

# Chapter 16

## Cultural Education in the Field of Tension Between Tradition and Transformation—A Theoretical Introduction



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**Abstract** During the 2018 UNESCO-UNITWIN conference “*Aesthetics of Transformation*”, participants visited cultural transformative places and institutions in Nuremberg, Germany. The field trip reports focus on concrete examples of what aesthetic transformation in the context of arts and cultural education can look like and, moreover, how tangible experiences can be created. Reflecting on the history of the *Künstlerhaus* (engl. *House of Artists*), Viktoria Flasche shows how the interplay between self-government and institutionalization can manifest itself in architectural structures and influence working and visiting experiences of the site. The ongoing process of negotiating difficult cultural heritage and memory culture is the pivotal point in Johannes Bretting’s discussion of affective impulses brought on by the physical and material remnants of the building structures of the *Nazi Party Rally Grounds* in Nuremberg. The transformative potential of art museums is the centerpiece of the cooperation between the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* and the KPZ—the *Education Department of Museums* in Nuremberg—, a program devoted to initializing discussions of locality and (post-)migratory experiences among students (Friederike Schmiedl). Anna Carnap and Astrid Hornung round up the section with their report on the *Villa Leon*, a community center that serves as an example for a successful cooperation and integration of self-governed and institutionalized community work, and the *Children’s Museum Nuremberg*, an institution dedicated to providing sensory experiences and a change of perspective in experiencing the world and our environment from past to present.

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## 16.1 Culture and Cultural Education

The following thoughts are based on the assumption that cultural education can be considered as a specific, pedagogically structured, field of practice in which people are given the opportunity, on the one hand, to interact productively and/or receptively with cultural forms, phenomena and meanings—and thus to articulate culture and themselves—and on the other hand, to open up opportunities for all kinds of people to participate in certain forms of culture (e.g., the arts). Given that notion, it becomes clear that what is understood or is to be understood as cultural education is inseparably connected with what is concretely given as cultural reality or with what is understood as “culture”.

At first glance, this circumstance may seem rather trivial. However, taking into account that cultural realities, and thus cultural forms and practices, are neither *per se* nor unconditionally given, but that they are fundamentally to be understood as historically bound, and thus do not appear universalizable (Reckwitz, 2008a, 2008b), this given fact reveals itself to be highly significant not only for the terminological and content-related conception of arts education, but also for its programmatic approaches and goals. Cultural forms and practices are thus always “only” of a relative stability (Schäfer, 2013) or “only” of a contextual, as well as relational-circulative commitment, since they result from historical processes and thus from an inescapable reciprocal entanglement of tradition as well as emergent iterations and contingent transformations (Klepacki & Klepacki, 2018). To put it differently: because culture appears as a “total complex of ideas, forms of thought, modes of perception, values and meanings generated by human beings” (Nünning & Nünning, 2003, 6), cultural figurations have a sense-generating effect only in their connection to their respective concrete historical-contextual emergence or generation. Culture as a “dimension of collective systems of meaning” (Reckwitz, 2012, 90)—or as a symbolic framework of order—structures social practices on the one hand and is at the same time produced, passed on and transformed through them, since it arises as an “emergent moment from practical executions” (Jörissen, 2018, 52). Cultural processes of tradition and transformation are thus inseparably linked, with traditions acting as stabilization mechanisms and transformations appearing as eventful break-ins that generate openness to the future, breaches of tradition, transcendence of the present, and leaps in innovation. Transformative events thus initiate processes in which cultural (and thus social and historical) “reorientations” (Bergmann et al., 2011, 39) that extort “new or re-orientations [or] at least reformulations of previous orientations [from] the groups concerned and the individual” (Düllo, 2011, 28) as well as a transgression of established practices. Transformations generate differences to the given, the known, the skilled, the trusted, the understood, etc. and thus open up horizons of possibilities on the one hand and on the other hand they also generate resistances and fears, since they make the established appear limited, fragile and fleeting.

This fact now appears fundamentally significant to the analyses compiled in this volume, insofar as the goals, ideals, ways of proceeding, postulates, approaches,

concepts and programs etc. of cultural education make itself appear as an actor that can only be described against the background of its specific cultural ties and contingent historical developments. Cultural education is thus at the same time an effect of historical processes of tradition and transformation that generate both certain ideas of arts and education *and* specific ideas regarding conceptions of what is called “subject”, or what is formed as a subject, that is supposed to experience aesthetic-cultural educational processes in contexts of cultural education, or is supposed to participate in (specific forms of) art and culture. From this perspective, arts education appears most of all as a dispositive originating from and tied to the educational and artistic logics of European Modernity, within or by which the idea of the aesthetic education of a subject, by way of art and culture or by way of artistic practices as well as the idea of subjective participation in art and culture, is still passed on today. At the same time, however, given a fundamental change in the understanding of art and aesthetic practice as following the tradition of Eurocentric high culture paradigms toward that which may be called “post-art” (Meyer, 2016, 243), as well as against the background of post-colonial and post-migrant transformations of globalized life-worlds—and thus given an all-encompassing “re-arrangement” of cultural guiding ideas (Schimank & Volkmann, 2017, 61)—this dispositive experiences itself in the area of conflict between stabilizing attempts of passing on, self-legitimation or self-identification constraints, and disruptive-contingent dynamics of change. Against this background, current forms of arts education have to be questioned. For example, if or to what extent they provide possibilities to critically reflect on the age of digitalized globalization and thus on hegemonial aspirations of a neoliberal and neo-colonial production of culture.

## 16.2 The Need for Reformulation/Rethinking in Cultural Education in the Context of Cultural Transformation Dynamics

If, on the one hand, cultural education can be seen as an effect and an agent of cultural processes of tradition and transformation and, on the other hand, as a practice of breaking through established (hegemonic) cultural patterns and practices, as well as a context in which certain (high-)cultural logics are affirmatively transmitted as legitimation strategies of cultural education, it shows how multi-layered the field of cultural education is connected in cultural processes of tradition and transformation. A contemporary diagnosis of cultural education must accordingly point out these entanglements and critically reflect them with regard to the (self-)conceptions, goals, forms, places and contexts, procedures, contents, etc. of cultural education.

If cultural education strives to be a context in which cultural forms and practices can become thematic, and if cultural education is to represent a “practice of aesthetic reflection of cultural practices and their conditions” (Jörissen, 2016, 65),

it must also open up spaces in which a non-affirmative—that is, a critical—“positioning on these forms” (ibid.), and thus on the hegemonic logic of stabilization of cultural tradition mechanisms, as well as on the contingent destabilization energies of cultural transformation dynamics become possible in the form of critical-reflective aesthetic articulations. Such aesthetic articulation processes would then not only aim at self-positionings “within given cultural orders and their symbolic forms” (ibid.), as they, for example, appear in functional neoliberalist creativity logics of “aesthetic capitalism” (Reckwitz, 2012), but rather in positioning *on* these orders and forms (Jörissen, 2016), “within which we are called upon to design and locate ourselves” (ibid., S. 66).

If the field of cultural education wishes to fulfill the task outlined here, then it would be logical to ask about the effects of transformation processes in the fields of life and reference sciences and the arts with regard to the understandings, forms, processes and goals of cultural education. In addition, the assumptions and implications of models and approaches of cultural education in terms of culture, society, subject, education and art theory would have to be questioned in order to be able to reveal one’s own historically grown dispositive and to locate oneself with regard to these transformation processes.

Cultural education would then necessarily have to be thought of as a critical, self-reflexive field that not only wants to open up spaces for its clientele, but also for itself, in which both the field of cultural education and the subjects addressed by the field can be identified as realities of their own sense, which, however, are not to be thought of as separated from outside of social frameworks, patterns of practice, norms, power structures, etc. (Rebentisch, 2012), but appear as part of the cultural or social, in which freedom, and thus reflexive distance, can become virulent.

### **16.3 The Meaning of Cultural Transformation Dynamics for Concrete Areas of Cultural Education**

In concrete terms related to specific areas of cultural education, this means, for example, in art-related contexts, increasingly dealing with the renunciation of an orientation towards the piece of art and the accompanying focus on the principle of post-production, i.e. the handling of already existing material, as well as with the hybridization of art forms or with the blurring of the boundaries between art and non-art and thus with the end of a Eurocentric idea of autonomous art (cf. Meyer, 2016).

In socio-culturally oriented areas of cultural education, the question of the forms, social spaces and places of socio-culture in the twenty-first century will have to be posed in view of social pluralization tendencies, the increasing everyday relevance of digital media technologies and the associated cultural practices of the so-called digital natives as well as global cultural key problems. If socio-culture sees itself as a culture of networking, participation, responsibility and articulation, then this

culture today would be thought of as a fundamentally (post-)migrant, post-colonial and post-digital culture.

In a similar way, current transformation dynamics have effects on cultural education in the context of the culture of remembrance or in the field of museums, since the pluralization of cultural realities is accompanied in particular by a pluralization of patterns of the formation of cultural traditions, and thus also a multiplication of collective forms of memory and cultures of remembrance, as well as cultural patterns of knowledge and experience. This inevitably raises the question of what relevance or functionality the established Eurocentric mechanisms of collective memory or museum constructions of historical reality can still possess. With this question, the established traditions of the museum or commemorative cultural confrontation with culture and history should accordingly also be critically questioned (Klepacki, 2019).

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