



IJRSLCE

International Journal
of Research on
Service-Learning &
Community Engagement

Volume 13 | Issue 1

A Community-Centered Perspective on Community-University Engagement and Local Development in Southeastern Europe

Carmen Luca Sugawara

School of Social Work, Indiana University, USA

Dinka Caha

Faculty of Law Osijek, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia

Kim Hea-Won

School of Social Work, Indiana University, USA

Recommended Citation

Sugawara, C. L., Caha, D., & Hea-Won, K. (2025). A Community-Centered Perspective on Community-University Engagement and Local Development in Southeastern Europe. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.37333/001c.146133>

A Community-Centered Perspective on Community-University Engagement and Local Development in Southeastern Europe

Carmen Luca Sugawara, Dinka Caha, and Kim Hea-Won

Abstract

In a time of growing inequality and social isolation, community-university engagement (CUE) is becoming a priority among university administrators and social development stakeholders who are faced with increased pressure to find solutions to the grand challenges of our time. The existing literature scarcely documents the benefits of such programs for local communities. Using a local capacity for community development measure that has preliminary evidence of validity, this study examines the experiences of 211 CUE partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo and their perceived impact on local development. The findings provide insight into community stakeholders' experiences working with universities, expanding the CUE literature beyond Western voices. It highlights the role of CUE in strengthening local capacity for development.

Keywords: *community-university engagement, community partners' voices, local capacity for development, education for sustainable development, Southeastern European universities*

Una perspectiva centrada en la comunidad de la vinculación comunitaria universitaria y desarrollo local en el sureste Europeo

Carmen Luca Sugawara, Dinka Caha, y Kim Hea-Won

Resumen

En un contexto de creciente desigualdad y aislamiento social, el compromiso comunidad-universidad (CUE, por sus siglas en inglés) se ha considerado como una prioridad para los administradores universitarios y los actores del desarrollo social, quienes se enfrentan a una creciente presión por encontrar soluciones a los grandes desafíos de nuestro tiempo. La literatura existente ofrece escasa documentación sobre los beneficios de dichos programas para las comunidades locales. Utilizando una medida de capacidad local para el desarrollo comunitario que tenga evidencia preliminar de validez. Este estudio examina las experiencias de 211 socios de CUE provenientes de Bosnia y Herzegovina (BiH), Croacia y Kosovo, así como el impacto percibido de estos programas en el desarrollo local. Los resultados proporcionan una visión enriquecedora de las experiencias de los actores comunitarios al colaborar con las universidades, ampliando así la literatura sobre CUE más allá de las perspectivas occidentales. Se subraya, además, el papel fundamental del CUE en el fortalecimiento de la capacidad local para el desarrollo.

Palabras clave: *compromiso comunidad-universidad, voces de los socios comunitarios, capacidad local para el desarrollo, educación para el desarrollo sostenible, universidades del sudeste europeo.*

*Editors' Note: Translation provided by Dr. Mauricio Escoffie Ramirez, DDS, MSc, DPH.
Dental Public Health and Dental Informatics
School of Dentistry, Indiana University
USA*

Introduction

In an era of rising inequity, social isolation, and complex societal challenges, community-university engagement (CUE) is emerging as a priority strategy for university administrators, faculty, and community members. Universities face growing demands to prepare for the market economy (Benneworth et al., 2018; Secundo et al., 2017) and to address the local community challenges (Culum, 2014; Fisher, 2023; Luca Sugawara, 2022). Development agencies like the European Union, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations (UN), and governmental institutions are shaping top-down supranational educational policies to increase the universities' third mission and partnerships with local communities (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PPMI, & Farnell, 2020).

CUE emphasizes partnership beyond the university, guided by collective agreements, resource exchanges, and accountability (Jongbloed et al., 2008). Participation, equity, and humility are principles that pave the way toward reciprocal community-university partnerships (Luca Sugawara, 2022). However, universities often develop, manage, and assess CUE programs, focusing on preestablished learning outcomes while giving little attention to local impacts. This pattern is also mirrored in CUE scholarship, which remains heavily focused on academia.

Despite growing stakeholder support for CUE, the literature often overlooks community voices and local impact (Chika-James et al., 2022; Fia et al., 2022; Koekkoek et al., 2021; Muse, 2018; Orphan et al., 2018; Stanton & Giles, 2017). This raises questions about who benefits from these partnerships and the associated costs. Understanding CUE's contribution to local communities is essential for (1) establishing and defining roles and responsibilities in partnerships, (2) leveraging local community power and accountability of higher education institutions (HEIs), and (3) developing institutional capacities and policies to support CUE initiatives. This is particularly crucial in Southeastern Europe (SEE), where trust between the universities and local communities is fragile (Luca Sugawara et al., 2023), and supranational policies (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PPMI, & Farnell, 2020) actively support the university's third mission to advance students' purposeful learning and promote the common good.

Community-University Engagement in Southeastern Europe

The increased focus on community-university collaboration in Europe is driven by geopolitical forces, educational reforms (such as the Bologna process), and the need for HEIs to move away from traditional ivory tower privilege and connect with local communities. Actors like the European Commission, the UN, and the OECD have played critical roles in creating pathways for European universities to embrace the third mission. This is evident in frameworks like the Renewed Agenda for Higher Education (EC, 2017a), the Horizon 2020 Framework Program for Research and Innovation (EC, 2017b), and governance bodies such as the European Higher Education Area and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI-UNESCO), as well as international organizations and professional networks such as the Service-Learning in Higher Education Fostering in Central and Eastern Europe, and the European Association of Institutions of Higher Education. The most recent policy frameworks place communities at the epicenter of HEIs' transformation. For example, the European University Association's (EUA's) *University Without Walls—A Vision for 2030* (EUA, 2023) stresses HEIs' role in societal transformation and promotion of the public good, highlighting the university's accountability to stakeholders.

The metaphor "university without walls" conveys an open, inclusive, and collaborative academic environment. The OECD's Student Agency for 2030 (OECD, 2019) framework emphasizes creating opportunities to develop a student agency as both a learning goal and a learning process. Their message is loud and clear: Learning extends beyond professional competencies in specific disciplines; it involves strengthening students' voices and choices while accentuating the common good. To develop student agency, universities must create curricular opportunities for students to engage with complex environments. In this process, CUE reinforces students' coagency and collective agency.

The coagency highlights the relationship and exchanges between the individual and the learning community such as students, teachers, peers, and community members. These exchanges lead to transformation for all parties involved, emphasizing the effectiveness of CUE (Dewey, 1944; Freire, 1970). Fostering collective agency, which represents an increased shared responsibility for a greater good and a sense of belonging and purpose, requires putting individual interests aside to achieve a greater societal good (OECD, 2019). This type of learning is dialogical and contextual, demanding partnerships with local, national, and global communities/industries.

Service-learning (SL) education is emerging as a priority for CUE initiatives in SEE (Luca Sugawara et al., 2023). Nevertheless, researchers in the Southeastern region often focus on SL designs and student outcomes, with less attention to community benefits. Recent papers show that SL contributes to environmental commitments in HEIs (Alfirević et al., 2022), fosters innovation in social entrepreneurship (Jelinčić et al., 2022), enhances student career management skills and civic responsibility (Stanke et al., 2021), and shapes attitudes toward end users (Duraku & Nagavci, 2022). This focus on academia is not surprising, as community-engaged educational projects have expanded only recently, and researchers often lack a community or a social development focus.

Croatian social entrepreneurs view SL education as a meaningful investment in preparing youth to increase their voice and choice in society (Detelj & Vuković, 2018). Feedback from end users indicates that SL improves families' well-being and children's academic achievement (Duraku & Nagavci, 2022). Moreover, community benefits are highlighted in students' academic competencies and potential for future civic engagement (Marsh et al., 2021). However, with an increased one-sided understanding of CUE's impact on communities, scholars are advocating for theoretical frameworks to guide research and explore outcomes for all involved (Tyndall et al., 2020). For instance, Lau and Snell (2020) provide a framework that identifies three domains for community outcomes: increased capacity, advancement in goals and values, and knowledge/insights gained. To validate this framework, Lau et al. (2021) studied the impacts of SL from the perspective of community organizations. Their findings show that SL fosters relationships, improves service capacity, and enhances knowledge and techniques. A more comprehensive framework developed by Luca Sugawara (2022) focuses on social processes that can enable community capacity development such as local assets, functioning capacity, and transformational capacity.

The existing body of knowledge on CUE highlights practical concerns. Community perspectives are notably absent in CUE research, which predominantly focuses on the university's gains, giving limited attention to community benefits and local development. The majority of CUE literature originates from the United States and Western cultures (Doberneck et al., 2010; Koekkoek et al., 2021; Orphan et al., 2018; Sandmann, 2008), missing to address the challenges of HEIs and local communities in promoting the third mission of the university. This article addresses these concerns by focusing on CUE beyond the voices of the academy and within three Southeastern European countries: BiH, Croatia, and Kosovo. These countries were chosen due to their common post-communist political background, shared journey through the Bologna Process, and the research team's affiliation with the Southeastern European Academic Women's Leadership Network. This paper investigates community stakeholders' experience in SEE regarding CUE and their perceived contribution to local capacity for community development (LCCD). It also identifies existing barriers and needs for advancing community-university-engaged programs (CUEPs) in SEE.

Methods

Study Design and Procedure

This cross-sectional mixed-methods research was conducted from November 2019 to May 2020 as part of a research project that explored local capacities for community development in SEE. The research project examined the perceptions and experiences of 438 scholars, university administrators, and various local stakeholders of CUE such as representatives of civil society organizations, local agencies, and other institutions from BiH, Croatia, and Kosovo. In this paper, we report community-engaged partners'

responses ($N = 211$) collected through an online Qualtrics survey. We provided similar statements and information in an earlier article capturing the voices of faculty. The first author's university's institutional review board approved the study prior to data collection. Participation in this research study was voluntary. Participants were not reimbursed for their participation. More detailed information about data collection, local partnership building, and faculty voices can be found in Luca Sugawara et al. (2023).

Study Participants

Snowball and purposive sampling methods targeted community-engaged stakeholders involved in CUEPs. The participants were recruited using community-engaged social networks, local development agencies supporting CUE, and university administrators. The inclusion criterion for participating in the study was having previous involvement in community-university-engaged programs as part of their work. Previous CUEPs included SL courses, students' practicum, internships, SL programs, community-based research, and community service/volunteering. Out of 213 respondents (BiH [$n = 69$], Croatia [$n = 93$], and Kosovo [$n = 51$]), only two community-university-engaged partners did not meet the inclusion criterion, bringing our study sample to a total of 211 participants. We used power analysis to identify the minimum sample size needed to determine predictive contributions based on hierarchical multiple regression (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007, 2009). For six predictors, a medium effect size of 0.15, Cronbach's alpha of 0.05, and 80% power, the total sample size should have at least 77 participants.

Among our participants, over 40% were from Croatia; most participants (73%) worked in local community organizations; about 29% of participants held roles as project coordinators, followed by 27.6% serving as executive directors. On average, the participants were involved in community-engaged initiatives for nine years and one month (ranging from six months to 30 years, $SD = 7.01$). The three most prevalent academic programs that implemented community engagement were humanities (21.4%), followed by social work (17%) and education (12.5%). Social development (27.2%), and public policy, government, and nonprofit sector (16.6%) were the most frequently targeted community entities. The most common sources of funding for CUEPs were international donors (36.6%), local government (17.7%), and state government (16%).

Most community partnerships were formed through direct contact initiated by community organizations (42.2%) and by participating in shared events with the university members (26%).

Measures

Community-University Engagement Index. This study defines HE community engagement as the collaborative processes between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) that promote mutually beneficial exchanges in which empowerment, reciprocity, and cultural humility are fundamental principles of partnership (American Council on Education, n.d.; Luca Sugawara, 2022). A community engagement index was created using the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance's (AUCEA, 2006) typology of community engagement (Benneworth et al., 2018). The decision to use the AUCEA was based on critical conversations with the research team and the need to mirror some of the activities taking place in their respective institutions. Furthermore, given the ivory tower position universities maintain in SEE with few opportunities for community practitioners to be co-teachers and educators in classroom learning, the item "involvement in clinical and professional programs" was moved to community outreach and community service. The community engagement index included three dimensions: engaged teaching and learning (three items), engaged research (three items), and community outreach and personal service (four items). Engaging teaching and learning represents a form of experiential learning in which students participate in an organized service activity in the community and reflect on the experience to better understand course content and enhance personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle et al., 2006; Jacoby, 1996). Engaged research represents the extent to which academia (student and/or faculty) engages in collaborative research with community members to solve problems or promote social change (Balls-Berry & Acosta-Perez, 2017; Strand et al., 2003). Service and community outreach are defined as the extent to which representatives of

the academy are involved in joint initiatives aiming to address community needs (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Participants were asked to rate how often they participated in each community-engaged activity on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (to a great deal). A summary score was created for each dimension, with higher scores indicating higher levels of experience with community-engaged areas.

Local Capacity for Community Development scale. The LCCD scale was used to measure the contribution of CUEPs to the LCCD (Luca Sugawara, 2022). LCCD is conceptually defined as the social processes through which individuals, community groups, and organizations maintain, strengthen, and develop local capabilities to function and improve community well-being for the long term (Morgan, 1998; REDACTED, 2022; UNDP, 2009). Building on MacLellan-Wright et al.'s (2007) community capacity survey, the existing literature, and input from several stakeholders involved in CUE, the LCCD scale was developed to measure the community's perception of the impact of CUEPs on local development. It consists of three subscales (see Appendix A): community assets (eight items), functioning capacity (nine items), and transformational capacity (six items). The community assets subscale measures the extent to which community participants developed new knowledge, skills, or access and mobilized resources or deepened their knowledge of community history.

The functioning capacity reports on community-engaged initiatives' contribution to community participation, leadership, community structures and power, partnerships/social linkages, and community-based decision-making. The transformational capacity subscale examines whether, by participating in CUEPs, the community increases its ability to engage in strategic development, policy practice, and good governance and deepens its sense of community. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed their participation in community-engaged work with the university impacted LCCD using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great extent). A summary score was created for each subscale, with higher scores indicating a greater contribution to LCCD. Although the psychometric properties of the scale are further evaluated in another study, it has already established face and content validity by building on existing literature and incorporating input from external community stakeholders during its development. The scale was also shown to have good internal consistent reliability with the current participants: community assets (Cronbach's alpha: 0.90), functioning capacity (Cronbach's alpha: 0.91), and transformation capacity (Cronbach's alpha: 0.90). Participants also had the option to answer open-ended questions about three most pressing barriers and needs to develop and implement university-community engagement successfully.

A forward translation and cultural adaptation process suggested by Brislin (1970, 1986) was used. A panel of seven bilingual experts (four social work faculty and three community partners from Croatia, BiH, and Kosovo) reviewed the English version of the survey, discussed the content, and modified items and instructions. With community-engaged education being a fairly novel concept in all three countries included in the study, additional explanations of each question were provided and agreed upon by the instrument development team. The survey was translated into three languages—Croatian, Bosnian, and Albanian. Another panel of six bilingual researchers (two researchers in each language) reviewed translation accuracy, sentence structure, and similarity, or congruence of meaning between the English version and translated items. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved. Final versions of the survey were developed in three languages and were available to participants only in their own language.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 26.0). Descriptive statistics were used to examine sample characteristics and participants' level of community-engaged activities and perceived impact on the LCCD. Two-step hierarchical multiple regression analyses were then conducted to examine the contributions of CUEPs to the three dimensions of LCCD: community assets, functioning capacity, and transformational capacity. For each dimension of LCCD, three dichotomous control variables were entered as the first step. They were governmental funding, international donors, and foundation funding. Due to the importance of funding in advancing the third mission of HEIs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, and Kosovo, and existing correlations, three major types of funding were included. We did not include "tenure in

participating in CUEPs” and “type of target community” because neither was significantly correlated with the three dimensions of LCCD. In the second step, the summary scores of three types of CUEPs were added (engaged teaching, engaged research, and community service/outreach). Three researchers also reviewed the open-ended responses related to barriers and needs and extracted the common themes. Any disagreement among the coders was discussed and resolved.

Results

Community Participation in Community-University-Engaged Programs

Community participants report an overall low level of involvement in community-university engagement, with mean scores ranging from 1.49 to 1.89 on a 5-point scale (see Table 1). *Public lectures and seminars* ($M = 1.89$) and *SL* ($M = 1.87$) were the most frequently reported community-university-engaged activities, while contracted community-based research projects ($M = 1.49$) were reported as the least involved activity. About 22% of respondents ($n = 42$) reported that they participated in field practice/internships to a great extent, while 50% ($n = 98$) reported that they never/rarely participated in international SL experiences.

Regarding engaged research activities, about 42.3% of participants ($n = 83$) reported some level of involvement in collaborative research projects with the university, while 55.7% ($n = 107$) reported they had never/rarely been invited to participate in contracted community-based research projects. Within the community outreach and services, about 58% reported that they occasionally delivered or hosted public lectures and seminars ($n = 113$), but 57.9% ($n = 110$) of participants reported they had never or rarely been involved in volunteering or clinical and professional programs.

Table 1.

Types of Community-University Engagement

	<i>N^a</i>	Never/Rarely <i>n</i> (%)	Occasionally/ Moderately <i>n</i> (%)	A Great Deal <i>n</i> (%)	M(SD)
Engaged Teaching and Learning					
Service-learning	195	62 (31.8%)	96 (49.2%)	37 (19.0%)	1.87 (0.70)
Field practice/placement and practicum internships	195	74 (37.9%)	79 (40.5%)	42 (21.5%)	1.84 (0.76)
International learning experience	196	98 (50.0%)	68 (34.7%)	30 (15.3%)	1.65 (0.73)
Engaged Research (with Academia)					
Collaborative research projects	196	88 (44.9%)	83 (42.3%)	25 (12.8%)	1.68 (0.69)
Community-based research projects	193	83 (43.0%)	80 (41.5%)	30 (15.5%)	1.73 (0.72)
Contracted community-based research	192	107 (55.7%)	75 (39.1%)	10 (5.2%)	1.49 (0.60)
Community Outreach and Community Service					
Delivered or hosted public lectures and seminars at the university	195	52 (26.7%)	113 (57.9%)	30 (15.4%)	1.89 (0.64)
Invited to participate in classroom learning as teachers/lecturers	194	86 (44.3%)	84 (43.3%)	24 (12.4%)	1.68 (0.68)
Volunteered in your community	190	110 (57.9%)	59 (31.1%)	21 (11.1%)	1.53 (0.69)
Clinical and professional programs	190	110 (57.9%)	63 (33.2%)	17 (8.9%)	1.51 (0.66)

The items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = moderate, 5 = a great deal).

^a *N* is represented as aggregated data for Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

Local Capacity for Community Development

Participants acknowledged some positive impacts of CUEPs on enhancing LCCD (see Table 2). Within the community assets, the mean scores ranged from 2.38 to 2.74 on a 5-point scale. The item “providing community partners with opportunities for learning” was ranked as the greatest contribution, with 24.3% ($n = 41$) of respondents selecting “to a great extent.” This was followed by “bringing the community together” at 22.4% ($n = 38$). “Access external resources” ranked lowest (12.4%, $n = 21$). For functioning capacity, the mean scores ranged from 2.24 to 2.74 using the same 5-point scale. Participants reported the greatest contributions were made to “influence on processes, decisions, or community work” at 22.0% ($n = 35$), followed by involvement of a “diverse range of community participants” (18.0%, $n = 29$), and the least contributions were toward working with preexisting community structures (8.1%, $n = 13$). Similarly, in transformational capacity, the mean scores ranged from 2.22 to 2.62 on a 5-point scale. Our results show that 20.3% ($n = 32$) of participants see CUE programs as helping to increase “the visibility of community partners,” and 13.5% ($n = 23$) see academic efforts as making an important contribution to reshaping community values. For a detailed itemized description of the LCCD scale, see Table 2.

Table 2.*Local Capacity for Community Development*

	<i>N^a</i>	Not at All <i>n</i> (%)	To a Small/Some Extent <i>n</i> (%)	To a Moderate Extent <i>n</i> (%)	To a Great Extent <i>n</i> (%)	M (SD)
Community Assets Subscale						
Learning opportunity	169	5 (3.0%)	75 (44.4%)	48 (28.4%)	41 (24.3%)	2.74 (0.86)
Skills and knowledge	172	3 (1.7%)	86 (50.0%)	49 (28.5%)	34 (19.8%)	2.66 (0.81)
Bringing the community together	170	15 (8.8%)	73 (42.9%)	44 (25.9%)	38 (22.4%)	2.62 (0.93)
Understanding community history	171	28 (16.4%)	86 (50.3%)	39 (22.8%)	18 (10.5%)	2.27 (0.86)
Identify external resources	169	10 (5.9%)	86 (50.9%)	50 (29.6%)	23 (13.6%)	2.51 (0.80)
Identify internal resources	171	12 (7.0%)	90 (52.6%)	48 (28.1%)	21 (12.3%)	2.46 (0.80)
Access internal resources	167	11 (6.6%)	85 (50.9%)	48 (28.7%)	23 (13.8%)	2.50 (0.81)
Access external resources	170	22 (12.9%)	82 (48.2%)	45 (26.5%)	21 (12.4%)	2.38 (0.86)
Functioning Capacity Subscale						
Involve diverse participants	161	8 (5.0%)	81 (50.3%)	43 (26.7%)	29 (18.0%)	2.58 (0.84)
Involve community organizations and members	161	9 (5.6%)	91 (56.5%)	40 (24.8%)	21 (13.0%)	2.45 (0.79)
Influenced on processes, decision, and community work	159	6 (3.8%)	64 (40.3%)	54 (34.0%)	35 (22.0%)	2.74 (0.84)
Work with preexisting community structures	160	18 (11.3%)	98 (61.3%)	31 (19.4%)	13 (8.1%)	2.24 (0.76)
Encourage involvement of informal community leaders	161	26 (16.1%)	82 (50.9%)	34 (21.1%)	19 (11.8%)	2.29 (0.88)
Develop new social linkages with diverse groups	160	15 (9.4%)	94 (58.8%)	41 (25.6%)	10 (6.3%)	2.29 (0.72)
Develop new community structures	159	16 (10.1%)	103 (64.8%)	25 (15.7%)	15 (9.4%)	2.25 (0.76)
Facilitate new social linkages	158	9 (5.7%)	96 (60.8%)	36 (22.8%)	17 (10.8%)	2.39 (0.76)
Develop leadership abilities	159	21 (13.2%)	92 (57.9%)	31 (19.5%)	15 (9.4%)	2.25 (0.80)
Transformational Capacity						
Reshape community values	171	12 (7.0%)	86 (50.3%)	50 (29.2%)	23 (13.5%)	2.49 (0.81)
Increase visibility as community partners	158	8 (5.1%)	76 (48.1%)	42 (26.6%)	32 (20.3%)	2.62 (0.86)
Strengthen community response to challenges	159	16 (10.1%)	83 (52.2%)	41 (25.8%)	19 (11.9%)	2.40 (0.83)
Contribute to existing policies	159	26 (16.4%)	89 (56.0%)	27 (17.0%)	17 (10.7%)	2.22 (0.85)
Increase accountability of local partners	159	13 (8.2%)	87 (54.7%)	38 (23.9%)	21 (13.2%)	2.42 (0.82)
Strengthened ability to engage in long-term changes	158	15 (9.5%)	83 (52.5%)	41 (25.9%)	19 (12.0%)	2.41 (0.82)

The items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a moderate extent, 5 = to a great extent).

^a*N* is represented as aggregated data for Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

Role of Community-University-Engaged Education in Strengthening LCCD

All three types of community-engaged programs were significantly positively correlated with the three dimensions of LCCD, with the smallest bivariate correlation between engaged research and community assets ($r = 0.27, p < 0.001$), and the highest between transformational capacity and community outreach ($r = 0.44, p < 0.001$). See Appendix A for the correlation table.

As presented in Table 3, the results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses show that only the second model contributed to the development of community assets ($F_{(6,147)} = 12.06, R^2 = 0.22; p < 0.001$), with an additional 19% of variance explained. The results show that in model one, none of the funding sources were a significant factor in strengthening the community assets. In the second model, *community outreach/service* ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.01$) and *engaged teaching* ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.01$) significantly positively contributed to the development of community assets.

For functioning capacity, again, only the second model was significant ($F_{(6,136)} = 11.70, R^2 = 0.24; p < 0.001$), with an additional 20% of variance explained. The results show that community outreach/service ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$) significantly positively contributed to the community's functioning capacity, while having foundation funding ($\beta = -0.16, p < 0.05$) had a negative contribution to developing functioning capacity.

In relation to transformational capacity, the first model was significant ($F_{(3,137)} = 3.26, R^2 = 0.06, p < 0.05$) with both foundation and governmental funding ($\beta = -0.17, p < 0.05$) negatively contributing to strengthening the transformational capacity, while international funding had no significance. The second model additionally explained 22% of the variance ($F_{(6,134)} = 13.89, R^2 = 0.28, p < 0.001$). Only foundation funding remained a significant negative predictor after adding types of community-engaged activities to the model. Among the types of community-engaged activities, again, only community outreach/service ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$) positively contributed to transformational capacity.

Table 3.*Predictors for Each Dimension of Local Capacity for Community Development*

Predictors of Community Assets						
	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Governmental funding	-1.74	1.20	-0.12	-1.10	1.13	-0.07
International donors funding	-0.95	1.23	-0.06	-0.82	1.12	-0.05
Foundational funding	-1.11	1.30	-0.07	-1.0	1.18	-0.06
Engaged teaching				0.57	0.21	0.24**
Engaged research				0.08	0.20	0.04
Service/community outreach				0.46	0.17	0.25**
R^2	0.02				0.22	
R^2 change					0.19	
F for change in R^2		0.30			12.06***	
Predictors of Functioning Capacity						
	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Governmental funding	-2.12	1.34	-0.13	-1.61	1.25	-0.10
International donors funding	-0.15	1.37	-0.01	0.33	1.25	0.02
Foundational funding	-2.87	1.47	-0.16	-2.86	1.34	-0.16*
Engaged teaching				0.26	0.22	0.10
Engaged research				0.19	0.27	0.08
Service/community outreach				0.65	0.19	0.34***
R^2		0.05			0.24	
R^2 change					0.20	
F for change in R^2		2.244			11.70***	
Predictors of Transformational Capacity						
	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Governmental funding	-2.04	0.97	-0.17*	-1.56	0.89	-0.13
International donors funding	-0.44	1.00	-0.04	-0.14	0.88	-0.01
Foundational funding	-2.23	1.07	-0.17*	-2.19	0.95	-0.17*
Engaged teaching				0.15	0.16	0.08
Engaged research				0.22	0.16	0.13
Service/community outreach				0.48	0.13	0.34***
R^2		0.06*			0.28	
R^2 change					0.22	

<i>F</i> for change in R^2	3.26	13.89***
------------------------------	------	----------

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Roadblocks to Community-University Engagement—Community Perspectives

The study participants ($n = 106$) reported four primary needs essential for successful participation in CUEPs. Partnership was cited as the top priority ($n = 57$), followed by expertise ($n = 41$), educational reform ($n = 25$), and resources ($n = 13$). *Partnerships* were identified as crucial for ensuring accountability in community-university partnerships, particularly emphasizing inclusivity and the active participation of minority groups in program development. The participants also highlighted the need for equal partnership in the community-engaged programs, with opportunities for joint planning and stakeholder coordination. *Expertise in community-university engagement/know-how* was reported through a need to understand what community-university engagement is, educating on best practices, increasing experts in the field, clarifying the university's contributions to the community, promoting continuous education, and valuing local community expertise. *Educational reform* is underscored by the necessity to establish outreach strategies between universities and communities, implement university policies that promote community-university engagement, ensure HEIs are dedicated to assisting local communities, change the system to enable cooperation of universities with local community groups, and promote citizen education and continuous educational reform. *Financial/resources* are presented as the need for space, funds, human capital, stable and predictable funding, minimum costs, and development of local resources.

Furthermore, our data ($n = 104$) also identified four primary barriers to participating in CUEPs; two of these obstacles reflect the themes identified as needs, namely financial/resources and partnerships. The university's *institutional capacity* is frequently described by 48 instances of lacking mechanisms to engage communities, facing institutional inertia, administrative barriers, bureaucracy, burnout from EU program implementation, absence of strategy and infrastructure, and insufficient knowledge of community-university engagement.

Finances/resources ($n = 46$) were reflected in lack of resources and personnel, insufficient funds, lack of time and human capacity, dependency on project funding, and the university's human resources interest in working with NGOs. The *motivation* was reported with an equal frequency ($n = 46$) as the finances/resources theme, pointing to lack of interest, lack of appreciation from the academia, ex-cathedra approach to working with the community, ivory tower position of professors, prejudices toward community professionals, lack of faculty's willingness to work with the local communities, and a prevalent apathy and disinterest. Finally, *partnerships* ($n = 37$) resurface as a barrier to community partners' involvement in community-university engagement and are expressed through CUEP's lack of reciprocity, inclusiveness, sustainability, network, misunderstanding of the importance of cooperation of the university with the community, difficulty in working with professors, and a lack of monitoring and assessing of the partnerships.

Discussion and Implications

This study aims to expand on the understanding of CUE initiatives in SEE by capturing the perspectives of community partners. Community partners were surveyed to understand their involvement in CUEPs and the extent to which such programs contribute to LCCD. Participants also identified the needs and barriers associated with their CUEs. The findings support the existing literature on CUE in SEE and provide valuable insights into understanding the types of CUEPs that contribute to LCCD. They also highlight the role of the university's third mission in strengthening local communities.

Community Perspectives on Community-University Engagement

Our community participants have generally had limited involvement in CUEPs. Field education and SL courses received higher scores, reflecting the attention given to SL development in SEE. This aligns with the Bologna process and the European Commission's *Renewed Agenda for Higher Education* (2017a), which prioritize community-based education and curricula that support local development (Benneworth et al., 2018).

However, community-based research activities received a low score, with only 15.5% of participants involved. This may be due to a tradition of valuing scientific projects that advance knowledge without much focus on societal usefulness (Boyer, 2016). Promoting community-based research requires a culture of engagement, ongoing communication, and university policies promoting faculty collaboration with the community. It also needs institutional infrastructure to advance this work. Establishing Offices of Community University Engagement can centralize coordination between academic units and local organizations, embodying the metaphor of a “university without walls.” There is also a need to develop a system for tenure and promotion that advances publicly engaged scholarship, agendas, and institutional support (Fisher, 2023), including grants, reduced teaching loads, and availability of research assistance. Monitoring and evaluation practices for partners can be integrated into these offices.

When surveying community partners about university-led community outreach programs, lectures, and seminars were the most frequently mentioned activities, reflecting the expert role that university professors often assume. Acknowledging the value of local expertise and community wisdom, there is an opportunity for local partners to assume co-educator roles, fostering knowledge sharing while enhancing the quality and sustainability of the partnership (Compare et al., 2022). Community members have professional and local wisdom that strengthens students’ understanding of local communities and their work toward sustainable development.

Community-University Engagement and Local Development

In examining the relationship between CUEPs and LCCD, participants highlight the practical benefits of CUEPs. Community members learn and develop new skills and knowledge.

These results align with Lau et al. (2021), who found that SL assists community organizations in acquiring resources and gaining knowledge, ideas, and techniques. This finding supports the notion that learning is dialogical (Freire, 2000) and that CUEPs can become an important local asset for HEIs and host communities (Guarino et al., 2023; Luca Sugawara, 2022). When students learn, the community learns. Participants also suggest that CUEPs help local partners identify external resources, aligning with Luca Sugawara’s (2022) framework on exchanges and local development.

Moreover, we found that CUEPs help host organizations increase the involvement of diverse groups. This aligns with the EUA’s University Without Walls Policy Framework (2023), which emphasizes diversity and social cohesion. It highlights the importance of universities’ roles in sustainable, diverse, and engaged education. Therefore, HEIs should continue working with local communities, as such collaborations enhance local capabilities and broaden knowledge for all (EUA, 2023).

Our data support that engaged teaching, research, and community outreach/service programs are significant predictors of LCCD. Community outreach/service and engaged teaching are predictors of the development of community assets, supporting early findings that CUE advances learning and skills development for all involved. This also supports Ibrahim’s (2006) idea that shared interactions and collective goals facilitate new community capabilities. Understanding that CUEPs may contribute to developing community assets is essential when establishing reciprocal partnerships and delineating expectations, roles, and responsibilities for all involved (Muse, 2018).

Community outreach/service is also a predictor of the functioning and transformational capacity. Through community participation and the involvement of all stakeholders, including the active participation of diverse groups, CUEPs have the potential to enhance a community’s capacity to come together and tackle local issues. This requires community groups and university representatives to unite their efforts for greater benefits, impacting local communities. Unlike coagency, which operates on an individual scale, collective agency encompasses shared accountability, a feeling of unity, identity, purpose, and accomplishment needed for the sustainability of our communities (OECD, 2019). This result highlights the importance of HEIs working with local communities to advance the 2030 Agenda (Fia et al., 2022; Lozano, 2006; Purcell et al., 2019), while underscoring the need for creating community-university partnerships and engaging stakeholders in the co-creation of knowledge and processes as a public good.

To our surprise, foundation funding is a negative predictor for developing the functioning and transformational community capacity, while governmental funding is a negative predictor of transformational capacity in the first regression model. These findings may reflect the heavy administrative work and frequent reporting on project implementation, which can pull community organizations away from fieldwork and creative activities.

Grants often cover most costs but not all, which can push local community members to work extra without pay, contributing to this negative association. A USAID study in 12 countries highlights the complexity of grant-making reports and the burden on local communities (Dichter, 2014). Community organizations often dedicate considerable time to documentation rather than direct engagement, hindering local capacity development. This is also a well-known European problem (Gimeno-Feliú, 2014). Another possible explanation is that community organizations are not compensated in proportion to the value they contribute to community development, nor are they adequately recognized for their service costs within CUE grants. Addressing the power imbalance between the universities and communities is crucial in negotiating agreements and project costs to prevent undue burdens on local organizations.

Our data from open-ended questions identify several roadblocks to participating in CUEPs, including the absence of shared norms on community-engaged education, bureaucratic university infrastructure, lack of supportive CUE, transparency and trust issues, resource scarcity, and low faculty interest. The comfort of the status quo and resistance to reform in higher education may also impact faculty.

Our results underscore that community-university partnerships and motivation are significant roadblocks to CUEPs. Strengthening the connection between the university and local stakeholders is a multifaceted and challenging process that requires a culture of community engagement (Boyer, 2016), bringing together multiple actors with diverse agendas, resources, needs, and expertise. Successful institutional partnerships require appropriate institutional structures and governance to facilitate exchanges (Goddard et al., 2016) and strengthen the relationships between all involved (Bringle et al., 2012; Muse, 2018). The “ex-cathedra” superiority approach can make local community stakeholders feel disrespected and undervalued, hindering the perception of community stakeholders as equal partners. The lack of transparency in goals and the insufficient allocation of staff and time to build relationships and trust deepen the gap between HEIs and local communities. Ad hoc CUEPs need enhanced planning, transparency, and inclusive, democratic decision-making to ensure meaningful reciprocity.

Finally, to support effective CUEPs and uphold the university’s third mission, HEI administrators must develop policies that advance and promote publicly engaged scholarship, teaching and learning, and service. Planning and securing the resources needed are critical first steps in addressing the institutional barriers and aiming for a positive impact on local development. Likewise, developing competencies to advance this field of education and practice is in order. Faculty members need training to offer community-engaged courses, develop community-anchored assignments, and participate in community-engaged research. Community members, too, need training and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, along with equal participation in designing, planning, executing, and evaluating CUE initiatives. Finally, administrators must reflect on the importance of developing university policies to advance CUE free from external pressures, especially political influence, as it is crucial to create community-university pathways that are inclusive and responsive to all.

Study Limitations and Future Directions

The study participants were recruited using snowballing and purposive sampling. Despite spanning three countries, the sample is not representative. Furthermore, given the paucity of measures to evaluate CUEPs’ impact on the local context, researchers developed specific measures for this study. However, with community-university engagement being a relatively novel concept in SEE, we identified cultural adaptation challenges, including language and contextual differences among the three countries and between SEE and the United States. These challenges highlight the need for further validation of tools measuring community-university engagement efforts in the SEE context. Moreover, although our LCCD scale covers key content areas and demonstrates good internal consistency reliability, as well as face and

content validity, additional research is needed to validate it. To address this, a manuscript is in progress reporting on the results of the factor analysis and our efforts to validate this scale. An additional potential methodological drawback was the fatigue participants experienced from answering open-ended questions about their specific community-university-engaged experiences. This format is uncommon in Southeastern European surveys, leading many participants to skip these items. To mitigate this risk, clear instructions, definitions, and examples were provided next to each question.

Of equal importance is that the data collection process occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. This might have influenced participant responsiveness and led to shifts in community priorities. Finally, the study focused on three funding sources as primary predictors alongside CUEPs. However, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of CUEPs' impact on communities, future research should explore a wider range of geopolitical, economic, and social-structural factors facilitating or curbing such initiatives. As we move forward, it is critical for governmental institutions, social development actors, and HEIs to collaborate closely with local communities. In this context, future research needs to understand how funding sources may become roadblocks to advancing community-university engagement in SEE and what curbs and develops such community-university partnerships. Moreover, while the study findings are context-specific, they highlight the need for additional research to better understand the contributions CUEPs bring toward sustainable development in other parts of the globe.

In conclusion, this paper underscores the importance of CUE efforts to strengthen local capacity for development in Southeastern European countries. It highlights the unique and critical perspectives that community stakeholders bring to these efforts and the contributions of CUEPs to LCCD. In the face of escalating global challenges, the paper reaffirms the pivotal role of HEIs in supporting the 2030 Agenda (EUA, 2023) and working with local communities for a sustainable future. It emphasizes the importance of strengthening our collective agency needed to bridge the gap between the university's third mission and the grand challenges faced by human communities. CUE might be one important catalyst for societal transformation and sustainable development.

References

- Alfirević, N., Petković, S., & Zlatković Radaković, M. (2022). Contribution of service-learning and supporting factors to the environmental sustainability commitment of higher education institutions. *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, 29(1), 87–104. <http://doi.org/10.3935/rsp.v29i1.1857>
- American Council on Education. (n.d.). *The elective classification for community engagement*. Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/elective-classifications/community-engagement/>
- Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance. (2006, July). *Universities and community engagement* (Position paper). https://www.universityworldnews.com/filemgmt_data/files/AUCEA%20Position%20Paper.pdf
- Balls-Berry, J. E., & Acosta-Pérez, E. (2017). The use of community engaged research principles to improve health: Community academic partnerships for research. *Puerto Rico Health Sciences Journal*, 36(2), 84–85.
- Benneworth, P.S., Ćulum, B., Farnell, T., Kaiser, F., Seeber, M., Šćukanec, N., Vossensteyn, H., & Westerheijden, D.F. (2018). Mapping and critical synthesis of current state-of-the-art on community engagement in higher education. Institute for the Development of Education, Zagreb. https://ris.utwente.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/76357596/TEFCE_Mapping_Critical_Synthesis.pdf
- Boyer, E.L. (2016). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 20(1), 15–27. <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1244/1241>
- Bringle, R. G., Clayton, P., & Price, M. (2012). Partnerships in service learning and civic engagement. *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*, 1, 1–20. <https://scispace.com/papers/partnerships-in-service-learning-and-civic-engagement-4uaf7c56ni>
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2002). Campus–community partnerships: The terms of engagement. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 503–516. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4560.00273>
- Bringle, R. G., Hatcher, J. A., & McIntosh, R. E. (2006). Analyzing Morton’s typology of service paradigms and integrity. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 13(1), 5–15.
- Brislin, R.W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 1(3), 185–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135910457000100301>
- Brislin, R.W. (1986). A culture general assimilator: Preparation for various types of sojourns. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 215–234. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(86\)90007-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(86)90007-6)
- Chika-James, T.A., Salem, T., & Oyet, M.C. (2022). Our gains, pains and hopes: Community partners’ perspectives of service-learning in undergraduate business education. *SAGE Open*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211069390>
- Compare, C., Albanesi, C., & Pieri, C. (2022). Community-university partnership in service- learning: Voicing the community side. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 26(2). <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/2596/2749>
- Detelj, K., Kedmenec, I., & Vukovic, K. (2018). Service learning as a lever for rural social entrepreneurship development in Croatia. *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, 461–468.
- Dewey, J. (1944). Between two worlds. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.), *Later Works of John Dewey* (Vol. 17, pp. 451–465). Southern Illinois University Press.

- Dichter, T. (2014). *The capable partners learning agenda on local organization capacity development*. USAID.
- Doberneck, D. M., Glass, C. R., & Schweitzer, J. (2010). From rhetoric to reality: A typology of publically engaged scholarship. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 14(4), 5.
- Duraku, Z.H., & Nagavci, M. (2022). Building upon service-learning in higher education: Lessons learned and future recommendations. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 11(1), 175–190. <https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2022.v11n1p175>
- European Commission. (2017a). *Communication on a Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education* (p. 247). Commission of the European Communities, Brussels. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0164&from=ES>
- European Commission. (2017b). *Responsible Research and Innovation*. <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/responsible-research-innovation>
- European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PPMI, & Farnell, T. (2020). *Community engagement in higher education: Trends, practices and policies: Analytical report*. Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/071482>
- European University Association. (2023). *Universities without Walls—A Vision for Europe's Universities in 2030*. <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/957:universities-without-walls-%E2%80%93-eua%E2%80%99s-vision-for-europe%E2%80%99s-universities-in-2030.html>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41(4), 1149–1160. <https://doi.org/10.3758/brm.41.4.1149>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A.-G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods*, 39(2), 175–191.
- Fia, M., Ghasemzadeh, K., & Paletta, A. (2022). How higher education institutions walk their talk on the 2030 Agenda: A systematic literature review. *Higher Education Policy*, 36, 599–632. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-022-00277-x>
- Fisher, K. (2023, August 23). The insular world of academic research: More community-focused scholarship could build public trust. What's standing in the way? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-insular-world-of-academic-research>
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum Books.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Continuum Books.
- Gimeno-Feliú, J.A. (2014). Towards efficiency in public procurement: Simplifying procedures and reducing the administrative burden. In *Proceedings of the 5th International Public Procurement Conference*. <https://www.ippa.org/IPPC5/Proceedings/Part4/PAPER4-8.pdf>
- Goddard, J., Hazekorn, E., Kempton, L., & Vallance, P. (2016). *The civic university: The policy and leadership challenges*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784717728>
- Guarino, A., Barbieri, I., Compare, C., & Albanesi, C. (2023). Facilitating assets-based development in rural communities through service-learning. *Community Development Journal*, 58(3), 512–538. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsac017>
- Ibrahim, S. (2006). From individual to collective capabilities: The capability approach as a conceptual framework for self-help. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 7(7), 397–416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649880600815982>

- Jacoby, B. (1996). Service-learning in today's higher education. In B. Jacoby & Associates (Eds.), *Service-learning in higher education: Concepts and practices* (pp. 3–25). Jossey-Bass.
- Jelinčić, D. A., Baturina, D., & Franić, S. (2022). Impact of service learning on social entrepreneurship and youth employment in Croatia. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 20(4), 319–335.
- Jongbloed, B., Enders, J., & Salerno, C. (2008). Higher education and its communities: Interconnections, interdependencies and a research agenda. *Higher Education*, 56, 303–324.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-008-9128-2>
- Koekkoek, A., Van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2021). Unraveling university-community engagement: A literature review. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 25(1), 3.
<https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1586/2648>
- Lau, K.H., & Snell, R.S. (2020). Assessing community impact after service-learning: A conceptual framework. In *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'20)*, Valencia, Spain. <http://headconf.org/head20/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/10969.pdf>
- Lau, K.H., Chan, M.Y.L., Yeung, C.L.S., & Snell, R.S. (2021). An exploratory study of the community impacts of service-learning. *Metropolitan Universities*, 32(2), 106–128.
<https://doi.org/10.18060/25482>
- Lozano, R. (2006). Incorporation and institutionalization of SD into universities: Breaking through barriers to change. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 14(9–11), 787–796.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2005.12.010>
- Luca Sugawara, C. (2022). Higher education institutions' roles in strengthening local capacity for community development: An analytical framework. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (JHEOE)*, 26(3), 163–176. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1375340.pdf>
- Luca Sugawara, C., Kim, H.-W., Modić Stanke, K., Krasniqi, V., & Basic, S. (2023). The role of community-university engagement in strengthening local community capacity in Southeastern Europe. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 98, 102747.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102747>
- MacLellan-Wright, M.F., Anderson, D., Barber, S., Smith, N., Cantin, B., Felix, R., & Raine, K. (2007). The development of measures of community capacity for community-based funding programs in Canada. *Health Promotion International*, 22(4), 299–306. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dam024>
- Marsh, C., Anderson, L., & Klima, N. (2021). *Engaged Learning in Europe*. Maklu, Antwerp.
- Morgan, P. (1998). *Capacity and capacity development—Some strategies*. CIDA.
http://nsagm.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/0/3/12030125/strategies_for_capacity_development_cida_1998.pdf
- Muse, S.D. (2018). *Exploring the Community Impact of Community-University Partnerships*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 1415. <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1415>
- OECD. (2019). *OECD future of education and skills 2030 conceptual learning framework: Student agency for 2030*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/projects/edu/education-2040/concept-notes/Student_Agency_for_2030_concept_note.pdf
- Orphan, S., Solodukhin, L.D., & Romero, D. (2018). Fostering collective impact: Measuring and advancing higher education's contributions to civic health and equity in Colorado. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 6(1).
<https://doi.org/10.37333/001c.6981>

- Purcell, W. M., Henriksen, H., & Spengler, J. D. (2019). Universities as the engine of transformational sustainability toward delivering the sustainable development goals: “Living labs” for sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 20(8), 1343–1357. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-02-2019-0103>
- Sandmann, L. R. (2008). Conceptualization of the scholarship of engagement in higher education: A strategic review, 1996–2006. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 12(1), 91–104. <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/520>
- Secundo, G., Perez, S.E., Martinaitis, Z., & Leitner, K.H. (2017). An intellectual capital framework to measure universities’ third mission activities. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 123, 229–239. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.12.013>
- Shalabi, N. (2013). Exploring community partners’ perspectives on the nature of service-learning partnerships in Egypt. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 1(1), 80–91. <https://doi.org/10.37333/001c.001001008>
- Srinivas, T., Meenan, C.E., Drogin, E., & DePrince, A.P. (2015). Development of the community impact scale measuring community organization perceptions of partnership benefits and costs. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 21(2), 5–21.
- Stanke, K.M., Galešić, D., & Seršić, D.M. (2021). Service-learning supporting career management. In *Proceedings of ICERI 2021 Conference*, November 2021.
- Stanton, T.K., & Giles, D.E. (2017). Introduction: Founders, framers, and futures. In C. Dolgon, T. D. Mitchell, & T. K. Eatman (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Community Engagement* (pp. 1–12). Cambridge University Press.
- Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R., & Donohue, P. (2003). Principles of best practice for community-based research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 9(3), 5–15. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mjcs/3239521.0009.301>
- Tyndall, D.E., Kosko, D.A., Forbis, K.M., & Sullivan, W.B. (2020). Mutual benefits of a service-learning community-academic partnership. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 59(2), 93–96. <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20200122-07>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2009). *Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer*. United Nations Development Programme. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/capacity-development-a-undp-primer/CDG_PrimerReport_final_web.pdf

APPENDIX A

Table A.1

Correlations

Bivariate Correlations										
Variable	N^a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Governmental funding	211	1								
2. International funding	211	−0.04	1							
3. Foundational funding	211	0.12	0.12	1						
4. Engaged teaching	197	−0.10	0.09	−0.02	1					
5. Engaged research	196	−0.10	0.02	−0.02	0.41***	1				
6. Community outreach	190	0.04	−0.02	0.04	0.47***	0.53***	1			
7. Community assets	171	−0.12	−0.02	−0.14	0.38***	0.27***	0.37***	1		
8. Functioning capacity	160	−0.13	0.02	−0.19*	0.31***	0.33***	0.41***	0.77***	1	
9. Transformational capacity	159	−0.17*	0.00	−0.21**	0.34***	0.37***	0.44***	0.80***	.83***	1

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Acknowledgments

This study was conducted with the support of Indiana University's Presidential International Research Award, IUPUI's Research Support Funds Grant, and The Dennis A. and Julia M. Watkins Foundation. We extend our sincere gratitude to our research team members, Drs. Sanela Bašić, Vjollca Krasniqi, and Koraljka Modić Stanke, as well as our research consultants, Dr. Mary Price, Dr. Julia Hatcher, and the Proni Centre for Social Education in Osijek, Croatia, for their critical contributions to advancing the scholarship and practice of community-university engagement in Southeastern Europe.

Finally, this work would not have been possible without the voices of the community groups who believe in the importance of building bridges with higher education institutions and who actively engage with faculty and students in shaping community-university partnerships that help us move toward a sustainable future.

About the Authors

Carmen Luca Sugawara, Associate Professor and Director of International and Global Engagements at Indiana University School of Social Work, centers her scholarship on community-based global learning and community-university engagement.

Dinka Caha is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Her research and teaching interests focus on prevention, implementation science, and community capacities.

Kim Hea-Won is Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at Indiana University. Her scholarship focuses on translational research, including the implementation of evidence-based practices and program evaluation.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Carmen Luca Sugawara through email at clucasug@iu.edu