



## Fighting Back with Democracy

Charles F. Kettering Foundation, 2019  
Dayton, Ohio, USA

### Fighting Back with Democracy

Enhancing World's Social and Civic Infrastructure for Promoting Democracy Concepts and Practices

#### HOW LIBRARIES CAN ENHANCE DEMOCRACY IN SMALL COMMUNITIES / INSIGHTS INTO THE EDUCAB METHODOLOGY AND INTERVENTIONS

##### Executive Summary

Mihai Lupu

- The focus of the paper is to grasp the potential of libraries to initiate, curate, and foster critical thinking-based knowledge, democratic practices, and also exposure to diversity focused contexts that will contribute to enhancing community-oriented and civic engagement practices around the world (especially in small communities).
- The text stands alone in construction and coherence, nevertheless, it was thought from the beginning as part of a larger study that will include also elements on: 1. Current status on how libraries are functioning, 2. Revitalizing humanities and world's knowledge through libraries, 3. Redesigning library infrastructure to boost democracy, and 4. Insights into EduCaB open model, methodology, and interventions.
- I am offering evidence how, in small communities, there are already practices, habits, customs that are civic, democratic. One needs to also include them while considering interventions in such places – I have named them *small-scale democracies*.
- I am showing the importance of acknowledging and then acting on what I have called *democracy distance*, which I define as a space between what one knows and proactively uses from established democracy narrative and practices, but also the degree in which citizens are able to understand and consequently frame their local heritage of customs and practices within their communities as essentially *democratic* instances (when the case).

- I was also interested in breaking the concept of democracy into smaller units (i.e. indices and indicators), ones that can make more sense for citizens in villages and small towns, and can be easier seen in the day to day actions and all the experiences they are exposed to, while giving a wider range of space for specific interactions at local level.
- I am presenting nuances of how one can relate to communities, not only through the classic territorial approach and the diasporas, but also including all those contributing and connected somehow to those communities. This changes the way one can assess the resources communities have, and how isolated these are from their externality, also how it relates to the actual concept of *externality*.
- In the text, often I am referring to academic and non-academic literature (trying to open the discussion with new questions and ways of tackling my ideas). I also give various examples of interventions and the results of the interventions we had via the EduCaB program and methodology, while relating them to other existing practices and approaches.
- Libraries are regarded throughout the text as both *Agoras* in miniature through the way they are run and the services provided to the communities, while also contributing to the larger scale *Agora*, by improving citizens' well-being and the way they relate to each other.
- The questions and examples given in the paper are meant to start a larger conversation that we all need to have, those caring about the revival of communities and of democratic practices in such places, when trying to answer these questions: *How much we do not use from what democracies can offer right now? And then, how much can a library do in a small community to promote democratic practices and the whole experience of democracy, while using and capitalizing this existing 'offer'?*