

**Licenciatura em Mediação Artística e Cultural (ESELx - IPL): uma análise crítica sobre o papel do mediador e do processo de mediação no contexto português**

**Degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation (ESELx – IPL): a critical analysis on the role of the mediator and mediation process in the Portuguese context**

**Diplôme en Médiation Artistique et Culturelle (ESELx – IPL): une analyse critique sur le rôle du médiateur et le processus de médiation dans le contexte portugais**

**Grado en Mediación Artística y Cultural (ESELx - IPL): un análisis crítico sobre el papel del mediador y el proceso de mediación en el contexto portugués**

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## **Resumo**

As mudanças nas dinâmicas do sector cultural em Portugal começam a evidenciar a necessidade de aproximar artistas e produtores culturais ao público. Contudo, serão poucos os profissionais capazes de conciliar competências teóricas e metodológicas que permitam fazer essa aproximação. Foi a identificação da necessidade de um ator que facilite a relação entre público e sector cultural que conduziu à criação da licenciatura em Mediação Artística e Cultural, no ano letivo de 2016-2017 na Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa. Esta licenciatura visa a formação de profissionais que tenham a capacidade de criar pontes entre produtores de cultura e públicos, através do desenvolvimento de estratégias em territórios diferentes, mas complementares nas áreas da educação, programação, processos criativos, a partir daquele que é o potencial integrador destas dimensões. Depois de diplomados os primeiros estudantes desta licenciatura, é importante refletir sobre o processo formativo e sobre a sua contribuição para o desenvolvimento da democratização cultural e da democracia cultural em Portugal.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento de públicos; Democracia cultural; Democratização da cultura; Cidadania, Ensino Superior

## **Abstract**

The changes in the dynamics of the cultural sector in Portugal are increasingly evident creating a growing need to bring artists and cultural producers closer to the public. However, few professionals can develop this type of work resorting to a solid theoretical and technical background. These needs led to the creation of the degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation in the 2016-2017 school year, at the Lisbon School of Education (Polytechnic Institute). This undergraduate program aims to train professionals who can establish a relationship between cultural producers and the public by developing work strategies effective in hybrid territories that combine different but complementary features such as education, programming, creative and artistic processes, assuming their integrative role. After the graduation of the first students, it is important to reflect on the several aspects that influence the development of this degree and what is its contribution to cultural democracy and democratization in Portugal.

Keywords: Audience development; Cultural democracy; Cultural democratization; Citizenship; Superior education

## Résumé

Les changements dans la dynamique du secteur culturel au Portugal sont de plus en plus évidents, créant un besoin croissant de rapprocher les artistes et les producteurs culturels du public. Cependant, peu de professionnels peuvent développer ce type de travail en recourant à un solide bagage théorique et technique. Ces besoins ont conduit à la création du diplôme en médiation artistique et culturelle au cours de l'année scolaire 2016-2017, à l'École Supérieure d'Éducation de Lisbonne (Institut Polytechnique). Ce programme de premier cycle vise à former des professionnels capables d'établir une relation entre les producteurs culturels et le public en développant des stratégies de travail efficaces dans des territoires hybrides qui combinent des caractéristiques différentes mais complémentaires telles que l'éducation, la programmation, les processus créatifs et artistiques, en assumant leur rôle intégrateur. Alors que les premiers étudiants ont été habilités en tant que professionnels, il est important de réfléchir aux différents aspects qui influencent le développement de ce diplôme et analyser la façon dont cette formation peut contribuer à la consolidation de la démocratie culturelle et de la démocratisation au Portugal.

Mots-clés: Développement d'audience; Démocratie culturelle; Démocratisation de la culture; Citoyenneté; Enseignement supérieur

## Resumen

Los cambios en la dinámica del sector cultural en Portugal empiezan a poner de relieve la necesidad de acercar los artistas y productores culturales al público. Sin embargo, pocos profesionales podrán conciliar competencias teóricas y metodológicas que permitan esta aproximación. Fue la identificación de la necesidad de un actor para facilitar la relación entre el público y el sector cultural lo que llevó a la creación de un título en Mediación Artística y Cultural, en el curso 2016-2017 en la Escola Superior de Educação de lo Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa. Este grado tiene como objetivo formar profesionales que tengan la capacidad de tender puentes entre productores de cultura y audiencias, a través del desarrollo de estrategias en territorios diferentes pero complementarios en las áreas de educación, programación, procesos creativos, en base a cuál es el potencial integrador de estas dimensiones. Después de graduar a los primeros estudiantes de este grado, es importante reflexionar sobre el proceso de formación y su contribución al desarrollo de la democratización cultural y la democracia cultural en Portugal.

Palabras-clave: Desarrollo de audiencias; Democracia cultural;  
Democratización de la cultura; Ciudadanía; Enseñanza superior

## Introduction

During the last decade, the cultural sector has come to know, in general terms, significant growth, and Portugal is not an exception to this tendency. Even during the years of the financial crisis that affected Portugal (2008 – 2013), economic indicators showed that there was an increase in both cultural production and public affluence to cultural programs (Mateus, Primitivo, Caetano, Barbado, & Cabral, 2010). As a result of the expansion of the cultural sector, new professional profiles began to emerge and being demanded by both the institutions and the public. Aware of such evidence, Lisbon School of Education (ESELx) created and implemented a degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation based on the premise settled by the Portuguese Constitution that Culture should be accessible to all citizens – Democratization of culture – and that all citizens should be able to fully participate in the cultural process – Cultural democracy.

The end of the first studies cycle – 2016/2017 to 2018/2019 – provided the opportunity to reflect on the academic and formative outcomes of the graduation programme, and also, about the social role of mediation and mediators. In that sense it is important to understand what Artistic and Cultural Mediation is; if there is room for artistic and cultural mediators in Portugal; if cultural institutions are interested in having mediators and what personal, professional, and academic characteristics should an artistic and cultural mediator have. To do so, we present the conceptual framework that has helped us to define which are the main concepts to think about the relationship between audiences, artistic object or artistic equipment, and the artists. We also analyze the results of an exploratory study carried out with finalist students, teachers, and institutional partners of the artistic and cultural mediation degree.

## Lisbon School of Education and the degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation

Lisbon School of Education has a long tradition of adopting innovative approaches to formal and non-formal education. In fact, in the late 19th century the educative programme of ESELx was grounded in the ideology of the

First Republic with principles based on democratic and humanitarian values (Ferreira, 2018). In the last decades, ESELx training offer expanded besides formal education, and the graduate courses available have a strong focus on social and cultural intervention, as is the case with the degree in Community Development and Music and Community. The courses taught in ESELx involve mandatory internships that, over the years, has led to the creation of partnerships with various institutions from the educational, social and cultural sector. These ESELx institutional partners (Museums, Cultural equipment, Art centres, etc.) provide relevant information on real social and cultural contexts. Their feedback pointed towards the necessity to have skilled professionals to operate as mediators between the cultural producers and the communities. This information contributed to the creation of the degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation. This perception coincides with the absence of a cultural or artistic “mediator” as a professional category in the National Catalogue of Qualifications (Vohlgemuth et al., 2017). As defined by Giménez (2010) the role of a mediator, despite their specific area of actuation, is to provide an alternative system that enables communication, stimulates social and community participation promotes social cohesion, and can operate as a bridge between institutions and people.

The output provided by ESELx partners regarding the lack of professionals apt to intervene in the artistic, cultural, and social sectors was important to design the new degree. The Portuguese legal framework regarding access to culture and other studies on a similar matter provided the grounds to legitimate the necessity of having such professionals in our society. If we attend to the Portuguese Constitution, the 73rd article reads as follows: “the State promotes culture democratization, encouraging and ensuring all citizens to cultural fruition and creation”. Despite that, there is an “imbalance between cultural supply and demand - more visible in certain regions of the country and certain artistic fields - the influence of certain social factors on the constitution of consumers / cultural practitioners is also perceptible” (Gomes & Lourenço, 2009:55). The asymmetries in cultural fruition may be related to a paradigm that associates culture with education and high social status. Thus, it is important to shift the approach towards arts and culture. In that sense, the cultural democracy model appears to adjust to the change that is needed, since the idea of cultural democracy is based on a paradigm shift: "culture is not only a consumer good but also a place for citizens to form their own culture. In other words: 'cultural consumption' gives rise to 'cultural participation' (Lopes, 2009). These were the stepping stones that led to the creation of the degree.

## **Degree goals, skills and structure**

Having in consideration the motivation and framework that presided the creation of the degree, the established goals are to train professionals in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of mediation projects in diverse artistic and cultural contexts. This training is to be supported by research and scientific data directed towards the development of the community in its artistic and cultural dimensions. To ensure these goals, there are a set of skills that are developed during the three years, such as the ability to know and understand the publics, contexts, and equipment of artistic production and dissemination as well as various forms of artistic intervention. Students should also develop the ability to design, implement, manage and evaluate a project in artistic and cultural mediation resorting to networks of different subjects and policies in artistic and cultural dissemination. Communication skills and a critical and reflective attitude are also aptitudes that should be developed during the training process.

Given the diversity of competences and knowledges involved in the mediation exercise, the degree was organized to offer a wide range of scientific and technical domains. In that sense curricular courses can be divided in three categories: the ones that define the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological framework in different scientific areas (Social Sciences; Arts history and movements; Multimedia communication and Project Methodology); the practical courses on arts (dance, music, visual arts, theatre) that offer an insight of the artistic languages; and the annual internships in professional contexts that were developed to offer different experiences in each year: observation of the creative process (1st year), participation in cultural equipment (2nd year) and creation, implementation, and evaluation of Artistic and cultural mediation projects (3rd year). These internships are developed with and for different institutional partners and in different artistic areas such as plastic arts, cinema, circus arts, dance, animated forms, music, theatre, multidisciplinary areas, and other contexts that have culture and art as a core subject. During the internships, students have developed projects in artistic management, inclusion (social inclusion and special need people inclusion), heritage education, community development, and copyright work.

## **Artistic and Cultural Mediation conceptual framework**

Similar to what happens in other countries, the concept of “Mediação Artística e Cultural” (literally translating to English as “Artistic and cultural mediation”)

is an unclear term that can be used in different contexts with different purposes (Mörsch & Holland, 2015). Portugal's recent political history is, in part, responsible for the underdevelopment of culture and the lack of systematic reflection about the social role of art and culture and the absence of professionals devoted to audience and cultural development activities. For almost five decades (1926 -1974), cultural production was limited to what was allowed and validated by the "Estado Novo" policies (Xavier, 2016). Cultural production, during the years of dictatorship, served as a State propaganda vehicle (Damasceno, 2010; Portela, 1987). It was only after the 25th of April coup d'état that matters related to arts, culture and education started to gain a more democratic relevance. Thus, it becomes evident that the growth of the cultural sector and the possibility of general access to culture is very recent in Portugal (Centeno, 2011). Only recently, a new approach to the cultural process and products is starting to emerge, with the public being called to participate. As a consequence, the debate on culture, arts, accessibility, and participation, is coming out of the academic spheres, leading to a social reflection about the need and the added value of using culture and art in social and educative contexts, creating a positive outcome in the publics (Ferreira, 2019; Vlachou, 2019).

This approach, concerning the role of culture and art in the development of society, is recent in Portugal and, for that matter, we are still lacking a more representative framework, as well as a more appropriate and clear vocabulary to define what is meant by an artistic and cultural mediation. On the other hand, it is known that the subject of (artistic and) cultural mediation is not a straightforward subject even in the contexts of its first appearance (Mörsch & Holland, 2015). Artistic and cultural mediation is at the intersection of several scientific fields that combine arts and social sciences. Furthermore, there is not a unanimous interpretation of what artistic and cultural mediation is. In that sense, having into consideration the reasoning and motivation behind the creation of the degree, it is important to define the conceptual framework that establishes and guides the academic path of the students. The clarification of mediation and mediator applied to culture and art are fundamental to the definition of the future professionals and, subsequently, the notion of what should be the impact of such professionals in the society. In that sense, we present the conceptual framework that was the starting point of the degree structure and goals considering the Portuguese and European context.

The degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation offered by the Lisbon School of Education was influenced by what is the French notion of "médiation culturelle". According to Mörsch and Holland (2015:18) "in the 1980s, the term

“*médiation culturelle*” was associated with public relations activities and knowledge transfer. In addition to the fields of the arts, it was used to refer to the preservation of historical monuments and cultural heritage”. The idea of “*médiation culturelle*” grew with the community art movements, for that matter, “*médiation culturelle*” implies that there should be an engagement between artists, institutions, and audiences. The mediator role should be, in the words of Henry (2014) “de permettre à chacun de mieux se construire par des pratiques culturelles où l’art porte sa propre efficience en termes d’expressivité, d’énonciation et de relation au sein d’un cadre de vie ordinaire et d’un environnement sociopolitique donnés” (p. 87).

If the idea of “*médiation culturelle*” and “*Kulturvermittlung*” (German) is related to the social and cultural development through arts and culture. In English spoken contexts “*cultural mediation*” doesn’t stand for the same concept. The idea of “*mediation*” refers to conflict resolution and, more specifically, inter-cultural tensions (Mörsch & Holland, 2015). The same seems to happen in Portugal. There are “*cultural mediators*” (in Portuguese “*mediadores culturais*”) that serve as intermediaries between cultures (Vohlgemuth et al., 2017). To differentiate the “*culture mediator*” that manages the differences between cultures from the ones that work towards social development through arts and culture, it was necessary to add the artistic dimension to the description of the degree and professional category, thus reflecting the role of art in the process.

Other relevant concepts within the notion of “*médiation culturelle*” that influenced the design of the degree in Artistic and Culture Mediation, are the democratization of culture and cultural democracy. These are fundamental notions to understand the role of the mediator. In that sense, culture democratization can be defined as a strategy, or State cultural policy, that aims to increase access to cultural work to an extended audience who may not have the resources or motivation to attend cultural events (Gattinger, 2011; Laaksonen, 2010; Matarasso & Landry, 1999). Even though democratization of culture and cultural democracy are not mutually exclusive policies, they have different starting points. Cultural democratization has a top-bottom perspective, that can be considered, in some cases, paternalist (Hadley & Belfiore, 2018; Kelly, 1984). On the other hand, cultural democracy, defends a bottom-up, or even a circular approach, “fostering the idea that every person, every community and every cultural minority has cultural requirements and should have certain rights that ought to be respected. It includes the promotion of cultural diversity and active participation in cultural life, together with the

facilitation of access to decision-making processes, and to secure equal access to resources and cultural services” (Laaksonen, 2010, p. 11).

As we understand it, mediation is the process of connecting people (society) to culture through the creation of links between politics, artists, and public space. This includes a wide range of practices from public development actions to participatory and community art. Ultimately, it aims to make every person a true cultural agent (Lussier, 2015; Vohlgemuth et al., 2017). The mediator should promote links between the cultural object (material production, creative process) and people. Depending on the nature and purpose of the project, will be a transmitter, companion, pedagogue, etc. Their work will be modulated and redefined according to the specificity of the individuals according to the artistic, cultural or social context (Lussier, 2015; Vohlgemuth et al., 2017). This definition of a mediator goes along with one of the proposes of the ESELx “training teachers and other educational agents with a high level of preparation in the cultural, scientific, technical and professional aspects”. Meaning that the non-formal educative perspective is present in both the formation and intervention of the mediators. This perspective will guarantee that cultural democratization and democracy are ensured. The exercise of artistic and cultural mediation should allow the creation of privileged meeting places between artists and citizens, thus promoting interpersonal interchange, learning and, commitment. It can also help reduce psychological and social barriers to exclusion from target groups (Lussier, 2015; Vohlgemuth et al., 2017)

### **First study cycle analysis: methodology and results**

By the end of the first studies cycle (April, 2019), it was important to evaluate if the goals established were fulfilled and if future employers consider the role of the artistic and cultural mediator relevant. In that sense, an exploratory study was developed to gather the opinion of final year students, teachers, and institutional partners. The methodological approach comprehended a focus group and inquiries.

The focus group counted with the presence of 3rd year students (N=6) that were informed about the purpose of the study and permission was asked to record in audio the conversation. Afterwards, using the transcript of the focus group, a content analysis was performed.

Given the difficulty to schedule two other focus group, researchers opted for an inquiry as a strategy to collect information to both teachers, from different

artistic and scientific backgrounds (N=9), and institutional partners (N=6), that represented different cultural sectors and artistic languages. The inquiry was announced via email and made available in a site. Subjects were informed about the goals of the study and of the anonymous and confidential nature of the data gathered. The inquiry was composed of ten open-ended questions that were, subjected to content analysis.

The instruments to data gathering (focus group questions, inquiries) were organized in three categories: perception about the degree; identification of what is perceived as a suited conceptual and methodological framework; and the role of the artistic and cultural mediator in social professional contexts. More detailed information about the nature of the questioning is in Table 1.

**Table 1- Focus group and inquiry categories**

<b>Question's categories concerning the degree</b>	<b>Question's categories concerning the theoretical and conceptual framework</b>	<b>Question's categories concerning the Artistic and cultural mediator role</b>
Expectations Students preparation / previous knowledge / background Aspects to improve Valued aspects in the training process; Significant learning	Artistic and cultural mediation definition Identification of ACM theoretical framework Identification of ACM methodological framework	Intervention dimensions Profile of the mediator The relation between ACM and communities ACM role in society ACM role in institutions

### **Students focus group: data analysis**

The results of the students' focus group revealed that, concerning the degree, they didn't have specific expectations regarding the course's contents or prospective employment places: "Student A: I didn't have a clear notion of what cultural mediation was." Some students referred that they were attracted

to the “artistic dimension” of the degree and others mentioned the “relevant role that the internships played in the selection of the course”.

Considering the conceptual and theoretical framework, students revealed that the notions of cultural democracy and cultural democratization were the most relevant to them. Subjects regarding cultural policies as a whole were also mentioned as a significant part of their training process. Finally, the mediator role was debated, and several aspects emerge. The students declared that: as a professional, an artistic and cultural mediator should be aware of the cultural offer and attend a variety of events, as stated by the student A and AM:

Student A: we read several texts on what is culture, what is art, and other subjects, such as, culture democracy and cultural policies (. . .) I think that the mediator really has to follow the creative process so that he can transmit something to the public. If we go to the internet, we can access all the information but what is interesting is to show what lies behind the curtains, what the public can't see. I think that's what we have to show.

Student AM: My example: when I first came to ESELx, I was lazy to go and see things. It wasn't about the money or the time it took (. . .) because the teachers made us go to visit cultural events, we now talk on Facebook and plan to go see some events. I think the degree gave us an urge to see things because, as we see things we are learning and building ideas and relating that with our future job. I think that was the main change I saw in myself. I'm not lazy anymore.

According to the students, the mediator should also have the resources to act as an audience developer establishing specific strategies and goals that should result from a differential diagnosis performed to the agents involved in the process. The mediator should be a professional able to develop skills that enable him/her to work with different audiences, with different needs, and the ability to reflect and adjust the mediation process:

Student D: I think that mediation is a place where the mediator enables the link between the public, the object, but is not about explaining but creating a space where the public can think and reflect, can construct their thinking on what is being seen. The mediator is the

person who helps to reach that point without forcing or directing, without the idea of wrong or right. Each person, from their own experiences, and the public will get from the experience whatever is meaningful for them.

In summation, students emphasize the importance of knowing and participate in the cultural offer of a given territory; the ability to help to educate the public; the ability to adjust the way of working with specific audiences and the capacity to reflect on the matters that are being worked.

### **Teachers' inquiry: data analysis**

In order to affirm artistic and cultural mediation as a formal interventional field, it is important to understand if every agent involved in the training process has the same understanding of what artistic and cultural mediation is and, in that sense, teachers' perceptions are relevant to imprint coherence in the training process.

When inquired, teachers used words as “translator; mediator; proximity; interaction; intervention” to define their understanding of Artistic and Cultural Mediation. Answers pointed towards the idea of “a construction between social and artistic spheres” and a “relation between publics and artistic processes”. Content analysis revealed that there is a general notion that the mediator has a dialectic agency on both artistic objects/artists and audiences, but there is not a final definition to the nature of work that is developed by the ACM: “a very comprehensive area in the artistic and cultural domains” (Subject 3). Also present, was the idea of Mediation as intervention – “Intervention model that articulates two concepts - democratization and cultural democracy – depending on the audiences' specificity” (Subject 9). Despite the variety of replies, teachers converge on the idea the mediator as a facilitator between audiences, artistic and cultural objects. This perception reflects on what teachers identify with being the role of the mediator: a professional that intervenes in different levels of the social, cultural and educational spheres and also in different institutions (private and public) societies contexts the social context.

It is interesting to understand that most teachers assume that Artistic and Cultural Mediation isn't allocated to a specific scientific or artistic area but results of the intersection between social sciences and arts. Social sciences theoretical concepts provide bases to mediators reflect on what their action

could be or should be. On the other hand, elements regarding the artistic domain, such as aesthetic movements, history of art, understanding artistic techniques, are necessary to dialogue with artists and communicate their intentions to the audiences and vice-versa. The need for a knowledge that extends from social sciences to art, is also mentioned by the faculty when asked about the professional profile that an artistic and cultural mediator should have. Professors state that the mediator should have good communication skills, creativity, leadership, management skills, capacity to navigate different methodological strategies, solid knowledge on cultural policies, funding programs, a network for potential partners, capacity to work in interdisciplinary teams, be proactive and capable of adapting to different circumstances:

“The artistic and cultural mediator should have in-depth theoretical knowledge about mediation, art, culture, cultural policies, cultural democracy, among other [concepts]; methodological knowledge of conception and development of mediation, according with the guide lines of cultural programs and projects (national, European and from other countries); development of networks and partnerships; communication skills (with different actors and in different spheres / contexts) and in different supports (face-to-face, technological supports, etc.); definition of projects and intervention plans; development of team work; analysis of different information (legislation, statistics, etc.); systematic research around the areas related to your work.” (Subject 2).

Thus, there is a common understanding that, as a professional, the mediator can act on diverse social, cultural, educative, management and artistic spaces. There is not a consensus, among the teachers, about what a mediator should or can do and, at the limit, he/she can do virtually everything in the cultural sector, considering the argument of the Subject 2. An explanation for this conception, of what a mediator is or does, may be influenced by the degree's study plan. When asked what they most value in the Artistic and Cultural Mediation training in ESELx, teachers are consistently mentioning the diversity of course units available to students, as well as the possibility to have different internships throughout the three years.

Although there are several positive aspects identified in the plan of the course, teachers also identified some weaknesses. The most mentioned is the need for

coordination between different teachers and the subjects they teach. This aspect is in line with the wide dispersion of content that can lead to a perception of lack of coherence in the study plan presented: “Greater (effective) curricular integration within the study plan.” (subject 1). It is also mentioned by some respondents, the importance of having a space to establish what is meant by Artistic and Cultural Mediation at the beginning of the degree: “Reinforcement of the framework around Artistic and Cultural Mediation at the beginning of the course (1st semester / 1st year);” (subject 2); “Reinforce, at the entrance of the course, the theoretical framework that guides the course in the field of MAC.” (subject 8).

Regarding the relationship that the mediator should have with the communities with whom and for whom he/she works, the words "proximity", "availability", "empathy" and "respect" are mentioned in a consensual way. This is one of the (few) aspects that seem to be clear about those that should be the skills to be acquired and/or developed for the Mediator.

The analysis of the responses of the professors, despite not fully representing the degree faculty, are relevant since they give a perspective on the diversity of ideas that exist about mediation and the exercise of the mediator. This information is relevant to the degree's reevaluation process, alerting for the need to define more concretely those that are intended to be the subjects and fields for reflection and intervention in Artistic and Cultural Mediation.

### **Institutional partners inquiry: data analysis**

Cultural and artistic institutions and producers represent one of the cornerstones associated with the exercise of Artistic and Cultural Mediation. In that sense, and in order to guarantee a training that takes into account the understanding that cultural agents (organizations or artists) have of Artistic and Cultural Mediation we collected the perception of a group of institutional partners (institutions with which ESELx has an internship protocol) about Artistic and Cultural Mediation and the role of the mediator.

When asked how they defined the MAC, “audiences” are consistently present in the presented definition. Aside that, there is a very broad and vague conception of that definition: “Actions that in the fields of management, production, education and communication, with the intent to bring audiences and cultural activities together. Consist of processes that promote the best possible use of the aesthetic, intellectual and social experience inherent to the cultural universe - culture as an intrinsic element of people's daily lives and

citizenship, as a tool at the service of society.” (subject 1). Into an extent, it is present the idea that Artistic and Cultural Mediation works as a mechanism for attracting or captivating audiences for these institutions/artists, in a univocal perspective - institution/artist - public - which leaves out the public's influence or participation.

When asked directly about the role of the mediator in society, only one of the respondents mentions that the professional exercise of mediation may be related to the exercise of a more active and conscious citizenship through artistic fruition and participation: “It has a fundamental role in that it reinforces the production of social welfare, involving communities in artistic experimentation, stimulating critical thinking and contributing to the creation of the city and citizenship.” (subject 5). The remaining respondents refer that the Artistic and Cultural Mediation exercise is essentially a technical activity of carrying out tasks of dissemination, communication and education of audiences: “It can intervene in the areas of the dissemination of artistic activity, education, social action and health, namely in the executive implementation of cultural projects that are constituted with these focuses.” (subject 1); “Bridging cultural activities and the public.” (subject 2); “Facilitator but participatory and well prepared” (subject 3); “Reinforcement of communication, relationship and inter-multi-trans culture” (subject 4); “Sociocultural, formative-pedagogical, organizational, creative dimension” (subject 6). These responses indicate that there is a discrepancy between those who are the founding principles of the degree in Artistic and Cultural Mediation and the type of professional to be trained, and the understanding that cultural institutions have of this professional. The perspective of cultural democracy, one of the pillars of the training, does not seem to be represented in the responses obtained. Despite this, when asked about the relationship that the mediator should have with the communities, the answers refer, almost unanimously, that it must be a relationship of proximity, dialogue and trust, thus pointing to a notion of civic participation that is born from the contact with the mediator.

Notwithstanding having related the role of the mediator to the exercise of performing tasks, when asked about the type of skills that these professionals should have, institutional partners identify competences of a theoretical nature, in various areas of knowledge, with little reference to the need for mastery of intervention-action methodologies: “Preferential training in several areas: theory and artistic practices, pedagogical and management aspects of the arts.” (subject 4); “Philosophy-aesthetics, History of culture and the arts, formal and informal Pedagogy, Sociology and Anthropology, Languages, Cultural Production with project management, fundraising, cultural and artistic

programming.” (subject 6). It is interesting to note that the reflective dimension, which could be supported by a theoretical and conceptual framework evoked by the partner entities, is not evoked in the answers given. Also, the methodological basis that must underlie the executive dimension of the mediator (which is referred to as being one of the mediator's functions) is not mentioned in the answers given to the question “What theoretical, conceptual and/or practical principles should an artistic and cultural mediator master?”. However, they recognize as an added value of higher education training, the ability to converge knowledge, techniques and skills of very diverse nature in favour of audiences and institutions.

Partner institutions were also asked about what professional spaces for an artistic and cultural mediator could be. The answers revealed that public organizations (municipalities, museums, theatres, schools, cultural centres, etc.) and cultural institutions of a private nature (galleries, artistic creators) were the most frequently identified: “Institutions dedicated to social intervention, whether public or private, such as civil councils or private associations, social responsibility actions within business corporations. Also as partners of artistic creators and cultural production institutions, in the field of public relations, design and implementation of projects” (subject 1). In these institutions, the roles that respondents believe could be played by mediators are varied: production, communication, promotion, raising audiences, developing projects and activities: “Communicate and organize awareness actions for the enjoyment of cultural rights (social, civic, etc.), attract viewers and audiences by informing them, sensitizing them and accompanying them in actions, activities and shows”. (subject 6). It seems, therefore, that the public assumes a secondary role in what is the action of cultural institutions.

The present sample is small and unrepresentative of the ESELx institutional partners, thus making it impossible to generalize conclusions. Nevertheless, the elements presented allow us to reflect on the existing gap between those that are the conceptual training principles associated with the degree and those that are the conceptions and expectations of potential employers.

## **Final remarks**

It is interesting to note that the idea of mediation often underlies the presence of a conflict. In the case of Artistic and Cultural Mediation, this conflict seems to reside in the public's withdrawal from cultural spaces, but also, in a divergence in the expectations of the various agents that are involve in the

process of creating the space for the performance of artistic and cultural mediators. The results we have presented seem to indicate that, among the various actors that are part of this relationship - public, institutions / artists, trainers and future mediators, there are different understandings of what is Artistic and Cultural Mediation and about the role of the Mediator. The dimension of social intervention, which is at the basis of the course design, is not always evident to the partner entities and to the teachers themselves. Also, expectations about those that should be the mediators' knowledge and skills, do not always seem to be in agreement. There is consistency around the idea that the mediator should be able to put a plan into action, but there are no insights on how he/she should do so, i.e., the methodological model, is not referred nor identified. On the other hand, the results show that teacher and future employers expect mediators to have a deep and diversified theoretical and conceptual knowledge that should be used to communicate ideas to the audiences but not to reflect and adjust the mediation process. However, there is a point of sharing between all the elements that constituted this exploratory study: the idea that Artistic and Cultural Mediation is made of an area of intersection of knowledge and competences.

The dispersion of ideas about Artistic and Cultural Mediation found in this exercise, seems to reside in the different intentions and objectives associated with cultural and artistic practices. It is important, throughout the process of affirming this area of action, to seek a space in which it is possible to reconcile the different expectations about what the Artistic and Cultural Mediation could be, starting by reflecting about the training that is being offered and understanding if it is taking into account those that are the social demands but also those of future employers. It seems important to invest in such a debate emphasizing the crucial role of research and scientific production to create a common vocabulary, methodology, and understanding of what is meant by Artistic and Cultural Mediation and the role of mediators in Portugal.

In Portugal, it seems clear that we are experiencing the evolution of what is consider the mediation process. Thus, all contributions and perspectives regarding this matter are relevant to establish this field of intervention mirroring what is happening in other contexts.

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