



*Original Contribution*

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## THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION

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### ABSTRACT

This article proposes a theoretical and historical overview of researches with which to clarify the subject of animation. Subject of research is the socio-cultural aspect of it, accompanied by a clarification of the etymological and semantic foundations of the concept and specification of theoretical highlights regarding its emergence and constitution as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

**Key words:** animation, socio-cultural animation, historical aspects of animation

### INTRODUCTION

Animation as a socio-cultural phenomenon occurs during the first half of the last century, rapidly gaining popularity and even becomes a "fashionable" term that many sectors recognize and use to give a new meaning to the activities and services they offer. At present, there are numerous researches and author searches for clarification of the essence, specifics and social importance of animation as well as to study the scope of its dimensions.

In this respect, this article aims to solve two main **tasks**:

- Theoretical study of animation in etymological and semantic aspect.
- Exploring the origins and essential characteristics of socio-cultural animation.

### Occurrence of animation

In many European countries in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century there was a noticeable division of social classes of those who have access to education and those who are deprived of this privilege. Very soon, however, this practice is identified as unacceptable and some steps are taken towards democratization of education, ensuring access to education for adults and support social change. Processes that

inherently presuppose animation and its occurrence.

After the Second World War in Europe, particularly in France (defined as the "cradle" of socio-cultural animation), social processes are characterized by active participation of citizens, brimming with ideas and hopes for a brighter future. Exactly in this period France has introduced legislation to further promote the construction of educational, cultural and youth centers, conducting workshops and enable the public and in particular young people to participate in the cultural life of the community.

To denote the process of social change and public awareness has been introduced the term animation (lat. animation - animation, excitement, spiritualization), gaining wide use and social significance nowadays.

### Etymological and semantic foundations of animation

Etymological foundation of the term "animation" (Eng.) or "animation" (Sp.) comes from the Latin root "anima", which has several independent meanings: beginning of life, spirit, soul, sensible start. Another interpretation allows consideration of the concept, distinguishing feminine and masculine "anima" and "animus" - desire, good spirit, mood and courage, bravery, enjoyment, pleasure. Accordingly, the verb "animo", means excitement, enthusiasm. (1)

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According to the social pedagogue Trilla (2), the term "animation" examines the idea of "the impact and effect of animation", focusing on the verb "animate" which means to "spiritualize", "quantify", "infuse strength and activism in inanimate objects "to" beautify", "to give happiness and activity of a group of people", "to cause a reaction." Regardless of specific interpretations of the word "animate" the meanings fail to fully clarify the nature of socio-cultural animation, which show how complex and ambiguous the term is.

Finnish social pedagogue Kurki (3) shares these positions by stating that the term animation is rooted in the Latin word "anima", life /soul, which means "to give life or spirit of something." She also mentioned that meaning can be derived from the word "animus" with a clear reference to motivation and movement. The author adds that in terms of the etymological meaning, the animation is to give life, to motivate people for action, to form relationships, to work for a better society. According to the author, at the base of the definitions of animation lies an encouragement of participation and inspiration of people to be self-aware and realized.

Besides etymological analysis to clarify the nature of the animation is necessary to consider also the semantic foundations of the term, justifying its five meanings (4):

- In his first matter animation primarily denotes the situation. In this sense, it is advantageously used as an adjective and less as a noun, i.e. animated;
- In its second matter, the animation acts on an object to spiritualize it, direct it or to regain its original look. In this significance animation is used as "animation" (school class, a team on a training course, etc.).
- According to the third meaning animation is a product, achievement, result. In this significance animation is commonly used in plural (school or commercial animations - sales, sales discounts, festivals, concerts, historical monuments, fairs, entertainment.)
- In its fourth matter, the animation is seen as precise educational equipment. It refers to the audience, which works with a qualified teacher. This type of animation is common in the education system as a function of a wide range of activities. The animation occurs after a fixed time in the series of educational tasks.
- The last matter of the animation is rather an institutional matter. In this case the question is about institutions whose activities are administratively regulated and funded.

The definitions of socio-cultural animation as a scientific concept vary according to the context in different social science approaches, specificity, identity, role and function. It turns out that the socio-cultural animation is one of those undefined and "slippery" concepts whose meaning is difficult to determine.

### **Genesis and essential feature of socio-cultural animation**

There are different opinions about the origin of socio-cultural animation as a scientific discipline. Some authors claim that the beginning is laid in the 19th century, while according to other authors, animation as a professional field and its historical constitution arises in the early 60s of last century (4).

According to a report by the European Cultural Foundation in 1973, socio-cultural animation "is that stimulus in the mental, physical and emotional life of people in an area that impulses them to take a wider range of experiences through which to reach a higher degree of self-realization, self-expression and awareness of belonging to the community which they influence". In other words, this form of animation is tied to notions of community development and public education and training. (5)

Scientific interest is also the definition about socio-cultural animation as an "action within a group, community or context, which aims to develop communication and structuring of social life using indirect methods; animation is a method of integration and participation". (6) According to this definition, good communication and the structuring of social life is related to the idea of a permanent dialogue in which members of a group are invited to participate and contribute to the development of their social environment. In this analogy, Ander-Egg (7) says that socio-cultural animation "(...) is a form of socio-pedagogical action, which is mainly characterized by demand and provoking processes involving people". In this sense, socio-pedagogical actions relate to continuous learning and knowledge sharing to the social reality of a particular group of people in a specific context, in terms of participating.

This position is shared by Kurki (3), arguing that the socio-cultural animation is a combination of all the measures which are focused on creating conditions for the active involvement of the subject as to his own development and the development of the community to which it belongs.

In his turn, Mambekov cited in Voronina (8) claims that " Socio-cultural animation is a part of the cultural and educational system of the society, which can be presented as a special model for the organization of social and cultural activities:

- as a set of elements (state institutions and organizations) being in a constant relationship corresponding to the model;
- as a set of classes, a variety of activities and ways in which the leading role plays animator, professional or volunteer , having special training and normally using active teaching methods.

Keyword for socio-cultural animation is participation. Socio-cultural animation is always movement /stimulus/ of pedagogical realization, participation /interaction/ and social creativity. Therefore, educational, social and cultural dimensions together serve as a parallel and identical element in its structure.

Cited definitions synthesize experience and scientific research of a number of researchers, each of which focuses on certain essential features of the socio-cultural animation. And though they sound different, these definitions achieve harmony in terms of the trinity: participation, integration and identity. On the base of these three elements may be displayed and the essence of the concept of socio-cultural animation - namely, the idea of uniting people from different social circles to participate in their own lives, preventing them from impersonal contemplation of his own existence.

Diversity in definitions of socio-cultural animation is transferred also in the attempts to clarify the types of socio-cultural animation.

For example, according to Ander-Egg (7), there are four types of socio-cultural animation: individual, social, cultural and educational.

- Individual socio-cultural animation, which aims to stimulate the expression of man towards deployment of its ability to change the environment and the immediate circumstances in it.
- Social variation of socio-cultural animation, leading to increased participation in public life by organizations able to provide a solution to specific problems and public needs. Thus reinforcing the sense of social belonging and personal identity.
- Her cultural range aims to support collective and individual creativity as an alternative of the passive consumption.
- Educational dimension of socio-cultural animation seeks to build democratic habits

and ways of acting that exacerbate people's attention to the necessity of acquiring quality education for successful personal development.

In her turn Kurki (3) sees socio-cultural animation in its three dimensions:

- Educational dimension as a personal development.
- Social dimension as a support to the group and the community to increase their activity.
- Cultural dimension as fostering creativity through diverse expression.

To illustrate the specifics of animation and its diversity, in his turn, Gillet (4) divides socio-cultural animation into two directions:

- Hot animation - where the animation is a factor for transformation and socialization.
- Cold animation - where the animation is a store of social standards.

In all three classifications there is an overlap of the scope of various types of socio-cultural animation, which only strengthens its leading accents in terms of mobilizing public activity of creative and cultural expression towards the acquisition of quality education and self-realization.

## CONCLUSION

Socio-cultural animation as a socially significant phenomenon is used in all spheres of human activity. Even with an advantageous implementation in areas such as sport and tourism, gradually finds its place and importance in the Bulgarian public and social processes. Its prospects are to be recognized and promoted in sectors such as education, cultural activities and activities in the field of leisure. Validation of its contribution highlights will further reinforce and strengthen the fragile foundations of our civil society, in the context of personal commitment and a proactive citizenship.

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