We Will Be a We

Cultural Transformation
Movement

EASY READ AND FURTHER RESOURCES:



The embossing on the cover of this publication is an alphabet system designed by Farila Neshat. It was created in the co-creative workshop series Spines — Dreams, Stories & Memories in Wood 2025, at Brunnenpassage, Vienna, Austria. Read more about the process in the chapter Artistic Production (page 139 – 142).

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We will be a We

THIS PUBLICATION

PROLOGUE BY ISRAEL ALONI

This publication moves.
This publication hopes that you will move.
This publication is not the outcome of academic research.
This publication is not a report to sit on a shelf.
This publication does not address a homogeneous reader.
This publication is not for everybody.
This publication is not ~~not~~ for everybody.
This publication is not the end of something.
This publication never started.
This publication may be unnecessary.
This publication might necessitate the movement.
This publication is a sequence within a movement which is in itself a sequence in movement…
This publication is a process.
This publication needs to be processed.
This publication asks for nothing and at the same time would not settle for less.
This publication is a product of an attempt to not be defined by productivity.
This publication is an archive of triumphs and defeats.
This publication was made possible by the very system it seeks to critique.
This publication is not what it seems.
This publication is made public.
This publication was made by a public.
This publication seeks to meet the public.
This publication wishes it did not have to exist.
This publication exists out of an urgent need.
This publication is here. And here. And here.
This publication is not authored with a sense of knowing.
This publication is an expression of knowing there is infinitely more to learn.
This publication embraces multivocality as both form and means.
This publication acknowledges you, the reader, the witness, the participant.
This publication is a publication because it is made public.
This publication is not a legal document but a historical one.
This publication came into being through the pipes of history, past and future.
This publication is humbled, but also anxious and vexed.
This publication is a gesture of openness.
This publication is an invitation to join the movement.
This publication is a choreographic score of body, space and time.
This publication exposes and expresses tones and voices usually silenced.
This publication is a choir piece for *us* who often feel ostracised.
This publication is happy to host you.
This publication is words on pages, but also flesh on bones.
This publication is a non-exhaustive collection of stories that need to be listened to.
This publication is a gesture of optimism.

WHAT IS CTM?

This publication, **We Will Be a We** is one of the outcomes of the **Cultural Transformation Movement** (CTM), a four-year international cooperation project that proposes a context-based process for diversifying artistic production and distribution. The project proposes to begin by transforming cultural centres and their organisational operations through the development and implementation of strategies and methodologies for cultural management and creation processes, with the full engagement of Underrepresented Communities (URCs). It includes a partnership of five organisations: four multidisciplinary art centres and production houses from Ukraine, Italy, Belgium and Austria, and one pan-European cultural network.

Cultural Transformation Movement main query

The project operated across two dimensions: one within cultural centres and organisations, and the other around them. On the one hand, it explored the correlation between art-making by under-represented communities and their artistic expressions; on the other hand, it examined the parameters of social and cultural justice within a cultural organisation, such as governance, policy-making, and organisational transcultural competence.

The project aims to develop the partners' cross-cultural competence and build their capacity to diversify their leadership. It proposed offering residencies and mentorships to artists from underrepresented communities to develop their capacity to become the next generation of leaders in the arts and culture field. It also sought to raise awareness — among artists, decision-makers, and cultural organisations alike — regarding the systemic and structural discrimination faced by artists from URCs. It explored how diversification of policy and governance informs and influences artistic production.

The project began in March 2023 and is scheduled to conclude in February 2027. It is co-funded by the European Union under the Medium-Scale Cooperation Projects scheme of the Creative Europe programme.





↑ Image: © Hannaneh Heydari
→ Image: TEH99, Sofia, Bulgaria

HOW TO READ THIS PUBLICATION?

Invitation to you, the reader

The challenges and lived experiences of marginalised people and under-represented communities are featured in this publication not as a defensive gesture, but rather as an open invitation to you, the reader. This publication invites you to notice where similar challenges manifest in your own context and to explore how you might implement some of the suggested methodologies and actions (detailed in the chapter “Things You Can Do” page 233 – 237) to ignite or sustain cultural transformation within your community.

Order, system, trajectory

The publication starts with an introduction to the project, the consortium and each local context. Then it works through examples of the activities and actions undertaken in the project; it continues with suggestions and proposals for actions and practices you can incorporate into your own context; and it concludes with reflections by the project researcher.

How to read this publication

This publication is authored by and written from the perspective of the project researcher, who was engaged specifically for this capacity. However, it also includes plentiful utterances and perspectives of other people in the project. To assist with the visibility of this multi-vocality, and signal who is the speaker in each section, there is a distinct, colour-coded system:

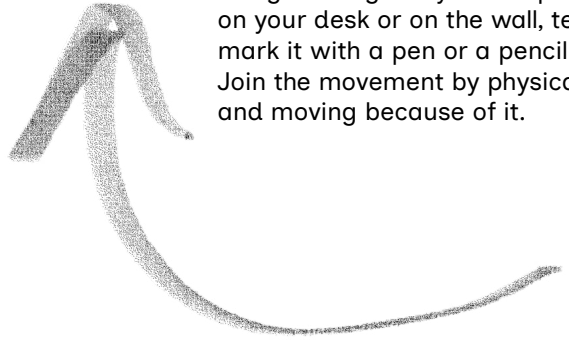
Black: narrative, descriptive, reporting and informative depiction of the project, its activities and processes.

Pink: researcher’s comments, reflections and analysis: dedicated to contextualisation of the materials in broader discursive and theoretical perspectives, as well as footnotes.

Green, people’s voice: direct quotes from the individuals who worked in CTM.



Marks and Markings: in the publication, a system of visual markings features an “organic hand” to assist you, the reader, in navigating movement through the pages.



↻ Flip, turn, fold, use …: the physical form and format of this publication are designed to grant you complete agency as a reader. Fold it, turn it, display it on your desk or on the wall, tear out a page and pin it, highlight phrases, or mark it with a pen or a pencil. Treat this publication as a practical work tool. Join the movement by physically moving the publication — moving with it, and moving because of it.

ACRONYMS & NICKNAMES

CTM	Cultural Transformation Movement: in the context of this publication, referring to the cooperation project between 2023 and 2027, which is co-funded by the European Union.
URC	Underrepresented Communities: used to refer to those who have been muted, removed, disenfranchised, oppressed, conveniently forgotten, ignored, discriminated against …
COC	Centre of Change: referring to the four cultural centres that are partners in the project.
TEH	Trans Europe Halles: a European network of cultural centres. CTM project coordinator.
404	VIERNULVIER: the project partner and Centre of Change in Ghent, Belgium.
BRU	ArtSocialSpace Brunnenpassage Vienna: project partner and Centre of Change in Vienna, Austria.
IZO	IZOLYATSIA: Platform for Cultural Initiatives — project partner and Centre of Change from Kyiv, Ukraine.
ZŌ	Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee: project partner and Centre of Change in Catania, Sicily.
AOC	Artist/Agent of Change: referring to the artists and agents who have been working with the cultural centres in the project.
ATF	Artistic Transformation Facilitator
PM	Project Manager

QR CODE TO RESOURCES

Online resource page

To view the full versions of the documents and references which are mentioned in this publication, please visit the resource page online via the QR code.

Available on the resource page:

Digital (PDF) version of this publication

→ Easy read options — links to tools that can convert the PDF to an easy read version.

Artistic Statement in different languages
Sound file of the statement
Sound collage for Manifesto of Change (used in the Reflection workshop in Sofia)
Manifesto of Change in different languages
Sound file/interpretation of the Manifesto of Change
Diversity campaign

Roundtable Workshop reports:

1. Representation Is There Such a Thing? (Tbilisi)
2. Community as both the origin and the destination of our work (Epanomi)
3. Transformative Creations (Riga)

Reflection Workshops

1. Unlearning the Status Quo (Tbilisi)
2. Lost in Translation? (Tartu)
3. Stop << Rewind ((Breath)) Forward >> (Epanomi)
4. A Workshop That Isn't One (Sofia)
5. The Forgotten Data Lab (Riga)
6. 2056: Radical Cartographies of Future (Marseille)

Soundfiles:

1. Manifesto of Change
2. Artistic Statement sound piece

TERMINOLOGY

"As we know from post-structuralism, words refer to other words, not to things in the world."

(MILON QUIS — words for dance, Aloni 2025)

Throughout this publication, you will notice that certain words appear more frequently than others. This is due to the field of thought and discursive realm within which the Cultural Transformation Movement project has both been conceived and realised. Rather than assuming that we all refer to similar sentiments or phenomena with these words, the following are some non-conclusive definitions of some of these words, only to usher you, and us, into the field of meanings and symbols that this publication is referring to. These definitions have not been articulated collectively by the CTM consortium, but rather assembled by the researcher to assist in sharing this publication with the reader and to provide historical, theoretical, discursive, and philosophical references to some of the language used in the project and publication.

During the preparation of this publication, after reviewing the initial draft of the following pages, which feature definitions of key terms frequently used in CTM, a project manager on the team commented that it was not clear who had articulated these definitions or why these specific terms were selected. Whilst there is no doubt–unintentional or unconscious–some sculpting of the meaning of a term by the way it is utilised and interpreted in a particular context, the following pages contextualise these key terms, chosen due to the frequency of their use in CTM, in a broader historical, cultural, discursive and theoretical environment or systems.

> It might be naive to think that we can indeed create unanimous cohesion and an identical understanding of any term or language. Linguists and philosophers have pondered the ambiguous zone between signifier (the word) and signified (the thing the word is "pointing at" in the world). Furthermore, terms gain and lose layers and dimensions of power, significance and meaning entirely dependent on the temporalities, specialities and mediums in which they are uttered, enunciated, or expressed.

None of the following definitions is absolute or finite. They are merely a situatedness of a term, within a weave of other terms, that collectively and independently seek to forge meaning and thus soothe the anxiousness to understand, and more so that of being understood.

> There is something humbling about the experience that, despite tireless attempts, words and language will forever demand our careful attention and also offer us a field for experimentation, creativity, play and whim if we only let it.

Underrepresented

In political theory and contemporary culture, the term "underrepresented" describes communities systematically pushed to the margins of institutional visibility and resource allocation by dominant socio-political structures. Within the arts, it addresses creative practitioners whose voices, histories and cultural outputs are structurally excluded from "main stages", decision-making bodies, collections and funding architectures (Ahmed, 2012; hooks, 1995).

Positionality

Grounded in feminist and queer theories, this concept asserts that an individual's understanding of the world is inherently shaped by their specific location within intersecting webs of power, privilege and identity.

In cultural work, acknowledging one's positionality is a critical prerequisite for ethical collaboration, intending to ensure that practitioners remain aware of the authority or biases they bring to a space (Haraway, 1988).

Unlearning

This radical pedagogical and decolonial practice requires individuals and institutions to consciously dismantle deeply ingrained, Eurocentric and patriarchal habits of thinking, organising and valuing. Within cultural management, it demands a rejection of traditional, extractive rubrics of success in favour of care-centred and collaborative methodologies.

The term refers to the conscious process of discarding outdated, incorrect, or harmful knowledge and behaviours to make way for new learning (Harney & Moten, 2013).

Horizontality

Drawing from anarchist and grassroots political organising, this denotes a structural model that rejects top-down, vertical hierarchies in favour of flat, consensus-based decision-making. Within the CTM framework, it manifests as an ongoing effort to distribute power, agency and resources equally between institutional project managers and on-the-ground agents of change (Graeber, 2009).

Dismantling

In critical race and queer theories, this refers to the active, deliberate process of deconstructing and pulling apart oppressive, systemic infrastructures rather than merely attempting to reform them from within. In the cultural sector, it involves breaking down the exclusionary financial, administrative and curatorial mechanisms that protect institutional whiteness and class privilege (Ahmed, 2012).

Critical / Criticality

Rooted in the *Frankfurt School* critical theory and philosophy, this signifies a refusal to accept existing institutional conditions as natural or inevitable, instead interrogating the hidden power dynamics that sustain them. For cultural projects, practising criticality means continuously questioning one's own complicity in bureaucratic violence, in funding politics, and in paternalistic modes of community engagement (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947).

Heterogeneity

This represents a state of radical multiplicity and difference that resists being flattened or assimilated into a single, uniform identity. Within CTM, it honours the diverse, localised and sometimes conflicting methodologies brought forward by different partners, refusing to reduce underrepresented experiences to a monolith.

Canon (Canon of Art)

Referring to the historically gatekept, Eurocentric and elitist body of artworks and master narratives traditionally deemed authoritative and universally valuable by dominant cultural institutions. Political and queer theories critique the canon as an ideological tool that actively erases marginalised, non-Western and non-normative expressions of creativity and knowledge.

Power Dynamics

Tracing the fluid, often invisible ways power is negotiated, exerted or resisted between different actors within a specific ecosystem. In transnational cultural projects, these dynamics constantly manifest as a tension between funding bodies, institutional gatekeepers, and grassroots practitioners navigating structural scarcity.

Tokenism

From political and queer critique, this is the superficial, staged inclusion of marginalised individuals to create an illusion of diversity without shifting actual structural power or resources. In the arts, it reduces underrepresented practitioners to a visual commodity used to satisfy institutional diversity quotas or funding criteria, whilst leaving exploitative dynamics intact.

Oppression

The systemic, institutionalised and historical exercise of power to restrict, marginalise and subjugate specific social groups for the benefit of a dominant class. Within the cultural field, oppression manifests not only through overt exclusion but through the subtle, exhausting extraction of minoritised labour under the guise of inclusion (Freire, 1970; hooks 1992).

Deliverables

In the administrative language of European grants, for projects co-funded by Creative Europe under the lump-sum model, these are the quantifiable, tangible outputs — such as reports, festivals, or publications — that a project is contractually bound to produce (EACEA, 2021).

Reporting

A formal mechanism of institutional accountability through which project partners must logistically and financially justify their activities to state or transnational funding bodies. For radical cultural projects, reporting often introduces a structural paradox, requiring fluid, transformative and safe community spaces to be translated into standardised, auditable data (EACEA, 2021, Graeber, 2015).

Epistemology

A branch of philosophy which investigates the nature, origins and limits of human knowledge, asking who is allowed to know and what is validated as truth. Critical and decolonial theories challenge dominant Western, rationalist epistemologies by reclaiming embodied, ancestral and artistic practices as valid forms of theory-making (Haraway, 1988).

Decolonial

The political and philosophical methodology which seeks to actively decouple societies, minds and institutions from the persistent, lingering geometries of Eurocentric colonial power. In arts and culture, a decolonial approach demands the radical redistribution of wealth, the subversion of Western aesthetic hierarchies and the total centring of marginalised self-determination (Tuck & Yang 2012).

Access Rider

Originating from disability justice and queer organising, this is a self-authored document detailing the specific physical, emotional and structural conditions an individual requires to perform their labour safely and sustainably. In the arts, implementing access riders actively subverts hyper-extractive workplace cultures by reframing care, pacing and tools like "landing days" as non-negotiable rights. (see page 230 – 231)

Social Justice

The fair distribution of rights and opportunities. Coined by **Luigi Taparelli in the 1840s, John Rawls later secularised it in 1971.** In political science, it drives welfare policy; in cultural theory, it demands representation for marginalised groups. Enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 3), the EU champions it through the Pillar of Social Rights and programmes such as Creative Europe (European Commission, 2017, European Union, 2021).

Intersectionality

An Analytical framework for understanding how social and political identities — such as race, gender, class, sexuality and disability — overlap to create unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. The term was coined by **Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989** and has been frequently used to highlight the complexity of identity and positionality, rather than treating them as single, distinct and isolated categories.

HuWOman

A term coined by Israel Aloni (CTM researcher) to challenge the passive acceptance of “human” as an inherently inclusive category, given that this unexamined acceptance often carves discrimination into our societies. It evokes the legacy of Olympe de Gouges, who was sent to the guillotine after writing the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen (1791) upon realising that the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man excluded women. HuWOman serves as a constant reminder of who is not automatically protected by the “human” category. While *huwoman* or Hu-Woman occasionally appears in other accounts, huWOman, with the intended emphasis and the particular theoretical and conceptual context, is a neologism by Aloni. While it was not used regularly in CTM, it is part of the researcher’s conceptual world and therefore used throughout the publication.

Add your own terms and definitions:

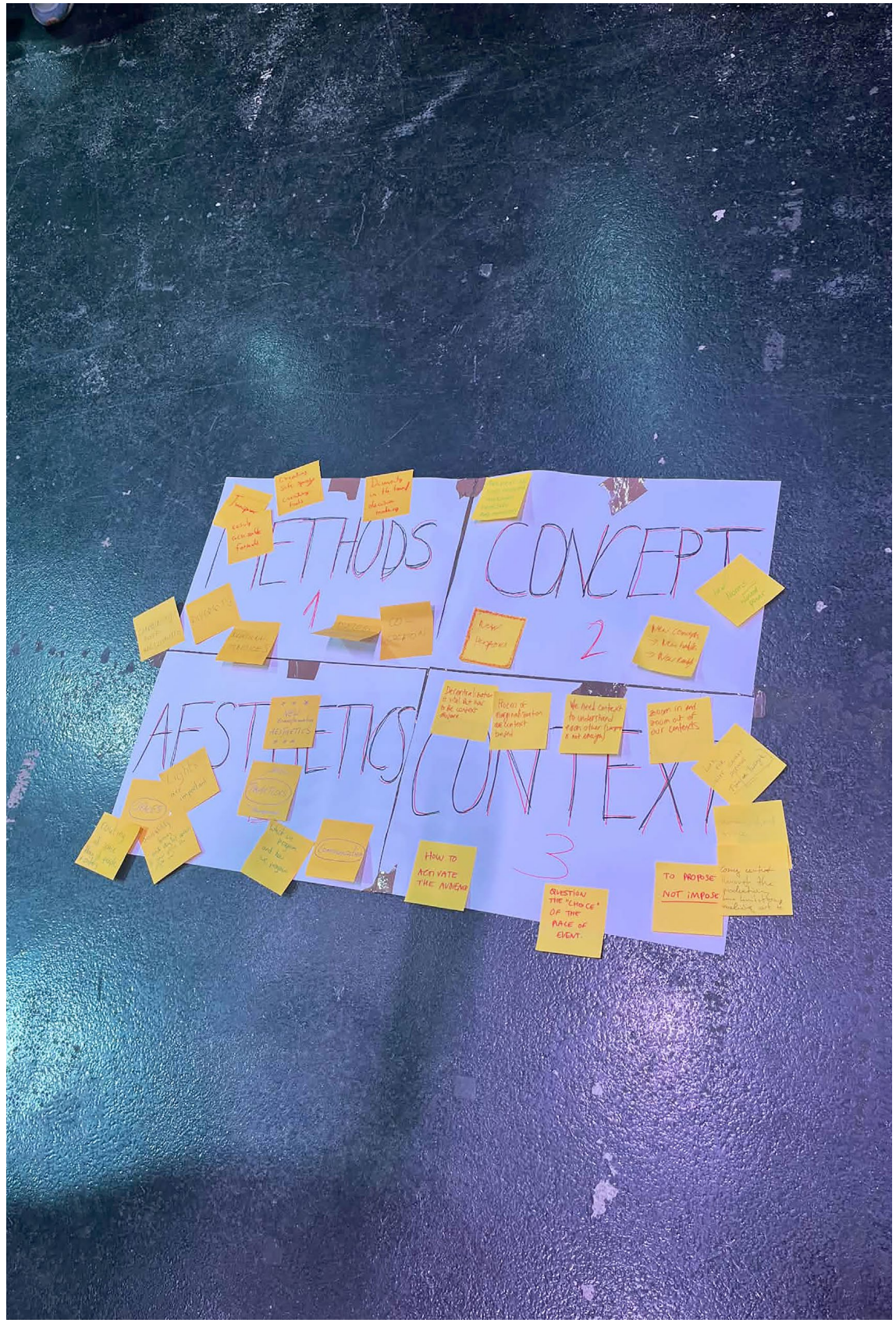
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RESEARCH SCOPE

Introduction to the publication

This publication, **We Will Be a We,** is produced within the framework of the Cultural Transformation Movement, a European Cooperation project co-funded by the European Union, and was authored and edited by the project researcher. The publication includes contributions specifically authored for it: reflections, reports, descriptions, and analyses, as well as segments from materials developed within the project's activities.

The researcher's perspective had to be negotiated throughout the project, ranging from a neutral "fly on the wall" to an active "sounding board" participating in discussions and thought processes. Both perspectives are included in the coming pages. See chapter *How to read this publication?* on page 10 – 11.

The research scope

The project coordinator, TEH, works with HUBS to gather network members around shared geographic or thematic interests. One of these hubs is the Cultural Transformation Movement Hub, which is dedicated to plurality within the arts and cultural field. Although operating under a similar title, the research and this publication do not refer to this hub; rather, they focus on the activities, actions, processes, and experiences of individuals and organisations within the four-year international cooperation project running from March 2023 to February 2027.

This publication is authored, edited and published before the official and operational end of the project and therefore is unable to conclude the project or present a coherent reflection of the ways in which the project, as a whole, reverberated or resonated in the local, and more broadly the European, arts and culture field or society at large. It rather refers to episodic, finite actions within the project and to the processes that occurred before the publication was finalised.

The layers of the research are also defined by limited in-person visits to the project's activities on location. The researcher visited three of the COCs at the very beginning of the project (before any CTM activities took place), once again the CoC in Catania when they (the researcher) lead a two-day movement and choreographic research workshop for local artists, multiple times to the CoC in Ghent, who are the partner to whom the responsibilities for the preparation of this publication were assigned, and met in-person the project manager from the CoC from Ukraine, during the initial visit to the CoC in Vienna. It was impossible to travel to Ukraine due to the persisting war, and also IZO is no longer operating in a physical space there.

Other than these site visits, the in-person meetings between the researcher and the consortium took place at various locations during the TEH (project coordinator) conferences and camp meetings across Europe. Therefore, the process was predominantly conducted through interviews, questionnaires, conversations, online meetings, and written exchanges (email and messaging platforms) with individuals in the consortium, as well as by studying and reviewing materials, artefacts, documents, reports, and communication materials produced by the project. The research also included desk research, in which the researcher reviewed reports, articles, and publications on the status and processes of the arts and culture field in Europe and, more specifically, the realities and experiences of underrepresented communities. These are mentioned throughout the publication as relevant, and in the References chapter on page 262 – 264.

Furthermore, the researcher has not studied the project partners outside the CTM project and did not have access to comprehensive data or information about the partner organisations and their operations beyond the scope of their roles and activities within this project. While certain actions and activities of CTM in the respective contexts clearly interacted with and impacted broader local contexts, both internally and surrounding the CoCs, these aspects have always been perceived and researched through the prism of the CTM project and not through an encompassing research of each organisation as a whole and their societal context at large.

The research interest

Queries guiding the research have gradually become more specific and have been narrowed down to the following questions:

1. In what way can a project realised within the specific framework of Creative Europe ignite and practice the shift in power that CTM demands? What conditions are necessary for CTM's demands to become applicable practice?

2. What are the capacities of a medium-scale Creative Europe Cooperation project to incite a cultural transformation beyond the people and organisations in the consortium and those who come in direct contact with the project activities?

3. What are the most stubborn hurdles standing in the way of the aspired cultural transformation? What are the conditions or preconditions that make them stubborn?

4. In what way would the proclaimed transformation be embodied and embedded in the contexts the project engages with? What are the affirming signs that indeed a transformation is underway?

The research questions are addressed again in the Reflections chapter on page 241 – 261.

Movement and Perspective

To disclose the perspective from which the research is conducted, it is important to note that I am a contemporary dance and performance artist who also initiates and designs large-scale international art and cultural projects. My interest in movement, alongside my practice of process philosophy, fundamentally shaped my attentiveness throughout the project and informed the authoring and editing of the materials in this publication.

Within these pages, there is a deliberate layer of self-critique, not to be confused with criticism, born precisely of a desire to perpetuate the cultural movement the project seeks to support. The degree of critique, which is practised on and through these pages, was not unanimously agreed upon by all the people in the consortium. It mostly announced what the research process revealed.

Process and Transformation

The research is primarily based on information obtained through methodologies including questionnaires, interviews, conversations with people involved in the project at the partner organisations, a review of project documents, and remote observations. Given the limited in-person presence, as described above, most of the research was not based on first-hand observation but relied predominantly on people's depictions and descriptions of their realities, drawn from conversations, interviews, questionnaires, reports, artefacts, and communication materials. Some of these materials were specifically curated for this publication; others were originally produced as formal reports for funding bodies and stakeholders, created as communication and marketing materials, or preserved as organic artefacts of the project's activities and creative processes. Read more in the Research Methodologies chapter page 68 – 71.

Multivocality

Many of the contributions in this publication are not merely "about" the people and activities in the project, but are the physical trail of the utterances and artworks themselves. They say "it takes a village," and indeed, processes operating across such complex terrains require a village-like collective effort. The prominence of this dynamic within CTM made it clear that the plurality and heterogeneity of voices also need to be reflected in both the content and the form of this publication. Therefore, many quotes are interwoven throughout the publication.

In this publication, the reader will encounter both a portrait of what has been and an exposition of the internal processes that led to these happenings. It also presents lessons learned, methodologies developed, and key findings gathered throughout the project. Rather than reorganising these fragments of information (data) into numerical or reductive summaries, they have been carefully interwoven with the testimonies, artefacts, activity reports and visual materials that make up the fabric of this book.

Project Structure

As a context-based process, CTM sought to diversify the means, methods and processes of artistic production, whilst reimagining how these practices connect with and relate to communities and audiences. The project deliberately commenced with a necessary "transformation from within" the participating organisations and their immediate operational contexts.

CTM represented the concrete schedule of activities designed to put the movement's declared intentions into practice. Co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, the project was coordinated by TEH — Trans Europe Halles, in Lund, Sweden, alongside four anchor members: ArtSocialSpace Brunnenpassage Vienna (BRU) in Vienna, Austria; VIERNULVIER (404) in Ghent, Belgium; Zō centro culture contemporanee (Zō) in Catania, Sicily, Italy; and IZOLYATSIA Platform for Cultural Initiatives (Izo) from Kyiv, Ukraine.

CTM was built on a commitment to "take real steps", make genuine structural pledges and openly share experiences with the wider cultural sector regarding how to make social justice an absolute priority in creative contexts. Over its four-year lifespan, the project remained dedicated to transforming its partner institutions so they might authentically embrace and reflect the full range of diverse backgrounds and perspectives found across contemporary European society.

Project Objectives

In the project proposal submitted to Creative Europe, the explicit objectives were stated as follows:

1. **Improve** the diversity of artistic productions and **circulate** the resulting knowledge and good practices among project partners and the European cultural sector at large.
2. **Develop** the capacity of our partner centres to **enable** a transformation from the inside to implement new models grounded in social justice, and help **propel** them to the next level.
3. **Grow** and **connect** a new generation of leaders from underrepresented communities (URCs) transnationally.
4. **Start** a movement for social justice in the European cultural sector and **share** knowledge and good practices among movement members working for social justice.

The proposal further declared that the project would "plant the seed of a social justice movement across the European cultural sector by raising awareness among minorities and cultural organisations in the partners' cities and globally, offering a platform for artists who want to be more politically engaged to discuss their issues with (culture) politicians, policymakers and funders, turning our partner centres into tribunes where breakthroughs around social justice in artistic productions are brought/shared to/with our partner centres and their communities, and where conversations can start and develop into action."

The term "social justice" appears 81 times in the project proposal submitted to Creative Europe. CTM sees equity and diversity as matters of social justice, not merely a sector-specific agenda.

Structural Framework: The Workpackages

The key application components of CTM include:

- Review and planning
- In-person transnational gatherings
- Knowledge transfer and competence development contexts (workshops)
- Artistic productions, publishing and performances
- Communication strategies and campaigns
- Project management, evaluation, monitoring and reporting.

To ground its ideological goals in practice, the project was designed around five interconnected clusters of action, designated as "Workpackages" (WP) within the Creative Europe framework:

Workpackage 1:
Transformation — Centres of Change & Agents of Change

Objectives:

- Improve the diversity of artistic productions and circulate the resulting knowledge and good practices among project partners and the European cultural sector at large.
- Develop the capacity of partner centres to enable a transformation from within to implement new models grounded in social justice, and help them progress to the next level.
- Grow and transnationally interconnect a new generation of diverse leaders from underrepresented communities.

To achieve genuine institutional transformation, the partner cultural centres act as Centres of Change (CoCs), driving internal reforms to their staff, processes, and tools. Each CoC involved one or two Artist/Agent of Change (AoC) — creative catalysts from Underrepresented Communities (URCs) embedded within the team and the local context. By placing AoCs at the heart of the organisation, the project aimed to dismantle traditional, top-down structures and build long-term decision-making power for underrepresented actors within the cultural sector.

Workpackage 2:
Action — Activism by Centres of Change

Objectives:

- Grow and transnationally interconnect a new generation of leaders who are currently from URCs
- Start a movement for social justice in the European cultural sector and share knowledge and good practices among movement members working for social justice.

Aiming to empower people from URCs in the arts and culture field to advocate for social justice, while strengthening partner centres' capacity to represent them. The CoCs host annual awareness-raising workshops that bring together dominant and URC creatives, as well as separate workshops that foster direct dialogue with funders and policymakers to tackle systemic inequalities.

Additionally, planning and realising a diversity campaign. These mobilisation efforts leverage local public events and international networks to connect with and engage decision-makers.

Workpackage 3:
Production and Transnational Circulation

Objectives:

- Improve the diversity of artistic productions and circulate the resulting knowledge and good practices among project partners and the European cultural sector at large.
- Develop the capacity of our partner centres to enable a transformation-from-inside to implement new models grounded in social justice, and help them scale up to the next level.

Research circulation, publication, and artistic residencies. For the research process, the project engaged a researcher to accompany and witness the process from start to end, contribute to cross-pollination between the different parts of the project, and author this publication. The researcher also facilitated annual Roundtable Workshops as part of the project's transnational dissemination efforts.

For the Artistic Productions, in addition to their individual practices and interests, the AoCs integrated learnings from various workshops and capacity-building processes in the project into their artistic production processes, which they developed in collaboration with the CoCs and with the accompaniment of the **Artistic Transformation Facilitator**. These artistic productions brewed throughout the project and continuously responded to the project's processes and to the contexts in which they (AoCs and CoCs) work.

Workpackage 4:
Management, Administration and Coordination

Objectives:

- Improve the diversity of artistic productions and circulate the resulting knowledge and good practices among project partners and the European cultural sector at large.
- Develop the capacity of our partner centres to enable a transformation-from-inside to implement new models grounded in social justice, and help them scale up to the next level.
- Grow and connect a new generation of leaders from underrepresented communities (URCs) transnationally.
- Start a movement for social justice in the European cultural sector and share knowledge and good practices among movement members working for social justice.

This workpackage included the standard coordination and financial management activities, in addition to planning, preparation, monitoring, quality management and evaluation, and finally Partners' Transnational Conferences.

This dimension of the project was intended to support learning at the project management level, including the project's governance, risk management, and knowledge-sharing frameworks. It includes managing reporting, deliverables, fund distribution, and quality control across all partners.

The mentorship program component of the project was initially planned for the Transformation workpackage (WP1) and was later transferred to WP4, while task coordination shifted from BRU to TEH. This was done to better distribute responsibilities among partners and to enable the mentorship program to benefit from TEH's vast international network.

Workpackage 5:
Communication and Dissemination

Objectives:

- Improve the diversity of artistic productions and circulate the resulting knowledge and good practices among project partners and the European cultural sector at large
- Develop the capacity of our partner centres to enable a transformation-from-inside to implement new models grounded in social justice, as well as help it scale to the next level
- Grow and transnationally interconnect a new generation of leaders who are currently from underrepresented communities (URCs)
- Start a movement for social justice in the European cultural sector and share knowledge and good practices among movement members working for social justice

This Workpackage ensured communication of the project's activities and processes across multiple channels, mostly digital, throughout the project. A unifying visual identity was developed collaboratively at the start of the project and serves as the project's overall representation. Each partner could also develop a specific approach to communication and marketing to best interact with the communities and networks that they identified as their desired connections.

Transnational gatherings

The following were the in-person transnational gatherings in which the CTM consortium met, within the Partners' Transnational Conferences framework and had the opportunity to interact with an international network of cultural centres through reflection and roundtable workshops:

TEH Conference 95 — Traditions & Transitions
6 - 7 June 2023 in Leipzig, Germany.
Including the 1st Partners' Transnational Conference, the in-person component of the CTM kick-off meeting.

TEH Camp Meeting 96 — Reboot
5 - 8 October 2023, Tbilisi, Georgia.
Including Reflection Workshop: Unlearning the Status Quo & Knowledge Roundtable: Representation Is There Such a Thing?

TEH Conference 97 — Arts of Survival
30 May - 02 June 2024, Tartu, Estonia.
Including the 2nd Partners' Transnational Conference and Reflection Workshop: Lost in Translation?

TEH Camp Meeting 98 — Argatia
10 - 13 October 2024, Epanomi, Greece.
Including Reflection Workshop: Stop << Rewind ((Breath) Forward >> & Knowledge Roundtable: Community as Both the origin and the destination of our work.

TEH Conference 99 — BeHome
5 - 8 June 2025, Sofia, Bulgaria.
Including Reflection Workshop: A Workshop That Isn't One and the 3rd Partners' Transnational Conference.

TEH Camp meeting 100 — SHIFT + CULTURE
30 October - 2 November 2025, Riga, Latvia.
Including Reflection Workshop: The Forgotten Data Lab & Knowledge Roundtable: Transformative Creations.

TEH Conference 101 — Imagining Within Limits: Cultural Centres and Planetary Boundaries.
16 - 19 April 2026, Marseille, France.
Including Reflection Workshop: 2056: Radical Cartographies of Future & the 4th Partners' Transnational Conference, which included the open *Workshop: From Reflection to Responsibility — Sharing Transformative Practices through CTM Project*

TEH Camp 102 — GRINTA! Underground: Grass-Root Organisations between Persistence and New Narratives
22 - 25 October 2026, Silandro, Italy.
Including We Will Be a We (CTM Publication) Launch & Reflection Workshop





Image → : © Léo Lethielleux, TEH99, Sofia, Bulgaria
Image ↓ : © Fariba Mosleh

DATA

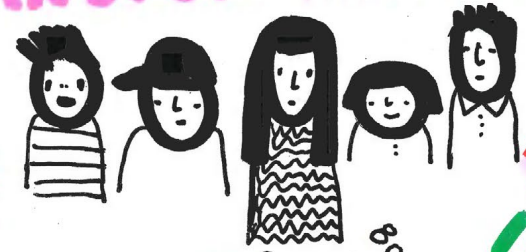
UNTIL 29 MAY, 2026



CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION MOVEMENT



PEOPLE



- ARTISTS/AGENTS OF CHANGE : 7
- PROJECT MANAGERS : 8
- GUEST ARTISTS : 39
- WORKSHOP FACILITATORS : 34
- ARTISTIC TRANSFORMATION FACILITATOR : 1
- RESEARCHER : 1



404 GHENT

802

PERFORMANCES PUBLIC ACTIONS EXHIBITIONS → 6+++

MARSEILLE

CITIES → 5

LANGUAGES

20 CATANIA

85o

EMAILS → 16904

TEH LVND



RIGA

TARTU



2960 PARTICIPANTS



303

LEIPZIG

izo Kyiv

SOFIA

1005

BRU VIENNA

WORKSHOPS

- KNOWLEDGE ROUNDTABLE : 3
- REFLECTION WORKSHOPS : 6
- ANNUAL PARTNERS TRANS-NATIONAL CONFERENCE : 4
- LEADERSHIP TRAINING : 14
- TRANSCULTURAL COMPETENCE : 16
- AWARENESS & MOBILISATION : 12

TBILISI

COUNTRIES → 13

BRU = BRUNNENPASSAGE **ZO** = ZO CENTRO CULTURE CONTEMPORANEE

IZO = IZOLYATSIA **404** = VIERNULVIER

TEH = TRANS EUROPE HALLES

DATA until May 29, 2026
by Marieke De Munck

WHO ARE THE PARTNERS?

The CTM partnership includes four cultural centres (CoCs) and one European network (TEH).

The four CoCs are members of TEH, and this is the context through which they met and initiated this project. Although they all operate within the European continent, their contexts and operations are distinct, presenting varying advantages and challenges. The following is a brief description of each organisation, its relationship to its locality, its previous experience with community work, its experience with URCs, and its impetus to join the CTM project.

ArtSocialSpace Brunnenpassage Vienna



Image: © suna films

ArtSocialSpace Brunnenpassage Vienna (BRU) is a cultural centre that has operated since 2007 in the former market hall at Vienna's Brunnenmarkt in the city's 16th district. They host around 400 events annually and take a strong transdisciplinary approach. They have been dedicated to questions, practices and processes of societal plurality and systemic shifts, and their projects are mostly co-creative productions between artists and people from civil society. They have been attentive and sensitive to the particular local context in which they are operating, with an active, diverse market right outside their door and an important place for the communities who live in the area and its surroundings, as well as for their social and cultural exchanges.

Based on their experience working with URCs, BRU suggested changing the terminology for the Cultural Transformation Movement. In the earlier stages of the project's development, it was called the Social Inclusion Movement, and BRU proposed renaming it the Cultural Transformation Movement. For BRU, inclusion suggests including into existing structures rather than changing the structures themselves, which does not reflect how they approach work with URCs. What they perceive as necessary is not incorporating or integrating certain people and communities into a predetermined scope and ways of doing things. For BRU, a profound societal and cultural transformation is needed.

"We need new narratives, and new aesthetics"
(Fariba & Zuzana, PMs BRU, 2023)

At the commencement of the project, the team at BRU expressed their wish to instigate and witness a transformation across all aspects of artistic production, including the people involved (e.g., audience, performers, creative team, administration, and production) as well as the themes and aesthetics of the work. They spoke about their striving for political justice and a shift in power dynamics and hierarchies.

BRU sees itself as a learning and unlearning institution. Their approach to learning is reciprocal, multidisciplinary and transversal. They approach both internal and external processes as learning.

Main intention of BRU:

Provide access to the arts and to question the way artistic productions are made.
Use the transformative power of art.
Make art that is relevant and representative of society at all levels: audience, staff, and the program.
(Fariba, PM, BRU, Spring 2023)

BRU was initiated by and is still partially funded and supported by Caritas, a large international NGO (non-governmental organisation) with a widespread network of activities and projects. On their website, Caritas describes their mission as "*… see hardship and act against it. And to stand up and speak for those people who have no voice*". Within this framework, BRU was established with the intent to be open and accessible to as many people as possible. Nonetheless, BRU works differently and does not attempt to speak for someone but rather to make it possible for people from the margin to speak, perform, and work for themselves.

Caritas is not supervising, monitoring, or controlling BRU; a structural link remains between the two. In some contexts, Caritas is affiliated with the Catholic Church, but this is not the case for its activity in Vienna, including the connection to BRU.

BRU Geographic mission: the neighbourhood and URCs across Vienna.

General attendees and audiences: URCs and people with limited resources.

Most present communities at BRU: newcomers from other countries, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour), people with disabilities and the LGBTQIA+ community.

In the 2023 introduction interview, the PMs at BRU reported that their most present communities and audiences have been shifting over the years. They used to have a strong presence of "*people with post migrant background*", and in recent years, it has been varying, with the LGBTQIA+ communities becoming more present and active. However, people with disabilities, although sought after, are less prominent as creators, participants and audiences, and the team acknowledged that BRU is not particularly established as a centre for this community.

For BRU, it is important "*that people are aware of their right to art*". *(Fariba, PM, BRU, Spring 2023)*

In terms of finance (*), at the start of CTM, BRU was relatively stable compared to previous years, when it experienced some challenges. However, this changed during CTM.

BRU's finances come from a broad range of resources: national, municipal and district cultural departments; international projects such as Creative Europe; and co-financing from the EU department of the Austrian Ministry of Culture. They also generate income through space rental and paid knowledge transfer, and receive some contributions through sponsorships and philanthropy.

However, they do not operate on a profit-oriented basis; thus, income from rentals and fees is not intended to generate profit and is often subject to a "pay as you can" policy, resulting in relatively small amounts. Caritas Vienna contributed about 20% of BRU's annual turnover in the past years.

During CTM, the external support framework for BRU evolved, with the City of Vienna's Integration Department concluding its support and the supporting foundation subsequently discontinuing its activities in Austria.

At the commencement of CTM, these were the reported challenges for BRU:

The continuous change in discourse and the wish to keep up with it; the need to obtain alternative resources to accommodate rising demand and develop new actions and programs; and being cautious of instrumentalisation, in the sense of redirecting expectations to certain individuals and communities to bring processes to full fruition.

Fariba Mosleh (PM, BRU) described the organisation's mission as using art's transformative power to make the cultural sector representative of society, in BRU's audiences, staff, and programming. The organisation seeks to provide equitable access and challenge traditional production methods, aiming to serve those underrepresented in the mainstream, including local neighbours and speakers of diverse languages.

By participating in CTM, BRU hoped to gain the space and time to reflect on their own reality, activities, and processes, share their practices for working with URCs, and access resources to connect with new communities. They also aimed to diversify their team further and engage with artists over much longer, more substantial timeframes than their standard programming allows.

(*) It is relevant to survey the financial structure and status for the partners because financial precarity can impact whether the organisation, and the people working in it, can afford to take risks (operational, curatorial, and economic) and whether they have the resources to facilitate and realise the initiatives and activities that are necessary in relation to URC or int he process of igniting a cultural transformation. When resources are scarce, the risk might be lesser and manageable. There is some correlation between access to resources and the ways in which organisations and professionals in the arts and cultural field choose to confront and/or challenge the systemic challenges that they face.



Farila Neshat (AoC) Born in Kabul (1994), Farila is a Vienna-based conceptual artist, researcher, and founding director of B.Ā.A.R. STUDIO (Building with Art, Architecture for Resilience). Her trans-local biography spanning Central Asia informs a nomadic epistemology that deconstructs socio-spatial structures to resist cultural erasure.

Neshat reinterprets architecture as a "performative archive" rather than mere infrastructure. Her sculptures and installations explore psycho-geographical entanglements, treating the built environment as an active agent of social memory. Through vernacular innovation, she fuses traditional, regenerative construction with bio-political awareness to foster socio-ecological resilience. Blending textile technology, graphic design, and visual semiotics, Neshat completed a drawing and printmaking diploma at the University of Applied Arts Vienna in 2024. She is currently studying Environmental and Bio-Resource Management at BOKU.



Fariba Mosleh (PM) studied cultural and social anthropology, Sinology, cultural management, and art education in Vienna, Barcelona, and Guangzhou. A recipient of numerous research and work grants, she serves as both an institutional curator and the director of the studioOne association. She specialises in managing, producing, and curating transcultural, co-creative, and community-oriented artistic practices. Fariba frequently serves on artistic juries and advisory boards (as D/Arts and Vienna Festival), moderates panels, and is currently a curator for performative and visual arts at Brunnenpassage, where she leads the EU-funded Cultural Transformation Movement project.



Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur (AoC) is the co-founder of Pamoja, a movement for the young African diaspora in Austria, and of the research group on Black Austrian history. Her transdisciplinary work as a learner, researcher, activist, teacher, cultural worker, curator, and community organiser, alongside her theoretical output and multifaceted artistic interventions, is decisively shaped by her life in Ghana, the UK, and the US, and by the art of collective creative processes. Elected to the directorial collective for the Museum of Migration (MUSMIG), she currently lives and works in Vienna.

Arts Centre VIERNULVIER



Image: © Jantien Vermeiren

Arts Centre VIERNULVIER (4-0-4 in Dutch) is an official Flemish Arts Institution, operating in Ghent, Belgium. They have been operating since 1988 as an arts centre under the name 'Kunstencentrum Vooruit', and became an institution in 2017. The name changed to VIERNULVIER in 2022. They produce and present performing arts, music, literature, theatre, and debates, and initiate and realise social and community projects. For 404, artistic practices are always key to both the process and the outcome. The centre is located in the centre of Ghent, in a building called De Vooruit, with a historical affiliation to the labour movement. There is no longer an official or formal connection to the labour movement, but the centre's position in local cultural history remains. In the building, there is an operating Grand café, which means there is also a steady flow of people coming and going for casual and social interactions.

In the mission statement of 404 (public on their website), it says:
"VIERNULVIER seeks to facilitate greater cross-pollination between the arts and the local and global communities. We serve both as a welcoming meeting place and as a lab for development, production, presentation, participation and reflection."

The self-proclaimed pillars of 404 are:

- → To offer support to local, national and international artists and organisations, while focusing on innovation and cultural diversity, both on and beyond the stage.
- → To be a platform for experiment, creation and transition, with a view to creating a varied, low-threshold artistic programme.
- → To invest actively in facilitating engagement within the arts, the organisation as a whole, and society at large, with the aim of creating a fairer, more sustainable and diverse society, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.
- → To connect artists, organisations, audiences, and society, and thus align their operations with those of many other players in and out of Ghent.
- → To offer a free space for different opinions, worldviews and choices. To invest in knowledge sharing, expansion and (self-)reflection.
- → To make time for optimism, collegiality and generosity. To be a place where celebration can happen.

In March 2023, the PMs at 404 (Marieke and Tine) described the organisation's mission as supporting art and making cultural life accessible to the broadest possible audience to enjoy, participate in, and reflect upon. They explained that, ideally, their venue would welcome anyone with an interest or curiosity, with a specific focus on engaging youth (aged 16 and over) in content creation and curation.

At the commencement of CTM, 404 faced distinct challenges stemming from inequality and discrimination. Internal organisational and HR deficiencies have been hindering the organisation from truly diversifying its personnel and audiences, leaving the team with low representation of BIPOC individuals and people with disabilities. Out of 90 people working at 404 at the commencement of CTM, 16 have a migrant background, of whom only 3 worked in the office and 13 in the bar, kitchen or housekeeping.

The organisation is mainly for middle-class 25-50-year-olds who are neurotypical and able-bodied. BIPOC people, even if casual or project workers, are nearly entirely engaged in the housekeeping and kitchen teams and were not part of the decision-making, curation and programming team.

In addressing these gaps, 404 views social justice and artistic integrity as interconnected; in their view, ethics and a just social environment provide the essential basis for authentic artistic integrity.

When working with URCs, 404 consistently questions how to navigate, discuss, and actively alter power dynamics without causing defensiveness, whilst determining how to offer mutual support during the process of change.

By participating in CTM, 404 hoped to engage in knowledge exchange and learn collaborative strategies to undo workflow bottlenecks. They hoped the project would provide a structured, relatively long-term opportunity to address institutional discrimination and representation openly.

The PMs have both been working at 404 for quite some time. Marieke is part of the artistic team and focuses on CTM's artistic side. Tine is responsible for audience development and primarily for the internal and organisational aspects of CTM. They are both also responsible for the CTM artistic production.

404 geographic mission: The scope is local (Ghent and surroundings), national (Flanders & Belgium) and international.

General attendees and audiences: about 350,000 visitors annually. Focused on younger people (Ghent is a university city). At the start of CTM, the audience for the performing arts program at 404 was mostly people over 30. Some of their activities have focused on older adults, a prominent local community. The general sentiment at 404 is that "everybody is welcome".

404's most prevalent communities: 30+ year-old, middle-class White people from Ghent and the surrounding area. For specific projects/ events, the LGBTQIA+ community.

Who are the missing communities?
Artists and people with disabilities, newcomers from other countries, BIPOC, and the working class.

In terms of finance, 404 is supported by the Flemish government, The city of Ghent, Private sponsors (insurance company), a Brewery (sponsoring with free beverages), international project funding, such as Creative Europe, ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) — for the restoration of the building, rental of spaces in the building, and self generated income through ticket sales and services.

At the commencement of CTM, these were the reported challenges for 404:

Not yet finding ways to connect with the local lower social class; The local projects and productions not benefiting from the varied audiences that the international program does;

Difficulty forming strong affiliations with local artists from different communities; implementing theory and rhetoric into practice, matters such as cultural transformation.



Marieke De Munck (PM) is a Belgian artist, performing arts curator, and creative producer specialising in transdisciplinary art. Currently a curator at Arts Centre VIERNULVIER (Ghent), she brings expertise in site-specific public art, socially engaged art, urban community labs, ecology-driven practices, and collective rituals. She previously served as artistic coordinator for the biennial festival WILDEMANNEN WOESTEWIJVEN and has worked with institutions including LUCA School of Arts, Studio ORKA, and S.M.A.K. Marieke holds master's degrees in both Visual Arts and Performing Arts, as well as an arts teaching degree.



Tine Theunissen (PM) is a Belgian cultural worker and audience development researcher based in Ghent. Best known for her community-driven, participatory initiatives at Arts Centre VIERNULVIER since 2018, she focuses on accessibility, DEI advocacy, and equity. Key initiatives include co-founding the Young Board in 2020 to bring youth voices into cultural governance. Formerly a classical languages teacher and food culture researcher, Tine coordinated KOPERGIETERY RABOT, a suburban youth theatre space, and also performs with the community theatre group La Barraca.



Dounia Mahammed (AoC) is a Brussels-born queer performer, writer, and creator who graduated from the KASK drama programme in 2015. Grounded in a profound appreciation for nature, movement, and physical mediums, their work frequently manipulates language and sound to explore the nuances of human (mis)communication, connection, wonder, and doubt. Alongside their artistic practice, they are deeply engaged in activism and work as a freelance confidant within the creative sector.



Mira Bryssinck (AoC) is a theatre maker, actress, and activist who graduated from KASK Ghent in 2016. Her work focuses on giving form to undisclosed feelings through language and movement, exploring themes of societal space and inclusion. She created the pieces *UTOPIA* and *LETTER*, which centre on transcultural encounters. Mira is a co-founder of the hybrid collective Par Hasard, which champions connection, accessibility, and experimentation. As an artist with disabilities, she also actively participates in the grassroots movement Cripping the Space.

IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives (IZO)



IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives (IZO) is a non-profit, non-governmental platform for cultural initiatives founded in 2010 on the site of a former insulation factory in Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine. In 2014, the foundation was forced to move to Kyiv after Russian armed forces seized Donetsk, and the venue was turned into an illegal detention, torture and execution site. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (2022), IZO has also had to close its venues in Kyiv and Soledar and has been operating as a floating organisation, carrying out activities in various locations across Ukraine and other parts of Europe.

IZO is a platform for research, discussion, and the presentation of substantiated socio-political problems at differing scales, from the local to the global, through artistic practice. They aim to effect systemic change in Ukrainian society through the agency of cultural projects, in research, site-specific projects, exhibitions, and residencies that mediate between contemporary art and civil society.

IZO's objectives are: to be a catalyst of cultural decentralisation in regional Ukraine; produce and spread knowledge about the social and cultural characteristics of Ukraine's East; develop the cultural sector in the direction of greater stability and diversity; encourage a contemporary visual culture for marginalised voices in society; support Ukrainian specialists and activists in art; realising interdisciplinary projects to increase international collaboration via residency programme; create deeper connections between local and global contexts to stimulate critical thought.

The organisation's core intention is to drive the transformation of Ukrainian society by actively responding to current national events and providing direct support. They aspire to connect with representatives of Ukrainian society who wish to implement their own projects and ideas and to offer them the support they require.

Geographic mission: Changed due to war.

"IZO works with the people of Ukraine as a political nation, rather than an ethnic one"

(Mykhailo, PM, IZO, Spring 2023)

General attendees and audiences: Changed due to the war.

IZO's communities:

"IZOLYATSIA works more around themes rather than target communities"

(Mykhailo, PM, IZO, Spring 2023)

For IZO, the theme of the specific project or activity dictates which communities they work with.

When asked, "Who is missing from your activities?" Mykhailo explained that while still important, Identity politics is not as central in Ukraine as it might be in Western Europe. At the same time, in the context of war with Russia, it is difficult to approach marginalisation through the same categories, because such a large part of society is exposed to displacement, violence, and the constant threat to life.

Before the full Russian invasion, they worked with young people, students (mostly from the humanities), post-graduates, mainly people under 40 years old, and cultural tourists — people who came to Kyiv from other cities.

Now (after the full invasion), they have been mainly working with internally displaced people in Ukraine and Ukrainians who are displaced in different parts of Europe.

Who are the missing communities?

Ethnic minorities and the LGBTQIA+ communities.

In terms of finance, IZO is supported by a private donor, international project funding such as Creative Europe, and commissions from national and international bodies to realise projects in the Ukrainian arts and culture field.

Since 2014, they have been supported by international bodies such as the French Institute, British Council, the Swedish Institute, the Danish Cultural Institute, the US Embassy, and more.

Also, since 2014, they have been supported by the Ukrainian culture foundation; however, since the full-scale Russian invasion, government financial support for culture in Ukraine has been significantly reduced.

The reported challenges for IZO, at the start of the project, were:

The obvious challenges of being displaced, scattered, forced to let go of their past and heritage and the need to focus on survival. The lack of stability and the constant uncertainty present additional challenges to the common social-cultural challenges of injustice and underrepresentation, which were the challenges IZO was mostly coping with before the full Russian invasion.

Besides the war-inflicted challenges, they navigate deep-seated domestic injustices and those against the LGBTQIA+ community. When IZO hosts activities with LGBTQIA+ people, they do not publicise them as widely as other activities.

When evaluating core values, the organisation prioritises social justice over artistic integrity. In the current Ukrainian context, social justice is intricately linked to a post-Russian, decolonial narrative that is presently a major subject of societal discussion.

In working with URCs, IZO continuously questions how the internal identities of its own team members inform and shape their outreach. Through their work in CTM, IZO hoped to build a robust diversity framework and persuasive language to influence other organisations and frameworks in Ukraine.



Yuliya Zakolyabina (Project Coordinator) is a Ukrainian cultural practitioner, service designer, and researcher based in Latvia. Working at the intersection of culture, social change, and systems thinking, she has spent over a decade coordinating international cultural and social projects across Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and the South Caucasus. Her portfolio ranges from anti-corruption documentary theatre in Ukraine to European nightlife campaigns against sexism. Currently a coordinator for the Cultural Transformation Movement at IZOLYATSIA, she blends strategic leadership with a care-oriented approach.



Kseniya Ulianova (AoC) is an art historian, critic, and independent curator born in Kyiv, Ukraine. A graduate of Kyiv's National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture and Sorbonne University, she curates transcultural exhibitions internationally. Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she organised events in Paris to support displaced Ukrainians and champion decolonisation processes. Kseniya also collaborated with LGBT+ communities and participated in a unique Ukraine-France training program for army personnel, drawing insight from servicemen and women that she now applies to the CTM project at IZOLYATSIA.



Mykhailo Glubokyi (PM) is the Development Director of the IZOLYATSIA foundation, where he has implemented site-specific, community-oriented cultural projects since 2011. A board member of Trans Europe Halles since 2021, he also contributed to the i-Portunus Creative Europe mobility scheme. Mykhailo's work focuses on rural capacity building, cultural decentralisation, and international exchanges across Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Eastern Ukraine. Notably, his 2021 involvement with The Social Inclusion Lab (SOIL) directly informed the creation of the CTM project.

Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee



Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee (Zō) is a cultural centre in Catania, Sicily, that supports and spreads a multidisciplinary approach to contemporary performing arts. It is a space for initiating and realising artistic projects in music, theatre, performing arts, electronic arts, visual arts, and writing. The Ministry of Culture in Italy recognises Zō as the only organisation in its funding category dedicated to multidisciplinary art programming in the country.

Zō was founded in 1997 by Sergio Zinna, Felicita Platania, and Ivano Mistretta to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue within the performing arts and to activate various venues in Catania. In 2001, it moved into its own venue, an old sulfur refinery located considerably outside the city centre. Part of the building was repurposed into the venue that Zō is today, as part of a larger redevelopment project of industrial buildings, initiated by the architect Nigel Allen.

Zō's self-proclaimed mission is to offer the inhabitants of Catania a channel of interaction with international contemporary performing arts, thereby creating a bridge to Europe, and to share competencies, skills, and opportunities with their communities.

Geographic mission: The region.
Zō declares itself to be a "regional organisation with an international mission"

General attendees and audiences: 20-60 years old, middle-upper-class inhabitants of Catania.

Zō's communities:
At the start of CTM, the majority of Zō's audience was middle-class White people. They aspire to engage a highly diverse audience, aged five to eighty, spanning all classes, ethnicities, languages, and nationalities.

Who are the missing communities?
People with disabilities and migrants.
Pamela (PM, Zō) has been leading a theatre group with people with disabilities. However, in the broader context of Zō, namely the audience who engages with their program, this community is mostly absent.

In terms of finance, Zō is supported by the Italian Ministry of Culture, the regional department of culture, project funding such as Creative Europe, and self-generated income from space rentals and ticket sales.

The reported challenges for ZŌ, at the start of the project, were:

A gap between the artistic proposals that Zō offers and the communities with whom they would like to engage. The proposals "*are not accessible to them*". *(Pamela, PM, Zō, Spring 2023)*

There are popular cultural and artistic practices, as well as a local linguistic dialect, which have not been included in their program.

The ticket and participation fees for Zō's activities and programs are too expensive for the communities they aim to engage.

Internally, the team is split. Some members of the team, not those formally engaged in CTM, prioritise monetary gain and appealing to privileged communities rather than to those who are underrepresented, and they justify this by arguing that working with URCs is not financially viable. Lack of systems and processes rooted in meritocracy, which would support process and care rather than product-oriented endeavours. A significant discrepancy and imbalance in opportunities for those from URCs, and thus their chances of initiating, developing and realising artistic projects are jeopardised from the start.

"It is hard to build trust with URCs"
(Pamela, PM, Zō, Spring 2023)

While part of the team at Zō has been interested in connecting with diverse communities on the island (Catania), it has been challenging for them to develop the communication channels and trust-building pillars needed to make Zō a place for URCs to visit and work. When navigating the balance between artistic integrity and social justice, Zō views social justice as an invaluable aspect of their work. They aspire to work with art as a service to social collectivity rather than as an ultimate goal, making the engagement of marginalised groups vital to their work, while also being dedicated to artistic integrity and to developing new standards and aesthetics rather than following traditional notions of "artistic quality". This deep commitment drives them to question whether diversity is merely an ethical obligation or a fundamental biological requirement for survival.

There is no infrastructure or tailored programs by the Sicilian government to address the social injustice and the absence of URCs in the contemporary performing arts field. There are significantly fewer resources in Sicily than on the Italian mainland.



Ségolène Le Contellec (PM) is a French cultural manager who moved to Catania to complete a master's degree in Cultural Mediation and International Communication. Initially collaborating with Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee, she developed an expertise in theatre and stage lighting, working with international companies. Her career has since expanded into coordinating artistic residencies and managing European cultural projects. Specialising in transnational cooperation, she oversees organisational processes, logistics, and partner relations for the CTM project.



Pamela Toscano (PM) is an actress, director, educator, and organisational coordinator at Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee. Serving as Project Manager, she has supervised the centre's artistic residencies since 2017, overseeing artist scouting, creative direction, and community relations. She has led major mobility and creation initiatives, including Ecdisi and SoundTrack Residencies. Trained at Teatro Stabile di Catania, Pamela specialises in physical theatre and frequently develops intercultural workshops and inclusive projects that merge artistic practice with social impact for people with disabilities.



Elie Laucher (AoC) is a French-born artist who studied fashion and textile design before working as a print designer in London. A permanent team member at Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee since moving to Sicily in 2019, she shapes the centre's visual identity and mentors young volunteers. Elie co-founded the YOP YOP illustration festival and the Maglia Festa upcycling platform, and was an active contributor to the intersectional festival Fudda. Her creative practice is deeply rooted in textiles, DIY printing, collaborative making, and agile, community-led production.



Emanuele Arturo Miceli (AoC) is a Sicilian cultural professional who transitioned from a background in industrial and management engineering into the arts. Since 2023, he has worked at Zō Centro Culture Contemporanee, specialising in securing public and private funding to sustain the centre's cultural initiatives while providing artists with legal and tax advisory services. Emanuele organises cultural events across Catania and its suburbs, focusing on promoting dialogue, community care, and active support for marginalised identities.

Trans Europe Halles



Trans Europe Halles (TEH) is a non-profit, member-led network of over 180 independent and grassroots arts and culture centres from across 40+ countries in Europe and beyond. Established in 1983, the network was initiated by citizens and artists who have been at the forefront of repurposing Europe's buildings and spaces for arts, culture and activism.

TEH's mission is to support the members — and, through them, their communities — in reclaiming abandoned heritage spaces and transforming them into vibrant, independent hubs for arts and culture, self-expression, heritage preservation, social exchange, and social innovation. Guided by action-driven, independent, and community-led values, they work together to regenerate neighbourhoods and cities while promoting social, environmental, and spatial justice. As a network, TEH provides a dynamic forum for ideas, experiences, and exchange that supports its members, their leadership teams, their colleagues, and the communities they serve.

TEH also fosters opportunities for international cooperation and networking, which are crucial for civil society-initiated cultural centres and all cultural professionals connected to them.

Together with like-minded networks, TEH co-signs position papers, declarations and petitions addressed to policy-makers. They meet with local, national, and regional policy-makers to inform them about the network's work and advocate for independent culture. TEH Coordination Office is located in Lund, Sweden.

↑ Image: © Pierre Gondard, TEH104, Marseille, France

While the themes have been addressed widely throughout TEH's projects and activities, CTM is TEH's first project to explicitly focus on diversity and accessibility.

In the project, their role has been to ensure coherence between the partners, provide scale and European relevance, and secure structural sustainability and long-term movement impact within and beyond the network.

As part of TEH's designated role and tasks within CTM, TEH coordinated and embedded all CTM transnational workshops, including Reflection Workshops, Knowledge Roundtables, and Partners' Transnational Conferences into the programmes of TEH's annual Camp Meetings and Conferences, connecting the project activities with the wider TEH network.

Geographic mission:
As a European network, TEH's operations are predominantly within and for the European arts and culture field, though they often extend beyond it. As TEH's Coordination Office is located in Lund, Scania, Sweden, TEH also supports the cultural actors in the region on international cultural cooperation and EU funding opportunities through its International Resource Office (IRO).

General attendees and audiences:
TEH's annual Camp Meeting and Conference, each held at a different location across Europe and hosted by member organisations, usually gather 250-400 participants from across the network and beyond.

TEH's communities:
Grassroots, non-governmental cultural centres across Europe. In its advocacy work, TEH is also deeply engaged with stakeholders and policymakers on national and international levels.

In terms of finance, TEH is supported by its members, the European Union, the Swedish Arts Council, the regional cultural department of southern Sweden and the city of Lund. They also receive financial support from private institutions to implement activities addressing specific challenges and priorities.

The reported challenges for TEH, at the start of the project, were:

Both internally and across the network, TEH identified a discrepancy between the commitment expressed through various workshops and discussions among network members, which helped shape the initial proposal idea for a more equitable and socially just arts and cultural field, and the extent to which these principles were embedded in organisational and individual's professional practices, particularly in relation to URCs. The challenge was therefore not primarily a lack of awareness or stated commitment, but rather how to translate these values into concrete practices, structures, decision-making processes and relationships with URCs.



Ceyda Berk-Söderblom (PM) is a transborder cultural professional working at the intersection of arts, cultural policy, and social, environmental, and democratic justice. With over twenty years of experience as an arts manager, curator, and DEI expert, she has led numerous transnational festivals across Europe. As Senior Project Manager and Researcher at Trans Europe Halles, she coordinates the CTM and Co-PED initiatives. Ceyda founded MiklagårdArts, advised the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, and chaired the board of Finland's Culture for All service.

What do you hope to gain from the Culture Transformation Movement project?

BRU

Leverage the rare opportunity of a four-year artist residency to deeply diversify their team, bring in fresh perspectives, and slow down their high-tempo environment to find dedicated space and time to reflect. While the organisation is already advanced in certain areas of discrimination criticism, it recognises gaps in its diversity expertise. It hopes to secure the resources needed to connect with entirely new communities it does not yet work with, and deepen existing ones. Ultimately, they want to be part of a broader international movement where they can simultaneously open themselves up to profound internal change and share their own established expertise to support other global partners.

404

Engage in deep knowledge exchange, learning collaborative strategies from other partners to undo structural knots and bottlenecks in their daily workflow. Rather than building entirely new frameworks from scratch, the organisation aims to build on existing foundations. Crucially, the project provides a structured, four-year opportunity — acting as a valuable institutional catalyst — to openly and safely address sensitive internal matters of discrimination and representation within the organisation.

ZŌ

By participating in the Culture Transformation Movement project, Zō hopes to acquire concrete, practical tools and processes to implement directly into their daily work. They aim to facilitate collective learning for their staff to deepen their understanding of underrepresented communities, whilst raising internal awareness to make the value of diversity a shared institutional priority. Ultimately, they hope this process will directly influence and transform their future programming and activities.

IZO

By participating in the Culture Transformation Movement Project, the organisation hopes to directly address the lack of diversity within its team while identifying robust structural frameworks to implement internally and share with partner organisations. Crucially, they aim to develop a powerful, persuasive vocabulary and impactful language to effectively communicate the importance of diversity, helping them recruit more people to the movement for social justice.

TEH

To stimulate the TEH network through the diversification of thought and practice; to produce and transfer knowledge about the presence, participation and work of URCs in the arts and cultural field; and to develop guidelines, methodologies and examples that can support TEH members in developing and implementing diversity and inclusion policies and practices. Through CTM, we also hope to contribute to cultural transformation across independent cultural centres in Europe and to support the development of enabling policies at local, national and European levels.

COMING TOGETHER

How did it all start?

The concepts and ideas underpinning CTM began to take shape in 2021 through a series of foundational conversations, including a workshop led by Fairooz Tamimi (then working for TEH) with the uncompromising working title: *“Diversify or Die”* at the D-Arts, project office for diversity, symposium in Vienna.

The project’s working title in the early stages of conceptualisation and ideation was “Social inclusion movement”. After critical reflection on the term “inclusion”, motivated by existing experience in BRU, it was decided to change the title to Cultural Transformation Movement.

The new title also offered an energising direction towards a cultural transformation, rather than “including” something in what is already “there”.

The 5 partners in CTM are notably different from each other. They have gathered around shared intentions, aspirations and needs. Throughout the project, they had to learn about their differences and how they could serve in reciprocal knowledge-transfer processes. While their objectives and intentions are clear, their interpretation in local contexts has been distinct, best suited to the environments in which they were realised.

Different but associated

The CoCs did not all start from a levelled plane. The specific context of each CoC entails distinct advantages and disadvantages. For example: 404 is a well-established institution with a large team and distinct departments responsible for specific aspects of its operations, while BRU, ZŌ and IZO work with relatively small teams and are less organised by different departments within the organisation; IZO lost its physical home due to the Russian full-scale invasion, while BRU, ZŌ and 404 continued to be firmly located physically in proximity to the communities that they chose to work with in CTM.

However, irreducible to the differences between specific contexts and modes of operation, it is important to note that all CoCs, TEH (as a network), the other members of TEH, and the arts and culture field as a whole, are continuously required to advocate for and defend the relevance and potency of arts and culture. During the COVID pandemic and since then, governments in Europe have been reducing their support for and appreciation of the arts and culture field, as Ingeborg Zackariassen covered in her article *The Ongoing Cultural Crisis in Europe (2024)*. While CTM is dedicated to driving a shift in the arts and culture field, we ought to acknowledge that art and culture, as such, have been underappreciated and underestimated in many parts of Europe. Each CoC operates in a different social, political, cultural, and economic context, and yet they are all, in some way, affected by some shared challenges, imposed on the art and culture field as a whole through reduction of support and eradication of infrastructure and programs across the continent, as addressed in *Recommendations for the Work Plan for Culture 2027 – 2030* (Culture Action Europe, 2026).

> *“There was something really valuable in realising we were all navigating similar challenges from different contexts, going through the same doubts and then motivating and supporting each other.”*
> *(Elie, AoC Zō, Spring 2026)*

> *“Some CoCs had larger teams and stronger infrastructure, while others worked with very limited capacity, resulting in uneven levels of support for AoCs in terms of coordination, documentation, and follow-up.”*
> *(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)*

Laura is referring to each CoC having distinct infrastructure; the scope of their activities differs, and they have varying levels of financial resources and capacity. This created different frameworks for supporting AoCs throughout the project. In more detail, only some CoCs provided physical spaces for their respective AoCs to develop their artistic production, and only some CoCs offered their respective AoCs support from a local artistic director or curator, in addition to the process with the ATF. These differences in infrastructure and processes at the CoCs also resulted in the AoCs having different needs from the collective of AoCs and from the process with the ATF.

YOUR ORGANISATION

To reflect on your own context, you can reflect on the following questions, which have been utilised in the early conversations with the CoCs in CTM:

What is the main/core intention of your organisation?

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.....

.....

In what way is your organisation experiencing challenges which stem from matters of inequality, injustice or discrimination?

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In an ideal world, who do you think should be the users/visitors of your organisation/venue?

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How do you reconcile potential tensions between artistic integrity and social justice?

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What question would you ask yourself in relation to working with underrepresented communities?

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What do you hope to learn from the Culture Transformation Movement project?

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Laura Camacho Salgado (Artistic Transformation Facilitator)

A Colombian-born, Norway-based curator, artistic facilitator, producer, researcher, and cultural strategist working at the intersection of artistic practice, institutional transformation, and international cultural collaboration. As Executive Producer of CODA International Dance Festival, she develops production strategies focused on accessibility, inclusion, and transnational partnerships, including Europe Beyond Access. With over a decade of experience in international cultural programming — including as Head of the International Program at Oslo World — she has built long-term collaborations across the Global South. Her work bridges critical inquiry and practice, informed by research on migration, borders, and cultural narratives. She holds a BA in Literature with minors in Arts and Fashion Design, an Erasmus Mundus Master's in Cultural Narratives, has lectured at the University of Oslo, and has published on cinema and migration.



Israel Aloni (Researcher)

A contemporary dance and performance artist, researcher, cultural organiser, pedagogue, performer, writer, and provocateur. Their internationally presented choreographic work addresses socio-political themes. Aloni is the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of ilDance, an independent production body for contemporary dance in Sweden, as well as architect and project manager of the EU-funded International Contemporary Dance Collective (iCoDaCo). They also serve as Artistic Director of COMPASS, Resident Practitioner at the New Education for Contemporary Dance, and an international consultant for European cooperation projects. Aloni holds an MFA in Choreography with a Specialisation in Performative Practices from Stockholm University of the Arts.





→ Image: © Léo Lethielleux, TEH99, Sofia, Bulgaria
↓ Image: © Léo Lethielleux, TEH100, Riga, Latvia

Methodologies

WHAT IS METHODOLOGY?

What is Methodology?

The word methodology is comprised of two Greek words: *methodos* (the pursuit of knowledge) and *logos* (logic, reason or study). Therefore, the literal meaning of the term is the logic of pursuing knowledge; in other words, the structural means by which we seek to acquire understanding.

In contemporary philosophy, sociology and critical theory (Haraway, 1988; Barad, 2007) — which have increasingly seeped into the vernacular of arts and culture — a methodology is not just a collection of tools for knowledge inquiry (otherwise known as research). It represents the overarching conceptual, contextual and philosophical framework that dictates how knowledge is gathered, interpreted and validated. For example, the process of co-curating an exhibition is not merely about "inviting others" but rather about knowledge harvesting and transfer. Depending on the specific lens through which you view research and practice, the term shifts its focus and political stakes. The specific means we choose to acquire the knowledge we seek are, in and of themselves, a direct expression of our onto-epistemological disposition or situatedness.

Are being and knowing related?

The ways we acquire knowledge are often closely linked to the ways we are being in the world, the ways we live our lives. Traditionally, ways of being (ontology) and ways of knowing (epistemology) have been treated as distinct, separate domains. However, contemporary theory and philosophy, notably Karen Barad's *agential realism* (*Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 2007), acknowledge that being and knowing are deeply interconnected and perhaps entirely inseparable. Rather than viewing a mode of being as an infinite, passive continuum, and knowledge inquiry as a momentary, detached formulation of a distinct episode, we understand them as inextricably interlinked into a single state of *knowing-being.* Therefore, the methodology through which knowledge is pursued is both a symptom of our ways of being in the world (ontology) and the lens through which we interpret that world (epistemology).

In short, an onto-epistemological disposition is a commitment to understanding that how we practise is what we become. It requires recognising that knowledge is not a static thing to be gathered, but a living, embodied relationship that we actively bring into existence.

Methodology in CTM

CTM embedded ethical methodologies across both its thematic content and operational processes. This commitment was demonstrated across several key reflection workshops: *The Forgotten Data Lab* (Riga, 2025) directly interrogated how data is collected and interpreted; *2056: Radical Cartographies of the Future* (Marseille, 2026) engaged participants in developing new visual and spatial modes of knowledge presentation; and *Community as Both the Origin of and Destination for Our Work* (Epanomi, 2024) examined models for horizontal community collaboration across every stage of the creative process.

This methodological rigour extended into individual artistic productions. Mira (AoC, 404) devised an intentional conversational methodology for interviewing; Farila (AoC, BRU) introduced a co-creative woodcarving practice to address intergenerational trauma; Kseniya (AoC, IZO) co-curated an eclectic exhibition and event with and by other Ukrainian artists; and Elie and Emanuele (AoCs, ZŌ) established frameworks for deep community participation in festival planning.

Together, these initiatives illustrate how CTM treated methodology not merely as a subject of inquiry, but as an active vehicle for cultural transformation. By aligning its own operations with these ethical commitments, the project empowered participants to design practices that are directly responsive to the needs and agency of URCs.

In a sense, CTM reaffirmed that methodology is never neutral; it is the site where power, ethics, and cultural transformation are either enacted or undermined. The project revealed that cultural transformation is unattainable when conventional, top-down structures are used to deliver "inclusive" content. Instead, methodology must serve as both the subject of inquiry and the apparatus of change. CTM learned that ethical methodologies must be elastic, safe, and continuously negotiated through deep listening and adaptability.

The Less Obvious Methodologies

A methodology can be a chain or network of methods. It can be a combination of actions woven into a field of knowledge inquiry. Articulating a methodology clearly is what makes it applicable in different times and spaces from those in which it was originally developed. Crucially, employing a specific methodology in a process already pre-determines the types, scope and limits of the knowledge we are capable of encountering.

Sometimes, a methodology is a relatable, everyday practice that might not seem like a formal framework at first glance. It can emerge simply by repeating a certain action with intense attention to the process and the fine details of performing it.

One such foundational methodology within CTM has been *hosting* and, more specifically, *feeding.* At various points in the project, different AoCs and CoCs described how food functions as an invaluable medium of connection-making. In Sicily, Zō reported that at their community stakeholder gathering, known as *The Table,* they always anchored the dialogue around shared food. Sharing this intimate ritual of dining together created a safe environment that made it easier to carry out the sensitive, demanding work of unpacking the challenges faced by URCs in Catania. In Vienna, Farila reported that in her practice, conversations with community members are accompanied by tea-drinking rituals, which directly foster a sense of camaraderie that, in turn, supports subsequent creative exchanges. At BRU, every event is accompanied by providing tea from a Samovar.

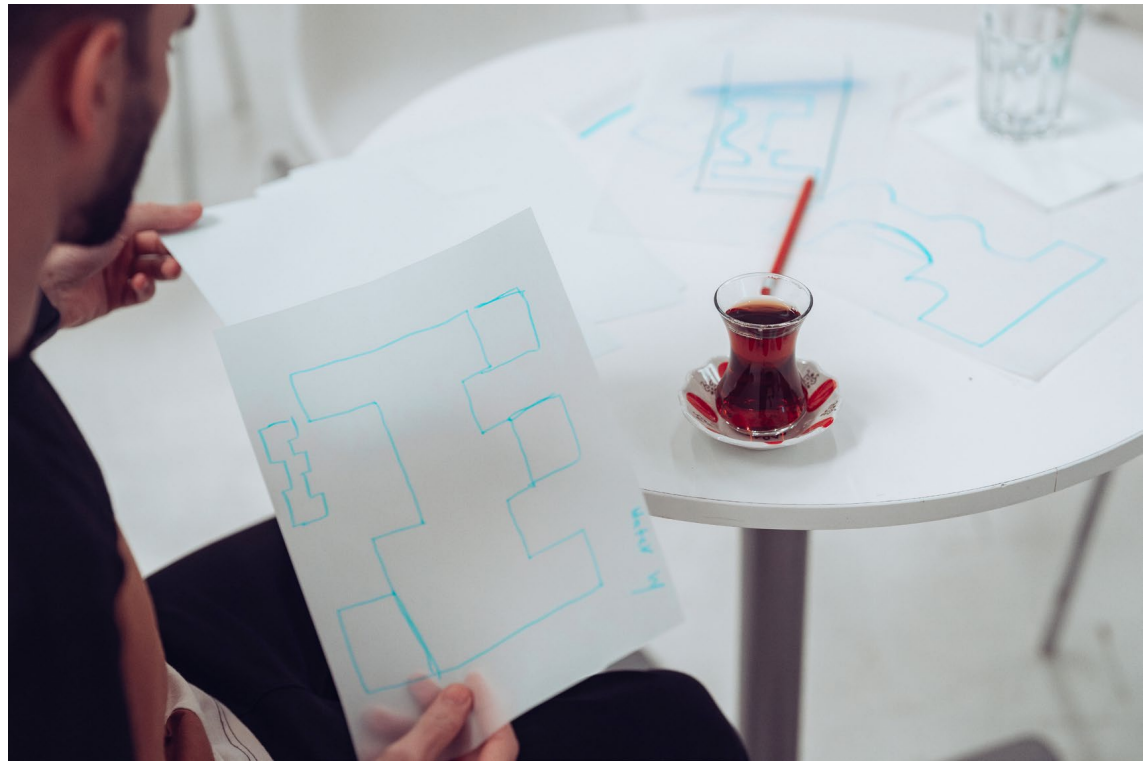


Image: © suna films

Hosting around food is not merely a gesture of kindness or an illustrative display of hospitality. It is a rigorous methodology for group-making, trust-building, anxiety-mitigation and togetherness. Connecting to the preceding articulations about methodology and onto-epistemology, it is important to recognise hosting as a medium and a logic for acquiring knowledge. Sharing food with each other demonstrates our appreciation and respect for one another, first as people, as equals. It is precisely this equality that lays the indispensable foundation for rigorous, profound work to change the systemic frameworks through which we learn, create, experience and share art and culture.

The term methodology comes up frequently across CTM conversations, documents and reports, and it appears many times throughout this publication. This persistent repetition underscores the importance of developing practices that are genuinely applicable and repeatable — offering trustworthy, sustainable processes to foster more equitable and just environments across the arts and culture field.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research process used the methods of **questionnaires** and **interviews** to gather data (mostly qualitative) on the local implementation of the project, the processes of the AoCs, CoCs and their respective communities; the process of the project coordinator, TEH, and the lived experiences of those working and participating across the consortium. The questionnaires were administered via **digital forms**, whilst the interviews were conducted in meetings, mostly online, with a few in person. The CoC questionnaires were answered by the PMs and, occasionally, by other team members, in which case the process facilitated collaborative conversations and reflections on their context.

The research process included a dynamic process of questionnaires and direct interviews interwoven throughout the project, with individualised and organisation-specific communication, in online meetings and direct written communication.

The process included the following:

- Three written questionnaire with each CoC (Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2026)
- Three written questionnaires with each AoC (Spring 2024, Spring 2025, Spring 2026)
- Interviews and reflection meetings were held with each AoC, CoC (PMs), TEH and ATF twice a year (Spring & Fall)

Additionally, the researcher requested information from CoCs, TEH, AoCs, and ATF via written communication (primarily email) to gain further insight into data, topics and content raised in questionnaires, interviews, and online and in-person meetings.

The written communication between the researcher and all other members of the consortium was ongoing and frequent, mostly utilising emails and shared online documents, while occasionally using less formal, more easily accessible, channels such as messaging platforms.

Whether the communication was written or verbal sometimes depended on the preference of the people involved in the dialogue. Some individuals preferred verbal communication, for either access reasons or a basic sense of ease when speaking rather than writing, while others opted to spend more time contemplating and articulating their answers and comments, and thus preferred written communication. The researcher accommodated these needs or preferences and adjusted the means of communication with each individual accordingly.

Sentiments towards the questionnaires and interviews varied across the consortium. Some participants felt, at times, that they were overly time-consuming and demanded a level of sustained concentration that was not easily summoned during an intense project timeline. However, the content shared through these mediums — and the knowledge generated in its articulation — is profoundly meaningful as they harvested and synthesised the practices, knowledge and experiences of the individuals in the project, while also carefully articulating the process of transformation in the local contexts, both organisationally and in terms of the work with the communities.

The researcher also had access to project official documents and reports, both internal and those submitted to Creative Europe. They also reviewed communication and marketing materials (websites, social media accounts, programs, info sheets and publications) produced by

each CoC and TEH to study how they communicated CTM and its content to their respective audiences. The researcher attended some partner meetings and consortium thematic conversations (i.e when a big project action or deliverable were discussed), and participated in the project's transnational workshops (Fall 2023 only online, and not in Spring 2024). The consortium members also shared personal notes, sketches, and doodles from their journey in the project, provided knowingly for analysis and inclusion in this publication.

The questionnaires presented the same questions to the addressed group (AoCs or CoCs) and the responses were examined in relation to responses by the same individual or organisation at earlier stages of the project, and triangulated with the project's objectives and work plan to note progression, change and tendencies as they emerged throughout the project.

Due to limited resources and the project's specific structural constraints, there was very little room for traditional ethnographic research, which typically requires the researcher to be fully immersed in the physical environment, geographic area, community, or action under investigation. Consequently, the questionnaires and interviews became vital channels of insight. Simultaneously, they evolved into significant moments of reflection and contemplation for those engaged in the project. At times, having to formulate and articulate their impressions into a comprehensive language allowed the AoCs, the ATF and teams from the CoCs and TEH to recall and process their journeys; at other times, the individual expressed feeling that requirement to summarise things felt inevitably reductive and insufficient.

The testimonies of the individuals in the consortium, enounciated in the interviews, reflection meetings and written correspondence, were referred to as subjective experiences and takeaways of the people in CTM, and viewed through comparative analysis. They were compared with the official reports and documents produced by the project, across contexts and geographic locations, and across time. The comparison sought to identify cohesion, discrepancies and movement between the unfolding of the project as such and the experience it evoked in the individuals and communities who participated in it.

Referring to the research questions, all the data and information collected through the mentioned methods, we examined on four layers:

1. Action – context – impact. In what ways did the actions and activities of CTM impact the communities it engaged with, the local context of the partners and the members of TEH?
2. Magnitude. In what way did the condition of CTM being a Creative Europe project informed its realisation?
3. Stubborn hurdles. What challenges or difficulties persisted throughout the project and on what scale did they occur (local or across different geographic locations)?
4. Embodied transformation. In what way the progression of the project reflected in the embodiment and embedding of cultural transformation in the individuals and the communities it engaged?

> The researcher also endeavoured to listen to the "matter" or the "content" held within the silences, and in what remains unwritten or unsaid within these texts. One of the core practices repeatedly reaffirmed throughout this project has been deep listening, which I have also attempted to practice within the questionnaires and interviews conducted; in the way they are featured in this publication, I hope they will incite a similar practice of deep listening within you, the reader.

Given the limited visits and the inability to witness most of the project's live activities, processes, and events, in the local and national contexts of the partners, the research relied heavily on the **testimonial accounts** of those physically present on the ground.

Furthermore, to notice a movement, a position of a *witness* might need to be embodied — to temporarily step outside the movement to register the transformation. The questionnaires and interviews throughout the project, in some way, served as such opportunities. Nonetheless, given the format of these communication channels, particularly that of the written forms, sometimes the way the responders approached the questions was not unanimous, and thus the same question could receive different kinds of responses. The research, and the process of authoring this publication, incorporate these differences into the analysis and synthesis of the materials as they can signify a meaningful context-specific temporality to the unfolding of the cultural transformation and the reciprocity between the local contexts and what CTM brought into them.

The project, its framework, and the researcher's role in CTM were also a learning opportunity regarding the accuracy of data collection and the ability to deduce information from it.

In addition to questionnaires and interviews, the researcher employed desk research methods to study and incorporate current affairs, cultural policies, and local and national discourse in each partner's context, as well as broader theoretical and conceptual frameworks. These references are noted, as applicable, throughout the publication, and in the References chapter on page 262 – 264.

The research process also included the researcher's site visits to Zō, 404 and BRU once at the very beginning of the project to familiarise themselves with the cultural centres, the team, and the local context. They visited Zō again when they facilitated a movement and choreography workshop with local artists, and visited 404 three more times for the development of this publication, as 404 was the partner responsible for its realisation. Other in-person meetings between the researcher and the consortium took place at various locations during the TEH (project coordinator) conferences and camp meetings across Europe.

The consortium viewed earlier drafts of the publication and its members had the opportunity to provide their individual feedback and reflections. In line with the CTM ethos, this publication attempted to respect the heterogeneity and eclecticness of perspectives and experiences in the consortium as well as allow individual agency for people to propose alterations or removal of content they were not confident and comfortable with.

PROJECT METHODOLOGIES

The project's methodology was to begin with internal transformation at the CoCs — including operational systems, team perspectives, programming, and practices — and to continuously work in full engagement with the URCs surrounding the centres. To maintain a close and intimate connection with the community, members of the identified URCs (specific to each CoC and its geographic, cultural, and political context) were engaged as Artists/Agents of Change (AoCs). They were tasked with actively engaging and activating both the CoC and the communities, playing a significant role in fostering alignment across the four key components: the CoC, the communities, the project activities, and the CTM.

The engagement of AoCs at the CoCs was intended to create, over time, more spaces of agency and positions of decision-making power within the organisations for marginalised individuals and URCs.

Following the project's objective to develop the competences of people in the CoCs so they can initiate and realise activities and processes with URCs, both during the project period and beyond, the project incorporated a series of workshops to develop their transcultural competences. These focused on diversity-sensitive anti-discriminatory culture production and a need to create habits for social justice.

The project activities can be roughly divided into two categories: local (location-specific) and transnational (practice- or knowledge-specific).

The local activities focused on developing competence, knowledge, processes, systems, and experiences internally within the CoC and externally through outreach to its surroundings. The scope and range of their outreach depended on the specific context and capacity of each CoC, as well as the identified need and willingness of local communities to engage with the project and its activities. The transnational activities transmitted, shared, connected, activated, and disseminated the knowledge and practices developed in the project across the project partners' geographic locations and further to other locations and communities through public interventions, workshops, and interactive and artistic endeavours.

For the competence development components of the project, the Diverse-leadership Capacity Building and Transcultural workshops, the consortium created a shared pool of expert trainers and facilitators (...), each with a particular background and field of work, from which the workshop facilitators were selected to offer workshops that address the CoCs' unique challenges. This aligns with the CTM's intention to harvest and apply existing knowledge in the arts and culture field, learn from what has already been done, and further specify it for the CTM context.

Surveying the network

The Knowledge Roundtable and Reflection workshops and Partners' Transnational Conferences during the TEH camps and conference meetings offered CTM valuable opportunities to share and disseminate the experience and knowledge accumulated throughout the project at the local CoCs, in the collaborative processes of the AoCs, and within the partnership's internal processes. They were also valuable for surveying the network and learning about how other cultural centres, members of TEH, experience and practice working with URCs. This transversality (movement across various planes and multiple directions simultaneously) enabled CTM to both offer and receive valuable insights and context for its processes.

The Reflection Workshops were facilitated by the Artistic Transformation Facilitator, and the Knowledge Roundtable workshops by the project Researcher. Both formats also involved the PMs and AoCs: In the Reflection Workshops, more actively co-designing and co-facilitating, and in the Knowledge Roundtable Workshops, mostly in the form of presentations and status updates from their respective contexts and experiences in CTM.

After hosting the Knowledge Roundtable and Reflection Workshops, the facilitators prepared a report that presented the themes, methodologies, and key learnings from each workshop. All the reports are publicly available on the CTM resource page (see page 14 – 15).

The Partners' Transnational Conferences, while playing an invaluable role in the transversal and reciprocal exchange of experience and knowledge within the consortium, were also sometimes open to other attendees of the TEH transnational camps and conferences. Notably, the one in Marseille (2026) included an open workshop where transformative practices from CTM were shared with participants not part of the CTM consortium.

Engaging AoCs

Each CoC had a context-specific process for engaging the AoCs associated with its organisation. At 404, the PMs sought artists from their existing network who they believed held interesting perspectives and could well suit the project's objectives and framework. For 404, it was important to work with artists. They chose two artists — Mira Bryssinck and Dounia Mahammed- with whom they had already worked in small collaborations. The PMs at 404 saw CTM as an opportunity to deepen these relationships. Both artists had also worked together before CTM. They had a personal friendship, which the PMs believed would benefit CTM, given the levels of individual and collective intensity required of the AoCs in the project.

The CoCs had to engage the AoCs at a very early stage of the project, which meant the PMs were also learning how to translate the project plan into a feasible action plan.

"They asked a lot of questions, most of which we didn't have an answer to. So, we stepped into the project from all sides with a certain trust and also lots of uncertainties."
(Marieke and Tine, PMs, 404, Spring 2026)

IZO felt it was important to find an artist who is fluent in the Ukrainian cultural context, has a network within the Ukrainian arts and culture field, and is experienced in working with Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals abroad and at the time of engaging the AoC, the PMs at IZO anticipated that the project would primarily involve Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals who are currently displaced and living elsewhere in Europe. This changed throughout the project, and IZO also worked physically in Ukraine, precisely because of the particular methodologies and practices that the selected AoC, Kseniya Ulianova, brought into the project and the curatorial thinking around the artistic production. (see page 132 – 134)

For BRU, the initial intent of the AoC search was to invite them to "join the team". They also knew that they wanted to work with artists who have both a distinct practice and a genuine interest in working with communities in co-creative processes. From the start, BRU knew they wanted to work with more than one AoC, to offer more artists the opportunity to engage with the project while allowing BRU to work with artists from multiple URCs. They were not sure how many AoCs they would involve, given the resources and capacity available to them. BRU commenced by having the curatorial team engage in an internal brainstorming process to establish a profile for the AoC suitable for their context. They also conducted local investigations and researched different potential candidates, culminating in a collaborative internal selection process. Eventually, they engaged one AoC, Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, for the first part of the project (2023-2024), and a second AoC, Farila Neshat, for the later part (2024-2026). The first was an in-reach process, and the second included an open call to extend their reach and draw attention to URCs. The open call process included three stages: a written application and two rounds of interviews. The PM at BRU attested that the AoCs *"were rather outside eyes that became critical friends." (Fariba, PM, BRU, Spring 2026)*

At Zō, they decided to engage two people who have already been working with their organisation, Elie Laucher and Emanuele Miceli. They felt that, in their context, it was important to engage AoCs who are familiar with the organisation's internal realities and dynamics to ensure a relatively smooth transition to new ways of working. In their context, it was more important to engage people who are creative and artistic but do not necessarily identify as artists, while maintaining strong ties to local communities and having significant agency in local social circles. Elie and Emanuele were engaged for the entire duration of the project.

A of change

At the commencement of the project, consistent with the language used in the project description in the application to Creative Europe, the acronym AoC stood solely for Artist of Change. As the project evolved and the CTM team learned more about the specific needs and capacities of the different local contexts, it was also decided to see it as an Agent of Change.

At the inception of the project, there was a conversation about how to define who counts as an artist, and whether traditional definitions offer sufficient flexibility when working alongside URCs. Certain members of the consortium felt it was far more appropriate to focus on the socio-political agency of those stepping into the role, rather than their formal artistry. It was precisely through this conceptual shift that the term "Agent of Change" was coined.

Some of the people who joined CTM in the capacity of AoC do not identify as artists. Still, they are certainly agents of change, movement and transformation in their respective context. Throughout the project, the acronym (initialism) AoC was used administratively and interpreted as "Artist/ Agent of Change"; thus, both terms remained in use.

Read more about the relationship between the AoCs and CoC on Main Findings, page 173 – 198.

Knowledge Roundtable Workshops

In line with the project's core intent to create contexts for reciprocal knowledge sharing, the Knowledge Roundtable Workshops served specifically as a medium for CTM's transnational, collective, and porous aspects. Facilitated by the project's researcher, these workshops were held annually at the TEH Camp Meetings.

The workshops commenced with the researcher presenting the current status of the project's various dimensions and inviting participants to reflect on and propose methods and strategies to mitigate the hurdles and challenges that inevitably arise in processes addressing injustice towards URCs in the European arts and culture field. The CTM partners were active participants in these sessions, alongside other TEH members invited to engage with the project consortium and contribute their localised experience and knowledge. These workshops have been highly significant for contextualising CTM within the broader European arts and culture landscape. They gained significance merely by challenging conventions in the field of European arts and culture, such as representation, community, and alternative artistic practices emerging from transgressive perspectives. Each workshop focused on a specific theme whilst offering an expansive, deep discursive field for exploration, experimentation and interaction.

Read more about Knowledge Roundtable workshops on page 162 – 169.

Reflection Workshops

The Reflection Workshops, held twice a year at the TEH meetings, both Camps and Conferences, were facilitated primarily by CTM's ATF in collaboration with the AoCs and PMs, and operated as collaborative, lab-style sessions. They offered a dedicated space for artists, agents, professionals, managers and activists to evaluate their experiences of cultural transformation while developing inclusive, community-driven practices across the arts sector.

As an essential component of CTM, the workshops brought together a rich tapestry of participants. These included the AoCs, CoCs, and the broader European cultural community.

The sessions intentionally moved away from traditional, rigid panel formats. Instead, they focused on participatory methods, creative practices, collaborative activations, shared reflection, unlearning institutional biases, and discussing deep systemic transformation.

Ultimately, these sessions aimed to dismantle some of the barriers that URCs, and particularly arts and culture professionals from these communities, experience, allowing participants to engage in mutual learning and proactively connect with their local communities.

Read more about the Reflection Workshops on page 150 – 161.

Partners' Transnational Conference

Designed to facilitate knowledge exchange at the project management level, these conferences support collective learning at the consortium level, across all aspects of CTM. Given the project's focus on transformation, creating a safe environment where partners can openly address challenges, share insights, and build on acquired knowledge was important to ensuring continuity.

The project included four such conferences. Each of them aligned with the core topics covered in local partner workshops — namely, Transcultural Competence and Diverse-Leadership Capacity Building workshops — thereby providing a forum for in-depth reflection on implementation. During these sessions, coordinated by TEH, the consortium gained insight into project activities and processes covering the period since the previous conference, enabling partners to refine strategies and maximise project impact collaboratively.

The inaugural conference served as the in-person component of the project's kick-off meeting. Conferences 2 and 3 focused on evaluating operational challenges, updating risk assessments, and addressing both local and transnational challenges in the project implementation process. The final transnational gathering will act as the project closure meeting, dedicated to assessing outcomes, evaluating the partnership, and reviewing overall achievements across the project's lifecycle.

Awareness Workshops

The Awareness Workshops were designed to address the project's core objective of bridging the gap in dialogue between URCs and decision-makers in the cultural sector. While each partner adapted the workshop format to their local context, all workshops shared common foundational principles: creating structured spaces for honest dialogue, centring the voices and experiences of marginalised groups, and generating actionable outcomes that feed into broader mobilisation efforts.

The workshops were curated to facilitate open conversations among URCs, marginalised artists/cultural workers, and key stakeholders (funders, policymakers, decision-makers). Based on the identified need to raise awareness of social inequalities and identify potential solutions, the Awareness Workshops were included as a mechanism to disrupt the often-isolated processes of working with URCs and to foster the involvement of those who can drive infrastructural change.

The workshops also surfaced important learnings for future implementation. For example, 404's experience highlighted the need for accessible language, noting that the common use of academic terminology in diversity and equity work often excludes those most affected. Academic terminology and intellectual framing can create barriers that keep some participants out of the conversation, and even signal to them, "you are not welcome here". Identifying this tension challenged facilitators to adapt their approach for future exchanges. In Ukraine, workshops in Dnipro that called for moving "from talk to action" made participants' expectations for tangible follow-up evident, a consideration for subsequent project phases.

Broader perspective

The Awareness Workshops for organisations and decision-makers played a crucial role in addressing the widely demonstrated disconnect between the work "on the ground" of artists and cultural professionals and the legislative and infrastructural processes of policy- and decision-makers.

The identified problems in the arts and culture field include profound social inequalities faced by marginalised and under-represented artists and cultural workers (URCs). The Awareness Workshops aimed to:

- Bridge the dialogue gap: CTM identified that the core problem is a lack of direct, honest conversation between those who experience inequality (URCs) and those who hold the power to change it (cultural organisations, funders, policymakers, and politicians).
- Create a structured, dedicated space for this dialogue, moving beyond abstract discussions to confrontation with real-world issues.
- Address social inequalities and start an "honest conversation about the social inequalities" that plague the sector.

→ Increase direct engagement to remedy the systemic barriers, including issues related to funding access, representation, and decision-making, that will persist, preventing the sector from becoming truly diverse and equitable.

→ Raise awareness and accountability. Addressing the insufficient institutional awareness on the matter. The workshops sought to motivate stakeholders, making them directly aware of the challenges and their responsibilities in fostering a fairer environment.

→ Mobilise for social justice. Offer URCs the opportunity to present their suggestions and solutions directly to those who control resources and policy.

Synthesis of Awareness Workshops

While the Awareness Workshops were implemented in distinct national and organisational contexts, they revealed significant convergent themes. They produced complementary insights about the challenges facing underrepresented communities in the cultural sector.

The transversal and recurring needs which surfaced in all locations include:

- Urgent need for safe and inclusive spaces
- General lack of knowledge about power dynamics and structural barriers
- The significance and power of collective action and solidarity
- Employing context-specific methodologies within shared frameworks





Transcultural Competence Development Program

The workshops were grounded in CTM's broader understanding that social justice in culture cannot be achieved solely through programming or audience outreach, but requires structural and cultural transformation within organisations themselves. This includes examining governance, internal processes, decision-making, organisational culture, and everyday working methods through a transcultural lens.

These workshops aimed to strengthen the trans-cultural competence of staff, teams, and volunteers, supporting them to address diversity, inclusion, and social justice at both strategic and operational levels.

The themes for the Trans-cultural Competence Development workshops varied greatly and included: early detection of harassment and discrimination in cultural workplaces, with particular attention to subtle and normalised power dynamics, differing communication needs stemming from diversity of identities and backgrounds in a team, making communication more accessible for people with different linguistic, educational, and cultural backgrounds, addressing issues of White Supremacy, shift from treating disability as an individual problem toward recognising inaccessible buildings, dynamics of co-creation processes, acknowledging privileges, finding quiet time and staying focused in loud and busy working environments, slowing down as means of care and sustainable practice, anti-racism, and microaggressions.

The methodologies, picked by the facilitators, were specific to the theme and the environment in which the workshops took place, and included: somatic grounding practice, guided discussion, practical case-study work, participatory reflection modules, introspective scanning, investigation of existing organisational practices and routines, collective drafting of action plans and guidelines, and open discussions in small groups.

The PM at BRU reported that the Diverse-Leadership capacity-building program **informed their daily team dynamics** and the way they made decisions for the organisation and its projects, such as the recruitment of AoCs for CTM. The incorporated internal communication processes and practices supported more collaborative and porous dialogue among team members.

↑ Image: © Igor Ripak
→ Image: © Fariba Mosleh

The PMs at 404 reported that the Trans-Cultural Competence Development program offered **valuable tools** (see practices that worked in CTM page 209 – 219) for incorporating CTM's work into other parts of the organisation and creating contexts in which matters concerning URCs and social justice could be discussed with colleagues from other departments. This was noticeable in 404 tackling power dynamics, dealing with microaggressions in the organisation, and bringing silence to an otherwise very 'loud' and extroverted working culture.

At Zō, the Trans-Cultural Competence Development program helped them harvest **references, ideas and practices** to instate the desired cultural transformation in their own organisation and, more broadly, in Catania.

At IZO, despite initial reluctance, considering the workshops forced and demanding extra work, the team acquired tools and processes with which to engage in extended discussions about internal dynamics in the organisation, created a strong emotional response among employees and increased interest in the CTM project and IZO's role in social justice in general.

Diverse-Leadership Capacity Building program

This series of workshops aimed to diversify senior leadership within the CoCs and their environments. The initiative focused heavily on training future cultural leaders to apply sustainable and ethical practices across all organisational levels, with a focus on social justice, diversity, and representativeness. The initiative was designed to cultivate a new cohort of decision-makers from URCs while embedding climate urgency and environmental sustainability into the core of cultural management.

The program was brought to life through a series of local, targeted workshops at the CoCs.

Themes for the Diverse-Leadership Capacity Building workshops included: feminist leadership, urgent socio-political realities, accessibility, building mutual support systems, moving past performative diversity, and integrating genuine equity.

Methodologies employed in these workshops include: cartography — mapping data and knowledge, creating a toolbox, plans for expanded curriculum, and blended critical theory and practical scenario analysis.

The Diverse-Leadership Capacity Building program successfully shifted the conversation from abstract policy to concrete practice, equipping future leaders with the tools, networks, and cross-border insights necessary to build a more resilient and inclusive European arts scene.

Diversity Campaign

CTM designed and launched a diversity campaign to amplify and intensify the ripple effect the movement created in the arts and cultural fields.

The journey of the diversity campaign began with a simple yet piercing question: *"Who's not in the room?"*

The initial concept aimed to make institutional absence visible through low-cost, flexible actions. Initially, the campaign was envisioned as both digital — on the TEH website, where visitors could anonymously flag missing perspectives- and physical — installing a simple empty chair or mirror in cultural centres marked *"Reserved for Stories Not Yet Told,"* allowing visitors to note who was being left out.

As the proposal moved into collaborative brainstorming sessions, the focus sharpened. They noted that diversity work often focuses solely on audiences and suggested that, to achieve deep institutional reform, the CTM campaign needed to target the neglected pillars of leadership, governance, and artistic content.

When the conversations were synthesised, it was decided to engage an animation creator to develop five short videos, inspired by the Manifesto of Change, under the slogan "Together we shape change," and to circulate them across multiple online platforms. Each video focuses on one question:

1. Be a We. Who is left out?
2. Take time. Who is missing?
3. Look and listen closely. Who remains unseen and unheard?
4. Share space. Who doesn't have it?
5. Care to dare. Who is being overlooked?

The campaign relies on a strict power principle: one striking sentence and one visual to maximise confrontation with minimal explanation.

> The diversity campaign is also available on the resource page (see page 14 – 15).

Connecting to communities

Working with local communities. Each CoC and AoC developed its own method for encountering and collaborating with local URCs.

"I began with a simple question: how can I establish genuine relationships with communities that have no reason to trust me? Initially, I thought that simply 'opening the doors' of the cultural centre would be enough. However, I soon realised that this was not the case. My approach evolved gradually, shifting my perspective.

… I believed that a big cultural centre like Zō could naturally serve as a point of reference, and that creating opportunities for the communities to come together would be sufficient. The first change came when I realised that access is never neutral and that waiting actually meant exclusion. From there, a counter-movement emerged: leaving the centre and going out to the communities, entering their spaces and participating in their activities."

(Emanuele, AoC, Zō, Spring 2026)

Emanuele reported gradually abandoning traditional communication tools in favour of more direct, informal methods. Emails were replaced by in-person conversations, café meetings, and WhatsApp video calls, which he reports enabled him to transition from being a 'proposer' to a 'participant'. Another change occurred when Emanuele began attending the activities of the communities with whom he communicated. He attested that this made his work "less visible" but more profound, involving observation, listening, and the establishment of presence, trust, and recognition.

Pamela (PM, Zō), like Emanuele, also reflected on how easily she began meeting and interacting with people, artists, and representatives of other organisations from URCs.

"Now I can say, 'I just met them'. Previously, I didn't have the chance to meet other people. I didn't have the occasion, the time, the opportunity to meet people from URC. And now, it happened, or we made it happen, and through these encounters, of course, my perspective also changed. It is hard to say why it didn't happen before. Maybe it is the combination of all the "small things" falling into place at the same time. The context of CTM offered internal and external support to initiate and realise these processes."
(Pamela, PM, Zō, Spring 2026)

A similar process occurred in Belgium when Mira (AoC, 404) was reaching out to community members to connect with during her research and development phases of the Artistic production.

"First of all, I went to search for a community in places where I knew I would find people who would be interested in a talk. I made an open call to ask siblings of people with disabilities and people with disabilities themselves to talk to. I talked to individual people of the community and to groups of actors with a disability. I asked questions, let people ask me questions, let them read parts of the text and feedback or associate with them."
(Mira, AoC 404, Spring 2026)

Farila (AoC, BRU) described the importance of cultivating profound trust to dismantle existing socio-spatial stratification. She opts to work with the haptic materiality of woodcarving and cultural heritage, and, through tactile and physical co-creation with communities, fosters a space of trust and camaraderie. She explained that this approach is critical because it transforms passive participation into a performative archive.

"Co-curation became a key element, allowing for shared authorship and distributed decision-making. It helped avoid projecting external frameworks onto local communities and instead, work with their experiences and needs."
(Kseniya, AoC IZO, Spring 2026)

Kseniya attested that her focus shifted towards the individual — their personal story, and the importance of deep listening. Working with preconceived frameworks quickly became insufficient or misaligned with the realities she was engaging with in the Ukrainian context. This led to a transition into more adaptive methods, grounded in dialogue, attentiveness, and responsiveness.

Farila (AoC, BRU) also reported a transition in her approach to working with local communities, from immediate, localised intervention to sustainable, long-term ecosystem-building. This transition required securing the necessary temporal (time) and spatial resources to foster deeper, unshakable trust.

Elie (AoC, Zō) reported the discovered importance and the noticeable impact of what she called *"delocating artistic interventions"* and taking them out of their venue and into the city. She noted that this was particularly effective with activities for kids and youth.

Internally, the AoCs reported that spending time together planning a workshop was a gentle co-creation process that consolidated their group relations and dynamics.

Artistic Productions

Alongside fostering knowledge, policy, and local URC collaborations, the project supported AoC-led artistic and community initiatives, sustained by strong peer solidarity and ongoing guidance from the ATF. This component sought to **diversify artistic productions,** circulate emerging practices across the European cultural sector, and build CoC capacity to drive a "transformation from the inside" through models grounded in social justice.

For example, by working with Farila, a visual artist, researcher, and founder of B.Ā.A.R. STUDIO, who is building with art and architecture to foster resilience, BRU deliberately stepped **outside its comfort zone** and ventured into participatory craft practices for the first time. The workshop series Spiral Spines — Dreams, Stories and Memories in Wood started at BRU and, for most of the work, moved to the neighbouring wood workshop of Bela Eckermann, who became an important partner in the project and the project's technical director.

"An essential part of our concept is the creation of Brave Spaces. These spaces not only offer protection but also encourage people to be brave and engage with difficult issues. They are based on the concept developed by Mickey ScottBey Jones, inspired by Beth Strano, which aims to enable individuals to take personal responsibility and consciously address challenges within a respectful and supportive environment. We see Brave Spaces as places where mistakes are allowed to happen and where learning and unlearning processes are encouraged. This requires both safety and courage — a balance that enables growth and transformation.… In challenging situations where positive discrimination is used as a tool in our work, the awareness concept provides us with a clear basis for explaining and defending our decisions. This enables us to represent our positions with confidence whilst preventing misunderstandings.… Ultimately, this concept reflects our social stance and our constant endeavour to challenge existing power structures and to promote a culture of learning and self-criticism. For us, Brave Spaces are places of exchange and empowerment — not only within the Brunnenpassage, but also beyond."
(Awareness text in Progress, BRU, 2025)

In this context, artistic productions are processes that foster operational transformation and thus support the cultural movement. The quote is taken from an early draft of what BRU describes as their attempt to curate **Brave Spaces.**

More about Artistic Production in CTM on page 121.

Dissemination and knowledge transfer

The project coordinator, TEH, has been responsible for disseminating the project's findings and developing practices across the network and beyond into the European arts and culture field. The PMs from CTM participated in panels, keynote talks, and seminars outside project activities, during which they described and shared the project's processes and activity reports with participants. As part of its role in leading the project's transnational knowledge exchange and dissemination, TEH integrated CTM activities into its wider European network. TEH coordinated eight Reflection Workshops, four Knowledge Roundtables, and four Partners' Transnational Conferences, embedding these activities within TEH Camp Meetings and Conferences, thereby creating opportunities for exchange among CTM partners, TEH members, and the wider cultural sector. TEH also established the project's online resource centre within the TEH website, ensuring that CTM's knowledge, methodologies, publications and other project resources remain publicly accessible and connected to TEH's wider knowledge-sharing infrastructure. Through these activities, TEH transferred the knowledge generated within CTM to a wider European network of independent cultural centres and created opportunities for its exchange, dissemination and longer-term use.

See the resource centre through the QR code on page 14 – 15.

Practice of Review and Evaluation

The project embedded iterative review, reflection, and evaluation as core methodologies that actively shaped the unfolding of CTM and the realisation of its activities. This included review and assessment during monthly online partner meetings, as well as collaborative work on project deliverables, such as continuous, interim, and final reports for Creative Europe. While mandatory under the funding agreement, this constant documentation, summarisation, and submission of progress reports served as vital opportunities for collective reflection. Similarly, the ATF integrated reflective practices into her work with the AoCs, allowing lessons learned during each phase to directly inform adaptations and adjustments in successive stages of the project.

The project is intensely layered, having taken on the monumental task of igniting, implementing and legislating a true cultural transformation. Throughout its lifespan, countless processes of transformation have occurred simultaneously at personal, artistic, communal, organisational and operational levels. Both culture and transformation tend to move. They refuse to be confined to a specific administrative timeframe; they are ongoing and operate across a vast spectrum – from the gentle to the grandiose, the miniature to the bold, the singular to the plural, the local to the international, the contemporary to the timeless, and the immediate to the long-term.

Whilst the project did facilitate cultural transformation to some extent, most noticeably in the local contexts of the CoCs, the processes of the AoCs, their relationships with the CoCs, and the initiation of reflective practices within cultural organisations through CTM workshops and activities at TEH transnational camp meetings and conferences – it also served as a rigorous learning process that revealed the extent of the work that remains to be done. (see Main Findings page 173 - 198 and Reflections on page 241 - 261)

The project provided a significant boost to resources, intent, action, and transformational processes within the local contexts of the CoCs and TEH, as well as across the European arts and culture field, through the TEH membership in the CTM transnational activities and communication channels. As such, continuous review and evaluation were vital to sustaining the project's impact across partner contexts. Rather than being swept away by the project's multidimensionality, these opportunities to review and reflect served as valuable moments to affirm the work accomplished and adapt as the project unfolded.

Image next page: © Léo Lethielleux, TEH99, Sofia, Bulgaria


Quality &
Expertise
Julius Meini
cup
let's talk coffee

Declarations, Proclamations, Expressions and Aspirations

ARTISTIC STATEMENT

Introduction

The following pages feature the CTM Artistic Statement, which was co-created by the AoCs with guidance and support from the ATF. In the project proposal, the Artistic Statement was described as a call to action for social justice in Europe. It is one of the key co-creations of the AoCs and, as such, constitutes one of the main artistic outcomes of the project. Since the early stages of the project design process, the Artistic Statement has been intended for circulation both locally and internationally. At the same time, however, it was also submitted as a structural deliverable for project reporting and financial compliance under Creative Europe. Thus, this statement is both evidence (a deliverable) of the project as described in the project proposal and an artistic expression of the AoCs.

Created in spring 2024, the *Artistic Statement* was the first relatively large collective endeavour undertaken by the AoCs. At that point, everything was fresh. The AoCs had been engaged shortly before they were tasked with authoring this collective artistic statement. Consequently, they knew very little of one another or their respective artistic practices and work in the cultural field. They also held vastly different sentiments towards being categorised and perceived as artists.

Respecting and incorporating differences, varied perspectives and diverse experiences have been repeatedly emphasised throughout this project. Positionality and situatedness have been continually recognised as intrinsic to any effort to instate fairer mechanisms and practices within the arts and cultural field. Understandably, co-authoring the *Artistic Statement* required multiple layers of mediation and negotiation. The desire to belong to a community, and feel empowered by a group's togetherness, is not always easily reconciled with the acute need to express each AoC's individual perspective.

The process offered both the AoCs and the ATF a rich context for learning. They learned about the others within the group, the potentialities that emerge from the relations forming **among them, the ways in which the AoCs can interact with the ATF, and the degree of influence the ATF can or should exert over the AoCs' processes.** Furthermore, they navigated what ideas and ideations the group as a whole chose to promote in their statement, which notions had to remain unincluded due to a lack of consensus or acceptance, how the AoCs operate within the greater architecture of CTM, and what intensities of friction and tension the AoCs were willing — or unwilling — to tolerate within the context of this project.

Furthermore, the process of co-authoring the *Artistic Statement* sparked an invaluable evaluation of the actual impact that statements create on their immediate and distant environments. The process required the AoCs, ATF, project coordinators, and project researcher to reflect deeply on the power dynamics between the AoCs and the consortium of partners (CoCs and TEH). The conversation revolved around the need to clearly define whether the *Artistic Statement* is authored by the AoCs alone or by the CTM project as a whole, and whether it is truly representative of the CoCs and TEH. The dialogue also addressed the vital importance of framing the *Artistic Statement* and, subsequently, communicating it with the utmost clarity, so that readers understand precisely **"whose words they are reading".**

This challenge is by no means unique to the CTM project. The European Union routinely demands that all artefacts, artworks, publications and productions made within Creative Europe projects be presented with a strict caveat: that the content of the work does not in any way represent

the opinions or ideas of the EU. This is, of course, both understandable and accurate. Whilst the resources provided by Creative Europe make the work of these artists and creatives structurally possible, the freedoms which the EU proclaims as essential to "European Values", such as freedom of speech and freedom of expression, can only be safeguarded by a distinct separation between creative output and financial patronage.

Nonetheless, at the level of affiliation and association between the CoCs and the AoCs — who are contracted by the former — this separation is rarely articulated as clearly or simply as the aforementioned disclaimer requested by the EU. While reflecting on a draft of the *Artistic Statement,* the partners, ATF, and the researcher focused on its content and form. It did not, however, fully articulate the ethical and operational dispositions that supported, or even justified, the process by which those who are not AoCs (namely the PMs) suggested alterations to the content and form of the *Artistic Statement,* which is presented as the intellectual property of the AoCs. What degree of interference by those who are not AoCs is acceptable in this instance?

The question remains: what is the ethical framework for an organisation to issue a blunt caveat stating that the artistic work developed within its own operations does not represent its opinions or values (as the EU does)? Are we aware that if organisations refuse to assume accountability, the risks involved in being daring and blunt with the artwork fall solely on the artists? Generally, should artists not expect firm, unwavering support from the organisations that engage them, without it being caveated by either a disclaimer or an intervention by means of editing? Should institutions not be held accountable for the environments they construct, which make certain utterances and artistic expressions possible — or impossible? Conversely, should the support offered by these organisations (in this context, the CoCs and TEH) grant them authority and authorship rights over the final artwork?

From the desk research (see References page 262-264) and from my participation in numerous international network meetings, conferences, seminars and Creative Europe project presentations, it seems these questions frequently arise, especially within large-scale projects supported by Creative Europe. The aspiration to foster environments that grant complete artistic freedom-despite the elusive nature of this concept-demands that both organisations and artists remain acutely attentive to the structural challenges emerging from their relationships. How can the work of the artists be free of "external" confinements and limitations within the context of a tight project framework?

Following a round of feedback (including the project managers at the CoCs and TEH, as well as the project researcher), alterations were made in the artistic statement. The document shared in this publication and across all other publicity is the edited version that followed the feedback session.

Perhaps there is no alternative way. After all, the CoCs and TEH are legally and financially responsible for delivering the project within the strict frameworks and guidelines set by the funders. This aspect of the co-creation process in CTM is not intended as a critique of the project or this specific process; rather, it is an open invitation to ponder the direct correspondence between the intent to work with historically silenced voices in society (URC) and the rigid obligation to abide by the rules.

One of the layers in which differences in realities and experiences have been noted throughout CTM is the notion of Europe as a "safe place". Is Europe safe? For whom? And where?

Evidently, certain individuals, communities and even nations are significantly less safe than others, even within the geographic and political boundaries of what we call Europe. (As documented by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2025). However, within CTM, we find individuals experiencing the immediate brutality of active warfare; others who have fled war zones in search of sanctuary, only to face discrimination and hostility within a supposedly safe European context; and second- and third-generation individuals who, though physically removed from conflict, carry the profound psychological, emotional, corporeal and cognitive scars of collective trauma.

The foundational premise of CTM is to address the under-representation of marginalised communities — an exclusion that is almost always accompanied by compromised safety. Undoubtedly, in certain respects, parts of Europe may be relatively safer than other regions of the world. Yet, who is permitted to bask in the protection of this "safety"? If safety is structurally reserved for only a select portion of the population, what are its toxic by-products and systemic resonances? Let us not forget that, for example, Ukraine is physically in Europe. There are entire regions of the continent that are significantly less safe than others, and even within the "safer" areas, only certain communities benefit from this "safety," while others face ongoing challenges and threats.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance explicitly notes a critical rise in systemic and institutionalised hate speech across the continent, which systematically forces vulnerable communities to withdraw from public life due to acute, localised fears for their safety (2025).

The answers to these questions are deeply rooted in our onto-epistemological presuppositions (the fundamental ways we perceive existence and acquire and process knowledge). CTM invites us, both internally and externally, to confront this reality and to work through the concept of European safety alongside the inevitable tensions and discomfort it provokes.

Statement of Translation

Another intriguing dimension of the *Artistic Statement* process is translation. Given the project's genuine interest in expanding and mobilising equitable practices across the European cultural field, the need to publish the document in multiple languages was obvious, already at the project envisaging stage. The project proposal lists six languages (Swedish, Ukrainian, German, Italian, Dutch, and Arabic) into which the Artistic Statement, authored in English, would be translated. Yet there was still a process of reflecting on which languages should be prioritised, and why these specific six languages rather than others. When considering the addressee — the people on the receiving end of the utterance — the CTM project was clearly concerned with whom it would deny access to the *Artistic Statement* if published solely in English. Given the many languages spoken by the communities embedded within and surrounding the COCs, choosing "only" six languages draws a clear division between the selected languages and those that weren't. Given the project's stated objective of engaging with URCs across each partner's geographic and cultural landscape, publishing the statement in languages other than English seemed unquestionable. The project proposal listed seven languages (including English), and resources for additional translations were unavailable. It did, however, appear that not everybody in the consortium had an equal understanding of the criteria on which the decision about which languages the *Artistic Statement* should be translated into was based.

> Where do we draw the line? How many languages would be sufficient? Across all project locations and its broad network in Europe, many other languages are common and integral to cultural vitality and vibrancy. While the project proposal clearly listed seven languages, the process of working on the Artistic Statement did invite additional reflection on the potentialities that unfold and the messages that are sent in the process of selection and limitation.

Ultimately, the boundary was drawn by a lack of material resources, rather than a lack of institutional interest or intent.

The *Artistic Statement* was originally authored in English (which is not the first language of anyone in the consortium) as the official and operational language of CTM, which is a common practice in many transnational collaborations. Particularly in contexts dedicated to decoloniality and social justice, it is important to note that no language is "neutral", especially not English, given its role in historical and geopolitical processes in Europe and beyond (Pennycook, 1994).

> (See the full statement in different languages through the QR code on page 14 – 15)

> Translation also adds an additional layer to the piece that is being translated. What happens to an artistic expression when it is translated into a language that is not used on a daily basis by the very people uttering that statement? What do these choices of translation reveal about the intentions of the art, the artist/agent, and the organisations that work with them?

The process of authoring and translating the *Artistic Statement* triggered in-depth conversations amongst the project partners, between the project managers and AoC, amongst the AoC, between the project managers, AoCs and the ATF and in some way, became a prism through which multiple aspects of CTM could be discussed and evaluated: outreach, accessibility, aesthetic and sincerity.

In line with CTM's continuous search for ways to activate the artefacts and materials that were developed throughout the project, the Artistic Statement was activated as an artistic intervention at the TEH meeting in Epanomi, a key component in an intervention which was displayed for 6 weeks at the Vitrina of BRU (a public window-display which bypassers can view and interact with from the street as well as from inside BRU), as well as an installation at Toplocentrala in Sofia, during TEH's 99 conference in June 2025.

CONSTRUCTION قيد

ДУМКИ
FRÅGOR, RICHIESTE,
~~INTERNE~~ (1)
CONFLICTEN
BLESSURES,
تنا قضا

РОЗЧАРУВАННЯ,
ORO, INQUIETUDINI
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DREAMS

OM NÖDVÄNDIGHETEN DE LA TRASFORMAZIONE КУЛЬТУРНОЇ (IM BAUCH VAN HET BEEST AKA THE قلعة DE L' EUROPE)

Within the EU-funded Cultural Transformation Movement Project,[2] We artists/ agents of change in Austria, Belgium, Italy and scattered across Europe (as a consequence of the ~~war~~ invasion of Ukraine) were given the task to collectively create an artistic statement. What we share here is an unfinished, deliberately unpolished, growing work in progress that connects to the ancient futures of the struggles and visions of so-called 'underrepresented communities.' In that wider sense the work continues until transformation in the cultural field and with it and beyond the eco-social world as a whole is achieved.

We chose to create an artistic statement centered on questions. We chose questions because we were not asked to ask them. We ask questions because we are tired of simply giving answers.

- We ask questions because we don't like the answers we have been given.
- We ask questions because the conflicts and crises we are experiencing force us to rethink our approach.
- We ask questions because the conflicts and crises we are experiencing force us to question our assumptions, and to adapt in ways we never thought possible or necessary.
- We ask questions because each individual experience, with its unique challenges and lessons, contributes to the fabric of our shared humanity.
- We ask questions because through this process of ~~"integration" and~~ dialogue, we imagine a future that embraces diversity, celebrates differences and finds strength in our collective humanity.
- We ask questions, because we believe that critical questions and questionings are harder to be turned into a token diversity show.
- We ask questions as a way to give importance and to voice what usually remains unspeakable and voiceless in statements like these.
- We ask questions as a way to break and question the conventional forms of statements like these.
- We ask questions to open up the space even to things we are not sure of.
- We ask questions to dare to go deeper than a polished surface.
- We dare to ask questions as a transformative practice to question how and what we learn about ourselves, others and the world we live in.
- We ask questions to expand our audacity in imagining a different world from within the belly of the beast, from within the fortress of Europe.
- We ask questions to create space for vulnerabilities, insecurities, doubts, conflicts, criticisms, dreams, wounds, ...
- We ask questions because we insist that vulnerabilities, insecurities, doubts, conflicts, criticisms, dreams, wounds, ... are not to be erased.

A Polyphonic, Part One: Choruses Behind Our Text
How can I____? Uniting questions

How can I write an artistic statement as an undercover neurodiverse Black artist of change from within the belly of the beast aka the fortress of Europe when to use the title of Olumide Popoola's poem "you can't breathe water"?[3]

How can I write an artistic statement as a Sicilian boy, from an ancient, traditional Sicily, underdeveloped, too intransigent to realize that it is such, make myself the spokesman of a generation of outcasts?

How can I write an artistic statement as a female cultural practitioner navigating between different languages that has created her home in the limits of the fortress of Europe, as a cultural worker that tries to take place to amplify the voices that have been silenced by a patriarchal and colonial system that my ancestors have reinforced?

How can I write an artistic statement as a queer feminist mixed race artist carrying intergenerational colonial trauma, from within the belly of the beast? ~~How to not be exhausted, working in racist, sexist, classist, ableist structures, facing systems of oppression day by day, being tokenised, silenced? How not use every spare minute to engage as an activist when a genocide is happening in Palestine?~~

How can I write an artistic statement as a female artist with a disability when the artistic environment is not yet aware of ableism in society and in the art field and is still looking from an internalized capitalist gaze? How can one not be indignant by the many stories of colleagues who work in precarious situations as artists from underrepresented communities? How to find and co-create the right environments for artists whose careers are determined by similar issues?

How do we matter what it means to write an artistic statement as an Ukrainian artist in an EU project for cultural transformation while being on an army mission?

How to be in this world, when you are being an Ukrainian artist in military service having an internal conflict that questions the appropriateness of everything you have done before?

(1) Throughout the document we are following the practice by fellow artist of change Dounia Mahammed of using crossing out as a conceptual choice.

(2) in Brunnenpassage: Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur
in VIERNULVIER: Dounia Mahammed and Mira Bryssinck
in Zō: Elie Laucher and Emanuele Arturo Miceli
in IZOLYATSIA: Kseniya Ulianova
facilitated by Laura Camacho Salgado

(3) https://writersmosaic.org.uk/content/you-cant-breathe-water-olumide-popoola

HOW TO

CREËREN,
CONTRIBUER,
SPRACHE
FINDEN,
NON TACERE,
AVLÄRA,
تحويل
ДЕМОНТУВАТИ,
EXPOSE,
VERSTOREN,
ENTRELACER,

BEFREIEN,
CURARE,
UPPMUNTRA,
МРiЯТИ,
يأمل
HEILEN,
VERBEELDEN,
TA TID,
ACCUEILLIR
LA COMPLEXITÉ,
BECOME ALLIES
&

MUOVERSI
INSIEME?

How to collectively create an artistic statement from within the fortress of Europe aka the belly of the beast that inspires "to dare to invent the future."?[4]

How can we create an artistic statement in a language that will always exclude some?

How to take time? How to take time in a system ruled by production logic?

How to take time to create art, to create artistic statements? How to take time to hear and to listen to unheard voices?

How can we contribute to transforming the violent, glorified neocolonial structures of the fortress of Europe (including 'green colonialism')[5] from within the belly of the beast?

How can we create art that dares to transform the current times of war, crises, oppressive eco-social circumstances, status quo and structures within the belly of the beast?

How do we avoid romanticizing war and acknowledge it as a harsh reality? What does holding a collective responsibility in the face of aggression mean to us as artists?

How can we build bridges while an enigmatic world of evil is redrawing the new borders of Europe with bombs?

How can we disrupt Europe's "racism amnesia"[6] and contribute to decolonial architectures of remembrance that matter the rich histories of multifaceted resistances?

How can we find languages that healingly matter and address intergene-rational trauma?

How can we align ourselves with the forces of peace, understanding, and compassion?

How can we center the struggle of the "Invisibles" the undocumented agricultural workers within the EU, "the wretched of the earth, left (...) in miserable work and living conditions"[7] for the right to even have rights?

How can we expose the systematic hypocrisy of the fortress of Europe that builds on the exploitation of the "Invisible field workers" to bring fruits and vegetables (sometimes organic) into supermarkets in the EU?

How can we show the intertwining of these struggles?

How can we be(come) allies? What do we need to consistently unlearn to build sustainable allyships dedicated to the struggle for global liberation?

How can we stay aware and self critical? How can we point out to people that are systematically absent?

How can we transform our collective understanding through adaptability and resilience?

How can we create a liberating SPACE for people to meet, think and unite? And what kind of space would it need to be?

How can we foster a community of tolerance and mutual respect?

How do we contribute to the unsilencing of silenced stories that yearn and struggle to be (re)membered and set free urgently?

How can we support and connect to each other's struggles?

How can we envision a future that embraces diversity, celebrates differences, and finds strength in our collective humanity?

How can we unlearn to leave no one unheard/ unseen?

How can we commit to integrate communities through dialogue about both present challenges and future aspirations?

How can we leave the door open? Some perspectives are not addressed when not everyone is in.

How can we encourage sustainable practices of caring?

How can our efforts become an investment in the future, advocating for a world where understanding and love triumph over division and hatred?

How can we embrace opposing needs?

How can cultural exchange play a role in opening conversations and bridging divides?

How can we build bridges while an enigmatic world of evil is redrawing the new borders of Europe with bombs?

How can we not get used to the idea of the existence of war and become a fortress of peace?

How can we embrace complexities and contradictions?

How do we consistently unlearn what refrains us from practicing deep listening?

How can we un/learn to see and take care of each other's wounds?

How can we "help" governments and stakeholders to see the importance of cultural transformation?

How to make the art scene and all of its ~~buildings~~ spaces and programming more accessible?

How to make art schools and all of their buildings and programs more accessible?

[4] Thomas Sankara

[5] As Gunn-Britt Retter Head of Arctic and Environmental Unit, Saami Council states: "The green shift is nothing more than a continued extraction of resources in Sámi areas, as has been the tradition since the earliest encounters between cultures. The difference is that resource utilization has been given a nice color, green; we call it 'green colonization.' We were first colonized by people from outside our lands, then colonized by climate change itself, driven by people from outside our lands, and are now being colonized a third time by responses to climate change. See: https://www.arctictoday.com/indigenous-cultures-must-not-be-forced-to-bear-the-brunt-of-global-climate-adaptation/

[6] Fatima El-Tayeb

[7] Aboubakar Soumahoro

How to dismantle, address and resist tokenism?

How can we free ourselves from the logic of victims olympics to decolonize solidarity?

How to keep breathing?

How can we make the art field see that it is important to have diverse voices in places where decisions are made?

How to free our bodies, our minds, our feelings?

How to keep dreaming, hoping, imagining, creating?

How to survive, stay alive, unharmed, unattacked and safe?

A polyphonic, part three: Choruses behind our text
A never ending demanding end

1. We question the still normalized colonial capitalist gaze and exploitive modes of production in intersectional ways.

2. We resist being tokenized as neo-liberal diversity decor or alibi. To speak with Audre Lorde's words: "We are not a figment of your imagination or an exotic answer to your desires. We are not some button on the pocket of your longings."

3. We demand structural change and transformation

4. Art that "transformingly" matters and centers unheard voices.

5. Matter the voices of the 22.822 migrants (at least)[8] that have found their unmattered death since 2014 and call out the underlying violent structures of the fortress of Europe

6. Art that is consistently "awaring" itself of the bodies: our bodies and their interconnectedness as artists, as people and beyond. Therefore accessibility and intersectionality are a necessity.

7. Art that does not get tired to strive to be, become and grow awareness of the multifaceted contexts, environments that we live and do not live in and beyond.

8. We call for the necessity of a cultural transformation. To use the words of E. Jane: "We are beyond asking should we be in the room. We are in the room, We are also dying at a rapid pace and need a sustainable future. We need more people, we need better environments, we need places to hide, we need Utopian demands, we need culture that loves us."[9]

9. Art that transformingly questions and is open for generative questionings.

The Art of asking questions.
A call of questioning. An open invitation.

We ask questions, because we ask ourselves, alone and collectively, and you reading these words, which questions need to be asked to invite cultural transformation within the fortress of Europe?

Which questions do you yearn to be asked?
(Which questions are you tired of being asked?)

Which questions remained painfully unasked in the questions you read here?

We ask questions as a way to invite you to this collective construction side by asking:

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?
What are your questions? What are you questioning?

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[8] See: Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto by Tricia Hersey. Rest Life https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nENorI4rWeU

[9] See: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/

[10] E. Jane in NOPE (a manifesto), https://e-jane.info/Text

CALL TO QUESTIONNEMENT

EEN OPROEP TOT HANDELN PER LE TRASFORMAZIONI STRUKTURELLA

ЗАКЛИК ДО PASSIVITEIT

(10) ”الراحة م قاَومة“

“…before we could write collectively, we needed to understand where each of us was coming from.”

(Elie, AoC, Zō, Spring 2025)

Image next page: © Pierre Gondard, TEH1O1, Marseille, France


SWEDEN
PRESENT
WHAT IS SHAPING
YOUR PRESENT CONDITIONS
OF CULTURAL WORK, CARE,
AND SURVIVAL ?
FRANCE
BELGIUM
AUSTRIA
UNDERPAID
PEOPLE
DECISION
MAKING
DIFFERENT
GENERATIONS
OF ARTISTS
OUR GOVERNMENT
WHO
DECIDES ?
LACK OF CONTROL
MUNICIPALITY
POWER
DEVELOPER OF
THE VENUE
LONG-TERM CONTRACT
RENT OUT
GENTRIFICATION
BEWARE NOT TO BE
COMFORTABLY NUMB.
STAY AGILE!
SHIFT
LACK OF TRANSPARANCY
NO DIALO
CULTURE
UNDER
PATRI

MANIFESTO OF CHANGE

Introduction

The CTM *Manifesto of Change* was published in 2025. In some ways, it continues the work done in the authoring of the *Artistic Statement* and expands on both the practices and the concepts that gave rise to it.

As with the *Artistic Statement,* the CoCs and AoCs incorporated the *Manifesto of Change* into their ongoing operations and activities, and initiated opportunities to activate it creatively in public settings.

The process of authoring included in-depth work by the ATF and the AoCs, with moments of reflection and comments from the PMs of the CoCs and TEH. In the process, the consortium articulated a desire for the Manifesto of Change to engage “the ones that are not in the room”. Besides the articulation of the manifesto as such, the ways in which it is presented, communicated, and incorporated, both within the context in which CTM had already been active and in new and further contexts and regions, were addressed. The intention to also reach people and communities who had never heard of CTM was expressed. With that, the manifesto aspired to be a medium for summoning, gathering, and inviting people into the movement.

After having gone through the process of co-authoring the *Artistic Statement* prior to the authoring of the *Manifesto of Change,* several elements were more established, and thus contributed to the process of co-authoring the manifesto:

- The role and position of the AoCs in CTM was clearer to them.
- Communication and workflow between the AoCs and CoCs were better established by that point.
- The means and dynamics of collaboration between the AoCs and the ATF were further established and refined to better accommodate both individual and collective needs.
- The AoCs were more acquainted with one another and knew more about each other’s artistic, professional and personal contexts and interests.
- CTM had already been active for nearly two years by the time the Manifesto was published. The project’s scope and practical capacities were clearer to the consortium.
- The consortium had met other cultural agents and professionals both in their local contexts and at the CTM transnational activities (in 2023 and 2024), which was conducive to predicting or imagining who might be the addressee of the Manifesto.

The AoCs and AFT were attentive to the manifesto’s tone. While speaking about and to a collective “we”, they were concerned with the possibility of creating a “we” vs “them” dynamic. They reflected on the limits of the idea of “we” and how to make it as porous and inviting as possible through the manifesto’s language, tone, format, and visibility. It was also important to them that the manifesto would include a clear call for action. They wanted to refrain from assuming the addressee as a passive recipient but rather encourage them to act, to take action, to join the cultural movement, to move culture.

In reflecting on and providing feedback on a draft of the manifesto, the PMs considered how to best balance its poetic, artistic beauty with its potential for broader engagement. The PMs resonated deeply with the text's artistic essence, suggesting that keeping the core text poetic honours its creative spirit while also offering constructive reflections on audience connection.

The medium in which the Manifesto of Change would be uttered and made public was also carefully explored. The accessibility and effectiveness of communication were considered. It was decided to publish the manifesto as a full written document, as a designed poster, and as a sound file. All partners were responsible for communicating and disseminating the Manifesto of Change via their communication channels to their network.

The *Manifesto of Change* was published in seven languages, as predetermined in the project proposal: English, Ukrainian, Dutch, Italian, Swedish, German, and Arabic.

Similarly to the *Artistic Statement,* it was activated through visual and performance interventions at the TEH transnational meetings.



To see other formats and translations of the Manifesto of Change, visit the resource page on the TEH website through the QR code on page 14 – 15.

On the next pages is the poster version of the *Manifesto of Change,* designed by Elie Laucher, AoC at Zō.

We dream of a world where silenced stories are heard and valued, vulnerabilities become strengths, and love, not success, defines our lives.

We dream of a world where silenced stories are heard and valued, vulnerabilities become strengths, and love, not success, defines our lives.
We refuse to conform with injustice.
We refuse to accept lies.
We will repair, restore, rebuild.

We demand
stop the violence, start the rooting,
dismantling of oppressive systems,
a planet–first approach: care for all beings,
slow down to protect.

The MANIFESTO

A collective call to action

this is a constallation of dreams, wishes, needs and demands!

We loved, we had a home, we saw, we had to endure, we were strangers, we were not here, we were here, we are trapped, we are in pain, we are transparent, we endure it, we try, we build, we explore, we swallow, we digest, we have a longing, we settle, we breathe slower, we have arrived, we root ourselves.

WE WILL BE A WE.

We will continue until
our voices find an echo, they will.

We will not shut down,
make space for other sounds
Invite and welcome
nurture and transform,
We will grow
know we don't know
learn and unlearn
reflect and return.

We will rebuild, restore, repair
We will not despair
We will slow down and run
We will step back and jump
We will reformulate, negotiate;
accept friction and navigate.

We will acknowledge,
keep on adding to the knowledge
We will care better, share better
We will know better, see better
We will be transparent and clear
We will be visible with all our fear
We will whisper until we shine
We will take and give our time

TAKE TIME MAKE TIME TAKE SPACE MAKE SPACE
FREEZE BREATHE THERE DARE RESIST
SEE FREE FREEZE BREATHE INSIST
BE(A) WE

BREATHE BREATHE FREEZE

We will revoice
We will make noise
We will continue until
our voices find an echo,
until they will

WE WILL BE WE

CONTRIBUTE
to the unsilencing of silenced stories
that yearn and struggle
to be remembered and set free urgently

LISTEN
to the unheard and unexpressed requests.

CELEBRATE
difference and see the strength
of what we call vulnerabilities.

(RE)BUILD
our practice on love.
Not success.

SLOW DOWN
to take care of our precious planet
and her animals.

SAY NO
to patriarchal, (neo-)colonial, imperialist,
racist, classist, ableist, ageist, sexist,
fatphobic, queerphobic systems of oppression.

FREE
our bodies, minds, feelings.
Free we'll be: imperfect and proud.
Imagining, hoping, imagining hope.

QUESTION
the still normalized colonial, oppressive gaze
and exploitative modes of production in inter-
sectional ways.

DISEMPOWER AND RECONSTRUCT
the belly of the beast aka the fortress of Europe.

REPUDIATE
war and violence in all its forms, meanings
and places.

CARRY
collective responsibility and boycott,
protest, address.

CREATE
liberating spaces for people to meet, think, feel, unite
and encourage sustainable practices of caring.

EMPOWER
connection, practice deep listening and support,
to connect with others.

TRANSFORM
change shape and sound and colour.

FREEZE

WE FREEZE

TO FREE

WE'LL BE WE BE WE

KEEP LONGING, BELONGING
KEEP GROWING AND GLOWING
KEEP LIVING AND GIVING
KEEP DREAMING
KEEP SCREAMING:

Let's rebuild, let's repair.
Let's nurture, let's share.
Let's listen, let's care.

Production and Key Moments

At the commencement of the project, the role, titled Main Artistic Director in the project proposal, was renamed Artistic Transformation Facilitator. This change was motivated by the account that the latter is more aligned with CTM's ethos and its intention to decentralise power. The PMs wanted to disrupt the notion of a single role holding artistic authority in the project, so they chose to officially rename the role, thereby redefining its authority. The renaming also involved a redefining.

When the topic was brought up while authoring this publication, Fariba (PM, BRU) reiterated that the change was also motivated by the presence of curators and artistic directors at the CoCs, already contributing distinct artistic advice, and wanting to avoid having a centralised approach or practice that would guide all the artistic productions across all CoCs.

> What Fariba raises is also important for understanding what those in positions of power at the CoCs, such as the PMs, are willing to relinquish and release to enable a cultural transformation both within their organisations and further in Europe. Clearly, the local context, familiarity and experience are crucial to the artistic productions in CTM. It was vital to the artistic process to have deep connections with local communities, localities, and cultures. However, it is interesting to ponder why appointing an artistic director who could be more involved in the envisioning and realisation of the project's artistic works was deemed problematic or even threatening by the PMs. Again, as with the change in terminology from Artists of Change to Agents of Change, we encounter a fundamental presupposition that knowledge, experience, and even expertise of the Other (in this case, the "main artistic director") necessarily entail abuse of power and tyranny. At the same time, in practice, the PMs' position allows them to define and redefine the other roles in the project.

"This change [from Main Artistic Director to Artistic Transformation Facilitator] reflected CTM's commitment to non-hierarchical, collaborative structures, but it also reframed the work"
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

The AoCs, having vastly different experiences with artistic practices, community engagement, use of digital tools, and transnational and transcultural collaborations, demanded hyperplasticity of artistic production processes and of those supporting the AoCs.

It required tailored approaches, mentoring, and follow-up. While this individualised support strengthened trust and amplified the voices of the AoCs, it slowed the project's momentum and limited the scope of ambitious outcomes. Uneven initiative among the AoCs sometimes placed additional weight on the facilitator to maintain cohesion and progress.

> Power, agency, and authority are intrinsically linked. While CTM aimed to disrupt and overturn established power dynamics, it perhaps failed to anticipate how this shift would alter how agency and authority were navigated. Because final accountability for delivering the project's objectives remained with the PMs, authority consequently concentrated in their hands. In attempting to transform the culture of culture-making, the emerging framework must culture alternative modes of authorisation.

Referring to the redistribution of authority and agency in CTM:

"It demonstrated that facilitative, non-hierarchical methodologies can nurture autonomy, experimentation, and plural authorship, but also demand substantial relational labour, adaptive leadership, and attentiveness to [a specific] context, highlighting the ongoing tension between ideals and structural realities in transnational, socially engaged cultural projects." (Spring 2026)

"One key lesson from CTM concerns time and deadlines. ***Community-based and relational practices thrive on slowness, trust-building, and iterative engagement, yet project frameworks often impose strict timelines.*** *For the specific AoCs in the project, this tension incited stress and limited the depth of engagement and opportunities for co-creation. During this four-year residency, keeping AoCs involved in co-designing a timeline that respected their pace and process was a persistent challenge."*
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

Artistic productions

Introduction

Alongside and in dialogue with knowledge production, skills and awareness enhancement, practice and policy development, and the development of local mechanisms for collaboration with URCs, the project supported the development of artistic and community projects led by the AoCs. These initiatives were sustained by deep camaraderie amongst the AoCs at the various CoCs and by constant communication with the Artistic Transformation Facilitator, Laura Camacho Salgado.

In the project proposal, the stated objectives for this specific component are:

1. Improving the diversity of artistic productions and circulating the resulting knowledge and good practices among project partners and the European cultural sector at large.
2. Developing the capacity of the CoCs and enabling a "transformation from the inside" by implementing new models grounded in social justice.

The AoCs developed their projects in close collaboration with the specific URCs they chose to work with or within, in their localities. Each Artistic Production is highly distinct in its themes, forms, and the methods and practices employed in its realisation. Crucially, all these processes remained deeply informed by CTM's broader processes and activities. They were incorporated, both thematically and in practice, within the CTM transnational reflection and roundtable workshops. For example, the AoCs presented their ideas and intentions for the artistic production at the Knowledge Roundtable workshop in Riga and a more developed conception and plan at the Reflection Workshop in Marseille. The artistic productions have been a milestone, known to every-one in the consortium from the project's commencement. It was always present, in some way, in the consortium's perspectives and actions, as well as in the themes, content, and ideas shared across the project's activities.

Artistic Framework

Whilst the artistic productions were developed by the AoCs in collaboration with their creative teams, including project managers, curators, dramaturges, and other artists, Laura (ATF) accompanied and supported them throughout the process. Working intimately with all the AoCs throughout the process offered Laura, in some way, the most cohesive perspective on Artistic Production as a project component in CTM. However, Laura has not experienced the Artistic Productions live at each location due to the project's structure and resource limitations. Laura's perspective is brought here to reflect on Artistic Production as a medium and an apparatus in CTM, rather than merely to share an artistic perspective, opinion, or authority.

"Over the past year, I conducted individual online sessions with each AoC, complemented by two group sessions. AoCs expressed a strong desire for more cross-centre dialogue, but scheduling and resource constraints prioritised on-site collaboration with local participants, reflecting the CTM's community-focused ethos. Crucially, CTM's approach is not about representing communities, but about creating dialogue with communities. This distinction resonates directly with the Artistic Statement "Under Construction" and the Manifesto of Change, which advocate questioning dominant structures, amplifying marginalised voices, and creating transformative, care-centred practices."
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

Developing artistic productions with the attentiveness and sincerity that CTM aspired to requires particular responsibilities:

- → Maintaining cohesion across all projects whilst honouring each AoC's unique approach.
- → Ensuring each project was meaningfully embedded within the over-arching CTM thematic framework.
- → Supporting genuine community involvement within each individual production.
- → Integrating additional collaborators within local contexts without compromising project coherence.
- → Balancing local specificity with the international, networked dimension of the CTM.

Several of the texts describing the artistic productions in the following pages have been adapted from documentation and reports compiled by Laura (ATF), communication materials from the CoCs and progress reports produced by the PMs at the CoCs and TEH.

Laura explained how, in her shared process with the AoCs, they each developed an approach, theme and practice specific to their local context and lived experiences:

"Each AoC adapted methods to their background, discipline, and community: Elie and Emanuele used participatory festival programming, open calls, collaborative selection, and iterative consultation with partners. Farila guided collective storytelling and embodied woodcarving, in collaboration with the woodcarving artist Bela. Mira used intimate interviews, group sessions, and fictionalised narratives to explore care, intimacy, and family dynamics. Kseniya combined co-curation, selective invitation, and adaptive communication with artists in the army and diaspora, addressing wartime realities. Dounia's early research focuses on intergenerational storytelling and collaborative interpretation."

In Broad Strokes

Dounia Mahammed (AoC, 404). Engaged strictly in a research process for a project that will continue to develop past the CTM project time-frame, in ongoing collaboration with 404. Their research explores themes of resistance, the transgenerational transmission of experience, and memory.

Mira Bryssinck (AoC, 404). Developed a performance that intimately explores the lived experiences and realities of the siblings of people with disabilities. At the Knowledge Roundtable workshop in Riga, Mira (AoC, 404) explained that her artistic production poses the questions:

→ If you grow up with a disability, how does it form your family structure?

→ How does your family structure inform your encounter with society?

Kseniya Ulianova (AoC, IZO). Developed a New Media Exhibition in Dnipro, Ukraine, curating the work of numerous artists from her chosen URC, focusing on their personal stories and incorporating new practices she developed during CTM.

Elie Laucher & Emanuele Miceli (AoCs, Zō). Worked closely with the team at Zō on the vision, planning, and realisation of a new festival named GuastaFest, specifically collaborating with local artists from URCs.

Farila Neshat (AoC, BRU). Developed a new co-creative wood-carving project with a heterogeneous group of participants. The collective artwork, titled *Spiral Spines — Stable in the Face of Disruption*, explores deep-seated themes of dreams, stories and memories, and was exhibited in Vienna. At the opening, the work was activated by performance and music, created by local artists.

Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur (AoC, BRU). Was part of CTM during the initial phase of the project and did not develop a new artistic production in 2026, like the other AoCs. However, Araba contributed tremendously to establishing the project's core approach and ethos regarding institutional relationships with the AoCs, as well as to the collectively authored Artistic Statement. She also developed an artistic intervention in Brunnenpassage's exhibition space Vitrina: Nag*Nol, titled *Living Woman*/Woman* who lives*, in March 2024.

Dounia did not complete the creation process within the CTM project timeframe. They did, however, engage in a research project exploring anti-colonial resistance, intergenerational memory, and activism.

The process unfolded from conversations Dounia had with their grandmother, which inspired a deeper and broader investigation of the dynamics between trauma, memory, and political engagement. Fragments of these conversations were shared with artists of Algerian heritage who live in Belgium, creating a collaborative process of interpretation and translation. Additionally, throughout the research, Dounia also addressed questions about the visibility of women and gender minorities in historical narratives of resistance.

Throughout the CTM project, the project engaged in ongoing exploration of how the collected material will be integrated into an artistic format, which will be developed later on with 404 in Gent, Belgium.

Connection to artistic statement:

"We ask questions because each individual experience contributes to the fabric of our shared humanity."
"How can we support and connect to each other's struggles?"

Connection to Manifesto:

"EMPOWER connection...TRANSFORM change shape and sound and colour."
Research and dialogue connect intergenerational memory with contemporary activism.

During the Reflection Workshop in Marseille, Dounia enacted the research methodology itself. Performing her own text, she invited the listeners to voyage through oral history, anti-colonial memory, mental health, bodily inheritance, and intergenerational trauma. Through rhythm, repetition, humour, pauses, and tonal shifts, she created an experience rather than an explanation.

Dounia's work, through its confluence of the tragic and the comic, the proximity of imaginative surrealism with the carnal imprints of transgenerational trauma, features an exciting form that can only emerge through attentive and creative convergence of the realities of the past, both distant and recent, the uncertainty of the present, and the hope for a desirable future. It criticises political infrastructure, utilising resistance as a key for drawing futures and intergenerational knowledge as a living technology of the future.

Excerpts from a text in progress by Dounia:

… I love badgers too and jackdaws (I wrote about one once)
and I love mice and rice and ice
and donkeys and bees, and trees
(one tree once played a major role in one of
my performances: big Eugene.)

Love lemons, honey, hedgehogs and nuthatches and fire,
fireflies and dragonflies and flies. I love ferns, stars,
squirrels, planets, the moon, bubbles, flowers, mushrooms,
mosses, fungi, bacteria.
(My last performance was about bacteria.)
I also like parachutes. Parachutes are nice if you fall by
surprise. I like surprises; falling by surprise is not one
of my favourites, but I like to be caught by surprise when
I fall.
I love wood, clay, wool, yellow blue, fish, jellyfish, sun,
deep sea creatures, ginger (I once made a song for ginger,
it goes like this…),
I also love cornstarch (I have once made a whole
scenography with cornstarch and water-it was a mess)
Love dogs, cats, ducks.
Olive oil oh! and lavender oil to calm down. I sometimes
need to calm down when panic attacks, once I have made
a performance about panic and other attacks. Like goose
attacks.
I love geese. – if a goose attacks you, back away slowly.
Do not yell at the goose. It's better not to say
anything. It will not understand you anyway. You should
also not make any physical gestures towards the goose.
And don't throw anything at the goose. No oranges,
no glass, no stick, no chair, no spoons, no milk.
When a shark attacks, you don't punch it in the nose when
panic attacks you: don't punch and don't panic.
When you have a panic attack – panic attacks you
There is nothing else attacking.
No bear. No angry person. No one.
Except if you are very, very unlucky.
You might be attacked by a panic and by a bear at the same
time. But that does not really happen a lot, I think.
Or maybe that is because those it happened to couldn't tell
about it.
Oh my. In any case. In this case of panic attacks,
Panic attacks you and that's pretty terrifying.
We are all afraid of panic.
I panic because I struggle with, CPTSD, PMDD, ADHD, AUTISM
depression, anxiety and well… me.
I struggle with chronic fatigue and chronic pain and I do
love rain, clouds, waves, drops, water in general. Fluid
things in general. Fluid people. Kind fluid people. Kind
people, all kinds of kind people. Kind slow people. Kind
shy people, kind angry confused people, kind, sympathetic
pathetic? All kinds of kind people.
The worst part is,

We might not have to worry about being attacked by a polar
bear anymore
… I carry intergenerational trauma and wisdom and care,
my last performance was about intergenerational care. Oh
I have astma too and mysterious skin issues sometimes on
my legs and my arms and on my arms I have traces of harmful
gazes I have internalised. I will carry them for the rest
of my life but I will not carry the shame anymore of being
a person with scars. Every scar is proof of surviving
a moment of deep deep despair and hopelessness.

… Free therapy. I'd like free therapy. To treat a tiny bit
of my melancholy.
My melancholy is that of my ancestors. The wars they
survived, each in very different places, stories. And
the violence in my life was determined, long before I
was born. Because I was born with the courage and anger
of my grandfather – fighting for Algerian independence.
My strength is my grandmother's, enduring harsh inter-
rogations, enduring loss after loss. My love is my mothers
love and my pain is the pain of my father who's dad was
killed by French bombs. Maybe that's when he became
explosive too, deprived of being a sweet and funny dad only.
My melancholy is that of my ancestors.
And I am grateful for what I inherited
I will not let my softness diminish,
I will practice sensitivity and healing.
I will honour their suffering
And not be silent. because it is our fire
our resilience
our freedom

Mira's project explores the experiences of siblings of people with disabilities, focusing on themes of care, intimacy, and family relationships. The research and development process for the project included individual and group conversations (interviews) with participants who have lived experiences as family members of people with disabilities. Mira engaged in collective storytelling and text readings with participants and artists with disabilities. A key artistic approach in the project is the use of fiction to challenge dominant narratives around disability and care.

In Iemands zus, Mira explores how disability shapes family life. Drawing on materials from community conversations and documentary sources, she traces the delicate balance between giving and receiving care.

The communication materials described the piece as:

A cinematic coming-of-age story unfolds on stage, accompanied by Simon Raman's music, and it was presented at 404, in Gent, Belgium, on 8-9 May 2026.

In the community conversations, Mira addressed family dynamics, experiences of growing up with a sibling with a disability, social misunderstandings and invisibility, loyalty, frustration, and care within family structures and intimacy and humour within private family contexts.

The sessions with the community members, who joined the research and development phase, were designed as safe meeting spaces where participants could introduce themselves, read fragments of the text draft for the performance — written by Mira, reflect on whether they recognised themselves in the material, share experiences that are often socially misunderstood, and discuss the specific challenges of growing up with a sibling with a disability.

Alongside the group encounters, Mira conducted one-to-one conversations with the participants, which enabled them to dive deeply into personal material, while the group sessions allowed them to listen, recognise shared experiences, and feel less isolated. Some participants preferred listening rather than speaking, which was also appreciated as a valid form of participation.

Mira testified that the line between interviewer, facilitator, and emotional support can become very thin in this type of work. This created an extra layer of responsibility and demanded additional time, attention, and ethical sensitivity. The process revealed how easily an artist, particularly in community — and participatory — art practices, can unintentionally assume a therapeutic role, even without formal training. Recognising this limitation became part of the methodological reflection.

The feedback sessions with the community were very generative. For Mira, reflecting on the text and the process as a whole with the community revealed many new possibilities within the text, helped clarify the piece's dramaturgical direction, and contributed to the flow of the creative process. The structure of the piece (jumping from one scene to another) emerged directly from the material itself. This fragmented form reflects how people naturally speak about memories: non-linear, layered, and associative. The process of integrating feedback is still ongoing, and the text continues to evolve.

Ethical awareness was central to this process. Not all the material gathered during the community conversations was presented on stage. Careful decisions were made about what to include, ensuring that participants are respected and protected. Furthermore, in the piece, Mira also plays the role of her own sibling, which raised questions such as: *Can a person with a disability represent a non-disabled sibling?*

Connection to Manifesto:

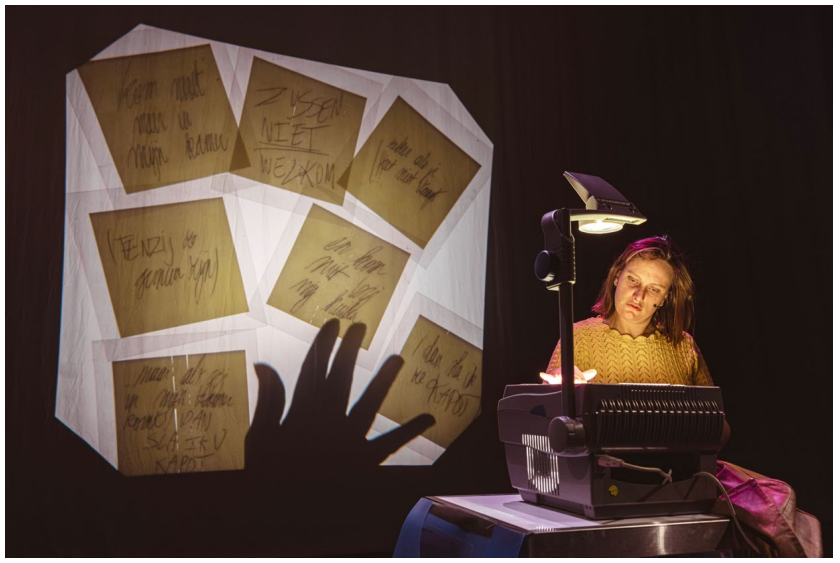
"CONTRIBUTE to the unsilencing of silenced stories… LISTEN to the unheard." Using fiction to amplify hidden voices and challenge dominant narratives.

Connection to Artistic Statement:

"We ask questions to dare to go deeper than a polished surface." "Fiction allows new stories to exist next to dominant narratives."

On the 5th of June 2025 (in a research questionnaire), Mira wrote:

"My project becomes clearer; it is attached to working with families where one has a disability. What does it mean to have a disability within a family context? What are the oppressive gazes of society, and how does that influence the disabled person and their context? What is the impact of having a family member with a disability on the chances of a family, and how to create from this narrative that does not exist within the arts?…"





 Images: © Michiel Devijver

Iemands zus credits:

Concept, text and performance: Mira Bryssinck
Music: Simon Raman
Production management: Flo Delameilleure
Dramaturgy: Fred Libert
Text coaching: Laura Vroom
VGT Interpreter: Kristien Desmettre
Performance coaching: Loes Swaenepoel
Image: Estelle Demaré
Costume: Pauline Verminnen
Lighting and sound: Fenna Maes
Coproduction: Trans Europe Halles / Creative Europe / EU and VONK & Zonen
With the support of: Grip vzw, De Studio
With thanks to: Fien Vanhaverbeke, Karen Flecken, Maia Janssens, Meron Janssens, Briek Janssens, Saartje Vandenbroucke, Liesbet De Waele, Werner Leemans, Flor Dierens and Eva Bryssinck, Ultima Thule, NTGent

Excerpt from the script of *Iemands zus*:

There is her.
There is me.
There is me and her.
There is her and me.
Sometimes her.
And me.
Sometimes me.
And her.
Sometimes us.
She is a sister.
My sister.
She is the sister of a sister with a disability.
I look for her here in my words and in Estelle's images, in Simon's music today.
And she is sitting out there in the audience.
Her name is Eva, or Flor, or Hanne…
Today her name is *her*.
Today I play the *me*.
I play her sister.
I am a sister with a disability.
There is a *me* in the words, the images, the music today.
There is a *me* here on stage.
And surely, I am also sitting out there in the audience.
My name is Mira, Julia, Aline…
So today, *me*.
Today we are ten and twelve, six and eight, 32 and 34, 18 and 16, and everything in between.

"I think it would be nice to have more authorship from people with disabilities themselves."

(Mira, June 2026)

Kseniya worked in collaboration with Dnipro Centre for Contemporary Culture and, together with Izolyatsia, made the exhibition “Transit Zones”, dedicated to new forms of invisibility and underrepresentation emerging from the experience of war in Ukraine. At the centre of the exhibition are military artists and civilian practitioners whose work takes shape under conditions of displacement, distance, and unstable presence. The exhibition is grounded in new media practices.

The exhibition opening event, on the 29th of May 2026, also included an artist talk with Sofia Bulgakova, an open conversation with participating artists, and a live performance by WALAKOS (sound producer Andriy Sokolov, blending broken beats, downtempo, and melodic synthesiser lines), featuring VJ and visual art by Roksolana Deynega. The exhibition remained open until 22 August, 2026.

The exhibition brought together three groups of artists: artists serving in the Ukrainian army, civilian artists currently living in Ukraine, and Ukrainian artists from the diaspora, and was included in the program of Construction Festival IX, which took place at Dnipro Centre for Contemporary Culture.

The project aims to reflect the complexity of artistic production in wartime. The specific context is reflected at all stages of preparation, curatorial coordination, logistical planning, and in addressing technical challenges such as infrastructure and electricity supply (generators).

At the inception of the project, Kseniya’s work focused on collaborating with underrepresented Ukrainian diaspora artists in Paris to build networks both within the diaspora and between these practitioners and the French cultural sector, addressing critical issues of visibility, representation and cultural mediation.

However, after a 2025 visit to Ukraine, her perspective shifted significantly. Confronted with a cultural landscape radically transformed by the persistent and intensifying Russian invasion and warfare, Kseniya felt compelled to shift her focus towards artists who remain in Ukraine, and whose artistic and personal trajectories are directly shaped by the ongoing war.

Consequently, the change in approach was followed by both thematic and methodological reorientation toward a context-responsive curatorial practice within a wartime environment, with a focus on new media, understood as: Unstable, Fragile, Easily destructible. This material condition resonates strongly with the instability of the wartime context.

Kseniya and her team were guided by the intention to avoid instrumentalising artists within political narratives, to resist simplified representations (e.g., heroism), to allow for multiplicity and contradiction, and to acknowledge trauma without aestheticising it.

The intimacy of the project with current warfare required continuous risk assessment, adaptability and flexibility from everyone involved, attention to infrastructural instability, and careful consideration of safety and accessibility.







 Images: © Oleg Samoylenko

Connection to Artistic Statement:

"How do we contribute to the unsilencing of silenced stories?"
"How can we create art that dares to transform the current times of war?"

Connection to Manifesto:

"QUESTION the normalised colonial gaze ... REPUDIATE war and violence."
Curation acknowledges the ongoing war context, ethical responsibility, and selective inclusion of voices.

From the curators' notes:

Artists who take on the role of military personnel are physically displaced to the periphery of the cultural field and, as a personal choice, to the margins of their own creative practice. Their trajectories often do not fit into established artistic or institutional frameworks, but instead form a new landscape — a landscape of fractured artistic positions, into which the entire community gradually finds itself drawn. Artist-soldiers, civilian artists, artists in exile: each of them becomes partially invisible to the system and conditionally visible to one another. Their experiences do not coincide; they confront each other, overlap, and create "circles on the water" that spread from personal history toward a shared one.

This exhibition speaks of being on the threshold as a collective condition; of presence and representation not as fixed categories, but as movement — a circulation of constant displacement and rethinking. It addresses communities that do not fit into stable structures, because the structures themselves cannot withstand the reality of war. There are no complete formulas or final conclusions here. There is only an attempt to remain within the process — in the transit zone between "there" and "here".

Transit Zones credits:

Curators: Lera Polyanska, Kseniya Ulyanova
Technical Director: Pavlo Sirko
Technical Support: Ivan Hudyma
Designer: Daria Titarenko
Artists List: Eugen Arlov, Marina Fedorenko, Georgiy Potopalskiy, Max Robotov (_mediaklub), Ivan Svitlychnyi, Pavlo Kovach, Vitaliy Kokhan, Lesia Vasylchenko, Anna Taradina, Liubov Durakova, Sofia Bulgakova, Marharyta Polovinko, Photinus studio and Kristina Solomukha



Image: © Oleg Samoylenko

Elie and Emanuele developed GuastaFest, a multidisciplinary festival, rooted in long-term collaboration with local grassroots organisations and associations, who all took part in the co-programming process. The festival took place on the 9-10 & 16-17 of May 2026 in Catania, Sicily, Italy, and focused on the visibility and participation of people from URCs, namely LGBTQIA+ communities, youth, people with disabilities and other marginalised communities. The project was mounted around practices of *togetherness and co-authorship* rather than *outreach.*

GuastaFest was developed through a community-based methodology, with the intention of co-creating a multi-vocal festival framework that ensures participants are agents of visibility and transformation rather than passive subjects. Through Zō, Elie and Emanuele also launched an open call process for artists, encouraging emerging voices and artists from marginalised backgrounds to apply. Five artists were selected from the open call process by a committee that included representatives from Zō and the other collaborating organisations.

Elie, Emanuele and the Zō team, were interested in developing a methodology which extends beyond the framework of the CTM project and continues to reverberate in the local arts and culture field, as well as has an impact beyond the project timeframe.

In the process of designing and implementing GuastaFest, Zō and the AoCs had to be attentive to mindful articulations of expectations and frameworks for multiple stakeholders, ways to ensure meaningful inclusion of marginalised communities in both artistic creation and festival governance, building trust and continuity with participants over time, integrating accessibility and inclusive practices into both programming and the physical venue, and navigating the boundary between cultural engagement and social support.

The festival presented a vast, multidisciplinary program featuring performance, dance, theatre, music, visual arts, illustration, creative writing, installations, and site-specific interventions.

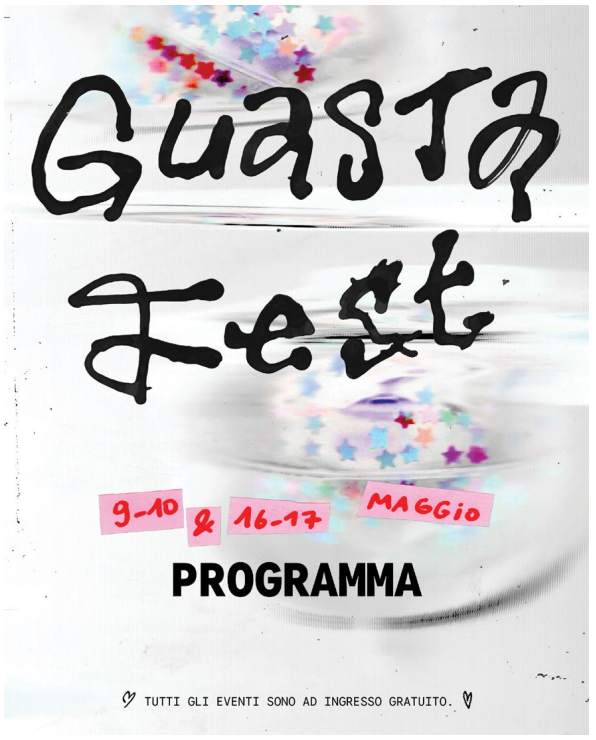
The Safer Spaces guidelines, developed by Zō during CTM, were rigorously implemented across all stages of the festival, including prioritising accessibility and transparent communication practices.

Connection to manifesto:

"LISTEN … CREATE liberating spaces … FREE our bodies, minds, feelings." Festival design foregrounds LGBTQIA+ and young marginalised voices, providing visibility and participatory opportunities

Connection to artistic statement:

"We ask questions as a way to open up the space even to things we are not sure of." "Art that transformingly matters and centres unheard voices."



Excerpt of text written by Emanuele Miceli as a "review" for GuastaFest:

And when I take off my headphones
and dance in silence without asking permission
I realize it is just a beginning disguised as an end
and that some feasts don't end but
scatter like candies
a piece for everyone
certain hearts when they break don't divide
multiply

GuastaFest team:

General Coordination: Elie Laucher, Emanuele Miceli
Project Manager: Pamela Toscano & Ségolène Le Contellec
Production & Artists Care: Ségolène Le Contellec
Technical Team: Aldo Ciulla, Gaetano Libranti
Technical Support: Abdoul Mohamed Ouedraogo
Concept, Visual Identity & Graphic Design: Elie Laucher & Francisca Cardoso Lima
Social Media & Copy: Teodora Marković
Creative Support & Documentation — Video and Photos: Eleonore Grolleau
Documentation Support: Roberta Baldanza
Communication Support: Giovanni Sinatra
Outside Eye & Support: Laura Camacho Salgado

Co-Organised with Smeralda Capizzi, Santina Arena, Chiara Platania, Laura Tomaselli, Emanuele Liotta, Federico Guarnaccia, Giovanni Sinatra





Images: © Francisca Cardoso Lima

The following text was written by Fariba (PM, BRU) and Farila (AoC, BRU) about this artistic production.

Over a period of five months, more than 30 participants worked in a co-creative workshop series using traditional woodcarving techniques. Through art, they explored themes such as migration, climate crisis, and geopolitical conflicts, and their socio-spatial impact in ongoing post-colonial realities. Translating these collective reflections into a new, shared visual language. Personal memories and dreams were carved into linden wood columns, now speaking for themselves without words.

This co-creative project, artistically conceived by Farila (AoC, BRU) and curated by Fariba (PM, BRU), works with artistic practice for dialogue and systemic transformation. In unstable times, it offered space for new approaches to conflict resolution and resilience, where existing structures could be questioned and sustainable forms of coexistence reflected upon.

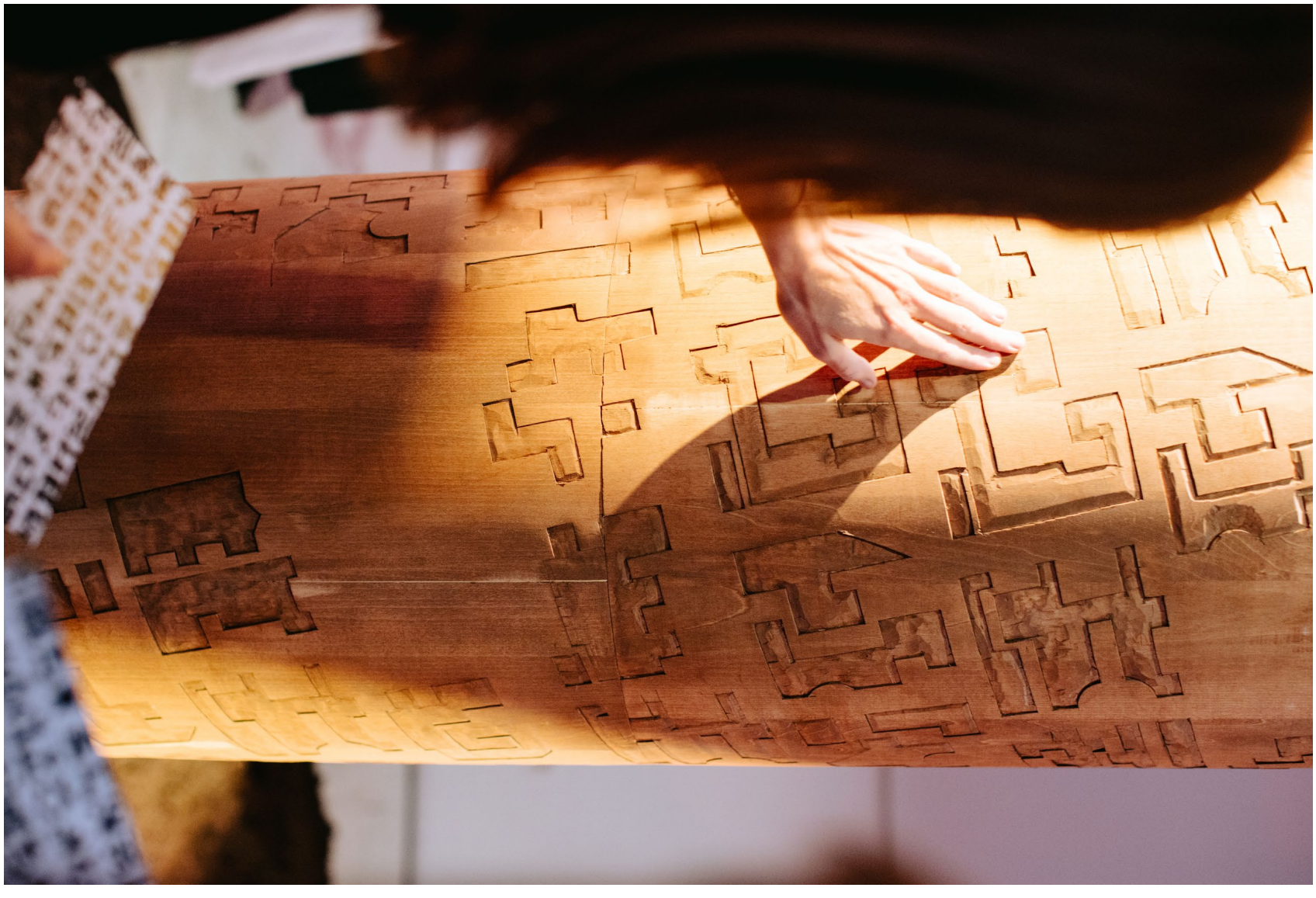
The collaboratively carved, multi-perspective, text-based symbols coalesced into an installation of four sculptural wooden columns. It was opened on May 4, 2026, at BRU, featuring a performative intervention by the artists Shahrzad Nazarpour, Graziele Sena da Silva, with live sound by Tahere Nourani. The performative intervention was then followed by an artist talk and a vinyl session by Ferhat Portakal. The event was held in cooperation with the Climate Biennial Vienna. The installation was exhibited in the main hall of BRU for two weeks, and BRU aims to further present the work in different versions at other venues.

Through working with Farila, BRU deliberately stepped outside its formal comfort zone and ventured into the field of participatory craft practices for the first time.

The workshop series Spiral Spines — Dreams, Stories and Memories in Wood started at BRU and, for most of the work, moved to the neighbouring wood workshop of Bela Eckermann, who became an important cooperation partner and the project's technical director.

Spiral Spines thus emerged as a process-oriented open space, an environment in which conventional artistic and social boundaries were dissolved, inviting individuals from diverse linguistic and biographical contexts to interweave their personal histories into a co-creative act. A focus was placed on the lived realities of people whose lives have been shaped by flight, migration, or war-induced upheavals. Nevertheless, the project was designed to remain open: anyone interested was invited to take an active part, stimulate thought, and work together to shape a multi-layered narrative about what it means to have human experiences and to be tangible in these changing times. Drawing upon early historical graphical forms, Farila conceptualised a symbolic alphabet rooted in a nomadic epistemology, which was further co-designed by the workshop participants and found its way onto the columns through the multilingual texts the participants contributed to the process.

The workshop series was technically supported by Esmail Sultani, an expert in Central Asian woodcarving techniques, with whom Farila had already worked on previous projects. His involvement was vital in protecting the transmission of endangered Afghan cultural heritage, a clear stance against cultural erasure.



Like all BRU formats, this process was designed to be accessible and low-threshold; no prior knowledge was required, and the workshops were free of charge. Farila chose to work with wood carving to inscribe participants' memories and, by doing so, allowed their stories to exist materially, remaining present without requiring verbal performance. The project provided an example of how memory can move beyond text and testimony into sculpture, surface, and shared object-making. This methodology also demonstrated how internal and external memory, as well as collective processes, can continue through care.

The main challenges that arose during the process, besides technical ones, included the transfer of intimate experiences of trauma into material form, while respecting participants' voices, building trust within communities that are often vulnerable or have experienced trauma, managing variable levels of participant engagement (due to time, energy, or willingness), thereby bridging the gap between project ambition and on-the-ground reality. And above all, maintaining ethical care while facilitating emotionally sensitive work.

The title Spiral Spines — Stable in the Face of Disruption took on increasing significance as the process unfolded. In an era defined by overlapping global crises, the workshop served as socio-spatial infrastructure, reinforcing community resilience despite surrounding geopolitical instability. The materiality of wood, grounded in questions of resource use and ecological inequality, became a carrier of inscribed, plural memories and imagined futures of solidarity.

What began as an engagement with ecology and global conditions crystallised into a narrative against forgetting.

Ultimately, Spiral Spines unites physical craft, language, and human experience to create a profound call to action, ensuring that these stories are not just preserved but also contribute to transforming the present and building a better future together.

Farila and Fariba created a booklet that depicts the production process, now available on the BRU website.

Connection with Manifesto:

"CREATE liberating spaces...SLOW DOWN to take care..." Workshops emphasise care, relational engagement, and slow, intentional creation. Participants' voices are central, and symbolic narratives are shared visually.

Connection with artistic statement:

"We ask questions because We ask questions because the conflicts and crises we are experiencing force us to rethink our approach." "Art that transformingly matters and centres unheard voices."





Images: © Igor Ripak

Spiral Spines team:

Farila Neshat: Artist, concept, design, installation
Fariba Mosleh: Curator, concept, project lead
Fariba Mosleh, Rey Joich, Emil Pürzelmayer: Production
Babriela Gazova: Event production
Bela Eckerman: Technical lead
Esmail Sultani: Expert wood carving
Rob Duncombe, Emil Pürzelmayer: Technical support
Natalia Hecht: Co-Creation Lab
Laura Camacho Salgado: Outside Eye
Adham Sinan: Rendering
Hannaneh Heydari: Social media
Nika Mitteregger: Public relations
Shahrzad Nazarpour, Graziele Sena da Silva: Opening performance
Tahereh Nourani: Sound Art for opening performance

Mara Chavez: Moderation artist talk at opening
Ferhat Portakal: Vinyl Session at opening
Special Thanks to Team Brunnenpassage and the Volunteer Team of Brunnenpassage
Co-Creators:

Akashdeep Singh Bhatti, Alina Chalonenke, Andrea Weissenbrunner, Anna Deli, Camille Drain, Caro Agredo, Dena Danesh, Elif Isik, Elisabeth Holzer, Emil Pürzelmayer, Emma Rabl, Esmail Sultani, Fahim Heydari, Fariba Mosleh, Farila Neshat, Fatemeh Bagheri, Fatemeh Haghayeghi, Fereshtah Rezai, Frida Koch, Ghazaleh Motamedi, Giullianna Cuc, Gordana Crnko, Hannaneh Heydari, Hadi Mohammad Pour, Ivie Isibor, Jamasardar Rasahi, Jay Khoram, Jenny Z., Levin, Lina Marangattil, Lydia Stockhammer, Mobaraka Nuri, Mo Muhanned El Abo, Mojtaba Ayni, Mosa Alswadi, Nicole Bucur, Nikolaus Huber, Philipp Sohn, Rana Tadjik, Reza Movafagh, Sebastian Mellgren, Sevil Gholami, Sheetal Jairth, Tim Ehmke, Zhameli Khairli, Zuzana Ernst.



This piece was not presented as part of the 2026 Artistic Production component of CTM, but rather independently during Araba's engagement in BRU, which ended in 2024.

Described as a resistant, polyphonic, poetic intervention for International Women's Day, Araba crafted an exhibition for the Vitrina (exhibition space) at BRU in March-April 2024.

For this exhibition, Araba worked with poetry and visual curation. Inspired by texts by June Jordan, Robin DG Kelly, and Audre Lorde about the agential and emancipatory power of poetry and how it connects us to the world we live in. It was done in collaboration with Munira Mohamud, who is an artist and poet from Vienna who explores politics, her own identity, and other socio-political issues.

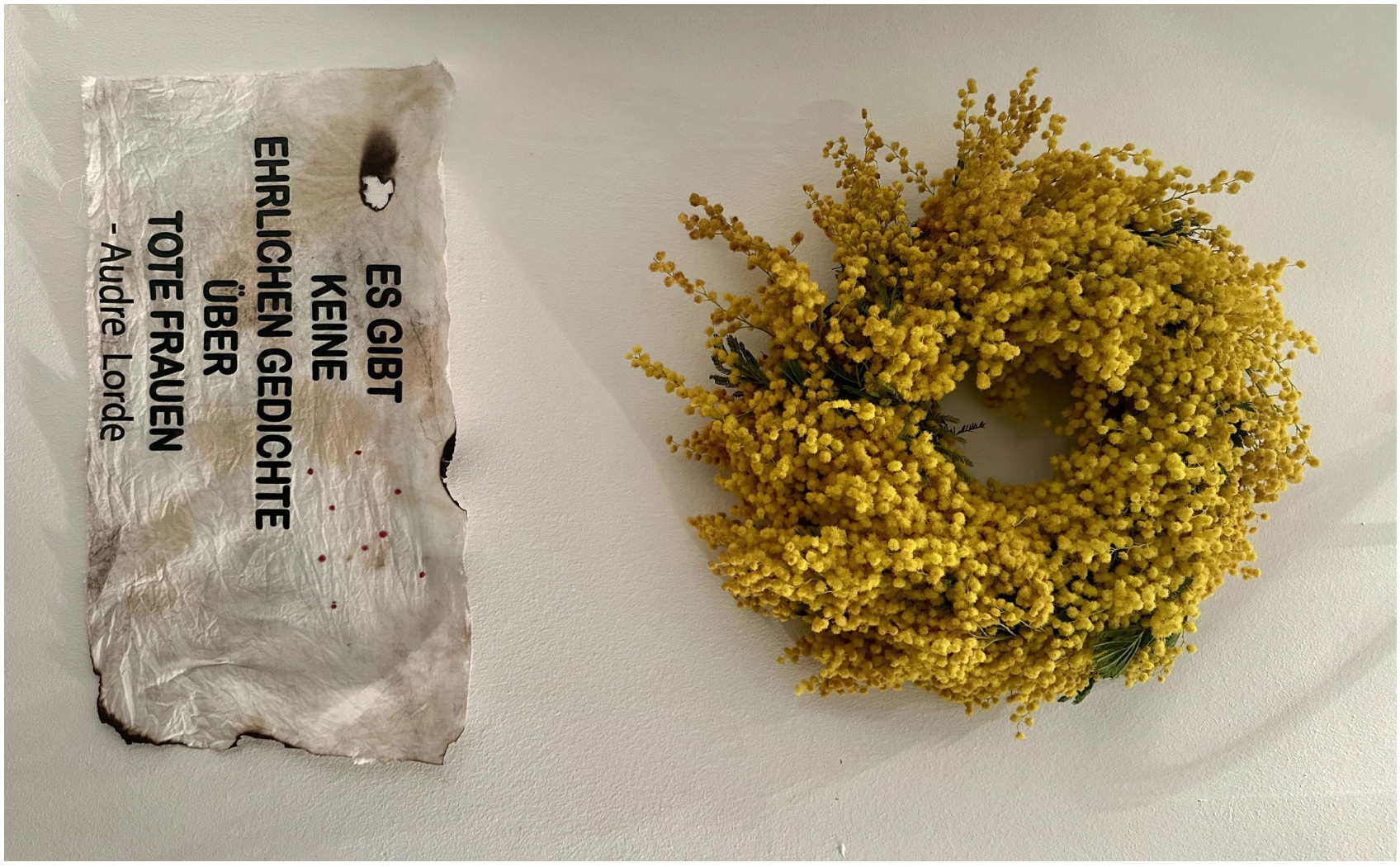
Nag* Nool is a Somali phrase drawn from everyday life, not easily translated, and also the title of a poem by the poet Munira Mohamud. In her words, Nag* Nool means:

"A woman who lives. Alive in the spaces that were taken from us and that we never believed belonged to us."

The exhibition comprises a poetic sound installation that explores the multifaceted meanings of Nag* Nool. In this context, the asterisk (*) next to Nag* and Frau* (woman*) is understood as a jointly fought-for intervention of recognition. In this piece, Araba and Munira address how Women*, who define themselves as such and far beyond, continually create multifaceted forms of resistance against oppressive definitions of "womanhood."

"to love and be loved for who we are."
(Munira Mohamud)

 Images p. 143-145: © Fariba Mosleh



Nag Nool — Living Woman** credits:

Artists: Munira Mohamud and Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur
Artistic Production, Concept, Curation: Munira Mohamud and Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur
Content Advisor: Elif Işık
Production and curatorial support: Fariba Mosleh

Translation:
Munira Mohamud (English, Somali)
Ishraga Mustafa Hamid (Arabic)
Nigar Hasib (Kurdish, Sorani)
Gamze Ongan (Turkish)
Esma Bošnjaković, Larissa Lojic, Gordana Crnko, Marija Perić-Bilobrk (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian)
Zsuzsánna Tamás-Szóra (Hungarian)
El Awadalla (Viennese)
Fariba* Mosleh ("Pan-Upper-Austrian")

Speakers:
Sofia Bempeza (German)
Munira Mohamud (Somali)
Ishraga Mustafa Hamid (Arabic)
Nigar Hasib (Kurdish, Sorani)
Züleyha Celiksu (Turkish)
Fariba* Mosleh („Pan-Upper-Austrian")
Marija Perić-Bilobrk (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian)
Zsuzsánna Tamás-Szóra (Hungarian)
Margaux Delotte-Bennett (English)

Technician: Robert Duncombe
Exhibition Installation: Florian Nitsch
Sound: Christoph Moser
Graphics: Natascha Liszt (Postcards), David Matthews (Flyer, Poster)
Textile print: William Obando Lopez, TEXCORP e.U.
Print of postcards: Printpool, Speedprint

Further thanks go to
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Workshops

Introduction

Beyond being a relevant format of collective and joined knowledge production and transfer, in CTM, workshops have also been a key methodology. Creating contexts for the movement of knowledge and curating experiences as mediums of (un)learning, have been constant in the project. All CTM workshops included dynamics of flow, transversality and reciprocity. Workshops were held in all layers and dimensions of the project: amongst the partners, the AoCs and the ATF, consortium and researcher, at the CoCs with their own teams, public workshops with local communities, hosting guest artists and scholars to share a practice or a method, people from the CTM consortium facilitating workshops with teams from CoCs other than their own, and transnational workshops during the TEH Camp Meeting and Conferences. In all these workshops, knowledge was not transferred monolaterally but poured amongst all, facilitators and participants alike.

The next few pages address the transnational workshops, in the formats of Reflection Workshops and Knowledge Roundtable Workshops, and Partners' Transnational Conference, because they were significant formats of transnational exchange in which CTM both acquired knowledge about the reality and practices of other cultural centres in the TEH network, and had the opportunity to disseminate the knowledge and experience from CTM to the European art and culture field.

For information about the framework and format of each workshop module see the methodology chapter page 72 – 85.





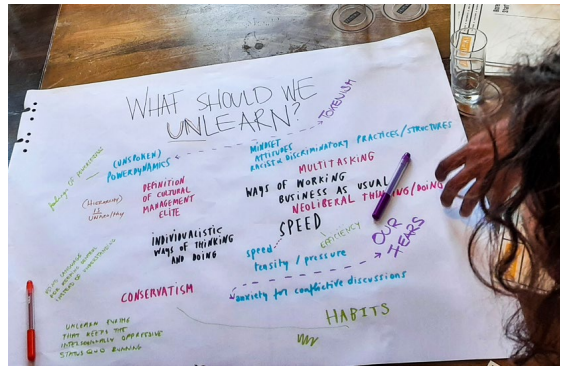


→ Images: © Fariba Mosleh

REFLECTION WORKSHOPS

As described in the Project Methodologies chapter (page 72 – 85), the Reflection Workshops were one of the formats for transnational knowledge transfer and dissemination through the TEH network. The following are descriptions of each workshop, its theme, format, and themes discussed. Further articulation of the takeaways from the workshops is provided in the Main Findings (page 173 – 198), Practices That Worked in CTM (page 209 – 219) and Reflections (page 241 – 261).

Workshop title:
Unlearning the Status Quo!
Tbilisi – October 2023



The workshop was designed to diagnose the current transnational status quo and highlight barriers that marginalise underrepresented communities, voices and bodies. The workshop proposed dissecting the elements that contribute to a more equitable and inclusive cultural sphere, spanning artistic practices, governance, policymaking, and transcultural competence.

At first, information on the existing status quo was gathered from the participants and divided into three categories:

- What should stay?
- What should we unlearn?
- What could/should we transform? (*)

The workshop highlighted the importance of noticing and acknowledging perspective, positionality and context. It accompanied the participants as they unpacked their individual situatedness and addressed the topic collectively.

The workshop intended to create a safe space (see safer space guidelines through the resources on page 14 – 15) to “all voices” in both form and content.

To revolutionise the cultural ecosystem, the sector must embrace collaborative, horizontal dynamics, operating as continuous learning labs that champion solidarity, diverse perspectives, and the freedom to question. Operations should shift towards care, vulnerability, and a slower, process-oriented pace that prioritises imagination over capitalistic pressure and speed.

Concurrently, institutions must unlearn oppressive frameworks. This requires actively dismantling patriarchal and racist practices, tokenism, Eurocentric art canons, and hidden hierarchies. The sector must reject neoliberal “business as usual” models, eliminate unpaid labour, break down knowledge silos, and use language for empathy rather than control.

Ultimately, systemic transformation demands a complete restructuring of decision-making, improvements in working conditions, and the replacement of rigid bureaucracy. By decolonising artistic standards, actively amplifying marginalised voices, and moving audiences past passive spectatorship, organisations can bridge the gap between progressive discourse and equitable practice.

As the first reflection workshop, this was also an opportunity for the AoCs to come together and jointly explore questions such as “Who am I?” Whom do I represent? Which privileges or biases shape my perspective? As well as facilitating a dialogue on invisibilisation and collective reflection.

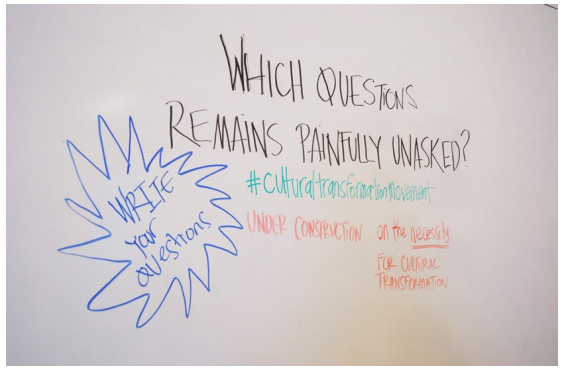
(*) To an extent, every CTM Reflection Workshop at the TEH meetings utilised this process of reflection, identifying the current status and situation in participants’ respective contexts, and naming the practices and habits that need to be let go of and those that need to be evolved and transformed. This process enabled participants to cherish what works well in their context and articulate what they would like to transform and how. It also enabled a dynamic of reciprocity and collegiality, as participants shared what they had in their own contexts, and learnt through what was proposed by others.

The participants recommended embracing interdependencies as a practice. They also suggested that processes should be continuously reworked and transformed rather than rigid and fixed.

> This might seem counterintuitive, and interdependence might generally be deemed to weaken both us (the artists and professionals in the field) and our processes. However, this proposal to embrace interdependencies invites us to consider that we do not need to exclude those who are not us, other to us, or different to us. It invites us to no longer think about “me or the other” but rather “me and the other”, “me as the other” or even “me within the other”.

Other suggestions included prioritising slow, process-oriented projects and practices of care whilst letting go of rigid structures, hierarchical pressure, and product-oriented, fast-paced processes.

Workshop title:
Lost in Translation? Cultural Transformation Movement Under Construction.
Tartu – May 2024



The workshop utilised the CTM Artistic Statement (see page 97 – 106) to explore how verbal, non-verbal, and hybrid translation can amplify diverse voices and perspectives.

It was divided into two parts:

1. An open reading of the CTM Artistic Statement.
2. A creative translation of excerpts from the statement into the participants’ preferred language or mode of expression.

The workshop culminated in a sharing session that fostered collaboration and dialogue among participants.

Through the workshop, the multidimensionality of language, which can be both a medium for connection-making and a barrier to connection, was highlighted. It also explored the politics of “mattering” and the creative process of translating.

> The notion of mattering is borrowed from new materialism, a field of knowledge that investigates the world through critical reflection on what matter is and how it comes into being. In critical and cultural theory, mattering examines both the process of acquiring physical, material form and that of acquiring meaning and significance within the discursive landscape; hence its relevance to the processes of translation and interpretation through language.

Further references to the dynamics and processes of language and translation can be found in the Artistic Statement (page 97 – 106), Terminology (page 16 – 20), and Reflections (page 241 – 261).

Experiments with the practice of translation already emerged in the reflection workshop in Tartu (2024), when the AoCs, accompanied by the ATF, translated the questions from the CTM Manifesto of Change into textual, image, sound, and performative forms, emphasising nonlinear, cross-cultural modes of communication and alternative epistemologies.

Workshop title:
STOP << REWIND ((BREATHE)) FORWARD >>
Epanomi, October 2024



This workshop, inspired by the concept of Argatia, the theme of that particular TEH network meeting, which emphasises collective support within a community, encouraged participants to rethink work and collaboration in the arts. It proposed that a lasting change requires a shift from individualism toward collective action.

One of the parts of the workshop was titled “REWIND”, in which Laura (ATF) invited the participants to work through processes of deep listening.

> Rather than treating listening as a passive biological function, Pauline Oliveros (2005) conceptualises ‘Deep Listening’ as an active, embodied practice that expands relational awareness and cultivates collective presence. In CTM, and in other artistic and cultural endeavours, Deep Listening refers to a transformative, empathetic practice of truly being attentive to another person without interrupting, judging or planning what to say next. It is an intentional shift from simply hearing words to sincerely attempting to understand the speaker’s underlying emotions, intentions and unspoken needs. In this sense, transgressing the biological process of listening into another intricacy. Deep Listening can invite people to be empathetic and participate in exchange with openness and reciprocity. To some extent, it is a practice proposed to remedy polemical polarisation.

The REWIND part invited participants to share experiences of systemic bias and marginalisation. It sought to identify where and how we might all perpetuate exclusion, even unknowingly. It is in this context that the notions of intent and unconscious bias come up and demand our attention.

Participants mentioned the following as hurdles on the way to the desired cultural transformation:

- Financial Barriers: Economic insecurity often limits engagement with the arts, creating barriers for both artists and audiences.
- Mental and Physical Care: Recognising the need to support mental and physical well-being as part of sustainable diversity efforts.
- Language Accessibility: Acknowledging that academic or niche language can make cultural content inaccessible.
- Generational Representation: Ensuring that both youth and elderly perspectives are included.

The workshop addressed the notion of moving forward with the relief of letting go, of forgetting. The question was asked: "*Is forgetting a right or a privilege?*"

> Forgetting in this sense refers to not considering, not being bothered by, not being confronted with, not being challenged by, not being held back by, and not being assigned the role of saviour. In that sense, to forget can be a privilege that many people in marginalised, discriminated-against, and underrepresented communities cannot enjoy, because for us it is woven into our phenomenological existence and the foundations of our relations and relationality. We cannot disregard it because it is loud, present, vivid, and active in our everyday lives.

The final part was titled "FORWARD" and articulated an action plan that would engage participants and encourage them to implement these actions in their respective contexts. However, we have not collected any data to demonstrate how the workshop findings were implemented in the participants' respective contexts.

Workshop title:
A Workshop That Isn't One
Sofia, June 2025



The workshop invited participants to enter a shared reflective space shaped by collaboration, experimentation, and community-rooted practices, and was informed by the Manifesto of Change (page 114 – 115) by the AoCs.

The workshop's objectives were to: create space for shared reflection among AoCs, CTM partners, and external participants from diverse communities; facilitate the exchange of methodologies utilised by the AoCs in their processes with URCs; Encourage embodied, trauma-informed, and sustainable practices in cultural work; and co-create strategies that support inclusion, care, accessibility, and decolonial thinking in practice.

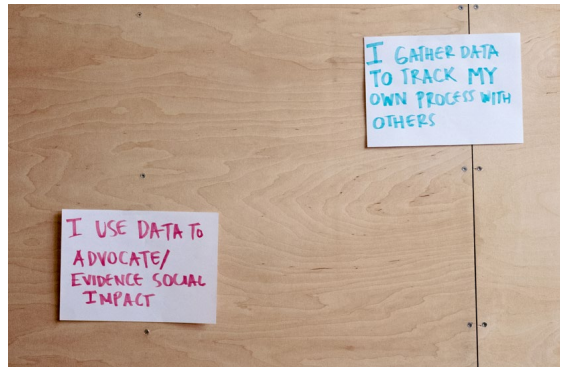
The workshop opened with a 5-minute multilingual **sound collage** (also available via the QR code on page...) curated by Kseniya (AoC from IZO), composed of fragments of the Manifesto recorded by AOCs and ATF. This polyphonic piece brought in layered voices and soundscapes, reinforcing the importance of multiplicity, translation, and presence.

The key takeaways from this workshop include:

- → Plurality is the method. There is no single pathway to transformation. Just many, interwoven.
- → Embodiment bypasses barriers.
- → Movement and sound can open spaces where language falters.
- → Care is infrastructure. It's not something we add on: it's how we do the work.
- → Importance of implementing trauma-informed check-ins in team spaces.
- → Rethinking budget structures to allow for community compensation and accessibility services.
- → Using embodied methods to bypass linguistic barriers.

Read more about Creative and active participation in the Methodologies chapter (page 63).

Workshop title:
The Forgotten Data Lab
Riga, October 2025



The workshop invited participants to explore and examine how we notice, harvest, collect, select, hold, archive, use, repurpose, and utilise data to both forge and transform our curated realities.

It dealt with the questions:

- → Is data different from knowledge? Is it its opposite? Or is it the foundational building block of knowledge?
- → Is data an apparatus of capitalism?
- → Why is there a need to collect more and more data? Should we need to forget instead?

The facilitator emphasised that data is not neutral: it is socially constructed, historically shaped, and carries the footprint of colonisation.

The workshop unpacked the dynamic between the importance of being seen and represented in the data and its interpretation, and, at the same time, the oppressive weight of being seen, as demonstrated by the strict data collection practices of tyrannical and oppressive systems and regimes.

In this workshop, participants testified that most of the data they collect in their usual operation is: gender, geography, attendee numbers, and basic demographic categories. They attested that the data is gathered primarily because funders require it, not because organisations find it genuinely useful.

Some participants noted discomfort at being obliged to ask for personal or private information simply to secure funding for their programmes (to report to funding bodies, stakeholders, and supervising authorities). The workshop also highlighted how reported data is not necessarily factual or grounded in reality. Clearly, this is not done with malicious intentions or frivolity, but the reality, resources and processes available to arts and culture professionals, as well as the importance of protecting people's privacy (and therefore not confirming the accuracy of the data reported by audiences, participants and collaborators), make "filling in the data gaps" the only option. There was a shared unease amongst participants with the gap between what is reported and what is real, and questions about how this distortion affects future funding, policymaking, and sector priorities.

> An element that can be added to the themes and processes examined in the workshop is corporeal data processing in relation to the phenomenological experience of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Bodies interact with other bodies and their environment through continuous data processing — some of which is conscious and active, whilst some remains unnoticed and passive. Various philosophical accounts refer to this as a process of synthesis: the incorporation of data into a specific moment, experience or state of becoming (Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon, 1952). Synthesis can be active, where the subject deliberately seeks to incorporate data into their process, or passive, where they acquire data that alters their experience entirely unintentionally and at times, even unknowingly (Difference and Repetition, Deleuze, 1968).
>
> Emotions can also be understood as somatic processes of working through data, through which we situate ourselves in relation to things, beings, and our own ideations. In this light, data and its processing can be either organic or inorganic.

The workshop then went on to reflect on how we make sense, or more accurately, sense-make from the data that is being collected.

> Sensemaking (sense-making) is a term describing an active, continuous process of constructing meaning to understand ambiguous or complex situations, enabling us to act. Rather than relying on a predetermined plan, it involves looking back on experiences, building plausible narratives, and adapting to changes as they unfold. The term is best known for the work of organisational theorist Karl Weick.

The workshop also addressed safety and risk in relation to data collection. For example, the collection of data regarding immigration status. Individuals navigating interim or ambiguous immigration statuses may find questions about their status deeply intimidating. Such inquiries can make them feel under surveillance, which fundamentally contradicts the core ethos of inclusion and hospitality in arts and culture spaces.

Furthermore, attempting to extract this type of data may signal to our audiences what we are interested in, what we deem important, and which aspects of their personal lives we believe we are interacting with through the artistic and cultural experiences we host.

Perhaps counterintuitively, one of the most resonant themes in the workshop was the value of quiet and subjective forms of data, those that are rarely featured in formal reports. These include: emotional cues, pauses and hesitations, absences, who "lingers at the edge", shifts in power dynamics, and silence (as a form of communication).

Participants questioned whether cultural organisations should aspire to measure these aspects or whether their value lies precisely in not being measured. A participant reflected: "*What are we not gathering? And is that where the meaning actually lives?*"

Workshop title: 2056:
Radical Cartographies of Future
Marseille, April 2026



Within the general theme for the TEH conference in Marseille: "Imagining Within Limits: Cultural Centres and Planetary Boundaries", this reflection workshop was conceived as a live cartographic experiment in how futures are produced, distributed, and contested through cultural practice. It approached future-making as something already active in the present, unevenly structured, politically conditioned, and materially shaped through cultural systems.

A potent question in the workshop framework was: Who is allowed to imagine the future?

> This invites us to notice that the otherwise liberated medium of imagination can also be occupied by a dominant subject, and thus, we ought to query who it is that is governing the potentials of that imagination. The future and the imagination have been fields of interest for thinkers and philosophers. Gilles Deleuze, in a lecture titled "What is the Creative Act?" at the National French Film School in Paris (March 1987), posited that when we are taught, we are also told what we are allowed to believe. In an online session (due to the COVID pandemic) of the *Gendering Seminar* (an independent circle of academics, researchers and psychotherapists in Melbourne, Australia) in September 2020, Israel Aloni (CTM researcher) proposed a reading of and seminar on Sara Ahmed's piece on Queer Vandalism (Feministkilljoys blog, October 9, 2019) in which the notion of occupying someone's imagination, by means of indoctrination and strict formation, was proposed. Here, relevant to futuristic cartography.

In this reflection workshop, through the practice of radical cartography, the facilitators proposed proliferating and cultivating potentialities for alternative, altering futures that are not predetermined or predicted by strict systemic indoctrination.

> In the song Masculinity (2023), Lucky Love (Luc Bruyère) sings: "Who gives you the right to run the rules?" Whilst Laura guided participants in this workshop to explore speculative and imaginative possibilities, we can go one step further and acknowledge that the rules we operate by today are the "genetic material" from which our futures are curated. The future is already here; it may be unknown, but it is already emerging within the spaces between the ticking beats of the now. To cultivate a future that enables alternative realities, we must accept absolute accountability and responsibility for our most mundane actions in the present.

The departure point for this workshop is that maps are not neutral. In the workshop's description (full report available via the QR code on page 14 – 15), Laura (ATF) proposed that the future is not something we enter, but something that is continuously drawn unevenly, collectively, and politically in the present.

> In contemporary cultural and political systems, many cultural workers and communities operate under conditions in which long-term thinking is structurally interrupted by external macro-level dynamics, survival compresses temporal imagination, and precarity fragments continuity. Systemic precarity and the constant demand for immediate survival strip marginalised cultural workers of the luxury of long-term planning, effectively granting those in power the exclusive privilege of authoring and controlling the future. This creates a condition in which some futures are actively authored, while others are continuously deferred. The workshop intervenes in this imbalance by asking: Who gets to imagine 2056 and under what conditions?

The workshop unfolded as a sequence of interdependent cartographic layers, each expanding the previous one rather than replacing it. By doing so, it acted as a direct political intervention to disrupt the imbalance mentioned above, reclaiming the right to conceptualise and shape the future for those who have been structurally forced to exist only in the present. This practice, radical cartography, here serves as a haptic methodology. It offers an actualisation, a materialisation, a visualisation of the concepts and ideas. In a sense, the radical cartography process is a continuation of the previous reflection workshop, The Forgotten Data Lab, which addressed relations and processes of data collection and utilisation. Here, in the cartography process, the data is mapped onto a representation of relations, placement, and orientation. This is a process of sense-making, of transferring and transforming data into matter, aspirations, an action plan, and tools.

> In What's the Use?: On the Uses of Use (2019), Sara Ahmed wrote: "the more a path is used, the more a path is used." She continued: "The path exists in part because people have used it. Use involves contact and friction; the tread of feet smooths the surface; the path is becoming smoother, easier to follow." The repetitive movements of those who are indoctrinated by and operate within a system tend to continually reinforce these well-trodden systemic trajectories. To discover different pathways, we must map alternative relations among the locations, experiences, and realities we need, desire, and aspire to embody.

What emerged in the workshop was consistent across contexts: unstable funding ecologies; exhaustion and burnout as structural conditions; fragmentation of institutional support; care responsibilities without recognition; administrative overload; short-termism and permanent urgency; and the exclusion of artists and culture professionals from decision-making structures.

When invited to envisage a speculative future for 2056, participants suggested: care economies, redistributed power structures, ecological interdependence, cultural transformation systems, and democratic participation frameworks.

> Here we can see the symptoms of the occupied imagination (by the system of indoctrination) which is mentioned above, in relation to the concepts of Deleuze and Ahmed. We, arts and culture professionals, are afraid to imagine a utopia because our freedom to dream is confiscated. Our future is "not in our hands", so what we can imagine for a world 30 years into the future is very limited by the agencies we are practising within, given the greatly limited status of our field at present. It was also reported, at least by one group in the workshop, that it was challenging to imagine any future at all, given the environmental and geopolitical challenges we are currently facing.

Key lessons from the workshop:

→ The potential of alternative systems of coordination or composition in our field lay in noting the differences between a collective and a collection. The proposal suggested that perhaps, rather than aiming to organise within frameworks of similarities and harmonies, as often demonstrated in collectives, we can organise on the basis of solidarity and empathy in frames of collections, a group of differences. A working group at the workshop discussed the difference between empathy and sympathy, asking whether cultural work sometimes overvalues identification: "we are the same", instead of curiosity: "in what ways are we connected despite difference?" They advocated for spaces where disagreement can be held with care.

→ Institutions speak of togetherness while often reproducing fragmentation; thus, arts and culture professionals (us) are required to exercise heightened attentiveness to the fact that the realities dictated to us by institutions should not be taken at face value. Institutions play an important role in responsibly hosting conflicts, rather than avoiding or ignoring them.

→ There is a shared fatigue from disingenuous solidarity. Our field is experiencing exhaustion from a symbolic welcome without structurally supported belonging. One workshop participant described living on a “solidarity island” regularly visited by a “tokenism boat”. A striking image for forms of inclusion that arrive visibly but remain shallow, temporary, or extractive. The metaphor opened a conversation about performative solidarity.

Reflection Workshops Takeaways

Across the seven transnational Reflection Workshops (2023–2026), participants highlighted a pervasive state of structural exhaustion perpetuated by financial precarity, administrative overload, and short-term urgency. Standard institutional frameworks were repeatedly shown to rely on performative inclusion, as one participant vividly described: living on a “*solidarity island regularly visited by a tokenism boat.*” This metaphor exposes the deep rift between symbolic rhetoric and structural belonging. Moreover, mechanisms such as demands from funding bodies, rigid reporting metrics, and the unquestioned use of English as an operational lingua franca were exposed as non-neutral apparatuses of power that occupy the temporal imagination and reinforce historical hierarchies.

In response, the workshops demonstrated that meaningful transformation requires embracing embodiment, plurality, and qualitative sense-making. Where conventional language falters or reproduces existing power dynamics, non-verbal, somatic, and performative experiments — ranging from polyphonic sound collages to radical cartography — bypassed linguistic barriers to unlock alternative epistemologies.

The Reflection Workshops revealed that authentic value lives in unmeasured, quiet spaces: silences, emotional cues, hesitations, and corporeal data processing. Moving away from extractive data gathering, CTM turned to care, trauma-informed practices, and slower, process-oriented tempos not as decorative add-ons, but as the essential infrastructure for sustainable diversity.

Ultimately, the Reflection Workshops showed that sector coordination must shift away from forced harmony toward a collection of differences — organising around solidarity, mutual accountability, and curiosity across lived experiences.

KNOWLEDGE ROUNDTABLE WORKSHOPS



Workshop title: “Representation. Is there such a thing?”
Tbilisi — October 2023.

The first Knowledge Roundtable Workshop was facilitated online by the project researcher, and Ceyda (PM TEH) coordinated and supported the on-site facilitation. It was dedicated to the challenges of representation and expression met by URCs in the arts and culture field. In line with CTM’s intention to transform cultural organisations and operational systems in the arts and culture field by implementing strategies and methodologies that are developed with the full engagement of URCs, the workshop proposal acknowledged that the notion of a singular example, or a representing entity, places a lot of weight on the project’s centres and artists/agents.

It posed the questions:

Are there advantages to being invited to the table?
Are there disadvantages to being “the one” representing a community?
How much representation can indeed remedy underrepresentation?

The workshop began with a contribution by the project researcher, unpacking the notion of representation and its perception as an aspirational concept. However, when we unpack some of the problems with the notion of individuals representing a community, we learn that we must adjust our perspective to align with the capacity and desires of those who are too often underrepresented.

Then the participants gathered in smaller groups and further unpacked aspects of representation from their respective contexts and experiences. The workshop concluded with a plenary session, where notes and comments from the different groups were shared and discussed openly.

Here are the key aspects discussed in the workshop:

- → **Sense of ownership:** We must define collective project ownership to empower all contributors.
- → The private vs the public: treat personal experiences with care and set clear boundaries before bringing them into public domains.
- → **Language:** Acknowledge and utilise language's power to shape how we comprehend and envision the world.
- → **Funding guidelines:** It is the role of the project's custodians to preserve authenticity within, and despite, rigid and biased funding frameworks.
- → **Political shifts:** Rising right-wing politics force projects to balance social defiance and cooperation. Arts and cultural projects must strike a delicate balance between working with and working against society.
- → **Source of public funding:** We must remain vigilant about what the funding we receive is associated with, even when the source is governmental. Public funding does not automatically guarantee genuine public care.
- → **Positioning in Europe:** Work within a healthy dynamic with the European Union and its values. We must navigate the distinct privileges and constraints of Europe with care.
- → **Future European challenges:** Inclusion strategies must constantly evolve to remain relevant globally.
- → **Underrepresented communities:** Engaging communities risks the appropriation of collective identities and artefacts. Be attentive and genuinely care about the people and communities with whom you collaborate.
- → **Team diversification:** Diversifying team composition directly fosters varied approaches and practices.



Workshop title: "Community as both the origin of and the destination for our work"
Epanomi — October 2024.

This workshop, facilitated by the project researcher, addressed the challenges and advantages that artists face in projects where they have clear intentions to work with communities but are also bound to work within a strict framework, dictated by the producing and funding bodies.

As CTM is posited on the premise of motivating both art-making and social justice, in relation to URCs and their voices, this workshop addressed the challenges the individuals from URCs might meet when working with the conventional stakeholders of the art and culture field, as well as those in the intent to collaborate with URCs through participatory processes within these existing contexts.

At first, the facilitator proposed a perspective through which participants were invited to notice both epistemological and ethical challenges.

Epistemology was defined in a rather clinical way by referring to its etymological lineage from the word Epistēmē (Greek), meaning knowledge, referring to intellectual knowledge, and a second definition was referring to Miriam von Schantz, a Deleuzian scholar of media and spectatorship at Konstfack, University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm:

"What does it do to understand things in one way or to understand them in another way?"

The notion that epistemology does things in the world, and changes the way we do things in the world, was particularly significant in the roundtable context, particularly in relation to how the way we know things makes things. So, in a project such as the CTM, where the intention is to bring about change, it is necessary to reflect on how we know what we know.

Eleonora Fabião's definition of ethics, through her reading of Spinoza, in her paper Performance and Theatre: Poetics and Politics of the Contemporary Scene, was presented: "The body is not being understood in terms of form, but of interactive forces, as a complex relationship between various velocities, as an elaborate interaction between infinite particles… Spinoza proposes that a body is not separable from its relations with the world since it is exactly a relational entity." (Eleonora Fabião translation from Portuguese — Maikon K)

Ethics of relationality and of thinking about and through the ways we relate are particularly relevant to CTM. For the purpose of the roundtable, participants were invited to think of the body also as a body of work, a body in the work, or the body of a gesture.

Then, to stimulate the collective mind, participants were invited to pose questions related to the workshop's theme, its abstract, the aforementioned definitions (epistemology and ethics), and their own experience working with URCs, whether as the origin or the destination of a project or activity. The group posed 60 questions, which were then organised in four categories:

- → **Identity and authorship.** Examples:
  How do we identify a community? How do we identify within a community? How do we categorise people into a group?

- → **Structure of Community.** Examples:
  How does a community negotiate its power dynamics? What are the relations of power between a community and those who are not part of it?

→ **Contribution and Action.** Examples:
What are the duties and responsibilities of the parts of the community? Does being part of a community require any labour?

→ **Context.** Examples:
What are the geographic orientations of a community? What are possible adhesives which can potentially hold a community together?

The group was divided into four, and each discussed the questions in one of the categories. When they returned from the discussion in smaller groups, they were invited to share their insights with the plenary as ***instructions.*** What started as a question has now become an action plan.

Here are some examples of the instructions noted by participants:

- If you work with communities, give it more time. Think about the resources and time engagement when you work with communities.
- When including specific communities, take others out of the space
- In order to protect the communities, create ground rules.
- Remember that a safer space for someone might not be safer for another.
- Beware of your power and of who sets the rules.
- Be patient. Make space for unlearning.
- If you take a name, a name is a token.
- If you want to reach people, ask who wants to be reached and who they want to be reached by.
- Exclude behaviours, not people.
- Allow identities to change and intersect.
- Remove expectations.
- Release yourself from the notion of needing more monetary resources to embody more power.
- Just join!
- Fight against unification.
- Do not try to become an “insider” to ensure that there are no “outsiders”.

To see the full list of **questions** and **instructions,** visit the full Workshop Roundtable Report via the QR code on page 14 – 15.



Workshop title: “Transformative Creations”
Riga — November 2025.

Facilitated by the project researcher, this workshop explored ways of **Seeing — Rethinking Perspectives, Creativity, and Curiosity.**

As CTM was nearing the main artistic production component of the project (*), the workshop was an opportunity to reflect on methods and processes of artistic creation and production that involve, include, relate to, and consider community, as well as ideas about diversification of knowledge, methodologies, and aesthetics.

The workshop began with the AoCs and PMs from each CoC sharing the current state of the CTM artistic production in their respective context. Mira (AoC, 404) shared her interest in working with siblings of people with disabilities to broaden perspectives on what life with or in proximity to disability can be like. AoCs and PMs from Zō shared the method they employ to proliferate and diversify the identities and expressions within their centre by creating a hybrid, multidisciplinary festival developed through residencies, co-creation with local communities, and collaborative processes. Yulia (PM, IZO) shared how sensitive it is to work with Ukrainians affected by war, and how some people in Ukraine may see CTM’s work as “less urgent” in a survival-focused reality. Kseniya (AoC, IZO) shared how her artistic practice has shifted since the war — now centring radical care as a political instrument — and how she has created spaces for art and healing for artists serving in the Ukrainian army and developed musical community projects with Ukrainian refugees in Paris. After visiting frontline cities in Ukraine, Kseniya decided to mount an exhibition for the CTM artistic production featuring artworks by soldiers. Ceyda (PM, TEH) explained TEH’s role in the project, not being a cultural centre, and how they disseminate the project’s activities and

(*) By this point in the project, some smaller creation processes have already taken place.

organise (together with the local hosts) the Camp Meetings and Conferences in which the transnational activities of CTM take place.

Then the workshop facilitator presented four aspects through which artistic practice can be transformed in relation to URCs: method, concept, context, and aesthetics. A simple definition for each of them was mentioned, primarily through etymological lineage:

{ASPECT}	{ETYMOLOGY}	{MEANING}
Method	Greek	Pursuit of knowledge; a way of going about something
Concept	Latin	To take in, conceive, or receive
Context	Latin	To weave together
Aesthetics	Greek	Perceptive, sensitive; sensory perception

Then, participants split into four groups, and each group unpacked practical ways to address one aspect of the chart.

Here are examples of what the groups shared in the plenary:

Method

- Easily accessible formats (eating together, etc.)
- Relational practices
- People with different skills and backgrounds
- Dialogue
- Co-creation
- Simple, social formats

Concept

- New norms
- New habits
- New reality
- Manifesting lived experience through freedom and honesty

Context

- Propose, not impose
- Question the place of the event
- Learn about different contexts to understand each other
- Zoom in and zoom out of our own context

Aesthetics

- Space — how does it work on bodies?
- Lighting — what mood and invitation does it create?
- Routing — how are spaces accessed?

Notes and reflections from your perspective and experience:

THIS IS A LEGEND

PARALLEL FLEXIBILITY

CO-CREATION

EXPOSURE VULNERABILITY

TOKENISM BOAT

RELATIONSHIP WITH TIME

SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT FOR A SOLIDARITY EVENT

SCALE SPECIALISATION DECARBONISATION

PUNISHMENT AS PUNISHMENT

BRAIN GYMNASTICS FOR FLEXIBILITY

LAYERING FOLDING

GRIPPING SEE THROUGH THINGS AWAY

REPARATIONS

FREE CAKE

THE READER OF THE WORLD

SILENCE

CULTURE CENTRE

COUNTER-CULTURE CENTRE

LIMIT

TOOL

Main Findings

Applying the different methodologies described in the previous pages, CTM identified notable aspects of creative and operational processes and power dynamics in the arts and culture field. The following is not an exhaustive list of what was learnt in the project, but rather an exposition of some of its key findings, organised by the research process, as described in the Research Scope chapter, page 22 – 25.

Access and accessibility

"At 5 pm on a Friday, participants began to gather in the Tiger Room on the second floor of Rīgas Cirks. The room, though warmly welcoming, was only accessible via a flight of stairs. This immediately highlighted a practical and ethical consideration for workshops of this nature: Accessibility."
(Laura, ATF, Riga Reflection Workshop report, October 2025)

Difficulties, challenges, and systemic barriers related to physical access within the spaces selected or allocated for CTM activities and wider TEH events recurred throughout the project. Whilst work is being done to rectify them, the existing system and those who operate it seem unable to truly make the shift. Perhaps not due to individual resistance but to the persistence and firmness of long-standing systemic discrimination. This includes different national legislation, heritage protection, ownership, funding and building regulations which might limit what cultural organisations are permitted to change.

In an article I wrote for IETM (International Contemporary Performing Arts Network) titled *Inclusion & Diversity* (2020), I proposed that physical access must be viewed fundamentally as a human right — a huWOman right (*). At a time when technology offers relatively simple infrastructural solutions, the continued institutional operation of spaces that remain physically inaccessible can only be explained by their fierce resistance to a cultural transformation. Governments and municipalities should invest taxpayers' money into making arts and culture venues accessible, rather than leaving the financial burden to the scarce resources of independent cultural organisations. Access to public venues is a huWOman right; it is not a privilege to be earned. This failure exposes a severe discrepancy within the core ideology of the European Union. Citizens with physical disabilities live drastically different realities depending entirely on where they reside in Europe. Access to publicly funded venues should be a strict, Union-wide policy backed by the necessary financial and operational support. Without this, a form of double discrimination occurs: individuals are barred from arts and culture by architectural failure, and, at the same time, their level of exclusion is dictated by geography. For example, a person in Sweden may enjoy comprehensive access to cultural life due to robust national legislation, whilst their European cohabitants in other parts of the EU are left out.

(*) A term Israel Aloni coined to remind us of who is not automatically protected by the "human" category. See more in the Terminology chapter, page 16-20.

This discrepancy creates structural inequalities that, given the technologies available in 2026, are clearly perpetuated by institutional and governmental refusal to transform.

*"But in general, **the overall project sometimes goes really fast and is still sometimes overwhelming as an artist with a disability to work in.**"*
(Mira, AoC 404, Spring 2025)

Sometimes we think that to make something more accessible, or accessible to more people, would require unattainable resources. For Zō, it was a very encouraging discovery to find a way to include sign language interpretation for their activity that did not require elaborate labour or monetary resources.

"… by providing sign language interpretation, deaf people would come and actively participate in the cultural life of ZO. It also activates the curiosity and dialogue between people and communities."
(Elie, AoC Zō, Spring 2026)

In relation to the persisting sense of lack of resources (as described in page 241), Emanuele (AoC Zō), who has also been responsible for some project management and budget allocation, reported: "*I have revised my approach to project budget management, prioritising accessibility and underrepresented identities, and I have learned to use new software and digital tools [for this purpose].*" *(Spring 2026)*

"There is no support from the government to work with sign language interpretation, and we have to cover the costs from our project budget. However, we find it affordable and the benefits triumph over the investment."
(Ségolène, PM, Zō, Spring 2026)

This exchange offers a clear example of how different perspectives and lived experiences coexist within the "same context", ultimately demanding distinct operational strategies to bring the ideology into practice. In relation to the critique on structurally insufficient resources, Emanuele demonstrates that practical agency still exists at the level of local budget planning. From this perspective, significant work can be achieved, as Zō demonstrates, through the creative allocation and redistribution of whatever resources are already available.

Emotion, in-motion and what we do not know

Clearly, the capacity to share sincere moments of empathy and connection can help summon the necessary cultural transformation within the European fortress, as demonstrated by the various workshop formats and creative methodologies CTM utilised. However, it is vital to note that structural discrimination does not necessarily stem from emotion, and therefore cannot be dismantled through purely emotional interventions.

Much discrimination is systemic — deeply entrenched in the pipelines and framework of our civic and legislative mechanisms.

Hannah Arendt wrote extensively on what she termed *"the banality of evil"* (1963), from which we can learn how the conscious self is often absent from the repetitive actions that reinstitute systemic injustice. This is precisely the locus of unconscious biases, and how individuals can genuinely believe they are incapable of discriminating against someone, whilst evidently doing so.

The mechanisms of injustice, discrimination, underrepresentation and bias are protected by our societies precisely because they rarely engage the emotional self of the spectator, the witness or the participant. While such events take a heavy emotional toll on those oppressed by them, those who are not may experience a total dissonance between their emotional self and their active, complicit self. We must remain attentive to how emotions can be deceptive — and can even conceal the real structural work that remains to be done.

The issue of free labour

Some of the challenges, hurdles, and predicaments in the arts and culture field were raised more frequently than others in the workshops across CTM. One of them is the expectation that individuals, including those from URCs, work for no suitable honorarium or monetary reward. While reported across the arts and culture field generally (McRobbie, 2016), the matter is particularly prominent for URCs, where uncompensated labour functions as a structural barrier to entry and sustainability (European Commission, 2020). Artists and community members from URCs are asked to participate or work in projects with no suitable, fair, or just honorarium for different reasons, two of which are a byproduct of the tokenistic approach, suggesting that people from URCs should be grateful for having the opportunity to participate in projects and actions in the field, or the underappreciative approach which assumes art and work of people from URCs are not necessarily professional and therefore, does not need to be rewarded or compensated monetarily.

In CTM, the AoCs and PMs were offered fees for their labour. However, the arts and culture field systemically fails to predict the amount of work required to realise an activity, task, or project. This frequently results in workload exceeding the time allocated in initial project plans. Consequently, individuals in the sector — particularly those who are not on the full-time payroll — often receive fees for only a fraction of their actual labour: the portion included in the initial budget. Furthermore, this pressure extends to salaried staff, who are routinely required to work unpaid overtime to fulfil expectations. The problem is systemic. Delivering profound, meaningful work requires substantial time and care. However, given the sector's chronic resource constraints — as noted throughout this publication — these invaluable endeavours remain severely under-resourced. Ultimately, the dedication and tenacity of cultural workers, both artists/agents and managers, often lead to capitulation to these conditions, with managers accepting "extra work" for little to no honorarium.

Also, in CTM, some of the work was not sufficiently rewarded. Individuals' work hours exceeded those anticipated in the initial project plan. This is not a rare case and not, by any measure, evidence of maltreatment or lack of experience in CTM. In fact, the matter was brought up and addressed, and there have been attempts to mitigate the workload that exceeds the project's allocated resources; alas, given the above-mentioned systemic dynamics, it could not be fully eradicated.

This precarity is particularly acute for "independent" artists, agents, and cultural professionals (*). This injustice is symptomatic of the systemic ill health of the non-institutional and non-commercial (not-for-profit) arts and culture sector — the very sector responsible for producing the vast majority of contemporary performing arts in many European countries.

Every activity demands extensive planning, negotiation, reporting, marketing, reflection, administration, and creative work. Projects naturally evolve, change, and develop. In contexts that prioritise meaningful dialogue and porous reciprocity among collaborators, such shifts require continuous communication and coordination before, during, and after an activity. These essential processes are rarely accounted for adequately in initial project plans and budgets, inevitably leading to uncompensated or underfunded labour. This critical issue was thoroughly examined in the IETM publication *Fair Pay in the Arts: The talk of the town or the elephant in the room?* (2024).

Fair pay is not demonstrated solely by numerical figures; it also manifests in the privilege to take time off, to rest, to rejuvenate, to switch off, to recover, to recuperate, to heal, and simply to be well. Salaried professionals benefit, both personally and professionally, from the stability and security that accompany financial safety and sustainability. Within CTM, however, even those on employment contracts — the majority of the PMs and a minority of the CoCs — were not employed full-time for their CTM work. They, too, were forced to negotiate and navigate a complex, multi-layered reality across different professional commitments.

Those subjected to the injustice of precarious pay and partial remuneration are nonetheless expected to maintain a consistent pace, output, and durability to earn a decent, dignified living — a demand that inherently reinforces the very hierarchies that generate and perpetuate inequality for URCs. This is not merely an account of unfair pay within the broader arts and culture sector. It connects directly to work with URCs, as individuals who are marginalised and weakened by systemic barriers are frequently underpaid or incapacitated by a perpetual cycle of under-resourced labour. Means and actions are intrinsically linked: without adequate means, actions are compromised. Actions that are insufficiently rewarded end up exacting a higher cost, requiring additional labour simply to offset the original effort invested. For social justice and equity to exist in the arts and culture sector, working conditions must be manageable for people with varying capacities, which urgently requires a greater allocation of resources.

In a 2026 interview, Mira (AoC, 404) shared that the Belgian government acknowledged the existing pay gap between women and men in the country and that this is directly related to care workers and, consequently, to the opportunities available to people with disabilities. She mentioned that most carers in Belgium are women. With the systemic pay gap between women and men (the binary language is in the source), it means that those who are caring for people with disabilities are not paid justly or fairly. We can conclude that, although it might be seen indirectly, such injustice imposes challenges and predicaments on people with disabilities who would like to engage in certain activities and/or professions. With their caretakers being underpaid, the participation of people with disabilities in society is undersupported. While this comparison between women and men is in itself problematic, because it perpetuates binary thinking and rigid systems, it is a telling case (in Belgium) regarding the entrenched pathways of discrimination and systemic abuse.

(*) Independent is in quotation marks because the notion of artists and professionals in the arts and culture field being independent is very contested. We, the so-called independent professionals, are clearly dependent on the mechanisms, resources, and processes of stakeholders, policy-makers, and governmental bodies. Therefore, it has become a relatively common practice to remind ourselves that the term "independent" is inaccurate.

There is a persistent, if not constant, lack of financial resources (funding) for creation, research, and community engagement in the arts and culture field (European Commission, 2020). This sense of scarcity is exacerbated in the contemporary arts and even more so in the contemporary performing arts. There is a tension between the need for more financial resources and the urgency of the work to be done.

At the **Reflection Workshop in Epanomi** (October 2024), the participants articulated the following as funding challenges:

→ Precarious funding conditions restrict project scope, leading to unsustainable short-term initiatives.

→ A common need for long-term funding, focused on systemic change, rather than short-term diversity metrics. This results in "independent" artists and cultural professionals living in constant precarity. Operating solely within a short-term project economy — rather than receiving a steady, continuous income — creates a deeply stressful reality. While part-time employment is not a complete solution, having a predictable, monthly income (even if partial) provides a degree of financial, professional, and mental stability upon which individuals can build. Consequently, although still insufficient, part-time employment, more commonly associated with administrative or managerial roles than strictly artistic ones, offers greater support than a purely project-based framework.

→ It is necessary to examine whether current diversity policies enhance inclusivity or limit artistic freedom in relation to community-specific initiatives and funding opportunities.

Reflecting on this short-term mindset, I am invited to reflect on how the shift towards celebrity politics and the commodification of politicians as celebrities means that elected officials are often more concerned with the number of people they can enchant with their demagogy than with the durability and structural efficacy of their policies (Street, 2004). This trend routinely produces volatile cultural policies and fluctuating resource allocations that shift drastically with every change in the political landscape (McRobbie, 2016). Consequently, the daily reality for artists and cultural organisations has become increasingly precarious. True advocacy and lobbying are slow, deliberate processes, and legislation takes an exhausting amount of time. This leaves many people and organisations, who are already under-resourced, facing literal exhaustion and systemic incapacitation (Serafini & Banks, 2020). The ideological hollowing out of political parties in favour of sensationalism and individual celebrity — which heightens the mere theatrics of politics — makes it profoundly difficult to anchor actual, lasting systemic shifts.

In the debrief process on the development, planning and co-facilitating of the A Workshop That Is not One (reflection workshop), some AoCs reported experiencing fatigue due to insufficient (monetarily rewarded) time for structured care before and after the event.

> We are reminded once again that those who take on the duty of bringing about transformation are often exploited by the very dynamics they intend to dismantle. A project as thoroughly planned and carefully realised as CTM can also operate in ways that are perhaps less tailored to the needs of the individuals and communities engaged in it; this occurs perhaps because the project is functioning within a larger mechanism that sometimes — all too often — deprives the project of the ability to redefine frameworks of labour and effort.

Not only are the marginalised underpaid, but also those who are subjected to the unjust power dynamics and operational mechanisms are often those who are expected to treat the ignorant with empathy and even take on the role of pedagogue, to educate those who do not know. AoCs have experienced this in CTM. Robin DiAngelo writes about this dynamic of the discriminated against having to educate the discriminator in *White Fragility — Why It is So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018) regarding racism, and Sara Ahmed wrote about it in *On Being Included* (2012) regarding diversity work in general.

"Despite the foundational trust we built, there were instances of attrition, reflecting the systemic fatigue often carried by marginalised individuals."
(Farila, AoC BRU, Spring 2026)

The overload of labour did not spare those in seemingly more stable positions in the arts and culture field. There has been a reported increase in work overload among employees of the partner organisations.

"This experience has been a sharp learning curve, revealing a clear miscalculation of the resources and time necessary to manage a project of this complexity effectively."
(404 team, Spring 2026)

Over the four years of CTM, one of the PMs at 404 experienced burnout, and some had to leave the organisation; the project coordinator, TEH, terminated the employment of several people in the coordination office due to funding cuts and limited resources, leaving the remaining team to take on an extreme workload to compensate for the reduction in human resources.

"Both artists and one of our PM members are neurodivergent, while another team PM manages the demands of raising young children. These factors, while enriching, require a level of coordination that standard institutional timelines often struggle to accommodate."
(PMs 404, Spring 2026)

The arts and culture field is under-resourced, resulting in artists and culture workers being asked to work at unhealthy and unsustainable intensity, and work-induced burnout is common. This concerning reality is well portrayed

in Arts Pay Survey 2025: Culture workers report burnout 'crisis', published by *Arts Professional* in September 2025. Being an action rooted in care and deep processes, cultural transformation depends on the wellbeing of its parts. To be well, they need to be safe. To be safe, they need to be resourced.

It is vital to reiterate that this systemic failure permeates every tier of the arts and culture sector across Europe. Throughout the lifecycle of a Creative Europe project, a designated Project Officer represents the European Commission and collaborates closely with the project coordinator to ensure the project's diligent execution. Acting as the primary point of contact, the Project Officer evaluates deliverables to ensure full compliance with both the Grant Agreement and Creative Europe standards. Importantly, the Project Officer is not employed by the project itself, but is a member of staff within the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

In November 2024, I attended the Grant Holders' Meeting for European Cooperation projects in Brussels — hosted by EACEA for coordinators across the Creative Europe programme. During this meeting, it was repeatedly highlighted that Project Officer units are operating under severe pressure and chronic overwork. This stress is driven by a surge in applications and an increasing number of cases requiring extensive guidance to navigate major structural amendments, such as partnership reconfigurations during the lifetime of active projects. Even at the operational core of European Cooperation projects within the European Commission's infrastructure, heavy workloads and the demand to manage real-time project shifts generate intense systemic and personal strain.

This operational bottleneck demonstrates how current dynamics in the European arts and culture sector — particularly within Creative Europe transnational cooperations — perpetuate a culture of overwork and exhaustion. Ultimately, this places an unsustainable burden on the individuals tasked with delivering the European Union's ambitions and policy objectives. The structural inadequacy is universal: when "independent" artists at one end of the spectrum and European Commission executive officers at the other are both overwhelmed by unmanageable demands, these conditions cannot be dismissed as isolated operational flaws. The system itself sustains them. We are, therefore, compelled to reassess, redesign, and radically overhaul our institutional frameworks. In *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe* (2014), Evangelia Psychogiopoulou explains how EU governance mechanisms and complex compliance monitoring (such as Grant Agreements) create administrative bottlenecks for both agencies and beneficiaries.

Artists — Institutions — Relations

In the **Reflection Workshop in Tbilisi** (October 2023), one of the issues identified for transformation was the relationship between artists and institutions (see the full report via the QR code on page 14 – 15). The workshop participants proposed to foster healthier, more equitable relationships between the two. They also proposed restructuring decision-making processes to be more inclusive. The latter is one way stakeholders can foster more equitable relationships with artists. Transparency and clear communication about decision-making processes can reduce the sense of mystery, and thus unattainability, of certain opportunities, calls and processes in the arts and culture field.

Relationships between artists and institutions can take on different forms. At 404, the involvement of AoCs changed during the project: Mira started working on an artistic production to be presented within the project's timeframe, while Dounia was focussing on research and development of a future project. This resulted in each AoC having a different level of involvement in 404, but neither attempted to influence the institution's general operations and activities. At Zō, the AoCs, Elie and Emanuele, were employed in the organisation and have been part of its ongoing operations, including planning and organising GuastFest and the artistic production for CTM. This arrangement also enabled the AoC's involvement in other processes and actions at Zō, and together with the local PMs, they steered the cultural transformation in their local context. At IZO, Kseniya (AoC) was engaged solely to participate in CTM and had no authority or responsibility for other IZO projects. Within the framework of CTM, Kseniya reported feeling free to make decisions and, together with the PMs at IZO, to choose how to act and to realise the project activities. At BRU, there was an initial attempt to bring the AoCs (Araba and Farila) into the organisation's overall conversation and processes. However, both AoCs expressed challenges in having their voice and opinions incorporated into the organisation's operation and the realisation of CTM.

"I believe that more transparency and clarity would be beneficial."
(Farila, AoC BRU, Spring 2025)

Fariba (PM, BRU) reported that, from her perspective, the intent to include and involve the AoCs' perspectives in decision-making processes aligns with the organisation's general attempt to work transversally and collaboratively with all the people in the team. The discrepancy between the PM's impression and that of the AoCs might suggest the need for continuous practice and further exploration to develop rigorous ways to put the aspirations into practice.

Attempting to balance transparency and meaningful inclusion of AoCs in project management processes on the one hand, whilst on the other hand ensuring managerial tasks do not unnecessarily burden them so they can invest their resources (physical, mental and emotional) into artistic work and community connection, is an intricate and far from straightforward task. The CoCs have adopted noticeably different approaches to this matter.

For example: in Zō, the AoCs were more involved in the everyday operations of the organisation and had authority over designing and realising the framework for the CTM activities in Catania, while in 404 the AoCs were mostly engaged in their respective productions and the collaboration with the other AoCs in the project, but they were not part of the ongoing work on the framework of CTM.

Furthermore, on a meta level, in regards to project management, while the AoCs were welcomed and sometimes deliberately invited to conversations about the overall aspects of the project, when it arrived at the moment of decision-making, which within the structure of a Creative Europe transnational cooperation project merely happens amongst official partners (in CTM case, the CoCs and TEH), the AoCs were mostly not present. Their input was listened to but not necessarily incorporated. AoCs reported proposing actions or activities for the project, emerging from their direct relationships and connections with the local URCs, suggesting shifts in budget allocation to better suit the needs of the relationship with the community, or proposing a specific format or medium for a project activity. However, these proposals were not incorporated into the project, as the project proposal and limited resources did not permit these accommodations.

It is important to note that there has never been any formal restriction against the AoCs joining the project management and partner meetings during CTM. Nevertheless, the limits of the AoCs authority and agency in the project were often met. The project proposal articulated what decision-making process it would employ. It described the PMs as representatives of the partner organisations and, therefore, as the decision-making authority. In practice, the AoCs were not present at the monthly partner meetings or included in all project-related email communications. Hence, the information they had about the project framework and the meta context was more limited than that of the PMs. Many of the project decisions were made during the monthly partner meetings and via email communication among the partners. While structurally, the voices of the AoCs were meant to be included through more frequent communication with their respective PMs, they were mostly not “at the table” during decision-making.

When the matter was discussed with the PMs, it was requested that we would be clear with the distinction between operational decisions, such as contractual, financial, reporting and consortium-management decisions necessarily, which perceived as should sit with the beneficiary organisations and their designated PMs, and artistic process, community engagement, and certain organisational process on a local level, in which the AoCs were more involved in real-time. However, what emerged from the AoCs’ testimonies throughout the project, as well as from the reports of the monthly partner meetings, cannot be cleanly dissected. Decisions taken at the macro level inform the project’s reality at the micro level, and vice versa. For example: what resources are allocated for an activity directly influence what is made possible in this activity; How the project communication strategy is designed for the whole project informs how the tone, sentiment, atmosphere and dynamics of the AoCs’ work are situated in the world and what connections it can weave with the URCs in their respective locations and across Europe.

“Accepting my specific role meant recognising that I was excluded from higher-level mechanisms, such as overarching budget management and policy formulation.”
(Farila, AoC BRU, Spring 2025)

Neoliberalism advocates for free-market capitalism, deregulation, privatisation, and reduced public services, thereby restricting access to essential needs such as healthcare and education. In the arts and culture field, neoliberalism translates to product-oriented and production-focused dynamics that depend on the exploitation and abuse of people. This results in superficial, artificial policies that cannot be implemented with the limited resources governments allocate, alongside accelerated production with no potential for sustainability. Neoliberalism also infuses the arts and culture sector with competitive dynamics and a race towards monetary resources. This leads to pseudo-actions that seemingly address the field’s issues and challenges but merely “tick boxes” out of capitulation to the eligibility frameworks set by funding bodies. Furthermore, the terminology of the “independent art” sector or the “independent artist” alludes to neoliberal dynamics of “independence” when, all the while, these same “independent” organisations and artists are heavily influenced — and even controlled — by the processes, mechanisms, decisions and resource allocations of political parties, governments and institutions.

The PMs have been the responsible authority for the realisation of the project as it was described in the agreement with Creative Europe and other national and local funding bodies and stakeholders. The AoCs have been the direct link to URCs and, in most cases, are from the communities the project chose to dedicate itself to. This division or separation has been the source of tension in the project. The PMs are not from the URCs, so project management decisions were not made by the people (the communities) who are impacted by them. The AoCs have not been engaged to take on project management responsibilities, so the realities and necessities they identified, from their own lived experience and from their work with URCs on the project, did not necessarily have the agency to influence how the project addressed them. In this publication, different potential reasons for this dissonance are explored:

- the PMs were constantly engaged in the project while the AoCs had smaller positions and the intensity of their engagement in the project fluctuated.

- the PMs are the connecting link between CTM and the CoCs and TEH as well as the local and national contexts.

- the AoCs are interested in practice and therefore, malleability of the project framework while the PMs often had to ensure that the unfolding of the project followed the theoretical description of it in signed agreements and documents.

- entrenched systemic hierarchies in the arts and culture field which often position project managers in the decision-making role and artists/agents at the executive role.

- a tension between the interest of the AoCs to be involved and informed about project management matters, whilst also being overwhelmed by the amount and the intensity of the processes at CTM, which made the PMs try to keep the demands from the AoCs down to a minimum.

CTM's methodology is intended to alter the traditional power dynamics within Europe's arts and cultural sector. Although the objective was clear, the methodology developed and practices applied, the initiative is not entirely free from challenges stemming from power inequality. According to Foucault (1978), power is relational rather than a possession. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Baruch Spinoza (1677), New Materialists conceive of power as affect — the capacity of any material or body (human or non-human) to affect and be affected by another (Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013).

To address this, we can adopt a more objective perspective as an analytical exercise: rather than viewing individuals or organisations as discrete entities, we can understand them as distinct project functions. The assemblage — the collective constellation of functions within the project (AoCs, PMs, CoCs, URCs, Researcher, ATF, Creative Europe, and local stakeholders) — is situated in relation to one another and to broader micro- and macro-contexts. A complex, highly intricate relational network of power is activated simply through the intersection of individual and contextual realities across these functions. These underlying relations already inform their capacity "to affect and be affected by another".

Within CTM, relational power was further shaped by the imperative to diligently fulfil the project proposal. While the dialogue between the ATF and AoCs, as well as between the AoCs and the PMs at the CoCs, was seemingly relatively non-hierarchical, it is undeniable that individual actors did not embody the same type or degree of power throughout the project lifecycle. As noted above, key decisions were made by the PMs, while others fell to the project coordinator (TEH), the primary intermediary between the project and Creative Europe. Ultimately, if power is negotiated through the capacity to both affect and be affected, within transnational projects it is continually contested among accountability to and responsibility for its various constituent functions.

On a local level, dynamics varied between the AoCs and the PMs, with some AoCs experiencing greater autonomy than others. Kseniya (AoC, IZO) reported a sense of almost overwhelming freedom regarding decision-making for the form and content of the CTM artistic production. Emanuele and Elie (AoCs, Zō) reported serving as the primary authority for GuastaFest; their local PMs acted mainly in a supporting capacity — handling logistical, administrative, and organisational aspects while intentionally limiting their involvement in artistic and strategic decisions.

At 404, the PMs were the primary authority in delivering the project, while maintaining a supportive and responsive environment for the AoCs to develop their artistic work. Conversely, at BRU, the AoCs reported that the PM was more directly involved and influential in decision-making, including aspects of the artistic productions. This difference may stem from Fariba's dual role as a curator at BRU, rather than acting solely as a "traditional" PM.

Thus, at the local level, AoCs and CoCs actively sought to disrupt traditional power dynamics and decision-making processes. It was primarily at the transnational management level, regarding the execution of the European Cooperation project, that PMs reported feeling their authority and agency were constrained — sometimes feeling unable to act without the approval of the project coordinator (TEH). In these instances, traditional hierarchies were, in a sense, maintained. It is impossible to conclude the cause for this without oversimplifying the complexity of the project, the relational networks of power (as unpacked above), and the broader endeavour to ignite cultural transformation.

As stated in other parts of this publication, this particular dynamic between artists/agents (AoCs in the context of CTM) and institutions is not necessarily a result of deeply rooted personal ideology. The people working at the institutions (CoCs and TEH in the context of CTM) are also often navigating complicated realities and sensitive roles which require they balance their desire to facilitate supportive environments for artists, agents and communities and thus transgress and disturb the status quo (as suggested in the reflection workshop with a similar title, see page 151 – 152) and on the other hand having to obey the demands and requirements of their superiors and the organisations that they represent.

> How is a hierarchy formed? How is it maintained? Is it vitalised by the sheer relations between its components or does it depend on an additional, perhaps external, power to ensure that the components maintain their positions?

Realising a cultural project is an organic process; it needs to respond to the changes that unfold over time. As long as the types and amounts of activities remain as described in the project proposal, no excessive procedures are required, and these relatively minor changes simply need to be communicated to Creative Europe and documented in official reports. Larger amendments are also possible; however, they require a more formal process in which the changes must be clearly motivated. Project amendments sometimes involve labour-intensive paperwork, but they are a relevant part of Creative Europe project management. CTM also performed amendments after the initial approval of the original project proposal. The decision on whether to submit requests for official amendments was made solely by the project partners (CoCs and TEH). This is how things are often done in relatively large transnational cooperation projects. The project partners, those who have signed the cooperation agreements, are also the ones who negotiate changes to the plan.

> For me, it is interesting to reflect on how power relations manifest in Creative Europe projects. As one of the research questions, I have been interested in the feasibility of a project realised within the strictly defined framework of Creative Europe to ignite a cultural transformation. CTM advocates the eradication of traditional hierarchies and aspires to involve URCs in all aspects of cultural projects.

If only some functions in the project negotiate the scope of change and transformation, what agency and capacity to affect are left for the URCs?

Perhaps, the system is not ready for, ready to or capable of practising the cultural change that is so evidently necessary.

In an interview in Spring 2025, Dounia (AoC, 404) suggested that projects working with URCs must avoid tokenising individuals, refrain from expecting artists from non-dominant backgrounds to perform emotional labour or act as diversity experts, and actively address issues of equality, accessibility, and equity. In another interview that same term, Kseniya (AoC, IZO) argued that achieving genuine cultural transformation requires a clear understanding of specific goals, rather than falling into tokenism or sweeping generalisations.

On the one hand, CTM operated with a clear action plan, timeline, detailed activity descriptions, and a dedicated team. On the other hand, the project's AoCs — who primarily represent URCs within the core consortium — frequently encountered the very risks Dounia and Kseniya warned against: tokenisation, and the systemic expectation that those who are already marginalised and discriminated against should perform the emotional labour required to dismantle those very dynamics.

At the same time, CTM was conducive and supportive to the AoCs' practices. Their affiliation with the CoCs, collective co-creative processes, the continuous process with the ATF, and the encounters and exchange with the international arts and culture field, through the transnational gatherings coordinated by TEH, offered the AoCs the opportunity to develop their individual practices and to receive collective support and assistance when necessary.

"The project gives us the freedom to follow our individual practices, while also offering support from the team when needed."
(Kseniya, AoC IZO, Spring 2025)

Perhaps these are not mutually exclusive or at least, should not be dichotomised. In some sense, CTM supported the AoCs and contributed to deepening their practices, each in a particular way, as described throughout this publication. This is most evident in the relationships between the AoCs and the communities they worked with, as well as between the AoCs and their respective CoCs. Nonetheless, CTM is both realised within the European context and all that this implies, and managed by people who have also been deeply indoctrinated in the European system, even though the personal and cultural backgrounds of some of them are not European. Therefore, CTM has clear objectives, a strong aspiration and a meticulous action plan, but it is not free from imperfections. It is not flawless. At certain moments, what comes to the forefront is the sense of support and opportunity and at other moments, the sense of being tokenised, limited and silenced. If we are to deduce any lesson from this, it is that working with URCs is a process defined by differences and specificity. It is not a journey with a clear destination but a practice to embody and embed in every aspect of our work.

Art — Act

"I realise I find it very complex to combine art and activism in a way. Often, they need very different spaces, and the power of certain words might, for example, decrease in an artistic context because they automatically become performative. Same for rituals of care. When a ritual is perceived as art, I feel like it is not really a ritual anymore."
(Dounia, AoC 404, Spring 2026)

This proposition by Dounia invites us to reflect upon whether, and indeed how, we draw defining lines between a ritual and an artwork. It raises the question: who is the witness for the action or intervention? A ritual is performed for someone, existing in direct relation to a Gaze — even if that "someone" is the self, or a divine entity. Does art depend equally upon the Gaze that observes it? Furthermore, do we risk compromising a vital aspect of art when it is instrumentally made and presented within the context of activism?

Another perspective was offered by Mira (AoC 404), who felt that the work in CTM offered her a way to be both an artist and an activist simultaneously, through the same actions. Referring to her work on the Artistic Production, Mira said:

"In this project, I came back to my previous longing or dream to be an artist whose work is the basis of an activist in a very poetic way. There is no border between the activist and the artist within me. Moreover, in this work, I could embody both of them." (Spring 2026)

This perspective stands in direct conversation with Dounia's contribution. Here, Mira articulates a profound conviction in the inherent activist power of art; conversely, from Dounia's perspective, we must remain deeply critical of how artistic framing and contexts might alter or compromise the integrity of grassroots activist endeavours.

Whole, Some or Wholesome transformation

CTM is a project. It has been realised as such. It had a start date and an end date. It had a predetermined activity plan with a timeline, objectives and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). While the stated objectives of CTM are well concerned with time and space beyond the project framework, it aspired to set a cultural movement in motion; it is still, practically and operationally, a project. This meant that, for parts of the teams at the CoCs who were not directly involved in CTM, it was sometimes perceived as "just a project". This was more noticeable in 404, which is the largest organisation among the CoCs in terms of the number of people working for the organisation, the number of activities it carries out throughout the year, and the number of audiences and visitors who interact with the centre annually. It was also noticeable in Zō, which is a significantly smaller cultural centre.

However, thematically, the work with URCs had not been at the core of their operations prior to CTM, so engaging in this project was at times perceived as adjacent to their regular work or as a fleeting attempt. This required tenacity, persistence, versatility, and agility from the CTM team in each CoC as they laboured to instate the CTM values, methods, and practices in their respective centres and local contexts.

The CTM team at Zō were unable to fully engage all of their colleagues in the organisation in the work with local URCs. While most of their team members recognised its importance, a small minority favoured traditional, hierarchical management styles. This resistance perhaps stems from Zō's demanding social and economic operating environment, which frequently requires immediate, practical solutions.

"… I still feel that the project is considered marginal compared to the centre's more 'traditional' activities and that its transformative value is not fully understood."
(Emanuele, AoC Zō, Spring 2025)

> CTM intended to ignite a cultural transformation, commencing with the transformation of **cultural centres** through the implementation of strategies, policies, and practices that involve and consider URCs at every step. Drawing on the articulations of ontology, epistemology, and methodology in the Methodology chapter (page 64-67), we can acknowledge that setting in motion a cultural transformation might require an ontological shift. A change in culture might result from a shift in perception. The PMs and AoCs, together with their collaborators, have ignited shifts within the groups and contexts which have been engaging with CTM. This is evident in the workshops, activities and artistic productions. However, significant parts of the CoCs remain subject to the dynamics and processes that CTM aspires to transform.

The circumstances were different at BRU. The organisation as a whole is dedicated to processes with and for URCs. It was established with the prospect of engaging with the diverse local communities in its district in Vienna. It has been employing and adopting mechanisms and procedures to ensure the security of this work in its operations. However, throughout the CTM timeframe, there have been incidents of homophobia and racism from within the staff reported by people in the team.

404 also experienced a pivotal moment when a conflict involving one of their colleagues flared, triggering a broader crisis within the organisation's team. The 404 team testified that this conflict raised difficult but necessary conversations around racism, power structures, and the lack of awareness within the institution and within the CTM project. It forced the team to critically reflect on internal dynamics, representation, and the conditions under which collaboration occurred.

> The example about 404 is referring to a public accountability process in which a former employee openly called out the organisation for systemic racism. The event drew intense scrutiny from communities, cultural practitioners, and the media surrounding the organisation, reverberating further across Belgium. Ultimately, the reckoning was not confined to the history and contemporary reality of 404; it also examined deep-seated hierarchies and structural discrimination across the Belgian arts and cultural field as a whole. For the CTM PMs at 404, navigating this public call-out was deeply demanding and challenging. Nonetheless, they approached it as a critical opportunity for institutional reflection and learning. Although not officially part of CTM, this institutional rupture underscored the project's core premise and its declared structural objectives.

This is not to disregard or discard the meaningful work that BRU and 404 have been doing before and during CTM, and will likely continue to do beyond the CTM timeframe. However, it is important to note that transforming culture is an iterative, persistent process. BRU, like the other CoCs and TEH, has transformed moments, encounters, experiences, and parts of their centres and contexts. Nevertheless, the road to wholesome transformation is still relatively long.

"When we had Pride events in our space, I suddenly found that my colleagues from event production teams and service providers are homophobic."
(Mykhailo, IZO, Spring 2023)

It might be that the partial transformations at the CoCs achieved during CTM will permeate the rest of the organisation and further infuse its surroundings with a more sustainable ontology of social justice and equity, as the project proposal states. Based on the current status and the data and information available to date, it is impossible to determine the long-term impact of CTM on the partner organisations as a whole and their surroundings.

> I was pondering: what would it be like if CTM were not organised within the frame of a "project" and the movement commenced as such, as a movement? Does formulating a cultural movement within the paradigm of a cultural project preemptively limit its unfolding as a movement?
>
> In the project title, *movement* refers to a social or political mobilisation – an organisation of people unified by a shared agenda. It represents the operational apparatus designed to drive the intended cultural transformation. Another thing that surfaces, nonetheless, is the definition of movement as the physical medium of change – a shift in space, time, and body in relation to other elements, objects, and beings – which has been most prominent throughout the process.
>
> Movement is the live process and experience of betweenness. HuWOmans experience moving when we are no longer where (and when) we have been, but not yet where (and when) we are in the process of approaching (a becoming). Movement is, in essence, the embodiment of a becoming, or the becoming of a body.

This experience of betweenness, whether physical or conceptual, can be — and often is — intimidating to those whose perception of reality depends on fixation, categorisation, and static forms. In Catherine Malabou's collection of writings, *Plasticity: The Promise of Explosion* (2022), she addresses the delicate relations among object and environment, practice and form, and idea and actuality.

Betweenness and movement are not reserved solely for dancers and social initiatives; they are intrinsic to the very processes that constitute our huWOman experience. Throughout the project and research process, I remained consistently inquisitive about how movement — the ongoing process of change — manifested and was recognised in the practices of the CoCs and AoCs.

Perspective — perception

At the Knowledge Roundtable Workshop in Riga, Mira (AoC, 404) connected the query for her artistic production to the Crip discourse.

She referenced Crip, acknowledging that disability stories are often told from the perspective of non-disabled people. Her artistic production sought to expand the canon (as referred to in the CTM Artistic Statement) through stories authored by people living with disabilities and their family members, especially their siblings.

CTM offered the AoCs an opportunity to evolve their practices and supplement them with layers that might not have been easily reached without the formats it offered.

*I have become much more thoughtful about inclusivity — not only within each of my projects, but also in my daily life. I am also learning how to approach complex or sensitive topics through **active listening** and by grounding my work in **care and empathy**. This has influenced both how I think and how I create.*
(Kseniya, AoC IZO, Spring 2025)

At the same time, when asked if her practice has changed in light of her experiences in CTM, Dounia (AoC, 404) replied: *"Not really." (Spring 2025)*

You might be able to catch the significant register of this response. Dounia pointedly says "not really", rather than a definitive "no". A compelling follow-up question here might be: what constitutes the "real" in this context? It is important to note that this particular syntax reveals a hesitation to directly attribute the shifting contours of her practice to the project's institutional machinery.

Whilst Dounia clearly registers a transformation in her creative work, she detaches it from the specific processes of CTM. Given the intense depth of labour the AoCs have undertaken during the time leading up to this answer by Dounia (Spring 2025), it is reasonable to deduce that if a shift in Dounia's artistic practice has unfolded, it is — at least in some measure — informed by her experiences within CTM. Even if the evolution of her practice manifests precisely as a rejection or opposition to certain elements of the CTM framework, a profound relationship between her practice and the project still exists. What would indicate a wholesome transformation in the practice of the AoCs?

One of the core elements in collaborative projects is the opportunity to gain perspective on our own position, reality and capacity. Indeed, such contexts offer us invaluable opportunities to learn what other people, organisations, and localities do to address challenges and situations similar to, and different from, those we are experiencing in our own context.

"It also made me see Zō differently. Looking at other cultural centres and their local realities, I realised that no centre is perfect, and that, given our circumstances and how understaffed we are, we actually do quite a lot."
(Elie, AoC Zō, Spring 2026)

However, an equally significant advantage in collaborative projects is the ability to see ourselves and our own contexts through the lenses of those we collaborate with. Togetherness is a powerful practice of camaraderie, but it is also a form of self-care and re-treat to the issues and problems we might experience in our respective habitats.

Elie's comment about how her perspective on Zō shifted through the collaborations in CTM attests to that.

Challenging but amplifying

When asked, in Spring 2025, what she believes are the advantages of partaking in CTM, Farila (AoC, BRU) replied:

*"… a collective process that allows us to contribute meaningfully. It gives us the opportunity to have an impact on a European level and **ensures that our voices are heard in a broader cultural and political context.**"*

To the same question, Emanuele (AoC, Zō) replied:
***"I am also excited by the prospect of discovering new spaces, both physical and mental.** I am excited by the prospect of embarking on a shared journey and **feeling part of something bigger than myself.**"*

The AoCs have not chosen one another as creative collaborators; each has been engaged or recruited by their respective CoC. The PMs had an extensive discussion about the profile of the AoCs they sought for the project, primarily at the project's outset, during the detailed articulation of the AoCs' roles and expected responsibilities. This created a reality for the AoCs in which they were expected to collaborate and find a collective voice and perspective, from which they could articulate utterances as powerful and significant as an artistic statement and a manifesto, with people who had not chosen them, and they did not choose them.

This was notably difficult for the two AoCs in BRU who were not part of CTM from the beginning to the end: Araba, who finished her engagement on the project in 2024, and Farila, who joined only after that. In relation to her experience in the co-creation processes with the other AoC, Farila said:

"... my feedback didn't feel very welcome, and I felt misunderstood and unheard." (Spring 2025)

As the project progressed and the AoCs had more opportunities to acquaint themselves with each other, learn about their interests and practices, they reported that despite meeting challenges at the start of their collective processes, namely authoring the Artistic Statement and Manifesto of Change, collectively planning the artistic interventions at the TEH camps and conferences, and co-designing and co-facilitating the Reflection Workshops with the ATF, they gradually found a way to **work together and respect each other's perspectives.**

Elie (AoC, Zō) attested to the way the AoCs articulated their camaraderie through co-authoring, co-designing, and co-facilitating artistic and participatory activities.

For her, the work itself (along with the other AoCs) became the vehicle through which they built relationships, shared experiences, and understanding. Therefore, it was important for the group to set aside time to come together and listen to one another, especially during the long online sessions. She added: *"Before we could write collectively, we needed to understand where each of us was coming from." (Spring 2026)*

*"After working together on the artistic statement and the manifesto, I feel that the dynamic within the group of AOCs has significantly improved. Throughout this process, **we have learned how to collaborate more effectively, communicate more openly, and better understand each other's perspectives and needs.**"*
(Kseniya, AoC IZO, Spring 2025)

The role of the Artistic Transformation Facilitator (ATF) was invaluable for the experience and process of AoCs. All of whom reported that the ATF made it possible to transition from being strangers to becoming a strong group. The process was made possible by the ATF accompanying, supporting and assisting the AoCs in forming a joint identity as the AoCs of CTM, identifying and articulating their internal dynamics as a group, addressing the relationship between the AoC and CTM, and supporting them in the practicalities of navigating different schedules, realities and needs.

*"We have formed a genuine group capable of **creating a space for listening and mutual understanding.** This has been made possible thanks to Laura's (the ATF) invaluable and consistent support."*
(Emanuele, AoC Zō, Spring 2025)

"Laura played a crucial holding role, both in facilitating the group dynamics and in the editorial labour of weaving our voices into a coherent whole, while preserving the multiplicity behind it. I would say we were very well guided by her into this journey."
(Elie, AoC Zō, Spring 2026)

Working with a group of people, perhaps in every circumstance, requires a particular process of negotiation between the individual identity–how each individual would like to portray themselves in the world–and the emerging collective identity. This aspect also came up in the Reflection Workshop in Marseille, where one of the working groups suggested examining the differences between a **collective** and a **collection.** Perhaps the former proposes a more intense degree of convergence, while the latter offers a greater sense of coexistence and a dynamic process of transition and adaptation. Holding a space for collection or collective formation requires subtleties of care and attention. Working with URC artists/agents and practising the justice that CTM advocates requires further care to ensure that the same entrenched operations of discrimination and exclusion are not repeated.

The emotional pull. Coming into the project with their individual experiences as artists/agents and, equally important, being of URCs meant that the AoCs were powerfully engaged in the project, both intellectually and emotionally. Farila (AoC, BRU) mentioned the importance of *"transforming a reactive emotional outcry into a strategic, performative archive of our socio-political demands." (Spring 2026)*

> Being invited – or requested, in this case – to collectively articulate an artistic statement and a manifesto might suggest the pre-existence of a singular collective voice waiting to be uttered. However, CTM repeatedly demonstrated that the movement's ability to foster differences is a vital part of its power. In some way, this reality was recognised, acknowledged and incorporated into the project by the CoCs before it was fully realised by the AoCs themselves.
>
> Ultimately, the collective voice of the AoCs – whilst still representing an eclectic, harmonious cacophony of shared objectives and varied expressions – merged through the co-authoring of the artistic statement and manifesto, with the support of Laura (ATF). Once the AoCs recognised the agential power of heterogeneity within their group, they began to support, encourage, and propel one another, culminating in the articulation of deeply powerful collective utterances.

Although the role of the ATF is defined as supporting the AoCs in their artistic processes, it was evident at CTM and acknowledged by the ATF and the AoCs that this role is also crucial in mediating the AoCs' experience with the framework and reality of the project.

As already mentioned, there was no consensus or uniform practice regarding how CoCs should engage the AoCs, so the AoCs had different agreements and engagement approaches with their respective CoCs. These differences also meant that the AoCs had varying availability to engage in preparatory, liaison, creative, and reflective activities throughout the process. All AoCs had to coordinate their CTM engagement with other engagements, obligations, and contingencies, especially those not involved in the CoC's daily routines (all but the AoCs in Zō). The fluctuating, inconsistent involvement of the AoCs, each in their own way and depending on their individual circumstances, made it extremely challenging and, at times, impacted the working environment.

While there was an understanding that individual circumstances varied and that each AoC had to navigate a particular reality–informed by their personal and professional lives–the reality of missing people from collective meetings or uneven contributions to collective processes was not always easy to reconcile.

"I find it disheartening that we can't always be present during meetings or maintain consistent communication in group chats. This fragmentation hinders the creative process."
(Emanuele, AoC, Zō, Spring 2025)

Laura (ATF) highlighted the importance of beginning the shared process by listening and learning about each other and their positionality.

"Early phases involved reflection workshops that foregrounded positionality, power dynamics, and critique of the status quo."
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

The digital is not in-person.

Internally, it has been repeatedly stated that the multiple online processes, including meetings, planning, interviews, creative processes, reflections, and evaluations, have been taxing, especially for the AoCs, and significantly so for the PMs. The former reported that the in-person moments they shared were significantly more valuable and useful for their group dynamics, creative processes, and sense of belonging than those shared online. They reported difficulties concentrating, feeling rewarded, or having embodied experience via online communication channels.

It seems that, depending on the role and position each person held in the project, they might have a different sense of whether the project was mostly digital or in person. The PMs who have been working with the local AoCs, URCs, and other contributors to the project might have the impression that much of it happened in person. Indeed, most of the local activities took place in person (except for those of IZO). However, it is the transnational processes and collaborations that mostly happened online. In-person meetings of people from different parts of Europe were both few and relatively a long time apart.

When asked what they would change in the project structure, most AoCs responded that they would reduce online meetings and activities and increase the time they spend together in person. They reported that the online sessions often felt static and left the AoCs feeling drained afterwards.

> The arts and cultural field, like many others, has been utilising online communication tools to host meetings and conduct managerial processes for the past fifteen years. This transition was drastically accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though we are no longer bound by the strict restrictions of that period, we have become habituated to continuous online communication. Paradoxically, we often perceive this as "environmentally friendly" because collaborations no longer require physical travel, while ignoring how the infrastructure of digital tools — especially in the current AI landscape — damages the Earth's ecosystem in numerous ways. Another significant disadvantage of using digital tools to "connect" in large collaborative projects is the distinct melancholy that arises from the dissonance between a presumed connection and our actual physical separation. At times, connecting online with colleagues to engage in a creative and artistic process is precisely what accentuates their physical absence and the profound sense of loss and loneliness it generates.

However, IZO benefited tremendously from online communication channels, both because their entire CTM team is displaced due to the ongoing war in Ukraine and because of the unstable, inconsistent reality in Ukraine, which made the participation of their communities in the activities they were organising unpredictable. Therefore, IZO learned that offering activities online, and more specifically recording them and making them available for people to engage with at their convenience, significantly increased the number of participants and the sense of relative clarity about how they can engage with the communities they care about while navigating the instability of war.

"The true transformation is not in producing deliverables that look like everyone else's. It is in honestly naming the tension between EU project structures and the unpredictable, often painful nature of doing cultural work in a country at war — and finding that this honesty, rather than alienating partners, opens a more genuine conversation about what transcultural competence actually demands."
(PMs, IZO, Spring 2026)

Underrepresented for underrepresented

In Spring 2025, Farila (AoC, BRU) highlighted the importance of having better connections with people "on the ground". She reported that at this point, only those already interested in cultural change were reached through the CTM activities. She expressed interest in engaging those who are not yet involved and could also contribute to the cultural transformation. From her perspective, the challenge was to engage those who are not already working to transform URCs' reality and inspire them to actively join the movement. She asked:

"How can we create platforms that are accessible to everyone and foster inclusion and interest?" (Spring 2025)

At Zō, it was a process of learning about practices for engaging with local communities that were most relevant to their context.

"I set out with great enthusiasm and the probably mistaken idea that I wanted and needed to change the world. I had expected a warmer and more immediate response, but few organisations replied to our emails and, in many cases, they did not seem to fully grasp the potential of the project. Over time, we gained a better understanding of the most effective strategies for establishing authentic connections."
(Emanuele, AoC Zō, Spring 2025)

"People respond very well to being personally invited, to feeling included rather than just informed."
(Elie, AoC Zō, Spring 2026)

As outlined in the Methodologies chapter (page 72 – 85) small gestures and soft methods of liaising, such as informal gatherings, sharing a meal, and offering active participation opportunities, such as woodcarving, opened different channels of communication that dismantled boundaries and separation apparatuses. They allowed trust to form, thereby encouraging the community to engage with the project. How can we apply similar processes to those who are not already enthusiastic about working with URCs?

Some AoCs reported being bothered by the question of belonging. They were not sure that if they did not share the exact same reality and life experience as the URCs they wanted to engage with, they would be eligible, suitable, able, or allowed to liaise and collaborate with these communities. For Kseniya (AoC IZO), the matter arose regarding her work with people who are still physically in Ukraine while she has been living in Paris.

"I also came to recognise something more personal – that even with regular presence, a certain distance [from the community and culture in Ukraine] inevitably emerges over time. This distance affects the way you think, perceive situations, and make decisions. This is why it was important for me to approach the project through co-curation with someone who has been continuously based in Ukraine throughout the war"
(Ksenia, AoC IZO, Spring 2026)

These apprehensions, experienced by Ksenia, closely align with the topics discussed at the Knowledge Roundtable workshop in Tbilisi (2023), which addressed the notion of representation. (see the full workshop report via the QR code on page 14 – 15) In this quote, Kseniya expresses a sincere concern, grounded in a practical fact: although she has been visiting frequently, she is not permanently present in Ukraine. While Kseniya's concerns were relevant, it is important to note that her not having had the exact same experience as the communities she worked with during CTM did not jeopardise her work with both the communities and stakeholders in Ukraine. This is a result of her frequent visits to Ukraine, her use of collaborative methods that supported local communities in developing their own work, and Kseniya's sensitivity to this aspect, which made her attentive, responsive to the situation and the people in it.

Impact and affects

When asked about the impact of CTM at the national level, the AoCs said that, despite the project's profound and evident impact at a local level, it did not create a significant impact at the national level.

Zō is particularly devoted to working in Catania, with some further reach to other parts of Sicily. A remarkable occurrence was the Italian government's recognition of Zō as an organisation dedicated to working with URCs and its addition to the national portfolio, but in practice this has not yet enabled the organisation to inform or influence the infrastructure, policies, or practices in the arts and culture field across Italy.

IZO has been forced to operate under very specific circumstances, and, clearly, while facing an existential threat and living in a war zone where reality changes rapidly, it would not have been reasonable to expect CTM to induce a nationwide transformation in Ukraine.

"In almost every workshop, the conversation ends with someone saying that projects like CTM don't feel very relevant right now – survival is the main priority."
(Kseniya, AoC IZO, Spring 2025)

404 is a significant cultural centre within Belgium's national arts and cultural field, and thus its activities and actions resonate across far-reaching territories, particularly in the Flemish part of the country. However, as mentioned elsewhere in the publication, the CTM ethos, practices, and intentions have not (at least not yet) been integrated across the entire organisation and all its activities. The CTM team at 404 has been initiating, implementing, and sustaining processes and practices to incite the cultural transformation across the whole organisation, but this will require more time and many more iterations. Therefore, the impact of CTM cannot be measured at the national level in Belgium either.

TEH, although not a CoC or cultural centre as such, has been working to disseminate CTM transnationally. It has been producing materials to assist this process, hosting activities at international events and liaising with stakeholders across borders. As a project partner, its work can also be viewed on a local and transnational scale. The extent of TEH's activity in CTM is more noticeable on the transnational level, with its creation and dissemination of the CTM materials across the Nordic region and EU, coordinating the workshops and activities at the transnational meetings and coordinating the partnership. However, on a local level in Sweden it has not been as prominent. Like in the other countries, no national policy changes in Sweden have been reported to be directly informed by CTM.

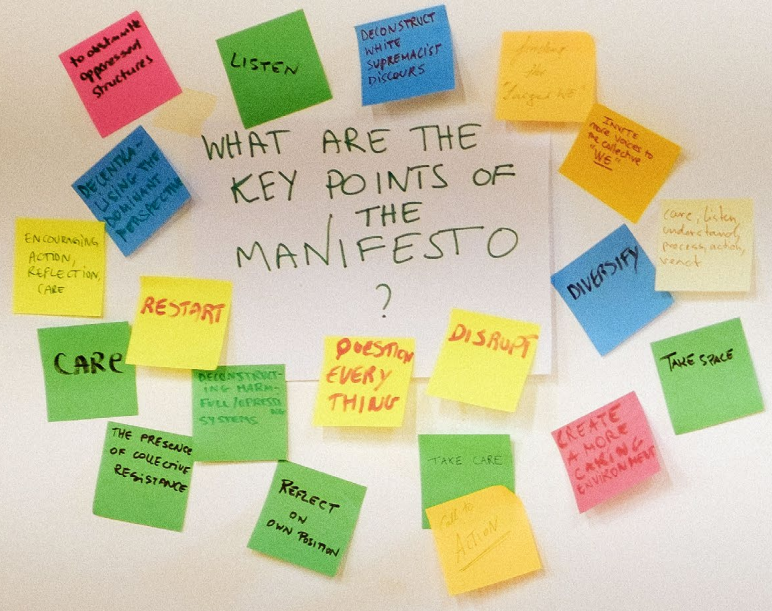
For BRU, the situation has been relatively different. Although it is also predominantly affiliated with the local communities in its district and across Vienna, BRU is also a significant part of D-Arts and, through that, has a national reach. **D-Arts** is a national body with 93 member institutions dedicated to justice in the cultural field and to promoting structural transformations so that the heterogeneous social reality in Austria is reflected in the country's cultural institutions. Through its significant efforts with D-Arts, BRU has been able to transfer the CTM ethos, ideas and practices to other cultural centres and institutions in Austria. This could serve as an example of what it might take to cultivate a national cultural transformation. It requires a national effort, a national action.

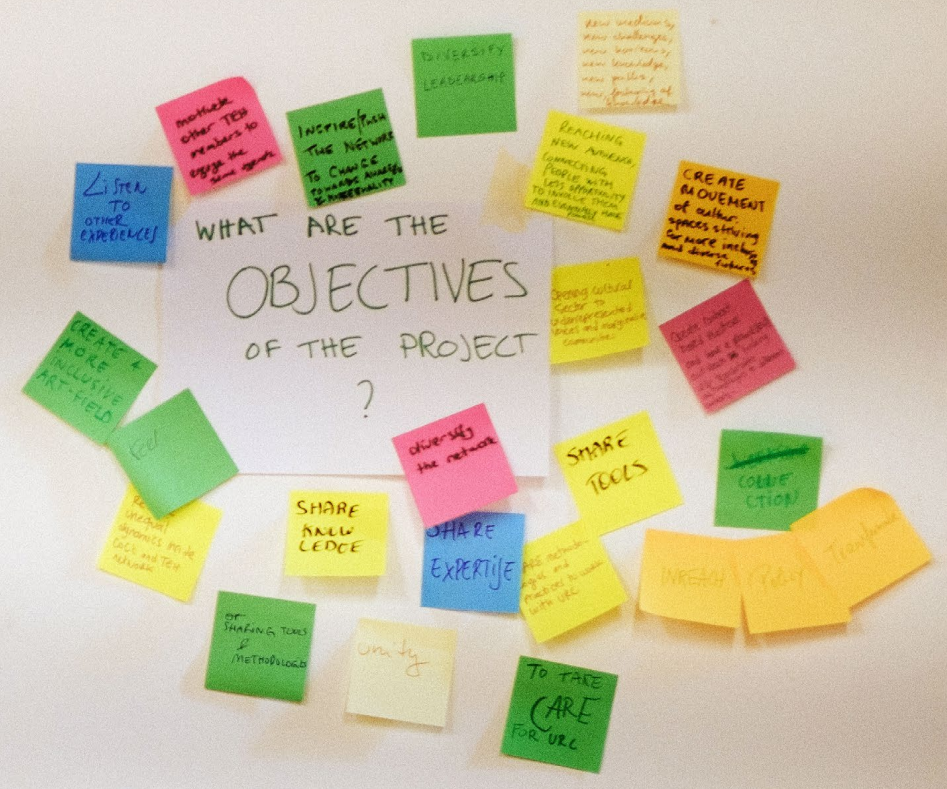
"When it comes to creating change that would carry the whole network with it, I am afraid this would require a broader mandate for me as a project manager, as well as more resources to engage with more than the four TEH members currently partnering in the CTM project. We should not forget the precarious conditions and complex ecosystems within which both our members and even the TEH coordination office operate."
(Ceyda, PM, TEH, Spring 2026)

As a European network, to truly implement CTM across its entire outreach, TEH would have to engage all its member organisations 180+ cultural centres). Perhaps, as Ceyda states above, it would be possible with a greater mandate and more resources. Within the current CTM scope, this was neither attainable nor feasible.

"I think CTM reached many of its objectives, especially in creating spaces for reflection, dialogue, artistic experimentation, and long-term relationship-building around questions of diversity, inclusion, ethics, power, and structural transformation within the cultural sector. One of the project's strongest achievements was its ability to connect very different people, contexts, and practices, while still creating a shared sense of purpose, trust, allyship, and collective learning."
(Ceyda, PM, TEH, Spring 2026)

Image next page: © Léo Lethielleux, TBH99, Sofia, Bulgaria


WHAT ARE THE KEY POINTS OF THE MANIFESTO ?
to dismantle oppressive structures
LISTEN
DECONSTRUCT WHITE SUPREMACIST DISCOURS
DECENTRA- LISING THE HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE
ENCOURAGING ACTION, REFLECTION, CARE
RESTART
CARE
DECONSTRUCT- ING HARM- FULL/REPRESS. SYSTEMS
THE PRESENCE OF COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE
QUESTION EVERY THING
DISRUPT
REFLECT ON OWN POSITION
TAKE CARE
Fall to Action
DIVERSIFY
CREATE A MORE CARING ENVIRONMENT
TAKE SPACE


WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT ?
LISTEN TO OTHER EXPERIENCES
DIVERSIFY LEADERSHIP
INSPIRE/TEACH THE NETWORK
REACHING
CREATE MOVEMENT
CREATE A MORE INCLUSIVE ART-FIELD
SHARE KNOWLEDGE
SHARE EXPERTISE
SHARE TOOLS
COLLECTION
OF SHARING TOOLS & METHODOLOGIES
unity
TO TAKE CARE FOR URL

Policy Recommendations

During the Radical Cartography reflection workshops (Marseille, 2026), participants brought up the questions:

"Could metrics move beyond productivity and growth toward collective wellbeing, self-defined limits, shared responsibility, and mutual care?"

As portrayed in this publication, there is a constant tension between a plan, especially one authored long in advance, and practice, which aspires to be adaptable, organic and responsive to the time and places in which it is practised. During CTM, there were a few moments when the rigorously articulated activity plan, objectives, and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) in the initial project proposal (submitted to Creative Europe) were limiting and restricting the movement that the project aspires to ignite.

"There was, and still is, a strong sense of frustration and even derealization among participants, as well as towards the project itself. It feels like it was written in a completely different time and under entirely different conditions. What struck me most was how drastically everything has changed over the past few years."
(Kseniya, AoC, IZO, Spring 2026)

Clearly, for IZO in Ukraine, reality has not only changed drastically since the project proposal was drafted in 2021, but has also been shifting ever since. During wartime, reality is not something that can be predicted, trusted, or counted on. Fluidity and volatility are intrinsic to reality, and thus, we must proceed with agility and flexibility. Culture, being cultivated by organic beings, is in itself organic, malleable and plastic. Movement and transfiguration are key to the resilience and sustainability of culture, cultural activities, and participation in their making, even in the face of persistent war, as in Ukraine. If the very framework of project-based cultural endeavours were to truly care for both the people and communities who engage in them, it would have to afford greater elasticity and plasticity.

"...the project aligns much more easily with European institutional frameworks, while in the Ukrainian context, it often meets a certain degree of scepticism due to different conditions and the lived realities in which the cultural field operates."
(Kseniya, AoC, IZO, Spring 2026)

To better anchor arts and cultural practices, we need **protective and supportive policies.** The following **policy recommendations** have been gathered from conversations, reflections, workshops and interviews conducted with project managers, activity participants and AoCs throughout the lifespan of the project. These recommendations are addressed directly to policymakers and those engaged in **structural advocacy and lobbying.** Whilst they are extrapolated from the specific experiences within CTM, they remain **highly relevant, helpful and necessary** across other cultural contexts.

If you are a policymaker, we invite you to evaluate **which of these frameworks are currently missing from your local context,** and to consider how you might initiate the processes required to make them a reality.

If you are engaged in advocacy and lobbying, these recommendations offer a **framework to ground your arguments and motivations for the policies you champion,** utilising the references, data and anecdotes compiled within this publication. Furthermore, recognise that you are part of an **informal, widespread community dedicated to this vital work.** You are by no means alone in this effort.

Macro-Frameworks for Structural Reform

Equitable and Sustained Funding: Prioritise multi-year, structural support that enables genuine systemic change. Subsidise participation costs — including childcare, travel and materials — to remove deep economic barriers, and explicitly recognise care, mentorship and co-creative labour as essential cultural work.

Decentralised Governance: Implement participatory, shared decision-making structures. Co-curation models and advisory boards must permanently include historically marginalised communities, youth, elders and intersectional identities to actively dismantle institutional hierarchies and paternalistic gatekeeping.

Linguistic, Creative and Cultural Accessibility: Fund multilingual and multi-modal programming as a baseline requirement. Support creative translation and interpretation infrastructures that allow communities to express knowledge in non-Western, embodied, visual and sonic forms.

Ethical and Relational Data Practices: Treat data as socially constructed, relational and ethically charged rather than neutral facts. Prioritise community-led data governance, strict anonymisation and minimal collection. Capture invisible, emotional or unmeasurable signals, ensuring they directly inform funding, programming and policy decisions.

Care-Centred and Reflective Practice: Embed mental, physical and relational well-being directly into the fabric of cultural work. Fund slower, process-oriented and collaborative initiatives that protect experimentation, deep reflection and the horizontal co-creation of knowledge.

Intersectional Accountability and Anti-Tokenism: Move decisively beyond numeric diversity metrics, checkboxes or superficial quotas alone. Require transparent positionality statements, ongoing institutional critical reflection and clear evidence of structural change. Implement independent mechanisms to hold institutions accountable for systemic equity.

Ecosystemic Transformation: Support networked cultural ecosystems that actively challenge patriarchal, colonial and neoliberal frameworks. Amplify invisible voices, recognise systemic interdependencies and foster non-extractive formats of collective knowledge production.

Strategic Actions and Policy Implementation

Legitimise alternative methods of communication. Make sketching, video testimonies and spoken word acceptable mediums of communication with stakeholders and funding bodies. Accept these formats for formal application and reporting purposes, as well as for ongoing institutional dialogue.

Structurally incorporate diversity-oriented cultural programmes directly into local, regional and national statutory policies.

Embed diversity-aware and sensitive initiatives, processes and progress loops within main and large-scale funding schemes rather than treating them as adjacent, temporary or additional programmes, which are routinely smaller and starved of resources.

Enforce methodological transparency in all open calls and selection processes. Render the assessment trajectory easily accessible to all so that applicants clearly understand what led to specific institutional decisions.

Clarify expectations within all open calls and tenders. Articulate explicitly what the call offers potential candidates alongside what is expected from them. If specific quotas exist, or if the call is targeted primarily at particular underrepresented communities, state this clearly from the outset to avoid extracting unnecessary, uncompensated labour from artists and cultural professionals.

Introduce mandatory diversity competence training for all politicians, curators, artistic directors, managers, decision-makers, assessment panels, selection boards, boards of directors and all other positions of structural power within the arts and culture field.

Challenge the dominant art canon directly. Place significantly greater structural and financial value on diverse artistic voices, practices and narratives that have historically been systematically overlooked, erased or marginalised by mainstream institutions.

Ensure democratic access to art universities, conservatoires, and professional creative education programmes, enabling individuals from all backgrounds to pursue viable professional careers in the arts.

Remove restrictive funding requirements that force cultural projects involving displaced, refugee or exiled communities to frame their artistic work exclusively through the patronising lens of humanitarian aid, social assimilation or trauma recovery.

Render all public policy meetings open to all citizens. Open the doors to institutional decision-making so that the people directly influenced by those decisions can witness, audit and understand the processes through which they were made.

Initiate direct consultations with the communities most affected by legislative changes and listen deeply to their first-hand experiences.

Meet regularly with grassroots organisations to formally recognise the invaluable work of those already operating on these issues at a local level, often without institutional recognition, compensation, or security.

Build an officially recognised network to provide long-term legitimacy, visibility and structural continuity to existing local initiatives. Treat the knowledge held within the community as an essential, authoritative asset in the processes of legislation, policy and law-making.

Establish a local observatory to effectively monitor, track and respond to patterns of discrimination and inequality across the municipality. Hold individuals, organisations and governmental bodies legally and financially accountable for discriminatory actions, and implement mandatory mechanisms for systemic improvement to prevent the recurrence of such behaviours.

Invest in early awareness-raising within schools by working alongside the younger generation through targeted educational programmes that actively promote empathy, mutual care and critical thinking.

Increase institutional support for family members and caregivers of people with disabilities to drastically decrease their systemic mental, physical and financial stress.

Expand structural awareness and support mechanisms to comprehensively assist individuals navigating all forms of war-induced, somatic and psychological disabilities.

Systemic Sovereignty and Global Responsibility

Enact structural sovereignty. Integrate community representatives and cultural practitioners directly and permanently into parliaments, high-level policymaking bodies and institutional boards. Ensure their input is unequivocally respected as primary, authoritative data rather than secondary opinion or advisory feedback.

Employ a rigorously open-minded approach to governance. Accept the poetic-scientific reality that those who occupy elite, isolated positions cannot autonomously, equitably or indisputably architect the future for everyone else.

Improve and expand programmes to combat global climate change. Confront climate change not merely as an isolated environmental or technical issue, but as a profound crisis of human stewardship, systemic extraction and planetary survival.

Own the historical and ongoing complicity of Europe and the wider Global North. Actively adapt and correct systemic injustices, halting the ongoing perpetuation of extractivism and discrimination against the Global Majority and oppressed cultures. Articulate comprehensive recovery plans and material reparations to actively undo the damage caused by centuries of colonial disenfranchisement and dehumanisation.

Dismantle the bureaucratic gatekeeping that systematically plagues political and cultural institutions. Make administrative and bureaucratic processes simpler, clearer and more accessible to ensure the respectful, dignified and frictionless participation of marginalised communities within the systems governing their places of inhabitation.

Add more policy recommendations from your perspective and experience!

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“Cultural activities shift a community from being talked about to speaking for itself.”

(Izolyatsia, June 2026)

practices that Worked in CTM

Practices that worked in CTM

This chapter is dedicated to the good practices that CTM developed and utilised to realise its objectives, as well as to its selected methodologies. Some of the practices mentioned below have been drawn from the experiences of people in the CTM consortium, while others have been developed organically within the project. This is not an exhaustive list of all the practices utilised by CTM, but rather a demonstrative and exemplary collection.

Types of practices incorporated in CTM:

→ Community-based, participatory practices
→ Slow, relational, context-sensitive engagement
→ Artistic processes, informed by research and story collection
→ Collaboration and shared decision-making
→ Locally and transnationally informed

Smaller groups

Working in smaller groups within a session or workshop fosters comfort, trust, and ease, which can inspire a more relaxed, open, and profound dialogue. Organising a large group into smaller clusters, in which topics can be addressed and/or tasks performed, offers more time for each individual to participate and express themselves more thoroughly, which might not be possible in a larger group. This has been proven to support meaningful processes in CTM activities.

"What worked beautifully was the intimacy of small circles. They gave space for true listening."
(Mira, AoC 404, A Workshop That Isn't One, June 2025)

Creative and active participation

Across all dimensions of CTM, whether in the Reflection Workshops, local Diverse Leadership and Trans-Cultural workshops, or Artistic Production processes with local URCs, creative and interactive practices have been utilised.

Rather than transferring knowledge through modes of passivity, such as sitting passively in front of a speaker and perhaps viewing a slide presentation, in CTM it has been evident that active and creative practices invite alternative and stimulating processes of both knowledge production and reciprocal exchange amongst participants and between participants and the facilitators.

One such example is the non-verbal processes of collective sharing, implemented in the Reflection Workshop: A Workshop That Isn't One (2025). There, the ATF and AoCs included many such practices; here are some examples:

- A collective listening to a sound collage — in this case, a polyphonic piece by Ksenia (AoC, IZO) with different voices reading excerpts from the Manifesto of Change.
- A non-verbal, collective breathing experience/exercise seeking synchronisation and grounding in body, space and time.
- Story Circle: Reflections around ecological memory and diasporic rituals.
- Visual Mapping: Using symbolic/multilingual signs to represent experiences connected with home, belonging and memory.
- Grounding Visualisation: Participants imagine standing face-to-face with an artist from a specific circumstance or after a specific experience. They explore their emotional responses and share their reflections from this encounter.
- Writing Warm-up: Participants write keywords associated with a preselected theme on post-its, which are then shared and discussed to open up the space.
- Collaborative Cadaver Exquis: Each person writes a sentence, folds the paper, and whispers the last word to the next participant. The resulting text, built from whispered phrases, holds an intimate, poetic resonance.

There are more examples of practice-based workshop facilitation methods and processes in CTM. The project's intention is also to share these practices and, hopefully, support other artists and cultural professionals in including them in their respective processes, experiences, and initiatives focused on creating a more just and socially inclusive arts and culture field.

"Being moved together, showing emotion together is a very intimate way of connecting that I value deeply."
(Dounia, AoC 404, A Workshop That Isn't One, 2025)

The emphasis on **soft participation, practices of care and small gestures** has been key to the dynamics that were possible to foster within CTM, particularly in engagements with URCs. Presence and attendance are forms of participation in this context. It is important to accept gentle participation without expectations or demands to perform at a high level. While most CTM workshops and seminars have welcomed such modes of participation, otherwise, people from URCs often don't feel welcome in arts and culture spaces.

"The moments when individuals arrived at the workshops, even if their participation was spontaneous or transitory, were profoundly impactful."
(Farila, AoC BRU, Spring 2026)

Considering community participation, at 404, they incorporated a layered reform to realise CTM, which differs from the mechanisms and dynamics generally used by their organisation. They shifted from "efficiency" to "relational depth" by employing four key elements:

1. Diverse Partner Landscape: navigating a broad ecosystem of partners across different sectors. Managing a complex web of institutional cultures and communication styles.

2. Building a Common Language: Not relying on professional 'jargon'. Actively bridging linguistic and conceptual gaps — across languages and sectors — to create a shared vocabulary for the project.

3. Centrality of Disability: Making the work with artists with disabilities a core methodology. Rethinking standards of production and prioritising accessibility as an artistic strength.

4. The Power of Slowness: Slowing the process down. While past projects were deadline-driven, CTM required a slower pace to allow for genuine dialogue, deep listening, and the inclusion of every participant's rhythm.

Most AoCs in the project have also reported on incorporating these active, participatory practices into their local processes. Within CTM, they have been conducive to both the formation of the AoCs cohort and their collective voice, as well as to local sharing clusters and processes within each CoC.

A similar dynamic also emerged in the processes of the AoCs with the ATF.

"The methodology I used within CTM has been participatory, process-oriented, and highly contextual, designed to navigate the complexities of working with AoCs across multiple cultural, social, and political realities."
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

At Zō, they went as far as involving the community in the process of making their festival **GuastaFest** (see page 136 – 138), stemming from their deep curiosity about how a cultural institution could genuinely open itself to citizens and URCs, moving beyond the traditional role of a cultural producer into becoming a space for exchange and participation.

Accessible Spaces

In the Reflection Workshop: A Workshop That Isn't One in Sofia, Emanuele (AoC, Zō) shared tangible strategies for making cultural spaces more accessible, especially in resource-limited settings. These included:

→ tactile maps
→ visual and luminous signals
→ quiet zones
→ warnings for strobe effects
→ real-time subtitle apps for smartphones

At Zō, accessibility was incorporated into the very core of planning **GuastaFest** (see page 136 – 138). Accessibility was not considered an additional "service" but a fundamental principle shaping the entire experience. In their collaborative decision-making processes, they addressed access-related matters and decided to always provide Italian Sign Language (LIS) interpretation, create a decompression space, have a clear and accessible information point, and offer earplugs for those who experience difficulties with noise, including neurodivergent people.

Artists and agents, thinking and planning with stakeholders

CTM revealed the generative impact of involving artists, creatives, and cultural agents in knowledge production and transfer processes. Clearly demonstrated in the reflection workshops co-planned, co-facilitated, and evaluated by the ATF and the AoCs, where the transversal flow of ideas, practices, and identities was conducive to the structure, atmosphere, and processes made possible in these contexts. This is not a standalone example; the *Artsformation Study* (European Union, Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Project Artsformation: Mobilising the Arts for an Inclusive Digital Transformation) highlights how the involvement of artists in planning and designing urban projects pushes urban planners and policymakers to think beyond traditional frameworks and envision alternative solutions to societal challenges.

Radical cartography

At the reflection workshop in Marseille in 2026, Laura (ATF) referred to radical cartography as *"Speculative world-making".*

Radical cartography evolved from the increasingly vital practice of using map-making as a medium to depict and visualise how phenomena and events occur in relation to one another, charting the multiplicity of connections that create the ecology in which those occurrences manifest. Rather than treating an object of exploration as a single, isolated event, this practice invites us to actively notice its interconnections and affective flows.

A different practice of map-making took place during the IZO activity.
As they became a cultural centre with no physical venues and the team was dispersed across Europe, they remained deeply dedicated to the communities and culture in Ukraine and had to transform their perception and practice.

The IZO team attested: *"Our 'centre' became a network: relationships, digital platforms, and shared intentions rather than a building." (Spring 2026)*

They had to engage in a practice of "radical world-making" to navigate a new reality, finding a rhizomatic flow amongst all the different places, people and resources.

They further explained that they accepted that this networked, decentralised mode of operation is not a compromise but a legitimate, potentially more inclusive model. This realisation freed them from constantly measuring their work against pre-war standards and allowed them to evaluate it on its own terms.

Casual interpersonal connections

Zō, who before CTM had little experience in formally collaborating with the URCs in Catania, required a thorough methodological transformation to forge meaningful, trustworthy, and fertile collaborations in their local context.

At the start, they learnt that some relationships required sufficient **time and mediation,** especially among migrant communities and those experiencing social vulnerability. Here, the importance of **trust** resonates deeply.

Seeking to connect with URCs, they began by sending about 100 emails to organisations they did not know. They received very few responses. However, they began meeting different organisations **in person.** Through CTM's workshops, events, and meetings, connections were gradually made. They called people and explained in detail why they thought a particular event or activity would be interesting or relevant to them. The Zō team also started going to more events and activities at other venues and in different parts of Catania to meet and connect with people. It was evident that **meeting in person** is important.

These meetings could be more **casual** and friendlier. The CTM team at Zō explained that their actions stemmed from the acceptance that when you meet someone you care about, you meet them in person; you don't send an email.

When Pamela (PM, Zō) attended a film festival, she met the president of an LGBTQIA+ association who asked her for a lift home. This personal encounter gave them time and space to connect, which later led to a collaboration on CTM activities. Learning about the local culture and communication dynamics helps those we approach feel less distant or alienated from the actions and activities we would like to collaborate on with them.

The Table

Zō created **il Tavolo** (The Table), where representatives from different communities and associations dedicated to URCs in Catania gather to discuss important social, cultural, and political matters from their perspectives. Il Tavolo is only for representatives of organisations. So the attendees are not representing themselves, but they are the voice of a group. The person who represents the organisation can change, and different people from the same organisation can attend different meetings, but it is still "the voice of the community". Il Tavolo started around the process Zō used to articulate the **safer spaces guidelines.**

There is always a sense of togetherness, of the casual dynamic of people meeting and sharing something. They always eat at the table. In this context and through these gestures of communality, they can discuss challenging matters. Il Tavolo meets at least once a month and plans to continue beyond the CTM project timeframe.

The most active associations at Il Tavolo are: **Arcigay,** promoting LGBTQ+ rights, inclusion, and transfeminism through a network of community-driven clubs; **Transgressive,** a trans, non-binary, and intersex community focused on mutual aid and neurodiversity within an anti-capitalist framework; **Salmastra,** a collective exploring active citizenship and culture through a conscious relationship with the sea; **Mettiamoci in Gioco,** a parent-led group creating spaces for solidarity and youth gathering specifically for people with disabilities; **KinEst Fest,** an international festival bringing Central and Eastern European cinema and LGBTQ+ themes to light; and **Officine Culturali,** which enhances cultural heritage to drive sustainable social and economic development.

Il Tavolo became a space for learning collective conflict resolution. An example that might seem negligent yet demonstrates the rigour of this process is the group's serious consideration of one participant's request to displace rather than kill mosquitoes, shifting collective habits away from paternalism by recognising that every individual's needs deserve consideration. This is a simple example of how relationships grounded in interpersonal **respect and trust** can lead to changes in habits and behaviour.

Holding different voices in the room

In the Reflection Workshops in Tbilisi, Laura (ATF) proposed the following guidelines for holding multiple voices, experiences, and perspectives in the same room:

Rules of Understanding:

- Listening and Acceptance: Listening is an act of receptiveness. Participants are encouraged to engage fully in active listening, take notes, and ensure 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 it is 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.

(*) While a zero-tolerance policy aims to protect the integrity and safety of transformative spaces, CTM demonstrated that its rigid application can inadvertently replicate mechanisms of exclusion. The matter was brought up by the PMs. The tension between welcoming heterogeneity on the one hand, and maintaining structural safety for URCs on the other, cannot be resolved by static rules. Instead, it requires continuous negotiation through process-oriented practices such as deep listening and participatory engagement.

What other rules for holding different voices in the space would you like to add?

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Multivocality through translation and interpretation

As demonstrated in the Reflection workshop, Lost in Translation? In Cultural Transformation Under Construction (2024), in Tartu, creative translation processes can be a means of understanding (see page 152 – 153).

Creating a collective space, physical and mental, where content can be "translated" and interpreted into myriad languages, formats, and modes of expression can facilitate a communal experience, even if not all media and languages are equally comprehensible to everyone present in the shared space.

The practice of translation from one medium to another introduces dimensions of gain and loss in language use, which might inspire empathy amongst participants and communities involved in the process.

Here are some examples from the workshop in Tartu:

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: → Working with embodied forms of uttering, what participants receive from the proposed content.

"I adapt my language to suit my interlocutors, ensuring it is clear, respectful, and accessible. I am actively committed to creating events and spaces that are safe and inclusive. This project has had a tangible impact on how I conceptualise and develop my cultural practice."
(Emanuele, AoC, Zō, June 2025)

Questions as practice

Articulating what the task at hand is with and through questions. Approaching a task with questions. Working through the task with questions. Allowing the response, the outcome, the thing being made to also be a question.

Question as a methodology of keeping things open. Keeping the future open. Being open to different futures. Articulating and posing questions is not a sign of deficiency; it can be a sign of excess, of plentiful curiosity, and of **not being bothered by strict and finite forms.**

How long can we stay with the question? What are the mechanisms that force us to move from the process of questioning to the articulation of answers?

These are queries and curiosities that supported the ATF and AoCs in defining their collective dynamics, co-creating together, engaging with their local URCs, and developing their CTM artistic productions.

"We tried to use questioning as a way of unlearning, staying longer in uncertainty instead of rushing into conclusions."
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

Community as both the origin of and the destination for our work

As the Knowledge Roundtable Workshop with the same title suggests, to foster a true dynamic of reciprocity, the communities ought to be part of both the origin of project conceptualisation as well as the destination, the direction in which the project is striving to progress. Things can start within an already formed community and their existing curiosities, desires or needs. Alternatively, a community might form around the work at a later stage, when it already has the magnetising power to draw people toward it.

Work with URCs needs to be integrated into the everyday processes of the arts and cultural field. It should not be practised as a benevolent gesture of the privileged or a perpetuation of colonial tokenism.

This is a practice. This is good practice. It is a practical matter to enrich the mundane with care for URCs. As the Diversity Campaign (page 80 – 81) proposes, it can be a daily practice to ask: Who is missing?

Digital longevity and security

As noted in the Main Findings chapter (page 173 – 198), IZO had to develop specific prctices to ensure the accessibility and security of their online activities amid a volatile environment. Unpredictable live attendance — caused by participants losing power or seeking shelter in bomb shelters mid-event — led them to record every session. By uploading these recordings to accessible streaming platforms, participants could engage at their convenience. Consequently, while real-time attendance remains significantly lower, the recorded sessions regularly attract over 100 views.

In response to a Russian intrusion during a live event, IZO also implemented strict security protocols. They transitioned to individual Zoom links and webinar formats, which conceal participants' identities unless intentionally altered by the host. Event communications now combine content promotion with explicit security reassurances. These adaptations highlight how online practices must proactively integrate safety and security measures, particularly when engaging with under-represented communities.

World Café and Open Space

These are not CTM-specific formats; they follow well-established methods developed by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs (World Café) and Harrison Owen (Open Space Technologies). However, both formats, in part or in whole, were utilised to facilitate group conversations.

World Café is a structured hosting method that facilitates collaborative dialogue by rotating participants across small, intimate table conversations to discuss specific, open-ended questions. The room features multiple tables, each focused on a topic relevant to the participants and the event context. A designated Table Host remains at each table to welcome changing groups, support the flow of conversation, and ensure notes (textual or visual) are captured on the paper tablecloth or cards. Participants choose their initial table to engage in a generative discussion. After a predetermined timeframe, participants must move to a different table, while the Host stays behind to brief the next group on what was previously discussed, ensuring each round builds upon the last.

The process culminates in a plenary session where Hosts share key insights, allowing the entire room to identify cross-pollination and overarching patterns.

Open Space Technology (OST) is a highly participant-driven unconference method that operates without a pre-planned agenda, allowing attendees to co-create the entire schedule at the start of the workshop around a central theme. During the initial marketplace session, any participant can step forward to propose a focus area they are passionate about. Without any democratic voting or filtering, the proposer simply assigns their topic a specific time slot and breakout space on a public schedule wall. The room then splits into smaller groups based on individual interest, with the proposer hosting the initial conversation. This practice is guided by the "Law of Two Feet" (or the Law of Mobility), which dictates that if participants find themselves in a space where they are neither learning nor contributing, they have the full autonomy to use their two feet to move to another group. Like the World Café, the Open Space process concludes with a collective plenary session to share outputs and reflections.

Inclusive HR policy

404 implemented an HR policy which is specifically attentive to matters regarding URCs. The goal of this policy is to actively diversify the workforce by removing recruitment barriers stemming from systemic discrimination, and by reaching out to URCs to better reflect the society and the hetero-geneity of the inhabitants of Ghent and Belgium at large. Additionally, the policy instates continuous staff training on topics such as **unconscious bias** and **decolonisation,** ensuring that inclusivity remains structurally embedded in organisational culture.

Young Panel

This began as an initiative taken by 404 to include young people in envisioning and reflecting on the organisation's plans and activities. It is a collaborative process in which young people actively and critically advise the arts centre. Through this platform, members ensure that the perspectives of the next generation are represented and that traditional processes, which are generally repetitive and stagnant, can be challenged, stimulated, and eventually replaced by more attentive and context-sensitive approaches.

Anti-discrimination and anti-racism working group

Designed and practised by 404, a temporary group of 15 colleagues that get together and work around a certain 'challenge', 'a needed transformation', 'a wicked issue'. It consists of motivated colleagues from different departments at the cultural centre, as well as members of their Young Panel. The group meets monthly, and their meetings last as long as necessary. Together, they discuss key topics and collaborate with experts to organise workshops and training sessions for the other 75 colleagues in the organisation, as well as external peers (artists and fellow cultural professionals). Out of this group, they also established **Samenspraak** — a discursive format in which colleagues gather every 8 weeks to discuss texts and video fragments related to (anti)racism.

Accessible aesthetics and communication modalities

TEH initiated a process to make their visual and communication materials more broadly accessible. These include:

- Preparatory work for incorporating accessibility features on their website, including UX/UI (User Experience/ User Interface) improvements, focusing on usability, accessibility, and inclusivity.
- Designing the TEH voice and tone. A framework for both internal and external communication, based on inclusivity, accessibility, solidarity, and peer-to-peer exchange.
- A style guide that describes TEH's communication style in detail. This guide emphasises clear and accessible communication frameworks. It uses plain, simple language to make information accessible and meaningful to network members and audiences. The guide states: *"We are inclusive. We speak with, not at, people. We write as peers."*

In line with their intention to use transparent, simplified communication, TEH also updated the website to reflect the limited physical access to their building. The text says:

"We regret to inform you that our current premises, housed in a protected building managed by Kulturen in Lund, are not wheelchair accessible. Unfortunately, due to the building's protected status, we are unable to make structural modifications at this time. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. Please know that we are actively exploring alternative solutions, including hosting events at more accessible venues, to better accommodate all visitors."

(TEH website)

Examples and Concrete Tools

While the examples in the previous chapter mostly demonstrate practices developed and incorporated locally, the following examples demonstrate practices applied transnationally across all partners and their contexts.

HOW TO REACH OUT?

WHO IS WELCOMED TO “ENTER THROUGH YOUR DOORS”?



Graphic design: Elie Laucher (AoC, ZŌ)

One method to engage people for different roles in the project, also known as scouting or recruiting, which has been used the most during CTM, is Open Call.

This is a very common practice and therefore, can serve as a “petri dish”, an opportunity for experimentation and refinement of engaging people from URC. Open Call is indeed a practice of making a call open, but it is also an opportunity to learn about both people’s presence and absence. Who is already here? Who is not yet here? Who should be here?

The Open Call method has been used to engage AOCs, the ATF, mentors, guest artists and creative (i.e graphic designer) within CTM. Some calls have been launched at the local level, and others have been international. Each Open Call was informed by the specific social-cultural context, timing and the geographic spread in which it was published, but there have been some notable commonalities.

Things to be attentive to when working with the method of Open Call:

Language

Who is “speaking”? Who do we hope would “hear” it? What is the best language to use, to ensure that the call is received by those you are trying to reach?

Intentions

What is your intention with the Open Call?

Objectives

Are the objectives of the Open Call clear to you?

Referring to the experiences within CTM, in relation to heteroginising the team (forming it of parts which are different to each other), here are some guiding questions to consider when developing an Open Call:

→ In what kind of relationships are you willing to, or open to, engaging?

→ How much are you willing to change in the process of engaging someone to join you as a new colleague? Are you willing to let their way of being and doing things inform your ways?

→ In what way do you allow yourself to question and challenge the formats and mediums of Open Call in order to:

- Specify the process to your needs.
- Make the process as gentle and easy to engage with as possible for the applicants.
- Subvert or challenge power structures and dynamics which have been instated in the more traditional forms of this practice.
- Prevent unnecessary work from people who are not really suitable for the position or role that you are looking to fill.

- → In what ways can you already communicate who you are, what it is like to work with you, and what is important to you through the way you compose and communicate the Open Call?
- → Are you prepared for the workload required to process applications and communicate with applicants in a respectful and empathetic way?
- → What are you expecting the receiver/viewer (the person seeing the Open Call) to do in order to respond to the Open Call?
- → How do the people responding to the Open Call have to engage with it? (Are they required to write? To speak? To edit a video? To send an email?)
- → How do the skills and capacities that are required for people to respond to the Open Call already demonstrate the kind of work, engagement and responsibilities that they would be expected to perform in the role/position for which you are publishing the Open Call?
- → How do the mediums through which you invite people to respond to the Open Call (e.g video, written text, spoken text, online form submission) already exclude some people?

Notes to self about Open Call processes:



Image: © Igor Ripak

SAFER SPACE GUIDELINES

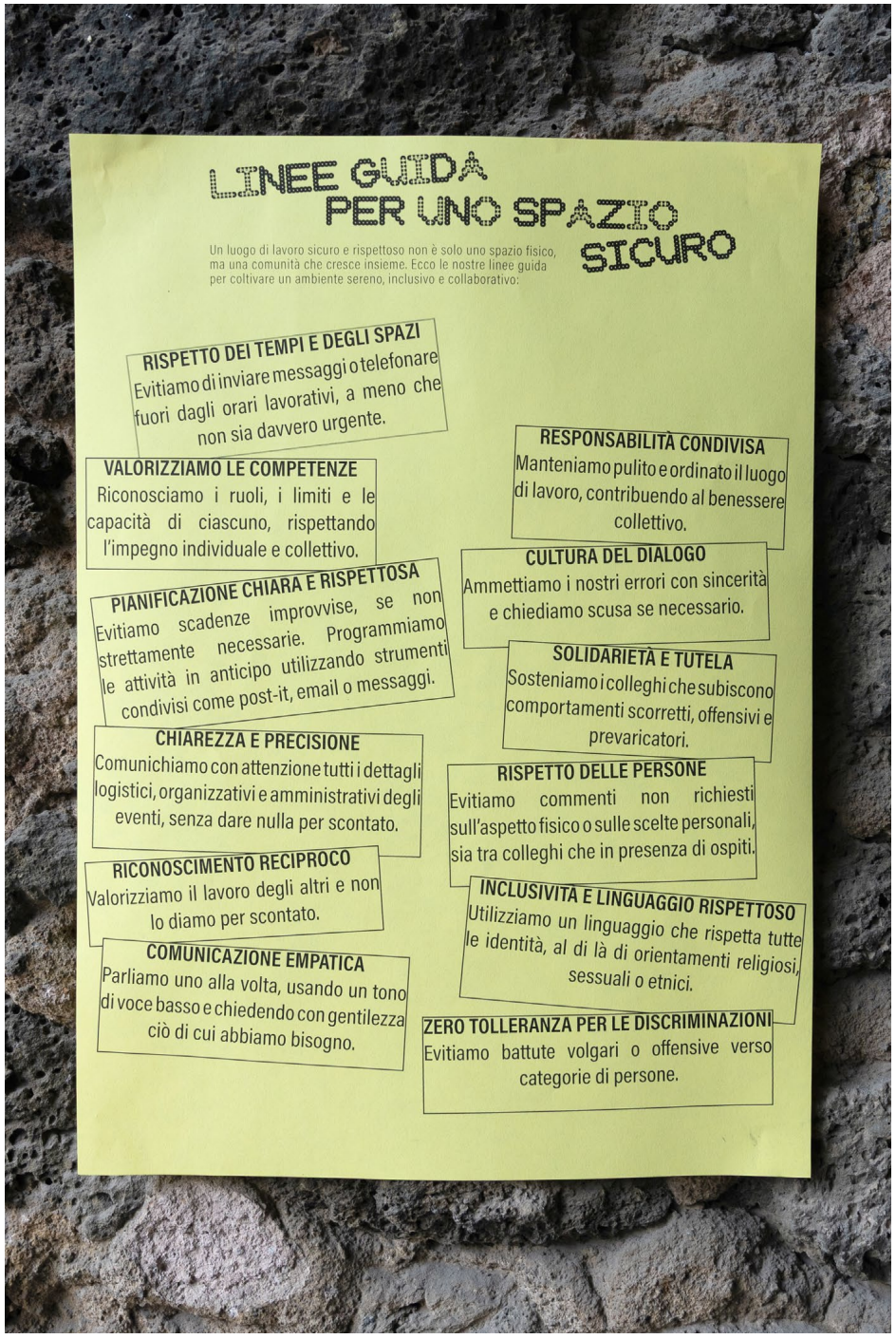


Image: © Elie Laucher

During CTM the CoCs have been seeking methodologies and formats to articulate safer space guidelines that are particularly relevant to their context.

At Zō they needed to create space where members of URCs could reflect together, express criticism, share uncomfortable thoughts, imagine alternative ways of working together and unlock a greater awareness of their true capabilities and potential. The team researched existing safer space guidelines (in Europe) and were not content with those they found, which were limited to written or video formats. They decided to develop a practical format, seeking to activate those who engage with it rather than only informing them theoretically. They are still working on how to make that shift.

In the photo (left), a list of "internal" safer space guidelines is provided, authored by Zō at the very beginning of the project to assist them in applying the CTM objectives and realising its activities. It was articulated after two workshops with Ilaria Tucci. The Zō team, together with their collaborators at il Tavolo (see page 214), continue to work on more comprehensive safe space guidelines for the broader context of CTM and the activities of the associations across Catania.

At BRU, they started the process of articulating Safe Space Guidelines within the workshop they hosted with Sonya Lindfors, titled: 'Working with F(r)iction'

This is not a finite, universal, or concluded set of safer space guidelines, but merely an example of what such guidelines might include. As such, it is titled: Safer Space Guidelines in Progress

1. Let us not assume consent, but seek it.
2. Let us respect the physical, mental and emotional boundaries of others, as well as our own.
3. Let us not assume the identity, sexuality, gender, health or background of others, but remain open to them.
4. Let us respect the opinions, beliefs and experiences of others, even if they differ from our own.
5. Let us be mindful of our privileges, our behaviour and the space we occupy.
6. Let us act with mindfulness and curiosity, helping and caring for one another. Let us assume that people mean well.
7. Let us acknowledge that safety does not mean the absence of discomfort. There will be friction, and we will make mistakes. Staying with the questions, tensions and discomforts is an essential part of the practice.

8. No harassment or discrimination of any kind – no place for homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, ableism, fatphobia or ageism. No discrimination on the basis of origin, language or nationality.

9. Let us recognise that English is not the first language for most of us. Meanings can be lost in translation.

10. Let us make space for diversity, complexity and a multitude of voices.

Sonya Lindfors is a Cameroonian-Finnish choreographer and artistic director who also works in facilitating, community organising, and education. In 2009, she also founded UrbanApa – a platform for urban arts.

Notes to self about Safer Space Guidelines:

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Image: © Hannaneh Heydari

ACCESS RIDER

404 developed **Access Riders** for their PMs and AoCs through a workshop with Luke Sinclair (based in Ireland). In the workshop, Luke explained that within disability studies, impairment is defined as: "*any physical, sensory, or mental loss (or limitation) in a person's body or mind.*"

The **impairment** is that which the affected person suffers from on a daily basis. Meanwhile, a **barrier** is a factor in the environment, society, or attitudes that prevents individuals from participating fully in daily life. The workshop invited participants to consider whether someone is disabled simply by the fact that they have a certain condition, or they are disabled by barriers in a particular space that prevent them from being included and having a regular life.

In this workshop, an Access Rider was described as a living document in which a person–or their advocate–names the access supports they require in order to participate fully in a space. Luke also pointed out that an Access Rider can be–and usually is–politically charged. This is because it challenges conventional practices in the arts and culture field, as well as the rider's ability to attract government attention by demonstrating that access problems are not going to disappear.

The Access Rider is personal and articulates the travel, accommodation, sensory, communication, dietary, religious, and safety needs of a person who will participate in an activity or action. This might be a brief engagement or a more long-term one. The Access Rider should remain open and available for adjustments as do the needs of the person it refers to.

The practice and process of creating Access Riders have also been adopted by other CoCs.

> Within the context of Access Rider, a "landing day" can be a fundamental structural requirement for an individual to perform their work to the best of their ability, whether they are an artist or a cultural professional. As highlighted throughout this publication, limited resources across the arts and cultural field routinely pressure individuals to operate under tightly constrained and challenging conditions. Additionally, individuals from URCs are frequently anxious about "causing trouble" or "being a burden", which often deters them from requesting what they require to fulfil their tasks to the best of their ability. Employing the practice of an Access Rider invites both practitioners and hosts to actively learn what can be done to strive towards a safe, secure and hospitable working environment.

Notes to self about Access Rider:

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Things You Can Do

CTM — and, in a broader sense, any movement — is inherently about being in motion. It is about the act of motioning. Whilst this movement has been actively moving within the project timeframe, it must continue to be practised and shared far beyond the current Centres of Change and Artists/Agents of Change.

Here are several actions, based on experiences gained within CTM, that individuals, collectives or organisations can incorporate into their respective contexts, in the capacity and intensity which are available, suitable, and sustainable for them.

Remember the notion of **small gestures** that has been unfolding throughout this publication. Not all actions are relevant to all locations, nor are they applicable at all times. Choose, select, experiment and explore what works best for your particular efforts with and for Underrepresented Communities in your context.

Practise patience, attentive listening, repeated engagement and continuous communication.

Plan more time for processes. Ensure the allocation of temporal resources to envisaged actions during the initial planning stages of all activities and projects.

Implement Access Riders. Invite yourself and others to articulate what you or they require to participate in and engage fully with an action or activity.

Introduce unconscious bias training across your team and organisation.

Establish safer spaces guidelines. Articulate the clear ethical and operational frameworks necessary for the individuals and collectives within your communities to feel safe, welcomed and wanted.

Demystify the reporting process. Make the reporting details transparent and available to everyone. When all stakeholders understand funding bodies' reporting expectations, you can collectively design your approach and identify ways to support it collectively.

Reflect your intentions in the budget. Ensure your commitment to working with artists and audiences from underrepresented communities is backed by explicit financial allocation.

Allocate dedicated resources for translation. When working in multilingual contexts, ensure the necessary professional translators, interpreters, or tools to provide sufficient linguistic access.

Schedule deliberate time off. Remember to step away from the work and take a break from the task at hand. This is vital not only for rest but also for gaining a fresh, critical perspective.

Gather around basic needs. Share a meal, take collective walks and practise crafts together. Movements are made of people; connect with them through the intimacy of the mundane.

Initiate direct consultations with the communities most affected and listen deeply to their first-hand experiences.

Establish a local observatory to effectively monitor, document and respond to patterns of discrimination and inequality in your city.

Invite the community into decision-making. Coordinate advisory panels or committees composed of people from the communities you wish to engage in dialogue. Ensure everyone is rewarded for their investment; reward does not mean only monetary compensation; the conditions must be negotiated openly and in advance.

Form a rotating committee for "social empathy". Shift responsibilities periodically so that different individuals within your organisation take turns being directly accountable for how you interact with your community and wider context.

Connect with wider networks. Find individuals and organisations who share similar themes and issues. Work together to share both the burden and the joy of transforming culture — have *Someone to Run With* (David Grossman, 2000).

Utilise simple, local and direct communication channels. Group chats on messaging apps, direct personal messages and word of mouth within local neighbourhoods are often the most effective tools.

Centre communities as co-authors rather than passive subjects.

Create dedicated contexts for sharing, solidarity and joint action. (Take inspiration from 404's *Wine and Whine* or *Rum and Rant*, and Zō's *The Table).*

Ask questions and remain curious. Let others see your curiosity and your willingness to learn from them.

Make information accessible. Radical sharing is a form of radical care for the communities and environments we inhabit. Render what you can transparently, clearly and easily retrievable.

Adapt dynamically when migrating online. As demonstrated by Izolyatsia's circumstances, be ready to record sessions for those who cannot attend, or pivot quickly if a speaker is compromised. Remain mindful of sensitive topics that might attract disruptive opposition, and implement registration-only events with securely guarded links when extra safety is required.

Balance guidance with autonomy, allowing collaborators the freedom to lead.

Document, reflect and act as a supportive yet critical friend.

Allow spaciousness for curiosity, experimentation and intentional risk-taking.

Keep on keeping on. Continue to reach out even if you do not receive the desired response — or any response at all — on your first attempts. Multiple approaches are frequently required to initiate systemic movement.

Share, expose and spread knowledge. Be generously open with the experiences, tools, and findings you acquire through your cultural work.

Trust the process. Cultural transformation is mobilised by the collective dedication of those who move it, even when the momentum remains undetectable at times.

Engage the younger generation and the elderly through targeted programmes that actively promote empathy, mutual care and critical thinking.

Optimise digital channels for accessibility. Follow a user-centred design approach on your website to solve real-world user problems, explicitly considering disability, digital literacy and device limitations. Implement accessible interfaces that enable high-contrast modes and read-aloud functions.

Image next page: © Andriani Tzima

This is a nonexhaustive and inconclusive list. Add your own suggestions and keep borrowing examples from other initiatives that you want to follow.

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Reflections

Reflections, contemplations and outro by Israel Aloni

The coming pages are written in a slightly different tone from the rest of the publication. They are more directly authored by me, the project researcher, and therefore use first-person grammar.

Throughout the project, there has not been a unanimous agreement on whether realising the project is, in itself, the intended cultural transformation movement or whether it should be seen as the process of paving the way for transformative processes to occur in the different contexts in which the project has been active. Some of the AoCs expressed frustration when PMs said they believed the transformation was already underway, while the AoCs' empirical experience indicated otherwise.

The project has been caught up in trendy terminologies and thus operated in the realm of discourse. However, neither at the level of the project's empirical imprint nor in terms of its impact on the communities, contexts, and environments in which it was active do we have any data to measure or estimate the scope of the project's influence.

For example, regarding the claim to create a **safe space** for "all voices" in the Tbilisi reflection workshop, the process and empirical data clearly show that it is never possible to include and support "all voices". Every space is an exclusive space. Every process is a selective process. In a reflective dialogue, Fariba (PM, BRU) mentioned that, in their context, they are also questioning the notion of "zero tolerance," which has otherwise been presented as a desired reality and potentially an aim or goal for CTM.

From my perspective, culture is not merely the collective, unifying element of a society. Culture is everything that huWOmans do in relation to the world, to ourselves, and to one another. Every group or collection of people — whether intentionally or organically formed — creates and practices a culture: a household, a family, a professional organisation, a project, a network, a neighbourhood, a town, a city, or a nation. They all form cultures.

No huWOman belongs to only one culture; we all navigate multiple cultures simultaneously. At times, the behaviours and habits required by one culture exist in tension — or even contradiction — with those of another in which we participate. Each of us is an intercultural project. How we behave in one context differs from how we behave in another, yet these distinct cultures co-exist within us.

Large international cooperation projects such as CTM are a cacophony of cultures, constantly navigating between chaotic harmony and harmonious chaos. Every individual must negotiate their multiple cultural identities, finding ways to mediate between them while allowing a new, shared culture to emerge within the specific contexts the project inhabits.

Anyone who has engaged in collaboration understands the sensitivity required for intercultural negotiation — even when that interculturalism is embodied within a single person. An additional challenge in international arts and cultural collaborations is the false presupposition that peers share identical onto-epistemological dispositions. We tend to assume that professionals in our field operate with similar cultural references, behavioural patterns, survival needs, and aspirations. However, collaborative practice repeatedly exposes the inaccuracy of these assumptions.

At the reflection workshop in Tbilisi, which took place at the outset of the project, one of the things that was named on the list of "things we should unlearn" was the "canon of art". The notion of "canon" came up numerous times throughout the project, mostly regarding a perceived hierarchy of aesthetics and approaches in the art field. Whilst there is evident power manipulation, coordinated by peculiar hierarchical mechanisms in all segments of the arts and culture field, as strongly featured in *The Price of Everything* (Nathaniel Kahn, 2018) and in *The Square* (Ruben Östlund, 2017), it is important to note that any set of rules, much like those listed in the report of that very workshop from Tbilisi, might be the groundstone for a new canon. It is precisely through movement and transformation that we avoid the solidification of a new canon and stiff hierarchies of power, practice and aesthetics.

Another recommendation on the same list of things to "unlearn" is "unhealthy hierarchies", with the recommendation to "*transform hierarchical structures into flat equitable systems that value every voice*" *(Tbilisi Reflection Workshop report, 2023)*. Whilst this is, in theory, a highly desirable aspiration, numerous situations within the CTM have demonstrated that even those dedicated to disrupting or abolishing existing hierarchies are not necessarily able to do so in practice. For example, in 2023, TEH had to make a large part of its team redundant due to a reduction in resources. While the process was caused by these financial challenges and carried out in accordance with Swedish labour law and TEH's collective agreement, including the required negotiations with the relevant trade unions, it was a heavy moment for everybody involved. The precarity of resources in the arts and culture field too often leads to significant actions that affect people's livelihoods. Projects are cancelled, organisations have to cut back, venues and festivals lose their support with relatively short notice, and political changes result in the cancellation of funding schemes. Hence, policy, structure and system directly influence individuals. While, to some extent, TEH having to let some people from its team go is not directly related to CTM, it is a relevant example of how the unstable reality of the arts and culture field directly influences individuals.

Additionally, during the CTM project, it became known to the AoCs that they were not all earning the same amount. This situation is informed by varying rates and fees across countries and by varying degrees of regulation and protections for fees and working conditions in different contexts. The difference in fees for AoCs corresponds to the standard amounts recommended in their respective country. However, discovering these differences and learning that they were not all remunerated equally, while being expected to engage in the project to the same degree and commit the same amount of time, was deeply disturbing to the AoCs. They did not have enough information to understand what led to this situation; it made them wonder about the motivations and conditions that produced it.

In the Reflection Workshop in Tbilisi, the participants articulated a need to reimagine bureaucracy. They suggested either completely reimagine them or fundamentally eradicate them. Although the project incorporated and, in some ways, promoted a transformation in artistic practice alongside policy-making, it merely supported transformative processes of envisaging, planning, and producing artistic work. It did not, however, transform artistic practices as such. In other words, the frameworks facilitated by project management and organisation were addressed, but the artistic processes and praxis within the various media and art forms included in CTM have not been addressed directly. For example, the project did not address questions of composition or dynamics across art forms in relation to URCs. Participatory, interactive, devised and process-based artistic practices have been common in the arts for decades. Both community art and community-oriented art have been practised by both institutions and project-based initiatives, increasingly so since the early 2000s (EACEA / European Commission, 2006). The relations between project frameworks that promote social justice and cultural transformation (such as CTM) and artistic practice remain underexamined. At the same time, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Sometimes what is necessary is a new perspective on the existing wheel or a new approach to how we interact with the wheel, and what we allow the wheel to do to us or to make us do. Laura (ATF) acknowledged that the methodologies she utilised with the AoCs were "*refined collectively with AoCs, even if they are not new*" *(Spring, 2026)*

What CTM demonstrated, and potentially supplements the existing arts and culture field with, is the invaluable correlation between artistic practice and policy-making. Rather than working on one of them at a time, CTM set the bilateral process of art practice and policy-making as one of its main objectives and, in this sense, developed and implemented meaningful, repeatable practices as described in this publication.

Partners Under Attack

In the **Knowledge Roundtable** workshop in Riga, Yuliya (PM, IZO) shared that some people in Ukraine view CTM's work as less urgent at the moment because they are in survival mode. Is the work of CTM and other similar initiatives that of privilege and luxury? Is it insensitive to presuppose that all people, no matter where they are and what their life is like, can or should be motivated and mobilised by the aspiration to social justice and equality? How do we liaise with those who are in a real, empirical, tangible and carnal struggle for their very survival, such as those in a war zone? CTM was envisaged in *Europe,* but what, where and when exactly is this *Europe?* For example, Ukraine is geographically, culturally, and historically part of *Europe,* but while included in the Creative Europe program, can we truly say that Creative Europe does enough to ensure the safety and well-being of all those working on Creative Europe projects?

"CTM is looking at epistemology whilst Ukrainian artists and IZOLYATSIA are in an ontological crisis"
(Mykhailo, PM, IZO Oct 2024)

> The war in Ukraine and the surreal, yet intensely real, situation of IZO weighed heavily on me throughout the project. It bothered me because it did not seem to bother the project as such. I think there is room to reflect deeply on how transnational collaborations that include individuals and organisations in or from Ukraine operate differently and alter the flows of perseverance that sustain familiar intensities of work in the arts and culture field. It is not obvious to me what we, as a whole, as a collective, in CTM, have done differently because we were collaborating with IZO, compared to how we would have done things under different circumstances.

Although, on a personal level, the people in the project were empathetic and concerned for our colleagues in and from Ukraine, the situation did not fundamentally change the project's approach, methodologies, or overall intentions. IZO adapted to the situation and adjusted what they could within the project plan's framework. However, addressing the profound impact of one partner having to navigate war alongside other project-related challenges is important. Our partners and colleagues from Ukraine were required to navigate an unbearable reality whilst simultaneously performing full-fledged partnership duties within a European cooperation framework. The institutional premise is that the EU not only supports but also encourages and prioritises collaborations with people and communities in and from Ukraine. Nevertheless, what does this actually mean? How does this function in practice?

IZO had to navigate the daily sensitivities of working with URCs, liaising with stakeholders, influencing policymaking, and managing authorities — challenges that all partners faced. However, they simultaneously had to confront the rapidly changing reality of an ongoing war, the profound dislocations that accompany it and personal realities being under threat.

The show must go on.

On the 5th of November 2024, Kseniya (AoC, IZO) said: *"Even though it might not be easy or comfortable for the other people in the project to talk to me about the war, it is important that IZOLYATSIA is represented in the project."*

> Kseniya is referring to the challenges imposed by the persisting war. War is "inconvenient". This "inconvenience" is more a manifestation of the supreme ignorance and complacency that we have come to muster. There is a brutal war going on right here, in Europe, and we continue to perform as if nothing is happening. Right after the full Russian invasion of Ukraine, the arts and cultural sector was a little shaken by the events, but mostly what remains is a few specific open calls offering incentives to collaborate with artists and organisations in or from Ukraine. However, generally, the arts and culture field, as well as other sectors of society, have moved on, advanced the agenda, and relegated the suffering of the Ukrainian people to yesteryear's news.

In CTM, we had the opportunity to work with artists and organisations in and from Ukraine, but this has not changed the project's ongoing trajectory. We have not really responded to the current realities and conditions faced by artists and communities in Ukraine. Instead, the question was "how"?

The project was busy finding ways to implement a project that had been designed and described prior to the full invasion in February 2022. What needs to happen for us to change our ways? When will the "show" not go on? The team and the artist from Ukraine repeatedly expressed the difficulties they faced in sharing their true situation with others. They did not want to be "party poopers" or "rain on people's parades". Is it really better to have a parade while our colleagues and collaborators are sometimes paralysed by their situation, which they did not choose?

During a conversation in April 2025, Mykhailo (PM, IZO) mentioned a discussion he had at the Venice Biennale with a curator regarding why people are ceasing to support Ukrainian artists. The curator noted a perception that audiences are seeing "the same things" from Ukrainian artists, highlighting a pressing need to diversify the artwork being produced. This directly relates to the concept of representation addressed during the **Roundtable Workshop** in Tbilisi. Displaced individuals and artists face a complex, multidirectional junction of expectations to represent where they are "from". These include expectations from the Self (ego), the Other (superego), potential employers and commissioners (often resulting in tokenism), and the community within the artist's home context.

Furthermore, those who "help" the individual acclimatise to a new location often seek validation by receiving exactly what they expect from the artist, based on their own assumptions about the artist's background. There might be certain expectations from the presented artist/agent to be a certain way and to produce a certain kind of work, based on a limited conception of what artists from their context might be capable of or interested in, as addressed in *Comfort Work* by Lia Dostlieva and Andrii Dostliev (2024). This dynamic feeds directly into the saviour complex and the concept of the benevolent rescuer of the "miserable", drawing parallels to the behaviours Robin DiAngelo analyses in her book *White Fragility: Why It is So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018).

In the wider arts and culture field, particularly within the "Western" world, there is a pervasive tendency to champion resilience: to "keep going", to "adapt" and to seize crisis as a sudden opportunity for experimental or adaptive practice. However, the lived reality for individuals, organisations and communities in and from Ukraine remains unbearable; any sense of groundedness, stability, longevity and reassurance is far out of reach. Instead, IZO, alongside Kseniya (AoC, IZO) and their matrix of local collaborators, had to practise an entirely alternative mode of operating.

Some aspects of that reality — inconclusive and insufficient though they may be — are featured in this publication through the testimonies of the IZO team, as well as the reports and materials from their activities and actions. This publication cannot offer a comprehensive depiction of the lived experiences of the people and communities directly impacted by this war. However, it cannot ignore the profound weight of these conditions either.

In Spring 2026, when asked how she would like her process within CTM to be featured in this publication, Kseniya replied:

> *"It is important for me that the publication clearly conveys the Ukrainian context, not only as a background, but as a condition that fundamentally shapes the project. I would like this context to be understood in its specificity, including the ways in which lived experience, cultural production and everyday realities continue to evolve under ongoing war conditions.*
>
> *For me, it is also essential to highlight that the war has produced new forms of underrepresented communities. In particular, military participants hold a complex and often contradictory position. While they are highly visible and frequently perceived as a form of social elite, they are at the same time underrepresented in terms of cultural articulation, legal protection and nuanced representation.*
>
> *This experience cannot be fully translated into more stable or institutional frameworks. It carries its own temporality, urgency and forms of knowledge that often remain partially invisible or difficult to grasp from the outside."*

In a conversation I had with Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur (AoC, BRU) in May 2026, she expressed the impression that within CTM, there was a general sense that simply executing the project was, in and of itself, the demonstration of the cultural transformation it aspired to achieve.

In response to this statement, Pamela (PM, Zō) wrote: "*I can only express a personal opinion: being part of the project and bringing it to completion meant exactly the opposite for me. This is both because I became aware of the deep hypocrisy you mention — unfortunately even within the network — and because I realised just how far we still are from the cultural transformation we claim to aspire to" (Spring 2026).*

While Pamela's comment indicates that some individuals within the CTM consortium recognise the prematurity of declaring cultural transformation, I share Araba's sentiment. CTM served as the framework for some extraordinary processes and actions at local and transnational levels. However, it shied away from the conflicts and friction that inevitably arise upon encountering the "real world" — the empirical reality.

Nevertheless, this is not merely a shortcoming of CTM; it is a structural failure of the European project — of Europe as a project. On the one hand, we are fed the narrative that Ukraine will soon join the European Union; on the other hand, Ukrainians are expected to quieten themselves so as not to disturb or disrupt the perpetuated myth of a "cultured Europe", even within spaces ostensibly dedicated to the under-represented, silenced, and ignored.

In Spring 2026, the PMs from IZO wrote:

> *"Without active cultural production, Ukraine becomes defined externally — by news footage, by geopolitics, by the victim frame. Ukrainians abroad are hyper-visible as refugees but almost invisible as cultural actors. Cultural activities shift a community from being talked about to speaking for itself."*

Working in English

As described in relation to the **Artistic Statement** (page 97 – 106), the notion of translation was addressed numerous times throughout the project. It was also the key topic for the **Reflection Workshop** in Tartu in 2024. Although the project held invaluable conversations about who might be listening to

— let alone understanding — the project's utterances, the internal working language of the CTM project remained strictly English. Consequently, whilst the receivers of the project's expressions were granted some linguistic consideration (such as with the translation of the Artistic Statement and Manifesto of Change to six additional languages), as well as some non-linguistic mediums (visual expressions, sound pieces, performative gestures etc.), the voices who have been speaking within the project were requested to yield to the unshakeable status of English as the default idiom for transnational European collaboration. This persists despite the geopolitical reality of Brexit. Following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, Ireland remains the sole EU member state in which English is a primary official language.

What layers of nuanced experience, local references, and alternative ontologies have we, in CTM, lost by forcing our internal dialogues into English? What do we sacrifice through our unquestioning acceptance of English as the mandatory vessel for a movement that claims to disturb existing power structures? What do we gain — or risk accepting — by capitulating to certain power systems, such as the hierarchy of languages in Europe?

Language is not only a means of description and expression; it also creates realities with particular potentialities. What becomes possible is deeply informed by what the language we use enables us to dream.

Jargon/vernacular

In the reports on the transnational workshops, it is often stated that the practices employed are feminist and anti-colonial. We need to ask: in what way are these practices truly **"feminist"** and **"anti-colonial"**? How can we, as artists and cultural professionals, ensure these terms and notions do not become mere tokens that perpetuate the European Union's agenda-setting superiority?

As already mentioned, in CTM there was a mixed experience within the consortium among those who held the view that the project itself constituted the cultural transformation. At the same time, others wanted the project to do more research, investigation, and exploration into what a cultural transformation actually can, might, or ought to be.

What indeed makes the practices and actions of the project **"feminist"** and **"anti-colonial"** if, evidently, they could implement, relatively smoothly, a theoretical plan that advocates for actual transformation but operates in a system that does not transform? Some of the practices in CTM featured in this publication indeed propose a feminist and anti-colonial approach, such as care and deep listening. At the same time, as also featured in this publication, the entrenched systems of transnational cooperation, specifically within the Creative Europe framework, make it particularly challenging to achieve a deep transformation grounded in these ethics throughout the project.

Evidence vs reality

In her lecture titled *"Complaint as Feminist Pedagogy"* (delivered in May 2018), Sara Ahmed stated that **"creating evidence of doing something is not the same as doing something".**

This resonates with a conversation I had with Araba (AoC, BRU), who expressed that she encountered challenges in drawing the PMs' attention to the fact that CTM is not the solidification of the desired change. Rather, she argued, it is an invaluable opportunity to experiment, explore, question, and even challenge what the very transformation that needs to be made is: whom it would benefit and whom it would restrict, what the accurate means and methods are to bring about this transformation, and how to best prepare for the world after that transformation has occurred.

Whether the project is communicated as the development of frameworks in which cultural transformation can occur, or as the cultural transformation itself, also depends on how data is collected, interpreted, and presented. For example, the Forgotten Data Lab Reflection Workshop (page 155 – 157) examined how we harvest, archive, and use data to shape our curated realities. As the basic unit of information, data is frequently framed within technological and artificial intelligence (AI) discourses as a site of privacy negotiation. However, its factual reliability remains a severe challenge. Modern AI tools make altering reality imminent, allowing fabrications to be easily misinterpreted as fact. Because data is generated cyclically, a single false feed can corrupt an entire system, causing systemic failure and immense suffering. In that sense, data collection, processing, and presentation can also produce believable narratives that might not be grounded in empirical or factual realities. Data also serves as a primary tool for financial and bureaucratic control. In European cooperation projects such as the CTM, data serves as the mandatory language of accountability. Producing and packaging this information is a primary task for managers, as funders treat it as objective evidence of successful project implementation. This unavoidably places a lot of emphasis on data collection, to the point that the task of collecting data to present our actions can occupy us in such a way that it might keep us from taking those actions.

This ubiquitous surveillance masks a deeper shift. As Euro-Western societies race towards advanced AI agents, we are unthinkingly rewiring human cognitive capacity, shifting our trust from physical bodily experiences to digital streams. Nonetheless, the abyss between experience and the data meant to describe it remains vast. How we treat data is an ontological dilemma that dictates the world we aspire to live in. At **The Forgotten Data Lab** workshop, participants noted that raw data can easily mislead the untrained eye; it is never neutral. The act of interpretation — deeply informed by who performs it and how — is what breathes meaning and power into it.

Viewed through the critical lens of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) and intersectional identity politics, data collection can easily become an apparatus of tyranny. Top-down surveying, rather than active phenomenological synthesis, remains a process reserved for a select few. The sheer authority to collect information is a symptom of privilege, and data always reflects the biases of those who handle it. Across various Creative Europe co-funded projects, a recurring institutional trajectory surfaces:

Practice → documentation and data collection → proof and reporting → liability → credit and status → resources → practice.

The institutional legitimacy and funding that cultural agents rely upon depend heavily on the data they harvest. Much of the economy of liability in the arts sector prioritises data presentation over the reality of the actions themselves. Organisations with substantial resources can easily produce convincing data, whilst independent or marginalised practitioners, restricted by limited capacity, struggle to document their work. This dynamic explains the frequent discrepancy between lived grassroots experience and institutional narratives, allowing well-resourced entities to convince policymakers they are driving cultural transformation, even when the reality on the ground contradicts their claims.

Data collection functions as capital. Whilst it can leverage advocacy for marginalised communities, it can also be abused by those in power to fuel discriminatory initiatives. As noted in **The Forgotten Data Lab** workshop report, participants face a constant tension between the necessity of data collection and the ethical imperative to protect individual privacy. They highlighted competing pressures: securing funding, protecting communities, meeting capitalist productivity metrics, maintaining ethical truthfulness, and coping with strict time and skill constraints.

The workshop report, authored by Laura (ATF), claims the following objective was achieved:

Reflection on data in cultural work: A shift from "data for certainty" to "data for connection," aligning cultural work with the needs of each one rather than institutional pressure. Participants deepened their understanding of what counts as data and why subtle signals matter. Rather than treating data as fixed, numerical, or funder-driven, the workshop opened the door to a broader repertoire: emotional signals, quiet gestures, absences, tensions, and relational dynamics.

However, this administrative mode of reporting exemplifies "evidence over facts". There is no objective way to know if participants' perspectives shifted or if practices changed. Ironically, the report replicates the very bureaucratic pressures it critiques, having been produced purely to satisfy the project coordinator and funding bodies. Whilst it contains valuable insights — noting that "transformation in cultural practice is not only about measurable outcomes, but about attentive care, ethical responsibility, and curiosity toward the unseen" — it ultimately prioritises data that serves stakeholders over the actual process participants undergo.

Whilst the report speaks with absolute certainty, there is no singular way to enact cultural transformation. Many within the sector intentionally avoid the term "industry" to signal their refusal to capitulate to neoliberal market forces. Nonetheless, rejecting mainstream market mechanisms often merely produces an alternative, underground market. Underground movements are never entirely free of forms, rules, and structures. Because no system can process everything, what passes through its mechanisms is always selective. Consequently, demands to abolish existing systems — whether patriarchy, capitalism, or funding bodies — do not eliminate structure; they merely propose alternative systems. Abolition itself is a coordinated system, and it remains entirely data-dependent.

Accessing the spaces that are dedicated to accessibility

The **Knowledge Roundtable** workshop in Riga (2025) took place at the Horse Room at Riga Cirks. The Horse Room is a performance space that might be described as a black box, although it is neither particularly boxy nor as level as many black boxes are. It has a few pillars dividing it into subsections, with significant differences in floor levels, all connected by stairs. The room has no natural light, and the only proposed lighting for the session was glaring-white LED stage lighting at a fixed, intense brightness. Only after persistent requests was it possible, with the assistance of the technical team at Riga Cirks, to alter the lights to a warmer, arguably more welcoming glow.

The **Reflection Workshop** in Riga (2025) took place in the Tiger Room on the second floor of Rīgas Cirks. The room, though warmly welcoming, was only accessible via a flight of stairs. This immediately highlighted a practical and ethical consideration for workshops of this nature: accessibility. Physical barriers can limit participation, and this experience underlined the need for organisers to insist on fully accessible spaces for future sessions.

When organising a knowledge roundtable within CTM, we must examine our decisions about the spaces we invite people into — physically, socially, and symbolically.

The sentiment in CTM was generally that of "the show must go on" or "we do not have other choices". The project's premise is rather radical. It raises a serious question: can we indeed transform the unjust culture in our contexts? It would perhaps be suitable for the project to adopt a less yielding approach at least sometimes and, at times, not let "the show go on". Proclaiming to ignite, usher and sustain cultural transformation requires a certain aporia (a state of confusion, puzzlement, or misalignment) as a transitory stage of cultural shift. Sometimes, before a realignment, we have to stay with the trouble (Haraway, 2016) and not stick to the flow of doing. Sometimes not doing is the best course of action.

In the Knowledge Roundtable workshop in Riga, Mira (AoC, 404) reinforced that accessibility is also about autonomy — designing contexts and experiences so people can engage without needing to ask for assistance.

As described at length in the Access and accessibility part of the Main Findings chapter (page 174), in the article Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Accessibility (IETM, 2020), I suggest that accessibility be perceived as a huWOman right. What if accessibility were not something of privilege or advantage but simply a default? Working in a strict system, a cultural transformation would have to go against the grain. Perhaps if CTM were to strictly employ accessibility practices, which indeed ensure that all the spaces where its activities take place are accessible to people of different abilities, it would have to **refuse** to work in certain places or to proceed with certain activities. Clearly refusing to proceed with the plan would also have significant consequences in a context such as a Creative Europe project. However, it is important, even if only for the manifestive proclamation, to enunciate this as an option. Wouldn't that be a transformation? If the practice of cultural transformation is reserved only for certain situations and generally involves avoiding confrontations and discomfort, it makes it impossible for the URCs to exercise the trust that is vital to their participation, as has been noted numerous times in this publication.

At the end of the Knowledge Roundtable Workshop in Riga (2025), I offered two ideas to the participants, coming from my own observations and process in the workshop and CTM:

Do not be afraid to cause harm

This is, of course, not promoting or insisting on violence in any way, shape or form. On the contrary, this is inviting us, those who can, to be the necessary wall to block the violence and violations that people in URCs have been experiencing thus far. Stopping the flow of discrimination and marginalisation would cause some harm to what has been, and to the way things have been done. I utterly oppose violence or violent opposition. We need to be careful and caring. We need to be sensitive and attentive, but also willing to confront the systems that have led us to the current reality, which, for many people in URCs, only presents increasing challenges and threats through current political processes and events across Europe and beyond.

Invite childlike play and playfulness into our processes

Being open to unpredictable processes, allowing the wander of the journey to navigate us to unfamiliar places, falling deeply into a tunnel filled with possibilities and potentialities, allowing our imagination to inspire us and encourage us, accepting our desires and needs also to be motivated by joy and enjoyment without feeling ashamed or guilty about it.

These suggest a different way to perceive the role and responsibilities of a project such as CTM. Refusing to work in spaces that are not broadly accessible might cause some "harm" simply because it would **prevent the machinery of convention from working as smoothly as it is used to,** perhaps as it wants to. However, **the smooth operation of the machine of convention depends on the suffering of URCs.** So perhaps to truly bring about a cultural transformation, some harm needs to be made. Not to people, to systems.

Methodologies of connection

It is invaluable to acknowledge that epistemological presumptions deeply shape the methods we choose to connect and communicate with communities. If we wish to connect with individuals who are not present in "the room", we cannot rely on the very communication methods dictated by "the room". As Audre Lorde famously observed in 1979, *"the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"*. In the **Casual Interpersonal Connections** section on reaching out to the local community, particularly the practices that the PMs and AoCs at Zō developed (see Practices That Worked in CTM page 209 – 219), we learn about the challenges of cultivating connections and relationships with URCs in a "professional context". In his book *Betraying Ambition* (2017), Diego Agulló invites us to trace the lineage of the term "professional" and, through doing so, reflect on the expectations and formulations we carry regarding who a "professional artist" is and what art-making is expected to look like. If we continue to practise the methods that guard these rigid formulations of who an artist is and what their lives should resemble, we actively reinforce the fence that keeps URCs excluded from the "professional" arts and cultural field. In that sense, CTM — and particularly the AoCs and PMs — have done extraordinary work in employing alternative communication tools, strategies, dynamics and forms to ensure that this separation fence is dismantled, or at least that an inviting gap is opened so URCs can enter.

"I hope we will keep working like that also after CTM, because it is working. I like this horizontality. While there is still a hierarchy in the broad sense of cultural operation in Catania and more broadly in the arts and culture field, it feels like we have been able to enable and practice a significant layer of horizontality and equality in our work."
(Sēgolēne, PM Zō, Spring 2026)

In a conversation with Fariba (PM, BRU), she shared information about BRU's process of developing a reporting system for internal discriminatory incidents. They instituted this system to establish a contingency plan so that, in the event of an unpleasant or harmful situation, people know they have an address, someone to talk to who can assist them, and someone to follow up. The work truly never ends. BRU has evidently been dedicated to anti-discrimination work prior to and during CTM, and has developed and employed multiple practices that broaden and deepen community-conscious, heterogeneous artistic practices.

> Working in anti-discrimination, diversity, accessibility, or however you want to name it, is a continuous and ever-changing process. It has no end because it is always in relation to life and real-time experience. It is context-based, and context is not only place but also time. As time unfolds, so should the work we do on dismantling the frameworks and infrastructures that inflict discrimination and injustice on marginalised communities.

Care as practice

On the one hand, working with AoCs and participant groups from URCs requires a certain sensitivity and attentiveness. It demanded the development of care practices that extended to both the AoCs and the local communities with whom they and the CoCs worked.

"In Mira's work, care showed up through long conversations and listening sessions with siblings of people with disabilities, where the process itself shaped the material. In Farila's workshops, care was in the repetition and slowness of carving sessions with participants from different diasporic backgrounds. In Kseniya's project, care was also about constant adaptation and communication with artists under very different, often fragile conditions, including wartime realities."
(Laura, ATF, Spring 2026)

At the same time, when care is practised, there must be caregivers. We must remain equally attentive to the labour of caregiving itself. This is highlighted by Mira (AoC, 404) in her reference to changes in Belgian law designed to better support caregivers, thereby disrupting gender-based legislative discrimination in the workplace. It is also evident in relation to the distribution of power, authority, and agency within the CTM, specifically among the PMs and AoCs, as well as between the latter and the ATF.

During the CTM, facilitators often had to negotiate the intention to offer safer spaces, caretaking, and participant support on the one hand, whilst remaining cautious about relying on the exhaustion of other "human resources" — namely, the facilitators themselves.

If care is a practice and we aspire to practise it, who is caring for the practice? If people are required to care for individuals, places, and actions, then they, too, must be cared for. A system that is solely, or mostly, concerned with the evidence it creates to prove that a plan has been followed and realised forgets to care for the people executing that plan. We must care in order to practise care. Projects like the CTM must care about caring so they can actively practise it, not only for their "audiences" but for the very people tasked with delivering that care.

In my own movement practice, my collaborators and I work with the notion that "what is done is done", which suggests two key elements: firstly, what is done is already done, meaning we are no longer participating in it and it is merely our minds and corporeal memories that remain occupied by passed time; and secondly, what is done has been done *by someone or something* who participated in the doing of what has been achieved. If care is being administered, and if things are done with care, it means someone or something is doing the caring. **To care is to labour.** To foster and sustain a true cultural transformation, **we must develop a sustainable rhizome of care.**

In-Out

Does the notion of community immediately create hierarchy and exclusion due to the ideations of in (inside) and out (outside)? How does a community organise within the idea of a limit that needs to be crossed to be in or to be out?

One of the instructions articulated by participants of the **Knowledge Roundtable** in Epanomi (2024) was:

Do not try to become an "insider" to ensure that there are no "outsiders".

Martin Heidegger argued that a boundary or limit is not a stopping point where something ends, but rather that from which something begins its presence or unfolding. A limit or boundary can also function as a protective apparatus; indeed, many URCs utilise limits and boundaries to shield themselves from violent and harmful intrusions. What, then, are the **limits of inclusion and social justice** when the physical and psychological safety of certain people depends precisely on the exclusion of others?

Furthermore, who is to be held liable for the imminent threats and pervasive lack of safety that URCs still endure in many parts of Europe? Sometimes communities are formed, by definition, from the outside: an external power or authority declares a community into existence for administrative or even propaganda purposes. Organising individuals, lives, and experiences into rigid groups — and marking them with defining tags such as "underrepresented" — has long been propagated by hegemonic regimes. The very notion of the "underrepresented" implies that the articulating voice possesses a panoramic overview of reality — a totalising perspective from which it determines which stories and experiences are missing. Does this mean we can only designate who is underrepresented if we stand **entirely outside that reality?** Moreover, if we possess the authority to direct who is categorised as underrepresented, does that not confirm we are indeed on the outside looking in?

"Over time, I realised that the Ukrainian context has, in fact, produced its own form of underrepresented community — one that is not easily legible within a European framework. I am referring to military participants. Despite their visibility and the way they are often perceived from the outside as a form of social elite, they are simultaneously placed outside many forms of legal protection, representation, and cultural articulation."

(Kseniya, AoC IZO, Spring 2026)

In my interviews with them in Spring 2025, roughly the middle point of the project, I detected a strong sense amongst the AoCs of sometimes being unheard and unseen both in CTM and within their respective CoCs.

Cultural transformation, or Diversity Work as it is sometimes referred to, requires in-depth processes and the capacity to **work through discomfort,** discrepancies and differences. This requires a broad range of skills, knowledge and experiences. The AoCs proposed that the project structure should have included experienced consultants to work with the CoCs and TEH on the project's implementation. Clearly, there is profound and significant knowledge and experience amongst the team at the CoCs and TEH. As depicted in this publication, they designed, initiated, realised, and evaluated methodologies and practices throughout the project. However, sometimes when we participate in a process, it can be difficult to notice our blind spots, biases, and shortcomings. The AoCs' experience of being unheard and unseen by the CoCs and TEH did not stem from a lack of will or interest; after all, CTM is initiated and realised precisely to see and hear people from URCs. It might have stemmed from the dynamic and velocity of projects such as CTM, with the accountability and responsibility to deliver within the context of large institutions and continental operational systems such as Creative Europe. Therefore, it might be beneficial to have someone with the necessary experience and knowledge of working with URCs but without an obliging role within the project, to accompany those who are realising it and bring to light the **unavoidable cracks** in an endeavour as ambitious as CTM.

"It is crucial to allocate financial resources for team training, inreach processes, and critical reflection on one's own institutional practices and actions"

(Elisabeth Bernroitner, team member at BRU, Spring 2026)

The CTM project structure includes **Diverse Leadership** and **Trans-cultural Competence** workshops, intended to precisely support and further develop knowledge and practice for working with URCs in the arts and culture field. Workshops are a significant format for knowledge production and transfer. However, they might not be sufficient for a foundational transformation, such as the one CTM proposes to implement. The project acknowledged the need for competence development and demonstrated the implementation of these workshop modalities. It also acknowledged the need to allocate resources to create the necessary environments for working with URCs, as demonstrated by Zō's allocation of resources for sign language interpretation. Similar sensitivities and adjustments would also be necessary internally, within the consortium, and in CTM project management.

Core Challenges: Money, Time, and Institutional Specificity

A chronic resource shortage plagues the European arts sector, a reality exacerbated by widespread budget cuts since 2024. Even well-backed initiatives like the Creative Europe-funded CTM project operate under intense systemic strain. This deficit directly impacts human capital, inducing organisational stress and **structurally unhealthy dynamics** that hinder the deep infrastructural changes required to centre marginalised communities genuinely.

Money remains an important mechanism of tangible support in large-scale initiatives. For instance, Dounia (AoC, 404) noted that receiving payment was the primary form of support she recognised from CTM. While she was highly critical of systemic tokenism, her reliance on financial remuneration highlights a complex dynamic of self-tokenisation, where agents from URCs navigate **compromised ethical frameworks out of financial necessity.** Conversely, proper compensation enabled artists to refine their practices, no matter how anti-establishment they were. Fariba (PM, BRU) explained that the CTM budget allowed BRU to pay the highest artist fees they had afforded in years, facilitating the large-scale production of *Spiral Spines by Farila (AoC, BRU)*. Similarly, Zō prioritised directing their budget to support local communities, which actively shaped the planning and execution of GuastaFest. As Elie (AoC, Zō) observed in Spring 2026: *"It feels more concrete to me to use the budget directly to support the communities that wanted to be active participants in the project."*

Building meaningful relationships requires trust, which cannot be rushed. However, the product-oriented art ecology often starves initiatives of **organic time,** forcing them to adhere to **artificial schedules** established during initial project design. This structural rigidity generates anxiety, **turning a well-intentioned framework into a challenging environment** for the very participants it aims to empower.

Evaluating the Cultural Transformation

Achieving systemic change also requires engaging those who are outside our existing networks. This is not necessarily a simple or easy task. It often requires attentiveness and responsiveness to the realities and dynamics of those who are "outside," to better align the form, tone, and means of communication with them. In Spring 2026, Emanuele (AoC, Zō) reported that in the early stages of the project, he encountered mistrust, resistance, and indifference when he attempted to involve people beyond the TEH network and his familiar community. This evolved throughout the project, and Emanuele and the team at Zō developed the necessary ways to connect with communities that had not been closely related to their organisation prior to CTM (see Main Findings on page 173 – 198 and Practices That Worked in CTM on page 209 – 219).

While working with URCs is prioritised, actual participation rates remained low, particularly among institutional gatekeepers and decision-makers. For CTM to achieve its policy-level ambitions, policymakers must be actively brought into these spaces to listen, observe, and engage. To process the transformation across all layers of the arts and culture field, actors from all of them need to be involved. Ambitious structural transformation cannot be achieved by four cultural centres and a single network alone.

Hopefully, as the project approaches its official end (March 2027), the knowledge, methodologies, and relationships developed will continue to resonate in the communities and the arts and culture field, fueling the broader movement.

Igniting and processing significant cultural transformation is an ambitious undertaking. Those dedicated to working with URCs might be encouraged to embark on these large endeavours, motivated by hope and devotion. As this publication points out, there are deeply entrenched systemic hurdles that often exhaust those who are devoted to this task. The hope to really bring about the change, which is so empirically and evidently necessary, can sometimes create the illusion that it is within reach. The work is not linear; it is not chronological; it works as a dynamic cartography or assemblage of moments, events, actions and connections. It is not always possible for those who do the work to notice the shifts in the system and the contexts in which they operate. This can lead to a schism (a disjunction) between the desire to witness the change and the empirical environment. If we are optimistic, we might perceive things more positively; if we are pessimistic, we might perceive things as less accomplished. When the endeavours we embark on are so large, and the labour they require is taxing and demanding, it is difficult to be realistic, to see things "as they are".

It is challenging to find ways to practice self-care in such a large undertaking. It might be difficult to accept a complex process in which our efforts bear fruit in some way but do not necessarily result in the changes and outcomes we had hoped for. To hold this nuanced position, we need to tap into a sense of humility towards ourselves. Many people working in the arts and culture field work wholeheartedly to initiate, realise and process what we deem meaningful or significant to our communities. However, the magnitude of the work that is still to be done can easily overshadow our process, colouring it with pessimism-or optimism bias. How can we both appreciate the fruits of our efforts and still connect with the humbling realisation that perhaps we have not been able to achieve the larger goals we set for ourselves? Donna Haraway called it "staying with the trouble" (2016).

As mentioned in the reference to the conversation with Emanuele from Spring 2026, connecting with those who are not easily or organically part of our endeavours is a complex process that might require reassessing, rewiring, reacting, and reprocessing the media, modes, and content of our actions. This takes time. Time to listen. Time to process. Time to utter. Time to gesture. Time to act. In CTM, it was not always easy to practice this complex humility–remaining dedicated to the large endeavour while also acknowledging the magnitude of the work still to be done–perhaps simply because of the deep devotion to the process and the deep belief in the feasibility of a cultural transformation. The tension between the obligation to fulfil project plans and agreements with funding bodies on the one hand, and the need to allow things to organically evolve as the project was developing its connections to the local URCs and the TEH network, does not leave a lot of room for this grounding practice of self-care, of alignment, of humility. The need to develop project outcomes, meet KPIs, and report what needs to be reported can put a lot of pressure on the project. The request to quantify and solidify (for example in the form of a report) a project that intentionally proposes alternative modes of being-doing with the communities (see Practices That Worked in CTM page 209 – 219) perhaps contributes to the described schism between the project's empirical process and those framed by reporting mechanisms.

I agree that we should celebrate the gains, no matter how small they may be. However, I agree even more with the importance of staring the beast right in the eye and confronting ourselves in the reflection. CTM has done valuable work in developing practices, opening communication channels, sharing knowledge, and calling for action, primarily in CoC contexts and among the TEH membership. However, it has also exposed the depth to which systemic discrimination and discriminatory systems operate, pointing to the magnitude of the work yet to be done if we indeed strive to achieve a cultural transformation.

The Ethics of Space-Making and Terminology

Inviting historically silenced voices into established institutional frameworks triggers complex power negotiations. As Sara Ahmed describes in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), being invited to the table does not change the discriminatory mechanisms that barred entry in the first place. For marginalised groups to express themselves authentically, institutions must possess a genuine will to transform. As Audre Lorde famously stated, *"the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"*. (1984)

In CTM, like in other transnational cooperation projects, a persistent tension existed between the rhetoric of artistic freedom and the rigid deliverables demanded by Creative Europe. This institutional friction manifested early on when certain partners pushed back against using the term 'artist', leading to a shift to 'Agents of Change'. While all AoCs engaged in artistic processes, some rejected the artistic label to avoid what they described as the institutional and elitist hierarchies historically guarded by academia.

Throughout this evolution, the project's vocabulary shifted from generic definitions to **CTM-specific tools of world-making.** However, proximity does not guarantee shared perspective. CTM served as a stark reminder that diverse lived experiences exist even within the same structural reality, underscoring the necessity of strict contextualisation and positionality.

Furthermore, as Pamela (PM Zō) noted: *"We learned that there are prejudices not only from the "outside" of the URC but also that people in the URC possess prejudices towards being a URC." (Spring 2026)*

Internalised biases and labels can restrict collective vision. Championing the struggles of one specific community does not guarantee understanding of another, underscoring the need to acknowledge these prejudices to achieve genuine transformation.

At a partner meeting in July 2026, one of the PMs said, *"Maybe we need to discuss what we mean by social justice".* This, together with the examples, lessons learnt, and practices presented in this publication, can encourage us to continue fostering an inquisitive spirit in language, words, terms, and meaning, rather than solidifying them in objective space and time.

In this publication. I spend time with words. I both believe in and am fascinated by the performative power of words. That is to say, I am interested in how words do things in the world. I believe words, and more generally language, bring things into being. At the same time, I believe words are also arbitrary and detached from the world. I am intrigued by the complexity of how language contributes to reality-making and, at the same time, detaches us from reality.

Going back to the research questions:

During CTM, a lot of knowledge has been cultivated and harvested. Small gestures of change have been practised. Local initiatives and systems have been instituted. Documents have been authored. Connections have been made. Voices have been heard.

Nevertheless, the questions remained questions. Cultural transformation cannot be concluded or summarised; it is simply a process of processes. As this publication suggests, questions are a process. Through trial and experimentation, the CTM consortium has sought to "stay with the trouble" (Haraway, 20216) and to both connect with URCs and perhaps make them and their histories somewhat less underrepresented. At the local level, in the contexts of the CoCs and the TEH network, we might say that change has come. At national and transnational levels, particularly in terms of policy and systemic change, we will need more time, resources, and many more people to make the change truly.

In the following, I will address each of the research questions from the perspective of the now, as we are approaching the end of this publication:

1. In what way can a project realised within the specific framework of Creative Europe ignite and practice the power shift that CTM demands? What conditions are necessary for CTM's demands to become applicable practice?

What the Creative Europe framework offered CTM was the resources to engage people in realising actions and gestures of connection necessary to spark cultural transformation. The conditions required to process a more holistic cultural transformation depend on further resources: improving working conditions in the arts and cultural field, incorporating accessibility into the core of cultural operations, practising care and empathy at organisational and policy levels, relieving the arts and cultural sector from the demand to prove its worth through quantifiable metrics, and developing collective trust in qualitative, empirical, and sensed experiences. Whether there has been a shift in power relations remains an open question, as we may only be able to detect such shifts over time. Processes have been ignited within CTM; whether they result in lasting power shifts depends on the assemblage and collection of elements that persist and prevail beyond the project timeframe.

2. What are the capacities of a medium-scale Creative Europe Cooperation project to incite a cultural transformation beyond the people and organisations in the consortium and those who come in direct contact with the project activities?

As a transnational cooperation project, CTM was able to create a dynamic environment for the cultivation and transfer of knowledge and experience.

While operating in different contexts, the CoCs were able to exchange knowledge, broadening the range of methods and practices available to them in their endeavours. This context also allowed TEH members to connect with CTM processes and participate in transnational workshops and activities. The transnational aspect of the project remedied some of the isolation and alienation that can be sparked by cultural transformation work when undertaken by a single entity (whether an individual or an organisation) within a given context. Connecting with others dedicated to similar processes and activities simultaneously encouraged and empowered those taking on the role of igniting transformation.

Regarding the extent of the affects generated by CTM processes, this remains an open question. As noted throughout this publication, it could be argued that many seeds have been planted and sparks kindled, which may evolve into a larger, more expansive cultural movement; however, we must also acknowledge that CTM affects were primarily reported within the local contexts of the CoCs, the internal dynamics of the consortium, and the network meetings of TEH.

3. What are the most stubborn hurdles standing in the way of the aspired cultural transformation? What are the conditions or preconditions that make them stubborn?

There are systemic hurdles that impede the flow of endeavours that aspire to remain attentive and responsive to the organic processes of culture-making. A political arena that offers little to no care for the arts and cultural field perpetuates an unsustainable reality, in which those dedicated to art and culture-making must also take on the burden of creating the very environments and realities in which that work can occur. The field relies on an impossible amount of labour, causing many individuals, organisations, and communities to suffer under its weight.

The complexity of facilitating heterogeneous environments is not easily reconciled with production and reporting mechanisms that are strictly product- and report-oriented. When considering access — whether physical, political, social, or environmental — it becomes clear that even when a system addresses one dimension of inaccessibility, it may continue to operate in discriminatory ways in other dimensions.

Operating with and through language requires us to practise greater attentiveness and care regarding the power dynamics that emerge from the terminology we select and how we use it. Systems often construct barriers through the deployment of specific languages (verbal and otherwise); supporting underrepresented communities (URCs) in learning these languages is one way the arts and cultural sector can enable them to navigate these environments more effectively.

While numerous conditions contribute to making these hurdles so stubborn, it remains difficult to establish direct causal links.

4. In what way would the proclaimed transformation be embodied and embedded in the contexts the project engages with? What are the affirming signs that indeed a transformation is underway?

The empirical signs that a transformation is underway would likely include the emergence of practices characterised by greater care, respect, and appreciation for those who have traditionally been underrepresented — without relying on heavy, unsustainable labour. If these practices are embodied and reterritorialised (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972), they become incorporated into the organic development of culture, thereby requiring less strain over time.

Pedagogy and epistemology — both what we learn and how we learn — play a crucial role in what different environments and cultures can potentiate. Furthermore, mapping a radical future whose seeds are rooted in the present, while possessing the capacity to navigate through it — and knowing that others can navigate it with equal ease and agency — serves as a strong indicator that transformation is indeed taking place.

Findings from CTM demonstrate that community responses point to the necessity and efficacy of these proposed processes. Individuals from URCs have begun to engage actively, while a broader cohort of team members across the CoCs have started participating in dialogues around social justice and cultural transformation. When an utterance or intervention is reciprocated, that reciprocity signals that a transformation is unfolding.

Outro

Ultimately, demands to abolish existing structures entirely do not leave a vacuum; they merely replace old frameworks with alternative systems. Abolition itself functions as a coordinated, data-dependent system that relies on its own selective filtration. CTM has been a practice of attempting or an attempt to practice. In some way, it has been much like life, in which we constantly oscillate between a plan and an experience. Perhaps an organic, lifelike process is all we can commit to. And then, what is done is done. Over time, we will be a we.

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