Time for Cultural Mediation

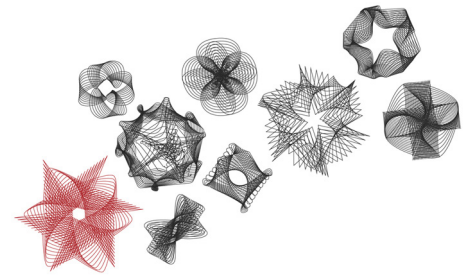**Time for Cultural Mediation**

1   What is Cultural Mediation?
2   Cultural Mediation for Whom?
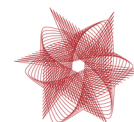**3**   What is Transmitted?

3.0   Intro

An art museum hosts an exhibition on medical themes in paintings dating from ten different centuries. In conjunction with that the museum offers a special cultural mediation programme for nurses in training. The programme starts with a guided tour of the exhibition, in which the group learns about the works on display from an art historical perspective while sharing their own associations with the paintings against the background of their work experience. Subsequently, the participants themselves engage in creative activity in the cultural mediation room. Taking images in their instruction texts as a starting point, they use various visualization techniques, such as analogue paper collage, acetone frottage, tracing projected images and digital image processing software. After a period of time, the mediator goes to the prospective nurses' university for a session with the group. Together, they review the day in the museum and consider whether anything from their experiences at the workshop could transfer to their daily routine in training or in their professional lives. In this context, discussion turns to a Damien Hirst piece from 2002 shown at the exhibition: a large printer's type case holding hundreds of brightly coloured pills, displayed like jewellery in a glass cabinet. The participants discuss whether a defamiliarization method like the one used in the Hirst piece might open up possibilities for them to develop new perspectives on everyday materials and thereby avoid falling into routines, stay alert. In that context, heated discussion erupts over the fact that Damien Hirst is currently one of the world's most expensive artists and that his works are included in the collections of many museums.

This example contains a great variety of educational content: above all, the artworks themselves; then techniques of image composition and artistic processes (such as shifting the significance of ordinary objects) and their potential relevance for other fields of action. The museum as an institution is also a subject matter, though, as are museum collection policies and what is currently happening in the art market.

This chapter explores in somewhat greater detail the various subject matters that cultural mediation can address. The final, more in-depth text turns to tacit content in cultural mediation in the past and the present, which has itself been a subject of critical discourse among professionals in the cultural mediation field in recent years.
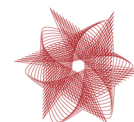
→   www.kultur-vermittlung.ch/time-for-cultural-mediation

3.1 Works and production as subject-matter

The content of cultural mediation which is both best known and most frequently addressed in practice concerns the output of institutions of (high) culture, such as museums, exhibition venues, theatres, opera houses and dance, concert and literary organizations. At centre stage is cultural mediation on the subject of works of art, presented in performances or exhibitions or, in the case of literature, released by publishing houses or presented in readings. In the visual arts, cultural mediation usually relates to an exhibition or a series of exhibitions, which may be thematically organized or may focus on the work of a single artist or group of artists, a period of history or a specific style. The presentation of an institution's own collection constitutes another focus, in part because unlike temporary exhibitions, the permanency of collections permits a more in-depth treatment and the development of a longer-term cultural mediation programme. Individually led or recorded audio exhibition tours offered in conjunction with practical workshops are a common format. Another popular approach is to concentrate on one individual work or one selected object: for instance, in many museums one sees the picture or the object "of the month" serving as the subject-matter of cultural mediation programmes. In the music world, we find cultural mediation about individual orchestral works or operas or the work and personality of individual composers in conjunction, for example, with a programme of concerts for children or matinee performances. In theatres and dance centres, cultural mediation focuses on pieces on the performance calendar – here, a commonly used format is the introductory discussion or director's talks.

The cultural mediation formats named above are generally explanatory in nature and designed to promote understanding of the works. Their primary aim is to produce background knowledge relating to the works and their creation. Cultural mediation can also have objectives which go further and thus use other ways of designing methods and formats for projects relating to the works and production of high culture.

3.2   Artistic techniques as subject-matter

Learning to play an instrument or to sing in individual or some form of group instruction now represents the most common form of music mediation. All major cities in Switzerland have music schools or conservatories, but there are also a great many individuals who offer private instruction.

The situation with dance mediation is similar – one finds instructional programmes in private dance schools, where pupils can learn a wide variety of dance styles, spanning all epochs and genres, right up to the semi-professional level. This type of programme is distinctly more common than projects dealing with productions or individual works. The majority of programmes relate to social dance forms, i.e. to forms not primarily intended for the stage.

There are also private acting schools and schools whose programmes cover a range of disciplines. Some of them offer courses designed to prepare pupils for acceptance at state universities to continue their training.

In the domain of visual art there are fewer private instruction options available. There, most mediation programmes concentrate on instruction in analogue painting and drawing techniques, though it is not uncommon to see programmes providing instruction in digital and documentary media, such as film or photography, or interdisciplinary offerings. Less common are programmes designed to teach people techniques in the literary domain. In that field, the most common form of cultural mediation is offered by private individuals in the area of creative writing.

Outside of state-approved training centres, like the conservatories, cultural mediation in this area takes the form of a heterogeneous range of offerings on a free market. Accordingly, there is considerable variation in the level of professionalism of mediation providers. In many areas, independent instructors and / or schools have banded together in associations which engage in promotional activities as well as quality assurance.
In this context, the music schools are quite distinctive: existing throughout Switzerland, they represent an area of where the domains of cultural mediation and formal education overlap – both in the schools and in the universities.

Instruction in artistic techniques as provided by the majority of individuals and private schools does not cover the history of the arts or, most strikingly, the arts in the present day. One would hardly expect to find priority given to such subject matter at a dance class for instance, but its complete omission from the instruction of artistic techniques conceals a sort of tacit curriculum, in the sense of an implicitly communicated, often traditional understanding of art. The word tacit here is used to refer to instances when cultural mediation makes no reference to the fact that it is presenting only one of many possible perspectives, each of which
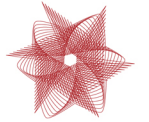
is associated with a set of choices regarding what is taught and what is not. In fact, one cannot learn to play an instrument or learn an acting or painting technique without at least incidentally acquiring some knowledge about music or the visual arts as a field of practice – however, in such cases this knowledge remains implicit and is not analyzed.
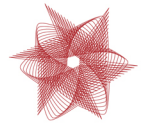
3.3 The institutions as subject-matter

The institutions and venues of arts production and presentation can and do themselves constitute the subject matter of cultural mediation. Many cities host open-studio events; theatres, opera houses and museums convey a sense of how they operate to visitors an "behind the scenes" tours. Programmes like these convey knowledge about the operational aspects of cultural institutions, about how work is divided, and the occupational profiles of their staffs. Participants also have the opportunity to learn about the differences between production and presentation: completed exhibitions and productions are juxtaposed with the daily work routine, the tools, the sounds and smells in workshops and storage facilities, in administrative wings and equipment rooms.

Institutions can also become a topic in → *cultural mediation about individual works*. This happens, for instance, when decision-making and production processes are explained. Or in cases when mediators explicitly → *distance* themselves from the decisions of institutions or when they depart from the subject-matter set by the institution and encourage participants to debate.

Cultural mediation formats in which participants actively interact with institutions go far beyond the → *reception* of content. The → *Tate Forum*, provides an example. There, young volunteers develop their own programme in the London gallery Tate Britain. One purpose of this programme is to give participants the opportunity to get to know the institution well, but that is not the only aim: participants are also supposed to help the institution to evolve – and to test and reveal its limitations while doing so. In such situations, cultural mediation about institutions crosses over into the sphere of an → *affirmative function* and can contribute to an engagement with → *art as a system*.

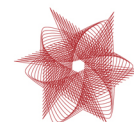→ *cultural mediation about individual works* see Text 3.1

→ *distance* see Text 5.3

→ *reception* see Text 4.1

→ *Tate Forum* http://www.tate.org. uk/research/publications/ tate-papers/on-evolution-peer-led-programmme-tate-forum [15.2.2013]

→ *affirmative function* see Text 5.1

→ *art as a system* see Text 3.4

3.4 Art as a system as subject-matter

Who defines what is art or who is an artist? How are quality criteria established in the arts? How is a price put on an artwork, and how did it come to pass that art can be traded like a commodity at all? Should an interest in the arts be attributed to innate predisposition or to social influences? Why have the students at Swiss universities of arts and music mainly been young men who are → *white* and come from families from the upper and university-educated middle class, despite the fact that "talent" is supposed to be the key selection criterion in admissions exams? Questions like these are examples of subject matters of cultural mediation which examine art as a → *system* and encourage debate. They target the – frequently unwritten – rules of the → *field* of artistic activity, the market mechanisms or the social conditions in the various artistic domains.

    Addressing the topic of the systemic functions of cultural mediation itself constitutes a special case – arising, for instance, when mediators and participants discuss for whom, how and why the arts contribute to personal growth and / or why cultural mediation should take place at all.

    In principle, "art as a system" can be introduced as a topic in any cultural mediation format – but in reality, at least in continental Europe, this happens quite rarely and, when it does appear, usually in very small doses. One can point to one reason for this in the latent tension that exists between the critical potential of this kind of thinking and the functions of cultural mediation, which has traditionally served to sustain and affirm the system. Because of that tension, cultural mediation staff do not tend to see questions like these as lending themselves to their purposes. Moreover, cultural mediators may be discouraged or even expressly prohibited from broaching such questions by the directors of cultural institutions.

    The adoption of an alternative approach becomes more appealing when one realizes that (self-)criticisms and (self-)analysis can, to a certain degree, have a system-sustaining dimension. That is why, for instance, the Tate Galleries worked with education professionals to publish an "Art Gallery Handbook: A Resource for Teachers" (Tate Galleries 2006). Part of that publication discusses the institution's selection processes and the offices endowed with the power to interpret, examining and questioning their authority. The fact that the Tate collaborates with schools a great deal suggests that the gallery has an interest in having partners in collaboration (teachers) who are well informed and independent thinkers. Moreover inviting teachers to think for themselves may do more to encourage them to identify with the Tate than would attempts to "convert" them to art. However, unanswered questions remain: how far institutions will allow critique to go and at what point and in what form it begins to be perceived by the institution as a threat or loss of control.

→ *white* see Glossary

→ *system* see Glossary

→ *field* see Glossary
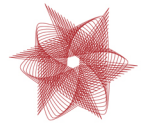
3.5 Instruction in artistic processes in businesses

Under the banner of "creativity", businesses have become aware that artistic processes hold potential for the development of their employees. Companies are less interested in developing the artistic expertise of their employees than in fostering certain personality traits commonly attributed to artists, or thought to be engendered through engagement with art. These traits might include a positive attitude toward open processes and searches, a high tolerance for error, the ability to shift perspectives or an independent and inventive way of approaching problems. There is currently a research project underway at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts titled → *Art in Company / Kunst und Wirtschaft*, which is devoted to the links between entrepreneurial activity and artistic activity.

Creaviva in Bern's Zentrum Paul Klee, a children's museum, offers workshops for management and employees under the banner "Art + Business". There are also freelance cultural mediators who offer formats using music or theatre or creative writing which are intended to help companies enhance teamwork processes or improve the way businesses present themselves.

The use of artistic processes as creativity techniques for businesses is the subject of heated debate. One has to question, for instance, the purported correlation between the strategies of artist, perceived as highly flexible sole-entrepreneurs, and the strategies that employees are supposed to develop to cope with increasing demands. The following → *statement* is taken from a Swiss site advertising a programme of this kind: "The means for teambuilding in modern companies and the ones [sic] in theatre barely differ from each other". Such claims would appear to cast doubt, albeit indirectly, on certain qualities associated with the arts, such as a spirit of → *openness of interpretation and processes* and → *relative autonomy*, and thus their critical potential. No one mentions that artistic approaches can give rise to processes and effects which are diametrically opposed to the logics of business (such as the refusal to perform a duty, questioning rules as a matter of principle, the need to isolate oneself or to slow down) or that artistic professionalism can consist of rejecting any and all intention to have an effect of any kind.

While arts mediation is not the primary objective in this type of pro-gramme (though artworks do play a role for illustrative and / or inspi-rational purposes), formats like these (like instruction in artistic techniques) nonetheless convey implicit knowledge about art or implicit concepts of art in the sense of a "tacit curriculum".

→ *art in company / Kunst und Wirtschaft* http://www.artincompany.ch [20.2.2012]

→ *statement* http://www.conray.ch/en/team-building/theatre-steady-go [01.4.2014]

→ *openness of interpretation and processes* see Glossary

→ *relative autonomy* see Glossary
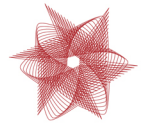
3.6 Instruction in artistic methods in social, educational and activist contexts

Artistic processes are taught in a variety of settings: educational, therapeutic and social, as well as in formal adult education programmes. Techniques of visualization, drama, dance, creative writing and acoustic and musical performance are used to structure learning processes, to uncover and depict conflicts or problems, to address issues collectively, to communicate with the outside world and for self-expression.

Artistic processes also play a role in the context of social and political activism, where they serve the aims of → *self-empowerment*, → *self-represen-tation* and → *intervention* in public debates. Analytic engagement with images and texts, quite often drawing on examples from the history or present day of the arts, is used to help people develop → *visual literacy*, an ability to read images critically. This provides a foundation upon which people can produce other images and texts of their own creation that differ from the depictions found in the mainstream media and the adver-tisements ubiquitous in public spaces: to design posters and flyers or create theatrical and musical performances in connection, e.g., with demon-strations or interventions in public spaces or in connection with existing images (cf. the alteration of commercial advertising → *culture jamming*, or performative forms of speech like → *radical cheerleading*).

Artists are actively involved in all of the areas mentioned above. Here again, we see the links and intersections between the production of art and cultural mediation. Like the teaching of artistic processes in business settings, these intersections are highly controversial. They too give rise to debate about the contradictions between promises of efficacy and artistic autonomy, about the role of artists and art in political and social contexts, and about the instrumentalization of forms developed by the arts in this context.
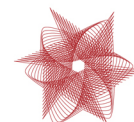
→ *self-empowerment* see Glossary

→ *self-representation* see Glossary

→ *intervention* see Glossary

→ *visual literacy* see Glossary

→ *culture jamming* http://www. orange-press.com/programm/ alle-titel/culture-jamming.html [16.3.2012]

→ *radical cheerleading* http:// kreativerstrassenprotest.twoday. net/topics/Radical+Cheerleading [16.3.2012]
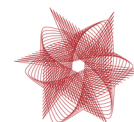
3.7 Learning methods as subject-matter

Whenever cultural mediation addresses the subject matters discussed in this chapter up to now, learning methods are also communicated, at least implicitly. We see this most clearly in connection with learning to play a musical instrument: techniques for practicing and developing interpretations constitute independent educational content in and of themselves in this context.

Cultural mediation focusing on works of art also transmits general and to no small degree normative knowledge about how to learn, though it often does so incidentally and without explicit acknowledgement. Participants learn what methods to use to read and interpret works, which aspects are important when interpreting them and which are not, how to approach the multiplicity of possible interpretations of artistic productions and what forms of expression, what vocabulary to use in describing them. It is not unusual for this to result in the creation of new forms of exclusion, which the cultural mediation was originally intended to prevent or even eliminate. One might see this when many specialized terms are used in director's talks or an exhibition tour. Or when phrases like "as you surely know" suggest to the audience that certain names or facts are generally known and that they should be familiar with them already from some other context.

Cultural mediators who aspire to a critical approach try to expose and question these norms in order to reinforce participants' autonomy and powers of judgement in engaging with art. A critical mediator aspires to a transparent transfer of knowledge, to analyze what is being taught and learned and what implicit content and unquestioned assumptions are being transported along the way.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES André Grieder:
Contemporary Art is Where the Magic Lies

A magician writes to me. He wants to be included in our programme. I saw him perform once. Between the main course and dessert he approached my table, made cards vanish and coins appear. I was impressed. I regret, I answer the magician, that we cannot include you in our programme. Our cultural mediation deals with the arts, not variety show acts. He responds: I do not do only magic, I do theatre and tell the stories of a dynasty of magicians.
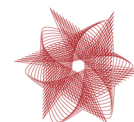
The magician performs at a primary school. I am also there. He entertains the pupils well and makes them admirers of his art. Days later I contact him again: we program chiefly contemporary associative theatre. Your piece does not fit in with our programme. I'm sorry, again, I must say no.

Why do we not include primarily traditional, canonized, appealing, entertaining, nice art? I mean art that lights up the eyes of children and offers young adults an escape from reality?

Modern art is subjective, complex, associative. It reflects our world. Young people are supposed to participate in our world: for instance, by seeing Junge Theater Basel's production of "Strange Days Indeed". In it, young people dance this theme: you have to scream if you want to be noticed today – in politics, in advertising, in the media, in ordinary life. The production does not give any answers, it only asks questions, calls for reflection and criticism. "Strange Days Indeed" is open, disturbing, surprising: contemporary art in fact. By engaging with it, young people construct their identities along the principle of otherness. Variety acts, on the other hand, tend to confirm what is already known; they can hardly be said to promote self-reflection or self-criticism.

We trust our taste and our experience and make subjective judgements about what constitutes art that is worth conveying to people. We endeavour to avoid instrumentalizing that art or turning it into an educational exercise, in order that it continue to be art. In our work we engage in self-criticism, self-reflection and flexibility. That is our attitude. It gives us positions from which to argue why we bring "Strange Days Indeed" to young people. The magician did not have sufficient theatrical presence, there were dramaturgic weaknesses in his piece and his technique let him down at key points. As a result, his magic suffered: making things disappear and reappear. Without those formal flaws, we might have offered the piece to the schools as modern magical art.

André Grieder *leads the section* → *Schule und Kultur in the Office of Elementary Education of the Department of Education of the Canton of Zurich.*

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Urs Rietmann: Art + Business

"One cannot tie a knot with one hand." (Mongolian proverb)

There are several ways to parse the title of Creaviva's format for business, teaching or administrative teams. You can make art your business. Managing a business responsibly, collectively and in a way designed to promote solidarity is a challenging task.

When we consult with people who are interested in our programme, we – who in no way consider ourselves to be experts in organizational development or supervision – explicitly describe its features. We are not selling Creaviva as a centre for the promotion of personality traits that are attributed to artists or understood to be engendered through engagement with art. Nor are our workshops intended to analyze the strategies of artists as independent entrepreneurs either, although that would be interesting.

We are interested in creating a framework that permits a team to break out of pre-existing patterns and habits for a few hours by engaging in creative workshop activities. In this context, art is an excellent means to the stated end to the extent that immediate exposure to art in a museum generates a productive sense of disorientation and a willingness to let oneself become involved which would be almost impossible to attain in a more familiar setting. The fact that the people who work in Creaviva are primarily artists with a talent for teaching rather than educators with an affinity for art enhances this aspect.

We have defined a range of missions for which we think our offering is appropriate. They encompass primarily visualization (e.g. of a company's vision), reinforcement (e.g. of a core message), promotion of team spirit and creative teamwork within an existing or newly formed team.

We try to avoid articulating in greater detail the effects our workshops are intended to produce. One of the primary aims of our practice-oriented cultural mediation is to allow participants the opportunity to experience their own abilities. This does not mean that we try to convince our guests that they are artists. The collective work that they take home at the end of a team workshop does have a discipline-specific value though, to the extent that it encourages an appreciation for art and respect for artistic endeavour.

Urs Rietmann *is the Director of the Creaviva Museum for Children in Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern.*
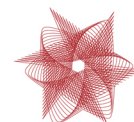
CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Nathalie Tacchella:
Appeal for Catalytic Cultural Mediation

When Beuys said that "everyone is an artist", he was not talking about artistic production or profession: he was thinking of the potential – a potential of thought and action and an intimate space of freedom – which individuals either leave dormant or cultivate. Cultural mediation interests me when it does not shield those potentials from one another and lets art be what it is: an open dialogue between human beings.

By positioning itself between art, artistic practice and works, or between artists and the public, cultural mediation isolates the object from "its" audience and renders intimacy between the person and the art impossible. Conceived after the work itself, but designed and put in place before the public has access to it, cultural mediation affirms its own necessity at a time when that necessity cannot really exist, regardless of how good or well-intended the offering is. What I mean by that is that art is not an isolated phenomenon: it is an integral component of the world of our imagination and social reality.

Arts mediation should not exist: but it does for most of the works preserved or produced in the closed spaces of theatres, museums and concert halls. And this because these works were appropriated by the dominant culture – a culture which will go to any lengths to open itself to an audience as wide as possible, lest it become a closed circle, spinning into oblivion.

The dominant discourse imposes models which inhibit, which level knowledge and skills. Cultural mediation therefore reconstructs a relation-ship between the individual and art, but this relationship is truncated – one could almost say rigged. There is a genuine danger that cultural mediation could lend support to the view that art is inaccessible by nature and can be rendered accessible only through the efforts of competent mediators.

Cultural mediation also interests me when it tries not to neutralize the audience or prevent dialogue between human beings, no matter what its quality may be.

Cultural mediation interests me when it acts as a catalyst, something which "changes neither the direction in which a transformation unfolds nor the composition of the system in its final phase". In my practice, I try to develop cultural mediation which is not an end in itself, but instead permits the renewal of direct dialogue among the artist, the artist's actions, the work and the audience.

Nathalie Tacchella *is a choreographer and dance mediator. She directs the dance troupe* → estuaire *in Geneva and is a co-founder of and is jointly responsible for Geneva-based theatre* → Galpon. *She also teaches contemporary dance at Atelier Danse Manon Hotte.*

→ *estuaire* http://www.estuaire.ch [25.1.2013]

→ *Galpon* http://www.galpon.ch [25.1.2013]
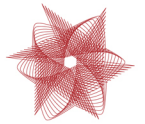
CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Cultural Mediation Working Group, Pro Helvetia: What is the Conveyed? Sociocultural Expertise in Cultural Mediation

At the focus of the Pro Helvetia's promotion of cultural mediation are the various artistic disciplines, their works, projects, techniques and institutions. However, cultural mediation activities also have ties to another sphere which frequently overlaps with cultural mediation in its vocabulary and practices: the sociocultural sphere.

Sociocultural projects and sociocultural animation do sometimes engage directly with art. When they do so though, they tend to be directed more towards social and societal aspects of engagement with art, and thus their aims differ from those pursued by Pro Helvetia in its promotion of arts mediation. Sociocultural projects and arts mediation can frequently overlap to a certain extent.

When carrying out cultural mediation projects which are based on interactive and participative approaches, familiarity with sociocultural processes can be crucial for a project's success. Is the target group being addressed in a way that is appropriate for that group? Is the project set up as a partnership? Do the mediators have the relevant knowledge and experience? Viewed in this way, sociocultural expertise is revealed as an important feature bearing on the quality of any cultural mediation project.

Pro Helvetia's interdisciplinary Cultural Mediation Working Group *was responsible for developing the promotion criteria within the framework of the Arts and Audiences Programme.*
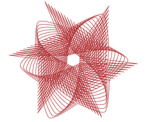
FOR READING AT LEISURE Working in a Field of Tensions 3:
Tacit Learning Objective in Cultural Mediation

"Once struggled for, the 'right to education' has become a lifelong duty to educate oneself requiring that learners be flexible and marketable, on pain of their demise" (→ *Merkens 2002*)

Text 2.RL revealed the necessity to examine the unspoken call for invitees to become more similar to inviters from a hegemony-critical perspective in the context of addressing invitations to cultural mediation. In this section, this issue will be explored and illustrated with respect to the content of cultural mediation. We will examine tacit teaching content and learning objectives in cultural mediation, taking "lifelong learning" as our example.

In 2010, the German Museums Association released → *Museen und lebenslanges Lernen*, the German translation, in an expanded edition, of a European handbook entitled "Lifelong Learning in Museums", which was the result of an EU-funded project of the same name.[1] The handbook defines "lifelong learning" as informal learning (i.e. learning not-leading to a qualification that takes place in social settings) and "highlights the importance and significance of learning throughout life". In addition to providing suggestions relating to adult education practices in museums, the handbook provides a considerable amount of information about historical and current-day power relationships at work in museums and galleries which influence the educational activities there. In this context, the handbook explicitly addresses the issue of racism, one of the few publications of this type to do so (Gibbs et al. 2007, p. 83). It calls on institutions to ensure that "the diversity of staff matches the diversity of the audience the museum wishes to attract" (Gibbs et al. 2007, p. 17). It emphasizes the demand for contemporary museum work to consciously engage with all audiences, and particularly participants in education projects, on an equal footing and to consider the effects of inequalities in that context. It cites the mediator and philosopher Paulo Freire (Freire 1974) as having been influential for the leading learning concepts in today's museum mediation. With these aspects in mind, one could say that the handbook is informed by the idea of cultural mediation as a critical practice. However, it makes no mention of the critiques articulated over the past two decades of the book's guiding theme, the concept of lifelong learning itself and the emphasis on the importance of → *soft skills* equated with it. The authors, both museum consultancy professionals, describe the potential of museums in this respect as they see it: "Museums can be ideal places for promoting 'informal learning'. Visitors may leave the museum knowing more than when they arrived: knowledge, understanding, insight or inspiration that helps to make a *positive difference* to their lives" (Gibbs et al. 2007, p. 13, italics added). Although this handbook and other similar publications do identify the radical diversity of
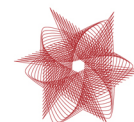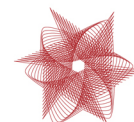
learners as offering a special potential in adult education, they adopt uncritically the assumptions that everyone sees a willingness to engage in "lifelong learning" as equally desirable and that everyone sees a visit to the museum as an opportunity for self development aimed at optimizing their capacities. This blind spot seems to be less a coincidence than a symptom of a literally "tacit" learning objective for cultural mediation: the development of a → *habitus* characteristic of "homo flexibilis" (Sennett 1998), adaptive people who can continually reinvent themselves and survive in a post-industrial economy "geared for short-term relationships and rapid change" (→ *Ribolits 2006*, p. 121) without becoming a burden to the collective. The development of the increasing flexibility in the organization and production of work required by the shift from a Fordist to a → *post-Fordist* mode of production causes the "willingness to build and optimize one's own work capacity (permanently)" to become an "essential prerequisite for participation in society, and thus the possibility of surviving in post-Fordist capitalism" (Atzmüller 2011). The expansion of the concept of "lifelong learning" can be traced back over the past forty years: from the bottom-up demand articulated in the 1970s to be allowed to learn throughout one's lifetime (in the sense of fair access to educational resources) through the idea anchored in society since the 1990s that individuals are able to learn throughout their lives (in the sense of a more complex understanding of learning biographies which relativizes the idea of linear occupation-specific qualification processes and development stages, each building on the last) through to the present-day imperative which insists that one keep learning through one's life in order to stay competitive and avoid becoming an "education loser" (Quenzel, Hurrelmann 2010). All three concepts now coexist and intertwine. This explains to some extent the positive approach articulated in "Lifelong Learning in Museums". Increasingly, responsibility to meet the requirement of lifelong learning is being shifted to the individual as the "enterprising self" (Bröckling 2007).[2] To reject this way of seeing oneself would appear not to be a socially acceptable option: it would be seen as actively refusing to plan what, in the current situation, the majority sees as a "successful" life. The fact that soft skills, i.e. personality traits and personal attitudes, are playing an ever larger role in the formulation of learning objectives and educational endeavours is simply a logical extension of this outlook. Our example, Lifelong Learning in Museums, describes the outcomes one could expect from informal learning processes for adults in museums.[3] It lists the obvious learning progress relating to specific topics, such as "increased knowledge of specific subjects", "enhanced understanding of specific ideas and concepts" or "improved technical and other skills". However, the vast majority of the potential learning results it provides aim at changing the personal sensibilities and attitudes of the learners: at "increased self-confidence", "personal development", "change in attitudes or values", "inspiration and creativity", "social interaction and communication",

→ *habitus* see Glossary

→ *Ribolits 2006* http://homepage.univie.ac.at/erich.ribolits/php/web/archive [22.2.2013];
see Resource Pool MFV0310.pdf

→ *post-Fordist* see Glossary

→ *Sertl 2007* http://homepage.
univie.ac.at/michael.sertl/
OffenesLernen.pdf [21.2.2013];
see Resource Pool MFV0308.pdf

→ *cognitive capitalism* see Glossary

→ *Lazzarato 2007* http://eipcp.net/
transversal/0207/lazzarato/en
[12.2.2014]

"community empowerment", "development of identity", right through to "improved health and well-being" (Gibbs et al. 2007,p. 34). With this shift of focus, every museum-goer becomes a therapy subject and the museum becomes a therapeutic facility, since the process of optimizing the various traits is a never-ending one. Teaching participants ways to "use individual potentials creatively" appears to be a more important objective than engaging with the content of an exhibition. (→ *Sertl 2007*, p. 9). Since wellbeing, self-confidence, social and communicative behaviours and values are aspects which could be associated with the private sphere, one might consider their observation and assessment on the part of employees of a cultural institution as trespassing in that sphere. Nonetheless, it is stated, in a tone leaving virtually no room for doubt, that cultural mediation in the context of lifelong learning is intended to increase the individual's willing-ness to learn more.

It is no accident that cultural mediation is considered to have special potential in this context. In the 19th century, the age of industrial capitalism, the image of the artist was still one which embodied the opposite of what the bourgeois-style entrepreneurs represented. This is no longer the case today though, in our era of → *cognitive capitalism*. Now there are many points where the qualities ascribed to artists and those of the ideal manager intersect: "autonomy, spontaneity, mobility…, openness…, conviviality, multitasking… availability, creativity, visionary intuition networking" (Boltanski, Chiapello 2004, p. 97.). Accordingly, artists and "creatives" are well suited as role models for the "enterprising self" (Loacker 2010). They are thought to have an ability to improvise (including in dealing with insecurity and poverty), to focus on problem-solving, be curious, optimis-tic and, above all, able to act on their own initiative. And indeed, continuous personal development and change do figure in the self-concept of many artists (Loacker 2010, p. 401). The basic problem associated with cultural mediation's unsceptical adoption of the task of encouraging lifelong learning as an internalized value is that doing so involuntary encourages the creation or at least the legitimating of inequality. Instead of responding to economic deregulation and rising social insecurity with redistribution, we grant them legitimacy by insisting that individuals be creative and flexible and that they continue to invest in their own human capital throughout their lives.

On a pragmatic level, it should be said that the happily self-governing artist as role model for present-day employment is purely a fictional con-struct. The majority of artists in Europe face relatively difficult economic conditions. Many of them live on half (or less) of what is officially considered a living wage and do so with either inadequate or no provisions for illness, disability or old age (→ *Lazzarato 2007*). This situation is by no means welcomed by all artists, nor have they integrated it into their own concept of an artist by choice. On the contrary, some are engaging in organized
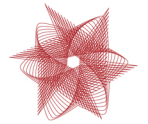
resistance. Adaptation is not the only way in which curiosity and a willing-ness to reinvent oneself manifest themselves: they can also encourage inventive forms of political intervention (Lazzarato 2007). I cite just two of the many such examples here: → *GlobalProject / Coordination des intermit-tents et précaires d'Île de-France*, an organization founded in 2003 which is pushing for changes in the employment conditions of people who work in stage productions and the audio-visual sector, and the "Carrotworkers' Collective" in England, in which → *precarious* cultural workers have de-liberately aligned themselves with other underpaid and poorly secured occupational groups, for instance in the nursing, cleaning and food-service sectors.

In recent years, cultural mediation has also come up in discussions about precarious employment conditions. In her April 2010 article "Spanners in the Spectacle: Radical Research at the Frontline" (→ *Graham 2010*), arts mediator, artist and activist Janna Graham reported on the strikes and surveys in which the mediators (arts educators) at the Venice Biennale joined forces with S.aL.E. Docks and the project housed within it, → *Pirate Bay*, which itself was associated with the Biennale, to protest the conditions of their employment. S.a.L.E. Docks describes itself as "a permanent laboratory of piracy in the lagoon, a self managed situation active since 2007 in the struggle against all kind[s] of privatization and exploitation of knowledge and creativity." Still, resistance activities remain fairly rare in the field of cultural mediation. Workers employed in cultural mediation (very often self-taught artists) also embody the soft skills so highly acclaimed in post-Fordism: they see themselves, by virtue of their occupation, as socially competent, good team players and good networ-kers, as inventive in coping with limited resources, as curious and ready to learn new things. Analogous to the artist figure as a role model, cultural mediation is associated with the promise to free up the creative potential of each individual, motivated to no small degree by the interest of economies "demanding workforces that are creative flexible and adaptable" (→ *UNESCO 2010, Road Map* p. 5).[4] And the majority of arts mediators find themselves in precarious employment relationships. Yet they are – perhaps to an even greater degree than artists – (still) a group with a relatively homogeneous social background. Most of them come from the "new middle classes" (→ *Sertl 2008*), they are → *knowledge workers*. In their self-image, the idea of lifelong learning tends to be associated with words like "entitled to" and "can" rather than "must". Seen from this angle, their desire to encourage a willingness to keep on learning among the people who participate in their offerings is also the consequence of an idea of "equality" which is para-doxical. Cultural mediators' aim in one way is to share privileges, create a level playing field in connection to access to the educational resource which is culture. At the same time though, it is to change "the others", to make them more similar to themselves: to convince them that the mediators' ideals

→ *GlobalProject / Coordination des intermittents et précaires d'Île de-France* http://www.cip-idf.org [7.9.2012]

→ *precarious* see Glossary
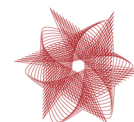
→ *Graham 2010* http://www.faqs. org/periodicals/201004/ 2010214291.html [10.10.2012]; see Resource PoolMFV0303.pdf

→ *Pirate Bay* http://embassyof piracy.org/2009/05/thanks-to-sale-we-have-physical-space-in-venice [7.9.2012]; see Resource Pool MFV0304.pdf

→ *UNESCO 2010, Road Map* http:// www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/ MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/ Seoul_Agenda_EN.pdf [22.2.2013]; see Resource Pool MFV0305.pdf

→ *Sertl 2008* http://homepage. univie.ac.at/michael.sertl/ IndividualisierungIDE.pdf [21.2.2013]; see Resource Pool MFV0306.pdf

→ *knowledge workers* see Glossary

of the learning individual are the right ones. For the majority of cultural mediators, then, a critical distancing from the idea of lifelong learning would also entail distancing themselves from their own values and standards, and even from the tenets justifying their own activities. This very ability to distance oneself from oneself, though, is the feature which points to educational professionalism.

Unsurprisingly, there is no easy way out of this paradox (comparable with the paradox of recognition discussed in Text 2.RL). It is not a coincidence that the people who produce the well-founded critiques of lifelong learning and related concepts presented above have tended to be individuals for whom access to educational resources and knowledge about how to learn are givens. Once again, stopping the attempt to use cultural mediation to engender a joy in learning and encourage personal development cannot be the answer. Doing so would only help bolster positions of privilege. The adoption, in the spirit of educational reflexivity, of a sceptical, challenging attitude towards what appear to be wholly positive concepts, such as lifelong learning, would probably result in transformed and transforming practices in cultural mediation. Such an attitude would bar practices aimed at engendering enthusiasm for something in participants or influencing people's personal development "for their own good", in the sense of a tacit curriculum. Instead, instances of critical distancing would themselves become the subject matter of the education. Perhaps materials such as the → *alternative curriculum* developed by the Carrotworkers' Collective for precariously employed cultural mediators, could be used to launch discussions in cultural mediation settings about what being allowed to / able to / compelled to learn means for the participants. One learning objective for cultural mediation might be to replace the demand for continuous, lifelong self-optimization in the name of competition with a concept of life-extending learning which considers the community as a whole and rejects the possibility of losers.

Whichever attitude one chooses to take – it should be clear from the discussion thus far that cultural mediators need to take a position on which objectives they are pursuing in their work and to make those objectives as transparent as possible to participants – always assuming that one is committed to encountering the participants on an equal footing, as the authors of the handbook "Lifelong Learning in Museums" aspire to do.

→ *alternative curriculum* http://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/pwb_alternative-curriculum.pdf [14.10.2012]; see Resource Pool MFV0307.pdf

1   The handbook was a product of the two-year Lifelong Museum Learning (LLML) project funded by the European Commission, supported under the Socrates Grundtvig Programmes from October 2004 to December 2006.
2   The increasing shift of techniques of governmentality into self-governing capacities of the individual now form an extensive research field within the social sciences: governmentality studies.
3   In providing this list, the authors refer to the "generic learning outcomes" designed by Eilean Hooper Greenhill, a matrix intended to identify learning results from a museum visit; → http://www.inspiringlearning.com/toolstemplates/genericlearning/index.html [5.9.2012] and Hooper Greenhill 2007 → see Text 7.RL
4   "21st Century societies are increasingly demanding workforces that are creative, flexible,
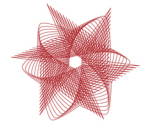
adaptable and innovative and education systems need to evolve with these shifting conditions. Arts Education equips learners with these skills […]" (UNESCO 2010).

Literature and Links

Literature:

– Atzmüller, Roland: "Die Krise lernen – Neuzusammensetzung des Arbeitsvermögens im postfordistischen Kapitalismus", in: Sandoval, Marisol, et al.: Bildung. MACHT. Gesellschaft, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2011, pp. 117 – 136
– Boltanski, Luc; Chiapello Ève: The New Spirit of Capitalism, G. Elliot (trans.), London: VERSO, 2004.
– Bröckling, Ulrich: Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007
→Deutscher Museumsbund, Berlin (Pub.): Museen und Lebenslanges Lernen – Ein europäisches Handbuch, Berlin: Deutscher Museumsbund, 2010; http://www.museumsbund.de/fileadmin/geschaefts/dokumente/Leitfaeden_und_anderes/LLL_Handbuch_2010.pdf [7.9.2012], see Resource Pool MFV0301.pdf (expanded German edition of Gibbs 2007)
– Freire, Paulo: Erziehung als Praxis der Freiheit, Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1974
– Gibbs, Kirsten (eds.): Lifelong Learning in Museums – A European Handbook, Ferrara: Edisai, 2007
→Graham, Janna: "Spanners in the Spectacle. Radical Research at the Frontline", in: Fuse Magazine, Spring 2010; http://www.faqs.org/periodicals/201004/2010214291.html [10.10.2012], see Resource Pool MFV0303.pdf
– Hooper Greenhill, Eilean: Museums and Education. Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance, New York: Routledge, 2007
→Lazzarato, Maurizio: "Die Missgeschicke der 'Künstlerkritik' und der kulturellen Beschäftigung", in: transversal - eipcp multilingual webjournal, 2007; http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/lazzarato/de [30.10.2012], see Resource Pool MFV0302.pdf
– Loacker, Bernadette: Kreativ prekär. Künstlerische Arbeit und Subjektivität im Postfordismus, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010
→Merkens, Andreas: "Neoliberalismus, passive Revolution und Umbau des Bildungswesens. Zur Hegemonie postfordistischer Bildung", in: Meyer-Siebert, Jutta, et al. (Eds.): Die Unruhe des Denkens nutzen. Emanzipatorische Standpunkte im Neoliberalismus, Hamburg: Argument, 2002, pp. 171 – 182; http://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/sozialoekono-mie/zoess/Neoliberalismus__passive_Revolution_und_Umbau_des_Bildungswe.pdf [21.2.2013], see Resource Pool MFV0309.pdf
– Quenzel, Gudrun; Hurrelmann, Klaus (Eds.): Bildungsverlierer. Neue Ungleichheiten, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011
→Ribolits, Erich: "Flexibilität", in: Dzierzbicka, Angnieszka; Schirlbauer, Alfred (Eds.): Pädagogisches Glossar der Gegenwart, Vienna: Löcker-Verlag, 2006, pp. 120 – 127; http://homepage.univie.ac.at/erich.ribolits/php/web/archive [21.2.2013], see Resource Pool MFV0310.pdf
– Sennett, Richard: Der flexible Mensch. Die Kultur des neuen Kapitalismus, Berlin: Berlin-Verlag, 1998
→Sertl, Michael: "Offene Lernformen bevorzugen einseitig Mittelschichtkinder! Eine Warnung im Geiste von Basil Bernstein", in: Heinrich, Martin; Prexl-Krausz, Ulrike (Eds.): Eigene Lernwege – Quo vadis? Eine Spurensuche nach "neuen Lernfomen" in Schulpraxis und LehrerInnenbildung, Vienna / Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2007, pp. 79 – 97; http://homepage.univie.ac.at/michael.sertl/OffenesLernen.pdf [21.2.2013], see Resource Pool MFV0308.pdf
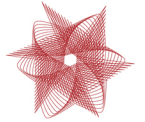
→ Sertl, Michael: "Individualisierung als Imperativ? Soziologische Skizzen zur Individualisie-
rung des Unterrichts", in: IDE 3 / 2008, pp. 7 – 16, Innsbruck: StudienVerlag;
http://homepage.univie.ac.at/michael.sertl/IndividualisierungIDE.pdf [21.2.2013], see
Resource Pool MFV0306.pdf
→ UNESCO (pub.): "Seoul Agenda. Goals for the Development of Arts Education", Seoul, 2010;
Roadmap: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/
Seoul_Agenda_EN.pdf [22.2.2013]; see Resource Pool MFV0305.pdf

Links:

→ Carrotworkers' Collective, Training for Exploitation? Towards an alternative curriculum:
http://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/pwb_alternative-curriculum.pdf
[14.10.2012]
→ Coordination des intermittents et précaires d'Île-de-France, Paris: http://www.cip-idf.org
[7.9.2012]
→ Pirate Bay: http://embassyofpiracy.org/2009/05/thanks-to-sale-we-have-physical-space-
in-venice [7.9.2012]
→ UNESCO, World Conference on Art Education, Lisbon 2006 / Seoul 2010: http://portal.
unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30335&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.
html [30.4.2012]