

Learning activity

Artistic Imagination

TIME: 3 hours

LEARNING AIMS:

The learning aims include connecting the strategic lens of transnationalism with a multitude of ways of imagining.

- Use artistic expression to fuel imagination
- Enhance ability to think outside the box
- Allow reflections on different shapes of transnational organizing
- Pair theory with practice by raw imagination, visual art, video, installation pieces and more.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 10-20

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS:

Format: The exercise can be nicely run in an online context, giving participants time and space to explore the different art pieces virtually. In an in-person context, the different pieces can either partially be printed or shown on a projector. Alternatively, if there are several rooms available, different rooms can showcase different pieces and allow participants to walk around.

When to use it: This is fairly unusual activity within social movement spaces and is by far not only suitable for those engaging in arts within their activism. The exercise can be used as an opening to a more reflective or analytical exercise as it sparks creativity and does not entail massive amounts of talking.

FRAMING:

How do we dare to imagine? What inspires you to dream and open up your creative muscles? For some it might be a walk in nature, a conversation, music or art. This exercise uses different artistic pieces to engage with the ideas of envisioning and radical imagination, awaken curiosity and channel creativity.

The exercise serves as an example of a different approach to radical imagination that can be used to free the mind from stuck political discussion and also offer new group dynamics within an established group.

FACILITATION:

Step 1. Introduction

Open the room with the welcoming exercise

Step 2. Art Encounter

Go through the different pieces, depending on your set up in different ways.

- Online with considerable time in between the pieces - people are encouraged to notetake on a piece of paper in front of them and not digitally.
- On a projector after checking in with people where they are at - note taking while sitting in a scattered set up and not a circle is encouraged (ideally participants do not “get inspired” by their neighbors impressions.
- In different rooms - people can walk in silence and take their notebooks with them.

Step 3. Exercise

- Instructions: Take in each piece and note down a couple of first expressions. Words do not have to be descriptive or sensemaking. Really note down anything. The feeling it gives you, associations, colours, smells, really anything that comes to mind following your first impressions.
- After exploring the different art pieces they return to the circle.

Step 4. Pairwork

- Facilitator encourages pairs of two to get together - Pairs of two instructions: One after the other, participants are encouraged to read out the words of their paper. The order is their choice. There is no further interaction between the pair apart from reading out the contents on the paper. After pair has completed all the different notes they stay in silence
- Online adaptation: breakout rooms of two with very clear instructions and upon finishing people return immediately into the main room- which will be mostly silent.
- Facilitator encourages new pairs of two to get together Instructions: In another round of active listening you try to remember what words were shared by the other person in the previous exchange. Recounting these words you can share one word with your pair. Afterwards the partner shares a word and it goes back and forth (small pairs/ breakout rooms close in max. 5 min)

Step 5. Plenary discussion

Plenary discussion space depending on the size of the group can be done in a large plenary or in small groups with a facilitator or someone stepping up as one spontaneously (this person can receive a print out of the questions).

- How free were your associations with the art pieces
- How easy was it to remember what your partner said?
- Did the things your partner said get mixed up with your own feelings?
- Did you perceive and hurdles or challenges in thinking freely - can you describe these?

- What comes to mind when you think back to the exercise? Do you feel imaginative and creative or rather restricted and uneasy?

Wider Reflections

- Meaning making
- Responding to what we are supposed to perceive in certain pieces of art?
- Boundaries of our own mind?
- Imagination is very tainted and it is easy to get caught up in patterns that we are used to.

Taking it out into the world

- What does this experience mean for other moments where you are trying to engage critically?
- How can we foster the radical imagination without being constrained by previous patterns of thought?
- What does this exercise mean for our transnational work - are there ways to offer collaborative thinking processes to enable us to think creatively, collectively and transnationally?

Step 6. Conclusion and takeaways

Closing Coming together as a whole group

- How did you feel about this exercise - Feedback, thoughts?
- Did this exercise evoke anything in you?

SOURCE: European Alternatives

IMAGES:

Art pieces for the instruction

- Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares ([Forest Law](#))
 - Pick a picture
- Lorenzo Pezzani and Charles Heller ([Forensic Oceanography](#))
 - The Left to Die Boat Video 00:00 - 03:15
- Tabita Rezaire ([Exotic Trade](#))
 - We could potentially see the same world differently 00:00 - 02:31
- Karrabing Film Collective ([Salt](#))
 - Karrabing Film Collective, Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams (2016) 00:00 - 02:27
- Ruangrupa ([The Gerobak Bioskop](#))
 - Permutaran Warga (6)
- Nida Sinnokrot and Sahar Qawasmi (Sakiya - Art/Science/Agriculture)
 - Nida Sinnokrot, [Jonah's Whale, 2014.](#)
 - [Wild Seed Collecting Walk](#)

- Minia Bibiany (Doukou)
 - [Blue Spelling](#) - six pictures
- The Living and the Dead Ensemble (Ouvertures Monsieur Toussaint)
 - *Picture: The Unfolding of Life in a Spiral H E R E A F T E R / Sonic Acts / Amsterdam / february 2019*
- Contrafilé and Campus in Camps (Mujawara/The Tree School)
 - [Pictures of Tree in the air](#)
- Additional pieces can be added by the facilitator if anything comes to mind