspective and views, and thus to exert an influence on others.

Another competence involves an openness to accept divergent opinions and creatively combine them with one's own opinions. This ability might be linked to the concept of resilience, making for a personal flexibility, allowing one to learn from confronting the vicissitudes of life, adverse conditions for living and development, and hardships without having to modify them excessively. Personal flexibility allows one to incorporate alternate descriptions of reality and learn from experiences that can otherwise destroy an individual's, group's, or community's state of equilibrium.

This flexibility is tied to a competence called "hope," which not only makes us socially active but also helps us uphold a relatively firm conviction that sudden, incomprehensible, or chance events will ultimately lead to positive outcomes. Finally, the last personal ability, inspired by definitions of the recuperation process ("recovery"), comes down to experiencing one's own actions as free from external pressure, necessary, and, above all, meaningful, despite adversity and the experience of failure.

Dialogues of Social Networks

The second realm of competence is based on an approach by Jaakko Seikkula and Tom Arnkil, who drew from systemic family therapy to create a technique called social network dialogues.¹³ At the heart of this approach is a shift in focus toward the primary significance of the process of forming and maintaining relationships and conducting conversations with the assistance-seeker. Focusing on concerted efforts to pin down the source of the problem

and enact therapeutic changes remains secondary; if these changes occur, they are, as it were, a natural consequence of good relations, not of sociotechnical tactics. This is why, apart from the ability to “keep up with” one’s partner in relations, in other words, to do “relational work” in a dialogical approach, it is vital to be able to hear what people are saying, not just what we imagine they are thinking.

A no less important competence is linguistic openness, which allows people to find a new, shared language in discussion and to forego professional jargon. If we want to communicate in a comprehensible way, we must discard our own linguistic bonds. Only then will people enduring undue hardships in life be capable of naming them – and this is fundamental to defining what assistance is needed.

Practicing dialogue also presupposes an ability to hold group conversations with all those who are significant to the assistance process. Of course, they are representatives of the social network of the assistance-seekers, their families, the groups to which they belong, as well as representatives of key organizations enlisted to help. This particular competence involves the ability to initiate and conduct group conversations practically from the beginning of the assistance process, while all the issues involved in analyzing the situation, planning the activities, and making a decision are subjects of open discussion incorporating all those gathered round.

We should stress that neither the themes nor the form of the conversation ought to be strictly planned – they must

be open, flexible, and thus amenable to modification and mutual creation by those cooperating during a meeting. The focus of attention is creating an atmosphere of trust during meetings and not necessarily holding them in strict conformance with the established assistance goal. In general, the second realm of competence concerns a dialogical way of life, remaining in a specific relation with oneself and with others, which means laying oneself bare and learning other – intimate, subjective, unique – meanings of reality and seeking a holistic image of human existence.

The Evolutionary Aim of ROCK

The last collection of competences we are calling organizational focuses on the specifics of formulating the collaboration's aims and approaches for bringing them about. An interesting source here is Frederic Laloux,¹⁴ the creator of an organizational model called “evolutionary teal” (meaning democratic, decentralized forms of managing through organization).

Seeking new traits of the institutions emerging in the twenty-first century, one thing Laloux pointed out was the changes in defining the end. By his approach, the end ceases to be an attempt to control the future, requiring the application of various sociotechnical practices based on set formulae to describe reality. In its place comes a method of listening to what is happening in the complex system of cooperation between the workers of a given institution, or various cooperating institutions, and the interpretation of what the system strives for. By the

same token, the traditionally rigid aims prescribed by the SMART acronym (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) turn into an evolving and open-ended goal. We might capture its specifics through a different acronym: ROCK (Resilient, Open for meaning, Common, Kind). By this way of understanding, the aim can be seen as a “bedrock,” less as guidelines for the organization’s actions than an assurance of stable support for its growth and the updating of its potential.

The evolving aim is flexible; it transforms along with unpredictable external circumstances, thus retaining its resilience. It is experienced by those cooperating on its behalf as sensible, relevant to the values held by the team, and open to the axiological verification of the actions taken and arising from it (Open for meaning). The aim is discussed by the collaborators and is shared by all (Common), making it universal and inclusive. Finally, it is developed through open debate, in an atmosphere of trust, which makes it personal and friendly (Kind). A special competence of the future will be the ability to formulate evolving goals of an organization and to integrate them with the existing ones, taking into account its strategic paths of development.

The second vital component of teal organizations is described as “striving for fullness.” Alongside the traditional specialist approach, it promotes the multifaceted involvement of workers, releasing their potential, bringing in specific skills that have remained on the organization’s margins. This holistic practice is a promising method for

developing original aid resources. It requires special teamwork skills and undermines the present careful separation of professional life from private life. Striving for fullness means operating between two worlds; it involves merging competence resources, not separating them.

Another attribute of new organizations is “self-management.” The space of cooperation is conceived as a system primarily based on direct relations between workers, with no need to stress hierarchies, forced efforts to reach a consensus, or excessive formalities in cooperation agreements between partners. The system is conceived as a “living organism” with self-organizational capabilities, keeping the necessity for central management and control to a bare minimum. The organizations that emerge are sometimes even ahierarchical, with a prevailing ethos of no leadership. New members have the same status as those with plenty of seniority. Freedom of choice, suggestions, and a sense of the possibility of embarking on a task replace the traditional distribution of instructions with negative sanctions for their non-execution. Reaching a consensus is replaced by giving consent to the actions taken; that is, unless they contradict the foundations of the institution, its mission and its strategic goals. Team communication is thoroughly direct and open, breaking down barriers that arise from the varying statuses of the team members.

The essence of competences defined as organizational is the institutionalization of social life, which reinforces the process of creative realization – a person’s subjecthood, dialogical presence in the world – and strives to bring

about spiritual, cognitive, moral, and aesthetic values, and thus to shape the common good, which ensures social and cultural development.

**WHAT DOES
A SANE SOCIETY
NEED?**

In the above-mentioned thoughts on a sane society, Erich Fromm wrote that a society might further “man’s capacity to love his fellow men, to work creatively, to develop his reason and objectivity, [...] the experience of his own productive powers,” yet it can also impair this development, producing “mutual hostility, distrust, which transforms man into an instrument of use and exploitation for others, which deprives him of a sense of self, except inasmuch as he submits to others or becomes an automaton.” Fromm also stressed that the majority of societies do both these things at once, and that the key question remains of “to what degree and in what directions their positive and negative influence is exercised.”¹⁵

This means the philosophical basis of social development cannot be a simplified Darwinism, wherein the fittest survive. It is more like Peter Kropotkin’s thought, binding the dynamic of societies’ growth and the instinct for mutual aid.¹⁶ This instinct ties us to Others, who, as weaker minority

figures living in fear, deserve our attention, recognition, and love. The Other stands on guard for *humanum*.

We must recall that every political community project presupposing a current or future homogeneity simultaneously assumes a loss of the heedful face of the Other – their actual physical, mental, and spiritual proximity – and carries a danger of the gradual impoverishment of humanity. For the Other is utterly necessary for me to fully develop my subjecthood and difference. The gradual or sudden isolation of oneself from people is tied to the inevitable disappearance and ultimate annihilation of the human being and thus the destruction of the community.

If, as representatives of an institution, we would like to become craftspeople of cooperation – if we feel responsible for forging conditions for the positive and full development of each one of us – then we see the value of inter-institutional practices of cooperation based on dialogical reciprocity.

We might encapsulate the essence of such cooperation with reference to Józef Tischner, who saw dialogue as “rising above oneself, [...] toward a community of one and the same points of view on matters and things.”¹⁷ To this way of thinking, cooperation is not only a meta-competence facilitating the enactment of a value – of forging a good relationship; one that respects the freedom of each person – but which also expresses responsibility for people, groups, and communities requiring social support, recognition, empowerment, and care.

Yet we must bear in mind, as Tischner aptly put it, that dialogue involves a double challenge. It is not only a readiness to confess, “I’m sure you’re not all wrong,” but also to admit, “I’m sure I’m not all right.”¹⁸

BASED ON THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

- Hubert Kaszyński, “Kierunki oraz zasady zaangażowania badawczo-aplikacyjnego klinicznej socjologii i pracy socjalnej,” *Praca Socjalna* 2021, no. 1(36), pp. 79–95.
- Hubert Kaszyński, “O powinności współpracy na rzecz zdrowia psychicznego,” a lecture delivered for the conference *Zdrowie Psychiczne – Nowa Kultura Pomagania*, Gdańsk 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ8wrihINB0>, accessed 2.09.2021.
- Hubert Kaszyński, *Pracownik socjalny – sojusznikiem zdrowienia osób z doświadczeniem kryzysu psychicznego*, webinar, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN4KQikGr7U&t=1428s>, accessed 2.09.2021.
- Hubert Kaszyński, “Źródła, idee i wartości w pomocy społecznej” in *Pomoc społeczna. Idee, rozwój, instytucja*, eds. Jerzy Krzyszkowski, Elżbieta Bojanowska, Krzysztof Chaczko, Ewelina Zdebska, Warsaw 2021.
- Hubert Kaszyński, Olga Maciejewska, “O kryzysie psychicznym i jego korelatkach” in: Paweł Bronowski, Hubert Kaszyński, Olga Maciejewska, *Kryzys psychiczny. Odzyskiwanie zdrowia. Wsparcie społeczne. Praca socjalna*, Warsaw 2019, pp. 83–125.

NOTES:

- 1 See: Jon Yates, *Fractured: Why our societies are coming apart and how we put them back together again*, HarperNorth 2021.
- 2 Cf. Jerzy Hausner, *Spółeczna czasoprzestrzeń gospodarowania. W kierunku ekonomii wartości*, Warsaw–Krakow 2019, p. 378.
- 3 Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, London 2017.
- 4 Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, Cambridge 1985.
- 5 Cf. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1971.
- 6 Cf. Antoni Kępiński, *Poznanie chorego*, Warsaw 1989.
- 7 Cf. Viktor E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*, New York 2014.
- 8 Cf. Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, New York 1995.
- 9 Cf. Andrzej Kokoszka, *Jak pomagał i leczył profesor Antoni Kępiński*, Krakow 1999.
- 10 Zygmunt Bauman, "What Chance of Ethics in a Globalized World of Consumers," *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, Boston 2008.
- 11 Cf. Aaron Antonovsky, *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*, Hoboken 1987.
- 12 Quoted in: Hubert Kaszyński, *Praca socjalna z osobami chorującymi psychicznie. Studium socjologiczne*, Krakow 2013, pp. 64–67.

- 13 Cf. Jaakko Seikkula, Tom Erik Arnkil, *Dialogical Meetings in Social Networks*, London 2006.
- 14 Cf. Frederic Laloux, *Reinventing Organizations*, Toronto 2014.
- 15 Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, op. cit., p. 70.
- 16 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*, ChristieBooks 2015.
- 17 Józef Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, Krakow 2018, p. 22.
- 18 Ibid.

małopolski
instytut
kultury **mik**

INSTYTUCJA KULTURY
WOJEWÓDZTWA
MAŁOPOLSKIEGO

 MAŁOPOLSKA

Publisher:

The Małopolska Institute of Culture in Krakow

30-233 Krakow, ul. 28 Lipca 1943 17C

tel. 12 422 18 84, www.mik.krakow.pl

Director: Joanna Orlik

Editor-in-chief: Elżbieta Kaproń

Translator: Søren Gauger

Proofreader: Steven Hoffman

Series graphic design and typography: Kira Pietrek

Typesetting: Anna Papiernik

ISBN online publication 978-83-61406-02-0

Kraków 2021

This publication is not for sale.

It is available on an international Creative Commons license: Acknowledgment of authorship – Non-commercial use – On the same conditions 4.0 (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Małopolski Instytut Kultury w Krakowie
[Małopolska Institute of Culture in Krakow,
abbr. MIK] is an independent body set up by the
Małopolska local government. MIK engages in many
activities to study and promote cultural heritage
of the Małopolska region. MIK provides workshops
and training as well as organizes conferences
and seminars for culture sector employees. We
also research the evolution of cultural trends and
development directions.

Three words describe us in short:
Region, React, Rethink!

MIK is a proud member of three international networks:
Culture Action Europe, Interpret Europe, and the
European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts
and Cultural Education (ENO).

www.mik.krakow.pl



Hubert Kaszyński is a sociologist, clinical social worker, social work supervisor, and professor at the Jagiellonian University at the Applied Sociology Wing and the Social Work Institute of Sociology. In 1989 he began working in social therapy, in the field of mental health. He is a council member for the Polish Association of Social Work Schools and the Institute of Therapy and Social Education Associations. He conducts research into mental health, axiological education, and the significance of Holocaust heritage for contemporary social work.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5714-6842>