



## 5.2 Reproductive function of cultural mediation

Another commonly encountered function of cultural mediation is that of developing the “audiences of tomorrow” through activities with children and young people or by exposing people to the arts who would have sought such exposure on their own initiative, perhaps because their leisure activities are set in locations not within cultural institutions. Cultural institutions are seen as institutions which grant the public access to valuable cultural goods. These goods are not equally accessible to all: even when admission is free or very inexpensive, not all members of a society have an equal sense that the institution’s offerings are intended for them – one hears historically or socially-based exclusion mechanisms or “symbolic obstacles” spoken of in this context. Against this backdrop, the purpose of cultural mediation’s reproductive function is to provide access to these goods to the broadest possible range of audiences. Cultural mediation programmes whose function is primarily reproductive tend to be designed by cultural mediators with pedagogic experience. Examples of projects falling into this category are workshops for school classes and advanced training offerings for teaching staff, programmes for children and families and event-oriented activities with high audience figures such as museums at night events or museum days, concert picnics or the offerings for children and young adults in the Swiss dance festival → *Steps*. We use the term reproductive in such contexts because these projects are motivated to no small degree by the institution’s desire to ensure its own future by creating new users and also because they are associated with activities of caring and providing for.

→ *Steps dance festival* <http://www.steps.ch> [21.3.2012]

The problematic aspect of this function of cultural mediation is that in its attempts to draw in new audience groups the focus is primarily on those who are absent – the people who fail to grasp how good for them the culture the institutions offer might be. Thus this function is characterized by efforts to persuade and induce.

It is rare for institutions to shift their focus to their own content, range of offerings or rules of conduct. Yet these should be scrutinized, because they too contribute enormously to audiences development.