

BORDERS TO CROSS

Title:	Strategies of Inclusion and Empowerment
Name workshop:	Empowerment of civil society
Projects presented:	1. The Balkan Forum 2. Bona Mente 3.
Workshop director(s):	Maurice Specht/Martiene Gootens
Name rapporteur(s):	Brita Trapman
Date and time of workshop:	30 Oct, 2013 14:30

During this workshop we discussed different possible strategies to include and empower citizens. An interesting interactive discussion followed during which the participants positioned different strategies of empowerment in a chart along two axes. The horizontal axe represented the confrontational, activist methods on the one side, and the deliberative strategies on the other. The vertical axe represented popular, self-created space on the one side and invited space on the other.

An interesting finding was the fluency of strategies over time. New popular spaces need to be created because old ones become invited spaces, as exemplified by Pakhuis de Zwijger itself that used to be a squatted space and now functions as a convention centre. And new strategies need to be invented to catch people's attention. It was for example suggested that Egyptians are starting to get annoyed of people occupying the Tahrir square again and again.

Before the participants were invited to join in the positioning exercise, they were introduced to two divergent Balkan initiatives. The first, the Balkan Forum, provided a bottom up strategy by providing a platform for left-wing organizations and movements from the Balkans to meet and explore common goals. The second organization, the Macedonian Bona Mente, had worked through a bottom up strategy to let the government adhere to a law that was included in the Ohrid Peace Agreement, signed by high-level officials and designed without public involvement. The law provided for inter-ethnic committees in every municipality in Macedonia, which would deal with cultural and identity-related issues in order to prevent interethnic tensions. The law was not enacted properly until Bona Mente dedicated years of work, convincing officials of their obligation to enact the law and the public of its importance.

In answer to the third leading question, the strategy of Bona Mente forms a good example where civil society works together with political officials and civil society.

Extra information: