

International Conference „Aesthetics of Transformations and the Challenge of Sustainability: Arts Education Research After Globalization“

in cooperation with the UNITWIN-Network „Arts Education Research for Cultural Diversity and Sustainability“.

Akademie für Schultheater und performative Bildung, Nürnberg, 2.-5. Mai 2018.

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Welcome Address

Dear Colleagues, dear guests and dear friends,

it is my great pleasure and honor to welcome all of you to the second international conference of the UNIWTIN Network „Arts Education Research for Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development“ – also in the name of the *UNESCO Chair in Arts and Culture in Education* of Eckart Liebau, who is co-hosting this conference. I am delighted to welcome our esteemed guests for tonight:

- Prof. Dr. Christoph Wulf, Vice-President of the German UNESCO Commission, who will hold the opening keynote of our conference,
- Prof. Dr. Günter Leugering, Vice-President Research of the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, and
- Mr. Harald Riedel, city councillor of the city of Nuremberg, both of whom will be so kind to give short a welcome address.

I am also delighted to welcome Mrs. Lopez Ennen from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, who will join us in the next days. The ongoing attentiveness of this ministry towards an international view on arts and culture in education is highly appreciated. – Thanks for being with us.

I gratefully welcome our colleagues from all over the world, who made all the travelling efforts in order to join us here at the Academy for School Theatre and

Performative Education. This conference brings together a multitude of distinguished groups and networks in arts education research, namely

- Members of the *UNIWTIN Network „Arts Education Research for Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development“*,
- Members of the *World Alliance for Arts Education*,
- Members of the *Network „Research in Arts Education“ of the European Educational Research Association*,
- Members of the *European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts and Cultural Education*,
- Members of our german *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung, of German Educational Research Association*,
- Colleagues from the *Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nuremberg* and its *Interdisciplinary Centre for Research in Aesthetic Education*.
- *and, last not least, students of our Master of Arts in Pedagogy Degree Program, which kindly agreed to closely follow the talks and discussions in order to secure and reflect upon the outcomes of this conference as part of their students research activities.*

As we are gathered here, in order to share our expertise and experiences, we represent an multitude and diversity of perspectives on the matters of *aesthetic, arts, and cultural education*. Focusing on arts education research for cultural diversity, the UNITWTIN Network reflected upon the *diversity of conceptions of diversity* in arts education throughout the world during its first conference last year in Singapore (watch out for the first volume of the UNIWTIN Yearbook, which is in preparation).

Cultural diversity is not only a subject matter, it is the *basis* of our common work; if not to say, it is maybe our most important resource as arts education researchers in a globalized world. We would probably not sit together here if we

would not share this belief, which is also the basis for the work of the United Nations, and UNESCO in particular.

Now, as the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005) states,

„cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a **mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations**“.

The source of this richness of cultural diversity lies in the *ways of seeing, feeling, perceiving, experiencing and thinking* which originate, emerge and transform not on an individual or institutional, but on a cultural level, as our cultural histories show. Our ways of *being in a world* and *relating to a world and ourselves* are based upon inherited cultural forms of perceiving and knowing. They are passed on through education and socialization in everyday life, and they are essentially staged, refined, reflected and transformed through the aesthetic discourses of the arts.

This is the reason why arts education is central to diversity education, and also to sustainable education: Because in an acceleratedly changing world, the necessity of change and learning processes lies evidently not only on an individual and institutional level, but more so on the level of inherited cultural practices. This kind of change can hardly be enforced by law-making and political measures, it has to be shaped through culture itself. Here are the everyday material practices located, as well as the roots for an ethical attitude towards environmental issues, plus the roots for the aesthetic and aesthetic means to perceive and assess those.

We have thus to think in a much more complex, diversified way about this. In a world „after globalization“, we have learned that cultural change has many faces; it is a matter of utmost complexity. The demand for a „cultural change towards sustainability“ bears completely different implications in different parts and

regions of the world. What may be acceptable or even seem as a necessary measure of empowerment in a postcolonial situation under adverse economical and political conditions, may be completely inappropriate in rich, safe, politically stable and internationally dominant regions of the world. Whatever may contribute to the development of a global, connected thinking in Germany for example – which has, as of this Wednesday, used up its natural resources for this whole year, and apparently does not care too much for this fact – has to start with deeply embedded, culturally specific schemes of perception, common sense, common judgments and beliefs (in this case: concerning life-anxiety and safeguarding patterns; cultural patterns of production, consumption, and accumulation of goods and wealth; the relation of overpowered cars and self-esteem, and so on). It has to connect to these cultural scaffolds of subjectivity, gaining critical distance while at the same time working with the resourceful aspects of these schemes.

For research in arts education, it is crucial to know and recognize the diversities of cultural perceptions of arts and education, *as well as* the huge differences in conditions, interests, goals and institutional structures concerning artistic practice and educational forms and systems. If we ask for the contribution of arts education for sustainable development, we have to firstly ask for its role, potentials and *capacities for cultural change in general* – understood as a change that does not *conquer, but translate and transform* cultural heritages and traditions into a culturally negotiated projection of the future.

Understanding arts as a agent for such non/anti-hegemonial practices of transformation, and *arts education* as an agent for the empowerment towards participation in such processes, may contribute to fostering and sharpening our understanding of the role of arts education for sustainable development. The resulting question: „How may and does arts education contribute to cultural sustainability?“ aims towards the multiple aesthetics of transformation in the arts, the inherent connexion of education and transformation, and finally the intersection of both, of which we will see, hear and discuss many diverse

thoughts and examples in the following days. May it widen and change our professional perceptions, too.

Just a last remark before I give the floor to our Vice-President Research: I'd like to express my deep gratitude to the team of my chair. This conference, from the first brainstorming in 2016 to its final realization, from its theoretical conceptualization to its practical organization, is an effort and achievement of the whole team, which by the way will also be hosting the conference sessions and field trips in Nuremberg in the next days. Huge thanks for this, and thanks in advance to the organization team, most artfully led by Lisa Unterberg.