



6.6 Legitimization: Cultural mediation as means to actively contribute to shaping the arts and their institutions

This strategy of legitimization focuses on the potential for cultural mediation and its participants to actively influence the design of programmes, and the contents and practices of cultural institutions. Since it encourages and facilitates change, this strategy goes beyond the identification of a necessity for inclusion and participation: it aims at → *institutional change*. For instance, the dramaturge, director and author Rustom Bharucha suggests that cultural institutions inherited their self-image from the bourgeoisie / civil society. The rapid changes in the world outside the institutions, he says, have given rise to new notions about the public and politics and to new forms and practices of cultural representation that challenge and transcend those inherited bourgeois concepts. Cultural institutions therefore find themselves threatened with a decrease in their importance. Bharucha believes that it would therefore be prudent for institutions to do more to open themselves to partnerships with other social domains, individuals and organizations. The institutions should accept influence and challenges from other perspectives. This is not solely a question of “access... [to the institution, CM], but the right to interrogate its assumed privileges and reading of history. It is my plea that instead of shutting ourselves up in the box – whether it is the ‘black box’ of theatre, or the ultra-white, air-conditioned, dust-free box of the museum – that we should open ourselves to those seemingly disruptive energies ‘beyond the box’ that can enable us to forge new links between the public and the private, the civil and the political” (Bharucha, 2000). Thus this line of argument would have cultural mediation actively contribute to the development of the institutions as well as fulfil the democratic aspirations of participation in shaping the culture.

→ *institutional change* see Text 2.4

No relevant criticisms of this argumentation have yet been formulated, other than the cautions (in Text 6.3) regarding populist tendencies. This may be because, as a relatively new phenomenon, it has rarely had an impact on actual practices.