

Start with the audience- make everyone active

-A good experience from ESF that could make the forum activities even better!

We would like to share one interesting experience from the European Social Forum in Malmö. This can maybe be helpful in the discussions for future forums. The forum was great with all themes, the demonstration and new networks created. But still many workshops were pedagogical disasters, with one way information, mostly male speakers talking and talking and almost no time for speakers and audience to interact and be creative together.

We had a similar scenario for the workshop “Learning to change the world”. Three different groups merged during summer, and altogether we had ten speakers. If all of them should talk there would be only a short time left to questions from the audience.

But in the last minute we decided to make it really different. And it became a success.

This is what we did:

First we gave a small paper to everyone in the room about 80 people. They all got ten minutes to write about one or two moments when they experienced learning that can change the world. Everyone put their papers on the wall and we used 20 minutes to walk around reading as much as we could.

After this we formed groups of about five people in each and they discussed the issue of alternative education in the groups. Then we opened the floor for 40 minutes of free discussions.

In the end the keynote speakers added thoughts and summarized the seminar for about 30 minutes.

The interesting thing was that many of the things that the speakers planned to say was now said by the participants and the speakers only needed a third of the planned time to fill in and summarize. In this way everyone in the room was participating and creative. The spirit was great. Many people came up to us and said. This is the way all forums should be!

In the afternoon the same day we had an evaluation meeting to discuss if should continue to cooperate. We expected the organisers 10 people but more than 30 showed up.

We don't think that every seminar can be organized in such an alternative way, but many could. When we planned it we asked ourselves do we dare to make it so alternative and start with the audience, does it look too vague. But after this experience we feel that it is really possible. Most people coming to the forums have the knowledge and the will to contribute and if we give everyone this opportunity the forum process could be even better..

If you would like to know more or make plans for Belem or other events with us, please contact:

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