

# BORDERS TO CROSS

Title:	Workshop 1.4
Name workshop:	<b>Youth and Participation</b>
Projects presented:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Art as a means for social transformation. The fisherman village of El Max – Egypt</li> <li>2. The Horsh Beirut Campaign - Lebanon</li> </ol>
Workshop director(s):	Machtelijn Brummel
Name rapporteur(s):	John Callaghan
Date and time of workshop:	9.30am

This workshop, titled *Youth and Participation*, presented two projects; Gudran for Art and Development, bringing art out of the galleries and onto the streets, and Nahnoo, an organisation dedicated to youth empowerment. Both organisations engage young people in projects of civil society.

Both projects capitalised upon the creativity of young people, in order to create repertoires of protest/resistance that caught the imagination of the public and media (such as painting messages on the front of houses in El Max, or creating temporary mini green spaces throughout Beirut). Also, sometimes solutions to our problems are right in front of us! For example, Nahnoo understood that the green space they sought did not need to be created, simply highlighted and made accessible.

Realising that they were only reaching the same, small network of people with their art in Alexandria and Cairo, and motivated by “the sense of an artist’s social responsibility”, the artists of Gudran decided to take their art to the streets. They worked with the community of El Max, a fishing region in western Alexandria, who were facing relocation by the government. Gudran began working with the children of the community, giving art classes and helping them to brighten up their homes and environments. Through this repertoire of ‘festive resistance’, the local community were given an opportunity to change their fate, through expression of pride in and ownership of their community, which succeeded in reversing the government’s planned relocation program. Taking action/responsibility for change, both by the artists and the people of El Max, were key moments in this project.

After the civil war, Beirut’s green spaces were gobbled up by development, leaving young people

with nowhere to safely congregate, and leading to anti-social behaviour. Nahnoo identified a pre-existing green space in Horsh Beirut, strategically located between Sunni, Shiite and Christian communities, which had the potential to serve as an ideal location for young people to get together, share ideas and foster mutual understanding. Nahnoo empowered young people with the necessary skills to engage the municipality on a formal level (lobbying, advocacy etc), and used inventive repertoires of protest to maintain pressure on the municipality and hold them accountable to their promises. Their approach was strategic - not revolutionary - but well coordinated and committed.

Both projects highlight how the creativity and passion of young people can be harnessed to great effect. Young people are a very adaptable group; Gudran showed young people how they could effect change by taking control of their circumstances, and freely expressing their creativity. Whereas Nahnoo gave young people the skills to focus their creativity and passion into an 'appropriate' form, with which the municipality would engage and take notice of. Having experienced initial success, the young people in both cases are now suitably empowered to take control of these organisations, which displays a commitment and sustainability that bodes well for the future.

Extra information: