



GUIDE BOOK

# MICROPOLIS

THE POWER OF LOCAL COMMUNITY



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# 01

## Idea of Micropolis



We created the name Micropolis to describe a local community, city district or a town that has successfully created it's strong, inclusive local identity and an active participation and cooperation of inhabitants, so that they can function as ancient „polis“ – the fully democratic, local community where everybody is involved.

### The essence of Micropolis are three factors

#### **Powerful inclusive identity of a given place**

based on the diversity of all residents, their unique talents and stories, aware of the richness of their own unique resources and allowing all residents to identify with a given place, regardless of their age, origin, physical or financial status.

#### **Strong local bonds among the neighbors and organizations**

that enable mutual support in the face of difficulties and problems, regular listening to the needs of the community and sharing resources (such as time, ideas, talents, knowledge, digital, linguistic, business skills, mental and material support) to help people in crisis.

#### **Active participation of residents in the life of the community**

joint creation of local space, culture and education, the possibility of implementing original projects and initiatives, triggering a sense of agency and innovation.

# 02

## WHY



A human being is a social being – we absolutely need relationships with others to survive, fully develop our potential, enjoy mental and physical health, and ultimately be happy. The natural environment for creating community and nurturing bonds is the people around us – family, neighbors, schoolmates, and colleagues. Regardless of geographical location or historical era, people have always formed groups and communities to provide essential support.

Today, however, this seems more challenging than ever before. We are experiencing a crisis of family and traditional forms of life; we live in large, anonymous, and ever-expanding metropolises; due to the development of technology (electronics and social media), we live increasingly faster and are massively abandoning social life in reality in favor of the virtual; we suffer from isolation, alienation, and loneliness, which consequently leads to widespread depression (according to the WHO, currently the second most common illness in the world and the most common in the near future); while living in an information society, we gain awareness but are also connected to all global problems (the most stressful seems the climate crisis and various war conflicts).

As institutions closely related to culture and education, we believe that the best remedy for these problems is a well-functioning local community, symbolically named Micropolis. Like the ancient "polis," it is based on interpersonal bonds and the engagement of community members, providing a mutual support system that offers a sense of belonging and security.

### Creating and strengthening such environments results in:

- **development of interpersonal skills** (communication, empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, responsibility for others), which translate into success in personal and professional life, and subsequently into social development.
- **strengthening of democracy and civic participation**, as people who feel connected to their community are more likely to engage in actions for its benefit (e.g., participating in elections and other forms of civic activity), which in turn contributes to building a more aware and responsible society.
- **cooperation and mutual assistance** that help solve many problems, increase the efficiency of actions for the common good, integrate social groups, and build interpersonal bonds.
- **counteracting isolation and loneliness, and consequently depression**, by creating a friendly space, engaging situations, opportunities to be together, and a sense of security and belonging.

**Community is the foundation of healthy and sustainable human life on both micro and macro scales. It meets the psychological, emotional, and physical needs of individuals and forms the basis for a democratic and active society. Therefore without a shadow of a doubt, it is worth investing in building and strengthening local communities!**



# 03 HOW to develop strong local communities?



Below we present the 6 Steps Model showing how to develop local communities. We hope it may be an universal and useful tool for NGO's but also for Municipalities, Culture Centers, Libraries, Schools and the individual activists who want either to start with well-planned community works or want to be more effective and advanced in their community-developing efforts. During the 16-month Micropolis project, we gathered knowledge and experience from various international organizations and experts, tested all 6 steps of the model and we observed the positive effects of this designed way of working with the local community.

## 6 STEPS MODEL

- 1 GET INSPIRED BY THE IDEA OF MICROPOLIS
- 2 CREATE A MICROPOLIS TEAM
- 3 DO THE SURVEY AND FIND THE MAIN CHALLENGES
- 4 BUILD A LOCAL NETWORK
- 5 PLAN YOUR PATH TO MICROPOLIS
- 6 START TO NETWORK MORE INTERNATIONALLY



# 04 6 STEPS to strong local communities



1

## GET INSPIRED BY THE IDEA OF MICROPOLIS



**Visit Micropolis Website** and know the Micropolis idea, why it's important.

<https://micropolis.club/about/>



**Read the Case Studies** from different countries:

**IFS Case Studies**

<https://micropolis.club/ifs-examples-on-fostering-social-cohesion-and-active-citizenship/>

**WCK Case Studies**

<https://micropolis.club/how-we-build-micropolis-in-wawer-district-case-studies-from-wawerskie-centrum-kultury/>

**Interfolk Case Studies**

<https://micropolis.club/case-studies-from-the-civil-society-area/>



**Follow the materials from the Micropolis Conference in Warsaw**

<https://micropolis.club/first-partners-meeting-in-warsaw/>



## CREATE A MICROPOLIS TEAM

**Find people interested in the idea of developing a well-functioning local community and build a team as diverse as possible in terms of experiences and skills.**

### **WCK Experience:**

The formation of the Micropolis team at the Wawer Cultural Center began with organizing several meetings for employees from all branches interested in community-oriented activities. Based on their diverse experiences and perspectives regarding local challenges and needs, the Micropolis concept was developed, and an EU project was written. Subsequently, foreign partners were recruited for the project. When the project started, all employees of the institution were invited again, along with volunteers collaborating with WCK. The goal was to create a team where individuals with diverse skills could engage in various capacities and in different ways. The group thus formed began to implement the project in successive stages.

### **Interfolk Experience:**

The coordinator from the Interfolk Institute was the main partner of the Micropolis project from the beginning. In order to obtain diversity of the team and have greater access to work with the local community, he invited Middelfart Volunteers Center to be a partner and they invited the Culture Department and the Culture Island (culture center) from Middelfart Municipality to join the project. It was the first such project in the city of Middelfart, combining the above organizations and such a construction of the team allowed for very beneficial effects of participation in the project and in the next steps of the model.

### **IFS Experience:**

To have a diverse team that mirrors the local residents when it comes to educational background, age, gender and cultural background is good and important as long as the team doesn't go too "native". The risk with that can be less objectivity and some ethical issues.

It is also important that the team share common basic values and approaches such as a focus on possibilities and a positive view on humanity. And to regard residents as "subjects" that are able to act and decide and not as "objects" that need to be taken care of and being entertained.





### 3

## CREATE A MICROPOLIS TEAM

During the project we have tested 2 types of surveys – depending on the needs and research goals:

### A SURVEY AMONG THE LOCAL INHABITANTS:

Polish team chose the more basic survey among the local community – to find the main needs and challenges in creating strong communities

<https://micropolis.club/results-of-the-survey-in-wawer-district-in-august-sep-tember-2023/>

### B SURVEY AMONG THE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

The Danish team decided to conduct the survey among the organizations to check what could help them to work better with the added community values

<https://micropolis.club/danish-survey-report/>

The IFS team has run the survey among the international NGOs to know better how community centers from different parts of the world meet the needs of local residents and get to know innovative or just effective tools to promote social cohesion and inclusion and active citizenship

<https://micropolis.club/results-of-the-survey-micropolis-the-power-of-strong-local-communities/>

Another way to know the local needs and wishes is organizing face-to-face meetings among the residents or local NGO's in a structure of focus groups. Meetings and face to face interviews can be even more beneficial than running online or paper surveys.



## BUILD A LOCAL NETWORK

**Do the research on what NGO's, public organizations and individual activists are active in building the local community. Invite them for a networking meeting so that they can know each other and the job that they are doing. Present them the results of the survey. Look for common strategy, projects and solutions that will bring more synergy into their efforts for a local community.**

### EXAMPLES

#### **Creation of a local network in Wawer district**

Building the local community in the Wawer district involved making organizations more visible so that residents could join them, enabling mutual cooperation, and thereby valuing and strengthening the volunteers.

#### **STEP I: Professional Education of the Team**

- Four Micropolis team members attended the "How to increase a municipal power" conference by the Generations Institute, learning from successful case studies of community-building.
- Workshops with Generations Institute: Experts conducted workshops for Micropolis team members, cultural program coordinators, and local activists. The focus was on building local identity and stronger bonds, leading to the conceptualization of "The Celebration of the Local Community" event.

#### **STEP II: Creation of a Local Network**

- Database Creation: A comprehensive contact database of local organizations and activists were compiled through brainstorming and desk research.
- Invitation to Events: Invitations were sent for educational workshops, a networking brunch, and "The Celebration of the Local Community." While workshops had limited interest, the brunch and the celebration saw substantial participation.
- Networking Brunch: This successful event facilitated networking, showcased Micropolis project ideas, and gathered inputs for the Catalog of Local Activists.

#### **STEP III: Educating Residents on Community Participation**

- Celebration of the Local Community: The event featured the screening of "Until the Last Drop" documentary, discussions with the director, presentation of Micropolis ideas, distribution of the Catalog of Local Activists, and awards for local activists. Over 200 participants attended, enhancing awareness and appreciation for local activism.

More: <https://micropolis.club/micropolis-wp8-summary-report/>





## **DANISH WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS WITH POLITICIANS:**

### **Cultural Workshops for Co-creation and Networking in Middelfart**

At the end of 2023, the Culture Department organized a three-hour evening cultural workshop to promote co-creation and networking between cultural associations, entrepreneurs, and the municipality. The meeting included representatives from various cultural organizations and artists, enabling a broad discussion about culture from different perspectives.

The workshops included a tour of a local cultural institution and discussions with external experts. Politicians moderated various thematic workshop stations, ensuring political responsiveness for participants. It was crucial to involve all participants and provide them with a space to express their opinions.

The key takeaways from the workshops highlight the importance of carefully selecting participants and strongly involving politicians to support cultural initiatives. These workshops should become a regular part of developing the Micropolis concept, fostering the exchange of ideas and collaboration among local cultural actors.



There are various paths that you can follow to build strong (in the meaning – powerful, vibrant and well-functioning) local communities. The names of paths are more like hashtags# - showing the main element of the path but all the presented methods and Case Studies work with various elements of the paths, so it's just a way in which we organized the know-how (and not very precise and separated methodologies). Here are the paths that we find the most effective and of strategic importance in building strong local communities. Choose the paths that you find the most suitable for your organization and for the local community. More examples and explanations to each path will be given in the next chapter.



## START TO NETWORK MORE INTERNATIONALLY

### **Polish experience – application for a KA1 and then KA2 small scale partnerships**

Wawerskie Centrum Kultury (Wawer Culture Center) is a nice example, how the public institution responsible for organization of cultural life in the Wawer district of Warsaw, decided to network more internationally with a goal to become a more open and innovative institution. We started with the application for KA1 Erasmus grant to send our employees to English courses abroad. As a second step we applied for KA2 Small Scale Partnership Project in order to practically use our English skills and gather more knowledge and inspiration on how similar institutions work in other countries and how they work with local communities. Both projects brought a lot of fresh energy and new ideas into our everyday work and have changed our way of thinking.

### **Danish experience**

One of Micropolis project's results and inspirations was the decision to apply for KA 1 Erasmus grant (Erasmus+ Mobility for Public Staff and NGOs in Middelfart). The municipality of Middelfart aimed to address inclusion, diversity, sustainability, and technology challenges faced by local volunteers. The goal was to equip volunteers with tools and knowledge from European best practices to enhance local initiatives. The project involved an Erasmus+ mobility program focusing on:

- **Attracting Diverse Members**

Learning inclusive practices from other EU countries.

- **Sustainability Practices**

Gaining skills in environmental sustainability.

- **Digital Solutions**

Providing the use of digital tools for better management.

- **Results and Impact**

The initiative intended to increase inclusive practices, improve sustainability efforts, and enhance the use of digital tools among volunteers, strengthening local identity and community cohesion.

Inclusive participation, European networking, continuous learning, and a supportive environment were crucial to the project's success.

### **IFS experience:**

IFS is coordinating a global network of community organizations that interacts in common advocacy, exchange of best practice and project development.

There are many advantages for local organizations to take part in such a network. The obvious is of course capacity building through exchanges of good practises by webinars, study visits and development projects but also to get recognition for the importance of community work and what support is needed for this. The feeling of being part of something much bigger than only the local daily activities is also very strengthening and rewarding.

# 05 Paths to Micropolis: Case Studies and wider examples

## **A** Local Identity & Strong Bonds

Local identity is the sense of belonging and identification that residents have with a specific place ("I am from here, I know this place, and I am proud of it"). This shared experience fosters a sense of community and bonds within it ("I feel good with the people here, I know them, and I am in contact with them").

Collective consciousness connects people on an emotional, cultural, and social level, relying on shared experiences, traditions, and values. It grows from past and present histories (e.g., about the residents) and from shared spaces (historic places, newly created ones, or natural areas that are cared for and fought for together).

Strong bonds are the foundation of any healthy and well-functioning community, as they signify deep, mutually supportive relationships based on trust, understanding, and cooperation. In such a community, people share and exchange all kinds of resources, such as time, ideas, talents, knowledge, and digital, linguistic, and business skills.

### **Middelfart – Building Identity that Creates Bonds**

*In our municipality, we want all citizens to feel proud of the place they live and work in and to be aware that exceptional things are happening that they can get involved in.*

*We feel connected to the place through its history and natural features, which are honored in projects such as:*

- *Bridgewalking – the adapted bridge for climbing is a major tourist attraction, providing a unique experience for participants and instilling pride in the residents.*
- *CLAY Ceramics Museum – promotes cultural heritage and is a beautiful place to spend time.*
- *KulturØen – a large cultural center with a cinema, library, concert and lecture hall, café, restaurant, and tourist information. It is designed as an open, modern cultural meeting place for all citizens. Cultural activities are either partly or fully created through co-creations with other cultural partners: music school, art school, music associations, local organizations, associations, artists, etc.*
- *Crazy Nice Sunday – an event within The Triangle Festival Week organized by MIND Museum, Library (Middelfart Kultur og Bibliotek), the Mental Health Service in the Southern Denmark region, and many volunteer organizations. The festival program introduces people of all ages and backgrounds to difficult topics related to mental health.*

### **Film Club in WCK – how the local identity is connected with the local community**

The WCK Film Club is one of the newest projects of the Wawer Cultural Center in Warsaw. In a fully professional cinema hall, we organize film screenings, meetings, discussions, seminars, and workshops. The aim is to educate, inspire, and provide high-level entertainment through various events centered around cinematography, as well as to create a community of cinema lovers and integrate the local community.

After a year of operation, we can confidently say that our mission is progressing according to plan and is successful! Our events attract an audience, and the 250-seat hall is often filled to capacity. There is very positive feedback on this matter—viewers express their heartfelt thanks and say that the events were important to them, sometimes even showing tears of emotion.

The project's success is due to fulfilling the wishes and requests of the audience when designing events, the diversity of the proposals, the interactive formula of the events, the integration of various communities and generations, the educational value, and the promotion of social values, as well as creating a sense of community.

However, the most important aspect seems to be simply providing a good space for meeting and conversation. Everyone needs contact with others (perhaps more so today than ever before) and needs to be seen and heard – these needs can be satisfied by attending club events.

Usually, after the film, there is a discussion among the viewers, sometimes with the support of psychologists, who ensure emotional safety.

People want and need to be together – a well-designed cultural event can be a new formula for micro-community life.

## **B Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

Local community centers can play a vital role in this process by using e.g. culture, sports and craft activities as a means for inclusion rather than with the aim to enhance advanced skills. Also to arrange local common events implemented in inclusive ways is an effective way to create a sense of togetherness in the community.

It is of course always important to reflect upon how inclusive the activities really are when it comes to marketing, premises, fees and how activities are carried out.

Sometimes separatist activities are a path to inclusion. LGBTQ cafés are one example of an activity where a vulnerable group first creates an in-group community in a safe environment that eventually can lead to further inclusion in the broader local community.

### **Interfolk's Case study I: focus on social inclusion and local identity.**

**Background and Objectives:** The "Culture Guides for Marginalized Social Groups" project, coordinated by Interfolk, aimed to engage low or non-users of art and culture among marginalized groups. In Køge, Denmark, the project focused on integrating local cultural opportunities into schools to enhance children's access to culture and foster social inclusion.

**Methods and Activities:** The project involved entire school classes to ensure inclusivity, with activities provided by local cultural associations. Key activities included art exhibitions, theater performances, music sessions, cultural lectures, and interactive storytelling. These activities took place both in schools and at local cultural sites.

**Results and Impact:** The initiative increased cultural awareness, engagement, and emotional understanding among children. It fostered tolerance, strengthened community bonds, and made children and their families more aware of local cultural opportunities.

**Key Success Factors:** Inclusivity, collaboration between cultural associations and schools, responsiveness to community interests, and providing diverse cultural experiences were crucial to the project's success.

**Theme: Social Inclusion**

For a detailed case study, visit <https://micropolis.club/case-studies-from-the-civil-society-area/>

### **Case Study: All Activity Houses in Malmö, Sweden**

**Background and Objectives:** The All Activity Houses (AAH) initiative, launched in 2011 in Lindängen, Malmö, addresses local challenges such as insecurity, low employment, and high crime rates by transforming schools into community centers. The program aims to foster social cohesion, active citizenship, and strong community bonds.

**Methods and Activities:** AAH offers free, resident-driven activities such as sports, arts, music, and cultural events. The program operates within schools, involving diverse staff and actively engaging parents to build trust and community involvement.

**Results and Impact:** The initiative has led to improved student grades, increased feelings of security, and enhanced social cohesion. By leveraging existing school infrastructure, AAH has created a safer and more inclusive environment, strengthening community ties and promoting individual empowerment.

**Key Success Factors:** Free activities, integration with schools, parental involvement, diverse staffing, and active networking with local actors are critical to AAH's success.

**Theme: Social Inclusion and Strong Local Bonds**

For a detailed information visit

<https://micropolis.club/ifs-examples-on-fostering-social-cohesion-and-active-citizenship/>

### **Examples from the IFS survey:**

Active solidarity remains the best space for individual contributions to a collective project which creates sincere bonds nourishing friendship and local family ties. As you can see in the following video and article, we managed recently to fight Covid engaging kids and parents, youth and NGOs in a very effective and powerful action!

<http://www.mourad-chalal.com/soiree-en-famille-2-0/>

## Active Citizenship

Active citizenship, in other words, is the engagement and participation of individuals in the life of their community and society, aiming to improve conditions for themselves and others. This can take various forms, ranging from voting in elections to volunteering, participating in community groups, and advocating for social, political, and environmental issues.

Active participation of residents and organizations in community life manifests itself in the creation of shared spaces (e.g., neighborhood cafes and clubs), the co-creation of culture and education (initiatives carried out in Local Activity Spots or local cultural centers), the implementation of projects funded by public resources (within the framework of city programs such as the Participatory Budget, national or European Union funds), and sponsorship by local businesses in business-cultural cooperation.

Active citizenship is essential for building resilient, inclusive, and thriving communities. By engaging in the civic life of their communities, individuals not only contribute to the common good but also enrich their own lives and support a stronger, more cohesive society. Therefore, it is worth considering how to build active citizenship. What influences people to want to engage and cooperate, to feel a sense of agency? How can we engage and include groups at risk of exclusion (seniors, foreigners, people with disabilities) in activities? How can we create spaces that encourage activity, cooperation, and initiative? How can we organize Local Activity Spots, neighborhood cafes, and community clubs that work effectively?

The example of Middelfart demonstrates how the local community can collaborate with the City Council and co-create cultural events to build a sense of agency among residents. Residents collaborate with the City Council in the Local Development Plan (LUP), identifying common goals and initiatives that strengthen the local community and support sustainable cultural, economic, and environmental development. The projects have modest budgets, and their greatest value lies in the sense of agency that citizens gain.

### **Examples of local activities in Middelfart that have strengthened active citizenship:**

*Residents collaborate with the City Council in the Local Development Plan (LUP), identifying common goals and initiatives that strengthen the local community and support sustainable cultural, economic, and environmental development. The projects have modest budgets, and their greatest value lies in the sense of agency that citizens gain.*

*As part of this collaboration, the following were established:*

- Volunteer Center Middelfart, where private individuals, associations, municipalities, businesses, and other entities can get help in implementing initiatives – discovering opportunities and receiving advice and guidance on participation and engagement.
- The digital platform Socialkompass.dk consolidates all local proposals from the city and organizations related to social engagement in one place – the activities of entities are promoted, and citizens gain a portfolio of options to choose from.
- Triangle Festival Week, an event co-created by residents, associations, and cultural institutions from various municipalities.
- Trækbanen, a city path that, thanks to grassroots initiative, has become a shared cultural space and a walking alley planted with fruit trees and wildflowers and decorated with murals.

### Case Study: Neighborhood Volunteers in Debrecen, Hungary

**Background and Objectives:** Eletfa Segítő Szolgálat Egyesület (Lifetree Help Service Association) was founded in 1989 to foster community development in Debrecen, Hungary. The Neighborhood Volunteers program aims to empower residents, strengthen neighborhood relations, and develop a network of volunteers to support community work.

**Methods and Activities:** The program recruits and trains local volunteers through a comprehensive 36-hour program, covering community work methods, communication skills, and social services. Volunteers engage in ongoing needs assessment, provide various support services, and organize community events.

**Results and Impact:** The program has increased community engagement, safety, and active citizenship, creating a network of local organizers who provide continuous community support. Enhanced cooperation between residents and local services has strengthened neighborhood relations and improved living standards.

**Key Success Factors:** Involving trusted local leaders, structured volunteer training, fostering a DIY spirit, organizing community events, and active networking with local actors are essential to the program's success.

**Theme:** Active Citizenship and Community Empowerment

**For a detailed information visit**

<https://micropolis.club/ifs-examples-on-fostering-social-cohesion-and-active-citizenship/>

### WCK experience: Local Activity Spots (MAL)

Local Activity Spots (MAL) are spaces where Warsaw residents and non-governmental organizations can use free services and space for their neighborhood activities. Currently there are over 100 spaces in Warsaw open to neighborhood initiatives. The offer and character of each place depend on the entity managing it, the creativity of the residents and non-governmental organizations that are co-creators and beneficiaries of the activities. Openness, cooperation and locality are the values that unite all places belonging to the MAL network. A key aspect is the ability to use the offers or spaces of various places close to home for free. MAL is run by public institutions, non-governmental organizations, housing cooperatives and local entrepreneurs. Local Activity Spots focus on grassroots activities, based on the social involvement of residents and non-governmental organizations. Here they can implement their ideas, organize meetings and initiate joint ventures. Activities bring new value to residents, and the currency is commitment to society, not money. Some places are financed (or co-financed) from city funds. Other entities make their space available free of charge because those who run it see value in cooperation with residents and involvement in community life. The creation of the MAL network is consistent with Warsaw's strategic goals, which are to support the construction of a responsible community of Warsaw residents.

***IFS - The community based work always starts from the idea of working with people, not for them. Meeting with people, listening to their ideas, encouraging them to take their place in the community, organizing events, panel discussions, world cafes, demanding local authorities to listen to what people are saying and making sure that small voices and signals are meaningful.***

***IFS Survey: Most successful ways to foster participation and active citizenship***

- *Involve as many as possible in arranging local events,*
- *Utilizing diverse communication channels for reaching people,*
- *Establish Community committees comprising local residents and make it a key driver in decision making processes in the community,*
- *Regular community meetings,*
- *Capacity building workshops to build skills and knowledge, enabling people to actively contribute to planning and decision making processes,*
- *Planning committees with representation of as many "groups" from the community as possible (ages, interests, gender with more so on),*
- *Promote DIY culture,*
- *Organize meetings between residents and politicians.*



## **Green Values & Initiatives**

Green values and initiatives can work two ways – enable local communities to take greater care for their local nature and beauty of the spot but also enable such actions that can't be done by single citizens – green projects need the strong local community. Local actions not only integrate people but also have the bigger goal – acting locally for nature is important also on a global scale.

### **How was it in Middelfart?**

During the first phase of the Micropolis project, the Danish team completed a baseline survey in Middelfart Municipality regarding the cultural and social organizations provision of added community values for the benefit of the living conditions in Middelfart municipality. The survey disclosed that green values had a low score in the everyday practices among the local cultural and social NGOs. The Danish team therefore gave a high priority to promote green values and practices with the following three pilot works:

1. New local training courses/workshops in the context of cultural activities that include and promote green aims and values.
2. Advice and initiatives in relation to social associations on how to incorporate green values in their activities.
3. Guidelines on how local voluntary associations can take part in and have stalls and activities in a bigger national event about sustainability, like the yearly People's Climate meeting in Middelfart.

### Case Study: Sustainable Clothes Production Workshops in Middelfart, Denmark

**Background and Objectives:** The "Sustainable Clothes Production Workshops" project, led by the Volunteer Centre Middelfart and the Culture Island, aimed to promote green values and environmental sustainability. Workshops were developed to address a lack of green practices among local associations.

**Methods and Activities:** The project included two workshops:

**Workshop 1:** A session on the clothing crisis by Stine Højland, focusing on sewing and recycling.

**Workshop 2:** An interactive workshop on upcycling old textiles, led by Tina Amlund, held alongside a Repair Café event.

**Results and Impact:** The workshops increased awareness of sustainable practices, engaged a broad audience, and inspired new community groups focused on textile work.

**Key Success Factors:** An inclusive approach, engaging presenters, community connections, and effective social media promotion were critical to the project's success.

**Theme: Green Values**

**For a detailed case study, visit** [[link to the full version on the website](#)].

### Case Study: Green Menu at Volunteer Centre Middelfart, Denmark

**Background and Objectives:** The Volunteer Centre Middelfart aimed to incorporate environmental sustainability into local social associations. Historically, Danish Volunteer Centres had not focused on green values.

**Methods and Activities:** The center created a "Green Menu" with suggestions for associations:

1. **Choosing Foods Wisely:** Use local, organic, and seasonal products; reduce meat consumption.
2. **Avoiding Food Waste:** Use reusable dishes, register for meals to minimize waste, and distribute leftovers.
3. **Sustainable Procurement:** Repair, buy used, or choose sustainable products.
4. **Transportation:** Implement carpooling systems.
5. **Waste Resources:** Provide waste handling and sorting courses.

**Results and Impact:** The initiative raised awareness and inspired associations to adopt sustainable practices, influencing broader community behavior towards environmental responsibility.

**Key Success Factors:** An inclusive approach, practical advice, ongoing support, and engagement were crucial to the project's success.

**Theme: Green Values**

**Read more:** For a detailed case study, visit [[link to the full version on the website](#)].

### Case Study: Stall at the People's Climate Festival in Middelfart, Denmark

**Background and Objectives:** The Volunteer Centre Middelfart, alongside social voluntary associations, participated in the People's Climate Meeting in August 2024 to promote green values and sustainability. The aim was to enhance NGO cooperation and community engagement.

**Methods and Activities:** The project involved setting up stalls and organizing interactive activities:

- *Debate Event:* Panel and plenary discussions on environmental responsibilities.
- *Interactive Transport:* Climate quizzes during cargo bike rides.
- *Information Stalls:* Demonstrations on sustainable practices.

**Results and Impact:** The initiative increased NGO cooperation, raised public awareness, and strengthened community bonds through engaging activities and discussions.

**Key Success Factors:** Interactive engagement, strong collaboration, event visibility, and educational content were crucial to the project's success.

**Theme:** Green Values

**Read more:** For a detailed case study, visit [\[link to the full version on the website\]](#).

## Networking & Co-Creation

### **Case Study: Co-Creation Across Three Societal Sectors in Middelfart, Denmark**

#### **Background and Objectives**

**Background:** Co-creation has become a focal point on the political agenda of municipalities in Denmark and other Western European and Nordic countries as an alternative to traditional government and market-based provision of welfare services. This approach seeks to establish new forms of cooperation between civil society associations and public institutions, promoting democratic empowerment and transformative potential.

**Objectives:** The primary objectives were to foster co-creation among the three main societal sectors—civil society, public sector, and market sector—to develop new welfare solutions. By involving citizens, associations, businesses, and public employees in a collaborative process, the initiative aimed to harness diverse competencies, values, and networks to address common challenges innovatively.

**Methods:** The initiative focused on cross-sector collaboration, where participants from civil society, public institutions, and local businesses worked together on equal terms to co-create solutions. This included democratic engagement and shared decision-making processes.

#### **Activities:**

- **Workshops and Meetings:** Regular workshops and meetings facilitated discussions and planning among stakeholders from all three sectors.
- **Project Development:** Collaborative projects were developed to address specific local challenges, leveraging the strengths and resources of each sector.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Providing training for participants to enhance their skills in co-creation and collaborative problem-solving.
- **Public Engagement:** Engaging the broader community through public forums and consultations to ensure inclusive participation and feedback.

### **Results:**

- Successful development of innovative welfare solutions that addressed local needs effectively.
- Strengthened relationships and trust among stakeholders from different sectors.
- Increased capacity for co-creation and collaborative problem-solving within the community.

### **Impact:**

- Enhanced social cohesion and a stronger sense of community through shared efforts and mutual support.
- Improved responsiveness and adaptability of local welfare services to meet diverse community needs.

### **Learning:**

- Co-creation requires a flexible approach that values the input and expertise of all participants.
- Effective communication and ongoing engagement are crucial for sustaining collaborative efforts.
- Cross-sector collaboration can lead to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions for community challenges.

### **Key Success Factors**

**Inclusive Participation:** Ensuring broad representation from civil society, public sector, and market sector.

**Equal Partnership:** Promoting democratic engagement and shared decision-making processes.

**Training and Support:** Providing resources and training to build capacity for co-creation.

**Continuous Engagement:** Maintaining ongoing communication and engagement with all stakeholders.

**Theme:** Co-Creation

**Conclusion:** This case study highlights the successful implementation of co-creation strategies across the three societal sectors in Middelfart. By fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, the initiative developed innovative solutions that enhanced social cohesion and community well-being.



## **Innovative Organizations**

### **IFS Experience:**

The traditional role of local civic organizations is to find innovative solutions to local needs. No-one knows the local needs better than the local residents. So when people come together to solve a problem they often find a solution and organize it together. In the best of worlds good solutions are picked up and implemented by authorities and become regular. Good and well known historic examples of this are kindergartens, ambulances and school lunches that started as local initiatives out of need but became a regular service supplied by the welfare state.

**According to the IFS survey: What does your organization need in order to fulfill the needs of the residents? (rank your answer)**

1. Staff with different educational backgrounds
2. A mixed staff regarding age, gender, cultural background and
3. Good and strong local networks
4. Clear democratic structure in the organization
5. A positive outlook on mankind
6. Big and well equipped premises
7. Many volunteers
8. A café/restaurant

**Biggest challenges for the organizations**

- Lack of core funding to sustain ourselves. A rapidly growing group of folx struggling with affordability. A lot of systemic bureaucracy.
- **Not being able to fully offer activities to the local citizen to the extent that is wanted/needed due to financial restraints.**
- **1)** Reaching youth, young adults and families in a long lasting manner. Our target groups are mainly either children/ adults or seniors. **2)** Securing an enduring funding that also covers all administrative expenses. **3)** Drastic and uninformed changes in public services in the region pose surprising challenges. The public service does not consider us strong enough as a partner to negotiate and communicate its plans.
- One of the biggest challenges is funding that fully pays for the actual cost of the work and understands and respects that staff need cost of living adjustments on a regular basis. Also, most of our funding opportunities are for supporting work that provides basic social services - it is hard to get money to support purely community work or community engagement work.
- lack of volunteers/members
- Outside - little involvement of citizens in social life. Inside - hyperproduction with a shortage of staff.
- We could do a lot more if we had employees

**The survey disclosed that:**

Almost all respondents are mainly active in fostering Social inclusion, Active citizenship/participation and Local identity/Social cohesion. The most common tools in order to fulfill the needs of their target groups are cultural activities, local common events open for all and that all activities are for free.

Most important for fulfilling the needs is to have staff with diverse educational backgrounds and also regarding age, gender and cultural background. Good and strong local networks is another important prerequisite as well as clear democratic structures in the organization.

The most obvious challenge for almost all of the respondents is lack of funding. Other things that are mentioned is that there is a rapidly growing group of residents that are struggling with affordability, lack of political support and recognition, structural racism, difficulties of reaching vulnerable groups and to keep young people away from criminality.

## Conclusions

The survey pointed out the following main success factors when doing local community work aiming at fostering social cohesion/local identity and active citizenship:

- Have a diverse staff regarding education, gender, cultural background and age,
- Focus on cultural activities and local common events open for all,
- All activities should be for free/almost free,
- Arrange leadership and mentor programs,
- Involve as many people as possible in deciding and carry through all arrangements and activities,
- Arrange community workshops, committees and meetings for open dialogues and idea sharing and involve all kinds of residents in them,
- Capacity building workshops to build skills and knowledge, enabling people to actively contribute to planning and decision making processes,
- Focus on building relationships and cooperation with local citizens, house owners, housing companies, local business and the civil society and make sure there will be a win-win situation for all,
- Utilizing diverse communication channels for reaching people,
- Meet all local residents as subjects, not objects. Always work with the residents, not for them...

## Case Study: Transferring the ESG Framework to NGOs in Middelfart, Denmark

### Background and Objectives

**Background:** The European Commission initiated new ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) legislation in 2023, initially targeting larger private and public organizations. Recognizing the potential for broader application, Interfolk and the Culture Department, Middelfart Municipality aimed to adapt and transfer the ESG framework to NGOs. This adaptation was prompted by a survey indicating a need among civil society associations for sustainable practices encompassing environmental, social, and cultural dimensions.

**Objectives:** The primary objectives were to:

- Introduce and adapt the ESG framework for NGOs.
- Enhance the planning, evaluation, and reporting of NGO activities.
- Foster sustainable practices within the civil society sector.

**Methods:** The project involved examining how the ESG framework, promoted by the EU Commission, could be adapted for NGOs. This included simplifying the framework to suit the specific needs of civil society associations and providing practical advice on its implementation.

**The ESG methodology will imply a tripartite focus on:**

- *Environmental Practices:* NGOs can be encouraged to adopt policies reducing their environmental footprint, such as waste management, energy efficiency, and choosing sustainable suppliers.
- *Social Considerations:* Ensuring activities respect human rights, diversity, and inclusion, and support local communities.
- *Governance:* Implementing transparent management structures, ethical codes of conduct, and policies ensuring integrity and accountability.

**Planned Outcome:**

- *Enhanced reputation and reliability of NGO's, engaging more members and volunteers.*
- *Positive response from donors and community stakeholders to the adoption of ESG practices.*
- *Improved long-term sustainability and community trust.*

**Planned Success Factors:**

- *Adaptability: Simplifying the ESG principles to meet NGO needs.*
- *Gradual implementation of ESG principles with small, incremental steps are essential for successful adaptation.*
- *Providing ongoing advice and training resources for implementation.*
- *Involving stakeholders in the process to build trust and accountability*

**Conclusion:** *This case study outlines a methodology for a successful adaptation of the ESG framework for NGOs. By integrating sustainable practices, NGOs can enhance their social impact, strengthen their reputation, and foster long-term community trust and support.*



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