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„Transformacja i kultura: 25 lat zmian w Polsce”**

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Transition to democracy and market economy has been accompanied by an inherited strong consumption hunger. Years of accumulated appetite for all sorts of consumption goods and services led to expectations of traditional patterns of consumption. Those patterns came from the West.

But at the same time we felt that our expectation of a better quality of life was not fully met by increasing consumption. We were not sure how to identify better quality of life we dreamed of. We inherited economy that never cared about the quality of life of Poland's citizens. When the change came we moved rather quickly on the material aspects of catching up. It was not at all obvious, however, how to move toward a home grown model of the quality of life.

And culture saved us. And it was possible because the bottom line of the grand change was the advent of freedom. Culture is freedom sensitive. Transition gave artists the feeling of artistic autonomy even if public funds did not follow.

We have experienced an explosion of new culture in all its dimensions. Transition and freedom gave us a whole bunch of fantastic creators in cinema and theater. Many gained very quickly European and global recognition. This explosion continues in all domains of culture.

But it is worth looking at trends, beyond people. We can see a growing presence of women as creators, new forms of media, the questioning of division between the high and low culture, more and more often cultural activity as a connecting tissue in rebuilding human relations, especially in local context. We see artists involving ordinary people in art creation, artistic intervention in city landscape, in public space. I think here of Paweł Althamer, Joanna Rajkowska, Julita Wójcicka and others.

In short freedom made culture less exclusive, less celebratory, engaging local communities,

invading public space, changing nature of relations between artists and people, less preaching to the masses, facilitating the emergence of a more responsive recipient of culture.