

# My Penguin Heart



A book for cultural  
workers on how to keep  
your spark alive

## The Project behind this book

The Penguin Project was a research and development initiative by Die Bäckerei - Kulturbackstube and the Trans Europe Halles (TEH) coordination office.

The project was started with the rough aim of improving the working conditions of people working in independent culture. Die Bäckerei provided the research expertise and working power; TEH provided the administrative expertise and the budget via Factories of Imagination part 3. The project officially started in June 2019 at the TEH meeting in Dresden and ended in October 2021 at the TEH meeting in Bratislava. However, in our heads the project started long before that and we feel like we are just getting started.

The Penguin Project was led by Shawn Antoni Wright and Florian Cope-Ladstätter from Die Bäckerei – Kulturbackstube.

The Penguin Project group consisted of six cultural workers from five centres:

- Mieke Renders and Hanna Olson from the TEH coordination office
- Gabriella Riccio from L'Asilo in Naples
- Guna Datava from the Institute for Environmental Solutions in Cesis, Latvia
- Jana Ryšlavá from Cooltour in Ostrava, Czech Republic
- Zuzana Psočková from Tabačka in Košice, Slovakia
- Katarina Zivanovic from Studio Alta in Prague, Czech Republic

Michel Quéré and Ella Overkleef were responsible for a lot of the administrative work related to the project.

Throughout the project, we did scoping visits to three cultural centres, carried out lots of interviews and informal conversations with cultural workers, held a big group workshop at the TEH meeting in Timisoara, and coordinated many online focus groups with the penguin group.

Our insights were brought together in this book, but there is also a penguin website ([www.thepenguinproject.com](http://www.thepenguinproject.com)). And the penguin ideas will hopefully live on through many workshops, conversations and in the daily lives of cultural workers across Europe

“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

- T. S. Eliot

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Part one

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*Introduction*

Hello dear cultural worker

*Why This Book Matters*

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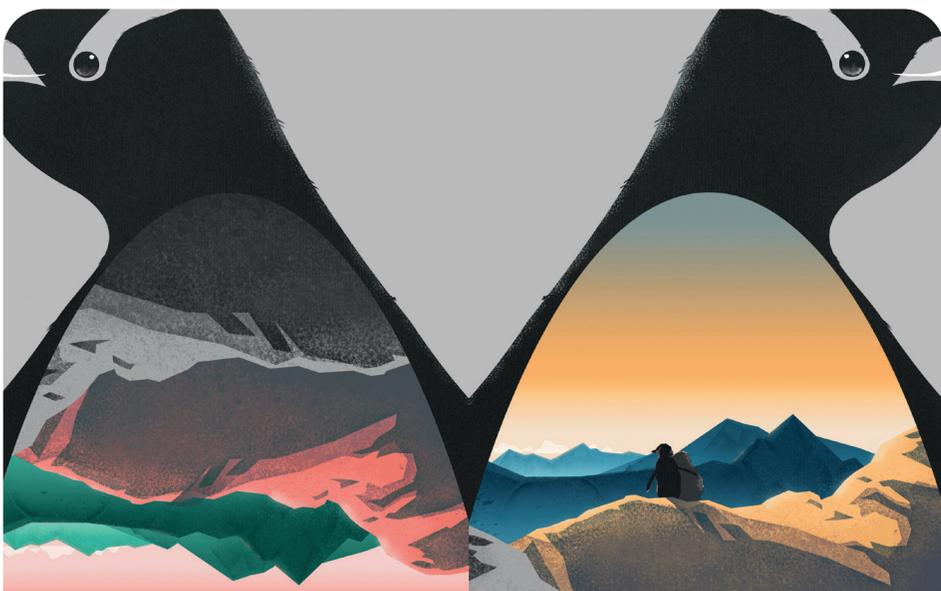


“When you change the way  
you look at things, the things  
you look at change.”

- Albert Einstein



# HELLO DEAR CULTURAL WORKER



## Hello Dear Cultural Worker

This book is about you and why you work in independent culture. And how you can keep doing what you do. How you can keep your spark alive.<sup>1</sup> It is about the connection between motivation and frustration in cultural work, between self-expression and self-exploitation, between having a burning spark and burning out.

But you will not find quick fix solutions within these pages. Instead of giving answers we want to pique your interest in the questions. Instead of reducing cultural work to a problem that can be fixed, we want to invite you to explore the beauty and the beast of working in culture. And we want to help you to gain a deeper understanding of the connection between the two.

This book works with metaphors to make ideas easily understandable. Metaphors are powerful because they speak both to our heads and to our hearts. They are tools of analysis and figures of poetry at the same time. We think that suits our context.

The penguin metaphor was our original inspiration for taking a closer look at cultural workers' working context. In that sense, this metaphor was the start and the name giver of the project behind this book

This book is focused on the individual cultural worker and their spark. It is not about how cultural centres keep their spark alive. Nevertheless, we think that it would be very beneficial for teams to go through our metaphors and questions together.

we want to invite you to explore the beauty and the beast of working in culture.

## Quick reading information

*This book can be read in different ways. From the first page to the last. From back to front. Pictures first, text later. Whatever you prefer.*

*If you are impatient to get going, then skip the next two chapters, jump straight to the second part and start working.*

*If you want to know more about our take on why this book matters and our approach/methodology, then keep reading the next few pages.*

1. This roughly means your energy level, your motivation and joy at work. We'll spend the rest of this book going into depth about the spark and what nurtures and drains it.

# THE TWO SIDES OF WORKING IN INDEPENDENT CULTURE



## The Two Sides of Working in Independent Culture

*Or Why This Book Matters*

When observing people who work in the independent cultural sector, two things immediately spring to attention. First, one notices how much passion, creativity and sense of purpose there is. People seem to be vibrating with energy. But second, on closer inspection, there is a darker side. People often struggle with too much work; some feel alienated from their team; others feel trapped in their position. Overall the life expectancy in independent culture is rather short and the turnover of workers in cultural centres is high.

How can there be so much **motivation** on the one side and so much **frustration** on the other?

## Two sides of the same coin

*A dichotomy*



### This observation makes us wonder:

The metaphor “two sides of the same coin” suggests that two experiences that seem contradictory are nevertheless intrinsically connected.<sup>2</sup> What connects the A and the B side of a coin is the coin itself. And the coin is only a coin if it has both sides.

Applying this metaphor to our observation would suggest that the positive and the negative aspects of working in culture are intrinsically connected; that we cannot have one without the other. Could that be true? Can we have the enthusiasm, sense of adventure, joy, etc. only at the cost of frustration, overwork and burnout? That seems a sad conclusion. However, we think there is some truth in this.

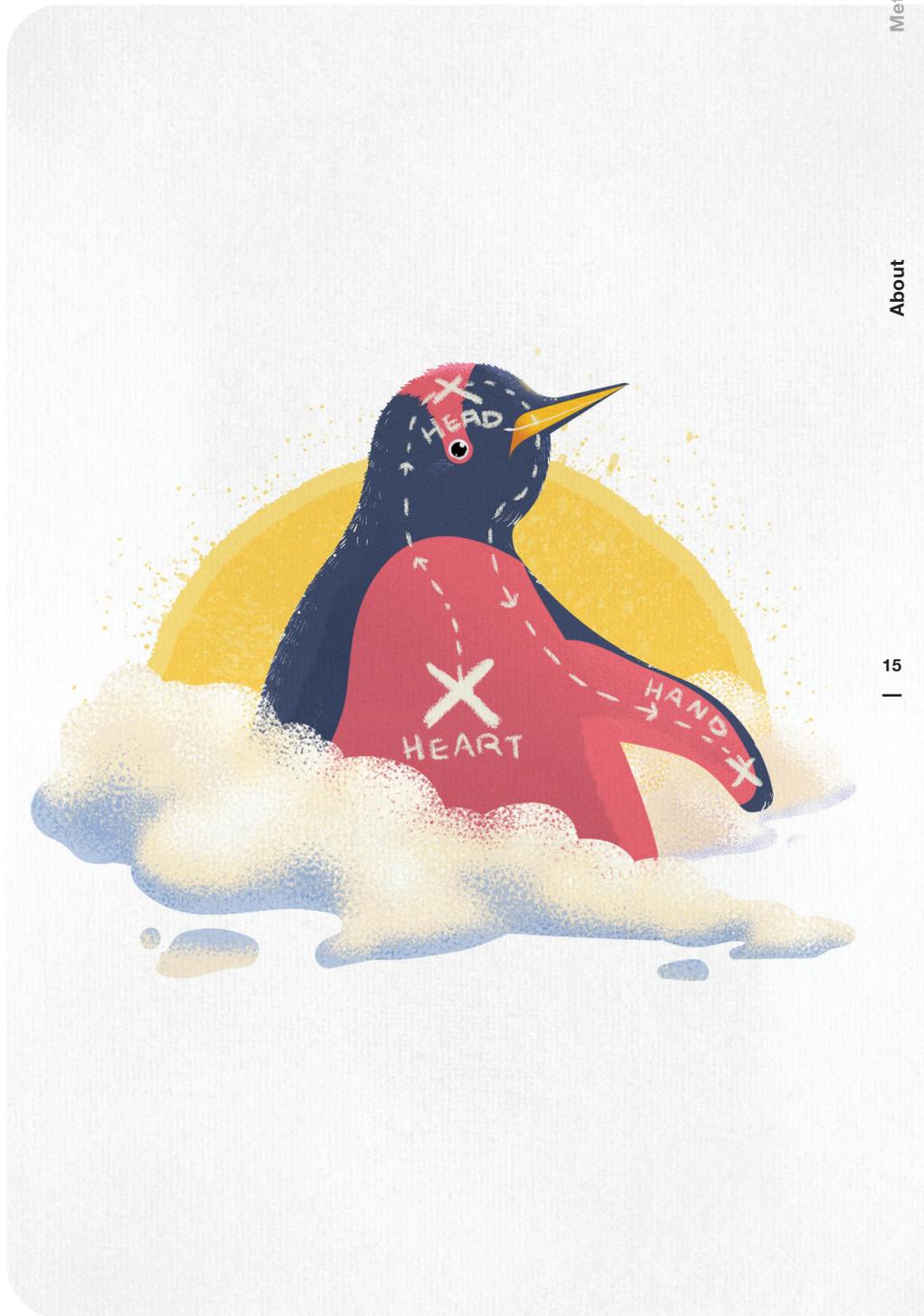
### How to escape this dilemma?

**The first step to escape the dilemma is to learn more about it.** In order to understand how the positive and the negative sides are connected we need to look deeper into the phenomenon of working in an independent cultural centre. We need to ask questions like: What attracts people to working in cultural centres? If motivation and frustration are the output, then what is the condition for these extremes? We will try to answer these questions in the chapter Resonance.

**Second step – take action:** After the questions that focus on understanding, we also need to ask a more action-oriented question. How can we use our insights for positive change? How can we keep our spark alive? The metaphor section of this book is dedicated to these questions.

2. “A lot of joy with the baby, but very little sleep – those are the two sides of being a young parent.” If you have children, you might have heard this one.

# FROM HEART TO HEAD TO HAND



## From Heart to Head to Hand

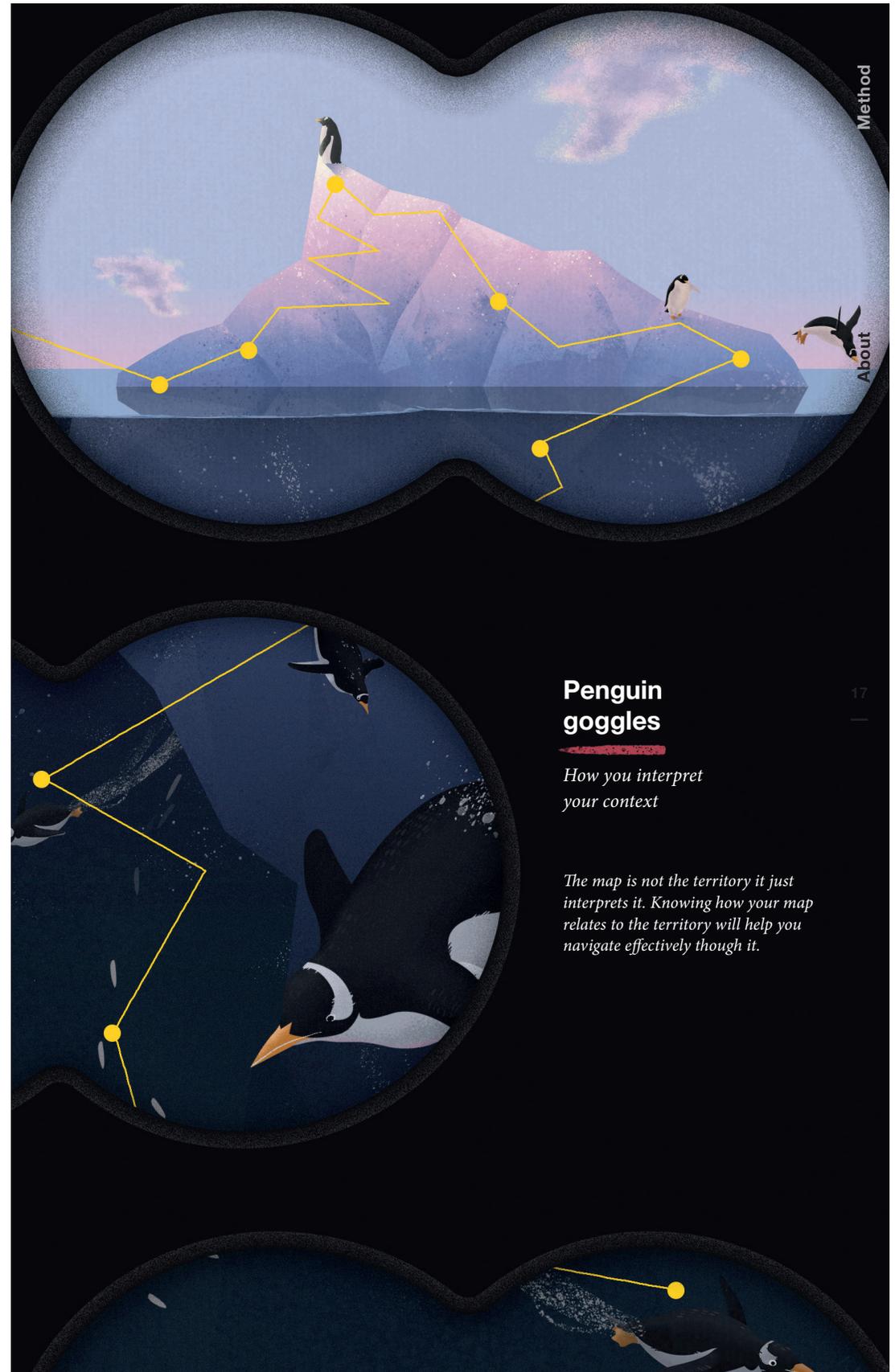
*Or How to Change Things*

How you experience your working reality – whether something inspires you or drains you – depends on the outside world on the one hand, your working context, or “the system”. And on the other hand, it depends on your frame of reference, how you interpret and make sense of your context. Both external context and internal interpretation mutually influence each other over time.



The question is – which side should we focus on?

When we look at the working context of cultural workers, there seem to be a million factors that influence their spark. The organisational structure of the centre, leadership style, financial stability, age of the centre, personality structure, identification with the centre’s purpose, and so on. Moreover, every cultural centre is situated in a different socio-political context. So, how can we find a way to support cultural workers to keep their spark alive that works regardless of the context?



### Penguin goggles

*How you interpret your context*

*The map is not the territory it just interprets it. Knowing how your map relates to the territory will help you navigate effectively though it.*

With this book, we cannot directly change your working conditions. But we can try and help you to change how you experience and make sense of your situation.<sup>3</sup> We can provide the tools to help you reflect on why you do what you do and how that influences your spark. These tools will help you to actively build your relationship with your centre and deal with motivation and frustration. We hope that this approach will contribute to a sustainable working relationship between you and your cultural centre.

### How can we do this?

This is where metaphors come into play.

In this book we develop metaphors as tools to reflect on your working experience. They help to pose specific questions that everyone, regardless of their specific context, can relate to. Metaphors help to put images and words

to experiences. In that way they help to bring things from the subconscious to the conscious level. When you are conscious about things, you can act upon them.

### Heart head hand

*From the subconscious to the conscious then act*



We have come up with our own metaphor for the process we want to enable – **from heart to head to hand.**

#### It starts at the heart,

where we feel, where we develop emotional energy, commitment, love, hate, friendship. This is where our energy and willpower comes from.

#### → From heart to head

means we learn to think and talk about what we feel. We develop a language and are able to talk to others about these important topics. This is already a very important change that enables us to make the last decisive move

#### → from head to hand.

The hand stands for our ability to act, to make a choice and change our reality.

<sup>3</sup> To avoid misunderstandings, we do believe that it is very important to work on the circumstances of cultural work and to engage in political lobbying for better legislation and more public funding. It is vital to work towards better organisational structures and business models And to network for knowledge exchange and inspiration. All of that is absolutely necessary. It is just way beyond the scope of the Penguin Project.

# Meta phors

Part two



"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

- Albert Einstein

*Introduction*

Our Metaphors

*What attracts cultural workers to their centres?*

The Resonance Metaphor

*The Power of Context*

The Penguin Metaphor

*Risk and Exposure in Cultural Work*

The Ridge Metaphor

*Where you get charged or drained*

The Energy Flow Metaphor

*Mapping your relationship with your centre*

The Energy Flow Model



# THE METAPHORS



## Introduction

The second part of the book introduces our metaphors. We provide these metaphors to illustrate different aspects of working in culture, and as tools to reflect on these aspects.



With the **resonance metaphor** we want to grasp what attracts us to our centres. It is an inspiration to understand what causes the intense experiences of motivation and frustration that often characterise work in a cultural centre.

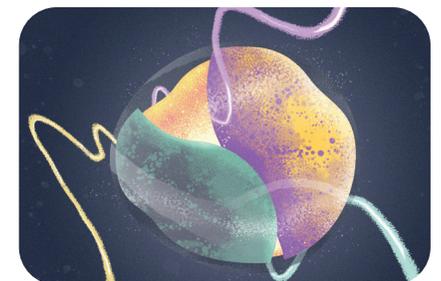
The **penguin metaphor** provides a base for reflection about how your innate capacities fit to your working context, and how that influences your experience at work. It also invites you to think about how you and your cultural centre mutually shape and influence each other.



The **ridge metaphor** is about risk and exposure. Are you exposed at work? And does that invigorate or terrify you? Learn more about what makes the difference between the two in this chapter.



The **energy flow** metaphor takes a more detailed look at what gets exchanged between you and your centre on a tangible and intangible level. It helps to identify in detail where you get charged up and where you get drained.



# THE RESONANCE METAPHOR



## The Resonance Metaphor

*What attracts cultural workers to their centres?*

In our desire to answer these questions, we came across resonance theory. Mainly developed by the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa, resonance theory captures and explains observations we have made about how cultural workers relate to their centres. The idea of resonance helps us to understand why cultural centres are such fascinating but also captivating places to work for some people. In the upcoming sections, we will give a brief introduction to resonance theory and link it to the context of independent culture.<sup>1</sup>

## Resonance Theory

Resonance as a concept comes from acoustics. It describes the phenomenon of two vibrating bodies mutually influencing each other – like the strings and the body of a guitar that reinforce each other. Taken as a metaphor in the social context, resonance describes a certain mode of relationship between a human being and (part of) their world.<sup>2</sup>

We all have resonant relationships in our lives. It is the relationships that really matter to us, that define who we are. In that sense, being in resonance is an existential experience. It is a state of being in which we feel very present and addressed as an individual and at the same time connected to something/someone else.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that resonance should not be taken as an ideal state of working in culture. You can't say "more resonance is always better". Rather, resonance theory helps us to understand our existing reality better. It also provides good food for thought about how we would like things to be, without suggesting easy solutions.

<sup>2</sup> Here "the world" can be the world in total, but also specific parts of it, like our family, a friend, a partner, the workplace, your team, a hobby, nature, a forest, a tree, art, a painting, God, Trans Europe Halles, ...

## Mutual transformation

Where and when can you transform things and yourself



### What characterises a resonant relationship?

A resonant relationship is one in which both parts speak with their own voice and mutually influence each other. In other words, **resonance is about listening and answering.** A resonant relationship is one that affects us emotionally. Something speaks to us, touches us, concerns us. An example is when a musician touches their instrument and starts playing. As a result there is a moment of answering. Your body tension changes. Your eyes light up. Your state of mind changes.

In a resonant relationship there is also **mutual transformation.** Think about a carpenter and the wood they are working with. This also means that in a resonant relationship we have a strong sense of **self-efficacy** – we can see our own impact in the world.

And finally, there is a moment of **unavailability.** This means that we can't force or control resonance. There is always some level of uncertainty involved.

## Resonance and alienation

The opposite of resonance is alienation. In an alienated relationship we face a world that seems cold and rigid, that does not speak to us and we feel indifferent towards it. Nothing matters. According to resonance theory, experiences of resonance and experiences of alienation are the two fundamental modes of experiencing our world. Most of our actions are motivated either by looking for resonance or trying to avoid alienation.

**We cannot and should not have resonant relationships with the entire world around us.**

## Work, conflict and over-resonance

Resonant relationships are special because we need to invest time and effort to keep them resonant. Moreover, resonance does not mean harmony. Conflict and resistance are indispensable parts of resonance. As a result, resonance can never be a commodity, we can never consume it.

With that in mind it becomes clear that we cannot and should not have resonant relationships with the entire world around us. On the contrary, resonant relationships can be exhausting. We can even be “over-resonant”, meaning that we cannot control or stop the flow of energy between us and the world. When we are over-resonant, we stop speaking with our own voice. We lose our individuality and cannot say “no” any more. This can lead to burnout, which is another way of saying that we cannot feel any resonance anymore.

## Independent Cultural Centres as Resonance Heaven

We believe that independent cultural centres are basically resonance heavens for many reasons. This makes working in a culture centre a very immersive, enriching, but potentially also a captivating and exhausting experience.

### Existential experience

Many cultural workers we have talked to describe a similar experience when they started working in their cultural centre. They had this feeling of something inside them responding, waking up, a rush of energy when they began to realise the potential that lay ahead of them. Cultural centres have this ability to touch us in an existential way. They speak to us and something inside us answers. This experience is often quite sublime and most cultural workers struggle to put it into words.

### Resonance on many levels

In a cultural centre, we can experience resonance on pretty much every level. We can be in resonance with the big idea, the vision and purpose of our centre. We can also be in resonance with the work we do – either with our hands or our minds – repurposing the building, developing performances, designing light and sound, wrestling with Excel spreadsheets ... And then we can also be in resonance with the people in our centre. The combination of these experiences has the potential to make working in a cultural centre a resonance-rich experience.

### Mutual transformation and self-efficacy

Since cultural centres are normally unfinished, malleable places, there is a lot of potential to engage our creativity and transform the place according to our own ideas. The extreme case would be an empty industrial ruin that gets transformed into a living centre through imagination and the work of many hands. In a cultural centre, we can recognise ourselves in our work and grow our capacities in many different ways.

### Facing and overcoming resistance

Cultural work is often characterised by overcoming hurdles or resolving conflicts. Working around resistant public authorities, motivating an audience for an experimental performance, finding money to pay the bills, fixing a leaking roof, ... the list of challenges is long. Responsibility is often very direct and personal. Overcoming these hurdles can be exhausting, but they also provide stepping stones for personal growth and success stories.

### Surprise

Culture centres are chaotic, volatile environments. We cannot fully control what is going to happen next. Like jazz musicians we have to develop improvisation skills. Having to improvise can be very stressful for a beginner, but for an experienced jazz musician, it is the pinnacle of making music.

## The two sides of resonance

For all these reasons, cultural centres can be invigorating places to work. They challenge and transform us, make us feel alive and in connection with something bigger, something worth struggling for. However, cultural centres are also places where we can easily become over-resonant. Resonance on many levels can mean that it becomes increasingly hard to draw a line between us and our centres. Mutual transformation is only a positive experience as long as we can keep our own voice. And facing resistance and surprise can turn into an experience of drowning. This is the flip side of a strong resonant relationship with a culture centre.



To pick up the question from the “**Two Sides of Working in Culture**” chapter, we think that – in order to be in resonance with our centres and experience the wonderful things that contains – we have to expose ourselves to the risks of a resonant relationship too. A certain amount of risk and uncertainty is necessary to keep resonance alive.

But this is not an excuse to forget all control. If you go climbing, you don’t leave the rope behind.<sup>3</sup> You can learn to navigate resonance, like jazz musicians learn to improvise. You can learn how much risk and exposure you can handle without being overwhelmed and paralysed. You can learn about where you waddle and where you flow in a cultural centre context and adapt accordingly. And you can become aware of what you give and if that matches what you get back.

<sup>3</sup> Unless you are Alex Honnold and you really know what you are doing!

## Working Questions

- With what in your life are you in a resonant relationship? A person, a craft or activity, a bigger idea like god?
- In which way is that relationship existential to you? Can you identify elements of listening and answering, of mutual transformation and of unavailability?
- Would you say you have a resonant relationship with your culture centre (or parts of it)? And if yes, what does listening and answering, mutual transformation and unavailability mean in that context?
- Can you relate to the idea of over-resonance with a culture centre? Do you speak with your own voice? Can you say no?
- Can there be a path of resonance in cultural work that successfully avoids the depths of burn-out and bore-out?



1. **Vertical:** We feel connected to something that is bigger than us. This could be god, nature, history, but also art.
2. **Diagonal:** Describes a relationship with our work, material, our bodies.
3. **Horizontal:** Describes our relationship with other people. Our families, friends, colleagues. But also our relation to the political system we live in.



### Three axis of resonance

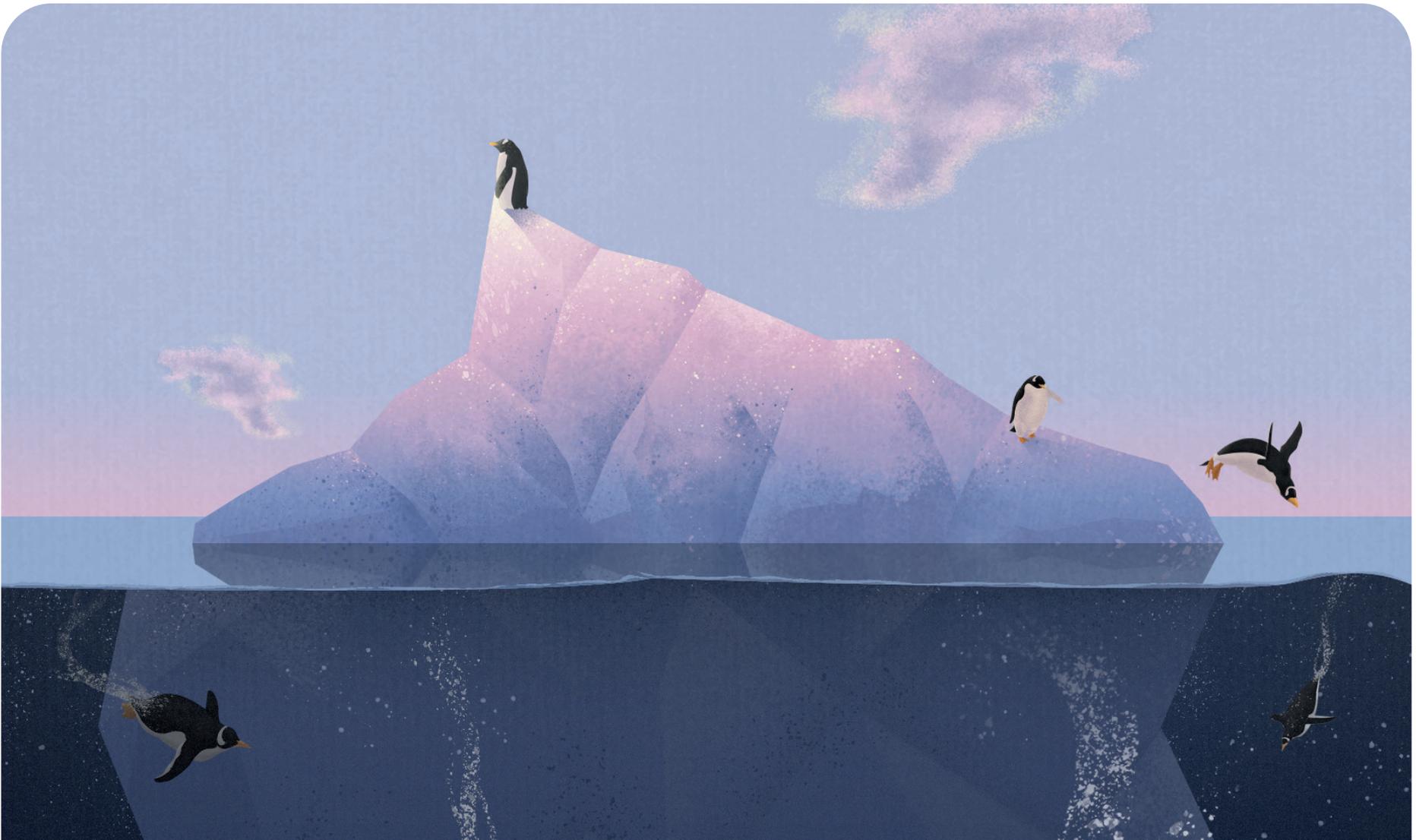
*An axis of resonance is when between the subject and a specific part of the world establish a stabilized form of reference.*

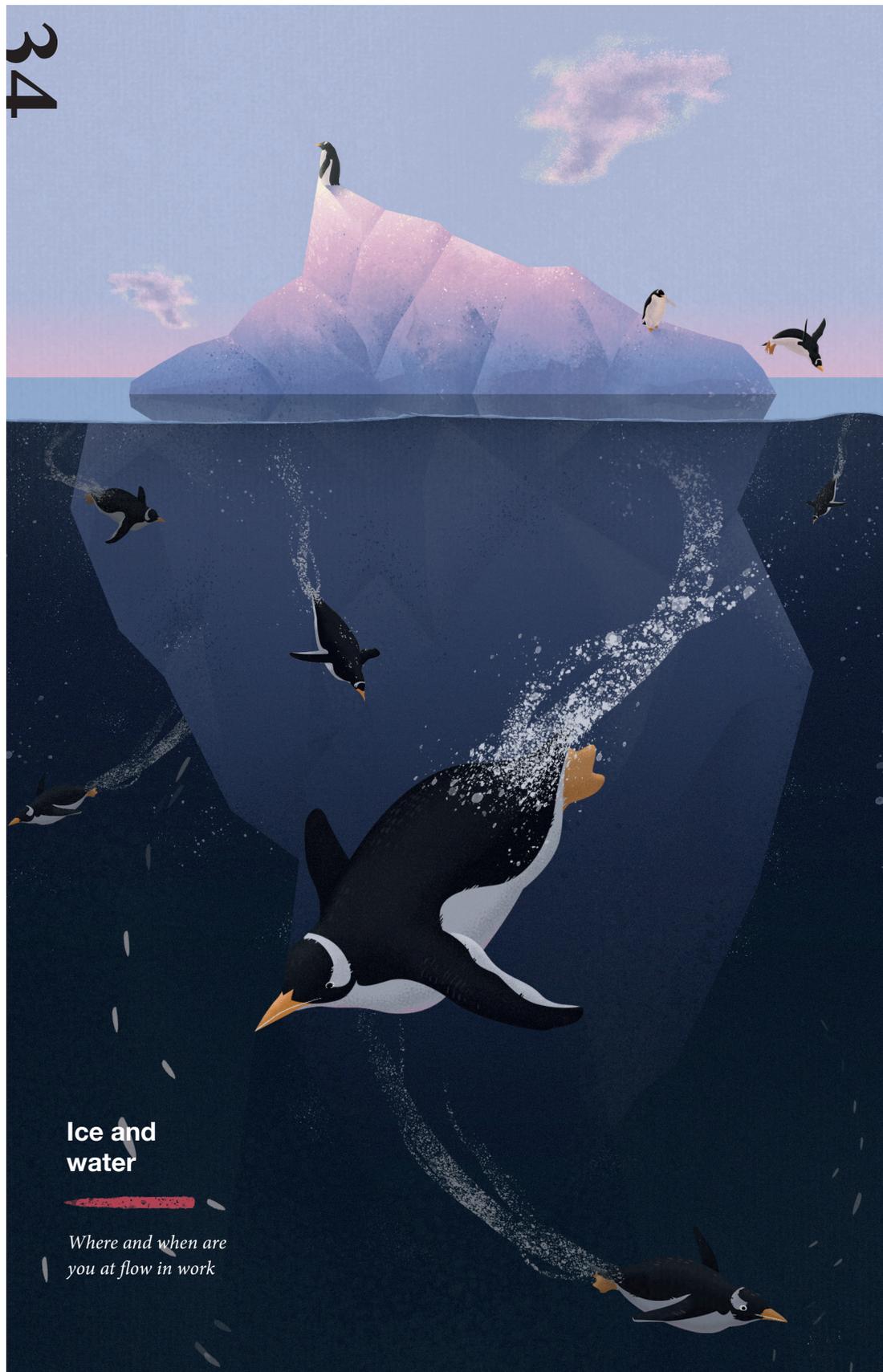
# THE PENGUIN METAPHOR

The Penguin Metaphor  
*or the Power of Context*

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The metaphor that  
inspired the project  
behind this book.



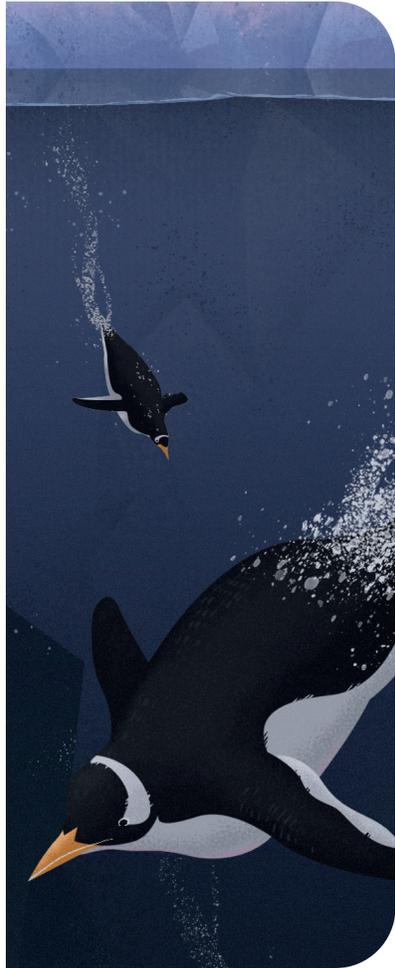


### Ice and water

Where and when are you at flow in work

Why Penguins?  
*Ice and water.*

Have you ever seen a penguin walking on ice? Their legs are somehow too short, they don't walk as much as totter. How can evolution produce such clumsy animals? However, in water it's a different story. They are fast, agile, playful swimmers who can swim 2,000 kilometres powered by the energy of one litre of petrol. No human machine comes close in terms of efficiency.



### 1st reading:

*The power of context*

The penguin can be read as a metaphor for the power of context. Our (working) environment determines how much of our innate potential we can manifest, how elegantly we move about, and which of our qualities we can apply. In other words, depending on our context, we either waddle or we flow. If the context supports our characteristics/abilities then we can move effortlessly. If it does not, we struggle.



### 2nd reading:

*Coevolution*

Penguins are also a product of an evolutionary process that has taken millions of years. Throughout this process penguins have adapted to their environment, but they have also shaped it. Evolution is actually coevolution.

## Working questions

- What would be the equivalent of ice in your work context? And what is the water? What could be a fish? And what could be the sea leopard?



- How can you change your working reality in your centre so it better suits your talents?
- How can you adapt to the needs of your centre?

# THE RIDGE METAPHOR

## The Ridge Metaphor

*Risk and Exposure in Cultural Work*

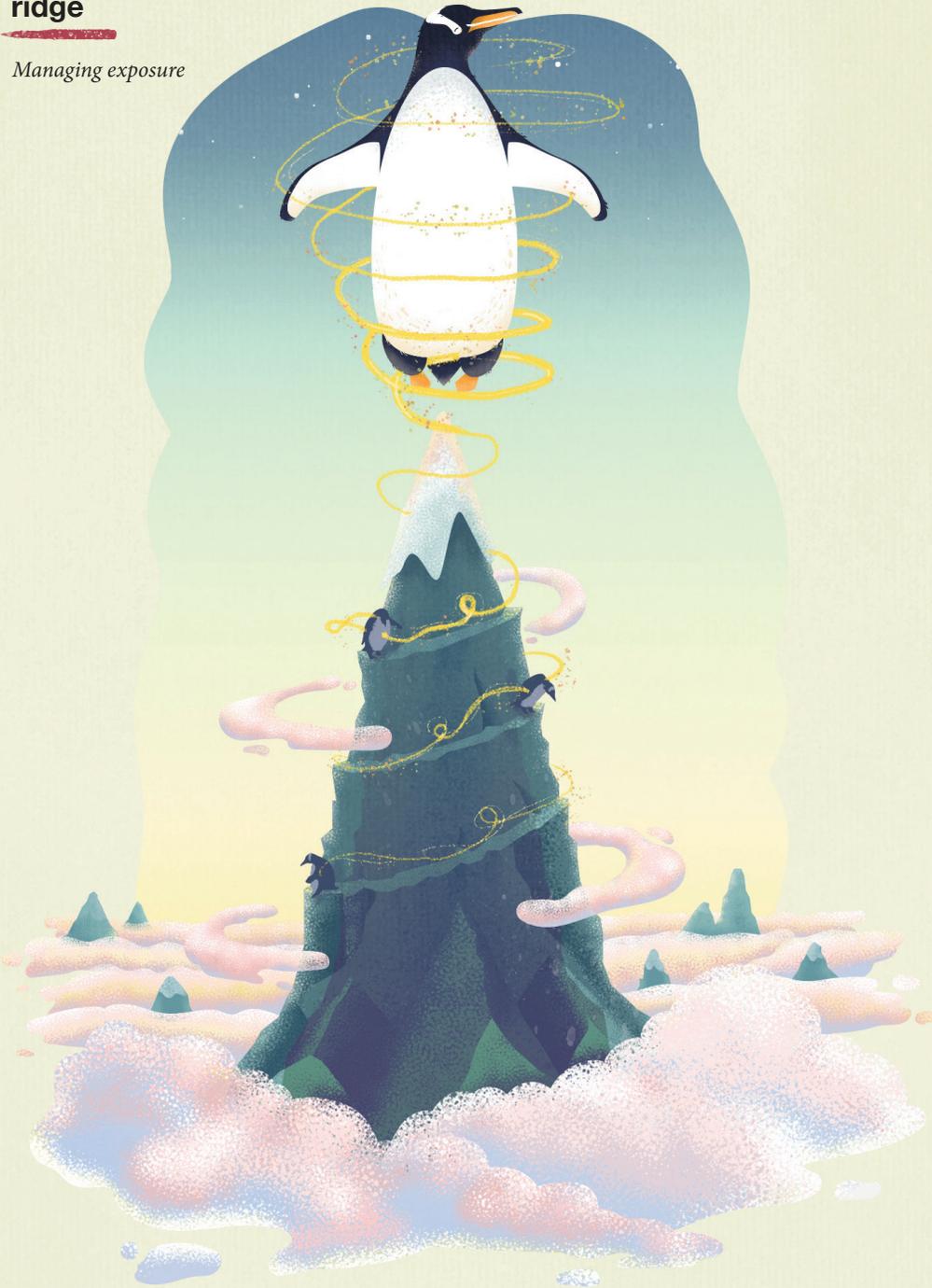
With the metaphor of the ridge, we wanted to create an image that illustrates one basic aspect of working in a cultural centre – risk, exposure and consequence. The ridge metaphor was inspired by our time spent in the mountains. Walking or climbing a ridge line

can be very exciting, but also quite terrifying. What makes walking on a ridge exciting (or terrifying) is the exposure and the connected risk of falling. The bigger the exposure and risk, the greater the emotional reward if we successfully manage the climb. Being exposed makes you feel alive. You are totally in the moment, your body produces adrenaline, nothing else matters.



## The ridge

*Managing exposure*



Penguin



*At best the journey has charged you, at worst you are drained.*

Path



*The need of both consequence and safety in order for your journey to charge you*

Other ridges



*Everyones ridge is different*

Clouds



*You may not always see when and where you are exposed*

The difference between being excited and terrified is based on how well your skills match the difficulty of the terrain. What can feel like a walk in the park for the experienced mountaineer can be way out of the comfort zone of a couch potato.

It is important to note here that (i) mountaineering skills can be learned, (ii) you have to know your skill level and match it to the terrain, and (iii) be aware of the risk. Misjudging the situation can end badly. Another aspect of walking a ridge is that it is normally a limited distance. Keeping up the focus required to safely get across is taxing. In order not to get too exhausted, one has to mix time spent on the ridge with time spent on less difficult terrain.



## The Cultural Context

Working in a cultural centre often involves risk and exposure. You commit to challenging projects with difficult reporting; you take responsibility for a shaky budget, or take the lead in a new performance. You can also feel exposed in your team or towards the authorities.

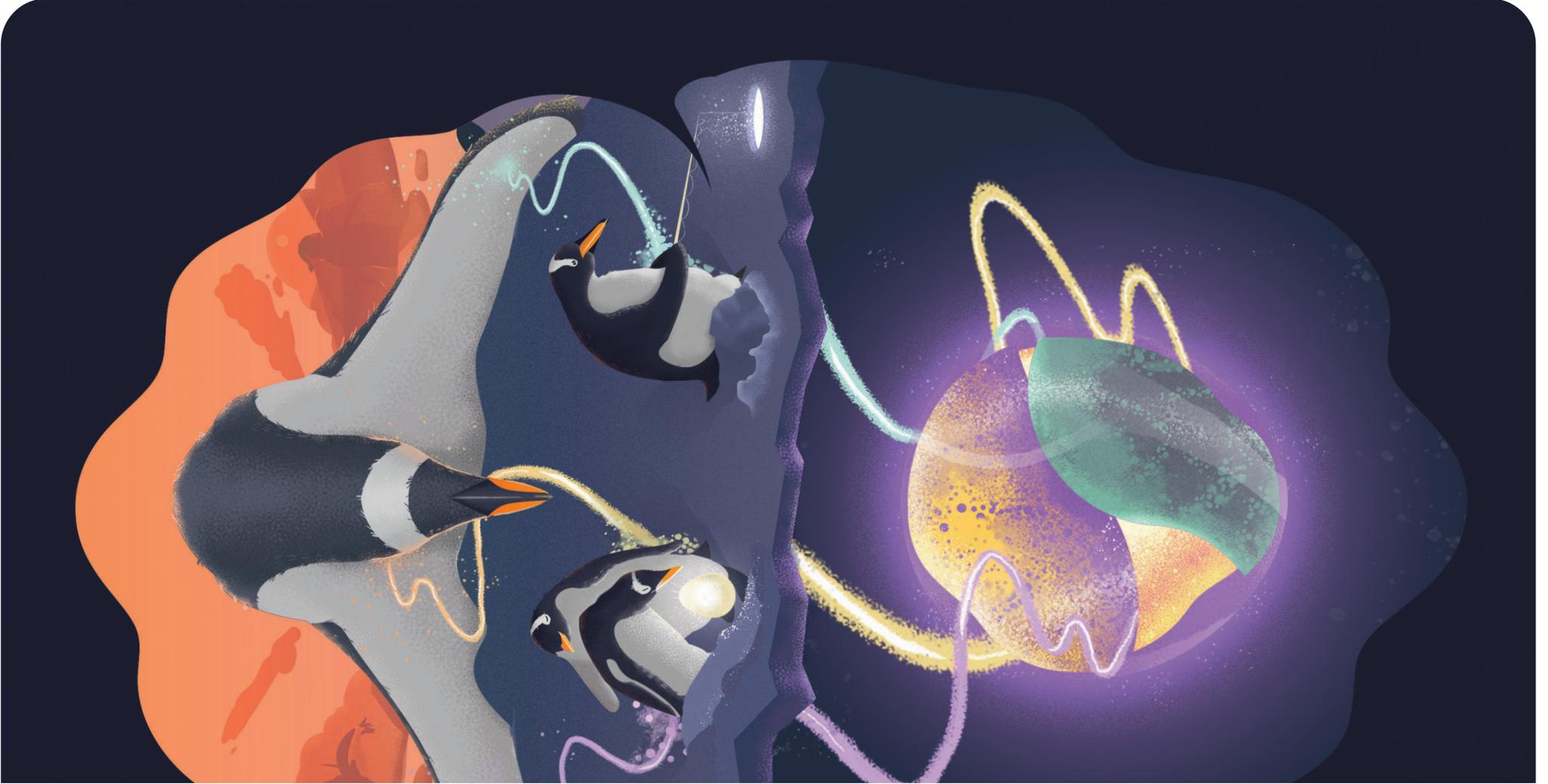
In our view, exposure and risk are integral parts of the experience of our work in culture. They provide the salt, the seriousness, the excitement. However, being in these situations can also wear you out, if you are not aware of the risk or if your skills don't match the terrain.

## Working questions

- Can you remember a situation where you put yourself in an exposed position (in sports, romance, gambling, work) and successfully got through? How did it feel during and after?
- Do you like being on the ridge? If so, what do you like about it? If not, why don't you like it?
- When and where are you exposed at work?
- How are your personal ridges made up?
- What is the reward after you have mastered an exposed situation at work?
- What are the skills and conditions needed for exposure to positively impact you?
- How long can you handle exposure?
- Do you know people who were exposed for too long?
- Is it possible that you are not exposed enough?

# THE ENERGY FLOW METAPHOR

*Forms of exchange between you and  
your culture centre*



## The energy flow metaphor

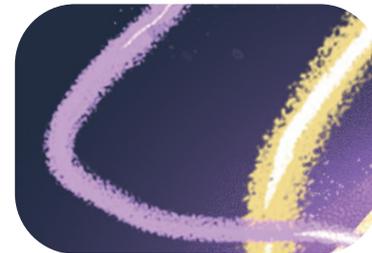
Forms of exchange



*You and your motivation to work in culture*



*The tasks through which you make your contribution*



*The intangible exchange, things like joy, trust, self-efficacy*



*The bigger idea your contributions are in support of*

## The Energy Flow Metaphor

*Energy flow keeps organisms alive*

The energy flow metaphor is inspired by the idea of an ecosystem in which organisms and their physical environment are linked together through nutrient flows and energy cycles. Energy in the form of sunlight enters the system through photosynthesis and is transformed into plant tissue. By feeding on plants and on one another animals transform the energy further and move it through the system.

For our purposes we will simplify the complexity of an ecosystem and focus on the idea that energy is exchanged in various forms between organisms to keep the system alive - in this case **we focus on the energy exchange between you and your culture centre**. There are many forms of energy exchange between you and your culture centre going on at the same time. The more obvious, almost tangible ones - you give time, you get money, but there is also an exchange of more intangible values like trust, joy, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, etc. We assume that all of these values can be understood as a form of energy that is exchanged.<sup>5</sup> For example, it charges you up to feel part of a community at work. And it drains you to be excluded.

In an ecosystem energy mainly moves in one direction - up the food chain. But in a social system like a culture centre **reciprocity or fairness** are very important. If things are working well, there is a balance of energy - you give as much as you get back. If energy flows are out of balance - especially over a long period of time - you feel exploited and you leave or burn out.

<sup>5</sup> In a metaphorical, not an esoteric way.

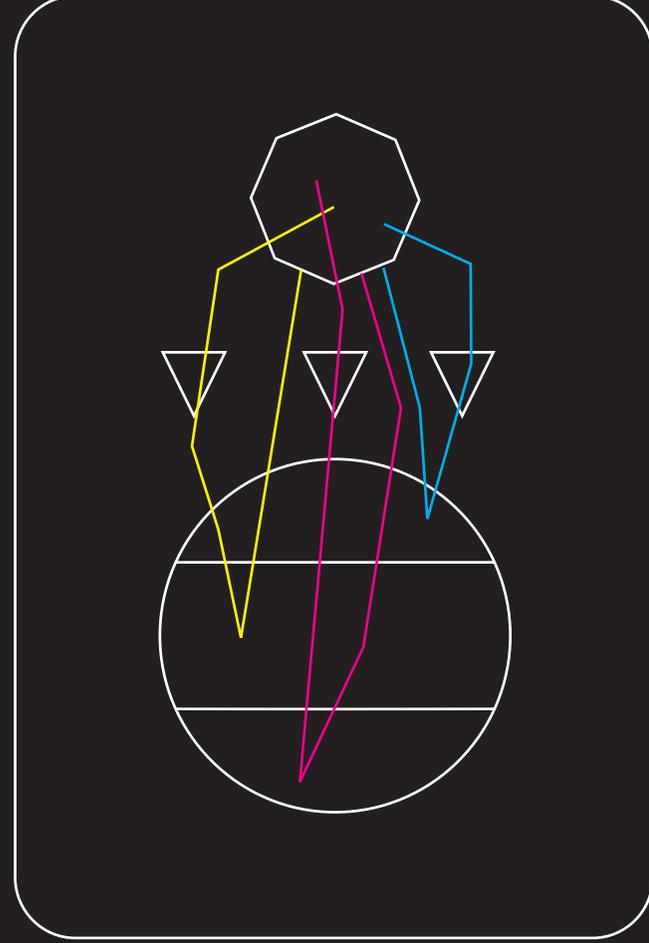
## The Energy Flow Model

### Mapping your relationship with your centre

The idea of energy flowing back and forth in various forms between you and your culture centre opens the possibility to map the exchange going on in detail. Building on that, we have created a model that offers a visual representation of the relationship between culture worker and culture centre.

Applying this model to your own relationship with your centre will help you to develop an understanding of what exactly you give and what you get, find out where and when you get charged up or drained, and if - at the end of the day - the deal between you and your centre is fair.

*Between the individual to the organization*



## The architecture of the energy flow model

*Understanding the model*

**The model consists of six parts:** 1. You - 2. your touchpoints to your culture centre - 3. Your experience at the touchpoints - 4. the energy flows at those touchpoints - 5. the meaning for you - and 6. to the meaning for the centre.

### 1. You

There are countless ways to describe you.

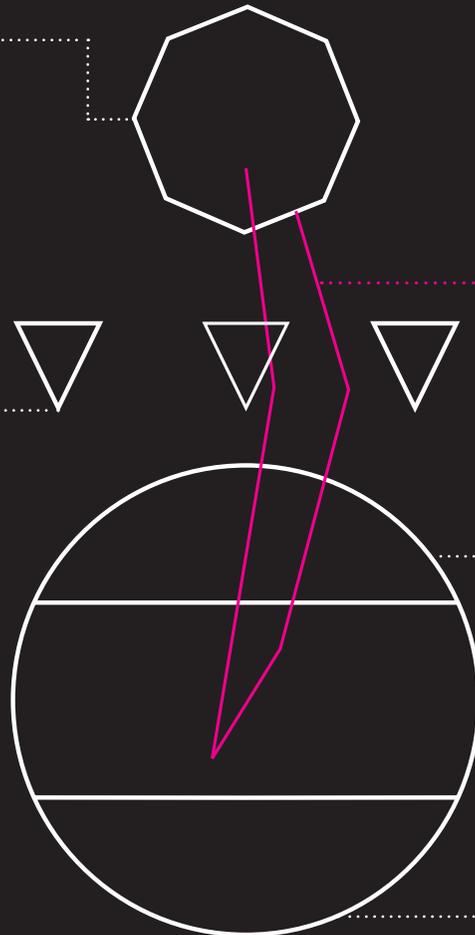
We have chosen to work with high point descriptions. A high point is a point in your life when you felt most alive, engaged and energized. Describing a high point and why it mattered to you contains a lot of information about you.

Going through the model with cultural workers we have realized that people often look for recreating a past high-point experience in their work. But be aware that describing one or two high points expresses only a small part of who you are. What charges and what drains you in your job might be related to different aspects of your personality.

In our experience it is best to take two high points - one that is work related and one that has nothing to do with work. The high point that has nothing to do with your work reminds you about who you are without your work. And the job related high point might shine a first light on your motivation to do the job.

### 2. Your touchpoints to your culture centre

You are in contact with your culture centre via a number of touchpoints. These touchpoints are visible, tangible elements of your centre like the building, being part of your team, the audience, the programme, individual concerts, your daily work and many more.



### 3. Your experience

At every touchpoint you relate to your centre in a different way. It is here that you have the experiences that then aggregate to your overall impression of your centre.

### 4. The energy flows between you and your centre

At every touchpoint energy is exchanged in different ways. Very roughly you can distinguish between physical, emotional and mental energy. For example, you could give a lot of mental energy in team meetings (carrying the mental load of structuring the meetings), or emotional energy when taking responsibility for a tight budget, or physical energy when building up a stage. You receive emotional energy in the form of a sense of belonging to a team. However, this distinction is only a helping construct and not to be taken too strictly.

### 5. The meaning for you

You experience those touchpoints in a certain way - as charging or draining or both - because of the meaning you connect to them. To really understand why some touchpoints drain or charge you up, you need to connect them to what they mean to you.

### 6. The meaning for the culture centre.

Every touchpoint is also an expression of the idea of your cultural centre. Through them you get in touch with the intangible side of your centre. Sometimes the connection is very direct, like the cultural program being a direct expression of the culture centres core idea. Sometimes the connection is more indirect. Doing accounting for example might be harder to link to the core idea, but is a necessary activity to keep centre alive from an economic perspective.



# Application

Part three

The spark it takes to start  
something, is not the same as  
the spark it takes to maintain  
something.

*How to go through the process yourself*  
The Resource Section

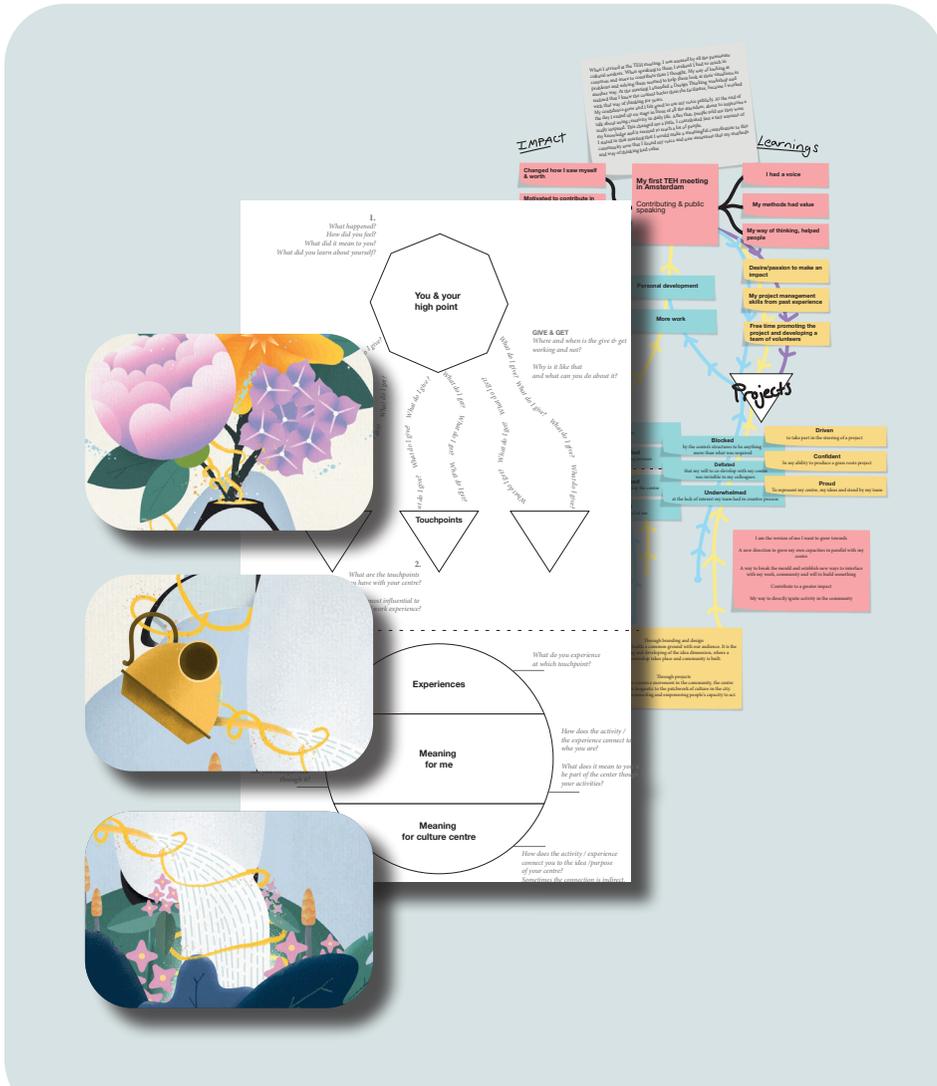
- *Worksheet*
- *Example model*
- *Making Sense Of Your Model*

*How to apply the penguin ideas in daily practice*  
The Hand Page

*What attracts cultural workers to their centres?*  
The End is Hope



# THE RESOURCE SECTION



## How to go through the process yourself

On the next pages we provide you with some resources that enable you to analyse your relationship with your centre.

1. A worksheet that serves as a blueprint for going through the process.
2. Shawn has created an example model from his personal experience of working in culture that illustrates how a finished model could look like.

3. Some inspirations of how to use your model to adapt your energy balance.

4. A video in which we guide you through the process. The model is pretty complex and there is a lot of information that is much easier to communicate in a dynamic form than in print.

Go to [www.thepenguinproject.com/model](http://www.thepenguinproject.com/model) to check it out.

**R** THE ENERGY FLOW MODEL

Modeling our relationship with our centres

**1.**

**High point**

Think of a situation in your life that marks a high point, a situation when you felt at your best, when you were really alive? Describe the situation in detail, include a beginning middle and end.

**Characteristics of a high point**

- Helps you discover our "edges"
- Changes you in an irreversible way
- You find ways to repeat it

**2.**

**Touchpoints**

This is where we interface with our centre. It's good to start with ones that influence your working experience the most.

**Examples of a touchpoint**

- Team meetings
- Tasks
- The space

**GIVE & GET**

Say what you give and get for each touchpoint. It can help to think about it in this way:

**Mental (planning)**

**Emotional (stress)**

**Physical (sitting)**

**3.**

**Feeling & meaning**

**Experience**

What kind of experiences do you have at each touchpoint? And how do they aggregate to form your overall experience of your culture centre?

**Meaning for me**

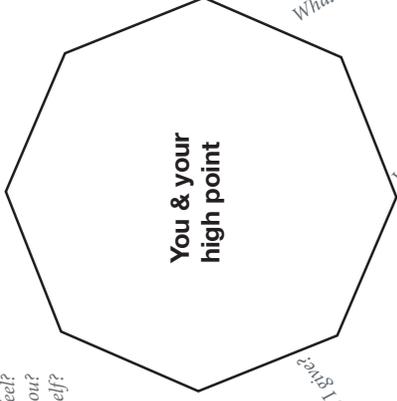
Explore what it means to you to be part of your centre, using your activities and experiences as reference.

**Meaning for culture centre**

Examine how each touchpoint connects & expresses the purpose & idea of your centre.

**Worksheet**

1. What happened?  
How did you feel?  
What did it mean to you?  
What did you learn about yourself?



**GIVE & GET**

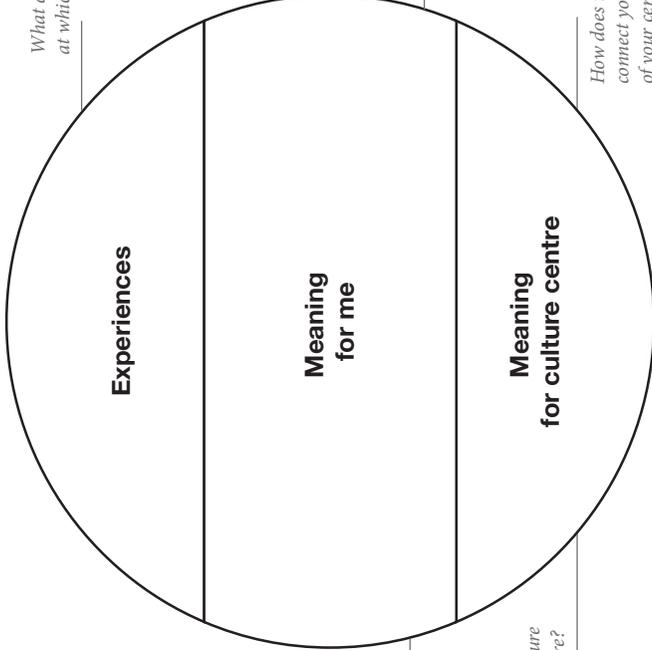
Where and when is the give & get working and not?

Why is it like that and what can you do about it?

2. What are the touchpoints you have with your centre?  
Which are the most influential to overall work experience?

- 3.

What do you experience at which touchpoint?



Who are you when doing this work or having this experience?

Are you transformed through it?

How does the activity / the experience connect to who you are?

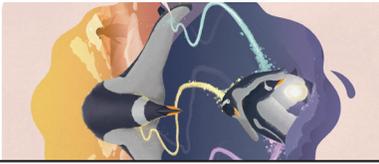
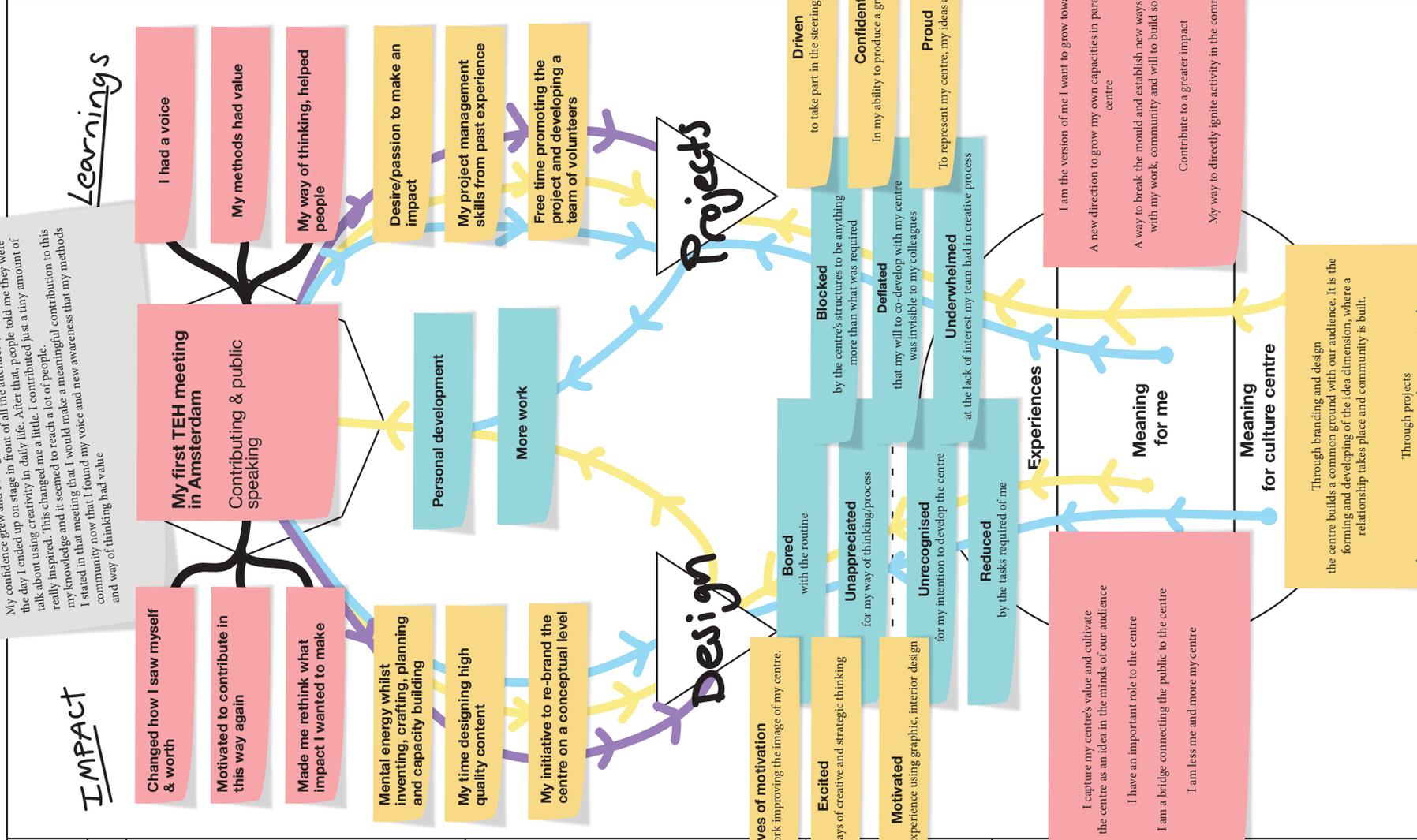
What does it mean to you to be part of the center through your activities?

Which part of the culture centres idea is expressed where?

How does the activity / experience connect you to the idea / purpose of your centre?  
Sometimes the connection is indirect.

# Example Model

<p><b>THE ENERGY FLOW MODEL</b></p> <p>Modeling our relationship with our centres</p>	<p><b>1. High point</b></p> <p>Think of a situation in your life that marks a high point, a situation when you felt at your best, when you were really alive? Describe the situation in detail. include a beginning middle and end.</p> <p><b>Characteristics of a high point</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps you discover our "edges"</li> <li>• Changes you in an irreversible way</li> <li>• You find ways to repeat it</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Touchpoints</b></p> <p>This is where we interface with our centre. It's good to start with ones that influence your working experience the most.</p> <p><b>Examples of a touchpoint</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team meetings</li> <li>• Tasks</li> <li>• The space</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Feeling &amp; meaning</b></p> <p><b>Experience</b></p> <p>Focus on the feelings you get at each touchpoint, combining them to form and examine your overall experience at work.</p> <p><b>Meaning for me</b></p> <p>Explore what it means to you to be part of your centre, using your activities and experiences as reference.</p> <p><b>Meaning for culture centre</b></p> <p>Examine how each touchpoint connects &amp; expresses the purpose &amp; idea of your centre.</p>
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## Make Sense Of Your Model

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**We assume here that you have completed the model for yourself and need some help with interpreting it. If that is the case, here are some ideas for making sense of your model.**

- Give the process some time to sink in and go over some of the metaphors in the book again. Ask yourself: where am I charged up or drained and why.
- Look at where you are charged up and drained and form questions that put in focus what you need for your relationship to be mutually beneficial.
- The process itself is already an intervention. You have made visible the intangible part of the deal/relationship. How will you use that awareness to manage your relationship with your centre?
- Look at it through a resonance perspective. Is your work playing a big role in contributing to a good life? Is it getting in the way of it?
- You uncovered multiple points of intervention and opportunities to recalibrate your relationship with your centre. The energy flow metaphor implies that changing one little thing in the system will affect other parts, or at the very least provide feedback on what can and can't be influenced by you alone.

Going through the journey individually will help you understand various aspects of your relationship with your centre. However, carrying out this process as a group creates a shared understanding that goes far beyond what an individual alone can achieve.

# THE HAND PAGE



## The Hand Page

*Or how to apply the penguin ideas in daily practice*

The main focus of this book is on developing metaphors that you can use for reflection. How you apply the penguin ideas to your daily work is obviously highly dependent on your context. There is not too much we can say about it. We will therefore only sketch a few ideas here that could serve as inspiration.

### 1. Personal level: Keep a penguin diary

Choose one metaphor – for this example we use the ridge – and then write down regularly what your experiences are and how you interpret them. For example:

2.10.21: “Two weeks ago I felt exposed when I did the moderation for our podium discussion. It felt awesome to be in front of so many people. I was well prepared and so I enjoyed the situation and felt up to the challenge.”

7.10.21: “For the last two months I have been managing our team-internal reorganization process. I feel quite exposed, but in a bad way. There is little support but a lot of critique from my colleagues and I cannot get any of the responsibility off my shoulders. I will have to address this issue in our next team meeting.”

Keeping track of such experiences over time will add up to a database of exposure-experiences. You will learn in detail about what makes exposure an experience that nurtures you vs. drains your spark. That will help you to avoid the negative and cultivate the positive aspects of exposure.

### 2. Team level: Work through a metaphor with your teammates and actively shape your working culture

Knowing what charges up and what drains your colleagues adds another dimension to teamwork. It is in our teams where we co-create our working culture that determines how we work every day. In many cultural centres, this is a passive process that “just happens”. Using one or several penguin metaphors to examine how you relate to those topics as a team provides an opportunity to take an active approach to examine and shape your working culture together. “How can we organise so we are more in tune?”, “How can we create situations where we, as a team, harvest the fruits of our work?” Working on those questions will introduce an element of care into the working culture.

### 3. Go to the penguin website

Find out what else the penguin project has to offer. [www.thepenguinproject.com](http://www.thepenguinproject.com)

### 4. Go to Trans Europe Halles (TEH) meetings and talk to people about the penguin ideas.

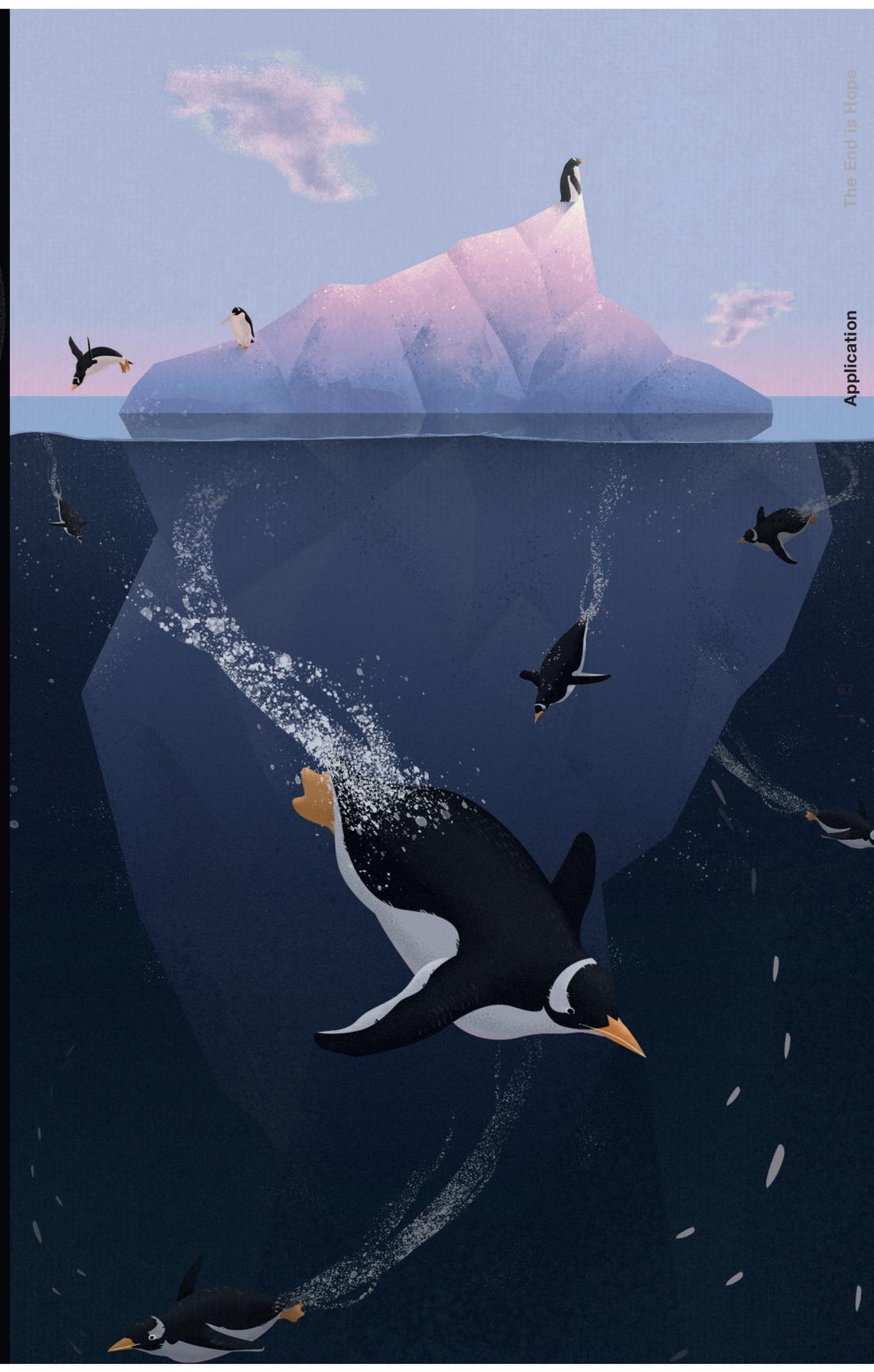
Find the authors of this book, Shawn Antoni Wright and Florian Cope-Ladstätter, and talk to them about it.



## The End is Hope

We want to end with a few words of hope about what we hope to have inspired in readers of this book.

- We hope that we could spark your interest in the question of what keeps your spark alive and what connects you to your cultural centre.
- We hope that, after reading this, you have a better understanding about what charges you up and what drains you in your daily life of working in culture and maybe you have already started making adjustments.
- And last but not least, we hope that by now you have an idea of how the beauty and the beast of working in culture are connected and why it is an ongoing challenge to keep the dynamic balance between bore-out, resonance and burnout.





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KULTURBACKSTUBE**

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