

UK Community Foundations Conference 2022 “Foundations for the future – Acting now to shape tomorrow”

Experiences and take-away

Andrea Cognata – Fondazione Comunità Novarese onlus

You can want to live in a world already built, or you can choose to build the world you want to live in.

Lord Dr Michael Hastings of Scarisbrick CBE – President of UK Community Foundations

Whilst in its evocative simplicity, I think this sentence encompasses all the dimensions related to the theme of the [UKCF22](#) conference and of the study visit offered to the European Delegates by the [European Community Foundations Initiative](#).

The dimension of knowledge, as the ability of the Community Foundations to read the local consequences of the tendencies summarized by Tony Armstrong, Helen Bernard and Karl Wilding.

In the last years, the steady succession of pandemic, economic crisis and war have affected our communities psychologically, inducing a sense of impotence and precarity and worsening, on a global level, the spread of instability, insecurity, inequality, and, within our sector, the shrinkage of the resources a Community Foundations can rely on.

The dimension of choice, of the attitude toward those challenges.

Facing the scale of such a complexity, a Community Foundation can obviously feel itself overwhelmed and prefer to manage only short-term efforts to tackle immediate needs. But precisely the scale of that complexity asks the sector to show courage, to give up old attitudes and practices and to rethink its role.

Much more if one understands that the best resource to manage those challenges is at reach.

In the heart of our communities lie all the energies, all the tools, all the solutions.

Imandeep Kaur – Co-Founder at Civic Square

As after the II World War, the transition to a more secure, equal, stable future must be a bottom-up one. But communities can't achieve such objectives on their own.

Here is the opportunity to take for Community Foundations: to use their convening power to involve people in decisions that affect them, to consent to a decision-making devolution, to unite forces and to achieve big goals.

The experience of [Forever Manchester](#), the Community Foundation of Greater Manchester area, can offer an example of this needed transition, for the courage showed suspending the grant making activity to rethink and redesign the Foundation from the roots and the decision to change the traditional need-focussed approach with the **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)** approach, which encourages to work closely with communities, to map their existing resources, interests and passions and bridge them together to build a resilient supporting network for the hard times and to define new perspectives.

The dimension of desire, as the willingness not just to grapple with what is likely or possible, but to imagine alternative futures and the ways to reach them.

As pointed out by Eloise Smith-Foster, it is vital to create an infrastructure able to help citizens to identify the seeds of change already happening, unleash their hopes and aspirations, encourage them to dream their future and to develop an action plan to reach it. Because only defining a clear image of the desirable future, it is possible to work on the present, to improve things or make them change.

The dimensions of humility and courage, as the capacity to recognize that, if Community Foundations can have been part of the problem, they can be part of the solution. But they have to stop searching for a reality fitted to their particular expectations and understand that lived by the communities they serve, to accept to confront with other perspectives without prejudice, to reshape themselves to manage new challenges, to collaborate, not compete, to think more in a long-term way and become more comfortable with changes, to resist to the constant urge for results and stay focussed and persevering even when they fail.

As remembered by Carola Carazzone, Community Foundations have the capacity to embrace complexity. They can build purpose from constraints and help their communities to take responsibility of their future.

All they need is to set a vision, as suggested by Andy Burnham, to choose to be relevant and transformative, rather than transactional, to continue to be persevering.