

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL MEDIATION: WHAT PROFESSIONAL PROFILE?

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of a new professional group to meet the challenges posed by the changing role and place of artists and arts in current societies, as well as the relationship between the public(s) and the various artistic and cultural manifestations, has prompted us to try to (a) understand how some potential employers, trainers and graduates see the role of the artistic and cultural mediator; (b) identify the definition(s) they propose of artistic and cultural mediation; and (c) identify the knowledge and skills they consider necessary for this professional exercise. A brief literature review (Arnaud, 2018; Henry, 2014; Lussier, 2015; Mörsch & Holland, 2012) contributes to a better definition of the concept of artistic and cultural mediation that reconciles the rationales of the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy, highlighting, among other things, the purposes that can be pursued. Drawing on a specific context of the degree in artistic and cultural mediation of the Lisbon School of Education, graduates, teachers and cooperating professionals who supervise the trainees of this degree were engaged in focus groups. The respondents provide definitions of artistic and cultural mediation with educational, social, cultural, investigative, political and economic dimensions, a wide range of knowledge and skills necessary for an intervention in this area, and various roles played. We conclude with the importance of pursuing research to better circumscribe a domain of specific knowledge and the field of intervention as conceptual for artistic and cultural mediation.

KEYWORDS

artistic and cultural mediation, professional profile, citizenship,
cultural democracy, democratisation of culture

MEDIAÇÃO ARTÍSTICA E CULTURAL: QUE PERFIL PROFISSIONAL?

RESUMO

A emergência de um novo grupo profissional para responder aos desafios colocados pela mudança do papel e do lugar dos artistas e das artes nas sociedades atuais, bem como da relação entre o(s) público(s) e as diversas manifestações artísticas e culturais, levou-nos a tentar (a) compreender como alguns potenciais empregadores, formadores e graduados veem

o papel do mediador artístico e cultural; (b) identificar a(s) definição(ões) que propõe(m) de mediação artística e cultural; e (c) identificar os conhecimentos e competências que consideram necessários para este exercício profissional. Uma breve revisão da literatura (Arnaud, 2018; Henry, 2014; Lussier, 2015; Mörsch & Holland, 2012) traz contribuições para uma melhor definição do conceito de mediação artística e cultural que concilia as lógicas da democratização da cultura e da democracia cultural, destacando, entre outras coisas, as finalidades que podem ser prosseguidas. Ancorado num contexto específico da licenciatura em mediação artística e cultural da Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa, foram realizados grupos de discussão com diplomados, docentes e profissionais cooperantes que enquadram os estagiários desta licenciatura. Os inquiridos apresentam definições da mediação artística e cultural com dimensões educativa, social, cultural, investigativa, política e económica e um largo conjunto de conhecimentos e competências necessários para uma intervenção nessa área assim como uma multiplicidade de funções exercidas. Concluímos com a importância de continuar a investigação no sentido de melhor circunscrever um domínio de conhecimento específico e o campo de intervenção como conceptual para a mediação artística e cultural.

KEYWORDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role and place of artists and arts in today's societies and the relationship between the audience(s) and the various artistic and cultural manifestations are changing. To meet the need for new professionals skilled in developing a new role in artistic and cultural mediation, the Lisbon School of Education launched, in 2016, the degree in artistic and cultural mediation (DACM) at the intersection of the arts and social sciences.

This degree is essentially inspired by the French concept of "cultural mediation", which combines the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy. It aims to train professionals to build relationships between cultural producers, all professionals in the field of arts, artists and citizens who form the so-called "audiences" to develop working strategies in hybrid territories that combine distinct but complementary characteristics, such as education, programming, creative and artistic processes.

Since some graduates are integrated into the labour market, and the professional category of cultural mediator does not yet exist in Portugal, it is important to (a) understand how some potential employers, trainers and graduates see the role of the artistic and cultural mediator; (b) identify the definition(s) they give to artistic and cultural mediation; and (c) identify the knowledge and skills they deem required for this professional practice.

To achieve the objectives previously mentioned, in the first part of this article, a brief literature review brings contributions to a better definition of the concept of artistic and cultural mediation, highlighting, among other things, the conditions of its emergence and the purposes that can be targeted. To contextualise the study, we present the DACM focusing on how it has materialised the theoretical principles that sustain it.

An empirical section outlines the methods followed and the results of an exploratory study aimed at collecting the representations of teachers, institutional partners and some graduates who invested in the creation of the Associação Portuguesa de Mediação Artística e Cultural (Portuguese Association of Artistic and Cultural Mediation).

At this research stage, it is a descriptive work without any prescriptive or normative vein.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL MEDIATION

To better understand the emergence of the concept and the practices of artistic and cultural mediation, we have to remember those of democratisation of culture and cultural democracy. The first in our text, and the chronological order, refers to cultural policies that tried to respond to a design which gained much relevance in the discourses in the first half of the 20th century. Furthermore, they can be found in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (1976), specifically in Article 43: “the State promotes the democratisation of culture, encouraging and ensuring the access of all citizens to cultural fruition and creation”. The democratisation of culture is based on the assumption that there are “works” of universal value to which everyone should have access. Therefore, the strategies implemented to achieve this goal are mainly based on geographical decentralisation and reducing people’s costs in accessing cultural facilities. These policies are considered paternalistic since they select for individuals the works that deserve to be known, recognised and appreciated, and elitist since not all cultural manifestations are recognised as relevant, for only some are granted legitimacy to be part of the heritage. They take as an assumption that “aesthetic enjoyment is universal and does not bring any knowledge either about the object of enjoyment or about the one which is its subject” (Caune, 2005, para. 47). By denying the subjectivity and uniqueness of those who look at the works, social and cognitive barriers subsist. Furthermore, looking at the typology of the shows and events attended, we come across a commonality: the so-called erudite artistic and cultural manifestations, legitimised by the “cultural entrepreneurs” (Arnaud, 2018), are attended by a very small number of people and these attendants belong to the privileged socioeconomic classes (Pais et al., 2022).

Another concept that subsequently made way for other cultural policies is “cultural democracy”, which recognises and values the diversity of culture, and artistic manifestations, placing all subjects simultaneously as consumers and producers of culture. It has abandoned the universalistic definition of culture in favour of a broad, anthropological, pluralistic, relativistic definition, including amateur practices, community cultures, and audiovisual media (Martin, 2013) based on a cultural plurality (Lahire, 2006; Lopes, 2009). Thus providing the grounds for fundamental texts of international scopes, such as the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura, 2002). With these policies, there is a risk of crystallising cultural identities, of a marked social reproduction, without mobility and, therefore, of the ghettoisation of culture (Baracca, 2010; De Certeau, 1974/1993).

The concept of artistic and cultural mediation emerges in a perspective of reconciliation of the two logics. Special attention is given to the specificity of the audience(s), considering their needs and their tastes and the relationship between the audience(s) and the artists, between the audience(s) and the art(s) is reconfigured (Lafortune, 2013; Maurel, 2010; Rathier & Innocenti, 2010). In such a paradigm, it is not about trying to convert the non-audience of a sensitive activity or a certain institution into engaged spectators, a design of cultural democratisation that should not be disregarded. Rather, it is about enabling each citizen to better construct him/herself through cultural practices in which art brings its efficiency in expressiveness, enunciation and relationship in an everyday life environment and a certain socio-political context (Henry, 2014). Along these lines, the work of the artistic and cultural mediator will be modulated and redefined according to the specificity of individuals and according to the intervention's artistic, cultural, social, political and economic context (Lussier, 2015). We understand, then, that cultural acting is at the centre of social, political and economic tensions, at the boundaries of what is cultural, also contributing to the definition of groups recognised as cultured, enlightened and dominant (Arnaud, 2018). Hence, the work of the artistic and cultural mediator goes beyond the limits of established cultural facilities, such as museums or cultural centres, and involves expressive creative processes using languages that are not always recognised and valued by academia. Artistic objects may be quite distant from the "works" once considered in the policies of democratisation of culture. In these processes of "artification" (Shapiro, 2007), the strengths and implications are not limited to the artistic or cultural domain. For a social group to assert its culture as a valuable heritage, it must have a culture to assert and the means to do so. These means involve a power game at the social, political and economic levels. Since Bourdieu (1979), we know that some cultural practices are marks of distinction of socially privileged groups and that certain cultural manifestations are considered popular, mass or high. For example, Juliano (as cited in Trilla, 2004) provides a classification of culture into three categories according to the social group that produces and/or enjoys it: (a) the official or dominant culture that is normative, sets the standards and has prestige; (b) mass culture based on standardised production and consumption, generated by "official culture", aimed at sectors of the population that do not have access to the products of "dominant culture"; and (c) popular culture based on face-to-face relations, which meets local specifications, devalued and proper to subaltern classes. On the other hand, when Pereira (2016) tries to define the value of art, it always comes back to recognition by peers, by the market, by curators... In other words, political, social and economic power games will allow some recognition of certain cultural manifestations. The artistic and cultural mediator cannot ignore these aspects and work in mediating certain works belonging to a certain collection without questioning how the works gained that place nor the perspective that the various audiences may have of this recognition. The symbolic violence exercised by legitimised works may prompt contrary reactions in people excluded from dominant groups.

The citizen who constructs him/herself through art(s) interacting with others and their socio-political context may thus no longer be seen as the target audience of an

intervention but as a participant. Their participation can be categorised at different levels: (a) reception of the works and the mediators' discourses; (b) interactivity, when mediators ask questions or propose activities; (c) participation, when mediators allow people from the audience the opportunity to make changes in their project; (d) collaboration when the project is co-constructed by mediators and people from the audience; and (e) claiming when the project initiative comes from people to respond to the specific desire of a given community (Mörsch & Holland, 2012). It is, therefore, important that the artistic and cultural mediation professional can develop a reflection on these levels of participation by confronting some of the goals he/she declares to pursue with the strategies he/she implements in the course of his/her profession. The type of intervention or activities developed assign roles to each stakeholder, allowing more or less room for people to make decisions. Artistic and cultural mediators should be aware that participation is not exhausted with activities led by professionals asking for interaction with the audience, which is still at a very low level of participation.

The terminology used to refer to interventions in artistic and cultural mediation reflects this transformation of the role and place assigned to the participants and their increased participation. There are no longer "guided tours" in which the visitors must follow their guide, but "targeted tours" in which the visitors follow their own route, considering the given guidelines. There is a shift from "audience training", which is based on the trainer's action, to "audience development", which entails growth from the inside. The "educational services" are replaced by "participation departments"; the "groups of programmers", "groups of curators", and "groups of participatory art" flourish, all composed of people from territorial communities or others and not of professionals in arts or culture. In fact, we can identify these practices in venues (such as Culturgest, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), cultural organisations (such as Teatro Meia Volta, Comédias do Minho, Acesso Cultura, among others) and cultural projects (such as 23 Milhas and Bons Sons) where the processes of cultural production are shared between artists and audiences according to the logic of the emancipated spectator as proposed by Rancière (2008/2010).

Arts and culture are considered important for the person's and the citizen's development and pillars for the sustainable development of territories in their cultural, social, educational and economic dimensions (Carta do Porto Santo, 2021; Comissão da Cultura das Cidades e Governos Locais Unidos, 2004; Costa, 2018).

Within this theoretical framework, it is clear that a degree in artistic and cultural mediation should be multi- and interdisciplinary and develop competencies and knowledge in the fields of social sciences and education, but also of the arts, together with the technical competencies required for intervention and practice within professional contexts.

3. THE CONCEPTION OF THE DEGREE IN ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL MEDIATION

The DACM was built at the Lisbon School of Education, a degree launched in 2016 (Cruz et al., 2021). The degree study plan includes curricular units on the scientific areas

of social sciences and education, arts, languages and communication technologies and aims to develop the following specific competencies:

- To know and understand the audiences, contexts and facilities for artistic production and dissemination (cultural organisations and territorial intervention, anthropology of culture, sociology of culture, diversity, cultures and social intervention);
- To identify networks of stakeholders and policies in artistic and cultural dissemination (cultural organisations and territorial intervention and cultural policies);
- To know and understand the multiple forms of artistic intervention and expression (theory of arts, aesthetics, and the optional curricular units taught in schools or artistic degrees under protocols of exchange of curricular units offered);
- To communicate effectively with the different stakeholders of the artistic and cultural mediation process (foreign language, oral and written expression technique and multimedia communication).

Besides these curricular units, there are two structuring and more transversal sets. On the one hand, the curricular units of project methodology I, II and III (Bell, 2010; Rangel & Gonçalves, 2010) in each of the first semesters of the course and, on the other hand, the project of intervention in artistic and cultural mediation (PIACM) I, II and III in the second semesters of the course which, besides mobilising the competencies developed in the previously mentioned curricular units, specifically contribute for students' ability to design, implement, manage and evaluate a project. The three PIACMs consist of work placements in multiple contexts, monitored by renowned professionals, the co-operating supervisors, within the framework of seminars in which particular emphasis is placed on the articulation between the theoretical-practical curricular unit and the professional intervention.

The rationale presented when the course was created states that training is based on the model of the reflective professional (Schön, 1994). Although developed transversally in the training units of project methodology and the PIACM, this reflexivity competency deserves specific attention in a curricular unit of the third year: professionalism in artistic and cultural mediation.

4. METHOD

The results reported here stem from exploratory work (Cruz et al., 2021) and were the subject of an oral communication at the colloquium "Prendre part à l'art et à la culture. Pratiques, théories et politiques de la médiation culturelle aujourd'hui" (Participating in art and culture. Practices, theories and policies of cultural mediation today) on October 7, 8 and 9, 2021 at Aix Marseille Université, France. They stem from a study under a research project named *Entre: Investigação em Mediação Artística e Cultural* (In between: research in Artistic and Cultural Mediation), funded by the Research Centre in Education. The project aims at the following objectives: (a) to establish artistic and cultural mediation as an area of research and scientific production contributing to the development of its conceptual and methodological frameworks; (b) to contribute to the definition of the artistic and cultural mediator's professional profile; (c) to identify and analyse the role

of artistic and cultural mediation for the different socio-cultural agents (artists, cultural institutions, mediators, students, audiences).

Given the complexity of the phenomenon under analysis, we adopted a qualitative approach (Crahay, 2006; Vandenberghe, 2006), thus materialising our concern with respecting the uniqueness of the participants. Our option for an essentially qualitative approach was motivated by the complexity of the situations (Vandenberghe, 2006) we intend to analyse and because only by considering the interpretations of the stakeholders will we be able to contribute to our questions. “The term action replaces the term behaviour: an action encompasses physical behaviour and the meaning that the agent and those who interact with him attach to it” (Crahay, 2006, p. 36).

Like Verhoeven (2006), we consider that, from semi-inductive research, based on a logic of intersubjective and pragmatic construction of knowledge, a generalisation is possible, not by statistical representation, but by an analytical generalisation. Therefore, our purpose here is not to create representative groups but to collect a diversity of understandings about the role of the artistic and cultural mediator, the definition(s) of artistic and cultural mediation and the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for this professional activity.

Three focus groups were held by the end of the academic year 2020-2021. The first, with graduates, was attended by master’s students employed in the cultural sector and founding members of the Portuguese Association of Artistic and Cultural Mediation. The second gathered teachers engaged in the DACM from anthropology, visual arts, communication, psychology and sociology. The third involved professionals with different activities: actors, filmmakers, museum employees or local government officials, all welcomed and supervised trainees in different school years and from different curricular years. The script focused the discussion on three major dimensions: the definition of artistic and cultural mediation, the roles played by artistic and cultural mediators in employing organisations and the profile of these professionals.

The data collected were subject to content analysis with the categories corresponding to the three dimensions included in the script, namely (a) the concept of artistic and cultural mediation, with three subcategories: definition, scientific areas and methodologies; (b) the role of the mediator in society, with four subcategories: the dimensions of intervention, the purposes of artistic and cultural mediation, the relationship with communities and the roles played in the organisations; and (c) the profile of the mediator identifying the competencies and knowledge required for the professional activity.

With our qualitative and comprehensive approach and the number of people involved in the focus groups, the quantification of responses has little relevance. When planning the procedures for data collection, we tried to diversify the sources of information and collect particular, complementary and/or diverging views (Alves & Azevedo, 2010). At the moment of analysis, we tried to consider all the conceptions expressed and explain the representations’ diversity, multiplicity, and contradictions.

5. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GRADUATES

When we asked the DACM graduates to define artistic and cultural mediation, their first reaction was to ask for time to ponder. They state that this definition is controversial and variable, and finally, they give it enunciating the purposes it can pursue. For them, artistic and cultural mediation dimensions encompass the educational, social and investigative dimensions, although they state that it goes beyond the educational dimension. From their perspective, during their professional intervention, artistic and professional mediators establish relationships with employers who are unaware of the profession, with the media and with representatives of local authorities to make their work known and try to enhance it, and also with the audiences, the people. In all situations, the relationship must be thought of in the long run. Furthermore, in their contact with the communities they work with, they must be very open to diversity, with effective proximity and empathy. As for the duties performed by recent graduates in artistic and cultural mediation, they point out that they are quite varied, ranging from communication and management to the organisation of events and the organisation or inventorying of collections. These duties do not always reflect what they had envisioned during their training:

I think that throughout the course, I developed a really nice idea about what mediation was, which is very much my own personal idea. Now that I'm working, I cannot implement it, which makes me a little upset. I mean, I think I learned a lot, and I'm trying to implement it, but it's not working that well. (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021)

However, they believe that their interventions transform people and the workspace itself.

For recent graduates, the purposes of artistic and cultural mediation and the role of the mediator in society fall on a continuum between economic and political poles. In the economic pole, it is a mediator/seller who works towards the commodification of culture, using communication, marketing, and advertising to increase the number of people attending cultural events: "how to attract more audiences to our activities" (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021). The data collected is the least present in the DACM graduates' discourses. We also find a mediator/pedagogue who strives to democratise culture by breaking down cognitive obstacles and explaining the works to people who alone did not have the competencies to do a good reading. In this perspective, which coincides with some of those collected by Martinho (2013), the mediator defined contents that people should acquire. Part of their work focuses on the search for strategies, more or less active or directive, for the acquisition of knowledge and development of attitudes: "the mediator can make a guided tour, the mediator can simply translate the works in writing or provide a brief context and is already mediating, he can engage in activities with groups" (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021).

I think what was most worthwhile was the impact I had on the kids at school and the difference it made just having been with them for those few days.

They didn't care about theatre at all and suddenly, "Wait a minute, maybe this is interesting; maybe I'll even go and see it". (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021)

In the study mentioned (Martinho, 2013), some professionals who develop artistic and cultural mediation activities introduce themselves as "teachers" and value pedagogy as a required training area.

On the political pole, we find a mediator/mediator making room for cultural democracy, reflection and positive encounters between people and between people and works. As Arnaud (2018) says, cultural acting will enable a better understanding of oneself, others and one's surroundings, hence a possible position-taking for social transformation. The graduates surveyed state:

the role of the mediator must allow people the time to reflect (...) I think that people generally like to participate and give their ideas about what they are seeing or reflect on what they are seeing. The mediator eventually is just a fly on the wall or is only there to instigate the conversation, and I think that's where you get the best results." (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021)

"I think the mediator must have the ability to provide the room for reflection" (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021).

"The spaces should be a little bit more democratic, that include all people because the goal is not to exclude" (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021).

"I think that the mediator must have the ability to create this space for reflection (....), but also a space of encounters between completely opposite realities or realities that are rather very similar, or different realities, whatever they may be" (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021).

Concerning the competencies required for the professional exercise of artistic and cultural mediation, we can see a great coincidence between the decisions of the DACM course coordinator and the representations of the graduates. The core competencies: (a) knowing and understanding the audiences, contexts and equipment of artistic production and dissemination; (b) identifying networks of stakeholders and policies in artistic and cultural dissemination; (c) knowing and understanding the various forms of artistic intervention; and (d) communicating effectively with the different stakeholders in the process of artistic and cultural mediation are also considered central by the graduates who, however, did not mention the idea of networking. Similarly, the transversal competencies listed in the presentation of the study cycle, such as designing, implementing, managing and evaluating a project and being a reflective professional, are valued. However, the group surveyed admits as important some competencies not taken into account by the group proposing the degree, such as those stemming from knowledge in marketing and management and aimed at the profitability of projects. They also focus more on psychology-related competencies in a more practical dimension: "I talked about empathy, about listening to people and trying to understand" (Focus group 1, 16 March 2021).

6. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TEACHERS

The teachers are unanimous in considering that the definition of artistic and cultural mediation is very broad and non-consensual. Some see this non-consensual aspect as strategic, as it would be a way of encompassing a wide diversity of practices in this term:

mediation can sometimes be used like this; it can be such an abstract concept, so broad, and then maybe it is worth closing, or not closing; when is it useful and functional to help us think about what doing artistic and cultural mediation is. (Focus group 2, 15 July 2021)

For some, artistic and cultural mediation is a form of translation that aims to make works accessible to the public:

so this idea that they are mediating something, between something, they are in the middle of something... And they must have this ability to translate in the sense of turning something strange into something familiar to one side or the other, right? So, to make it familiar, to make it close, to make it... to decode, to make it involving, to make it appealing, to make something strange or unknown, become familiar or recognisable, right? (Focus group 2, 15 July 2021)

The teachers also mention that artistic and cultural mediation can be a driver for transforming the cultural sector organisations or institutions.

Artistic and cultural mediation can be seen from a more individual perspective with an emphasis on personal development and, in this case, as a facilitator of experience and construction for others. It may also be seen in a more social dimension, either as the use of cultures and arts or of artistic expressions, as a link between people, between communities, between audiences and even between individuals themselves in a horizontal perspective: “it has this role of, from an artistic or cultural expression, bringing us all closer to each other (...) it may also be a way for us to come closer to ourselves” (Focus group 2, 15 July 2021).

As for the scientific area with which they associate artistic and cultural mediation, there seems to be no doubt among the focus group participants. They state that it is the social sciences and humanities. However, when asked to elaborate on more specific subfields or domains, the answer is not so unequivocal; the arts, psychology, sociology, anthropology and communication are mentioned, and their hybrid nature is underlined. To define their conceptual framework, the teachers mobilise various concepts such as public space, public and cultural sphere, cultural democracy, cultural translation, cultural rights, mechanisms of cultural contact, collective, and otherness and they quote as reference authors Jürgen Habermas, Bruno Latour, Clifford Geertz or Emmanuel Levinas.

There is consensus among the focus group members that part of the mediator's role in society is to be the interface between organisations and the audiences; some emphasise that this role can only be developed through integration in institutions, others, in networks or in the very communities with which they interact. The purpose of their

intervention in society would be to reinforce the significance of art and culture in society or even to include vulnerable people or groups such as the mentally ill, migrants, and the unemployed... To develop this role, the trainers define a very demanding professional profile with communication, analytical and reflective competencies, with knowledge in a wide range of scientific areas, with the will to always learn more, with transversal skills such as empathy and the ability to adapt to different contexts:

they can bring transversal competencies, i.e., beyond technical knowledge and beyond scientific knowledge, that they can provide about essential concepts, right? Since they will be mediators, the mediator dimension has an underlying communicational dimension, right? There is a set of transversal competencies. (Focus group 2, 15 July 2021)

These teachers' representations pose challenges for training in artistic and cultural mediation. The first observation is that the teachers' own training domain contaminates their reading of what artistic and cultural mediation may be. It may be necessary to claim a domain of specific knowledge based on a better definition of artistic and cultural mediation, its conceptual framework and the competencies of this professional to avoid that contamination. Whether due to incomplete knowledge of the intervention contexts or ontologically, as a result of inherent contradictions or strategically, this hybridisation of artistic and cultural mediation seems to consolidate the idea of an initial broadband training that specialisation may follow at a post-graduate or master's level, for example. Given the complexity of artistic and cultural mediation itself and its intervention contexts, training should favour the capacity for analysis and reflection and the ability to adapt to diverse professional situations. It is deemed essential to endow students with:

competencies from the point of view of analysis. As I said before, not in the sense of being social science researchers, not in that sense, but robust analytical competencies precisely because there is a reading of a complexity that I think is important for them to be able to do. (Focus group 2, 15 July 2021)

The centrality of the practical dimension, namely the internships in diversified contexts, emerges then as an adequate response when associated with a training model based on the reflective professional (Schön, 1994).

7. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE COOPERATING PROFESSIONALS

The cooperating professionals consider that part of their work falls within the scope of artistic and cultural mediation. Therefore they did not hesitate when presenting some definition of this concept and did so by taking their own professional activity as a starting point. Generally, they define artistic and cultural mediation as what is between, in the middle of, and the multiple parties may be creators, audiences, institutions, programmers, people... However, the definitions given are not all coincident; one aspect that

varies is the activity versus the passivity of the audiences. For some, mediation is the passing of information and knowledge. For others, it is listening to both what is received and created. Others consider it to be the act of creating tensions, restlessness and possibilities for discussion, or even a driver for transformation. They recognise four dimensions in the intervention in artistic and cultural mediation: cultural, social, educational and political. In the organisations where they work, they consider that the roles played by mediators are: to bring people closer to the institutions, to make artists' work known, to contribute to increasing the number of people attending cultural facilities and to promote dialogue and knowledge sharing. Professionals have a prescriptive discourse on the qualities that artistic and cultural mediation should have: empathetic and affective, educational, participatory and promoting active citizenship. They also mention the relevance of the need for artistic and cultural mediation in schools at all levels of education, including university. When we approach the profile of the artistic and cultural mediator, the list of knowledge and competencies is extremely long, which can be understood when we also analyse the purposes to be achieved by the intervention of these professionals. The knowledge to be mastered by the artistic and cultural mediator covers several fields: arts (visual arts, cinema, theatre, music, etc.), sociology, history, art history, aesthetics, philosophy, law, foreign languages, and participatory methodologies. Besides knowledge, these professionals must have soft skills such as humility, willingness to listen, openness towards the other, absence of prejudice, and empathy. They must be guided by social, civic and humanistic values and must be able to not impose their aesthetics on the other. Regarding know-how, professionals consider it important for artistic and cultural mediators to know how to diagnose a territory, understand the work of a creator and the creative processes, involve people in a creative process, build a capital of trust with people, communicate and create spaces for dialogue. This wide range of knowledge and competencies required for the professional exercise of artistic and cultural mediation coincides with the diversity of purposes ascribed to this intervention. For some, these have an essentially educational dimension, the mediator being the person who explains what should be seen in work, hence the importance of knowledge of the arts of creative processes: "we were actually filmmakers, so we already had knowledge of the artistic part, and we were trying to pass this knowledge on to children, young people, others. However, this is mediation by people who know art" (Focus group 3, 7 May 2021).

This educational dimension does not always correspond to a transmissive model, and professionals value the contributions that can be given by the elements that form the audience:

we don't have to be the only ones passing on this information. I think it is important to have this collaboration. When we talk about the mediator, we don't have to be the one passing on the dialogue. If we have to call people, if we have to bring them to our side, talk to them, these are processes that are a little long at first, but then eventually flow, and I think that when we think about the mediator, it is important to understand that we don't have

to be the centre, but maybe the middle. That is, we have to call people and promote dialogue, but we do not have to be the ones to convey everything. (Focus group 3, 7 May 2021)

The educational dimension is mitigated by a rather social dimension that places the mediator not in the position of a transmitter but actually as a mediator who will provide encounters, bonding and social integration. Talking about art and culture is also a way of talking about oneself and one's surroundings:

I think that the work of mediation is also a work of raising awareness of the realities that these people who are in the surroundings of the reality in which each of us works, have the opportunity to speak out, to give them a voice, to be able to complain about their troubles, their problems, and somehow we try to find solutions that allow for a better way of life or to improve the person's living conditions. (Focus group 3, 7 May 2021)

Artistic and cultural mediation assumes a political dimension since people cease to be passive audiences and become stakeholders who make decisions to transform their surroundings. For some of the professionals in the focus group, the mediator's intervention actually aims at this transformation:

but when I am instead, at the service of the spectator, at the service of the citizen, being a professional in this sector, we may transform people into spectators, and my concern is rather to transform people into more active citizens, more aware, more participatory, more available for their sensibility to develop through artistic provocations (Focus group 3, 7 May 2021)

8. CLUES FOR REFLECTION

The data collected points to large areas of intersection between the representations of the groups surveyed regarding the definition of artistic and cultural mediation and the professional profile and the purposes of intervention. However, we must acknowledge some divergences. For example, the graduates borrow from the area of the economy the knowledge and techniques of advertising and marketing that the trainers did not integrate into the DCAM curricular plan. The cooperating professionals have a much wider range of knowledge and competencies that artistic and cultural mediators need than the teachers, including law, which is not included in the training areas of the study plan. However, there is a point of sharing between all the elements that made up this exploratory study: the idea that artistic and cultural mediation is made of a space intersecting knowledge and competencies. We may ask ourselves the risks of this lack of definition of the field of intervention and the conceptual one. We may think that the absence of a clear definition of the field of intervention of artistic and cultural mediation allows this field to be widened and, therefore, to include more typologies of practices and, consequently,

to reinforce a professional group by increasing its number. Nevertheless, this absence carries the risk of absorption and dissolution in other more consolidated fields, both in intervention and scientific affirmation.

Another clue that we believe is important to explore further is the understanding of the contradictions between the profiles and competencies outlined by the teachers and the cooperating professionals, both of whom train the same groups of students. As we have seen, the range of knowledge identified as necessary for the three groups surveyed is extremely wide and incompatible with a three-year degree training plan. The tensions verified in the respondents' representations between more economical, more educational or more political and social dimensions reflect the tensions in the definition of cultural policies. The sources available in Portugal reflecting on artistic and cultural mediation proposed by Mörsch and Holland (2012) ou Lafortune (2012) are scarce. Even so, it is possible to identify some relevant contributions (Martinho, 2013; Fradique, 2019). *A Cultura e a Promoção da Democracia: Para uma Cidadania Cultural Europeia* (Culture and the Promotion of Democracy: Towards a European Cultural Citizenship; Porto Santo Charter, 2021) is the document closest to the assumptions behind the degree intended to train professionals in artistic and cultural mediation. There is still a very operative, formalised and scholarly understanding of mediation in cultural contexts. However, this path is similar to those seen in countries like Canada, France, Germany and Austria in the last decades. Through this maturation regarding artistic and cultural mediation practices, these contexts have contributed to a better conceptual and methodological definition of this field of knowledge and action. Therefore, further research is pertinent to better circumscribing a specific domain of knowledge for artistic and cultural mediation, drawing clearer boundaries with arts education, cultural programming, cultural management or other related professional activities.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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