

“THE MOST SUSTAINABLE IDEAS
AND THE WILL TO ACT ON THEM
ARE RIGHT HERE”



Asset Based Community Development - how to get started

Published by the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences 2019

ISBN: 978-82-93677-08-6

This booklet was developed by Associate Professor Rita Agdal, head of the Master Programme in Community Work at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, and Assistant Professor Inger Helen Midtgård at the same department, in collaboration with Cormac Russell, Director of ABCD Europe and Faculty member of the ABCD Institute at DePaul University, Chicago. Managing Director at Nurture Development.

Picture rights: free to use, share or modify, even commercially.

Reprints with source references are encouraged.

Creative Commons license: attribution to source, non-commercial, no derivatives.



This booklet contains tips on how to develop your community, and how to encourage others to contribute towards creating a good quality of life for you all.

Welcome message

If you love your community in principle, but wonder, “what can I do to get going?” in practice, then this handbook is for you. And if you are an experienced community builder eager to invite more people to contribute to the well-being of their community, you’ll find plenty here to energize you.

This short practical guide offers many fun and useful tips on how you and your neighbours can build community together, in a way that starts with a focus on what’s strong, not what’s wrong.

The ideas contained here have been tried and tested by residents in many Norwegian communities and in neighbourhoods, towns and villages across the world.

We believe there is an abundance of untapped capacities and resources in every community, waiting to be discovered, connected and mobilized, and we hope this handbook supports you and your neighbours in the pursuit of these invaluable treasures.

Happy treasure hunting!



A photograph of a forest floor. The foreground is dominated by a thick carpet of bright green moss. Several large, grey, angular rocks are scattered throughout the moss. In the background, numerous tall, thin tree trunks rise vertically, creating a dense forest. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the moss and the grain of the wood.

THREE MOBILIZING QUESTIONS

- **WHAT DO YOU CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT ?**

- **WHAT PERSONAL TALENTS, SKILLS AND MOTIVATIONS CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE WITH ?**

- **WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO GET OTHERS TO JOIN ?**

STARTER PACK 1 :

INVITE PEOPLE WITH HEART FOR YOUR COMMUNITY TO A GATHERING.
YOU MIGHT CALL IT AN IDEAS PARTY, THINK FEST, OR INSPIRATION MEETUP

SUGGESTED APPROACH

- *Invite people who you wish would join in person. Perhaps start with a small group to plan the first meetup. Find a positive theme that can engage.
For instance:*

« The good neighbourhood »

« Community and joy where we live »

« Our local environment »

The original driver for the initiative may be concerns about juvenile crime, vandalism or something else. Nevertheless, the invitation should have a positive angle. « Youths – an important resource for our neighbourhood » is a theme with a positive perspective on growth and development. « What can we do about juvenile crime » is negative and focuses on shortcomings. Focus on what's strong not on what's wrong.



- *The small group that takes the initiative can invite five people each. Personal invitations are effective. Knock on the doors of people you want to get to know better, talk with those who you think can contribute, and ask them to bring others along.*
- *Explore the resources where you live, the groups and organizations you belong to, your housing association, neighbourhood council, parent council, school or childcare groups, refugee centre or flat share.*
- *Consider how you can facilitate participation by children, youth, parents and senior citizens. Is there a need for childcare? In what other ways can you ensure that everyone can participate? Remember: nothing attracts people like food and fun.*
- *Think about what the gathering should be like and divide responsibilities.*
- *Invite to an idea fest (not a meeting) with some food and entertainment. Present what you are passionate about, and ask what the others care about. Focus on the positive and not the negative.*
- *Briefly introduce a question or shared theme and why you invited those present, for example creating a village to raise our children. Kick off with some light entertainment. Find people where you live: storytellers, singers, dancers etc. There is talent to be found in every place, who just need a nudge to present their skills.*



NEXT : DISCOVER AND MAP YOUR ASSETS

- *Open with a few words, for example « To create a great local community, we need to start with the resources that those who live here have. »*

The things that each and every one of us are able to do are abilities that we can use to create the healthy local community that we wish to live in. Ask people to not be shy. For some people it is difficult to present their skills and talents. Be clear that all their contributions big and small are important. There is no blueprint. Use humour, if you like.

- *« What would your mother or best friend say you are good at ? »*

Consider some things that you yourself are able to do. Can you walk on your hands, or whistle? Deliberately keep the hurdle low in terms of what can be counted as a skill or as a resource.

Resources, talents or gifts (in ABCD-speak) can range from caring for animals, or singing, or making people feel welcome, to financial accounting.

- *Then, together, you start mapping the resources of the people in attendance.*



CHART IT OUT WITH STICKY NOTES

Use Post-it notes in multiple colours to map the participants' resources and skills :

HANDS – YELLOW NOTES

Share your skills – use yellow notes and write down what you are good at. For example: hedge trimming, sewing, bicycle repair, baking or painting. Let people present for each other what they are able to do. Let them find each other, in being able to do the same thing, or in getting help from others who can do what they cannot.

*I drive cars,
trucks and buses!*

HEAD – GREEN NOTES

Share your skills – use green notes and write down what you are good at. For example: thinking rationally, structuring and organizing, math and text writing, planning and accounting.


Again, let people present what they can do, and let them find others who can do the same, or others who can do something different that can be of help.

*I taught granddad
how to use a
smartphone. Several
other elderly home
residents too.*

HEART – PINK NOTES

Share your skills – use pink notes and write down what you are good at, for example taking care of others, be attentive to everyone attending, considering others' needs, concern for those who are different, concern for animals and the environment.

Once more, let people present what they can contribute, and let them find each other in terms of having similar or complementary resources.



*I can entertain
children aged 3-
12 :)*

- Stick all the yellow, green and pink notes on the wall and stroll around the resources you have. Feel that you are resource-rich.
- You have now mapped the human resources that the group has. These are the primary resources that people have and that they themselves can put to use.

WHAT ENGAGES PEOPLE ?

Ask the group what they care about and want to work on. Don't push for one answer or a single issue, people will group up around different passions and concerns, and that's great. Help people shape their own passions and support them to take ownership and invite others in, encourage people to welcome in diverse opinions and people.

Play with formulations until everyone finds passions or concerns that people care about and then work on framing them positively. This could be one question that everyone can agree on, but is more likely to comprise a number of questions that smaller groups huddle around.

The questions should engage and enthuse; they should be about things that people care about enough to take personal and collective action on.

- *Is this a question that we can agree would be positive to pursue and that would develop us as a community ?*
- *Can we be proud of this question ?*
- *Can this question engage others – when they see what we want to achieve ?*
- *Examples of suitable development questions (but you have your own answers) :*
 - « *How to locally source happiness for our neighbourhood ?* »
 - « *How to create a good and inclusive neighbourhood ?* »
 - « *How to make outdoor areas attractive and accessible for all ?* »
 - « *How to create activities that bring together children, youth and the elderly ?* »



- *Have you identified your development question or questions ?*
- *Does everyone in the small group working on the question agree and is everybody satisfied ?*
- *Is your selected question something that you can work on and towards, together, with spark and joy ?*

You might go back and forth and pursue different ideas before you end up with a question that gives direction, enthusiasm, is fulfilling, and that can bring people together.

- *When you get there, write it up on a flip chart. Now you should celebrate !*

Have coffee, good food, pomp and circumstance at the ready, and use time to celebrate there and then. You have reached an important milestone and agreed on what you will work towards. Share three cheers or choose some other way to mark the occasion.

After the celebration comes the next phase.



BRING OUT THE FLIP CHART (OR PAPER, TAPE AND A WALL)

Collect the resource descriptions that you mapped earlier, and use a flip chart to write up any resources that you can use to work on your selected question, or questions.

- Some resources need to be connected to achieve the desired results. You could use tape or red yarn and thumbtacks to connect these, so that you see the resources in context.
- Find blue Post-it notes. Ask the people who gathered where you might find answers to your question.

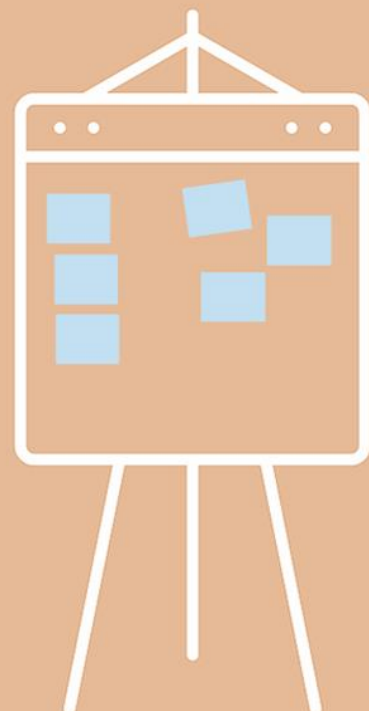
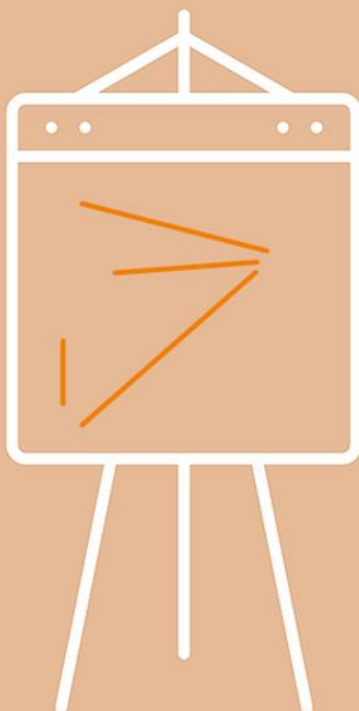
Find places and resources that you have access to, such as club houses and other locations. These could be physical locations (houses, schools, sports arenas, parks) or organizations (associations, voluntary organizations, pre-existing groups or one that is created for your purpose). Also map public buildings and facilities that you could gain access to without much work or administration. Write them up on the flip chart.

The school canteen can be used after 5 PM

- Take another stroll. What else can be added, what have we not yet included? Something else you need, that is local, but that you don't have control over? Write these up on notes and attach them to the flip chart.

Now you have created a solid base for resource-based development.

It's time to act!



TIME TO ACT

Resources have been identified, links have been made, places and arenas to mobilize resources have been identified. Now it's time to put your initiatives into practice! Before you go home:

- *Plan the road ahead. Let the connected resources and those people (your neighbours) who own them get organised and decide when to meet next time, for example in meetups of two or three people. It's important that the individuals involved are keen to take on the work that they set out to do. It is important that people can feel free to say no or just do things they feel passionate about. People should not feel forced in action or overburdened by it.*
- *Let others know what you are working on and for, and if everybody in the group invites five people each to the next meeting, then you will have a larger group of people that can work together.*
- *Agree on the next time to gather. Use open gathering spaces where everyone feels welcome, and advertise the meetup so that anyone can participate. Remember personal word of mouth invitations are always the best way to get people to join in.*
- *You could plan for food and some cultural content. Who can sing, play or tell a good story?*
- *Decide who (at least two persons) will have the main responsibility for organising and planning the next gathering.*

When you work on these initiatives locally, celebrate milestones as you go. For example, when a group has installed two benches, cleaned the area around and planted flowers. The group has come some way. A lot still needs to be done, but celebrate what has been done with a ribbon cutting ceremony, a speech, music and snacks or some other expressions of joy. Let every milestone be a small celebration. Celebrate those who worked together. This helps to grow the motivation and trust to continue the work, and as a result more people may wish to join. If there are different groups, let them know about each other's community efforts.

We will celebrate that the redesign group got funding for sewing machines, and the first stitch.

A new milestone celebration when they have sewn their first five garments. Invite the others to see and celebrate.

**Now the carrot, salad and cabbage can be planted.
We will ceremonially break the ground !**

Have a party with the group that works on this and invite others. This way it will be easier to recruit others for weeding, watering and harvesting. And when it's time for harvesting, it's time for the harvest feast!

WHICH TALENTS DO YOU HAVE ?



GOOD LIFE CONVERSATION QUESTIONS :
CREATE CONNECTIONS AND BRING OUT TALENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

A CHEAT SHEET FOR LIFE-ENHANCING CONVERSATIONS

Conversations can progress from an introduction to a lasting connection.

The questions on the next pages can be of help to explore how people might contribute to their communities.

We call them the Good Life Conversation questions.

They are loose suggestions that you can freely dip into, depending on the person and on the circumstances for the conversation.

The questions are not intended to be used like a survey, but to help steer towards life-enhancing conversations.

They can help guide through three steps towards understanding the gifts and contributions that a person can bring to their community:

- **Discover** the things that enrich a person's life



- **Explore** which passions can be developed into new options and contributions to community wellbeing



- **Connect** a person's gifts to other assets to create an abundant community





**What are your gifts of the head ?
What do you know about ?**

(music, movies, singing, playing music, history, languages, birds, sports, books, etc.)

DISCOVER ►

**What are your gifts of the heart ?
What do you care about ?**

(volunteering, listening, being with children, nursing, poetry, caring for others, etc.)

DISCOVER ►

**What are your gifts of the hands ?
What do you enjoy doing ?**

(Recycling, gardening, cooking, walking, quilting, fishing, arts and crafts, driving, plumbing, delivering, sewing, cutting hair, etc.)

DISCOVER ►

What do you like doing that makes you forget time ?

What gives you the greatest joy or pleasure ?

What are your passions ?

DISCOVER ►

What are your favourite games ?

Do you have other hobbies or special interests that we have not talked about ?

DISCOVER ►

What is your thing ?

What is your jam ?

How do you have fun ?

DISCOVER ►

What contributions do you like to make to others ?

EXPLORE ►

CONNECT ►

What 3 activities do you do best ?

DISCOVER ►

Would you be willing to show someone else how to do one of them ?

EXPLORE ►

CONNECT ►

What kind of job (paid or unpaid) might be associated with your passion ?

EXPLORE ▶

What product or service would you enjoy selling ?

If you could start a business, what would it be ?

EXPLORE ▶

*Have you ever made anything ?
Have you ever fixed anything ?*

DISCOVER ▶

Can you imagine your most challenging characteristic turned into a gift or contribution ?

EXPLORE ▶

What are the three skills you would most like to learn ?

What could you teach others ?

What would you like to teach others ?

EXPLORE ▶

Which clubs or groups do you belong to ?

DISCOVER ▶

Which relate to your passions ?

EXPLORE ▶

Which exist in your community ?

CONNECT ▶

Where do you think you could make your contribution, or share one of your gifts ?

EXPLORE ▶

CONNECT ▶

What matters to you that you would join with others in doing ?

DISCOVER ▶

EXPLORE ▶

CONNECT ▶

If three of your neighbours were willing to help, what would you love to do to make your community a better place to live ?

DISCOVER ▶

CONNECT ▶

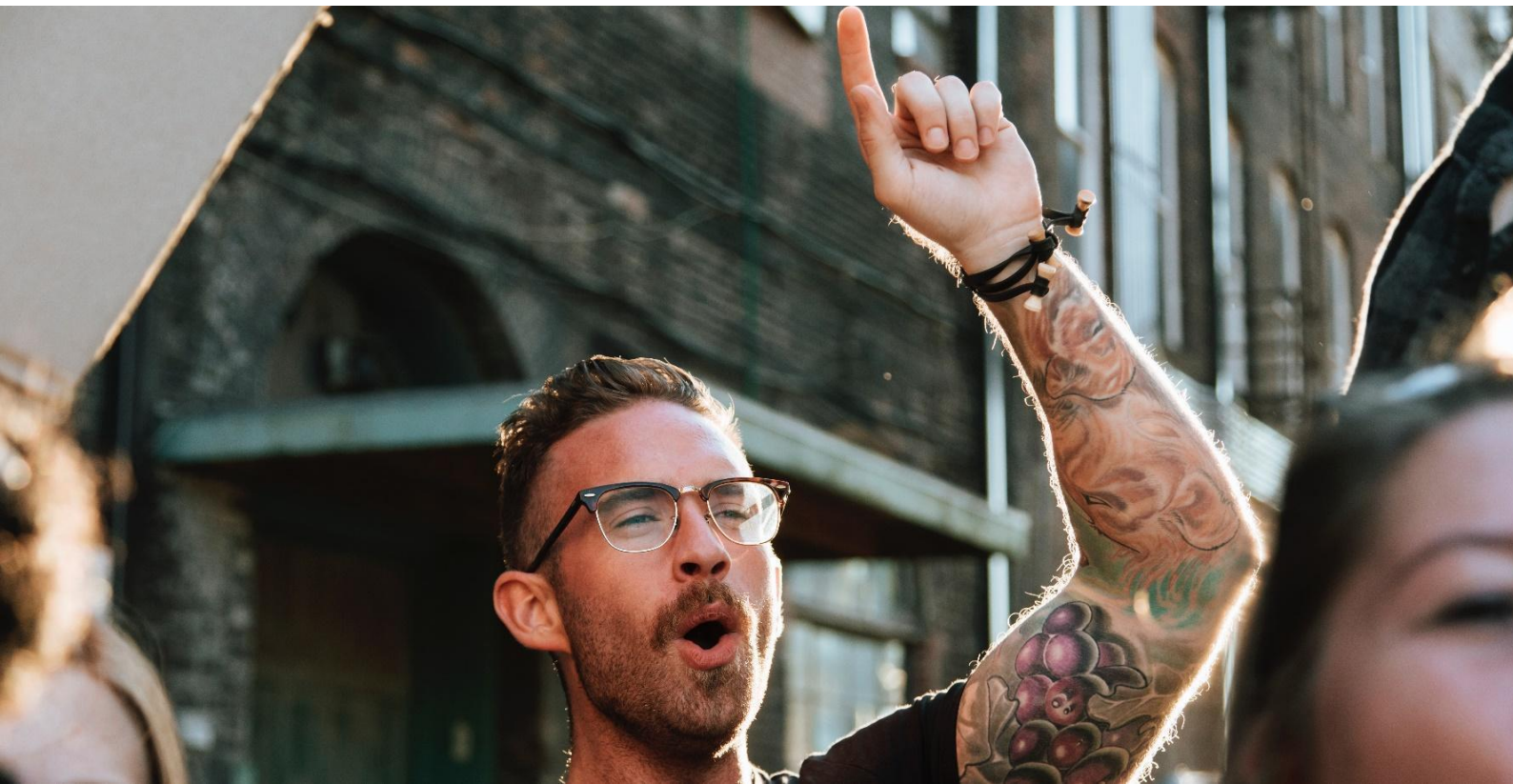


STARTER PACK 2 :

WHAT TO DO WITH THE INFORMATION ABOUT ASSETS AND RESOURCES ?
STRUCTURE IT AND PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

AN EXAMPLE FROM BØMLO IN NORWAY

- *At a town meeting, these questions were asked:*
 - « *What do you care so much about that you are willing to do something about it ?* »
 - « *What personal traits, skills and motivations can you contribute with ?* »
 - « *What will it take to get others to join ?* »
- *After a brief introduction from the neighbourhood council and the municipal council about a health initiative with the aim of being community driven, those attending talked in groups. A small group sat down to organise input from the participants:*
 - « *What can we do ourselves ?* »
 - « *What else can we do ourselves with a little outside help ?* »
 - « *What input can we give to the municipal council, and to what department ? What should be included in the municipality's existing plans. Which plans ?* »
 - « *What is relevant for our business community ?* »



- « What goes beyond the municipality's responsibility ? E.g. the county or state. »
- This was summarised in a table, so that everyone could see what the plan was and who was responsible for each part. This also commits the municipality to supporting issues that local citizens are passionate about. Making plans visible can be done on the municipality's and/or neighbourhood council's website, in a booklet or via a public notice and on social media. This can attract additional people and keep those involved engaged and energised.

Many people were asked about their views and contributed. They contributed with opinions but also commitments to what they cared enough about to take action with their neighbours. People's resources were taken seriously, with the premise that everyone can contribute something towards a better community. People shouldn't be made to feel that their contributions ultimately are not seen and are not valued.

Have a look at the following table, as an example from our work in Bomlø in Norway.

This we can do ourselves local responsibility	Input for municipal planning	Input about health for the health and welfare department	Input about school for the school management	Input public transport & road safety municipality / highway authorities	Suggestions involving local businesses
Clean up Vetahaugen Talk to [name]	Downtown homes for the elderly, with a sea view	Various input regarding the service centre	Bullying	Lacking bike lanes, lights, pedestrian areas	Cafe
Include the old ferry quay area in communal planning	Areas, paths and tracks for recreational walks	More homes for the elderly	Swimming pool	Specific road sections	Climbing park
Venues for social gatherings	Public use area: facilitate bathing and other activities	Organization of services	Unsustainably small class size at lower secondary level	Public transport needs overall improvement	
More active use of the service centre			Some youths at lower secondary level wish to switch schools	Public transport routes/minibus, mornings and evenings	
New tracks for recreational walking. Also a wheelchair friendly path					

SOME TIPS ALONG THE WAY :

ASK: WHICH ARE THE GOOD SPACES TO MEET ? WHERE DO YOU FEEL WELCOME ?

THINK UNCONVENTIONALLY

Rather than thinking traditionally and gathering at a place like the school gym or city hall, ask: Where do people normally meet up? Who would we like to include; where do they meet up?

- *Do you want to include the guys who hang around to chat in that one store on Fridays ? Then arrange to meet there. You could ask do we know anybody locally who knows them and would be willing to connect us ?*
- *Are you wondering how to welcome immigrant families who often meet at the playground ? Use the playground for a gathering and to reach out to them.*
- *Are church meetings or church services a place where senior citizens meet ? Then ask to use the church for a small gathering there also and bring your children.*
- *Find out where young people hang out and talk to them there. Being social is about being interested in others, not about getting them to be interested in you or your project. Building community is about making connections through conversations.*

It's not important that everybody attends the same event. Multiple meeting spots are good for variety. Later, different groups can meet each other for inspiration and celebration, and to share what they are working on. Places where people feel a sense of belonging are good places to meet, and a good starting point for people to connect and participate.



WHERE SHOULD YOU MEET ?



STARTER PACK 3 :

LOOK FOR HIDDEN TREASURES

TREASURE HUNT 1

Some things are invisible. We know so little about our local environments. A treasure hunt can bring to the surface what we aren't yet aware of. The hidden treasures: the things you don't see because you take it for granted. What you pass daily without noticing. A treasure hunt makes these seemingly invisible assets visible.

- *Encourage people to photograph or draw treasures in their local environment. The treasure hunt starts with a brief introduction. Groups of one to four roam around with cameras to look for and capture treasures.*

Give them a good amount of time, depending on the distances and whether everything is in walking distance.

The groups meet each other at one meeting place.

- *After the treasure hunt, each group prepares a presentation and shows their treasure to each other. This is a wonderful way to discover how rich your local environment really is !*
- *Praise those who looked at the place they live in and discovered something that the eye normally misses. We easily become blind to our old stomping grounds.*
- *You could create an exhibition and invite everyone.*

Community initiative: "Knitting for Groningen" to highlight risks to housing structures due to gas exploitation



TREASURE HUNT 2

After that treasure hunt, people may be ready for more ?

The biggest treasure challenge is to find those who do not want or do not dare to get involved, and those who do not show or are not aware of their own resources.

- *Ask people to keep a camera, notebook or drawing set at hand during the next two weeks. The task is to find what is hard to discover at first glance (the hidden treasure).*

Perhaps the fifteen year-old discovers that his dad is a good singer in the shower ? Record the song, present it at the meetup, and with some good convincing and long-term mild persuading from others and the son, the father might be the missing tenor on the men's choir ? Perhaps you discover a mother-in-law who is a great storyteller. If she doesn't want to get on a stage, maybe she would welcome people to visit for tea, biscuits and a story ?

- *After the 14-day treasure chase, the groups get together and present hidden treasures to each other. Then get to work on bringing treasures to the surface, into public view. This requires time and patience.*

Remember that people need a motive as a nudge. « Since you're so great with the computer, we need you to help us create a website.»

- *« You're good at cracking jokes. We need you to create a good, fun atmosphere at this gathering.»*
- *« I know you're skilled at filleting fish. There a group of newly arrived women want to learn how to prepare fish meals, so we need your help.*

When you invite people to share their strengths you are more likely to engage them, than if you ask them to contribute with something they can't do or don't have an interest in.



COMMUNITY STROLL – MOVE AROUND AND SENSE THE COMMUNITY

In order to appeal to all generations, you need to involve them in ways they find attractive. The Community Stroll is a method that involves roaming around in the local environment and using one's senses – hearing, seeing, smelling, feelings and associations – to map the qualities of the place, what's there. These don't have to be categorised as good or bad, just noticed.

What should we preserve ? What do we want to strengthen ? This we want to change. This should go, or be up-cycled.

Preparations

- *Find a collaborative group of children and young people, like a student council, after-school club or football team. Invite a grown-up neighbour who they know (coach). And perhaps invite someone from a senior citizens group?*
- *The participants mustn't all live in the place they will stroll through. Those who don't live there can of course add value by sensing things « from outside ».*
- *Facilitate the group to select a route on a map and a time plan that works for the participants. 2 - 2.5 miles (3-4 kilometres). Up to one hour.*
- *Paper for each of the participants, to take notes at the stops.*
- *Identify 8-15 points on the route to stop for a few minutes and use their senses. A parking space, the cinema's street, an undeveloped area, the school yard, a green area. An overgrown forest walkway.*
- *You'll need a meeting space with food and drinks to gather at the end.*



Along the way

- A group member (the facilitator) takes responsibility to stop at each point and keep the schedule. The facilitator's role is to coordinate the group, not to be the boss.
- At each stop, all the participants take note of what they smell, see, associate, remember. They can write, take photos, draw, send snapchats or text.
- The group facilitator should invite everyone involved to talk about their day-to-day relationship to the place.

Workshop and gathering

- How about wrapping up the Community Stroll at the local pizza place ?
- The group facilitators collect the participants' notes from the stops.
- Use a print map (A3 or larger) of the area you strolled through. The participants can explain and draw, write and be creative using the map to communicate what they would like to change in their local environment.
- You can prepare a list with questions like « If you were hosting a visitor from abroad, where would you take them ? What would you show them ? » You could also supplement with other participatory methods or design tools, or consider using Lego pieces to represent what was sensed in a three-dimensional way.

Afterwards, categorise and analyse the input. There is no blueprint here, only possibilities. The input can be both rewarding and entertaining. You will learn to really see and understand the place that you call your neighbourhood, village or estate.

The Community Stroll was developed by Bømlo municipality in Norway, together with pupil representatives from three schools. (Thanks Alf Helge Greker, Bømlo community planner!) this is what inspired the idea of Community Strolls.

Drawing: Malin from Stord municipality



I WANT THE PLAYGROUND TO BE
FIXE
THEN EVERYTHING I WANT AND I
HAVE A GOOD LIFE
I HOPE YOU HAVE A GOOD LIFE

STARTER PACK 4 :

INVITE THE YOUNG ONES

YOUTHS ARE RESOURCEFUL

There are a multitude of reasons to invite young people into local community building efforts:

- *Who has more of an investment in the future ?*
- *Many have time, and time in itself is a resource.*
- *They are creative and have ideas.*
- *They are connected to the area, and know what goes on.*
- *They can blossom if they get chances to contribute.*
- *Young people often have a can-do mindset, enthusiasm and a contagious energy.*
- *They recruit parents and others to also participate.*

Figure out the easiest way to get in contact with local young people. Where do they hang out ? Visit them and invite them by asking what they care about and think is important to work on.

- *Agree on a time to meet with some adults and young people. Ask all the young people who show up to ask two to five others to join them.*
- *Invite them all to an ideas fest, good food and a place where they can feel at home. In short, throw a party!!*



- Present briefly what's been done until now and tell them how important young people are to community life. They're the future. Use the reasons above if you like.
- Map the resources that they have : see Starter pack 1
- After the young people themselves have mapped their resources in their own group, use the information to create contact with the other groups – invite the youth to present their resources and thoughts about their local area for a wider age group of local residents.
- Then ask that wider group/assembly what the common ground is, and what they can do together across age groups. The young people's presentations create links between people who are normally found in different arenas. If older residents have ideas, it is important that they also share them with young people. That way it all feels respectful and fair.

Don't leave the young people to fend for themselves. Adults who are comfortable communicating with young people can walk alongside them and support them. But they should not direct their efforts or take over. Remember to give the youth space to be on their own too, while also helping them to connect to other groups. The adult support role is one of a connector, not a leader.

Ask what the youth require support with. When the time is right, connect them with relevant departments, organisations or experts, for instance the municipal city planning department, a sports team or an occupational therapist at the hospital. Don't jump to this step too quickly. First and always seek to link them to local community resources. Here again, connecting young people and their ideas with local productive adult neighbours is the starting point, before looking to external resources and support.

The adult is important for building bridges, and should make sure that the young don't lose interest or courage.



STARTER PACK 5 :

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF THE WORK

A FINISH LINE PARTY, OR CELEBRATIONS ON THE WAY TO THE GOAL

To evaluate is to consider what we have learned and achieved. The process and result can be equally important. That is up to those who participated. Questions for a final gathering and celebration could be :

- *What has happened ?*
- *Why has it happened ?*
- *What have we learned ?*
- *What impacts did we have ?*
- *What dilemmas did we face ?*
- *What have we achieved ?*
- *Who have we included ?*
- *Who is not here, yet ?*
- *Was everyone invited ?*
- *How many people who were isolated are now connected ?*



- *Are the resources that we mapped being connected and productive used ?*
- *What did the exchange of resources lead to ?*
- *Did we bring the hidden treasures and resources to the surface ?
Are they in productive use ?*
- *Did we strengthen existing gathering places and create new ones ?*
- *Did we strengthen existing clubs and associations and/or create new ones ?*
- *Did public organisations (like schools, childcare and hospitals) and businesses get invited when the time was right ? Did they engage in and contribute to the community development efforts in useful ways ?*
- *Did we ourselves as citizens take the lead and did we get appropriate support from the municipality, from businesses and other local institutions to develop our local community in line with our own goals ?*
- *What are we satisfied about – what remains to be done ?*
- *How far have we progressed in reaching our goals (our development question) ?*
- *Did new and more important questions show up along the way ? What are they ?*
- *What is our road ahead now ?*
- *Who else can we invite to join us ?*

Many traditional projects have a fixed start and end date. A local community building process based on ABCD doesn't need to have that. Those who participate decide. Community is not a project, it's a way of life.

Some things can be wrapped up and other things can be started. The resources that are identified can be used for shorter or longer periods. Meeting places and community initiatives can function and develop. This is all a part of creating robust and sustainable local communities.

It is smart to undertake evaluations along the way, and not just at the end, because that will allow mid-course corrections if needed. If you see that some people are not engaged in the community development activities, ask why. Anyone can choose not to participate, but they should at least be asked and understand what they say yes or no to. If large groups are excluded or resources are forgotten, then a change of course is needed along the way.

Enjoy the finish line party, but remember it's also the starting line of the next community adventure. Good luck !

SOME TIPS ALONG THE WAY :

THE SHOPPING LIST AND THE REFRIGERATOR

CHECK WHAT YOU HAVE, BEFORE YOU DECIDE WHAT YOU NEED

When you shop for groceries on the weekend, what do you do first ? You probably check the fridge and cupboards to see what you have and make a list of what you need in addition.

In planning processes undertaken by professionals, they often forget to support the community by inviting them to check their cupboards and refrigerators. They start with what is thought to be needed or missing, without first checking for what is already there or already envisioned.

These ABCD mapping methods and 5 starter packs help bring to light resources that are already there, and that can be used without official decisions, permits or long processes. They shift us from a focus on delivery to a focus on discovery.

This is so simple, and so fundamental, that it is easily forgotten.

ABCD takes people and their resources seriously. ABCD contributes to sustainability, community and citizen participation.



A SHOPPING LIST FOR THE FIRST GATHERING

- *A small and engaged group that cares, plans and personally invites others.*
- *An ok room to gather people (has natural life and is warm).*
- *A flip chart and large white sheets of paper.*
- *Post-it notes: pink, green, yellow and blue.*
- *Thick marker pens.*
- *A cultural contribution: songs, spoken word performance etc.*
- *Food, beverages and other celebration tools.*
- *A ball of red yarn.*
- *Thumbtacks.*



6 THINGS THAT WORK

Here is what the founders of ABCD say are important to achieve positive developments :

- *The resources that local inhabitants have.*
- *The voluntary associations in the local area.*
- *Institutions in the local area that support community building.*
- *The physical surroundings (such as open places, public parks, playgrounds, forests and docks).*
- *Stories that carry the culture and heritage of the place.*
- *Interaction and exchange between the above, and money and non-money exchanges like time and care.*



SENSIBLE RULES FOR YOUR COMMUNITY WORK

- *Never do for others, what they can do themselves*
- *Give your support while taking a step back*
- *In development processes you should focus on possibilities and reframe problems*
- *Have fun and arrange parties or informal gatherings, not meetings*
- *Start where people are, listen to what people say*
- *What do you think about regarding the local community ? What keeps you up at night ? Start with what people care about enough to take action on*
- *Work towards results that make a visible difference*
- *Everybody has gifts and resources. Everyone can contribute something*
- *Get to know people before they present their wishes and agendas*
- *Celebrate results along the way. Celebrate partial goals in the work*
- *Share the good stories about what you do, the place you live and create good new stories together*
- *Focus on the strengths and the resources and not on what is wrong and lacking*



STARTER PACK 6 :

WHAT IF PEOPLE DISAGREE ?

IT'S NEVER THE CASE THAT EVERYBODY AGREES ON EVERYTHING

In community development work, conflicts can arise. Conflicts can occur at different scales and with different degrees of seriousness. Conflict can be uncomfortable, but they can also clean the air and result in a renewed drive afterwards. There is no straightforward and easy way to fix them. The starter pack underneath provides suggestions, not answers.

- *Find out what people disagree about. Let them present this for each other. Remond people it is ok to have doubts, to say no to certain things if they disagree, that that's healthy and authentic.*
- *Ask how they themselves think this can be resolved or indeed if they feel it needs to be resolved, sometimes a little tension can be healthy.*
- *Go through the different suggestions for a solution if they surface.*
- *Consider: What can we agree on, and on what must we agree to disagree on ?*
- *Make sure that strong voices aren't dominating more careful, quieter voices.*
- *Give those involved tips and rules for how to live with one other despite disagreement. Disagree without being disagreeable.*
- *Find peace builders in the local community.*

Remember, living side by side with people who think differently is the sign of a confident and healthy community. Not everyone in the community building process has to always agree. You represent the diversity of the area - a strength in itself. As Peter Block says, "If you can't say no, your 'yes' is meaningless".

AND FINALLY :

SOME VIDEOS THAT MAY BE AN INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WORK

**Take a street and build a community,
Shani Graham at TEDx Perth**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1W5kXWSJac>



**Cormac Russell explains Asset Based
Community Development**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6EkaMpAgdE>



**How to start a movement? Leadership
lessons from Dancing Guy. Gabo Huang**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb aemWlljeQ>



**The value of stories and how to tell them
Cormac Russell**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nk hMylanzYA>



**Sustainable community development:
from what's wrong to what's strong,
Cormac Russell**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5 xR4QB1ADw>



ABCD is used by local communities the world over.

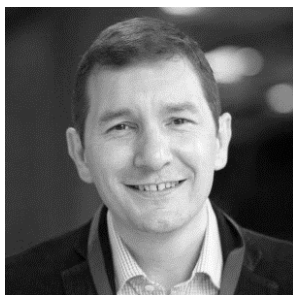
Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), is a capacity-oriented approach to community development.

The Community Work section at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) teaches and supports ABCD facilitators and researchers, and runs an international Master's program in community work. Community work is the process of assisting people to improve their own communities, by undertaking autonomous collective action. We also teach and research other participatory approaches for citizen-driven innovation, development and research.

The ABCD Institute works with strategic partners to support community-driven change around the world. The Institute's lead partner in Europe, Nurture Development, provides trainers, mentors, facilitators, researchers and consultants who connect with change makers and innovators around the world. They also deliver workshops in ABCD.

This booklet builds on our collective experience.

If you have ideas for improvement based on initiatives in your own community, please contact us.



Cormac Russell

Director of ABCD Europe &
member of the ABCD
Institute at DePaul University
Chicago

cormac@nurturedevelopment.org



Rita Agdal

Associate Professor and
Department Head of the
Master in Community Work
Western Norway University
of Applied Sciences

riag@hvl.no



Inger Helen Midtgård

Assistant Professor
Western Norway
University of Applied
Sciences

ihmi@hvl.no