



# The Power of Diversity

Creating Space for Collaborations across Teams, Organizations and Countries

In today's world, polarisation is a growing phenomenon that is creating unbridgeable divides. Governments, businesses, political institutions, and religions are struggling to create a joint global vision for dealing with challenges such as political and religious polarization, climate change, energy shortages, and economic or environmental crises.

23



PARTICIPANTS

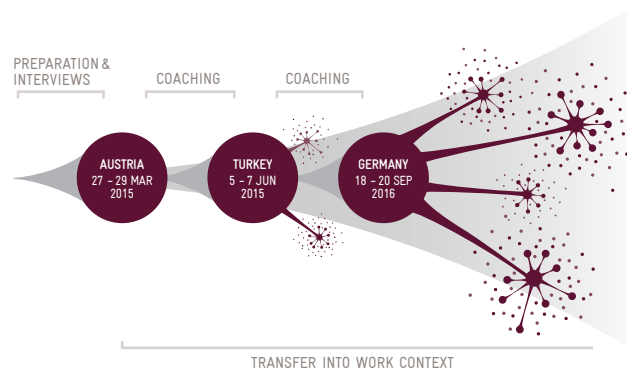
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COUNTRIES

## The Process

The Lab united 23 change agents (39% men, 61% women) from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Ghana, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Serbia, Sudan, Uganda, and the United Kingdom who represented different societal sectors (government, civil society, NGO, private sector and academia). Among the participants were the Commissioner General of the National Revenue Authority of Uganda, the Deputy Director of the European Integration Office of the Republic of Serbia and the CEO of Brap, a leading British NPO in the field of diversity and human rights.



The Power of Diversity Lab explored new ways of bridging divides and harnessing the inherent power that exist in the globalized and highly interdependent social systems

today. Convened by the Global Leadership Academy and the Deep Democracy Institute, and drawing on the method of the latter, it introduced concepts and practical interventions based on modern physics, the science of complexity, and cutting-edge psychology. It included a new approach to awareness training on rank and privileges, and trained leaders and change agents not only to manage diversity and power processes, but also to harness and develop their potential. Participants learned to facilitate large, diverse groups from different countries and sectors, and to uncover their enormous potential.

In the first Lab meeting in Vienna, participants engaged in a reflective dialogue around identities and roles and their facilitation in a complex world. This was connected with issues of leadership, rank, and power relations and combined with exercises on conflict resolution.

The second meeting in Istanbul offered space to reflect on meaning and impact in a leader's life. Furthermore, individual and group-related privileges were identified and observed for their effect on other less privileged individuals. The methodology of group process was used frequently: It built a deep understanding within the group, recognition of the whole community, including viewpoints of the minority in the group, or those views which remain unmentioned, and which usually tend to be ignored or overridden. Participants discovered hidden process structures in groups and allowed new creative identities to emerge.

In the last Lab meeting in Berlin, reflections on how to deal with public criticism as a leader were made. Additionally, special emphasis was laid on exercises helping participants transfer their rich learnings into their everyday lives.

The Lab process was shaped by the issues and challenges that participants brought to the table:

How do I as a leader or change agent promote individual power and diversity (divergence) while bringing unity and synergy (convergence) to the system? How can we rapidly work through conflict and divergence in our own team



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so we don't lose impact in the field (market, community, etc.)? How can we proceed with our vision and strategies in a fast-changing and complex world? How can power and diversity within a group be handled together in a way that increases impact and efficiency? How can leaders achieve a perfect distribution of power? How do we negotiate with systems that seem inert and rigid?



**Further information about the lab:**  
[www.we-do-change.org/what-we-do/power-of-diversity](http://www.we-do-change.org/what-we-do/power-of-diversity)

## Impact

**"I have learnt not be afraid of change. It was an important step for me to say: I live in an instable country, but I now feel safe to lead."**

*Sasa Gavric, Executive Officer, Sarajevo Open Centre*

**"Within our society's formal, subjective and dyadic way of thinking, we often forget the subtle complex processes of the larger world. The power of the lab pertains to its application of the science of complexity to one of the most complicated processes in existence: human relationships."**

*Joni Baboci, Director of Atelier Albania Unit, National Territorial Planning Agency of Albania*

## Stories of Change

In all three meetings the participants approached the leading questions (see above) as well as their own concrete challenges in different but overlapping formats such as group discussions, role play, facilitation exercises, and individual reflection. The participants thereby experienced and acquired new approaches to multidimensional change management on the basis of process work. Amongst other methods, they tested out differentiated perception of roles and disturbances within group situations, and practised working through them in such a way that previously stagnant or conflict-ridden situations could be understood as opportunities for growth and addressed accordingly. Between modules, the coaches were available to the participants, and supported them in the practical application of what they had learned in their own contexts.

**"What we are learning here is neither a tool nor a technique – it is a completely new way of understanding the world,"** stated Dr Donald Rukare, CEO of the Governance and Public Policy Research Center in Kampala, Uganda, summarised his experience.

After the official conclusion of the Lab in Berlin in September 2011, the participants were determined to use their newly acquired skills and ideas to keep working on concrete changes in their home contexts. For example, Nicolette Manzini from the Mondisieme Foundation in Southern Italy said, "My organisation is enthusiastic about the new ideas and skills that I brought back from the lab. We are currently working on integrating these experiences as new standards for our processes with displaced people, school pupils, and teachers." Adel Ghazaly, director of the South Egypt Development Association, a non-governmental organisation with 60 employees, described the changes in his home country: "There are very serious conflicts between different ethnic groups here. There are murders, and many families find themselves caught in seemingly insurmountable



table cycles of violence and revenge. These conflicts are considered to be unsolvable, and many individuals who have worked for peace between these groups have told me that it was impossible and dangerous, that I had better not get involved at all. What we experienced and learned in the Power of Diversity Lab has given me the courage to seek change. I have begun to carry out community dialogues with representatives of rival groups and to give workshops to youth from the region on the topics of revenge and conflict. I have learned to deal with difficult situations better and also to deal with myself better. I now think, more than I have ever before, that change is possible”.



72%

improvement of innovation and leadership skills



60%

received significant impulses for tackling current challenges in their home systems



69%

were able to initiate innovation and change in their institutions and organisations

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Further information about our impact:  
[www.we-do-change.org/our-impact](http://www.we-do-change.org/our-impact)

## The convening organisations

### The Deep Democracy Institute

Founded in 2006 as a think tank and educational institute that researches, applies and teaches Deep Democracy worldwide, the Deep Democracy Institute consults governments, conducts large scale change processes in businesses and NGO's, and facilitates and consults grassroots movements and communities. The Deep Democracy Institute facilitates Open Forums on issues that involve multiple stakeholders and polarize the public for groups of up to 1000 participants. It conducts training programs across the globe from San Francisco and Amsterdam to Moscow and Novosibirsk, Ramallah and Jenin, Downtown Nairobi and Kibera (an informal settlement adjacent to Nairobi, the second largest slum in Africa). The Deep Democracy Institute works in war zones – facilitated conflicts in postwar Yugoslavia – and currently work with polarized political streams in Ukraine, where its representatives also consult and teach at the University of Public Administration under the President of Ukraine, the Ukrainian elite institute for Public Administration. They also teach at the Moscow Business School and the University of Moscow and are regular guests at conferences and educational institutions across the globe.

[www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org](http://www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org)

## The Global Leadership Academy

The Global Leadership Academy offers interdisciplinary and practice-oriented programmes aimed at improving the innovation capacity and leadership skills of decision-makers from the fields of policy-making, business, higher education and research, and civil society. In the Lab they come together to look at global issues from a completely different angle. Gaining fresh perspectives allows them to implement the necessary change processes in their spheres of influence.

The Global Leadership Academy, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), is a central component in GIZ's range of services for international human capacity development.

[www.we-do-change.org](http://www.we-do-change.org)

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