

Unleashing the Power
of Community
Animators

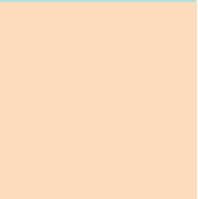
*Challenges
in the Digitalisation
of Society*

Edited by

VALERIJ DERMOL

ANICA NOVAK TRUNK

ToKnowPress



Unleashing the Power of Community Animators



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Valerij Dermal

Anica Novak Trunk

*Unleashing the Power of Community Animators:
Challenges in the Digitalisation of Society*

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Foreword

We invite you to join us for *Unleashing the Power of Community Animators: Challenges in the Digitalisation of Society*, a thorough examination divided into two parts that delve into essential community development aspects in today's digitised society.

In the first part of this comprehensive book, we delve into the multifaceted concept of 'animation' and its diverse interpretations, with a special emphasis on its pivotal role in social animation. This analysis underscores the crucial function of social animators in shaping communities, inspiring individuals, and empowering the marginalized in society. Tailored for young people and institutions dedicated to local community development, this part aims to provide an in-depth understanding of social animators' identities, actions, and significant contributions. Exploring the significance and adaptability of these animators at the local level, we scrutinize their skills, strategic use of digital technology for communication and collaboration, and training opportunities available for aspiring animators across various European nations. The section culminates with a compilation of effective strategies, resources, and techniques designed to enhance the field and amplify the impact of community involvement. This sets the stage for the last chapter of the book's first part, which underscores the profound impact of volunteering in fostering social integration among young people, aligning seamlessly with the overarching objective of fully grasping and advocating for social mobilization.

In the second part of our comprehensive book, we turn our attention to the pressing issues surrounding internet accessibility and education across various European regions, a discussion made even more urgent in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. This segment of the book illuminates the challenges faced by marginalised communities in their quest for digital resources, particularly the exacerbated discrepancies in access brought about by the pandemic. Central to this narrative is the pivotal role played by digital literacy skills and support systems in bridging the digital divide and fostering social inclusiveness. At the core of these discussions is an implicit acknowledgement of social animators as key figures in addressing these challenges. These professionals empower communities by leveraging their specialised skills

and available resources by imparting essential digital knowledge and tools. The book's second part meticulously examines the collaborative efforts between social animators in the roles of coaches or multipliers and communities, shedding light on their integral role in promoting digital literacy and inclusion. These joint endeavours aspire to cultivate a society with equitable access to digital resources, recognising the vital role of social animators in navigating the challenges posed by the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Both parts of the book underscore the interconnectedness of animation, community development, and digital inclusivity, underscoring their collective significance in shaping a more equitable society.

The book's first part is the product of the collaborative efforts of professionals working on the KA2 Erasmus+ project 'Local Environment Animation: A New Chance for Youth Development.' These professionals devoted their time and energy to doing research in order to provide content that is of great use to community animators working in the local area. The methodology made use of the information, skills, and resources provided by the partner organisations, which ensured that a comprehensive and diverse perspective was obtained. The text was developed by a collaborative effort between the following organisations:

- WSPA Lublin, Poland
- Consorzio Materahub – Industrie culturali e creative, Italy
- The Independent of Christian Trade Unions – NKOS, Slovakia
- EOS Foundation, Poland
- Association for Education and Sustainable Development – DITR, Slovenia

The book's second part is the product of a different Erasmus+ project named University and Business Inclusive Digital Learning Coaches (UnInLeCo). Through improving their digital literacy, the UnInLeCo initiative intends to empower disadvantaged students and young people, particularly those at risk of dropping out of school and who come from marginalised areas. The project's primary goals are to facilitate reintegration into educational settings, close the gaps formed due to the Covid-19 issue, and cultivate sustainable digital skills. By means of a University-Business-Community Alliance, the project intends to develop a long-term support system to enhance the digital preparedness of these students to facilitate their continued access to and participa-

tion in educational activities. The results of the project may also bring substantial benefits to social animators. As a result, the second part of the book provides a practical outline of how social animators can contribute to society and digital empowerment even more effectively. This part of the book has been thoughtfully crafted in collaboration with partners from the UnInLeCo project:

- University of Alicante, Spain
- International School for Social and Business Studies Slovenia
- Institut fuer sozialwissenschaftliche Beratung GmbH, Germany
- South-East European University, North Macedonia
- Fundeun, Spain

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Part One

Exploring the Role and Skills of Social Animators



Erasmus+

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Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

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The word animation comes from the Latin words *anima* (soul), *animatio* (revival), *animus* (vigour) and the verb *animo*, which in Latin has three meanings: (1) to blow, (2) to breathe life into something, to give soul, to bring to life, (3) to stimulate, to add courage, to encourage, to make bold. In French, the word *animer* means to bring life, give strength to action, initiate a specific undertaking, or encourage.

We can see the person of the social animator as someone who:

- shapes the sense of community by building relationships and social ties,
- activates and motivates others to act,
- creatively unleashes the potential in other people and communities,
- emancipates and empowers people, groups, and communities, including those marginalised and socially excluded,
- may influence public participation, i.e. influencing decisions.

The following chapters of the book aim to present in a clear way who the social animators are, what actions they can take, how animators can develop their competencies and how animators' influences can affect society. The publication is addressed to young people and all people and institutions interested in animators of the local environment,

especially to organisations with adequate resources to organise training for young people.

Local animators play an increasingly important role in communities in today's fast-paced (digitally) connected world. These imaginative people contribute significantly to forming and enhancing communities through their unique talents and skills. To highlight local animators' significant contributions and lasting effects on the communities they serve, this book intends to study the value, identity, and flexibility of animators in the area.

In Chapter 2, 'Exploring Local Animators' Value, Identity and Adaptability,' we journey to comprehend the essence of animation and its profound influence on society. We explore animation's different forms, methods, and uses and its definition. We also dig into the world of animators, looking at their obligations during the creative process of collaboration and communication. Finally, we thoroughly try to understand animators' numerous tasks to bring their dreams to life by examining their job responsibilities. On the strength of this basis, we explore the particular functions and significance of animators within the neighbourhood. We learn how these gifted people support the growth of local communities, the dissemination of knowledge, and the fostering of relationships among various cultures. We also look at their capacity to include neighbourhood residents and link them to essential resources and services. Animators promote more participation in civil society, resulting in higher competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem among community members. They do this by assisting in community initiatives and encouraging people to express their rights.

Chapter 3, 'Competencies of Local Community Animators,' focuses on the competencies and skill sets required for success as a local community animator. We start by defining and examining the idea of competencies, emphasising the significance of having a wide range of skills, expertise, and competencies for animators to perform their jobs successfully. Next, drawing on a European viewpoint, we investigate the competencies that animators need to succeed in their professional endeavours. Through thorough analysis, we determined 13 core competencies that are the cornerstone of a thriving local community animator. These competencies cover a broad spectrum of abilities, including leadership, project management, communication, and community involvement. As a result, animators may maximise their impact and ef-

fect long-lasting change in their communities by developing and refining these competencies.

Technology has become an essential tool for social animators to improve communication, teamwork, and overall impact in the digital age. In Chapter 4, 'Empowering Social Animators for Communication, Collaboration, and Impact through the Use of Digital Technology,' we examine how digital technology enables animators to be more effective in their work. In addition, we discuss how digital platforms help animators and community members communicate and share information effectively as we explore the value of cooperation and debate. In addition, we investigate several digital resources and platforms, such as websites, social media, data gathering and analysis tools, online training and capacity-building tools, virtual workshops and events, mobile applications, online fundraising platforms, and monitoring and assessment tools. As a result, animators can increase the impact of their work, reach a wider audience, and affect real change in their communities by using the power of modern digital tools.

The preparation of animators for their professional careers is vital, and Chapter 5, 'Educational Paths of a Local Community Animator,' examines the educational options open to aspirant animators in a few selected European nations. In the chapter, we learn how local community animators evolve by looking at the educational systems in Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Italy. We examine the value of animators' education and emphasise the various educational settings and initiatives that meet their particular requirements. A thorough overview of the educational environment for animators is given in each nation, covering everything from neighbourhood activity centres and social service facilities to social economy support centres, higher education institutions, postgraduate studies, and accredited courses and training. Aspiring animators can choose their educational path wisely and gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their professions by being aware of the educational possibilities that are out there.

In Chapter 6, 'Collection of Good Practices, Tools, and Methods for the Profession of Local Community Animators,' we construct a list of beneficial procedures, equipment, and strategies for local community animators. This collection, divided into 'educational support' and 'work support,' offers valuable tools and information to help animators be more productive and influential in their line of work. The chapter's first section is devoted to educational support, which offers advice on

training programmes, chances for professional growth, mentoring programmes, and tools that help animators build and hone their competencies. This chapter enables animators to continuously improve their abilities and knowledge by showcasing excellent teaching practices and disseminating valuable resources. The chapter's second section explores job assistance and provides animators with valuable tools, ideas, and techniques to help them complete their everyday tasks. The section offers animators the tools to plan, carry out, and assess their efforts, from project management methods to community engagement strategies. Additionally, it investigates cutting-edge methods for teamwork, resource mobilisation, and impact evaluation, ensuring that animators may successfully and confidently negotiate the intricacies of their work.

The last chapter, Chapter 7, is about the importance of volunteering as a driver for the social inclusion of youth. Volunteering is seen as a driver for social inclusion of youth. Besides, volunteering also enhances employment opportunities for young people, allowing them to develop new skills, extend networks, build CVs, try new vocations, and gain experience. Active citizenship of youth is another dimension that volunteering promotes. It is often argued that volunteers identify what should be improved in society before the public or authorities do. Through volunteering, animators can gain many valuable skills, too. Volunteering can help animators enhance their skills and knowledge, build and strengthen networks, build relationships, etc.

To conclude with the description of the book's first part, and as we get to the end of the investigation into the world of community animators, we develop a profound respect for their priceless contributions to society. Animators transform communities, empower people, and promote good change through creativity, passion, and dedication. The book's first part intends to inspire and help animators in their desire to have a lasting effect by recognising their value, investigating their competencies, utilising the power of digital technology, and offering insights into educational courses and best practices. May their commitment and efforts strengthen communities and usher in a better future for everybody.

The investigatory nature of the project is demonstrated by the organised research method employed to gather materials for Chapters 3 and 4. Representatives from each partner organisation in the four participating nations – Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Italy – were given

questionnaires prepared in advance. These questions provided a structure for gathering essential data and insights about local animators' skills and digital resources in their work. The questionnaires were filled out by representatives from the partner organisations who were subject matter experts on the topic. This procedure ensured that the material was grounded in actual procedures and accurately reflected the specifics of each country's local setting. Questionnaires allowed for a systematic and uniform approach to data collection, permitting accurate comparisons and analysis among the various nations. The partner organisations also conducted desk research to enhance the data gathered through the questionnaires. The study examined renowned organisations' resources and training programmes that train and assist regional animators. The objective was to find unconventional approaches and resources employed in the neighbourhood to train animators. The desk study also includes a thorough examination of the literature using the terms 'local community animator,' 'education,' 'competencies,' 'development,' 'social impact,' 'soft competencies,' 'higher education,' and 'importance.' This procedure ensured that current and pertinent sources were reviewed to inform the publication's content.

It is worth mentioning that each project partner organisation had the flexibility to adapt the research methodology slightly, tailoring it to their respective nations' distinctive realities and organisational frameworks. The methods employed in the investigation allowed for a more profound exploration of the issue, considering each local context's unique traits and customs. The process of gathering material for this book was rigorous and collaborative, providing an excellent opportunity for a thorough and insightful investigation into regional community animators' skills, career paths, and digital empowerment. Consequently, the publication offers a comprehensive overview of the competencies, educational pathways, and digital technologies utilized by local community animators across several European nations, synthesizing partner organisations' knowledge and diverse viewpoints.

Chapter Two

Exploring Local Animators' Values, Identity, and Adaptability: How They Play a Fundamental Role in Communities

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What Is an Animation?

Animation is a topic that has caught the interest of many individual scholars and institutions for years. In 1997, Jaume Trilla, a professor of social pedagogy at the University of Barcelona, defined the term 'animation' as given in dictionaries, with the inspiration from the verb 'to animate' (Trilla, 1997). This word means 'to infuse the soul,' 'to infuse forces and activity to inanimate things,' 'to make a certain appearance pleasant,' 'to infuse value,' 'to take action and effort to something,' 'to communicate happiness and movement to a group of people,' and 'to dare on something.' From these meanings, animation is understood as the 'action and effect of animating.' Although this definition does not clarify the meaning of animation in reality, it shows how complicated and comprehensive the expression is and gives current research a solid base for more detailed explanations.

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2008), 'animation' is the process of bringing to life and inspiring to take action, which is based on the conviction that anyone, even ordinary people,

can create positive changes in themselves and beyond that in their communities if they are trusted, encouraged, and supported (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003). Another study of rural animators in Scotland (Budge et al., 2008) noticed that animation is how people set things up and encourage people to get involved in the process of self-realisation, self-actualisation, and belongingness. To do that, a rural animator will provide people with various support, including stimulation, inspiration, and emotional and physical help. Developing from the previous research, in 2013, Smith described animation as an activity that consists of working intimately with people and groups to help them participate in and manage their communities (Smith, 2013).

Animation comprises qualities encompassing both personal and institutional change directly and indirectly. It directly involves educating, stimulating, and encouraging others to be more active in their communities. Indirectly, it involves building, coordinating, and overseeing networks, relationships, circumstances, and environments towards the same end. Animation can subsequently be understood as empowering, encouraging, and invigorating the creation of esteem by others – individuals, bunches, and communities.

Who Is an Animator?

Introducing yourself as an Animator to a local community member generally results in a snigger or a joke about cartoonists. Still, we have also found discussing our job titles to be a great way of starting a conversation and beginning that process of engagement and relationship building, which is central to the role of the Community Animator.

The term ‘Animator’ has never developed the same meaning in the UK and Ireland that it has in much of Northern Europe. In France and Italy, in particular, a new meaning is well established. Here, the work of the Animator is concerned with encouraging people and communities into action – working with individuals and groups to enable them to become more active citizens, breathing life and fire into their underlying passions and supporting them in shaping and developing their communities. Thus, we talk about the role of the Animator as being concerned with community development and capacity building, the empowerment of individuals and groups who, when equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence they require to make things happen, have been known to bring about transformational regenerative change; ‘Animation is that stimulus to the mental, physical, and emotional life

of people in any given area which moves them to undertake a wider range of experiences through which they find a higher degree of self-realisation, self-expression and awareness of belonging to a community which they can influence.'

However, to start with a little more scientific definition – the terms 'animation' and 'animator' are correlated as 'animator' is developed based on 'animation.' The variation in defining the meaning of 'animation' above can lead to different explanations of the term 'animator.'

In the late 1980s, Jan Żebrowski (1987) considered an animator as a person who spontaneously or distinctively animates the environment and invigorates the desire for knowledge, impacts the development of different interests, shows comprehension and appreciation towards the significance of teaching and education in the life of a person, and is mindful of own social role. In any case of the field in which the animator works, his work is undoubtedly energetic and inventive, and his task always consists of reviving and fortifying activity in a diversity of areas of life and its development. He is a person who is discreetly dedicated to taking full action and implementing initiatives in all areas of human activity. Being an animator is not required to be creative; however, it is ideal for him to be able to create opportunities for others to become creators or social workers.

In another study, the term animator originated from the Latin word *animere*, which means to breathe life into something. From this perspective, 'A community animator is someone who comes from the community; knows the culture and language of their community; has time to commit to the project; willing to learn and most of all dedicated to serving the community's best interest. Community animator uses their skills and talents to enable people and groups to learn from each other and act on their needs and aspirations' (Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, 2016).

According to the Carnegie Rural Community Development Programme (2018), the work of the animator is also concerned with encouraging people and communities to take action – working with individuals and groups to enable them to become more active citizens, breathing life and fire into their underlying passions and supporting them in the shaping and development of their communities.

These explanations vary, but they share a variety of common points. Thus, based on these descriptions, we combine and modify them to create our own definition of an animator. An animator is understood

as ‘a person who originated in a particular community who holds a community-oriented mindset and is willing to dedicate their time in shaping and promoting the overall development of their communities. An animator closely connects with members and communities to encourage them to become more proactive people, with the enhancement in their sense of community, genuine desire to become a better version of themselves, self-confidence in their own capacities and galantry in following their dreams.’

What Are Other Names?

Animator. A word suggestive of being active and positive of enthusing, working with (not for) community, bringing out the best, motivating and inspiring (helpfully). Not suggestive of any hierarchical relationship between the worker and the community. It can potentially be perceived as being suggestive of ‘pulling strings.’ Therefore, it is a novel word and may not be understood widely. It may be construed as being about film or cartoon making!

Animateur. A ‘mysterious’ word used extensively in the 1980s and 1990s in France and Italy may lead folk to ask questions about the worker and give a valuable opportunity to talk about the nature and methods of the work. It is likely to be understood by those with a knowledge of the history of adult education. It has the potential to be perceived as jargon.

Community Development Worker. It is an accepted term that is not generally questioned. Perhaps it suggests that the worker is ‘doing to’ the community. However, conversely, it may be perceived as patronising, implying that a community needs to be developed. Suggestive of a ‘service delivery approach’ or being at the community’s beck and call. A constant (unhelpful) reminder that the person is a worker and therefore paid, thus suggestive of delivering ‘physical’ outputs rather than being focused on capacity building.

Fieldworker. Suggestive of grassroots, ‘bottom-up approach’ and of the worker not being afraid to get involved - a ‘hands-on’ approach. It can be confused with natural/history/ecology/survey work. Suggests the role may be concerned with outdoor pursuits or practical work rather than working with people.

Facilitator. Suggests a helpful, empathetic approach that maximises people's skills and talents. A user-friendly term means 'helping along,' 'bringing together,' or 'building on' a community's existing skills and talents. There is no hint of hierarchy, but it suggests the worker is separate from the community, perhaps being 'brought in' to carry out a specific intervention. Suggests that you may need help and cannot exercise without assistance. It has the potential to be seen as stirring things up or wanting to move things in a certain way.

Coach or Multiplier. The book's second part mentions the coaches and multipliers as community facilitators or fieldworkers. A coach is, for example, a professional who guides and supports individuals or teams in achieving their goals, enhancing performance, and developing specific skills or competencies. Coaching involves a collaborative and facilitative approach to help clients unlock their potential and navigate personal or professional challenges. On the other hand, a multiplier is a person who acts as a multiplier. A multiplier is typically someone who, through their expertise, guidance, and influence, can positively impact and enhance the skills and knowledge of others within an organisation. These individuals catalyse spreading and multiplying the benefits of training efforts, contributing to the overall growth and development of the team or workforce.

What Are The Job Duties of an Animator?

In some countries, people can be accustomed to the job title 'animator,' 'community animator,' or other names with similar job functions; however, it is still unknown in many other regions. To imagine more easily what exactly an animator does, some job duties will be listed, with references from job descriptions published by the Academic Invest website (n.d.), Edmonton Community Development Company CDC (n.d.) and Canadian CED Network (2018).

The tasks of an animator generally include but are not limited to:

- Working alongside community members to develop community-based programs by arranging and coordinating programs, workshops, community gatherings, etc.
- Facilitating and co-leading design sessions for identifying functional requirements with community representatives and end users, organisational policies, etc.

- Supporting and encouraging program participants or local community volunteers
- Helping program participants or local community volunteers connect with resources and funding or training sessions to improve their skill set shortfalls.
- Inviting and encouraging community leaders to be involved in their own local projects.
- Supporting the development of partnerships with governments, organisations, collaborators, local committees, and authorities to improve animation programs in the community.

The job duties show that working as an animator requires people to connect with different communities. Therefore, people can decide to work in the following types of fields (not a comprehensive list):

- Religious communities
- Ethno-cultural minority groups
- Disadvantaged communities
- Communities of like-minded people (e.g., the group of people who are interested in making their community more 'green')

Who Employs Community Animators?

Community involvement animators are hired by organisations that have a vested (and generally altruistic) interest in the well-being of the community they are a part of or represent in some way.

To simplify that vague explanation, below is a list of the types of organisations that may hire community-involvement animators:

- Religious groups
- Non-profit organisations
- Social services groups (with or without religious affiliation)
- School boards and individual schools
- Government agencies

What Are the Roles and Importance of an Animator in the Local Community?

The roles of the animator are generally concerned with community development and capacity building, the empowerment of individuals

and groups equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence required to make things happen. It is usually known to bring about transformational regenerative change. In another research, 'Understanding the role and the uniqueness of the EMC community animator model in empowering ethnocultural communities in Edmonton,' Professor Ali demonstrated 5 fundamental roles of a community animator (Ali, 2016).

Community animators work with local communities, such as a community of neighbours or the inhabitants of a district. The animator begins their work by getting to know the people and the site's specifics, initiating cooperation, running workshops, and supporting the community in local events, e.g., picnics, exhibitions, and concerts. The animator aims to strengthen the relationships between people and animate community events.

One crucial area of the activities of community animators is creating creative situations where the residents are invited to share their reflections and ideas on a subject of interest to them. This is how numerous participation projects are designed: performances engaging the community, exhibitions and films featuring their work or their performances, audio plays, graffiti, and even music albums recorded jointly. The initiatives of the specialisation graduates serve as an excellent example of such activities.

One of the topics that community animators increasingly work with is the identity of a given place and its inhabitants, historically and in the present. Projects addressing local histories allow for the inclusion of entire communities in the activities, to give people a voice, and to listen to the stories they have to tell.

Animators working at culture centres and art institutions are often responsible for establishing contacts with the audience and adjusting the institutions' offerings to the audience's needs. However, it is not only culture centres that need animators; such positions are more often than ever set up in libraries, which, apart from lending books, try to engage readers in other activities, too. Thus, a community animator may design and run a project promoting books and reading, set up a book club or arrange an exhibition with and for the library goers.

Community animators also work in galleries and museums, most often in the education or public projects departments, where they work on events to include the audience in creative activities and dialogue about the institution's programming or specific exhibitions. The role of

a community animator includes implementing the activities described below.

Knowledge Transfer

Animators share knowledge or information with community members in diverse ways, for example, through training, interpersonal interactions, and bringing community animators to a service provider. The information that an animator can pass on to the local community can include:

- How to navigate resources and information to connect with the mainstream system.
- How to facilitate community development and play a leadership role.
- How to manage financial life (e.g. information on financial literacy).

Engaging Community Members in Community Development Work

Numerous community animators immerse themselves in their community development work. Moreover, many other community members are energised to engage in community work to contribute more fundamentally to community development.

Establishing Connections between Communities

Animators play a vital role in interfacing and connecting individuals from different ethnocultural communities, fortifying solidarity among these members. As a result of this process, the expansion of social systems inside and beyond their communities is promoted.

Connecting Communities with Organisations or Service Providers

Animators open the 'entryways' for each of their ethnocultural communities. They build close contact between themselves and different organisations, offices, or service providers – connecting communities to various resources and services.

Speed Grants Projects Related to the Roles and Activities of a Community Animator

The seed grant program is designed to provide modest funds for community-led initiatives aimed at community development. Animators

play a crucial role in offering training to the community on the application and effective utilisation of seed grants, allowing community members to apply their skills in practical endeavours.

While these are fundamental responsibilities of an animator, the impact on local society can be better understood through actual case studies. The final report of the 2003 'Animation Project' by the St Vincent de Paul Society (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003) highlights four key contributions that an animator can make to their community. These contributions are detailed in the following sections.

Development of Community Initiatives

Establishment of a Community-Managed Laundromat and Coffee Shop. The Claymore Community Laundromat and Coffee Shop, once just a dream, are now nearly self-sustaining. They offer essential services, serve as a community meeting hub, and provide opportunities for training and work experience.

Increasing Confidence to Claim Individual and Community Rights Reclaiming Vacant Land to Form a Vibrant Community Park and Meeting Place. Transforming abandoned land into a lively community park and gathering space required community representatives to engage in discussions and negotiations with various stakeholders, including local government officials, parliamentarians, government departments, non-government organisations, lawyers, and businesspeople. As an illustration, the park hosts community events that attract hundreds of locals regularly.

Increasing Participation in Civil Society

Increased Volunteerism (i.e., participants begin or expand their community volunteering). The total number of residents participating in local community activities gradually increased. Many of these volunteers became community leaders involved in mentoring new volunteers.

For example, a document evaluating the Animation Project in 2002 reported that volunteers discovered the following changes as a result of their involvement:

- Practical improvements for community members
- Community-designed and operated services
- Job generation

- Expanded skills base of the neighbourhood
- Changed perceptions of public housing estates in the Campbelltown area
- Increased optimism among residents
- Expanded networks and partnerships and increased collaboration.

Establishment and Support of Independent Community Organisations. Cultivating self-determination and local community control were considered the Animation Project's key standards. Six autonomous community organisations advanced from its work, including Claymore Community Laundromat and Coffee Shop and Kids Community Park with BEST, Airds Focus Group and Bradbury Heart House Focus Group, Minto, and Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group.

These groups held community gatherings with decision-makers and chosen agents raising lodging, well-being, transport, and instruction issues. The inhabitant activity bunches further embraced individual and systems advocacy, gave data to their nearby communities, opened gatherings, and arranged with an extent of government and non-government lodging associations.

This project worked alongside nearby neighbourhood community associations to get extra resources. All through this preparation, participants' finance-raising abilities could be upgraded and tested as they took part in submitting writing workshops and proactively emerged themselves in making written and verbal presentations to grant-makers.

Sense of Competence, Self-Confidence, and Self-Esteem

Learning and Training Outcomes. As a part of a partnership with Macquarie Fields, TAFE Outreach, Animation Project and Claymore Community Laundromat and Coffee Shop, a certificate training course focused on managing laundromat could be run. In 2000, 20 women graduated from this training, and more than 4 women continue to further study in the TAFE system. In addition, in another intensive informal learning program, over 70 workshops and seminars were carried out every year with the participation of approximately 150 people.

Changing Images and Perceptions. Coming from a poor and marginalised community, Animation Project participants usually shared their

common experience of stigmatisation, stereotype, or sense of impotence. This project endeavoured to build a platform for residents' voices to be heard, giving the communities the full power to tell their own stories. It eventually led to an emerging cultural and community-based art program fostering positive media stories and public speaking activities. These programs could attract over 100 inhabitants to take part, including both adults and children.

Personal Change. Participation in the project could bring about social changes and personal transformation by finding their own voice, discovering there is 'no one above us,' and figuring out personal capacities and potentialities. Some participants decided to pursue further studies or employment. They could gain significant leading positions in their community or organisation, such as P&C President.

Confidence to Network. After the project, the community spirit among participants was lifted. On 6 separate occasions, over 150 people tried to find opportunities to come together, share experiences and act despite geographical boundaries. The attendance at community events kept consistent. In 6 months, the number of people joining the Community Leader Course Graduation, Macquarie Fields Expo, and Halloween and Christmas Carols in Kids Community Park were 60, 500, 300, and 200, respectively.

These are just some examples representing the roles and importance of an animator in the local community. More detailed real cases of best practices will be further expounded in Chapter 4.

How Is the Animator Profession Recognised?

It is impossible to deny the importance of animators to the local community based on what has been discussed above. However, it is not yet so socially situated in the public consciousness, perhaps because it may have been taken for granted, having been there all along but never recognised or voiced, or it is an emerging practice that is still not part of the discourse. This profession merely gets attention from some governments or small communities. For example:

At the governmental level, *Puente al Desarrollo* (A Bridge to Development) is the human rights-based legislation in Costa Rica that has witnessed government agencies and communities collaborating to tackle social problems (Truell, 2018). A new law from the social work ap-

proach has contributed to alleviating poverty and strengthening community self-care systems. After its introduction in 2016, the statistics in the following year showed that the poverty rate was reduced by 41% in this country.

Other endeavours at the project level, such as the project Open School for Village Hosts (OSVH) funded by the European Commission, are also trying to bring new life to Europe's tiny villages. In this project, a new job title has also been invented, which is called 'Village Host.' Village Host will discover and connect assets existing in their community but currently neglected: people, places, buildings, and skills (Thackara, 2022). They will combine these resources to organise events, build enterprises, or offer services.

On the contrary, at the regional or global level, it has not been recognised as a professional profile with national and transnational frameworks. With the references from European professional frameworks, such as ESCO, which identifies, describes, and classifies occupations and skills for the EU labour market and education and training activities or Pact for Skills – a shared engagement model for skills development in Europe, the 'animator' profession has not been identified and registered. Getting this profile into the system is essential for regional and global policy support.

Chapter Three

Competencies of Local Community Animators

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What are Abilities, Knowledge, and Competencies?

The terms 'skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies' are often used interchangeably to describe the same concepts. In general conversation, this is fine, but when it comes to writing a job description, assessing candidate fit, or conducting a performance review, understanding the meaning and implication of each word becomes vital.

Knowledge

Knowledge is sometimes viewed as a concrete manifestation of abstract intelligence. Still, it results from an interaction between intelligence (capacity to learn) and situation (opportunity to learn), so it is more socially constructed than intelligence. Knowledge includes theory and concepts and tacit knowledge gained due to the experience of performing specific tasks (Winterton, 2006).

Ability

The *ability* is a talent or *skill* in a particular area. It can be improved or developed to a certain extent, even though it is natural and inherited. However, its development is a lengthier and more complicated process.

What does this all mean? It means that:

- We can know how to do something, but it does not necessarily mean we have the ability or skill to do it. This is why knowledge

is the ‘simplest’ to develop. An example is knowledge of how to use a word processing application.

- We need to have the ability and knowledge to develop a skill. It is challenging to create a skill if we cannot establish it – for example, the skill to edit documents on the computer.
- We can have the ability to do something, but if we do not improve on this ability, it will remain stagnant. It will unlikely turn into a skill – an example: the ability to understand and follow instructions (Zahra, 2019).

Competence

The terms ‘competency’ and ‘competencies’ focus on someone’s personal attributes or inputs. They can be defined as the behaviours (and technical attributes where appropriate) individuals must have or must acquire to perform effectively at work.

‘Competence’ and ‘competences’ are broader concepts that cover demonstrable performance outputs and behavioural inputs. They may relate to a system or a set of minimum standards to perform effectively at work. A ‘competency framework’ is a structure that sets out and defines each competency (such as problem-solving or people management) required by individuals working in an organisation or part of that organisation. Competency frameworks originally consisted mainly of behavioural elements – expressing the softer skills involved in effective performance. However, they have become broader in scope to include more technical competencies. Technology developments have given this shift more significant momentum (CIPD, 2019).

Competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves meeting complex demands by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual’s knowledge of the language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom they are communicating (Scott, 2015).

Key competencies are context-independent, applicable, and effective across different institutional settings, occupations, and tasks. These typically include basal competencies, such as literacy, numeracy, and general education; methodological competencies, like problem-solving and IT skills; communication skills, including writing and presen-

tation skills; and judgement competencies, such as critical thinking (Winterton et al., 2005).

A European Perspective on Competences

The 2006 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning supported the development of competence-oriented teaching and learning and the need to reform curricula in the European Union. Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 was adopted to promote further the development of key competencies in the European Union.

The European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning identifies and defines 8 key competencies necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability in a knowledge society: (1) Communication in the mother tongue; (2) Communication in foreign languages; (3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; (4) Digital competence; (5) Learning to learn; (6) Social and civic competences; (7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; (8) Cultural awareness and expression (Commission of the European Communities, 2009).

The LifeComp conceptual framework establishes a shared understanding and a common language on the 'Personal, Social and Learning to Learn' competencies. LifeComp comprises three intertwined competence areas: 'Personal,' 'Social,' and 'Learning to Learn.' Each area includes three competencies: Self-regulation, Flexibility, Well-being (Personal Area), Empathy, Communication, Collaboration (Social Area), Growth mindset, Critical thinking, and Managing learning (Learning to learn Area). Each competence has, in turn, three descriptors which generally correspond to the 'awareness, understanding, action' model (Sala et al., 2020).

The European Commission has developed Green-Comp as a reference framework for sustainability competencies at the EU level (Bianchi et al., 2022). It provides a common ground for learners and guidance to educators, providing an agreed definition of sustainability as a competence. GreenComp consists of 12 competencies organised into four areas. In addition, GreenComp comprises four interrelated competence areas: 'embodying sustainability values,' 'embracing complexity in sustainability,' 'envisioning sustainable futures' and 'acting for sustainability.' Each area comprises three competencies that are interlinked and equally important.

The European Commission has developed EntreComp (European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework) as a reference framework to explain what an entrepreneurial mindset means (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). EntreComp is a standard reference framework that identifies 15 competencies in three key areas that describe what it means to be entrepreneurial.

The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, also known as DigComp, provides a common language to identify and describe the key areas of digital competence. In this case, digital competence is part of the Key Competence Framework for Lifelong Learning and is interlinked with other competencies (Vuorikari et al., 2022).

Competencies of a Local Community Animator

Community animators have a wide range of responsibilities, which can include (Career Insights, 2022):

- Communicating with community members to understand their needs and concerns.
- Creating outreach plans to help spread awareness of community issues or initiatives.
- Coordinating volunteers and other members of the community to participate in events or projects that support the organisation's goals.
- Building relationships with businesses, community leaders, and other groups can help achieve the organisation's goals.
- Conducting research on issues and possible solutions, such as environmental concerns or community safety issues.
- Working with government agencies to improve public policy and create change through legislation or other means.
- Implementing programs designed to empower members of the community to act on local issues, such as crime prevention or education.
- Planning community events such as festivals or block parties to engage residents in activities that promote social interaction with others in the community.
- Identifying community needs and developing plans to address those needs through cooperation with other organisations.

In everyday work, they carry out a wide range of non-monotonous

activities. They build organisations to maximise the power and involvement of their members. They listen to their members (through individual conversations). They are responsible for sharing information and raising issues, options, alternatives, and problems that affect the collective power that the group can wield. They identify and develop a diverse group of members who agree with the role of the organisation's public voice on various issues. They develop sound organisational strategies based on an analysis of power. Their task is also to recruit and develop leaders and group members. The role of the animator is to build public relationships. They work with people to define problems and issues and help them think about the strategies and tactics needed to act confidently and win. They help with fundraising and integrate fundraising into every aspect of their organisational work. Sometimes, they facilitate training and strategy sessions when needed. Finally, they strive for accountability and demand accountability from others in their work (Nowak, 2018, p. 70).

The characteristics of a successful Community Animator are not prescribed, nor should they be. Instead, you will be an individual with a unique set of skills and qualities which will make you fit for the job. Of course, you will also require learning new skills, and you will never know it all – but you will journey in a spirit of learning, be open to new possibilities and be as humble as you are confident (Gavin et al., n.d.).

Based on the analysis of the responsibilities of local community animators and their daily activities, we propose a set of competencies crucial for their work and successful careers. In formulating the competencies, we have drawn on several occupational frameworks.

The individual competencies are complementary, sometimes overlapping (e.g., creativity and problem-solving, leadership skills and strategic thinking), and together create a strong competency profile for anyone who wants to experience success in working with the community.

Building on the preceding discussions and our project investigations, we have identified 13 essential competencies that a proficient social animator should possess. These competencies are elaborated upon in the subsequent sections for a more comprehensive understanding.

Active Listening and Questioning

Comstock (2015) defines active listening as a communication technique that requires the listener to attend and focus on a speaker or

group to understand the message. Listening requires concentration, not interrupting the speaker (Hunsaker et al., 2008). According to Jones and Pfeiffer (1974), active listening is a matter of attitude and an intellectual and emotional process. Active listening is an essential social skill the local animator uses to make the client feel understood and supported. This skill is vital in community work, where clients often do not hear from the majority (House of Commons, Women and Equalities Committee, 2019, p. 9). In community work, it is precious that active listening maintains communication relationships and contributes to mitigating conflicts that are very common in communities (Rodat, 2020). It can be, for example, an area of negotiation between the client and his employer. The worker actively listens to both sides to provide the client with the necessary resources to fulfil his needs and solve his social problems (Sharkey & Sharples, 2008). An animator can also teach the client active listening skills, increasing their quality of life (Švehláková, 2020). Active listening requires listening to the content, intention, and feelings of the client of a community centre.

Active listening involves giving full attention to the person speaking, understanding his message, and responding appropriately. The animator must focus on the speaker, avoid interrupting or distracting behaviours, and provide feedback demonstrating understanding and empathy. As an active listener, an animator shows his interest to his client verbally with questions and non-verbal and visual cues signifying that the other person has something important to say (Bauer et al, 2010). Active listening skills can be developed through practice and training, such as workshops and role-playing exercises.

To understand the client's message well, it is necessary to use questioning to get feedback. Asking questions is related to active listening because it develops the conversation, helps the animator to understand the situation and gains new insights.

Community animators can elicit information, encourage participation, and help people identify solutions to their problems by asking the right questions. Questioning skills involve asking open-ended questions that encourage community members to share their perspectives and experiences. Follow-up questions are essential to clarify any confusion and ensure the community member feels heard and understood. Community animators can use these questioning techniques to facilitate productive conversations and gather valuable insights from community members. Effective questioning requires the animator to be cu-

rious, non-judgmental, and respectful of the community members' experiences and perspectives.

Negotiation

Negotiation ability is crucial for local community animators. They frequently need to navigate complex situations, make decisions, build consensus, resolve conflicts, empower community members, foster partnerships, manage expectations, handle diverse perspectives, prevent conflicts, and advocate for vulnerable populations. Negotiation principles are integral to most professions.

Setting precise objectives and a well-considered strategy are essential while negotiating. A fair evaluation of the parties engaged in the negotiations is also crucial, and if there are multiple groups on the opposing side, this includes determining who the leader is. Mutual trust and cooperation are the cornerstones of any negotiating process, aiming to produce a mutually beneficial agreement. The highest levels of communication proficiency and positive working relationships are necessary for effective negotiating. Keeping your emotions out of the negotiation process and maintaining discipline while concentrating on the parties' objective interests is critical. Both the topic of the negotiation and the capacity to communicate with others are crucial for good outcome (Osmičević & Meško, 2020).

Developing various relationship management abilities, such as communication, strategy formulation, persuasion, dispute resolution, decision-making, and rapport-building, is necessary for effective negotiating. To attain advantageous results, negotiators must thoroughly analyse the circumstances, considering each party's concerns and comprehending their counterparts' goals. A skilled negotiator thoroughly prepares in advance, identifying areas of overlap and mutual interest and researching the other party to find common ground to address before the negotiation starts (Vilendrer Law, n.d.).

Negotiations have several possible outcomes, such as win-win, win-lose, and lose-lose situations. When a 'win-win' situation exists, both sides leave the bargaining table with a mutually beneficial accord. Understanding the goals of their opponent, working for shared benefits, and fostering long-lasting, cooperative relationships are all highly valued by win-win negotiators. On the other hand, in win-lose scenarios, one side benefits at the other's expense, possibly putting the latter in a disadvantageous position. If negotiations cannot result in a mutu-

ally beneficial agreement, both sides can find themselves in worse situations than when they started, which would be a lose-lose situation (Osmičević & Meško, 2020).

Ability to Work with a Group, Respect for Difference

Working in the local community will test the animator's ability to work with groups and respect differences. The individual can interact effectively with other people and build teamwork, can use own strengths while balancing and complementing the strengths and weaknesses of others to achieve goals effectively, can respect ethical values and generally accepted standards of behaviour, accept differences, and be tolerant, polite, courteous, and considerate, can establish and maintain relationships and create and use networks of contacts, can identify conflict situations, assess the situation in conflict management, devise appropriate resolution strategies, minimise dysfunctions, and promote constructive dialogue, and can behave assertively and use effective communication (Register zaměstnaní, n.d.a).

Working with a group and respecting differences is an essential social competence of local community animators, as it helps them effectively engage with colleagues and community members. Knowledge of social games can be a valuable tool for improving social competencies, as social games can help to build trust, foster communication, and promote teamwork. Here are some exercises that local animators can use to improve their social competencies:

- *Trust-building activities.* They help establish trust among team and community members. Examples include blindfolded trust walks, trust falls, and trust circles.
- *Communication exercises.* These activities help to improve communication skills, such as active listening, clarity of expression, and nonverbal communication. Examples include role-playing exercises or group storytelling.
- *Team-building exercises.* These activities help to build teamwork and collaboration skills, such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Examples include team-building challenges, group brainstorming sessions, and collaborative art projects.
- *Icebreaker games.* These activities help break the ice and promote a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Usually, games are short, with simple rules. They are intended to get to know each other,

perceive the norms of others, and help create a picture of what standard norms might look like. An example of such a game is Truths and Lie, in which someone shares three ‘facts’ about himself (two are truths, and one is a lie), and others in the group try to guess which facts are the truth and which lie.

- *Short, fun games* (party games) are designed to relax the participants and promote team spirit. In principle, they are short, with simple instructions and flexible enough to be adapted. However, they usually create a sense of the intensity of the moment (tense action), and everyone feels involved, even if only as observers. Moreover, such games foster an environment where even those unfamiliar with the game can feel brave enough to join in, encouraging bonding between participants based on shared experience.
- *Cultural exchange activities*. These activities, such as cultural potlucks, language exchange programs, and community tours, promote cultural awareness and sensitivity (Lah, 2018).

Ability to Cooperate and Network with Different Generations

Local community animators need to be able to cooperate and network with different generations, whether they work within or outside of their communities. Traditionalists (those born before 1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials or Generation Y (1981–1995), and Linkster generation or Generation Z (those after 1995) are the five generations that coexist and work alongside each other currently. Every generation has distinct viewpoints that are shaped by their upbringing and experiences (Weinstein, n.d.).

Individuals from different age groups have distinct attitudes, views, and work methods, which is generational diversity. The ability to work with different generations brings young animators a multitude of benefits (Woszczyk, 2023; Newell, 2023):

- It supports Inter-Generational Learning. Different generations bring diverse experiences, perspectives, and knowledge to the table. Young community animators can learn valuable insights and wisdom from older generations, which can impact their work and decision-making.
- It fosters solidarity within the community. Creating enduring bonds and ties between generations can promote community cohesion.

- It facilitates the sharing of resources. Older generations often have access to resources, such as funding, facilities, or historical information, that can benefit community initiatives. Networking with older generations can help young community animators access these resources.
- It leads to Sustainability. Intergenerational cooperation helps guarantee the long-term viability of community endeavours.
- It is a crucial method of guidance and mentoring. Young people can benefit from mentorship and guidance from older, more experienced individuals. Guidance and mentoring can help young animators hone their abilities, make wise choices, and avoid typical traps.
- It encourages creativity and innovation. Combining the viewpoints of many generations can result in original ideas and inventive solutions. While older generations can offer a grounded perspective based on their experiences, younger generations might offer novel ideas.
- It promotes Community Engagement. Increasing community participation and engagement can be achieved through an intergenerational approach to community development. People of all ages are more inclined to actively participate in local activities when they feel appreciated and included.

To foster the ability to cooperate and network with different generations, young community organisers should participate in intergenerational workshops, events, or initiatives that unite individuals from diverse age groups.

Digital Literacy

The local animator influences the community face-to-face, but part of their work occurs in the digital environment. For example, they manage a social media page, group, or chat app, create posters and online petitions, or produce media content.

The updated DigComp 2.0 framework identifies critical components of digital competence in five areas, which can be summarised as follows (Vuorikari et al., 2016):

- *Information and data literacy.* Articulate information needs, locate and retrieve digital data, information, and content. Assess the rel-

evance of a resource and its content. Store, manage and organise digital data, information, and content.

- *Communication and collaboration.* Interact, communicate, and collaborate through digital technologies, being aware of cultural and generational diversity. Engage with society through public and private digital services and participatory citizenship. Manage our digital identity and reputation.
- *Creating digital content.* Create and edit digital content. Enhance and integrate information and content into the existing body of knowledge while understanding how copyright and licensing should be applied. Know how to give clear instructions for a computer system.
- *Security.* To protect devices, content, personal information, and privacy in digital environments. To protect physical and mental health and to know digital technologies for social well-being and social inclusion. To be aware of the environmental impact of digital technologies and their use.
- *Problem-solving.* Identify needs and problems and address conceptual issues and problems in digital environments. Use digital tools to innovate processes and products. To keep up to date with digital developments.

Leadership

The traits and talents that people exhibit to manage resources, oversee initiatives, and influence members of their community toward the accomplishment of shared objectives are known as leadership competencies. From the perspective of a local community animator, we look particularly at community leadership. Whereas animators of the local environment may not have a formal leadership role, they nonetheless impact their networks and contacts.

The roles of local animators as leaders include the following groups of responsibilities (Lamm et al., 2017):

- Initiation and spread of interest;
- Organisation of sponsorship;
- Goal setting and strategy formulation;
- Recruitment – resource mobilisation;
- Implementation of strategy and plans.

Motivation

According to Michael J. Jucius (1975), '[m]otivation is the act of stimulating someone or oneself to get a desired course of action, to push the right button to get a desired result,' or simply, it is a motive to act.

Local community animators need motivation to stay dedicated, overcome obstacles, motivate others, accomplish goals, forge relationships, adjust to change, encourage creativity, find personal fulfilment, and have a long-lasting positive impact on their communities.

Animators must comprehend what will inspire others to act appropriately to inspire others. To accomplish this, animators must take the time to learn what matters to the individuals they wish to inspire. It is also important to realise that sometimes you cannot motivate people, or you will need to develop original ideas and solutions to encourage them (BookBoon, 2010).

Problem-Solving

The process of detecting a problem, coming up with potential solutions, and taking the right action is known as problem-solving. Your personal and professional lives both benefit from having strong problem-solving abilities. Managers frequently cite everyday problem-solving as essential to their organisation's success in today's rapidly changing world. Local environment coordinators might use problem-solving to develop valuable and original solutions and demonstrate independence and initiative to employers. The ability to solve problems is a skill, and just like any other skill, the more you practice, the better you get. So, how exactly do you practice problem-solving? Learning about different problem-solving strategies and when to use them will give you a good start (CCMIT, n.d.).

For the successful resolution of conflicts, frankness, mutual trust, readiness to accept new information, perseverance, and determination are important. Everyone has a fundamental sense of personal dignity. When we conflict with someone, and our beliefs and values conflict with the interlocutor's, it is essential to show appropriate respect. It is desirable to avoid 'win-lose' behaviour and accept honest confrontation. Therefore, the 'I win, you win' or 'I am fine – you are fine' method is best. When solving conflicts, we separate the problem from the person (we do not accuse and analyse the person, but concrete problems or behaviour in a particular situation), focus on needs, desires, and demands, and act empathically (Selič, 2012).

Here are some of the most common problem-solving methods that animators can use (Cuncic, 2023; Robbins, 2022; Heye, 2006):

- *Brainstorming*. This method involves generating a large number of ideas in a short amount of time. The goal is to develop creative solutions to a problem by encouraging free thinking and open discussion.
- *Problem-Solving Technique (PST)*. This is another helpful method that community animators can employ to help individuals or groups identify and develop solutions to problems in a structured and logical way. PST involves several steps, including problem identification, goal setting, generating alternative solutions, selecting the best solution, and implementing and evaluating the solution. It is a practical approach that focuses on the present and finding solutions rather than dwelling on the past or emotions related to the problem.
- *Root Cause Analysis*. This method involves identifying the underlying causes of a problem by asking ‘why’ questions. The goal is to identify the root cause of the problem rather than just addressing the symptoms.
- *SWOT Analysis*. This method involves analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with a particular situation or problem. The goal is to identify potential solutions by leveraging strengths, addressing weaknesses, capitalising on opportunities, and mitigating threats.
- *Fishbone Diagram*. This method involves visually mapping out the causes and effects of a problem. The goal is to identify the underlying causes of the problem by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- *Decision Matrix*. This method involves creating a matrix to evaluate multiple options based on criteria. The goal is to select the best choice by objectively weighing the pros and cons of each option.
- *Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)* is a method that studies how our thoughts and language affect our behaviour. It aims to reprogram our thought processes and help us view past events from a different perspective so that we can make necessary lifestyle changes and take control of our lives. NLP involves visualisation, language patterns, and anchoring techniques, which can improve

communication, change limiting beliefs, and overcome negative emotions. In addition, NLP can be a powerful tool for problem-solving, especially when combined with other techniques such as brainstorming, root cause analysis, and SWOT analysis.

Creativity

Creativity is not a mysterious, magical process only available to a select group of people, such as singers, actors, writers, and artists. People have trouble defining creativity precisely. The capacity to switch between wonder and rigour to solve issues and offer unique value is creativity. Our ability to wonder allows us to pause, fantasise, and pose bold, imaginative questions. Rigour is the ability to follow the rules, use complex abilities, pay close attention to details, and devote sufficient time to a task to master it. Both are essential for the development of creativity. A hybrid approach to creativity that blends awe and analytical rigour is necessary to succeed in our age of augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and quickly developing technologies (Nixon, 2020).

The ability to combine previously learned information to solve issues and create new things is what makes creativity fundamentally a combinatorial process. The work of a local community animator is not routine. Instead, an animator experiences new situations and challenges and innovates while overcoming them.

Tips for creative thinking (Skills you Need, n.d.; Torrance, 2006):

- *Brainstorm.* Start by generating as many ideas as possible without judgment. Write down everything that comes to mind, even if it seems silly or impractical.
- *Take a break.* Sometimes, stepping away from a problem can help you develop new solutions. Take a walk, listen to music, or do something relaxing.
- *Learn something new.* Exposing yourself to new ideas and concepts can help spark creativity. Read books, watch documentaries, or attend a seminar on a topic you are interested in.
- *Make connections.* Try to find connections between seemingly unrelated ideas. You never know what new and exciting ideas may come from combining two seemingly different concepts.
- *Change your perspective.* Look at things from a different angle. For example, try to see things from the perspective of another person or even an animal or object.

- *Embrace failure.* Do not be afraid to make mistakes or fail. Failure is an opportunity to learn and grow and can lead to unexpected solutions.
- *Collaborate.* Work with others to bounce ideas off each other and develop new solutions. This can lead to a more diverse range of ideas and perspectives.
- Remember, creative thinking is a skill that can be developed with practice. So, keep trying new things and not be afraid to experiment.

Resilience

Resilience can be defined as the ‘capacity of individuals to withstand considerable hardship, to bounce back in the face of adversity, and to go on to live functional lives with a sense of well-being’ (Vaillant, 1993, p. 248). Among the qualities that build resilience that does not suppress reality but accept it are: ‘A sense of humour; a sense of direction or mission; intellectual capacity; adaptive distancing; self-efficacy (or self-esteem and initiative); and the possession of a talent or skill’ (Turner, 2001, p. 442). Resilience does not depend on the conditions in which the animator finds himself and which he faces. Even in adverse life circumstances, a person can remain resistant to them and live a functional life full of well-being. Resilience as a specific ability of a professional does not mean avoiding anxiety, fear, or uncertainty. Resilience is about overcoming them.

‘Cultivating resilience allows us to face these and other stressful experiences with greater confidence, so we have the resources to bounce back’ (Whitney, 2017). In community work, animators often come across imperfect systems and financing of social services. Their persistence and steadfastness are needed. A local coordinator builds their own resilience and ‘community resilience.’ By this, we mean strengthening social capital, networks, and support; language revitalisation, strengthening of cultural identity and spirituality; supporting families and parents to ensure the healthy development of the child; improving local control and collective efficiency; building infrastructure (material, human and informational); increasing economic opportunities and diversification; and respecting human diversity (Kirmayer et al., 2009).

Working with excluded clients brings frustration, so resilience is essential to motivate the local animator.

Further on, we will move into a deep discussion of resilience to criticism. There are 3 types of criticism (Reed, 2020):

- *Constructive criticism* is a form of feedback that focuses on delivering critique and negative feedback constructively and positively that shows people where and how they can improve their behaviours. This is a reasonable criticism because it is actionable, transparent, and beneficial to the recipient rather than putting them down.
- *Destructive criticism* contrasts with constructive criticism. It is inclined to harm or demotivate rather than help the person who receives the feedback. It is unhealthy because it aims to show that the person or object has no worth or validity. Therefore, instead of providing a basis for learning and problem-solving as gently as constructive criticism, this criticism category is usually personal, emotionally motivated, and harshly damaging to the recipient.
- *Self-criticism* is the habit or act of criticising yourself, especially your behaviour, work, or performance. This kind of criticism can also be harmful. People with self-criticism keep repeating to themselves that they are not good enough, filling their heads with self-doubt and a toxic attitude. Self-criticism involves a knee-jerk reflection that is demeaning, devaluing and destructive. Thus, when expectations are unmet, self-critical individuals experience feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, failure, and guilt.

Both constructive and destructive criticism comes from the opinion of other people, which can also be understood as external criticism. In the meantime, self-criticism appears inside the heads of individuals, which means both the sender and receiver are the same person. This form can also be called internal criticism.

Resilience to criticism refers to the ability to handle and respond to negative feedback constructively and positively. It maintains a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem, even in the face of criticism or rejection.

Resilience to criticism involves being able to objectively evaluate the feedback that is received rather than reacting emotionally or defensively. It also involves being open to learning from feedback and using it as an opportunity for growth and self-improvement.

People who are resilient to criticism tend to have a growth mindset,

meaning they see challenges and setbacks as opportunities to learn and improve rather than personal failures. They can also maintain a positive outlook and remain focused on their goals, even in the face of criticism or rejection. In addition, people resilient to criticism have a better understanding of themselves and their situations. Finally, resilience to criticism can also help us avoid being hurt by other people or ourselves and learn to love ourselves.

In the context of community animators, resilience to criticism is an important skill, as they may face criticism or negative feedback from community members, colleagues, or other stakeholders. Community animators can remain focused on their goals and continue working towards positive change despite challenges or setbacks by resisting criticism (Wilson et al., n.d.).

Patience

Patience involves enduring difficult or frustrating situations without becoming upset or anxious. It requires self-control and the ability to delay gratification, accepting that some things may take time and effort. Patience can also involve empathy and understanding towards others struggling or facing challenges (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

The Thrive Centre for Human Development (n.d.) lists several benefits of practising patience:

- *Physical health.* Practicing patience can reduce stress, which in turn can have a positive effect on physical health. Chronic stress is associated with various health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders.
- *Emotional regulation.* Patience can help people regulate their emotions more effectively. Individuals may be less likely to react impulsively or get caught up in negative emotions such as anger or frustration by cultivating patience.
- *Social skills.* Patient people may be more effective in social situations. For example, they may be better listeners, more empathetic, and better at resolving conflicts.
- *Purpose.* Patience can help individuals focus on their goals and persist through complex challenges. People can work towards their goals more effectively by staying patient and persistent.

Local animators must exercise tolerance and patience in different

situations or handling difficult persons. In the current fast-changing environment with an accelerated pace of living and with greater dependence upon technology, this skill is becoming alien among people. Present-day clients want speedy and spontaneous service without losing time, and services cannot afford to lose ‘customers’ and referral opportunities. If animators do not exercise patience in such situations, negative emotions accelerate, and relations get destroyed. Therefore, animators must demonstrate patience in difficult situations by taking fair and firm actions (Kumar & Dhiman, 2022, p. 83).

‘Patient people understand that the more they accept the things they cannot change, such as events they cannot control, the more they can learn to react in a way that does not maximise stress or make the situation worse . . . Patience does not mean you never feel frustrated, but you know how to handle frustration and grant allowances. You can avoid making decisions based on the anger or frustration you feel. Developing patience can take some practice’ (Herrity, 2023).

Planning and Organising

Planning and organising competencies are a person’s skills and abilities to efficiently plan, organise, and manage tasks, projects, or activities to accomplish particular goals or objectives. Organisation skills are those related to creating structure and order, boosting productivity, and prioritising tasks ‘that must be completed immediately, versus those that can be postponed, delegated to another person, or eliminated altogether. In addition, maintaining strong organisational skills can reduce the chance of developing poor work habits such as procrastination, clutter, miscommunication, and inefficiency. Therefore, managers usually look for employees who can keep their work and desk organised and adjust quickly to a company’s organisational structure’ (Doyle, 2021). Planning and organising competencies also include time management. A community animator must plan different activities and manage their time effectively.

Strategic and Conceptual Thinking

Strategic thinking skills are any skills that enable animators to use critical thinking to solve complex problems and plan for the future. These skills are essential to accomplish job objectives, overcome obstacles, and address challenges-particularly if they are projected to take weeks, months, or even years to achieve (Stobierski, 2020).

Animators must 'define significant problems, gather information, formulate ideas, and construct prototype plans for solving the problem. These complex, creative problem-solving skills imply a need for expertise bearing on both the nature of the problem and the kind of leadership role at hand' (Mumford et al., 2000).

Conceptual skills help workers avoid the pitfall of not 'seeing the forest for the trees,' as the saying goes. They can envision problems and brainstorm solutions if they possess conceptual skills. These skills likely mean they are creative and can work through abstract concepts and ideas (James, n.d.). Conceptual thinkers are adept at grasping the rationale behind actions. They can think abstractly and quickly apply what they learn to a given circumstance. To compete in a varied culture, animators must think creatively about all aspects. You will learn how to concentrate on the larger picture and spot implicit concepts before others do through the assignments in this competency course.

Chapter Four

Empowering Social Animators for Communication, Collaboration, and Impact through the Use of Digital Technology

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General Overview

The efficacy of social animators can be significantly enhanced through the strategic integration of digital technology, amplifying their outreach, coordination, communication, and overall impact. Several avenues where digital technology proves instrumental in supporting their work include:

- *Collaboration and Communication.* Collective effort of individuals or groups working together toward a shared goal, facilitated by effective communication, which involves the exchange of information and ideas to achieve mutual understanding.
- *Websites and social media platforms.* Utilizing online platforms and social media channels facilitates seamless collaboration and communication among diverse stakeholders.
- *Data Collection and Analysis.* Digital tools enable efficient gathering and analysis of data, providing valuable insights for informed decision-making.
- *Online Training and Capacity Building.* Leveraging digital platforms allows for the effective delivery of online training sessions, enhancing the skills and capacities of community members.
- *Virtual Workshops and Events.* Conducting virtual workshops and

events enables broader participation, breaking geographical barriers and promoting inclusivity.

- *Mobile Applications.* Mobile applications can streamline various processes, ensuring accessibility and real-time engagement with community members.
- *Online Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation.* Digital platforms offer avenues for online fundraising and resource mobilization, fostering financial support for community projects.
- *Evaluation and Monitoring.* Digital tools assist in systematically evaluating and monitoring initiatives, allowing for continuous improvement and impact assessment.

It is essential to note that while digital technology plays a pivotal role, its integration should be complemented by offline involvement and interpersonal contacts. A balanced, community-centred approach combines the strengths of digital tools with the personal touch of face-to-face interactions, ensuring a more comprehensive and effective strategy.

Collaboration and Dialogue

Social animators must collaborate and communicate effectively, and the availability of digital technology gives them many tools to improve these qualities. Regardless of the distance between team members, volunteers, and community members, they can use various digital technologies to promote effective communication. Even when people are physically apart, these solutions allow for real-time communication, seamless document exchange, and collaboration.

Social animators can email their team, volunteers, and community stakeholders to share pertinent information, project updates, and documentation. In addition, instant communication channels are provided via messaging apps, enabling rapid deliberations, brainstorming sessions, and decision-making.

Social animators can host virtual meetings, training sessions, and community events using video conferencing technologies, enabling face-to-face interactions regardless of the location of participants. In addition, these technologies provide screen sharing, nonverbal communication, and visual clues, which improve dialogue clarity, enable visual demonstrations, and foster collaboration.

Digital tools also make collaborating on files and documents possi-

ble in real-time. For example, multiple team members can access, edit, and contribute to shared documents at once using cloud storage solutions. This function simplifies teamwork, resolves version control problems, and guarantees everyone uses the most recent data.

Digital tools also make it easier for social animators to collaborate internally and interact with the community. Community members can express their ideas, opinions, and feedback in online forums, social media groups, and other locations. Social animators can actively participate in these online communities by promoting conversations, responding to issues, and gaining insightful information. The community benefits from a sense of ownership, inclusivity, and group decision-making because of this ongoing interaction.

Digital technology generally allows social animators to overcome geographic constraints and improve communication and teamwork. They can create effective communication channels, enable real-time collaboration, and interact with their teams and communities more profoundly and inclusively by utilising the resources at their disposal.

Websites and Social Media Platforms

Social animators can take advantage of the enormous potential of social media and internet platforms to increase their reach, attract a larger audience, and encourage deep community interaction. These platforms offer social animators valuable ways to spread the word about their activities, engage with a larger audience, and raise awareness.

Social animators may communicate fascinating stories, powerful graphics, and thought-provoking ideas by using the power of social media platforms. As a result, they can capture their target audience's interest and convey the core of their initiatives, campaigns, and events. In addition, social animators can advocate for good change by bringing attention to critical social issues through original and entertaining material.

These platforms give social animators a way to plan events and organise communities. They can advertise and plan events that foster community involvement by using the capabilities of online platforms. Social animators can use these platforms to communicate event information, stimulate interest, and encourage community involvement in everything from virtual seminars to community clean-up programmes.

Social media platforms also provide two-way communication, en-

abling social animators to interact actively with neighbours. Social animators can offer opportunities for community members to share their opinions and contribute their ideas by promoting debates, asking for feedback, and posing thought-provoking questions. This inclusive approach ensures that social programmes align with their needs and goals by empowering the community.

Online platforms also provide the opportunity to build virtual communities where people may interact, work together, and support one another. For example, social animators can create online communities or forums where locals can exchange stories, get advice, and work together on projects. These online communities promote a sense of community and shared ownership while facilitating knowledge sharing and interactions across geographical boundaries.

In conclusion, social animators can access effective tools through social media and online platforms to spread information, create awareness, inspire communities, and interact with their target demographic. Furthermore, social animators can effectively use these digital channels to spread their messages, encourage neighbourhood involvement, and motivate constructive social change.

Data Collection and Analysis

Social animators' jobs involve collecting and analysing data, and digital technology has considerable advantages in these processes. Social animators may gather and analyse data more quickly, accurately, and efficiently by utilising digital tools, giving them the information they need to decide what to do and how to do it.

Social animators might use online surveys as a valuable tool to collect information from their target populations. These surveys can be disseminated via various digital methods, including email, social media platforms, and survey-specific websites. Online surveys are more convenient and accessible, encouraging community participation and producing a more extensive and varied dataset. Social animators can create surveys to gather data on the community's needs, preferences, and difficulties, acquiring insightful knowledge of their top problems.

Apps for collecting data on mobile devices give social animators another effective tool. Using these apps, data may be directly captured on mobile devices like smartphones or tablets out in the field. Social animators can design unique forms and questionnaires that allow them to collect information on the spot at community visits, events,

or interviews. Data loss or duplication is less likely when data gathered through mobile apps is promptly synchronised with a centralised database. In addition, this real-time data collection improves the accuracy and timeliness of information, allowing social animators to act more quickly and modify treatments as necessary.

Using data management tools to organise, store, and analyse data is another benefit of digital technology for social animators. Social animators can safely store data, use data cleaning procedures, and do sophisticated analysis thanks to these software options. Social animators can obtain important insights into the needs and preferences of the community by employing data management tools to spot patterns, trends, and correlations in the data. Social animators can adapt their interventions with the support of this data-driven approach, ensuring that resources and efforts are focused where they are most needed.

Digital technology also makes it easier to combine various data sources. For example, social animators can compile information from surveys, mobile apps, and other digital platforms to build a detailed picture of the characteristics and behaviours of the community. The community's issues and capabilities are better understood because this comprehensive data analysis approach enables social animators to create focused, research-based solutions.

In conclusion, the efficiency and effectiveness of data gathering and analysis for social animators are considerably improved by digital technology. They can collect information more effectively, analyse it accurately, and provide insightful conclusions thanks to online surveys, mobile data-gathering apps, and data management tools. As a result, social animators can create successful interventions, make educated decisions, and promote good social change using digital tools.

Online Training and Capacity Building

Online training and capacity building have become effective tools for social animators to equip volunteers and community members with essential information and abilities. Online courses, webinars, and video tutorials are just a few of the possibilities available on digital platforms, enabling people to learn opportunities regardless of location or time constraints.

Through online courses, social animators can create complete learning programmes that address topics pertinent to their efforts and community needs. These courses can be designed with modules, examina-

tions, and interactive components to achieve successful learning results. Flexibility and support for various learning styles are provided by the ability for participants to access course materials, participate in conversations, and finish assignments at their own leisure.

Webinars are interactive online gatherings where social animators can lead seminars, provide presentations, and moderate discussions. Participants can participate, ask questions, and get answers right away in these real-time meetings. Attendees' learning experience can be improved by including subject matter experts, guest presenters, or seasoned practitioners who can offer their thoughts and experiences in webinars.

Social animators can easily and quickly give practical examples and step-by-step guidance using video tutorials. These courses may address a range of abilities and strategies pertinent to the work of social animators, including project management, community organising, and advocacy tactics. In addition, video tutorials can successfully convey information by combining visual and audio components, making it more straightforward for participants to comprehend and use the knowledge they have learned.

Social animators can establish online communities of practice using digital media. These online communities bring people who have common interests and objectives together so they may interact, share information, and encourage one another's learning. Beyond the training sessions, participants can interact, network, and cooperate using online forums, discussion boards, or social media groups. This promotes a sense of community and allows for ongoing learning and information sharing.

Online training and capacity building have several benefits. They eliminate geographic boundaries, allowing social animators to connect with people in isolated or underserved regions who might have trouble accessing conventional training options. Online training enables people to learn independently and accommodates various commitments and schedules. It also allows participants to learn at their own pace, allowing them to take control of their education and customise it to meet their individual needs.

In conclusion, social animators now have a potent tool for delivering training and capacity-building initiatives thanks to digital platforms for community members and volunteers, online communities, webinars, video tutorials, and courses that offer convenient, flexible, and

exciting learning options. As a result, social animators can empower people with useful information, skills, and resources by utilising these digital tools, enabling them to contribute actively to social change and long-term community development.

Virtual Workshops and Events

Digital technology has completely changed how social animators may plan and run online conferences and workshops, providing a wealth of advantages and chances for networking, cooperation, and information sharing. As a result, social animators can reach a bigger audience, get their message out there, and get around the logistical problems of traditional in-person events by using webinars, online conferences, and virtual workshops.

Delivering lectures, training sessions, and interactive conversations via webinars have become popular. Social animators can organise webinars on various platforms, enabling participants to connect in real-time from many locations. Webinars allow speakers to impart their knowledge, interact with viewers via live chat or Q&A sessions, and offer insightful commentary on timely subjects. In addition, these online gatherings are convenient and flexible because attendees may join from the comfort of their own homes or businesses, saving money on travel and lodging costs.

Social animators can bring together experts, practitioners, and community members from many regions through online conferences, which offer an immersive and collaborative virtual environment. These conferences frequently include keynote addresses, panel discussions, and breakout sessions that let participants interact in-depth, share best practices, and tackle new issues. In addition, participants can interact, network, and exchange ideas via digital platforms, encouraging cooperation and group learning.

Whatever their location, participants can benefit from engaging, hands-on learning in virtual workshops. For example, social animators might create workshops with interactive activities, group discussions, and breakout spaces to promote active involvement and collaboration. These workshops may concentrate on particular techniques, approaches, or social issues pertinent to social animators' work. In addition, a dynamic and exciting learning environment is fostered through digital tools that allow participants to participate in real-time activities, access shared documents, and collaborate on projects.

Reaching a larger audience is a crucial benefit of virtual conferences and seminars. Geographical limitations are no longer an obstacle, enabling people from distant regions or other nations to join and gain from these activities. This improved accessibility encourages diversity and inclusivity and allows sharing of a wider variety of viewpoints and experiences. As people from various locations can interact and exchange ideas, it also promotes cross-cultural learning and collaboration, encouraging a more universal approach to social change.

Additionally, virtual workshops and events lessen the logistical difficulties of planning in-person events. Rental costs for venues, travel, lodging, and food are considerably lowered or eliminated. Additionally, virtual events take less time to plan and organise because there is no need to manage on-site logistics or secure actual premises. This improves the overall quality of the events by allowing social animators to devote more time and resources to developing content and participant involvement.

In summary, digital technology has created new opportunities for social animators to plan online courses and events. Webinars, online conferences, and virtual seminars allow participants from many locations to network, share expertise, and work together. As a result, social animators can reach a larger audience, promote cross-cultural learning, and get around practical issues with in-person events by utilising various digital channels, thereby increasing their effect in promoting social change.

Mobile Applications

Mobile applications have developed into excellent instruments for social animators, providing a variety of advantages to simplify business operations and boost productivity. They can use these apps to assist many facets of their job, such as data collecting, project management, community participation, monitoring, and evaluation, or they can use them to support already-existing apps.

The capacity of mobile applications to provide effective and precise data collecting is a key benefit. Social animators can design bespoke forms and surveys within the programme, allowing them to use cell phones or tablets to gather data on the spot. Social animators can gather various forms of information using these apps, which frequently include features like offline data collecting, GPS tagging, and multimedia integration. In addition, mobile apps expedite data gathering

by eliminating the need for paper surveys or manual data entry, which lowers the possibility of mistakes or data loss.

Another area where mobile devices can tremendously assist social animators is project management. These apps offer collaboration, scheduling, and task management features, facilitating effective teamwork. With tools like shared calendars, to-do lists, and document sharing, social animators may improve collaboration and guarantee that everyone understands the objectives and timetables of the project. Additionally, real-time updates and notifications are provided by mobile apps, keeping the team informed and promoting quick decision-making.

Mobile applications can be valuable platforms for encouraging meaningful interaction, which is essential for the success of social initiatives. Apps that give community members access to appropriate resources, knowledge, and assistance can be made by social animators. These apps can provide educational materials, instructions, or toolkits about social issues, arming locals with information and abilities. Additionally, mobile apps may offer features like forums, chat options, or calendars of local events to let community members interact, exchange ideas, and work together on projects.

Social activities must include monitoring and assessment; mobile applications can make these tasks easier. Social animators can use apps to monitor progress, gather real-time data, and assess the effectiveness of their activities. These apps may have data visualisation, analytics, and reporting functions, enabling social animators to produce in-depth insights and show the success of their programmes. In addition, mobile apps automate data gathering and analysis, saving social animators time and money so they can concentrate on enhancing programme outcomes.

Additionally, mobile applications can offer community members easy access to information and assistance. For instance, social animators can develop applications that link residents to healthcare providers, educational possibilities, or employment options. These apps can provide a forum for community members to ask for help, learn about pertinent events or programmes, and connect with support groups. Social animators can reach individuals in the community who might not have easy access to other resources by utilising the widespread use of mobile devices to make their efforts inclusive and accessible.

In conclusion, social animators can benefit significantly from mobile applications in various ways. These apps expedite procedures, boost productivity, and enable meaningful connections in multiple areas, including data gathering and project management, community engagement, monitoring, and assessment. As a result, social animators can strengthen their projects, empower communities, and promote long-lasting social change by utilising mobile technology.

Online Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation

The ability of social animators to participate in fundraising and resource mobilisation initiatives has been transformed by digital platforms. With the help of online channels, they have access to reliable tools that enable them to run efficient and successful campaigns, reach a larger audience, and increase their pool of possible donors. In addition, social animators can generate money and gather resources to support their activities by using crowdfunding sites, social media campaigns, and online payment methods.

Platforms for crowdfunding have become popular for social animators to start fundraising efforts. These platforms offer a specific area for them to present their initiatives, explain their mission, and establish fundraising targets. Social animators may effectively convey the impact and value of their programmes, encouraging people to make financial contributions through compelling stories, captivating imagery, and regular updates. Through crowdfunding campaigns, social animators can connect with donors outside their personal circle by reaching out to a more extensive worldwide network of people who share their enthusiasm for social concerns.

Social media efforts significantly aid online fundraising and resource mobilisation. Social animators have a wide audience reach and the opportunity to connect with various audiences thanks to websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. They can use these channels to communicate with potential supporters, share motivating tales, and raise awareness of their causes. In addition, social animators can persuade people to donate, share their campaigns with their networks, and become champions for their cause by using targeted advertising, appealing content, and clever calls to action.

The donation procedure has been streamlined thanks to online payment platforms, making it simple and safe for supporters to give. Social animators can incorporate online payment methods into their

fundraising efforts, enabling supporters to donate immediately and without fuss. To ensure accessibility for a broad range of potential donors, these systems frequently accept various payment methods, including credit cards, digital wallets, and bank transfers. Donor confidence is increased by quick and secure payment processing, which raises the possibility of successful fundraising results.

Digital platforms allow social animators to mobilise resources outside of monetary assistance in addition to monetary contributions. Through web resources, they can request in-kind materials, machinery, or volunteer labour donations. Creating wish lists or online registries by social animators enables people or organisations to donate particular goods or expertise that support their activities. Online systems offer a simple and effective approach to monitoring and coordinating resource mobilisation initiatives, effortlessly bringing together funders and receivers.

Digital platforms also allow social animators to foster long-lasting relationships and participate in donor stewardship. For example, social animators can show appreciation and notify supporters of the results of their efforts by sending out personalised thank-you letters, status updates, and impact reports. Online platforms also make interacting and communicating with donors easier, offering chances for feedback, participation in upcoming projects, and acknowledgement of their support.

In conclusion, the landscape of fundraising and resource mobilisation for social animators has changed due to internet platforms. They can engage others who are passionate about their cause using crowdfunding sites, social media campaigns, online payment methods, and resource mobilisation initiatives. Social animators may effectively raise money, gather resources, and build meaningful relationships with sponsors by utilising these digital technologies, ultimately enabling them to have a good and long-lasting impact on their efforts.

Monitoring and Assessment

Social animators can monitor and assess the effects of their work with the use of digital tools. With the help of these tools, they can better gather, analyse, and understand data, giving them valuable insights into the success of their projects, their progress, and their growth potential. In addition, social animators can improve their methods for

monitoring and evaluating their work by utilising data analytics tools, online questionnaires, and monitoring dashboards.

Social animators can make sense of the massive volumes of data they collect thanks to data analytics tools. These technologies can handle and analyse real-time data, bringing out significant trends, correlations, and patterns. Social animators can better grasp the significance and efficacy of their projects by using statistical approaches and visualisation techniques. Thanks to data analytics tools, they can also identify key performance indicators (KPIs) and assess progress concerning predetermined goals and targets.

Social animators may easily and effectively collect feedback from stakeholders and assess their experiences and levels of satisfaction by conducting online questionnaires. Digital platforms can be used to distribute these polls, expanding their exposure while preserving respondents' privacy. Social animators can create unique surveys, gather replies in an organised way, and automate data entry with the help of online survey tools. In addition, social animators can improve their strategies and actions by analysing survey data to get insights into their stakeholders' needs, preferences, and perceptions.

Monitoring dashboards give social animators a thorough picture of their projects in real-time by centralising and visualising project data. These dashboards can include information from many platforms, including surveys, financial records, and performance metrics. Monitoring dashboards helps social animators manage project outcomes, spot bottlenecks, and make decisions by providing essential metrics, progress indicators, and visualisations. In addition, they give a quick overview of their projects' entire performance and progress, allowing for quick interventions and course corrections.

Additionally, digital tools make real-time and nearly real-time data collecting possible, improving the speed and accuracy of monitoring and assessment operations. Social animators may now collect data directly on the ground using smartphones or tablets and mobile data collection apps, doing away with the requirement for manual data entry and lowering the risk of data loss or mistakes. This real-time data collection allows social animators to quickly gather information and respond to new trends or problems.

Additionally, digital platforms allow monitoring and evaluation parties to collaborate and share data. Social animators can work with collaborators, academics, and communities using online platforms and

shared datasets, offering a participatory approach to data analysis and interpretation. This cooperation supports group decision-making and promotes a shared knowledge of project outcomes, ultimately raising the standard and legitimacy of the monitoring and assessment process.

In conclusion, digital technologies are essential in helping social animators track and assess the results of their efforts. They may more effectively gather and analyse data, track progress, and pinpoint areas for development using data analytics tools, online questionnaires, and monitoring dashboards. As a result, social animators can improve their monitoring and evaluation procedures, make wise judgements, and ultimately boost the results and efficacy of their efforts by successfully using these digital technologies.

Chapter Five

Educational Paths of a Local Community Animator in Selected European Countries

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The Importance of Animators' Education

Social animation is a long-term and multilateral process of reviving and developing a specific environment: local (commune, city, district, housing estate, village) or social (a group of excluded, professional, neighbourhood people having a common problem or interests connected by a subculture). It creates and implements local development programs, revitalisation programs, and community organisations within the social welfare system. The method of social animation is an educational practice that stimulates people (individuals, groups, communities, local communities) to independently design (diagnose, plan, evaluate) and implement activities focused on social problem solving, satisfying

needs with the use of democratic values (subjectivity, dialogue, participation, partnership, community) and potential (resources, opportunities) essential for the development of the environment in which they live/work.

A local community animator is responsible for conducting the process of shaping the community (building social relationships, social activation, and mobilisation), as a result of which the potential of people, groups and communities is activated, empowered (especially marginalised and socially excluded) and also their responsibility is to launch the process of public participation. The animator uses knowledge, skills, and experience to conduct these activities (Gliwicka et al., 2010). Considering the animator's tasks, they must have interdisciplinary expertise from many fields, e.g., sociology, psychology, economics, history, cultural studies, administration, etc. Furthermore, an animator is a moderator of change. Therefore, they must also have knowledge and skills in conducting social processes, group development dynamics, change management, conflict management and communication.

Appreciating that animator plays a crucial role in local social processes, out of concern for the quality and effectiveness of their work, in recent years, in many European countries, standardisation of their work has occurred. This is also the purpose of educating animators, including shaping their knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Educational Paths for an Animator in Poland

In Poland, the profession of a local community animator has been described in the Polish Classification of Professions as an Economic animator for regional development (CODE 242202). According to the classification, the animator initiates and promotes regional development and helps local administration units, pro-innovation institutions and enterprises undertake and implement initiatives related to the social and economic development of the region. The animator's professional tasks were defined as follows: identifying needs, initiating activities, suggesting new ideas and action strategies in the field of regional development; cooperation with various institutions in order to define general directions of the region's development; mobilizing local communities working for the social and economic development of the region; promoting economic, tourist and other values; initiating, coordinating and supervising the implementation of tasks and invest-

ments related to the development of the region in specific areas; developing a strategy and plan for regional development and a feasibility study; recommending potential solutions to existing problems, planning them and providing assistance in the organisation and implementation of planned activities; providing information and consultations in the field of services supporting regional development; searching for sources of financing and partnership for the implementation of undertaken projects; obtaining EU funds; matching partners to launch joint ventures related to the development of the region (Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, n.d.).

Local Activity Centres

In Poland, the Association Centre for Supporting Local Activity¹ is a pioneer in animation work with the local community and educating generations of animators. The association has developed a method of working with the local community, which aims to discover the strength of the local community and promote it under the common brand CAL. Among other things, the association organises training and workshops educating animators, as well as local government employees and NGOs in the area of animation work and organises meetings of local community organisers.

Social Service Centres

The legal regulations for the profession of a local community animator in Poland apply to animators employed in Social Service Centres called local community organisers. This is regulated by the Act of July 19, 2019 (Ustawa z dnia 19 lipca 2019 r. o realizowaniu usług społecznych przez centrum usług społecznych, 2019) on the provision of social services by the social services centre. The tasks of the local community organiser include in particular (Art. 32):

- Conducting research on an ongoing basis based on the needs of the local government community in the scope of supporting activities or the potential of the local government community in the field of supporting activities;
- Developing, based on the conclusions resulting from the recognition of the needs and potential of the local government commu-

¹ <https://www.cal.org.pl>

nity in the field of supporting activities, a plan for organising a local community and its updating and implementation;

- Undertaking activities aimed at activating the self-government community, in particular, organising supporting activities;
- Initiating activities other than those aimed at strengthening social ties and integrating the local government community;
- Cooperation with entities conducting local animation or other forms of community work in the area of the centre's operation.

The organiser of a local community may be a person who (Art. 33):

- Has a university degree;
- Has at least 2 years of experience in conducting local animation or other forms of community work, including work with the local community;
- Obtained the second degree of specialisation in the profession of a social worker in the speciality of social work with the local community or completed training in the field of local community organisation;
- Has not been legally convicted of an intentional crime prosecuted by public indictment or a deliberate fiscal offence or against which no final judgment has been issued that conditionally discontinues criminal proceedings for the commission of an intentional crime prosecuted by public indictment or a deliberate fiscal offence.

Regional centres of social policy organise training in local community organisations. Their program covers the following issues: legal provisions governing the establishment of the CUS; the role of non-governmental organisations in shaping the local market of social services and the principles of cooperation with social partners; methods of diagnosing the needs and potential of the local government community in the field of supporting activities; animation of the local community and environmental work; competences, tasks and functions of the local community organiser; methodology of work with the local community, including volunteering, neighbourhood support and cooperation with entities running local animation in the area of the social services centre, planning the development of the local community, developing and updating a plan for organising the local community (Kolegium Pracowników Służb Społecznych w Lublinie, n.d.).

Social Economy Support Centres

Local community animators are also employed in Social Economy Support Centres. Therefore, both the local community's animator and their tasks and work standards have been defined in the standards applicable to Social Economy Support Centres, which concern, among others, the competencies and improvement of knowledge and skills of OWES employees (Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej, n.d.).

An animator at OWES must have at least 3 years of experience providing animation services regarding local development and creating local partnerships. The competencies of the OWES key personnel align with the 'Competency Model.' Competency assessment is carried out by:

- Periodic staff appraisal carried out once a year;
- Creating periodic professional development plans updated yearly based on staff assessment;
- Participation of staff in activities increasing competencies, including internal training, external training, consulting, networking meetings, exchange of experiences, etc.

Actions increasing competencies are documented: the employee must provide OWES with a copy of the confirmation of training or participation in workshops/meetings growing competencies. It is necessary to strive for each member of the staff to improve their competencies through training, workshops, and consultancy, for at least 30 hours a year (Abramowicz & Charyton, 2019).

Certified training for animators employed at OWES is held periodically and covers the following content areas:

1. Animation Process
 - Role of an animator in the local community
 - Operating models and threats
 - Principles of advisory work
 - Use of tools in animation work
 - Innovative methods in online games
2. Social Media for Animation Work
 - Effective use in animation
 - Conducting and moderating meetings offline and online
3. Change Management

- Context of running an initiative group or NGO
 - Diagnosis of difficulties
 - Action plan and motivation
 - Goal achievement
4. Change Leadership (PES Management)
 - Building leader authority/role
 - PES development strategy
 - Innovative animation methods in online games
 5. Promotion of ES Activities
 - Tools, initiatives, financing
 - Introducing and preserving change
 - Diagnosis, action plan, motivation, goal achievement
 6. Supporting the Change Leader
 - Building leader authority/role
 - Team management styles
 - Conflict resolution
 - Coaching tools in working with a change leader

Cooperation between Local Government Units and NGOs. Creating public policies using the potential of ES, including creating local plans for the development of the social economy in communes/counties, including PES in the revitalization process, cooperation with local government units within the CUS; cooperation with local government units within the CUS. Tools of collaboration between NGOs and local governments – using the JST-NGO cooperation model: conducting social dialogue, diagnosis using the Local Quality Index for cooperation, identifying areas for support/directions of cooperation development.

Legal Bases. Legal bases for establishing and functioning individual entities of the social economy; learning the formal and legal context. PES registration, creating statutes, and applying social clauses. De minimis aid, establishing and running a paid and economic activity, the economic activity of KGW; legal and accounting aspects of running a PS; reporting; financial flows; optimisation (selection) of the form of running a business – creation of statutes, application of social clauses.

Strategy for Working with People Experiencing Mental Disorders and Diseases. Identifying various disorders, ways of communicating and working with people experiencing these ailments (e.g. how to handle such

a person, how to make the first contact and where, if necessary, send them back so that they can get professional help), coping with basic medical situations (e.g. an epilepsy attack).

Interpersonal Skills. Effective communication and conflict resolution. Development of ability to work with a group – group process. Creating partnerships, networking of entities, etc. Preparation and diagnosis of the local environment. Concluding permanent local partnerships (PES, business, local government units); PES cooperation with business. Encouraging businesses and enterprises to join the social activity and support PES, system benefits for local government units and businesses from developing the social economy, and benefits of using CSR in business and creating a local brand to activate and establish local partnerships.

Organisations are being established in Poland to associate and train animators on certified courses. An example of such an organisation is the Forum of Social Animators,² which runs the School of Social Animators.

However, there is no specific uniform path for educating local community animators. Animators can educate themselves mainly in post-graduate studies, courses, and training. Some schools of social workers also offer a specialisation in the field of local community animation.

In Poland, the profession of a local community animator can also be acquired during undergraduate studies.

Higher Education

Lublin University of Science and Technology in Ryki: The studies aim to deepen the theoretical and practical knowledge of students in the field of social activity and initiate and implement animation tasks in the area of the local community in the fields of culture, self-governance, education, and assistance. The graduate, acting as a sociocultural animator, undertakes activities aimed at changing the social and cultural environment of the local environment, triggering and building social capital in it, developing the ability to conduct social dialogue, supporting the development of individuals and communities, and building their social activity (Lubelska Szkoła Wyższa w Rykach, n.d.).

² <http://www.forumanimatorow.org>

Many universities in Poland have no separate field of study educating local community animators. Therefore, competencies related to an animator's work can be acquired, among others, in pedagogy, sociology, economics (specialisation in anti-social economics), social work, and cultural studies.

Knowledge and skills in animation can be acquired, for example, during pedagogical studies as part of environmental education. After graduation, the student will know the basic concepts of environmental education are helpful in the work of an environmental animator, understand the factors influencing the selection of animation strategies and methods in the environment, be able to analyse, research and evaluate (on a fundamental level) the functioning of local communities and the possibility of taking actions; understand the role of time and place in making social changes; be able to critically analyse and use in practice social theories: sociological, philosophical, psychological, pedagogical and different interpretations of the importance of the role of the social environment in human life; be able to analyse and evaluate the results of animation practices in the local environment; be aware of recent changes and challenges in local communities. Furthermore, the student will understand the role of a social animator in the local environment and the process of change, as well as the risks associated with environmental activities; acknowledge and understand the role of the social and cultural potential of the local environment, be able to use it in animation activities; be aware and able to use the educational/creative potential of the place where the social animator works; understand the role of the memory of the past in the local community, its significance for the present, and also see – where necessary – the possibility of 'working on the memory of the community' (Uniwersytet Warszawski, n.d.).

At the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, undergraduate studies (bachelor's degree) are offered in pedagogy with a module in social animation and culture management.

As part of the second-cycle studies in social work and social economy, e.g., at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, the student will be prepared, among others, to activate and integrate local communities, including building a development strategy for solving social problems, using the opportunities provided by creating social economy entities and their potential to generate social change (Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, n.d.).

Postgraduate Studies

Many postgraduate studies combine the animation of the local environment with the animation of culture, offering postgraduate studies in this field. Such studies are offered, among others, by the University of Management and Administration in Opole: Animator of the Local Community is a postgraduate course aimed at people who want to participate in social life actively and who want to be a leader who stimulates the functioning of various social environments and improve their quality of life. The studies aim to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, and competencies in enhancing environmental activities, especially in areas requiring prevention or intervention. A course graduate will gain knowledge in social animation, public policy, theory, and social development strategies. They will learn about the tools of social participation, ways of initiating and building local partnerships, adult education principles, individual development paths and group cooperation, and diagnosing communities. The graduate will have extensive knowledge in functioning and building social economy centres. The graduate will be prepared to work in broadly understood environmental activation. They will acquire skills in diagnosing the local community, developing local development strategies, and initiating and building partnerships and social networks. They will learn to introduce tools of social participation effectively and creatively and animate community cooperation. They will be able to work based on the dynamics of the group and maintain the commitment and motivation of others. The graduate will acquire skills that will be able to support the development of educational, social, and cultural institutions. The field of study allows for the acquisition of competencies, enabling actions in the broadly understood activation of individual social environments. The graduate will build and support the functioning of local communities creatively and innovatively (Wysza Szkoła Zarządzania i Administracji w Opolu, n.d.).

Educational Paths for Animators in Slovenia

In Slovenia, the profession of local community animator can fit under categories like (Republic of Slovenia, 2023; Republika Slovenija, 2023):

- A person responsible for the animation of tourists – a touristic animator. Persons who act as tourist animators need to have a secondary school (4-year programme); national qualifications are offered in this area).

- Persons in charge of organising events like organising events and business meetings. Such tasks can be performed by persons with secondary school (also national qualifications are offered in this area) and by persons who completed university degrees (mainly persons who finished their studies in areas like business, management, and tourism, but also persons that completed their degrees from other areas).
- Persons responsible for community affairs (e.g. employees at community/municipalities in charge of community affairs, employees at NGOs). Usually, a university degree is needed to perform such work (but usually not limited to specific areas of study). Preference is given to candidates with good knowledge/experiences, such as working with marginalised groups, knowing the work of communities in culture, education, sport, and social issues, and being familiar with how public institutions and NGOs operate.
- Profile of professionals working with youth. They can be motivators, coordinators, leaders of specific projects for youth, multi-practice, e.g., animation of youth in camps, professionals working in NGOs or other organisations dealing with youth. Professionals working in this position can have secondary school or university degrees (in most cases from the area of social work, social pedagogues, pedagogues).

Secondary School

Secondary schooling in Slovenia (students of 14/15 to 18/19 years) is provided by upper secondary schools and secondary schools. It is classified as three years of general or vocational-technical and secondary professional or technical education (Republic of Slovenia, 2023; Republika Slovenija, 2023). In Slovenia, no secondary schools explicitly educate local community animators. Most comparable are technical schools of tourism (of 4 years), which equip students with knowledge from the area of tourism, communication with clients, heritage, organisation of touristic activities, etc.

University

In Slovenia, no study programmes explicitly educate local community animators. However, many study programmes include compulsory or elective courses that equip students with knowledge and skills to work

TABLE 5.1 Courses That Cover a Wide Range of Knowledge and Skills to Work As Community Animators/Professionals in the Local Community

Courses about	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Work with groups – study programme of social pedagogy (UL)	•			•
Social interactions – study programme of social pedagogy (UL)	•			
Community and community work – study programme of social pedagogy (UL)	•	•		
Experiential learning/experiential pedagogy – study programme of social pedagogy (UL)	•			•
Concept of social work with youth, study programme on social work (UL)	•			
Project management, study programme on economy or management (several HEIs)	•	•	•	
Interpersonal communication, study programme on media and communication studies (UL)	•	•		•
Communication, communication in business, included in several study programmes at different HEIs		•	•	
Tourism (and sustainable development), study programme translation at UL			•	•
Communicology in tourism, study programme tourism at UL			•	•
Creative design thinking, study programme tourism at UL	•	•	•	
Social exclusion and policies of inclusion, study programmes at Faculty of Social Sciences, UL	•	•		
Local and regional self-government, Faculty of Administration, UL		•		

NOTES Relevance for the area of working (examples/suggestions – not limited to): (1) with youth, (2) as professionals at municipalities/communities, (3) organisation of events, (4) animation of tourists. UL – University of Ljubljana.

as community animators/professionals in different areas; for examples/suggestions, see Table 5.1.

Postgraduate Studies

Also, at the postgraduate level, some study programmes include compulsory or elective courses that equip students with knowledge and skills to work as community animators/professionals in different areas, e.g., elective or postgraduate courses of study programmes in the economy, management, social pedagogy, communication, and tourism.

The course on Local self-government is worth mentioning, offered at the PhD on Legal Studies of University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Law (University of Ljubljana, n.d.).

Certified Courses and Training

National Professional Qualification for Tourist Animators. The entry requirements for obtaining the qualification are a secondary general/grammar or technical education and a mentor's certificate of having completed at least 200 hours of practical work in the field of tourist animation (Slovensko ogrodje kvalifikacij, n.d.c).

National Professional Qualification in the field of Organiser of Congress Events. The entry requirements for obtaining the qualification are a secondary general/grammar or technical education and 5 years of work experience in the field of tourism (Slovensko ogrodje kvalifikacij, n.d.a).

National Professional Qualification in the Field of Organising Business Meetings and Events. The entry requirements for obtaining the qualification are a secondary general/grammar or technical education and 5 years of work experience in the field of tourism (Slovensko ogrodje kvalifikacij, n.d.b).

Educational Paths for Animators in Slovakia

In Slovakia, there are no legal acts regulating the profession of a local community animator. Such a profession is unknown in Slovak legislation or the national professions system. A distantly related occupation is Specialist Worker for Marginalized Populations. They need a second degree, preferably in social work (Register zamestnaní, n.d.c).

Another distantly related profession is Youth Work Coordinator. The Youth Work Coordinators plan, direct and coordinate youth work concerning the municipality's or higher territorial unit's remit in youth work, working with children and young people and with organisations focusing on children and young people. Requires a bachelor's degree and degree programs with non-specified orientation (Register zamestnaní, n.d.b).

In Slovakia, there are no training paths for the profession of local community animator at any level of formal education, neither in secondary education nor in higher education. There are also no postgraduate studies educating in these fields nor certified courses.

Educational Paths for Animators in Italy

According to the impact finance scheme, the Minister for Public Administration has started the experimentation of the activities related to the Social Innovation Fund to promote innovative models that aim

to satisfy emerging social needs, with the involvement of actors and private sector funding.

This Fund and projects selected to support the growth of social innovation activities are governed by Presidential Decree DPCM 21 December 2018.

The experimentation is divided into a three-year program, which has since been renewed, within the resources allocated by the Fund, finances social innovation projects of local administrations (capital municipalities and metropolitan cities) in the sectors of social inclusion, cultural animation, and the fight against dispersion scholastic.

The role assumed by the Department is that of an enabler of social innovation processes that favours the birth of ideas and projects from below to accompany and validate intervention models capable of giving a more effective response to the needs of citizens and a more efficient allocation and use of public resources.

Overall, in Italy, animation activities are being paid attention to and promoted by the Fund, under the observation of the Minister of Public Administration. However, as for the legal regulations at both regional and governmental levels, there is still no official governance for the profession of local animators.

Secondary School

Not much higher education has been identified. However, some organisations act as business incubators for internal areas that accompany and enable communities and inhabitants to learn skills to produce social impact and new economies. The case studies cited for Italy in Chapter 6 are good examples.

For example, in the process of educating local community animators, Appenninol'Hub³ accompanies the inhabitants 'step by step' to enable their skills, develop employment by creating new businesses and regenerating essential services that meet their aspirations and are solid, sustainable, and long-lasting.

The development and incubation of businesses living in the Inner Areas thus become the means to improve living conditions, enhance the wealth of places, develop resilience, and increase the rate of the widespread economy.

Appenninol'hub inspires and accompanies communities and terri-

³ <https://www.appenninohub.it>

tories in implementing new business or service projects. It assists the company structure in the early stages of entrepreneurial management in obtaining financing and participation in tenders for their development. They also support Local Public Administrations, Communities, Companies and Private Entities in economic-social development and innovation paths.

University

There are courses in social science and development. Regarding local community animators, some examples of bachelor's degrees in social innovation, local development, and social work are provided by prestigious universities in Italy. Here are some examples:

Bachelor of Local Development, University of Padua Students follow the economic, sociological, political, statistical, historical-geographical, socio-pedagogical, and anthropological areas while acquiring in-depth knowledge of the local development processes' social, organisational, economic, territorial, institutional and dynamic forms. In addition, students will learn to analyse the territorial framework and promote conditions favourable to local development, allowing graduates to hold managerial roles in the project development, monitoring, and evaluation phases and work as professionals in development cooperation or governmental and non-governmental organisations (University of Padua, n.d.c).

Bachelor of Social Work, Università di Bologna. This programme trains professional profiles able to work in public and private social services, considering the operational methods of the organisation they work in. In their work, graduates must understand, analyse, and assess the demands of professional social services, identifying and fostering the use of all personal and institutional resources and those available in the local community to implement care paths responding to the presented requests and problems (Università di Bologna, n. d.).

Bachelor of Social Work, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca. This bachelor's degree in social work aims to train experts focused on individuals, families, groups, and the community.

During the three years, the following competencies were acquired:

- *Theoretical knowledge:* theoretical understanding of principles and ethical assumptions of social work, including a broad range of dis-

ciplines ranging from sociology to psychology, anthropology, law, and social policy theory.

- *Methodological know-how*: the ability to employ methods and techniques to prevent critical situations and manage social work.
- *Practical skills and aptitudes*: collaborative conduct to facilitate teamwork among professionals with different technical skills and coordination with local associations and services (Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, n.d.).

Degree in Social Innovation at Università degli studi di Napoli Federico II.

The course aims to train an expert in the analysis and management of social innovation who can carry out the planning, management, analysis, and evaluation of social transformation interventions in an integrated way. The aim is to produce desirable outcomes in terms of improving social solidarity, environmental sustainability and the economic performance of organisations, networks, and territorial systems (Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, n.d.).

Postgraduate Studies Educating a Local Community Animator

Postgraduate courses are similar to bachelor's in social science and development. Here are some examples:

Master's Degree in Advanced Social Work, Università di Verona. 1st year of study is aimed at providing the student with basic biomedical and preventive hygienic knowledge, the foundations of the professional discipline as requirements to face the first internship experience, finalising the student's orientation in the psychiatric professional field and acquiring basic professional skills. The 2nd year of study aims to deepen clinical knowledge and professional rehabilitation skills in the psychiatric field. At least two internship experiences in Psychiatry Operating Units occur in different contexts. The student can follow the patient's path from the first reception to discharge and deepen the knowledge learned in the clinical, therapeutic, rehabilitative, and organisational fields. The 3rd year of study is aimed at specialising in-depth and acquiring knowledge and methodologies relating to professional practice and the ability to work in a team; the student can experience gradual accountability under expert supervision-acquisition of scientific research methodological skills to support thesis elaboration. This curricular logic has resulted in the choice of gradually increasing the number

of credits assigned to the internship from the 1st to the 3rd year (Università degli Studi di Verona, n.d.).

Master's Degree in Innovation and Social Work, University of Padua. At the heart of this course is the study of social innovation, not only in its theoretical and practical aspects related to social policies and the programming and management of services but also in its training of key emerging issues and problems such as social impact assessment, restorative justice, personalization, and enablement through social services. The course emphasises an international approach that will prepare students for the profession of specialised social worker after passing the State Exam. It will also allow them to fulfil the tasks needed at managerial levels and through the evaluation of social policies and services needed to operate various public and private organisations (University of Padua, n.d.a).

Master's Degree in Local Development, University of Padua. The master's degree provides a thorough understanding of the specific social, organisational, economic, territorial, and institutional forms and dynamics that characterise local development processes in different contexts and at varying levels of development. It offers an in-depth knowledge of the various methodologies used to formulate, implement, monitor, and evaluate programmes for local development and promotes the implementation of sustainability processes. International partnerships and mobility agreements reinforce its intrinsic multicultural and multilingual dimension (University of Padua, n.d.b).

Master's Degree in Community Animator, Pegaso University. Unipegaso offers a master's degree program in Community Animation. This one-year program provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills to become competent community animators (Pegaso University, n.d.). The program is offered entirely online, which allows students to study at their own pace and convenience. The program covers various topics such as community development, social psychology, communication, and organisation of community activities. Students will learn about the different approaches to community animation, such as participatory, collaborative, and empowerment approaches. The program also emphasises the importance of social inclusion and diversity in community animation. Throughout the program, students will participate in practical activities that will enable them to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the program. In addition, students will work on

real-life projects and case studies to develop their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. The program is designed for individuals who wish to develop their knowledge and skills in community animation, including professionals already working in this field or individuals who want to pursue a career in community animation. The Italian Ministry of Education recognises the program, ensuring its quality and relevance. Overall, the master's degree program in Community Animation is offered by Unipegaso.it is a comprehensive program that provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills to become competent community animators. The program is designed to meet the needs of individuals who wish to develop their careers in community animation or related fields.

Master's Degree Program to Become a Community Facilitator, Labsus and the University of Turin. The master's program in Community Facilitation, offered jointly by Labsus and the University of Turin, is tailored to provide students with the knowledge and skills to become proficient community facilitators capable of promoting social innovation and community development (Labsus, n.d.). The program covers an extensive range of subjects, including community development, participatory approaches, communication, and organisation of community activities. Students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the various roles and responsibilities of community facilitators and the tools and techniques used to promote community development. Designed for individuals seeking to pursue careers in community development or related fields, the program offers practical experience through internships and hands-on projects and the opportunity to network with experts and practitioners in the field. The Italian Ministry of Education accredited the program, ensuring graduates receive a solid theoretical foundation, practical skills, and experience. Upon successfully completing the program, graduates will be well-equipped to work as community facilitators in various settings, including non-profit organisations, local governments, and community-based initiatives.

Master Program of the Community Facilitator, National Coordination of Agri-Cultural Centres (CNCA). The Master program of the Community Facilitator, provided by CNCA, is a free online course that aims to equip participants with the essential skills and knowledge required to excel as community facilitators (CNCA, n.d.). The course encompasses various subjects, such as community development, social innovation,

participatory approaches, and project management. The program provides an in-depth understanding of community facilitators' diverse roles and responsibilities and the tools and techniques necessary for fostering community development. The program welcomes individuals passionate about community development, and no prior experience or qualifications are required. The program provides access to online resources such as video lectures, readings, and case studies, in addition to enabling participants to interact with their peers through discussion forums. The self-paced nature of the program allows participants to complete the course according to their own schedule. Participants will receive a certificate of completion upon completing the program, validating their acquired skills and knowledge. The master's program of the Community Facilitator offered by CNCA provides a valuable opportunity for individuals seeking to gain expertise in community development and aspire to become competent community facilitators without incurring any costs and in the comfort of their own surroundings.

Certified Courses and Training

Several courses and training are offered; however, most courses are organised online. Some examples will be illustrated below:

ITACA Sviluppo, an Italian organisation dedicated to promoting social and economic development, offers a training course for Community Facilitators. The program is designed to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to become effective community development facilitators, covering various topics such as conflict resolution, participatory approaches, and project management. The training course is open to individuals interested in community development, with no prior experience or qualifications required. The program is available in both online and in-person formats, with the flexibility to adapt to the needs of the participants. The curriculum includes interactive sessions, case studies, and group exercises, enabling participants to gain practical experience in community facilitation. Upon completion of the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion, demonstrating their proficiency in community facilitation. The course provides an excellent opportunity for individuals interested in community development to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become effective community facilitators and contribute positively to their communities (ITACA Sviluppo, n.d.).

The professional training program for 'Territorial Facilitators – Pro-

moting Local Interventions' is offered by the municipality of Padua in Italy. The program aims to equip participants with the requisite skills and knowledge to serve as effective territorial facilitators and promote local development. The course covers many topics, including community building, project management, conflict resolution, and communication skills. The program is accessible to anyone interested in community development; prior experience or qualifications are unnecessary. The training is delivered through a blended learning format, with both online and in-person sessions. In addition, the curriculum includes interactive workshops, case studies, and group exercises, offering participants ample opportunities to gain practical experience in community facilitation. Upon successfully completing the training, participants will be awarded a certificate of completion. This program presents an excellent opportunity for individuals who wish to explore community development as a profession, acquire skills and knowledge, and positively impact the Padua municipality's communities (Comune di Padova, 2021).

Demetra Formazione (agency support training at work) has a course on social innovation:

- Co-design and hybridization: how to develop partnerships
- Innovation in management
- 2030 Agenda and circular economy: development of projects
- Impact assessment as a process and as a tool

It is aimed primarily at social, production, labour and service co-operatives, social enterprises, and freelancers (Demetra Formazione, n.d.).

FORUM PA, Artea Studio, the Nuovo Welfare Association, and Sportlink have designed a training course for social innovators. The idea of the catalogue was born with a highly operational intent. We thought of it as a social innovation toolbox within which you can find the tools you NEED to operate in the life cycle of an idea: generation, design, experimentation, communication, market, and financing (Forumpa.it, n.d.).

A private organisation, Urban Centre, provides a free downloadable 'Social innovation – training and local development' available to professionals, third sector bodies and public administrations (UrbanCenter, n.d.).

Courses on urban regeneration example – by ‘Qualità e Sviluppo Rurale’ on harnessing and valorising local architectural heritage (but too specialised) (Qualità e Sviluppo Rurale, n.d.).

Others

Incubators, as mentioned above.

Chapter Six

Collection of Good Practices, Tools, and Methods for the Profession of Local Community Animators

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This chapter includes practices, tools and methods that can be applied to the profession of local community animator. Project partners collected practices from Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, and Italy. Most practices are from those four countries; however, a few are identified from countries outside the consortium.

Educational Support

This section presents a collection of best practices focusing on using innovative and nonstandard tools and methods in educating local community animators, accompanied by concise descriptions.

Project Yalta (Youth Activation – Long-Term Ambition)

Country: Slovakia.

Source/link: <https://unss.sk/yalta/yalta-in-english.php>

Keywords of practice: Young people with disabilities, active leisure time, toolkit for young leaders, youth workers' toolkit.

Target groups: Educational institutions, providers of training, NGOs; students; young people with disabilities.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

Type of best practice: Project.

Form of source: Text – 2 toolkits.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: The Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union (ÚNSS), with the Slovenian Association of Disabled Students (DSIS) and the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations (PDCO), implemented an international project, Youth Activation – Long Term Ambition. The project aimed to prepare a group of active young people with visual impairments for dynamic change, encouraging them to engage and independently develop their ideas and projects. The project supported the development of skills so that disadvantaged young people themselves create possibilities and opportunities for active leisure time in the community.

Project activities:

- Training for UNSS and DSIS professionals.
- Training for young leaders and volunteers with and without visual impairment.
- Inclusive youth groups established in four Slovak pilot regions (Bratislava, Nitra, Prešov and Banská Bystrica).
- Weekend camps carried out with the involvement of trained youth leaders and volunteers with and without visual impairment from each pilot region.

The final YALTA conference is to be carried out with the involvement of young leaders, volunteers, and all project partners.

Summary of the good practice: Two main project outputs summarise knowledge from several educational activities using modern informal education methods for young people and workers. The completion of the project was the YALTA conference.

- Youth Workers' Toolkit (SK, EN version)

- Toolkit for Young Leaders (SK, EN version)

Some additional information about the practice:

- *Youth Workers' Toolkit.*¹ Through this toolkit, project partners wanted to outline several options for youth workers to involve blind and partially sighted young people in social, civic, sports and cultural events and activities. To succeed with such an involvement, getting acquainted with some particularities related to supporting inclusive groups is undoubtedly good. Project partners also summarize a lot of helpful hints related to adjusting the environment to facilitate independent mobility and orientation of persons with visual impairment or making electronic or printed information accessible. Since project partners often engage volunteers or young people with a completely different type of disability in inclusive groups, you can also find useful information in the toolkit from mentoring and volunteer management.
- *Toolkit for Young Leaders.*² Its general objective is both to motivate young people to their own activity and create a kind of support system of inclusive groups – i.e. such groups where they can encounter a blind, partially sighted person, or on the contrary, a person without this impairment or a person with another 'difference.' Toolkit offers elementary solutions for how to adapt games for people with visual impairment, how to gain and keep volunteers (as they often significantly help them), how to advocate for one's own needs and interests, how to work in a team of youngsters or how to plan of own project.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, and posters:

- Project reports³
- Photo gallery⁴

National Project Building Professional Capacities at the Community Level

Country: Slovakia.

Source/link: <https://bokku.gov.sk/en/home/index.html?csrcrt=8728761250960810494>

¹ https://unss.sk/yalta/assets/files/toolkit_workers_graphical.pdf

² https://unss.sk/yalta/assets/files/toolkit_leaders_graphical.pdf

³ <https://unss.sk/yalta/vystupy.php>

⁴ <https://unss.sk/fotogaleria/2017/aktivizacia-mladeze-yalta.php>

Keywords of practice: Community level, crisis intervention, poverty and social exclusion, community organisers.

Target groups:

- Young people, especially young people under the age of 29, who are not on the register of jobseekers, nor in employment, nor involved in the education or training process – NEET.
- Subjects carrying out activities in the public interest.
- Children.
- Families with children, single-parent families with children, multi-child families.
- Staff implementing policies and measures to prevent discrimination and/or social inclusion in both the public and private sectors.
- Low-income households.
- Disadvantaged job seeker.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Children, adults, and families for whom social protection measures for children and social guardianship are implemented.
- Marginalised groups, including the Roma.
- Asylum seekers, persons with subsidiary protection.
- Individuals or groups at risk of discrimination, poverty, or social exclusion.
- Entities implementing measures for the social protection of children and social guardianship.
- Children and adults who are provided with social services.
- Public and non-public social service providers.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Governmental organisation – Implementing Agency of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

Type of best practice: Project.

Form of source: Text – PDF documents.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: Further building and development of professional capacities of providers of selected social services of crisis intervention (community centres/low-threshold day centres/low-threshold social services for children and family) at the community level to increase the efficiency of their activities – that means to provide quality professional support to individuals and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion leading to self-help solutions to their social problems, as well as to provide support lead-

ing to the development of entire communities through the targeted use of community resources.

Summary of the good practice: A national project is underway in Slovakia to address the difficulties of communities and their vulnerable members. It includes training community workers and organising community centres. As part of the training, courses have been held, and manuals have been produced in several areas of community work. At the same time, standards for community centres, low-threshold day centres and low-threshold centres for children and families. I perceive the selected materials as inspiring and beneficial for the development of the animator of the local environment.

Some additional information about the practice: Methodologies developed within the framework of the national project:

- *Needs mapping and analysis (methodological guide).*⁵ Needs mapping is one of the first and basic steps towards community residents' involvement in the community centre's activities. It has several meanings; among other things, it is a means to activate them, especially identifying and discussing community residents' needs, problems, and goals. The results of the needs mapping should support the formulation of the community centre's objectives.
- *Process of community work.*⁶ Neighbourhood entrance, getting to know the neighbourhood, analysis of needs, goals, and roles, contacting and connecting people, setting up and building organisations, helping to clarify goals and priorities, keeping the organisation running, intergroup relations and action, departures, and endings.
- *Individual planning.*⁷ It involves defining the goal that users want to achieve through the social service. Depending on the agreed goal, specific steps are defined to fulfil it. Part of the individual planning process starts with communication with the service user when the requirements and expectations of the service user are ascertained through an interview. The outcome of the planning

⁵ https://www.npkiku.gov.sk/data/files/np_kiku/dokumenty/Mapovanie%20a%20analyza%20opatrieb%20blok.pdf

⁶ https://www.npkiku.gov.sk/data/files/np_kiku/dokumenty/PROCES%20KOMUNITNEJ%20PRACE%20obrozura%20blok.pdf

⁷ https://www.npkiku.gov.sk/data/files/np_kiku/dokumenty/Metodiky%202018%20ISBN/Individualne%20planovanie%202018.pdf

process is the individual plan, which is developed jointly by the key worker and the service user.

- *Community work.*⁸ Community work aims to improve the inhabitants' quality of life in disadvantaged local communities. The means to achieve this goal are mobilising community capacities (internal resources) and inclusive strategies. It is carried out by promoting the growth of local groups towards greater responsibility for everyday public affairs. This is done through a problem-solving process defined by the local community.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters: Leaflet.⁹

School of Leaders of the Polish American Freedom Foundation and School for Leaders Association

Country Poland.

Source/link: <https://www.liderzy.pl>

Keywords of practice: School for local leaders, activating local leaders, animation, innovation.

Target groups: Students; policymakers; animators, local leaders – people working for the development of the local environment.

Type of responsible party or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

Type of best practice: Initiative – a non-governmental initiative educating animators of the local environment.

Form of source: School of local leaders.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: A comprehensive program of support and development of Leaders acting for their local environment or a significant social change, development of a leadership model based on 4 pillars:

- self-awareness and leadership credibility,
- the ability to unite and engage people in action,
- vision of change in the environment, and
- the ability to introduce it.

Summary of the good practice: The central part of the program is a 12-

⁸ https://www.npkiku.gov.sk/data/files/np_kiku/dokumenty/Komunitna%20praca%20oblok.pdf

⁹ https://bokku.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Kedy-zvolit-metodu-_KP_letak-1-3.pdf?csrt=11721030471404717346

month cooperation between the leader and the tutor and a series of training courses tailored to their participants' needs and priorities, including planning their own development, team building, organisation management, communication, involving the environment and building local partnerships. The skills acquired during participation in the program help leaders in their activities to benefit local communities. Participants participate in debates, workshops, meetings with inspiring guests and leadership training. Together with tutors and experienced leader-advisors, they work individually on developing themselves and their communities. The program graduates are people from all over Poland who maintain relationships with each other and undertake joint activities.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Social media¹⁰
- Web page¹¹
- Podcast¹²

Local Activity Support Centre

Country: Poland.

Source/link: <https://www.cal.org.pl>

Keywords of practice: Activating local leaders, supporting local leaders, animation, innovation.

Target groups: Educational institutions, providers of training; students; policymakers; animators, local leaders – people working on the development of the local environment

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

Type of best practice: Initiative – a non-governmental initiative educating animators of the local environment.

Form of source: Supporting the development of local animators by implementing the CAL method.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief:

- Implementing innovative methods of working with the local community by educating animators of the local environment.

¹⁰ <https://youtu.be/rxbA1y4GiYo>

¹¹ <https://www.liderzy.pl>

¹² <https://www.szkoła-liderow.pl/podcast>

- Support for communities and social movements.
- Conducting observations, tests, and diagnosis.
- Developing innovative solutions for social problems and services.
- Developing social and educational system solutions for government administration in the field of social policy.
- Creating an environment and space for meetings and reflection on the conditions of social development.

Summary of the good practice:

- Employee education and support for local public institutions in implementing environmental and social services and participatory management (Local Activity Centres).
- Education of social workers, local community animators, officials, librarians, culture animators, teachers, and social leaders in social animation and entrepreneurship, active integration, and innovative social and educational solutions.
- Organisation of meetings of local community animators.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Web page¹³
- Social media¹⁴

Process of Local Strategy and Action Plan Development – Youth Contribute to the Development of Kneipp Park and the Touristic Theme Path

Country: Slovenia.

Source/link: https://soen.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/PlaNET-SOEN-2.o_IO1_final.pdf

Keywords of practice: Quality of life in a local environment, ideas/initiatives/youth, active participation of youth in project and promotion of the result.

Target groups: Students; youth.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Public institute for tourism, youth, and sport; educational institutions.

Type of best practice: Activity, initiative.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: Youth and schools were an-

¹³ <https://www.cal.org.pl>

¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpfsC14GhDzm9FQ_NUMIegw

imated to prepare various project proposals, enabling a better life in the local environment. They particularly were invited to participate through the bottom-up principle actively:

- They were invited to workshops to prepare regional strategy and action plans.
- At the workshops, we determined priority areas with them and, through discussion, wrote down suggested project proposals.
- Next, the project proposals in focus groups were debated with young people from various fields of expertise and different experiences and interests.
- We evaluated project ideas. Both projects were among those that were highly graded and chosen.

Summary of the good practice:

- Young people were invited to workshops to prepare local strategies and action plans.
- Young people participated in writing a project proposal, planning a project activity, and implementing the project.
- Young people are actively promoting both products between various target groups – they are primarily focused on kindergartens, schools, and youth.
- High school and university students in tourism are preparing communication plans and innovative products in both locations for the needs of other target groups.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters: Kneipp Park.¹⁵

Community Assessment Tool – Asset Inventory

Country: USA.

Source/link: <https://clubrunner.blob.core.windows.net/00000050172/en-au/files/sitepage/club-program-information/community-assessment-tools/Community-Assessment-Tools.pdf>

Keywords of practice: Technique for collecting information about the community, observation, group discussion about item(s) chosen by participants of activity

Target group: Students.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

¹⁵ <https://kozjansko.info/2013/07/javni-kneippov-park-v-sentjurju>

Type of best practice: Activity.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice: An asset inventory is a technique for collecting information about a community through observation. It is similar to a shopkeeper taking stock of merchandise, but instead of cataloguing products in a store, community members catalogue assets in their community. Objectives:

- Identify community assets that members think are important to community development.
- Reveal why people believe these assets are important.

Summary of the good practices: Preparation: You will ask participants to walk around the community for about 30 minutes and decide the boundaries in advance. You may also want to prepare a handout or poster describing the asset inventory procedures.

Materials for participants:

- Pens or pencils
- Paper or notebooks
- Handout with asset inventory directions (optional)

Materials for facilitators:

- Map of the community, if available
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board, if available

Procedures:

1. Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of your assessment. (5 minutes)
2. Randomly divide participants into groups of four to six. (5 minutes)
3. Ask each group to take a few minutes for introductions and choose a team leader who will keep track of time, ensure the group stays on task, and report back to the larger group at the end of the meeting. (5 minutes)
4. Give participants a brief overview of the activity. Explain that they will be walking around the community to identify items they think are essential to the community. If necessary, provide examples of community assets. Be sure to explain that each group member should identify at least one item. (5 minutes)
5. Distribute the activity materials to participants. (2 minutes)
6. Have group leaders take their teams into the community to identify assets. (20–30 minutes)

7. After the groups return, ask them to discuss their findings. Visit each group during the discussion to monitor its progress and answer questions. (10 minutes)
8. Ask each group to develop a list of 5 to 10 assets they think are most important to the development of the community. (15 minutes)
9. Invite group leaders to share their lists and explain choices briefly. Record the lists on a chalkboard or dry-erase board. (10 minutes)
10. Discuss the assets that groups had in common. Why were these items considered important? Did any groups identify different items? If yes, why were these items chosen? (30 minutes)
11. Collect and keep all the lists for reference when evaluating your asset inventory.

Power of Youth

Country: Slovenia.

Source/link: http://www.movit.si/fileadmin/movit/oZAVOD/Publikacije/Odtisi/Kompandij_ESE_2020.pdf

Keywords of practice: Community development, inclusion, acceptance, and integration of third-country nationals.

Target groups: Students; youth.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation – Mladinski Center Šentjur (Youth Centre Šentjur).

Type of best practice: Activity.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: A group of young people who have been attending the activities of the youth centre Šentjur for several years designed a project aimed at young people in their place or municipality. With the project, they wanted to achieve greater (social) involvement of young people in the local community, connect young people from different neighbourhoods, and integrate. Young people from the Albanian community feel more connected to their local environment. Besides, they wanted to enable young people to acquire diverse competencies and a place to connect with political decision-makers and address environmental concerns.

Summary of the good practice: The activities implemented during the project and organised by youth were three football tournaments in three different local communities, meetings with young people in five other local communities, a series of workshops on recycling and

promoting environmental cleaning (workshops were organised online, as the implementation of the planned cleaning campaign in the municipality was not possible due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic). Through the project, young people learned how to organise activities and managed to encourage young people from marginal groups (Albanians) to participate and include them in the activities.

Bloc Farm: A Project to Help Young People Return to Their Rural Origins to Take Care of Their Territory (An Initiative of Bloc Fest)

Country: Italy.

Source/link: <https://bloc-project.com/farm>

Keywords of practice: Returning home, long-term projects, networks of actions.

Target group: Students (young people having left their rural origins).

Type of responsible body or organisation: Association.

Type of best practice: Training, activity, project, initiative, face-to-face/personal sessions.

Form of source: Face-to-face experiences, learning by doing.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: *The Bloc Festival* was born on the initiative of a group of young professionals under 35 from Cilento and the rest of Italy who are active in the cultural field. Together, they want to imagine a new urban humanism which goes beyond the traditional categories of city/countryside, urban areas/internal areas, near/far, and unprecedented images of contamination. Bloc is the block, the neighbourhood. As in a condominium or an urban community, also in our case, it is only by sharing experiences and energies that it becomes possible to generate change. Bloc works to turn the spotlight on the Cilento National Park area to put it at the centre of a new narrative. Committed to developing a valuable cultural program that, starting from the riches already in the area, creates new opportunities for those who live it and those who want to discover or rediscover it with different eyes. By catalysing creative energies, we also intend to act on the territory to improve its social and environmental impact through local communities' involvement. The attention in this sense will be twofold: on the one hand, aimed at mitigating the environmental impact of our activities, and on the other, aimed at spreading greater awareness on the sustainability issues of the man-environment relationship.

Bloc Farm is a project promoted together with the Municipality of Castelnuovo Cilento and financed by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Youth Policy Department and ANCI, which aims to involve the young people of the Cilento Municipalities so that they return to re-take care of their territory, creating networks of actions and grafting long-term projects. The goal is, therefore, to stimulate the adoption of a new model of action, which finds in the criticalities of the territory the push to imagine new future facts of active citizenship, inclusion, and responsibility. We support 15 young Cilento people on a path of rediscovery of the territory, empowerment, and self-entrepreneurship.

The concrete outputs so far have been:

- Create a potential business idea to be launched as a start-up and create a business plan. Mentoring will continue during 2022 to undertake activities in 2023.
- Launch of a community project through interviews to be added to the digital repository of the project – to create an artistic concept to create original site-specific street art, which will be used as a catalyst to promote other community initiatives to promote social welfare (community party, artwork spins off and participatory with the local community).

Summary of the good practice:

- The project focuses on the rural territory and new generations with a call for young people from Cilento (Italy).
- Offering workshops for impertinent ideas and offering the opportunity to put them into practice for the development of the territory.
- Young people were selected via an open call.
- The project aims to put the new generations at the centre of the activities so they can return to re-take care of their territory, creating networks of actions and grafting long-term projects. The goal is, therefore, to stimulate the adoption of a new model of action, which finds in the criticalities of the territory the push to imagine new future facts of active citizenship, inclusion, and responsibility.
- Hybrid training methods offline/online, including a weekend to rediscover the area, stimulate greater awareness and a discussion on potential needs and critical issues, a 54-hour online training course, which provides workshops dedicated to design for internal areas, self-entrepreneurship, and social innovation.

A Business Incubator for Internal Areas That Accompanies and Enables Community and Inhabitant Skills to Produce Social Impact and New Economies

Country: Italy.

Source/link: <https://www.appenninohub.it>

Keywords of practice: Regeneration, incubation, internal areas, social impact.

Target groups: Policymakers, the inhabitants who want to become community animators.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

Type of best practice: Participatory workshops; inspiring best practices; incubating the idea/project; supporting the start-up (networking/crowdfunding).

Form of source: Website and face-to-face sessions.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: Appenninol'Hub accompanies the inhabitants 'step by step' to enable their skills and develop employment by creating new businesses and regenerating essential services that meet their aspirations and are solid, sustainable, and long-lasting. The development and incubation of businesses living in the Inner Areas thus become the means to improve living conditions, enhance the wealth of places, develop resilience, and increase the rate of widespread economy. Appenninol'hub inspires and accompanies communities and territories in implementing new business or service projects. It assists the company structure in the early stages of entrepreneurial management, obtaining financing and participating in their development tenders. They also support Local Public Administrations, Communities, Companies and Private Entities in economic-social development and innovation paths.

Summary of the good practice: 4-step process that combines educating and supporting the development of local animators:

1. Being inspired by local examples of best practices and facilitating local networks
2. Participatory workshop to define the mission and project content
3. Incubating the idea (legal identity, business plan, etc.)
4. Supporting the start-up (advising on crowdfunding, public funding opportunities, creating networks, etc.)

A key point is linking people and building networks.

BRIT, a Facilitator for Small Villages (with Less Than 5,000 Inhabitants) and Owners of Historic Mansions

Country: Italy.

Source/link: <https://www.mundobrit.com>

Keywords of practice: Leadership, valorising historical properties, contemporary business, sustainability, memories, autonomy, historical properties.

Target groups: Educational institutions, providers of training, students, young people.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Company.

Type of best practice: Training; face-to-face/personal sessions.

Form of source: Video.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: BRIT is a consulting and training company, born from the integration of the skills and experience of architects, entrepreneurs, and coaches, focused on:

- leadership of real estate;
- the enhancement of historical assets through the establishment of contemporary businesses;
- the sustainability of the recovery of historic buildings.

The BRIT team has created a way of working divided into three progressive phases to guide the owners of historic properties through the long and complex process of transforming and making their assets income. They help:

- create a sustainable business with the historical property owners;
- self-finance restoration and renovation works;
- guarantee harmony and family unity.

They help owners consciously lead the project beyond the traditional approach of consultants, professionals, and companies, passing from ‘I tell you how to do’ to ‘I train you to do’ and supporting you until you reach your total autonomy. The BRIT offer is progressive and flexible, knowing that it is a process that must take place at the speed with which the owner can make decisions with prudence, with extensive evaluations and skills also acquired personally.

Summary of the good practice: They consider the property a living existence that has a self in the past – a contemporary identity and a future that depends on the will of the owners. They build the future on the foundations of memory; 3-step format:

1. Three-hour meeting – called BRIT Revolution, which aims to let

you experience our method first and to allow the sharing of visions, tools, and languages.

2. BRIT Journey, a 4-day full immersion seminar, where you can develop:
 - ‘your’ future;
 - ‘your’ building;
 - ‘your’ business idea;
 - your next step.
3. In seven steps, personalised advice will lead you to enhance your real estate assets. This course is called the BRIT Marathon and lasts 9–12 months:
 - seminar to express the business model;
 - mentorship and case studies;
 - property diagnostics;
 - feasibility of the re-use project;
 - prototyping of the business model through ‘immersive simulations’;
 - business planning;
 - risk analysis.

Work Support

In this section, we present a collection of best practices that centre around utilising innovative and nonstandard tools and methods supporting the efforts of local community animators. Each practice is accompanied by a description and information detailing its application and impact. It is worth noting that certain practices mentioned in the previous section are also relevant to this section, such as the Business Incubator for internal areas and the BRIT facilitator for small villages.

Useful Materials and Recommendations during the Coronavirus Pandemic for Working with Volunteers

Country: Slovakia.

Source/link: <https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/sk/materialy/dobrovolnictvo-v-case-koronavirusu-manualy-odporucania>

Keywords of practice: Coronavirus pandemic, volunteers, self-government, organisers of volunteer activities.

Target groups: Volunteers; organisers of volunteer activities; leaders and managers of NGOs.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

Type of best practice: Initiative.

Form of source: Document and materials on the web platform; video; event; Audio Radio VIVA.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: The Volunteer Centres and Organisations (PDCS) platform is an umbrella organisation. Its mission is to support the creation of a favourable environment for the development of volunteering in Slovakia, to be the voice of volunteering centres and organisations that develop volunteering, to defend their needs and interests, and to translate them into legislative or societal practice.

Summary of the good practice: During the crisis caused by the spread of the Covid-19 disease, solidarity grew throughout Europe, and interest in volunteering grew. The Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations (PDCS) has prepared a comprehensive list of recommendations and principles for involving volunteers in activities. On the web portal¹⁶ organisations and volunteers can find all necessary materials and documents related to health protection during the pandemic. Some of the materials are also in the Hungarian language.^{17 18}

Some additional information about the practice:

- Materials for municipalities and organisations¹⁹
- Materials for volunteers²⁰
- Materials for organisers of volunteer activities²¹

¹⁶ <https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/sk/materialy/dobrovolnictvo-v-case-koronavirusu-manualy-odporucania>

¹⁷ https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/Koronavirus/%C3%96nk%C3%A9ntes_vagyok_a_koronav%C3%ADrus_idej%C3%A9n.docx

¹⁸ https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/Koronavirus/%C3%96nk%C3%A9ntes_vagyok_a_koronav%C3%ADrus_idej%C3%A9n_cserk%C3%A9sz.docx

¹⁹ https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/Koronavirus/Samospravy/Manu%C3%A1l_pre_samospr%C3%A1vy_Dobrovo%C4%BEn%C3%ADctvo_po%C4%8Das_epid%C3%A9mie_COVID19.pdf

²⁰ https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/Infografika_-_dobrovo%C4%BEn%C3%ADkom_v_%C4%8Dase_koronav%C3%ADrusu_-_rady_a_odpor%C3%BA%C4%8Dania.pdf

²¹ <https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/sk/novinky/novinky/262-zasady-zapojenia-dobrovolnikov-a-dobrovolnicok-ak-uz-sme-sa-rozhodli-s-nimi-spolupracovat>

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Audio Radio Viva²²
- Video²³

GROWNi

Country: Slovakia.

Source/link: <https://growni.sk>

Keywords of practice: Website, mentoring, education, volunteering, development.

Target groups: Non-government institutions; public administration; professionals.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation – Občianske združenie LEAF (civic association).

Type of best practice: Service provided and mediated online.

Form of source: Website; published offers; published contacts.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: A website that offers various services and types of support that can benefit local animators. In ‘Volunteering,’ they connect two worlds: people willing to help and meaningful initiatives. In the ‘Mentoring’ section, the practitioner can choose a mentor. They will advise and move them forward in an area that interests them through a one-off consultation or long-term mentoring. Alternatively, they become a mentor for others. In the section ‘Education,’ with exciting events, courses, or study and scholarship opportunities, employees can grow and get to know interesting organisations or inspiring lecturers. They can also join working groups according to their topic.

Summary of the good practice: GROWNi – We create space for your personal and professional growth. We connect, educate, and inspire. Together, we move Slovakia forward. We connect experienced mentors with those who currently need their know-how. We create space for professional development in unique working groups through courses and events. We connect regions of Slovakia and encourage their involvement. People on GROWNi do not expect a financial reward for their help. There is also a list of volunteers ready to help in different areas.

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcrhEdXErlM>

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRIV36EbqIM>

Some additional information about the practice: The individual will find on the GROWNi page:

- *Mentor (consultant).* Do you need a consultation on how to grasp your idea or take your project further? On GROWNi, you can find a mentor who has been there before and can advise you.
- *A volunteer.* Looking for help with a specific problem? Whether it is marketing, IT law, HR, or event management. Find a volunteer who knows what they are doing. Volunteers can be professionals or students.
- *Team member.* Do you not want to do things alone but want to find people interested in the same field as you? Find teammates and take your project to the next level.
- *Opportunity to promote your project.* In addition to finding great people to join you on GROWNi, by publishing your project, you can let the world know about it and gain new supporters and fans.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Educational opportunities for young professionals, experienced professionals, non-profit organisations, and public institutions²⁴
- Mentoring offers for young professionals, experienced professionals, non-profit organisations, and public institutions²⁵
- Mentoring in the thematic area of ‘youth work’²⁶
- Mentoring in the thematic area of ‘working with community’²⁷

Q Neighbourly Movement

Country: Poland.

Source/link: <https://www.cal.org.pl/projekty-2/zrealizowane/q-ruch-sasiedzki>

Keywords of practice: Animation of the local community, animation, innovation.

Target groups: Local communities; local community animators; users of services provided by local community animators.

²⁴ https://growni.sk/skills?who=professional&who=ngo_school&who=public_institution&who=young_professional

²⁵ https://growni.sk/mentoring?who=ngo_school&who=young_professional&who=professional&who=public_institution

²⁶ https://growni.sk/mentoring?hashtag=praca%20s%20mládežou&who=ngo_school&who=young_professional&who=professional&who=public_institution&page=2

²⁷ https://growni.sk/mentoring?hashtag=komunita&who=ngo_school&who=young_professional&who=professional&who=public_institution

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation; local community animators.

Type of best practice: Initiative.

Form of source: Implementing innovative methods of animating the local community.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: The goal of Q-Ruch is to integrate neighbours and strengthen neighbourly ties. The initiative aims to search, promote, and support agreeable activities, create amicable relations, build trust and cooperation, change the look of courtyards, and create a friendly neighbourhood.

Summary of the good practice:

- *Education:* organisation of the educational cycle of the Academy of Neighbourhood Initiatives, where residents learn to animate their neighbourhoods.
- *Animation:* encouraging residents to participate in Warsaw-wide neighbourhood actions such as Neighbour's Day and Backyard Christmas.
- *Support:* support for initiatives and active residents who have ideas for local activities and are looking for funds for their implementation, consultations in the Local Initiative Incubator.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Social media^{28 29}

Animation in the Village of Krzaki

Country: Poland.

Source/link: <https://pl-pl.facebook.com/pracowniainspiracjikulturalnych>

Keywords of practice: Animation, innovation, activation, youth.

Target groups: Local communities; local community animators; youth.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation; local leaders

Type of best practice: Activity; initiative.

Form of source: Implementing animation activities; Website.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: Actions taken in the area of Krzaki were a response to emerging problems:

²⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/QRuchSasiedzki>

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/OtwartaKuchniaMiejska/videos/501469123681928>

- ineffective use of free time during school holidays,
- difficulties in learning and acquiring new information,
- the insufficient number of joint activities integrating residents.

By implementing animation activities in Krzaki, it was possible to minimize the emerging problems – the lack of active forms of spending free time during school holidays, no space for joint meetings, and difficulties in accessing culture. By using new methods of work unknown to local communities, organisers of local ventures managed to stimulate the community to act actively for the benefit of the surroundings.

Summary of the good practice: The initiator of the activities was local youth, who were both the organisers and participants of the implemented projects. Citizens, entrepreneurs, local authorities, and media representatives were involved in the activities. In these activities, young people were guided by dignity, respect for others, equal opportunities in the local community (mainly children and youth), security, solidarity, and openness. External organisations helped young people to prepare and conduct activities. A total of 15 initiatives were organised. An Informal group called ‘Entertainment Youth’ was created, which was transformed into the Pracownia Inspiracji Kultury Cultural Association after 10 years of activity. Activities were extended to neighbouring towns. Since 2004, the team has organised and implemented eight social projects (‘Holidays in Krzaki,’ ‘Foto Krzaki – on a clearing and at a firehouse,’ ‘We live in the bushes,’ ‘We invite you to our Krzaki,’ ‘Roots of the Krzaki,’ ‘Holidays in Krzaki,’ ‘Discovering the Bushes,’ and ‘Together. For us!’), several exhibitions, film screenings, festivals and competitions. The group participates in regional and national projects – including social and turnout campaigns, thus encouraging the residents of the Brzenio commune to participate in civic life actively.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Article³⁰
- Facebook³¹

³⁰ http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-doi-10_18778_1508-1117_31_04

³¹ <https://pl-pl.facebook.com/pracowniainspiracjiekulturalnych/videos/podczas-warsztat%C3%B3w-w-muzeum-animacji-se-ma-for-uczestnicy-i-uczestniczki-projekt/371476153008582>

Drop in Education: A Catalogue of Non-Formal Education Methods

Country: France, Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia.

Source/link: <https://drop-in.eu/media/drop-in-io2-en.pdf>

Keywords of practice: Non-formal education methods, stimulating engagement and motivation of participants.

Target groups: Local community animators; users of services provided by local community animators.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Educational institutions.

Type of best practice: Activity.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: A catalogue was developed as a part of the project. It is meant to be used by facilitators – teachers in different subjects, and support persons and youth workers to support them in their everyday work with students (to fight against early school leaving). The general goal of this alternative tool is to enhance the capacities of the facilitators to stimulate active engagement and to maintain sustainable motivations for learning among the students by using the methods of non-formal education applied in a classroom environment. The catalogue is a collection of several methods that can be very useful for animators.

Summary of the good practice: Several methods are included:

- Section from: Ice Breaker, Team Building, and Get to Know Each Other Activities
- Section form: Being Yourself, Self-esteem, Self-confidence, and Self-awareness
- Team Building, Feeling of Equality, and Active Participation
- Building up Your Own Environment and Taking Responsibility for It
- The Importance of Education and Motivation to Learn
- Learn to Say NO!

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters: Handbook.³²

Global Education Agora

Country: Slovenia; the project involves partners from Slovenia, Italy, France, Uganda, Spain, Lithuania, Portugal, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania, and Greece.

³² <https://seedsforchange.org.uk/tools.pdf>

Source/link: https://geagora.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Newsletter-GeAgora-EN_02.pdf

Keywords of practice: Innovative methods, methods from the streets.

Target groups: Local communities; local community animators; users of services provided by local community animators.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation for Slovenia – Association Lojtra.

Type of best practice: Activity; project.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: GEAgora is a strategic partnership project funded by the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme (2017–2019). Its main aim was the development of innovative methods with a global dimension that can be applied on the streets.

Summary of the good practice: The project includes several good practices of activities that can be of help to animators:

- Cultivators race
- Street exhibition: bones of contention
- Theatre in the street
- The apple game
- Twisterra
- Street debate
- Music to attract
- Indignant drawings
- Living exhibition – street action

Some additional information about the practice: General project website.³³

Seminar on Time Management

Country: Slovenia.

Source/link: <https://www.gzs.si/Dogodki/9-11-2021/seminar-time-management>

Keywords of practice: Time management.

Target group: Local community animators.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Non-governmental organisation.

Type of best practice: Seminar or workshop.

³³ <http://geagora.eu>

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: The purpose of the seminar is to introduce participants to the methods that can help them manage their time more effectively and give them tips on how to use the methods.

Summary of the good practice: Knowledge and use of time management methods:

- To do sheet – advantages and backdowns of its use.
- What is important, and what is urgent?
- A method for determining work priorities.
- The most successful method for setting goals.
- Why does not multitasking work?
- Methods for realistic time estimation for individual activities.
- What are the biggest thieves of time, and how can we avoid them?

How to establish an effective management system?

- Why is procrastination good in some cases?
- How do you work with people who do not meet deadlines?
- How do we establish and maintain a system that will work?

The most common pitfalls and obstacles in maintaining an effective time management system.

Some additional information about the practice: Different training providers offer several similar workshops and seminars.

CasaNatural: A Social Innovation Community – Coliving, Coworking Incubators

Country: Italy.

Source/link: <https://www.benatural.com>

Keywords of practice: Social innovation, co-working, co-living, dream incubation.

Target groups: Local communities; local community animators.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Company.

Type of best practice: Training; seminar or workshop; activity; project; co-working and co-living services.

Form of source: Video; event; face to face.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: Thanks to the methodology (dream, share and prototype), Casa Natural becomes the first professional Dream Incubator where your dream job becomes reality. Casa

Netural offers support in realising the professional dream, starting from the assumption that passion and creative energy are the fundamental ingredients of those who dream and become decisive propulsion engines for those who realise what they dreamed of doing.

Casa Netural offers consultancy for the realisation of the project, supporting the writing of the idea in sharing it within the physical and virtual community that revolves around the Incubator of dreams, in the business model and business plan, in offering a physical space to test it and a community of people to grow the idea and find the team. Casa Netural is also a place to live. The Co-living space hosts innovators worldwide who bring their projects to the territory, seek inspiration or network to work with locals on shared projects.

Summary of the good practice:

- Offers many elements to create a fertile environment for networking and incubation.
- Co-living stimulates the exchange and inspiration of new ideas.
- Co-working supports local animators and facilitates networking.
- It initiated many projects that promote the sharing economy and develop collaborative methods of work, design, management, and care of the physical spaces of the community.
- It promotes international networks and exchanges of skills, know-how, and skills.
- It is an inclusive place involving the local community and innovators from all over the world. A house in which to live, a co-living experience to develop skills and visions.

Noi Ortadini

Country: Italy.

Source/link: <https://linktr.ee/noiortadini>

Keywords of practice: Urban regeneration, social inclusion, urban gardens, sustainability, urban regeneration, urban gardening, social agriculture, social inclusion, sustainability, green cities, rewilding, renaturing, European Solidarity Corps, European Solidarity Corps, biodiversity, and biodiversity.

Target groups: Local community animators; users of services provided by local community animators.

Type of responsible body or organisation: Civic and social organisation.

Type of best practice: Organisation.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: Noi Ortadini is an association for social advancement (in Italian APS – Associazione di Promozione Sociale) based in Matera, a southern city in Italy. Their mission is to promote social and economic development in the local community by creating employment opportunities and supporting marginalised individuals, such as refugees and those with disabilities. Noi Ortadini offers a range of services, including environmental education workshops for children and adults, as well as a range of projects, events, courses, and DIY activities focused on sustainability and social impact, and they aim to create a positive change in the local community.

Summary of the good practice: Noi Ortadini has led several events and workshops. Some examples are displayed below:

- ‘Cantiere delle idee’ is a community-based initiative to engage the local community in the participatory planning of their urban community garden.
- ‘I am Out’ is a youth exchange hosted at a local farmhouse, including practical and theoretical sustainability and outdoor activities.
- ‘Biblioteca di quartiere’ is a project aimed at promoting reading and literacy among young people in the area.
- Orto in Rime – Poetry and live music event.
- Olimpiadi dell’Agricoltura – The Agriculture Olympics.

Fixed meeting weekday: every Saturday morning.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Social media.³⁴

AgriNetural

Country: Italy.

Source/link: https://www.benetural.com/it_IT/agrinetural

Keywords of practice: Food urbanism, social innovation, urban agriculture, sustainable food systems, community development, interstitial spaces, redevelopment interventions, alternative economies, minimal interventions, non-invasive interventions, regional development.

Target groups: Local community animators; users of services provided by local community animators.

³⁴ linktr.ee/noiortadini and participedia.net/organization/8180

Type of responsible body or organisation: Civic and social organisation.

Type of best practice: Project.

Form of source: Text.

Aims and objectives of the practice in brief: AgriNetural is a cutting-edge project rooted in the design trend of Food Urbanism, which seeks to explore the impact of food production on urban design and architecture. The project showcases the potential of novel social innovation strategies to integrate food production, processing, distribution, and consumption in the contemporary cityscape. AgriNetural aims to identify and cultivate abandoned spaces, such as interstitial areas, courtyards, flat roofs, and disused buildings, thereby becoming a critical element of livelihood for residents, fostering an alternative economy, and serving as an icon of redevelopment interventions through non-invasive, minimal actions. Ultimately, the project aims to create a replicable model that can be adapted to other cities.

Summary of the good practice: AgriNetural has led several events and workshops. Some examples are displayed below:

- Identifying and mapping abandoned urban spaces and cultivating interstitial spaces, courtyards, and flat roofs.
- Implementation of pilot projects for the cultivation of urban areas.
- Creation of educational programs and workshops to promote using abandoned urban spaces for agriculture.
- The organisation of events and initiatives to promote the dissemination of knowledge related to urban agriculture and its benefits.
- Development of a network of stakeholders interested in promoting agriculture and the regeneration of abandoned urban spaces.
- Promoting social innovation strategies aimed at integrating food production, processing, distribution, and consumption in the contemporary city.
- Collaboration with local communities, non-profit organisations, and institutions to promote sustainable urban development by urban agriculture.
- Creating an open-source platform to share knowledge and best practices related to urban agriculture and the regeneration of abandoned urban spaces.

Relevant visual materials, pictures, photos, videos, posters:

- Social media.³⁵

³⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/agoragrimatera>

Chapter Seven

Volunteering Supports Solidarity, Social Inclusion, and Participation of Youth

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Putting European principles like solidarity and non-discrimination into practice, volunteering is one of the essential components of active citizenship and democracy. It contributes to the peaceful evolution of European communities. At all levels-local, regional, national, and European-voluntary activities develop a sense of connection and commitment among citizens to their society. They also increase civic participation. According to the volunteering charter, a volunteer is a person who voluntarily engages in socially beneficial actions. These initiatives encourage the volunteers' personal growth as they devote their time and effort to the greater good without receiving compensation (European Youth Forum, 2012).

Volunteering is imbued with ideals like belonging, empowerment, reciprocity, solidarity, and mutual trust. People engage in volunteerism for a great variety of reasons: to help eliminate poverty and to improve basic health and education; to provide a safe water supply and adequate sanitation; to tackle environmental issues and climate change; to reduce the risk of disasters; and to combat social exclusion and violent conflict (UNV, 2011). At a collective level, volunteering is linked to active citizenship and social participation. Volunteers acquire and

develop specific skills and competencies at the individual level, which are increasingly recognised in the labour market. However, volunteering has not yet reached its full potential. More Europeans than those who regularly volunteer believe that helping others is a significant part of their lives. According to the 2007 Eurobarometer, seven of ten Europeans do not volunteer, even though 80% of poll participants believe that volunteering is crucial to European democratic life. Regarding the younger generation, only 2% of those between the ages of 15 and 30 report regularly engaging in volunteer work or other community service, while 3 out of 4 young people say that volunteering motivates them to become more involved in society (CEV, 2010).

Volunteerism for Social Inclusion of Youth

Young people are a significant driver for societal advancement. Youth are also acknowledged to be a population that is particularly susceptible to social marginalization. As a form of civic engagement, volunteering has the potential to be a potent tool for providing young people a voice in decision-making. According to studies, volunteering at an early age encourages people to begin their long-term commitment to development. When volunteering helps young people participate in development processes, it can also improve social inclusion by fostering relationships between youth and their communities, providing those volunteers with a sense of inclusion and esteem for their community. In turn, the communities gain a deeper appreciation of the potential benefits that kids may provide in today's society (UNV, 2014).

Any discussion of young people's social inclusion must include the topic of employment. Therefore, drawing attention to data showing that volunteering may supplement formal education by teaching young people employability-boosting practical skills is crucial. Social skills and competencies can be developed through voluntary activities, acknowledged as rich learning experiences. By increasing job-related skills such as cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, evaluation and management, problem-solving, and leadership, volunteering can help improve young people's professional chances and advancement (UNV, 2014).

Volunteering As a New Dimension of EU Citizenship

The EU encourages official and informal political participation as part of active citizenship. It also entails participating in pursuits often as-

sociated with the non-political private sphere. The term ‘active citizenship’ does not just refer to political participation or the ability to vote, two of citizenship’s oldest and possibly most prevalent definitions (Bezjak & Klemenčič, 2014, pp. 53–54). Roker and Eden (2002) created the idea of beneficial social engagement. According to their definition, it includes a variety of social behaviours such as official volunteer work, unofficial community networks, neighbourliness, regular political activity, awareness-raising, selfless acts, and caring work at home and in the neighbourhood that enable young people to ‘participate in their communities and influence policies and practices in the world around them’ (Roker & Eden, 2002).

Volunteering is an essential component of good citizenship and political engagement, not an alternative to it. This way of thinking about citizenship is where we can trace the origins of the concept of active citizenship (Bezjak & Klemenčič, 2014).

For several reasons, volunteering is now widely accepted and encouraged as a successful method of promoting civic engagement. Volunteering fosters civic virtues, increases political engagement, and strengthens democracy. It is frequently stated that persons who have volunteered are more inclined to vote, join political parties, and engage in political processes (Bezjak & Klemenčič, 2014). In society, volunteers are referred to as ‘little platoons’ (Institut de Recherche et d’Information sur le Volontariat, 2011):

The ones who see what should be improved or changed in society before the public authorities do. Volunteers make hidden things visible.

European youth are among the population groups in Europe most eager to develop the habit of active EU citizenship. However, they must be given the chance to participate in social change. In the current systemic crisis, overcoming the lack of worldwide knowledge and growing scepticism about the benefits of the EU will probably be more challenging. Unprecedented levels of unemployment, the risk of social isolation, and poverty are affecting Europeans (particularly young people). For instance, young people (between the ages of 18 and 29) appear to be losing some faith in the European Union. 57% of young Europeans believe they have been marginalized and excluded, according to the Youth Eurobarometer from April 2014 (European Commission, 2014).

Youth can develop their position as ‘European activists’ in their own

areas through many forms of citizenship programs. Undoubtedly, one of these activities is volunteering. While volunteering, in general, cannot replace political engagement (especially if it does not address the political issues of power, equality, and structures), it does play a significant role in promoting civic engagement, social responsibility, and solidarity.

Third Mission of the University: Volunteering Activities in the Society

In recent years, there has been increasing pressure on universities to shift from mainly teaching and performing research to adding a 'third mission,' portrayed as 'a contribution to society.' Universities that participate in 'third mission' initiatives are becoming increasingly acknowledged as vital forces advancing cultural, social, and economic advancement in the areas in which they operate. They accomplish this by disseminating information and technology to a larger audience in both industry and society (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020).

Secundo et al. (2017) highlight that the third mission has three discrete dimensions-technology transfer and innovation, continuing education, and social engagement-through which universities engage with their external engagement. According to a study by Berghaeuser and Hoelscher (2019), the third mission is a concept that most universities include in their mission statements. Nevertheless, the main emphasis usually centres on transmitting technical knowledge and the economic consequences. Issues about civic involvement are given comparatively little attention.

In the modern world, volunteering is an essential tool for solving social problems. This practice is essential for helping students from different nations build their professional and personal abilities. As a third mission, volunteering refers mainly to social engagement and interaction with non-profit organisations.

Further on, we present insights from Eurobarometer reports of 2011, 2014, 2019 and 2022 (European Commission, 2011, 2014, 2019, 2022c) about the participation of young people (15–30) in volunteering activities in 28 Member States of the European Union.

In December 2014, the Eurobarometer surveyed youth involvement in volunteering activities (over 13,000 young people between 15 and 30 were interviewed). The results showed that one-fourth of the young Europeans participated in voluntary activities in the last 12 months,

whether regularly or irregularly. This finding is similar to the proportion observed in the Flash Eurobarometer survey February 2011, when 24% said they had participated in an organised voluntary activity (European Commission, 2011).

Compared to the findings from February 2011, in 2014 young people were equally or less likely to be involved in organised voluntary activities. The most significant increases can be seen in Cyprus, Italy, and Portugal, while the most significant decreases can be seen in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, and Lithuania. In 2011, no country reached the threshold of more than 40 respondents involved in volunteering, while in 2014, in Ireland, more than 40% were involved in volunteering (European Commission, 2015b).

However, important progress can be noticed in recent years, as according to Barometer from 2019, out of around 10.000 surveyed young people, 34% of respondents claimed that they had been involved in organised voluntary activities in the past 12 months. Countries in which more than 40% of respondents are involved in volunteering activities are Ireland, Germany, and Austria (European Commission 2019).

Two crucial factors encourage young people to engage in volunteering activities: the possibility of receiving financial compensation for the expenses incurred during their volunteering and the right to recognise the personal and professional experience acquired formally. Namely, by participating in voluntary activities, volunteers gain skills or enhance their individual and vocational capabilities through non-formal learning. Such skills can later be useful in continuing education or entering the labour market, especially when they are formally recognised through qualifications that enrich their curriculum vitae.

Some member states, such as Croatia, Malta, Slovakia, and Austria, have implemented or prepared tools supporting young people in describing and recognising competencies and skills acquired through voluntary activities. Several countries use the web and IT solutions to operationalise these tools. In October 2014, the Czech Republic introduced a vocational qualification for 'Coordinator of Volunteers,' a certificate accepted nationwide (European Commission, 2015a, p. 115). According to Eurobarometer 2014, only a quarter of young people who have taken part in voluntary activities have obtained a certificate or diploma officially acknowledging their experience and abilities, a percentage that has slightly increased since 2011 (European Commission, 2014). However, the 2022 Eurobarometer report, which also includes

a section on the validation of learning outcomes, reveals that 39% of the young people surveyed received some type of formal validation of their learning activities, such as a certificate, a report summarizing their learning, or another formal validation of the learning outcomes of their volunteer work (European Commission, 2022c)

Most activities of volunteers focus on humanitarian and development aid – causes with a particular global dimension. Education, training, and sports are also among popular activities. Conversely, other issues such as the environment, animal welfare, and political, cultural, and religious causes seem less appealing. Young volunteers mainly engage in activities within their country, which aligns with their propensity to engage in actions that benefit their local community. Results of the study (European Commission, 2015b) indicate that 93% of the young people participating in the survey never had the opportunity to go abroad for volunteering.

Importance of Volunteering for Local Community Animators

Volunteering is important for young people who want to become local community animators because it allows them to develop their skills, gain real-world experience, network, understand community dynamics, build portfolios, explore their career goals, and give back to their communities. Volunteering gives young people the skillset they need to achieve a successful career in community animation and positively impact their neighbourhoods (UNV, 2011).

Final Remarks

Many young people in Europe are at risk of social exclusion as a result of the economic crisis and its repercussions on the labour market. This has led to decreased confidence in the European Union among this demographic. As a result, it is of the utmost importance to investigate potential avenues to prevent young people from drifting towards the margins of society. In addition to the impending problem of unemployment among young people, which can be partially attributable to the lack of working experience and practical abilities, volunteering presents a priceless opportunity for young people to acquire skills vital to their future success. We claim that the fundamental benefit of volunteering is enhancing general skills and cultivating social capital. This is even though there are worries over the possibility of a mismatch between the abilities obtained via volunteering and those sought by the

labour market. Drawing on previously published works, such as Keeley (2007), which shows a cause-and-effect relationship between social capital and human capital, it becomes clear that volunteering can considerably increase one's employability.

With a focus on essential pillars, the vital aims include ensuring that all young people have a more substantial involvement in democratic and civic life, enhancing the social inclusion of all young people, and supporting a smoother transition from education to the labour market. By integrating young people into society, cultivating a feeling of citizenship, and providing them with new skills and competencies to better their employment prospects, volunteering emerges as a transformative force contributing to achieving these objectives. It is of the utmost importance to acknowledge the significance of the skills obtained via participation in voluntary activities as an essential type of non-formal learning. This highlights the need to assist young people's voluntary endeavours. In addition, several programmes the European Union is implementing are on the verge of increasing the number of young people eager to participate in volunteer activities overseas. This will reinforce the myriad of advantages that volunteering can bring to the overall development of young people.

Part Two

Digitalisation and Society



Erasmus+

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Chapter Eight

Introduction

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The remaining chapters of the book's second part investigate the significant issues of digital accessibility and education in various European countries. More particularly, the book investigates the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic on disparities in digital resources. Within the context of this particular location, the authors shed light on the challenges that marginalised communities face when attempting to access and use digital resources and opportunities. Simultaneously, the texts highlight the significance of possessing skills in digital literacy and developing support structures to combat the digital divide and boost social inclusivity.

Within the context of these particular chapters of the book, the significance of social animators becomes apparent because of their significant role in addressing these challenges. These professionals make use of their specific expertise and the resources that are available to them in order to empower communities and individuals by supplying them with the required digital skills and tools that are necessary to navigate a digital environment that is always experiencing change. In the book's second part, we will investigate the collaborative efforts of social animators and communities to advance digital literacy and inclusion to establish a society characterised by digital equality.

This part of the book provides an in-depth analysis of the difficulties and strategies connected with reducing the digital divide in European digital societies, particularly emphasising the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even though there have been advancements in the accessibility of information and communication technology (ICT), there is still a considerable disparity in opportunities. Furthermore, the gap between those with access to digital resources and those without access has become even more significant due to the epidemic. At the same time that the European Union (EU) is working hard to create a 'digital

society' that protects democratic rights, the European Commission is also working hard to ensure that all citizens have access to training in digital skills.

A significant portion of this part of the book focuses on the importance of addressing informal learning, which is responsible for eighty per cent of the learning outside of traditional educational institutions. The objective of the Erasmus+ project known as 'University and Business Inclusive Digital Learning Coaches (UnInLeCo)', which represents the basis of this part of the book, is to enhance the social support infrastructure for excluded populations. Based on the study's findings, the book's next chapter focuses on the difficulties encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic. They also show the inadequacy of digital readiness in educational systems. Due to a lack of resources and capacities, communities that were socioeconomically poor and socially excluded had a tough time gaining access to online education.

Detailed information addressing the challenges and efforts made in partner countries, notably Spain, Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Germany, is provided in the following chapters. For instance, Spain encountered challenges when attempting to educate economically disadvantaged populations. However, Slovenia prioritised solving issues such as the improper use of computers and poor educational facilities. Concerning the transition to online education, North Macedonia had difficulties, particularly in rural areas. On the other hand, Germany emphasised the integration of students who were refugees or migrants. A complete study is performed on the characteristics of those impacted by the digital divide. This analysis considers various aspects, including geographical location, degree of education, socioeconomic status, proficiency in writing and language, age, and gender. The findings of this study show the significance of learning opportunities associated with social contexts. These learning opportunities include scheduled (formal and non-formal) and spontaneous (informal) learning activities.

Case studies from Spain, Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Germany are presented in the chapters that are part of the book's second part. These chapters provide an analysis of digital inclusion programmes. Specifically, they emphasise the significance of strengthening the capacities of individuals through digital inclusion activities, with a particular emphasis on strategies such as the production of media, participation in social media, the implementation of smart city initiatives, and the promotion of cybersecurity awareness. This study aims to explore

the engagement of various stakeholders in the digital society. These stakeholders include the government, universities, businesses, and organisations providing civil society services. The book's second part also emphasises the significance of the 'Triple Helix' idea and the impact of corporate social responsibility in a society increasingly dominated by digital technology. Training digital learning coaches and providing help to underserved areas is the goal of the Erasmus+ Project UnIn-LeCo, which also demonstrates the collaboration between universities, industry, and civil society.

Chapter Nine

Bridging the Digital Divide: Challenges and Strategies in European Digital Societies

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Even though ICT access has improved in many European regions in recent decades, inequality of digital opportunity must be acknowledged. The 'digital divide' indicates that not everyone can access and exploit internet information. Jobs, education, media, politics, and administration have changed drastically due to the Covid-19 epidemic, widening

the digital gap even more. Internet trends that threaten democracy, such as disinformation, fake news, and hate speech, also widen the social gap.

EU aspires to eliminate the digital divide and create a ‘digital society’ where all individuals may benefit from technology. The digital world should also respect democratic rights and principles (European Commission, 2022b). The European Commission intends to train all citizens in digital skills to reach these goals and improve everyone’s everyday life, employment, and learning systems in a mutually beneficial way.

The 2000 *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* by the European Commission was about continuing ‘lifelong learning’ rather than creating one-time learning arrangements. Namely, it is not just institutionalised; 80% of learning is informal. Learning occurs mostly outside educational institutions and often without the purpose of learning. Digitalising formal learning procedures alone excludes many because institutionalised education is generally limited to children, trainees, or professionals. Besides, not everyone can afford or access schooling. For example, financial education has been suggested for school curricula; however, despite the firm intentions, the implementation has been slow for years. We can conclude that institutionalised education typically lags behind society.

We maintain that the foundation of the digital society lies not only in traditional educational institutions but also in other crucial social support systems, including civil society groups, companies, and universities. The inception of the Erasmus+ project ‘University and Business Inclusive Digital Learning Coaches (UnInLeCo)’ is rooted in this belief. The UnInLeCo initiative is designed with the explicit goal of establishing and reinforcing a robust social support infrastructure. This infrastructure is intended to assist underprivileged populations in enhancing their digital skills and fostering positive learning attitudes. As highlighted, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the digital divide, posing challenges to all partner countries involved in the project. The subsequent sections delve into both general and specific challenges each partner country faces.

Covid-19 Pandemic Digital Challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic showed that education systems are unprepared for digital transformation. Due to the Covid-19 issue, schools and civil society organisations still use digital media and IT technolo-

gies to communicate and educate. Institutions have employed various methods to tackle issues related to digital transformation. For instance, schools have transitioned courses and lessons to online formats or have mailed educational materials. Many institutions have adopted learning platforms, often through collaborative efforts between schools and regional media competency centres or by utilising platforms like YouTube to provide digital learning resources.

The abrupt transformation in education delivery has hit students and parents from economically poor immigrant and socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods hardest. They might have poor computer abilities, limited hardware, and sometimes little writing incentive. The cliché suggests these target populations are addicted to mobile phones, yet studies demonstrate low digital participation. Disadvantaged groups know little about digital learning platforms, video conferences, and systematic utilisation of online resources. Many parents of students lack wireless Internet and use obsolete cell phones and volume-limited mobile data plans. The technology, software, and basic principles and requirements for digital learning tools are also unknown. Thus, the crisis intensified the exclusion of vulnerable people from education and non-formal and informal learning. Overall, social exclusion risk increases due to increasing individual and community expenses.

The Covid-19 crisis highlights one of the prerequisites for effective digital education and training: connectivity and appropriate digital equipment for learners and teachers; confidence and competencies in using digital technologies to support learning processes; cooperation and exchange of best practices and innovative teaching methods. In this period, educational institutions that had invested in digital capabilities were better able to adapt and expand their instructional approaches, engage learners, and continue learning. The situation showed that all educators must be able to use digital technology to teach and ensure everyone can engage in digital education; however, the situation showed that teachers and students need to improve their skills and introduce new learning methods.

As part of the UnInLeCo project, a comprehensive study was conducted, focusing on the specific needs of young students and parents among project partners. The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the unique requirements of partner countries involved in the project:

- After the recession, underprivileged groups in Spain had trouble getting into and staying in school (Escorihuela, 2016). Universities and businesses must have worked with civic society to reengage them. Spanish schools were closed at the start of the lockdown, forcing instructors, students, and parents to adapt to new learning methods. Everyone had to take online classes, and most Spanish students had to study at home.
- The importance of good family-school relationships may be stressed, focusing on Spanish schools' teaching and learning approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic. During crises, collaboration and communication enable the management of educational issues, including online education (Serrano-Díaz et al., 2022). The challenges in online education may be exacerbated when families with limited economic and social resources need to collaborate and communicate. Numerous studies indicate that disparities in access to education contribute to social issues in economically disadvantaged circumstances (López-Noguero et al., 2021). Cabrera (2020) argues that online telematics teaching in Spain during Covid-19 increases educational inequalities among students by revealing the material deficiencies of electronic devices in the most disadvantaged homes, with lower income and fewer resources, especially single-parent households, especially those with parents with compulsory secondary education or lower, from public centres and especially from southern Spain. According to Fundación FOESSA (2021), the 'digital divide' is a new cause of social exclusion and inequality. In a digitalised culture, not having an adequate connection, device, or digital management skills means losing possibilities in jobs, education, public help, and personal social interactions. This affects 46% of households that are excluded, compared to 35% that are not.
- Educational programmes have mitigated the worst effects of new educational gaps with relative success. During the state of alarm, education was moved from schools to families, highlighting an already existing inequality that now takes on new forms: gaps in digital access, technology use, and results. In households with Roma children, 44% lack Internet access, four times the general population, and two times higher in households with disabled children. Fundación FOESSA's (2021) research found that the epidemic

has widened educational disparities in a setting of substantial disparity in training, learning circumstances, and academic outcomes.

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, Slovenian schools collaborated with pupils via video conferences, online classrooms, email, and video explanations. The DIGI school initiative, which targets socially disadvantaged pupils, was another Ministry effort to address technical equipment issues. Donors helped collect more PCs for low-income distance learning students (Ermenc et al., 2021). Schools around Slovenia let kids borrow computers.
- The primary issues with using a computer were sharing it with siblings, not knowing how to use it or not having an adequate setting to learn, and Internet connection issues. Distance learning provides individual learning support for children with learning disabilities.
- Teachers received robust online learning support. In Slovenia, the Ministry for Education provided materials and support that helped teachers teach online. Therefore, some teachers were better equipped to teach than others. However, 67% of Slovenian instructors were willing to use ICT for teaching, according to TAILS 2018.
- Teachers made videos using home electronics, which may be a concern. Therefore, these recordings were sometimes of worse quality and sound, which could irritate pupils with specific deficiencies.
- The Covid-19 problem has hit Roma and migrant children also in Slovenia. Combined with a short digital skills transfer training programme, so-called intercultural mediators, established in a preliminary study, can connect beneficiaries.
- In North Macedonia, Covid-19 affected practically all aspects of society, especially meeting distance. National health authorities in North Macedonia worked hard to employ technology to improve services and manage the health system. UNICEF, WHO, and UNFPA are implementing 'Safe and Innovative Health Services during the Covid-19 pandemic in North Macedonia' with funding from the Covid-19 Fund.
- Educational institutions also suffered from the pandemic. The North Macedonian government halted all schools on March 10

because Covid-19 forced all pupils to stay home. Due to several challenges, most schools were unprepared to switch to distance learning from home. In addition to the problems, this pandemic revealed certain institutions' inability to equip their staff for remote teaching and learning. The next segment was more volatile to these changing teaching and learning delivery strategies, even with educational layers or study groups.

- Due to several challenges, primary education was more susceptible to switching from onsite to online programmes. First, rural schools had trouble using online platforms to organise online classes due to poor internet connectivity or speed. Many households lacked a PC, laptop, or other technology to attend lectures, connect to virtual classrooms, and study frequently. Many senior workers lacked the digital skills to handle this new circumstance. Urban areas with stable internet connections fared well. Thus, the Ministry of Education had to create a national platform for online learning during pandemics.
- Secondary schools were similarly unprepared for this forced learning transfer from onsite to online learning and teaching. Most families had children in primary and secondary schools and just one digital gadget that both could not use, worsening the situation. Except for children, parents had a more challenging time paying high internet fees and acquiring gadgets for online schooling.
- Some private universities in North Macedonia that had already been using some Learning Management System (LMS) were almost ready for this crisis situation, and students and teachers were exposed to online learning due to the digitalisation of many services.
- In addition to hardware and software issues, teachers needed training on such programs. Most had trouble assigning tasks online. They might meet students online but not set up and retrieve and collect assignments. Amid growing uncertainties due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education in North Macedonia announced that over 270,000 high school and primary school students, including 19,000 first graders, would start school online at home in 2020/2021 (Civil.Today, 2020) communicating with their teachers via the national distance learning platform. The national remote learning platform sought to standardise and unify

education. However, educational access remained a problem, especially for Roma, disabled, and at-risk children (Hunt, 2020).

- Covid-19 and the well-being of children and parents made managing students' well-being vital. There were several ways this epidemic had affected people. Many psychological concerns and unanswered questions caused demotivation and worry. All villages in Macedonia faced the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused problems (Zeqiri et al., 2022).
- Movement restrictions, quarantines, distance learning, and social isolation have harmed children's mental health. Distance learning increased students' tension and anxiety by 25% in secondary schools and 18% in elementary schools (United Nations North Macedonia, 2021).
- Due to the Covid-19 isolation and restrictions on face-to-face interactions, many institutions had to resort to remote communication. This included scenarios where patients communicated with their doctors, service providers interacted with their clients, businesses engaged with stakeholders, and professors connected with their students. The pandemic highlighted the need for enhanced digital capabilities to navigate such challenging circumstances.
- Prominent educational institutions shaping public opinion in North Macedonia faced the crucial task of addressing social conflicts, particularly those related to the Roma minority, given the nation's rich intercultural diversity. It was imperative that students from diverse backgrounds were exposed to social phenomena and encouraged to develop innovative solutions to mitigate these challenges.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic in Germany, typical school programs shifted predominantly online. However, refugee and migrant students were often left out due to their parents lacking access to necessary tools like hardware, software, and virtual teaching expertise. In response, there has been collaboration among universities, towns, and industries to address this gap and ensure these students have the support they need.
- The emphasis on our children highlights societal disparities, but the digital competence of European youth is not solely determined by their parents' education, background, or financial status. It is evident that rural residents face fewer digital access op-

tions, and factors like gender, age, and disability contribute to the digital divide. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic underscored unequal participation in digital transformation. Considering these aspects is crucial for shaping a democratic, digital Europe.

- Despite its potential to simplify living, seniors in Germany are routinely barred from digital media. Senior-friendly computer and mobile phone courses and online platforms are useless without an internet connection. Non-use is primarily due to technical-structural hurdles, notably in rural areas and senior homes. Unlike young target groups, seniors are generally critical of new media (SozialBank, 2019).
- In Germany, the ‘digital divide’ between major and minor municipalities is still enormous due to ‘digital refuseniks’ and ‘digital laggards’ (Initiative Stadt.Land.Digital, 2017), but rural areas have caught up. Though they lack digital media competency and use, their receptivity to it has grown (Initiative D 21, 2019, 2020; Roßmann, 2020; Bürger & Grau, 2021).
- 48% of Germans want to be more digital, such as buying tickets on the app, arranging a doctor’s appointment online, or using smart home apps. The survey showed that digital technologies are transforming daily life and that many struggled. According to the study, more training in digital technology skills is needed (Digitaltag, 2023).

To summarize the findings, let us break it down into the following key points:

1. Underprivileged communities in Spain still struggle to obtain and maintain education post-recession. Universities, corporations, and civic society must work together to solve these problems.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic forced most schools to switch to online learning. Family-school interactions were emphasised to combat the digital divide and social issues caused by low resources.
3. The pandemic caused educational inequality in rural areas. The issues were sibling computer sharing, digital literacy, and online learning video quality.
4. The pandemic made switching from onsite to online schooling difficult in most countries. Teacher training and unequal digital tool availability were significant difficulties.

5. Pandemic limitations caused psychological disorders, demotivation, and anxiety among students and parents.
6. Seniors and rural communities face a persistent digital divide. Ongoing digital adoption issues require strong initiatives.
7. European youth digital competence is affected by many causes, including the Covid-19 epidemic, which highlighted unequal digital transformation.
8. Rural-urban differences hinder digitalisation. Digital literacy and training must increase to close the gap.
9. Despite a desire for digitalization, problems, including digital technology issues, require substantial training.

These challenges must be observed and approached because a 2019 OECD study found that digital change can create inequality and cause individuals to lose touch. A comprehensive and coordinated political approach with skills development initiatives as a core part of the European digital transformation is essential to strengthening skills.

Characteristics of the Digital Divide

Our study analysis and country-specific research highlight the factors influencing digital participation, which include:

Geographical Location. In recent years, there has been progress in narrowing the digital divide in Europe, especially regarding basic broadband access. However, towns and rural areas still face challenges and may not benefit as much from digital advancements as European cities do (Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, 2017; Nüßlein & Schmidt, 2020; Masterson, 2022). Despite efforts, a digital gap persists. Initiatives such as the European Parliament’s Briefing on ‘Bridging the digital divide in the EU’ aim to address this rural-urban discrepancy (Negreiro, 2015; DigitalEurope, 2020; European Committee of the Regions, 2021). The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) by the European Commission (2023b) is a tool that can enhance transparency regarding digital performance indicators in these areas.

Education Level. As various studies indicate, lower education levels tend to diminish digital competency. Research consistently shows a strong correlation between digital skills and the number of years of education. Individuals with limited or no education at the low and middle school levels tend to exhibit weaker digital abilities. This digital divide

poses a significant risk of leaving educationally disadvantaged populations behind, impacting various aspects of life as digitization continues to advance (Bachmann et al., 2021).

Economic Class. Education plays a crucial role in determining economic class, and studies show that income significantly influences one's readiness for the digital future. Individuals with higher incomes are more daring in embracing digital technologies, often leveraging the latest gadgets and superior internet connections. This digital advantage is closely tied to financial capacity, with internet access becoming increasingly dependent on income levels (Nüßlein & Schmidt, 2020). The *Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027* (European Commission, 2020b) and *DigComp Framework* (European Commission, 2022a) aim to improve critical multipliers, educators, and risk groups' digital readiness. From 2019 to 2024, the European Commission will focus on 'A Europe fit for the digital age'¹ through the Erasmus+ programme. Another noteworthy endeavour is the European network 'All Digital – enhancing digital skills across Europe',² which empowers digitally disadvantaged groups to gain digital skills and take advantage of digital transformation.

Writing and Linguistic Skills. Refugees and migrants often face educational disadvantages, which extend to challenges in digital competence. Consequently, individuals who are illiterate or struggle with language may find it challenging to stay connected online. Proficiency in a language is closely tied to one's origin, and the migration process can diminish social participation, exacerbating these difficulties (Borde et al., 2021; Bachmann et al., 2021; European Commission, 2020a, 2021a). Recognising the challenges migrants face, a comprehensive plan for integration and inclusion spanning from 2021 to 2027 has been established. The issuance of the *White Paper on Migration Uncertainty* (Bijak et al., 2023) further emphasizes the commitment to enhance integration efforts and shape EU migration policy. The strategic focus revolves around leveraging ICT-based solutions, implementing participatory design and co-design approaches, and fostering end-to-end cooperation among various stakeholders involved in integrating migrants into European societies.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en

² <https://all-digital.org>

Disabilities. Digitalization presents significant opportunities for individuals with disabilities, yet existing access barriers need addressing through digital skills training. It is crucial for society to be aware of these online obstacles, particularly those involved in designing digital media, hardware, or IT programs. Europe has taken steps, including publishing a study on inclusive web accessibility for people with cognitive disabilities (European Commission, 2021b). Despite these efforts, the Social Europe Initiative criticizes the European Commission for not sufficiently addressing disability issues at the European Futures Summit, highlighting concerns about conference participation and the accessibility of the online platform (Moledo & Couceiro, 2022).

Age. Age affects digital capabilities, too. Children and teens' computer skills are overstated, according to studies. Even if 14- to 24-year-olds are 'digital natives' who grew up with the Internet and shaped its technical advancements via their actions and interactions, their digital competence is frequently insufficient. Meanwhile, internet abilities are generally weaker, especially among older people, sparking public controversy. People born before 1980 are called 'digital immigrants' because they must learn to use digital technologies as adults. The European Commission must confront the ageing society due to demographic change. The European Commission's (2010) *Digital Agenda for Europe* aims to address these issues.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a heightened emphasis on political accountability in supporting seniors. A noteworthy example is the Council of Europe document titled *The Digital Era? Also my Era!* (Hermans, 2022). This document provides a comprehensive overview of the subject, highlighting promising practices and emphasizing age-appropriate media education.

Additionally, a 2021 survey by the Council of Europe, titled *Against Ageism and Towards Active Social Citizenship for Older Persons* (Quinn & Doron, 2021), explores the impact of the pandemic, specifically focusing on the use and necessity of digital technologies to ensure social participation and active citizenship among older individuals. This survey addresses ageism in a digitally influenced world.

Looking ahead to *Europe's Digital Decade: Digital Targets for 2030*, the European Commission underscores the importance of digital citizenship for adults (European Commission, 2023a). This requires a commitment to freedom of choice, protection and security, solidarity and

inclusion, participation, and sustainability. Notably, in the transformation process, there is a central emphasis on prioritizing people to foster democracy.

Gender. While gender differences in childhood and adolescence are relatively minor, they tend to widen in adulthood, rendering women another vulnerable group. This gender disparity in digital skills and opportunities is underscored by the OECD study *Bridging the Digital Gender Divide* (OECD, 2018). Moreover, the European Commission highlights that women are less likely to possess specific digital skills and work in the field of ICT compared to men. In response to these challenges, the European Institute of Gender Equality actively promotes gender equality and digitalization in the EU (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018). Members of the European Parliament are also advocating for digital gender equality through initiatives such as their *Spotlight on EU Action for Women* (European Commission, 2020c) or more digitally oriented EU measures for women in Digital Scorecards (European Commission, 2021c), and the *EU Women's Digital Manifesto* (n.d.) along with organising events in collaboration with Euractiv. Recognising the need for transformative change, the *Memorandum for Lifelong Learning* (European Commission, 2000) identifies 'learning in social environments' as a crucial field of action. It emphasizes that institutionalised learning alone cannot effectively compensate for the disadvantages faced by women in the digital realm.

Learning Opportunities in Social Settings for Digital Societies

Learning in a social environment refers to outside institutionalised learning processes, such as school, company, and adult education, which are especially important during global change. Examples include voluntary work, cultural, social, and ecological projects, and forming opinions and social learning in digital spaces (Trier et al., 2001; Stahl, 2003; Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, 2019).

The European Commission (2000) introduced the term 'learning in a social environment' in the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* and identified three categories of 'appropriate learning activities':

- Schools award degrees and qualifications for formal learning.
- Non-formal learning includes 'on-the-job learning' and art, music, sports courses and civil society activities like youth organisations, trade unions, and political parties.

- Informal learning is a natural part of daily life, but unlike the other two, it is not intentional, so learners may not perceive it as increasing their knowledge and skills, but it shapes them.

Social learning provides a valuable opportunity for excluded and disadvantaged groups to develop social skills and digital abilities directly relevant to their everyday lives and practices. This becomes particularly crucial because the Internet and social media while connecting people globally, pose potential threats to society and individuals. Cybercrime, the spread of fake news, disinformation, and the prevalence of hate speech have become commonplace, posing significant challenges to democracy on a global scale.

In light of these concerns, it is essential to safeguard the democratic values we uphold offline in the digital realm. Recognizing the importance of a safe and trustworthy internet, the EU and international partners have jointly proposed, in the *Declaration for the Future of the Internet* (European Commission, 2022b) initiatives to ensure the Internet serves as a secure space for everyone. The goal is to protect democracy and humanity in the online environment, aligning with the values we cherish in the offline world.

Digital Society Partners

In building and navigating a digital society, several partners play vital roles. These include government universities, companies, and civil society organisations.

The *government* bears the responsibility of providing essential resources for the digital society and formulating educational support measures and regulations. However, effective collaboration with other social actors, particularly universities and companies, is indispensable as they serve as crucial partners, catalysts, and contributors of resources.

The Triple Helix discussion, which involves *universities collaborating with industry and public organisations*, is further enriched by the concept of the ‘Third Mission.’ This broader mission encompasses knowledge and technology transfer, regional engagement, collaborative research with *civil society*, and active student participation.

In a digital society, *businesses* play a pivotal role. They must consider the societal impact of digital products and services during their development and ensure compatibility with social values. The digital trans-

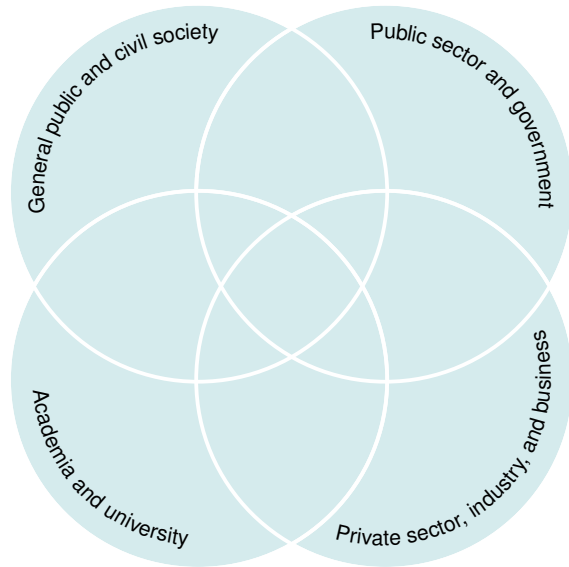


FIGURE 9.1

Four-Helix (adapted from GRRIP Project (2020) and Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung (2023))

formation also extends the traditional understanding of ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (Andersen, 2022).

Digital support from *civil society organisations* is vital to the digital transformation, particularly because they engage with disadvantaged groups and comprehend their unique needs. These organisations can facilitate the acquisition of IT basics and advanced skills in IT systems and processes through accessible educational initiatives like computer courses and informal learning.

As a resource-based intervention, empowerment utilizes social support to enhance autonomy and self-determination in a digitally influenced world. In this context, supporting actors can act as ‘coaches’ to assist individuals who may feel powerless in navigating the digital realm and help them overcome technical challenges. Social animators, in particular, can play a significant role in fulfilling this coaching function.

In the Erasmus+ Project UnInLeCo, the key idea was that universities, businesses, and selected civil society organisations leverage their digital expertise and educational resources to train so-called digital learning coaches. These coaches, drawn from relevant civil society organisations and comprised of both professionals and experienced volunteers, play a pivotal role. They facilitate the dissemination of digi-

tal skills and serve as multipliers, extending their support to a diverse range of individuals, including both advantaged and disadvantaged populations within the community.

Empowering Individuals Through Digital Inclusion Initiatives

This section describes some good practices from several European countries, Spain, Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Germany, highlighting diverse approaches and innovative projects promoting digital inclusion and skill development and showing that empowerment is essential besides access to the target group and a trustworthy relationship because informal learning occurs in a familiar social environment. People are encouraged and given easy access to the digital world, especially with civil-sector support.

The examples outlined below demonstrate that various aspects such as media production, social media engagement, everyday software and hardware usage, smart city initiatives, digital business model development, digital mindfulness practices, cybersecurity awareness, IT programming skills, and more have the potential to empower individuals in a digital world. All the examples were identified within the UnInLeCo project.

Spain

- *Millennials* project is co-financed by the European Social Fund, focusing on training courses for 16–29-year-olds. It covers a range of digital skills, from cybersecurity to project management.³
- *Alicante Futura* offers a 100-day digital boot program, preparing non-technical individuals for the digital job market.⁴
- *Madrid for Refugees* empowers refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants with digital literacy skills for social integration and job-seeking.⁵
- *E-Inclusive* project by Cocemfe creates a global telematics web platform, enhancing digital accessibility for people with disabilities.⁶

³ <https://www.eoi.es/es/empleo/empleo-y-practicas/en-que-consiste>

⁴ <https://www.impulsalicante.es/alicantefutura/queesalicantefutura>

⁵ <https://madridforrefugees.org/en/digital-literacy>

⁶ <https://www.cocemfe.es/informate/noticias/clm-inclusiva-cocemfe-pone-en-marcha-un-proyecto-piloto-de-transformacion-digital>

- *Using Digital for Employment*. The Roma Secretariat and Red Cross launched ‘Using Digital: Socio-Occupational Itineraries from Analogue to Digital,’ innovating employment support processes.⁷
- *We Break the Digital Divide*. Caritas’s project ensures safe internet use for families, fostering digital literacy.⁸
- *Jovesolides E-Inclusion* promotes digital literacy through their ‘E-Inclusion project,’ especially among the aged and unemployed.⁹
- *Digital Boot Camp*. Verne Group offers a ‘Digital Boot Camp for Non-Technical Professionals’ to become digital employees in just 100 days.¹⁰
- *Proyecto e-IRIS* helps libraries establish modular digital citizenship spaces for users and people with disabilities.¹¹
- *Programa CERES*. The European Social Fund-funded ‘Programa CERES’ trains female trainers to teach rural women basic computer and information skills.¹²
- *Next Generation Funding* supports the ‘Programa de alfabetización digital’ in various regions, addressing the rural digital gender gap.¹³

Slovenia

- *Third Age University* promotes intergenerational activities and offers various ICT-focused programs.¹⁴
- *Symbiose Genesis* is an intergenerational project providing local ICT workshops for seniors.¹⁵
- *Digital Skills for Integration and Active Citizenship* project aims to improve the digital skills of migrant people to support their integration and active citizenship.¹⁶

⁷ <https://www.gitanos.org/actualidad/prensa/comunicados/131803.html>

⁸ https://www.caritas.es/accion_social/rompemos-brecha-digital

⁹ <https://jovesolides.org/proyectos-emprendedores/e-inclusion>

¹⁰ <https://www.vernegroup.com/actualidad/noticias/lanzamos-el-programa-new-digital-workers>

¹¹ <http://eprints.rclis.org/42680>

¹² <https://programaceres.es>

¹³ <https://www.cursosmujerrural.es>

¹⁴ <https://www.utzo.si/en>

¹⁵ <https://simbioza.eu>

¹⁶ <https://discproject.eu>

North Macedonia

- *Romaversitas* programme empowers Roma undergraduates with digital skills.¹⁷
- *Roma Economic Development Initiative* empowers vulnerable communities economically and offers digital skills training.¹⁸
- *eLearning Centre 'IT Training and Education'* supports universities using technology for teaching and learning.¹⁹
- *SEE University Business and Innovation Centre* fosters start-up enterprises and digital skills training.²⁰
- *SEEU Quality Assurance and Management Office* provides training for academic and administrative staff, including digital skills training.²¹

Germany

- *Computerspende Regensburg* donates computers to low-income individuals and promotes digital autonomy.²²
- *Binary Kitchen*. The non-profit hackerspace 'Binary Kitchen' creates digital projects and collaborates with other associations.²³
- *Campus Asyl* promotes equal participation through various activities, including digital empowerment initiatives.²⁴
- *Digital Empowerment Initiatives*. Several organisations in Germany are dedicated to educating refugees and promoting digital empowerment.²⁵
- *We Integrate* association supports politically persecuted people through the 'We Code IT Academy' project, offering digital skills training.²⁶

¹⁷ <https://romaversitas.org.mk>

¹⁸ <https://redi-ngo.eu/projects-list>

¹⁹ <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/centres/eLearning>

²⁰ <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/centres/bic>

²¹ <https://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/about/quality-assurance-management>

²² <https://computerspende-regensburg.de>

²³ " <https://www.binary-kitchen.de/wiki/doku.php>

²⁴ <https://www.campus-asyl.de/ueber-uns>

²⁵ <https://www.fczb.de/project/digital-empowerment>

²⁶ <https://digitale-helden.de>

Chapter Ten

Digital Learning Arrangements

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The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in digital learning. However, integrating digital technologies into educational processes has created challenges and disparities. Notably, there is a growing divide between individuals with adequate digital access and strong digital skills and those without, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, teachers and technology developers must understand digital media users' digital abilities and competencies.

To effectively navigate the digital world, Europe needs increased dig-

ital capacity from systems, institutions, and individuals. The development of a digital society calls for active involvement from various actors to support universities, industry, and civil society. Collaborative efforts are essential to address the existing challenges and ensure that the benefits of digital learning are accessible to all (European Commission, 2021c).

To identify success factors and address local challenges, it is recommended to explore valuable resources like the European Commission's 'Digital Skills & Jobs Platform' or the Erasmus+ programme. These platforms provide insights and best practices for analysis. Over recent years, the European Union has established clear objectives and country-specific initiatives, resulting in support structures and digital aid for educational institutions. This focused approach aims to enhance formal learning processes. Simultaneously, civil society organisations are crucial in promoting non-formal and informal digital literacy programs for vulnerable communities, aiming to improve their digital participation.

A fundamental component in this endeavour is the knowledge of DigComp.¹ The EU Science Hub provides essential resources, including the competence model, implementation guide, assessment, and monitoring tools, along with additional assistance and learning materials. Utilizing these tools contributes to a more comprehensive understanding and effective implementation of digital skills initiatives.

Support Structures and Digital Literacy Initiatives

This section explores digital literacy initiatives in Spain, Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Germany, focusing on enhancing digital literacy, bridging the digital divide, and promoting digital inclusion in these regions. The aim is to support digital coaches, including teachers, informal trainers, social animators, and mentors engaged in sports groups, music, art education, and cultural activities. Digital learning and transformation organisations from partner countries are highlighted as members of support structures. Support structures are typically established by political leaders or through finance and development programs, often in collaboration with universities. Alternatively, support structures may also be developed bottom-up by individuals from civil society, science, or companies who are affected or concerned.

¹ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp_en

Spain

Spain has undertaken several initiatives to enhance digital literacy and inclusion:

- *MigraCode Europe*. This network, supported by non-profits, provides free tech education and job search assistance to youth refugees and migrants. It is part of a broader European effort.²
- *Digital Agenda 2025* prioritises strengthening digital skills for workers and citizens, aiming to reach 80% of the population with essential digital skills. The National Digital Skills Plan³ outlines specific measures to achieve these goals.
- *Centro Digital Colaborativo*. This project, part of the Strategic Plan for Digital Transformation of the Generalitat Valenciana, aims to create a flexible and inclusive virtual learning environment for teachers, students, and communities to develop digital skills.⁴
- *Fundación Cibervoluntarios* fights the digital divide through initiatives like volunTIC Valencia, which brings together institutions, companies, and NGOs to address digital vulnerability.⁵
- *Digitalización Sostenible* aims to recycle electronic equipment waste and promote a circular economy, reducing the digital divide.⁶

Slovenia

Slovenia's initiatives focus on various aspects of digital literacy:

- *LAG Prlekija* project aims to create 'digital villages for tomorrow' and offers rural digital technology support, including digital training for seniors.⁷
- *eUPRAVA*. The Ministry of Public Administration in Slovenia supports eUPRAVA, which provides a single portal for various public services, simplifying access to essential information.⁸

² <https://migracode.eu/about-migracode>

³ https://portal.mineco.gob.es/RecursosArticulo/mineco/ministerio/ficheros/210127_plan_nacional_de_competencias_digitaes.pdf

⁴ <https://portal.edu.gva.es/gvait3du/es/centro-digital-colaborativo>

⁵ <https://www.cibervoluntarios.org>

⁶ <https://digitalysostenible.com>

⁷ <http://www.las-prlekija.com/en>

⁸ <https://e-uprava.gov.si/si>

- *Coding Initiatives.* Several initiatives encourage coding among youth, such as the annual Slovenian University Hackathon and Coding Giants, an international programming school.⁹
- *Digital Literacy Workshops.* Programs like POMP and DIGI school aim to boost digital literacy, especially among vulnerable groups. They provide essential digital skills for integration into Slovenian society.

North Macedonia

North Macedonia has implemented initiatives to enhance digital skills in various sectors:

- *Covid-19 Response.* The Covid-19 epidemic has underscored the importance of digital skills, leading to increased online services, including online shopping and delivery, NGO services, and government interactions.
- *Truthmeter.* A portal that holds political parties accountable by analysing promises made to citizens.¹⁰
- *Digital First Aid.* A free resource for first responders, trainers, and activists with technical expertise to protect themselves and others from digital issues.¹¹
- *Kariera.mk.* The most extensive service network for employment and advanced IT solutions in North Macedonia, providing resources for career development.¹²
- *EU Code Week.* An initiative that promotes coding, creativity, and digital skills. It engages schools and students in digital activities.¹³

Germany

Germany has a range of digital literacy initiatives:

- *Medienfachberatung.* This service in Upper Palatinate helps youth produce media content and improve media literacy.¹⁴

⁹ https://codinggiants.si/index.php/courses?active_type=Brezpla%C4%8Dne+delavnice+CwG+Online

¹⁰ <https://truthmeter.mk>

¹¹ <https://digitalfirstaid.mk>

¹² <https://kariera.mk>

¹³ https://codeweek.eu/search/?country_iso=MK

¹⁴ <https://www.medienfachberatung.de/oberpfalz/ueber-uns>

- *Digitaler Engel*. A project by Deutschland Sicher im Netz (DSiN) that helps older people use digital tools effectively and personally.¹⁵
- *Digitaler Kompass*. DSiN trains online advisors to help older people explore digital offers.¹⁶
- *Digitale Nachbarschaft*. This initiative focuses on safe internet use for associations, initiatives, and citizens.¹⁷
- *Bavarian State Effort*. ‘Digital verein(t)’ provides manuals, workshops, and online seminars to support volunteers and associations in digitisation.¹⁸
- *Skala Campus*. A digital learning and exchange platform for socially oriented individuals. It offers webinars and self-learning courses on various topics.¹⁹
- *Better Place Academy*. Offers free online courses and webinars on digital issues for social organisations.²⁰
- *Open Transfer*. A movement that promotes knowledge transfer and scalability of positive social ideas through various initiatives.²¹ *Vereinfacher Podcast*. Covers topics like taxation, association legislation, fundraising, and digitalisation for non-profit associations.²²
- *Regional Initiatives*. Local initiatives in Regensburg and Wiesbaden support clubs’ digital transformation.
- *Digital Education Meets School (DigiBitS)*. This project helps teachers integrate digital subjects and methods into their classes.²³
- *#wirfürschule*. An initiative that aims to create a vision of the school of the future through hackathons and forward-looking projects.²⁴
- *Politische Medienkompetenz*. Provides information on democracy,

¹⁵ <https://www.digitaler-engel.org/materials>

¹⁶ <https://www.digital-kompass.de/materials>

¹⁷ <https://www.digitale-nachbarschaft.de>

¹⁸ <https://digital-vereint.de>

¹⁹ <https://www.skala-campus.org>

²⁰ <https://www.betterplace-academy.org/online-kurse>

²¹ <https://opentransfer.de>

²² <https://www.vereinfacher.de/podcast-vereinfacher>

²³ <https://www.sicher-im-netz.de/digibits-%E2%80%93-digitale-bildung-trifft-schule>

²⁴ <https://wirfuerschule.de/ueber-uns>

media, data science, and more, with online tools, glossaries, and game recommendations.²⁵

- *Leidmedien*. Promotes inclusive media design and reporting, particularly about disabled people.²⁶

UnInLeCo Coaching Frameworks: Mutual Learning Integration

The UnInLeCo project championed an inclusive and comprehensive approach to learning, emphasising expanded and integrated learning experiences grounded in informal and situational learning principles. The project was guided by several key premises that shaped its educational philosophy. Firstly, it recognized that learning is a social activity, emphasising the importance of collaborative and communal learning experiences. Additionally, the project acknowledged that knowledge is intricately woven into the fabric of community life, and learning thrives in the context of shared experiences. Emphasising the principle of participation, the UnInLeCo project highlighted that active engagement is crucial for effective learning outcomes.

Moreover, the project emphasised the interdependence of empowerment and participation, recognising that an empowered learner actively contributes to their learning environment. The project also identified exclusion from participation as a significant barrier to learning, underscoring the importance of inclusivity. Lastly, the UnInLeCo project embraced the idea that learning is a continuous and lifelong process, emphasising that everyone is a perpetual learner, continually acquiring knowledge and skills throughout their lives. Through these guiding principles, the UnInLeCo project aimed to foster an inclusive, participatory, and lifelong learning environment (Araf, 2020).

In UnInLeCo, the *learning scenarios* represent real-life digital challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, requiring active learning for solutions. The interaction between facilitators (multipliers) and the digital coach fosters self-directed learning through conversation. The process involves combining practical, everyday knowledge with intentional learning to gain creative insights. Participants receive support through encouragement, tools, and reflective questions to enhance their learning experience.

The *coaching framework* serves as the project's central concept, built

²⁵ <https://www.politische-medienkompetenz.de>

²⁶ <https://leidmedien.de>

upon certain principles. This framework is designed for three key groups: digital coaches, multipliers, and recipients. Digital coaches are IT professionals from universities and corporations seeking to expand their knowledge of IT by engaging with new people and immersing themselves in digital experiences. Hailing from universities or businesses, these coaches possess excellent digital skills. They excel in communication, counselling, empathy, and perspective-shifting. Digital coaches are passionate about learning new IT tools and technologies, boasting a network that allows them to explore and seek technical assistance. However, it is noted that while IT specialists often focus primarily on technological solutions, there may be a gap in understanding the lives of potential consumers.

Digital coaches may work with *multipliers in target areas* to digitally improve activities and help members learn. Multipliers are dedicated members of educational, civil, social, political, and church organisations. They share digital transformation and skills training funding and insufficient internal digital competence. Each multiplier is part of an initiative, active in one of the areas of action, and knowledgeable of regional digital learning opportunities. Multipliers are crucial in empowering and encouraging beneficiaries to self-learn through volunteer efforts and in a non-hierarchical relationship. Multipliers value the idea of learning together and avoid adopting the traditional ‘teacher-student’ model. They maintain direct contact with beneficiaries, which could include vulnerable demographic groups, and have connections with other initiatives and individuals who can link them with civil society organisations or support groups.

The Erasmus+ project UnInLeCo identified several vulnerable populations. seniors, individuals with disabilities, women, and mothers from rural areas with little economic options, children, and young people from migrant and/or socially disadvantaged homes will be beneficiaries. The project aims to create mutual learning experiences between IT-affine ‘digital coaches’ from universities and companies and socially engaged ‘multipliers’ who work directly with the above-mentioned vulnerable groups. These shared learning experiences offer value for everyone.

Why do digital coaches benefit from the project? Engaging in this initiative offers digital coaches the opportunity to gain insights into new digital living environments. Integrating these experiences into their work

contributes to creating more inclusive IT applications. As a result, vulnerable groups experience long-term benefits from the project. Digital coaches can access IT networks and professionals, enabling them to tackle challenging use cases or raise awareness about digital barriers among key stakeholders. This ongoing effort contributes to gradually removing digital barriers, developing new IT applications, and enhancing existing applications to be more user-friendly and accessible.

Why do multipliers benefit from the project? Initially, multipliers can leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the lives of disadvantaged groups and streamline their work. This involves capturing common technical challenges in video format and making them accessible to beneficiaries. The demand for IT support for vulnerable populations is expected to increase as society becomes more digitally oriented. Social mediators and digital educators are crucial in bridging the digital divide. The UnInLeCo project specifically focuses on educating social mediators, including social workers, community developers, migrant organisation workers, church and youth workers, and community group facilitators, about opportunities for digital learning for their clients. The goal is to empower and support them in utilising these opportunities within their respective fields. Training programs will be conducted to enable them to create, produce, and publish digital instructional resources.

The coaching framework highlights the importance of mutual learning achieved through non-formal methods, face-to-face interactions, and the exchange of valid information. Despite being an IT specialist, the digital coach does not take control of the conversation, and the multiplier does not play the role of a 'student.' Instead, the coaching framework fosters an equal dialogue with the following key assumptions:

- They both contribute to the discussion – one possessing information and knowledge about digital technology, while the other offers insights into their personal digital experiences. Acknowledging that each person may perceive aspects the other might overlook, the goal is to empathize and explore various perspectives. The shared belief is that learning serves as an opportunity for personal and collective growth, with an understanding that individuals are putting forth their best efforts within their respective circumstances (Araf, 2020).

- Participants must be open to sharing relevant information and able to use practical examples and simple explanations to make the situation understandable to the ignorant counterpart. As a tandem, they co-create the intervention and knowledge exchange. During the conversation, the interlocutors focus on the common interest rather than the individual.

The project's main aim was to reach learners in their current situations. Many people have already engaged in some form of formal learning, like primary or secondary school, university, vocational training, or other educational programs. Additionally, individuals have a social environment that contributes to their learning. In today's activities, such as using media, banking, or connecting with others, a digital aspect is involved. Hence, possessing digital life skills becomes crucial as essential competencies are needed to navigate daily life.

Apart from developing and funding such initiatives, it is also worth mentioning that it is crucial to connect these activities, support organisations, and offer digital assistance to civil society groups, schools, and various public and private institutions like retirement homes. This ensures the inclusion of everyone in Europe, enabling their participation in the ongoing digital advancements.

Digital Learning Methodology

The coaching technique strongly emphasises fostering digital skills among all participants. The goal is to engage participants in discussions and learning experiences centred around the digital challenges they encounter in their daily lives. To achieve this, digital learning arrangements should be crafted with a focus on principles like self-regulated learning and action competence.

Self-regulated learning is essential in the context of digital education, and learning settings should be designed to encourage a sense of 'complete action.' This involves breaking down learning scenarios into sequences, allowing students to independently navigate them while the facilitator provides guidance. Facilitators play a crucial role by offering information, suggestions, and assistance, empowering learners to shape their own learning process and enhance their competency. This approach is particularly significant as the UnInLeCo initiative delves into informal learning for the digital lives of vulnerable groups.

The complete action principle involves the steps shown in Figure 10.1.

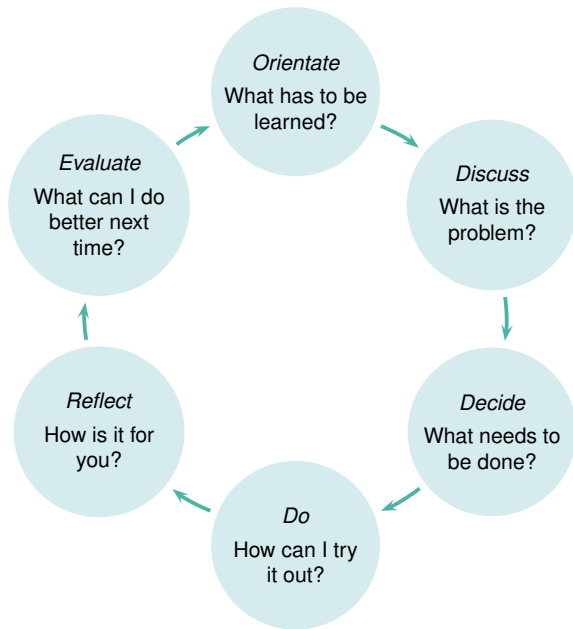


FIGURE 10.1
Complete Action
Principle (adapted
from Bundesinstitut
für Berufsbildung
(2021))

The multiplier can serve as an information platform for the client by explaining digital technology (function ‘inform’). In the first step, the multiplier aims to ‘Orientate’ the client on why collecting information from the Internet is necessary. To achieve this, the multiplier discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Internet research. Pros include timeliness and multimedia content, while drawbacks involve the risks of disinformation and subjectivity. Additionally, the multiplier gains insights into the client’s life during the ‘Inform’ phase. This may involve activating the client’s past knowledge or inquiring about their interests, such as preferred information sources and how they have used them. The multiplier may also address the client’s existing disinformation and fake news situations.

Moving to the ‘Discuss’ step, problems such as concerns about disinformation and false news are openly addressed. The learner needs to be guided toward understanding the study area and recognizing its benefits, emphasising the importance of connecting the learning material to the learner’s life and needs. Empathy is crucial for the multiplier, who must understand the client’s world, making this task more manageable. In situations involving disinformation, it is common for individuals to hold different opinions or be surprised by each other’s

perspectives. Therefore, observing, listening, and comprehending the client's needs and viewpoints during this phase becomes necessary.

In the 'Decide' step, a solution is reached through dialogue. For example, the multiplier can showcase IT competence through source critique, fact checks, and critical thinking. Following this, the multiplier introduces problem-solving methods and concludes by explaining various answers, backgrounds, and contexts in simple terms. Practical examples from the counterpart's life are provided to enhance understanding. This step aims to empower the learner with the skills needed to navigate and make decisions in the digital realm.

The fourth step, 'Do,' is crucial in implementing the acquired knowledge. The multiplier guides the client to check digital content sources and conduct fact checks, encouraging active learning through hands-on practice. The multiplier should provide an example and encourage the client to assess the source critically. This guidance is offered as a suggestion, fostering receptive peer feedback rather than a lecturing approach. The focus is creating an environment conducive to learning low-threshold digital skills through engaging and relatable conversations.

In the next step, 'Reflect,' the multiplier engages with the client by asking about their thoughts and feelings regarding the solution. Together, they critically evaluate the proposed solution. The multiplier may seek additional examples or explore related topics to understand the issue at hand better. This reflective process enhances the learning experience and allows for a more comprehensive problem analysis.

In the final step, 'Evaluate,' the multiplier undergoes an evaluation process. This involves continually receiving feedback or engaging in self-reflection to enhance discussion skills. This evaluative phase contributes to improving the multiplier's ability to effectively communicate and support clients in navigating digital challenges.

Creating and sharing digital learning scenarios proves beneficial when certain learning content is likely to be revisited between a multiplier, client, and digital coach. These scenarios can include up-to-date learning materials or relevant learning media, providing a structured framework for ongoing discussions and learning interactions.

Open Educational Resources

Over the past decade, various organisations and individuals have contributed to developing digital skills, resulting in a wealth of videos, ar-

ticles, podcasts, and similar multimedia resources addressing digital issues and offering solutions. However, navigating and selecting suitable material can be challenging. Here, multipliers and digital coaches can complement each other's strengths. Digital coaches can assess learning resource content for technical accuracy, while multipliers can gauge its suitability for their clients (considering language, scope, depth, and digital media comprehension). Even suboptimal resources can inspire digital learning, as demonstrated through face-to-face interactions where multipliers convey the content of relevant videos.

Open Educational Resources (OER),²⁷ which encompass freely accessible, open-licensed educational materials, offer opportunities for free access, use, modification, and redistribution with minimal or no restrictions. Examples include course materials, entire courses, books, curricula, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia apps, and podcasts. The nonprofit Khan Academy²⁸ serves as an international illustration, providing free, high-quality education to a global audience.

Open Educational Resources (OER) have gained prominence in various European countries, reflecting a commitment to democratizing education and fostering digital inclusivity. Here is a brief overview of OER initiatives in select European nations:

- INTEF projects in Spain provide access to various online educational resources, including the EDIA Project for classroom innovation, Adventure of Learning for non-academic learning, Procomun for pre-university learning objects, Image and Sound Bank for multimedia resources, and Educational Resources for Online Learning with didactic itineraries. Autonomous communities also have developed open educational resource repositories, such as Contenidos Medusa in the Canary Islands and academic portals in Extremadura, Andalusia, and Aragon.
- In Slovenia, online platforms like ucimse.com,²⁹ the Digital Competence Enhancement portal,³⁰ Astra.si,³¹ and online classrooms developed by a private TV network.
- In North Macedonia, the Unique National Platform for Online

²⁷ <https://open-educational-resources.de>

²⁸ <https://de.khanacademy.org>

²⁹ <https://ucimse.com>

³⁰ <http://projekt-ddk.si>

³¹ <https://astra.si>

Learning,³² EDUINO,³³ and various digital resources, such as Think Equal³⁴ and Druzinata MELA,³⁵ support education.

- The Anton App³⁶ offers curriculum-based tasks in Germany, while YouTube channels like SlideCampus³⁷ and Easy German³⁸ provide educational content. The ‘Silver Tipps’ campaign helps seniors navigate the digital world, and platforms like PIKSL³⁹ offer digital literacy courses. Bavarian universities provide non-curricular ‘OPEN vhb courses,’⁴⁰ and serious games like ‘Fake It to Make It,’⁴¹ ‘Bad News,’⁴² and ‘Orwell’⁴³ promote media literacy.
- These initiatives across the four countries aim to enhance education through open educational resources and digital learning opportunities.

³² <https://chat.openai.com/c/www.schools.mk>

³³ <https://www.eduino.gov.mk>

³⁴ <https://issuu.com/unicefmk>

³⁵ <https://issuu.com/unicefmk>

³⁶ <https://anton.app/de>

³⁷ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC153TuWMm-M_Mz6GZprj6FQ

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/@EasyGerman>

³⁹ <https://piksl.net/bildungsangebote/ausbildung-digitale-teilhabeberaterinnen>

⁴⁰ <https://open.vhb.org>

⁴¹ <http://www.fakeittomakeit.de>

⁴² <https://www.getbadnews.de/#intro>

⁴³ <https://www.surpriseattackgames.com/portfolio-items/orwell>

Chapter Eleven

Digital Multimedia for Learning and Teaching

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The Erasmus+ project is at the forefront of curating an extensive collection of digital learning materials tailored to the diverse needs of its participants. This list serves as a valuable compilation of resources gathered thus far, spanning various subjects and formats. As the pilot project evolves, the commitment to inclusivity remains steadfast, with ongoing efforts to expand the repository by incorporating additional learning materials. Moreover, the project is poised to enhance its impact by creating bespoke media materials, ensuring a comprehensive and accessible learning experience for individuals across diverse backgrounds and circumstances. This dedication to resource diversity aligns with the project's overarching goal of promoting digital literacy and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Seniors

Seniors face significant digital vulnerabilities, often hindered by factors such as limited internet access due to poor connectivity or outdated technology. The rapid pace of technological advancement may overwhelm them with unfamiliar English phrases, acronyms, or uncertainties about using innovative technologies. In an increasingly digital world, activities like receiving e-prescriptions, conducting online bank transfers, or completing forms at citizens' offices have become the norm, further accentuating the digital divide for this demographic. With landlines becoming obsolete, their primary means of communication is through mobile phones, limiting their connection with family.

This digital exclusion extends to their social life. To address these challenges, the following learning resources are tailored specifically for seniors, offering support in navigating their digital living environment.

Search and Find. The digital world offers various possibilities for searching and finding knowledge, for example, in search engines, reference works, forums, and blogs. In addition, senior portals offer the possibility of finding information tailored to the target group.

- <https://www.seniorenweb.org>
- <https://www.seniorenportal.de>
- <https://www.digital-kompass.de>
- <https://seniorplanet.org>

Exchange. Digital technologies offer different ways to contact each other (e.g., video telephony or messenger services for sending photos), which can enrich the social life of older people. In addition, seniors can contact their friends and families who do not live next door.

- <https://www.digital-kompass.de>

Network. With the Internet, seniors can network with others in their areas of interest, regardless of location.

- <https://www.seniorenportal.de/community>
- <https://www.televeda.com>

Inform. Digital technologies offer various possibilities for obtaining information and conveying and presenting news (e.g., media libraries, video portals, web TV, web radio). The Internet is also helpful for information and promotion of health.

- <https://www.50plus.de/spiele.html>
- <https://www.digital-kompass.de/themen/nachrichten>
- <https://www.silver-tipps.de/hoerspass-mit-der-ard-audiothek>
- <https://www.pflege.de/leben-im-alter/gesundheit-im-alter>
- <https://blog.getsetup.io>
- <https://seniorplanet.org>

Entertain. Seniors can use digital technologies for entertainment, e.g. brain training, audiobooks, or virtual crosswords, to enjoy virtual travel, or to have virtual museum tours.

- <https://portal.seniorenweb.org>
- <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/tools/spiele/kreuzwortraetsel>
- <https://www.myndvr.com/virtual-reality-at-home>
- <https://www.silvergames.com/de/t/games-for-elderly>

- <https://www.lumosity.com/de>
- <https://www.brain-fit.com>
- <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/tour-virtuali-elenco.html>
- <https://www.louvre.fr/en/online-tours>
- <https://experience.xplorit.com>

Shop. Digital technologies can also help seniors with shopping, e.g. ordering medication or delivering food. For this, seniors can learn how to use e-banking and about the security and threats of electronic banking.

- <https://www.agespace.org/tech/staying-safe-online>
- <https://seniorplanet.org/event/ebay-paypal-3>
- <https://www.ebay.com>
- <https://www.paypal.com/us/home>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oADxUX4STjE>
- <https://www.capitalone.com/about/newsroom/helping-older-adults-understand-whats-possible-with-online-banking>

Learn. The Internet can also be helpful for educational purposes; for example, seniors can use learning platforms to acquire new knowledge or deepen their interests.

- <https://www.wissensdurstig.de>
- <https://www.seniorenweb.org/digitales-wissen>
- <https://www.masterclass.com>

Transport. Seniors can also organise their transportation through the World Wide Web. This is useful, for example, for daily errands, doctor visits and travel. In addition, seniors can learn how to use the tool Google Maps, a web-based map service.

- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.maps&hl=en&gl=US&pli=1>

Organise. More and more administrative tasks are also being transferred to the digital world, for example, making appointments with doctors and applications from public institutions or health insurance companies.

- <https://platform.digitalnovkljuceni.si/mod/page/view.php?id=85>
- <https://platform.digitalnovkljuceni.si/mod/url/view.php?id=103>

Protect. Of course, it is also important that seniors are safe online. So, the handling of passwords and the dangers in the network, such as bots or viruses, should be taught.

- <https://www.wizcase.com/blog/simple-and-effective-online-safety-tips-for-seniors>
- <https://seniorplanet.org/event/protecting-your-personal-info-online-2>

Support. Digital technologies in the form of hardware can help seniors, especially in everyday life, e.g., a vacuum cleaner robot or a home emergency call.

- <https://burg.biz/pages/elektronische-tuerschloesser>
- <https://www.homeandsmart.de/beste-saugroboter-im-test>
- <https://www.homeandsmart.de/maehroboter-rasenroboter-test>
- <https://www.homeandsmart.de/bewaesserungscomputer-vergleich>
- <https://www.homeandsmart.de/heizungssteuerung-anbieter-uebersicht>
- <https://www.homeandsmart.de/maehroboter-rasenroboter-test>

Preserve. Digital technologies also offer the possibility of health care, for example, online courses for relaxation techniques or gymnastics.

- <https://www.youtube.com/@GabiFastner>
- <https://seniorplanet.org>

Participate. The innovative technologies also enable participation in social and political activities, such as smart city initiatives.

- <https://www.media4care.de>

Relax. Digital media can be used for entertainment and relaxation, e.g., listening to music or a podcast.

- <https://seniorplanet.org/event/spotify-15>
- <https://www.spotify.com/us/download/android>
- <https://seniorplanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Podcasts-Handout-06.10.22.pdf>

Earn. Of course, the Internet can also be used to earn money, for example, by selling goods on digital marketplaces.

- <https://seniorplanet.org>

Create. Seniors can also produce and share media or pass on their knowledge by starting a blog.

- <https://seniorplanet.org>

Migrants

Migrants face digital vulnerabilities, frequently hindered by financial constraints that limit access to a reliable internet connection, necessary software, and hardware. Language barriers and limited digital

skills also compound their challenges, making it challenging for migrants to navigate the internet and digital technologies in their host nation. As a result, they often rely on media from their home country for information and social interactions, restricting and, at times, hindering their digital engagement in the host country. Fostering a digital civilization necessitates a nuanced approach, encompassing clear language and multilingual digital offerings. The following outlines the current living environment and initial learning resources tailored for this target group.

Search and Find. The digital world offers many opportunities to search for and find knowledge, for example, in search engines, reference works, forums, and blogs. However, especially for migrants, it is essential to have particular information platforms about the host country. It is also vital for migrant children to have age-appropriate offers.

- <https://www.internet-abc.de>
- <https://klexikon.zum.de>
- <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/about>
- <https://www.deutschland.de/de>
- <https://handbookgermany.de/de>
- <https://www.migazin.de>

Exchange. Digital technologies enable an exchange independent of time and place. Migrants can stay in touch with family and friends from their home country and network with local people.

- <https://www.vaybee.de>

Network. Social platforms, in particular, can help migrants find people with similar interests and backgrounds in their area. Digital business networks, such as LinkedIn, can also be helpful. There are also digital mentoring services to help find a job.

- <https://www.social-bee.de>
- <https://hr-integrate.com/links.php>
- <https://www.workeer.de/de>
- <https://www.sprachundintegrationsmittler.org>

Inform. Migrants often source their news from their home country because local information is often unavailable in their language or simple language. Unique information portals for migrants are helpful, also concerning disinformation.

- <https://www.nachrichtenleicht.de>
- <https://www.dw.com/de/themen/s-9077>

Entertain. Of course, digital technologies are also used for entertainment. However, most entertainment media on traditional TV are only available in a few languages. In addition to subtitles via Teletext, 'TV on Demand' can enable digital participation.

- <http://www.easygerman.fm>
- <https://www.zdf.de/kultur/forum-am-freitag>

Shop. Digital technologies can also be used for shopping with a view to products from the home country. In addition, some organisations here give vouchers to disadvantaged people, e.g. migrants.

- <https://www.gooding.de>
- <https://kultuer-regensburg.de>

Learn. Digital technologies can also help with language acquisition or developing other skills. Age-appropriate services are vital for young migrants.

- <https://www.jugendundmedien.ch/medienkompetenz-foerdern/sonderpaedagogik>
- https://www.inklusive-medienarbeit.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/v6.0_Meko_App-Katalog_deutsch-mathe-assistiv-taster.pdf
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLiBp19Yps>
- <http://www.easygerman.fm>

Transport. Having your car is expensive. However, to remain mobile, the Internet can help find sharing services to increase mobility.

- <https://gourban.co>

Organise. Migrants should also find support in their family care work. In the meantime, a variety of everyday digitalisation can facilitate the organisation of everyday family life.

- <https://monefy.me>
- <https://apps.apple.com/de/app/apple-wallet/id1160481993>
- <https://finanzguru.de>
- <https://www.getzuper.com/german/home-ger>
- <https://outbankapp.com>
- <https://www.biallo.de/anbieter/banking-app/trefin>
- <https://www.familywall.com>

Protect. Of course, it is also vital that migrants are safe online. The handling of passwords and the dangers on the net, such as bots or viruses, should be taught, as well as media criticism.

- <https://www.youtube.com/@saferinternetat>

- <https://www.youtube.com/@HateAid>
- <https://www.fsm.de/medienbildung/#eltern-und-familien>

Support. Digital technologies can also support migrants' everyday lives, e.g., finding their way around the host country, integrating, finding a job, etc.

- <https://apps.microsoft.com/store/detail/welcome-to-germany/9NBLGGH5X14N?hl=en-us&gl=us>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/magazinedeutschland>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.germany4ukraine.app&gl=de&hl=de>
- <https://ankommenapp.de/APP/DE/Startseite/startseite-node.html>
- <https://integreat-app.de>

Preserve. Digital technologies also offer the possibility of health care, for example, fitness and relaxation courses.

- <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/ZugewanderteTeilnehmende/AngeboteFrauen/Kursprogramm-MiA/kursprogramm-mia-node.html>
- <https://remote-health.eu/de/Courses>

Participate. Innovative technologies enable participation in social and political activities, such as smart city initiatives in immigration services.

- <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Migrathek/eAufenthaltstitel/eaufenthaltstitel-node.html>
- <https://www.vdz.org/digitalisierung-der-verwaltung/digital-integriert-von-der-einreise-bis-zur-einbuergerung>

Relax. Digital media can be used for entertainment and relaxation, e.g., listening to music or a podcast.

- <https://www.spotify.com/us/download/android>

Earn. The World Wide Web offers migrants many support services in finding a job and starting a business. Nevertheless, the Internet can also be used to earn money, for instance, in digital marketplaces.

- <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/de>

Create. Migrants can also produce and share media themselves and become influencers.

- <http://kubragumusay.com>
- <https://www.instagram.com/dr.hatun/?hl=de>
- <https://neuemedienmacher.de>

Disabled Individuals

Disability encompasses individuals with long-term physical, mental, or intellectual sensory impairments, hindering their full, effective, and equitable participation in society. Numerous barriers impede the digital participation of many disabled individuals, and the digital revolution, while offering new opportunities, also presents challenges by potentially decreasing social interaction. Leveraging digital technologies can empower disabled individuals to engage more fully in society. Therefore, urgent initiatives are imperative to champion inclusion, mitigate the digital gap, and work towards its permanent closure (Bosse, 2016; Bosse et al., 2019; AktionMensch, 2020).

Search and Find. The digital world offers various possibilities for searching and finding knowledge. For example, for people with disabilities, there are particular information platforms for conveying legal and health information.

- <https://www.ach-so.ch>
- <https://www.enableme.de/de/themen>

Exchange. The digital world offers an exchange network to keep in touch with friends and family and through networking with like-minded people and people with similar challenges.

- <https://www.enableme.de/de/themen>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.glidechat.glideapp>
- <https://www.kendimiz.de>

Network. Exchanges on the Internet are a vital social resource, especially for people with disabilities.

- <https://kenndich.de>
- <https://www.rehafamily.de>
- <https://www.rehakids.de/intro.html>
- <https://forum-munterbunt.de>

Inform. There are particular information platforms for people with disabilities, sometimes called inclusion platforms. Often, these information services are created by those affected.

- <https://www.netz-barrierefrei.de/wordpress/barrierefreies-internet>
- <https://www.taubenschlag.de>
- <https://www.participa.ch>
- <https://inkluyou.de/was-ist-inkluyou>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@sozialhelden>

- <https://www.nachrichtenleicht.de>
- https://www.einfach-teilhabe.de/DE/AS/Home/alltagssprache_node.html
- <https://kobinet-nachrichten.org>

Entertain. The Internet also entertains, provided they are designed to be accessible. In recent years, there have been not only special offers for people with disabilities but also attempts to make the public media more accessible.

- <https://www.netz-barrierefrei.de/wordpress/barrierefreies-web-2-0-ein-leitfaden-zu-social-media-und-behinderung/barrierefreiheit-von-whatsapp>
- <https://www.daserste.de/specials/service/barrierefreie-angebote-ard100.html>
- <https://programm.ard.de/TV/Audiodeskription/Startseite>
- <https://tvfueralle.de>
- <https://dieneuenorm.de>
- <https://www.gretaundstarks.de/greta/greta>
- <https://krauthausen.tv>

Shop. Due to the limited mobility of some people with disabilities, digital marketplaces and online shopping offers can be a great relief.

- <https://www.brack.ch>

Learn. The digital space is ideal for educational offerings for people with disabilities, their families, or even companies that employ people with disabilities.

- <https://lebendige-gebaerden.de>
- <https://equalizent.eu/die-zoom-basics-schritt-fuer-schritt-zum-meeting-dgs>
- <https://www.enableme.de/de/enableme-deutschland/myhandicap-wird-zu-enableme>
- <https://jobinklusive.org>
- <https://illuminate.nrw>
- <https://piksl.net>

Transport. Especially people with physical disabilities are limited in their mobility. Virtual assistance can help them participate more in life again.

- <https://travelable.info>
- <https://sozialhelden.de/wheelmap>
- <https://projekt-elevate.de>
- <https://www.accessibility.cloud>
- <https://brokenlifts.org>

Organise. The digital world can help organise life and make everyday life easier, such as doctor's appointments, shopping or travelling.

- <https://seeingassistant.tt.com.pl/en/home>

- <https://planb.hamburg>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.marvin.talkback>
- <https://support.apple.com/de-de/HT202658>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.evernote>
- <https://travelable.info>
- <https://sozialhelden.de/wheelmap>

Protect. People with disabilities are a specially protected group, which should also apply to the Internet. However, they are just as confronted with negative Internet phenomena and should be able to take advantage of training opportunities.

- <https://www.karmacom.de/workshops-vortraege-und-seminare/social-media-menschen-mit-behinderung>
- <https://www.inklusive-medienarbeit.de/social-media-fuer-alle-das-projekt-webinklusion-der-tu-braunschweig-ein-gastbeitrag-von-alexander-perl>

Support. Digital and smart home technologies can also be tools for people with disabilities. For example, some support organisations work for people with disabilities and their needs by building awareness and developing hardware and software.

- <https://www.talktools-gmbh.de/kommunikationshilfen>
- <https://www.tjfbg.de/ausserschulische-angebote/barrierefrei-kommunizieren>
- <https://www.enableme.ch/de/artikel/smart-home-produkte-2136>
- <https://taptapseeapp.com>
- <https://apps.apple.com/de/app/seeing-ai/id999062298>
- <https://apps.apple.com/de/app/viaopta-daily/id908408072>
- <https://www.bemyeyes.com/language/german>
- <https://web.kestner.de/das-grosse-woerterbuch-der-dgs-app-fuer-ios>
- <https://www.rehadat-hilfsmittel.de/de/app-suche>
- <https://www.gari.info>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.accessibility.auditor>
- <https://de.ava.me>
- <https://www.pedius.org/de/home>
- <http://www.cardzilla.ws>
- <https://apps.apple.com/de/app/grace-f%C3%BCr-autismus/id360574688>
- <https://scan.gefuehlsmonster.de>
- https://www.inklusive-medienarbeit.de/tool_tipp
- <https://www.inklusive-medienarbeit.de/assistive-technologien>

Preserve. The Internet also offers media for preventing and promoting physical health promotion.

- <https://www.youtube.com/@RollstuhlsportDRS>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@StiftungPfennigparade>

Participate. For people with disabilities to be more likely to participate in digital life, there is a need for offerings in plain or straightforward language and enhanced features such as speech output, sign language, screen readers, audio description, voice-over, subtitles, or voice assistance systems.

- <https://incluscience.org>
- <http://gesellschaftsbilder.de>
- <https://leidmedien.de>
- <https://www.marlem-software.de/marlemblog>
- <https://ramp-up.me>
- <https://blog.zoom.us/de/zoom-sign-language-interpretation-view>

Relax. People with disabilities are also often under more significant psychological strain or find it harder to relax because of the challenges they face in everyday life. Again, digital tools such as meditation apps or mood trackers can aid here.

- <https://daylio.net>
- <https://www.happify.com>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.moodpath.android>
- <https://www.7cups.com>
- <https://www.7mind.de>

Earn. The Internet is also there for commercial purposes so that products can be sold worldwide, for example, by workshops, associations or individuals living with disabilities.

- <https://www.werky.de>
- <https://www.parafaktum.de>
- <https://www.shop-dalle.de>
- <https://www.entia.de>

Create. Digital media are ideal for making the lifeworld of people with disabilities accessible to others. Some influencers and role models already do this in social media.

- <https://raul.de>
- <https://davidlebuser.wordpress.com>
- <https://quergedachtes.wordpress.com>
- <https://die-andersmacher.org>
- <https://www.bernhard-nagler.at/meinblog/ins-bewusstsein-menschen-mit-behinderung-ins-digitale-zeitalter-muessen-wir-alle-mitnehmen>

Children at Exclusion Risk

Early school leaving remains a prominent challenge for children at risk of exclusion. Limited access to hardware and software both at home

and school exacerbates this issue. While children may possess digital devices, their usage tends to be recreational. Leveraging technology can address this challenge by granting access to engaging digital resources. These resources make learning enjoyable and contribute to instilling the importance of education. Such initiatives aim to enable children to lead a well-rounded daily life and safeguard them from social marginalization.

Search and Find. The digital world offers various possibilities for searching and finding knowledge, for example, in search engines, reference works, forums, and blogs. Naturally, therefore, children need to have age-appropriate offers.

- <https://www.internet-abc.de>
- <https://klexikon.zum.de>
- <https://www.buscadorinfantil.com>
- <https://www.kiddle.co>
- <https://www.alarms.org/kidrex>
- <https://es.wikidia.org/wiki/Vikidia:Portada>
- <https://www.safesearchkids.com>

Exchange. Digital technologies offer different ways to get in contact with each other (e.g. video telephony or messenger services for sending photos)

- <https://gromsocial.com>
- <https://appadvice.com/app/gobubble-kids/1533153367>

Entertain. Many multimedia resources, such as interactive stories, educational games, podcasts, etc., are available for children to entertain and learn simultaneously.

- <http://pipoclub.com>
- <https://numo.mon.gov.ua>
- <http://www.mundoprimaria.com>
- <http://www.cerebriti.com>
- <https://cuentosparadormir.com>
- <http://es.childrenslibrary.org/library/lang18.html>
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/es/podcast/cuentos-infantiles-al-rescate-cuentos-que-ayudan/id1267771651www.schlaulich.info>

Learn. The Internet offers a variety of open educational resources for students to expand their knowledge in a visual, easy, and entertaining way.

- <https://procomun.intef.es>

- <http://recursostic.educacion.es/secundaria/edad>
- <https://www3.gobiernodecanarias.org/medusa/ecoescuela/recursosdigitales>
- <https://rincones.educarex.es>
- <https://www.educarm.es/home>
- <http://facilitamos.catedu.es>
- <https://didactalia.net/comunidad/materialeducativo>

Organise. There are different multimedia tools, such as videos and applications, that can help students organise their learning better.

- <https://myhomeworkapp.com>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woxn1nFs5Jw&ab_channel=NicaBernita

Protect. Protection is vital when surfing the Internet. Children should, therefore, be made aware of the dangers of the Internet through manuals and games.

- <https://www.is4k.es>
- https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/es_es/interland

Support. Some NGOs and associations can help children at risk of abandoning school and those at risk of exclusion. For example, by building awareness and developing hardware as well as software.

- <https://www.anar.org>
- <https://ayudaenaccion.org/ong/colabora/proyectos-solidarios/pobreza-infantil-espana>
- <https://sites.google.com/nazaretalicante.es/nazaret/nazaret-alicante>
- https://www.gitanos.org/comunidad_valenciana/alicante

Preserve. The Internet offers media for preventing school abandonment

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33H9SpHGQxU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrhF7FKu3rA>

Create. The Internet provides different multimedia tools to stimulate children's creativity.

- <http://www.autodraw.com>
- <https://www.cerebriti.com>
- <https://apps.apple.com/es/app/creappcuentos/id777978879>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/ocioeducativo>

Ukrainian Refugees

Refugees face challenges affording a reliable internet connection, necessary software, and essential equipment, leaving them vulnerable online. Language barriers and emotional struggles often lead to feelings

of being overwhelmed by the vast realm of the internet and modern technologies. The availability of Ukrainian-language-enabled digital tools can significantly alleviate these challenges. Equipped with a digital device, individuals can access a wealth of information about the host country, navigate bureaucratic procedures, maintain contact with their families, and seek practical assistance.

Search and Find. The digital world offers many opportunities to search for and find knowledge, for example, in search engines, reference works, forums and blogs. However, especially for Ukrainian refugees, it is essential to have special information platforms about the host country. In the same way, Ukrainian children need to have age-appropriate search engines.

- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es>
- <https://help.unhcr.org/spain/uk/ukraine-relevant-information>
- <https://www.safesearchkids.com>
- <https://es.wikidia.org/wiki/Vikidia:Portada>
- <https://www.kiddle.co>

Exchange. Digital technologies enable exchange independent of time and place. Therefore, Ukrainian refugees need to have search engines that allow them to contact host families.

- <https://www.ukrainetakeshelter.com>
- <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/uk/web/ucrania-urgente/w/red-estatal-acogida-desplazados-ucrania-1>

Network. Social platforms, in particular, can help Ukrainian refugees find people with similar interests and backgrounds in their area and, at the same time, be in contact with relocated friends and families.

- <https://facebook.com>
- <https://www.instagram.com>
- <https://twitter.com>
- <https://www.tiktok.com>
- <https://linkedin.com>

Inform. Ukrainian refugees need information on the administrative procedures and support they can receive in their host country. This information covers everything from entry to the different managerial procedures, such as health and access to education. They must also be updated with what is happening in their home country.

- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk/ultimas-noticias?selCat=1010209>

- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk/ultimas-noticias?selCat=1010210>
- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk/w/escolarizacion-desplazados-ucrania-1>
- <https://www.ukrinform.ua>

Entertain. Digital technologies are also used for entertainment. One of the main problems with traditional media is language, but several portals allow reading books in Ukrainian, listening to radio and music and watching films.

- <https://leemosclm.odilotk.es/results?collectionId=156045>
- <https://www.ucraniafm.com>
- <https://onlineradiobox.com/ua/?lang=es>

Shop. For Ukrainian refugees, finding information about organisations that help with food donations and public administrations that financially support these families is crucial.

- <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/web/guest/w/el-gobierno-aprueba-una-ayuda-para-familias-vulnerables-de-ucrania-de-400-euros-mas-100-euros-por-menor-al-mes>
- <https://www.cear.es>
- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk>

Learn. The main problem for Ukrainian refugees is learning the host country's language. In this regard, digital technologies can help acquire language or other skills. In addition, open educational resources allow children to learn and keep up with their lessons.

- <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/permanente/materiales/index.php?espanol#space>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fu6LXCMcxRhICgV2as8M8wn92hgZP4Dw/view>
- <https://tueftelakademie.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/pictionary-es-ukr-2.pdf>
- <https://www.acnur.org/ensenar-sobre-las-personas-refugiadas.htm>
- <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/atencion-educativa-ucranianos/uk/recursos-educativos.html> <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk>

Transport. Different public and private companies offer free transportation for refugees who wish to travel to any point in the host country. Train tickets and free transport cards fall under these measures.

- <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/web/ucrania-urgente/w/transporte-gratuito-ucranianos>
- <https://www.renfe.com/es/es/grupo-renfe/sociedades/renfe-viajeros/abonos-renfe>

Everyday Life. Ukrainian refugees must also find support in their daily lives. One of the challenges is opening bank accounts or keeping up with their financial situation. Digital tools can help with these tasks.

- <https://www.openbank.es/pozyka-bizhentsiv-ukraina>
- <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/eu/servicios-al-ciudadano/tramites-y-gestion/es/oficina-de-asilo-y-refugio/ucrania-proteccion-temporal>

Protect. Support is one of the things Ukrainian refugees desperately need. Different digital tools allow them to discover organisations and associations that can help them.

- <https://www.is4k.es>
- https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/es_es/interland
- <https://www.saferinternetday.org/in-your-country/ukraine>

Support. Digital technologies can also support migrants' everyday lives, e.g., finding their way around the host country, integrating, finding a job, etc.

- <https://ucranianos.com/es/ucranianos-en-espana/asociaciones>
- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk>
- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.germany4ukraine.app&gl=de&hl=de>
- <https://www.comunidad.madrid/servicios/ucrania>
- <https://www.asociaciondar.es/kak-pomoch>

Preserve. Digital technologies also offer the possibility of health care.

- <https://ucraniaurgente.inclusion.gob.es/uk/ultimas-noticias?selCat=1010210>
- <https://www.san.gva.es/es/web/portal-del-paciente/buscador-recursos>
- https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=es.gva.mesSalut&hl=en_US
- <https://ucranianos.com/refugees/acceso-sanidad>

Relax. Digital media can be used for entertainment and relaxation, e.g., listening to music or a podcast.

- <https://www.spotify.com/us/download/android>

Earn. The World Wide Web offers Ukrainian refugees services to help them find work and start a business.

- <https://es.eu4ua.org>
- <https://www.universia.net/ua/home-ua.html>

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Reviews

The monograph contributes to the scientific literature by providing valuable insights into the roles and significance of local community animators, their competencies, educational pathways, and the potential of digital technology in community development. It adds to the existing body of knowledge in the field of community development, social animation, and volunteerism, expanding our understanding of the profession and its impact on individuals and communities.

The monograph offers theoretical frameworks, practical examples, and case studies that can guide future research and exploration of community animation and its various dimensions. By examining the roles and importance of animators in knowledge transfer, community engagement, and connection building, the monograph sheds light on the impact of community animation on social cohesion and development. This contributes to the theoretical understanding of community development processes and the factors that influence their success.

Moreover, the discussion on the competencies of local community animators presents a valuable framework for assessing and developing the skills necessary for effective community animation. The identification of ten key competencies provides a foundation for future research on the development and measurement of these competencies, enabling researchers and practitioners to enhance the professional development of animators and evaluate their impact on community outcomes.

The exploration of digital technology as an empowering tool for animators opens avenues for further research on the integration of technology in community development practices. The monograph's examination of digital platforms, data analysis techniques, online training, and virtual workshops provides a starting point for investigating the efficacy of these tools in enhancing communication, collaboration, and impact within communities. Future studies can delve into the specific strategies and approaches for implementing digital technology in community animation, considering factors such as accessibility, sustainability, and ethical considerations.

Additionally, the monograph's analysis of educational paths for ani-

mators in different European countries contributes to the understanding of the educational landscape and opportunities available for aspiring animators. This can inform further research on the alignment between educational programs and the competencies required for effective community animation. Comparative studies across countries can provide insights into the effectiveness of different educational pathways and support the development of best practices in animator education and training.

The collection of good practices, tools, and methods for local community animators serves as a valuable resource for practitioners and researchers alike. It offers practical insights into successful community animation initiatives and presents opportunities for further exploration and adaptation. Researchers can build upon these examples to conduct case studies, evaluate the effectiveness of specific approaches, and identify emerging trends in community animation practice.

In summary, the monograph contributes to the scientific knowledge in the field of community development and social animation by providing theoretical frameworks, practical examples, and research opportunities. Its examination of the roles, competencies, educational pathways, digital technology, and volunteering in the context of local community animators enriches our understanding of effective community development practices. This monograph serves as a foundation for future research endeavours and advances the field by offering insights and guidance for animators, educators, policymakers, and researchers striving to create positive social change.

Kirk D. Anderson

The monograph provides a comprehensive exploration of the role and competencies of local community animators in various European countries. It delves into the value, identity, and adaptability of animators and emphasizes their fundamental role in communities. The monograph examines the job duties and responsibilities of animators, highlighting their contributions to community development, knowledge transfer, and establishing connections between communities.

One of the significant contributions of the monograph is its focus on the competencies of local community animators. It presents a European perspective on competencies and identifies ten key competencies that are essential for animators to effectively fulfill their roles. This sec-

tion offers valuable insights for individuals and organizations involved in training and educating animators.

The monograph also explores the use of digital technology to empower social animators for better communication, collaboration, and impact. It examines various digital tools and platforms, such as websites, social media, mobile applications, and online training, that can enhance the effectiveness of animators' work. This section highlights the importance of embracing digital technology and its potential to amplify the impact of community animators.

Additionally, the monograph provides an overview of the educational paths available for aspiring animators in selected European countries, including Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Italy. It discusses the different educational institutions, such as secondary schools, universities, and postgraduate studies, as well as certified courses and training programs that can equip individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to become successful animators. This section serves as a valuable resource for those interested in pursuing a career as a local community animator.

Furthermore, the monograph offers a collection of good practices, tools, and methods for the profession of local community animators. It covers both educational and work support, providing practical examples and insights that can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of animators' work. The monograph recognizes the significance of volunteering for the solidarity, social inclusion, and participation of youth. It discusses the role of volunteerism in social inclusion, the involvement of youth in volunteering activities in the EU, and the importance of volunteering for local community animators. This section highlights the potential of volunteering to foster social cohesion and empower young individuals to contribute to their communities.

Overall, the monograph provides a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the role, competencies, and educational paths of local community animators. It offers practical recommendations, tools, and methods to enhance their work and showcases the importance of volunteerism in fostering social inclusion and participation. The monograph's interdisciplinary approach and extensive references make it a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in community development and the role of local community animators.

Anna Rakowska

In the first part of this comprehensive book, we delve into the multifaceted concept of ‘animation’ and its diverse interpretations, with a special emphasis on its pivotal role in social animation. This analysis underscores the crucial function of social animators in shaping communities, inspiring individuals, and empowering the marginalized in society. Tailored for young people and institutions dedicated to local community development, this part aims to provide an in-depth understanding of social animators’ identities, actions, and significant contributions.

In the second part, we turn our attention to the pressing issues surrounding internet accessibility and education across various European regions, a discussion made even more urgent in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. This segment of the book illuminates the challenges faced by marginalised communities in their quest for digital resources. Central to this narrative is the pivotal role played by digital literacy skills and support systems in bridging the digital divide and fostering social inclusiveness. At the core of these discussions is an implicit acknowledgement of social animators as key figures in addressing these challenges.

Both parts of the book underscore the interconnectedness of animation, community development, and digital inclusivity, underscoring their collective significance in shaping a more equitable society.

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