



1.2 Médiation culturelle

Usage of the French-language term “médiation culturelle” is similar to usage of the German-language → *Kulturvermittlung*, but it has a country-specific character and a longer history. When it first emerged in the 1980s, the term “médiation culturelle” was associated with public relations activities and knowledge transfer. In addition to the fields of the arts, it was used to refer to the preservation of historical monuments and cultural heritage. The term had associations with already well-established educational activities and links to diffusion in the field of the arts and culture. The understanding of “médiation culturelle” as a form of transmission of knowledge remains influential today and describes the majority of the activities practiced.

However in parallel to the emergence of this broader concept, a concept of “médiation culturelle” specific to the arts was also being developed, in part through the work of the degree programme (with a strong sociology and linguistics emphasis) set up in 1994 called “Médiation culturelle de l’art” at → *Université Aix-Marseille* in France. That programme is founded on the idea that art is often created from an individual act in opposition to the collective and is, for that reason, rarely accessible to a wider public in the absence of prior knowledge. At the same time, that art should be accessible to this collective is seen as desirable in the sense of a → *democratization of culture* (Caune 1992, Caillet 1995). Due to these tensions, médiation culturelle is understood less as knowledge transmission and more as the act of forming relationships of mutual exchange among publics, works, artists and institutions. Under this understanding, the aim of médiation culturelle is to place the various different perspectives involved in relation to one another. These activities focus on the individual perception of artworks by participants. The point is not to fill in lacunae in understanding with specialized knowledge, but to understand the lacunae as a point of departure for dialogue and aesthetic experience (Caune 1999). Ideally, the collective analysis of the different forms of expression which are brought together in this process of exchange is another integral part of médiation culturelle de l’art.

In addition to standing for this very specific concept, the term “médiation culturelle” is used in more common parlance with a meaning that overlaps with other terms, such as “action culturelle” (generally referring to the dissemination of cultural offerings out away from the centre and into the periphery) or “diffusion” which is associated with marketing.

→ *Kulturvermittlung* see Text 1.1

→ *Université Aix-Marseille* <http://allsh.univ-amu.fr/lettres-arts/master-mediation-recherche> [1.2.2013]

→ *Democratization of culture* see Texts 6.4 and 6.5



There are other terms in use which entail considerably more specificity as well, such as “médiation artistique” for → *instruction in artistic techniques or processes* or → *médiation culturelle de musée* for museum-based mediation. Increasingly, médiation culturelle is also being introduced in the area of activities of → *animation culturelle* (Della Croce et al. 2011). Animation culturelle is a field associated with the social sphere. It encompasses the aim established in 20th century → *éducation populaire*: cultural activities which have the capacity to transform society should lead to the emancipation of participants.

→ *Instruction in artistic techniques or processes* see Texts 3.2, 3.5 and 3.6

→ *Médiation culturelle de musée*
<http://mediamus.ch/web/fr/rubriken/grundsatzpapiere-mediamus> [21.2.2013]

→ *Animation culturelle* see Glossary: Socio-cultural animation

→ *Éducation populaire* see Glossary: Lay culture