

6. Community foundations: a new territorial actor for participatory planning and co-design of social-ecological innovation,

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The first ever Community Foundation was established in Cleveland (Ohio, USA) in 1914. Today the GFCF- Global Fund of Community Foundations estimates that there are 1850+ community foundations worldwide and that they have increased 75% in the last 25 years. They are different in origin, background and mission. Community foundations are, by nature, a highly context-specific field, being this is a plus and a richness. In the current changing landscape of civil society space and donor funding, community philanthropy is a critical part of the process to strength the capabilities of communities to make claims and to boost their sense of agency. Community philanthropy can be a powerful strategy to people-led local development and a concrete way to achieve mutual accountability, local ownership and, at the end, sustainability.

Community philanthropy can be a very essential player for the SDGs (Sustainable Developing Goals) agenda everywhere, in the once called “developed countries” as well as in the “developing” and/ or “emerging” ones. It can make a real difference for 2030 Global Agenda local ownership, accountability and different kinds of sustainability. It can contribute to break down the divide between donors and the so called “beneficiaries” towards an idea of co-investment where different actors bring different strengths and needs to the table.

But still, this is not the reality and, most probably, not even the

common understanding, neither from the side of the United Nations and Governments, nor from the one of community philanthropy.

We are interested in helping to enlighten professional specializations and sector silos and making our contribution in building bridges, inter-sector synergies and alliances which are so key to face current complex issues and challenges, exploring where, how and on which important topics engage community philanthropy in Europe for SDGs.

The SDGs agenda is – arguably – the most ambitious and powerful international agreement the United Nations approved since the Bretton Woods accords in 1944.

On the worst of the hypothesis, SDGs will remain a technocratic exercise unable to trickle down and engage public opinion on choices that challenge our own life styles, such as way of spending, consuming, even traveling.

In theory, community foundations are perfectly placed to play an astonishing long-term role in connecting local civil society and institutions for the SDGs.

As Assifero, in October 2015, we organized a panel on community philanthropy at the Third World forum on local economic development (held Torino, 13-15 October 2015), and in February 2016 Assifero contributed to the establishment of ASviS, the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development and the most advance multi-stakeholder platform on SDGs in Europe.

The idea of contributing to engage more community foundations for the 2030 Agenda became urgent after the first Global Summit on Community Philanthropy held in Johannesburg 1-2 December 2016.

Any partnership involving foundations should, of course, be based on the unique features of foundations: their independence and their ability to take risk and incubate new solutions. But the key idea is that community philanthropy organizations are essential players for the SDGs agenda everywhere, and, particularly, in Europe where 600 community foundations are now more informed and connected through ECFI- European Community

Foundations Initiative.

Actually in Italy there are 37 community foundations mainly in the north and only very few in the south. They are born and developed following different ideas but in each of them it is possible to find specific characteristics that identify them as inclusive and dynamic organisms with variable settings. And this is true either in Italy than abroad. Thousands of CF in the world (more than 700 in Europe starting from the 1990) are the example that there is not a standard model for all of them but GFCF underlines three main points of the CF: financial and real estate assets, immaterial assets like relationship and knowledge of the community and territory, leadership, participation, and most important confidence and reliability.

All the CF have a local governance and are independent organisms with assets that have been obtained by either small and bigger donations. CF are not corporate or family foundations, are something else. The interventions are not proposed by the 'management' of the CF but are gathered from the territories, from the communities, from the bottom. And for this reason the first Global summit on Community Philanthropy of Johannesburg has chosen #shiftpower to underline this difference. Differently from associations, CF are thought to remain during the years, despite the change of management and people. Therefore CF can have a long period perspective and thinking, having the possibility to create human capital, reliability, increase assets and capabilities in the communities. The power of CF's is the strong link with the community itself, *the community is the power*.

CF are identified with the community, it doesn't matter how big it is or if it refers to only a particular subset of people. And also the assets can vary from very thousands of millions of usd (Silicon Valley CF) to only the concession of a monument for 50 years.

Actually CF must face with the important goals (civil, environmental, cultural, economic and social) of ASviS and the different importance that each of them have on the specific community. Not only a mean to solve specific and defined problems but

an instrument to change the behavior of the community giving them the consciousness to be able to determine itself.

Sometimes and somewhere in Italy, CF are seen as cash dispenser, but in this way CF could survive also as standalone entities, that could even avoid to interact with the stakeholder and the community itself. In this way a misunderstanding between the mean and the goal could be generated. Giving money is not the goal but only the instrument (or better one of the instruments) needed to obtain the goal of common welfare. Other important instruments are the definition and activation of different networks, the use of the assets in real local economy (helping in developing it) the knowledge of the territory and the different realities and actors (private and public) operating on it that are concerned in the 'welfare' of the community and the use of new policies.

We can say that CF are main actors in developing the human capital of a community. They should be able to catalyze financial and non financial resources also starting from the community assets and not only from needs. CF are changing the traditional way to invest experimenting innovative policies and approaches.

Thanking to the various associations that deals with CF (GFFCF ECFI Assifero) and also to some very big foundations like the italian "Fondazione con il Sud", through the calls of tenders, CF have started to exchange experiences and to cope among themselves. Also the relationship between the financial partner and the implementation partners has changed from a top down approach to a more strategic and reciprocal approach.

In places like Recife or Messina and some district in Naples or in Katmandu or Varna the CF are seen as community orchestrators. As far as Agenda 2030 goals are concerned we believe that they are the foundations of the personal and social development and the culture of 'giving' is one of the 17 items.

As the Italian spokesman of the agenda, Giovannini said *'at a global level we are observing a very strong aim to actuate the Agenda's goals, 112 countries have declared their own strategies; private sector is working on the sustainable development, new re-*

porting standards (as GRI and ESG) have been implemented, important investments in renewable energies, campaigns against the use of plastic, attentions to sustainable finance and social investments and social impact, stronger involvement of the communication media.'

Therefore also the CF can act as relational promoter in the cultural change, because they have the strength and the 'institutional role' to do it. They have a broad vision and can build connections among different players promoting a systemic change in the community ecosystem. A territory with a CF is a more 'infrastructured territory' as far as the philanthropy and cultural point of view are concerned.

The Fondazione della Comunità Salernitana was established on April the 27th 2009.

63 donors participated, all of them believed in this new instrument to improve the social responsibility of the territory, among these 63 there are different sensibilities, capabilities, but also relationships. All this helps the community, that has been supported not only giving financial resources to projects but also giving attentions to the needs and trying to solve them in innovative ways, also activating networks and finding different solutions.

The SDGs represent, for CF, a very important impact and strategic opportunity in multiple perspectives: multiply their assets and their characteristic ability to incubate innovative solutions, increase the impact of their action and build new multi-stakeholder and multilevel networks.

To have a CF is an added value for every territory, as these institutions make available to the common good financial, social and relational capital.

Regarding economic and social policies forced to deal with today's problems, the CF can indeed represent the most forward-looking, ambitious and exciting platform of current affairs related to the Sgds. Today, for the first time in the history of humanity, there are also tools and technological resources to eliminate po-

verty, hunger, the destruction of the environment and achieve a more human and sustainable development for all.

To promote the goals for 2030 the time factor is crucial, as we have to remind ourselves. As well as the cultural choice for sustainable development. A choice aimed also at being a guide for private investments and consumption, a vital element for modifying current production and consumption models, with positive economic, social and environmental effects. Thanks to the work done by Assifero within ASviS, the Italian CF will continue contributing to the transformation of places, reinforcing the commitment to the integrated development of people.

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Selected websites

- SDGs Philanthropy Platform (www.sdgfunders.org)
The UN sustainable development knowledge platform
(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>)

The Global Network of Foundations working for development at OECD
(<https://www.oecd.org/site/netfwd/>)

The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development
(<http://www.asvis.it/english/>)

Project mapping different organizations carrying out a variety of practices of sustainability (<http://www.geographiesofchange.net>)

Partnership initiative for SDGs in the Netherlands (www.sdgcharter.nl)