EUROPEAN **COMMUNITY** **FOUNDATION** INITIATIVE

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION
WHAT, WHO AND HOW
A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
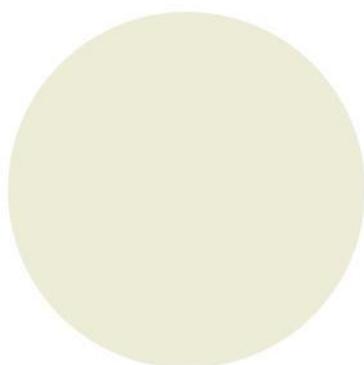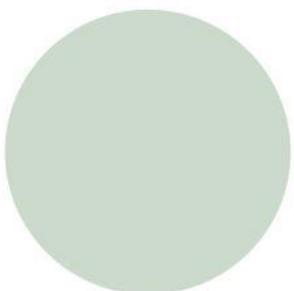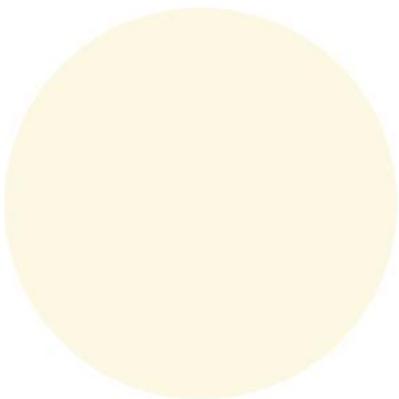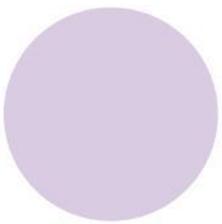
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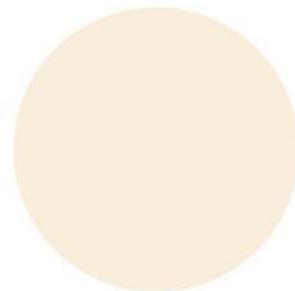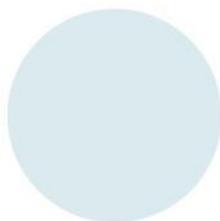**Bibliographic information of the German National Library (DNB):**

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INTRODUCTION

In his latest book, [Citizens – Why the key to fix everything is all of us](), Jon Alexander invites people and the whole society to move from the consumer story that permeates every aspect of society and in which people are mere recipients, self-absorbed and pursue only their interests, to the citizens' story. He envisions and proposes a new narrative where individuals are creative, capable, and caring and recognise the power of collaboration and co-creation to build a better future. In this vision, governments, organisations, and communities recognise citizens as assets, able to contribute, imagine and put into practice together new futures and possibilities and not passive subjects.

Fostering people agency, encouraging, nurturing, and strengthening meaningful community participation and engagement are crucial elements to face today's societal challenges' complexity, interconnectedness, and scale. It becomes essential to find solutions, ideas, and concepts that are community-driven and led. In this sense, territories are incredible hubs to experiment in thoughts and actions with new tailor-made approaches that make the most sense to citizens and can help build confidence and strengthen the social fabric for building a more resilient, equitable, and fair society.

This publication is, firstly, a collection of stories and examples of how European community foundations are driving, enabling, and fostering community engagement and participation. It focuses on the process, the results achieved, and the challenges faced. It draws from people's experience in the field, articles, press releases, and other communication materials.

The report also aims to provide readers who are new to the topic with useful information, helpful frameworks, and models for citizen engagement and participation at different levels. Finally, it also highlights the vital role community foundation support organisations play in strengthening the system, offering guidance, and equipping them with the necessary tools and know-how.

What can you expect?

- Stories from the community foundations' field;
- Toolkits and publications from organisations that work on community engagement and participation from different angles and perspectives, such as digital engagement, community organising and collective intelligence perspective;
- A collection of materials, readings, and insights from community foundations and community foundation support organisations across the continent.

Who is this for? Well, it is accessible to anyone and could be of particular interest to:

- Community philanthropy practitioners eager to learn more about how peers across Europe are leading and enabling community engagement and participation processes;

- Foundations and philanthropic organisations that wish to know more about the work of European community foundations, understand the missions they pursue, the challenges and obstacles they face, and how they could aspire to drive community agency and participation by supporting them;

- Civil society organisations' representatives that are interested in discovering the role of the community philanthropy field in driving these kinds of processes and exploring potential partnership and collaborations with them.

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT: WHAT DIFFERENCES?

In its wider meaning, citizen participation can be defined as a process in which people, individuals, or groups take part in shaping and influencing decisions that would impact their community (geographical or interest-based). It usually refers to the public sphere but is also applicable in the decision-making process of organisations that work with specific communities; participation can take place within an institutional framework and groups or institutions themselves can kick it off[1].

It is also a core principle of human rights and a condition for effective democratic citizenship for all people. Without the full spectrum of human rights in place, participation becomes inaccessible. Poor health, low levels of education, limitations on freedom of expression, and poverty are among some conditions that can impact our ability to join these processes and structures meaningfully and consciously, which affect us and our rights. At the same time, without participation, many human rights are difficult to access. Thanks to it, we can build a society based on human rights, foster social cohesion, make our voices heard to influence decision-makers, achieve change, and eventually be the subject and not the object of our lives[2].

Usually referred to in the context of public space and while often used as synonyms, citizen engagement and participation differ fundamentally on one central aspect. Engagement entails a more top-down approach, where one organisation or the local government asks for input and initiates a dialogue with a specific community. Participation is led bottom-up, usually kicked off by organised citizens who are put in the driving seat of the decision-making process. Within the public space, citizen engagement and participation both have the same objective: to increase collaboration between communities and local institutions and actors and improve programmes for the community itself[3].

If you are interested in stories of citizen participation and engagement at the local level from public institutions check out the [Healthier Democracy Toolkit](#) developed by Public Agenda, which includes a whole section dedicated to inspirational local case studies.

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[1] For a brief discussion on citizen participation refer to [Citizen participation](#)

[2] [Citizenship and Participation](#) - Council of Europe

[3] [The difference between citizen engagement and participation](#) - Citizen Lab

Why do people participate and get involved in the community?

Researchers have long studied why people are motivated to volunteer, channelling their efforts to help others and to be engaged and active in their community. Taking part in their surroundings gives people a sense of belonging, expands their network of relationships and can be an outlet for multiple aspirations. IVAR - Institute for Voluntary Action Research in its research briefing "Empowered communities in the 2020s"[4], undertaken to inform the Local Trust strategy[5], outlines a precise set of drivers, enablers, and obstacles, based on a series of interviews and conversations conducted in the United Kingdom, that motivate people to take part and be active in their community. In particular:

Drivers for motivation:

- Injustice, the will to correct and take action on what is wrong in the community;
- Aspiration, making the community a better place for the individual and the people around him or her;
- Purpose that makes people feel good about themselves;
- Emotional response to a specific event or issue;
- Values that move the person – e.g. being religious, political, shaped by the family and origins;
- Responsibility towards others and the community.

Enabling factors, such as:

- Relationships with people who invite you and spur the sense of engagement and participation;
- People, having role models or supporters in the community that invite you to act;
- Resources, that is the time and money to volunteer;
- Confidence or hope in being capable to make changes and make a difference.

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[4] IVAR (Institute for Voluntary Action Research) (09/2017) "Empowered Communities in the 2020" IVAR Research Briefing 1;
[5] This is one of the piece of a series of short reports that informed the final publication The Future for Communities: Perspectives on power

Moving towards the obstacles, this research highlights the following **internal constraints:**

- Fear of drawing attention on yourself;
- Money and time (having barely the possibility to stay afloat is a key);
- Caring duties;
- Cultural factors;
- Health;
- Disability and all related accessibility issues;
- Confidence in the ability to meaningfully contribute;
- Despondency, hopelessness regarding the ability of community actions to have proper effects.

Finally, on the **external disincentives and hindering barriers:**
- Format for engagement and participation that might be unfamiliar and off-putting;
- Cultural aspects that are not taken into account within the interactions, language and tones held at meetings;
- Issues that might not be relevant for a person or portion of the community itself;
- Institutions who are not equipped properly and able to convey and interact with the community;
- Experience of individuals in not being heard.

FRAMING AND MODELLING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Over the past few decades, several researchers have focused on understanding and framing participation dynamics and processes at the community level. This section briefly outlines some of the most famous participation dynamics and processes to provide a helpful conceptualisation. It also sketches out how community engagement and participation can be performed online, defining the potentialities and risks of the digital tools and how power can be built within communities through community organising.

Ladder of citizen participation

One of the first and most influential models is the "Ladder of citizen participation" developed by Sherry R. Arnestein in 1969, which, for the first time, put at the centre of its analysis one essential issue: citizen participation in the democratic process requires the redistribution of power.

"The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy — a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have-not blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos, and whites. And when the have-nots define participation as redistribution of power, the American consensus on the fundamental principle explodes into many shades of outright racial, ethnic, ideological, and political opposition. [...] participation without the redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless" Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," Journal of the American Planning Association.

In her work, Arnstein sets out a metaphorical ladder of eight consecutive rungs representing increasing levels of citizen agency, control, and power. Additionally, she includes a descriptive continuum of participatory power that moves from nonparticipation (no power) through degrees of tokenism (counterfeit power) to degrees of citizen participation (actual ability). [Figure 1]

In short:

Manipulation is when those holding the power mislead the community and its people into believing they are going to give them power. The process set out for this transfer is intentionally built to deny it.

Therapy consists, for instance, of creating participatory programmes that aim to convince citizens they are the problem when, in fact, institutions, policies and privilege holders create the problems for them.

Informing. Even though it is essential and lays the foundations for every possible further development, when the process is kept on a one-way flow of information—

from officials to citizens—with no possibility of feedback and no negotiation power, it gives people no options other than passively accepting.
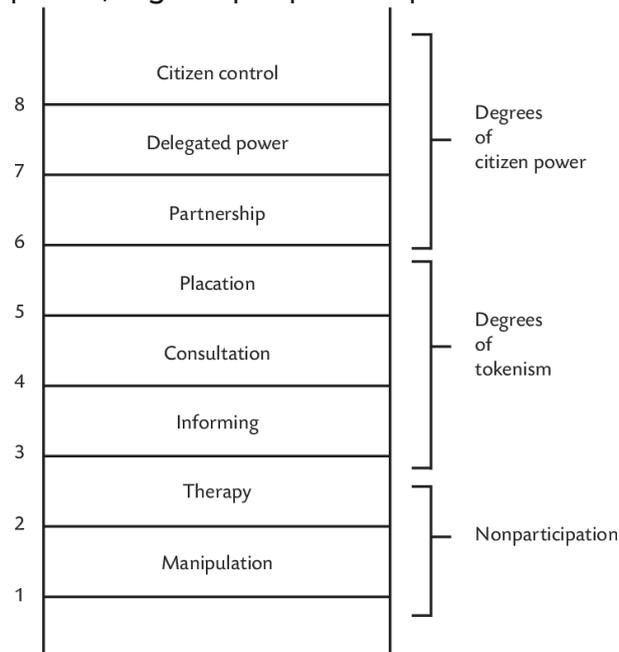
Figure 1 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969)

Consultation represents a step forward in this direction, with the most frequent options being public surveys, local meetings, and hearings. However, if this is not combined with other modes of participation, there is no guarantee that the inputs will be followed up.

Placation occurs when citizens are granted limited influence in a process. Their involvement, however, appears to be for the sake of involvement.

Partnership occurs when public institutions, officials, or administrators allow citizens to negotiate better deals, veto decisions, share funding, or put forward requests that are at least **partially fulfilled. In Arnstein's words:** "At this rung of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. They agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees, and mechanisms for resolving impasses. After the ground rules have been established through some form of give-and-take, they are not subject to unilateral change." However, Arnstein notes in many situations, citizens proactively take this kind of power through actions such as protests, campaigns, or community organising.

Delegated Power occurs when public institutions, officials, or administrators give up at least some degree of control, management, decision-making authority, or funding to citizens.

Citizen control occurs when "participants or residents can govern a programme or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which 'outsiders' may change them." In citizen-control situations, for example, public funding would flow directly to a community organisation, and that organisation would have complete control over how that funding is allocated.[6]

This ladder is undoubtedly, according to Arnstein herself, a simplification that, among others, does not consider the obstacles that impede participation and gives the appearance that lower levels are universally harmful. On the other hand, it gives the impression that higher levels are positive without exception, independently from the circumstances. Therefore, there are two particular notes

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[6] This synthesis is drawn from Organising Engagement dedicated section on the Ladder of citizen participation

that must be put at the centre: first, there is a significant gradation in citizen participation, and secondly, different enabling conditions must be implemented for those who are most marginalised.

Participation and engagement for a specific target group: children and young people

Arnestein's work influenced further research focusing on the participation of specific targets, such as younger people. In 1992, Roger Hart wrote for UNICEF "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship", the first publication to focus on children and adolescents' meaningful engagement and participation in adult-led programmes and strategies. By applying the conceptual framework of the ladder of involvement, he set out eight rungs that move from non-participation at all to full child-initiated shared decisions with adults (Figure 2).
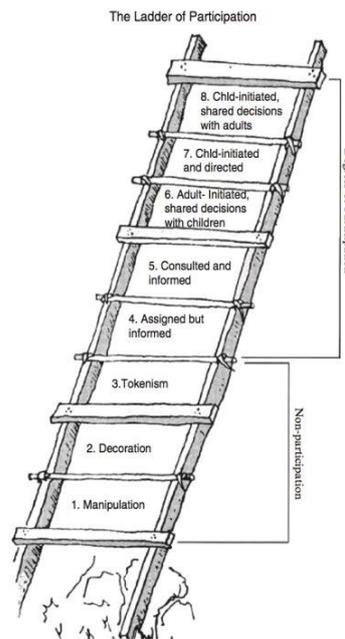
Roger Hart's original 1992 illustration of the Ladder of Children's Participation from *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. The model features eight "rungs" that describe the characteristics associated with different levels of decision-making agency, control, or power that can be given to children and youth by adults.

Figure 2 Roger Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation (1992)

Children and young people's participation in the decision-making processes received substantial recognition at the legal level globally thanks to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which established in Article 12 young people's right to be heard. This article was indeed identified as one of the four general principles of the Convention, together with the right to non-discrimination, the right to life and development, and the primary consideration of the child's best interests. This implies that what is enshrined in Article 12 is not only a right in itself but must be taken into account in interpreting and implementing all other rights.

In this sense, participation must be a process, not a single event, to be practical and tangible.

However, for Laura Lundy, Co-Director of the Centre for Children's Rights and Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Education, and Social Work, QUB, having the right to a voice does not necessarily mean being heard. Therefore, she developed a model, the so-called Lundy Model (figure 3), based on four pillars[7]:

1. Space: Young people must be allowed to express their views
2. Voice: Young people must be supported in expressing their views
3. Audience: there must be a target audience to listen to them
4. Influence: the opinions expressed must subsequently be put into action
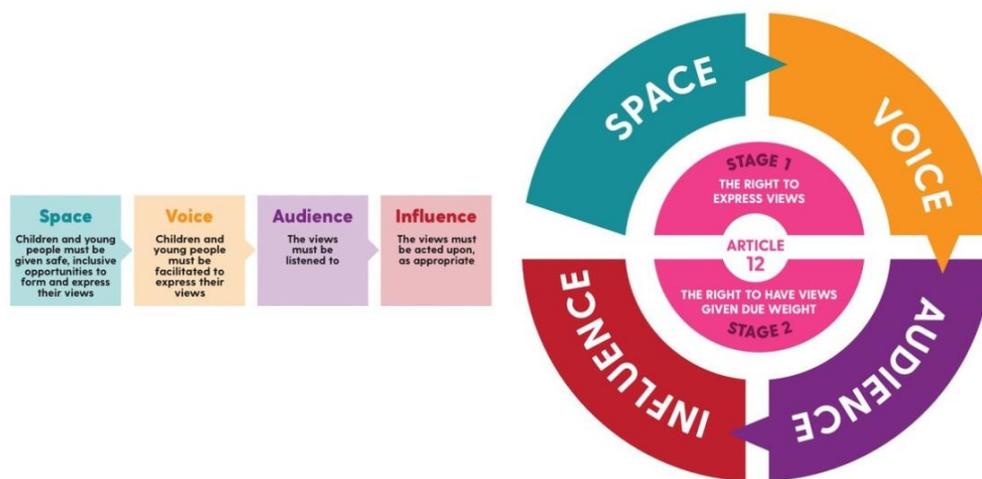
Figure 3 Lundy's the Lundy Model

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[7] For further information on the model, you can read Laura Lundy article. "Enabling the meaningful participation of children and young people globally: the Lundy Model" in the Queen's University Belfast website. The Laura Lundy model set the basis for Ireland's Participation Framework - National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making
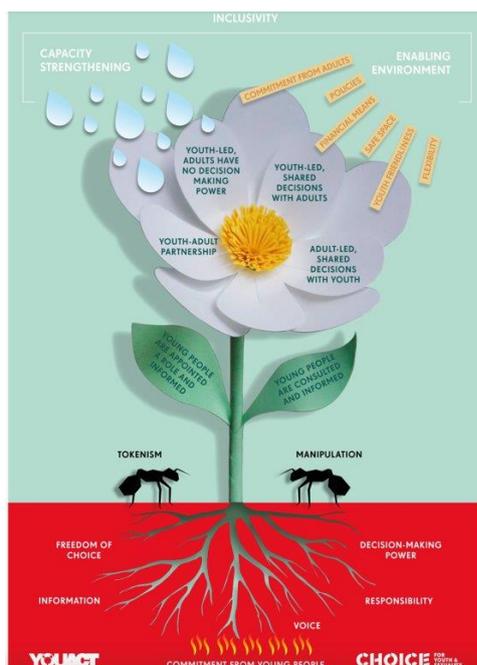
Figure 4 The Flower of Participation

Finally, another helpful framework based on Hart's Participation Scale is The Flower of Participation (figure 4) developed by CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality and YouAct[8]. It is a tool that goes beyond the ladder approach and gives a more comprehensive view of the whole ecosystem to enable participation. It can be used to analyse and explain the Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) level within organisations. Young people can also use it to understand their level of involvement and fight for their participation rights.

● **The roots** represent five fundamental elements underpinning each MYP: freedom of choice, being informed, having a voice, decision-making power, and responsibility;

● **The petals and leaves** represent the different forms of MYP;

● **Water**, a fundamental precondition, gives young people the opportunity to grow;

● **The sun**, another fundamental precondition, is the enabling environment that adults must build to allow the different forms of MYP to evolve;

● **The air** represents inclusiveness: Young people are not a homogeneous group, and participatory processes must consider diversity and inclusion;

● **Insects**, the danger of non-significant participation.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATION IN PHILANTHROPY? THEN YOU CANNOT MISS…..
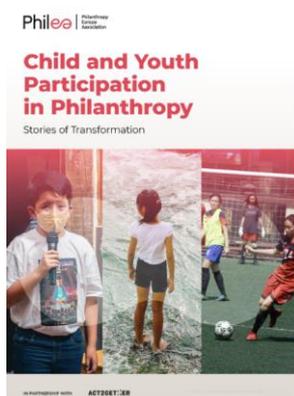
"Child and Youth Participation in Philanthropy: Stories of Transformation", developed by Philea (Philanthropy Europe Association) Children and Youth Thematic Network, that sets out the challenges and opportunities for foundations to foster active youth participation and presents a series of interesting case studies from across the continent;

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[8] Choice for Youth and. Sexuality and You Act (2018). The Flower of Participation
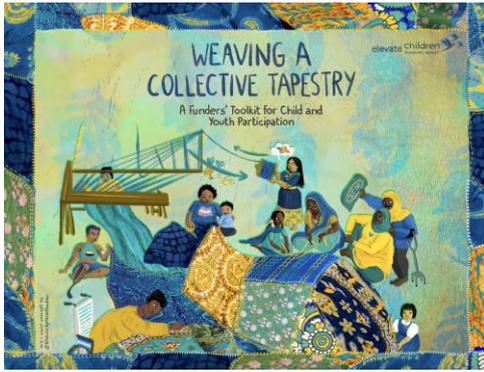
"Weaving a collective tapestry. A funders' toolkit for child and youth participation", by Elevate Children Funders Group, the first of its kind to offer support and guidance on the substantive "how-to" of child and youth participation - tailored specifically to funders;
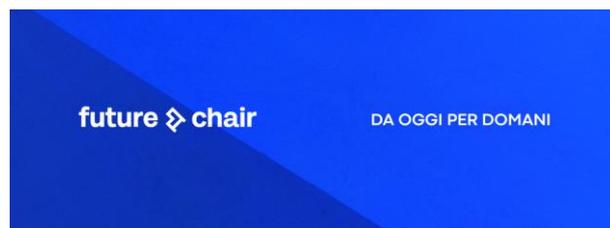
Assifero's Future Chair Initiative that looks to the future by focusing on intergenerational dialogue and the participation and involvement of young people in the decision-making processes of foundations and philanthropic organisations.

Citizen Participation Continuum

Developed by Robert Silverman in 2005, the Citizen Participation Continuum[9] is a practical framework that aims to help community-based organisations understand their role in enabling participation in the decision-making process within their community. It is set out as a plain spectrum, with no rigid hierarchy, that moves from two extremes: on the one hand, there is instrumental participation, with limited citizens' involvement from the organisation, functional to achieve specific tasks and scopes. On the other hand, there is grassroots participation that entails a broader range of possible ways in which people can actively drive, shape decisions and initiatives, and find solutions to a shared challenge.

In Figure 5, some of the different forms of participation between the two ends of the spectrum are identified.

Figure 5 Elizabeth Rocha's the Ladder of Empowerment (1997)

The range of participatory activities that can be implemented on the instrumental participation side depends on organisational constraints, such as budgeting, staffing, project scope etc. In contrast, grassroots participation is generally shaped by resource limitations (e.g., political influence, funding sources, volunteer capacity, etc.).

From participation to empowerment: the ladder of empowerment

Building on earlier models of participation, the researcher Elizabeth Rocha developed a framework that would take into account not only the dynamics of participation but also focuses on building power in communities and the conditions that contribute or undermine this process. This is the first civic-participation model to describe the characteristics of individual and collective forms of community empowerment in democratic decision-making.

The model she provides, the so-called Ladder of Empowerment[10], describes empowerment as a dynamic relationship between individual and collective agency: actions that are focused on individual empowerment represent the least amount of potential power in a community, while actions that bring about structural, political, and institutional changes throughout a system represent the greatest amount of potential power. As collective mobilisation increases, so does potential empowerment, but ultimately legislative or legal mechanisms will be required to empower entire populations of people.

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[9] Silverman, R. M. (2005). Caught in the middle: Community development corporations (CDCs) and the conflict between grassroots and instrumental forms of citizen participation. Community Development: Journal of the Community Development Society, 36(2), 35–51.
[10] Rocha, E. M. (1997). A ladder of empowerment. Journal of Planning Education and Research, 17, 31–44.

1) Atomistic individual empowerment aims at enabling persons to acknowledge and perform full participation about their problems.

2) Embedded individual empowerment encourages individuals to operate in larger contexts and groups within society. It consists of "the ability to understand one's external context, to manoeuvre through it at a heightened level of facility with the goal of increasing personal efficacy and satisfaction."

3) Mediated empowerment means the mediated relationship between for instance public administrators and citizens, with the first ones managing the flow of information in the process and the interactions' modalities. Although it can be empowering under the right conditions, it might lead to disempowerment, especially when the administrations fail to question their assumptions, understand their own biases, or dismiss potential contributions of community participants.

4) Socio-political empowerment refers to individuals, groups, and organisations mobilising to accumulate social and political power to challenge governmental or institutional authority.

5) Political empowerment refers to the policies or political processes able to empower (or disempower) an entire community and defer ownership. The system itself is the main target through electoral, legislative, or legal change, such as when laws are passed to protect groups from discrimination or when court decisions protect rights that have been infringed[11].

Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2)

Developed by the [International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)](#) in the early 2000, the Spectrum of Public Participation outlines five broad participation modalities that fall on a progressive continuum of increasing public influence over decision-making in a civic-engagement process. It brings together elements of the other participation frameworks and it is most widely used. The spectrum also reflects some of the key underlying driving principles of the community of practice for public participation, such as the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process, research input from participants in designing how they participate and the creation of the right enabling conditions to meaningfully involved people.

The five stages of this spectrum, as shown in the figure 6 below, are the following: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. Each of them has a specific objective and addresses a particular message.

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[11] This paragraph is a synthesis of the [dedicated page](#) on Organising Engagement

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hand of the public
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

Source: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Figure 6 Spectrum of Public Participation (based on IAP2)

Given its simplicity and broadness, it represents a useful tool that can help community groups define and determine how they are involved in any public participation process and therefore it can be applied in diverse engagement processes and contexts[12]. It is also one of the most used systems to assess community engagement processes internationally: a slight adaptation of this will be used also in this report to explore different community foundations stories.

From technique to shifting power principles: centring equity in the community engagement and participation process

The whole engagement and participation processes cannot be detached from the overall cultural, social, economic conditions and context of the community. Inequalities are deeply entrenched in our systems and organisations must take them into account in the designing process. In The Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement: A Guide to Transformative Change, the author, Kip Holley, defines six principles to embed while developing engagement and participatory process .[13]

1. **Embracing the gift of diversity**. It means that the sum of citizens' contribution is greater than its parts.

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[12] More information on this model and its implication are available in the Spectrum of Public Participation page of Organizing Engagement
[13] Holley, K. (2016). The Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement: A Guide to Transformative Change. Columbus, OH: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University.

2. **Realising the role of race, power, and injustice**. Equitable and inclusive civic engagement requires confronting the past and inner cracks within the community in terms of race, history, wealth, and privilege accumulation. It also means to create the conditions for more privileged people to understand their own bias and be willing to give up and share power.

3. **Radical hospitality: invitation and listening**. Specific groups within the community, such as young people, women, immigrants and people with disabilities, can face insurmountable obstacles in finding spaces and ways to have their voices heard. Creating the enabling conditions for marginalised people to participate, be ready to have difficult conversations, to listen attentively and address concerns is a necessary strategy to have more meaningful and equitable engagement especially in communities with a long history of distrust and dissatisfaction.

4. **Trust-building and commitment**. Many communities look at public institutions with suspicion and a lack of confidence, having been most of the time historically let down. To address this, shared leadership and shared accountability must be at the core of the civic engagement strategy for organisations.

5. **Honouring dissent and embracing protest**. A thriving community is a community where disagreements, dissent and conflicts thrive in a healthy way. When differences and nuances of opinions are expressed, the community can find alternatives and expand its assets and solutions. Therefore, an engagement environment that supports a space for long-term dialogue and disagreement can help stakeholders stay focused on new possibilities, even while holding different views on issues.

6. **Adaptability to community change**. Even though people resist change, those are inevitable in the community. Therefore, the enabling environment for community participation must be flexible and be based on shared values and principles rather than a set of activities and projects with prefixed outcomes.

Moving participation and engagement from offline to online: the challenges and opportunities of digital participation

Digital tools and devices have become an integral part of our daily lives, and our interaction possibilities have further expanded with the advent of COVID-19. With more and more people across Europe and the world online, there are numerous opportunities for digital engagement and participation in decision-making.

First, engaging online eliminates the problem of proximity. It allows a broader portion of people, from those who do not have the means and possibility to participate in person, to join. It also helps overcome language barriers thanks to plug-ins and tools that allow for smooth translation, giving confidence to those who might feel uncomfortable expressing themselves in another language. It provides the appropriate time to make informed choices and deep dive into additional materials. New engaging techniques, like gamification, can effectively

arouse the interest and involvement of specific target groups, especially young people who may feel disinterested in the regular decision-making process. Finally, online tools make it easier to collect ideas.

Are you interested in starting a digital engagement process within your community?

Here is a set of valuable tools and tips:

- Here is [a list of digital participation platforms](#) and services collected by People Powered platform - Digital participation platforms research

- Involve made available a [useful step-by-step guide](#) on where to start digital engagement

Read [The Guide to Digital Participation Platform](#) by [People Powered](#) and their helpful advice on when to use digital platforms and how (available in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish)

Read [The Beginners' guide to Digital Community Engagement](#) by Citizen Lab

However, digital participation in community engagement brings challenges and barriers that must be overcome.

First, online access cannot be taken for granted. According to the 2022 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)[14], the share of EU households with internet access reached 93 %. The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Finland reported the highest proportion of households with internet access (98%). Spain (96 %) and Denmark (95 %) were also among the EU Member States with the highest rate of household internet access. Greece (85 %), Croatia (86 %) and Bulgaria (87 %) presented the lowest rates of household internet access among the EU Member States. However, in this context, it is important to notice two main factors: first, the rural-urban divide. In 2022, cities presented greater household internet access with 94 % compared with 92 % for towns and suburbs and 90 % for rural areas. While,

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[14] Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) monitors Europe's overall digital performance and tracks the progress of EU countries in their digital competitiveness. All the data is available [here](#).

for instance, Belgium, Slovenia, and Estonia were the exception to that general trend with towns and suburbs presenting highest household internet access compared with cities and rural areas and in Finland, Norway, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, the difference was around one or two percentage points between the three geographical areas. In Greece and in Portugal, the gap was way wider (14% each) and 12% in Romania. Secondly, access does not mean ability to properly use the online tools. In 2021, 26% of the EU population aged 16–74 years reported above-basic overall digital skills[15]. Again, the urban-rural divide is repeated in this dimension: 33% people living in cities had above-basic digital skills in contrast to 24% in town and suburbs and 20% in rural areas[16].

Furthermore, the digital divide is stark among different dimensions, starting from the intergenerational one. In Europe in 2022 96% of young people aged 16-29 years stated that they use the internet every day compared to 84% of the adult population[17]. From a gender perspective, according to the thematic focus of the Gender Equality Index 2020[18], developed by the EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality), while in general women surf equally with men online daily (78% vs 80%) older women and women with low education lagged behind. In particular, among people aged 55-74, 55% of women vs 61% of men surf the internet daily and 25 % have never had the chance to use the internet. The same proportion applies to those with low education: 57% vs 61% use the internet daily and 27% have never accessed it.

People with disabilities is another group that is facing a digital divide: even though they account for 15% of the EU population, they are underrepresented at the political level and face many barriers to digital access and use. In 2012, 55% of people with disabilities declared Internet access at home against 74% of non-disabled ones. Furthermore, when talking about disabilities regulators tend to make one big group, and particular needs are not addressed. Ferri and Favali (2018) have demonstrated in a study from 2016 that 73% of the participants who lived with some form of disability and therefore have different access needs experienced barriers in more than a quarter of websites that they visited for the first time. According to the scholars, a third of them experience such barriers on more than half of the websites.

In addition to accessibility and ability to engage with digital platforms and tools, it is interesting to report what Europeans use the Internet for and if digital participation is a viable option for civic engagement and participation. According to the DESI index, EU Member States present a contrasted figure as regards to the role of the internet in the domain of civic and political actions. Only 8 % of EU individuals reported having participated in online consultations or voting to define civic or political issues in 2022. The share grew to 14 % for the individuals who expressed opinions on civic or political issues on websites or in social media and

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[15] The overall digital skills indicator is a composite indicator based on five types of skills: information and data literacy skills, communication and collaboration skills, digital content creation skills, safety skills and problem-solving skills.

[16] EU digital skills divide: cities outpace rural areas - Eurostat (March 2023)

[17] Being young in Europe today - digital world - Eurostat (June 2023)

[18] Gender Equality Index 2020: Digitalisation and the future of work - EIGE (October, 2020)

18 % for those who reported civic or political participation (see Table 1). Among the Member States with the highest share in these three categories, the internet appears to play a significant role when it comes to participating in civic and political actions. In Finland and in Malta, 26% and 28% of individuals respectively had civic or political participation online. By contrast, the share dropped to 9% in Germany. In Norway and in Montenegro, the internet played a significant role in civic and political participation in 2022.

Finally, the digital participation opportunities brought up a new phenomenon: slacktivism, a portmanteau between activism and slacker. Defined by the UN as when people "support a cause by performing simple measures" but are not necessarily "engaged or devoted to making a change"[19] Slacktivism is a way for people to voice their ideas and opinions digitally, without physically showing up for a certain cause. While this expands engagement possibility and attraction to a cause, it also brings a set of challenges in following up concretely and taking in person actions and committing to such a cause.

Why ensure participation? Untapping collective intelligence for long-lasting solutions

Ensuring and enabling meaningful citizen participation is vital to finding equitable, lasting solutions for the challenges of today by leveraging and untapping the collective intelligence of the community and beyond. According to Smarter Together, a non-profit organisation whose mission is to expand governments' and communities' ability to solve public problems more effectively by fostering more inclusive and deliberative governance around the world, collective intelligence is "defined as the capacity of groups to outperform individuals in problem-solving, innovation, prediction, creativity, and other cognitive tasks." It entails three different types of knowledge: explicit, which is the one that can be codified, stored, and exchanged quickly and does not depend on the individual; embodied knowledge, which is the constant flow of senses, actions, and experiences that encodes how the bodies should act without representation in a given situation, only visible during the performance. Thirdly, tacit knowledge is defined as subconscious knowledge within the individual and contains habits, experience, skills, emotions, intuition, and sensing that are difficult to codify and make explicit and communicate to others (e.g., how to drive a car).

In building collective intelligence, two main principles must be considered: include more people, since larger groups tend to be more intelligent if there are the right circumstances in place; and have different people with different backgrounds, experiences, statuses, and knowledge. Within this framework, community-based organisations, like community foundations, are well-positioned to ensure the broader involvement of various stakeholders and individuals.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN UNTAPPING COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY? CHECK OUT THIS TEN METHODS AND STORIES FROM SMARTER TOGETHER

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[19] UNAIDS Outlook Report July 2010 (page 141)

Building local leadership for long lasting change - community organising

Community organising is the process of building power by involving a constituency in identifying problems they share and the solutions that they desire; individuating the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by that constituency that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that constituency[20].

There are different types of community organising, among which[21]:

- Social movements that focus on organising people around specific broader societal issues, such as climate justice, refugees' rights, etc. It usually entails a smaller group of already engaged actors that widens the horizon and brings others into fighting for the issue. It usually requires creating some temporary movement structure, like a coalition able to maximise ordinary people's participation in the movement, and then directing this energy towards meeting movement goals through skilful strategy.

- Neighbourhood (place-based) organising focuses on local concerns and challenges and can be led by a community-based organisation, like a community foundation or a coalition. In this case, organisers work on building and strengthening a more profound sense of community while, at the same time, enabling residents to take collective action to realise local visions and goals.

- Broad-based organising scales up the local and issue-based approach and works on building a more permanent form of citizen power. Organisers in this realm focus on creating broader organisations, made of other entities to leverage a more significant collective impact. Community foundation support organisations can be seen as part of this.

One of the most critical thinkers and leaders in developing conceptual framework and strategy for community organising is Dr. Marshall Ganz of Harvard University, who created the Public Narrative framework, through which "social movement leaders – and participants – can move to action by mobilising sources of motivation, constructing new shared individual and collective identities, and finding the courage to act." This framework is made of three main components:

- **A Story of Self** that is the values that have called the individual to leadership;

- **A Story of Us** communicates the values shared by those in the community who want to act;

- **A Story of Now** that outlines an urgent challenge to those shared values requiring immediate action.

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[20] [Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots](#) - D.Beckwith and C.Lopez (1997)
[21] [What is Community Organising?](#) - The Common Social Change Library

By mastering these three stories and bridging them together, and in doing so, creating a purpose, a community, and a sense of urgency, the organisers can become more effective and generate more trust and solidarity among the community of reference.

The helpful guide [Organising People Power and Change](#), originally adapted from the work of Dr. Ganz and resources from the Leading Change Network and the New Organizing Institute and revised by the collective work of individuals working collaboratively from Dogwood Initiative, Leadnow, One Cowichan, the David Suzuki Foundation, and Stonehouse Institute, outlines how the public narrative is encompassed in five leadership practices for effective community organising, that is:

1) **How to articulate a story of why we are called to lead, a story of the community we hope to mobilise and why we are united, and a story of why we must act.**

   Storytelling for community organising must prompt actions; it goes beyond making a speech. It must convey those emotions that move people to take agency, such as hope, anger, solidarity, urgency, and the "you can make a difference feeling."

   The story effective organisers tell is not just a recount of an event: it must have a challenge the person faces, a choice they make, and a sharing of the outcome. In this storytelling approach, the Public Narrative Framework comes in handy!

2) **How to build intentional relationships as the foundation of purposeful collective actions**

   Establishing strong, intentional, and lasting relationships rooted in the same values is essential to catalyse different resources and build and wield power within the community. One of the primary investments of community organisers is carefully building this one-to-one relationship within the community to involve and engage individuals and call for their actions.

3) **Create a structure that distributes power and responsibility and prioritises leadership development**

   Community organising is about shared leadership and power distribution. For this reason, its leadership model can be represented as a snowflake, with a core leadership team and other local ones and individuals strongly interconnected. To favour this kind of power distribution, coaching, as a way to help people find their solutions, is a pivotal element.

4) **Strategise, turning your resources into the power to achieve clear goals.**

   In community organising, strategising means turning what you have in terms of resources (skills, people, financial ones, supporters, etc.) and what you built into what you need, that is, power, to achieve your goal.

5) **Translate strategy into measurable, motivational, and practical action**

While the first three points focus more on creating and strengthening a community and building power, the last two are about strategy and action to wield that power. One of community organising's transversal components that also must be taken into consideration is digital organising, which is mobilising people for action through digital tools.

In the end, community organising can be a powerful way to convene and activate power from different types of communities, especially the marginalised ones, and offers a strategic approach to guide bottom-up change by broadening participation and shifting power dynamics. In Europe, community organising as a practice is rising. However, there are still several challenges that organisers need to overcome, among which are: fatigue and burnout, fragmentation of movements and communities that might have the same goal and share the same values but differ in the approach; political apathy among those who they want to mobilise; connecting the local level to the broader national or international picture and the lack of funding on this matter[22].

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN COMMUNITY ORGANISING…
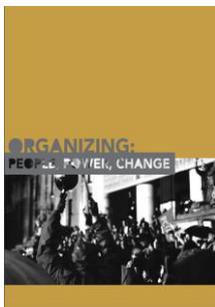
You can deep dive into the Organising People Power and Change guide that provides a useful framework and guidelines to implement the five leadership practice for effective community organising

Community Organisers UK
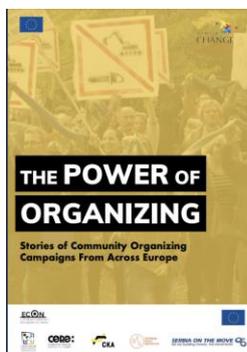
Here you can find a list of stories from across Europe

[22] Marina Tota & Dagmara Kubik (07/2021) 8 challenges to community organising in Europe, Guerrilla Foundation

The Commons Social Change Library that gathers the collective wisdom of people engaged in social change, including citizen participations and civic engagement, and makes all the materials free, digital, and directly available.

The Blueprints for Change manual and guides section with lots of resources in different languages on community organising, campaigning and tools and techniques on how to mobilise individuals.

Check out also The European Community Organising Network and its list of members to see who is working on community organising in your country!

Finally, take a look at the work that Re:Power does in the US and their course

STORIES FROM THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FIELD

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS: WHAT ROLE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION?

With no one-size-fits-all model, community foundations throughout Europe and beyond can play a pivotal role in driving and enabling community participation and engagement on various issues and for the community in a variety of ways. The community-first focus is well anchored in their name, their centre of attention is the locality, and their approach is holistic. No community foundation can live without its community (of 'beneficiaries', stakeholders and partners, and donors), and this concept is becoming more and more evident within the field: more and more organisations that were born first as primarily philanthropic intermediaries are now rethinking and paying attention to the community engagement process they put in place.

Community foundations are therefore well positioned for leading and enabling greater community participation and engagement for a variety of reasons and features, some of which are listed below:

- They are deeply entrenched in the community: the geographical focus of their purpose and mission;

- They are catalysts at the community level and bridge different stakeholders and actors within the community;

- Because of their long-term vision, while also dealing with the here and now, they can accommodate the slower pace needed for creating meaningful engagement and building stronger communities. Community engagement and citizen participation is an ongoing underlying process they can take upon;

- They can be extraordinary vehicles to invest in, being capable of rebalancing the power dynamics inherent to philanthropy since they centre their vision on community needs and desires;

- They work with a bottom-up approach, they pursue community ownership, and their leadership is recognised;

- They have both financial and non-financial resources like connections, convening spaces, technical assistance, relationship brokering, networks, research and evaluation, personal ties, influence, and social capital to make available;

- In many cases, they have built trust among people in the community, and at the same time, they have established solid credibility with local administrations and donors.

However, there has not been much research on this specific topic within the field. In 2013, CF Leads, the American network of community foundations committed to community leadership, investigated what role foundations could play in community engagement and participation, particularly going beyond civil society organisations and engaging directly with individual residents. This dimension might be often overlooked, but it is critical: "It involves active, meaningful participation by the people who live in the neighbourhoods where change is occurring and whose lives are most affected by the policies, systems, and structures that are targeted for change"[23]. According to this work, community foundations that have involved residents can achieve long-term sustainability and more significant impact, going beyond the usual suspects like local organisations leaders or louder voices, bridging gaps, and bringing closer the community. They can activate and engage residents on single issues or in their day-to-day operations.

The working group assembled to develop the report, made up of different leaders from the community foundation field in the US, outlined a series of guiding principles for resident engagement and participation among which:

- Resident agency. Recognise that all people have power; they have the ability to relate to one another, understand issues at stake, make recommendations based on their knowledge, competences and lived experience to public institutions and take action themselves to address public problems;

- Inclusiveness. All individuals from the community's population must have the opportunity to be involved, contribute with ideas and work to improve the community. It is not about simply bringing together the "elite" but to intentionally involve everyone's knowledge and experience at the table for community benefit;

- Partnership, not directorship. Organisations or individuals work with communities: the key is not to direct people but to connect them and create the conditions for them to collaborate;

- Reciprocity. Community foundations must understand they are not above the others: they have as much to learn from other institutions, and from residents themselves, as they have to teach;

- Contributions beyond grantmaking. Grantmakers and non-grantmakers both have resources to bring; the narrative must be shifted from deficits to assets. Engagement is most effective when residents and communities have the chance to identify, use and leverage assets such as time, talents, experiences, networks and others;

- Everyone gives. Every community resident can contribute with both financial and non-financial resources.

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[23] CF Leads (2013) Engaging Residents. A New Call to Action for Community Foundations, page 5

When speaking of community participation and engagement, the quality of the process is a key element for success. Therefore, the group sketched out some useful indicators for residents' engagement like:

- Level of participation. Measures for this indicator track the number and diversity of participants and the depth of their participation (e.g., number of hours spent per person in the activity; quantity of interactions among individual participants and among groups, such as residents, public officials, nonprofit and business leaders, and employees);

- Quality of the engagement experience. Measures include level of participant satisfaction and the quality of deliberation within the process;

- Actions taken. Measures include both the extent to which participants took some sort of public action (e.g., voting, volunteering, working with others to solve a public problem) and an increase in "successful" actions, as defined by residents;

- Participant outcomes. These measures reflect residents' broader opportunities for participation and changes in the political context surrounding the engagement. Examples include the effect on: (a) residents' trust in government, community attachment, interest in public affairs, confidence in their capacity to effect change and openness to the views of others; and (b) trust in each other and in government;

- Community outcomes. Measures include specific changes to the health and wellness of the community, such as advancement in educational attainment, improvement in public health or the environment, and reduction in violence.

The results, insights, and outcomes of this overall process, along with a series of concurrent research, fed into a more recent publication by CFLeads, called "Community Leadership Field Guide for Community Foundations[24]". Its aim is to outline the core practices, competencies and strategies needed for effective community leadership by community foundations. In addition to the strategies that organisations can pursue to expand and deepen their community leadership role, that is, for the US context, insisting on racial equality, amplifying community voice and influencing public and policy systems, the report sets out five core competencies that are critical to advancing effective community leadership strategies. In a nutshell, these are:

1) Engaging residents to hear their concerns, lift up their ambitions and harness their talents;

2) Commissioning and disseminating local data and research to help understand the nuances of community challenges and provide information to help solve problems;

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[24] CF Leads (07/2021). [Community Leadership Field Guide for Community Foundations](#)

3) Working across sectors because the challenges facing communities are multifaceted and interconnected and cannot be solved by any one entity or sector;

4) Shaping public policy, recognizing that government systems have a significant impact on the lives of every resident;

5) Marshalling resources beyond the foundation's own grants — from private foundations as well as from local, state, and federal government — to address community needs.

Building on this work and in search of a more concrete definition of the different facets of community leadership for the US context, Colton Strawser from the Community, Leadership, Engagement and Research (CLEAR) Institute identifies, based on existing literature, three main components of community leadership[25]:

1. Civic leadership, which is defined as activities focused on empowering others to contribute to the greater good of society; challenging the norms of traditional leadership, civic leadership is intentional, without position and power (Couto, 2014). It aims at bringing social and cultural changes and tackles the transformation of the policies in place. By taking up this role, community foundations could not only lead but also prepare and empower others for adopting this kind of role;

2. Collective leadership that entails the potential catalytic capacity and convening power of community foundations to foster social change - for community foundations this means they cannot take upon themselves finding solutions and leading locally but they have to be able to catalyse and convey other actors in meaningful horizontal relationships to create social change;

3. Community engagement, that must be at the core of the community foundations' existence and raison d'etre.

Deep diving into the European context

Like other continents, Europe faces some of the most complex social, cultural, and economic challenges as a whole and as the single countries it comprises. Its richness and potential lie in its diversity, but it also poses obstacles. In the past 40 years, it has gone through vast changes as a continent, starting from the dissolution of socialist regimes in Eastern countries and the adoption of the euro as a single currency. Furthermore, it went through global challenges, such as the financial crisis of 2009 and the Covid-19 pandemic. Most recently, with the latest unlawful Russian invasion of Ukraine, it also became the battlefield for democratic values in the Western world.

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[25] Strawser, C. (2021). Community Foundations as Community Leaders: The Role of Community Leadership in Creating Change. *The Foundation Review, 13*(3). https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1580

In this time and through all these events, inequalities have risen: in 2021, Eastern European residents earned 69% of the European average adult national income. If split into subregions, Eastern countries which are members of the EU earn 77% of the European average in 2021, and those which are not members only earn 34%[26]. Within countries, as well, these stark inequalities are evident, with a slow and steady destruction of the middle class and more and more people living in poverty. In every EU Member State, more than 70% of Eurobarometer respondents are worried about the rising cost of living, with peak results in Greece (100%), Cyprus (99%), Italy and Portugal (both 98%). '46% of the population surveyed say that their standard of living has already decreased due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis. A further 39% have yet to see their standard of living reduced but expect this to be the case'[27].

The many challenges named above have had an impact also on other aspects of our society: these crises have affected people's health, including mental condition, social development, and ability to weave relationships - the highest rate of unemployment, anxiety, and depression, in particular among those who are already most marginalised like younger generations and women. This general discontent and suffering have also eroded trust in the public institutions, both the EU and national ones. Furthermore, it has favoured the rise of nationalist movements and the election of conservative nationalist governments in many countries across the continent as a response to the unfulfilled promises of globalisation.

Meanwhile, another concerning phenomenon is rising significantly at the national level: civil society organisations' space to operate is often shrinking. Tightening surveillance programmes, counterterrorism measures, questioning and restrictions on civil rights, not ensuring the independence of the judiciary system, and pressure on media freedom are some of the initiatives that governments have introduced throughout the years that deeply affect some of the fundamental human rights and democratic values. Also, in many Eastern countries, several restrictions have been raised concerning international funding, the primary source of support for many non-profit organisations.

In this context, community-based organisations, like community foundations, play an essential role in rebuilding the social, civic, and also economic fabric at the local level, putting people's needs, aspirations, and desires at the centre of their vision and actions. They are strategically placed to create and foster connections and strengthen relationships among people, institutions, Third Sector organisations, the private sector, and many others. They can be enablers and leaders in finding community-led solutions to global challenges and restoring individuals' trust, commitment, engagement and participation in their community.

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[26] Theresa Neef, Alice Sodano (04/2022); Inequality Trends in Europe - World Inequality Lab - Issue Brief 2022/04
[27] European Parliament Press Release 12.1.2023, Europeans concerned by cost of living crisis and expect additional EU measures

Within the participation and engagement realm, as with all other issues, no magical recipe or unique solution can be copied and pasted across different communities. Cultural, historical, social and economic factors must be weighed to define what being a society is, the challenges that must be faced, and what is needed to overcome them. For instance, as it will be apparent in the following chapters, starting and spreading the culture of local philanthropy and giving is the leading driver of community foundations in Eastern European countries, such as Serbia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Ukraine, to set off and nurture community engagement processes and to empower citizens. Indeed, these contexts have been heavily affected by the recent fall of socialist regimes and the political turmoil that has followed, and still exists, and have instilled a widespread distrust in people and their power to change things. However, these micro dynamic transformations, fostered and spearheaded locally, are essential in restoring the social and economic fabric. If scaled up, mainly through community foundation support organisations (CFSOs), they could impact the national context directly and indirectly.

On this matter, Trag Foundation published two insightful reports on the impact of community foundations on community empowerment and social change.

[Community Foundations in Serbia: Bottom Up Empowerment. The role, challenged and prospect for the development](#)

[The impact of community foundations on social changes in local communities](#)
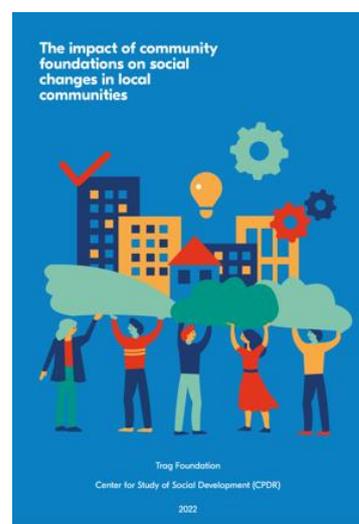
In other countries, like Italy and Spain for example, where the culture of giving, especially at the local level, is traditionally strong, because for instance the Catholic cultural traits and people have known democratic government for a long time and taken them for granted, community participation and engagement techniques might take different forms. In most marginalised places, that would

mean establishing people's confidence in themselves and empowering them to be protagonists of their own life and the community.

Finally, one of the effects of Covid was to reconnect young people and young professionals, that had moved to other places for study and work, with their communities, with a huge potential for bringing back new fresh forces to the place,

with new competencies and skills (e.g. in technology), and new hope and vision for the locality. In Italy for instance, young people are returning to the rural areas from the big cities, and are contributing to promoting and rebuilding community development processes around different assets, such as empty public spaces and physical infrastructure, people, culture and heritage, and the natural environment and its resources.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

The following section presents stories from practitioners and community foundations across the continent. As mentioned in the first chapter, there are several models built around community participation mostly developed for the public sector, providing valuable ways for local, regional, and national administrations to involve citizens in decision-making processes at different levels. However, very little has been developed specifically for the community foundations' field and widely for community-based organisations.

As stated before, The Public Participation Spectrum created by the International Association for Public Participation provides a practical, more comprehensive framework used by many in different fields. However, there is one particular adaptation, that also takes inspiration from the Arnstein Ladder of participation, that can be most relevant for community foundations: the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. This tool was developed by Rosa González of Facilitating Power in partnership with Movement Strategy Center and entails the following stages:

Inform: provide the community with relevant information about what is happening in and outside the community;

Consult: gather inputs and insights from the community to inform the decision-making process and how to proceed in specific areas;

Involve: ensure community needs and assets are integrated into the process, inform planning and create the right enabling conditions for groups and individuals to be involved;

Collaborate: ensure the capacity of community members and groups to collaborate among each other and beyond, play a leadership role in decision-making and the implementation of decisions;

Ownership / deferred power: foster democratic and equitable participation through community-led decision making.

The stories presented emerge from interviews with community foundations, support organisations and community foundations' practitioners and a thorough desk research spanning from community foundation websites, annual reports, media coverage and social media channels.

This slightly adjusted conceptualisation and framing is helpful, especially in the last part of the spectrum, which, rather than using empowerment, puts the decision-making process in the hands of the community itself. Even though this has been mainly developed in collaboration with local municipalities across the US, it recognises the critical role that community-based organisations, such as community foundations, play in cultivating community capacity to participate in and lead decision-making processes that meet community needs and maximise community strengths. Given the difference made in the beginning between engagement and participation, we could safely state that the first two steps - inform and consult - fall into the engagement realm while the remaining three - involve, collaborate, and defer to - implicate community participation.

The advantage of this framework is that it puts the different developmental stages in a spectrum perspective rather than a ladder one. In this way, it eliminates any sort of judgements about the point where the actions or strategies are included and gives the flexibility to move across the spectrum. Furthermore, it is broad enough in its definitions to expand the different dimensions to relate to different parts and initiatives of the community foundations work.

For each dimension, community foundations could play a dual role: on the one hand, being an enabler, that is they provide the resources (financial and non-financial ones - such as social capital) to enable and cultivate community capacity for this kind of process and create the right conditions for community engagement and participation. On the other hand, they could lead these information, consultation, involvement, collaboration and ownership stages of the spectrum.

The different stories and experiences from the field have been grouped under a single dimension of the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership based on the most prominent interesting trait they show to provide more clarity. This is a simplification for narrative purposes: many of the projects and initiatives are very enriching and encompass different aspects, most of the time at stages before the one highlighted.

A step back: community foundations themselves as expressions of community engagement and participation

Before diving deep into the different forms of participation, it must be highlighted that, in many cases, community foundations are a formal and organised expression of community participation and engagement. They represent, in many

cases, a hub for active citizens, local organisations, and other actors to drive community development. While the original model has been since the beginning the American one, where community foundations' primary role is to be a strategic philanthropic intermediary at the local level, in the past 20 years, more community-oriented, bottom-up approaches have come to life. In Romania, for instance, ARC, one of the national support organisations, started incentivising this process in 2006, supporting local informal groups of people who wanted to do something for their community by building community foundations. A few years later, they set up a development programme dedicated to that, which led to the birth of 18 community foundations, emerging from local assets and social capital[28].

In countries with few or no community foundations, community foundations' support organisations play a crucial role because they create the conditions for these organisations to develop. They set up a call for interest for individuals, informal or formal groups, to test the needs and feasibility for a community foundation to become established in their territory. The whole process is structured and overseen by CFSOs, like AEF (Asociación Española de Fundaciones) in Spain, Trag Foundation in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Roots & Wings Foundation in Hungary, and the Association for Charitable Foundations in Austria, with mechanisms and steps that guarantee that those who apply keep in mind that they are working with and for their locality and to avoid narrowed visions and top-down approaches[29].

For instance, the Zenica Community Foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was brought together by a few friends deeply engaged in the community that found an answer to their aspirations in the Trag Foundation open call for 'initiative groups'. After undertaking the learning programme, the organisation came "informally" to life. The promoting group focused on entering the community to reach beyond its bubble by organising many activities. It also established new partnerships with the media and the local government and concentrated on small micro-communities and local donors. The same happened in Sarajevo, when a group of friends wanted to do something for the community in memory of a friend who died. They all have different backgrounds, primarily working in the private sector; therefore, being included in such a development programme has challenged them to expand their horizon and incorporate bottom-up approaches to participation in their work to ensure wider engagement in their activities.

In Hungary, a clear example in this direction is the Pécs Community Foundation, registered in 2016 by nine individuals who wanted to lift the community spirit and empower citizens to take back ownership of the community. Pécs, the fifth city in the country, is a historical landmark and is famous for its universities but has long struggled from an economic point of view to move beyond its mining legacy, which left the city suffering from a financial and imagination crisis. According to the organisation's survey, 93% of the responding people did not participate in city

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[28] If you would like to deep dive into the history and characteristics of community foundation in Romania, you can read A Guide to Community Foundations in Romania by ECFI
[29] The ways how community foundation support organisations help the establishment of these organisations is explained in detail in the section 3.

activities. Therefore, the community foundation's mission became 'to boost a culture of giving at the local level, imagine and create new opportunities, build greater cohesion, and foster collaborations among local actors.

In Serbia, the [Pančevo Community Foundation](#) undertook a similar path: it started as an informal initiative of a few active people in Pančevo, a city approximately 20 km from Belgrade, with mainly young people living there commuting to the capital for work and study, who wanted to do something for their local community; firstly by creating a place where the community could gather and to enable them to express themselves. Indeed, culturally, people are not keen on doing things together in the city: while there is much respect for each other, a sense of community needs to be built. The Trag Foundation programme was the answer to their aspirations. The organisation was established in the harshest moment of Covid, and the first activities and outreach mainly took place online and with people that the founders already knew. However, when the restrictions were lowered, the community foundation became more public, reaching out to new parts of the community to widen its scope and serve them better.

The [Niš Community Foundation](#), as well, set out with a similar approach: different individuals committed in civil society organisations of Niš, a city located in the southern part of Serbia comprising 350,000 people in five municipalities, had in mind to do something for their community for quite a long time. However, at the beginning, the time did not seem ripe, the society was not yet ready for a community foundation. They started to build some shared knowledge around the concept and undertook the Trag Foundation capacity building programme just around when Covid hit. The first steps, especially on the fundraising side, were challenging: indeed, it was difficult to raise financial resources online. But in times of despair, great ideas come to life: the founders went beyond their immediate circles of acquaintance and launched online auctions on Facebook to raise money for the community foundation's future work. After explaining what the organisation was committed to do and its vision, they made available interesting items (like football jerseys or other objects) from famous people in Serbia for people to purchase. In this way they created the first community of donors that they are keeping engaged with to this day.

Community foundation establishment processes lead, among others, to one of the fundamental elements in the organisation: the composition of the board and the governance. These should be built on inclusivity and diversity principles to represent the wider community. Even though this is not always the case, several community foundations put in place mechanisms and decision-making processes that would enable the participation of the wider community. Here are a few interesting examples.

Porta Palazzo Community Foundation governance: a means for meaningful active citizen participation to act towards a shared vision

In November 2019, representatives from various local associations in the Porta Palazzo and Aurora neighbourhoods in Turin (Italy) decided to start a participatory path to establish the community foundation. Their main drive was to design a new type of protagonist and ownership in the territory that would draw from the people

and realities that inhabit and live it. The purpose was to build an organisation capable of acting with a bottom-up approach, conveying, and enhancing active citizens' participation and community engagement in imagining and fostering a shared future for the neighbourhoods. Indeed, with over 40 organisations operating in the community, the environment was vibrant and active but needed a shared vision. The path led to the establishment of the [Porta Palazzo Community Foundation](#) in November 2020.

Like many other community foundations, Porta Palazzo has three central bodies:

- The Steering Committee sets the objectives and programmes of the community foundation;

- The Executive Committee supervises and manages the foundation's activities;

- The Scientific Committee,with consultative power.

However, to ensure that community members, individuals, and groups feel appropriately empowered in the organisation's decision-making process, the Porta Palazzo Community Foundation has established a Territorial Committee which examines and approves the strategic plan, indicates the areas of work to be addressed, and gives an opinion on the decisions to be approved by the Steering Committee. It includes supporters (founders and co-founders of the Community Foundation), associations, local institutions, volunteers, informal groups, local traders and entrepreneurs. In 2022, the Territorial Committee met three times officially and had different unofficial meetings on various topics (fundraising, communication, etc.)[30].

Representing the neighbourhood through formal and informal bodies - Tot Raval Foundation

The [Tot Raval Community Foundation](#) was born out of the effort of local organisations and citizens of the El Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona. Today, its governance is broad and inclusive, made up of the following bodies:

- Patronat (Board) comprises 53 organisations active in the community, from cultural to educational institutions, commercial associations, and individuals. It meets twice a year and is responsible for approving the organisation's activity plan, budget, and financial statements;

- The Junta (Executive Board), nominated by the patron, comprises 15 people, carefully representing its members. It meets once a month;

- The Tot Raval Network (XTR) brings together diverse organisations in the neighbourhood. It aims to promote wider participation, the relationship between entities, and the visibility of the different actors in the district committed to the construction of a Socially Responsible Territory.

The community foundation's team coordinates and empowers the XTR, within which different thematic spaces are opened based on the community's desires, in

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[30] More information on Porta Palazzo Community Foundation can be found [on their website](#)

which specific issues are analysed together. Here people exchange insights on the priorities and strategic lines of action that inform the particular area/project; priorities and strategic lines of action are defined and executed together, and activities are monitored and evaluated.

In addition, there are Working Groups including the Raval Labour Network, Sponsor your Equipment; Community Education Group; Raval Culture Festival(s); Sant Jordi al Raval; Raval Interreligious Group; Community Health; Community Health References in the Raval; Team Raval with the unaccompanied migrant youth and Alliances for Sustainable Tourism in the Raval. The team also ensures these groups collaborate to support cross-collaboration and bridge the initiatives.[31].

Widening the community with an unusual ally: the role of the Church in the establishment process

While community foundations are non-religious organisations and serve the whole community, in Southern Italy, churches have been an unusual driver in establishing the community foundations themselves.

[San Gennaro Community Foundation](#), the community foundation that serves the Rione Sanità neighbourhood, one of the most densely populated in Naples and Italy, came to life in 2014. Its establishment process was kicked off in 2010 by Padre Antonio Loffredo. For years, he was the local priest who had been working with disadvantaged youth in the community at his local church. His work drove some local nonprofits and associations to relaunch in the neighbourhood. Then, they began to reflect on the need for a "place" that could collect the many experiences and good practices, creating a locus for catalysing and connecting actors able to shape a shared future for the community. The promoting committee, led by the two churches in the neighbourhood and other local associations, worked to put together the core group of 13 founding members, all private organisations, who guaranteed that in ten years, they would donate €100,000 each to the foundation. The process ended in 2014, and the Fondazione Comunità San Gennaro was born with the clear vision of developing the local artistic and human capital and the sustainable development of the community and its members through their active participation.

[Agrigento and Trapani Community Foundation](#), located in Trapani and Agrigento province in Sicily, one of the most stunning but most deprived areas of Europe, has been established as an answer to the problematic situation of young people in the territory. The process kicked off in 2016 when the Bishop of Agrigento launched a 'cry of alarm', underlining the startling NEETs situation (people not in employment, education or training) and the lack of social capital in the area. A group of 20 young people was set to start tackling these problems by identifying the territory's long-term priorities and lines of action. To do so, they had the chance to travel around Sicily and the whole country to get to know existing well-established organisations, learn from them, and gather exciting cues and ideas. This

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[31] More information of Tot Raval governance and functioning can be found on the [organisation's website](#)

stimulating experience led to the establishment of a community foundation encompassing Agrigento and Trapani, similar territory in several aspects. Today, Fondazione Comunitaria di Agrigento e Trapani is building its identity as a strategic partner and as a resource catalyst for local organisations with innovative and vital projects but must be equipped to attract and secure the necessary financial and human resources. It has three main lines of action:

1. Promoting community welfare in education and people care;

2. Supporting socially responsible businesses led by young people;

3. Enhancing the cultural and natural heritage of the areas in which it operates.

Finally, Val di Noto Community Foundation, which serves the Val di Noto valley in Sicily, with a population of over 500,000 spread across 2,700 sq km, secured consistent financial support from the two dioceses, Ragusa and Siracusa, that agreed to contribute to the first fundraising efforts by devolving part of the 8x1000, a contribution that Italian taxpayers are allowed to give to charities. Today, both dioceses play an active role in the governance, being able to nominate one member of the board each.

As the saying goes, 'knowledge is power. Having all the information necessary, being equipped and able to make sense of it, is the foundation for taking action towards finding solutions. Most of the time, in the information process, participants are merely recipients. If the communications remain at the level of one-way information sharing, the community is reduced to absorbing information. In this context, community foundations can make sense of this information and reshape it in a way that is relevant to the local community.

They can also catalyse opportunities, news, and stories from the organisation and the community that can inspire action, collaboration and give a greater understanding of what is happening. Informing is at the basis of a community foundation's life, and most of the time, is bidirectional and effort is made to reach out to new audiences i.e. those not already engaged.

There are several ways in which community foundations communicate and inform the community they serve: first and foremost, their own communication channels, from social media to their website and newsletters, dedicated to projects or the whole organisation. Several community foundations across the continent have established fruitful relationships with local media throughout the years, so are able to amplify their voice, give more visibility and expand their reach to different audiences. Many open the doors of their headquarters, set community meeting time slots or they go out in the community to hold information sessions.

The Timișoara Urban Heroes Project - Timișoara Community Foundation

In December 2021, Piața Unirii, one of the main central squares in Timișoara, became the place of inspiring stories. The Eroi Urbani art installation, an awareness campaign initiated by Ness Romania and implemented by the Timișoara Community Foundation, featured seven local heroes, ordinary people who believe in change for the better and act for their community. Coming from different fields and areas of Timisoara, the campaign's idea was to prove that everyone, regardless of status, job, or age, could do something impactful for the city itself. To avoid making it just a one time in person initiative and keep a positive and inspiring narrative alive, the Eroi Urbani moved online in 2022 with other examples and stories.

Vital Signs - Knowing and sharing the state of the community to inform action

Vital Signs is an effective community-led approach to gathering and utilising local data and intelligence spearheaded by [Community Foundations of Canada](#) and spread in Europe. The programme, led by community foundations, uses local knowledge to assess the state and vitality of the community to act accordingly towards improving its quality of life. The ultimate mission is to inspire civic engagement, to help citizens, organisations, local administrations, and other actors to find evidence-based solutions and open up conversations on shared issues. Vital Signs are potent tools to inform and inspire community actions if appropriately used.

Other methodologies such as imPuls Reports in Germany, or Hidden Needs in the UK, have been adopted, with similar objectives. Here are some exciting examples of how Vital Signs has been used to inform the community and the community foundations' actions.

[Bucharest Community Foundation](#) launched, in 2017, [Vital Signs Bucharest](#), the first research that collects public data from 12 crucial city areas. The analysis captures the quality of life in Bucharest in 12 areas: population, environment, local economy, work, mobility, safety, wealth inequalities, housing, education, health, art and culture, and sense of belonging. The idea was to move beyond stereotypical belief and base actions and have conversations around actual evidence. Based on the data obtained in the Vital Signs Bucharest research, the Bucharest Community Foundation has selected three key areas on which to deepen the study and test the possibility of developing thematic funds: education and the role of the community in influencing school results, prevention in health and healthy lifestyle and community belonging.

The [Fondacija Iskorak (Step Forward Foundation)](#) in Serbia undertook the Vital Signs process in 2022, focusing on the community's perception of different parameters, and conveyed all the results and insights together in a dedicated website called [Vitalni Znaci](#). Among the key developments, there are the most pressing challenges for the community itself, that is, emigration, unemployment, and standard of living of citizens, and the most advanced offerings and qualities, such as security, cultural and artistic opportunities. However, from this analysis, it also emerges that 60% of respondents feel a weak sense of belonging to the community. Recognising the need to be more meticulous in the restitution of data and perceptions across the community, the community foundation implemented a [Vital Map](#) that those interested could filter according to critical parameters, such as neighbourhood, age, and sex, to understand the different community perceptions better.

Some community foundations across the continent (emulating the developments in Canada) are linking Vital Signs to the SDGs as a sensemaking framework, thereby linking the local 'pulse' to a national and global discourse.

Tuzla Community Foundation, operating in the wider area of Tuzla canton in the northeast of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, adopted the methodology in 2012. The last report was done in 2019, where they provided information, based on the first and secondary data, about housing, health, education, and inequalities across the territory[32].

Fondazione Comunità Nord Milano, serving several districts in the wider Milan area in Italy, decided to adopt the Vital Signs as a way to move forward being a mere grantmaker and assume a more enabler role, gathering, and making sense of available granular data and trends about the community itself for informing its strategy and potential actions from communities and organisers.

In Germany, Braunschweig Bürgerstiftung published its second and latest ImPuls Report that leverages several SDGs to provide a clearer picture of how the community is evolving and its critical challenges. Among others, it reserves space to analyse the state of the community in the past few years, revealing the various ways it stuck together and created new solutions during adverse times. It is not just a means to inform the community but also to pose some key questions on how to move forward.

In the UK, Milton Keynes Community Foundation has developed a ten-year experience with the Vital Signs, framing the evidence according to the 2030 Agenda and using it to better inform a portion of the community, particularly donors and businesses, as to what areas need the most attention. Given the decade perspective, it has also become an evaluation tool to see progress in addressing the community's needs and significant challenges, such as increasing fairness, reducing poverty and inequality, and tackling climate change.

Build community capacity to share its voice - Cìvica Oreneta del Vallés Community Foundation

With radio being one of the historic media in Spanish society, Fundacio Civica Oreneta (Civica Oreneta del Valles Community Foundation), founded in 2003 serving the Badia del Valles Municipality in Catalonia region in Spain, launched in 2010 a local high-quality internet-based radio called Radio Badia. The goal was to set up a shared channel where individuals, especially young people, and organisations could share and address information, interests, issues, and challenges with the whole community. The organisation supports those involved with technical knowledge and teaches the responsibility and accountability principles in producing public content and communications. For younger generations, in particular, it carries out specific school programmes on how to build a radio show: the resulting episodes, the latest ones being Radio La Jota

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[32] The whole report can be found here

[2022/2023](#), are uploaded and spread across the community. Currently, every Wednesday from 5 until 6 pm, people can tune in from Facebook or the website to listen to brand new conversations and get further information on the work carried out. The radio continues operating thanks to the direct participation of 39 people who carry out the different activities of the project, which has a large group of beneficiaries, 612 people as of 2022, through the network.

Another exciting project in this communication realm is Badia Comunicacion, since 2015, which seeks to improve the communications skills and presence of non-profit organisations, informal groups, and individuals to raise awareness and give them visibility within the community. Furthermore, it fosters and instils a collaborative paradigm when communicating values. Indeed, throughout the educational process, the community foundation makes it easy for them to work as a team, providing guidelines for co-existence, promoting social relationships, and developing shared narratives. The underlying idea is to make the work of the overall non-profit sector more visible in the community, with all its nuances, promoting a shared identity and driving a powerful narrative of the city and the community itself, outside and inside. As of 2022, Fundacio Civica Oreneta had held 171 workshops involving 780 people.

Talk the Walk, a new way to show the community - Timisoara Community Foundation

How many times have we wished to rediscover our city with a set of new eyes? To burst our bubble of what we already know and step into the "unknown," exploring stories from people within the community we would never have encountered? In Timișoara, the local community foundation provided a possible answer: the Talk the Walk programme. It entails organised walking tours throughout the city, along a pre-established route, led by a local host and dedicated narrators. In this journey, lasting about 2-3 hours, participants walk through less known or visited neighbourhoods or spaces of the city, visiting various projects and non-governmental organisations or sometimes places less accessible to the public. To update and make this information public, [Timișoara Community Foundation](#) set up a [Facebook page](#) that would gather all the experiences and stories from the visits.

Informative breakfast across Germany – the German community foundations' format

Different community foundations in Germany put in place every year a welcoming, informative and exchange format: community breakfasts in community spaces. They can also take up the form of fundraising events around specific community foundations' projects.

[Stuttgart Community Foundation](#), for instance, in June 2022 resumed the breakfast as in-person events, under the motto ["Celebrate, promote, have breakfast"](#). It gathered around 300 guests that found out about the foundation's projects and vision; additionally, they could network among each other. The event

proceeds went to support KuBUS, a mobile studio run by the Stuttgart Children's Foundation, full of tools and painting supplies that travel to various schools to awaken and encourage the children's creativity.

The Göttingen Community Foundation hosted, with the support of several sponsors, the 11th edition of the Citizens Breakfast on the 25th of June, hosting more than 700 visitors at the Johanniskirchhof. The foundation's chairwoman and the board member moderated the meeting, displaying fully the work and initiatives of the organisation.

Informing newcomers about the community - How to Sibian/ca programme from the Sibiu Community Foundation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced people to isolate and stay away from one another. The Sibiu Community Foundation wanted to heal those deep fractures and started reconnecting with people in the community through their personal

stories and experiences in Sibiu. In 2020, the organisation kicked off a micro-map of the community, through a dedicated Facebook page, that connects different worlds and experiences, and at the same time, also brings into the narrative more sensitive things about the local culture and international culture, like for instance stories of people who fled from Ukraine after the invasion. In 2022, Sibiu Community Foundation expanded this

format for those who have just arrived in the city and wanted to know more about its opportunities to meet new people who could make it feel like home. For these reasons, they launched the first edition of How to sibian/ca, a series of micro-events held in a week, which takes place in different spaces in Sibiu, from hotels and cultural centres to sports clubs and city tours. The initiative is also an excellent opportunity for the community foundation to inform newcomers of the organisation's work and vision for the city, potentially attracting new financial and social capital with different backgrounds and competencies for a shared future of the community.

CONSULT

In its strictest form, consulting entails "obtaining public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions." It is one of the most used forms of engagement, inherently reciprocal and bi-directional. Consultative processes must acknowledge from the beginning that every group and individual bring skills, competencies, and experience to the table. And they present both opportunities and risks. On the one hand, consultation entails creating and providing spaces and occasions for the community to share its concerns and ideas about specific issues and plans.

Along with space, however, the right enabling conditions must be ensured to provide meaningful participation, especially to those most affected by the issue. That is only sometimes the case: for different reasons, consultation techniques, like surveys, focus groups, and meetings, are designed in a loose way that facilitates consultations and participation of a small slice of the community. Furthermore, another recurring risk is that decision-makers do not follow up with the community on what has arisen and do not include it in the planning and implementation phase, tokenising and discouraging people involved from possible future interactions.

Consultation is viewed as a developmental stage prior to involvement. It usually does not entail building a shared vision and process but consulting on half-baked plans, existing formats, or solutions that can be adjusted and better implemented. However, as it will be shown, the stories from the field are more nuanced and entail different approaches and levels of implication in the consultation process.

Within this scope, community foundations can again play the enabler role, creating the conditions for different groups and citizens to be consulted around different community processes and initiatives, led by for instance the private sector, the municipality and non-profit organisations. But in many cases, they also directly consult different audiences to inform their strategy, programmes, and projects to tailor them appropriately and make them more effectively and meaningful for the community.

How to use local expertise for local issues? - Local Community Development Foundation Stip

With this programme, the [Local Community Development Foundation Stip](#), operating in North Macedonia, facilitated the creation of a local advisory board that would be consulted by local governments on community issues. This board comprises volunteer experts in different fields, like urban planning and architecture, to provide ideas for their locality and give consultancy on how the city should look in the future. Initially, the municipality was open and interested in the insights arising from this board; however, there was no follow-up due to a lack of funds and different priorities. Therefore, the community foundation had to

change its role from catalyst to monitoring, becoming a watchdog that would keep an eye on the progress and ensure that the municipality would act and keep its word on the commitments made. The main challenge now for Local Community Development Foundation Stip is to maintain the enthusiasm and the willingness to keep working even though their proposals still need to be implemented in the period they are supposed to.

Fund for Neighbourhood Initiative - Obrenovac Community Foundation

Established in 2017, the Fund for Neighbourhood Initiative is dedicated to supporting informal groups and individuals in the Obrenovac municipality near Belgrade, who want to do something for their community and need some help. With no thematic focus, anyone aged over 15 can propose a project or an idea and try to gather other people around it to increase social cohesion and community building. The Obrenovac Community Foundation supports whoever reaches out first with information and technical support on how to apply. Secondly, it provides mentoring and takes care of the administrative burden for those selected. Initially, for the first three years of the programme, there was an independent committee, composed of local people chosen by the community foundation, in charge of deciding the projects to fund. Today, instead, the approach is more consultative, and the voice of the wider community is heard through an online voting process that is more participatory. Furthermore, Obrenovac Community Foundation follows up with all the projects supported, putting them in contact and deep diving into community conversation to exchange what could be next for them and what could arise starting from the initiatives.

For more information click here.

A roundtable to explore community ideas and solutions - Stuttgart Community Foundation

How can volunteers in refugee work be better supported? How can we make it possible for people without money to go to the theatre and the museum? How can all citizens find out about palliative services in the city? These are some of the different but relevant questions for the community at the centre of investigation for the Stuttgart Bürgerstiftung (Stuttgart Community Foundation) in Germany. To create the right conditions to consult people and bring their inputs and ideas on the matter, the organisation has launched the Runde Tische initiative (literally 'roundtable').

The community foundation is in charge of the overall process: it trains and involves professional moderators able to be neutral, cast the conversation, and harvest its results. It seeks to provide all the funding, and once ideas arise throughout this

process, it commits to bringing them to life and implementing them through ad hoc projects and programmes.

This kind of format was also successfully transferred online during the Covid pandemic to consult with individuals and organisations on specific issues: for instance, the community foundation opened the "Gute(r)Dinge" fund, whose priority was providing food for homeless people. To effectively and properly run it, the community foundation called its first "virtual roundtable" and gathered all those working on the topic, from city administrations to groups and individuals, to efficiently share and collect information for more targeted support. This process also led to some specific 'spin-off' collaborations among actors involved.

Finally, the round table consultation process played a major role in the design of one of the latest initiatives, [Mittendrin – Chancen für morgen gestalten](#), hosted by the Stuttgart Community Foundation in partnership with Mercedes-Benz Deutschland, which in the next five years will make available €12.5m for civil society projects. The community foundation organised eight summer sessions, involving 60 participants who identified concrete spheres of actions and priorities to the community challenges, which have been expressly included in the public call[33].

More information on the [Runde Tische webpage](#)

Sibiuverde: A go-to platform for waste sorting - Sibiu Community Foundation

Sibiuverde is a platform that gathers all relevant information in one place regarding waste collection in Sibiu. The idea for this came out after the Sibiu Community Foundation consulted the community, thanks to an ad hoc questionnaire aimed at finding out their needs and problems concerning the city's waste management. The answer was clear: people needed a single source of reliable information containing clear indications on how to dispose of waste. For this reason, Sibiuverde, an accessible, quick platform, a go-to database containing all the information, came to life at the end of 2020, as the winning idea of the hackathon organised by the community foundation along with the Wenglor company and the City hall.

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[33] The information drawn comes from the Stuttgart Bürgerstiftung's official press release available [here](#) in German

The platform contains four main sections:

- A glossary of terms anyone can look up, how and where to properly dispose of waste. It contains hundreds of entered words and functions as a search engine within the platform;

- FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions);

- Many urban myths circulate quickly and convey false information that decreases the interest of citizens to sort waste properly. These are documented and validated / invalidated according to reality;

- Articles about waste sorting, recycling, and zero-waste living.

INVOLVE

At the root of involvement, there is the willingness to work directly with the community throughout the process, from start to finish, to ensure that "concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and included." It is the first concrete stage that works towards ensuring and demonstrating that the community's voice has been heard. In its most effective implementation, the involvement of the people is thoughtfully crafted from identifying the issue through the creation of the solution and its evaluation. To pursue stronger accountability and involvement, community members who are adequately trained and equipped hold facilitating and leadership positions. Especially in the public decision-making process, but also at the community level, a meaningful involvement process that puts suitable mechanisms and conditions in place for people to join ensures the long-term sustainability of the initiatives and decisions. This positive result is almost always worth the investment in terms of time required compared to the previous steps.

According to the Spectrum of Engagement, this is the stage where, in its most powerful form, community organising steps in as a strategic driver to build from the bottom up and spread power through the community.

As we will see, community foundations mostly enable these involvement processes by using different tools, particularly open funds with pooled financial resources available that incentivise the local community to shape and co-create specific solutions to various issues.

The Happy Streets projects - Eger Community Foundation

By serving the city of Eger, with 40,000 residents, the [Eger Community Foundation](#) has the potential to act in an precise, detailed way, reaching individuals and bringing micro-communities' ties to life. In particular, the community foundation detected that people live in a very individualistic way, juggling most of the time between two jobs and focusing on their families. They see engaging with others and being active in the community as more of an additional burden than a meaningful route to a healthy life.

For this reason, the organisation promotes the Happy Street project, a call for neighbourhood communities of people who want to be more active and involved in their buildings or streets. With an open fund, individuals or small groups can apply for financial resources to organise small community activities, like gathering, small events, cooking sessions, etc. And they have to involve others when they do it. The project's goal is to create small, safe, diffuse spaces to rebuild the communities and plant seeds here and there to enable a more collaborative vision of society among people.

Hurbanovo programme - Nitra Community Foundation

Nitra Community Foundation serves around 80,000 people in the city of Nitra and wider province, in the western part of Slovakia, near Bratislava. One of the ongoing critical issues is to make sure to reach all persons and groups in the community, providing spaces and opportunities for all its citizens. With this objective in mind, the community foundation developed the Tu sme doma - Hurbanovo - zodpovedne k ľuďom a planéte programme (Here we are home - Hurbanovo - responsible for people and the planet) to empower and involve micro-communities in the peripheral areas, like the 8,000 citizens of Hurbanovo. The initiative, in its second edition, calls for locals to find ideas and solutions that would solve community issues while at the same time enhancing social cohesion and fostering cooperation.

Nitra Community Foundation has catalysed private efforts, developing a solid partnership with Heineken that provided the funds for the initiative, and public ones, involving the local administration. What stands out is the community foundation's ability not to cede to donors' wishes and priorities but to advocate for processes that put the community in charge of finding solutions for its own needs.

Micro-funds for local organisation - Bilgoraj Community Foundation

The Bilgoraj Community Foundation set up the Lubelskie Locally Microdotacje fund (literally Micro-fund for Lublin), the 9th city in Poland, to support small organisations and informal groups in the community. The primary tool deployed is micro-grants integrated by providing training, consulting services and webinars for those who benefit from the initiative. The fund's main objective is to increase the involvement of citizens and non-governmental organisations from the province of Lublin in public life. For the 2020-2023 period, the community foundation has heavily focused on informative sessions and have found ways to further expand its reach and audience to be more inclusive. In particular, it hired local animators, people with the sole task to let people in their competence area know about this opportunity, be available to explain in detail to those interested and support them in presenting their application.

Promoting citizen involvement and engagement through the arts - Tot Raval Community Foundation

Opera Prima Raval can be summarised as a community-first, community-owned theatre creation. Developed by the Gran Liceu Theatre in collaboration with the [Tot Raval Community Foundation](#) (Fundacio Tot Raval), this opera was based on the community-creation principle. The whole neighbourhood of El Raval (one of the most densely populated and diverse in Europe) was implicated and involved in the overall artistic and creative process. That meant artists, artisans, citizens, associations, collectives, schools, and cultural facilities co-shaped a new representation and story for the community, representing and valuing all its diversity. The dramatists and writers dived into the community life, hearing people's stories and amplifying their voices in the opera. The result was "La Gata Perduda," an opera of the community for the community: it talks about people's concerns, their realities, their multiculturalism, and their different languages and sounds. It was performed on the 5th and 7th of October 2022, premiering the new season of the Lyceum. About 1,000 people joined the project, directly or indirectly, including individuals, entities, and organisations, and about 70 Raval associations and institutions collaborated.

The community foundation played a pivotal role in this process by actively reaching out to people and organisations in El Raval; seeking synergies with other interested stakeholders; looking for spaces to meet and enable the whole development of the opera; disseminating information and giving visibility in the governance spaces of the project where the vision of the neighbourhood and connection with the community sphere was necessary.

"La Gata Perduda" represents a further step towards achieving the Tot Raval Foundation mission of building a new narrative of the community by involving members in this co-creative experience.

For more information: https://totraval.org/ca/projectes/opera-prima

Inclusivity as the North Star - Pančevo Community Foundation

The [Pančevo Community Foundation](#) main programme is Naš kraj, naša ideja! (Our neighbourhood, our idea!). It was the first one that kicked off intending to make ideas arising from the community by providing financial resources. From the

fundraising point of view, it was challenging because having a specific focus can be better perceived by potential donors who might not give their money.

Once they had raised funds, they set up an open call with defined shared criteria and started to support the chosen initiatives. In its first edition, the Pančevo Community Foundation found themselves in a new learning path: how could they support initiatives in the best possible way? How could they be an engaged donor? Having the possibility to exchange with other community foundations in the country, like Stara Pazova and Niš, was a big help.

Within the programme, they faced two main challenges: first of all, being the new kid in the block, first of its kind, making people understand what a community foundation is and what they do. In the Serbian context, foundation work is associated with charity rather than local development, like the community foundation. The other challenge was to motivate people to do something themselves, to be active citizens able to shape their community and not wait for others. To overcome these challenges, the community foundation representative worked a lot on their communication strategy to build a unique, clear message they first conveyed among people they already knew and afterwards with one-to-one conversations with other community members. Also, they crafted a series of small fundraising events that would target different audiences in the community, like pubs, craft beer producers, burger restaurants, lawyers, and hairdressers. On this occasion, the board members could share with new people the work they do and provide results after the first edition of the call. Even though it is not a lot of money, it is a slow process of building relationships for the Pančevo community foundation, which is vital for its development. They wanted first to get recognised and acknowledged and secondly to show it is worth investing in. It wants people to be engaged with it and buy into the vision.

Being inclusive is one of the core values of the community foundation. Involving the wider community was relatively easy because board members come from civil society organisations working with marginalised communities. That is reflected in the programmes themselves. Specific requirements exist for applicants, such as involving people in rural areas, women, LGBTQI+, children, and persons with disabilities.

The community foundation is in the third round of its programme and has started to collect more comprehensive knowledge and ideas from the community and expanded its reach. For this reason, it is now moving forward in a new role: bridging and connecting people with similar ideas or missions and being a platform for exchange where those who need something could be combined with those with a similar thing to offer. The community foundation also wants to support people to bring ideas to life. But having this kind of role requires a much bigger organisational capacity and investment by donors and funders in the community foundation itself.

Pančevo Community Foundation wants to hold one-to-one and public meetings with specific marginalised groups in the local community in the future. It has also realised that it should craft a slower approach to community engagement and work on the quality of the interaction and the relationship building aspects with

different community members. It also wants to shift the perspective from problems to desires and build on community assets and feels a 'quality over quantity mindset' is essential for meaningful involvement.

Creating involvement process around public spaces - The story of Giardino Pellegrino, Porta Palazzo Community Foundation

Giardino Pellegrino is the only public park in the Porta Palazzo and Borgo Dora. Between 2011 and 2019, this space hosted a tourist attraction, the Turin Eye air balloon. However, when it was removed the Giardino Pellegrino was closed and abandoned. In 2020, while it was still in its establishment process, the [Porta Palazzo Community Foundation](#) decided to give new life to this vital space by setting up a thorough community process around its reopening efforts. Initially, two of the organisation's founding members, Circoscrizione 7 and Associazione Fuori di Palazzo, stipulated a memorandum of understanding with the municipality that ensured the reopening of a small portion of the space dedicated to children. Ten volunteers took care of the rotation of the opening and closing.

The second step was to make accessible and public to the community the remaining part of the Giardino by implementing the safety measures needed and activating a participatory planning process around the ultimate socialising objective for the space. In 2021, the community foundation signed a memorandum of understanding with the City of Turin and District 7 to make the garden, once reopened, an aggregative and social space safe and welcoming for everyone whether they have a home or not. It raised 7.382€ among over 200 people through a thoughtfully crafted crowdfunding campaign to do this.

While the renovations were taking place and a collaboration pact between the foundation and the municipality was signed, Fondazione Comunità Porta Palazzo kickstarted a new participatory format: the "Why Not" Wednesdays at the Giardino (originally in Italian "I mercoledì del Giardino"). The meetings, open to everyone, focused for the first part on identifying the best themes and methods to involve citizenship in the regeneration of the space. People who participated were invited to answer two fundamental questions to build the garden's future: "What would you like to find in the garden?" and "What do you want to do for the garden?".

Once the first suggestions had been collected and left as testimony on the garden's gates, the community foundation drew up a calendar of appointments to be held every Wednesday, available on its website: in every meeting, further ideas and finetuning of existing ones, such as gardening workshops to meetings with

organisations working in the area, from card tournaments to moments of exchange of good practices, emerged from citizens, associations and local organisations.

Finally, on the 13th of May 2022, the Giardino Pellegrino was officially reopened with a prominent public celebration involving the community. The agenda of the activities is very lively and community-shaped: citizens, associations, and informal organisations hold different types of activities with materials, such as tables, chairs, and others, made available by the foundation and stored directly in the space. Since the 2023 spring, a new format of convening emerged: Why not Thursday? Every Thursday between 6 and 8.30 PM, people gather at Giardino Pellegrino to exchange and listen to each other, meet, and expand their community knowledge. This event is informal except for the first Thursday of the month, where the main objectives are to generate ideas for further shaping the place and getting a pulse on the community's feelings and priorities.

Fondazione Porta Palazzo has played a crucial role in this process: first, building the participatory approach to ensure community involvement and make Giardino Pellegrino feel their own. Secondly, leading the negotiation with the public administration and the efforts to make the ideas which surfaced possible.

Widening involvement of the whole community - the public open call of Niš Community Foundation

Since its inception, Niš Community Foundation has wanted to convey a new powerful message to the community: people could do something on their initiative and do not have to necessarily wait and be the recipient of someone else's pre-set programmes, in particular the national and local administration. The foundation wants to build agency among the community, enable their involvement, and let them know they would watch their back and support them. To achieve this, Niš Community Foundation opened as a first step almost three years ago, the first open call to support formal and informal groups across the community with their ideas. There are no specific targets; everyone is invited to apply, including minors. The open call, to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, has five main focus fields: sport, art, education, culture, and public space, but at the same time gives the possibility to present ideas outside these areas.

One of the critical issues the founders addressed since the beginning is how to communicate: coming all from civil society, they wanted to burst the communication bubble by using terms that are understandable for the people outside the sector. You will not find any "projects report," "indicators of success," or "implementation" among the words used in the call: they have kept the wording as simple as possible for all to apply.

In 2023, Niš Community Foundation issued its fourth call; as of today, it has awarded €36,000 for 35 ideas in the community. It has gone above and beyond in reaching out to new people through its communication channels (social media, for instance) and in-person information sessions (one of these, for the first time this year, was hosted by one of the Nis's municipalities). Step by step, they are gathering and building the trust of people and among the community itself, and they are showing ways for individuals and groups to take action and be involved in the community.

Involve the community to create transparent steady value - Urban Space 100 from Temple Misto Platform

How is it possible to involve members of the community in a way that generates a steady transparent income for initiatives and also provides employment opportunities? What kind of creative ideas can be put out there? The Urban Space 100 created and promoted by the Temple Misto Platform, a community foundation serving Ivano-Frankivsk city and wider area, is one of them. It is a restaurant that works as a social enterprise: 80% of the net profit from its activities goes to support social projects. To launch it, the community foundation gathered 100 individuals, with different backgrounds, to commit financially a one-off €1,000 to this experiment, becoming real shareholders. Once it was established in 2014, they met every quarter to provide their inputs on which ideas and projects should be supported. Since its establishment, more 162 projects have been financed, making available in total €177,388.

Urban Space 100 is a social enterprise in the form of a restaurant. 80% of the net profit from its activities is allocated to support social projects. The restaurant is founded by 100 patrons. Urban Space 100 hosts a free event space and Urban Space Radio studio.

In 2022, after Russia's full-scale invasion, the founders unanimously decided to provide support to the Ukrainian army and related most pressing initiatives. It dedicated €25.413,21 to the SAVE UKRAINE NOW coordination centre, a local bottom-up non-political initiative that brought together representatives of business, culture, and the public sector of the Ivano-Frankivsk region, as well as friends and colleagues who temporarily found shelter in Ivano-Frankivsk to help the Precarpathian military on the front line.

Urban Space 100 is not only driving financial resources to the community, it has also become a central gathering space, where people and organisations can meet, exchange, have ideas and propose formats and contents. In 2022, for the 8th anniversary and after an almost two-year break, the site has resumed its operation with 50 events such as lectures, discussions, presentations, film shows, and charity concerts held throughout the year.

After successfully running and creating greater impact at the local level for years, Temple Misto Platform has decided to give the opportunity to others to experiment with this format by opening a "social franchise". Those interested can reach out to the organisation to present their application and work with their

support to gather community consent and open an Urban Space in their city. The first one, called [Urban Space 500](#) - putting together 500 individuals from across the city as founders - was opened in Kyiv and today it finances a wide variety of projects.

Placing community organising at the heart of its strategy - Tuzla Community Foundation

At its very core, Tuzla Community Foundation (further abbreviated as Tuzla CF) adopted, since its birth in 2003, a community organising approach that supports citizens, especially those in rural neighbourhoods to assess and discuss community problems, develop action plans, and wield power to put them into practice. The Tuzla CF supported active citizens with financial and non-financial resources throughout this demanding process. The approach was primarily practised in Tuzla, the third biggest city in Bosnia Herzegovina and later scaled up in the broader area of Tuzla Canton with 450,000 inhabitants, recognising that many communities were underserved and marginalised by the system and government.

After years of on-the-ground experience and practice, the Tuzla CF developed a unique model of community organising, which is described in detail in the practitioner's book named "The Alphabet of Organising"[34] and drew inspiration from YEPP[35] and the ABCD approaches[36]. One of its key strengths is the possibility to be adapted to any specific community, to its needs, traditions, culture, and customs.

Among the fundamental factors for an "organised community", the model identifies the following:

- The presence of the Local Development Group, which consists of active citizens, representatives of associations, institutions, and other formal and informal civic groups;

- Trusted local leaders who are willing to organise people and take the lead;

- Young people's empowerment and involvement, being responsible for community development, is essential. Without them, the necessary long-term perspective for community development is not achievable;

- Spaces are also necessary where people can gather, socialise, plan development together, and openly discuss issues. They, therefore, require investment and regular maintenance;

- Local donors represent an essential resource the community can and should rely on to solve local problems. They can be individuals living in the community or from the diaspora, as well as local businesses and companies.

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[34] [Abeceda Organiziranja](#) (2018)
[35] For further information on YEPP approach available [here](#)
[36] [A Guide To Asset-Based Community Development](#) from City of Good

In practice, the Alphabet of Organising also identifies the action strategy for community organising, which comprises the following stages: assessing the community needs and desires through different tools and in-person conversations; building a team of activists/local citizens engaged in the process; developing an action plan; mobilising for action and looking for resources; implementing the initiative and finally evaluating.

Community organising was implemented in more than thirty communities across Tuzla Canton. In 2014, the process was moved one step forward by the activists and Tuzla CF when they decided to establish the Network of Active Communities – NAC ([Mreža aktivnih zajednica](#)), which continues to convene the power of these communities. Today, the NAC is a grassroots organisation that brings together activists from different communities across Tuzla Canton to connect and collaborate in advocating for changes, align their work, and share learning experiences through events and meetings. It also supports and advises its members on implementing the community organising model. The NAC's long-term mission is to support civic participation, activism, and democratic development partnerships among representatives of different sectors.

It also has a multiplier effect. Today, anyone who wants to become active in the community can refer to the NAC to become empowered and trained as a community organiser and leader of positive societal changes.

COLLABORATE

Collaboration is widely recognised as essential for facing today's interconnected challenges at local, regional, and global levels, as given their complexity and scale, no one alone can find and deliver solutions. However, a collaborative mindset and approach still lags behind. The Partnering Institute, a UK based organisation that works globally to provide evidence and standards for collaboration and provide training and strategic support, identifies different barriers to collaboration. These include an unsupportive enabling environment like the lack of trust across societal sectors or unhelpful government/funder policies; insufficient mechanisms and platforms to convene stakeholders; a lack of norms and standards for effective partnership; misaligned incentives within organisations and multiple process and cultural internal barriers preventing them from being 'fit for partnering'; and individuals lacking the key competencies for professional partnership[37].

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING THE DIFFERENT TOOLS FOR COLLABORATIONS. CHECK OUT THE PARTNERING INITIATIVE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE THAT OFFERS A SERIES OF TOOLS AND REPORTS THAT WOULD SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR PARTNERING JOURNEY

In this stage, community foundations can play several roles:

- Teach the value of collaboration among groups that seek the same mission. They can also foster funding practice that can incentivise a collaborative mindset instead of a competitive paradigm;

- They can establish meaningful collaborations with actors, within but also outside the community, to achieve common goals in the short term and a shared vision in the longer one;

- They can provide spaces, online and in person, where people, organisations and other groups can meet and spark new collaborations;

- Given their in-depth knowledge of the community, they can also advise and provide one to one connection to those who reach out to them with ideas.

Starting from scratch: Active in the Community programme – Slagalica Community Foundation

With a wide area to cover, the entire Slavonia region, with so many rural communities that suffered a lack of connective infrastructure after the 90s civil war, the Slagalica Community Foundation sought ways to develop human capital and empower citizens from all communities to lead local-based responses to

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[37] From a philanthropic perspective, the TPI model has been tested mainly with family and corporate foundations. In a workshop organised by ECFI and hosted by UKCF in June 2023, the TPI explored how they resonated with the work of community foundations and shared their insights in this article Exploring Partnership Models for Community Foundations

actual needs and collaborate among each other. For this reason, the organisation promoted the "Active in the Community" programme, a national initiative co-led with other community foundations in Croatia in cooperation with the National Foundation for the Development of Civil Society. The aim was to develop social capital in rural communities, give the tools and means to local communities, and foster bottom-up solutions through, for instance, building a more robust culture of giving and implementing social programmes in communities.

How does it work, and who is it for?

The programme looks for associations, informal groups, institutions (schools, libraries, cultural institutions, etc.), and local government representatives. At the beginning of every year, the Slagalica Community Foundation opens a call for proposals and selects ten participants. No financial resources are made available; instead, the focus is to provide a capacity-building path by providing support on different topics, like needs analysis in the community, how to develop programmes, activities and campaigns, fairs, workshops, public events, and implementation and mentoring of community fundraising campaigns).

Once a challenge is identified, the community foundation supports the participant in addressing the conversation to the community of reference to foster their involvement and collaboration among each other. In 60% of the communities, when the community foundation intends to bring everyone around the table to discuss the challenge identified, people are surprised: even though they know each other and know what they do, they have never collaborated or worked with each other. They never talk and share a common vision for the community. But having such an empowering external organisation, like the community foundation, that builds trust and recognition and does not dismiss their needs or ideas / solutions but rather facilitates their implementation is something they genuinely welcome. With this programme, the community foundation equips participants with the necessary tools and processes to gather and build tighter and closer local groups and communities around issues. It empowers them to go from imagining a solution to action. Once a group is established, it is now in Slagalica Community Foundation's radar and network: the organisation remains available and supports it, especially with non-financial resources to ensure that they can sustain the collaboration and the approach.

The Forum for Ukrainian Refugees - Community Foundation Ireland

As soon as the war hit Ukraine, Ireland immediately mobilised. In the first couple of weeks, the Red Cross raised approximately €16m, and the Government prepared to welcome 200,000 refugees. In such a fertile and welcoming environment, the Community Foundation Ireland set up a fundraising campaign, with the support of the Government, and made available over €7m in 18 months. The first piece of funding was dedicated to kickstarting the first Forum for a coordinated response, to avoid all the efforts from civil society, public administrations, and citizens moving in different directions, replicating, and losing effectiveness. The Forum, therefore, brought together leaders working around the

issue and institutions like the Refugee Council, the Immigrant Council, and representatives from specific localities where more refugees were being hosted. Within this space, the participants started several coordinated working groups on topics such as standard of practice, emergency accommodation, the issue of children going to school and being equipped with correct materials, access to information for refugees, health and mental health and legal issues.

Such a heartfelt and coordinated effort proved its impact from the very early stages: the Government recognised this platform as the best place to get information on deploying a meaningful and effective response since it was caught off guard. The Forum became one of the most relevant pieces of representation for different groups and people working to support refugees but also for Ukrainian leaders as well. It was the central organisation able to advocate how funding from the Government should be used and lobby on how the Government should best respond. Given its solid structure and participatory process the idea in the long term is to keep it and expand it not just for Ukrainian refugees but all refugees.

Building a community able to collaborate and believe in itself - The Community Builders of Forever Manchester

Founded in 1989, [Forever Manchester](#), the community foundation serving the Greater Manchester area, has since undergone a new strategic redefinition that put the community, its assets, and its desires at the centre. While in the beginning, the focus was being more a philanthropic intermediary with greater attention to the donor community rather than the wider one, at the beginning of 2011, the organisation fully embraced the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model, which led to the establishment of an unusual team within the foundation, the Community Building Team.

Community builders typically invest two to three years into a community, trying to get to know as many people as possible, unfolding great ideas, discovering their passions, and connecting them.

The process that underlies the community building can be summed up in four stages:

1. Discover. Community builders start with simple conversations by asking people and groups what they are good at and what they wish for themselves and their loved ones. The community's wealth of knowledge and competencies is invaluable and, most of the time, concealed. The community builders sit back and create the enabling conditions for everyone to express freely, listen, and collect all the inputs. And they often discover hidden gems.

2. Bring people together. After having listened, the relational connecting role begins. Community builders focus on weaving a carefully crafted web of relationships, bringing together people with joint or complementary interests and capacity to build something more significant.

3. From ideas to reality. When community ideas come to a more concrete stage, if needed, Manchester Forever provides funds, consults, and support to make them a reality.

4. Sharing. To expand the more comprehensive community building, telling stories of the community for the community is crucial.

For Great Conversation.
Forever Manchester Meets.
Local people with interesting stories to tell.

FOREVER MANCHESTER
Let's do something extraordinary

For this reason, the community foundation created the 'Forever Manchester Meets' series, to change the narrative around the communities of Greater Manchester, to encourage those who have interesting stories to share, and build the idea that there are a lot of great people in the area creating something unique. [Listen to the podcast here]

The ultimate aim of the Community Building Team is to build a tighter and more fruitful social fabric among residents of Greater Manchester, able to trust and collaborate and to leverage shared assets, accompanied by and with the support of the community foundation.

Resilience Lab - Timisoara Community Foundation

Resilience Lab

Fanzin

Fundatia Comunitara Timisoara   arc

After different consultations with organisations and individuals it works with, that exposed the need for various actors in different sectors to come together and potentially spark trans-sectoral collaborations, the Timisoara Community Foundation set up the Resilience Lab, along with Actors of Urban Change and with the support of ARC, a national philanthropy support organisation.

It is a facilitated space where people can connect and imagine new solutions for the community and the city. It is also meant to be an incubator where these ideas can come to life and be spearheaded, and tested. At the core of this process is building community resilience on a personal, organisational, neighbourhood, and city-wide levels. To spread what has been catalysed, the Timisoara Community Foundation developed an online "funzine" with some thoughts that emerged from guest discussions.

Environmental Platform for Bucharest - Bucharest Community Foundation

Bucharest is one of the most polluted cities in Europe and faces infringement proceedings with the European Commission for excessive levels of pollution. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine, in addition to the losses of human life and suffering, security threats, and economic disruptions, added several ecological and environmental risks for the city.

The Environmental Platform for Bucharest, promoted and led by the Bucharest Community Foundation, brings together and fosters engagement and collaboration among civil society, companies, public administration, academia, and citizens who act together in ways to address the capital city's environmental problems systematically. The objective is, that by 2024, Bucharest will become a community capable of collective impact (collective impact ready community) on environmental issues. The framework of this work resides in the collective impact approach promoted by John Kania and Mark Kramer[38]; the model assumes the existence of five key elements:

- A common social agenda;

- A shared results measurement model;

- A joint action plan, with activities that support each other;

- Open communication, which encourages real collaboration;

- A support organisation with the capacity and resources to involve community members.

In the first six months of activity, the community contributed to changing the Financing Regulation for NGOs from the Bucharest City municipality to the management and concession regulation for parks and to the working group for reducing air pollution from the General Council of Bucharest municipality. At the same time the Environmental Platform for Bucharest established a funding programme. The Environment Platform for Bucharest consists of over 60 representatives of organisations, initiative groups, and local public administrations who participate in joint meetings. As of October 2023, the Platform has allocated €300,000 in long-term grants to 11 projects focused on urban nature, air quality, and waste management. In the immediate future, it prepares to grow steeply, as it will grant another €300,000 by the end of the year. It has also signed-off to launch two multi-year strategic programmes with private funding.

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[38] Kania J. and Kramer M. (2011) "Collective Impact" Stanford Social Innovation Review

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

The last development stage of the framework is community ownership, where power is deferred to people and groups primarily interested in and affected by a particular issue. The goal is to "place final decision-making in the hands of the public." Community foundations can be allies of the community and citizens, setting up the process but leaving decision-making power to them. In this scenario, it is impossible to set expected results beforehand: the real added value is in the process and the impact of the decisions. Furthermore, this co-creation approach and empowerment lead to long-lasting and more effective initiatives. However, community foundations must pay attention to properly equip those who participate with the necessary resources. As mentioned in the beginning, while community ownership might be the final ideal stage across the spectrum it cannot be viewed as universally good given that all modes of participation entail compromises and potential abuses that organisations must pay attention to.

Participatory grantmaking as a tool for community empowerment - The Deciding Together Fund of Two Ridings Community Foundation

Two Ridings Community Foundation approached participatory grantmaking for the first time by setting up the Deciding Together Fund, funded by Lankelly Chase, an independent charitable foundation, who devolved the power and asked for more focus on the process rather than getting money out quickly. This path was nurtured, in addition to the community foundation experience, by two years of work already underway by the York Multiple Complex Needs Network (York MCN) in the city, which brought together people in York from diverse perspectives of multiple complex needs (homelessness, addiction and recovery, poverty, mental health difficulties). External facilitators were involved in overseeing, facilitating, and harvesting the conversation.

The process went as follows:

1. **Involve the wider community and set expectations.** The organisations contacted council leaders, funders, community groups, lived experience networks, faith organisations, disability groups, culturally diverse organisations, faith groups, and education establishments. Through an open information event, the organisations shared the three levels of engagement that would have been possible:
   - Very involved in the whole process, committing a day per month for six months;
   - Partially involved, unable to participate throughout;
   - Low-key involvement, where they were kept informed via a mailing list.

2. **Set the rules of the games and get together to decide**. After this, the working groups started their activities, meeting six times, and the organisers set clear rules for engagement and interaction. There was a Decision-Making Space based on input from different sub-groups, and every individual could discuss it with the group before adopting a collective decision. The underlying principle was "Consent decision-making", which meant that not everyone had to agree, but they consented to what came up. The foundation facilitators had no decision-making power; instead, they were enablers of the conversation. Decisions were taken in response to critical questions like: How do people apply? What questions will be in the application? What will the invite look like? What will be in the Guidance notes for the fund? How many panels will we have, and how will those panels look? Ultimately, the fund was split into three sub-categories: small, medium, and large grants.

3. **Communicate the fund to apply**
   In addition to crafted communications, online and on paper, the group organised two Drop-Ins attended by over 20 people

4. **Evaluate the fund**
   The evaluation committees comprised working group members, ensuring diversification in terms of gender, background, age, etc., who received and evaluated the applications. After this, discussion panels were held during which people who gave their availability for low essential involvement but were keen to join could contribute.

5. **Communicate and distribute the funds**

The team of Two Riding Community Foundation governed this process by creating the right conditions for everyone to contribute and making available their professional experience every step of the way. They took away most of the burdensome duties and allowed participants the time and space to make clear decisions and be creative.
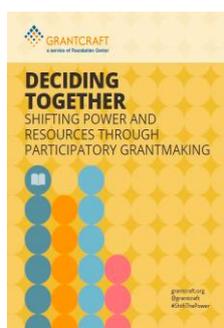
DO YOU WANT BETTER KNOW WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DID NOT?

Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking by Cynthia Gibson for GrantCraft

This report illustrates why and how funders around the world are engaging in this practice that is shifting traditional power dynamics in philanthropy. Created with input from a number of participatory grantmakers, it shares challenges, lessons learned, and best practices for engaging in inclusive grantmaking.

Providing Local Empowerment through Financial Resources - Lecchese Community Foundation

The Lecco province is a vast area of small municipalities and little communities that value relationships at its core. Recognising the need for more significant empowerment and the need for such small communities to be in the driving seats of the decision-making process, the [Fondazione Comunitaria del Lecchese](#) (Lecchese Community Foundation) established in 2018, for the first time, "fondi di comunità" (community funds). Their main aim is to foster participatory community welfare and empower local communities to take care of their needs and fulfil their desires.

While the decisions on allocating the resources and what they are for, are in the hands of local communities, the community foundation is in charge of all administrative burdens and is a constant support if needed. Micro-targeting communities in such a way has also been a way to further develop local philanthropy by welcoming the bequests of those who have lived and worked in our communities, confirming a commitment to the locality. By the end of 2022, there were 12 community funds open.

A human and space regeneration process - The Capacity programme of Me.S.S.In.A Community Foundation

While usually the target for community foundation activities is, directly or indirectly, a broader group in the locality with shared interests and features (e.g., young people, women, persons with disabilities, social entrepreneurs, etc.), [Fondazione Me.S.S.In.A](#) (Messina Community Foundation) with its programme [Capacity,](#) and in its overall strategy, supports and empowers individuals. In 1908, Messina was struck by an earthquake that destroyed most of the city. While several areas have been rebuilt, as of today two large rundown neighbourhoods

created to host the refugees still exist. Fondo Saccà and Fondo Fucile are slums, hosting hundreds of families in very deprived conditions. The aims of this programme are therefore dual and interconnected: on one hand, to build new urban and socio-economic systems that enable humans to thrive and to access a whole range of opportunities to fulfil their

aspirations in different areas of their lives, like housing, knowledge access, job market. On the other, it wants to empower, through personalised and community ad hoc projects, individuals and families to fully understand what they need and to be able to willingly choose from among the different alternative opportunities provided by the new urban and socio-economic systems, the ones that fulfil them the most. The underlying driving framework for the community foundation's strategy and, therefore this programme, is the Capability approach from the Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen[39].

Given the rundown state and overcrowding of the neighbourhoods, the priority was to address housing and find alternatives for those residing there. While in these cases accommodation is provided usually by public authorities or non-profit organisations that see the person mostly as an object of the initiatives rather than the subject, the community foundation intentionally overturned this dynamic. It made the connection between living, work, sociality and knowledge, adopting a more holistic approach to regeneration. In addition to the opportunity to access a municipality-owned house, it made available a one-off sum of money (as 'personal capacity capital'), along with social and cultural empowerment, for individuals and their families so they could independently buy their own home (the grant was up to 75% of the price of the house, or €80,000). The only binding condition has been to sign an anti-mafia pact that concerns their past and future. Of course, throughout the whole process, these people have been accompanied by a specialised team, encompassing architects, educators, and other social workers, that could support them not only in their housing choice but also addressing different needs, such as lack of competence for the job market, education for their children, community and social bonds strengthening. At the core of this process, there is always the clear idea to create the conditions for individuals to fully understand the possibilities in front of them and own their decisions and future.

Once the clearing out, in particular Fondo Sacca, was completed, Fondazione Me.S.Si.N.A led the regeneration of the whole area: the spaces became an urban park, accessible to anyone, and a new block of flats was designed and built using some of the most cutting edge technology in terms of environmental sustainability. In 2021, 205 families went to live in a house of their choice. Numerous job placements and pathways have emerged from illegal and irregular work. The concrete possibility of buying one's own home and the possibility to access ethical social finance services provided by the community foundation's partners has been an essential springboard for

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[39] To read more about Amartya Sen and the Capability approach, you can read Capability and Well-Being, Amartya Sen; The Cambridge Handbook of the Capability Approach, edited by Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti, University of Pavia, Siddiqur Osmani, Ulster University, Mozaffar Qizilbash, University of York; A multidimensional assessment of well-being based on Sen's functioning approach, Enrica Chiappero

regularising people's working relationships and enabling individuals to rethink their own lives, moving from survival towards medium-long term perspectives. After completing the process in Fondo Saccà, the municipality has expressed an interest in replicating and scaling up the experience to regenerate the remaining rundown neighbourhoods.

Civic Activism in Practice - The Romanian Community Foundations project

How can citizens in Romania be more active and engaged in the community and in expressing their needs and desires to local public institutions? How can they be equipped with the right tools to actively monitor public authorities' activities to increase the efficiency and transparency of public policies and services? These are a few of the questions that four community foundations in Romania, Valcea Community Foundation, Banatul Montan Community Foundation, Buzău Community Foundation, and Timișoara Community Foundation, are addressing with the project Civic Activism in Practice funded by the Active Citizens Fund Romania programme, financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through EEA Grants 2014-2021, and carried out by the Romanian Center for European Policies.

The programme aims to support citizens in decision-making processes at the local level by creating the conditions to develop and drive new solutions and improving their ability to engage in public consultations, initiate petitions, address public authority and help people plan and implement community-driven local actions.

The programme consists of the following steps:

1. Identify community needs by applying local consultation strategies;

2. Provide peer learning and examples like campaigns that brought significant changes, experience from leaders and successful actions at the local level, and the development of a civic activism guide;

3. Organise training programmes;

4. Empower participants to set up a local campaign and assist them throughout the journey;

5. Elaborate with the community foundation on local/national recommendations intended for local public administrations.

While the goal and the overall process are shared, each community foundation develops different engaging techniques and solutions based on the territory of competence and community needs and assets.

In Timișoara, for instance, the online local consultation, that involved 2,151 people, shed light on community life, priorities, and concerns, particularly road safety, health, pedestrian safety, public transport, and education. Subsequently, the community foundation organised a 2-days training session focused on project management, campaigns, advocacy strategy, and practical tools to carry out their

initiatives successfully. Over 30 community members, along with over 20 trainers, took part in this occasion.

After this moment, participants developed their plans and strategies, some of which were submitted for participatory budget approval, and the community foundation supported two specific campaigns, Safer pedestrian crossings, and Guidance Systems for the Blind, that mobilise other people and engage in new creative ways online people on such important topics. With the evidence emerging from this process, the Timisoara Community Foundation could also draw key recommendations to present to the local administration.

Civic Innovation Programme - The Community Foundation Northern Ireland

The Civic Innovation Programme, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland promoted by the [Community Foundation Northern Ireland](#), aimed to support and accompany initiatives that put people in the community at the centre of the decision-making process and foster their participation. Anyone could apply to this open call, from formal and informal groups, associations, and social enterprises to individuals and public sector representatives. The initiative, which used a combination of intensive project design support, expertise on public participation and grant-funding to support the delivery of the arisen projects, was financed by the community foundation itself with support from the [Paul Hamlyn Foundation](#) and the [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#).

The participatory process and its timeline:

1) **Let people know and inform them** (November 2019)

   Information workshops across Northern Ireland for individuals and organisations on the upcoming launch of the program, its objectives, and ways to take part and present ideas that the community foundation would shortlist.

2) **Challenge identifications, focus group workshops and collaborative teams' creation** (January 2020)

   The programme was officially launched on International Democracy Day (29th of January), where people got together to listen to the shortlisted proposals and present new ones, inspired by speakers and through discussion in world cafe formats. At this point, 44 ideas emerged and were narrowed down to 14 for the next co-design phase[40].

3) **Co-design process and solutions development** (February - April 2020)

   A series of workshops was held, with participants slowly coalescing into 14 teams and developing their project ideas. Before working on concrete solutions, each group was supported in this process to explore creative and relevant approaches to the challenge they wanted to address.

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[40] You can find the challenges and ideas which emerged during the workshops [at this link](#)

4) **Prototype projects - test, evaluate and iterate project** (May- August 2020)

Following the co-design stage, 11 projects were supported with a €5,746 grant to allow teams to develop further or test them. That meant seeing their potential effectiveness on a smaller scale and undertaking preliminary scoping, research, or political engagement around the chosen action area.

5) **Grant application and project delivery**

Each project team then could apply for a grant of up to €114,931. Seven project teams were successful in their pitch for funding, and the Civic Innovation Programme awarded over €574,535 to a range of projects aimed at improving democracy in areas of education, environment, community cohesion, peacebuilding, health and wellbeing, language rights, and community planning.[41]

With an investment of over €1m in this civic innovation programme over three years, at its core, there is a deep understanding from the community of the need to build an effective community engagement and involvement process. They used a variety of creative approaches to public participation and deliberation, such as citizen panels, digital engagement, and participatory budgeting that allowed them to lower the entry barriers and have wider attention also of the marginalised communities. The issues covered, such as educational segregation, climate change, Irish language rights, community planning, and peacebuilding, came directly from the community's people.

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[41] The winning projects were: Dare to Dream, The 'Building a unified civic society voice and vision in a divided society' project, Idir sráid agus stát: From Street to State, Commoning Possibilities, Growing Food Growing Community Project, Newry, Mourne and Down Citizens Panel 'Living well Together' project and Future schools: Empowering parents, schools and communities

WHICH COMMUNITIES? TAILORING ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION PROGRAMMES FOR THOSE AT THE MARGINS

Young people's engagement and active participation

Youth Bank

Born in Northern Ireland, the Youth Bank is a unique approach that puts power directly in the hands of young people. The initiative empowers young people to run funds and decide how to direct resources available to support practical, youth-led projects that address issues that matter to them to improve their communities. It overturns the power dynamics inherent to philanthropy, ensuring that those affected by the problems are actively involved in raising resources and deciding how they are used. It is a compelling tool that ultimately defers ownership to young people in the community.

Across Europe some community foundations have introduced Youth Banks as part of their strategy to bring young people closer and become more involved at the local level and draw them near the organisation's work. While the basic framework of the model is the same, community foundations have adapted and tailored the approach to the local context.

In Italy, for instance, Fondazione Provinciale della Comunità Comasca (Comasca Community Foundation), first and then Monza Brianza Community Foundation, Milano Community Foundation, and Valle d'Aosta Community Foundation, all based in the North of the country, have embarked on the Youth Bank journey, with similar modalities. They involve people between 16 and 24/25 and offer dedicated training and support.

Agrigento and Trapani Community Foundation, based in Sicily and serving the Agrigento and Trapani provinces, has been experimenting with the Youth Bank with a new, unusual target: minors who have been taken in charge by the judicial system, in particular by the Social Services Offices for Minors. Implemented in the context of the T.R.A.P project, which was selected and supported by Con I Bambini within the Italian Fund for educational disadvantage among minors (Fondo per il contrasto della povertà educativa minorile) the community foundation provided a learning experience path, made up of 9 separate meetings, where young people of the community centre in Menfi (AG) were trained, step by step, to become the managers of a small 'Youth Bank'. After having identified the main issue to address, (SDG 11 Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), they opened

the call for proposals to the other centres that are part of the programme to invite them to imagine new youth-led solutions.

[Trenčín Community Foundation](#), in Slovakia, implemented the Youth Bank, spearheaded first with funding from a private company, with the idea of creating a new generation of young people involved in the community and volunteering in the long term. The project ran for several years and seeded interesting independent initiatives beyond the Youth Bank.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Tuzla Community Foundation, within its vision and strategy, pays particular attention to young people, following one of its main principles that long-term community development and its prosperity cannot fruitfully evolve without investing in the youth in the present time. For this reason, it carries out a vast number of initiatives whose main target group is young people, the future community leaders that improve youth organisations and institutions and the youth sector in general. Among the first ones, was the Youth Bank that started in 2004 in Tuzla City and then was expanded to the whole area of Tuzla Canton. Nowadays, the Tuzla CF is running five Youth Bank Committees (YBC), comprising young people between 15 and 25. These youngsters oversee the grantmaking process for youth initiatives and make decisions about the financial support to them. Every year, the organisation launches an open call for 100 places for youngsters that participate in the series of training, learnings and leadership opportunities, and exchanges. Since its establishment, over 1,200 young people have participated in the Youth Bank and over 9,000 were supported to implement more than 470 projects.

In Ukraine, Youth Bank started to be implemented in 2011 and ten years later eight community foundations were successfully carrying them out: Bari Community Foundation (Bar, Vinnytsia Region), Podilska Hromada Community Foundation (Vinnytsia), Voznesensk Community Foundation (Voznesensk, Mykolaiv Region), Foundation of Berezani community (Berezan, Kyiv region), Domanivka community development fund (Domaniska OTG, Mykolaiv region), Ridnya community fund (Stryy, Lviv region), GOstynets NGO (Novoyavorivsk, Lviv region) and NGO "Space" (Rivne). To further strengthen these initiatives, the National Network for Local Philanthropy Development, one of the two community foundations' support organisations in the country, decided to lay the foundations to build an overall national movement that would support Youth Bankers throughout the process and especially on the fundraising side.

Young people in Mirafiori and Mira Challenge - Mirafiori Community Foundation

[Mirafiori Community Foundation](#) focuses on the Mirafiori neighbourhood, a former industrial site for the Fiat automotive production plants that has registered severe

marginalisation, impoverishment, and degradation in the past decades. Its programmatic objectives are, among others, enhancing young people's conditions, accessing opportunities, and empowering them to shape their lives and community.

For this reason, in 2021/2022, the community foundation centred its co-programming initiative on young people. In the beginning, between April and June 2021, several formal and informal groups and individuals engaged in a process to imagine and create integrated programmes for and with young people in Mirafiori. The focus has been chiefly on sports-cultural activities, political-environmental activism, awareness of risky behaviours typical of young people, the circular economy, and environmental sustainability. Youth protagonism and transferring skills are at the basis of young people's engagement in the neighbourhood.

In its second year, the community foundation kicked off a transversal rounded programme called Mirachallege, which transfers power to young people in the activities' decision-making process. Individuals from across the community were accompanied on a one-year journey. They could organise different events and initiatives every two months in the neighbourhood on three topics: sports, cultural events, and regeneration of public spaces. One rule only: the location and format must differ from one event to the other to ensure the broader involvement of the community[42].

Ravalinks - Tot Raval Community Foundation

Rava[L]inks is an experiential training for young people from Raval neighbourhood on participation, youth self-management, and community action. The training combines visits to organisations or projects, conversations with reference people in different fields (social, cultural, political, economic.), the discovery of youth initiatives, the creation of training capsules, and participation in playful and dynamic group cohesion experiences. The project aims to generate a network and empower young people in different socio-cultural conditions of the neighbourhood to recognise themselves as agents of social transformation. It also wants to strengthen the El Raval's social fabric through its youth, strengthen the sense of belonging and shape a new identity for the neighbourhood. The training takes place over three weekends, during which the group lives together from Friday to Sunday. In 2022, the project's fourth edition was carried out for two weekends in October and one in November. It involved 12 girls and boys from the Raval, between 18 and 30 years old, participating in the training. The group exchanged ideas and talked to 24 people from different fields.

The project also resulted in the creation of the 'Comunitat Rava[L]inks,' a meeting space for the young people who have participated in the different editions of the

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[42] More information can be found on Mirafiori Community Foundation dedicated page

training and who expressed interest in remaining connected with others in the transformation dynamics of the neighbourhood.

Youth Inclusive Community - Local Community Development Foundation Stip

Local Community Development Foundation Stip identifies young people as one of the key targets to serve and implicate in the decision-making process. Its commitment goes beyond implementing programmes: the organisation is a National Council on Youth member and is recognised as a regional office for youth in the Eastern part of Macedonia.

The Youth Hub is one of the flagship initiatives of the community foundations. One of the main issues it addresses is job market access: North Macedonia is experiencing a brain drain to other countries due to the lack of opportunities. In this space, young people can attend training and information sessions, discover job opportunities, connect with mentors, and they are supported in using the active measures of the Agency for Employment to build their capacity and increase their employability. The structure is also run with the support of young people, creating a stream of volunteers that ensures its sustainability.

From an organisational point of view, the community foundation has walked the talk and brought young people into leadership positions, particularly board members, with the idea that the transfer of power is necessary to shape youth-based solutions.

Finally, the Local Community Development Foundation Stip has become a watchdog on how young people are involved at the local level throughout the country in response to the adoption of the Youth Participation law by the Macedonian government in 2021. The organisation is currently working on a report that surveys how the law is being implemented, focusing on social justice for youth and the needs of those living in rural areas. It will also outline the issues that need to be resolved by different actors at the local level to avoid the constant emigration of younger generations.

Young Nitra Philanthropy - Nitra Community Foundation

The Young Nitra Philanthropy programme, launched by Nitra Community Foundation in collaboration with the Municipality and with Unicef, aims to support young people aged 13-25, motivate them to do something for the community, and volunteer by supporting their creativity and evolving skills. The primary outreach

vehicles are schools and universities: the community foundation launches an open call for at least three young people to get together and think about something they could do to improve some aspects of the community. Those selected are accompanied by an adult and are offered formal and informal training on project management and how to prepare, implement, and evaluate their project during dedicated workshops. In 2023, the organisations supported 13 projects for a total contribution of €12,000.

The Urban Leadership Academy - Sibiu Community Foundation

Being present and active in the community for over ten years, the Sibiu Community Foundation identified, among others, two concurrent challenges: on the one hand, the lack of a diverse and qualified leadership, with different competences and skills that would benefit the city. On the other hand, Sibiu increasingly faced the exodus of young people with great potential, who however, often describe the community and the wider environment there as disinterested and unfriendly to them and their needs. To address these issues, the community foundation created the Urban Leadership Academy to attract young people from different backgrounds, and interests, empower them and co-create the enabling conditions and opportunities for them to stay. The programme's core is nurturing new urban leaders by providing them with relevant skills, increasing their empathy, building community organising approaches, and fostering an intersectoral and systemic understanding of the community. The cohort comprises 15 participants aged between 21 and 32 who go through a development journey, a cultural and practical learning experience over five intense weekends, accompanied by several mentors who are experts in their respective fields. Started in 2022, the Sibiu Community foundation's ambition is to create the next generation of young changemakers, able together to create change from the bottom up and foster a community approach throughout all of Sibiu.

Lively Făgăraș - Țara Făgărașului Community Foundation

Like many other small and medium-sized cities in Romania and Eastern Europe, Făgăraș, a small city in southern Transylvania, has lost over 30% of its residents between 1992 and 2011. As a result of these socio-economic changes, an oversized built environment remained, with underutilised or abandoned spaces that no

longer meet the community's needs. Demographic and economic decline has left behind civic apathy and demoralisation. People have lost hope in the city's potential to rebuild, and young people prefer a future in better developed cities. For all the above-mentioned reasons, [Țara Făgărașului Community Foundation](#) partnered with Make Better Association and Open Transformation from Norway to provide young people the opportunity to shape and give new life to the abandoned spaces throughout the city.

The Lively Făgăraș programme, involving the civic appropriation of derelict spaces, ran from March 2021 to September 2022 and consisted of four phases:

1. **Discovery**: to understand what buildings and spaces were abandoned or underused and which ones could be given new life. The techniques leveraged ranged from participatory mapping tools, mental maps, and urban exploration in groups to walk-along conversations with residents, urban education, questionnaires, interviews, and consultative meetings;

2. **Ideation**: to seek how this space could be transformed and for what purpose;

3. **Activation**: to test the ideas on the ground;

4. **Co-governance**: to assess how key stakeholders (owners, users, administrators) could get organised and take responsibility at their end to ensure a long life for the ideas set in place.

A Toolkit for
Civic appropriation
of derelict spaces
in shrinking towns

Every partner brought different assets and competencies to the table. Fagaras Community Foundation was able to leverage the social capital and mobilise young people throughout the community to join the programme. During the Activation phase, it could also call on and convene other actors to co-create solutions for chosen spaces. The overall process also gave life to a Guide that tells the story and lessons of this project in the hope that it will be helpful to other organisations interested in involving citizens, especially young people, in reshaping the use of abandoned space to fit new community purposes.

[Link to the publication](#)

Elderly

Active+ - Żywiec Development Foundation

The [Żywiec Development Foundation](#) works in the wider Żywiec region in Poland. Among the people in the community it serves, it focused on older people with the programme 'Active+'. In particular, it created a senior bulletin called [Bez limitu! (No limit!),](#) that brings out the voices of seniors (over 60) from the region on different topics, such as their environment, what they care about, and their peers. It is a monthly publication distributed in paper and online and sent to regional municipalities. The editorial committee is open to anyone in the target group who wants to make available their ability as a writer, narrator, or photographer who wants to bring meaningful conversations and topics to the community. Several other activities are run within the Active+ programme: for instance, a community call for projects for seniors able to implement and enhance collaboration among organisations and groups at the local level. Another example is the video and podcast series highlighting the stories and experiences of older people, their passions, friendships, and their daily lives told through their own words.

Older Persons Fund - The Community Foundation Ireland

The [Community Foundation Ireland](#) has supported the rights of older people since its very beginning. Following the European trend, it is estimated that by 2041, people over 65 will account for 22% of the population in Ireland, compared to 11% today. To empower older people to speak up for what they want and need and to champion their participation as active citizens in their communities, the community foundation set up a dedicated long-term philanthropic fund called The Older Persons' Fund, with an initial investment of €3m. Among other projects, over €250,000 has been awarded to CRAOL, a community radio forum. The funding was used to train several older people as broadcasters and empower them to represent themselves on the airwaves, giving a voice to those who are usually the silent ones.

The Neighbourhood Academy Platform - Pécs Community Foundation

To bring people and organisations together and inform each other about what they are doing and what they imagine for the community in the future, Pécs Community Foundation created the Neighbourhood Academy. This is a regular in-person meeting where participants could share good practices and initiatives and provide new information and perspectives on the organisation's strategy and plans. In the past two years, this platform has been focused on a particular target: older people. At the centre of the conversation is what it means to be an older adult in Pécs and what could be done to fight isolation and foster intergenerational relationships. The underlying principle for the organisation has been to shift the perspective, seeing older generations as an asset and not a burden to the community to be discarded. The conversations continued building up, and new actors joined along the way. Among the proposals that emerged during this series of discussions was the possibility of organising a dedicated centre for the elderly in Pécs.

Homeless

Community Solutions to Housing and Homelessness - The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Moving from a tokenistic approach towards a participatory and empowering one, where the communities most affected are in the driving seats of finding solutions and the right enabling conditions are created for this to happen, is critical for meaningful participation. The [Community Foundation Northern Ireland](#) has done this with its Community Solutions to Housing and Homelessness programme. Instead of guessing homeless people's needs, it researched the root causes and possible co-designed solutions. This programme is funded by the [Oak Foundation](#).

- Among the expected outcomes of this process:

- New collaborations emerge amongst organisations working on housing issues and homelessness;

- New solutions to specific challenges within housing and homelessness are developed and tested, placing the insights and voices of people with lived experience at the centre;

- New opportunities to influence decision-making and public services relating to housing and homelessness;

- Enhanced knowledge and skills in creative problem-solving for participating individuals and organisations.

How did this process work? The programme management and priorities

- **Setting up a steering group.** A programme steering group comprising those working in the housing and homelessness sector, a programme participative evaluator the funding organisations and individuals with lived experience was established to oversee and steer the direction of the programme;

- **Challenges identification.** Through community surveys, online workshops, and research based on insights from those with lived experience, the community foundation has identified 13 main challenges that need to be adequately addressed by existing services, policies, or legislation in Northern Ireland. In a nutshell, those challenges are: rented housing; mental health and complex needs; stigma and respect; hostels and temporary emergency accommodation; violence against women and girls; female homelessness; services and support for male and other victims of domestic violence; relationship breakdown; homelessness affecting asylum seekers

and refugees, LGBTQ+ people and young people; early intervention support; and agencies and organisations not collaborating enough[43];

- **Finding and supporting innovative new projects, founded on lived experience.**

  The programme provided a range of resources to support the testing and development of new solutions by offering a Seed Fund investment of up to €28,744 to groups and organisations who had new ideas for changes in how the issue was addressed;

- **Collaborative team creation to address such challenges.** The community foundation encourages collaboration among different actors. Even though there was no mandatory size for the group, approximately 5-6 people per team came together;

- **Problem-solving.** Pre-grant support was available to those who participated in the Foundation's Innovation programme, facilitated by programme partner Work West. This facilitated process was implemented to support the teams to foster creative new approaches to the challenges and develop concrete ideas and solutions. Throughout this phase, people with lived experience were a critical active part, a sounding board, and an engaged actor[44];

- **Seed fund - from an idea to reality.** Now, the cohort of co-created projects could pitch for a seed fund to test, develop, and deliver ideas that would solve the root causes of homelessness in the country. In the first and second year of the programme, all ideas for innovation were presented as a pitch to a panel of experts by experience; those comprising the steering group members, funders, those working in the sector and those with lived experience of the issue. In July 2023, eight groups pitched their ideas to a packed auditorium comprising groups working on housing issues, those with lived experience, and others who voted to allocate up to €28,745 per group in a Participatory Budgeting process. Those who were unsuccessful in the overall vote received €5,749 to develop their ideas further. In total, €183,974 was allocated.

To date, the programme has supported 15 projects[45] with an investment of €307,018.

"An essential element to this programme is that those at the coal face, with direct experience of the myriad of issues facing our housing sector are centrally involved and have a key part to play in deciding what projects, in their view, can receive

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[43] To deep dive into the full list of the challenges and their detailed description please visit the dedicated page on the community foundation website

[44] Not all teams participated in the pre-grant support; in year one of the programme Seed Fund was allocated by a direct grants call. The purpose of this was to identify ideas that were already in the community or were in the early stage of implementation.

[45] Among the projects funded: The Right Key, The Hummingbird Project, Quaker Project, Starling Collective, MAN NI, Kith & Kin, Safe project, Horn of Africa NI (HAPANI), Causeway Rural and Urban Network, Housing Rights, Women's Aid, DePaul NI, Mindwise and Shelter NI.

support. [...] *The voting on each project is based on participatory budgeting principles – essentially people directly deciding how to allocate this funding through a process of democratic decision making. [...]In essence what we will see is those who have direct knowledge and insight into the issues of housing and homelessness have a direct say in how they think these issues* can be addressed." states Gemma McCaughley, Innovation & Voice Programme Officer at the Community Foundation Northern Ireland[46].

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[46] [£160,000 delivered for Housing and Homelessness projects](link), The Community Foundation Northern Ireland (July 2023)

THE COMMUNITY OF DONORS

Donors are an essential target audience of community foundations that they need to engage with meaningfully and over time. Even though, in many cases, only those who give financial contributions are considered in this realm, there is a true potential to expand the meaning to include the giving of time, and knowledge / experience (the so-called 4 Ts - Time, Treasure, Talent, and Testimony[47]).

Furthermore, in many cases, donors do not want just to give money but are also willing to be involved and participate in the community foundations' programmes and initiatives and can actively lead several processes. In Eastern Europe, for instance, where one of the main focuses is to build a culture of local philanthropy, the people from the community who are giving small sums in response to specific fundraising calls, for instance, can also be those who actively apply and shape the community also with their activities, time, competence and other assets.

Building trusted and meaningful relationships with donors is one of the community foundation's primary objectives to achieve its mission and ensure its long-term sustainability. Below are a few examples of everyday practices and stories that put the building of donor communities at their centre and their engagement in more meaningful and active ways.

Giving circles

In its broadest definition, a giving circle is a form of participatory philanthropy that entails people with shared interests gathering to donate their financial resources and, time and competencies, for instance, for a common cause and effort[48]. It is a form of horizontal philanthropy that achieves specific community-related missions by untapping the power and potential of the many rather than a few individual funders.

The type of relationship and engagement that can be built across the giving circle spectrum goes from the occasional one, in particular live crowdfunding events, to a more long-term continuous participation by the same group of people that decide, as a circle, where the resources should go.

In the first case, community foundations gather citizens to support projects and organisations directly while engaging them and taking a first step to expand the donors' community. The donations can be made on the spot, or people can also commit to support with a monthly sum. However, in this context, the community foundation is usually an intermediary in the process, bridging the donors and

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[47] A brief explanation is provided in the article A Broader Definition of Philanthropy by Women from the Aspen Leadership Group
[48] What is a giving circle? - Philanthropy Together

organisations. Unfortunately, the work and value added of the community foundation is often not fully appreciated or compensated for.

However, there are different examples across Europe of community foundations implementing giving circles which managed to include financial coverage of their efforts: for instance, in Germany, [Braunschweig Burgerstiftung](#) (Braunschweig Community Foundation) launched the first-ever German Giving Circle event in 2021, shaped according to the [The Funding Network](#) live crowdfunding model. On this occasion, they raised over €16,000 among 91 participants for creative and socially minded projects, including using community chicken coops to tackle isolation amongst the elderly and musical theatre to help refugees learn a new language and culture. In June 2022, the community foundation expanded its reach in collaboration with the local Lions Club by proposing a hybrid event that collected €25,000 in two hours for three different projects. In June 2023, it held the third edition with three new projects and introduced the rule that 7% of the funds would go to the community foundation to cover the administrative costs.

In Hungary, [Pécs Community Foundation](#) has organised Giving Circles throughout the years, going online during the pandemic. Following The Funding Network's model, the organisation every year selects three local initiatives that could receive the funds during the live auction, held both online and in person. However, the Pécs Community Foundation allows donating money online for those who cannot attend the event. In 2023, the 5th edition of the Giving Circle reached its highest peak in fundraising, with €8,423 awarded. The organisation keeps 8% of the sums donated to cover all administrative and logistics costs.

In Bulgaria, giving circles have been famous among community foundations because, given their horizontal and direct structure, they overcome the issue of low trust in the type of funds that non-profit organisations have received. As mentioned in the beginning, developing a culture of local philanthropy is the main goal for many community foundations across Eastern Europe since, for decades, they have been supported by international funds that have antagonised the community itself. Giving circles provide a straight connection to the projects funded, and therefore, they can attract more local donors. Furthermore, they are great fuel for local pride, and the creative and engaging formats developed make it easy and fun to participate. However, one of the main issues, especially in historically more conservative countries and communities, is not only to engage and support the "comfort" topic but also to address difficult conversations. In this context, [Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation](#), the Bulgarian community foundation support organisation, has played a crucial role in rebalancing the conversation. First, it set up some Giving Circles to bring the most marginalised groups under the spotlight. Secondly, the organisation tailored an ad hoc communication strategy and a series of information sessions for community foundations on integrating social justice issues and expanding the vision in their giving circles[49].

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[49] To know more about Giving Circles in Bulgaria, read ["Giving Circles: Unlocking Generosity by Bringing Donors Face-to-Face with Beneficiaries"](#) by Monika Pisankaneva from the Workshop of Civic Initiative Foundation

In Ukraine, the [Toloka Community Foundation](#) of Kharkiv, a city in the northeast of the country, near the Russian borders, has implemented a specific format called Toloka Talks. The name builds on the community's cultural heritage: Toloka was a form of mutual assistance among villagers in several regions, including Ukraine. Toloka Talks is a communication platform for philanthropists, founded in 2016 by a group of highly engaged citizens to fill the communication and investment gap between representatives of civil society's initiatives and potential donors. It is held in different formats (auctions, presentations of cultural projects, theatrical performances, etc.) to attract more interested participants. It focuses on catalysing resources for initiatives and as a driver of potential partnerships between businesses, individuals, civil society organisations, and the local government.

But how to move forward from a one-time engagement to retain a fruitful relationship with those who join the giving circles and build a tighter community of donors?

In the United Kingdom, for instance, [Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland](#) has worked in this direction. It has established a long lasting continuous engagement process that goes beyond the Giving Circle event by setting up the [Giving Network](#). Mainly aimed at young professionals, anyone can join and pool their giving, learn about vital community issues, and pick causes to support. To access the network, people are invited to invest at least £30 per month, which gets doubled by the community foundation in the first three years, up to a maximum of £1,000 per year. The organisation plays a key role in matching the community's actual needs with the resources available: priorities are set by the results of the latest Vital Signs report, and individuals can choose four out of nine organisations presented by the community foundation. The Giving Network members meet the four final charities in an in-person event held between May and June, where they learn more about their work through a presentation and the chance to chat with them directly. The donations that members have made into the fund during the year are available for them to allocate as they choose to one or more of the four charities at the giving event. The Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland has also implemented a support scheme for the overhead costs to run such a programme by allocating 10% of funds gathered to this end.

Another interesting form of long term engagement emerges from Slovakia, where the [Trenčín Community Foundation](#) has a Club of Donors, started in 2003 as an endowment fund of the Board of Directors at the time, that encompasses the people of Trenčín and those from the surrounding towns and villages. It meets once a year to decide together which initiatives to support. After 19 years, some of these projects have become a landmark and a reference point for the community.

If you are interested in Giving Circles, this publication from Global Fund for Community Foundations analyses and deep dive into different models across the world and the advantage of embarking in this process.

Exchange among donors - Foundation Scotland

Usually, organisations and individuals are required to share only the positive outcomes and results achieved without disclosing the mistakes made along the road. For grantees, this is often because financial resources provided by donors might depend on what has been attained. For funders, peer-to-peer pressure might kick in. But mistakes / failures are what make us grow and learn from one another. For this reason, Foundation Scotland gathered philanthropists to share and inform each other about the errors they have made in their activity as individuals and organisations and the learning they derived. The event was hosted in a peculiar and perfect place: the Library of Mistakes, a beautiful site in Edinburgh that collects the world's business and financial history failures. Attended by more than 60 friends, business associates, and supporters of the community foundation, the evening saw a series of panellists talking about their experiences and included a highly engaging Q&A session.

Donors' Agorà - Milano Community Foundation

The Fondazione Comunità Milano (Milan Community Foundation), serving citizens of Milan and 56 municipalities in the southern area of the city, established in 2019, has attracted a wide variety of donors, from firms to individuals. To engage more meaningfully with them and further align their vision with the community foundation, an online and in-person community of donors was established, the Agorà dei Donatori (literally Donors' Agorà). This space is open to all people who share the values and mission of the foundation and is meant to be a driver to experiment with new formats and forms of gatherings to create further

connections and trigger potential new collaborations. In 2022, the community foundation held the second in-person donors' assembly in the Bollate prison centre to present its activities, ideas, and projects and to give them the occasion to exchange among themselves. With this carefully crafted and curated space, the Fondazione Comunità Milano is investing in a long-lasting donors' journey that would hopefully strengthen its social capital and deepen the relationship with this critical part of its community.

Getting local business in the mix - stories from the Serbian context

Among the different donors within the community, local businesses can play a crucial role in supporting the community foundations' development and initiatives, especially in their starting phase. In Serbia, organisations have come up with creative ideas to engage in shops and activities. Niš Community Foundation has partnered up with one of the oldest local bakeries, founded in 1948, that wanted to give back to Niš. For every purchase made, 10% of the sales of a typical scone, the Žitopek, would go to the community foundation to restore two public sports fields for basketball and football. These are lively community spaces that gather hundreds of young people that were in danger given the unsafe state they were left in. The campaign succeeded: the first field was returned to the public in July 2023, with a big inauguration of a broader healthy lifestyle and sports awareness campaign. The second one, dedicated to football, became accessible and lively with a big event involving local young football schools and the wider community.

Pančevo Community Foundation has mobilised throughout the years to partner with local businesses, like pubs. With their partnership, they organise fundraising nights, where part of the income from the sales of beers and burgers goes to support the organisation's work. Furthermore, they are used as a stage for the community foundation to share their vision, activities, and results achieved with a wider, diverse audience. The community foundation has also collaborated with local hairdressers, which donates, on specific days, part of its earnings to the community foundation. Even though the sums are not high, the important thing is that the message is out there, and the community foundation ensures greater visibility among people out of its usual reach.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

Governments at all levels today are increasingly under pressure to adapt and provide answers to the ever-changing environment and the interconnected challenges of our time. Institutions are having a hard time staying ahead and governing given the global economic, social, political, ecological, and technological trends. Democratic participation models are in crisis, proving inadequate to present developments. Furthermore, political trust, one of the defining indicators of representative democracy, is continuously falling but community foundations around Europe indicate that there is more trust in local institutions compared to national ones.

Even though these attitudes can be considered a general trend, the situation differs from country to country in Europe. Therefore, the way community foundations relate to and work with public administrations differ. Local administrations are rarely involved in establishing and governing the community foundation. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland was established in 1975 with an initial government 'challenge grant' to be matched by private contributions. Another example is the Nitra Community Foundation, whose co-founder and first donor at the time was the City of Nitra itself, given the difficulty in 1990 to raise money by private funders on these topics. In Eastern countries, like Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Romania, for instance, community foundations make very clear that they are apolitical organisations: indeed, local communities heavily distrust the political system and, therefore, to be credible and trusted institutions, staying a distance from political dynamics and discourses is necessary. Finally, community foundations have a long-term perspective; they are born to stay for the long run, while political systems follow the electoral cycle logic and are increasingly short-sighted in addressing immediate needs and gaining consensus. This clash is another element that must be considered when weaving a relationship with public administrations.

However, it is indisputable that governments at all levels play a pivotal role in societal development, setting the enabling conditions, priorities and making available more funds, especially at the national level, than any philanthropist or donor could. Different practitioners interviewed agree that while keeping and communicating their independence, some kind of relationship and correct cooperation with local administration(s) is necessary to pursue the community's best interest. The spectrum of the interaction that community foundations can have with local administrations spans from simple coexistence, where the communication revolves around, for instance, requests for permits or complying with rules, where everyone involved does their separate work; to collaboration and co-creation, where local administration partners up with the community foundation in developing programmes along with the community and informs its strategy with what has emerged. National regulations can support this kind of collaborative dynamics: for instance, in Italy, in 2021, the Constitutional Court recognised the supremacy of the Third Sector Code's article 55, which states that

local administration must implement collaborative paradigms in the territory which can include non-profit organisations, and where appropriate, community foundations.

Finally, the last frontier to be discussed in this realm is the possibility for community foundations to lobby / advocate for change at local, regional, and national levels. Lobbying is a necessary and robust process in our democracies that can and must also be undertaken by citizens and non-profit organisations. It is about how to change the rules of the game, bring fresh ideas, data, and energy to policymakers, and influence policy that affects community life. It is a long-lasting solution for community foundations to respond to needs and change the system. In this context, again, community foundations can play a dual role: lead first-hand a lobbying / advocacy initiative or create the enabling conditions for other organisations and individuals in the community to move forward with this kind of activity.

The Good Lobby is a European organisation with national branches that aims at democratising lobbying, and supports and works with citizens and non-profit organisations to equip them to lobby for the issues they work on. It has developed a ten-step strategy helpful for anyone who would like to take up this journey:
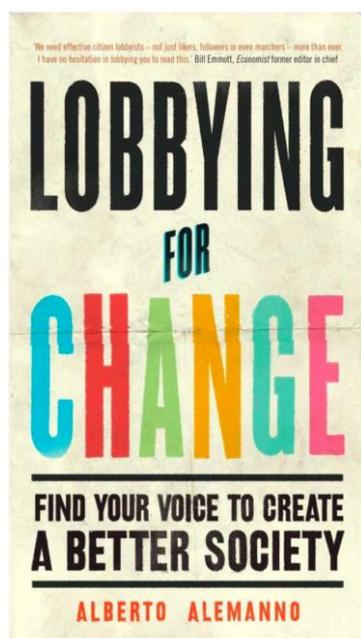
1. Pick your battle: the list of possible focuses and issues is endless. It is critical to narrow down the field and return with one priority;

2. Do your homework. Research, data, and quantitative and qualitative evidence are essential to support your position;

3. Map the interests and your lobby environment, including the possible allies and opponents you could find in your journey;

4. Define your strategy;

5. Choose your allies and build a coalition with an open mind, which would be able to attract more organisations and individuals oriented to your mission;

6. Catalyse resources to support your efforts;

7. Plan your communication strategy according to the different targets you need to reach policymakers, media, and the wider public;

8. Have face-to-face meetings with key policymakers;

9. Monitor developments and delivery of what you asked for;

10. Know and stick to the rules.[50]

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[50] A brief explanation of these points can be found in the paper "The 10-step lobbying guide, in Lobbying for Change: Find Your Voice to Create a Better Society; Alberto Alemanno London:

[Lobbying for change](#), Alberto Alemanno. It is available also in Italian ([The Good Lobby - Partecipazione civica per influenzare la politica dal basso](#)) and in Spanish ([The good lobby: El cambio social a tu alcance](#), 2023)

Serà Horta Sud 2030 - Fundació Horta Sud

The [Serà Horta Sud 2030](#) project arises from the collaboration between the [Horta Sud Community Foundation](#), the associative and business fabric of the region, the Horta Sud Community, and the regional government (local and regional public institutions). It aims to raise awareness, debate, and propose measures and actions aligned with the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for the structuring and improvement of the region and the quality of life of its people. An exciting aspect of this project is that the local administration asked the Fundació Horta Sud to lead this process, moved by the deep awareness of the organisation's added value, its catalysing capacity, and its ability to engage and activate the actors within the community deeply.

Kicked off in 2021, it was the natural evolution of a previous community pact called #PacteHortaSud, which, amid the pandemic, aimed for the region's reconstruction through the joint action of the various actors of the Horta Sud.

Serà Horta Sud 2030 is a permanent space for exchange, open to anyone willing to bring long-term social change in the community and foster and build a shared vision. It is based on four action pillars:

- Investigating: Detecting the fundamental needs for the structuring and improvement of the region and the quality of life of its people based on objective indicators;

- Dialogue: Foster constant dialogue between public, private, and the third sector and civil society;

- Debate: As a vital part of our democratic lives, debates in cross sectoral and inclusive dialogue tables, with experts from all branches, to analyse and search for improvement actions;

- Proposals: The proposal of specific actions and monitoring compliance with the recommendations and progress in these matters.

The thematic priorities identified through a participatory approach that involved communities in different municipalities are:

- Sustainable mobility;

- Fairtrade and ecological food products as a tool for social transformation;

Iconbooks, 2017. A more detailed and illustrative one, with several supporting examples, can be found in the book.

- Sustainable and local industries and economic development;

- Energy transition;

- Foster a culture of transparency, co-governance and citizen participation.

What has been achieved so far in these dimensions? Almost two years after the project's launch in terms of sustainable mobility, for instance, public transport fees have been unified, and progress has been made in articulating the region through connected cycle paths. Concerning energy transition, concrete steps have been taken to move towards self-consumption, favouring installing solar panels through subsidy schemes in many municipalities. In addition, this alliance has been recognised by the European Union through the European Climate Pact.

Not only that, but at the core of this project, there is the need to promote and implement new processes that would enable active citizen participation and community engagement, especially from the associative and non-profit sectors. According to its Serà Participació Serà Horta Sud (that means Participation in Horta Sud) report, for the first time, the different levels of the administration have come together to discuss specific proposals with people and associations from the community. Indeed, after a series of exchange roundtables throughout the year and an impact analysis on the value of association and civic participation in the territory, carried out by the permanent observatory, a series of concrete proposals for the different entities within the public administrations arose, such as to dedicate 3% of the municipal budget to strengthen the action of associations that work in public services; promote social public procurement measures; implement and support policies for associations e.g. training for board of directors; public support campaigns; days of joint work and ensure fairer and more open access to public administration.

Advocacy campaign for social housing and residential land - Stara Zagora Foundation

The housing crisis is one of the starkest issues across many European countries. In Bulgaria, owning or renting a house is incredibly difficult, especially for marginalised communities like Roma. The national Government set out the National Housing Strategy in 2004, which would serve as the basis for action at the regional and local level. However, it has yet to be adequately implemented, and not much has been done to solve the obstacles recognised. Being aware of this significant issue, the Community Donors Fund Stara Zagora Foundation launched the initiative "Advocacy campaign for social housing and residential land in the municipalities of Stara Zagora, Plovdiv and Maritsa" supported by the Active Citizens Fund. This aims to reform local policies for the construction of social housing and the provision of residential land for individuals and families in

extreme need and marginalised communities in three municipalities, Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, and Maritsa. To achieve this, the community foundation prepared [a detailed report](), that would encompass the evidence of a lengthy investigative participatory journey focused on three dimensions:

- Request official information on the three municipalities on different social housing aspects in 2020 (e.g., number of municipal housings, occupied council dwellings, public houses inhabitable, number of granted applications, and those put on hold). This step gave the foundation a clearer picture of the current situation. It highlighted that while the Plovdiv municipality submitted a proposal to advance this work, the other two lagged behind. Furthermore, all three towns lacked an adequate policy to facilitate access to housing for Roma people.

- "A Decent Home for Everyone"' presented results from interviews to research the condition of the homes where Bulgarian citizens, representing different groups, live, raise, and educate their children. The total number of respondents was 152 people split among the three municipalities with an almost equal distribution in terms of gender. Even though the sample size is not representative, the evidence emerged, among which overcrowded spaces, with people having on average about 7 sq. m and several generations staying in the same palace, and poor living conditions, supported the need to change the policy in place and expand the reach and availability of social housing;

- Good international practices are referrenced, offering an overview of other countries' policy solutions, like the United Kingdom and The Netherlands, that could be adapted to the Bulgarian context.

This study, completed and published in 2021, has been presented publicly in the three municipalities and served as a basis for initiating six local initiatives (two per municipality) with concrete proposals to submit to the local administration to find shared solutions to this pressing issue.

The power of the many - Community foundations in the South of Italy promote a national petition

At the beginning of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the social situation and economy were plummeting, the seven community foundations of Southern Italy promoted a public petition, signed by over 4,000 people, addressed to the Minister of the South and Social Cohesion at the time, Giuseppe Provenzano. Its objective? Support the proposal of Carlo Borgomeo, President of the Fondazione CON IL SUD - the point of reference in the philanthropic sector for the Southern part of the country - to invest and make available a high amount of financial resources by granting non-repayable funds addressed to organisations in the South with consolidated experience and roots in the territories, such as community foundations. To further support this effort and enhance its national credibility, Assifero - the national support organisation for community foundations - signed the petition and pushed it forward to increase its visibility.

Being an incubator for advocacy initiatives - Local Community Development Foundation Stip

The Local Community Development Foundation Stip has decided to position itself as an enabler and supporter for local organisations, citizens, and movements to move forward and take action in their own hands regarding advocacy. In North Macedonia, the citizen participation process presents specific weaknesses. Even though there are several ways to engage: the number of accepted recommendations by citizens is insignificant, civil society organisations do not have the right competencies and capacities to pursue advocacy programmes, and they do not have the resources to scale up their actions. The Strengthening Local Democracy initiative aims to address these needs. The community foundations structured the programme based on two main stages:

- First, it organises training sessions for a more comprehensive number of participants, from individual citizens and formal and informal groups to more structured organisations. It gives an overview of the tools available to shape and move forward with their initiatives and also a deep dive into how to monitor the work of local government on specific issues.

- Secondly, it opens a call for support where some emerging advocacy initiatives were experimented with during the training phase. Local Community Development Foundation Stip supports them daily, being available to consult throughout the overall process and its implementation. The approach is learning by doing: the selected participants go back and forth with their idea and strategy that is challenged, tested, and adjusted upon exchange with the community foundation. The organisation also supports providing analysis and data gathering from the national context and other partners that could further advance and make the advocacy campaigns presented more solid.

The evidence from this project is being gathered by the Local Community Development Foundation Stip to inform a Citizen's' Participation and Policymaking 2023 publication, which will be released by the end of the year.

A platform for shaping a new vision for the city - The Temple Misto Platform in Ukraine

The Temple Misto (literally translated Warm City) platform's mission is to drive the creation of opportunities and social transformations, starting from Ivano-Frankivsk city in the Western part of Ukraine and encouraging change even further in the community it serves. Among its strategic priorities is strengthening competence and capacity and the fruitful activation and engagement of residents. The "Development Strategy for Ivano-Frankivsk" goes precisely in this direction: a community involvement and participation process that would bring possible answers to a straightforward question: "How is the city and how do we want it to be in the future?" This approach is particularly important after the start of the full invasion, when all the previously developed strategies stopped being applicable. And everyone who cares about the community should be enabled to contribute and shape it.

Usually, these strategic processes are the municipality's prerogative. However, the community foundation did not want it to be something created behind closed doors. It was willing to make it a community engagement process encompassing the longstanding residents, newcomers, and people relocated from occupied and destroyed regions. The Development Strategy for Ivano Frankivsk was therefore

co-initiated with the City Council, the foundation, and four other entities. At its core is a set of formal and informal events throughout the year focused on different topics that would enrich the insights, the narrative, and the possibilities for the city's future and continuously involve other people. Every conversation and input would be recorded and made available to the community digitally.

In 2022, with Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the programme had to stop, and the format had to be reconsidered and reshaped. However, the situation confirmed some critical assumptions: Ivano-Frankivsk could build a strategic vision of the city's future around four hinges. These were: entrepreneurship, not only local businesses but also relocated ones; social capital; education investment; and different types of infrastructures.

In 2023, the process was set in motion again, and the community foundation could hold 20 different in-person events focusing on the role of Ivano-Frankivsk in the war and the future of the city, gender equality, and a deep dive into why people live or have moved to the town. Approximately 1,500 people joined the initiative, which achieved more than 80 mentions in the local media. At the end of this highly participatory inclusive process, the community foundation would bring all the harvested insights into a publication involving people in its drafting and final release. The Temple Misto platform's distinctive role and added value is its convening power, the ability to draw people and organisations, and create enabling conditions for individuals with different backgrounds, ideas, and stories to be active parts of reshaping the city.

Shaping citizens' initiative through participatory budget - Nitra Community Foundation

Mením Moje Mesto (literally "I am Changing My City") supports citizens' initiatives and innovative projects to shape their community and the city of Nitra and proactively improve their and other people's quality of life. Participants can address and come up with ideas for specific areas of concern, such as public spaces; including, for instance, IT applications for public spaces; environmental protection (including ecological education and IT applications for environmental protection); and to strengthen community life in the city.

Once they develop a project, they can submit it, and whether it would be implemented is up to public voting to ensure that the community has its say in the process. If the idea is approved, it is time to roll up their sleeves and work together, supported by financial resources, to implement it.

One of the exciting aspects is that Nitra Community Foundation administers and leads the initiative in collaboration with the Municipality, which provides funds through the city participatory budget. In 2020, the amount disbursed was €40,000 with limits of €4,000 per project. This is both an opportunity and a challenge:

streaming public funds through the community foundation to empower and give citizens agency has proven effective and impactful. People were deeply involved throughout the process. They took to heart the fulfilment of the projects. However, public funds are not a reliable source of income, especially at the local level, since they depend on different factors, such as political willingness, shifting priorities, tax collection, etc. Indeed, even though Mením Moje Mesto started to prove successful and received a more considerable consensus among the population, the city of Nitra stopped the funding due to a substantial decrease in the resources by the National Government directed to Municipalities due to the Covid crisis and the war in Ukraine. Nitra Community Foundation, however, is working tirelessly to get the programme back and has opened intense conversations to provide this opportunity and space to its community.

THE ROLE OF SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Making the case and communicating the added value of philanthropy infrastructure organisations, like community foundation support organisations (CFSOs), can be challenging. To address this fundamental challenge infrastructure practitioners convened in a co-creative process during 2017 to develop what became the 4Cs framework. This helpful tool, originally intended for making sense of impact and evaluation, is more often used by networks in planning based on four dimensions: Capacity, Connections, Capability and Credibility. Recently, Inspire has since proposed a further C that reflects the potential and work of community foundations and support organisations: Catalyst. The following paragraphs will explore and analyse the contribution and role of European CFSOs in fostering the ability of community foundations to pursue community engagement and participation based on the five Cs above.

Capability - building skills, knowledge, and expertise

The vision and competence required to view the community not just as a mere recipient but in the driving seats of the decision-making process at different levels are only inherent to some community foundations or those aspiring to build one. There are long-established community foundations, like in the United Kingdom and Northern Italy, born first as philanthropic intermediaries, facilitating connections between donors' interests and community needs and local organisations and working towards matching them accordingly. In many national contexts, like Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary, Spain, and Austria, the field is relatively young, and there are a lot of formal and informal groups taking their first steps toward setting up a community foundation. Therefore, here, the need to reach out to the community and put in place mechanisms of representation and interaction for everyone is not always straightforward.

In this context, community foundations' support organisations are essential in helping the organisations build the necessary competencies and establish the required process to pursue this kind of vision and objectives. For instance, AEF in Spain and Trag Fondacija in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have an annual open call for those interested in establishing a community foundation in their territory. The ones that get accepted undertake professional development programmes tailored to the country and, in many cases, also accompanied by resources and matching fund mechanisms that, since the very beginning, ensure that they pay attention to and involve the community itself and not just their immediate circle of acquaintances.

Trag Foundation, for instance, set up in 2019 with the support of the Mott Foundation, the "Our local foundation – the community has a say!" programme to build the community foundation movement in the Western Balkans region. It was a formal effort of the organisation's long-standing commitment to building and supporting local philanthropy initiatives. To do so, it looks for informal groups of

at least three people in the same community and then helps them with mentorship and capacity building.

AEF (Asociacion Espanola de Fundaciones) has a specific programme in place called Programa de Apoyo a la Creaciòn de fundaciones comunitarias that identifies all the required conditions, steps and strategy to build and strengthen the community foundation, providing valuable tips, checklists, and examples. To further support the field and spread information and knowledge on this development path, the organisation has also created an online accessible guide: Guìa para la creaciòn y fortalecimiento de una fundaciòn comunitaria.

Roots and Wings Foundation is an incubator for those wanting to establish a community foundation in Hungary, selected through an open call. They provide financial and professional support from the beginning of the process, deploying local facilitators to drive the process, asking participants to assess the local situation, validate the need for a community foundation, and build consensus. Tailor-made support is available until the organisation becomes strong, typically between five to eight years.

Building on the above-mentioned experiences, the Austrian Association of Foundations, the national network of 120 philanthropic organisations, launched a similar programme called Verband fur gemeinnütziges Stiften, in its country. The incubator program, kickstarted in 2022, speaks to individuals or organisations active in their communities, who want to build a sustainable shared future. The pilot entails five phases:

- Registration for interests;
- Creating a group willing to commit;
- Attending a series of professionalising and informative webinars on different topics;
- Presenting the concept note for the community foundation;
- Creating it.

Given the absence of community foundations in Austria, the association is taking it upon itself to raise awareness of the concept and promote the programme among different audiences.

In Ukraine, Ednannia implements the School for Community Foundations Programme, aiming to support the development of community foundations. The programme consists of three main components: education and competence building, information, and connections creation.

Even though this kind of commitment towards integrating community participation and engagement as an organisational principle is central to the early stages of a community foundation, support organisations are well aware that in a dynamic environment and with turnover of staff, volunteers and board members,

a life-long learning approach is required. All kinds of different support and learning opportunities are offered also to well-established community foundations. This can contribute to enhancing practice and help in considering and addressing new topics.

In Italy, for instance, Assifero has collaborated in the past couple of years with The Good Lobby Italia (the Italian branch of the European organisation) on the topic of the civic lobby and the role that community foundations could play both as enablers and as leaders for community advocacy and lobbying actions. Similar training sessions were also held in Ukraine: the National Network of Local Philanthropy Development organised a two day workshop focused on advocacy campaigns for community foundations. It consisted of a series of panels and workshops, both online and in person, during which organisations were invited to think about and start developing their lobby strategy on specific topics and to understand the precise role they could take. In addition, Assifero has also focused for the past 18 months on community organising, providing inputs and knowledge on how to integrate such an approach within the organisation. In the Netherlands, LSA Bewoners provide specific training, not only to community foundations, on the topic of residents' involvement and activation of the Asset Based Community Development model, and it facilitates the exchange of knowledge.

Finally, in many cases, community foundations' support organisations can be knowledge holders for individual organisations they help. The issue for many community foundations is their sustainability in terms of human capital: many people in the organisations are volunteers that dedicate their time and passion. For many reasons, they cannot commit at a certain point anymore, and succession plans and mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge and competencies still need to be implemented. In this context, support organisations can be pivotal in supporting this delicate transition phase, sharing information and accumulated learnings from the field and the organisation.

Capacity - building resources and changing the culture of giving

Community foundations' support organisations are increasingly drivers for bringing financial and non-financial resources to the field. As mentioned before, in the incubating process for new community foundations and initiatives, these organisations make money available to support them for example with matching grants based on the ability to catalyse resources at the local level. In Italy, for instance, some of the biggest foundations of banking origin that historically have been contributing to the development of the field have different support financial mechanisms in place. Fondazione Cariplo, based in Lombardy, for instance, created an ad hoc fund available for resources that will flow into the community foundation endowment and, at the same time, make money available to the individual organisation that can grant and deliver them in the territory. Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, based in Piedmont, Valle D'Aosta and Liguria, concentrates its efforts on supporting fundraising activities and providing resources to community foundations to enable them to build community

participation mechanisms. Fondazione CON IL SUD, which operates in the Southern area of the country, after a thorough selection process, accompanies those interested in building a community foundation in the initial phase of their life and reserves money for their endowment and their activities.

Community foundations' support organisations can also attract funds for shared initiatives. The Romanian Federation for Community foundation, for instance, is the leading reference organisation for different national stakeholders that want to invest in the territory, which includes the private sector. One example is the Fund for a better Future in the Communities, supported by Lidl with the Federation, which is implemented by five community foundations with tailored solutions to the territories and which focuses on finding solutions driven by the community for the community on education and environmental issues.

Connections - building relationships

The ability of community foundation support organisations to convene community foundations as peers to exchange knowledge and experience is one of the key added values recognised by their members and beyond. The opportunity to learn from one another, at the national and international level, in a field so diverse and in the making is priceless and accelerates the learning process for individuals and organisations. They also create spaces for new ideas and possible collaborations among practitioners to come to life.

Given their position, community foundation support organisations can also connect community foundations with other relevant stakeholders at the national level, within and beyond the philanthropic sector. They can make connections with other public and philanthropic institutions, such as family and corporate foundations, that want to invest in a particular territory and can connect them with community foundations as potential partners. Finally, they can connect with other relevant stakeholders at national and international levels around issues of shared interest e.g. SDGs, emergency responses, participatory processes, helping share experience and raise the profile of the community foundation field.

Credibility- building reputation, recognition, and influence

Community foundation support organisations are the prominent advocates for the field. Since they communicate and have relationships with various actors, they can be a voice for the work and impact of community foundations, individually and as a movement. In doing so, one of their challenges is to decide how to articulate to diverse stakeholders the value added in a field that is characterised by its diversity. Only a few community foundation support organisations focus solely on community foundations - most have a wider constituency / membership. On the one hand, this fact can add value in connecting different entities, amplifying the voice, and building unusual alliances for community foundations; on the other, it can dilute its interest in and potential impact in advocating specifically for the community foundation field given the wider interests.

Leveraging on their credibility, community foundation support organisations can be a powerful ally for individual community foundations, legitimising their actions and initiatives even more and scaling up their work and impact. As mentioned in the example, Assifero, for instance, signed the national petition of community foundations from the south of Italy to boost their effort by leveraging on its established recognition and reputation.

Ednannia, one of two Ukrainian community foundation support organisations, makes one of its strategic pillars to advocate for the community foundation sector and broader civil society. When in dialogue with potential and established donors, one of the top priorities is always to reinforce the credibility of the sector and the added value of these organisations for the territory. It also works to build and strengthen a more favourable enabling environment for community foundations. In parallel, the National Network for Local Philanthropy Development in Ukraine is itself advocating for the sector, with aligned objectives and interests and a clear communication strategy for branding the community foundations at the national level. Among the major initiatives is the Open Letter "If not now, when?" to achieve 25% of international funds to be directed and managed by local organisations and also used to strengthen them. Indeed, amidst the Russian invasion, even though on-the-ground organisations, such as community foundations, are addressing the needs, responding to the humanitarian crisis, and finding solutions for its short and long-term impact, only 1% of UN funds went directly to local actors.

Catalyst - being a change agent

The catalytic role that philanthropy support organisations, such as CFSOs, can play is related to their ability and potential to foster change not only in the community foundation field, but in the overall philanthropy and local development ecosystem. This can thus accelerate and amplify the local level work of community foundations and efforts to address the root causes of issues and challenges in a systemic way.

As mentioned before, being at the intersection of different constituencies, first and foremost the membership / community they serve but also their allies, and functions, CFSOs can lead by example, foster conversations with donors, partners, and their members, and they can help capitalise resources – financial, knowledge, relationships, legitimacy – and influence the paradigms on how these resources flow. Being a catalyst means implementing flexible and agile philanthropic infrastructure and processes that support and facilitate the rise of new possibilities, paths, and players. It entails giving life to decentralised broad networks, where the capacity for fostering and enacting change is distributed across nodes[51].

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[51] Stef A. and Porumb A. (02/2023). "The quiet might of infrastructure: How philanthropy support organisations can catalyse transformation", Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association

But how can CFSOs concretely implement their role as catalysts in relation to community engagement and participation? Here is an initial list of possible approaches:

- Sensing the emergent needs of the system, firstly, the community foundations' one: Create a safe space for meaningful intersectional conversations and provide a more rounded, nuanced systemic approach to the issue. Develop intentional moments and opportunities to bring practitioners from the field and beyond to co-imagine new possibilities and alternatives on how community foundations foster engagement and participation. Make sure that these spaces are well funded and accessible.

- Observing and building knowledge from practice: CFSOs know the field like nobody else and are in a privileged position to make the work done by community foundations at the edges emerge. They can collect knowledge from the field, mostly from practices, see patterns and draw and sum up shared principles. They can build participatory toolkits and collections of practical examples for the field and other philanthropic actors, public institutions, researchers, etc (if strategically communicated).

- Building a community of practice around participation and engagement based on their constituency's needs, pace, and rhythms that can identify synergies and underpin the other four Cs.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Make clear to different stakeholders, especially donors, the multifaceted work of community foundations

One of the significant challenges across the field is to comprehensively communicate and make the case to different stakeholders, particularly potential and established donors, for the role and added value of community foundations. Compared to the work that thematic organisations, groups, and movements do (for instance, on climate, gender, education, etc.), the holistic approach that community foundations pursue to tackle issues comprehensively at the local level (and where possible systemically) is hard for individuals, funders, local government and other stakeholders to fully comprehend and value. Even local NGOs sometimes think of them as potential competitors rather than allies. That is true in different ways for community foundations across the continent: those in Eastern Europe, e.g. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Ukraine, and Romania, have a specific mission to build a culture of local philanthropy able to foster active participation and engagement among the community and rebuild the social fabric. Especially those in the early stages that need to build their credibility find themselves investing a lot of time, effort, and energy to convince people about the organisation's vision and mission and how they can engage with it. In these cases, the quality of the social capital of the founding members is crucial, as well as the matching grant mechanisms offered by several CFSOs that support community foundation initiation and in the early stages of development. In other countries, e.g. the United Kingdom and in northern Italy, it can be difficult to get beyond the rooted idea that community foundations are mere philanthropic intermediaries, acting on donor intent. This is a challenge for several organisations that, after many years running, are reshaping their strategy and position in the whole community ecosystem to serve a new, transformed purpose. However, there are different interesting positive examples:

- the work that Community Foundation Ireland is doing throughout the overall donors' journey, which led them to go from €8m in grants in 2019 to €25m in 2023;

- the new Community Foundation for Northern Ireland Grantmaking Strategy Commitment, states "we will encourage donors to provide funding that is as unrestricted as possible in terms of the costs the funding can pay for, and we will actively seek for longer term funding for the sector with both new and existing partners"[52];

- the work of Forever Manchester, which in the early 2000s moved beyond its intermediary role and actively took part in building and empowering the community through the ABCD model and its Community Builders team.

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[52] The Grantmaking Strategy 2023-2026 of Northern Ireland Community Foundations (page 6)

In this varied context, the community foundation must find suitable and more diverse donors and partners, that is, philanthropic organisations and individuals, to support them in this process and bring others on board.

Community foundation support organisations, leveraging on their credibility and position, can play a key role in advocating for the community foundation movement, highlighting their multifaceted knowledge-based added value.

Recommendation: CFSOs could prepare shared communications materials, factsheets, data visualisations, and other information to community foundations that they can adapt and make relevant to their local context to equip them to talk to different stakeholders.

Community participation and engagement is a process requiring continual investment of time and resources rather than a one-time project

Fostering and enabling community participation and engagement is not a goal easily measurable, or that can be constrained into a project-based mindset. These underlying permanent approaches to the community foundations' work permeate the organisations' vision, mission, strategy, and programmes at different levels and depths. Building social capital requires continued investment of time and financial resources or it naturally dissipates. Putting these kinds of efforts in place also needs competence and constant evaluation and adaptation according to the community's needs. It is a time-consuming, long-term "invisible work" that aims at social and cultural changes in the locality and, therefore, only starts to give its results after several years. However, most funding is project based, linking success to a pre-set of indicators and outputs with a short-term vision, and often it does not include support for organisational costs. This obstacle for community foundations impedes them from investing in processes and bringing forward community engagement practices. One possible entry point to build further evidence of the potential of these underlying approaches and start "educating" funders about it would be to include them in a specific area of work of the organisation (such as climate, education) or programmes. In this way, the efficacy of these processes could be proven in a confined space and then scaled up.

Recommendation: CFSOs are well positioned to drive additional resources to the field that would cover engagement and participation work (possibly, for instance, EU and UN funds focused on citizens' participation and democracy) and to reach out and advocate on behalf of the sector with other significant funders in the ecosystem.

Recommendation: If you need to make the case to reimagine project-based giving at the local level, check out The Funding for Real Change initiative, which brings stories and evidence from the global philanthropic field on how to make project-based funding more equitable and flexible

Community foundations' sustainability from a human and financial perspective

Building local level social fabric, establishing meaningful relationships and bridging individuals and organisations, getting people's trust and recognition, and engaging the community are time-consuming and demanding priorities for people associated with community foundations. Considering that in many cases, they are volunteers, this makes the work even harder, seesawing and challenging to plan for the long term. One of the main issues that arises across the field is that, while in the beginning, the enthusiasm to join and advocate for the community foundation is intense; over time, people go through different phases of life. Their level of commitment cannot be guaranteed. For instance, for those community foundations started by groups of young people, if they do not manage to strengthen the organisation in time with paid staff, they will struggle through the years to keep being highly engaged and to juggle among their new priorities. Furthermore, with no succession plan and the challenges of attracting new volunteers, the risk that many encounter is to throw away what has been built up to that point and start again from scratch.

Recommendation: National CFSOs could act as "historical knowledge holders" keeping the memory and traces of the process initiated at the local level to provide some succession plans and guarantees.

Competencies and skills required for community engagement and participation

As shown in the stories shared, community foundations, intentionally or unknowingly, apply a variety of engagement and participation processes at various levels. While most of the work carried out relates to on-the-ground experience and attentive listening to the community, it is recognised that different approaches require distinct sets of competencies, from digital skills to design and much more, that often are not present yet in the organisation.

These kinds of competencies can be:

- Acquired in-house through professional training, also provided on a large scale by community foundations, support organisations that might be better positioned to find the funds for it. Assifero, for instance, has carried out a three-date workshop dedicated to civic lobbying and how the community foundations can act;

- Acquired gradually also through materials and toolkits made available, for instance, by CFSOs, but also potentially in a collective effort by pooling together people from different community foundations across the country;

- Provided by others specialised in community engagement and participation processes.

Recommendation: Peer learning is a proposed solution to fill these gaps rather than reinventing the wheel. It gives the space and the opportunity to practitioners to learn from one another about difficulties encountered by carrying out this kind of work.

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ABOUT ECFI – EUROPEAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

ECFI is an initiative committed to strengthening and promoting the community foundation movement in Europe. The initiative, hosted by the German Association of Foundations (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen), collaborates with a range of partners inside and outside of the community philanthropy ecosystem to achieve this goal.

ECFI works with community foundations (CFs) and community foundation support organisations (CFSOs) primarily through facilitating and stimulating interactions to enable learning, knowledge-building and empowerment. ECFI is also engaged in the mapping and analysis of CF activities and in disseminating information that will facilitate development of the field. ECFI strives to be a central point of contact for wider engagement within the global community foundation movement.

ECFI's THEORY OF CHANGE

ECFI believes in order to achieve long-term change in local communities (in relation to building trust and collaboration; enhancing the potential for self-determination and empowerment; and achieving social cohesion), that community foundations have an important role to play by building and utilising resources; convening and connecting people and organisations; and adding value through local knowledge and expertise.

ECFI's APPROACH

ECFI's approach is to empower those operating in the community foundation field – community foundations themselves and the array of support organisations that operate at national and regional level. We aim to add value to their work through providing a European dimension, consistent with values of promoting local democracy and civic participation; fostering the establishment of productive international relationships and knowledge exchange; helping bring financial and non-financial resources into to field; inspiring and driving momentum for development of practice.

ECFI's STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Facilitate interaction and learning, and share new knowledge and fostering collaboration among CFSOs in Europe to strengthen the support infrastructure;
2. Inspire and facilitate growth in the CF field in Europe;
3. Stimulate CFs in Europe to exercise their community leadership role and collaborate on pressing issues, including inequality, migration and climate change;
4. Build and share knowledge about the CF field in Europe;
5. Leverage financial resources and other support for the development of the CF field in Europe;
6. Increase awareness and understanding of the SDGs and their relevance to the work of community foundations in Europe.

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