



You Change the Tribe and the Tribe Changes You

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It all started innocently enough approximately one year ago in March 2009. Since then, we have, with no doubt, experienced one of the most intense years of our lives. Therefore, this article should be taken as our attempt at catharsis, an emotional expression of how the Forum has changed us both personally and professionally.

In August 2009, when the machinery of the Forum had already started to move and, apparently, every DUSKE member was committed to it, we had to face up to some bad news and a new scenario: due to personal/professional reasons, the former President and Vice-President had left DUSKE.

We must admit it did feel challenging. At that moment a crucial question came to our minds: *Are we going to be able to handle it?* But we must admit, too, that our sense of responsibility became stronger whenever we felt tempted to give up. *How could we NOT get the job done?* It soon became clear that we were already committed to the whole project, and, what is more, we quickly understood that we had to cling on to our wish and our imagination and trust ourselves if we wanted the Forum to be successful. So without wasting any time DUSKE started imagining the Forum intellectually, socially, and logistically, as well as working on the communication and publicity of the Forum and *collecting* support from different local institutions such as universities, NGOs, and the local administration. Those were challenging times, and so they keep being, fortunately, since we still see endless possibilities for DUSKE.

The few weeks prior to the Forum turned out to be really intense (nothing compared to the Forum itself, though). We had three days to fulfil Tokyo Foundations' expectations, University of Deusto's expectations, presenters and participants' expectations, and, what is more, our own expectations. One of our biggest concerns was that our one year of hard work had to be embodied: it had to converge and take shape as we had planned it through diverse moments and activities, times and spaces; going from spontaneous to more studied ways to eventually end up being an intellectual and social experience to be remembered. *If only it could feel fluid, and if only people could find and create comfortable spaces for encounter, debate, and creation...*



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Fortunately, it all came true. The Forum took life by itself and, by the end of the journey, it felt like a reunion of old friends who had more in common than expected; people who, from different perspectives, genders, generations, national and social backgrounds, demonstrated a strong commitment to mutual understanding and enrichment. Feedback after feedback, we all felt part of the same stream. At times, it even felt as if there was magic in the air—we especially remember the last day's discussions where we all sat together in a circle, interacting freely and productively.

Without any kind of doubt, the Forum has been an extraordinary experience: demanding and challenging as well extremely motivating, interesting and—why not—fun and enjoyable. Although we did imagine the Forum in similar terms to what it eventually turned out to be, we never thought that the experience would mean so much to us. We had the opportunity to meet very interesting people, working groups, and organisations along the way—both from the Sylff and non-Sylff communities, the local and the extra-local contexts, the private and the public sectors, and both personally and virtually. It has been very encouraging and comforting to realise that there are people around us with a strong orientation and wish to contribute to the achievement of social justice and well-being for all. As a lesson learnt from the Forum, we now know that there are many valuable people and projects *out there* that are worth being contacted and known for, and we shall keep in touch with.

We would like to conclude by borrowing some words from the fascinating film *Fierce People* by Griffin Dunne, which we always wanted to use but had never found the right moment to do so: "We are a sum of all the people that pass by our lives; you change the tribe and the tribe changes you."

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