OPEN SPACE ON ARTS AND DEMOCRACY

Report from IETM Autumn Plenary Meeting in Budapest, October 6th-7th, 2015

by Vassilka Shishkova

Open space on Arts and Democracy

Open Space is a powerful, self-organising open meeting format that enables participants to create their own agenda in accordance with a specific theme. More information about Open Space can be found here.

6 November, 2015 - 14:00 - 17:30

On the first of two Open Space sessions with the theme of Democracy and the Arts, we looked specifically at:

- the place of the performing arts in democracy: what is our place today as artists, producers, cultural workers, funders and other stakeholders?

- what are our strengths and weaknesses, our threats and opportunities?

7 November, 2015 - 10:00 - 17:30

For the second of two Open Space sessions, which lasted a full day we focussed on:

- democracy: what can we do to instigate change?

- how can we move forward?

- what can we actually achieve?

- how do we transform weaknesses into strengths, threats into opportunities?

Facilitators:

- Esther Charron - Pôles Magnétiques, Canada
- Gary Hills – Independent, Belgium / UK

Picture: IETM Plenary Meeting Budapest 2015 (© Balázs Turós)

Introduction: what this report is and what it is not. And why

The current report takes the endeavour to capture the mood and sense of the intense conversations and sharing of ideas in an inspiring community of over 300 individuals from the performing arts and cultural field. The IETM Budapest Open Space sessions lasted for a cumulative period of 10 hours and comprised 19 discussions on various topics from the arts and democracy domain. The report is based on the presentations each discussion group representatives have delivered at three reporting sessions. The report is kept as close as possible to these presentations. There are also a few parts presenting the Open space format technology and the reporter's short inclusive observation remarks.

Reading the whole report from beginning to end would not add much to your understanding of the overall atmosphere of the Open Space sessions.

Instead, you might pick a topic that has caught your interest from the contents list (page 4) and see what thoughts, doubts and ideas this specific discussion group has shared with us.

Enjoy your Open Space!

The Open Space meeting rules and principles

The Open Space on Arts and Democracy was held in 3 two-hour sessions at the IETM Budapest meeting: one on 6 November and two on 7 November. In the beginning of each session the moderators present the technology and the rules of an open space meeting to the participants.

Open space is a self organized meeting where people make their own agenda. It is open, organic and natural. Its agenda includes those topics that are meaningful and important to the participants; whatever they may be.

The Open space is ruled by four principles, one law and one rule:

- Whoever comes are the right people: this means everyone who is passionate about an issue may suggest it for discussion; it also means that everyone can join any discussion group.

- Whenever it starts it's the right time;

- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have;

- When it's over it is over: the discussion ends whenever the topic is exhausted.

- The Law of two feet (The Law of mobility): a person may be joining or leaving groups whenever he/she wishes to.

- The moderators decided on this occasion to implement the Chatham House rule, which is not in the original set of Open Space rules. When this rule is applied, 'participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed'.

The participants were invited to suggest an issue they feel passionate about. Those who suggested the topic were responsible for moderating the discussion group, for taking notes and for reporting back to everyone on the conclusions the group

Word cloud of the topics discussed

reached. A more structured kind of presentation comprising into five sentences and three keywords was implemented on the second day of the Open Space.

19 participants suggested topics for discussion, one of them anonymously.

Topics and discussions at the Open Space meeting

On the first Open Space day, the guiding theme was what the place of performing arts in democracy is, what are our strengths and weaknesses, our threats and opportunities as artists, producers, cultural workers, funders and other stakeholders. The second day of Open Space directed the discussion to more specific questions like how can change be instigated, what can actually be achieved through the arts, how to transform weaknesses into strengths, threats into opportunities.

The participants suggested and discussed 19 topics, 8 on the first day, 6 on the first session of the second day and 5 on the last session (originally 7 of which two merged in a common discussion and presentation).

All the topics found their disputers. Each discussion group counted at least 10-15 debating people for most of the time. It was uncommon that a discussion reached conclusion before the final time set.

The debates were ardent, challenging the establishment, critical but constructive in their conclusions. If we briefly examine the wording of the topics (Figure 2), we would drive to the conclusion that the Open Space participants were predominantly solution oriented ('how' instead of 'why' or 'what') and were mostly interested in the art(s) and democracy but also in processes and procedures (of applying democracy) and what is wrong with them and in people, identity, form and contents.

Looking deeper into each topic's presentation would give us a more detailed picture of what is important and how change can be achieved according to IETM people.

Contents

Word_Stats

1. how - 9 times (11.8%)
2. democracy - 6 times (7.9%)
3. art - 4 times (5.3%)
4. democratic - 4 times (5.3%)
5. arts - 3 times (3.9%)
6. wrong - 3 times (3.9%)
7. process - 3 times (3.9%)
8. without - 2 times (2.6%)
9. people - 2 times (2.6%)
10. build - 2 times (2.6%)
11. diverse - 2 times (2.6%)
12. representative - 2 times (2.6%)
13. leadership - 2 times (2.6%)
14. form - 2 times (2.6%)
15. content - 2 times (2.6%)
16. should - 2 times (2.6%)
17. plays - 2 times (2.6%)
18. political - 1 time (1.3%)
19. don't - 1 time (1.3%)
20. claim - 1 time (1.3%)
21. yourself - 1 time (1.3%)
22. need - 1 time (1.3%)
23. identity - 1 time (1.3%)
24. tool - 1 time (1.3%)
25. whole - 1 time (1.3%)
26. responsibility - 1 time (1.3%)
27. place - 1 time (1.3%)
28. celebration - 1 time (1.3%)
29. everything - 1 time (1.3%)
30. shit - 1 time (1.3%)

Word statistics of the topics discussed

***Topics discussed in Session 1,
6 November 2015***

The opening session brought the key concepts and the big questions and concerns of the social and political agenda. All participants tuned in quickly. The discussions were kept constructive although passionate and vivid.

- ● ***Self demising democracy: what to do if democratic procedures turn in favour of rising fascism?***

Group members shared various examples from different countries and continents: Europe, USA, New Zealand… The key question was whether democracy is values or procedures and how we can make a distinction between democracy as procedures and democratic values.

Another topic in this group was plurality and how, through democratic procedures, the representation of smaller groups has been gradually decreased and they have fewer opportunities for political participation.

If democracy is guided by values, what happens when its values change? For example, due to its current majority values Europe fosters the refugees now but what will happen when the values change (through democratic procedures) and lynching 'foreigners' would be accepted as appropriate thing to do?

The role of the artist in this situation of uncertain value conventions is to be a living example to defend democracy (of what democracy is). Art as expression was ardently discussed as an opportunity to make a change. Art could be regarded as space where people can meet trying to establish a dialogue.

The extent to which art institutions could challenge the authorities and the hypothetic consequences of this disobedience was discussed, while being dependent on financial support from these authorities.

The group pointed out artistic activism as a tool to fight political and economic injustice. Artistic actions are still sporadic and isolated, without communication with people in larger European context. Certain concordance through time and across countries, a kind of shared memory of artistic disobedience would be of help.

No magic solution of the problem with rising fascism was found but hopefully the discussion has triggered some optimism that art is part of the answer.

- ● ***Do we need more 'identity' and what can art do about that?***

The next group gave a definite response: we do not need *more* identity at all. Then they elaborated on what identity is and how can art relate to it.

Identity, meaning 'the qualities, beliefs, etc., that make a particular person or group different from others' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) is a label (relational and contextual) given and/ or adopted by an individual or a group in relation to the self and to others.

There is the *national* identity, constructed on the basis of culture; of family values, religion, history, language, etc. Our governments often (mis)use it to oppose one nation to another and we definitely don't need more 'identity' of this kind. National identity can be not only built on conservative type of values like religion, history, family traditions but also on tolerance, open-mindedness, etc.

There is also *individual identity* which is a pledge for sanity: to know who you are. This is the identity we need but the problem is how we use it and why: to define yourself or to exclude the different one.

We have *multiple identities* in different contexts. Choosing the appropriate one transforms identity into a process. We value the freedom to choose one's identity and the freedom to stage another identity (as crucial element of modern democracy).

What *arts can do* in relation to identity (be it national, group or individual), at first place, is to constantly question it. Arts can propose a different agenda and push forward different identities and new identity models. Arts can also give a voice to the other – art can be a platform for different voices.

What we as artists strive to do is to pull our audiences out of the comfort zone. This can trigger the process of re-identification instead of simply using identity labels.

A reviving experience may be to hear the Other telling our (hi)story. [For example, in an Eastern Orthodox European country a young teacher in history who is Muslim and from Iraqi origin has become a prominent public figure]

We have to be cautious and critical with the newly constructed 'European identity' which the EU is forcing us to advertise, through the requirements of its various funding schemes.

- ● ***There is no point of making work for the people only with people***

The discussion group changed the topic to: There is no point in *only* making work *for* the people, but also *with* the people. Thus the core of the discussion was to define the meaning of *with*.

Various examples of community-engaged (and community engaging) art which opened up traditional art spaces or staged art in public spaces were quoted:

- a play that involves a whole community as writers, actors in a piece that expresses their community;

- an opera that, for artistic reasons, sets out to engage the experience of the most disintegrated members of the community and ends up feeding them, counselling them, befriending them and crowd-funding them to become paid members of the community;

- a feminist cabaret that invited audiences to participate by eating vulva-shaped cupcakes and putting messages into a box with the innuendo of the words 'put your hand in my slot';

- a school project that challenges children's beliefs that 'gypsies smell' by showing them 'Jacob doesn't smell' and thus their beliefs start to shift;

- a large event inspired by the 'Wizard of Oz' that enables 75 women and girls from different backgrounds to come together and share their dreams and dance in a flash-mob alongside people they would never normally meet.

All the examples above come to show that we as artists and as citizens, in or outside democratic processes, are not changing the world *but being the change*. We are there to enable voices to be heard, to create safe spaces for ideas to be shared and for communities to come together. We can encourage people who think that they have no influence on democracy to experience being part of something, sharing a thought, asking a question, finding *confidence and hope* which in itself is powerful.

- **How can art be a democratic tool without the whole responsibility of democracy?**

The discussion group attempted to delve deeper into the strengths and weaknesses, the good things and the bad things in the complicated relationship between democracy (as a state governance system) and the (publicly funded) arts.

The background of the discussion was the current situation in which public funding bodies expect the arts to contribute to the overall democracy: by giving all citizens access to arts and culture, by broadening participation in arts, by helping solve social problems and so on. All these democracy amplification functions have entered the artistic agenda and are affecting every activity in our job.

Democracy is a double-edged sword. The current system often leads to art's instrumentalisation. We could see some opportunities in this instrumentalisation: when one applies for funding, they could get the money simply by ticking the correct boxes and not bothering to delve deeper into their application's motivation. The threat is it decreases the value of art to a culture of pleasing everybody, hence is 'shooting yourself in the foot'. At the extreme, most of the money from public funds is given to people who tick the boxes and not for the art piece in its own sake.

As artists we will defend democracy, but we don't want to be told how to do it. We are not willing to allocate a considerable share of our funding to activities aimed at demonstrating that we defend democracy in the 'right' way instead of making art. We will defend democracy in a way artists do it, not by ticking the boxes the administration has in mind for us. Listing threats and opportunities:

Defining art can be a threat: if you categorise too much you can end up with cut budgets for avant-garde 'arty' art. It can offer opportunities too: defining art can sharpen the arguments for arts value. Art is an intrinsic human condition, it is a specific language therefore it is essential to support the learning and producing content (art) in this language.

Democracy can be a threat. If the people decide to cut budget for arts and culture in favour of entertainment or science or healthcare following a democratic procedure, there is not much that can be done. At the same time, democracy is an opportunity to create art through public funding.

Money / funding as threat imposes a passive aggressive controlling system on arts.

Not having any funding is an opportunity. It gives you the freedom to choose how to make your art. If you don't use funding you are free. Well, with funding, you can actually make art.

Kids are a threat if viewed as clients that have to be pleased; for example new public management sees students in universities as clients. Kids are also an opportunity because they don't judge avant-garde art, by experiencing art from young age they learn to question society and are open to express themselves.

- **Is there any place for celebration when everything is so shit?**

The group started off from grasping the perception of shit: is everything indeed shit or we just feel it is? If you can feel it's shit and still be in this shit, aren't you then kept in by an oppressive system that is designed to make you feel everything is shit?

The group discussed whether it is our responsibility as artists and creative practitioners to celebrate what is good, what is working, what is progressive. Artists are optimists by heart but is it OK to just have fun? That moved on to the idea of *celebration as an agent for change.*

Celebration can actually provoke a reaction and artists can use this to project a ray of hope.

That somehow brought the idea to actually create more shit, be more disruptive, *amplify the shit for the people to actually notice it.*

Then the group reasoned whether creative energy, the act of creativity is actually celebratory in its core. If this be the case, is then anger the only means of movement and change? How might we *use celebration to change* ourselves, our communities, our society?

For example, there was a non-European protest where people were smiling and singing, and dancing to protest.

It is not always about the darkness, it is sometimes about finding the light. There is a strong n*eed to celebrate your identity*: who you are, where do you come from. Thus celebration can be an act of resistance but an act of assertion as well, showing that alternative ways of living are possible.

Some of the participants in the group pointed out they had chosen this particular topic because it had no 'democracy' or 'politics' in the title. Democracy has become an empty word and we need to step out and find an unusual place that enables fresh thinking. Celebration is not just confetti or a party; it can be redefined as a political act on behalf of the audience or with the audience.

The process of redefining what the celebration means for the community and with the community will create something appropriate to its context. A similar thing happened at a train station in Europe where refugees were kept. Musicians came along and started to make music and other artists were involved too.

This brings back /// confirms /// the idea that there is a need for celebration as an act of visibility of community and once again; and it brings the reason making celebration part of our artistic practice.

- **What if your art is political and you don't claim yourself you are**

The presentation started with a pledge 'Please stop criticism on 'Holiday on Ice'!' – the show being given as an example of a non-political work.

The discussion started from the attempt to define what political art is today and with the notion that political work might be used in order to assist artist get funding support (i.e. functions as an instrument not as artistic form and content).

A participant in the group admitted the guilt of not liking to do community work and engage socially. It is not an easy thing to confess because you can be blamed in not being political enough. What kind of artist are you when you are not political? Actually, living in a society makes you political, everyone is political. Unless for example you are living alone in the woods, doing your own thing; but then it is even more political, isn't it?

It is a matter of right words. Something might be considered political under certain terms and non-political under others.

Nowadays the EU is all the more encouraging political work and community work. It seems less interested in someone who is just being an artist, doing their thing, experimenting with the form. New art forms in performing arts contain meaning that can be even more political than the pieces that bear the label 'political work'.

The group discussed the preconditions for EU encouraging mostly the social aspect in performing arts and let the assumption that they might spring out of the capitalist or the neoliberal ideology. The situation might also be a result of politicians consulting mainly the academia on matters of arts and culture. The academia people are not into practice, therefore the politicians don't get the word directly from the
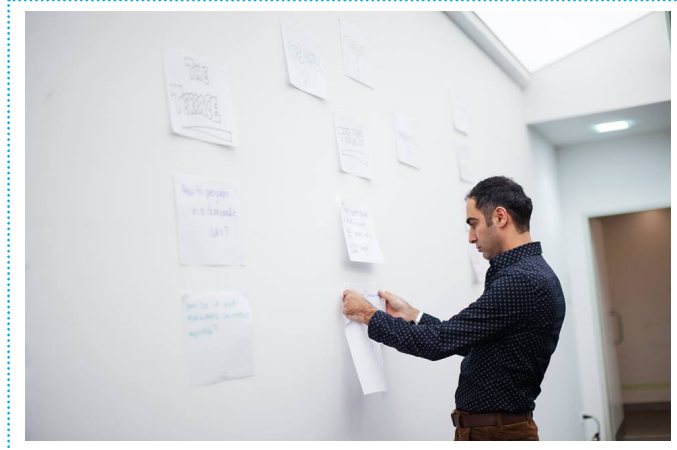
Picture: _IETM Plenary Meeting Budapest 2015_ (© Balázs Turós)

artists. In conclusion, artists are forced to claim their work being political even though they would rather not label it this way.

- **How to program in a democratic way?**

The discussion started with a challenge to programmers in the group to share how they program in a democratic way: do they use a network or some other participatory way. For example, there was a case of online programming that let the audience choose what they want to see.

The main goal of the group was to explain what programming is and whether it is supposed to represent the curators (their views, taste, identity), the audience or the funding body. It was considered important to question the role of the programmer, the curator. This is an expert figure but do we trust them, can we rely entirely on their expertise when we want a democratic type of programming?

There is also the need to question of democracy itself. Democracy is a matter of choice and perspective, it is a relative concept. For example, some refugees that have fled from Cuba, reached Russia and then moved to Hungary which they find – in comparison - a free and democratic country.

Through the debate, the group reached to the conclusion that a democratic programming has to reflect society, to represent diversity, to educate people, to build potential to think by ourselves.

How could we do it? It is important to carry the debate further and to study how do we maintain the freedom of speech in performing arts and how do we reflect it into programming. Our responsibility as artists is to think outside the box and to constantly question and challenge ourselves and the way we are working.

- **How do we move forward without moving?**

How can we shift to a new paradigm of practice to respond effectively to Climate change?

This issue was defined by the group as bigger than democracy. It is vital for everyone to everyone to understand what actually the scientific facts and proofs of climate change mean and how their life would be affected by it. There are a lot of very depressing facts about sea levels rising, climate change refugees that will be coming because their homes and homeland will be irreversibly destroyed. Flying and travel is a

big problem for carbon emissions…

The question is what is our responsibility as individuals and artists, what can we do? There is some hope. The number of arts examples addressing the environmental crisis is growing. There are arts examples of localism, of doing things without materials, of recycling, of insisting that no one flies, of 'rehearsing the future' by doing radical acts with very limited resources: artists toured Australia by bicycle; rural touring networks in UK; Italian tours that deepen engagement with local community by staying longer and meeting the people, etc.

Arts have power to inspire, to transform perceptions, to engage people in issues and to excite with impossible dreams. Arts can lead people to new imagination for a positive future. Arts have to keep this issue on the agenda and question how climate change relates and will affect democracy.

We have to ask ourselves some quite practical questions that would help us move forward without moving. Could we as IETM encourage lower carbon print public transport like trains instead of planes when possible? Can we all not fly for the next meeting?

Picture: still from the film of the IETM Plenary Meeting Budapest 2015

Presentation of the topics from Session 2 and Session 3, 7 November 2015

The second day offered the Open space participants the opportunity to discuss over 12 new topics of interest. They can be generalized into four major themes:

The bigger concepts:

- Majority is wrong. Equality is wrong. Democracy is wrong.
- Volksgemeinschaft. Democracy is over. Art is dead.

Artistic content:

- Free to express what? Opportunities of…
- Why are plays with female leads still considered women's plays?
- Back to the basics. The revolt of reduction.
- Form or content? Content vs form? Aesthetics as democracy

Arts organisations functioning and 'democracy' as 'procedures':

- How to find balance between democratic process and efficiency in the process of creating a new venue for arts?
- How can we create a transparent decision making process?
- Forming coalitions?

Arts organisations' integrity and 'democracy' as 'values':

- How can we be the change in how we organize ourselves as sector. Can we practice what we preach?
- Democracy means that everyone should be represented. What is the demographics in this room? Who should be here and is not?
- How can we build diverse and representative leadership in the arts? 1 and 2

In terms of presentation, the topics were to be characterised by 3 keywords, and some of them: in five main sentences.

- **_The bigger concepts_**

Following the critical stance in the discussions from the previous day, these two topics question the core concepts of democracy and art.

Majority is wrong. Equality is wrong. Democracy is wrong.

We have to redefine democracy because it is simply not working anymore. Is democracy really perfect or is it just the best term we have come up with until now? We are using democracy as a life-jacket. The wrong size life-jacket.

The question is whether we need to find new ways to redefine democracy or we need to find new systems. Does this consensus of the majority really work? In reality, there is no majority of people but majorities of opinions; people are much more than that and we should not equate people to opinions.

If we follow the rule of the majority, then the minority voices would be excluded, suppressed (in this case, what happens to democracy?). If we decide that every voice is important, then how we include these voices (and how does democracy operate?).

Language and aesthetics act as to define majorities and minorities. Speaking of art and artists, when people are working in a minority position, they feel less responsibility towards the majority and that helps them focus on the creation process.

Equality seems to be rather relative concept of democracy. We should emphasise on having really equal opportunities. Our development of human beings is neither equal nor democratic. We are brought up by being taught what to do, what to think. We are not equal because each has a different expertise but we should strive to have equal opportunities to express ourselves.

At the end, the discussion group tried to come up with a new term for democracy: _Bureaucracy, takingcareocracy, shareocracy_ were some of the suggestions. But what if not the first part of the word requires finding a substitute? The second part, _krátos_ in

Greek means 'rule', 'dominate'. What if this has to be changed?

Three keywords: _majority, equality, demo-?_

Volksgemeinschaft. Democracy is over. Art is dead.

(Volksgemeinschaft, meaning 'people's community' was a Nazi concept of a new society with artificially constructed common identity).

The topic in five sentences:

Everything is a lie. We need to explore ecologies of the mind. What is transparency and development? Everybody needs to be a fool. Resistance is never futile.

Three keywords: sensitivity, dialectic, 'meta-omorfiá' (Greek for 'beyond beauty').

- **_Artistic content_**

There could hardly be anything of bigger concern to an artist than the freedom of expression, the quality of the artistic work and the essence of their art.

Free to express what? And how?

The first allusion the group made was with freedom of speech in mass media and the different kinds and levels of censorship that are imposed on media even in the democratic countries. (An example was given with Scottish newspapers bought by a US media corporation that is against Scottish independence; hence, those newspapers didn't cover all the opinions on the topic in an equal way.)

Listing several alarming examples of restricted freedom of expression in the arts led to the question how to deal with this threat. One of the options pointed out was to _cooperate internationally._ Unfortunately, the problem seems to be global. For example, a participant stated that in Northern Europe one would experience difficulties to get funding for their art unless it is somehow dealing with issues of gender, homosexuality and transsexuality.

A way to evade the funder inflicted repression on artistic freedom is to act independently. In fact, many artists nowadays choose not to seek funding but to finance their own work. This is an option for smaller scale projects. When you need a bigger venue, team, resources _independent self-funding_ would most often not suffice.

The opportunity of _crowd-funding_ was discussed but again this could be a solution for smaller range projects.

The Norwegian fund was mentioned as an option for Europe based artists if their own funding bodies and politicians are tough to deal with.

It was suggested that, speaking of freedom of expression, the borders of this freedom have to be outlined. We should be able to discuss everything, but there are certain sensitive issues, like the issues of religion for example, that we should deal with in a sensitive way.

Three keywords: _national, local, liberty_; additional: careful, political governance, international cooperation, alternative funding.

Why are plays with female leads still considered women's plays?

The prejudice of women in theatre and how they are expected to act and be is one of the key problems that we are facing.

Diversity has been a big topic at this IETM meeting and we need to admit that gender inequalities are still there along with all the modern inequalities in our society.

We are talking about breaching the gap, so we need to talk how to help mothers stay artistic; how to enable people make the right artistic choices for them.

We have to be aware of the specific situation of trans-women and all the gender spectrum and the vocabulary associated with it.

Let's smash the patriarchy and in doing so maybe we could help smashing racism, capitalism and other various of the –isms.

Three keywords: *context, representation, power*

Back to the basics. The revolt of reduction.

The starting point of the discussion was what we make to meet the audience: how we find it, how we reach it; the accessibility of the audiences outside the big cities. That brought the discussion to the subject of ethics and aesthetics. When you communicate your aesthetic values to the audience you share your ethical guiding principles too.

It is essential to find a way to reach our audience without being didactic and without our art being instrumental in some way. Paradoxically, staging more basic, minimal art could be a valid means to reaching the (untrained) audience. Being more basic doesn't mean that one has to give up contemporary art techniques. You don't need to be simplistic in order to be understood by even an unseasoned audience.

The group discussed the ways you can be political (in content) within the frame of minimal the performance art form. Furthermore, it is not easy to stage out your political views when the majority is not on your side. Art can be really powerful through its sheer vulnerability. For example, a stand-up comedian only has a mike but can make a huge difference to the audience just by using a voice. People do relate to the vulnerability of the artist. You can start with something local in scale and context and then transform it into something meaningful to larger groups and to society.

Three keywords: *ethics, aesthetics, vulnerability*

Form or content? Content versus form? Aesthetics as democracy

The discussion started off by examining whether there is indeed a dichotomy between form and content, aesthetics and ethics. Somebody noted that in recent development of performing arts, at least in the last decade, form is somehow prevailing over sense, i.e. the artistic effort is put into elaborating new forms and aesthetics.

There is a response, not only from audience members, but also from many performing arts professionals that no matter how wonderful an art piece may be they soon forget it because it didn't create a feeling within them. So that is kind of a failure due to putting aesthetics versus content. On the contrary, powerful and expressive were considered those art pieces which, be it imperfect in form, carried a specific meaning the audiences could relate to. It is possible that the audience is not following the curating that is based on aesthetics. As consequence, choosing form over content puts us, the performing artists, in an unfavourable situation because the audience would rather not spend their shortened money on something deprived of meaning no matter how gorgeous aesthetically it is going to be.

The group contemplated over what is that meaning the audiences can relate to: maybe there is a sense of urgency for something to be said out loud or maybe it is a reaction to the giving, making a present, donating to the audience.

Fear was mentioned in relation to meaning and how fear causes the voices to mute. (Fear causes the artistic process to draw away from meaning and to seek expression in form.)

Another reduction of meaning might come from the globalisation processes. Globalisation causes the voices to blur in a common easily consumable mixture for larger audiences that brings more vagueness than meaning at the end. Thus strong voices are muted.

The expectation that performance should make pieces that are good for everybody is yet another factor that hampers meaningful content for specific audiences. In music it is acceptable to have segmentation into classical music, jazz, pop, rock but in the performance field, artists are expected to make works for all.

Activist art was mentioned as showing positive traits of revival after all 20 years of a blunt landscape. If activists craft it a bit, they would definitely keep the audience involved.

Money was (once again) recognised as threat to artistic production. Artists are expected to market themselves as products and as a result, considerable financial recourses are allocated in non-artistic activities like pr, marketing research, digital communication, etc. instead of funding directly artistic production.

At the end, it was summarised that there is no dichotomy between form and content and that they should be developed in balance.

Three keywords: *fear, money, bravery*

- **Arts organisations functioning and 'democracy' as 'procedures'**

No matter how focused on general concepts and on artistic quality we are, the tough everyday life of the average performing arts organisation poses issues of practical nature that call for solutions.

How to find balance between democratic process and efficiency in the process of creating a new venue for arts?

14 participants took part in this conversation, each sharing their experience in creating venues. North-South and East-West were equally represented for a balanced picture of the current situation.

Advices for those creating a new venue for arts:

It is important to stay autonomous in public money investment situation.

Never compromise with your values and goals.

It is essential to keep transparency in relationships with the artistic community, with partners, society, media, etc.

Include international influential institutions and partners from the beginning.

Involve established public figures to advocate for your project from the beginning.

Three keywords: *vision, autonomy, educate.*

How can we create transparent decision making process?

Transparency doesn't always mean quality and diversity.

Cultivating empathy eliminates gameplay and can allow the artist in the business of making art. It is necessary to break hierarchies, because hierarchy always means no transparency.

Full transparency increases administration both in established companies and for new emerging artistic organisations. It is necessary to build meaningful evaluation process so that accountability and transparency could be achieved.

It is necessary to reveal the true value of art and share it with the audience. 1 word – advocacy

Keyword: *empathy*.

Forming coalitions?

What is a coalition: it is a gathering of differences in order to find common denomination into a common cause, a common interest. It is important to ask oneself: in forming that, what would I have to compromise?

A coalition is a place to acknowledge ourselves and be recognised by the others.

Since coalitions are built in certain context and the context creates a common interest, then how can you make this interest, this coalition sustainable?

The discussion about art should be separated from the discussion about cultural policies.

Three keywords: *respect&solidarity* (one word), *empowerment, intervention*.

- ### Arts organisations' integrity and 'democracy' as 'values'

Arts organisations' life is highly dependent on maintaining integrity, maybe more than for any other type of organisation. If governance, management or funding are not compliant with the organisation's vision and mission this will inevitably lead to decay of its most cherished asset - its art.

You cannot defend democracy if you are not democratic yourself.

How can we be the change in how we organize ourselves as sector? Can we practice what we preach?

The discussion started off with a list of the issues that hamper organizational change. At first place, it is the monster of efficiency, that strive to be maximum productive with minimum resources. Then there is the anxiety of acceleration resulting in a constant lack of time to talk, to think.

The bigger scale or size of an institution would intensify these problems. Multiple requirements from the funding system add more to the organisational burden.

Actually, the way the funding system functions was found to cause a lot of problems. All the requirements that have to be met, that constant strive for efficiency drove the participants in the discussion to the conclusion that if there is no funding you can return to your values and to your art. However, one needs money to make art and that turns the process back to struggling with the funding system and its requirements.

The group admitted though that the path of externalising the funding system will not lead to the desired solution; it is time to accept that the arts organisations are also a part of the problem.

Recognising the responsibility of arts organisation for the overall state of the sector (which functions more like an interconnected ecosystem than as a hierarchical structure) is the starting point for seeking the solution.

Positive change in an arts organisation would come with reframing our way of thinking and of doing things. We need to step up and make place, take time to talk, to think, to connect to others, to share, to show solidarity and to try collectively to do things. We need to make space for conversation about our work not just business. It is crucial to maintain transparency in our dialogue and interactions with the others and to find new ways of curating and creating and working with audiences that would be based on equality.

Three keywords: *care, transparency, collectiveness*

And we need to cross out efficiency.

How can we build diverse and representative leadership in the arts? Part 1

The participants defined diversity as characterised by: socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability and ability, sexuality, age and linguistics.

The discussion group saw organisational boards as a key for securing diversity in organisations. Decision making structures would quite like a bit more transparency on how decisions are made. Funders could be a bit more critical and could require further steps in applying diversity in organisations.

In fact, organic structures would hardly enhance diversity naturally so we need to force diversity a bit. The group talked about positive discrimination and the pros and cons of applying. Some bad practice examples of forcing diversity were pointed out: for example, a launch of a LGBT leadership programme that was not supported the right way and failed at the end because of that.

The independent and financially challenged scene is usually more diverse but is massively overstretched. Nonetheless diversity has to be enhanced: for example by job adverts, by making sure your premises are accessible, making your space desirable for diverse groups.

Organisational structures have to be changed. Tokenism is not enough.

A successful example is The Cultural Diversity Code (the Netherlands) which was launched by the government. This voluntary code gives guidelines to funded organisations how to foster diversity in their structures. (It started as The Code of Cultural Governance and was implemented in the business first).

The group elaborated some concrete recommendation towards IETM meeting. Diversity has to be considered when panels and panelists are selected, as well as to think about how to overtly make more diverse program and ensure diversity in representation. There is also the issue with the dominance of the English langue. It might be possible to find volunteer translators in other languages among the participants in the IETM meeting.

On a larger scale, the group decided to design a code or a pledge of practice for diversity in cultural and arts organisations.

Three keywords: *diversity, pledge, yeah!*

Democracy means that everyone should be represented. What is the demographics in this room? Who should be here and is not? How can we, as individuals and as IETM network take action to ensure that they are?

IETM is recognised as a diverse and well-functioning network. At IETM meetings all the participants benefit from the chance to get perspectives they would not otherwise do in their own places and communities.

The question is how we, as IETM members, can make the conversation even richer at the next IETM meeting at Amsterdam. For example, we can find an underrepresented body at where we live, which cannot attend the IETM meeting and facilitate them to join by sharing our rooms or by taking care for the travel expenses. If they cannot join, then when we may share with them our knowledge, be ambassadors and spread the IETM word.

In terms of facilitating the meeting we can think of making sure the premises are accessible of simplifying a bit the registration process.

How can we build diverse and representative leadership in the arts? Part 2

This discussion was in sequence of the first one with the intent to elaborate on the Code of diversity for arts organisations. It merged naturally with the discussion on diversity and representation.

The group proposed that an online platform should be launched to give opportunity to everybody interested in diversity and equal representation to share practice, knowledge, ideas on how we, as individuals, as organisations, can be more inclusive and more diverse. The online forum would give the share space to all who would wish to contribute to the elaboration of the code of practice. An informal meeting at IETM Amsterdam can further these efforts on.

Three keywords: *share, invite, practice*.

Closing

At the end of the meeting Gary Hills, who moderated the Open Space sessions together with Esther Charron, shared his impressions and left the group with a thought to reflect upon: 'Change doesn't always have to be huge because huge can be scary. All change means is that you do something a little bit more. Or a little bit less'.