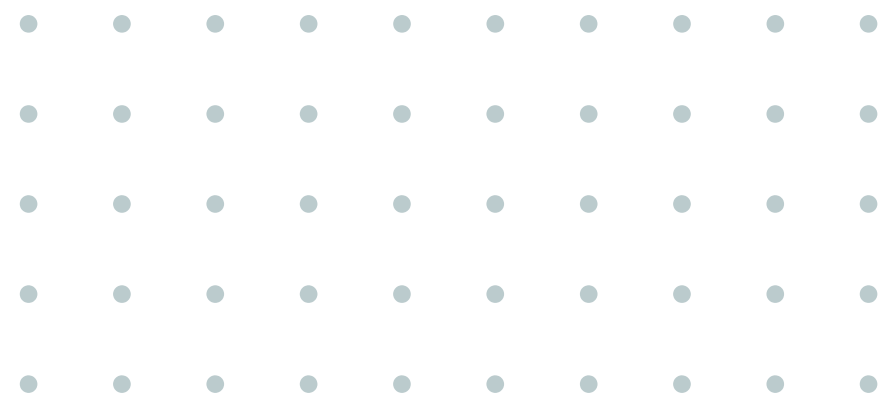
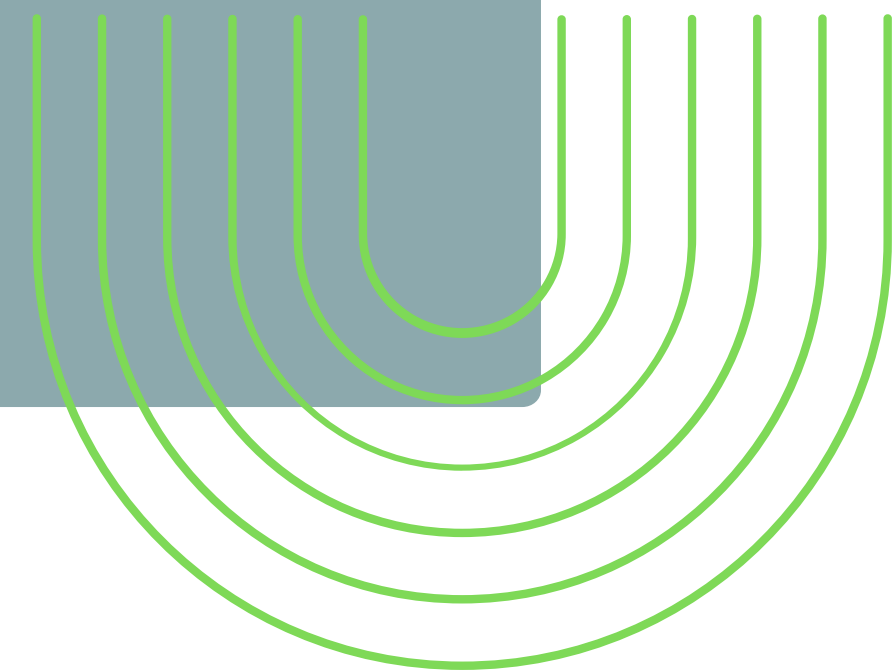




COMMUNITY POWER-BUILDING IN SOCIAL INNOVATION

Train the trainers

The RESIST project is co-financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund) under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.



01.

GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP & OWNERSHIP

Where to look, what to spot

02.

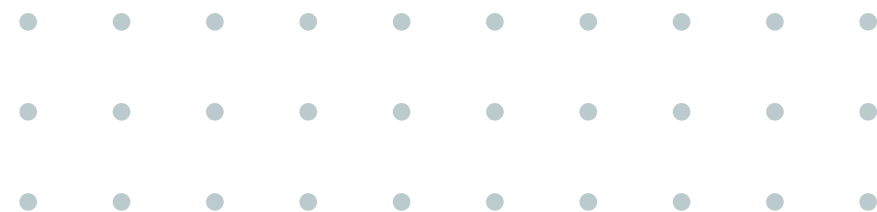
POWERSHIFTS & POWERBUILDING

Why those matter

03.

MECHANISMS & METRICS

Selection of main methods



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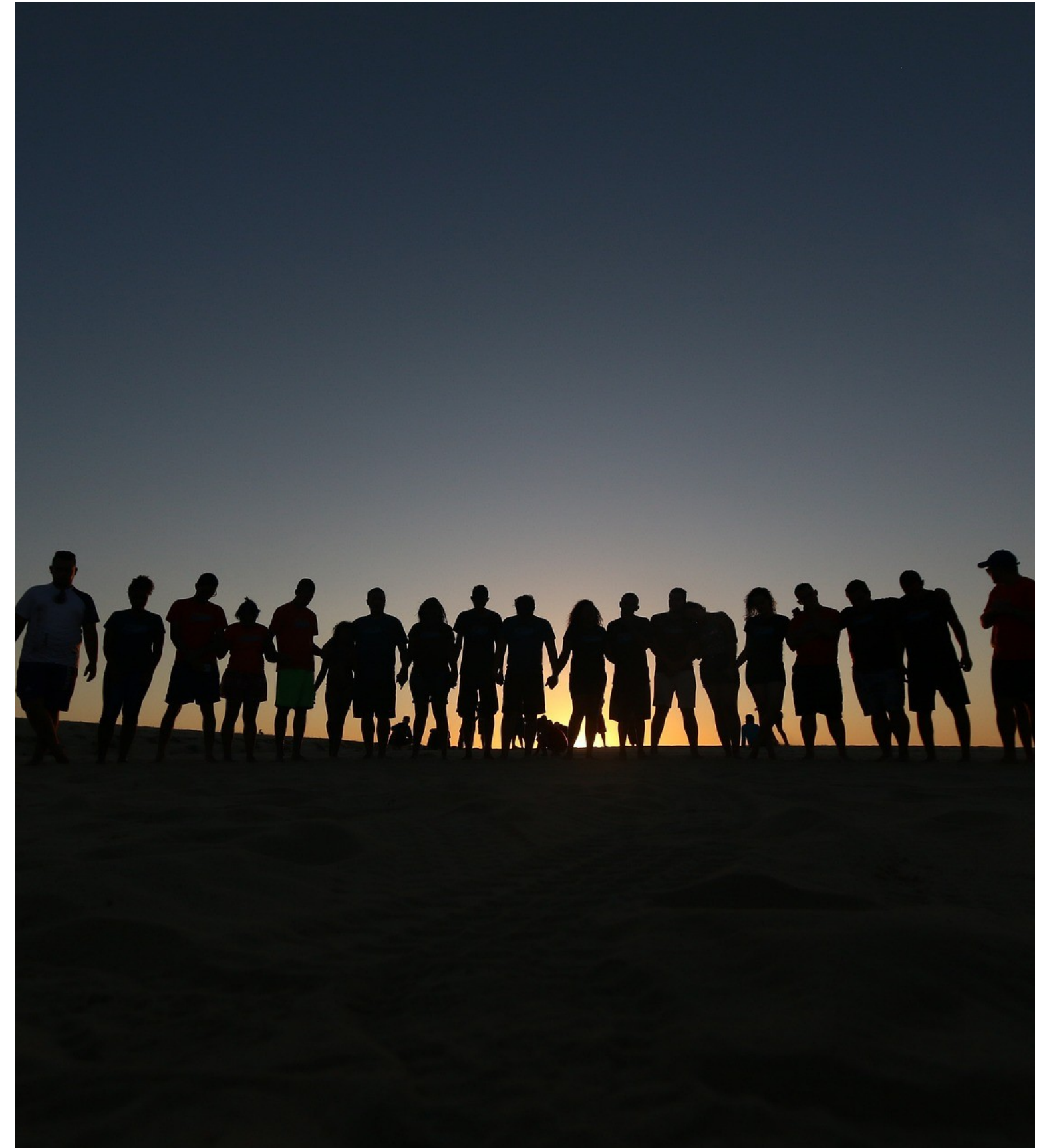
Governance, Leadership & Ownership

This presentation explores how **shifting power to communities transforms social innovation.** We will look at governance models, leadership development, ownership structures, and the ethics of power-sharing, while drawing on case studies and practical strategies.



Why Community Power-Building Matters

- Social innovation often fails when decision-making power remains concentrated in external institutions or organizations. **Without community ownership, initiatives risk being temporary and ineffective.**
- Building power ensures that communities are not only participants but **active decision-makers**, strengthening both legitimacy and trust.
- Long-lasting governance structures give resilience, allowing communities to continue shaping change long after funding cycles end.
- Empowered communities cultivate the skills, confidence, and collective energy needed to address both current and future challenges.





- Innovation **without power transfer** creates extractive programs, where communities are treated as subjects rather than partners.
- Real innovation **redistributes decision rights**, positioning communities as co-creators instead of passive recipients.
- Sustainable change depends on **embedding local ownership** at every stage.

Social Innovation Requires Power Shifts

When innovation is carried out without structural shifts in decision-making, it risks reinforcing inequities rather than dismantling them. Programs might achieve measurable outputs, but they rarely transform systems. Lasting social innovation must transfer power alongside resources, ensuring communities drive the process as well as the outcomes.

What is community-power building



Community power-building is the **practice of shifting authority** to those who are most directly affected. Instead of institutions prescribing solutions, residents define the problems, design the responses, and govern the structures that carry them forward.

This **creates ownership** of both resources and outcomes, ensuring social innovation is not imposed from the outside but emerges from within.

By rooting innovation in lived experience, communities create solutions that are culturally grounded, more relevant, and sustainable.

Program delivery vs. power-building



- **Clients vs. co-owners:** Traditional service delivery treats residents as clients, while power-building positions them as co-owners of solutions.
- **Short-term outputs vs. durable governance:** Service programs measure outputs; power-building creates governance structures that persist.
- **External control vs. community decision rights:** Programs are often controlled by outside agencies, but true empowerment comes from local decision-making authority.
- **Service provision vs. structural change:** Delivering services solves immediate needs, while shifting power addresses root causes and transforms systems.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

Asset-Based Community Development **begins by mapping what already exists within a community:** the skills of individuals, the associations they belong to, and the institutions rooted in the area.

By focusing on abundance rather than deficits, communities build strength and resilience. ABCD connects neighbors, strengthens informal networks, and invests in leadership capacity.

The shift from a deficit mindset to an abundance mindset helps communities recognize and use their own power as the foundation for innovation.



Leadership Pipelines

Identify: Use talent scouting and peer nominations to bring forward emerging leaders who may not hold formal titles.

Train: Provide community members with skills in organizing, governance, facilitation, and negotiation.

Support: Offer stipends, coaching, and peer networks to ensure leaders can sustain their engagement.

Sustain: Create long-term succession plans and mentorship systems to continuously renew leadership.

Ownership Structures for Power

Ownership determines who ultimately holds decision-making rights.

Community benefit agreements bind developers to community priorities, while mutual aid networks and solidarity economies demonstrate how communities can own and control the means of resilience and support.



Ethics of Power-Sharing



- Consent, compensation, and credit are non-negotiable when involving community members.
- Avoid tokenism and co-optation, where participation is symbolic but not substantive.
- Respect community sovereignty and protect privacy, particularly when handling data.
- Sharing power requires not only giving seats at the table but transferring resources to communities as well.

Barriers to power-building

Communities face many barriers in building power. **Institutional resistance** and gatekeeping often limit access to decision-making spaces.

Short-term **funding cycles** create instability and pressure to prioritize compliance over innovation.

Many communities **lack training and capacity-building support**, leaving leaders overstretched. **Sustaining volunteer energy** without proper resources is difficult, leading to burnout and loss of momentum.



Overcoming barriers

- Build **broad coalitions** to pressure institutions into making structural changes.
- Secure **multi-year, flexible funding** that allows communities to plan for the long term.
- Invest in **leadership** development infrastructure so capacity grows sustainably.
- Create **peer support networks** and mutual aid systems to prevent burnout.



From participation to shared power

Moving beyond involvement toward real community decision-making.

- Consulted – communities asked for feedback
- Co-Designed – locals shape solutions
- Co-Governed – communities hold decision rights & some budgets



Power-sharing is the true metric of innovation.

Community Power in Action

Examples that Shift Power to the People

BSI_4Women Empowers refugee women through entrepreneurship and community networks — demonstrating communities shaping their economic future.

SEMPRE (and its extension “SEMPRE Accelerators”)
Created local empowerment networks combining social-service providers + vulnerable communities.

BSR Cultural Pearls

Engages smaller cities/regions to strengthen community culture and sense of belonging — emphasising community-led cultural activities as innovation.

Real-world models where communities lead, not follow.



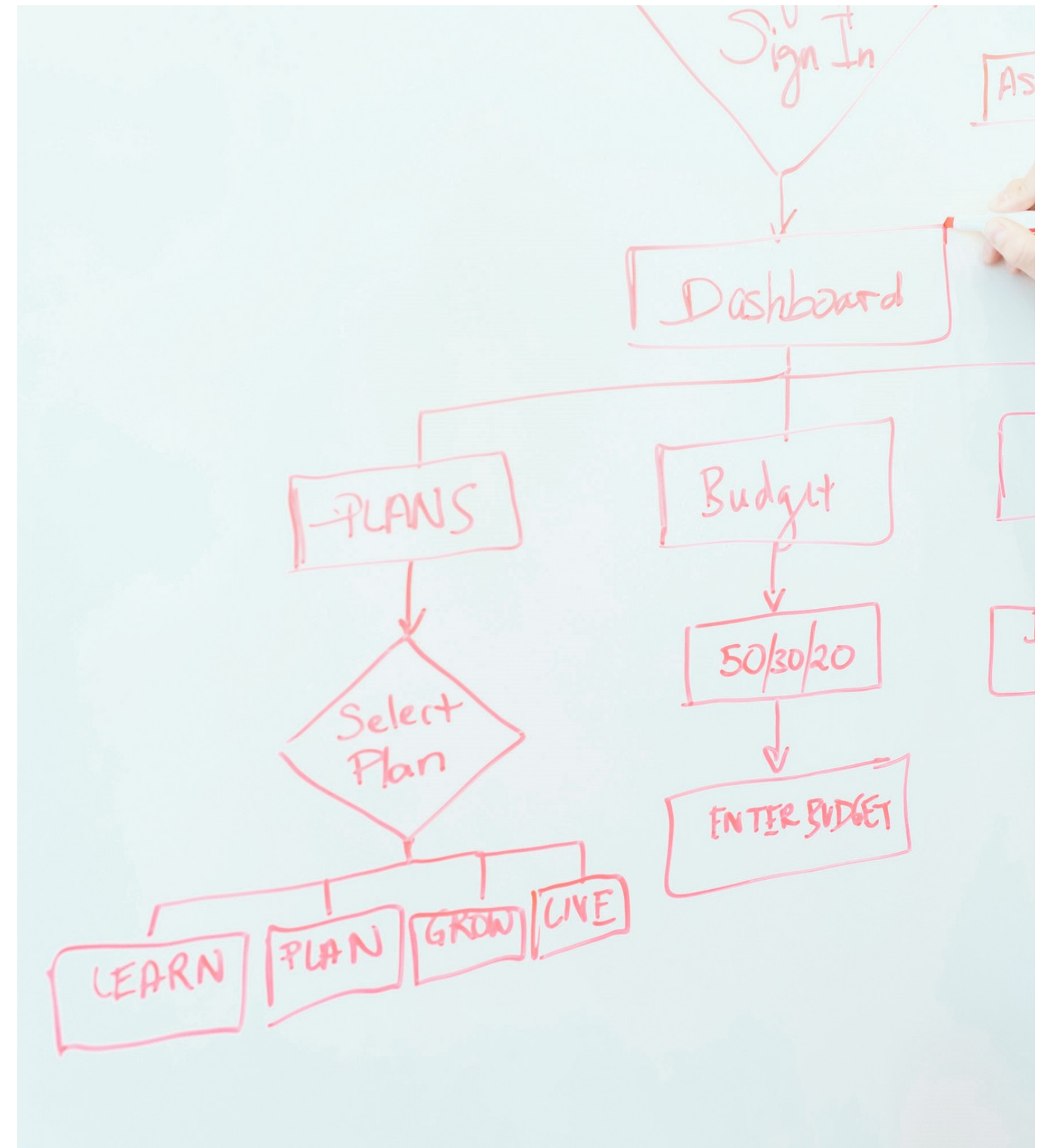
Mechanisms that redistribute Power

Tools that Shift Who Decides

- **Participatory budgeting**
- **Cooperative & mutual ownership**
- **Social procurement clauses**
- **Citizen assemblies**
- **Digital deliberation platforms**



How to Know When Power Has Shifted?



Measuring Community

Track deeper indicators than participation counts.

Power



Decision Rights –
who approves or
vetoes



Representation –
diversity in
leadership



Capacity –
local skills &
resources



Accountability –
feedback loops &
transparency





The economics of shared ownership



Community wealth-building as social innovation.

Main points:

- Cooperative and community-share models retain value locally.
- Each reinvested euro builds circular benefit.
- Shared ownership = long-term sustainability.

When Ownership Stays Local, Impact Multiplies

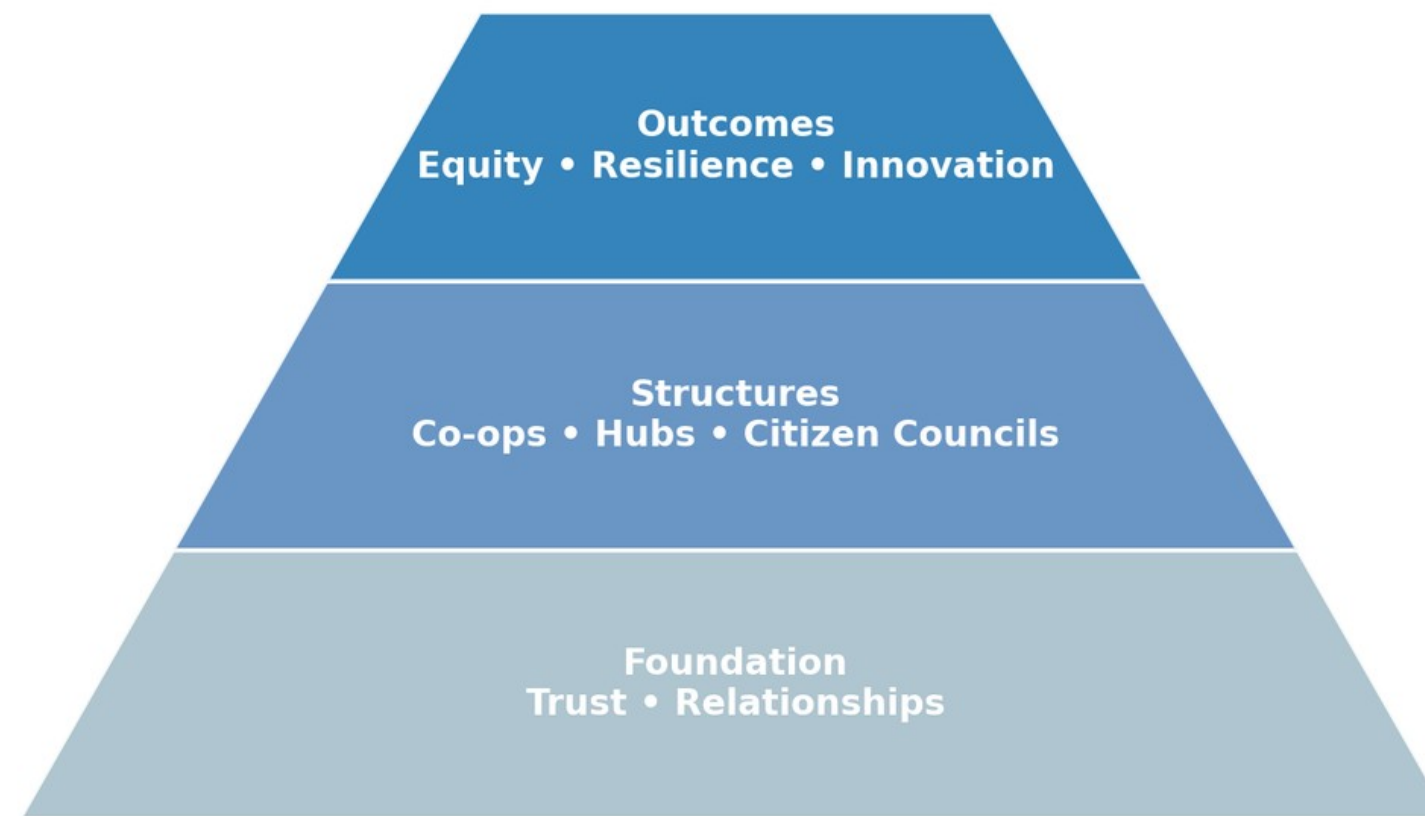
The Future: Power as Infrastructure



Power is not a project —it's the system itself

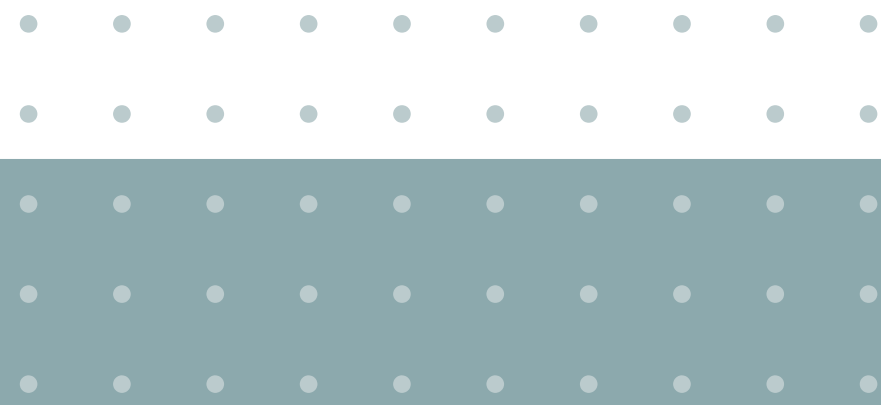
Building ecosystems where authority, trust, and capacity are embedded.

Power as Infrastructure: Layers of Community Innovation



“Communities are not beneficiaries — they are architects of change.”





THANK YOU

Have any question?

