

BORDERS TO CROSS

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| Title: | 'A legal framework for public consultation: striving for a more deliberative democracy' |
| Name workshop: | Economics and Urban Planning |
| Projects presented: | StRaten general (Belgium, Antwerp) |
| Workshop director(s): | |
| Name rapporteur(s): | Susan den Uyl |
| Date and time of workshop: | 9:30 - 11:00 30 October 2013 |

StRaten Generaal is an Antwerp based citizen movement. Different activist groups allied with experts and economic stakeholders. Together they tried to convince the local government not to build a highway through the city of Antwerp.

Conclusion: they did manage to delay the construction of the high way. But a civil society movement like this costs too much money and energy. It would be better if the government used a more deliberative (inclusive) democratic model.

Antwerp did not have a long tradition of the involvement of civil society. This citizen movement came into being out of protest against the local government. In 2000 the local government made a plan to make a high way through the city. In 2005 they presented this plan to the public. Without the involvement of the StRaten Generaal, the high way would be here now. So the movement has proved to be effective.

The main goals:

1. Stimulate **debate** about government plans. This means including collective expertise from society. This way you are able generate alternative plans.
2. **Alliances.** They worked together with other action groups. Economic stakeholders also allied with the activists and started the 'Forum 2020' together. These billionaire companies from the port of Antwerp also had an interest the highway - that would connect the port to the city - and wanted a project that would be legitimized by the community.
3. **Accountability.** Stimulate the government to be transparent about documents and plans.

To make an initiative/movement work you have to **ally**. You can ally with: 1) the national government 2) parliament 3) go to court. 4) Local government 5) public sector 6) external experts. 7) Other activist (civil society) 8) the press 9) economic stake holders (industry). The stronger your links are with the other 8 groups, the bigger your chance is that you will succeed; that you will be

listened to.

Trying to get ally with all these different groups and stakeholders costs a lot of **time, money and energy!**

A better solution would be to have a **more deliberative democracy**. We need a new legal frame for **public consultation**. The government now makes the plans and policies in their own laboratory, before consulting civil society and listening to alternative plans.

The StRaten Generaal does not represent the voice of the every single citizen. It is a 'highbrow citizen movements' which includes lawyers, architects, philosophers, etc. Then again, the main goal is not **legitimacy** like in a **direct democracy**. In this case, it is a matter of improving the **representative democracy**. The main goal here is, to include the expertise of people outside of the government. This way, more interests are consulted, which may lead to alternative plans.