

BORDERS TO CROSS

Title:	'European Alternatives: trying to bridge the European democratic deficit.'
Name workshop:	Community Building and Training
Projects presented:	Citizens Pact (Citizens Manifesto)
Name rapporteur(s):	Susan den Uyl
Date and time of workshop:	11:30-13:00 October 30th 2013

Heading: three lines leading the reader into the topic:

The Citizens Pact was born out of the idea that the European representative system is ineffective. Bridging this **European democratic deficit**, does not necessarily mean that you have to change institutions from top down. The Citizens Pact is an initiative that tries to handle this **from bottom up**.

By working transnationally (transeuropean), the Citizens Pact tries to provide a set of alternatives (laws and policies) that are different from the policies that are made at a national or European level. And by working from bottom up, it provides a **participatory element** in our representative democracy.

What triggered me: 5 lines:

In Europe, citizens and their representatives are used to think and talk in national terms. We tend to compare countries, even though most problems countries are facing cut across national borders. A lot of issues are European or regional and not specific to one nation. An example of a regional problem that should not only be formulated in national terms is the economic crisis the Mediterranean region is facing right now.

There is no **common vocabulary or awareness** to address these European or regional problems. Citizens across different countries are now using **different ways to express similar problems**. The Citizens Pact is an initiative that allows citizens to generate a common vocabulary, to address the issues that citizens across Europe face.

Description and elaboration of observations and reflections of projects and/or things that happened and/or were discussed during the workshop: 10-20 lines:

In contrast with the other (fiscal) pacts in Europe, where citizens felt it was barely democratic and did not involve them, the **Citizens Pact** should form a pact between European citizens and between

citizens and their representatives.

The creation of the Pact started around three years ago. Since then a **Citizens Manifesto** has been drawn up. This manifesto will be presented to the candidates of the European parliament in 2014. The manifesto consists of a variety of proposals for **political and economic reform**. But also stresses the **civil rights** of gypsies and minorities for example.

Because every citizen should be able to take part in the making of the Manifesto, the initiators of the Citizens Pact tried to **include as much ordinary citizens** as possible. The citizens, who are hardest to reach however, are the citizens who lack the most skills that are needed to participate in a political decision making process. They used three ways to address this problem. The first way was by going to small communities in Europe. The second way of targeting certain groups like unemployed people or migrants that are often excluded from politics, was to actively invite them to participate. The third way was to go to public places on the streets in 13 countries and ask people their ideas about the Manifesto. Now there were people included and who could give their opinion about the Manifesto, who normally would not have a say in policy making, like children or homeless people.

Reflection, possibly linking up to the leading questions and threads: 5-10 lines:

One of the reasons for the participatory element, is because the access to the decision making process in our representative democracy in the European Union can be difficult for ordinary people. And in a democracy, people should have the confidence that they are listened to. The Citizens pact aimed to bridge this democratic deficit, by literally taking the Manifesto to the streets. This is a simple way to give people the feeling, that not all the decision making about European problems takes place in Brussels.

The aim to make people aware that decision making at a European level is needed, because most problems are regional and not national, is a more ambitious goal. This awareness is one of the main goals of the pact, but this might be more difficult to achieve.