

Long table Chemnitz 2026 – report

Present: Tdw Curators (exep. Yuan and Nikos) + ITI people

And it starts with silence.

During this long table, the discussion prompt was 'Co-curation is a utopia'. the conversation started with a number of questions addressed to the curators who took a seat at the table. Asking about Chemnitz, the process and quickly dove into issues of mobility. Someone mentioned that the Theater der welt festival was the underlying support needed to make traveling possible. In addition, differences between what curation meant where brought up in this context. Someone suggested that with this difference in place, the way one curates and with what reasons can be adapted. Here, one does have to keep in mind that a curator from a certain place cannot even aim to represent that place or region. Within the same context, the risk of bringing certain plays to certain places in terms of audience reception relates to this.

Following this line of thought, the question of what curation is, was brought up. Responses included the contrast between 'picking' and 'putting things in conversation' and the tendency by artists to try and see themselves through the eye of the curator. In addition, one mentioned the sensed privilege to call oneself a curator, as a romanticized idea of a programmer.

Other people responded taking a critical perspective on the language used, and how different ecosystems and context influence and are in need of different things. The co-curational process of Theater der Welt was brought in shortly, mentioning that the lack of a shared curatorial vision not means that there is no shared curatorial conversation. In addition, someone emphasized how there is no step-by-step guide to co-curation. Take out one person in the room, and everything will be different. Other people mentioned the idea of curation as translation, interpreting curators as everyone who put things together, including those selling fruit at the market. Someone else wondered if co-curation is not the default, thinking about how grassroot organizations operate in comparison to institutionalized ones. What is good for the community one works for?

Going into a different direction, the sensed phenomena of European curators not feeling comfortable curating non-European pieces was brought to the table. With the result of artists collectives being invited instead.

The question of how to organize curation in non-hierarchical ways, through for example rotating structures was raised, with as counter argument the issue of professionalization.

In the end, the topic of mobility and how this relates to who has certain influence to bring in who, was a mayor topic. Calling that: yes, co-curation is a utopia if one or more of the curators has less or no influence, due to this, than others. This was a call for a more balanced distribution of power and influence. As a response, the word intention was introduced. Second, one mentioned how co-curation does not necessarily mean that a European partner is needed or included.

At the end, someone wondered if Theater der Welt should leave Germany, and instead travel to different countries every time. Questioning what the aim behind the festival is. Lastly, one mentioned how words are very slippery these days, making it very difficult to do right.