

# FELLOWS IN SWITZERLAND



December 2023

A photograph of a person sitting in a group, focused on writing in a notebook. The person is wearing a dark jacket and blue jeans. A blue pen is in their hand, and a smartphone is resting on the notebook. The background is blurred, showing other people in a group setting. A vertical white line is positioned to the left of the text.

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION



**DAN ACHER**  
**Happy City Lab**  
(2017)\*

Dan is battling the increasingly frequent atmosphere of anonymity, distrust and insecurity within neighborhoods and cities by creating participative events that become public tools to strengthen community and build a sense of belonging. In doing so, he encourages citizen ownership of public spaces and invites residents to take responsibility for their city, ultimately leading to a more active, cohesive and empowered citizenry.

**Recent news:** Dan recently launched his new installation 'Breathe' in Geneva in May 2024. With a fifteen-meter rising sphere that pulses with warm, rhythmic light, 'Breathe' creates a shared breathing experience across a city and globally. It invites people to slow down, connect with themselves and others, and breathe together in unison. Key monuments and natural features pulsed in sync with the sphere; the whole city breathes as one. Learn more [here](#).



**NICOLA FORSTER**  
**Foraus**  
(2016)

Nicola is tackling the significant discrepancy between political decisions and the desires and ideas of young citizens. Foraus is a unique grassroots “think and do-tank” that crowd-sources ideas for political change from young citizens. By doing so, he is supplying the political system with fresh, innovative ideas and combating the political apathy of young people by turning them into changemakers of traditional political systems.

**Recent news:** Foraus continues to publish papers on diverse foreign policy topics, such as youth political involvement, Europe, and Switzerland's role in the international system. As President of the SGG, a leading Swiss non-profit, Nicola pursues his vision of participative democracy.

\*Year of election as Ashoka Fellow

# EDUCATION & YOUTH





**CARSTEN  
RUEBSAAMEN**  
**BookBridge**  
(2013)

Carsten is addressing the education gap in rural areas. By rallying local communities, connecting existing resources and enabling local entrepreneurs to setup financially sustainable Learning Centers in their communities, Carsten creates a new comprehensive, self-reinforcing process that fosters quality education and community empowerment.

**Recent news:** Always envisioning a world of purpose-driven leaders transforming their own lives and organizations, BookBridge entered 6 new countries in 2022 and its focus transitioned into, more widely, empowering social entrepreneurs in deprived communities, matching them with professionals and impact investors.



**MARKUS GANDER**  
**Infoklick**  
(2008)

Markus's organization, Infoklick, connects youth with their peers and serves as a "platform of platforms," offering a centralized infrastructure for youth participation activities. It brings together youngsters both virtually and physically, and strengthens their bonds with supportive adults, youth organizations, sponsors, and communities.

**Recent news:** Markus died on July 1, 2022, just a few days before his 58th birthday. Convinced that many young people only need an impetus to move forward on their own and that the system must trust them and recognize their strengths, he tirelessly campaigned for youth in numerous ways. While his life has ended, the creation and celebration of his life's work will continue.



**JERÓNIMO CALDERON**  
**Euforia**  
(2012)

Jerónimo created a youth-led movement that transforms social change into a desired lifestyle for Generation Y. Euforia developed highly engaging event-trainings that offer young people and executives unique learning opportunities. By branding citizen engagement as cool, trendy and attractive, Jerónimo offered inspiring and “euphoric” opportunities that engage individuals and groups previously resistant to youth programs.

**Recent news:** Today, Euforia’s volunt'heroes create safe spaces where people realize their own potential, find solutions, and become transformational leaders, fostering collective intelligence, self-leadership, agility, and well-being in the workplace. For shifting from an ego-system to an eco-system, they design tailor-made programs fitted to the specific needs of organizations and offer their facilitation expertise for meetings, conferences, workshops, and retreats.



**CHRISTIANE DAEPP**  
**IdeenBuero**  
(2008)

Christiane’s *Office of Ideas* helps children use their creativity and idealism to become active problem solvers in their communities. Through extracurricular activities in schools, kids independently work to develop solutions to the problems their peers, teachers, and neighbors face, and change their neighborhoods for the better.

**Recent news:** In 2022, IdeenBüro celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday on the same day as the “democracy day”. Alumni and sister organisations met together for this important celebration and testified how much IdeenBüro helped them to grow.



**ELEONORA VOLTOLINA**  
**La Repubblica Degli Stagisti**  
(2017)

Eleonora, journalist, is convinced that journalism can be used as a level to address and solve the social problems of our time. In 2009, she created and, Repubblica degli Stagisti, an online newsmagazine. The projects explores the issue of unpaid internships and how not to be exploited as an intern in Italy while fighting for fairer conditions and access for young people to the labour market.

**Recent news:** She has now launched The Why Wait Agenda that questions the choice of having kids later or sooner through unpacking the concepts of fertility and parenting today. This new editorial adventure aims at reducing the gap between the desired number of children and the actual number of children women are having.



**DANIELA MAUDETH  
VALDIVIA GUTIÉRREZ**  
**Huellas & Futuro**  
(2018)

Daniela leads a movement in Bolivia that shifts the cultural mindsets around the treatment of women and reduces gender-based violence by working across gendered lines. She engages schools, parent-teacher associations, military academies, and the police force, to raise awareness of this issue and to devise preventive strategies. Additionally, she uses mass media and legal expertise to influence public opinion, empower victims, and strengthen the legal rights of women.

**Recent news:** Daniela published a novel towards the end of 2023, exploring themes of love, passion, manipulation and mental health. Also towards the end of 2023, Daniela's organisation launched its operations in the neighbouring country of Ecuador.



**HEALTH**





**CAROLINE KANT**  
**EspeRare**  
(2014)

Caroline is accelerating the cost-effective development of unexplored therapeutic opportunities in rare diseases by addressing key translational gaps and clinical development challenges. She is acting as an investor, a patient voice integrator and a trusted broker between patients, pharmaceutical companies, biomedical centers of expertise and regulatory authorities.

**Recent news:** Caroline has recently been appointed the Vice President of the Hopitaux Universitaires de Genève (HUG), the largest university hospital in Switzerland.



**MARIE-DOMINIQUE  
GENOUD-CHAMPEAUX**  
**As'Trame**  
(2007)

As'Trame supports the mental health of kids in families hurt by traumas. As'Trame help them cope with the emotional severance that follows a divorce, death, mental illness of a parent. Her methodology of “reliance paths” is a holistic approach for all kinds of traumas, encompassing every step from the recognition of the problem through to healing and closure.

**Recent news:** As'Trame's CEO Anne de Montmollin and her team are now looking at the systemic change needed to put in place sustainable family policies to respond to these situations early so that children can grow up safely and have the mental environment to be balanced and fulfilled adults.



# HUMAN RIGHTS



**ALAIN WERNER**  
**Civitas Maxima**  
(2020)

Alain is creating new spaces for stakeholders of the international criminal justice system, such as victims, NGOs, investigators, and lawyers, to work together with the aim of building the competency of, and ultimately strengthening, domestic judicial systems across the world to undertake international crimes prosecutions. In doing so, Alain is paving the way for impunity to be something of the past, and for justice to be served.

**Recent news:** In 2022, Civitas Maxima celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday of “supporting victims of forgotten conflicts in their quest for justice” and contributed to legal discourse in landmark cases against Gibril Massaquoi, Sekou Kamara, Alieu Kosiah, Moses Wright, and Kunti Kamara.



**ANDRAS VAMOS-  
GOLDMAN**  
**Justice Rapid Response**  
(2015)

Andras created a new strategy and instrument to tip the criminal justice sector and build a new culture of delivery to bring justice for the world's worst crimes. He is leading to a paradigm shift in international investigations: JRR provides criminal justice professionals rapidly, wherever needed, to help ensure investigations and fact-finding missions are credible, impartial and prompt.

**Recent news:** In 2022, Justice Rapid Response, now under the leadership of Samuel Emonet, has assisted justice in 25 different countries by deploying 91 experts to 28 partners, including international and national justice institutions and civil society organizations.



**KAREN TSE**  
**International Bridges to Justice**  
(2004)

Karen works to ensure that torture is not used as a means of investigation and that everyone has access to defense council. She is building international coalitions to support public defenders in emerging democracies. Through a replicable sequence of training, structural reform, and international support, Karen enables societies to pursue the basic rights to legal representation and protection from mistreatment using the law.

***Recent news:*** Karen is currently implementing a program that puts youth at the forefront, connecting young people across borders to leverage their collective voices in the fight for justice.

# INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES





**JONAS STAUB**  
**Blindspot**  
(2018)

Jonas and his non-profit organization Blindspot are a pioneer in Switzerland in enabling inclusion long before the UN Convention of the Rights of Person with Disabilities was developed. Blindspot has now positioned itself as a leader in the economic and housing market by providing the private sector with best practices of the added value of inclusion – an easy, natural process in which everyone can engage in.

**Recent news:** In the area of living, Blindspot launched a second inclusive apartment, enabling independent living for people with disabilities. Jonas Staub now also teaches his best practices around “Inclusion as a business model” at universities, like the ETH, and coaches national and international companies to implement this model. For this work he won the Swiss Diversity Award for the second time.



**CHRISTOPHE DUNAND**  
**Réalise**  
(2014)

Christophe has changed the way the Swiss social sector operates - making it more collaborative, bottom-up and oriented toward changemaking. He has introduced a nationwide approach of “social integration enterprises” (i.e., social enterprises focused on connecting vulnerable, unemployed people more permanently to the workforce).

**Recent news:** Réalise continued to launch programs for the development of new skills to answer latest market needs and participated in forums to help shift mindsets.



**MICHAELA NACHTRAB**  
**VerbaVoice**  
(2011)

Michaela envisioned, with VerbaVoice, a society in which accessibility for hearing disabled and deaf citizens is the norm rather than the exception. This means seamless communication in educational and professional environments as well as access to information. Michaela's strategy is based on a combination of her online service and its potential to social action which produce an empowering architecture for accessibility.

**Recent news:** She is now Head of Business Development Accessibility Services at Swiss TXT AG where she continues her changemaking journey from the inside.



**SOFIA APPELGREN**  
**Mitt Liv AB**  
(2010)

Sofia's approach allows the immigrant community to see – and the greater community to believe – that persons with an immigrant background can follow their dreams. With Mitt Liv AB she matches the most dynamic and entrepreneurial persons from immigrant communities with Swedish entrepreneurs and corporate leaders.

**Recent news:** She is now using Switzerland as the next step in her ambition to scale these flourishing programs to a European scope.



**CHRISTINE THEODOLOZ-WALKER**

**Intégration pour tous**

(2008)

Christine has transformed the way the Swiss public and private systems support individuals who have lost jobs due to their health. With IPT, Christine has created a revolutionary path to help people get back to work and has transformed the Swiss social welfare system using a model that can easily be transferred to other European contexts and beyond.

**Recent news:** Christine is now retired but in 2022, the IPT Foundation celebrated 50 years of activity in favor of professional integration and reintegration. Discover, in this [retrospective video](#), the highlights of this anniversary year!



# TECH & HUMANITY





**SONJA BETSCHARD**

**WeRobotics**

(2022)

Our newest fellow, Sonja, has developed a new framework to ensure that local experts across the Majority World have the know-how and power to drive technology-rich solutions to the developmental challenges their communities care most about. Sonja has worked with over 220 local experts and 175 local partners across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to implement projects that are generated locally, rather than in Geneva or New York.

**Recent news:** WeRobotics amplifies the power of local expertise to multiply sustainable solutions for development, aid and climate, driven by local actors and supported by drone, data and AI technologies. Recently, they published the 'Glocalization Report', which talks about their approach that seeks to establish a synergy between global and local resources, expertise, and knowledge to achieve meaningful and lasting development outcomes. Find out more about WeRobotics and the report [here](#).



**CHRISTIAN GROTHOFF**

**GNUnet e.V.**

(2015)

Christian is addressing our dependence on Internet architectures that enable censorship and mass-surveillance by implementing next-generation network architectures that enable informational self-determination. His work is providing new policy options, such as privacy-preserving digital cash suitable for central bank digital currencies.

**Recent news:** Christian's team found ways to secure digital payments even at points-of-sale that are offline, and to fold age-restrictions into digital cash to enable usable age-verification in e-commerce without the need for identification.

# The Swiss Ashoka Fellows' organizations already gave birth to other projects



(Lorraine 22)

Some other Ashoka Fellows organizations have expanded to Switzerland

