IN THE SERVICE OF COMMUNITIES - IN SMALL LOCAL COMMUNITIES

COLLECTION OF CASE STUDIES

2020

CONTENTS

PRESENTATION
OF THE PROJECT

Title of project: Developing Community-Based Services and Linking Them to Specialized Care Provision in Small Municipalities
Working title of project: In the Service of Communities – In Small Local Communities
Name of beneficiary: Hungarian Association for Community Development
Project ID: EFOP-5.2.2-17-2017-00011
Amount of contracted support: HUF 48,525,290
Proportion of Support (%): 100%
Duration of project: 24 months (1 February 2018 – 31 January 2020)
Area of intervention: Gönc District, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County
Project goals: to assess the current state of community-based services, collect good practices and formulate policy recommendations at national and local level
Target group: primarily professionals in the field of health, social services and adult education, as well as active regional actors and decision makers
Main project activities involving the target group: regional and other professional workshops, study trips and research

The first piece in this volume presents the project and, in parallel, the structure of the publication.

Instead of listing and analyzing indicators, we focus on the questions "What did we do – Why did we do it – how did we work?" to present the most important directions and events in our two-year project conducted in the Gönc district – that is, the path we have gone to achieving the results detailed in the further chapters of our final publication.

Approach

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the project, it is inevitable to say a few sentences about its antecedents, that is, why we ended up working in this area, what we focused on and why we chose this professional direction as an intervention. We believe that this information will help readers recognize the broader, more established framework of the two-year project. It is to make sure that we have an insight not only into the project as a whole, but rather, into a professional process, the last few years of which we now have the opportunity to present in depth.

You can read more about the region where the project takes place, and the geographical, historical, social and economic context, in Chapter 6.

The wider location of the project, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County (the second largest county in the country) has been struggling with numerous economic and social problems.

While the population is gradually declining, economic indicators (ratio of active workers and the unemployed) show an extremely bad trend, mainly due to the drastic decline of heavy industries. Of the county's 16 districts, 11 are among the most disadvantaged. Apart from a few towns, the settlement structure is characterized by scattered, small villages in which services are limited or hardly available, and the quality of existing services is low.

Professionals working in rural regions with small villages are in a particularly difficult situation in Hungary today, because they are supposed to remedy the particularly difficult social situation, as well as the problems associated with such regions, with limited financial and human resources, having to stand in the gap left by others in several districts.

As a national organization, we were also able to perceive this during the field work performed by the association in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in the last 15 years. In North Abaúj[1], community processes have taken place in several stages from the beginning of 2010, as a result of the cooperation between the association and local organizations. Several of them approached the alleviation of regional problems from a direction similar to our current work, i.e. they focused on the accessibility and quality of (public) services, as they satisfy the basic needs of people living in the local community and determine their quality of life.

At the same time, we had to recognize that although we had got into working relations with many local institutions and organizations as a result of our professional activities performed during the implementation of various projects – and community initiatives had been launched in several villages to address local issues – there are still many local communities in the county where social services and health care remain unresolved.

This is also the situation in the Gönc district in the northern part of the county, on the border with Slovakia. In the district, which is rich in natural resources and has a population of almost 19,000, local governments typically manage their affairs independently and, despite the geographical proximity, there is no cooperation on the district level. This, together with the declining population, poor housing situation, and low employment, may have led to the sad situation that in 2018, out of 174 districts in the country, Gönc finished in last place among the most disadvantaged.

So, although we started working being relatively well-embedded locally and equipped with professional ideas, in our project, which started in February 2018, the basic situation was almost the same: if there is a lack of capacity, there are not enough professionals and existing professionals are overwhelmed – how can we achieve change?

1 Name of a region within the County of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, where the association is active.

In the Service of Communities

Our response – which was also the objective of this two-year process – was to support community-based services, that is, to facilitate and encourage cross-sectoral dialogue and cooperation, and to make the operation of each sector community-based, helping them become embedded in the local community.

For a definition of community-based service, see a summary of the theoretical and practical foundations of the topic in Chapter 2.

In order to achieve the above goal, in the course of the project we primarily worked with local professionals working in the fields of health care, the social sphere and adult education, as well as active regional actors and decision-makers. In order to be able to support the establishment of community-based services, we had to assess the current situation of services and the conditions and obstacles of community-based operation. We also had to look for good practices and opportunities that can be adapted to local needs.

The international nature of the project was a valuable professional resource while implementing all this. Thanks to it, we were able to find additional partners through the active involvement of four foreign organizations. Bürgerstiftung Barnim Uckermark[2] (a regional community foundation in East Germany), SOCIA – Social Reform Foundation[3] (a Slovakian organization working for the social inclusion of people with disabilities), Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke[4] (an Austrian national umbrella for general adult education and culture in Austria) and the Regional Community Development Association in Romania have very different profiles, but all of them have some very exciting theoretical and practical knowledge in the area of community-based operation and services. During the two years of working together, we got to know the good practices they shared, and the meetings, workshops and joint regional study trips offered opportunities for learning, broadening perspectives, and acquiring an inspiring "bird's eye view" both on our side and that of local stakeholders.

You can read about good practice criteria and the methodology of collecting them in Chapter 4.

At the Level of Action

Learning and looking for possible directions to move forward were thus the main organizing principles when it came to organizing our activities.

A summary of the final research report can be found in Chapter 7.

In the framework of our participatory **research** – which explored the situation of services and community relations, thus determining the arc of the whole process – one of the professional focuses was to draw the current pattern of regional cooperation.

In the course of the situational analysis, our research questions sought to explore the local practice of cooperation between institutions and professions, as well as between professionals and the general public.

To read more about community functions and, related to them, the state of communities, see Chapter 3.

Broadening our focus as the research progressed, the role of service users and local residents and their communities in the operation of the institution and services also came to the fore in connection with institutional operation. This issue has brought with it another focus on learning about the state of the local community.

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2 The community foundation's website (in German): https://buergerstiftung-barnim-ucker-mark.de/
3 The foundation's website (in English): https://www.socia.sk/social-reform-foundation/
4 Ring's website (in German): https://ring.bildungswerke.at/

The results discussed in the final research report are put in an exciting framework by the fact that the Regional Association for Community Development in Romania, one of the foreign partners involved in the project, carried out a similar research in its own region in parallel with ours. The lessons from their research and ours have thus been added up.

In addition to the research, the **workshops** we initiated created an opportunity for, and gave shape to, gaining a complex understanding of local conditions; the meeting of, and knowledge transfer between, sectors, professions and institutions; as well as common reflection and learning.

So the framework was given and the content always responded to the needs perceived locally. The workshops allowed us to get involved in an exciting dialogue about the situation of the Roma (which is sometimes a taboo topic) or the impact of external grants on local conditions. On other occasions, we gained new strength from each other's stories on World Social Work Day.

The search for possible directions to make a difference was largely embodied in the **study trips** organized during the project. The aim was for the participants (mostly, but not exclusively, professionals from the region) to learn about good practices in community-based operation, thus gaining courage, inspiration and experience for local development. This is how we ended up in Baranya, for example, and got to know the operation of the micro-regional union there; or the organization working to keep local young people in Zala. The professional outlook did not stop at the national border – through our foreign partners involved in the project, relevant German, Austrian, Slovakian or even Székely[5] examples in the field have also reached us, enriching the range of case studies at our disposal.

Finally, it is important to highlight our **policy recommendations**, which include the lessons learned during the project, as well as the strengthening professional insights and new propositions, with our association's most important statements and recommendations that reflect on local conditions. The significance of the recommendations is also strengthened by the fact that, in addition to the system-level proposals – which are mandatory as an output – directions have been formulated that can bring regional change closer for committed local actors.

In Community Working Mode

We promised that in the presentation of the project, we would also reflect on the question "How did we work?" in a couple of sentences. This is closely related to the opening thought that we regard these two years as the latest chapter in an exciting professional process, and not as a project that ended on 31 January 2020. It is only in light of this that the presentation of the antecedents – and, as the conclusion of this chapter, giving an idea of the next steps – acquire a real meaning. We are not in a position to discuss the details of the future here, but it must be emphasized that this project provided a solid foundation on which we dared/wanted/managed to build up those upcoming steps.

When talking about the project, it is important to point out that simply implementing the planned activities would not in itself have been sufficient for forward-looking planning: getting to know and understanding was a key professional task in the

[5] Translator's note: Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania

project. What matters is how we implemented the activities – that is, the community working method. It is a way of working whereby we did not spare personal networking and tried to visit all the professionals working with the population from the sixty-person local community to the district center; whereby the themes of our workshops sensitively followed the professional needs that came to the surface on the way, even if this required further preparation and extra work; and whereby, in the end, we did not decide on a questionnaire survey "manually-operated" from Budapest, but instead accompanied a process in which a locally valid and relevant research process unfolded before our eyes.

All this also meant a very exciting, yet strenuous learning process for the project staff. We communicated progress regularly on our professional blog[6] – in the present tense, in an informal style, sharing our dilemmas and insights with readers, justifying our answers – and answering the basic question: what makes an intervention community-based? Reading these, perhaps others will discover the added value already mentioned – let us now simply call it the essence of community development – that ultimately organized this work into a process that is so human, reflects on real local needs, and has been shared with our local peers.

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[6] The professional blog is available here (in Hungarian): https://kofe.hu/szakmai-blog/

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The word 'service' makes most of us think of a shop, a post office, a bank or a bus service. To responsible local authorities it means, in addition, public services: healthcare, social, educational and cultural. These services meet the basic needs of people living in the local community and determine their quality of life. Therefore, both the average person and the leaders of the local community and local institutions want more services of the highest quality to be available to local residents. But when there is a shortage of capacity, there are not enough professionals and the existing ones are overworked – then how? There is no instant solution for the problem, but there is one which can make, through investing time and work, services in local communities more efficient and accessible, to the satisfaction of professionals and the general public. Community-based services do not solve structural problems, but in the medium and long term they can still help to overcome capacity shortages and increase access.

In our roles as family members, friends and co-workers, we often get annoyed when we feel we do other people's work. We keep asking ourselves: 'Why does he/she expect me to tidy up / work overtime / always decide instead of he/she? Why is it not natural for everyone to tidy up after themselves, and share tasks and the responsibility of deciding about something?' However, in our role as a citizen, we often take it for granted that we are being served and decisions are made without us. And in our role as a service provider, we often take it for granted that our role as a leader or professional is to serve the needs of the population. Community-based services create an equilibrium: they empower citizens to assume responsibility for, and actively shape, their lives and quality of life.

The purpose of this publication is to provide intellectual and practical support to those who want to turn the visioned future into present, and to engage the yet-unbelievers as agents of change in order to introduce community-based services.

TOGETHER ON THE WAY TO CHANGE

According to the approach used in this publication, a community-based service is community-based because it is embedded in the local community. This means, on the one hand, that local residents have ownership of the service, as they can participate in its design and operation, bringing in their own resources. On the other hand, it means that it is tailored to local needs and mobilizes local resources. A basic feature and criterion of a community-based service is that the role of client, user, visitor, that is, the person receiving the service (which often involves a sense of being vulnerable) is replaced by a customer role that involves, on the part of the service user, taking responsibility and taking part in the service as a partner. These types of services are not a substitute for professional activity and do not obviate the need for specialist work. At the same time, both professionals and the local community need to learn a new way of connecting.

Theory and practice of introducing community-based services and making existing services community-based – so goes the subheading of this publication, also defining its structure. The definition of, and detailed introduction to, community-based services is preceded by a theoretical section on community and service (and the relationship between them), and is followed by a practical section on the steps needed to start a community-based service. Those who lose confidence seeing the challenges of this exercise can find reinforcement in the arguments and support options described at the end of this publication.

DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE

Community and service are two defining elements of a community-based service. In the following section, we not only elaborate on the subject of community and service, but also illustrate their relationship in a historical context. The second part of this chapter provides a definition of community-based service, with different aspects of the concept explained in detail.

This community provided the context and framework for people's lives: relationships, connections, togetherness, habits, rules, culture, and this self-sufficient community created the economic conditions for life as well.

Humans are social beings who have lived in communities all around the world throughout all ages of history. When it was common for people to live their lives in one place, community naturally meant a community of people living in that place.

It is sufficient to look at the history of one's own local community (assuming one does not live in a 'big city') to find this traditional community existence, even in the not-so-distant past. One can argue whether this was a good thing or not, as there was very limited space for individual life paths or free will. It could also be worth considering what aspects of this would be worth bringing back into our world today. Nevertheless, these local communities undoubtedly provided their members with physical and spiritual security, as life was unambiguous, predictable, and self-explanatory.

Community in a traditional sense provides its members with a unified system of interpreting life, good and bad, desirable and condemned. These core values serve as the basis of the common knowledge, with stories, tales and teachings handed down from mouth to mouth, from one generation to the next. These core values are reflected in every community event, be it a wedding, a funeral, a harvest, feather-plucking, spinning, shelling corn, and other instances of collaborative work or joint entertainment. Not only traditions, customs, rituals, but also expectations and norms are based on these basic values (i.e. how to live so that you are 'not gossiped about by fellow villagers'). This was not a written rule book taught at school: everyone grew into and acquired, without noticing, a common culture based on common values and norms, as they lived their lives in the community not only when they were with their peers, but also when working or entertaining – that is, existing – alone or in the family.

Community also meant livelihood and survival. People worked together not only to 'enjoy each other's company', but because, for example, the quick processing of a pig required the work of several people. 'Today, I'll help you kill and process your pig, next week you'll come to us.' They also collectively processed hemp, which they used to make clothes. Similarly, they broke up the ice on the river together, to be transported to the 'community fridge', the ice pit – a family would not have been able to do all that

alone. And they collaborated in solidarity not only in these joint activities, but also in difficult life situations – if a mother with a newborn, or a grieving widow, had to be supported, or if a family needed help due to illness or aging.

It is difficult to answer the question whether 'the hen came first or the egg,' that is, whether the community was built on reciprocity due to people's interdependence, or whether we cannot even speak of community without reciprocity and solidarity. It is certain that these traditional communities managed to create their living conditions: the ground and framework for a full human life and the survival of the community.

The example above was about a traditional rural peasant community, but such communities existed not only in villages, and not only in the distant past. For example, working in 'kaláka' (voluntary co-operative work done on a reciprocal basis) was common during socialism as well, with many houses in the country being built in kaláka.

At a closer look, we can identify the following functions that such a 'traditional' community, which 'secures living conditions', performs[1]:
- socialization, i.e. the transfer of values and the norms, customs, traditions and culture based on them, which makes belonging to the (given) community unambiguous for the members of the community
- economic prosperity: all members of the community find their livelihood within the community, thereby ensuring the unity of the community
- social involvement: the community provides room and creates opportunities for (and expects) community participation in all areas of life, be it collective entertainment, working together, passing on culture, making community members adhere to the community's expectations, or reflecting on and deciding on common issues
- social control: the community maintains its core values and adheres to its norms, thereby ensuring the survival of the community
- Mutual support & solidarity: community members help each other and collaborate on individual and community tasks, managing situations, and solving problems.

Conventional communities thus fulfilled their functions by virtue of their existence and functioning. However, with the gradual transformation of the economic and social order, these communities have become weaker and, in the growing cities, have not fully developed. People had a place to live, but they no longer had a community to retain them.

The availability of a multitude of services is a natural part of modern life. In traditional village communities, too, there were people who provided services either inside the community, or coming from outside, such as teachers, shopkeepers, bartenders, livestock dealers, or tinkers who travelled from place to place mending pots – but today we are living a whole different life. We are no longer self-sufficient: we do not produce goods ourselves, but obtain our food, clothes and many things that did not even exist before – from fridges to mobile phones – from shops or on the Internet. Shops, webshops, home delivery companies, restaurants and street food places, hotels and hostels, airlines, taxis and coaches all provide us with services. Another aspect of our changing world is that we are left to ourselves.

Everything that used to be a natural part of the community's life – such as community events, community education and entertainment, caring for members of the community from birth to death – now exists as a service, available as a service, for example as a cultural, educational, health or social service.

1 See Ilona Vercseg (2018): *Közösségelmélet* (*Community Theory*), Hungarian Association for Community Development, Budapest, citing Warren.

Basically, all services are based on one need. Individual and community needs can be met on a market basis where the consumer pays the market price for the service they use, or on a non-market basis where the price of the service is not paid directly by the consumer.

- **Market-based services are typically provided by business entities.**

- **Non-market-based services may be based on the recognition of fundamental human rights (e.g. right to education or physical health) by the State (Fundamental Law). To satisfy the related needs, the state may organize non-market based services (e.g. cultural, educational or health services). State-subsidized services (basic and specialist services) are contained and regulated by laws, also determining the system of institutions providing the services.**

- **Churches and non-governmental organizations may also provide services on a non-market basis, in partnership with, or independently of, the state.**

A community-based service is community-based not because it is provided on a market or non-market basis, or by a church or NGO.

The following are essential regarding these services:

- **the need or demand that the service meets, including the way those needs have been identified and assessed**

- **the adaptation of the service provider and the service to the users and the service environment**

- **the relationship between the service provider and the service user.**

The community-based character of the service is determined by the above factors.

When comparing traditional communities and modern society, it is often emphasized that modern society has liberated the individual because it has given way to an autonomous and independent human existence. (It is up to the individual to decide whether they want to belong to any community at all.) Community-based service is not an 'anachronistic phenomenon', it is very up-to-date indeed: it brings back into the world the exploration, mobilization and constructive use of community resources in local communities of autonomous people.

Community-based service is a way of meeting needs and demands which is embedded in the local community, that is, locally-based; builds on personal and local community needs and resources; works in partnership with local residents on an equal footing; mobilizes internal resources; and functions in partnership with other services and other actors in the local community.

A PARABLE ABOUT NEEDS AND RESOURCES

Once upon a time there lived a woman who was an attentive and good cook, always preparing what her family liked. For this reason, she usually cooked chicken broth with vermicelli for Sunday lunch. If relatives or friends came over for lunch, she also made pasta and matzo balls, and vegetarian soup for vegetarians, so as to please everyone. She became famous for her art, and soon a delegation from the neighboring village came and asked her to cook for them at their church fare. As good as she is, she would definitely be able to make sure – from the little money the village can devote to this end – that nobody stays hungry.

The invitation was an honor, so she couldn't say no. She wondered what to do. You cannot make a single meal for so many people by yourself, and it's not easy to figure out what you can cook from such little money so that people would still like it. So she raised the question to the members of the delegation, who were happy to give her the popular 'Cookbook of Cheap and Popular Church Fair Dishes'. She flipped through the cookbook, but had no idea how an entire village, so many different people, could be pleased with just one kind of food. Her little son could not understand why her mom was so troubled when the solution was so simple: 'Well, ask them!' She then put down the recipe collection, and set off and visited the families of the neighboring village. The elders talked about preparing a local specialty for village feasts in the old days and shared the recipe with her. It seemed like an impossible enterprise because it took too much preparatory work and the ingredients were obsolete and already counted as specialties, so were expensive and difficult to obtain.

She went from house to house, asking things and talking to people. Many people were excited by the old recipe and agreed to help with the preparation. Others took her to their kitchen garden and showed her that they could deliver those special ingredients. Mothers with newborn infants were worried that the little ones would not like the taste, so they offered to join together and make a lunch for the kids (which, of course, anyone else could have, too) "free of any allergens" so that no one on a special diet would stay hungry. Young people were agitated by the fact that the village was spending money on a church fair lunch when they had been asking for the renovation of the sports ground for such a long time. They figured that in this situation they should bake cakes for the lunch, which then they would sell for a donation to renovate the sports ground.

So it happened that at the church fair everyone ate their favorite food, and because of the ingredients put together, even the little money that was available for the lunch proved to be too much.

'Based on personal needs'

Personal needs mean the diversity of human needs, the human in its entirety, and the importance of each individual.

All people are equally important, and in the above parable people would also like to cater for those who do not like specialties, those who do not eat meat, those who are gluten-sensitive, and those who cannot attend the dinner because of their health.

If many people need to be provided with a service at once, but our capacity is limited, it makes sense to design a system that can effectively meet needs and demands through regulation. From feeding, through having a place to live, to health and safety, these basic needs can be described rather accurately. For this reason, this system can be logically structured, from the necessary personal and material conditions to the identification of activities. In this system, however, 'out of the ordinary' demands and needs will not be met, or only at the cost of extra work involved in constantly

re-regulating the system, which leads to mutual dissatisfaction. Professionals often feel helpless and without means, so they partly devote their working hours to finding alternative solutions. They know best that when we get to know the individual life situations and see the problems, **the diversity of needs leaves us with no other option than to provide personalized services based on personal needs.**

With market-based services, the only thing that matters is whether the demand is accompanied by money. Regarding non-market-based services, the price of which is often paid by the state, from time to time we revisit which individual needs are to be regarded as 'legitimate' and which ones are to be 'recognized' as 'basic' needs. Community-based services explore the issue of need from a different perspective: **they consider the human in its entirety.** Local residents take part in a community-based service as people who take responsibility and act for themselves and the community. While the seed of this ability is present in every human being, it requires learning to develop it. (In a well-functioning community, the learning process is 'spontaneous' and takes place during socialization.) Therefore, **a community-based service also recognizes, as a need, the skill that serves as a basis of adulthood taken in this sense (i.e. a person who takes responsibility and acts).**

'Builds on personal resources'

On the other hand, and related to this, the acting individual also appears as a resource in the service – just like the inhabitants of the village in the above parable, who eventually prepare the lunch together with the cook using the ingredients they produce. Because not only money can be a resource, and not just objects or other things at the individual's disposal, the existence of which often entail financial savings. Resources include, for example, all kinds of skills, knowledge, experience, be it a recipe, gardening or cooking skills, or the ability to cooperate. The time a person devotes to an activity is also a resource of the individual, and so is the responsibility involved in their participation in the activity. Relationships are also a resource because relatives, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances are new sources of material resources and beyond: knowledge, ability, experience, time and intention, responsibility – and more. **People often feel worthless because they are unaware of the resources they have. Mobilizing, recognizing and raising awareness of individual resources is an important task of community-based services.**

'Works in partnership, on an equal footing'

The two main players in the service are the service provider (representing an institution) and the local resident using the service. In the relationship between the provider and the user, the professional and the layperson, it seems just obvious that the provider's word weighs more. It is the provider who decides and acts, since it has the knowledge and the institutional authority to do so. This usually results in an unequal situation that both parties consider natural. In a community-based service, the service provider does not 'monopolize' responsibility, decision and action – all of this is shared between the two parties. Just as the professional possesses specialist knowledge, the layperson has the knowledge of their own life and will, and is able, with the right information at hand, to make decisions and act as an autonomous adult.

Of course, this does not happen immediately and spontaneously – a community-based service involves a learning process in which the professional learns about empowerment, and the layperson about 'adulthood', in order to **work as equal partners in the service.** From the aspect of needs this means that the professional recognizes the skill of 'adulthood' as a need of the service user and seeks to meet that need during providing the service – this is called empowerment. Empowerment can also be seen as

a form of investment by the professional, which pays off by sharing responsibilities and leveraging new resources. We will see later that this partnership and empowerment works not only in individual relationships but also in the community: the professional learns not only to involve individuals and give them responsibility, but also to involve the community as a whole. Hence, seeking and applying community solutions becomes a natural part of their professional toolbox.

'Builds on local community needs'

A well-functioning local community provides community members with the framework and environment in which to live their lives in physical and psychological security. A local community functions well if it fulfills the functions described above (socialization, economic prosperity, social involvement, social control and mutual support). These functions also ensure that the good functioning of the community is maintained in the long run. As we have seen, the reason for the introduction and spread of services is, among other things, the fact that local communities have not been able to perform these functions fully, meaning they have been dysfunctional. **Services are thus designed to meet the needs of communities stemming from their dysfunctional nature.**

A community center, for example, fulfills the function of socialization, inasmuch as it provides space and opportunity for community members to meet and spend time together. So does a local school that has a curriculum presenting and processing local history, and local natural and cultural values. Providing a community space, organizing events, organizing the work of learning communities, providing the necessary facilities, providing educational activities – these functions all appear as services.

Economic prosperity means, among other things, local job opportunities, but services such as the provision of housing – for example in the form of social rented housing – vocational training, mentoring, providing information and counseling, also play an important role. Economic prosperity also includes the option to consume, which is also linked to various services.

An important focus of community-based services is strengthening the local community and meeting community needs, but this does not mean that individual needs lose importance in such services. In addition, individual and community needs are not independent of each other. Meeting community needs – by involving community resources – contributes to meeting individual needs as well.

'Builds on local community resources'

In addition to needs, the community also has numerous resources. Similarly to individual needs, community resources are diverse. Characteristics such as the **natural environment** (geographical location, natural resources and raw materials, climate, water, soil, air and wildlife) or the local **infrastructure** (roads, squares, utilities, buildings from residential buildings through factories to public buildings, public spaces and communications technology – and services) also appear as resources. **Culture** (values, norms, habits, traditions and common knowledge), as the basis and cohesive force of the community, and local identity are also important resources. So are the **members of the local community** themselves, their good health, physical strength, motivation, enterprising spirit, education, knowledge and skills. And so are the **relationships** within the local community between residents; within communities, organizations and institutions and between them; or between these actors and actors outside the local community.

'Works in partnership'

Professionals working (and often living) in the local community are to be highlighted separately: professionals taken in a brought sense – be they part of any sector in any form, and in any professional field – are also important resources for the community. They could be social workers working for a public institution, pastors, the volunteer leader of the local association, etc. who work for members and groups in the local community. Not only are their knowledge and commitment a resource, their contacts also form an important ingredient of a community-based service: **professionals working in the service collaborate with professionals elsewhere.**

'Mobilizes internal resources'

A resource in itself is only an opportunity. It only becomes a 'force', capital, when used consciously – if it is recognized as a value, a resource, and energy is invested in it to make the most of it. The knowledge of old people who know old recipes and practices, the special vegetables of small gardens, someone's cooking skills, the time spent with preparations, the ability to convince, organize and motivate others, become part of the community's capital through the common cooking activity at the village fair[2].

In addition to individual resources, community-based services rely on community-based resources. The exploration and mobilization of these resources is also a task of the community-based service, and results in the building of community capital.

'Embedded in the local community'

A community-based service is a service provided in a local community, part of a local community, or possibly in several local communities. Even if it covers several local communities, it still needs to be embedded and available in each of them. **This is because a community-based service is part of the functioning of the local community.** (The local community encompasses all residents and other actors in (a part of) a local community, whether or not they use the service.) The introduction of a community-based service is justified by the needs of the local community stemming from its shortcomings. With its operation, the local community becomes increasingly capable of fulfilling basic community functions.

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2 See L.J. Beaulieu (2014): *Community Vitality & Sustainability. The Community Capitals Framework* citing C. B. and J.L. Based on Flora.

STEPS TO INTRODUCE A COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE

In the previous chapter, we have presented the historical context in which the role of local communities is partly taken over by services. By defining the characteristics and criteria of community-based services, we came to the conclusion that community-based services strengthen the local community while the service is being provided. In this chapter we provide a step by step guide to starting a community-based service in a local community. A note in advance: just like the operation of the service, its introduction is also part of a community building / community development process.

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The starting point can vary, with there being three different ways for a community-based service to arrive in a local community.

- A (part of a) local community tries to remedy its dysfunctionality as a community by introducing a third party community-based service.
- An existing non-community-based service is transformed.
- The community, or an active core group, initiates a community-based service.

Regardless of where the initiative comes from, in order to create a community-based service not only in words but in reality, the same path must be followed.

The Szatmár Micro-Regional Basic Social Service Center in Nagyecsed carries out family and child welfare activities, including in the largest (western) segregated housing estate in the village of 1,500 inhabitants. A community center has been built on the site, which the institution runs as a settlement house. The settlement house is a community space that provides social and other services such as a laundry, a bathing facility, information and education. It has made it possible for professionals to be present and connected to the local population beyond problem solving. Being present also made local needs and demands more visible to professionals, who were able to respond to them flexibly. For example, at one point it turned out that employers often set writing a successful test as a criterion for employment, but the locals had difficulties writing the test. Therefore, a program was developed to improve their reading, writing and counting skills. Among other things, the mothers of young children attending these training courses needed child care, which was solved by employing suitably qualified women from the housing estate as nurses.

Step 1: The Intention is Born

You can read, talk and think about it, but in order to start the process the intention to **start a community-based service in the local community has to be born.** You need someone who wants it, a spark that either goes out or sets the world around you in flames. The intention may come from outside (for example, in the form of a statutory requirement) or from within the community. It may come from above (for example, from the mayor), from below from a local resident (who might otherwise be a professional) – or from a professional who runs, or works for, the service providing institution.

Step 2: Engagement of Staff

There is no community-based service without the involvement of the local community, but that requires someone to actually take this step. **Professionals play a key role in implementing (and running) community-based services.** When referring to such services, we often talk about professionals, but it would be more accurate to talk about service providers because the staff of a community-based service (a social worker, for example) may not have the qualifications required for the service activity. What is more, in the case of services that are started and implemented as a community initiative, the manager may not initially be a professional – they become a professional as part of the process. We are talking about professionals, in plural, because it is not enough for the leader to be open and determined if the employees are not. Wherever the intention comes from, there is definitely a **need for a 'core', a group of actors, who will start the process.** Whoever is the initiator should find companions who are similarly committed, open to learning, and ready for action.

> Tomor, Lak and Szakácsi are disadvantaged local communities in the Cserehát region of Hungary with a significant Roma population. The community work done here (led by a local Roma youth) has always had children as a focus. In one of their youth programs they developed a method (a kind of tutoring system) that was later used in the Tanoda (Learning Place). In the Tanoda, the curriculum was not taught by teachers. Teachers prepared high school students to deal with senior elementary school students, and, in turn, senior elementary school students taught junior elementary school students. The purpose of the Tanoda was to support learning and, through this, individual prosperity. Roma youth participated not only as students, but also as co-workers and facilitators.

A community-based service is not a 'traditional' service. It requires a kind of paradigm shift, a different perspective, a different attitude from the practitioner, which, as shown in in the next steps, has to be learnt eventually. For the time being, however, openness is what is important, **openness to change and to make change**. If the intention to introduce a community-based service comes from the outside or from above as an expectation towards the professionals of an institution and they are not open to it, the community-based service cannot be created.

> Assisted housing for people with disabilities is part of a government strategy that requires, by law, the replacement of a large number of nursing homes and other institutions and the transition to community-based services. However, if professionals in institutions do not intend to replace their usual routine with a different mode of operation, then the process is interpreted as moving from a large institution to a small institution. In this case, the service provided to people

with disabilities is not integrated into their living environment and support of their independent living is not implemented in the local community, which would otherwise be the foundation of a community-based service.

Step 3: The circle of actors prepares for action

Continuous learning is important in all areas of life and is also part of community-based services. However, there is a phase in the process of introducing the service when **the learning of the actors is the main activity:** this preparatory phase precedes stepping in front of the community.

Service activities must be prepared for, but addressing, activating and engaging people is an activity that requires specialist knowledge which can be acquired, and has to be acquired in this case.

The framework of this publication does not allow us to give a detailed account of the theoretical background and possible methods of addressing, mobilizing and engaging people, and of collaborative exploration and community planning. In order to delve deeper into the subject, we have included a collection of literature, training and other recommendations at the end of this publication.

Step 4: Involving the Community – Exploration and Planning

'Well, ask them,' goes the advice in the parable. Who would know more about the joys, values, problems and needs of the local community than the locals themselves? Talk to them, ask them questions, talk to smaller and larger groups, similar and different people. Obviously, the circle of actors is well aware of the situation in the local community – it is by no accident that they have initiated a community-based service. However, a comprehensive picture of the local community cannot be obtained without including the experiences, feelings, thoughts and opinions of the local people. But interviewing residents is not a 'poll', which is only for information. Interviewing is never just private or one-way communication. We do not keep the information for ourselves, we always make knowledge common. This **shared knowledge, and the conversation and joint reflection starting out from it** (which further broaden common knowledge) eventually become a resource for the community, as well as the cornerstone of the service.

In international and domestic practice, value-based exploration and development[3] is getting increasingly popular. It focuses on values and resources rather than deficiencies and problems. Problems still appear, but they are framed differently. **Getting to know the local community and exploring values and resources together serve as a starting point for designing the service.** The exploration is done together with the community, and so is the ensuing planning.

Our basic tenet is that everyone has an important role in joint planning, too. The professional brings their expertise (which the ability to involve stakeholders is increasingly part of), the local community members concerned bring – as experiential experts – their everyday knowledge, and everyone brings their other resources. 'Local resident' is a very colorful category by the way: it covers people living in the same locality with different occupations (and thus different skills), different experiences

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3 M. Emery, S. Fey, C. Flora (2006): *Using Community Capitals to Develop Assets for Positive Community Change* (CD Practice: 13)

stemming from different life histories and situations, and partly different contacts and connections. And we cannot stop at individuals, because there are different groups and communities functioning, and institutions providing services, in the local community. There is so much knowledge and resources to build on.

There are various ways to engage local residents, including some that involve online interaction or speaking to the public indirectly through representatives of residents' groups. When introducing community-based services, it is important to have in-person conversations and reach as many people as possible. The whole population cannot participate in the whole process, but during exploration and planning it is important that all groups in the local population are represented alongside other actors in the local community. Therefore, it is also important to think about which groups of the population we can identify (e.g. mothers with small children, inhabitants of a given area in the local community, newcomers, young people studying in another local communities, etc.).

Reaching out to residents and working together is much more than simply gathering information: it is about making people become active. The residents who take part in these conversations and the planning process get the experience that others are interested in their opinion, that their word counts, that they are able to shape things. Over time, they become committed to the service: they begin to own it, together with the responsibility of creating and operating the best possible service.

Step 5: Professional and economic design of the service

When describing the introduction of community-based services, we highlighted and described in more detail what makes a service community-based. Thus, at this point we only note that, naturally, planning involves the preparation of operations in accordance with the legal and professional requirements associated with the activity(s) concerned, as well as financial planning.

Step 6: Service

The community-based service is then launched along the planned strategy and action plan. At this point, let us stop for a moment and celebrate all those with whom, and for whom, we have achieved all this. Then, the weekdays should start, during which the operation, the order of activities and the system of co-operation have to be set up. Continuous attention must be paid to ensuring that community-based services remain community-based: reflection on this must be built into the daily operation and planned for. **A community-based service is a process in itself** – as if the target field of a board game had the words 'Go to start field'. Involvement of the local community, achieving the commitment of local residents and employees, and learning are not a one-off preparation but a continuous activity.

A PROFITABLE INVESTMENT

In light of the previous chapter, it can be clearly stated that the implementation of a community-based service requires, in addition to openness, a great deal of time and effort from the professionals involved. However, it is important to see that even the process of introducing the service mobilizes new resources, and this does not change when the provision of the service is started. There is less 'pressure' on the professionals providing the service because they are not left alone with their tasks. In a sense, the range of service providers expands with local residents (including users of the service) and other actors in the local community, including other service providers. This not only involves the mobilization of new resources, but also a shared responsibility. **All this leads to an increase in capacity.**

With this kind of collaboration and embedded service, a community-based service **can respond more quickly and flexibly to local needs and demands,** which makes it more efficient. This efficiency also increases the satisfaction of service users.

A community-based service is not 'external' in nature and service users are not outsiders anymore. By getting embedded into the local community, **the legitimacy of the service becomes clearer and is increased.**

In the process of introducing a community-based service, local people become part of the information flow and are encouraged/empowered to formulate their thoughts, express their opinions and participate in the planning process as partners – that is, become active. The pattern according to which residents are only present as 'customers' is increasingly being broken, and this affects other areas of their lives as well. It can change their role in the local community, their relationship to other services or the local council. They do not only wait and expect, but act.

In this way, a community-based service affects the entire local community and – indirectly – society, as democracy is operated by **active citizens who take responsibility and act.**

RECOMMENDATION BY THE HUNGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

You cannot 'order' a community-based service. It is essential that – prospective – employees actively participate in the implementation. However, this requires new knowledge and skills, and this chapter makes recommendations as to how to acquire them.

The Hungarian Association for Community Development (HACD) has been supporting community-based services and community-based transformation of existing services for years. While community-based services may be available both in a large city (a particular neighborhood) or a small village, the association has typically worked in small local communities where local residents have difficulties accessing services. *The Deep Poverty Program 2011-2014 (Community Development for the Social Inclusion of People Living in Deep Poverty – TÁMOP 5.1.3.)* aimed to reduce the increase, reproduction and territorial spread of poverty through social, urban and rural development and community development work. To provide professional support to local projects, the program also funded the operation of a consortium of professionals active in these fields. In the consortium of four organizations, community development/the community approach were represented by the HACD, which supported the establishment of community-based services in the fight against local poverty using this approach and methodology.

Between 2013 and 2016, the association continued to work in this area in the *Community-Based Service – Community-Based Operation in Small Local Communities* program supported by the EEA Grants in Hungary (NGO Fund) with another target group: in this program local groups and organizations received theoretical and practical support to make their operation, as well as the services they provide, community-based, thus ensuring their sustainability.

Most recently, the 2018-2020 *In the Service of Communities – In Small Villages* project funded by the EFOP (Human Resource Development Operative Program) has provided an opportunity for the association to initiate cooperation and joint reflection with local professionals and decision-makers about making public services community-based, thereby more accessible, in the Gönc district of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. This has been done through organizing participatory research, workshops and study tours, and presenting national and international best practices of community-based operation.

If you have any questions or dilemmas regarding community-based services, the introduction of a service, or the redesign of an existing service, we offer **personal consultation** opportunities to discuss them.

The Hungarian Association for Community Development is an educational institution licensed in accordance with the Adult Education Act. Its highly experienced teaching

professionals are also practitioners. The HACD can support the introduction of community-based services by **training both professionals and local residents.** For professionals, we recommend our 60-hour Community Mentoring and 24-hour Community Planning training courses, which can be held locally if required.

In addition to training courses, we are happy to support the process by **mentoring professionals** (through regular meetings and contact), which can provide security, reinforcement and personalized assistance to the professional who is just getting the necessary practice.

Executives and staff of existing community-based services are provided **professional supervision opportunities** that allow for reflection, and thus personal development and service development.

Contact us, we will be happy to answer you by email or call you back, whether it is in relation to a simple question or a more complex issue.

Our email address is: egyesulet@kofe.hu

We also recommend our online publications on the subject:

Aranka Molnár – Péter Peták – Ilona Vercseg (2014): *Közösségi lehetőségek a mélyszegénység elleni küzdelemben.* Önszerveződés és szakmaközi együttműködés. Módszertani útmutató. (Community Opportunities in the Fight Against Extreme Poverty. Grassroots Organizing and Interdisciplinary Cooperation. A Methodological Guide). 'Professional Coordination of the *Community Development for the Social Inclusion of People Living in Deep Poverty'* project, Budapest.)

Sándor Bardóczi – Péter Giczey (2010): *Kézikönyv részvételi városmegújításról.* Gyakorlati útmutató (Handbook on Participatory Urban Renewal. A Practical Guide). Urban Renewal Working Group of the Hungarian Association for Community Development, Budapest.)

Éva Hallgató – Ilona Vercseg (2008): *A közösségi munka szerepe a közösségi szolgáltatásokban* (The Role of Community Work in Community Services). Parola, No. 3

Ilona Vercseg (2004): *Közösségfejlesztő leckék kezdőknek és haladóknak.* Módszertani füzet. (Community Development Lessons for Beginners and Above. A Methodological Booklet). Hungarian Association for Community Development, Budapest.

Further recommended literature:

Mátyás Sain – Judit Rab (2018): *Részvételi tervezés a településfejlesztésben és településrendezésben* (Participatory planning in Municipal Development). Budapest: Lechner Knowledge Centre.

Mátyás Sain (2010): *Segédlet a közösségi tervezéshez* (A Guide to Community planning). Regional Development Booklets 1. Hungarian Public Nonprofit Company for Regional Development and Town Planning (VÁTI), Budapest.

COMMUNITY
FUNCTIONS

When outlining the theoretical background of community-based services above, we briefly touched upon the functions local communities might fulfil (e.g., socialization, economic prosperity, social participation, social control, mutual support). With reference to the term "dysfunctional functioning", we argued that "the introduction of a community-based service is justified by a need resulting from the shortcomings of the local community - and through its operation, the local community becomes more and more capable of fulfilling its basic community functions".

This chapter is aimed at readers who might wish to deepen their understanding of the functional interpretation of communities and to place the concept of well-functioning local communities in a broader systemic context. At the same time, we also intend to shed light on the motivation for using the term ‚dysfunctional’ in describing our communities.

The community as a social system

Before embarking upon analysing the functions of local communities, we would like to take a look at the issue from a wider, ‚global’ perspective. Although, as community developers, we envisage our work to mainly take place at the local level, we still think that highlighting the broader social context that local communities are embedded in is warranted if one wishes to foster well-functioning local communities. Thus, we consider it important to refer to the broader context defining the functioning of local communities in the present chapter as well, hoping to make the description of the functions of local communities easier to relate to.

If we define the concept of locality and local communities as part of a global system, the cooperation of global and local webs of relationships seems to be of key importance to us. The question may arise as to whether there is harmony between these two, or is local functioning always wholly subordinate to global processes and systems as a result of the "dominance" of globalism? In the twenty-first century, how can one talk about the relationship of these two? Is it even possible to separate global and local functioning in a contemporary context, or are we rather facing a complex system of interconnections between co-operating networks? Using the term balance raises the question of a healthy state or, in other words, of a properly functioning state: when can a community be considered healthy? When viewed as a global system, is the European community a healthy entity, or should one only interpret the concept of a healthy community on a local level? An abundance of questions, a plethora of dilemmas

concerning the functional interpretation of communities. Although not all of these will be answered in the present chapter, we consider it important to demonstrate that **the analysis of social functions presupposes a system approach.** We therefore believe that in order to understand a well-functioning community, it is important to describe some possible interrelations between global and local functioning.

As a representative of the functionalist systems approach, Warren basically uses the theory developed by Loomis, Parsons and Homans in the functional interpretation of local communities. The **social system**, as defined by Warren (1978), **is the structural organization of the interaction of individual social units**. The community also consists of social units and can be considered a social system. Before presenting the interpretation of the community as a social system, we would like to examine the relationship between society and community on the basis of functionalist systems theory.

Society as a functional system

System theories, according to Farkas (2007), tend to assume that society can be regarded as a functional system, the separate but interdependent parts or sub-systems of which perform certain functions (for other sub-systems and for the entire system), promoting the effective functioning and survival of the social system as a whole. Farkas highlights an essential question: in relation to the sub-systems and the system as a whole, how do the sub-systems meet the functional requirements that are necessary for the system as a whole? In his view, the nature of the whole system defines the functioning of its constituent parts, with changes in the individual parts also affecting the other parts. Approaching the level of human action, one can say that each action forms a specific functional system, and in meeting individual needs, these functions play an important role.

Locally based community interpretation

Concerning the interpretation of the community relationship, Tönnies (2004)[1], a seminal representative of classical community theory, distinguishes between communities organized along ties of the blood, place-bound communities, and spiritual communities that are related to a particular value, belief, culture, as a result of a kind of value choice. Vercseg (2018) also highlights three possible approaches to communities, i.e., interpreting them as bound to a given location, chosen based on a given interest, or as intellectual or spiritual communities.
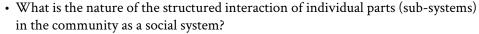
In connection with the functional approach to communities, we started out from the "space and place" definition of communities, since the interpretation in terms of functional systems is closely related to the social dimension of communities, frequently assuming their spatial, local basis. Chaskin (2013) emphasizes interaction, identity, as well as functions as the social basis of the community. The functionalist approach thus emphasises the social dimension of the community, in which different social dimensions related to locality (for example, a common identity), shared norms, as well as specific interactions and "exchanges") determine the system of relationships between individuals and develop their community membership and roles.

In order to be able to interpret the community as a social system, Warren (1978) considers it essential to answer the following questions:
- From what units do local communities, considered as social systems, develop?
- To what extent can the community be distinguished as a social system from its surrounding environment?

1 Tönnies, F. (2001): *Közösség és társadalom* (Community and Society). Budapest: Fok-ta Bt.

- What is the nature of the structured interaction of individual parts (sub-systems) in the community as a social system?
- How is the structured relationship between the interacting units in the community maintained?
- Is it possible to distinguish between the external and internal patterns of activities in the community?
- What is the connection of the community as a social system with other social systems?

The interpretation of society as a functioning mechanism is closely related to the interpretation of the functions of the local community. In connection with locality-focused community interpretation, it is important to take into account the global links of the local, as they contribute to understanding, for example, the impact of global economic and political mechanisms on the local level (Norberg-Hodge, 1996). To illustrate the range of similar effects, reference can be made to the fact that a gradual decrease in the importance of national state barriers has exacerbated territorial inequalities, even within specific countries or regions (Lányi, 2007). The process of globalisation stripped local communities of many of their powers, exercising a forceful impact on functional operation. What areas can be controlled by the community at the local level, and which are wholly at the mercy of globalized systems? According to Lányi, **global-cum-local processes** could operate in a sustainable manner if local communities had a certain share of basic public services at the local level, including public utilities, arable land, raw material production, which in some respects could provide a more sustainable response to globalized mechanisms.

Warren (1978) also referred to the dynamically changing nature of the local community, highlighting the processes of globalization (including, for example, the mobility and transfer of capital, population, technology, and knowledge) along with the political and economic environment as important influencing factors. He also saw global trends and processes reflected in the development of the division of roles between the state, market and civil sectors. For this reason, Warren identified two types of connection systems as significant in the understanding of the parts and units of local communities: the vertical and horizontal patterns of communities. In his view, the main decisions are taken outside the competence of the local community, even when they do affect its own constituent units or the very functioning of its system. At the same time, the opposite trend can also be observed, as the main activities of the units located in the same geographical area as the local community are often simply not relevant to the community, since their impact is experienced outside the community. Thus, the range of functional connections that fall outside a given local community is called the vertical pattern of that local community. Warren also isolates the system of links between the constituent units within the respective local community. The latter are regarded as horizontal patterns of the local community. Thus he also highlights the importance of analysing local communities in a global context.

Can a well-functioning community be considered a healthy community?

Thompson et al. (1990) see the key to a **well-functioning community** in the capacity of its constituent units to fulfil their own role in the whole system, i.e, in the whole "organism". Thus he interprets a well-functioning community as an organism. This interpretation is very close to the view of Henry (2011) who likens a community to the functioning of a living being: "It consists of different parts that represent specific functions, activities, or interests, each operating within defined

boundaries to meet the needs of the community" (McCloskey et al., 2011)[2]. Regarding the needs that functions may respond to, he cites the following areas as examples: the role of educational institutions in organizing teaching and learning, the work of economic actors in business and employment, the role of health institutions in health preservation, problem management and prevention and the impact of faith-based organizations on promoting spiritual well-being. According to McClosky (2011), a **healthy community** has an extensive network of connections and, depending on other sectors, assumes a certain shared responsibility for problem solving and ensuring well-being, characterized by collaborative co-operation and efficient resource sharing between parts of the community. Ashby et al. (2012) argue that through its functioning, a healthy community creates a social environment that continually reproduces and increases its resources, thereby ensuring healthy living conditions for community members.

Warren (1978), when defining a healthy community or, as he puts it, a good community, highlights nine main aspects which, in his experience, are worth exploring. These nine areas, in line with the author's systemic theory, are the following:

1. Primary Group Relationships

How well do members of the local community need to know each other? In his view, this aspect is of paramount importance for the functioning and growth of neighbourhood activities.

2. Autonomy

He also considers the decision-making power of the members of the local community to be a key factor for the local market, state and civil society sectors alike.

3. Viability

Viability means the ability of members of the local community to solve their own problems by developing the necessary actions themselves.

4. The distribution of power

The degree of power in political decision-making.

5. Participation

The extent to which community members participate in community matters.

6. Degree and extent of commitment

How important is the local community for its members? What degree of commitment is necessary for it to function properly?

7. Degree of heterogeneity

What degree of diversity among the residents in a given locality is most beneficial for the community? In connection with this, he highlights the value of the emergence of different lifestyles in one area.

8. Degree of neighbourhood control

The role of each neighbourhood within a given local community and the nature of their relationship with the local community also influence the proper functioning.

9. Degree of conflict

How much conflict is present in a healthy community?

Taking these aspects into account, according to Warren, provides important guidance for examining well-functioning communities.

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2 McCloskey et al. (2011): *Principles of Community engagement.* NIH Publication No. 11-7782, p. 5.

Interpreting communities in terms of functions

Throughout our work, therefore, we used **a functionalist approach to local communities.** According to this approach, local community is a social system that implements and / or supervises, controls the service and consumption mechanisms at the local level, while this local space also provides space for the formation and the maintenance of personal relationships and for the practicing of social roles and participatory forms emerging in the shared common locality (Weil, 2013). The functions that characterize the operational system of a given local community may, of course, vary; in our project, however, we set out from the community functions defined by Warren (1963, 1978).

According to Warren (1978), a community is a social system that consists of several sub-systems (such as educational institutions, healthcare and social services, local government, housing, rights etc.). In line with the interpretation of community as a social system, Warren has outlined additional assumptions that may help us refine the functionalist interpretation:
- Communities are macro-level social systems and are part of the individual-ecological perspective.
- Communities have boundaries which may be both geographical and mental.
- Communities have culture. The socialization of their members is influenced by the way of life, the values and beliefs that are sometimes called a set of beliefs.
- Community members communicate with each other in order to ensure the flow of information and to achieve their goals.
- Community members operate so as to make sure that their duties are carried out effectively to ensure survival.
- Communities use energy (occasionally constructing infrastructure or institutions).
- (…) community members should share a sense of 'us'.
- Community members adjust themselves to larger systems.
- Communities possess tools of social control.
- Communities have relative power in relation to larger systems. (Warren, 1978: 154)

Thus, according to Warren's interpretation (1963, 1978), a local community, interpreted as a social system, can be concieved of as a unified functional system which becomes complete if it fulfills the following functions:
(1) **production, distribution and consumption of social and economic products and goods** (e.g. educational, religious, commercial activities),
(2) **socialization** of the young,
(3) **maintaining norms and social control** (both through informal networks and through official channels, such as education, the police),
(4) **social participation**,
(5) **mutual support** (e.g. through institutions, voluntary organizations, networks of friends) (Warren, 1978).

Economic prosperity
The local community's function to ensure economic prosperity essentially examines the functioning of local participation in the processes of production - distribution - consumption, in the context of local products produced for everyday life, which many actors in the locality can contribute to (such as businesses, municipalities, educational institutions, the church etc.). In connection with this, it is important to take into account the conditions under which these products or services are produced,

the characteristics of the local community, the participation of its members, and the impact of their participation in this process (Warren 1963).

Socialization

In line with Warren's theory, locality comes into focus as a secondary site of socialization for the young. Secondary in the present case refers to the individual's socialization experiences outside the family (Solymosi, 2004). The state of the locality and local communities thus has a direct impact on the socialization of the individual: society or a certain unit of it transmits to its members the knowledge, social values and behavioral patterns that are characteristic to it or which directly affect their way of life. Warren highlights the role of school communities in this, which he regards as the main community institution.

Social participation

In essence, the community function of social participation emphasizes access: the opportunity that allows this and the next function. According to Warren (1978), this function is most widely performed by various religious organizations; in addition, local formal and informal organizations run on a voluntary basis also have a great influence on the operation of this function. In addition, Warren mentions various public health and social service providers and local governments, which may ensure space for social participation through their paid or voluntary employees during their formal activities.

Social control

Social control as a community function implies the ability enabling community members to influence the extent to which community members should meet the norms commonly accepted. The incumbent government and, at the local level, the municipality play a particularly important role in this function, which is also the responsibility of the police, the court, the school, the church, and social service providers (Warren, 1963, 1978).

Solidarity

Solidarity as the fifth community function characterizes the development of people's mutual cooperation and support at the local level. This can take many forms, ranging from support for individuals in need when ill to helping people encountering difficulties due to changes in their economic circumstances. However, forms of solidarity have changed radically in recent decades, with institutions such as public welfare institutions, private health organizations, government agencies, etc. gaining a role in it. Non-profit organizations may also be the embodiment of mutual cooperation in our society today.

Conclusion

Areas defined by certain functions of communities are essentially social systems that cannot be independent of greater level systems. In this context, it is very important to take into account national trends (e.g. national healthcare, governmental operation, education), and beyond this, the impacts of global systems as well (e.g. the operation of multinational companies). Thus, the sub-systems created within the local community and the national and global environmental systems surrounding and interweaving their operation can be interpreted together in the study of local functions (Schriver, 2016).

The functionalist interpretation of communities contributes to a better understanding of the foundations and the nature of collective action; assuming that community actions are mostly organized around an individual's social status or needs and are more likely to emerge along existing investments as well as established formal channels (Weil, 2013). The fulfillment of community functions defined by Warren, their

operation by the local community, basically depends on the organization level of the community and the close ties inherent in it (Warren 1963; Vercseg 2011). Warren (1978) also referred to this when defining aspects of well-functioning communities. We believe that the operation of community functions alone does not contribute to the development of healthy local communities, and we also regard it very important to consider the nine aspects identified by Warren. However, the realization of all this is determined very powerfully by global influences, therefore the issue of the well-functioning operation of local communities is now equally contingent upon global operations. However, we believe it is indispensable to recognize that local communities, as well-functioning social systems, also play an important role in the functioning of the global social system. With this work, we hope to contribute to underlining this notion.

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ON BEST PRACTICES

The Hungarian case studies are included in the next chapter

Without best practices, the presentation of the project cannot be complete. However, the purpose of this chapter is not just to show how we worked with best practices during the project. It also aims to help the reader get a better understanding of the case studies in this book. Last but not least, this chapter will also be beneficial to those who plan to collect best practice examples themselves.

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The Foundations

The grant program, in the framework of which our project has been implemented, was launched in order to improve access to (public) services.[1] Project plans were expected in which the applicants would learn about and process best practice examples of the given field in the framework of international cooperation, and make recommendations based on them and other things. Our project focused on small local communities that are most disadvantaged in terms of accessible public services, as well as community-based services that alleviate the problem according to our professional knowledge and creed. For this reason, in the project **we looked for Hungarian and foreign best practices in running community-based services that are workable in a small local community setting as well.**

However, the project was about much more than having experts from five different organizations study best practices as part of an international collaboration, involving collecting, processing and making best practice examples available in writing. We tried to present the best practices as widely as possible already during the project: we organized 11 domestic study trips, which allowed more than 40 domestic and 8 foreign experts to get acquainted with the best practices of a total of 26 organizations/institutions/municipalities.[2] International cooperation also went beyond the collection of best practices: it was only part of the joint reflection on the issues affecting small local communities, areas 'lagging behind,' local communities, and public services. At the same time, our foreign partners also had a chance to obtain personal experience in the rural district that is the target area of the project. The professional experience, expertise and specific professional approach of the foreign partners, and their reflections on the Hungarian situation and practice, have played an important role in this joint learning process.

1 In addition to accessibility, the call for proposals (EFOP 5.2.2-17) set the goal of improving quality, as well as the ability of (public) services to create new opportunities.
2 Each professional was given a chance to take part in several study trips. Two equally important considerations were providing the opportunity to attend the study trips for as many professionals as possible, and having each professional from the district, the target area of the project, gain insight and be inspired on as many study trips as possible.

Collecting Best Practices – The Methodology

Gathering best practices cannot be started immediately, not even if it were the job of a single person. And in international cooperation, special care must be taken, as it is important that there is agreement on goals, criteria and form – and that everyone has the same understanding of each concept.

The research work consisted of the study of best practice collections and their methodology, with the aim of getting a comprehensive picture of (1) how to define the term 'best practice'; what types and levels exist, (2) what criteria can be used to define an activity as 'best practice', (3) what specific professional criteria for best practice have been defined in areas close to the community-based service, (4) what template has been used to uniformly describe best practices.

What Makes a Practice 'Best Practice'

It is difficult to separate the definition and criteria of best practice, as the definition also includes the most important criteria: **innovative[3], tried and tested, practice of model value (including the activity process, the tools, the methods and the approach used) that results in positive change and is well-documented**. Additional criteria typically include **sustainability** (this is especially important in our case, as we think in terms of services and operations), and **adaptability**, meaning the given practice can be implemented elsewhere. Some best practice collections also include a time limit (e.g. only practices introduced no more than 3 years ago can be included), which we decided to avoid.

There are collections that differentiate between several levels of best practices (e.g., between promising practices[4] that are still running – and are therefore only presumed best practices for the time being – and tried and tested best practices[5] that are already widespread). We decided not to make that distinction.

What makes a best practice a best practice for community-based services/operation?

Central to the preparation for collecting best practices was the definition and uniform interpretation of what we consider to be a community-based service. What is meant by 'community-based', and what by 'service'? What do the two stand for together, and what does this all have to do with public services? The answers to these questions are far from obvious, even for community professionals – especially if the professionals come from different countries and partly from different fields. When it comes to methodology, it is important to emphasize experience: in international collaborations sometimes it turns out that some words, which can otherwise be translated quite accurately, do not mean the same thing in individual countries. It is very important to take the time and pay attention to clarifying the concepts at the beginning of the project – and also during further work. This was an important condition for

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3 Innovativeness is a necessary criterion for best practice, which always covers practice that is novel and renews established routine activities (or stands as an alternative to a missing activity, giving an answer to a previously unresolved problem). "Innovative" can also mean trying out a practice that has been tested in another field.

4 In a mental health project *(link in Hungarian):*
http://lelkiegeszseg.antsz.hu/portal/pfile/file?path=/site/Lakossagi1/Nemzetkozi-es-haza-sza-kirodalmak-alapjan-felkutatott-jo-gyakorlatok---Tarsadalmi-felzarkozasi-munkacsoport1

5 In a collection of educational best practices *(link in Hungarian)*: https://iskolataska.educatio.hu/index.php/jogyakorlatotlet/index/1413882969.edu

understanding and conducting a dialogue in our case as well – and joint learning never ended.[6]

Outlining the list of criteria has proven useful in collecting and describing best practices.

Based on this, the final, textual definition was born (see Chapter 2).

In the course of this project, by *community-based operation/services* we mean an activity that:
- is locally based;
- builds on personal/local needs and resources;
- involves working with partners instead of clients/users/visitors;
- mobilizes internal resources; and
- involves working in partnership with the providers of other services.

When defining community-based service, we emphasized that it can be implemented in any professional field and in any operational form. In this way, best practices can come from any field where they work with people, for people (e.g. health, social, cultural, training, adult education or active citizenship initiatives). And they are not necessarily institutional practices – they can also be implemented by churches, municipalities or non-governmental organizations.

Description of Best Practices: The Template

Generally, we do not collect best practices for ourselves: we also want to share them with others. It is therefore important to describe them in a transparent, easy-to-follow and comparable way: this requires a fillable template. The collections of best practices on the one hand, and our own goals on the other hand, provided the basis for creating it. The template we use contains a more detailed professional description following the short basic data (including a short summary of the best practice). After reading many best practice descriptions, we came to the realization that the 'story' cannot be left out of the template, so a few paragraphs of the activity were included between the basic data and the professional description.

Best Practices at Full Potential: The Case Study

The template for describing best practices can be found at the end of this chapter.

Best practices had to be described relatively briefly in a bound form, based on the criteria specified. The case study provides a freer form and a broader framework. **In our case, the case study means a systematic description, documentation and analysis of, and professional reflection on, a community-based service/ mode of operation.**[7] In addition to the facts, experiences are also included, and the

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6 During the last months of the project, for example, when we were talking to our Austrian partner about a lecture to be held for Austrian community professionals, it became clear that the term "service" is not used for public services in Austria. It needs to be explained separately that when we talk about public services (there is a separate term for them), we mean, among other things, social care.

7 Based on Ilona Vercseg's definition. (Ilona Vercseg: Preparing a case study. In: Parola, 2001/4. *link in Hungarian*)

description allows room for photographs and other documents. Its style adapts to the readers they are meant for: interested professionals.[8]

The possibilities inherent in the case study have been highlighted to the authors separately. The number and genre of 'appendices' enriching the case study can vary: notes, summaries, call to actions, etc. can also be used besides photos. You can tell a story while reflecting on the potential mistakes that may have been made (from which readers can also learn), on development (how the process unfolded over time), on difficulties, on activities that we would do differently today, and on activities that did not bring the expected results (or they brought an unexpected result) – with an explanation, if there is one, etc. In order to better understand the process, some activities can be described in detail (including, for example, a schedule for organizing an event that is relevant to the practice presented).
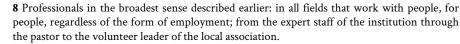
The Process

Having clarified in theory what we consider to be the best practice for community-based service provision/operation, with the template in hand each partner shared a best practice in English, the working language of the project. It was only after reading and discussing these that we finalized the template and reaffirmed the criteria for best practice.

The best practices were made available by the partners from their own 'perspectives': as they are partly national professional organizations with dense networks of contacts, there were many options to choose from. Based on our own experience of collecting best practices, we can say that the biggest difficulty was not finding them. Based on the criteria, we were also able to justify why exactly we consider the activity to be a best practice. However, a narrative had to be found to describe each best practice. The central element which the story can be built around. The focus. In some cases, it turned out that several best practices can be identified within a single best practice.[9]

Some of the best practices have been made into a case study. (The characteristics of the case study as a 'genre' were clarified together.) A criterion of selecting the case studies was that the best practice should be relevant and professionally exciting, so to speak, in the Hungarian setting. Another important aspect was to have the collection be as colorful as possible.

Describing a best practice, especially in the form of a case study, is a big job. First of all, you need to obtain the necessary information: in addition to the available documents, you need to orientate yourself within the field if possible, and to interview the professional leading the activity. If you describe your own best practice, the field visit and the interview can of course be saved, but the information still needs to be processed: you need to analyze, reflect, and describe it in a structured way. (And even then, it is not over: the descriptions need to be worked on as directed by the reviewer[10].)

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8 Professionals in the broadest sense described earlier: in all fields that work with people, for people, regardless of the form of employment; from the expert staff of the institution through the pastor to the volunteer leader of the local association.

9 Among the case studies in the volume, we searched for the narrative of the Ág development work at length, until we finally found it in the "community working mode".

10 The reviewer in this case means a professional reviewer. The professional review was performed by a member of the project staff.

Common Foreign Language

The common working language of the project was English – none of the partners had it as a mother tongue. (Understanding each other was made easier by the fact that both Hungarian and German were partly shared as mother tongues.) The use of English in correspondence and in-person meetings did not pose a problem, unlike in the case of best practices and case studies. They were written in English so they could become common knowledge – and in the end that was what prevented them from becoming common knowledge. More specifically, the best practices of non-native English speaking partners written in English were difficult for non-native English speaking partners to interpret. In addition to the constant lack of time, this also contributed to the partners not reading each other's best practices. We finally presented the best practices orally at our third international professional workshop (linked to specific topics), and this proved to be the most effective form.

What Is a Best Practice or Case Study Collection Good For?

An important, but not exclusive, purpose of describing and publishing best practices is documenting and making them available. Best practices also play an important role in promoting community-based services: they show that there are 'different kind of' community solutions around the world that are successful and work. They demonstrate that community-based operation is indeed feasible. **Those who are open to community solutions can receive encouragement, inspiration, and reinforcement** (not a 'recipe' though, as a best practice implemented elsewhere certainly cannot be fully adopted. However, let us once again emphasize the importance of getting ideas and inspiration: learning about best practices can help us stay afloat as we sink into our daily struggles in the ocean of problems.) These best practices can form the basis of a professional dialogue on community-based services and operations – and in a wide range too, as best practices are not profession-specific. **Case studies** that incorporate the analysis of, and professional reflection on, best practices and present the activity in detail **can serve as an appendix to the definition of community-based services**.

Our plan to put together, as a 'non-mandatory task', a serious collection of best practices that can be later expanded in a transparent way using the template, has not been carried out. When describing Hungarian best practices, we were again confronted with the experience of how much time it takes to prepare the description and fill out the template as completely as possible to facilitate understanding. This was supplemented by task of reviewing, correcting and finalizing best practices written by the partners (which was further complicated by foreign language use). Hence, this task would have taken so much time that would not have fit into the scope of the project. The case studies on the selected best practices are presented in the next chapter – however, as we also considered it important to publish other best practices, we also provide short, summary descriptions of them at the end of this chapter.

Domestic Best Practices

Study Trips

Reading the description of a best practice – and getting to know it on the field, by talking to contributors: in fact, the two together give a complete picture. **The study trips organized in order to learn about best practices** were mainly organized for the professionals working in the Gönci District, the location of our project, but we also advertised them nationally. These study trips (as our local colleagues call them: seeing tours) are among the few opportunities for professionals working in the field to break out of their day-to-day routines while learning about other practices (not only in the places visited, but also in conversations with participants from outside the district.) Of course, this does not mean that professionals working in the same district, but in different local communities, different institutions and organizations, necessarily know each other and each other's work. Also, they do not necessarily have the opportunity to conduct professional dialogue on a daily basis – the study visits provided an opportunity for that as well.

The study trips were also community events – especially the two-day ones where we were able to spend an evening together, before and after a long joint trip. (North Abaúj is located at such a far corner of the country that most venues can only be reached by taking longer trips from there.) The time spent together, the shared experiences, and the conversations strengthened local contacts as well.

We organized study trips not only to the more remote parts of the country, but also to nearby ones. Moreover, we also organized study trips presenting best practices from the district, which were instructive not only for our foreign partners. It was important to show that there are best practices available locally as well.

Hungarian Best Practices

Below, we present the diversity of localities and professional fields in which we visited best practices. We have not been able to process all the best practices (three case studies can be read in the next chapter), but we reported on all of them on our Hungarian-language professional blog – the links in the descriptions of the study trips lead to these entries.

Study trip to Nagyecsed (June 27, 2018): Szatmár Small Regional Basic Social Services Center.

Why do we consider the activities of the institution to be a best practice?
- Community development activities are integrated into its institutional operation
- It cooperates with local non-governmental professional organizations
- It uses projects as a resource during the operation of the institution.

Study Trip to Komárom – Koppánymonostor study trip: Best practice visit to Mag-ház (Seed House), hosted by the Living Space Association (October 15-16, 2018). **Topics covered:** the community development and local development activities of the local association; operating a community venue in consortium cooperation.

The case study on Mag-Ház is included in the next chapter.

Why do we consider the Mag-ház a best practice?
Because it is a community space that is connected to (part) of a local community and serves as a basis for community development work carried out in this and other local communities in the region; even the venue itself was created as a result of these processes. The structure of the community space (Mag-ház) was implemented in response to local needs, building on the voluntary activities of locals. Several NGOs run it in a consortium / affiliated organizational cooperation. In its operation, Mag-ház follows democratic principles, both at the level of operating organizations and that of staff and volunteers. It gives room for bottom-up initiatives, supporting their implementation but maintaining the autonomy of the initiator.

Study trip to Baranya: Best practice visit to North Hegyhát (Alsómocsolád) and Ág (October 26-27, 2018): community solutions by small local communities to the problem of poverty, emigration, revitalization of the local economy, and strengthening the community. **Topics**:
- community treasury and social cooperative in Ág,
- micro-regional union (joint development, repatriation program, regional gift package, etc.), village newspaper, local economic development program in the local communities of North Hegyhát, and in Alsómocsolád and Mekényes.

The case study on the development process in Ág is included in the next chapter.

Why do we consider the Ág program to be a best practice?
Because
- it involves local residents in planning and implementation,
- supports them in taking responsibility.

Why do we consider the Észak-Hegyhát Micro-Regional Union, the community programs in Mekényes and the "Our Own Bread" local economic development program in Alsómocsolád to be best practices?
Because they
- start out from local needs,
- build on local resources,
- are based on the cooperation of institutions, local governments, non-governmental organizations, economic actors, local communities and individuals, that is, partnership,
- strengthen local media and local identity.

Study Trip to Zala (November 26-27, 2018): Getting to know county, small regional and local best practices in Zalaszentgrót and Tilaj boasting community solutions for retaining young people, developing the local economy, cross-sectoral cooperation and cooperation between communities. **Topics:**
- the youth support/development activities of the Zala Returnees' Association in Zalaszentgrót and the small region,
- local economic development in Tilaj,
- the networking and community building/community development activities of the Association for the Villages of Zala County in the area of rural development and running a village caretaker service.

Why do we consider the programs of the Zala Returnees' Association to be a best practice? Because
- it treats young people not as a problem but as partners, a resource,
- its programs are based on cooperation between the civil, municipal and business sectors,
- its programs are built of each other/on each other.

Why do we consider economic development in Tilaj to be a best practice? Because
- it starts out from local needs,
- builds on local resources,
- thinks in terms of community solutions.

Why do we consider the activities of the Association for the Villages of Zala County to be a best practice? Because
- it builds a partnership-based network of actors based in the county,
- community learning is an important and consciously emphasized part of networking and cooperation.

Study trip to North Abaúj and network building between our foreign partners and regional professionals (March 20, 2019), **Topics:**
- 'Sure Start' Children's Center (Boldogkőújfalu),
- Local economic development program (Abaújkér),
- Abaúj Regional Nature Conservation Association (Fony).

Study trip to Tomor (April 2, 2019): from non-governmental organization to social enterprise – results of 20 years of development work in a Roma community

Study trip around Szombathely (June 17-18, 2019). **Topics:**
- Gencs Tradition Preservation Association (Gencsapáti),
- Herény Cultural and Sports Association (Herény),
- Together for Nádasd Association (Nádasd),
- Vine Hill Shepherd Circle (Oszkó).

Transdanubia Study Tour (September 18 – 19, 2019): Viable small local communities with the involvement of young people, with civil society/local government playing the main role, ensuring publicity and strengthening participation and cooperation.
Topics:
- Municipality of Pázmánd,
- Fekete Sereg Youth Association (Nagyvázsony),
- Dörögd Youth Association (Taliándörögd),
- KÖSZI – Central Transdanubia Alliance for Youth.

Why do we consider the activities of these organizations to be a best practice?
Because
- their development activities are built on the identification and development of local resources,
- they work as partners with local residents, organizations, institutions, local governments and other actors,
- they think and work in terms of regional cooperation and network relations,
- they operate community spaces for and with the involvement of the local community, organically connected to the local community development activity,
- they strengthen local media and local identity.

The case study on FÉSZAK is included in the next chapter.

Study trip to North Abaúj: Best practice visit to get acquainted with the activities of the "Fogadó" Association of the North Abaúj County Community Developers' Circle (FÉSZAK-KÖR) (November 14, 2019). **Topics:** What impact a non-governmental organization can have on the life of local communities and the region. What can be the role of community development in micro-regional development?
- Association for the Future of Abaújvár,
- Hidasnémeti Community Developers' Circle,
- "Fogadó" Association of the North Abaúj County Community Developers' Circle.

Why do we consider the activities of youth organizations to be a best practice?
Because
- they work in partnership with young people,
- they build on local resources and, in parallel:
- they use network collaboration as a resource,
- they use and develop local media in a conscious manner.

Why do we consider the activities of the Municipality of Pázmánd to be a best practice?
Because
- it works in partnership with local residents and actors,
- it provides a variety of opportunities for participation, including through the Street Trustee Network,
- it has defined transparency as a principle for its work (Glass Village); it develops local media.

Brief Description of Best Practices from Abroad

The case studies made from the selected best practices of our foreign partners are only available in Hungarian, but we provide short descriptions of the best practices in English, in the hope that they will be another source of inspiration for the reader.[11]

Székelyland[12]

Our Romanian partner, the Regional Community Development Association in Székelyland, facilitates community-driven development with community development methods. You can read more about this method in available community development literature.[13]

Activating, Mobilizing and Involving the Community of Olasztelek with Community Development Methods

At the invitation of its two local members, the Regional Community Development Association has launched a community development intervention in Olasztelek. The aim of the intervention was to activate the community, involve members in community cultural activities, and support the work of local, 'internal' developers with adequate external professional help – while also gently establishing and strengthening their position as internal developers. Interviews, community discussions, and a study catalog were used as methods during the process. During mobilization, the community got involved in common reflection and the launching, organizing and maintaining of several cultural event series.

Facilitating the Community-Based Development Strategy of Gheorgheni

In one of the local communities of Székelyland, Gheorgheni (Gyergyócsomafalva in Hungarian), which has a population of 4,500, two students initiated a community development process, with professional support from their teachers who are members of the Regional Community Development Association. They managed to raise sufficient funds for the project from different donors. They managed to involve as partners the mayor and volunteers active in local cultural life, representatives of the local youth organization, as well as other committed locals, who, together with representatives of local organizations and institutions, became participants in the training that forms the basis of, and is closely linked to, the process. During the course, participants acquired community development knowledge and methods.

The community development process was realized as a practical application of what had been learned, with professional support from the trainers. The goal was to write a Local Community-Based Development Strategy, which was created during the process through activating and involving the community. The mayor and some local elected members who won at the municipal elections during the project, became public actors as key active participants in the community development process. The new general assembly adopted and declared the strategy developed during the community development process as a fundamental document.

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11 Here you can read about the best practices of our partners from Székelyland, Austria and Germany. With our Slovakian partner we worked with best practices in a special field, in a different way. We gave an insight into this work at the closing conference.
12 Region in Romania mostly inhabited by Hungarians.
13 For example, the methodological booklet titled Community Development Lessons for Beginners and Advanced Students *(in Hungarian)* by Ilona Vercseg can be considered an essential handbook. (Hungarian Association for Community Development, Budapest, 2004.)

Education Strategy for Erdővidék

The Regional Community Development Association was invited to develop a community-based Education Strategy for Erdővidék with the broad involvement of community stakeholders. As several members of the association already had significant experience in training and education, the association decided to undertake the task. During the (somewhat less than) one-year process, we were able to reach out to opinion-forming representatives of all stakeholders (teachers, educators, parents, cultural institutions, businesses, citizen initiatives and local communities). More than 200 interviews were conducted, with community developers moderating 45 community conversations with nearly 800 participants in 18 local communities in the Erdővidék region. Although the basis and specific goal of the work was to create a sectoral strategy for development, thanks to presence of the community development professionals and the methods used, a community development process was started. The process was maintained – with external help – by the local volunteers involved, contributing to the strengthening of the community's cohesion and thus its ability to function.

Establishing Interethnic Cooperation in a Rural Area with a Mixed Ethnic Composition

The facilitators (community developers) of the Regional Community Development Association, in cooperation with an organization in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár in Hungarian), used community development methods within the framework of an interethnic project to promote the cooperation of interethnic (Roma and non-Roma) communities in Simonfalva. (Although coexistence had been peaceful in the local community, both communities were 'just fine on their own'. There were hardly any examples of cooperation, and the members of the two communities participated in existing ongoing practices as unequal parties.)

The process began with an interview marathon, which allowed for the identification of opinion leaders within both communities. From them, the 'team of initiators' emerged (the active core of participants in the process, who organized further interviews and then community discussions with the support of facilitators). An inventory of the needs and problems of the community(ies) was made and solutions were proposed. Of course, the values of the community were also taken into account during the workshops. A common vision was formulated, SWOT analyses were made. From the initiating team, an interethnic association was formed, with the local government, the school and the community center also being represented. The association participated in the next village day as a co-organizer already, with the programs organized by the Roma activists becoming an integral part of the event. The local Roma became equal partners both as organizers and hosts.

Austria

Our Austrian partner, the Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke, is a national umbrella organization for general adult education and culture, as well as community work. The best practice examples they shared came from their member organizations.

Activating Opinion Survey

In the course of an activating survey, citizens are asked about their opinions and attitudes, and are encouraged and stimulated to stand up for their interests and participate in the development of their living environment and in solving their problems. The method can be used to learn about the needs and wants of people living in a given residential area, and to support the independent action of citizens.

In order to better understand the terrain where the opinion poll is to be conducted, preliminary research is carried out whereby we talk to local key people and other residents, analyze written materials, and make observations. After informing the public in writing, during the survey the interviewers trained conduct oral interviews based on an open-ended interview sample. The aim of the poll is to map the fears, desires and worries of residents, and at the same time ask about their personal suggestions and their willingness to participate in the implementation of ideas.

The results of the survey are evaluated and presented to the public with the aim of defining the steps of implementation. Stakeholder and action groups are formed for the implementation phase. Unlike other, traditional opinion polls, activating surveys are not about one-off actions. Activating opinion surveys are much more about being the beginning of a long-term process and therefore require appropriate organization and implementation.

Wisdom Council and Dynamic Facilitation

The Wisdom Council (called the Citizens' Council in Austria) is a piece of deliberative methodology: a group of local residents from the municipality/region are randomly invited to a meeting where they receive supportive facilitation for 1.5-2 days. (Participants either come up with the topics already during the discussion or they are invited for a specific topic, e.g. the transport concept of the area). The results obtained there are discussed in a World Café open to all local residents. Then, the local government goes on to work with the results thus supplemented. (The process can be extended, for example through providing an opportunity to connect online.)

Repair Café Community Service

The Repair Café (RC) is an occasional DIY workshop and community space where local residents can take their household and other items that need repair (from coffee machines, through clothing and bicycles, to computers). At the RC, a local volunteer helps them with the repair. (This is important: the RC is not a service – items are repaired together.) It is organized 1-2 times a year for an afternoon/evening at a temporary venue. A regional organization, Tiroler Bildungswerk, provides the professional-methodological background for organizing RCs. An RC is typically initiated by a local organizer who seeks out volunteer experts and craftsmen locally, acquires a venue and promotes the event to local residents. After the RC, for the rest of the year, locals are either able to repair their items on their own, or they already know who to turn to. (The Repair Café is an international initiative, implemented in cities, but in Austria it has been proven to operate in a rural setting as well.)

Association Academy

Basis.Kultur.Wien is a Viennese umbrella organization that brings together local cultural and artistic initiatives that usually work with volunteers in the city, and provides them with professional and methodological support, among other things. The Association Academy is a further spinoff of this NGO support activity: instead of providing individual support, they have essentially developed a free training system in which workshops and seminars are held 8-10 times a year. These are one-off events and focus on both association-related matters (legal compliance, taxation, fundraising, etc.) and professional content. The trainings also provide a networking opportunity for organizations that otherwise do not know each other, thus facilitating cooperation.

Germany

Our German partner, the East German regional community foundation Bürgerstiftung Barnim Uckermark, was able to gather best practices from an area with very similar characteristics and problems to those of the Gönc district.

Living Habitats – A Regional Guide to Democratic Culture

The regional guide is a publication presenting civic initiatives (more precisely, initiatives, networks and individuals) as well as a 'program booklet' for a given summer. Its authors have explored local civic initiatives operating in a rural environment and motivated them to present themselves not only in the publication, but also by offering some kind of program and connection points to interested locals. The beautifully implemented travel guide has been distributed to all households in the area. In the autumn, the initiatives in the travel guide were convened for a gathering to discuss experiences.

Local 'Sinkholes'

The Local 'Sinkholes' project, hosted by the local museum (in collaboration with other institutions and organizations such as the local community theater), called on residents of the small town of Eberswalde, the center of the area, to look for local 'sinkholes', that is, public spaces in the town that have 'disappeared'. Once those spaces had been identified, 'detective games' were organized for each location as a one-time program whereby participants explored the past of the given public space through a variety of interactive games and community theater. (In addition, other complementary programs were also connected to the project, such as local high school students collecting oral history.) Volunteers were involved as soon as the preparation phase of specific local 'sinkholes' projects started, which also required research work prior to the organization: among other things, finding people who can tell stories about the given public space. One of the venues was a playground built by local Hungarians that has disappeared since. The detective game organized here provided a good opportunity for the participants to find out how Hungarians came to the city and learn about everyday Hungarian culture, including from the Hungarian engineer who initiated the construction of the playground.

National Socialist Place of Remembrance Memorial Site as a Cultural Community Space

In the years following the change of regime, the Eberswalde community of the punk-rocker youth subculture 'appropriated' a barracks on the outskirts of city, which had previously housed a women's concentration camp. Originally, they were only looking for a concert venue, a community space, but the punk rockers – who reject nationalism and especially fascism, and profess democratic values – eventually developed a community memorial here, which also functions as an open community space. In their interpretation, fostering a commemorative culture involves a communal processing of the past, as well as an opportunity to re-experience personal stories.

Democracy Award

The Democracy Award is given each year to those who do most for the region's democratic culture. To be noted separately is the fact that the prize explicitly recognizes support for democracy, but the process of creating the award and the related system of criteria was also exciting as it was not invented by experts but crystallized in a social process, with the community essentially formulating its own concept of democracy.

DRAFT OF GOOD PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Basic information:

Title of the intervention (action, process):

Institution/organization implementing the intervention/activity:
- Name:
- Type (local council/ organization financed by them – church/ organization financed by them – NGO/ organization financed by them):
- Field of activity (social – health care – training/education – culture – active citizenship):

Short summary of the intervention/ activity (1 paragraph)

Institution/organization implementing the intervention/activity:
- Organizational Description (mission & work):
- Home page:

Contact person (on good practice)
- Name:
- Contact details:

Information about the intervention/ activity
- Location:
- Type (project – service – way of working):
- Time interval:
- Financial background (supported by an organization or by a grant or by other sources):

Dissemination of the intervention/activity (home page, bibliography):

A The "story"
Description of the intervention in the form of a comprehensive and lifelike text (one, two or three paragraphs)

Professional information
Basic situation (needs/demands to be satisfied that the intervention addressed)
- from the perspective of the (local) community:
- from the perspective of the professional:

Objective: goal of the intervention
- from the perspective of the (local) community:
- from the perspective of the professional:

Target group:
Actors (participants) in the intervention:
- Initiator:
- Implementer (host organization):
- Partners involved (professional local partners, professional non-local partners, non-professional local partners, non-professional non-local partners):

Describe the activities performed during the planning/implementation/evaluation phases (if it is a regular activity, please include considerations related to sustainability; if it was a project, please include its 'after-life'), elaborating on the following aspects:
- Activities and methods (particularly the methods of involvement and empowerment)
- Roles and tasks (professionals & locals/target group)
- Resources needed (professionals – competences, time requirement, material and financial resources)

Achievements: measurable and non-measurable results of the intervention:
- on the personal level (among the members of the target group, with special regard to results in the area of the empowerment):
- on the level of the (local) community:
- on the level of the implementing organizations and partner organizations:

Why we think this intervention is a good practice example of a community based way of working/providing services[14]:

Reflection about the intervention (why we like(d) it – what difficulties we had – what we learned from it):

Suggestions (for those intending to perform a similar intervention/action):

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14 In the course of this project, by *a community based way of working/providing services* we mean an activity that:
- is locally based;
- is based on personal/local needs and resources;
- involves working with partners instead of clients/users/visitors;
- mobilizes internal resources; and
- involves working in partnership with the providers of other services.

PHOTOS FROM
THE HUNGARIAN STUDY TRIPS

In the office of Mag-Ház in Komárom-Koppánmonostor

Our host Zsuzsa Halmai (left) and a group of participants at Lake Alsómocsolád

Dinner reception with our foreign partners and hosts in Abaújkér, with locally-produced food on the table

Local community developer Laci Siroki (in the foreground) talks to participants in the courtyard of the Romama Apartment Restaurant and the Tanoda building in Tomor

A walk around Nádasd led by Tímea Földes, president of the local association (in the foreground)

Hosts and participants in front of the Treasure House in Taliándörögd

Béla Bereczki and János Sivák (at the table, from left to right) talk about the "Fogadó" Association of the North Abaúj County Community Developers' Circle, Telkibánya

CASE STUDIES
FROM HUNGARY

NORTH ABAÚJ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: THE HISTORY OF THE "FOGADÓ" ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTH ABAÚJ COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS' CIRCLE

CASE STUDY
ON MICRO-REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In Place of an Introduction: Origin myth

The necessary components of a micro-regional community development process cannot be foretold. As so many times in community development, there is no uniform recipe, but it is certain that people who want change and act for it are essential to the process. In 2005, there were two people in North Abaúj who wanted change. János Sivák, a local, well-respected, well-known and recognized man who is familiar with civil society life and has been actively contributing to it; and Aranka Molnár, an external community development professional who brought the new approach, knowledge and expertise to the micro-region. Of course, the commitment of two people is not enough for a successful community development process, but at János' call – thanks to his local connections and the general trust in him – the first meeting was attended by key individuals engaging in community activities from as many as 11 different local communities. We had called on the citizens who wanted to do something for their local community and region to see what we can do together. Because at that point it was already visible that power and potential lies in collaboration – no one can solve the distressing problems of the region alone. Many of the people addressed had instinctively been acting 'in a community way' in their own local community, or at their workplace, and then went on to perform community work increasingly consciously during the community learning process taking place.

At the first event, all of those invited turned up – partly because the fact that we invited people to think together about their local community and the region was a novelty for them; and partly because humans' natural curiosity was at work: if it's about something good, people just don't want to miss out.

This kind of curiosity probably stayed with the invitees because it is very difficult to talk about community development for the first time. We are not sitting together because a lot of money needs to be distributed or perhaps an existing direction of development needs to be implemented; we are neither there to have someone tell us what to do in the region to make life better. We, community development professionals, invite local people to learn together, to learn as a community. In this process, participants become conscious citizens, while changes are taking place in local communities and in the region, with a vibrant community life built up, and the methodology and experience of professionals expanded.

In community development processes, we often find that following the initial enthusiasm, the number of participants decreases, and then more people join in again. This is what happened in North Abaúj as well: seven out of the eleven local communities joining the process have stayed in (Gönc, Telkibánya, Abaújvár, Pányok, Zsujta, Hidasnémeti, and Hejce). Then, over the years, others joined our ranks (Tornyosnémeti, Hernádszurdok and Göncruszka), while Hejce dropped out of the cooperation.

We are talking about local communities forming a micro-region. We looked at the members of the "FOGADÓ" Association of the North Abaúj County Community Developers' Circle (FÉSZAK), which was established in 2007, in the same way: for us, each member represented a local community in the association, in the cooperation. And it remained like that during the initial years, too: in addition to inter-community work, active people were also organizing community life in their own villages. Where there existed communities before, they were strengthened. Where there did not, this cooperation generated community work in the local community. Over the years, however, this has changed, so FÉSZAK has reviewed this type of operation and concluded that the regional focus is more significant than the local community level. The association is now working to find this new path and build a novel collaboration. By the time the FÉSZAK got this far, a lot had happened in the micro-region and in the organization alike - we are talking about almost 15 years. In this case study, we would like to present the events and main stages of change occurring during this decade and a half.

Where Are We? Some Thoughts on the Micro-Region

Located in the northern part of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, the Abaúj-Hegyköz small region was created in 2004 as a new, independent small region. When we started organizing the community development process there in 2005, we thought that the small region of 24 local communities was too large to be treated as a unit and to start working there - which is why we created the concept of micro-region. We selected the northern part of the small region and named it North Abaúj. As a geographical name, the name does not hold, but in the meantime this name has become known no longer as a territorial delimitation, but as an indicator of a micro-regional community development process.

In terms of character, Abaúj-Hegyköz is a small region typically consisting of small villages: two of the 24 local communities (Abaújszántó and Gönc) have a population of more than 2,000, three have a population of more than 1,000, and the rest have a population of less than 1,000. Traffic and transportation conditions are poor, and mainly involve byroads. Industry is hardly present in the area. It is a region rich in historical traditions, natural resources and cultural-historical values, but for the people living here the standard of living is well below the Hungarian average. The region is not able to mobilize its human and natural resources in order for the people living there to make a better living and to benefit, rather than suffer from, changes and developments. Population decline is steady and strong. This is mainly due to emigration and, connected to it, a deteriorating age structure. All welfare indicators lag behind the national, but even the county average. The proportion of people with a primary education is typically high in the above-18 age group, and the number of people with a higher educational degree is negligible. The narrow range of livelihood opportunities has made its mark on the entire region. The majority of the existing non-governmental organizations do not focus on advocacy or lobbying, but are mainly engaged in the organization of cultural and leisure activities. A real civil society attitude is missing.

According to our own demarcation, North Abauj is made up of either seven or nine local communities that are involved in the community development process. Among them there is a town (Gönc), border villages (Abaújvár, Hidasnémeti, Pányok, Tornyosnémeti and Zsujta), a holiday community (Telkibánya), and ghettoizing communities (Göncruszka and Hernádszurdok). Interesting changes have taken place in the life of border villages in the last 10 years. An increasing number of Slovakian

citizens are buying houses in these local communities, with many of them staying there permanently. They also often go to Slovakia, mainly to the only big city in the area, Košice (Kassa), to work or socialize. (The development of the micro-region was by the Treaty of Trianon at the end of World War I, as the local communities lost their center, Kassa, meaning that the countryside lost its city. The micro-region has survived the last decades in these circumstances.)

It is also important to note that this community development process has not taken place in a prosperous region, but in one of the most disadvantaged micro-regions of the country, which is a priority area for development based on its indicators. Yet with local will, cooperation and community learning, the group of about twenty people has been able to achieve great things - even though we are aware that in disadvantaged areas advocacy capacities, the willingness to cooperate, and community competencies are in a worse condition than in prosperous ones.

The Roots[1]

In the autumn of 2005, a community development process was started in North Abaúj within the framework of the Community Initiatives Support Network[2] program. Everyone came to the first meeting with a different goal and different expectations. Some were impatient to find out what it was all about. Some arrived with excessive hopes, wanting everything, immediately. Then there were those who were waiting for the 'thing' to happen, for the organizers to say the magic word to make all their worries disappear and make the area flourish – oh, it will be so good to live here. What they had in common – regardless of temperament, experience or age – was that they all wanted to do something for their local community, Abaúj. Of course, those who were waiting for the magic word dropped out over time. Those thinking realistically remained – the ones who spared the time to meet once a month to get acquainted with community development, the region, each other and themselves, i.e. to explore the values and opportunities of their own local communities. Then, they only suspected what they now know for sure: problems are not going to solve themselves.

In the beginning, we did nothing but get to know each other. We met every month, always in another local community, where the hosts had the opportunity to present their village or town. It turned out that even though they are situated only a few kilometers apart, they do not know each other, they do not know what the residents of the neighboring local community are proud of, or where you can build on what. The 'outside eye' reassured the people living in the local communities that they did have important values on which to build, and the common ideas led them towards action.

In addition to getting acquainted, we started to map the common problems that appeared in all local communities, and then outlined and ranked the common tasks in order to solve them, followed by joint action. At the monthly meetings, people learned a lot from each other. Many things were brought in for analysis from their own cases, and this provided an opportunity for joint learning.

1 Based on a case study by János Sivák and a study by Aranka Molnár. János Sivák (2007): Together, Hand in Hand, as a Community. Uniting Local Communities for the future of Abaúj (in Hungarian). Parola No. 3, Aranka Molnár (2015): Community Learning in the Process of Community Development (in Hungarian). Parola Booklet. Hungarian Association for Community Development, Budapest.
2 National program supported by the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor 2004-2009.

In 2006, within the framework of the UNDP-ICSSZEM Cserehát Program[3], a call for proposals was launched to support community initiatives. We applied with the project 'HAND IN HAND – Local Communities Together for the Future of Abaúj', and we won support. The preparation of the application was also a test to see how well the work can be done in a community way (or else only one or two people would be working on the project). The breakthrough happened: the participants realized the common strength, the strength of the community. Everyone was involved in the work, they wrote the project together, and they experienced a new way of working none of them had before. The preparation of the application was a real springboard for the newly organized community.

This grant provided additional financial resources to continue the process for one additional year. The professional program involved monthly workshops at the regional and local level; a regional day titled 'North Abaúj in our Hearts'; a 3-day community development training course; a conference; and a summary publication. The events ran in parallel on two threads: at the local and regional levels. The work done at the local community level involved members approaching active residents, and over time associations and circles were formed – they mobilized the local civil society. (For a long time, the locals thought that the local leadership would take care of community development, but they realized that they had to do it themselves.) The work done at the regional level involved the representatives of the seven local communities continuing to meet every month, analyzing what happened, trying to find solutions to local problems, and coordinating common goals and tasks. They were a great source of strength for each other, because when locally done community work got into a downturn, at the regional meetings they received encouragement, something extra, something to 'charge up'. With this ammunition in hand, they also shook up their peers at home. It also worked the other way around: those coming from the local communities were able to give a new impetus, or a new direction, to work in the region by spreading the news of a magnificent action or event.

The name of the regional day – 'North -Abaúj in our Hearts' – perfectly sums up the atmosphere and contents of the day. In Gönc's youth park, we set up nine tents in front of an outdoor stage, which together with the stage formed a complete circle, thus symbolizing the 'whole', belonging together. The cooperation of the local communities was given a separate tent, while seven other tents belonged to the seven local communities, in which superb exhibitions of local values, historical memories, traditions and contemporary activities were organized. The 'FORUM Tent' was centrally located, where four topics were discussed in one hour each, by experienced professionals and interested residents from the region: youth; development opportunities; sustainability; civil society for democracy. On the stage, cultural programs by the local communities were shown continuously.

By the end of the three-day community development training, participants formulated the idea of establishing the „FOGADÓ" Association of the North Abaúj County Community Developers' Circle. The idea was soon followed by action, and the organization was registered in the summer of 2007.

The project was closed by a conference, by which the related publication was also completed. The goal with both was to make the active core of the community

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3 UNDP: United Nations Development Program, ICSSZEM: Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. UNDP supported the Cserehát area of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County within a separate framework, with the North Abaúj communities, where the community development process took place, also being beneficiaries.

development process boast of the results of nearly two years of work, and to get to know similar organizations in the county.

Getting Stronger[4]

From the beginning, FÉSZAK has considered it important – also due to its regional role – to take on advocacy for, and representation of, the seven local communities and the micro-region. However, a LEADER group[5] in Abaúj organized in 2007 without any publicity, gave them a hard task: Would the members of the association be able to mobilize local governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations in the seven local communities in two days' time? They did succeed: they brought together a team so big that could no longer be ignored, and the professionalism they represented spoke in favor of their involvement. FÉSZAK was admitted to the working group preparing the civil strategy, and then also into the management of the LEADER organization, where it became possible for them to bring in the values of community development and community-based development schemes.

Despite all this, they were dissatisfied as they felt that their circle was closed, that people did not know them enough in the local communities, and that the local communities themselves were not strong enough either. To address this, in 2008 community surveys were designed with the involvement of five local communities.[6] During the community survey, interviews were first conducted in the local communities with the involvement of university students, with the results communicated to locals during community discussions. For the problem areas that arose, the active core prepared a questionnaire which was distributed to each household. Then, the responses were recorded and analyzed, and a summary publication was prepared, which was delivered to each home. This was followed by discussions at the local community level, a presentation of the contents of the publication, and the planning of next steps.

Meanwhile, the activists of FÉSZAK continued to meet on a monthly basis, to compare the status of the community surveys taking place in the local communities, discuss the problems and find solutions together. They identified the organization of communication, both internal and external, as their most important common task. They started editing a website and writing a newspaper, where they introduced themselves and also showcased their activities. The newspaper was delivered to all households in the seven local communities.

Functioning communities were formed in the local communities and a cooperation network was established between the local communities. Unfortunately, however, in some local communities the local governments have stayed out of the cooperation.

In addition to the community surveys, in 2008 another important event took place in the life of FÉSZAK: the youth section of the association, FÉSZAK - IFI (FÉSZAK YOUTH), was formed, with 12-18 year olds getting involved in the youth community

4 Based on Klára Tünde Ureczky's thesis and Aranka Molnár's study cited above. Klára Tünde Ureczky (2013): *Investigation of Rural Development Opportunities Resulting from Community Development in North Abaúj.* The thesis was prepared as part of a regional and rural development consultancy course at the Faculty of Agricultural and Rural Development at the University of Debrecen).
5 LEADER is a rural development program funded by the European Union which focuses on subsidiarity and intersectoralism. In the program, local action groups are formed to develop local rural development strategies and then support – from the financial resources made available to them – local initiatives that contribute to their implementation.
6 The community surveys were funded by the International Carpathian Foundation.

development. The goal of FÉSZAK - IFI was formulated as follows: to create an active, responsible, opinion-forming group of regional youth working through joint planning and democratic division of labor, which organizes its annual programs on the basis of a jointly created work plan. Active members of FÉSZAK helped and organized youth work, being confident they could pass on to young people the values that were important to them, including the most important thing, cooperation. Their work was successful: with the support of their helpers, the young people have carried out many meetings and camps, and made several films about the micro-region and its local communities.

Between 2010 and 2011, the Common Knowledge project[7] brought a new color, a new opportunity in the community life of the region. Every process has its ups and downs, and this was true in North Abaúj as well. The Common Knowledge project arrived in the area right at a downturn and helped maintain continued interest, organizing new community events and providing opportunities for development, while showing a possible way to continue, to survive.

Within the framework of the program, research activities, self-education circles and preparatory training for community enterprise development have been implemented in the micro-region. Those who had not been active in the community so far were given the opportunity to learn about new opportunities for community existence and community development through training courses and self-education groups.

Thanks to the research, a rich local information base has been formed, which can be a basis for further progress and well-founded development based on local needs at any time.

The themes for the self-education circles were built on the results of the research, and the locations were tailored to the facilitators and the room and equipment needs of the given topic. It was a pleasure to see people who had not been engaged in the community for a long time leave their homes to attend these events. It was also an uplifting experience when active community members introduced themselves in their new roles. They were happy to lead sessions while they themselves could hardly wait to learn new things from the participants. The life of the local communities was enlivened, and a new conversation topic was born: the self-education circle.

The formula realized during the project was as follows: the existing knowledge, the willingness to act, and the strength of community cooperation have been multiplied by formal and informal training. And at the end of the formula there is an arrow pointing in a new direction, as the project did not end at that point and was not included in the archives together with the project documentation: with this opportunity, people were given a new impetus for community cooperation, to fill community existence with new content.

7 The project was hosted by the B-A-Z County Institute of Pedagogy, Vocational Development, Vocational Services and Community Cultural Work. Its local partners were the Hidasnémeti Cultural Center and FÉSZAK.

Achieving Full Potential[8]

Between 2011 and 2014, FÉSZAK implemented the complex program 'Let's Work Together Against Poverty!'[9] (hereinafter denoted by the Hungarian acronym TESZE). The long-term goal of the program was to promote the community integration of people living in extreme poverty in the local communities of North Abaúj, prevent further deepening of poverty, and reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty.

The program was built on the community development process going on in the region since 2005 and has developed and tested new methods for the integration of people living in poverty. An important element was coordinating cooperation between social services professionals (community developers, social workers, local development professionals, teachers and pastors) and social actors (local governments, civil society and businesses). Thanks to the TESZE project, the association tried and experienced the strengths and pitfalls of interdisciplinary/interinstitutional work.

The program was implemented in nine local communities (Abaújvár, Gönc, Göncruszka, Hernádszurdok, Hidasnémeti, Pányok, Telkibánya, Tornyosnémeti, Zsujta). That way, the original cooperation of seven local communities was changed. The local communities participating in the cooperation from the very beginning already knew each other and had experience working together – and trust was built on that. The newly joining local communities had to connect to this, but it actually went easily, as the local communities cooperating for some time welcomed them openly and supportively, as equal partners – they never made the new ones feel that earlier accession was a privilege. The new challenge was to involve those local residents who had so far stayed away from community development and to integrate those who had been left out, many of whom live in deep poverty.

Multi-purpose community spaces called 'settlement houses' were established in the local communities, where community-based services were developed, organized by local community workers with support from community development professionals. They also tried to address decision-makers who had been left out of the process so far, looking for common issues with them. Meanwhile, the network of local community workers was established – great attention was paid to the preparation and training of community workers.

During the project, the proceedings of the local community development processes and the progressing of the project completely coincided, as the staff, volunteers and partners of TESZE actually covered the range of active residents in the local communities. Thanks to the project, a planning and development group was present in the local communities participating in the community development process of North Abaúj for the first time – with the same intensity, unified in manner, with a threefold professional leadership (community development/rural development/ social work) communicating with each other on a weekly basis and thinking in terms of the regional level, besides the local one.

8 Based on Klára Tünde Ureczky's thesis cited above.

9 The program was implemented with support from the TÁMOP-5.1.3 program. More information about the program is available in the final publication *(in Hungarian)*: Edit Kovács (2014, ed.): "TESZE-m" (I'm Doing It)! Human and Professional Experiences and Recommendations from the "Let's Work Together Against Poverty" project Implemented in North Abaúj. Dialogue Association, Miskolc.

At the end of the project, the team working on the project formed the "FÉSZAK - FÉSZEK" (FÉSZAK – NEST) social cooperative. The idea of the social cooperative was inspired by the handicrafts produced in the clubs of the TESZE project, the provision of livelihood and self-sufficiency, the support of local producers and local products, the development of opportunities in program tourism, and local services that respond to local needs.

FÉSZAK's operation has become consciously planned and organized: they strategize and set long-term goals, for which they define paths of action, which do not just remain plans.

The new, or rather recurring challenge in the life of the association is the advocacy activity, which is carried out in order to have members' ideas reflected in local developments – particularly the elaboration of CLLD, which happened during this period. CLLD, i.e. community-led local development[10], was targeted at the new, seven-year planning period for rural development, which, contrary to its name, was carried out by omitting or neglecting communities. However, FÉSZAK has started to promote community planning, to bring together representatives of different sectors, overturning the idea that the social planning process does not require community participation because change requires expert planners.

Seeking the Way

Following the closure of the TESZE project, FÉSZAK – as an organization representing strong cooperation and interests in both cycles of LEADER – believed that it had become strong and well-known, and had demonstrated its professional competence and commitment enough, to become a key organization in the region – an indispensable partner in social development programs (at least in those that focus on community development and/or community-based operation). This is important because this period coincided with the launch of calls for proposals for new EU funding, with many of them having community development as a new focus (as a CLLD approach). This gave the organization confidence that it could have more opportunities to spread the community approach in Abaúj. However, this type of partnership – in which FÉSZAK, as an expert in community development, could have been a determining factor in CLLD-oriented processes – did not materialize. This was also due to the fact that local intentions targeting genuine community development processes and values were also transformed into mere fundraising intentions.

At first, the people at FÉSZAK found it odd that they did not have access to any projects or resources, not even those that had a community development focus, even though they could boast nearly 10 years of experience and history in this field. At the same time, organizations from outside the region appeared in Abaúj and received funds for various developments, but did not address FÉSZAK. This was partly due to the fact that they were not known (lack of awareness of the group is also typical of other organizations that are active in the field, are willing to act, and are capable of making an impact, but do not give enough weight to external communication). The other reason was they did not work with the same values as FÉSZAK and thought about community development in a different way. Organizations that get to meet FÉSZAK and get to know their work are amazed at how much knowledge and experience they have accumulated in the organization – and admire the kind of way they work together: nothing is decided by one person, they 'run' everything with the membership even though they live in different local communities and finding dates for meetings is not easy.

10 An instrument for rural development funded by the European Union.

Association members were initially disappointed that they had missed out on funding to support both field activities and organizational development, but when they saw how inflexible the application system was, how much effort the project required (not on the professional side but the management one), they no longer regretted their absence. In fact, they have gained a new experience: before applying for a funding opportunity, they have to look at it and consider it from all sides. If it does not match their values, their intentions to act – if they see that there are conditions that they do not want to meet, they have to let it go. This approach testifies to responsible thinking, which also has some downsides. For example, FÉSZAK's members have to work in other places, and not in the projects they generate and implement, and thus less time is spent on the organization and the goals set. We all know so well that change – social and community change – occurs when professionals spend quality time working in local communities and regions.

Meanwhile, in addition to community development, ecological thinking has been introduced into the organization as part of community-based operations. It means both the scale and extent at which development processes are considered, and the technologies that make the running of households, organizations and institutions more environmentally conscious. In light of this, they learnt about different techniques (production of drying equipment and dried fruits, installation of eco-toilets, deep-mulch gardening, etc.) together in the local communities and tested them in practice.

Thus, by the end of the TESZE project, regional awareness of the organization had greatly increased, but its focused activities decreased in scope because it was left without development resources and its members were forced to look for a job in other fields. The expected subsidies and new partnerships strengthening the regional role were not forthcoming. FÉSZAK did not know where to go, what the new direction should be, how to modify the plans it had envisioned for the future, what it would have to do to generate change while being faithful to its values. The association was left alone in this crisis situation and did not ask for external help to process the situation and plan ahead. At the same time, the organizations around FÉSZAK failed to realize that external support, the 'outside eye', was needed to deal with the situation – one that offers a mirror and helps formulate new challenges and new ways to go on.

In their search for a way ahead, FÉSZAK decided by 2019 to return to the traditions of their formation – to deal only with themselves, that is, with organizational building and the membership. They thought that we live in times when we should not engage in community work because the prevailing values do not support it. At the same time, the established "FÉSZAK-FÉSZEK" (FÉSZAK NEST) social cooperative was discontinued, as following changes in legislation, the conditions of maintenance became incompatible with their basic goals. By the way, despite the finished business plan, there were no activities in the cooperative: after the TESZE project, the staff disintegrated, everyone started working outside the association and the cooperative, and there was not enough capacity to run the cooperative. The membership was shattered, and the only opportunity seen ahead was 'sitting it out'.

FÉSZAK was found in this broken state by the 'In the Service of Communities – In Small Local Communities' project implemented by the Hungarian Association for Community Development in the region from 2018. FÉSZAK appeared in the program as a cooperating partner but did not have a role that would have given the organization genuine responsibilities. In our opinion, they would not have been able to do with any kind or depth of responsibility anyway. However, the professional topics of the project workshops (comparison of community work methods, work

with Roma communities, distribution of development opportunities, possible directions of social development in Abaúj, etc.), and the patterns and examples seen during the study trips gave joining FÉSZAK members such a munition that brought them out of the state of non-action. Several of them got involved in the participatory research, and as a result of the focus group interviews made with them they realized that the neighbors needed to visit each other again – to get together in different local communities, to see what the situation in the local communities is now, and what has changed in 15 years. When having gone around all eight local communities, new common issues would emerge along which actions can be organized. In addition to planning further steps in the process, they have come to analyze and understand the past years as well.

In this situation, another opportunity to continue the regional work came: an international project in which a method used in the startup world, the hackathon (used by Estonian partners to plan social care) would be tailored to community-based rural development in Abaúj, given FÉSZAK wanted to participate. The association discussed it with the members and decided to join the project. This opportunity provides a space for FÉSZAK to re-engage in a community learning process and come together again for the purpose of planning for the future, organizing actions in the region. They did not shy away from the next opportunity either: the internal core of FÉSZAK gathered and planned a next project that would build on the past, the experience and knowledge accumulated so far, without having to give up their professional commitment.[11]

In the case study, we do not only get to know a micro-regional community development process but also get an insight on the roles of external social development organizations in the life of a region or an organization. During the first years of the community development process in North Abaúj, the initiator and facilitator was the Dialogue Association. The process of FÉSZAK finding itself again was supported by the Hungarian Association for Community Development, and the joint projects implemented serve the strengthening of the organization and the process.

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11 The organizational goal of FÉSZAK is to develop cohesion among the people involved, being aware of which they want and can act together. FÉSZAK, as a community development organization, tries to emphasize that the indispensable basis of cohesion is people's need for belonging to a community. This need can be met at different levels of demand, and a community development organization needs to find harmony regarding this. This is not a small challenge, because we are not talking about a community bound together by common interest, faith or age, but a local community, the life of which must be organized in such a way that everyone living in it can be part of it. This is more than a methodological issue: by taking into account and acknowledging personal motivations, FÉSZAK tries to create an opportunity for the individual to be part of the community experience. They are aware that the strategy for an organizational mission can only reach its goal in harmony with personal life strategies. They never force anyone to engage in community activities against their will, but at the same time they try to encourage everyone to create opportunities for community cohesion with their peers by drawing and presenting their own colors, opportunities and frameworks.

Pictures from
the „North Abaúj
in Our Heart

Tents of local communities

Forum tent

Stage

MAG-HÁZ (SEED HOUSE) - RUNNING A COMMUNITY SPACE AS A CONSORTIUM *

CASE STUDY

MAG-ház is a community space in the Koppánymonostor district of Komárom, run by six non-governmental organizations as a consortium. We consider the initiative to be a good practice example, as this community space – which has so many ties with the local community – serves as a base for community development work locally and in other local communities in the area (with the community space itself being created as a result of these processes). The construction of the community space (MAG-ház) happened as a reaction to local needs and building on the voluntary work of locals. The community space is run by several civil society organizations as a consortium, with the cooperation of affiliate organizations. MAG-ház follows democratic principles in its operation, both on the level of the organizations running it and on the level of staff members and volunteers. It gives room for grassroots initiatives, supporting their implementation, yet retaining its autonomy as an initiator.

The Story of MAG-ház

Before describing the mode of operation in the focus of this case study (which is based on the practice of civil society community centers in France and is therefore called the French model), let us consider the path that led from the foundation of the Living Space Association (the founder of MAG-ház) to the establishment of a community space to be run according to what we call French model.

Former Presidents of the Living Space Association
(left to right: Zsuzsa Mészáros and Éva Monostori)
on the 15th Anniversary of the Association - in front
of the 5-year-old Mag House

Koppány - as the locals call Koppánmonostor - is now part of Komárom. Komárom is a town by the Danube in Northwest Hungary with 20,000 inhabitants. It is an industrial, commercial and cultural center. The historic Koppánmonostor started to be populated (again) from the 18th century. Holiday homes, vineyards and orchards were built here by the citizens of Komárom. In the 19th century and increasing number of people started to live here on a permanent basis. Today, it has a population of approx. 1500. Although it is now part of Komárom, it is separated from the town by its geographical location and rural character.

The situation in 1990s was as follows: dyed-in-the-wool locals were embedded in the local community, had their kinships and friendships and accompanying community life involving family events, pub conversations, and meeting people at major local events organized a couple of times per year (e.g. grape harvest). The city has a community center with functional communities. This setup satisfied their needs, and they did not desire a new community or a new venue. On the other hand, there were the 'blow-ins', families with children (small children and teenagers) who were not embedded locally and could not rely on the help of grandparents. They were brought together by their common life situation and evolved into a circle of friends. It was them who wished for a new community space. This wish manifested in the form of MAG-ház.

The story of the MAG-ház cannot be told without the story of Éva Monostori. She wanted to become a sociocultural animator, studied to be a chemist, and then worked as a non-qualified teacher in Komárom, where she built important local contacts. As a mother of small children, she 'asked' for the local community center to use for family and children's programs in the summer. These were the preliminaries that led to her employment with the community center, where she later worked in the position of deputy director and then as acting director. She was also in charge of working with local civil society organizations (CSOs) - which were partially created of the groups active in the community center - and that is where another significant part of her experience and contacts come from. It was the community center that enrolled her to an 18-month community development training course, which was a further source of inspiration and knowledge for her. Together with other graduates of the course she founded the Living Space Association[1] in 1997. She complemented her studies with study trips: beyond gaining experience around Hungary, she studied youth community development and civic community centers in France. When in 2006 the Association started building the community space it was obvious that they would run MAG-ház based on the French model to be detailed below.

Parallel to the construction of the house, the Association was being built as well. Its activities and groups got stronger and eventually evolved into independent associations, giving the core group of the consortium which was contracted to run the house. During the 20-year history of the house, both the main activity and the consortium changed: some groups that were not ready to enter into conflict with the city administration have quit the consortium; at the same time, other groups that

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1 The Living Space Association *(link in Hungarian)* was established in 1997 with the aim of carrying out community development activities in the area. In 2005 the association started to employ young professionals, which was a milestone in the organization's professionalization. They wanted to create a night youth venue for performing youth work, and that is how eventually the MAG-ház community space - which is owned by the Association - was created in 2006. In addition to running MAG-ház and performing youth work, the Association performs community and local development in three local communities in the region (Komárom – Koppánmonostor, Ács, and Ete), employing 21 people, typically in a supported employment framework. Mag-ház serves as the base for the Association's operations, so it is more than just a community space.

had looser ties with the house have either got more detached from it or have become affiliated organizations and, therefore, supporters.

Even though MAG-ház is a community space, its open community space function - whereby it is always open for informal community life - is not used by visitors. They come to attend programs and use the services provided.

Beside MAG-ház, a new community space called Art-Tér (Art Space) is being built in the center of the city. As far as its activities and income system is concerned, the new community space will represent a new format. Regarding the way it is run, however, it will also follow the French model.

The Operation of MAG-ház – The French Model: Theory and Practice

The house is owned by the Living Space Association and is run by the Komárom Area Civil Society Partnership (with its core activities being professional regional networking in the district, community development, and building civil society). In practice, the place is run by a consortium of six organizations (including the latter two organizations) that are close related (the independent organizations that have spun off from the owner organization; a national professional association which has the owner organization as one of its core members; and the regional civil society partnership in which the members of the consortium also participate). There are partial overlaps between the individual members of the organizations, their leadership and volunteer base. Therefore, cooperation is based on a high level of trust.

The consortium's board consists of the president of the owner and managing organization, and an elected member, with the executive, community and local development professional & civil society and youth expert Éva Monostori, being in charge of operative matters.

In addition to the organizations in the consortium, affiliate organizations are also connected to MAG-ház: they have regular presence in the house, they organize part of their events there, and they also support the house in some form.

Initially, when support for the civil sector was still substantial, the organizations included their support for the house in their budget. Today, this is not so typical anymore. Instead, project support from the local government for employing homeless people and giving out free food has become more prominent, but this can change over time as well. Among the other sources of income is the house's operation as a community center, which typically means summer camps involving a participation fee. As for non-typical expenditures, a non-typical item is to be highlighted: the house insures the work done by volunteers and also their person.

In order to secure the financial background and a legitimate operation, the administration and bookkeeping of the organizations in the consortium and the affiliate organizations happens in MAG-ház, or through MAG-ház.

The approximately 11 staff members and, including them, 50-60 volunteers of MAG-ház are usually in some way connected to several of the organizations in the consortium (e.g. they are an employee of one organization, and a volunteer in another).

The staff members (including the 10 employees working in the homeless program in addition to the ones mentioned above) and volunteers of the house work as equal partners in a democratic atmosphere. There is a team of five in charge of administration, but that said, there are no clearly defined responsibilities: everybody performs the task that is actually needed - and they do so independently, without any 'direct control'. When it comes to making strategic decisions, the leaders of the organizations in the consortium and a team of prominent staff members are in charge. Regarding questions connected to civil society and community development, the expert executive officer tries to enforce professional considerations.

For the staff members and volunteers, there is no formal procedure in place for acquiring working methods and learning how to perform tasks. They learn as a child learns the language. At the same time, the executive has to put a considerable amount of energy into 're-socializing' staff members who have acquired working experience in a different sort of environment, and has to put an end to backbiting and defeating the other. This effort is not always successful, and when it is not, the community has to say goodbye to the staff member in question.

Wall calendar for facilitating cooperation

Scheduling the working hours of staff members is also based on the principle of trust: you basically have to be present and perform your duties. You do not have to ask for a permission if you want to take time off (e.g. for dealing with your private matters). Staff members indicate their planned off-time in a common calendar, which makes its transparent for co-workers who can plan their work accordingly.

The stakeholders have not managed to create a functional system for coordinating work as yet. Meetings are irregular - in times of intensity, putting out fires overwrites rationality.

The organizations in the consortium and the affiliate organizations run the house in a cooperation based on trust, sharing both responsibilities and resources: they have their key to the house and are entitled to drive the microbus of the house or use the lorry, or borrow the benches. Coordination happens in the simplest way possible: the organizations put their needs on a wall calendar, so it is easy to see when the house and resources are in use.

Each activity and program of MAG-ház belongs to a particular organization in the consortium. That said, the house naturally accepts initiatives from outside, securing the autonomy of the initiating individual or civic partnership. The fact that this is not visible to the outside word is a conscious decision: visitors identify everything as MAG-ház. (Since the case study focuses on the running of the community space, the activities of the house are not described here.)

The organizations take part in the work of the consortium in a way to strengthen each other. They are not expected to support the house in an equal manner, since they are different both in size and nature. This way of cooperation manifests itself not only in the way the house is run - their activities can also be built on each other. For example, the Association of Komárom Archers has the preservation of local traditions as its main objective and has created community orchards in order to preserve the genes of local meadow orchards. Tending the orchards and processing the fruits is performed by the employees in MAG-ház's employment program. To complete the community spaces created with the orchards, benches have been produced in the arts camp and a living table football field in the Pallet Camp[2]. Another example is the community development work performed by the Living Space Association in the Gypsy slum of Ács, where the Association of Komárom Musicians has started working with young people.

2 An annual DIY camp where pallets are recycled.

Live table football

Results Achieved

For the staff members and volunteers working in the house, their job is a community learning process whereby they learn a democratic and autonomous way of working. (Unfortunately, there is still little experience of how young people who have worked in the house and then end up in a 'traditional' job based on different principles tolerate the rigid framework at their new workplace.)

The institution manages to address many local people and involve them in using the house, thus expanding the circle of those taking part in this community learning process about a democratic way of operation, indirectly democratizing the local community. Another important result is that the house is also a local employer, and that it supports the local community through social activities (e.g. giving out free food). MAG-ház serves as a base for local community development activities, with tangible, measurable results (e.g. carved wooden benches) and immeasurable results (e.g. the strengthening of local identity) that can also be listed here.

On the level of the organizations in the consortium, the greatest achievement is that they operate based on a model in which each organization has its organizational autonomy, yet they run the place together, in cooperation.

Further Remarks

In the French model, community centers have professionals whose task is to facilitate the activities/fundraising activities of civil society groups hosted by the house, as well as to coordinate the way the house is run and used. The experiences of MAG-ház have shown that, in addition to professional commitment, the employment of a professional (executive) having experience in running a cultural community space is also inevitable.

Community-based operation is based on partnership - not only between consortium organizations, but also between the house and all its users. However, this partnership is far from being self-evident, even for NGOs. For a few years now, even writing project proposals had to be 'priced' because the house could not get the 'commissioning' organizations to be partners in thinking together and working together: they regard it as a service, just like renting a room or a piece of equipment. They do not regard MAG-ház as a partner organization working partly in the same field and for the same goals, but as a service provider that also supports the civil sector and is sensitive to its problems (especially its financial difficulties).

The (large) part of the local population who did not participate in the development process leading up to the construction of the MAG-ház also only see the building and the service provider who can help you prepare your tax declaration, where you can rent a room or attend an event: the community attitude, partnership, a give-and-take balance are not natural for them. Apparently, developing this kind of attitude is almost impossible during operating as a community space.

In addition, if you already have the building and the employee(s) paid for the activities, there is a revenue obligation - which requires the house to 'market' its existing intellectual and material resources.

Further reading:

Éva Monostori: Fiatalok lépésről lépésre, közösségről közösségre *(Young People Step by Step, From Community to Community)* (In Hungarian). In: Farkas Gabriella – Kovács Edit (Eds.): A közösség dicsérete. 25 éves a Közösségfejlesztők Egyesülete *(In Praise of Communities. The Hungarian Association for Community Development is 25 Years Old).* Hungarian Association for Community Development, Budapest, 2014. pp. 112 – 117. http://www.kka.hu/weblapok.nsf/ 23e5e39594c064ee852564ae004fa010/9ce773b74dbe4803c1256b00005e88ec/ $FILE/KOFE_web.pdf

Éva Monostori (Ed.) MAGunk erejéből *(From Our Own Seed)* (In Hungarian). Publication by the 15 Year Old Living Space Association, 2011. https://mag-haz.eu/ wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Magunk_erejebol_2012.pdf

Contact:
https://mag-haz.eu/
Éva Monostori: emonostori@gmail.com

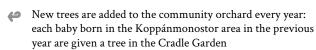## Pictures from the life of the MAG-ház

Laying rooftiles: MAG-ház is being built ➥

Cultivation of the community orchard in Koppánmonostor ➥

↩ New trees are added to the community orchard every year: each baby born in the Koppánmonostor area in the previous year are given a tree in the Cradle Garden

↩ The climbing wall and sandpit enriching the Cradle Garden were made in the last pallet camp

The 26 carved benches of the *'Our Treasures' Local History Trail* showcase the material, cultural, natural and built heritage of Koppánmonostor and commemorate prominent figures from the area. The educational trail was inaugurated at the Bench of the Consortium right in front of the MAG-ház: the ribbon was cut by members of the consortium and those taking part in creating the educational trail.

End-of-year roundup with consortium partners and associated partners who have ties with the MAG-ház and use the house as a venue

Birthday: 20th Anniversary of the Living Space Association, and 10th Anniversary of MAG-ház and several consortium organizations

During anniversary years, outstanding volunteers in the consortium organizations are rewarded

THE STORY OF A DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN ÁG THAT POINTS BEYOND THE PROJECT PERIOD*

CASE STUDY ON UTILIZING A COMMUNITY WORKING METHOD IN DEVELOPMENT WORK WITH PEOPLE LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

We are in a small dead-end village in Baranya County originally inhabited by Swabians. About 125 people live here on a permanent basis. When there are no jobs in a village, there are no public services either… Due to the shortcomings of public transport, theoretically available public services (e.g. health care) are difficult to access and jobs within commuting distances are completely inaccessible. Because of all this, physical and - partly related to it - social mobility are limited.

There has been a community development process going on in the village for over seven years.[1] As a result, some members of the local community have decided to start shaping their own fates and to start farming, taking it into account local opportunities and characteristics. This case study is about the process by which a village struggling to make a living on its own builds its own future. It focuses on the approach and methodology we call *community working method*.

Main Stages of the Community Process in Ág

The Ág story started with the TÁMOP 5.1.3 program[2] - referred to in professional circles as "Deep Poverty" - starting in 2012, which Ág joined as one of 11 local communities in the Sásd micro-region (today's Hegyhát district), which is categorized as an LHH[3] (most disadvantaged) region.

The original aim of the *PUBLIC-SPACE-NETWORK for Families*[4] project was to try to find a way out for people living in areas with extreme poverty and despair by running a family mentoring network, supporting local actions and initiating dialogue between different sectors in the region.

As soon as during one of the first conversations with main actors in the local community (the mayor, the head of the Roma minority government and his family), it became clear that joint action was needed to eradicate, or at least reduce, housing poverty in the village. It turned out that even if someone succeeded in getting a job outside the local community, they often lost it because their house was in such

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1 The external facilitators in the Ág team were Roland Oláh, Krisztina Jász and Attila Mester. The first two years of the process (including how mobilizing their own internal resources has strengthened participants' ability to create certain conditions for change together), has been reported on by Roland Oláh in Parola 2014/3: *Az egymásért végzett munka értéke és jelentősége kalákában végzett házfelújítás Ágon: közösségfejlesztés álruhában* (*The Value and Significance of Working for Each Other: Renovating Houses in Ág Through Collective Voluntary Work, or Community Development in a Disguise.)*

2 Website of the "Community Development for the Social Inclusion of People Living in Deep Poverty" program: http://melyszegenyseg.hu/fooldal/htmls (In Hungarian)
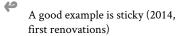
3 LHH is an abbreviation for "leghátrányosabb helyzetű", which means "most disadvantaged" in Hungarian. Based on a set of conditions laid down by earlier legislation, Government Decree 311/2007 listed disadvantaged (HH) and most disadvantaged (LHH) micro-regions as beneficiaries of development funds.

4 The project's website: http://alsomocsolad.hu/new/?page_id=1744 (In Hungarian)

a condition that they could not get proper rest after work. The house-renovation movement (repairing roofs from used tiles, concreting of stairs, etc.), organized in kaláka[5], is considered to be the first tangible product of joint action.

As the project only covered the costs of professional presence, it was necessary to obtain funding for the raw materials needed for the renovations. Visiting builders' merchants in the area brought surprisingly good results. Thanks to the donations, in the second half of 2013 6-7 families were able to start the energy renovation of their residential buildings. Subsequently, exciting dynamics began to emerge within the community. As they had experienced the potential of local cooperation, helping and supporting each other started to become a practice.

A good example is sticky (2014, first renovations)

At the end of 2013, Habitat for Humanity,[6] who were looking for rural venues for their program, joined the process. It was a perfect encounter.

The locals were able to purchase the raw materials offered by Habitat's potent donors at a fraction of the original price, for points collected through voluntary work. In this way, another 12 families had the opportunity to rebuild their house (going back to tradition, the method of adobe plastering was used instead of tile adhesive and plaster, which are less durable and effective).

Then, when the nearly 3-year-long program ended, there came a turning point that can be regarded as a landmark within the domestic conditions: in the middle of 2014, they ran out funding. The team of professionals tried their best (e.g. lobbying at the ministry) but were eventually forced to leave the scene, giving up their permanent presence. Because they were working on other projects in the area, they could at least make sure that their withdrawal was not happening overnight; they had about 6 months to complete the work after the project was closed. At the same time, seeing

5 Voluntary collective work which usually involves constructing a building, road, pavement, etc. In English, the expression "building bee" is sometimes used (translater's note)
6 Habitat for Humanity Hungary's housing blog has a blog post about this (in Hungarian): https://habitat.blog.hu/2014/04/09/a_habitatpont_baranyaba_megy

the commitment and involvement of the locals, they were looking for an opportunity to continue working together.

The professional dialogue initiated by the Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network continued in a working group. As a result, at the end of 2016, the development professionals appeared again in Ág in a new framework: this time in cooperation with the Profilantrop Association[7] and the Public-Space-Network Foundation[8]. It was a fortunate development that the terribly fragile community process, which had really been put to test by the long pause, could be resumed where it was once stopped, following a decision made at the coffee table.

With a presence maintained from minimal financial resources, the team was thinking about the possibility of moving forward in the form of monthly community meetings. Habitat's new offer in the form of bricks/roof tiles offered by Wienerberger ZRt. burst into this vacuum. In the spirit of energy efficiency, chimney renovations were planned first, followed by fireplaces, but the incredible amount of regulation made it impossible to carry out the work legally. In the end, only the roof tiling remained. Even so, the purchase of the timber needed for the renovation required significant own resources. Here, however, a new resource was mobilized - namely, the Community Treasury[9] launched in early 2017, with savings already made available for lending at the time (two families borrowed HUF 30,000 and HUF 50,000 respectively).

In the meantime, things started to speed up again with the ERSTE Foundation's Roma Partnership grant[10] and financial support from Profilantrop's charity shop[11] in Budapest (part of the profit was spent on this program). The culmination of the process was a conversation underneath a walnut tree in the summer of 2017, where it was essentially decided what the emerging social cooperative would do. In the absence of an available technology, hemp remained the insulation material to cultivate instead of hay, and animal husbandry with three pairs of emus was also started. This organic growth spawned the establishment of the Hemp-Emu Social Community Cooperative[12]. Formed of local community members, the cooperative keeps emus and grows hemp on a few acres of leased land.

7 The association's website: http://www.profilantrop.org/en/home/

8 The foundation was established in the framework of the project "PUBLIC-SPACE-NET-WORK for Families" in order to maintain a professional organization even after the end of the TÁMOP program.

9 The Community Treasury is a self-help fund that is based on members' contributions, with the rules also set by the membership. The idea is to allow members to take out a proportionally larger loan at a symbolic rate, even with small savings. (For more information on the Community Treasury in Ág, read Abcúg's article (in Hungarian).) In Ág, the first community treasury created and operated in close cooperation with professionals was followed by a second one (with new members involved). The latter was also an experiment to see whether this form is workable without intensive professional presence. It was not: this second community treasury was discontinued after a while. Nevertheless, the process has led to the launching of a third community treasury - after winding up the existing one - with an enlarged membership in January 2020 - now with minimal professional involvement.

10 Summary report of the project in English: http://www.profilantrop.org/documents/Profilantrop_EFRoPa_Report.pdf

11 The Philanthropy Charity Store's website http://filantropiabolt.blogspot.com

12 Report on the cooperative on the donor's website (in Hungarian): https://www.eckpecs.hu/index.php/2018/09/04/kendert-termesztenek-es-emukat-nevelnek-agon

Community Working Method

The steps in the process by which a local community living in extreme poverty creates resources and finds the faith for change can be well drawn. At the same time, the way of working together which we felt was essential for this story to take this direction is much harder to detect. Below we present - looking behind the scenes - the basics of the community working method.

Community development as a form of social intervention is based on the principle that the individual and the local community are able to control their own destiny. Where we do not experience this because of people's vulnerability, we need to help them regain this ability. In this context, the only form of help that is acceptable is one that avoids the creation of new addiction(s). In our experience, this seems to be accomplished by increasing participation, which can in many cases mean a new quality of cooperation in a given context. It is our understanding that the community processes in Ág follow this approach[13]. Let us now look at some of the details.

The process sought to allocate, through different threads, joint actions and resources to the need that has been locally identified, i.e. the reduction of housing poverty, that is, improving residents' quality of life through small steps embedded in a long process. Giving priority to local needs, even in the face of project considerations, was the first step in creating motivation for involvement and subsequent engagement. Although this approach is commonly referred to as a "commonplace" ("As a Budapest resident, I can't know better than those who actually live here, what it's like to live in the countryside"), but in light of the practice, it is important to emphasize the following: although a lovable and indispensable part of the process, the (learning) process in which local knowledge and incoming experience are integrated at the level of day-to-day operation harbors many difficulties due its novelty.

When different qualities meet

13 In our case, reinforcing genuine participation has completely gone against the (malfunctioning) charity system in the area whereby "the charity-minded person comes down from the city, opens the trunk and food and stuffed toys pour out".

It is not only local needs that need to be taken into account to encourage joint action regarding the issue taken up. The progress of the process, i.e. the scale of change, must also take into account the dynamics of those involved. Practice has shown that the path to a decision, that is, planning, is as important as the decision itself. Taking responsibility is crucial and the local community needs to be involved not only in the action but also in its planning. In Ág, too, regular joint design events preceded the individual physical developments. This had an additional impact on participation as well, as it regularly allowed for continuous engagement, in some cases leading to common reflection by 30-40 people.

A "classic" planning event

The essence of collaborative planning is to enable and encourage everyone to get involved in brainstorming, exploration and collective decision-making. In Ág, this fell on a very fertile soil, with local team members being glad to plan and brainstorm together.

However, this was not the case from the beginning. It required a milieu, a democratic microclimate created and facilitated by professionals, in which participants became more and more comfortable with the situation. By creating a framework for dialogue (not only can people convey their ideas, but the community pays attention, too, and the decision is shared), the individual responsibility of people becoming active has been activated as well. They began to take ownership of processes, and this made real commitment achievable in the foreseeable future. (For example, taking on daily tasks around the emus was automatic from the start.)

In addition to planning, some elements of involvement have been included, injected into concrete physical action (nothing happens without them contributing to it). All of this together has brought about change, bringing faith to the community.

At the daily level, however, it is also important to see that it was an extremely tough and long game whereby, instead of subordinating themselves due to an incredible amount of defenselessness, they became to accept, and also own, the peer-to-peer situations and equal relations offered; whereby it became natural for them that, for example, the professional members of the team were also accountable, and having differing

opinions was alright. An exciting culmination of this process of becoming self-reliant can be seen in the composition of the leadership of the newly formed cooperative, in which the local community has a strong presence - they elected someone from among themselves as president. Of course, this also required the professionals to take the initiative at the right moment, persistently asking questions (gradually making the group realize their goals and the path to achieving them, and based on them, make their own commitments and become accountable). In other instances, they stepped back to allow for the emergence of a new community identity. It was an exciting learning process for both parties.

In the context of subordination and partnership, there is an exciting contrast between the "internal" and "external" environments. In the external environment - for example in the local council - it is customary not to involve stakeholders in planning and decision-making, regardless of the otherwise good human relations. Nevertheless, the president of the cooperative - socialized in the "internal" environment - negotiates with the local government in the way he is now used to: everyone can have their say in the decision-making process, and everyone is equally involved in the decision.

As a conclusion to the analysis, we feel it is important to also address aspects of the process in which the socio-economic context - to which we briefly refer simply as extreme poverty - may have played a role.

First, we would highlight the recognition that the lack of visibility of a given socio-economic environment also affects the content of the action. Concrete, tangible results were needed, as a condition or motivation for participation. This was especially true in a local context where there had been a substantial loss of confidence in people willing to help them. In the past - in the absence of any meaningful involvement - interventions that were opaque and top-down passed, from the point of view of those affected, without any effect whatsoever. Only the enormous numbers on the billboards announcing the grants were left behind. This was somehow resolved by honest communication from the professional team.

The importance of tangible results was confirmed by the year 2013, when the renovation process had to be 'frozen' due to a shortage of resources in the TÁMOP program. This also set back the commitment to meetings and planning, as the unmet nature of elementary needs obviously transformed the sense of engagement. From that point on, obtaining the necessary process-related resources became at least as important - and sometimes even more decisive - as empowering the community. It is not enough for professionals to work for free: the financial background of the action must also be created. Thus, the task of fundraising appears as a prerequisite for community development.

This adds another element to the process's "good practice" status, providing an example of the fact that when it comes to working with people in extreme poverty, meeting basic needs is not only a prerequisite, but also a possible content for community work.

Results Achieved: Processes That Seem to Be Ripening

"Extreme poverty means not only the lack of financial resources, but also the loss of community relationships, the impossibility of accessing services, the lack of recognition and representation of active community membership and community interests, just as the deterioration of self-reliance and self-sufficiency (besides disadvantages in housing, education, on the labor market, etc.)," reads the executive summary of the Deep Poverty Program's final publication.[14] It is this context in which the Ág snapshot from seven years later acquires its true meaning.

The existence of the Hemp-Emu Community Social Cooperative today implies an incredible change in local conditions. Today we see a local community whose representatives, leaving their defenselessness behind them, outstrip their own limits and courage and - having been reinforced in their self-esteem - sit at the negotiating table with the leaders of the local community and local agencies as equal partners. About a year ago they started to believe that things will only work out if they take part in shaping the process themselves - that is, that there is a life beyond addiction and subordination, and that everyone can find their right role in it. So the change is already in full swing, and its signs are made visible also when, for example, a couple of people leave the workfare program, or when people become sought after in the primary labor market because of their knowledge obtained during the renovations.

All this has been further enhanced by the relationship with the charity shop in Budapest, through which new worlds have opened up to them. It is a relationship that can connect middle-class donors (or the Venezuelan girl volunteering there under ERASMUS) and the inhabitants of a dead-end village in Baranya - almost two worlds apart.

The members of the cooperative are listing plans and taking into account the expected results of the coming years and the related activities - they are outlining a vision. A future. Many times we may not even realize the significance of this. When it comes to "survival", people don't think about the future. However, in a seemingly hopeless situation, in which they are preoccupied with living from one day to another, it can also affect the survival of the local community if the people living there think about their future - as we see in the case of Ág.

14 http://www.melyszegenyseg.hu/dokumentumok/dokumentumtar_tartalma/TAMOP513_szoc_modszertani_edok.pdf (In Hungarian)

Pictures from the life of the
Hemp-Emu Community Social Cooperative:

Emu in the pen.
Emus are bred for
their meat and eggs

Hemp field

Hemp. Its seeds are used to make valuable cooking oil, while the stems are used to produce insulation materials

The members of the co-operative prepare hemp seeds for manual pressing by hand sieving

Selling help oil from Ág at the Blow-In Festival

ON THE
LOCAL CONTEXT

In order to grasp, understand and be able to manage a region, a county, a municipality, a neighbourhood etc., it is important to **know** it. Getting to know it can occur in several ways: from available statistical information; from completed strategies and studies; from surveying the people living there, as well as from the work of professionals in the field. We can get the best and most complete picture if we apply all the methods listed above and combine the experience, materials and numbers obtained this way.

During the project, in order to get to know Gönc District, we used existing studies, strategies, statistical information, conducted personal interviews with the key people, a research was being implemented in the district, and we also got familiar with the opinions of professionals during workshops. Of course, we interpreted the knowledge, experience and impressions gained this way **from the community developer's aspect, from the side of the community**, and we highlighted those that have an impact on communitarianism, collaborations, partnership and dialogue.

In this section, the district has been presented through the eyes of community developers, as we see it, and what we experienced during the two years that we spent working with professionals in the area.

The Wider Environment: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county

Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county is located on the northern periphery of Hungary. The county covers an area of 7,247 square kilometres, making it the second largest county in Hungary. In 2019, its population was 642,447 (Eurostat data) as opposed to the 2008 figure of 709,634, clearly indicating a steady decline in the population. This process is not only caused by the mortality rate per live births but also by **negative migration**.

It borders directly with Slovakia. It is divided into 16 districts and has the highest number of municipalities: as many as 358, and 29 of these are towns. **The proportion of small villages is significant**: 42% of municipalities have a population of less than 500 and a further 21% have between 500 and 1,000 people. The smallest municipalities are located mainly in the county's northern, border areas. **The quality of life of those living in the villages significantly differs from that of those living in larger municipalities** in terms of access to services, jobs, aging, health care and institutional development. Motorways 3 and M30, main road 3 and main railway line 80 intersect the county.

The last decade of the twentieth century forced economic transformation and **brought about individual and community problems** to the county. The excessive presence of heavy industry and its overnight collapse resulted in unmanageable problems for the people. Previously unknown to them, it was the first time they encountered

unemployment. Earlier having organized their lives and employed large numbers of population, factories and mines ceased to exist. This process led to a structural crisis. Since the 2000s, the lasting trend of decline switched to positive change. They began catching up, from time to time interrupted by economic crises but then returning to this trajectory.

Among other economic sectors, industry is the largest employer. Many of the employees work in public administration, education and trade. The number of people employed in agriculture is the lowest.

Gönc district

Gönc district is located in the northern part of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, at the border with Slovakia. Rich in historical traditions, natural resources and cultural historical values, the region is still characterized by relative underdevelopment and **the living standard of the locals is well below the Hungarian average.** The area is not able to mobilize its human and natural resources in order to enable those living here to earn a better living, and to benefit, rather than suffer from the changes and developments. The area is not characterized by the presence of industry at all.

Population decline is continuous and strong. This is mainly due to outward migration and the resulting deterioration of age structure. All welfare indicators lag behind the national but even the county average. Typically, a large proportion of people over 18 has only completed basic education, and there is only a negligible amount of people with higher education. The narrow range of livelihood opportunities marks the entire region.

At least one registered **non-governmental organization** can be found in each municipality of the district, however, many of them are inactive. The scope of activities of these associations is mainly culture, leisure, sports and field guarding, and many of them are foundations attached to kindergartens, schools and other institutions, set up with the aim to complement the operational resources of those institutions. The number of organizations dealing with development, social development, advocacy and empowerment is fractional, and there is no real civic attitude. In the recent years, **the significance and influence of these organizations, as well as their influence on the development of the district has been diminishing**. The authorities do not involve or address these organizations even in the programs that specifically belong to the profiles of the activities and knowledge of these associations. Thus, these NGOs are trying to bring about change in isolation, in most cases alone, though at times they are working together representing local civil interests with greater impact. Left out of developmental resources, neither are they **properly endowed with material and infrastructural provisions**. The fact that these organizations play a smaller part can also be traced back to a lack of expertise and boldness for civic courage in disadvantaged areas, as well as a lack of financially strong stratum that could also support the organizations.

According to governmental decree 290/2014, Gönc district is one of the 36 districts to be developed with complex programs. Among these districts, the situation of Gönc district is the 3rd worst.[1]

In the district **there are two towns**: Gönc in the north and Abaújszántó in the south.

[1] Over two years, this indicator has steadily deteriorated, so the district has come to occupy the last position.

The district is called bipolar because of this geographical distribution and because of the services grouped around towns, as well as their central roles. Due to their functions, the two towns are in competitive positions.

As a result of the "work, not aid" principle in the management of unemployment, the **largest employer in the district is the state**, employing masses of people living in poverty and extreme poverty in public works.
The burning problems of the district are: long-term unemployment, low level of education, emigration, aging, poverty/extreme poverty, villages turning into ghettos, insufficient access to services, and addiction (to alcohol and cheap drugs).

The District in Figures

In order to get an idea of a region, **we need some data** so that the figures, i.e. quantified indicators can specify our feelings and experiences. The following figures are from the 2011 census and relate to population figures, gender and age distribution, education, urban and transport conditions, as well as employment data.

In 2011, the permanent **population** of the entire district was 20,395. In 2001, this figure was still as high as 22,175. However, the resident population is only 19,275. Looking at the factors of population change, the total number of live births between 2001 and 2011 was 2,512, while the number of deaths was 3,406. Thus, **natural population decrease** is not 894, moreover, **migration balance** is also negative: -1,459 people. As for the **gender distribution** of the resident population, there are 9,280 men and 9,995 women. The age composition of the population is as follows: The number of people under 14 is 3,643; between 15 and 29: 3,540; between 30 and 49: 5,172; between 50 and 64: 3,741; and over 65: 3,179. In the population over 7, **the highest level of education successfully completed** is as follows: 1st grade of primary school: 401 people, the 1st to 7th grade of primary school: 3,328; 8 grades of primary school completed: 6,078; secondary education without a secondary school leaving certificate[2] (vocational and skilled workers' qualification): 3,612; those with a secondary school leaving certificate: 3,163; those with higher education degrees: 1,119. The low level of education in the district is shown by the figure of the highest level of education of the population over 7 compared with the national and county data. This is most striking in the case of those with a university or college degree. We consider that it is important to highlight this data because education greatly contributes to people's mobility, trust in change and action.

	grade 1	grade 1 to 7	grade 8	without secondary school leaving certificate	with secondary school leaving certificate	university, college, etc.
Gönc district	2.26%	18.8%	34.34%	20.4%	17.87%	6.32
B-A-Z county (short for Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county)	1.47%	13.98%	27.71%	19.84%	25.7%	11.28%
Total for Hungary	1.18%	11.22%	25.03%	19.48%	27.54%	15.54%

1. table: The population over 7 according to their highest level of education, 2011 Source: KSH (the Hungarian Central Statistical Office)

[2] In Hungary, a secondary school leaving exam is a precondition for entering into higher education.

According to economic activity, the number of people **employed** is 5,423, unemployed: 1,980, inactive employed: 6,301 and dependent: 5,571. According to the analysis of the labour market processes of the county compiled by the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Government Office in August 2019, the **unemployment rate** of the Gönc district is between 20 and 24%, while it is 12.6% for the county and 5.5% for the total of Hungary. In other words, unemployment rate is four times higher in Gönc district than in Hungary and twice as high as in the entire county.

The **district consists of 30 municipalities**. This area mainly consists of small villages. There are 18 municipalities with permanent populations of less than 500 people, 7 municipalities with a population between 500 and 1,000, and the population of merely 5 municipalities exceeds 1,000. The population of the two towns is also well below 5,000. The population of Gönc is 2,218, and that of Abaújszántó is 3,255.

The northern part of the district is over 60 km away from Miskolc and less than 30 km from Kosice. The Trianon border deprived **the region from its natural unity** and the countryside lost its town, which has not been dissolved and resolved until the present date. The countryside has not found its place, role, town, so to speak.

The district can be reached via **main road** 3 connecting the town of Miskolc with Kosice. Next to this main road there is a highway under construction and, according to the plans, it will be inaugurated in 2 years. Apart from road traffic, the district is also reachable **by rail**, via Miskolc-Hidasnémeti railway. The distance of 62 km between the two municipalities is covered by train in 1 hour and 4 minutes. Better access is ensured to the district from outside the district than there is to the district's seat, Gönc. The town of Gönc provides services linked to governmental offices, offices of government issued documents, educational counselling, social and child welfare, etc.

Public Services in the District

With regard to public services operating in the district, **in the social field** the work of **Abaúj-Hegyközi Child Welfare and Social Basic Services Area**, as well as **Abaújszántó Care Centre** can be highlighted. Most of the basic services in the region are provided by these two organisations. In addition to these, there are church-maintained service providers who contribute to the operation of basic services, as well.

In the area, the comprehensive scope of **Give Kids a Chance** program, hereinafter abbreviated as GYEP Program)[3] also allows for interprofessional cooperation, due to which they can be considered close professional partners in the field of social services. The community house and community spaces created in the framework of GYEP Program assume the cooperation of several municipalities, and the following areas are involved: Pere, Vizsoly, Vilmány, Boldogkőújfalu, Hidasnémeti, Gönc (where the community house is located). The GYEP Program cooperates with the staff of the Centre for Basic Social Services in the district. This is done, for example, through professional workshops, a prevention program, debt management, mediation, or even conflicts at school. The GYEP Program is complemented by **Presence Houses** with the help of the Hungarian Ecumenical Aid Organization, in two municipalities, in Vizsoly and Boldogkőújfalu; however, their activities also extend to other municipalities.

In addition to general health services (discussed below), among the professional collaborations in this field, the cooperation between the **Mental Health Centre** (hereinafter abbreviated as LEK) and the **Health Development Office** (hereinafter abbreviated as EFI) should be emphasized. EFI works closely with schools in the Gönc

3 A program to combat child poverty

district because the school program is a priority, as well as with kindergartens, by organising health days.

Several professionals described cooperation with **family doctors** in the district as difficult, saying that cooperation is not possible because the medical profession is isolated (they have no knowledge of the doctors' activities). The operation of Abaújszántó Care Centre is an exception, since there is close cooperation with the family doctors. The Gönc-based Centre for Basic Social Services has a close relationship with the Maltese Charity Service, who mainly donate to them.

Community culture can be mentioned from two, if not three aspects. On the one hand, there is a community space, serving as a stage either only for community cultural tasks or for the organization of other activities, as well. On the other hand, it is an institution, a stage providing basic community cultural services, which promotes the creation of cultural communities, develops social participation, ensures the conditions for lifelong learning, contributes to the transmission of community and cultural values, helps amateur artists, manages talent promotion and cultural economic development. Thirdly, we can also examine whether a specialist promotes community cultural activities in the municipalities or not. Anticipating the detailed data, we can say that the district is in a bad situation in all three aspects: in almost a quarter of the municipalities (including the district's seat) the community space function does not appear or only periodically, in half of them there are no regular cultural events, and there are only 1 or 2 municipalities where a professional with specialized higher education works. Our experience has shown that, in the traditional sense, the district has only two municipalities with cultural centres: Abaújszántó and Hidasnémeti. Out of these, only the centre in Abaújszántó has staff with specialized higher education.

A Detailed Presentation of the District's Public Services

Social Services

Village and Homestead Caretaker Services[4]

In the Gönc district, we have identified village caretaker services in the following 20 municipalities: Abaújalpár, Abaújkér (in this case: homestead caretaker service), Abaújvár, Arka, Baskó, Boldogkőújfalu, Fony, Gibárt, Hejce, Hernádbüd, Hernádszurdok, Hidasnémeti, Korlát, Mogyoróska, Pányok, Pere, Regéc, Sima, Tornyosnémeti and Zsujta. In the majority of the listed municipalities, the local government of each municipality maintains and provides the services of the village caretaker; in one case, however, three local governments perform this in association (Abaújvár Village Rural Caretaker Service Maintenance Association, Abaújvár-Pányok-Zsujta Village Caretaker Service).

Domestic Care[5]

Domestic care covers all areas of the district, basically implemented by six maintainer institutions in the area.

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4 'Its purpose is to alleviate the disadvantages of small villages and outlying areas arising from the absence of institutions and to ensure access to services satisfying basic needs, to public and certain other services.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=4445&p_session_id=91074865

5 'Basic social service provided to persons being unable to care for themselves in their home, as well as to psychiatric patients, disabled persons and addicts who, due to their condition, need help in performing the tasks necessary for independent life.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=1063&p_session_id=91074865

State maintained:
- Abaúj-Hegyköz Multi-Purpose Small Regional Association (maintainer), Abaúj-Hegyköz Child Welfare and Social Basic Services Area (service provider);
- Szikszó Small Regional Multi-Purpose Association (maintainer), Szikszó Small Regional Social Service Centre, which concerns only one municipality (service provider);
- Abaújszántó and Region Social and Child Welfare Primary Care Association (maintainer), Abaújszántó Care Centre (service provider).

Church-maintained:
- Abaújvár Parish of the Reformed Church (maintainer), Borbála Perényi Congregational Home (service provider);
- Boldogkőváralja Greek Catholic Parish (maintainer), Boldogkőváralja Greek Catholic Parish Happy Home Care Service (provider);
- Perkupa Parish of the Reformed Church (maintainer), Providence Diaconal Centre of the Reformed Church (provider).

Alarm System-based Home Assistance[6]

It is available in the municipalities of the district and implemented by three associations:
- Abaúj-Hegyköz Multi-Purpose Small Regional Association, Abaúj-Hegyköz Child Welfare and Social Basic Services Area;
- Szikszó Small Regional Multi-Purpose Association, Szikszó Small Regional Social Service Centre (for a single municipality);
- Abaújszántó and Region Social and Child Welfare Primary Care Association, Abaújszántó Care Centre.

Catering[7]

Within the district, we have identified social catering services in 19 municipalities, 15 out of which have municipal catering services, while four of them (Abaújszántó, Boldogkőváralja, Hejce and Korlát) have church-maintained catering services provided by the Diaconal Centre of the Reformed Church Providence. The ones maintained by the local governments mainly provide their services only within the municipality; however, in three cases the service also covers other municipalities: Abaújvár Social Catering Primary Care Association (Abaújvár, Pányok), the Local Government of the Village of Tornyosnémeti Catering and Village Caretaker Service (Hernádszurdok, Tornyosnémeti, Zsujta) and Fony Care Centre (Fony, Regéc, Mogyoróska).

6 'Alarm system-based home assistance is a provision to persons living in their own homes and needing such assistance due to their health and social conditions, in order to overcome arising crisis situations.'https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=3621&p_session_id=66338751'
7 'Basic social service involving provision of at least one hot meal daily for persons in social need who are permanently or temporarily unable to provide this for themselves or their dependants.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_menu_id=&p_almenu_id=201&p_ot_id=200&p_level=3&p_session_id=91074865&p_obj_id=1059

Day Care[8], Family Assistance[9], Support Service[10]

In the area, these services are provided by three maintainers:

- Abaúj-Hegyköz Multi-Purpose Small Regional Association, Abaúj-Hegyköz Child Welfare and Social Basic Services Area;
- Szikszó Small Regional Multi-Purpose Association, Szikszó Small Regional Social Service Centre (concerns only one municipality);
- Abaújszántó and Region Social and Child Welfare Primary Care Association, Abaújszántó Care Centre.

Community Care[11]

Basic community care for psychiatric patients is only available in the centre of the small region within the district, i.e. in Gönc, namely the Lighthouse Community Care for Psychiatric Patients maintained by Creating Opportunities Social and Healthcare Nonprofit Ltd., which, among others, receives clients from all over the Gönc district.

Specialized Care

Now that we have covered basic social services, let us move on to specialized care. In the district, we made ourselves familiar with three institutions providing specialized care services. In Abaújkér, Szent Zokitosz Child Protection Institution maintained by the Miskolc Diocese provides home care services, supplemented by aftercare services, while Abaúj-Zemplén Integrated Social Institution of the Directorate General for Social Affairs and Child Protection in Boldogkőváralja operates a large number of residential institutions for the disabled. The Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Child Protection Centre and the Regional Child Protection Service have home care services in Gönc (residential home, aftercare).

Health Services in the District

Regarding public health services, **general practitioner care** is only available to a limited extent. According to our data, it is only provided in the following municipalities:

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8 'Day care institutions for homeless people as well as persons living in their own homes but needing social and mental support due to their health condition or old age, those being partly or wholly unable to cater for themselves, disabled or autistic persons in need of supervision, psychiatric patients or addicts ensure daytime shelter, social relations and meeting basic hygienic needs.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=1067&p_session_id=57155928

9 'Services provided for families and single persons to prevent and manage social, mental health and other emergency issues as well as to preserve self managing capabilities.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=936&p_session_id=77440499

10 'The purpose of support service is to care for disabled persons in their residential environments, primarily to help them to access public services outside their homes, to maintain the independence of their lives, as well as to provide special assistance within their homes.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=3624&p_session_id=61271509

11 'The purpose of community care is to care for psychiatric patients [or for addicts] in their residential environment and to promote their recovery and rehabilitation.' https://www.ksh.hu/apps/meta.objektum?p_lang=EN&p_ot_id=200&p_obj_id=3622&p_session_id=81621258

Municipality	Other municipalities belonging to them
Abaújszántó	Baskó, Sima
Abaújszántó (other district)	-
Abaújvár	Pányok, Zsujta, Kéked
Boldogkőváralja	Boldogkőújfalu, Arka
Gönc	Telkibánya
Gönc (other district)	Göncruszka
Hidasnémeti	Tornyosnémeti
Vilmány	Fony, Mogyoróska, Hejce, Regéc
Vizsoly	Hernádcéce, Korlát

According to our database, **dental** care services are only operating in Gönc and Abaújszántó.

Preventiv family protection services are operating in the region in a shared system, as well. According to our current data, the service is provided by 11 district nurses.[12] In the Gönc district, a district nurse works in an average of 3 municipalities. Most of them are operating in 2 to 3 municipalities and there are only two district nurses who merely work in one municipality each. At the same time, there are district nurses who are present in as many as seven municipalities.

Gönc is the key healthcare centre of the Gönc district and this is where the Health Development Office are operating, a program basically involving the entire district. The program is joined together by the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service (in Hungarian abbreviated as ÁNTSZ) and the National Institute for Health Development, it must be applied for annually, and the main directions of the professional activities are determined by ÁNTSZ. The services they provide are counselling, club, regular exercise programs, health day, educational flyers and health training. The practical operation of the Health Development Office takes place mainly in the municipalities, since, according to their manager, substantial change can be achieved if the programs are implemented locally ("We need to meet the people."). A health developer works in the office for 20 hours a week (they are also implementing the school program) and two assistants who, among others, take care of the administration of the programs (the clubs and programs in Gönc and Abaújszántó, respectively). This is accompanied by the Mental Health Program employing a social worker and a psychiatrist. They are also planning to include a dietitian and a full-time psychologist in Gönc.

Cultural Services

According to the 2016 cultural statistics available at the beginning of the project, there are two municipalities in the district with museum exhibition spaces of public interest (in Gönc and in Telkibánya). These are maintained by the local governments. Maintaining municipal library services is mandatory for the local governments. There are 2 municipalities in the district with libraries as independent institutions

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12 'In Hungary, only individuals possessing a college degree in district nursing can practice as district nurses. They pursue their professional activities individually and maintain regular contact with health experts, child welfare and the social welfare system. A district nurse maintains a close personal relationship with their patients, within the framework of which they provide health, social and mental hygiene advice that suits their individual needs and problems. A district nurse also organises screening examinations, prepares vaccinations and offers health education and other health protection community programmes to their patients.' http://www.hungarikum.hu/en/content/hungarian-district-nurse-service-internationally-unique-traditional-service-system

(Abaújszántó and Gönc). The rest of the municipalities have libraries operating as member institutions, forming part of the county-wide town library. A librarian is working at least part-time in 18 of the 30 municipalities of the district (the rest are volunteers). While the law requires local governments to support community culture activities, 7 out of 30 municipalities in the district (including the district seat) do not have a year-round community culture space (community cultural institution, community cultural community space, integrated community and service space). 17 municipalities have no regular cultural opportunities and staff is working at least part-time in only 8 municipalities, the rest are volunteers (including those assisting the staff). In terms of qualifications, the situation is even worse: only 2 (with only 1 left at present) out of the 8 employees in a community culture position have a higher education degree.

The Challenges of the District – As We See Them

Before Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, the northern part of the district was a railway, customs and border centre, providing most of the employment for the locals. After the EU accession, industrial parks were built in Slovakia (Kechnec), where people from the district commute to for work. At the same time, no capital has been invested in the district itself.

From 2008, a new trend could be observed: A lot of people are buying houses in the northern municipalities of the district adjacent to the border and many of them live in these buildings permanently rather than use them as weekend houses. More and more of these people do not speak Hungarian, they go to Kosice for work in the morning and then come back in the afternoon. As a result, these small villages are becoming commuter settlements. This process has reached the stage where, within a few years, the balance of settlements will be upset and the number of people moving from Slovakia will be higher than that of Hungarian citizens.

In the district, the lack of professionals, the overload of professionals, the low level of education, the impoverishment of the settlements and the individuals pose huge problems. In addition to these, there are two problems to be discussed in more detail: **cooperation and cohabitation**. First of all it should be clarified what the people living in the district mean by these concepts.

- One would think that cooperation is something we are already good at because there has been so much talk about it over the last 20 years and so many different programs have been supported with the aim of creating cooperation. Yet both we and the professionals working and living there have found that hardly any real cooperation is present in the district. Even mandatory cooperation often only exists on paper and extensive cooperation between people, between professionals and institutions, between institutions and local people, between institutions, local people and municipalities, as well as between municipalities is completely absent. At least not according to our (the community developers') criteria of collaboration:
- no subordination among the partners
- dialogue-based
- none of the cooperating partners imagine themselves standing above the other party.

Seeing this, we believe we still have a lot to do here.

Another such important issue is cohabitation, which, in this case, means not only the cohabitation of Roma and non-Roma people but also the cohabitation of people who have moved from Slovakia and the population having lived there for a longer period. This cohabitation is an increasing challenge for these municipalities, as the permanent population is left with the question of how those who do not pay their taxes in Hungary contribute to the maintenance of the settlements and burden sharing.

Furthermore, the municipalities within the district are in different situations: some are economically strong, while others are lagging behind. There can be many reasons for that. On the one hand, the extent to which the management of the municipality is able to take advantage of the opportunities; the type of development strategy it has; and whether it has any vision of the future at all or allows external factors to determine it. On the other hand, obviously, it also depends on the population of the municipality and if the people who live there are working or not, if they feel responsible for their municipality, if they are involved in organizing the life of the municipality or are just waiting for someone else to solve things. This lagging behind cannot be blamed on one person (the mayor) or a body (the local government) because it is something more complex. This issue has often come out in the workshops during personal conversations.

Access to public services is also characterized by territorial inequalities. The smaller a municipality and the further away it is from the centre, the less public services and services in general there are. This is not only a characteristic of the Gönc district but rather typical of the entire country. This is the case despite the fact that access to public services is a civil right and it must be guaranteed for everyone. In addition, it is important that these services respond to societal needs and their goals include reducing territorial underdevelopment.

The **quality of public services is also affected by a lack of professionals in the district**, while the people working there are overloaded. Due to the institutional constraints and the inflexibility of the institutions, the professionals cannot see any possibility for the public services provided by them to be implemented on a community basis and, this way, to be based on local needs and local resources. Grant programs are the only ones believed to have this kind of freedom. Therefore, expansion of services and development of local solutions is expected from these programs.

Upon starting to implement our project, there were 36 projects running in the district with local professionals named; however, there was no link between the projects. As community developers, we initiated contact, as well as regular communication and coordination between the implementers of these projects. Five or six organizations were open to our initiative: the ones implementing the priority projects (GYEP, Infinite Opportunity)[13]. Thus, a cooperation started between us, we were meeting regularly, and got to know each other, as well as the methods we use. In addition, we also shared our experience of the region, and we analysed together the problems involving all of us; thus applying an interdisciplinary approach to them.

Too much grant support can also be a problem in case there is no cooperation between them and they are not planned in a way that professional contents can complement each other but, rather, the same program elements are repeated within them. This way, unfortunately, instead of cooperation, there will be competition between them.

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13 A program that aims at launching niche services in order to improve the standard of living for the district's population in the long run.

What could be the future of a region without industry but with clean environment and air, good natural conditions (Zemplén hills, river Hernád, castles etc.)? One of the options is obviously tourism. Nevertheless, we are emphasizing that it is just one option and not the only one. But **for it to be built and developed, change is needed, which in turn requires knowledge and mobility**. And the people living here are not very good at these things, so the first step would be to address these areas, so that those living here become brave, skilled, self-sufficient and self-disciplined. It is also essential for them to have functioning and well-organized communities.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH TO EXPLORE INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIONS IN THE MOST DISADVANTAGED RURAL DISTRICTS

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Hungarian Association for Community Development, the research team of the project 'Development of Community-Based Services and its Connection with Specialized Care in Small Settlements' (EFOP-5.2.2-17-2017-00011) carried out community-based participatory research in 2019 and 2020. The project sought to gain deeper insight into collaborations in the areas of social and healthcare, as well as culture and public education in the most disadvantaged districts in Hungary and in Transylvania, Romania.

The research team included: Zoltán Balla, Béla Bereczky, Kitti Boda, Hajnalka Urbán Bortnyákné, Lucia Csabai, Zsuzsa Gyenes, László Lázár, Aranka Molnár, Éva Kis Pongráczné, Béla Sándor, Csabáné Takács.

In line with the overall goal of the project, the research sought to contribute to the development of community-based services and to strengthen their professional foundations. The research was carried out in two locations, one in Hungary and one in Transylvania, Romania, the research locations being among the most disadvantaged micro-regions in both countries. The research was divided into two main parts: first, we examined the community functions present in local communities, then we identified the characteristics of collaboration between institutions operating in the social, healthcare, and culture and public education fields, as well as professionals working in these fields. In doing so, we sought to answer the following questions:
- How do local community functions perform in the chosen research locations - as judged by local professionals?
- What characterizes the relationship structure between local professionals working in public services and existing institutions?
- How do collaborations contribute to improving day-to-day work and working conditions?

Carrying out community-based participatory research not only allowed us to learn about the main features of existing professional collaborative practices in the two districts, but also made possible the involvement of professionals and local residents concerned in the research process. Thus, in addition to laying the foundation for the development of future community-based services, the results can also be integrated into the development of current collaborations between local professionals, thus helping their daily work.

Community-based services represent a way of fulfilling needs and demands, which are embedded in the local community, that is, they are local; they build on personal and local community needs and resources; they are operated based on an equal partnership with local people; they mobilize internal resources; they work in partnership with other services and other actors in the local community

(Gyenes, 2019)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A **local community** is a social system that represents a context for consumption and service mechanisms, the formation and maintenance of personal relationships, for the fulfilling of social roles, and the emergence of forms of participation in a given locality

(Weil 2013).

A number of studies have underlined the role of local communities in the efficient functioning of social care, healthcare, and culture and public education (Minkler – Wallerstein 1990, Parker 1996, Fawcett et al. 2000, Israel et al. 1998, Deeds et al. 2008). That is why we started out from a functional approach when defining local communities.

Experts adhering to a functional interpretation of community highlight a variety of relevant functions, which change fundamentally according to topical common goals and interests (quoted by Csurgó – Légmán 2015, Hankiss 1983, Gorman 2002, Kovács 2007). In connection with the functional concept of communities, Warren (1978) defined the functioning of social units as an organized system of social actions, which is aligned with the basic needs of everyday life.

The five functions listed by Warren can be summarized as follows:
(1) **the production, distribution and consumption of social and economic products and goods,**
(2) **socialization** of the young,
(3) **maintaining norms and social control** (both through informal networks and through official channels),
(4) **social participation,**
(5) **mutual support** (Warren, 1978).

Interpreting the local community based on its functions[1] allows us to understand the structure of collective action (Weil 2013). If we imagine communities as complex systems, many networks of social and organizational relationships may emerge along each function; while their boundaries are difficult to define, exploring the local characteristics of the network can help us understand the interactions between members of the network (Gilchrist 2009). Public services operating in a given locality essentially perform the function of mutual assistance and local resources (may) play a very important role in their community-based operation (Gilchrist 2011).

Nevertheless, exploring the partnerships and networks between the institutions and professionals providing local public services[2] is an important factor in supporting regional development planning, the importance of which has been emphasized by several Hungarian and international studies as well (Budai 2009, Budai – Puli 2015, Dávid – Magvas 2011, Provan 2005, Jeffrey et al., 2001, Barbara et al., 1998). Thus, collaborations, regarded as a quality feature of service provision, are becoming increasingly important targets of regional development (Budai-Puli 2015).

When we talk about collaboration, it is essential to highlight its different levels and differences in quality, because **different levels and types of collaborations**

[1] For more detail, see Chapter 3.
[2] For a description of public services and their regional characteristics, see Chapter 6.

serve different purposes. When examining the efficiency of interdisciplinary collaborations, some authors attach great importance to the study of network operations based on collaborative cooperation and its positive impact on the quality of collaboration (Keast-Mandell 2008).

Previous research has extensively demonstrated the importance of cross-sectoral (civil society, the state and the church) collaborative partnerships and networks in an attempt to ensure more efficient operation of various healthcare and social services (quoted by Provan – Agranoff 1991, 2003; Baker et al. 1994; Israel et al. 1998; Jennings and Ewalt 1997; O'Toole 1997). **As a result of joint, network-based cooperation and coordinated work, the services operating in this way are able to make far better use of the resources inherent in the locality, as a result of which developments aimed at the well-being of community members are more successful (Provan 2005).** Furthermore, services based on diverse collaboration have the capacity to solve difficult community problems much more effectively (Provan 2005). Collaborations and networks between social, healthcare and other related services help to eliminate the problems inherent in the locality as a kind of cumulated, joint resource (Provan 2005, Dávid 2011).

However, these collaborations are very difficult to establish and create, and even more difficult to maintain effectively, so in the long run, collaboration between social networks, especially between institutions, do not become viable (Provan 2005, Wandersman – Goodman – Butterfoss 1997; Weiner – Alexander 1998). The absence of infrastructural background enabling cooperation between networks is considered to be an obstacle, as a result of which these networks often implement cooperation on their own, as a kind of investment beyond work, and often lack real financial support. However, there are even more obstacles inherent in the network itself. Oftentimes organizations managing scarce resources are reluctant to share their own resources with other members, reserving them rather for their own operation, as they have no experience of the reinforcing effect inherent in shared resources. A further important obstacle mentioned by most studies is the fear of losing autonomy, which is closely related to the problem that each partner usually has its own vision of how a partnership should work (Keast 2014). Nevertheless, it can be stated that **network-based, collaborative cooperation in service provision enables the operation of community-based services** (Provan 2005, Alter – Hage 1993).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The lack of synergies between the services in the area was identified as a research problem, also referred to as "the problem of closed loops".

Research question

We **sought to adjust the definition of the research question to the local requirements and needs as much as possible**. What local experts (in both research locations, Hungary and Romania) regarded as a problem was decisive. Therefore, on the one hand, in preparation for the research, we conducted structured interviews with social, healthcare, and culture and public education professionals working in the regions concerned. On the other hand, we performed an extensive systems analysis based on various databases, as well as a secondary analysis of previous research and studies in the area. Thirdly, what helped us the most to adapt the research problem and thus the research topic to local needs was the organization and design of participatory research workshops: a five-person research team was set up in the research location, its regular meetings allowed us to narrow down the possible problem areas defining the research.

According to experts, the structural frameworks and conditions that facilitate cooperation are inadequate; instead, there are "established routines", as a result of which "closed circuits" are formed between services, professionals and users. All this, experts claim, makes it difficult to share resources efficiently in the district.

Participatory character of the research

Participatory research as a kind of umbrella term comprises several research methods. Of these methods we used community-based participatory research in the present research project (Caine – Mill 2016). Let us highlight some of its key principles:
- involving community members into the research process;
- taking into account the ethical implications of research with respect to the individuals and the community involved in the research;
- maintaining cooperation throughout the research;
- seeking a balance between the generalizable nature of results and their impact on the local community;
- ensuring flexibility, deriving from the interactive character of the process (Caine–Mill 2016).

According to Bergold and Thomas (2012), the essence of community-based participatory research is the fact that members of the researched community are involved in the research process as co-researchers. Its **cooperative nature** is a methodological feature that defines the preparation of the research. The starting point for this type of research is creating a space for the process of the co-creation of knowledge, rather than laying down specific research methods, so the emphasis is mostly on how to generate this collaboration. In doing so, creating an appropriate

"Community-based research is a cyclical and iterative research process that allows for the integration of researchers' methodological and theoretical expertise with the knowledge of non-academic partners. Community-based research is an approach that values genuine partnership with members of the community."

(Caine–Mill 2016:17-18).

space for processes aimed at the co-generation of knowledge is given great attention. Last but not least, this approach contributes to the empowerment of the participants through understanding and exploring the situation (Bergold – Thomas 2012).

Local stakeholder/co-researchers involved (local residents, professionals): Five local residents were involved in the research who work in, or use all of the social, healthcare, and culture and public education services in the region.**Mode of cooperation:** Together with local experts, we held research workshops, which were supplemented by online Skype meetings and consultations when needed.

The main topics and activities involved in the research workshops:
- Delineation and joint definition of the research topic and research problem
- Joint development of a semi-structured interview guide
- Preparation from the research methodology
- Joint discussion of the experiences of the pilot interview, refinement of the interview guide, recruiting interviewees
- Sharing experiences from interviews
- Evaluation of the results, joint discussion of the analysis
- Discussion of other elements of the research (questionnaire-based survey, focus group)

Research Methodology

The research was divided into two phases in both research locations. In the first phase of the research, we focused on understanding the operation of local community functions, while in the second, we aimed to understand the characteristics of collaborations between the institutions and professionals providing public services. The table below summarizes the methods used in these two research phases:

Research Topic	Research Methodology
I. Section: Examining Community Functionality	Focus group interview
II. Section: Examination of cooperation between public services	Semi-structured interview
	Questionnaire survey

First research phase: Focus Group Interview

We examined the state of local communities in both the Transylvanian and Hungarian research locations by conducting focus group interviews. The focus group interview as a qualitative research method should essentially be considered under the general heading of group interviews, as the selected interviewees "communicate in groups about a given topic" (Vicsek 2006:17). The analysis focuses on the collective opinion-forming of the interviewees and on their mutual reflections on the topic. The present research is exploratory in nature, as the interviewees evaluate the community functions characteristic of their district based on their own assessment (Vicsek 2006).

When selecting our interviewees, we defined two important criteria during the participatory research workshop, narrowing the target group of the project: interviewees should both (1) live and (2) work in the research location. Based on each community function, we selected our potential interviewees through their assumed connection to the function, based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted previously, in preparation for the research.

In our research, we conducted six focus group interviews in the phase of exploring functions, involving 30 people in the interviewing process. The subjects of the general focus group interview, covering all functions, were local professionals involved in community work in both the Hungarian and Transylvanian research locations, lived in the district themselves and were active members of several local communities.

The following two interviews were structured around the strongest and weakest functions from among those professionally analyzed by the interviewees, with the subsequent modification that the interpretation of the function they considered the strongest during the interview was supplemented by defining the category of the most needed function, leading to the fourth focus group interview. Thus, **following the first general interpretation, the next three focus group interviews** developed as follows:

a) socialization as the most needed[3] community function;
b) economic prosperity as the weakest community function;
c) solidarity as the strongest social function.

In the Transylvanian research location, the focus group interview was conducted with a different approach. Participants took part in two focus group interviews. The first one was about interpreting functions in general, whereas participants analyzed the five functions in detail in the course of the second interview.

Second research phase: Questionnaire Survey, Semi- Structured Interview

Questionnaire Survey

Network analysis as a research method can contribute to overcoming the difficulties and obstacles by helping uncover the current form of cooperation, and to understand the potential blockages or hindering factors. In our research, we started from the methodology laid down by Provan (2005) and Dávid (2011), whose research focused on an applied form of network analysis. We believe their work represents a significant contribution to adapting the potential of network analysis into the day-to-day field work by practitioners. The results from most of the research based on network analysis fail to reach the experts working in the field, although the findings could help members of the local community understand their current functioning, and also assist them in finding ways to develop more effective collaborations tailored to their needs.

In both research locations, we conducted a questionnaire-based survey to explore the collaborations of public services operating in the area. In general, **in our network analysis, we examined the three main areas of collaboration identified by Provan (2005)** :

1) relationship through the mutual exchange of information;
2) connection through shared resources;
3) joint activities.

In the network analysis, we analyzed the relationship between the institutions in both countries in terms of the following five categories:

1) social services;
2) healthcare services;
3) services relating to culture and public education;
4) other services provided by NGOs;
5) other church/religious services.

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3 The adjective "most needed" referred to shaping the future development strategy. Thus socialization was identified as the area of intervention most needed in the future.

Thus, in both countries, in the network of contacts explored, we primarily analyzed the relationships between these five types in a comparative manner, along the three types of cooperation identified above.

Semi-structured interviews

In this part of the research, we primarily sought to explore the characteristics of collaborations between social, healthcare, and culture and public education professionals. Research workshops were organized to assist the preparation, conducting and the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Within the framework of the workshops, the local experts involved in the research contributed their own experience and knowledge to the development of the design of the semi-structured interviews along with the process of collecting and analyzing data.

The interview guide essentially consists of three parts. The first part of the interview addresses the individual as a local practitioner with a view to establishing a regional diagnosis. This is followed by exploring the current active collaborations of the practitioners, and concludes with exploring the willingness of interviewees to develop collaborations, placing the focus on their openness to change.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

First research phase

Within the first phase of the research carried out in Romania (Transylvania) and Hungary, we explored the state of the communities in light of our interviewees' interpretation of community functions outlined by Warren (1978). The functions judged to be strong or weak were very difficult to select in both locations. While in Hungary the function of mutual support and solidarity was most often highlighted and defined as the strongest community function of the region with reference to communities established along the lines of shared issues, residents in Transylvania considered the function of socialization to be the strongest. The latter finding is particularly interesting given that the very same community function was characterized as one of those deteriorating the most rapidly in the Hungarian research location. However, as both selected districts are among the most disadvantaged areas, it is not surprising that economic performance has been characterized as the weakest.

In the Hungarian research location, the reason why the mutual support and solidarity function was perceived as stronger was attributed to how it was formed; however, one can say in general that this function is much more prominent in ideologically oriented or issue-based communities than in locality-based communities. Our interviewees reported that events likely to bring about solidarity mobilize more members of issue-oriented communities more quickly, thereby keeping alive and even strengthening the mutual support function in the district. **The dynamics characterizing the way the function works thus develop along singular events embedded in a given situation. The type of the triggering event was also identified as an influencing factor concerning the duration and the scope of the dynamics involved.** It is believed that the **past of or the historical roots of the communities, i.e. their socialization, play an important role in** strengthening the function, along with the types of connections between communities (level of acquaintance), the existence of a competitive situation, and the level of formalization in the given community. In terms of solidarity, mutual cooperation and assistance, the **personal nature of the relationship** was highlighted as a key feature. According to our interviewees, personal contact is also a driving force for solidarity, being a basic condition for its functioning. In addition to the personal aspect, participants also considered the **identification of a common goal and actively keeping it on the agenda** as essential, making the cooperation sustainable in the long run.

In the Transylvanian research location, a consensus soon emerged during the focus group interview that socialization is a stronger function of the communities in the region, albeit only from a particular aspect. This is because socialization in this region has been very closely connected with the preservation of traditions since the 1980s, especially with folk traditions and folk dance. This is not specifically the case for strictly local communities, as it is considered very important throughout the county: "*Keeping*

a certain set of values based on the preservation of traditions, and instilling those values in each other, is something that works very forcefully". Thus, socialization functions beyond the preservation of traditions are weaker in the region, according to our interviewees.

Transylvanian interviewees rated the function of economic prosperity as one of the weakest. Although real estate prices are rising in the town acting as the center of the region, salaries are low compared to the surrounding areas. The participants of the focus group also agreed that although there are constant attempts to **develop and promote local products** , locals are not that open to buying them. At the institutional level, they experience a barely noticeable shift in this direction: "*We as an institution found a way (...) to buy goods from a local entrepreneur and there are many more such businesses [in the region], so it works at the corporate level, but much less at the individual level*". **At the institutional level, therefore, there seems to be an awareness that local economic prosperity** could be boosted by prioritizing local products. It is traced back to the past of the region that closer cooperation and partnerships in the field of economic prosperity do not characterize the research location: "*We do not seem to believe in such an approach. We somehow broke apart in the old system, and everyone started to produce and work for themselves*" . It is **very difficult to engage locals in community-based economic organization processes**, to draw attention to their positive aspects: "*Growing produce together, selling goods together, working together, (...) it just does not work*". Some positive initiatives in this direction are presented as examples; participants think these have been brought about caused by a state of felt urgency. In the case of cooperatives operating in the region, for example, the parties involved had practically no other option in the given situation. The recent revival and development of cooperation between public land estates[4] and local farmers also occurred as a process the parties were compelled to engage in by the force of the situation. This process resulted in public land estates recently starting to provide loans to small farmers at a lower interest rate: "*In the last year or two, public land estates have warmed up to the idea of financing loans, with interest rates around 2 to 3%, which will of course turn out to be profitable for them as well...*" However, these cooperations spontaneously evolving from a momentary necessity also strengthen the economic function of local communities by strengthening a sense of locality-based mutual responsibility.

At the beginning of the focus group interview, participants agreed that **one of the most important hindering factors in the way of the economic revival of the area is rooted in lowered standards**. They interpreted this concept from a variety of angles, in a complex manner, ranging from low standards concerning infrastructure (built capital) to the attitudes of individuals working in business and other economic actors. In their view, when the economy starts to be characterized by lowered standards, this makes future cooperation utterly impossible. As devastating as it can be for the region, it can also act as a motivating, stimulating force once an internal determination to be more demanding is adopted. Thus, our interviewees identified being more demanding in terms of standards as one of the main development opportunities. For example, it is believed that a prerequisite for the recovery of tourism is to raise the standards characteristic of the region, both in terms of services and infrastructure. Demanding higher standards would also be needed in the **development of flagship products**, which, in the opinion of our interviewees, are not yet properly exploited by the region. The **legal environment** affecting agriculture and the acquisition of land is considered to be a factor making an economic recovery impossible. Regional cooperation and jointly developed vision for the future have also been identified by the participants as very important goals. Although some good examples of **local**

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[4] The joint ownership of forests and pastures, their emergence as community property

government cooperation were mentioned, this was identified as an area for improvement. The energy invested in the **next generation** is also considered as a priority area.

Second research phase

While interview results from Hungary mostly referred to forms of cooperation that are either mandatory or rooted in the institutional structure (with the occasional exception of joint activities in the arena of culture), **there is a much greater openness to the cooperation of informal, local community groups in Transylvania.** In both geographical areas examined, cooperation primarily involved a mutual sharing of information. Over and beyond this, a small number of respondents reported joint activities or collaboration based on shared resources or that required closer links.

This was also highlighted by the questionnaire survey in Hungary, in which it can be shown that at the time of collecting the data, out of the thirty-five social services involved, mutually sharing information was identified as the most typical form of cooperation in the district. Cooperation along joint activities came up about half as much frequently, while only two percent (2%) of the services indicated to relationships were based on shared resources. This clearly reflects the fact that cooperation is most often identified by partners with the flow of information. In the examined network of contacts, a certain central core emerged, the central nature of which was due to the fact that very close, mutual cooperation was reported in parallel with a multitude of links to other social services in the region. Services in the central core included the following: a family and child welfare center, as well as two family and child welfare services, two Safe Start Orphanages, two Presence Points, a village guardianship service and a mini crèche service. There is also a significant level of partnership both in the central core and in terms of mutual collaborations in connection with the Safe Start Orphanages, realized not only with other types of services, but also with other orphanages in the district. The latter thus act as catalysts for professional collaboration. It should also be emphasized that the isolated position of a large number of service types is reflected in the network of contacts. They are either weakly related to the services involved or have no collaborative relationships with these services at all. That, however, does not mean that they have no contacts or cooperating partners in other fields; rather, what was shown was that they were extraneous to these thirty-five organizations. Organizations dealing with psychiatric patients and addicts, some village guardianship services and social catering services frequently ended up in this position. The present research results reflect that the driving force for social services cooperation in the region is primarily linked to the Family and Child Welfare Service and Center, as well as some Safe Start Orphanages. In general, cooperation most often means the sharing of information and expertise for respondents from the district. Participants are in general loosely connected to each other, do their work independently, but are still committed to learning from each other (see openness). Cooperation in the form of coordination only seems to characterize the functioning of certain protective services, where interdependence is more tangible.

In Transylvania, almost seventy percent (70%) of respondents involved in the research on public services were other non-governmental partners that mostly indicated being engaged in the following activities, either formally or informally: Roma integration, support for interethnic relations, support for children living in children's homes, helping disadvantaged children bridge the gap, parental cooperation, youth clubs, folk medicine, environmental protection, cultural activities (e.g., folk dance and

folk song groups), operation of community venues. The respondents also included organizations from the field of social services (elderly care, child protection, family support) and healthcare services (nursing service, healthcare mediator) along with services related to running a museum in the field of culture and public education. A characteristic of the cooperation among public service actors relates to how diverse the network of relations of the given service is, and how much intersectoral cooperation is realized. In this context, it can be stated that, on average, respondents indicated at least two types of relationship categories. Most cooperation relations are implemented with other non-governmental organizations and other church organizations, while indicators for cooperation with institutions of culture and public education show very similar levels. Cooperation with social services is much less frequent, about half as much, while partnerships with healthcare services are only present at a minimal level among the services examined in the Transylvanian research location.

For both countries, most cooperation is mandatory, and mainly with organizations with a similar profile. In both the Hungarian and Transylvanian research locations, the cooperation of institutions running family and child welfare services was mainly organized around the protective signaling system (even if the service structure has a unique feature in each country), and cooperations with organizations with a similar profile predominate. Activities with different profiles rarely appear for this type of service in either of the two geographical areas. In the case of Transylvanian services, most respondents mentioned cooperation with venues of culture and public education and libraries. Concerning Hungarian services, some respondents did refer to the former, but most identified the village guardianship service as a cooperating partner with a different profile. The main difference consisted in the mandatory character of cooperation, given that while interview results from Hungary mostly highlighted forms of cooperation that were either mandatory or rooted in the institutional structure (with the occasional exception of joint activities with venues of culture and public education), there seems to be a much greater level of openness to cooperation with informal, local community groups in Transylvania. In both geographical areas examined, cooperation primarily involved a mutual sharing of information. Over and beyond this, a small number of respondents reported joint activities that required closer links or collaboration based on shared resources.

Conclusion

Within the first phase of **complex, community-based developments at the micro-regional level,** we relied on the interpretation of the functions assigned to the local community by local residents and professionals. The corresponding second research phase focused on the network analysis of public utilities in the district, as well as on understanding the character of cooperation among practitioners. However, all of this, we believe, would be less amenable to interpretation without analyzing the state of community functions, which we consider to be a key theoretical framework in the planning of community-based developments.

While our interviewees highlighted the function of mutual cooperation and solidarity as the main area of intervention in the Hungarian research location, respondents saw the function of economic prosperity as the most important in the Transylvanian research location, directly affecting other areas as well, especially when it is weak. Though all functions were on the whole considered weak and dysfunctional in both research locations, respondents were able to identify these functions in the life of the communities, thus proving their legitimacy at the same time. Although economic prosperity is considered to be the weakest function in both districts, in the

Hungarian research location, socialization was selected as the most significant factor, influencing the other functions yet still the weakest, the one which has deteriorated the most rapidly and has been downgraded the most in recent times. An interesting basis for comparison is that, in contrast, in the Transylvanian focus group study, socialization was considered to be the strongest function, which is still primarily nurtured in the region in the form of the conservation of local traditions. Mutual support and solidarity were ranked among the stronger functions in both research location. It was nevertheless highlighted in the Hungarian research as a primary asset of local communities, characterized as the most functional among the five functions. Its operation and dynamics show many similarities in both research locations, as its ad hoc nature and the way it operates in connection with specific events have been underlined in both locations.

Examining the state of communities thus provided a kind of broader context for a deeper understanding of the nature of collaborations. The emphasis on the function of mutual support and solidarity provided the background for the examination of co-operative ventures. This is because social, healthcare and cultural services currently support this function. The characterization of the existing cooperations between these areas provides the basis for their future development, as network collaborations can be further strengthened based on the already emerging patterns of cooperation.

In summary, in both research locations, cooperation based on the mutual provision of information is the most common, with a special emphasis on sharing information among actors with similar target groups or fields of activity. Joint activities that require closer cooperation turned out to be less common, while relationships based on shared resource use were referred to by respondents as even more infrequent. This suggests that activities of cooperation that are more time-consuming and that require more coordination occur only on a case-by-case basis or only among local practitioners in the examined areas, and fail to provide the foundation for institutional operation. All of the above highlights the need for a complex, community-based approach to service development.

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