

THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION MOVEMENT (CTM) PROJECT REFLECTION WORKSHOP #2

Unlearning the status quo!

TEH Camp Meeting 96 'Reboot'

Friday, October 6, 2023, 3:00 - 4:00 pm

Venue: Class Room, Fabrika Tbilisi

Report by:

Laura Camacho Salgado - Main Artistic Facilitator, CTM project

TEH Camp Meeting 96 'Reboot' took place between Thursday, October 5, 2023, and Sunday, October 8, 2023 and hosted by Fabrika Tbilisi, Georgia.

About the TEH Camp Meeting:

After the turbulent years we have experienced on political, economic, ecological, and social fronts, we believe it is essential to take a pause, gather together, and engage in introspection and collective dialogue on how we can REBOOT.

About the CTM project:

Cultural Transformation Movement (CTM) project is a context-based process to diversify artistic production and its destination starting from within the organization. It is led by Trans Europe Halles with four of TEH members, Brunnenpassage from Austria, VIERNULVIER from Belgium, Zo centro culture contemporanee from Italy, IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives from Ukraine. With the Cultural Transformation Movement project, we are taking real steps, making genuine commitments and openly sharing experiences with the other TEH members about how to make social justice a priority in arts, culture and creative industries.

On Reflection Workshop: Unlearning the status quo

Brief Description

Through a polyphonic exploration guided by Laura Camacho Salgado, the participants of this collective reflection workshop were able to diagnose the current

transnational status quo, highlighting barriers that have marginalized underrepresented voices and bodies. From artistic practices to governance, policymaking, and transcultural competence, the participants explored some of the elements contributing to a more equitable and inclusive cultural sphere.

Based on the collective sharing and listening practices, each participant was able to share insights on their local context. Together it was then possible to build a collaborative map of global experiences and practices that the cultural sector needs to unlearn.

Workshop Rules

Creating a Safe Space: Establishing a secure environment where all voices are valued and respected.

Rules of Understanding

- Listening and Acceptance:** Listening is an act of receptiveness. Participants are encouraged to fully engage in active listening, taking notes, and ensuring others have space to express themselves.
- Balancing Space:** Acknowledging our presence while also making room for others' voices.

Language and Speech

Language Consideration: English serves as the communication medium, but not everyone's mother tongue. Participants are urged to speak clearly and be mindful of language biases, such as gendered language.

Behavior

- Respecting Boundaries:** Encouraging awareness and respect for personal boundaries.
- Zero Tolerance:** Strictly prohibiting any form of bullying, discrimination, or harassment.
- Emotional Openness.**
- Supportive Environment:** Delving into sensitive topics in a non-judgmental, supportive space.

The process

The workshop was divided into two parts. The first part was dedicated to the members of the Cultural Transformation Movement project (AoA or agents of change, CoC or centers of change, as well as project management) that allowed them to create a safe space and to go deeper in the understanding of their positionality and their motivation to be part of this project.

The second part was open to all the TEH conference participants, and fostered a collaborative exercise of mapping the main points that needs to be transformed in the global cultural sector.

First part : Positionality: Who I am Forgetting?

The importance in understanding positionality to unlearn biases: The workshop convened participants from diverse contexts, each with their unique backgrounds and perspectives. Central to the session was an exploration of our positionalities — where we come from and the stances we choose to adopt. This exploration aimed to recognize our boundaries, limitations, and inherent biases.

Outcomes

The session successfully built bridges, enhancing understanding of each other's positions and contexts. Active listening and the creation of safe spaces were instrumental in challenging and reconstructing personal biases. Due to the sensitivity of the topics discussed in the first part of the workshop, the responses to following questions will not be included in the report. As each participant introduced themselves, guided by questions as a discursive map:

- Who am I?
- Whom do I represent?
- Who might I be unintentionally excluding?
- What privileges do I possess?
- What biases might influence my perspectives?

However, participants, both CoC and AoC, shared their positionalities, representation dynamics, and experiences of invisibilization. This fostered a deeper understanding of the local, global, and personal contexts of the project.

Second part : Learning, unlearning and transforming

The second part of the workshop that welcomed external participants – a session open to TEH members. Discussions were structured around three discursive umbrellas: What should stay? What should we unlearn? What should/could we transform?

Outcomes

At the end of Reflection Workshop participants in active group discussions have shared the following ideas:

What Should Stay?

- Openness to Vulnerabilities: Embrace and celebrate our vulnerabilities as avenues for artistic practices and human connection.
- Practices of Care and Thoughtful Inquiry: Foster a culture of care and meticulous questioning that nurtures both artists, audiences, and the entire ecosystem.
- Imagination: Cherish imagination as the cornerstone of artistic exploration.
- Lab Character of a Learning Institution: Fostering a culture of constant dialogue and process learning and unlearning.
- Pace: Embrace a slower, deliberate approach to art and art practices, resisting the neo liberalist status quo. Slowing down as a radical act.
- Concrete Actions: Commit to tangible actions that bring forth societal change and artistic progress.
- Solidarity: Stand together in solidarity, recognizing the strength in unity and collective action.
- Horizontal Relations: Cultivate relationships founded on equality and mutual respect, dismantling hierarchical structures.
- Co-Creation and Co-Curation: Advocate for collaborative practices that transcend individual authorship.
- Memory: Be critical about the past, in order to transform it to shape a more inclusive future. Embrace practices of mattering the unmattered.
- Embracing Mistakes
- Open Networks: Foster open networks that encourage collaboration and inclusivity.

- Urgency in Movement: Acknowledge the urgency of our work within the artistic movement for societal change.
- Freedom to Question: Uphold the freedom to inquire, challenging norms and fostering critical thinking. Learn to listen to the ones that you disagree with.
- Embracing Complexity
- Team Spirit: Cultivate a collaborative spirit that values teamwork and mutual support.
- Process Orientation: Prioritize the journey of creation as much as the final product.
- Openness and Willingness: Maintain an open and willing mindset toward continuous growth and adaptation.
- Critical and Diverse Perspectives: Embrace critical lenses and diversity as integral aspects of artistic discourse and societal change.
- Uphold values that challenge oppressive systems and support inclusivity.

What Should We Unlearn?

- So-called Canons of Art
- Feelings of Powerlessness: Shed the notion of powerlessness, empowering individuals to shape their artistic narratives.
- Patriarchal Structures: Dismantle patriarchal systems .
- (Unspoken) Power Dynamics: Address and dismantle hidden power imbalances within creative spaces.
- Tokenism: Reject token gestures in favor of genuine inclusivity and representation.
- Mindsets and Attitudes: Challenge fixed mindsets and attitudes that hinder progress and creativity.
- Racist and Discriminatory Practices: Condemn and dismantle discriminatory practices within cultural spheres.
- Unhealthy Hierarchies: Transform hierarchical structures into flat equitable systems that value the polyphony of voices.
- Cultural Management Elite: Redefine the notion of cultural management, making it accessible and inclusive.
- Individualistic Thinking: Shift from individualistic mindsets to collaborative and collective approaches.
- Stop the “Business as Usual” rhetoric: Challenge traditional, restrictive working norms and approaches.
- Neoliberal Ideals: Reject neoliberal thinking that prioritizes profit over art and humanity.

- Speed, Efficiency, Pressure: Reframe our approach, prioritizing quality and depth over speed and pressure.
- Fear of Conflict: Embrace conflict as a catalyst for growth and constructive change.
- Integration of Knowledge Silos: Recognize and bridge the gaps between different realms of knowledge and understanding.
- Language for Understanding: Use language not for control but for empathy and understanding. Language to find common grounds.
- Combatting Free Labor: Value and compensate artists for their labor.
- Oppressive Status Quo: Challenge and dismantle structures that perpetuate oppression and inequality.
- Conservatism: Move away from conservative mindsets, embracing progressive change.
- Valuing Cultural Work: Uphold the value of cultural work and its profound impact on society.

What Should/Could We Transform?

- The Entire Ecosystem: Revolutionize the cultural ecosystem as it works right now.
- Neoliberal Marketing Strategies: Redefine marketing strategies to prioritize authenticity and inclusivity over profit.
- Artist-Institution Relations: Foster healthier, more equitable relationships between artists and institutions.
- Public Engagement Beyond Spectatorship: Encourage active participation and engagement beyond passive spectatorship.
- Bridging Discourse and Practice: Align discourse with action, ensuring authenticity and integrity in all endeavors.
- Amplifying Diverse Voices: Listen and amplify diverse voices, ensuring diverse representation.
- Restructuring Decision-Making: Transform decision-making structures for more equitable and inclusive processes.
- Embracing Interdependencies: Recognize and embrace interdependencies within creative processes and communities.
- Reimagining "Bureaucracy": Rethink bureaucratic systems and/or abolish them.
- Artistic Practices: Challenge preconceived notions of "good art," as it comes from colonial, patriarchal and non-inclusive structures.

- Expanding Assumptions About Audiences: Reject limiting assumptions about audiences, embracing diversity in tastes and interests.
- Improving Working Conditions: Advocate for better working conditions and equitable structures within the arts.

Facilitators:

Laura Camacho Salgado - Cultural Transformation Movement project Main Artistic Facilitator

Ceyda Berk-Söderblom, Senior Project Manager and Researcher, CTM project lead at Trans Europe Halles