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MAKING SOCIAL CHANGES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

HANDBOOK ON COMMUNITY ORGANISING



YOUNG COMMUNITY ORGANISERS FOR SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Erasmus+ KA220 Cooperation Partnerships in Youth
Project Ref. No: 2021-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000028599



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



PUBLISHING INFORMATION

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Making Social Changes in Local Communities: Handbook on community organising
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Suggested citation: Nava, Lorenzo & Enescu, Daniela Pricop (2023). *Making Social Changes in Local Communities: Handbook on Community Organising*. Magenta: Young Effect APS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION	01
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	02
PREFACE	03
APPLYING THE THEORY OF CHANGE	05

Chapter 1: Introducing Community Organising	06
1.1 Definition of Community	07
1.2 What is Community Organising?	10
1.3 Community Organising vs. Community Leadership	12
1.4 Goals and Purposes of Community Organising	14



Chapter 2: Community Organising and Youth Work	15
2.1 What is the connection between youth work and community organising?	16
2.2 Key Youth Worker Competences as Community Organisers	18
2.3 Youth Communities, trends and challenges	21



Chapter 3: Identify the Challenge	22
3.1 Defining Problems and Issues	23
3.2 Research and Issue Identification	25
3.3 Understanding the Community	28
3.4 Preparing the Ground	30



Chapter 4: Building Local Leadership	31
4.1 Leader Identification	33
4.2 Empowering Leadership	34
4.3 Community and Linear Leadership	35
4.4 Organisational Management	36



Chapter 5: Participation and Inclusion	40
5.1 Keys to youth engagement and participation	42
5.2 Importance of Social inclusion	43
5.3 Democracy grounded on citizenship	45



Chapter 6: Visibility, Media, and Becoming Popular	47
6.1 Develop your community communication strategy	48
6.2 Developing your internal media and channels	52
6.3 Working with other media and journalists	55
6.4 Social Media - a useful tool to "raise your voice"	60



Chapter 7: Resource Building	61
7.1 Identify power resources from within the community	62
7.2 Power Analysis Tools	65



Chapter 8: Conclusions	68
8.1 Summary of the handbook	69

BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
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INTRODUCTION

Young Community Organisers

Young Community Organisers is a two-year-long Erasmus Plus Key Action 2 co-funded project based on innovation; it was applied by the Italian youth organisation Young Effect in partnership with the National Youth Council of Bulgaria, Tuzla District Governorship (Tuzla Kaymakamlığı, Türkiye), Youth Vision Association (Romania) and Globers Youth Organisation (Spain) aiming at embedding the practice of Community Organising in everyday youth work, based on multiple activities such as three international training courses that aim at gradually empowering youth leaders to become community organisers, and extensive local practice, where the young community organisers apply their learned competencies into organising a local community on tackling a minor local issue, by understanding the root of the problem, identify existing and necessary resources and build local leadership and partnerships towards a shared solution.



Disclaimer



This manual was co-financed by the Youth National Agency of Italy through the EU-funded programme Erasmus Plus, its content, though coherent with the underlying founding values of the European Union, does not necessarily reflect the views and positions of the EU on this matter.

Moreover, given its public funding nature, the manual is freely accessible by all who desire to do so through all the available channels. Anyone is welcome to use it and disseminate it and its content; just for tracking purposes, if you intend to use and publish the manual or parts of its content and its translations, please inform us by contacting us at ka2@youngeffect.org

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Lorenzo Nava has been an active youth worker and civil society activist since 2002, managing a sub-urban youth NGO for over ten years and working on preventing youth extremism and marginalisation; his work as a community organiser began in 2019 in the framework of political activism. Today he is working for the EU4youth programme on youth employment and entrepreneurship, organising two communities around youth employability in Georgia and Moldova.



Daniela Pricop Enescu

She is experienced in nongovernmental organisations accounting and financial and fiscal management of NGOs. Her experience also includes designing and managing monitoring and evaluation systems for not-for-profit organisations. She is familiar with Romanian financial legislation for NGOs and VAT issues and with EU institutions. Furthermore, Ms. Pricop Enescu is currently the coordinator of the two Erasmus+ projects for Youth Vision Association. She has been involved in the nongovernmental and private sectors for more than six years and is currently working as head of the Constanta Centre. Her essential qualifications are advocacy and policy formulation (areas of expertise: education, youth, EU and structural funds, social economy), Strategic Planning, Organisational Development, Project Management, financial management, including public procurement rules, Grants Management, Evaluation and research, Negotiations and partnership development. Ms. Pricop Enescu has an extensive theoretical and practical experience in European affairs and has coordinated several EU and national grant award schemes.

PREFACE

Every youth worker and social activist, upon hearing the description of what community organising is, has so far reacted with, “Hang on a sec, that’s what I am doing!” and that is right; it is not a new technique or methodology on how to bring together communities and empower them to accomplish their goals and needs, but rather a specific attitude to problem-solving and solution-finding. A philosophy that leads the youth worker to step back from community leaders and become instead its organiser, empowering the community to find its leadership, ensuring it is horizontal, participatory, and has a bottom-up approach until the community can stand on its own feet.

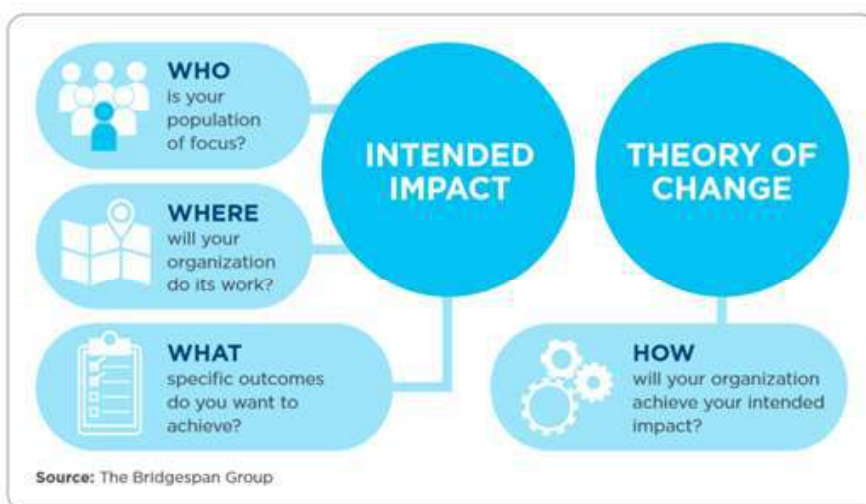
Community Organising was an approach developed by Saul Alinsky in the United States between the 1930s and 1960s to organise workers and marginalised communities in accomplishing their goals of improved living conditions, having their rights recognised and acknowledged, and striving towards more equal societies. At first, it was mainly applied to the organisations of labour unions but later culminated with the 1960s Civil Rights movement led by the Afro-American community; everybody heard about Martin Luther King. Since then, the practice was even further developed, becoming a fully recognised profession in North America and also widely used in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with different purposes such as; sustainable livelihoods in remote geographical areas at risk due to the climate crisis, self-organisation of slum dwellers, etc. In Europe, we are facing the dawn of this practice and its adaptation to a more European reality. Everywhere Community Organising was applied so far saw a situation of marginalisation and exclusion with an apparent cultural lack, or weak, cooperation between the public, private and third sectors, resulting in a conflictual situation where communities had no choice but to find solutions for themselves to solve their issues. The European scenario is very different; cross-sectorial partnerships are embedded in our social systems, as are tools and structures for dialogue and cooperation, resulting in less conflictual situations and more possibilities to identify joint solutions and tools to collaborate towards the desired outcome. This does not mean that this method can’t be applied to European realities, but it needs an adaptation, which is what we aim to accomplish with this project.

PREFACE

In this manual, we will discover step by step how to get started in the pathway of becoming a community organiser, clarifying some tasks and aspects of this profession and learning how it perfectly matches youth work. Just remember that only a tiny minority of young people are members of youth organisations; the overwhelming majority of lives dwell and learn outside of these structures. Yet this does not mean they, too, can't benefit from youth work. When a youth worker becomes a community organiser, the outreach and benefit for young people are much broader and go beyond the membership and volunteerism that already exists within the organisation. The key is to empower youth to become leaders and establish partnerships and alliances to empower them to identify and tackle issues that affect them towards sustainable solutions. It all begins by applying the Theory of Change.



APPLYING THE THEORY OF CHANGE [1]



The theory of change is a strategic planning approach. Its purpose is to describe the long-term outcomes that a group, organisation, or programme hopes to achieve and the specific actions necessary to achieve those outcomes.

Most often, this is used in social or political change by identifying the particular goals you want to work towards and the steps you need to reach those goals. The theory of evolution can help you better understand the potential impact of your work and identify any potential roadblocks or challenges to address for you to be successful. This can also be used as a base to communicate with others your goals and strategies and ensure support for your community organising work. [2] For example, imagine you are a youth organisation working to reduce the rates of school dropouts in a specific community, and your goal is to reduce teenage school abandonment by 50% over the next three years. To achieve this goal, you can develop a theory of change that defines the specific steps you will take to create this change, such as:

- Offer comprehensive coaching activities for teenagers in the community to increase their interest in learning and self-development.
- Provide accessible non-formal education activities on various topics tailored around the interests of young people.
- Partner with local social services to understand the root causes of school dropout and identify the specific target groups.
- Work with community leaders to increase awareness of the importance of education and preventing school dropout.

By taking these concrete actions, your organisation hopes to achieve its long-term goal of reducing school dropouts by 50%. The theory of change will help outline the specific steps the organisation will take to accomplish these goals and provides a framework for tracking progress and adjusting strategies as necessary.

[1] The Bridgespan Group <https://www.ncfp.org/knowledge/what-are-intended-impact-and-theory-of-change-and-how-can-nonprofits-use-them/>

[2] <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCING COMMUNITY ORGANISING



*First training course "Coaching competences for community organisers"
21-28 September 2022 in Italy*

1.1 Definition of Community

Humans are social animals by nature, allowing us to survive evolution and develop as a species, developing different levels of belonging more or less complex. This is essential to understand a community, so in this chapter, we will explore different shapes and forms we humans have to come together and define ourselves.

Group



Simply put, a group is a collection of individuals that comes together for a common purpose or some shared interest, which can be organised or informal.

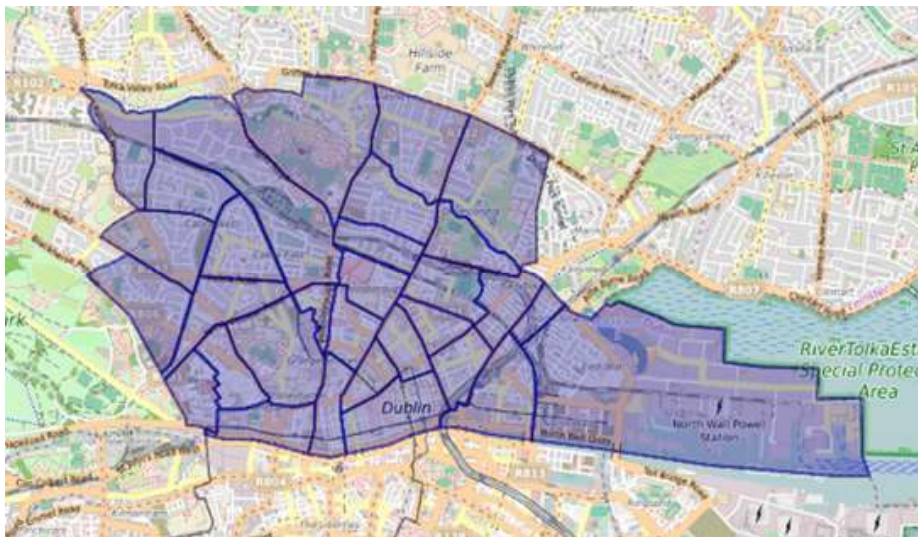
A group can be based on factors such as geographic location, shared experiences, and even values or beliefs. Examples can be families, organisations, or communities, ranging from a few individuals to millions of people.

A way to define a group can be its characteristics and dynamics, can be cohesive or diverse, can have a leadership structure or democratic, can be informal or formal, can be temporary or permanent, and all of this affects how the group works and its activities.

Another criterion and element to define groups can also be based on demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity, etc. So, groups exist, regardless of the awareness of belonging to a specific group or necessarily acting together towards shared goals. Young people who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training are part of a group of NEETs which does not imply that they know each other, cooperate and work together toward solving their issues.



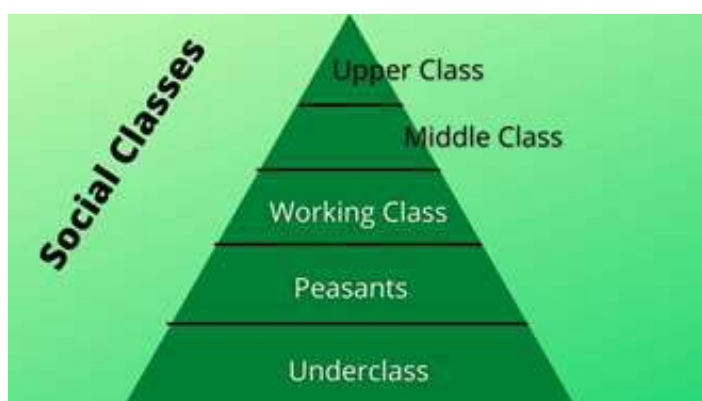
Constituency



A constituency is a group of people, or a geographical area, who elect representatives to a legislative body or other governing organisations. Mostly we find this definition in democratic contexts where citizens vote for their government representatives.

A constituency can be understood as a place, such as a city or a country, but can also be based on demographics such as age, gender, income, etc. However, a constituency is not just limited to political contexts; for example, in businesses, a constituency can be based on customers and stakeholders that the company needs to address, or in civil society organisations, the constituency is the group of individuals or communities they serve. A little more specific than a group, a constituency can exist well without any mutual knowledge, typical drive, cooperation, or strategy of its members. Not all who vote for a specific party talk to each other and organise their feedback and requests to the candidates or even mobilise in activism; just the same, not all members of the constituency need to necessarily work together towards common goals in identifying solutions to their issues and overcoming them.

Social Class



When it comes to social class, although this term is quite outdated already, we are talking about a group of people within society with similar levels of wealth, education, and prestige. It is a grouping of people based on economic and social status and is mainly used to address inequality.

We mostly know the typical division between the upper class, made of the wealthy and powerful society members, and the lower class, the poorest and least powerful, and between the middle class and working class. A social type, to exist, does not need that its member is aware that they belong to that class, and just as the groups mentioned above, there is no need for a type to exist that its members cooperate and activate; it just exists.

Community



A community is a group of people who live in the same geographical area and share a common culture, interest, or identity, such as neighbourhoods up to cities and even include virtual communities online.

Generally speaking, what defines a community is shared experiences, values, and a sense of belonging; people who belong feel connected and responsible for the group's wellbeing. Communities can also be described by their level of cohesiveness, solidarity, and social capital among the members, meaning networks, norms, and trust that support cooperation.

In this specific case, we have awareness; a person is a conscious community member, has belonging, values, connection, and a shared experience generated this. The trick in community organising is transforming a group, a constituency, or a social class into a community.



1.2 What is Community Organising?



First of all, Community Organising is not a technique nor a methodology but rather an approach to a process of building and strengthening relationships among members of a community and empowering them to take collective action to address common issues. It is a people-based approach to how to work with them on building their capacity to identify and solve problems by creating power and influence and, thus, fostering positive change.

Generally speaking, Community Organising typically involves:

- **Building Relationships:** In Community Organising youth workers build trust and relationships with community members, especially those marginalised or disadvantaged. This can include door-to-door, community meetings and involving local organisations.
- **Identifying issues and concerns:** Organising includes listening to community members to understand their problems and helping them identify common concerns and goals.
- **Building Power:** Community organising helps the community members to develop skills, knowledge, attitudes, as well as the confidence to take values-based action. This could take the shape of training in areas like leadership, public communication, community organising, and coaching community leaders.
- **Campaign Development:** Organising includes working with community members to develop strategies and campaigns to address the identified issues, meaning a clear action plan, identification and partnerships with allies, understanding opponents, and organising a series of events in a logical sequence.
- **Facilitation of Participation:** facilitating opportunities for community members to participate in the decision-making process and create opportunities for them to influence the public, the system, and policies, is indeed an essential part of organising.

Community Organising is an approach often used within social and political contexts and grassroots initiatives and is primarily associated with civil society organisations and youth organisations. It is always tailored to the targeted local community's needs, wants, and issues. The core principle is that community organising works with people, and there are many forms of community interventions; and empowers people to speak for themselves, recognising that confrontation and pressure sometimes are needed, as much as there is a need to hold authorities accountable. Ultimately community organising strives to create a long-term, democratic government organisation or movement that is successful at solving issues [3].



[3] "Handbook on Citizen Participation - Community Organizing as a Tool of Enhancing Citizen Participation." A Cooperative Project between the Grundtvig "Community Learning –Building Capacity and Empowerment for Active Citizenship" Project & The European Community Organizing Network.

1.3 Community Organising vs. Community Leadership

Often the first reaction of a youth worker or a civil society activist when facing an issue is immediately to start identifying and implementing solutions. But acting as a community organiser implies suspending your community leadership and taking a step back. Let's look here at the differences:

Community organisers

Individuals (or groups) working to bring people together to address common issues in their communities, helping to build strong, inclusive, and sustainable communities by empowering residents to take action for positive change.

It is working with marginalised / disadvantaged groups to help them gain a voice in decisions that affect them, such as improving access to services, education, promoting justice, development, etc.

Adopt various strategies and tactics to help the community achieve its goals, building coalitions, developing leadership, supporting research, developing campaigns, and facilitating dialogue and participation. Fostering change on local issues and creating change by working through grassroots organising, lobbying, and advocacy.

Community Leaders

The person or group guides and inspires a group to work together and reach common goals to improve their community. They support the community in building confidence and skills to take action together.

They are members of the community they lead and can have different functions, such as elected officials, activists, or leaders of other bodies or organisations. Promotes inclusiveness and diversity in all community-based processes.

They can inspire others to take action, build strong relationships and partnerships with other members and bodies within the community; can facilitate cooperation and communication within the community. Develops and implement action plans and strategies to address community issues.

Community organisers

This profession can be developed within youth organisations, non-profit settings, community-based organisations, and even governmental agencies. But there can also be individual consultants or volunteers, who bring people together, listen to concerns, and helps them develop skills and the necessary confidence to advocate for themselves and their community.

It can vary according to context and culture but always involves mobilising people against a specific issue towards the engagement of community members to develop their competencies and participate in decision-making processes.

Community Leaders

Have leadership and public communication competencies and fully understand their community, strengths, and challenges.

This is a dynamic process, and the leader helps their community to organise and strive towards its common aims, constantly evolving as the community changes.

There is a fragile line separating Community Organisers from Community Leaders. To put it simply, the main task of Community Organisers is to foster, encourage, empower and engage Community Leaders. For this reason, quite often, although it is not a rule, the Community Organiser is an outsider to the community who can step back and gradually hand the process over to the community leaders.



1.4 Goals and Purposes of Community Organising

“Community organising is about citizen power, and what democracy looks like in the 21st century, in a context where most people see the institutions at the national and EU level are hollowed out, where the voices of ordinary citizens are absent [4].”

As we clarified before, there is not a single approach, strategy, and way to apply community organising; nevertheless, the purpose and goals stay the same, that is, reaching out to specific local communities and initiating a process that is both time-intensive and often not that easy to empower this community to take ownership of their issues and apply tools that develop solution-finding competencies and thus take ownership of the solutions.

1. Develop Local Leadership: This is one of the main goals and purposes of community organising; often, an indicator is the quality and level of commitment of local leaders involved in a campaign and action. And when we talk about quality, we mean the capacity of leaders not only to lead processes but also to inspire and guide others to develop their leadership. Community organisers do so through capacity building, training, and coaching.
2. Involve Stakeholders: Every community faces problems, and within those problems, specific issues can be found that need addressing and solutions as a step towards solving the more significant problem. Once the issue is identified, organisers work with the specific community and explore the territory, identifying stakeholders, potentials for partnership, and potential opponents. The goal is to involve all stakeholders affected wholly or partly by the issue to act together toward owning and implementing the solution. Which involves research, face-to-face, and one-to-one meetings, more prominent fora, listening tours, and focus groups (to mention a few tools).
3. Power-Building: Community organising has among its main goals and purposes building the long-term capacity of marginalised communities to negotiate their interests with other community stakeholders, opponents, and those who hold the necessary power and resources that would allow them to solve their issues.
4. Direct Action: The final goal and purpose is to engage the community in actions and tactics that range from data collection, research, and evidence building to public education and debate, with a readiness to confront and challenge relevant decision-makers and holders of power and resources [5].

[4] https://organizeeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Ariadne_Community-report_AW_V2.pdf

Donald Mac Fhearraigh, Senior Programme Officer - Open Society Initiative for Europe

[5] “Making a way forward - Community Organising and the Future of Democracy in Europe” - Written and edited by Dave Beckwith, Deborah Doane, Steve Hughes, Bernadett Sebály, Anna Striethorst and Gordon Whitman - Ariadne Network

CHAPTER 2:

COMMUNITY ORGANISING AND YOUTH WORK



*2nd Transnational Project Meeting
23 - 24 March 2023 in Sofia, Bulgaria*

2.1 What is the connection between youth work and community organising?

Youth Work has been defined as *“A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary involvement, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations [6].”*

Also, *“(in youth work)...There seems to be a shared set of values and methods in youth work practices all around Europe:*

- ❖ *Voluntary participation of young people*
- ❖ *Listening to the voice of young people*
- ❖ *Bringing young people together*
- ❖ *Connecting to young people's lifeworld*
- ❖ *Broadening young people's lifeworld [7]*

Every programme supporting young people and youth workers, whether at the European level or national has included in its strategy the need to develop a culture of active and democratic citizen participation, placing a stronger focus on local youth work and local involvement recently [8]. And this is happening in a context as defined at the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly *“The paradox of today's democracies is that, although never ever in the past have so many people lived in democracies, never were so many people disappointed with the quality of the democracy they live in and experience on a daily basis...We are witnessing a huge concentration of power and money, and very often also a huge concentration of the media, in the hands of a few, so that our democratic institutions become vulnerable [9].”*

The building of a healthy democracy is grounded on active citizen participation, and that is a long-term and constantly on-going process that does not have a clear end. *“It takes six months to create new political institutions, to write a constitution and electoral laws. It may take six years to set up a half-way viable economy. It will probably take sixty years to create a civil society. Autonomous institutions are the hardest things to bring out [10].”*

[6] <https://www.youth.ie/articles/what-is-youth-work/>

[7] <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-work1>

[8] EGL Europe Goes Local Network - <https://europegoeslocal.eu/home/>

[9] Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly - Political Affairs Committee - Democracy in Europe: Crisis and Perspectives May 26 2010 pg 6-10”

[10] Has the East Joined the West? New Perspective Quarterly 7.1 Pg 44. Ralf Dahrendorf.

Every youth strategy in Europe today at the local level talks about youth engagement in democratic processes for youth to participate and speak for themselves, exposing young people to grassroots democratic practices or creating them. Community Organising is an opportunity to develop active, influential, and democratic youth participation, starting from the small and local levels. What we see today is community organising applied to tackle multiple issues such as integration of migrants, infrastructure improvements, and job market access for the hard-to-employ, so why can't it become an essential and strong tool in the hands of youth workers? Through Community Organising young people are allowed to take an active role in the democratic process, make stakeholders more transparent and accountable, and actively participate in decision-making processes that can shape the future starting from their communities and potentially, beyond that, promoting a healthy and participatory democracy. Now is the time when we need value-driven active citizens to become influential players in our communities; the first step should happen with youth and foster by youth organisations; because Community Organising is a democratically governed long-term process where young people can come together to act in their shared self-interest to identify community issues as well as solutions, and therefore, to take action by engaging the power structures that are in place and make that solution a reality [11].



[11] "Handbook on Citizen Participation - Community Organizing as a Tool of Enhancing Citizen Participation." A Cooperative Project between the Grundtvig "Community Learning –Building Capacity and Empowerment for Active Citizenship" Project & The European Community Organizing Network

2.2 Key Youth Worker Competences as Community Organisers

On the grid below, we can witness the Youth Work Competence Framework on the left-hand side and on the right side 11 required competencies for community organisers. And although Alinsky wrote these in the context of social conflicts in the USA of the 1930 and Union struggles, we can interpret and adapt its meaning to today's youth work.

Youth Workers [12]

1. Addressing the Needs of Young People:

- Understanding the social context where young people live.
- Involve young people in the planning, delivering, and evaluation of youth work using participatory methods.
- Relate to young people as equals.
- Demonstrate openness in discussing young people's personal and emotional issues when raised in a youth work context.

2. Provide learning opportunities for young people:

- Support young people in identifying their learning needs, wishes, and styles, taking any special needs into consideration.
- Create safe, motivating, and inclusive learning environments for individuals and groups.
- Use a range of educational methods, including ones that develop creativity and foster motivation for learning.
- Provide young people with appropriate guidance and feedback.
- Inform young people about learning opportunities and support them in using them effectively.

Community Organisers [13]

1. Power is resources; the sum of what you have and still need will lead to the solution to the problem:

- Understand what resources you have available, what resources you still need, and where you can find them or who can provide them to solve the issue.
- Conduct extensive and multistakeholder research and observation to understand the issue at hand fully.

2. Within your community there are all the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values you need to reach the solution, harmonise and use them:

- Be aware and ensure that the community knows the available capabilities, skills, and knowledge.
- Make sure the environment where the community starts is safe, inclusive, and motivating.
- Make sure each community member has the tasks they can and want to do within the community (and if need be, empower them to).

[12] [https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-competence#{%229802689%22:\[0\]}](https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-competence#{%229802689%22:[0]})

[13] Saul Alinsky "11 Rules for Radicals" Random House 1971

Youth Workers

3. Support and empower young people in making sense of the society they live in and in engaging with it:

- Assist young people in identifying and taking responsibility for the role they want to have in their community and society.
- Support young people to identify goals, develop strategies and organise individual and collective action for social change.
- Support young people to develop their critical thinking and understanding of society and power, how social and political systems work, and how they can influence them.
- Support the competence and confidence development of young people.

4. Support young people in actively and constructively addressing intercultural relations:

- Support young people in acquiring intercultural competences.
- Promote interaction between young people from diverse backgrounds at home and abroad so that they can learn about other countries, cultural contexts, political beliefs, religions, etc.
- Work creatively on and with conflicts to transform them constructively.
- Actively include young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and identifications in youth work activities.

Community Organisers

3. Adopt and invest in the strengths, especially the unique ones of your target youth community:

- Assess the competencies and learning needs within the community to create a learning plan.
- Make sure all community members are engaging in areas they are competent and / or would like to develop and are, therefore, motivated.
- Ensure that the agreement on the issue is shared, understood, and analysed with the community.
- Allocate appropriate time for capacity and confidence building among community members.

4. Pay specific attention to inclusive processes, diversity and respect in every aspect of community organising:

- Be aware of the elements of diversity existing in the community and use them to promote interaction and possibilities for cooperation.
- Seek collaboration to transform; possibly impeding existing conflicts between communities.

Youth Workers

5. Actively practice evaluation to improve the quality of the youth work conducted:

- Involve young people in planning and organising evaluation.
- Plan and apply a range of participatory methods of evaluation.
- Use the results of the evaluation for the improvement of their practice.
- Stay up-to-date on the latest youth research on the situation and needs of the young people.

6. Support collective learning in teams:

- Actively evaluate teamwork with colleagues and use the results to improve the effectiveness.
- Seek and give feedback about teamwork.
- Share relevant information and practices in youth work with colleagues.

7. Contribute to the development of their organisation and to making policies / programmes work better for young people:

- Actively involve young people in shaping their organisation's policies and programmes.
- Co-operate with others to shape youth policies.

8. Develop, conduct, and evaluate projects:

- Apply project management approaches
- Seek and manage resources.
- Give visibility to projects, write reports and make presentations for a variety of audiences.
- Use information and communication technology tools when necessary.

Community Organisers

5. Act with strategies and tactics in mind, focusing on your short/ medium / and long-term goals:

- Regardless of your ultimate aim and goal, always start small and local.
- The more you involve the community, the more ownership it will create and the motivation to participate.
- Always look for ways of improvement and tailoring all the aspects of community organising.

6. Make the process tangible, reachable, and enjoyable for the community members and leaders:

- Plan, Act, Evaluate for each tactic and strategy.
- Make sure that at the completion of each cycle there is a pause for "lessons learnt".
- Involve the community in every process.

7. Empower the community to come up with alternatives to the issue they are facing:

- Build participatory processes around creating action plans, strategies, policies, and legislative proposals.
- Keep it constructive and positive; do not just address the issue and criticism of the stakeholders.
- Gather the necessary competencies through networking.

8. Empower and transfer ownership

- Ensure gradually empower the community to take over different aspects of organising, including logistics, administration, communication, etc.
- Empower Community members to represent the community externally.
- Make intelligent use of information technology for inner and outer communication.

2.3 Youth Communities, trends and challenges

When we talk about work with young people, trends and challenges, have become synonyms in recent years. We are looking at the situation in Europe today that start with significant trends of political disengagement of young people and rejection of old forms of participation, replaced by new systems and approaches that are still under study, reflected in activism and involvement in environmental movements or gender equality topics, as particular dedication and motivation to join a cause, not as a life-long engagement but engaging specific areas, with a tendency to join movements pro-something rather than against something [14].

On the other hand, accompanying low levels of political participation and engagement, we can also see another factor heavily impacting young people, that is climate anxiety; according to different psychological associations between Europe and North America, over 50% of young people 15-25 suffer from more or less severe forms of climate anxiety [15].

The third element was the steady rise of populism and partly the visible rise of extremism which channelled the anger, becoming a recipient of the social frustrations and lack of belonging with the democratic institutions, which found fertile ground in some young people. This was the scenario we had until the global pandemic hit us all. Some of the deepest scars left by the pandemic prevention measures, such as quarantines, lockdowns, and social distancing, were on teenagers and young people in general, resulting in a substantial loss of a sense of community, the interruption of vital experiences to growth and development such as first love, first conflicts, first friendships, replaced by a close family nucleus and an impersonal online world, leading to further isolation and in some cases continued distancing, especially among the most marginalised and disadvantaged youth groups.

Last but not least, it is impossible not to mention the impact of current Russian aggression against Ukraine, which overall threw European society into uncertainty and fear towards the future, from economic insecurity to fearing an open conflict beyond the territory of Ukraine.

This is the scenario and situation where youth workers in Europe need to operate today, fear and uncertainty regarding personal security due to the conflicts, anxiety from the climate crisis, lack of belonging to communities, and disengagement from representative democracy, and this is where the community organising approach can be of help and support.

[14] <https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/ueber-jfe/publikationen/what-s-politics-got-to-do-with-it.4143/>

[15] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00278-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext)

CHAPTER 3: IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGE

Provided that you already know which community you want to target and needs organisation, therefore, your support as a community organiser, the first step is to identify the challenge this community is facing. As obvious as this might sound, take into account this process. Because when you want to empower a community to be organised it is essential that the solution to their issue can be tangible, realistic, and within reach. If a problem is too big, it might be discouraging and overwhelming and not see a precise end to the actions the community will undertake; a more minor or local issue instead can have solutions within reach and realistic and thus motivate engagement.



*Second training course "Community Organising"
27 Feb. - 6 Mar. 2023 in Romania*

3.1 Defining Problems and Issues

Of course, the dream is to have an organised community ready to take on any challenge and solve any problem. However, every incredible journey starts with a tiny step, keeping in mind the end goal; for example, if you want to contribute to solving the global climate crisis, a small step can be a campaign for planting trees in your neighbourhood or promoting attitudes of re-use, recycle, repair and regenerate, before taking the next stage of tackling more significant issues.

Before starting your campaign, you need a clear understanding of the following:

- What is the issue at hand, and how this connects to more significant goals
- What is the actual natural and necessary change? Is it someone's decision, or is it more complex such as influencing policies?
- Understand who else is impacted and affected by the issue and their connection to the group.

With these three points clarified, you will already have a solid ground to start building your community organising.

Community Organising can be considered in social contexts as part of civil society, and any form of civil society organising identifies with a long-term mission that connects the group of people to the problems that are perceived as essential, and thus they join the group together. These problems are often expressed as big ones, anti-discrimination, climate crisis, young people not in education, employment or training, healthy lifestyle, etc. And if people come together because they understand and believe wholeheartedly that this problem needs a solution, they are motivated and eager to engage. However, the size of these problems is massive, which can easily discourage people from taking that first step towards action, a normal reaction being "I am too small to make a difference."

An issue is more minor than a problem; for example to fight against discrimination and racism could imply a need for some training and educational programmes or advocacy for equal rights and opportunities, which means that it will be a lot clearer what is asked of the activists and volunteers, how many people you need, the specific areas of intervention, who is responsible for the decisions, and of course, the necessary resources.

An issue is specific, and when it is solved, the effect of the solution is visible and tangible, as is the change in people's everyday lives. Tackling an issue is realistic and worth it. Solving it demonstrates to the community their power, generates belief in evolution, and impacts the power relations within and around the community. An issue can be won, is easy to understand, and has a solution at hand, resulting in the unity of the community, working towards a clear target, and putting in a specific timeframe.

So, you identified your community, recognized the overall problem, and identified the issue; now it is time to analyse it, which means understanding why this issue exists, who is affected, and whose responsibility it is to solve it; once you answered that you will have paved the way to find out; how it can be changed, what actions are needed to solve it, and what is the strategy to do so [16].

Remember that people are more likely to react and mobilise when facing a crisis to solve an issue that can't be postponed anymore. Once solved, it is natural for people to step back and return to everyday life, which is the most common form of engagement. Therefore, gathering people around too big topics or problems that are not so urgent can be extremely hard. It would help if you had a sense of community and a proactive attitude to improve your local reality. Besides being reactive, another natural response to urgent issues is for people to expect others, such as authorities, to solve the community's problem. This is why most people do not get involved in organised societies, combined with other potential causes such as mistrust, apathy, distrust of public authorities, lack of confidence, etc[17].



[16] Basic Handbook on Community Organising: Iwona Novak , Erasmus+ Bona Fides Civic Activity Association (Poland),Centre for Community Organising (Slovakia), Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network (Hungary), Civil College (Hungary), and National Association of Resource Teachers (Bulgaria)

[17] "Handbook on Citizen Participation - Community Organizing as a Tool of Enhancing Citizen Participation. " A Cooperative Project between the Grundtvig "Community Learning –Building Capacity and Empowerment for Active Citizenship" Project & The European Community Organizing Network

3.2 Research and Issue Identification

Now let's put under the magnifying glass a few elements from the last paragraphs, namely:

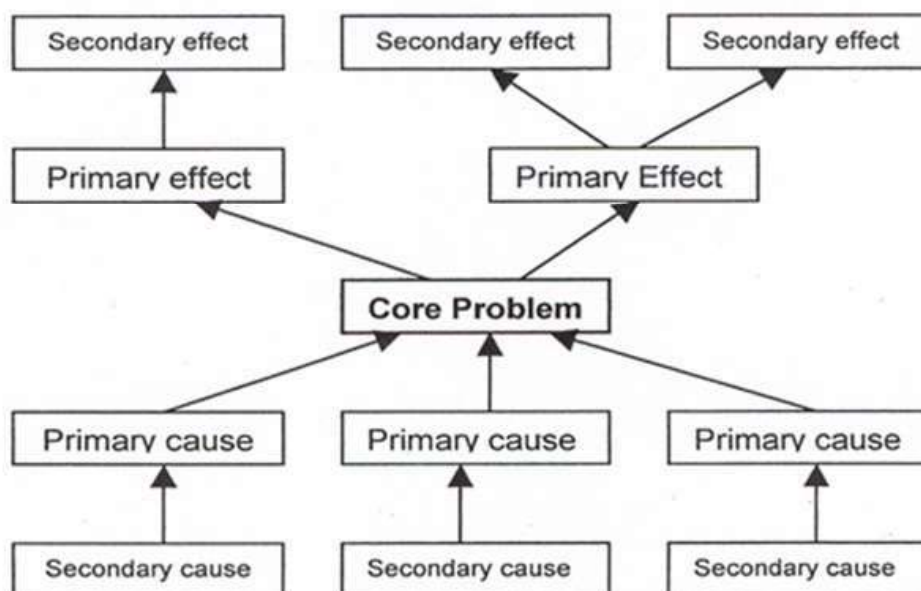
- a) What is the issue?
- b) Why does the issue exist?
- c) Who is affected by it?
- d) Who is responsible for solving it?
- e) How can it be changed?
- f) What actions are necessary to solve it?

What is the issue?

First of all, the issue needs to be identified, which may be less obvious than you think, and there is a considerable risk here to be played by assumptions. There exist overall problems that need addressing, and within those big problems, such as youth unemployment for example, exist specific issues that are local and detailed; for example, the percentage of school drop-out rate can be a particular and precise issue that stems out of the significant problem of youth unemployment, which means that it will be easier to mobilise a community around a specific, complex issue that has a local impact and can be solved by local solutions in a timely fashion within a particular timeline. Remember that both problems and issues need to be recognised and accepted by the community you are targeting; if they don't see this as a problem or an issue, then they will not mobilise their resources. At the same time, what the community specifies as a problem or issue, may not be the problem or issue at hand but a side effect; for example, the lack of leisure opportunities may be connected to the lack of a favourable business environment that would allow entertainment and leisure-oriented enterprises. Here is a tool for you to get started [18]:

[18] "Basic Handbook on Community Organising" Iwona Novak , Erasmus+ Bona Fides Civic Activity Association (Poland), Centre for Community Organising (Slovakia), Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network (Hungary), Civil College (Hungary), and National Association of Resource Teachers (Bulgaria)

Problem Tree / Solution Tree [19]



This is a straightforward and intuitive tool you can apply to analysing and breaking down a problem. It can be helpful, too, in extracting the local issues that exist within the situation.

- 1) Write the "Core Problem" in the middle;
- 2) Starting filling the lower part of the tree, "the Roots" by writing down the primary, secondary, and even tertiary problems; this will show you what is at the very root;
- 3) Then fill the upper part of the tree, "The branches and leaves" by writing down the primary, secondary and tertiary effects of the problem;
- 4) You can find the local issue somewhere within the branches and the roots.

A simplified example:

Core Problem: Youth Unemployment

Primary Cause: Lack of skilled labour force

Secondary Cause: 24% of school drop-out from secondary school

Primary Effect: Extended poverty

Secondary Effect: Young people emigrate elsewhere

[19] <https://worldanimal.net/our-programs/strategic-advocacy-course-new/advocacy-toolkit/31-uncategorised/244-2-causal-mapping-or-problem-tree-analysis>

In this specific case, the issue can be found in the secondary cause, the high percentage of school drop-outs.

Now you can take the issue of “24% of school drop-out from secondary school” and make another problem-tree solution-tree. This will help you to have an overview and vision of the issue, its effects, and its causes. This can also help you to have an initial concept of a strategy, but about that later.

Now it is time to transform the Problem Tree into a Solution Tree, which is very simple; you need to name every problem/issue, cause, and effect to its opposite.

Core Solution: High youth employability

Primary Cause: Skilled young labour force

Secondary Cause: Retainment of young people in education

Primary Effect: Decent life standards

Secondary Effect: Local Development

So well done, you have made the first step into identifying the issue, or more likely a few cases, a small and vital step into understanding why it exists, who is affected by it, who is responsible for solving it, how it can be changed, what actions are necessary to solve it, so in the following chapters we will give you a few tools to understand this, think like a scientist who created a hypothesis and now you need to test it against reality.



3.3 Understanding the Community

Keeping in mind that a community organiser frequently is an outsider to the community, though, of course, has some connections, it is essential to deeply understand the community and its issues and perhaps test some of the assumptions you could have created while creating the Problem-Tree and Solution-Tree (besides this is something you can later share with the community members, or even better to remake it together as part of a workshop.) Here are some steps that will help you to understand the community, and here are some tools that also will need to be tested against reality.

A. Subjective Observation: Here is a tool often used as an initial step in sociology or anthropology research. It is elementary; go for a walk to the area or areas where your community dwells and observe. If it is a neighborhood or generally a geographical area, go for a walk and observe; what things catch your eye and attention? Some elements could be:

- **The state of the roads:** poor maintenance could signal little attention by public authorities.
- **Cars parked:** can be an indicator of income in that area, including the number plates of cars coming from countries that often send migrants.
- **Housing:** in what state are the buildings and their maintenance? It could also be an indicator of outcomes and results.
- **Public Transport:** what kind of public transport is present, how frequently does it come, and where does it connect to? This could indicate how connected this area is, how much its inhabitants move, and where to most.
- **Shops:** what kind of small businesses are present? What do they sell? At what prices? Presence of ethnic products? This could help understand the ethnic composition as well as the income of the inhabitants.
- **Gender:** do you notice girls walking alone at different times of the day or night? If yes, often this could be a sign of safety; the contrary could be a sign of fear and, therefore, crime presence.
- **Human presence on the streets:** Watching teenagers on weekdays hanging around in the morning could be a sign of cutting classes, and seeing adults around during workdays and potential working hours could signify unemployment.
- **Environment:** A dirty green area or park could be a sign that families and inhabitants do not use the park, maybe hosts illegal activities such as pushing or a temporary shelter for the homeless.
- **Rubbish:** dirty sidewalks and streets could be a sign of the inhabitants' lack of care and sense of belonging to their territory.

Keep in mind these are all assumptions made from your subjective observations and imply you made more than one observatory visit at different times of the day and evening.

B. Participatory Observation: It is time to take it to the next level by engaging in a participatory manner with the area where your community dwells. Some ways can be:

- **Gatherings:** in your previous visits, you have identified places where people usually gather, bus stops, bars, marketplaces, etc. Eavesdrop and listen to what people are mostly talking about and expressing, especially if it concerns some local issues.
- **Engage:** Start random conversations with people around, shopkeepers, a pensioner on the streets, and a bartender to dig for information about the area and notice what issues come up.
- **Online:** Nowadays, almost all age groups engage with the internet; perhaps there are some social media groups from this area, which could be the ones created by active citizens or the municipality's social media, register to check what information is present on these channels, user-generated comments and especially the comment threads are often an expression of local concerns and frustrations. Take note
- **Expertise:** Again, all of the above are assumptions based on superficial observations; it is time to test them against the expertise, meaning finding and interviewing competent people who are informed about: the territory, the target group, and the issues you have identified. These experts could be former representatives of the local authorities, academics, journalists, chairpeople of civil society organisations, etc. To give their views.

Very good; now many of your assumptions have been clarified, confirmed, or deleted, and you have a more or less complete picture of the scenario and environment faced by your community, you are ready to start to prepare the ground.



3.4 Preparing the Ground

If you decide to become a community organiser and begin your practice, we can assume that there is already a potential community that has contacted you or one that you know needs organising, and of course, you have some contacts there. It is time to prepare the ground for the organising of the community. Once you have completed all the steps above, it is time to prepare the community to receive and accept your presence and role as organiser by starting to engage with the community.

- **One-on-One:** Start talking to people who are affected by the issue you identified; these are people you know already or that have a maximum of one degree of separation; your contacts can help you to arrange the individual conversations, and you will get deeper insight on the issue and how it affects people.
- **Reach Out:** Through the people you know and friends of friends, they can help you to reach out to even more people who are affected by the issue, if not you can use the social media channels you distributed to send out questionnaires [20].
- **Listening Tours:** Here is an excellent opportunity to engage some of the people you have already committed and shown motivation to contribute more to involve them in listening tours, that is, being on the streets or places where typically people gather to ask some questions as well as to answer their questions if any, and if you find interested people you invite them on a one on one.

At this stage, you are already building up your network by officially engaging with locals and community members and being open to involving them in the process if they show motivation, moving towards your second step after research and identifying the issue, thus beginning your community organising.

One approach that could be interesting for you for one-on-one meetings is the Public Narrative Methodology [21].

[20] "Basic Handbook on Community Organising" Iwona Novak , Erasmus+ Bona Fides Civic Activity Association (Poland), Centre for Community Organising (Slovakia), Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network (Hungary), Civil College (Hungary), and National Association of Resource Teachers (Bulgaria)

[21] "Ecosystemic Community Organising - Toolbox" published by MTU Discovering Opportunities. 20.12.2022 by L.Nava and M.Santos .

CHAPTER 4:

BUILDING LOCAL LEADERSHIP



*First training course "Coaching competences for community organisers"
21-28 September 2022 in Italy*

Leadership is a word connected around many misconceptions, stereotypes, and beliefs that make individuals refuse leadership roles. Many believe a leader is a person in a superior position in a group and can highly influence and control others [22].

This is why it is imperative in the context of community organising what leadership is and who a leader is. A leader is a person who guides the activities of a group and can inspire and influence others to work towards a shared vision. So let's scale down the negative connotations and burdening responsibilities often associated with leadership.

We all know different examples of leaders and for sure, in our mind came out the picture of a leader who can embody the expectation of command and control, but that is a choice among many different leadership styles out there. A leader is a person who helps to set goals for a community and to pursue them, helps with the creation and implementation of strategies, and takes a decision, and among the tasks we find:

- Building and maintaining relationships with the stakeholders;
- Empower trust and establish a cooperation culture among community members;
- To guide and direct activities;
- Use the ability to inspire and motivate others;
- Use the ability to communicate in different settings and environments at a public and personal level;
- To help create and promote the shared vision and to personally live it through attitudes, values, and behaviours;
- The decision-making skills involved include risk-taking and accountability;
- Leadership styles range between command-and-control to collaborative / participated.

When looking at theories concerning group dynamics, we can see that in most human groups, naturally, at least two leaders emerge, which can happen consciously but can also be unconscious. This means that leaders might well be unaware of their leadership role given by their followers, and even the group can be unaware that they are following a specific leader.

In Community Organising, leaders are members of the core group, meaning we are not talking about one or two people but a group who demonstrated commitment and motivation and are active. We will look closely at collaborative and participatory leadership as a community organiser is required to build local leadership.

[22] <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/leader.htm>

4.1 Leader Identification

One leadership style we will look at is community leadership; the focus in this specific style is *“Building and fostering a sense of community among team members and stakeholders [23]”* concentrating on collaboration, cooperation, and collective action to reach common goals. Community leaders’ purpose is to create a shared sense and vision among team members by building trust and relationships among all stakeholders. This is achieved through creating a culture of inclusivity and belonging, active engagement with the stakeholders, and understanding the needs and perspectives of all by actively listening and giving value to the ideas and opinions of all team members, generating ownership and, therefore, responsibility.

Quite often, a community leader is perceived as a mediator and as a facilitator who works to bring people together and build bridges between different groups.

In a nutshell, community leaders focus on building a sense of community among all involved team members and stakeholders, working towards a shared vision and purpose, promoting belonging and distributing responsibility, acting as facilitators and mediators, and attributing value to the diversity of points of view in the community.

When you begin your search for local leaders within the community, pay attention to this description, and see if you identify one or more characteristics as a potential for starting to build and empower leadership skills, competencies, and responsibility among community members.



[23] “Ecosystemic Community Organising - MTU Discovering Opportunities. 2023. L.Nava, H. Heidmann, M. Santos.

4.2 Empowering Leadership

There are many ways to empower leadership; look at tools such as training, providing experiential learning paths through non-formal education aiming at developing leadership competencies, or techniques such as mentoring where perhaps a person who previously covered leadership roles can mentor a new one, a fantastic strategy can be to apply one of the many coaching techniques existing out there. All of these are great, of course, but will have no results unless accompanied by trust, a delegation of tasks, and ensuring that the community leaders will, in turn, create more leaders and ensure that the power is shared horizontally across the community, as we shall see later.

Just to help you out a bit, here is a list of possible leadership styles:

- **Autocratic Leadership:** This style has the leader taking all the decisions and expecting obedience. It is effective in quick decision-making but results in low motivation and disengagement by the community.
- **Transformational Leadership:** Inspiring and motivating community members to achieve the shared vision, creating a sense of purpose and meaning for the team, and working to develop the team's capacities.
- **Servant leadership:** Serving and supporting the team instead of directing and controlling. The purpose is to build trust and empower team members, distributing autonomy and resources necessary to achieve the goals.
- **Laissez-faire leadership:** Handing off and delegating, allowing team members to make their own decisions. This can work in highly autonomous teams but also risks a lack of direction and accountability.
- **Transactional Leadership:** Setting clear goals, establishing rules and procedures, and rewarding or punishing team members based on their performance. This works to achieve specific and measurable goals but risks lacking creativity and innovation.
- **Participatory Leadership:** Active engagement and collaboration among team members, working to create a culture of shared decision-making and empowerment.

What leadership styles would you like to witness within the organised community?

4.3 Community and Linear Leadership

For you to make a very informed decision, we will take a deeper look into horizontal leadership, also known as participatory leadership.

This style emphasizes collaboration, cooperation, and sharing decision-making with the team members and the community. Its opposite is vertical leadership with a clear hierarchical structure, chain of command, and top-down decision-making.

Here the role of the leader resembles a facilitator or a coach and less of a manager or boss, some of the elements include: working to build trust; empowering team members; providing autonomy, and distributing resources, all to accomplish the goal. This process includes open communication and active listening to the ideas and opinions of team members.

Linear leadership works in flat, democratic, and decentralised organisations, like those that apply “sociocracy”, agile management, and “holacracy” (which we will explore later in this chapter. In a few words, organisations where authority and decision-making are distributed among all members, rather than centralised, are what is envisaged in community organising. By the way, this role is very close to the “Servant Leader” description.

All team members engage, interact and collaborate, resulting in a culture of shared decision-making and empowerment, valuing the inputs and contributions of all team members so that all take ownership of their work and tasks and feel free to contribute to the decision-making actively.

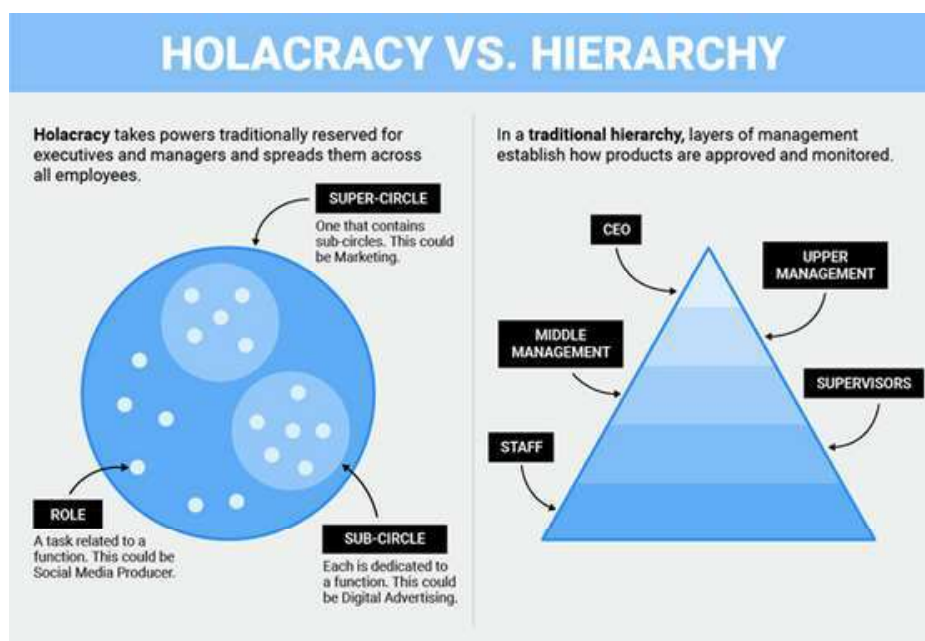
This enormously benefits the community, as this type of organisation requires high levels of creativity and innovation, and participation is essential to the successful functioning of organised communities.



4.4 Organisational Management

Holacracy [1]

This is a system of organisational governance where authority and decision-making are distributed throughout a network of self-organising teams instead of centralised organisations and hierarchies.



The aim is to increase agility, empowerment, and innovation by giving individuals and groups more autonomy and accountability.

Although this is mainly used in IT and tech, it can be applied to organizations that want to be more flexible and decentralised.

How it works is by breaking down traditional hierarchical structures of an organisation into a network of self-organising teams called "Circles," each circle has responsibility for a specific area of the organisation, for example, public communication or managing relations with the public sector, or marketing, and each circle has its own set of roles, rules, and processes and interconnected through many "governance meeting" where decisions are made and policies set. In *Holacracy*, individuals are not given specific job titles or managers; instead, they take different roles inside their circle depending on the needs of the project or task at present; this allows incredible flexibility and adaptability, and individuals can move between positions and teams as necessary.

Another emphasis of *Holacracy* is transparency and open communication, meaning regular meetings and check-ins to ensure everyone is aware of the organisation's goals and progress. Another element is using a system of "tensions" to identify and face possibly arising problems and obstacles that may come up; the purpose is to improve the overall performance continuously.

For *Holacracy* to work, there is a need for a specific mind-set and behaviours for community workers, leaders, developers, and organisers, and that is to learn how to work in a very decentralised and autonomous environment, which in turn needs trust among all involved and willing to try out and learn from failure.

[24] <https://www.holacracy.org/explore>

Sociocracy [25]



Sociocracy is also a system of governance and decision-making; it aims to create more effective, efficient, and equitable organisations by involving all members in decision-making processes. Its base is on consent, transparency, and accountability principles, emphasizing the importance of creating a culture of trust and respect.

Sociocratic organisations have decentralised decision-making by distributing this power to all members, and each member has an equal say in matters that affect them. In practice, the organisation is divided into smaller self-governing circles, and each circle has its roles, rules, and processes, a bit like in *Holacracy*.

The decision-making process is based on "dynamic governance," which translates into regular meetings for sharing information and discussing issues until a consensus is reached. Of course, it is implied that the process is designed to be inclusive and participatory, open for all members to contribute.

Sociocracy, perhaps is the method most applied in community organising, as it is very process oriented and focuses on cooperation and consensus, and creates more equitable and democratic decision-making processes.

It functions by decentralising decision-making processes and making them as involved as possible and involving all members, aiming to reach consent, and applying transparency and accountability within a culture of trust and respect.

The smaller circles are self-governed, and each takes care of a specific area of the organisation, and its members are encouraged to take on different roles within the process according to the needs of the tasks at hand.

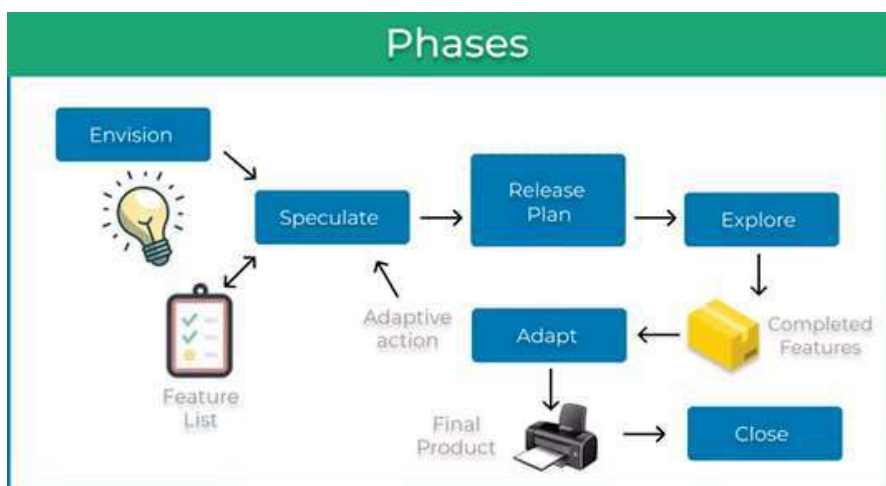
[25] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociocracy>

One of the key aspects here is adopting “double-linking” where each circle has a representative that links it to the next circle, and this facilitates and allows the flow of information and decision-making within the organisation, making sure all are aware of the goals, processes, obstacles, and that all decisions are in line with the overall strategy.

The focus is on the importance of constantly improving and adapting, which can be done with regular evaluations and feedback to ensure the organisation is meeting its goals and all are happy with how things are being run, helping the organisation adapt and respond to change.

This also needs a shift in mind-set and behaviours for all who work, volunteer, and manage the community, to work in decentralised and autonomous environments, learn to work with consensus-based decision-making, and have great extents of commitment from everyone.

Agile [26]



Agile management is a methodology applied to projects and organisations, and just like *Holacracy* and *Sociocracy* promotes flexibility and adaptation. It is grounded on the Agile Manifesto [27], a set of principles at first created by software developers, focusing on the value of individuals and their interactions, working software and customer collaboration, and responding to change over processes and tools. Of course, it can also be applied to other fields such as community organisations.

Here, the management structure is flat and decentralised, including cross-functional teams that work together to achieve common goals, thus allowing flexibility and adaptability and teams can answer quickly to changes and developments.

The system is based on repetition and step-by-step, including regular check-ins and progress updates, that is, to make sure that the activities are on track and the team is aligned with the goals and vision. This process is supported by applying agile boards, backlogs, and sprints; these help prioritise tasks, measure progress, and manage change.

[26] <https://www.wrike.com/project-management-guide/faq/what-is-agile-methodology-in-project-management>

[27] <https://agilemanifesto.org/>

Agile management puts a strong focus on communication and collaboration, envisaging regular meetings to ensure all are aware of the progress and that issues can be addressed quickly.

This works by breaking down large projects into smaller and manageable chunks; these are called Sprints and are completed in a short period, like 2-4 weeks. A team comprises cross-functional members who work together to reach specific goals for each Sprint. The team is self-organised, meaning it is responsible for deciding how to achieve the goals of each Sprint best, allowing flexibility and adaptability and allowing groups to react quickly to new developments and challenges.

One of the main tools in *Agile* management is the application of Scrum; this framework provides the structure of Agile development, which contains a Scrum Master, Development Team, etc. The Scrum Master ensures that the team follows the Scrum framework, the teams are responsible for prioritising the work, and the Development Team ensures it is aligned with the organisational goal. Another essential aspect is the use of daily stand-up meetings. Team members quickly share what they did the day before, their tasks today, and their obstacles. This is to ensure all are aware of what is happening, what the progress is, and that issues are addressed.



CHAPTER 5:

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION



Training course "Coaching competences for community organisers"

Ultimately, community organising wants to improve people's lives and bring positive change, which is very connected to the community's involvement in public decisions that transform and change for the better of cities, villages, and neighbourhoods. By improving services, green spaces, infrastructures, and environmentally friendly practices, in other words, addressing issues and obstacles to the community's wellbeing, solving through community organising, and finding the best solutions to the problems identified.

Through community organising, we empower young people to use their rights and effectively claim new spaces for participation; it is an effective way to involve those who typically are outside of the decision-making processes and give them a say in shaping their lives. Empowerment of communities is complex and long-term, ranging from building competencies and abilities to raising awareness about their rights as citizens, building up motivation and confidence to go public, and demanding change. Stopping the inertia and disaffection that affects many youth communities today, there is a need to recover a sense of the right to act and enable the voice of the problems, issues, visions, and concerns, using institutional and legal frameworks available to participate in decision-making. Many strategies can involve protests, public events, accountability sessions, boycotts, media pressure, mobilising their neighbour and other actors in the community to support the cause, and participating in public hearings, policy debates, etc.

They have organised young people by being involved in decision-making to challenge the status quo. They can also question how public authorities and institutions work and the existing culture and practices.

Of course, constantly public authorities can react positively to the requests of the organised community and offer solutions, and even be grateful for the support received in solving issues. However, there can also be adverse reactions from the elected officials or even open discouragement for the citizens to demand change. For this reason, Community Organising can work with any group of young people but is specifically proven to be most efficient when promoting participation among marginalised and disadvantaged groups [28].

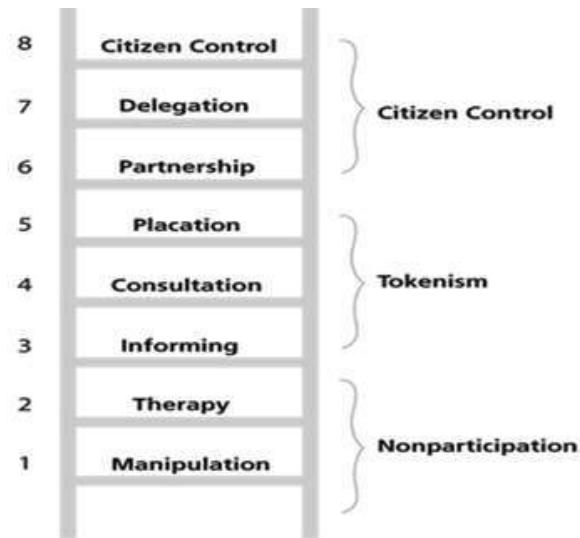


[28] "Handbook on Citizen Participation - Community Organizing as a Tool of Enhancing Citizen Participation."

A Cooperative Project between the Grundtvig "Community Learning –Building Capacity and Empowerment for Active Citizenship" Project & The European Community Organizing Network

5.1 Keys to youth engagement and participation

Below we can see Arnstein's Ladder of Participation.



Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

- 1. Manipulation/Therapy:** This is not participation; the goal here is to cure or educate young people to gain support for a pre-agreed plan.
- 2. Informing:** a first step towards participation but focuses on a one-way flow of information without channels for feedback.
- 3. Consultation:** A step towards participation, including surveys, neighbourhood meetings, and public inquiries, but can be just a decoration.

4. **Placation:** This can be like picking a few young people and including them in some bodies or organisations, allowing youth to advise or plan, but the power holders still have the final say or assess how honest or feasible the advice is.

5. **Partnership:** Power is redistributed through negotiation between young people and those who hold powers; plans and decisions are shared, maybe jointly.

6. **Delegation:** Youth is equally represented and is delegated to make decisions; now, it has the tools and power to assure accountability.

7. **Youth in Control:** the entire job of planning, policy, and programmes is in the hands of the community without intermediaries [29].

In many cases, the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups are located in the lower steps of the ladder, manipulation, and therapy, also known as non-participation, because by definition, these groups lack the means to participate fully, often the information and most of all the resources to solve their issues, having to rely on external intervention, or being used to depend on that. The critical understanding here for the community organiser is to make gradual steps to climb the ladder; a group that moves from manipulation/therapy to complete control may be unable to use that extent of power and responsibility, while it needs to be a process of gradual empowerment leading to the top level of participation.

One note about the previous chapter on leadership, you will identify that the potential local leaders are already located higher on the ladder of participation compared to the rest of the community. Therefore, they will be able to climb up, take their community along, empower them, and build more leadership within the community at each step.

[29] <https://www.citizenshandbook.org/arnsteinsladder.html>

5.2 Importance of Social inclusion

Social Inclusion in youth work is a word as misused as peace in the world at beauty pageants; everybody says it and wants it, but few know what this means, translates into practice, and applies to youth community organising.



Although probably one of the first things that pop into our minds when hearing the words “social exclusion” usually is images of extreme marginalisation and poverty, it is a bit more complex than that. We are looking at three main macro-areas where youth exclusion happens:

1. **Quality of Life:** meaning that young people do not have access to or are obstacles to a quality and decent life, and these can take the shape of obstacles and challenges in the fields of **health and wellbeing**, where the young people face difficulties such as chronic diseases, disabilities, etc., that stops them or at least obstacles their full participation and therefore Inclusion in society. Are exposed to **crime, harm, and criminalisation**, meaning either at risk of getting involved in crime, victims of crime and bullying, survivors of violent episodes or exposure, etc. **Living environment;** may come from difficult housing situations, remote geographical areas, unhealthy urban environments, etc.
2. **Participation:** his concerns limited or no access to opportunities for involvement. Keep in mind that here we are discussing exclusions by society or some of its elements and self-exclusion. What we are looking at in this area specifically is an exclusion to **economic participation**, meaning access or even knowledge about opportunities, limits to employment opportunities, or being part of a hard-to-employ group such as could be former offenders. **Cultural participation**, meaning the possibility to access opportunities for expressing one’s own culture, discrimination, racism, unrecognition, etc.; **Political and Civic participation**, meaning the access to a young person’s rights to express views and participate in politics and decision-making, limits to voting, disengagement with politics and public affairs including refusal to vote, or community’s issues not addressed by decision-makers.

Social participation, meaning obstacles to socialise, belonging, and being part of society, marginalisation, etc., for example, belonging to specific groups with a stigma or alienation by the rest of the community.

3. Resources: This concerns access to resources; without this element of exclusion, the group would have the necessary power to start solving their issues. **Material and Economic resources** are pretty explicit; low income or poverty comes to mind, but not only can material resources be access to essential services, etc. **Access to public and private resources;** for example, no access (or limited) to internet services, other services that enable a quality life, energy, food distribution, sanitation, etc. **Access to social resources** means, for example, youth centres or places for aggregation, support against substance abuse, support for survivors, etc. **Education and Skills** concern no access to opportunities for self-development, growth, and learning, such as schooling, drop-out, being part of young people Not in Employment, Education, and Training, absence of vocational training centres, etc.

The definition itself is pretty broad, and it is essential to understand which ones your youth community face and to what extent the access is limited or non-existent.



5.3 Democracy grounded on citizenship

Community organising is one of the self-protection tools available for a healthy and democratic society. Social exclusion has always been one of the elements that made fertile grounds for authoritarianism and dictatorial models. Dictators in every community across history were built on the support of the disadvantaged and marginalised. These groups were excluded from society and had no affection or feeling of belonging toward their community and its institutions. Once a force came into the political arena that appealed to the exclusion of these groups and called for the destruction of the existing system, it often met fertile ground; looking back in history at the working class in the Russian Empire, the unemployed in Germany affected by the economic crisis and countless more examples.

Community Organising not only promotes democracy as a principle and governance system but as an attitude, where young people identify solutions through cooperation, taking responsibility, and jointly placing solutions, creating a sense of belonging towards the community, its issues and issues, and especially its solutions.

Identifying the Issue: The community itself needs to be involved from the very start when determining the issue, observe, interview, conduct focus groups and processes, make sure that the community is heard in expressing its needs and wants (and make sure you can distinguish them) ensure that this is not a ranting corner where they come to complain, and that's it, but that they are aware that is the first step of a more extensive process of community organising that will lead to campaigns, actions, etc.

Solution-Finding: Precisely for not just collecting rants and complaints as you listen to them but also make sure they offer possible solutions to the issues they just voiced out, how this or that issue can be solved, what it needs and takes. This will be for some already empowering and others to put them in a place of responsibility for voicing their hopes.

Positive future outlook: Many emotions create passivity and inaction, for example, fear, and when making decisions, people often use two parameters; either because they are afraid something will happen or because they hope for something to happen. Your role is to empower the young people and ensure that the source of their action and engagement is based on hope, which is one of the most empowering feelings and emotions, and jointly create a positive future vision.

Activating: Once your positive future outlook is activated through a shared vision, the community starts to think in solution-finding modes, and the issue at hand is identified; that is when some will feel empowered to activate, and what does activating mean? It means to take responsibilities, maybe few at first which will initiate the path towards community leadership.

Awareness of rights and duties: You may be surprised to discover how little awareness there is concerning rights and responsibilities and what reactions young people often have in finding them; make sure you raise awareness about this to understand the existing situation, the disadvantage, the disaffection that exists and needs solving through active participation.

Creating opportunities: This is the key to keeping the community engaged and participating; opportunities for expressing their desire for participation and leadership, opportunities to make a positive impact, opportunities for learning and growth, and options to change the status quo, which can take the form of delegating powers and responsibilities, delivery of training, organisation of meetings, engaging in mentoring and coaching, etc.

Networking: Finding partners and engaging stakeholders is an essential part of community organising; this we will explore later, and the community should be empowered in the process of identifying allies, agreeing and maintaining relations, keeping in both mind and heart the community's good, that of the partner and the overall interest and shared goals.

Engaging Decision-makers: One issue often identified in youth groups facing marginalisation and lesser opportunities is a feeling of distance and antagonism from the institutions and authorities. It is necessary to bridge that gap and moderate and facilitate meetings with those who have the power to solve the issue the community is facing while still empowering the community leadership in the process, being of support.

Critical Thinking: One of the main directions to develop a democratic attitude within the young community members is the promotion of critical thinking, meaning fostering them to ask questions to probe for understanding, to identify data and information, develop the ability to think through solutions and conclusions, explore alternatives as well as different ways of thinking, and of course to communicate with each other and externally effectively.

Decision-making: It is essential to decide with the group the decision-making processes jointly and to try out different ones, aiming for consensus within the community as a tool for trust building. To increase responsibility, accountability, and transparency within the community and establish positive and inclusive processes.

Cooperation: Last but not least, the most crucial element to establish a democratic attitude and culture within the community is to identify as many possibilities of cooperation and collaboration within and outside the community, fostering the development of the art of compromise.

CHAPTER 6:

VISIBILITY, MEDIA, AND BECOMING POPULAR

It is often said that community organisers and civil society activists are so busy saving the world that they keep on forgetting to tell the world about it. Successful community organising needs outreach, support, networking, and awareness, which are all rooted in an efficient communication strategy, which we will explore in this chapter.



Second training course "Community Organising"
27 Feb. - 6 Mar. 2023 in Romania

6.1 Develop your community communication strategy

When you begin to plan your communication strategy, always keep in mind your target; talking to everyone means talking to no one, and tailor your message to your potential targets. Meaning:

Target	Message	Messenger	Feedback
To whom do you want to speak, and what is the goal of your communication? This specific target responds to what messages, channels, and types of communication?	The content, what is it you want to say, what are the learnings, awareness raising, the information you wish that target to receive?	What (or who) is the proper messenger to convey the message to your target? What are the most used and popular communication channels? Who has an exemplary reputation for talking to them?	Upon receiving your communication, what do you wish them to do? What is the call to action? How can they get in touch with you?

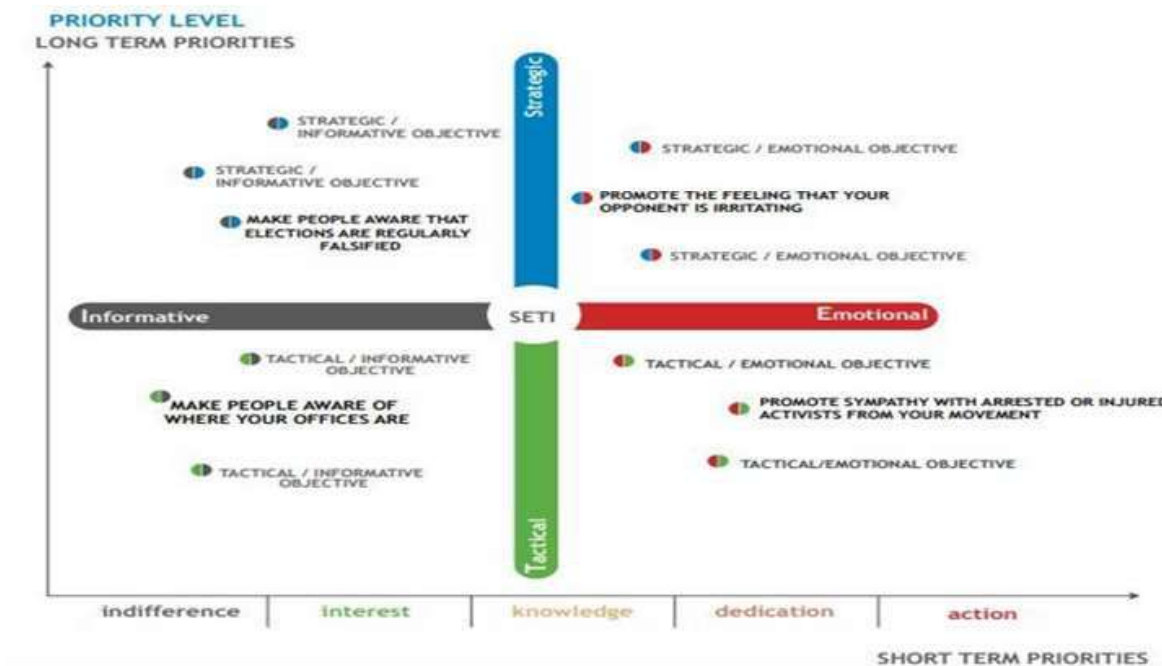
This is something you should always keep in mind and take into consideration when developing your communication strategy and practices. When we talk about targets, usually in community organising we can see four types of targets:

Who	Description	Communication Aim
1. Community Members and Activists.	These are the active and passive supporters of your community organising.	To encourage, motivate, promote the vision, recruit and pursue the community's aims.
2. The community at a large and broader audience.	This is the community at large, including those who are neutral, those who like you, and those who oppose you.	Understand your message and feel attracted to your cause by either becoming your supporter and member or withdrawing support from your opponents.
3. Potential allies and stakeholders.	This is every group, body, or organisation that shares fully or partially your values and purpose and has the potential of joining you or supporting you.	You want them to consider joining and supporting you and entering a coalition, and this is where it is necessary to show openness to compromise.

Who	Description	Communication Aim
4. Sympathisers outside the community	These people are either marginally or unaffected by the issue but still like you and would like to support you. Here you can also position friendly social media.	Offer them the opportunity to promote and support your mission, and if necessary, support the criticism of your opponents and reasons why the issue exists.

So each one of the four targets above requires its specific communication, message, and messenger as each requires different sorts of feedback; in other words, the call-to-action for each target group is different, and this means your communication needs to be tailored, and on the spot [30].

The S.E.T.I. Model of Communication:



The Centre developed this model for Applied Non-Violent Action. The idea is that in community organising, as well as in organising non-violent movements, there are two types of communication approaches, one being **Agitation Communication**, where you raise awareness about the unfair situation or injustice the community is facing as a motivator to take action and engage, and **Reconciliation Communication** which aims at offering reconciliation, peacebuilding, and cooperation with the opponents to solve the issue. Part of your strategy is to decide when at which stage, and for what purpose to use this or that approach.

[30] "Non-violent struggle - 50 crucial points" by Srdja Popovic, Andrej Milivojevic, Slobodan Djinnovic. Centre for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) Belgrade 2007

As you can see from the graph above, the **S.E.T.I. Model** stands for Strategic, Emotional, Tactical, and Informative. It offers ideas and inspiration for structuring your communication efforts and remembers to keep it targeted.

So we have to Axes one vertical and one horizontal, **Short Term Priorities and Long Term Priorities**; as we previously learned, the long-term priorities are part of our overall **strategy**, and the short-term priorities are part of our **tactics**. And here, you can structure your communication to be informative, delivering information about the issue, the community, the roots and causes of the problem, similar situations, etc. Or emotional, a communication meant to evoke specific emotions and emotional responses. A minor health warning here, the most accessible emotions to produce in a human are anger, hatred, and fear, and beware not to aim for those; community organising starts small and local and has a long-term aim to organise a sustainable and efficient community, angry mobs that might be prone to negative feelings, or even violent responses will not serve your purpose, quite the opposite.

So in the upper left, you have Strategic and Strategic Informative communication objectives; this means that this type of communication is to be used to sway your target from indifferent or uninterested towards becoming interested in you; here is where your information about the issue at hand, the community needs and wants and aim at increasing the knowledge your targets have about you, the problems you are facing and potentially the solutions as well.

In the lower-left quadrant, you have tactical objectives and tactical/informative communication objectives; you inform your target audiences where you can be found, what you need, what they can potentially do at this stage, communicate events, meetings, gatherings, etc. And this also serves the purpose and the upper-left quadrant to move your targets from being uninterested / indifferent to being interested and developing knowledge about you.

In the upper-right quadrant, you have the strategic and strategic/emotional objectives; this is where your communication aims at evoking emotions among your targets, and remember to evoke positive emotions such as hope, courage, motivation, you-can-make-a-difference, and beware of negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and fear. In this part, your targets are already informed and have some knowledge about you, and now is the opportunity to nudge them into becoming your supporters and allies.

In the lower-right quadrant, you have emotional and emotional/tactical objectives; these are short-term objectives that can promote and foster an emotional response to your community organising and campaigning, for example, share the stories of your community leaders and activists to evoke empathy towards their efforts and work to solve the issue at hand. And again, just like the upper quadrant this communication is aimed at those who already know who you are and what you do.

The purpose of S.E.T.I. Model is to structure your communication strategy to move your target groups from being indifferent or uninterested in your community. It issue becoming interested, gaining knowledge about you, showing some dedication to your cause (such as attending meetings, participating in rallies, and support through social media) to being motivated and encouraged to gain action and become active supporters or allies.

Take these tips into consideration, and you will have a draft communication strategy that can continually be improved by participating in specific communication training and accessing learning materials [31].



[31] CANVAS Core Curriculum students' book. "A guide to effective non-violent struggle". By Srdja Popovic, Slobodan Djinojic, Andrej Milivojevic, Hardy Merriman and Ivan Marovic CANVAS 2007.

6.2 Developing your internal media and channels

Of course, everything we have said so far is applicable and realistic if you have developed your communication channels. This sounds as obvious as it is underestimated, so pay quite a lot of attention here; this is one of the potentially significant pitfalls in community organising.

Research:

We stressed pretty a lot the importance of doing your research, gathering data and information by talking to experts, and engaging with the community through interviews and focus groups; an essential element here is to find out what the preferred and most used communication channels for every target group you want to reach. What social media do they use, and what for? How present are they? How is the quality of the internet connection in the place where your community dwells? How widespread are devices such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets, and which are more used? This will help you greatly in deciding on which communication channels to establish.

Design:

Keep a unique design, set of colours, and the same logo on every communication channel you want to develop; it needs to be recognised from the font, logo, and colours that this is you and can't be confused with anyone else. Also, regarding the choice of the aspect, beware of cultural connotations to specific fonts, colours, etc., not to be mistaken, for example, with some political movements, parties, or existing civil society organisations. Of course, keep it simple.

Content:

Make sure that the content you communicate and publish, besides the specific content about the community, its issues, and solutions, is relevant to the target groups you want to reach; you can also think of developing particular channels for specific groups, for example, a dedicated page to community activists and another for the general population or stakeholders, to keep your communication tailored.

Plan

Make a plan for your content delivery, when to publish what, and for this, you need to know when your target group is mainly online to reach them best, and this is part of the research and data you need to find. Of course, the plan needs to stay flexible and adaptable to unpredictable situations, keeping in mind the **S.E.T.I. Model** and the purpose of moving from uninterest to commitment.

Consider also offline

Through your research, your target group has limited access to the internet, or the bandwidth in that area is low. So, first of all, keep in mind to make your media and communication channels online accessible also at low speed without overloading graphics and rich content. Secondly, consider offline and traditional methods such as leaflets and brochures when you have some budget, to engage volunteers in popular spots to spread information and gather feedback, to even go door to door, or many other creative methods for you to be on the streets where your people are, and not to expect them right away to come to you and join your events.

Think like an Admiral

Many people will feel the temptation at the very beginning to register on as many social platforms, sites, and pages, as to be everywhere, including planning high effort and time-demanding presence on the streets. Be realistic and keep it simple. Select the right amount of channels you can realistically manage to make it easier to have them move at the same pace and speed, and none is left behind, and you can realistically respond to interactions. For this purpose, you need the mindset of an admiral, meaning, choose an admiral ship, one channel which is the main one and has all of your content and communication, and then develop the fleet around the admiral ship, meaning if your admiral ship has all the content the visual elements can be replicated on specialised channels for photos and videos, just as an example. Most important is that all the channels are interlinked, that every fleet channel leads back to the admiral ship, and that the admiral ship contains all the content and materials disseminated across the different channels in the fleet. This way, your communication will move further, smoothly, and at the same speed and pace.

Targeting

This is also a potential pitfall that needs to be appropriately treated; remember that speaking to everyone means speaking to no one. Above, we identified four possible target groups you could be interested in addressing; however, at the very beginning of your community organising, one or two would be more than enough, don't forget about the other ones later.

Each of those targets is interested in specific content and is receptive to a particular language, symbolism, metaphors, and styles; here, you have to make sure you use the right ones with the right group, and what would help you here a lot is to develop your Persona, in marketing terms a Persona is the features, characteristics, behaviours that a person displays publicly, and is a part of identity.

The way to develop a Persona is to imagine a single person that contains the characteristics, behaviours, and habits of your target group as if this was a person, and here is an example:

Age	22	Education	University Student
Gender	Female	Status	Single
Location	Sub-urban	Favourite Music	Hip-hop
Profession	Cashier	Causes	Ecology

And the list can be a lot longer, including their favourite movies, favourite series, reading habits, and likes, subjects she was good at in school, the food she likes, political views, sexual orientation, gender identity, leisure preferences, favourite social media, most used apps, income, family background, social class and status, hopes, fears. It can be extended. Also, here you will be working with the stereotypes about your target groups, which is ok.

Once you have defined your Persona, you can start to create your communication and content targeting this specific person. This will transform your communication into a personal conversation with someone you know well, as you know the answers to all those questions. Although, in reality, should you go for 40 or 50 descriptors of this Persona, there may be only one or two people that will match that description, there will be more who will match maybe 20 elements, and many more who will reach ten parts, and a lot more who will match 5. The purpose here is the identification and that your target group reacts with “Oh, they are talking to me!” and this works when target group members identify wholly or partly with some of the elements present in your communication.

So imagine who you want to reach, make a Persona exercise for each of them, and once it is completed, design the communication process, content, and appearance accordingly.

6.3 Working with other media and journalists

Besides building and establishing your channels, it is also essential to dedicate part of your PR efforts to establishing positive and constructive relations with the media stakeholders in your area and those potentially interested in you. And here is how:

1. **Mapping:** Create a map of all the media stakeholders that exist in the area where your community dwells, both online and offline; identify podcasters and radios, blogs and newspapers or magazines, social media pages and influencers, map out all the individuals, groups and stakeholders whose job is to disseminate information.
2. **Analyse:** Look at the content they put out there. Does it concern your community or the issue they face, fully or even marginally? Those that answer this criterion are your media.
3. **Contact-making:** Establish contact and personal relations with those working there, introducing yourself, your vision, and your strategy and ensuring them first-row-seats for the events you will organise. You will have a database of online and offline journalists, opinion-makers, bloggers, etc. (Also, be on the lookout for celebrities whose background lies within your specific community or territory.)

Significant the first three steps are done, you map them out, identify those more responsive to your message than others and establish a contact for your database. By the way, it does not mean you should ignore those who are neutral or who could show hostility toward you; the ones closest to you are treated slightly better.

Next...

Establish a regular communication practice, making sure that you are identified as a potential provider of news and information, which is their trade, for example:

1. Give exclusivity to your friendly media, and make sure they are the first to receive any news about your community organising, events, or campaign.
2. Express opinions about relevant events happening in the community or, more broadly, about the issue you are tackling, and present the media with opinion statements about where you stand.
3. Invite them to the events and your community to witness the issues and challenges faced. It makes no sense to hold press conferences when doing the first steps in community organising and keeping it strictly small and local. Still, you can save media events, walk-throughs the community, and facilitate contact.
4. Pamper them; journalists and opinion-makers like to be recognised as such and treated nicely; make sure you allow some symbolic presents, a little bit of food and drinks, and unique access to your information and fact-finding report.
5. Issue press releases, and at the same time, use your own media channels to convey the same information in the press release, just in case the information you gave out gets distorted or changed.

Issuing a press release:

This is one possible format for writing a press release (There are many more out there, but you can start with this one). What is essential about press releases:

- Timely can be up to 48 hours before the event; if earlier, it can be forgotten. In some cases, it can be sent after the event or as a position statement about something that happened.
- Address it to the media stakeholder and specific journalists you know personally to increase the chances it gets published.

Title:	What is this press release about? What is the topic?
Subtitle	Why is this important, or why is this happening?
The Body	When will this take place, or which timeframe is this referring to?
	Where is this going to happen, or which place/area does this concern?
	For whom and by whom are the actors and stakeholders involved? For whom is this? Who is doing it?
	How did this come to be, or how will this happen.
Conclusion and your contact details.	

For example:

Young People to Reclaim Public Green Spaces

Young people can't access our neighbourhood's green and public spaces because of criminal activities.

Next Sunday, from 10 am until 6 pm, the youth from a neighbourhood will reclaim ownership of our beautiful park by organising creative and artistic activities throughout the day for our entire neighbourhood to enjoy. This will take place in the Fountain Square at the centre of the park, and the activities will be spread across the whole park.

This is an event by the young people of our neighbourhood for the young people in our neighbour, but anyone will be more than welcome to join, as our community, together with the local youth centre, the local high school and the municipality, are going to create a series of events and workshops on creativity, from performing arts to painting and music, absolutely for free for all our citizens.

We are tired of seeing our public spaces perceived as dangerous for our neighbours to walk through and witnessing the criminal activities happening there, such as selling illegal substances and frequent robberies and fights. Since the city authorities are silent and absent from solving this problem, we decided to take the situation into our hands and finally reclaim what is ours by rights.

Feel free to join us in experiencing a beautiful community day. Should you want to find out more, contact us at the following...

Overall, working with media can provide your community effort with priceless allies to convey your message about your cause to the community and the wider public. Having good relations with the media can be a massive aid to your successful actions, as this will give opportunities to the public and relevant target groups to be informed about the issues as well as the solutions, and gives your community leverage to reach those decision-makers that may not have agreed to meet with you in the first place, and be influenced by your messages and actions, in parallel making them accountable for their actions.

Should you play your cards right, at some point, you will probably be asked to give an interview; in this case, we have some tips for you:

- Know your topic well and in-depth, which allows you to answer more questions consistently with your core message and vision and prove your expertise (without appearing academic).
- Get ready by trying this out within your group to practice your oratory skills and argumentation, creating a smooth and logical flow in your speech, statements, and sentences.
- A journalist may be aggressive and look for arguments or even a conflict because this attracts attention and momentum, but also to test the grounds, especially if it is from a media stakeholder who might oppose you. Just beware.
- If this is a podcast, a post, a written interview, or radio, you can use some support notes, but not if you are on video.

Keep in mind when it comes to being interviewed on video, be it on television or online video channels.

- Don't look at the camera; look at the interviewer.
- Avoid green and shiny fabrics; avoid stripes and chequered or tartan clothes. It can be distracting on-camera lights.
- Take it easy on jewellery, decorations, and excessive makeup; this can be distracting too.
- Keep your answers short, around 15-30 seconds.
- If you are being called for a phone interview, enquire on the topic and ask to call back so you can get ready, do research and prepare yourself.
- If you do not know something, admit so and promise to get back to the journalist once you have more information; this will be appreciated.

Media Events

As we mentioned before, the stage of small and local press conferences needs to make more sense. However, you can still plan some media events, which can be just as time-consuming and costly as a press conference, so make sure you need this before organising a media event. For example:

- A significant announcement you need to make that will attract the media's interest.
- You are under pressure by media interest, and you would like to have the media all at once in one place to address the questions because you can't keep answering calls and emails to answer the same questions.

A media event is a scaled-down press conference and can be an informal coffee or tea with a few journalists attending, and still, you need to take into consideration a few aspects:

1. Venue and time, where and when are you going to gather? It could also be a public space, depending if you want to dedicate any funds to this activity. Usually, mornings are better just after the rush hour, as afternoons are often used to prepare the articles for the next day.
2. Keep the duration in mind, and keep an agenda, which should not last longer than an hour; you can make yourself available for follow-up talks and one-on-one conversations.
3. Have a list of those to invite, and inform them in advance, asking for confirmation.
4. Send out a press release with all the details and agenda of your media event; you don't want to disclose all your information at once in a press release.
5. Prepare to document the event, pictures, filming, and minutes and gather the volunteers to divide these tasks.
6. Prepare the media kits and folders for each journalist containing all the relevant information.
7. Set a reminder for invitees a couple of days before.
8. Please arrange beforehand some follow-up one-on-one meetings with journalists and interviews.

Once the event starts, make sure you have the following:

- ✓ An attendance list of the journalists.
- ✓ Have an opening where you introduce your group, your community, and the agenda; this is also an excellent time to make any announcements if you have any. And keep it short to allow time for questions.
- ✓ Time for questions, allowing the journalists to introduce themselves and their outlet if necessary, and moderate the meeting, trying to have one question at a time; it's also ok to cut off journalists taking too much time or monopolising the question time.
- ✓ Summarise what was said at the end of the meeting and close the session.
- ✓ Of course, make sure you record everything yourself.

Once it is over

- Issue a press release of the event
- Send the materials to those journalists who have not attended the event.

The paradox today is that most journalists need to be more active and, in parallel, spoiled by the enormous information flows. Meaning that the first move here is always in you to contact them, inform them, and invite them. Otherwise, they can comfortably sit in their chair and wait for the information.

One thing is for sure; a journalist wants news, good and quality information, reliable sources, and especially those with a personal touch. General and overall updates on your activities may be boring. It is essential to your success to maintain good relations with the media, and this will need both time and resources you should allocate to PR and communication to make the proper investment [32].

[32] Basic Handbook on Community Organising. Iwona Novak , Erasmus+ Bona Fides Civic Activity Association (Poland), Centre for Community Organising (Slovakia), Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network (Hungary), Civil College (Hungary), and National Association of Resource Teachers (Bulgaria)

6.4 Social Media - a useful tool to “raise your voice”

Simply put, social media is the act of exchanging thoughts, viewpoints, and visuals via internet media. Recently, it has become a significant trend, mainly due to the advancement of information and communication technologies.

Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. provide convenient means to share viewpoints, knowledge, and personal moments, and this is what drives people towards using social media more frequently.

Every little bit counts, and we may even hear the voice of someone sitting in a remote area of the planet. Through blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and Facebook and Twitter posts, this information spreads around the world and plays a significant role in cultural evolution.

Social media affects every aspect of a person's life. People utilize internet media to gather information, share knowledge, tell tales and debate opposing points of view. It is one of the best ways to disseminate and broadcast local and global news.

Advantages of Social Media:

- ✓ Global connectivity:
- ✓ You have a direct connection with your audience in your business:
- ✓ A wonderful educational tool:
- ✓ You can grow your brand.
- ✓ You can increase website traffic
- ✓ Creates Awareness
- ✓ Entertainment with Social Media

Disadvantages of social media:

- ✓ Cyberbullying
- ✓ You might get some negative comments.
- ✓ Present Physically, Mentally Absent
- ✓ Circulation of fake news
- ✓ Hacking
- ✓ Promotes Laziness

Social media will continue to exist. Digital discussions, debates, and connections are beneficial, and it's more difficult to be accountable in a medium where there is only sometimes accountability. Community organisers should never avoid social media, but we must use it wisely:

- ✓ Like and share what you agree with.
- ✓ Be honest. Don't make up stories or pretend to be someone you are not.
- ✓ Stick to the facts. There are many credible sources of information online.
- ✓ Respectful disagreement is healthy, but name-calling is never constructive. Unfortunately, some like to be provocative and get a rise out of others; don't take the bait

CHAPTER 7:

RESOURCE BUILDING

Here is something significant to be aware of, the community you are organising is facing a few problems, and among them are some specific issues that you chose together to tackle, and those problems and issues have not been solved yet, because your community lacks the power to solve them, which translates as the community lacking resources to solve their issues, and the purpose of community organising here is to build resources, therefore power, within the community so that they can solve their problems, and here is how.



Second training course "Community Organising"
27 Feb. - 6 Mar. 2023 in Romania

7.1 Identify power resources from within the community

Here we are going to present you with a tool to start creating a Power Map, an activity with guided questions that will help you understand how power is distributed and allocated in your community among all actors and stakeholders to help you gain a helicopter view of the present situation you are facing.

Making a Power Analysis

1. Defining the agenda and understanding your opposition's plan: What are the key topics and points of your schedule that will be publicly presented? How is it connected to the issue that you identified? What is the agenda of your target group? What are their needs and wants? What is the plan of your opponents? What are the critical elements of the arguments that they present in public concerning the group issue?

Describe here your agenda, your needs and wants, that you will publicly present; describe here your community's agenda in terms of conditions and desires and the plan of those individuals or groups who will oppose you, listing what arguments they will use in public.

2. Major Battles and Campaigns: Analysis of the news. What are the public battles, policy debates, and cases connected to the group's issue?

Describe the present scenario, what confrontations are happening in public, what topics are being debated and trendy, and how these are connected to the community's issue.

3. Major decision makers: Who are the individuals, groups, and bodies responsible for making decisions on group issues? How much power each of them has? Who are they connected to? What are the things they like, and what do they fear? How can the group put pressure? Any personal connections?

Make here a list of decision-makers, how much power each has, the connections between them, their hopes and fears, and how it is possible to pressure them. Also, you should list if you have any relation to those decision-makers.

4. Organised and active opposition groups: Who are the groups of people, and organised people, who are opposing the group agenda and can actively do something in support of the target, influence the target or publicly confront the group during the campaign?

Here you look at your opponents, who they are, what groups, bodies, or organisations are against your agenda and that of the community, their capacity to influence public opinion, confront you, and what they can do against you.

5. Allies and supporters: How much power, capacities, and tools does the group have? Who is going to support you? Who can give you extra energy by forming a coalition or alliance? These should be organised groups - other groups of people, non-governmental organisations, unions, etc.

Here you look at the potential network, identifying those bodies, organisations, and groups with the tools and resources you need to overcome the issue, who they are, what they can give, and their interest in doing so.

6. Unorganised Groups: Who are affected by the issue that the group still needs to reach out to? Where and how can they be found? How can they be involved in the group's work, campaigns, and actions?

Here you look at groups of people who are not necessarily organised but are also affected by the issue, besides your community, where you can find them, and how you can involve them in your actions.

Now that you have developed your power map, you have a slight idea of how power is allocated and distributed around your community, both among potential supporters and opponents. You have a solid ground upon which to develop your research. (Keep in mind, when we say research, this is not only desk research, this implies talking and listening to the community, to experts, and other stakeholders concerned with either the community, the issue, or both) And be on the lookout for:

- What information do you need about the issue you chose to develop a complete understanding?
- Who has this information explicitly?
- Where can you find this information?
- What tools can you use to collect this information?
- What are the benefits of using these tools and added value?

The answers and critical findings to each of these questions will help you greatly to understand the power dynamics within the community, combined with the power map before.

Below is a friendly tool you can use with your community

You can use this activity within a focus group or a general meeting with your community while you are beginning to identify the issue and understand the power and resources you have. You can do this together or divide it into smaller groups for more variables and inputs.

Utopia (a facilitated dialogue - and remember to give the instructions one-by-one, not all together, to let time for the group/s to focus on one question at a time)

1. Describe your community 50 years from now; the reality in which they live now is perfect; it has reached a utopian state; describe it in detail.
2. Now describe the reality today. What are the main differences between today and the utopia you just described?
3. What needs to be done to start moving the community in the direction of the utopia you described?
4. What resources are necessary to do so?
5. What resources do you already have that would help you make a first step towards utopia?
6. What resources do you still need?
7. Where do you find them? Who has those resources?
8. How can you obtain them?
9. What needs to be done in 1 year to make your first steps toward that utopia?
10. What needs to be done in 6 months to make your first steps toward that utopia?
11. What needs to be done in 1 month to make your first steps toward that utopia?
12. What needs to be done in 1 week to make your first steps toward that utopia?
13. What can you do starting tomorrow to make your first steps toward that utopia?

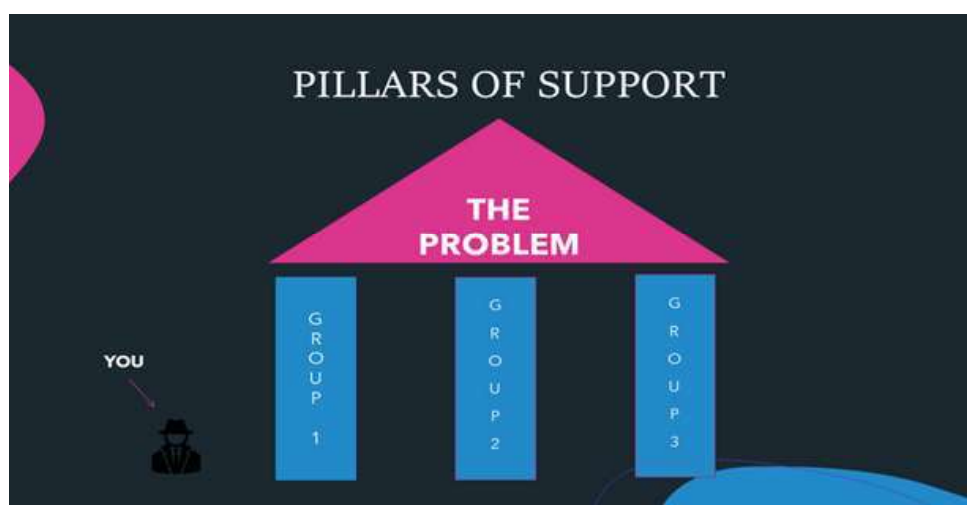
Complete by presenting (if it is in small groups) or summarising the result

Another tool you can apply with your group here is the Problem Tree / Solution Tree we discovered in the previous chapters.

7.2 Power Analysis Tools

In this final session, we would like to offer you two concrete tools that you can use. It is one tool divided into two main parts: the Pillars of Support and the Powergraph. However, this was mainly used in the past to identify the opponents and their support for the issue your community organising aims to solve. We will try to be creative, but let's take our time and go individually.

The Pillars of Support [33]

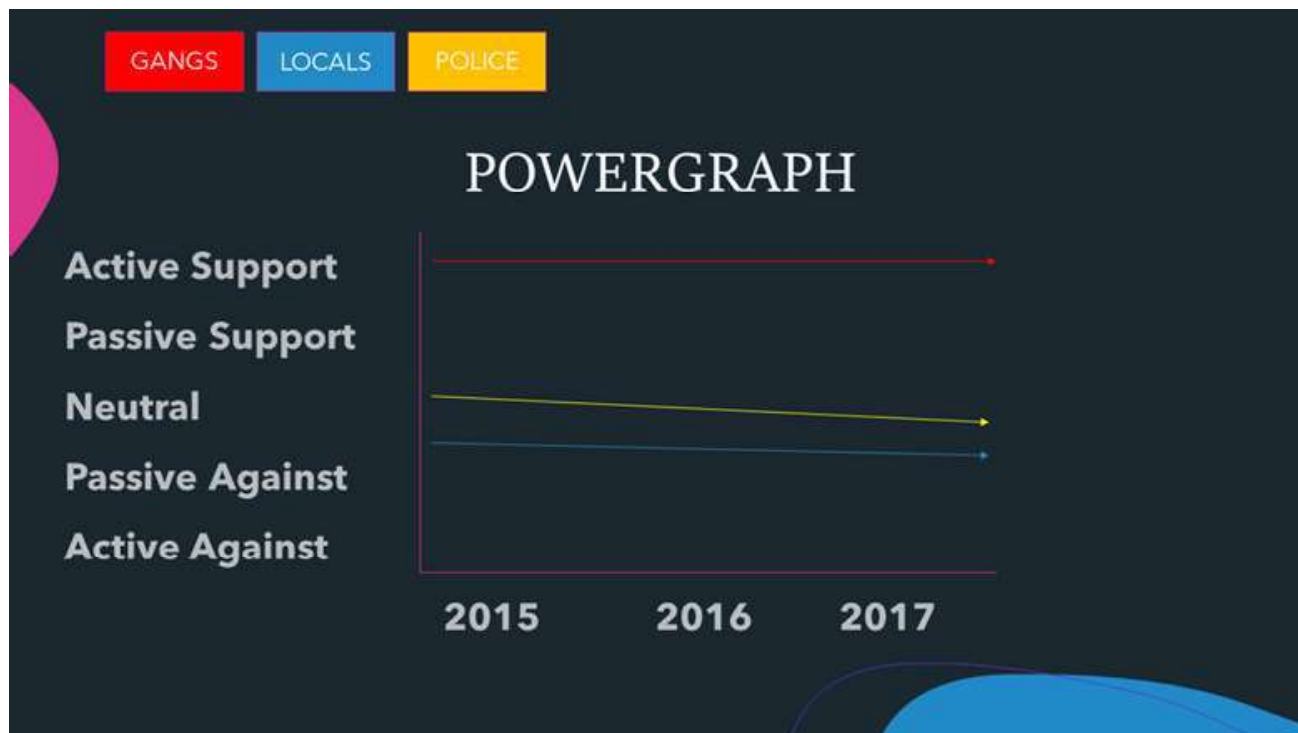


Imagine a structure like a classic temple, where at the very top, we have the Problem or Issue your community organising is trying to solve, and down to the bottom left corner is you. You and your initially small bunch of activists are far too small to tackle that issue by yourself, and you don't have to because the issue exists because specific groups of people support it. Therefore it is essential to identify the groups of people supporting their problems and, through your community organising and your actions, induce them to stop supporting the issue, encouraging them to withdraw their resources (their power) from supporting it. If enough groups of people stop supporting the problem, the issue will collapse.

At this stage, we need to do a little brainstorming. Who among the groups of people, institutions, organisations, and bodies are providing their resources and power and ensuring that the problem exists? Beware, here we are talking about specific groups of people, not concepts or ideas; poverty, for example, is not a group of people but a situation caused because a particular group, the poor people, have limited or no access to resources and the result of the actions of specific groups of people; for example relevant decision-makers not investing to fill the skills mismatch between job seekers completing compulsory education and the requirements of the job market. Go ahead and start designing your pillars of support; in the example above, there are three, but they can be as many as you wish as long as they reflect reality.

[33] "Non-violent struggle - 50 crucial points" by Srdja Popovic, Andrej Milivojevic, Slobodan Djinic. Centre for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) Belgrade 2007

The Powergraph[1]



You have selected your pillars of support, and now it is time to put them on the powergraph; this is the second and most significant part of this tool because with this method, you will analyse the behaviour of the pillar towards the issue and therefore how many resources (power) do they allocate to ensure the issue still exists.

There is a vertical axis that shows the behaviour and a horizontal one that offers a timeline, so you can see what the trend is. Now you understand why we keep on saying do your research?

On the vertical axis, different options starting from the top:

1. The group is actively supporting the issue.
2. The group is passively supporting the issue.
3. The group is neutral about the issue.
4. The group is passively against the issue.
5. The group is actively against the issue.

Community organising is a gradual and step-by-step process; at the very beginning, none of the groups you identified are located in points 4 and 5 (passively/actively against the issue). Still, you can understand where these groups stand and the trend at this stage. Later you can identify actions and campaigns that can help you move the group one notch down, for example, from being neutral about the issue to becoming passively against the issue, as it is pretty unrealistic for groups to change radically and all of a sudden become active against the issue.

[34] "Non-violent struggle - 50 crucial points" by Srdja Popovic, Andrej Milivojevic, Slobodan Djinic. Centre for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) Belgrade 2007

The actions and campaigns you will identify are meant to shake that pillar of support so it does not support the issue anymore, or at least lessen the consent to the issue, so that the whole structure becomes more unstable and is easy to make fall.

In the example you see above, we have three pillars concerning a situation of street violence, and the identified pillars are:

- The local gangs. They are actively supporting the issue.
- The police force is between passively supporting the problem and trending towards neutrality by being inactive and avoiding these neighbourhoods.
- The locals are neutral and passive because they fear it and don't know what to do about it.

In this case, an option for you is to bring community organising to the locals and build local resources, power and competencies so that the locals can build a strong advocacy group to demand to the relevant authorities the presence of law enforcement in the neighbourhood, which can result in the gangs needing to hide more and therefore not to support the issue as much as before, making youth crime issue slowly crumble down.

Reverse the situation

A little fun activity you can do is to combine this activity with the Problem-Tree / Solution-Tree; using the latter, look at which groups can support the solution and make a Powergraph to identify how much support they are already giving to the identified solutions and again plan actions and campaigns to help them increase their support, resources, and power to the solution. But, it is just an idea.

Another tool you can apply with your group here is the Problem Tree / Solution Tree we discovered in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER 8:

CONCLUSIONS



*Second training course "Community Organising"
27 Feb. - 6 Mar. 2023 in Romania*

8.1 Summary of the handbook

So what makes a Community Organiser [35]?

A community organiser is a volunteer or professional who frequently emerges from the communities where the organising is necessary and where it will take place. This means that there should be some direct or at least marginal connection between the community and the organiser, which is part of the leadership development process. Here, the organiser, can build trust and accountable relationships within the community, which works as a community outsider, bridging differences, mediating and moderating between different actors that affect, and are affected by the community and its issues.

Community organising is an art and a trade that can be learned through investing in training, mentoring, and ensuring the recognition and validation of this profession. It also includes envisaging how a community organiser can make a living out of it.

Starting Community Organising [36]

When talking to professional community organisers about what is an essential aspect of their job, a lot will answer “Listening,” actively listening to mind, body, and heart to the people in the community to understand and select the issues in need of solving and that people care about. Remember how the cycle goes:

Listening: one-on-one with several community members to help you identify the issue.

Meeting: Bring them together, and together prioritise the issue.

Regularity: make the meetings regular to start working on the selected issues and make a plan and strategy for the campaign.

Research: Lookout for potential solutions, target groups, decision-makers, institutions, and any person or body/organisation with the power to solve the issue and make solutions possible and viable.

Action: Take different steps to solve the issue and engage institutions and decision-makers with negotiation, confrontation, or other tools and methods.

[35] Making a way forward Community Organising and the Future of Democracy in Europe - Written and edited by Dave Beckwith, Deborah Doane, Steve Hughes, Bernadett Sebály, Anna Striethorst and Gordon Whitman - Ariadne Network

[36] Basic Handbook on Community Organising. Iwona Novak , Erasmus+ Bona Fides Civic Activity Association (Poland), Centre for Community Organising (Slovakia), Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network (Hungary), Civil College (Hungary), and National Association of Resource Teachers (Bulgaria)

Build a Community: Building a democratic and sustainable group of leaders that will address the local needs of their community.

Once you win your first campaign and celebrate the victory, it is time to move to the next issue to tackle, and the cycle begins again.

In this specific manual, we mainly focused on some aspects, some in-depth and some marginal, concerning Action and Regularity. We will dedicate a particular handbook. For now, the advice is to focus on a specific area or group that needs organising and engaging in social change, analyse what needs improvement, and develop a complete understanding of the issue and its impact on the community.

Please read about it and conduct sample interviews one-to-one with locals, stakeholders, and decision-makers who are affected (or affect) the situation. The whole picture will allow you to decide on the following steps.

Measuring Community Organising

Like every process involving a Theory of Change and civil society activism, community organising needs to be measured to understand its effects, impact, and outcomes and to carry out adaptations along the way. The development of Key Progress Indicators can be a training or handbook in itself, but for now, keep in mind four metrics to measure the impact of Community Organising, and mostly are qualitative.

- 1) Civic Engagement and Leadership Development:** This includes how many people are involved in the events and how many volunteers are recruited.
- 2) The value of change:** The change your community's actions have brought, how many people did it impact, and how?
- 3) Narrative Impact:** How many media stories are there, and what are their impact and outreach? What about your channels? How many did you reach, and what is the response?
- 4) Structural changes:** What is the impact of the change that is happening? Is there increased transparency and democracy?

Out of these, you can develop several indicators that will help you to monitor your success and understand how the process is going. For example, concerning leadership and involvement, look at the tasks and responsibilities and distribution among your active members or the successful recruitment rate carried out by your active members just as an example.

[34] "Non-violent struggle - 50 crucial points" by Srdja Popovic, Andrej Milivojevic, Slobodan Djinnovic. Centre for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) Belgrade 2007

Community Organising [37]

DOs

Focus on Measuring the Process: success is not only about the outcome; there is much impact in the process. Social change takes time. Be patient.

Invest in time with your community: Community organising is adaptable and changes according to local contexts, which comes with in-depth understanding.

Cross-Sectorial mindset: Bring people, groups, and communities together through compromise. You don't have to share every goal; for some actions having a few in common is enough to be partners.

DONT's

Think Small and Local means Small Impact: Small and Local is the kickstart, don't underestimate the power of making waves through the change you implement.

Get stuck on terminology: No concrete definition or parameter shows the scientific formula of community organising, and your practice is what will define you.

Money is not all: To throw money at a community does not work; it needs to go hand in hand with support and capacity building. Also, to get started, don't expect remuneration and funds immediately; prove to donors and sponsors that it is worth supporting you through your actions, not just your intentions.

Let go of power [38]: To support a community to be organised requires trust and delegation of power until an almost total handover. Be sure a community leader and a community organiser are quite different roles.

[37] Making a way forward Community Organising and the Future of Democracy in Europe - Written and edited by Dave Beckwith, Deborah Doane, Steve Hughes, Bernadett Sebály, Anna Striethorst and Gordon Whitman - Ariadne Network

[38] Donal MacFhearraigh of OSIFE.(Open Society Institute)

So why should we organise communities?

We are in a period of change and transition, which is occurring globally, where progressive thought clashes with tribalism and a return to an undefined past. Worldwide governance and structure are undergoing significant infrastructural changes. The economy is either reinventing itself through new green practices or changing its old business ways.

The uncertainties we face are symptomatic of the times we live in, marked by pandemics, wars, and recession, a human society rethinking and reinventing itself. Progress is being made in almost any aspect, from health to welfare, from representative democracy to participation and engagement of civil society and its organisations, and interconnectivity between individual humans, cultures, and societies. It is a world developing very fast, with an overload of opportunities, sources, and possibilities to be informed, to belong, and to participate. This can generate a sense of loss and disorientation, resulting in a hindered sense of belonging and damaging communities. When we belong, we feel responsible, we think of ownership, and we feel it is our duty and right that goes beyond our wellbeing to our communities and human ecosystems, including the natural world. Our wellbeing is connected to the places and groups we belong to.

Moreover, we need to establish and transform many of our habits into more sustainable ones, such as our economy, how we treat our environment, and how we live in our societies. Community organising, with its empowering, horizontal, democratic, and power/resource-sharing practices, is one viable way to start living socially sustainable, striving for equality, decent living standards, access to health, etc.

Whenever you begin your endeavours in civil society and community organising, keep in mind that "...it takes six months to create a new political institution and to write a constitution, it may take six years to set up a halfway viable economy, and it can likely take 60 years to build a civil society...[39]"

To start building that sustainable future we all desire and those socially sustainable, inclusive, diverse, accountable, transparent, democratic communities, we need to start now, small and local, one step at a time, and many of us in just as many realities.

[39] Sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf "Has the East joined the West?", *New Perspective Quarterly*, 7:2, Spring, 1990, page 42

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