

THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION MOVEMENT (CTM) PROJECT REFLECTION WORKSHOP #3

Lost in Translation? Cultural Transformation Under Construction

TEH Conference 97 'Arts of Survival'

Friday, May 31, 2024, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Venue: II Floor Meeting Room, Apraaditehas

Report by:

Laura Camacho Salgado - Artistic Transformation Facilitator, CTM project

TEH Camp Meeting 96 'Arts of Survival' took place between Thursday, May 30, 2024, and Sunday, June 2, 2024 and hosted by Apraaditehas in Tartu, Estonia.

About the TEH Conference in Tartu:

We are living in tumultuous times, the world is changing rapidly, and we all must adapt and find ways to survive. What kind of difficulties do (independent) art and culture centers face in these changing times and how will we survive? How can our centers support each other and our communities? The term 'Arts of Survival' encompasses the wisdom, abilities, and principles essential for navigating these difficult times to enjoy a culturally diverse and exciting future.

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: Lost in Translation? Cultural Transformation Under Construction

In an increasingly interconnected cultural sector, the global Anglophone perspective is on the rise. To open the cultural sector to new voices, a linguistic shift is essential. This interactive workshop explored both the politics of mattering and the creative process of translation as tools to challenge barriers.

The workshop emerged from a non-conventional, polyphonic artistic statement crafted by the Agents of Change (AoC). It harnessed the power of questioning to disrupt the status quo in the cultural sector.

Facilitated by Laura Camacho Salgado and the AoCs, participants examined how translation can dismantle hierarchies of power. Whether verbal, non-verbal, or hybrid, translation offers a pathway to amplifying diverse voices and perspectives.

The workshop was divided into two parts. First, participants engaged in an open reading of the statement, followed by a creative translation process, where individuals or groups translated excerpts of the statement into their preferred language or mode of expression. The event culminated in a sharing session, fostering collaboration and dialogue among participants.

Result and conclusions of the Reflection Workshop

As this workshop focused on implementing processes of creative translation and exploring various communication methods, it was process-oriented rather than result-oriented. The exercise raised awareness about active strategies to amplify new voices, such as 1) the art of questioning and 2) the creative translation as a process of understanding.

Key questions included:

- Who are we addressing when communicating?
- Are we communicating with everyone?
- How can open the cultural sector to new voices if we do not use a language to understand each other?

This session was held in person in Tartu, allowing participants and facilitators to share the same physical space, which facilitated deeper connections.

The workshop began with a brief introduction by Camacho Salgado, emphasizing the importance of opening the cultural landscape to different languages. Linguistic representation and language-based accessibility remain underdeveloped. Language can be both a medium and a barrier, and awareness of this duality is fundamental. Welcoming new voices into the cultural sector requires gatekeepers to be prepared to hear these voices in their own languages. The burden often falls on those expected to adapt to the languages of the status quo, both literally and metaphorically.

Following the introduction, participants listened together to the sound poem *Rest Life* by Tricia Hersey. This created a reflective space that encouraged active listening and creativity.

In this relaxed atmosphere, far from the fast-paced dynamics of a conference, the open reading began. The AoC started by reading parts of the statement, then invited attendees to take turns reading aloud different sections, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment.

The facilitators explained that participants would have the opportunity to translate one or two questions selected from the statement.

- What resonated with them?
- How did it connect with their own artistic practices?
- What are you forgetting and still yearning to be remembered?
- What questions that you read here resonate with you and how?
- What questions that you read here need to be questioned and how?
- What questions do you feel are still in urgent need to be asked?

This was not a literary translation but a creative one, using the source text as a reference point to create a new text that resonated with the individual and their target audience, whether verbal or non-verbal. Translation was understood to extend beyond linguistic boundaries to include visual, performative, or other forms of expression.

Participants were encouraged to work in a way that felt most comfortable, whether in smaller clusters or individually. The AoC guided the different types of translations available in the context of the workshop, though participants were encouraged to think beyond the options provided:

Text: From one written language to another

Handwriting: From printed text to handwriting

Text to image: From written language to image, using collage as a medium

Sound: From written language to sounds

Body language

As the workshop progressed, several participants chose to work collectively. At the end of the workshop, participants shared their translated excerpts with the group. They presented themselves, explained why they had selected a particular fragment, and shared their intent and positionality.

Translations shared by the participants

Each participant or group of participants took different approaches, mediums, and processes. Each translation was unique, even when the same excerpt was selected. For example, some participants created a polyphonic chorus of voices, while others used collage or recorded their own voices, blending them with vocal sounds such as whispers, screams, and breaths. There were translations between languages, translations between accents of the same language, and translations between dialects coexisting within the same country.

Below were selected 4 examples that the participants shared during the session:

Case 1.

Chosen fragment to be translated: How can we embrace complexity in the concept of reciprocal care?

Translation:

Using the polyphony of the voices gathered in the room. One participant decided to start an atonal chorus. The complexity of dynamics of what we are, was reflected in different notes and tones. Each one will echo the note sung by someone else, in their

one choice of tone. That generated a chain of voices that involved all the people present. With the underlying idea that we need to work collectively to find the reciprocal care of the note.

Case 2.

Chosen fragment to be translated: How can we envision a future that embraces diversity, celebrates differences, and finds strength in our collective humanity?

Translation:

The participant decided to translate from English to English. As follows (please note that is an informal script of the words said during the workshop): “Dear other white people: you are afraid to change. Yes, there will be certain things you have to give up. Let go off, once you have the courage to look at what you give and your fear. You’ll find an opening for new possibilities, new experiences. Real solidarity. Profound community. But yes this will require discomfort, (...) this will be painful, you will survive, it will be worth it.”

Case 3.

Chosen fragment to be translated: How to take time?

Translation:

The result was a recorded message, without any words. In the recording the words became whispers, the words became heavy breathing of someone lacking breath, the words got transformed into the footsteps of someone rushing to climb some stairs. A translation – explained the participant – that was not so much about the literal content of the written words but it is about connecting with the core of the message. It is about mattering a fundamental question.

Case 4.

Chosen fragment to be translated: How can we leave the door open? Some perspectives are not addressed when not everyone is in.

Translation: It was a real live translation staged like a theatrical performance. It was a continuous simultaneous translation between three people. The message went from Sicilian dialect, to Italian and then to English. Each time the content of the message transformed, the pace of the sound was different and the target audience

changed. As the time passed by the tempo increased until the point that the translators got lost in translation.

Facilitators:

Laura Camacho Salgado, CTM project's Artistic Transformation Facilitator

Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, Artist of Change (AoC), Brunnenpassage

Dounia Mahammed, Artist of Change (AoC), VIERNULVIER

Elie Laucher, Artist of Change (AoC), Zo centro culture contemporanee

Ksenia Ulianova, Artist of Change (AoC), IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives.

Mira Bryssinck, Artist of Change (AoC), VIERNULVIER

Emanuele Miceli, Artist of Change (AoC), Zo centro culture contemporanee