

9.1 Guiding questions for use in the documentation of cultural mediation

The introduction to this section might create the impression that a coherent and appropriate documentation of cultural mediation is nearly impossible given the variety of interests held by the various stakeholders. In the following we will provide a set of questions intended to guide and encourage a reflective approach to this complexity.

Before preparing materials that are intended to present a project, one should ask oneself about the influence the people or organizations commissioning them have. Does this influence necessitate conformance with a specific style of language, or might one deliberately omit the expected jargon, to offer a compelling contrast? Should certain details be skipped over in the presentation, or is transparency, even with respect to the project's problematic aspects, desired?

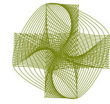
To make it easier for readers to get a sense of the project as a whole, certain central facts should be spelled out: What was done, how and by whom – and why? Who was involved? Where and when did the project take place? How long did it last and what phases were involved? How much did it cost and who paid for it?

It is also important to provide information about the conceptual basis of the project, not least because the position of the project's authors should be documented: Which theoretical approaches, cultural and educational policy requirements or good practice examples provided a rationale for the project? Which opened up points of criticism? Why was the project necessary and relevant today? What criteria are being applied to assess its quality?

In addition, the presentation should include a discussion of both the objectives and the results of the project. Did the objectives change over time? If yes, why? Were there any unplanned outcomes? Were the anticipated outcomes achieved?

Since cultural mediation is always about learning, the learning concepts underlying the project should also be discussed. What ideas about learning underlie the concept? What methods were used? Did, for instance, artistic approaches play a role at the methodological level?

One should bear in mind that the images used to document a cultural mediation project (and often used to announce future projects as well) are frequently recorded during the process. Who is responsible for documentation during each project phase should be clarified in advance. Participants or outsiders can serve as documenters. Usually, though, documentation tasks are done by the cultural mediators themselves. This sometimes causes confusion about roles and can lead to overwork, to the detriment of the documentation. There are pros and cons associated with every choice in this regard. An outsider might disturb the process, while pictures created



by participants will reflect their perspectives, not necessarily the one needed by the institution (and vice versa).

At this point one should also consider what type of professionalism one wants the documentation to have. Should documentation present the perspectives of the participants and reflect their desires regarding its design, or should it transform the project into a glossy brochure?

Author's rights are another question which must always be clarified: who holds the copyrights for photographs taken, and is the consent of people in photographic material required for its reproduction? Parental consent is always required if the subjects are minors. However both ethical considerations and the aspiration to transparency require that participants of any age always be in agreement with the use of their images and the way they relate to the accompanying text.