

7.5 Cultural mediation as a research field

After remaining primarily a field of practice for over a century, cultural mediation has become a significant field of research and theoretical work in the last 15 years. The rapid proliferation of graduate programmes in the field testifies to this; other indications in the German-speaking regions are the establishment of research institutes in universities, such as the Institute for Art Education (IAE) at Zurich University of the Arts, and private cultural mediation institutions which conduct research, such as Vienna's → *Educult*. In recent years, platforms have been established for individuals and institutions active in research: the Art Education Research Network in Switzerland and the network → *Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* in Germany. In the French-speaking region, one can point to the Master's programme Recherche Histoire, esthétique et sociologie de médiation culturelle at the → *Médiation Culturelle* department of Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, which is conducting research in the field.

Thus far, the majority of the research into cultural mediation has been of an evaluative character. It is aimed primarily at demonstrating the effects of cultural mediation on participants (see, e. g., the research on transfer effects in the project → *Jedem Kind ein Instrument* [An instrument for every child]) (Rittelmeyer 2010). The motivation for funding and initiating cultural mediation is largely based on the desire for non-art-related transfer effects (such as increased willingness to perform or social cohesion), as the text in “6. Cultural mediation: Why (not)?” discusses. Research is commissioned in order to produce evidence of such transfer effects. This places researchers in a dilemma: on the one hand, if their work is to deserve the name of research, it must be unbiased. On the other hand, the future of the commissioning institution may depend on finding evidence for effects. The field of tensions is particularly evident in the debate about the validity of → *studies* conducted under these conditions.

However, there is also a growing amount of research which does not focus on effects but instead investigates that approach critically. For instance, there are studies which attempt to identify what various actors and organizations consider to be positive effects and then analyze what lies behind those views. There is also research exploring the effects of a funding policy aiming primarily at transfer effects (→ *Hoogen 2010*). Other studies analyse the key concepts of cultural mediation, such as “participation” (→ *Hope 2011*).

→ *Educult* <http://www.educult.at/forschung> [1.5.2012]

→ *Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de> [1.5.2012]

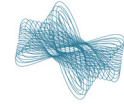
→ *Médiation Culturelle* http://www.univ-paris3.fr/MHSMEDC/0/fiche___formation [11.6.2012]

→ *Jedem Kind ein Instrument* <http://www.jeki-forschungsprogramm.de/forschungsprojekte/sigrun/sigrun-transfer> [1.5.2012]

→ *studies* see Texts in 6. Cultural Mediation: Why (not)?

→ *Hoogen 2010* <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/ppn/327486783> [24.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE070501.pdf

→ *Hope 2011* <http://www.sophiehope.org.uk> [1.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE0705.pdf



One important methodological approach is practice-led research, the purpose of which is to improve cultural mediation on the basis of theory and through analyses performed jointly with practitioners (for an example see the 2009–2011 project “Kunstvermittlung in Transformation” [Cultural Mediation in Transformation] conducted by a coalition of four Swiss universities of the arts and five museums (Settele 2012)).

Other scholarly disciplines with different specializations have also begun to engage in research on cultural mediation. Among them (often in combination) are approaches anchored in the history of education, didactics, the neurosciences, concept-theory and philosophy, art and sociology and other disciplines.