1. Introduction

This paper aims to join two quite separate research perspectives and methodologies, factually originating in very diverse academic fields. In our knowledge, Philosophy of education and Environmental economics rarely cross their research paths and educational praxis. Nevertheless, or actually for this, the authors found a reciprocal strong incentive to compare their ideas and theses, for the necessity to question the validity of diverse research approaches related to the link between art and education. The paper focuses on contemporary art as the theoretic ground to critically discuss the novelty of artistic ideas and their impact on traditional disciplinary positions. Taking into account a broad socio-educative context, the analysis moves on to explore the nature of spaces such museums as well as the nature of physical or cultural borders invented to divide inner and outer worlds. Is an aesthetic/educative experience meaningful only within a delimited area? Can we say that by posing borders, we are able to improve our art making skills or our teaching competences? The museum space, therefore, symbolizes the porosity of the border between inside and outside, between the self and the other, the familiar and the alien, the right and the improper, referring to soul, body, home and community. The question to raise then is, in view of an educative experience, how difficult should be the accessibility to museums to generate the awareness of an aesthetic feel? The museum represents the force of provocation: one must be learned to enter it and to overcome its border, in order to exit it fully conscious of a meaningful experience.

Along with the theoretical perspectives, the paper also presents the analysis of two case-studies of open-air museums: the Fattoria di Celle (in the province of Pistoia/Tuscany), which hosts one of the most valuable private collections of contemporary art in Tuscany, and the institution Tusciaelecta, which organizes, in the Chianti region, open-air exhibition of notable works of contemporary art.

2. Contemporary art is really art

One of the characteristics of contemporary art is to establish a relationship with the observer whose intervention is so necessary to the success of the work itself. More than in past times, the responsibility of the final work is shared between the author and his/her audience. It is customary to place the beginning of contemporary art since the end of World War II, but the changes and revolutions of the language of art can be found in the revolutions implemented in the course of the twentieth century, beginning with the first historical avant-garde, even if among critics this is an
ongoing and intriguing issue for theoretical disputes. In fact, starting from the early avant-garde, the language of art has undergone a strong shock: some rules of the classical tradition have been changed and other completely eliminated. In the representation is abandoned the principle of imitation (*mimesis*), introducing everyday materials in the construction of the works, as well as using new technologies. Artists begin to detach from the public and with the manifestations of the Dadaists openly declare war to the immediate comprehension of the work. The main idea was to wow the bourgeois (*épater les bourgeois*), to oppose to a ruling class but also to an artistic technique that bordered academicism and a compliant repetition. The advent of modern art in the Western world produces important consequences also at the sociological level, as it divides the audience through a reduced number of people favorable to it, and a large majority decidedly hostile to it. The work of art acts as a social power generator of two antagonistic groups, almost separating and selecting two human castes. The avant-garde art, therefore, is, more explicitly than in that past, not addressed to everybody but aims to a particularly gifted minority.

Starting with the second post-war, the attempt of the artist changes again in favor of a renewed relationship with the observer, making him/her to participate in the success of the work. The category of beauty is so replaced by the concept of being interesting that adds an intellectual component to the work of art. The work is no longer perceived for its beauty, but for its ability to stimulate the senses and the mind. The work of art becomes an object at the maximum metaphorical concentration. The idea becomes itself the object and the purpose of the aesthetic experience.

The contemporary work of art leads us to question our relationship with reality, requires a practice of knowledge that intends to investigate the comprehension of reality. In this way, the observer of art is no longer a mere spectator, but s/he becomes the user, assuming a more active role in relation to the work of art. The world, through art, is no longer shown, is quite experienced. The recipient becomes a *responsible contributor* to the sense of the aesthetic text in its unity that is structured at different levels. A text that has to ensure the right balance between known and unknown mechanisms to make the aesthetic experience valuable as such: it’s grounded on traditional codes while breaks their predictability. The work of art no longer exists as an object, but as an action; no more eternal, but precarious; no longer made of a single material, but of different and varied materials; no longer achieved through traditional techniques, but in new or mixed ways. The work is not any more an objective masterpiece and even less the objective witness of a destined vocation of the author. Its value is recognized within the artistic and existential project of those who have put it in place.

The collapse of truths, which opened the twentieth century, has resulted in the dissolution of the standards also in the field of art and has produced a breakthrough in its language. The complexity of society expresses a number of theories that contributed to destabilize and corrode convictions and certainties. The consequences of this evolution led art to deconstruct its key moments, often reducing the artwork almost to a degree zero. Traditional artwork techniques are complemented by new visual and performative grammars. The artist is now an author who, no longer focuses on the manual activity, since s/he almost works like an architect or a film director. It thus art moves its priority to the form, understood as the priority of the idea. The new artistic inspiration, seemingly outlandish, goes along paths addressing the will to stylize, the will to de-concretize the warp of reality. 

3. Highlights on Contemporary Art

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The historical starting point of contemporary art is still under the critic debate. The passage from ‘modernity’ to ‘contemporaneity’ is not a simple and linear pathway and we are obliged to choose a particular and subjective viewpoint. As enlightening guide in the complex relations between modernity and contemporaneity, we can follow the suggestion of the Italian art critic Renato Barilli about the 'homology' of facts which occur in separate realms nearly in the same time, but beyond the traditional dividing of history time. In other terms, the rise of contemporary art can be linked to the technical innovations of electromagnetism and media, both of which claim a new language which can be abstract and not necessarily the mimesis of the reality.

“[…] the contemporary abstraction arises when you realize that the distances are now easily passable in a single bound, and thus no longer a nagging problem. In addition, you cannot fail to recall that, in the contemporary era always survives a very effective technique to get a true representation of the external and measurable world: photography. It happens a sort of exchange of delegations, the cameras are called upon to continue to “represent” the physical reality, according to the canons not very different from those followed in the course of many centuries engaged in a slavish mimicry and perspective. [...] But, then, artists have realized that [it were] better to let the photographic medium to perpetuate the true and mimetic mode of vision while they have to think now the yardstick of the new energies inherent in electromagnetism, in a homologous relations, with a strictly formal compliance, with the directions that arose”.  

“Within a media system considered as a transcendent form adopted by a whole historical period, in other words, at the time of the practice of a general technology, it is possible to find a homology, an identification, between each part. The operators are committed to proceed in the innovation and in the construction of a new ‘language’.”

The traditional cult of representing reality is over since contemporaneity erases the concept itself of representing something from the world into a surface. The duality of real world and its representation has no more significance. The artist can wander around between objects and manipulate them, using the technique of Duchamp's ready-mades, just as the diffusive electromagnetic energy freely circulates, not restrained within fixed extents.

Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades are ordinary things which the artist selected, modified, repositioned and signed as an antidote to what he called ‘retinal art’4. He was no more interested in art that is only visual, seeking other methods of expression. He selected the pieces on the basis of ‘visual indifference’ reflecting his sense of irony, humor and ambiguity.

We report a dialogue between Pierre Cabanne and the artist:

“Cabanne: What determined your choice of ready-mades?
Duchamp: That depended on the object. In general, I had to beware, at the end of fifteen days, you begin to like it or hate it. You have to approach something with indifference, as if you had no aesthetic emotion. The choice of ready-mades is always based on visual indifference and, at the same time, on the total absence of good or bad taste.
Cabanne: What is taste for you?”

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2 Barilli R., Il materialismo storico culturale di fronte all’arte moderna e contemporanea, AdVersuS, VI-VII, 16-17, dicembre 2009-abril 2010, p. 57 and 58.
3 Barilli R., Il materialismo storico culturale di fronte all’arte moderna e contemporanea, op. cit., p. 47.
Duchamp: A habit. The repetition of something already accepted. If you start something over several times, it becomes taste. Good or bad, it’s the same thing, it’s still taste”. 5

The absolute relevance and theoretical importance of Duchamp's work for future conceptualists was later acknowledged by American artist Joseph Kosuth in his 1969 essay, Art after Philosophy, when he wrote: “All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually”. 6

The gesture of Duchamp causes, indeed, a disorientation in the viewer because the function so far attributed to an object is suddenly suspended, put in parentheses. This episode marks the beginning of all the provocations: derides and at the same time celebrates the creation of art through its opposite. An object recognized as banal and quotidian, is abruptly perceived as estranged. This new perception is what generates the experience of the sublime. While the acknowledgment of beauty is linked to a sort of understanding of the process that produced the feelings of order and harmony, the sublime appears when there is a suspension of language, a fluctuation of sense, just at the very moment when utterances are about to occur. Contemporary art, in fact, characterizes itself not through the denial of artistic techniques, nor by the elimination of previous languages, but through their dilatation. Artwork expands in space (environmental art), absorbs of the variables of movement (kinetic art) and the rhythm of time (happenings and performances).

4. Aesthetic experience and museum experience through contemporary theories

To discuss the perception of work of art, it seems appropriate to recall the point of view of John Dewey as expressed in Art as Experience (1934). 7 According to Dewey, the appreciation of a work of art is not a theoretical act, but a practical one. The work of art is not simply an object, because the ability to create a relationship with the viewer, becomes experience for the observer him/herself. Dewey underlines as the distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic, as well as between perception and enjoyment derived from the act of production, is exceeded since the work of art is a whole of experience of doing and enjoying in progress. The artist as s/he works embodies the attitude of the perceiver, so the aesthetic experience is closely linked to the experience of creating. The process of artistic production is organically connected to the aesthetic perception. The artist continues to shape until s/he is satisfied with the projectual perception of such a process. At each stage there is an anticipation of what is about to occur: the construction ends only when the product is experienced as good and this experience comes through a kind of direct perception. Similarly, for the observer, contemplation is not passive receptivity. It is a process that consists of a series of reagents acts that accumulate in the direction of an objective contentment, otherwise there is no perception but recognition. In recognition there is the application of some preformed scheme, while the perception is a reconstructive act. In the perception of the object, the viewer is filled with emotion and in this way s/he feels to create her/his own experience according to her/his point of view and interest. On the part of the perceiver, as of the artist, there is an action. The work of art

involves the viewer because it generates in her/him a feeling, but as long as s/he does not believe in what is sensing, there is no true act of expression. The work of art is not a neutral object, but an object that creates a belief. The approach to the work of art, then must be not only theoretical but also practical, experiential. The user is no longer an outside observer, but is attracted toward the work of art and therefore its judgment is not that of an outer visitor, but of an actor of the work itself.

It follows that the cultivation of aesthetic faculties requires to be performed within spaces and times where the consumer can engage her/his skills in acquiring knowledge. Such a (per)formative process may occur through the experience of museums. Museum provides the opportunity to expose the visitor to the power of estrangement of ‘instants of art’, in full awareness that this same estrangement, acts on her/his perceptions and knowledge.

Museums can be approached and understood as a contingent document that may be constituted of multiple and discontinuous historical series. According to Michel Foucault, museum is assumed essentially as a heterotopia or space of difference. Heterotopia of time that accumulates indefinitely, heterochrony.

“[…] the idea of accumulating everything, the idea of constituting a sort of general archive, the desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside time and protected from its erosion, the project of thus organizing a kind of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in a place that will not move—well, in fact, all of this belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are characteristics of western culture in the nineteenth century.”

The gallery space is part of the porosity of the border between inside and outside, between the self and the other, the familiar and the alien, the right and the improper, referring to the space of the soul, of the body, home, community. The museum becomes a critical off-site, not a heterotopia of exclusion, but a disorienting and, at the same time, relational heterotopia. Fluid space and space of intervention, ‘contact zone’ (Mary Louise Pratt), because converge in it many places, stories and alive existential paths.

Museum represents a system of applying concepts to objects, and is a space for presenting, reflecting upon and contesting the relation between concepts and things. Museums are fundamentally not for the objects but for the act of representation, and anything that operates as a space of representation can be called museum.

Understanding a museum as space of representation is an extension of understanding it as a heterotopia. The museum is a space of difference not only in the spatial sense of bringing objects together, but primarily in the sense of the difference inherent in its content. Since the content of the museum is interpretation, the difference is also the space between objects and conceptual systems applied to decode their meanings. As a space of representation, the museum is a space of difference. As Foucault says, museum is not a storehouse of objects from different times, but an experience of the gap between things and the conceptual and cultural orders in which they are interpreted. All museums reveal this difference inherent to interpretation.

Because museum is a space of representation, that puts on display the problem of relating words to things, the museum ‘undermines language’ and performs a kind of discursive analysis. Like in


discursive analysis, museum displays systems of representation and reveals the bodies of rules that are used to bind words and things together. It is, in fact, a place of narrative trajectories where no object can live in complete solitude. Therefore, within a museum the visitor moves according to a precise path, where every room has the role of a separate chapter, but in which they all contribute to the unfolding of the main plot. The museum empowers the visitor a keener use of her/his critical autonomy to question reality. Therefore, museum is at the same time an extensive and intensive place of care for specific signs and their syntax, which enhances a phenomenological model in which the world it is not only perceived but inferred. As any literary text, it can be conceived as a historical act, in the sense of ‘structure of appeal’ with which the performer interacts according to her/his previous experience. As place of confrontation that interacts with the community in which it is inserted, museum can contribute to the evolution of the same social context. As noted by Foucault, progress is not necessarily progress of ‘total history’, nor a teleological progress towards a goal or ideal; it is, rather, progress as the growth of capabilities -within a social community- to criticize and transgress cultural systems that cast power relations among historical events as fixed and necessary. Accordingly, memory carried on through museum is configured as a form of intervention on the contemporary world: memory is considered in its trans-historicity, as a necessity to which we refer to understand cultural processes not limited and crystallized in their specificity. Museum expresses the sense of contemporary and global memory, experienced as the transaction among places and times. Therefore, museum contains past and present by displacing and reconstructing them, and in so doing it admits and makes grasp the consistency of thought.

5. A Specific Phenomenology of Contemporary Museums: Park and Private Grounds

In the 20th century, museum has evolved into a space—walled or open air—for the interactivity between the viewers and the objects, through a concept of design placing equal emphasis on both the user and the object. Nevertheless, from the point of view of fruition, walled museums differ from open air art collections because to visit some types of the latter one has to sustain or not an access cost, or in term of explicit payment of a ticket or in following the cost of a sort of protocol behavior.

The definition of boundaries, as well as of private and public goods, is strictly linked to the realm of economics, starting from the assumption that museums (as well as education) are commonly (mis)classified as public goods.

Rivalry and excludability in consumption are characteristics of goods that determine their being private or public in economics. Under this approach, actually museums and education have to be technically classified as ‘quasi-public’ goods, because excludability is possible, but they do still fit some of the characteristics of public goods.


Here, we are interested in ‘boundaries’ as they are human (physical and symbolic) artifacts that produce privatization of goods imposing a cost of access.

The word ‘environment’ literally indicates what is surrounding one person and means also the natural world, as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity. The human perception is more clearly involved when we use the word ‘landscape’, that means all the visible features of an area of countryside or land, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal. The person ‘watching’ the visible landscape actually creates it, that, therefore, is an ambiguous and subjective topic. Strictly, a ‘park’ is not a ‘garden’, in the sense that it might be a large public area, in a town, or a wildlife park in the countryside, while a garden (from the French jardin, and the Italian giardino) means a fenced area, mostly closed to a private house. The French term paysage, and the Italian paesaggio, deriving from the Latin pangere (to stick a pole in the ground and establish boundaries, even an agreement or a wedding promise) includes the idea of enclosure.

The discussion on park is thus the discussion on the human establishment of fences, boundaries and enclosures. The modern sense of ‘park’ consists in the idea of conservation of nature and it can be easily joined to the notion of protected natural areas, with no or the least human intervention in cultivation and farming. On the contrary, a garden is a piece of ground fenced in order to avoid the free entrance (initially in the human history, cattle and people) for the private use by the appropriator (the owner). Generally it is cultivated with more or less aesthetic intentions.

The words -from different languages- garden, yard, garten, jardin, giardino, hortus, paradise, paradiso, park, parc, parquet, court, hof, kurta, town, tun, and tuin all derive from the act of enclosing outdoor space. The word forest itself (the Latin forestis silva indicates the woods outside the city doors) claims the meaning of separation and enclosure.

The enclosure of outdoor space is not a recent item, but often the expression refers the enclosure of land in the topic time in the XVI century in England, originating both political and economic discourses and theoretical confrontations about privatization of land and productivity. In order to divide private from public goods, the best way was to imposing a border, a fence, a pole, allocating to more efficient and productive individuals (or families).

Afterwards, the hedges started also in working symbolically being both a “sign” and a material barrier. It materialized private property’s right to exclude. We can consider the hedge as a symbol of boundary.

In an open air art museum the role of hedges (even the green plantations of boundaries) are thus a very intriguing issue to be discussed.

For all this above, we can formulate a discussion on which is the role of a hedge/boundary in a contemporary art park, trying to enlighten the topic illustrating the case studies of private

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Farmhouse Villa di Celle contemporary art collection in Pistoia (Italy), and Tusciaelecta, collective organization of open air and site specific collections and masterpieces of art in the Chianti region (Italy).

6. The mutating nature of borders in two open-air museums

Our case studies of open-air museums are the Fattoria di Celle (Celle Farm) which hosts the most important private collection of contemporary art in Tuscany, in the province of Pistoia, and Tusciaelecta, which is a collective organization of open air and site specific collections and pieces of art in the Chianti region.

The cases have been performed by gathering information from literature and specialized journals and newspapers as well as spending time interviewing both the owner of the Celle Farm collection and the director of Tusciaelecta during the month of January 2014. Here follows the report of the interviews.

The Celle Farm hosts a private collection of site-specific art since the 1980s. The land property sits on a hill overlooking the central Tuscan plain, far 35 kilometers from Florence and five kilometers from Pistoia. The collection hosts only invited international artists with their site-specific installations, some still in progress. The owner’s choice is selective oriented to artists striving to renew contemporary art. The family is an art collector since many decades expanding art property from the previous house in Prato to the present location in Celle. Commissioning artworks in open space is a focus goal in order to understand how contemporary artists might respond to a new kind of commission where space would become an integral part of the artwork and no longer be used as a simple container for art. In addition to its permanent collection, the Celle Farm also promotes temporary projects and exhibitions.

In the following, our attention is paid more to the accessibility of the art collection in the open space of Celle Farm. Requests for visiting are very numerous coming from all over the world. The collection may be visited by appointment on weekdays from mid-April to September 30, excluding national holidays and a period in August. The visit is free of charge, strictly guided and the visitors must respect a behavioral protocol. At the booking, they are advised that visit lasts 3-4 hours in a long open-air hike, and comfortable walking shoes are advised. It is not possible to use mobile phones during the visit neither to shorten the time of tour or interrupt it. Individuals or small groups are often scheduled together according to the language spoken, English or Italian. Punctuality for the arranged appointment is essential in order not to keep the other members of the group waiting. People coming with large busses are awarded to have an additional walk because the bus parking is far away the park gate.

Tusciaelecta has been promoted in 1996 by the Municipalities of Barberino Val d'Elsa, Impruneta, San Casciano Val di Pesa e Greve in Chianti, Castellina in Chianti, Gaiole in Chianti, Radda in Chianti, San Casciano Val di Pesa, and Florence, in collaboration with the Region of Tuscany, Province of Florence and Siena, and Tourism Promotion Agencies of Florence and Siena.

The original intention was quite explicit for the establishment of an action of public art, designed to produce a model for redefining the landscape and urban fabric through the insertion of contemporary art in Chianti. The exhibition has been conceived in 1996 by Fabio Cavallucci and Sergio Bettini.

Since its first edition till today, Tusciaelecta has invited more than fifty artists to visit the towns involved, and design work that intervenes in the territory with the objective to build a meaningful relationship between art and the place, through installation of site-specific pieces of art. The
original declared intention was to go beyond the aesthetic sphere in the more conventional sense of the term for advancing the social dimension, through the exchange with the public and with the energies of local production. The major aim of a territorial art project is to integrate artifacts and places and to consider the territory itself as the necessary precondition of the aesthetic expression, giving sense to the production of art.

In accordance to this assumption, after 2002/2003, the project involved more extensively the territory, avoiding the placement of art works in beautiful places’, often private and away from everyday life and focusing instead on public squares and main streets of the promoting Municipalities.

The audience became wider, opening up to a possible relationship not only with the visitors of the exhibitions and the many tourists who visit the Chianti area, but also with the residents. The aim is therefore to have site-specific works interfering in everyday life, and offering non stereotypical images of the postcard Tuscan landscape. The challenge is to create a new landscape constellation that joins the alien art work with the daily social, aesthetic, and cultural behaviors of the inhabitants.

Since 2004, Tusciaelecta has been adapting its goals by introducing a digital work which, of course, doesn’t physically interfere with the territory, but is capable of virtually infiltrating in the website of Tusciaelecta. The work is interactive, mobilizing the traditional audience-work relation as well focusing the visitors’attention on all the involved territory, even if not allocated in the physical and administrative area of the Municipalities. In more recent year the goal of Tusciaelecta has been to promote the most strict relation between places (including residents) and visitors. Thus, the organization promoted the installation of site-specific artworks to be permanently hosted in the territory. This would be a revisiting of the public intervention in commissioning art oriented not only to the specificity of art production, but to the opportunity to rethink both the awareness of living and the building of being in relations with the social community within contemporaneity. The very ambitious goal is to origin new forms of landscape, in a constellation of landscapes made by the conjunction of the artwork -an alien body- with the normal daily life of people and their social, cultural and aesthetic behaviors.

The following are two exemplary cases of supplying art and education by private and public institution in quite different patterns.

The Celle Farm gives the audience the possibility to visit an open-space museum but imposing some non-explicit costs of access. The visitors sustain the cost of traveling to the location of the museum in term of monetary expenditure and a non monetary cost, in term of respecting a behavioral protocol. The Celle Farm collection of artworks is then to be considered as a private good settled in a private ground whose owner doesn’t accept money for the access but requires a strict behavioral protocol that is actually a psychological cost. This is a non-monetary barrier for the free access, limiting and rationing the supplied good. People receive an increasing of ‘culture’ and ‘education’ through the fruition of an artistically oriented landscape- which is a positive externality, free of payments, making then possible the definition of museum as a quasi-public good.

The Tusciaelecta exposition is, on the contrary, the supply of a public good produced by public institution and it may be considered as the landscape itself from an economic point o view, i. e. a public good, because there is no rivalry and excludability in consumption.

The two institutions clearly aims at improving the cultural formation of visitors and their own wellbeing. In the first case the private owner increases her/his egoistic satisfaction by enhancing her/his reputation, in the second one, the Municipalities and other public bodies actually make a territorial promotion for tourists and residents. The initiative is largely welcome by local communities, both residents and companies.
7. Concluding considerations

Open-air museums are both leisure and educational items. In a diverse way than walled museums, they actually have different kinds of boundaries. There are cases of free access and free fruition of leisure (and education), similarly to the case of free enjoyment of landscape during a tourism trip. This is the case of public intervention in landscaping with contemporary art in the experience of *Tusciaelecta*. Residents and visitors can enjoy art pieces simply traveling and looking around, but only entering the ‘cultural’ border they can improve their knowledge and education level. Otherwise, there are cases in which the private owner of a contemporary art park, even without imposing an access monetary fee, pretends the respect of a certain behavior, that is a psychological ‘ticket’ to pay to have leisure and education. This is the case of the Celle Farm art exhibition. In any case the ‘educational border’ necessitates an active participation to be crossed by users.

The two cases confirm education as a costly activity for the users, even when it appears to be freely accessible, still necessitates, to be effective, the positive participation of users. Educative spaces always structure borders between being inside or outside an ‘educated community’. The action of crossing these borders is always a free but costly decision, even if education is designed as costless by public policies. Walled and open-air museums are both *heterotopian* places, where a particular form of aesthetic education takes place. No one can be educated without being willing to enter the border that separates ‘normal’ places from ‘different’ ones. This formative experience occurs poignantly by participating in the educational aesthetic project, within the contemporary art world, where languages and practices revolutionized the usual sense of making and perceiving aesthetic objects. With the gradual overcoming of the questioning of the disciplinary canons and the subsequent exploration of any possibility of formal language, art and its educative projection are undergoing a profound transformation of roles and motivations. Art, on the one hand, increasingly more freed - even from the limits imposed from the traditional museum site - becomes the protagonist of spatial formulations motivated by many different physical contexts; education on the other hand, is especially called to question the relationship between the characteristics of stability and representation of knowledge and the dynamics of the context of reality, whether physical or virtual.