

# Guideline with Recommendations for Action on Community Development for ACCESS

This guideline with recommendations for action on community development for the African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (ACCESS) was developed by Anni Roolf (<https://www.anniroolf.eu/>).

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# Introduction

This guideline explains the community development approach and relates it to the ACCESS context to illustrate how the ACCESS actor network can be understood and developed as a community. It outlines the strength of the community approach, what makes a vibrant community and how it can be the engine for successfully realising an attractive core idea.

The guideline begins with an introduction that defines the concept of community and distinguishes it from other terms. The following sections present nine key building blocks that can be used to promote the process of community development. The text concludes with a note on the approach. References to the ACCESS context are made in each section.

It is desirable to disseminate this approach among ACCESS project officers and throughout the network to stimulate the development of ideas and actions from the community perspective at different levels.

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## **ACCESS**

*ACCESS, a four-year project, started in April 2020 and aims to increase the employability of graduates from African universities and to open up attractive career prospects for them on local labour markets. These goals are to be implemented by the 25-member ACCESS project team, which will initiate corresponding processes among the teaching staff of the six partner universities from Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Tunisia via four project pillars. This, in turn, should lead to the African partners winning at least five further partner universities in each of their countries for the project and involving them in target-oriented processes.*

*Challenging project goals meet an international and decentralised network that already exists in parts, but in its entirety is still a vision. In order to achieve the project goals, it is necessary to further develop the network and align it with the project goals. It must be possible to stimulate a continuous commitment in the sense of the project goals, which makes their realisation tangible for as many network participants as possible and thus creates a sense of belonging.*

*Due to its internationality, decentralisation and not least the Corona pandemic, the project team as well as the entire network is primarily dependent on virtual channels. Although these channels have great strengths and possibilities, it is nevertheless challenging to design them in such an effective and attractive way that continuous and lively contact between the many different actors in the network can be established. And it is unfortunately not foreseeable at the moment how the possibilities for international travel activities will develop, which would of course represent an invigorating and enriching addition to the relationship building in the network. A permanently successful interaction of the relevant groups of actors and thus the establishment of a community is crucial in order to be able to achieve the project goals. At best, community development succeeds in activating the power of the entire community in such a way that the community becomes self-perpetuating and is thus multiplied on a broad basis - in the case of ACCESS, this would mean the lively further development of a sustainable community even beyond the funding period.*

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# At the Beginning: Philosophy of the Community Perspective

A community is a **complex social entity** with numerous members and subgroups. These feel connected to each other in the long term through a higher purpose, a mission, an ideal, common values, activities and experiences and **identify with** the community.

A community is larger than individual groups or teams. In contrast to a community, groups or teams are focused on a clearly defined common goal or a specific work task. The affiliation to groups or teams is clear, whereas in communities it is more complex and characterised by different proximity and distance relationships as well as stronger and weaker commitment. Groups or teams can be part of a community.

A new community can also emerge from groups, teams and entire organisations if they open up to their environment and involve other actors in an overarching mission that creates a new common identification for all. A pure group affiliation, such as being part of a group of students, women or senior citizens, is not sufficient on its own for the formation of a community, since members of these groups can be oriented towards very different goals and values and thus feel little belonging to one another.

In terms of complexity and scope, the community is comparable to a network or the entire stakeholders of an organisation. Unlike the community, however, the **network** is more arbitrary and defined by looser connections and not necessarily aligned social dynamics. The concept of an organisation's **stakeholders, unlike the community**, highlights differences in interests and demarcations between various relevant groups of actors. Stakeholder management is therefore about moderating and balancing competing interests.

The community approach is based on a different **view of people** than the stakeholder or network approach, in that it emphasises identification, connection, belonging, and cooperation between community members. Through community development, relationships within the community are fostered in a targeted and continuous process, since affiliation and identification have to be created again and again. Community development is also responsible for the growth of the community and the establishment of relationships with potential members.

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## ACCESS

*In the context of ACCESS, the community is made up of all groups of actors who are currently or potentially involved in increasing the employability of students and graduates of African universities and in opening up attractive career prospects for them on local labour markets. This purpose is the core idea that defines the connectedness and cooperation of the community. Whether all relevant actors already identify with the core idea must be questioned as part of community development and, if necessary, strengthened, also in order to implement the core idea as effectively as possible with as many forces as possible.*

The concept of community does justice to the increasingly diffuse and decentralised character of social communities, which are no longer necessarily characterised by geographical proximity, but also by virtual links across wide areas. In the meantime, many communities even emerge online first, before possibly gathering geographically and manifesting themselves through personal contact. Community processes should therefore always be thought of and designed as an off- and online continuum.

The need for the community approach is growing as organisations and their communities become increasingly flexible, virtualised, and decentralised due to a variety of influencing factors. People generally psychologically seek to **balance autonomy and attachment needs**. As contemporary organisational environments more strongly satisfy autonomy needs, it becomes an urgent organisational task to systematically work on counterbalancing them, also in the long-term interest of the organisation. The basic needs of home, belonging and connectedness also want to be answered, which can also be incorporated into the value proposition of the organisation. Community development is to be understood as a bundling term for these counter-strategies, which counteract organisational centrifugal forces, balance out imbalances and, last but not least, also promote the health of the organisation's members.

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## ACCESS

*This need naturally also applies strongly to the ACCESS context. This is because the different groups of actors are distributed internationally and, moreover, due to the Corona pandemic, are more dependent on virtual cooperation than ever before. For students, the goal is anyway to ensure a dynamic educational career with a smooth transition into attractive employment. This means that, overall, it is a decentralised, highly dynamic context with ever-changing personnel constellations, which fosters autonomy rather than bonding needs. In this respect, it is particularly fruitful here to work with the community development approach in order to ensure and constantly re-establish belonging and identification with the overarching mission. Long-term ties can also be built up with members of the central groups of actors, such as students and lecturers, who remain as community members after leaving the narrower context, for example by continuing to support the ACCESS mission as mentors.*

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Another distinction can be made to the focus of classical business administration on the individual, which is primarily oriented towards individual value-adding relationships with customers and other market participants. Community development, on the other hand, focuses more on the relationship of the organisation to groups and on the potential of intra-group and intra-community relationships, which can also be harnessed for value creation.

Community development thus enables a change of perspective, which, however, presupposes the willingness to view and develop the organisation systemically in its environment. The approach is applicable to a variety of contexts and can be used for profit, non-profit and, of course, educational organisations, social, political and religious movements, and for urban development tasks.

Community development is to be understood as **a mixture of top-down and bottom-up approaches**. Strategic impulses for community development can come both from the management level and from the various groups of actors in the organisational community. The decisive factor is that these impulses are taken up by other groups of actors and that a continuous process of participation and communication develops within the community, which in turn is advocated and promoted "from above". The goal of community development is, at best, to activate the power of the entire community in such a way that community development becomes a self-perpetuating process and is thus potentiated from the "bottom up". In this successful community dynamic, the role of the management level as a source of impulses is diminished; leadership proves itself through moderation and coordination of the long-term process of community development.

**Nine central building blocks of community development are explained on the following pages. These building blocks can initially be worked on individually and one after the other, but should generally be thought about and dealt with iteratively and in parallel.**



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# Building Block 1: Understanding the Core Idea and Communicating It Clearly to All Stakeholders

The central link of a community is a **common higher purpose**, a **shared mission** and **common ideals** and **values**. All of these guiding principles emerge, for example, when an organisation or movement is founded. They are implicitly or explicitly clear and guide the actions of the founding actors, who are often personally connected to each other. They are often the founding impulse through which people first come together and through which the community can gain further members. However, these outsiders need to recognise the shared core idea and acknowledge it as their own. The prerequisite is that the core idea is communicated clearly and attractively and can be experienced so that it can be appropriated by outsiders. The communication must also include an invitation to become part of the community ("onboarding") as soon as outsiders find the core idea attractive and worthy of support.

The more **inspiring and contemporary** a core idea is and the better it meets the needs, ideals and values of certain groups of actors, the more strongly it is able to generate affiliation to the community. For community development, this results in the task of formulating the core idea explicitly, precisely and attractively and ensuring that it is transported in an appropriate form to different groups of actors relevant to the core idea. Understanding the diversity of the groups of actors and responding to them is another essential challenge for community development, which is dealt with in more detail in **Building Block 5**, **Building Block 6** and **Building Block 7**.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Do all relevant groups of actors currently act on the basis of the same core idea?*
- *Is the ACCESS core idea precisely and attractively formulated?*
- *Who originally formulated the ACCESS core idea?*
- *Who in the actor-network were the drivers that developed the core idea?*
- *Who in the actor-network has already committed themselves to the core idea?*
- *Which relevant groups of actors are not yet or not yet sufficiently aware of the core idea?*

*It is also important to check how the ACCESS core idea is formulated stylistically, whether it is only available in sober application language or whether it has been put into a form that can inspire, fascinate and thus have a community-founding effect across the breadth of the actor-network. Here it is worthwhile to develop new forms of verbal and visual communication in order to transport the core idea in an infectious way.*

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# Building Block 2: Understanding Community History in terms of Content

The core idea (**Building Block 1**) is the initial spark of the community, which must be **continuously present** in order to ensure the cohesion of the community in the long term. This "continuous presence" of the core idea leads to another very identification-creating component - the common history of the community. This begins as soon as people come together, driven by a core idea, share activities and experiences, and in this way build relationships with each other. Without this continuity over time, no community can develop, because it only thrives in a medium to long-term perspective. Shared activities and experiences can take the place of the core idea, for example, when student entrepreneurs or practitioners of a certain sport continuously connect to form a "community of practice".

The founding members of the community are part of the story from the beginning, writing and telling it as co-authors, so to speak. Members who join the community later do the same from the moment they join. It is quite possible that they joined the community because of an attractive back story and can also tell a story of their approach to the community. These stories go a long way in building relationships. One could also say that this is about stories of relationships with the community, that is, a crucial building block for developing belonging and connectedness. Here, relationship-building storytelling within the community is just as important as promotional storytelling to outsiders.

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## ACCESS

*The following questions can be derived for the ACCESS context:*

- *Can a story already be told through the ACCESS context that binds some or all of the stakeholder groups together into a community?*
- *What time horizon does ACCESS have in mind? Is this determined by the funding period and what is the perspective for the period thereafter?*
- *Who are the ACCESS founding actors and what stories can they tell about the founding and the subsequent phase until today?*
- *What stories can ACCESS actors tell who joined the context later? Were they attracted by an attractive back story? What story was that? What story of approach to the context do they have to tell?*

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For strategic community development it is an important task to develop a deep understanding of the actor network as a "community in motion" and to tell its story ("storytelling"). An exciting and well-told story is a strong attractor for community building, because people want to be part of a good story.

A good story needs interesting **protagonists**. The listener wants to know which groups of actors, personal constellations and key people have shaped the history of the community. In certain communities, the personnel can be very decisive for the desire to belong. In other communities, the core idea is more in the foreground, which is supported by various actors or other building blocks of the community. The growth of membership and the integration of entirely new groups of actors can also be addressed in the context of community history.

The **location of the community** is also crucial: Certain geographical locations or virtual collection points form the necessary framework for the emergence and further development of the community. They often make community experiences possible in the first place and are thus very conducive to identification.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Which groups of actors, personnel constellations and key persons have shaped the ACCESS context since its foundation?*
- *Are there groups of actors and particularly charismatic individuals in the ACCESS context who embody the core idea in a special way and trigger a desire for affiliation in potential members?*
- *Has the ACCESS context already grown in terms of personnel since its foundation and have new groups of actors been integrated?*
- *Which geographical locations (countries, cities, institutions, buildings, spaces) and virtual platforms are part of the ACCESS context? Is there a location or a virtual platform where all groups of actors have already gathered together and where they could experience themselves as a community?*



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At the point of consideration, community development should also ask at what point in history the community finds itself, e.g. whether it has just been established, is growing strongly, is very rich in tradition or is shrinking.

An important part is the **founding myth of the community**. Here, special circumstances of the initiation can be reported and what constituted the community at that time. The time, place and participants can be identified, when the community started to define itself, to share first community experiences and to build identification. It can be told what difference the new community makes in the world and what the world would be missing without it.

The story of how the **community has changed** since then and what key experiences, turning points, adventures, trials, successes and challenges there have been in its development so far needs to be told. Here, revealing anecdotes and symbolic events can make the story more interesting and meaningful. The entire story can even draw on the archetypal form of the "hero's journey" to captivate listeners and (potential) community members. Transformational themes also include how the activities typical of a startup community have been scaled, balanced with a new logic emerging through growth, and how the community has dealt with changes in personnel or location.

As a thread of history, **continuity** can also be emphasised, e.g. how it has been achieved to continuously and vividly realise the core idea throughout history. This perspective focuses on what has remained the same since its inception and how the community has remained true to itself (despite changing circumstances and challenges). It can be told how innovation has always been able to emerge on the basis of strong continuity and how the tradition has been able to be continued in a lively manner.

For a compelling narrative, you can also look for powerful **metaphors, symbols, and images** associated with the community story. They can be highly evocative of the community's core idea and values, remind us of the founding myth or an important turning point, and make the community narrative particularly charged and memorable.

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## **ACCESS**

*A conceivable thread for the ACCESS community could be learning stories, i.e. stories (and even adventures) of individual and collective learning processes. These can include learning goals, activities and challenges. They can illuminate key moments of learning, and personal learning constellations, such as when crucial learning for the ACCESS mission occurred when certain individuals began to share. Further questions arise for the ACCESS context to sharpen its community story:*

- *When can the founding date of the ACCESS context be dated? Can the foundation be localised? Who initiated the foundation, who was present and involved at the time of foundation? What special circumstances of the founding can be reported? What was the atmosphere at the time? What are the different stories of the founding witnesses?*
  - *What difference does the ACCESS context make in the world? What would the world be missing without it?*
  - *How much time has passed since the foundation and what changes has the ACCESS context experienced since the foundation? What key experiences, turning points, adventures, trials, successes and challenges can be reported? Have there been any decisive personnel changes or changes of location?*
  - *What has remained the same since its inception and how has it been ensured to stay true to the ACCESS core idea? Are there metaphors, symbols, and images that represent the core idea, values, founding myths or turning points that could be exciting and meaningful to the community story?*
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# Building Block 3: Understanding Who and How the Community Story Is Told and Received

Apart from the content of the community story, it is very relevant for community development by whom and how the story is told and received. As part of community development, it is important to ask whether there is already an **overarching, official story** about the community that is known to all groups of actors in the community. This can serve as common ground and create connectedness. Community members can always refer to this story and perpetuate it through their activities. If this story is not present in all groups of actors, this important connecting point is missing. The risk of an overarching story is that it can be too unifying and dogmatic. This often happens when the story only represents the perspective of one group of actors. The danger is that the perspectives of other groups of actors who are also connected to the core idea will be shortchanged, and in the long run there will be a disidentification and turning away of these groups from the community. Ideally, the overarching story emerges through a process that incorporates the perspectives of all stakeholder groups. This process can be designed as an important community development tool, as it itself strengthens the involvement and identification of all groups of actors.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Is there already an overarching, official story about the ACCESS context?*
- *Is this story known to all groups of actors?*
- *From the perspective of which actor group(s) is this story told?*
- *Can all stakeholder groups in the ACCESS context identify with this story?*
- *Are there perspectives of particular actor groups that are not part of the story? What stories would these stakeholder groups tell about the ACCESS context?*
- *Are there currently groups of actors who are (too) little engaged and identified with the project?*

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It has already been emphasised in **Building Block 2** that the **individual community stories** of the members are important for building up a sense of connection and belonging. It follows that there are naturally different interpretations of the story within the community, so that we must speak of stories in the plural. Such a diversity of community stories can speak highly communicatively for a vibrant community and can be communicated confidently and richly to the outside world through appropriate channels. This sends a signal "pars pro toto" to the outside world about the ways in which individual representatives connect with their community, and it can show potential members how they too can participate in the community. This multi-perspective approach to the community story(s) also involves risks, as it becomes more demanding to tell a story that creates identification for all groups of actors, and conflicts can also become visible in this way. The art is to integrate these conflicts into an overarching community history, which can certainly gain in excitement and attractiveness through disputes and their clarification.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Is there already room for individual community stories in the ACCESS context? Are there internal community channels for individual community storytelling? Are individual community stories used for external communication?*
- *What conflicts, disputes, and clarifications have occurred in the ACCESS context and could be tension-building elements of an ACCESS community story?*

*Due to the internationality and high diversity of the ACCESS stakeholder groups, it is very obvious that there are at least seven perspectives from the seven participating countries. The intercultural coming together in a common context with a shared core idea can also be an interesting thread of the community narrative, where different backgrounds, motivations and learning experiences and learning from each other can play a central role.*

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In this context, it is also important to ask who and how freely he or she is authorised or encouraged to report the community story(s) to the outside world. Storytelling can, for example, be controlled only through individual authorised channels (prototypical: press spokesperson) or through multiple channels and all community members freely, lively and possibly more conflictual. Here, community development should find a conducive **balance between participatory history writing and storytelling and top-down storytelling** and constantly rebalance it.

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*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Who is empowered to tell the community story(s) on which channels?*
- *How freely do community stories currently circulate in the ACCESS context and beyond?*
- *Which actors and groups of actors tell each other their community stories?*
- *Between which actors and groups of actors does no narrative exchange exist so far?*

*In general, the approach of learning story(s) lends itself here as well, which would be able to bring the ACCESS core idea into a narrative dramaturgy. In this context, it is particularly relevant who talks to whom and exchanges learning stories, as it greatly favours the goal of ACCESS if as many actors of the context as possible are involved in learning processes, i.e. learning stories, learning adventures, learning ventures, and learning journeys. Only when learning processes take effect individually can they also take effect collectively. The narrative about learning processes can itself be a part of the learning process by making learning successes visible and creating incentives and stimulating learning obstacles to optimise processes together.*

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# Building Block 4: Continuing and Retelling the Community Story

Once community development has conducted an anamnesis of the community story told so far through **Building Block 2** and **Building Block 3**, **it is necessary to design** how and by whom it can be told and retold. It is necessary to decide how the previous story from the community's founding onwards can be enriched in order to strengthen the identification of all groups of actors and to make it attractive to potential members.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *How can the existing narrative about the ACCESS context be enriched so that it becomes an attractive community narrative with which all stakeholder groups can identify?*
- *How can the ACCESS community story be told in such an attractive way that one of the project goals, namely to expand to a network of thirty African universities, can succeed well?*
- *How can the ACCESS community story be told in such a convincing way that it is also conducive to reporting to the funding body, also with regard to the acquisition of further funding? Building a sustainable community can be a key argument here.*

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In line with the core idea (**Building Block 2**), it is also possible to work out how the **story is to be continued into the future**. It can be narratively anticipated what adventures will be faced in the future, what challenges will be overcome and how the community will adapt to them. There is room here to present the community mission, its vision of a better world and a desirable future for the community. This is where a future success story can be painted, i.e. what triumphant progress is in store in relation to the core idea. Since future perspectives are always uncertain, it is always necessary to regularly adjust the future dimension of the community story in order to remain plausible and motivating for groups of actors and potential members. Again, individual future stories can be fruitful as they can provide a rich and innovative reservoir of proposed solutions to future challenges. And, of course, the involvement of relevant actor groups in the development of future scenarios that promote identification also makes them more likely to be taken on board.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Is there already a future narrative about the ACCESS community? What ideas exist about the future development of the ACCESS context and how are they currently told?*
- *What role does the current funding phase play for the future time horizon and are there any ideas beyond the end of the current funding? Does the communication with the funding body form the actual thread of the current community history or does it also address other ACCESS stakeholder groups? Is there a perspective for sustainable community development even without continuation of the funding?*
- *How can the future narrative about a desirable future for the ACCESS community be reshaped in such a way that it has such a plausible and motivating effect on all groups of actors and many potential members that they are (further) committed to supporting the realisation of the core idea?*
- *What challenges must be overcome by the community in order to write an ACCESS success story together? How can the community effectively address these challenges and become unstoppable?*
- *What individual visions of the future exist in the ACCESS community and how can these be used as an innovative reservoir of solutions?*
- *How can the learning community approach also be mapped in the ACCESS future narrative? Which individual and collective learning processes are desired, planned and necessary to develop a sustainable learning community in the sense of the ACCESS core idea?*

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Ideally, community development pushes a process through which the **writing of history is balanced between top down and bottom up in a way that** is conducive to the community. In this process, all groups of actors are involved directly or through representatives with the aim of developing an attractive overarching story with which all groups of actors can identify.

The following tools, among others, can be fruitful for community development:

- **Qualitative interviews** (alternatively: questionnaires) with key persons about their community history can be conducted and evaluated, reflecting the diversity of the groups of actors.
- **Large group methods**, such as Open Space, World Café, Barcamp, Dynamic Facilitation, Art of Hosting) can be



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used in analogue and digital form to recapitulate, document and update the community history from multiple perspectives. Here, too, the participants should represent all groups of actors.

- A **digital platform and other media** can be used for ongoing participatory history writing. This can be a logbook or a wiki. This can be ongoing, but also in the form of quarterly, semi-annual and annual reports. There can also be a photo and video album that captures community activities and milestones. Podcasts can also be a good medium to share individual community stories. There should be room for one-way and two-way communication. All kinds of attractive forms of communication are allowed and there are no limits to creativity to circulate the stories in the community and beyond and to promote the common realisation of the core idea.

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## **ACCESS**

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *What might a history-making process look like for all ACCESS stakeholder groups?*
- *How can this process take on the character of a collective ACCESS learning story?*
- *Which key ACCESS personnel should be interviewed?*
- *What large group processes can be conducted in digital and or analogue form to recap, document, and perpetuate the ACCESS community story?*
- *Which existing platforms, channels, and media could be used for a participatory and ongoing ACCESS historiography? Which new platforms, channels and media should be created for this purpose? Which formats are conducive to encourage different groups of actors to tell and share (learning) stories?*
- *By which rhythms is the history writing process structured? At what intervals is the history updated (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually)?*



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# Building Block 5: Analysing Groups of Actors

After the history **Building Block 2**, **Building Block 3** and **Building Block 4**, another indispensable set of topics follows. This has already been touched upon in the previous sections, but requires the full attention of Community Development. Here it is about the people, i.e. the actual supporters of the community. Without people who represent the core idea and translate it into action, the idea remains theoretical and without life. Without people, the story remains pure fiction and has no protagonists who can drive an exciting story forward. In this respect, there can be **no community without people**. However, they will only remain in a lasting relationship through an attractive core idea. Therefore, one cannot be thought of and treated without the other. Otherwise, this would only promote a form of pure sociability in the sense of "feelgood management", which would probably not be sustainable. Unless, of course, a community-founding core idea developed out of the undirected sociability.

The task of community development is to gain an overview of the existing community by **taking stock** and looking at it with new eyes. In doing so, it will always be a matter of finding an appropriate and humble way of dealing with the complexity of a social entity with possibly very many participants and of drawing boundaries:

- The borderline can be drawn by asking which groups of actors are necessary to realise the core idea.
- Since it is not always clear from the outset who can play an important role in its realisation, all groups of actors who are in some way affected by the core idea ("stakeholders"), e.g. by benefiting from the implementation of the core idea, should also be included.
- Part of the stocktaking is the question of who is already part of the community, i.e. who already feels a sense of belonging, identifies with the existing context of interaction and values, and is a part of the community recognised by all groups of actors.
- It should also be asked who is not yet a recognised part of the community, but who could play a fruitful or value-creating role in the sense of the core idea. This is also about the growth perspective and reach of the community.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *Which groups of actors are indispensable to realise the ACCESS core idea?*
- *Which groups of actors are in any way affected by the ACCESS core idea?*
- *Who currently already feels part of the ACCESS context, identifies with the core idea and is recognised as part of the context by relevant stakeholder groups?*
- *Which groups of actors are currently not yet recognised as part of the ACCESS context, but could play an important role in terms of the core idea?*

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Once the currently and potentially relevant groups of actors have been identified, it is advisable to **explore** them in **more detail and in a differentiated manner**. Only in this way, it is possible to deal successfully with the various groups of actors in the context of community development. Qualitative interviews, questionnaires, surveys, data analyses and tools of "people-centred" customer research such as the "Empathy Map" can be used to find answers to the following questions, among others:

- What are the lifeworlds of the individual groups of actors?
- What needs do the individual groups of actors have that could be met by the future realisation of the core idea?
- What motivations do the individual groups of actors have that feed into the core idea?
- What potentials and limitations do the individual groups of actors have for engagement and participation in the community?
- What communication and interaction behaviour do the individual groups of actors display and which channels, platforms, locations and stages do they prefer?
- How strong is the independent identity and the degree of organisation of the individual groups of actors?
- How much closeness and distance do the individual groups of actors have to the community, how much do they feel they belong and how strong is their commitment to date?
- What connects the different groups of actors beyond the core idea? Where do serious differences between the various groups of actors become apparent?

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *What tools and methods have already been used to explore actor groups in the ACCESS context in more detail? Which groups of actors were these?*
- *Which tools and methods should be used in the future to explore all relevant actor groups of the ACCESS context*



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*in more detail?*

- *The guiding questions above can be used for the exploration.*

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The **way** community development **works** can be as follows: The results obtained through the guiding questions and with the help of the tools can be documented in the form of actor group profiles. Community development can work successively from core groups to actor groups in the periphery and from overview analyses (socio-economic data, group sizes, personas) to the detailed level of individual members. Every activity that leads to a better understanding of the relevant actor groups and also individual actors pays positive dividends for community development. Only in this way can the (potential) role of the actors be perceived and subsequently measures to deepen their identification be designed (**Building Block 8**). The overall aim is to create an awareness of how diverse the community is and what factors influence the state and development of the community.

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## **ACCESS**

*It is advisable to record the research findings on the individual actor groups of the ACCESS context in actor group profiles and to find a form for this that can be successively modified and supplemented.*

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# Building Block 6: Making Groups of Actors Visible to the Community and Keeping Them Continuously in View

Whereas **Building Block 5** was about taking stock, this Building Block is about creating visibility ("community visualisation") and continuity.

The first task of community development is to **present the current state of the community in** all its diversity,

- to get and keep an overview yourself,
- to make this representation permanently present in the community, and
- to open up access between groups of actors and members within the community.

A visual representation of the entire community or one that can be experienced with other senses helps to balance virtuality and decentralisation. If the community has a representation of itself in front of its eyes, it is easier for it to understand itself as a community and to build and deepen relationships within the community. It is important that this representation is constantly updated to reflect new affiliations, among other things. For new community members, integration into the community representation is a clear sign of "onboarding", and they can also be welcomed appropriately by other community members.

For community representation, choose **practical and descriptive tools or media, e.g.** databases, tables, mind maps, profiles (e.g. of stakeholder groups), maps, murals, infographics, publications, social media platforms and community logbooks. Here, the value generated by the overview is crucial; this must be balanced against potential overload from complexity, which is then no longer useful for community development. Here, too, it is important to choose forms of presentation that are as attractive as possible and to ensure that they are accessible to all groups of actors.

In this context, the task of Community Development is to maintain the community overview and its presentation, i.e. to find ways and tools for ongoing **"community monitoring"**. Due to the complexity and data protection law, it may make sense to make certain extensive data collections accessible only to the community development team or parts of the community. For these collections, the costs and benefits should always be weighed up and a "mini-NSA" should be avoided. The careful handling of internal community data is an important trust-building part of community development. A related code of conduct could also be discussed and agreed upon within the community. If there is a good basis of trust, individual data releases can also generate affiliation.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *What visualisations and other overview representations already exist that clarify the interrelationship of all stakeholder groups? Are these representations common throughout the ACCESS context? How up-to-date are these representations?*
  - *Which visualisations are particularly suitable and attractive for representing the ACCESS community?*
  - *How can it be ensured that these community representations are permanently present and accessible to all relevant groups of actors?*
  - *Are there already approaches to "community monitoring" in the ACCESS context?*
  - *Are there currently uniform standards for handling internal community data in the ACCESS context?*
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# Building Block 7: Strategically Develop and Expand Relationships with and between Selected Groups of Actors

**Building Block 5** and **Building Block 6** were about identifying, better understanding and presenting the totality of potential stakeholder groups in the community. In this section, the aim is to strategically develop a sequence for dealing with the groups of actors and to set priorities. On the one hand, this is necessary because of the complexity of communities, which makes it impossible to do justice to all groups of actors (at the same time), and on the other hand, it is necessary because of the limited resources for community development.

The overview of the groups of actors ensures that **conscious choice** and **targeted relationship building** can be made with particularly relevant groups of actors. This prevents, for example, the habitual cultivation of certain community relationships, to which access may be relatively convenient but which are not necessarily the most effective in relation to the core idea, from being continued unquestioned. And it allows for the inclusion of previously unconsidered or under-considered stakeholder groups that can give the community a strong and innovative push. The aim of community development is to focus on all the groups of actors who can most effectively implement the core idea.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- Which stakeholder groups are currently prioritised in the ACCESS context and are these the ones that are most effective in terms of implementing the core idea?
- Which groups of actors with high relevance for the ACCESS core idea should be focused on more strongly in the future?

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In addition to the in-depth understanding of these selected groups of actors in the form of actor group profiles developed in **Building Block 6**, the next question should be related to their **current state within the community**:

- What history connects each of these groups of actors to the community context,
- With which activities each of these groups of actors is currently advancing the core idea,
- How strong their presence, engagement and commitment within the community currently is,
- What the current value and benefits of community participation are for each of these stakeholder groups,
- The extent to which each of these stakeholder groups and their contributions are currently recognised within the community,
- How often they currently use which forms of communication and interaction within the community,
- With which other community stakeholder groups each of these stakeholder groups is currently particularly strongly connected or not connected at all, and
- Who are currently particularly committed, inclusive key players within each of these stakeholder groups.

The next step is to define the **target state** through community development, i.e. in which direction the relationship with each of the selected groups of actors should be developed, namely whether and how:

- The community story of each of these groups of actors can be more fully integrated into the overarching community narrative,
- Each of these groups of actors can be motivated to continue, modify or intensify their activities to implement the core idea,
- Presence, engagement and commitment of each of these stakeholder groups within the community can be strengthened,
- The value and benefits of participation can be sustained and enhanced for each of these stakeholder groups,
- The recognition of each of these groups of actors and their contribution within the community can be enhanced,
- The communication and interaction of each of these groups of actors within the community can be improved,
- Each of these stakeholder groups can be more connected to other community stakeholder groups,
- Particularly committed, inclusive key persons within each of these groups of actors can continue to be involved or be involved to a greater extent.

Finally, this module should venture a **look into the future as to** how each of the selected groups of actors will ideally contribute to the future implementation of the core idea and what role they will play in a desirable future of the



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community. These future perspectives can in turn be incorporated into the community's future narrative (**Building Block 4**).

The prioritisation carried out in this **Building Block 7** should not only be carried out once, but on an ongoing basis or at regular intervals. On the one hand, this is due to changing resources: if these become more abundant, other relevant groups of actors may be brought into focus and the community can be expanded quantitatively. Changes in the overall socio-economic context may mean that certain groups of actors become more relevant and should be included for the progress of the core idea. And internal progress in the community context itself can also result in new actor groups becoming important for the implementation of the next development steps. In this respect, the selection of the prioritised groups of actors, supported by continuous "community monitoring" (**Building Block 6**), should be questioned and revised again and again.

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## **ACCESS**

*The points listed under actual and target state and the ideal view of the future should be deepened for the relevant actor groups of the ACCESS context and recorded in the actor group profiles set up under **Building Block 5**. The reprioritisation of the actor groups relevant to the ACCESS core idea should be carried out anew at regular intervals. The previous analyses in the actor group profiles should also be updated.*



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# Building Block 8: Strengthening Continuities, Commitments and Obligations through Activities and Projects

This Building Block is about the **operational implementation** of community development, without which all the previous Building Blocks would remain abstract strategic analyses and brainstorming. The focus here is on the activities and projects through which the core idea of the community is brought to life, and what contribution individual groups of actors make to this. It is obvious that special and continuous attention is required at this point for successful community development.

At the beginning there is an analysis of the **current situation**, also with regard to activities and projects:

- Which activities and projects have been carried out in the community context so far and are already planned?
- Which of the prioritised stakeholder groups are involved in these activities and projects?
- In which of the implemented or planned activities and projects were all prioritised stakeholder groups involved?
- How can the effect of these activities and projects on community development be evaluated on the basis of the present recommendations for action?
- How much do the activities and projects carried out or planned so far advance the identified core idea?

Based on the analysis of the current state, Community Development can draw up an **interim balance sheet** of which activities and projects should be continued and further developed in the future and which new impulses the community needs at the current stage of development in order to come as close as possible to realising the core idea and to act in a future-oriented and powerful way. Many operational suggestions already result from the previous building blocks.

For the area of activities and projects, too, it is a question of defining the **target state** and thus of developing concrete (modified) ideas and plans for action. The question is which (additional) activities and projects are needed in concrete terms

- to realise the core idea,
- in order to involve each of the (prioritised) groups of actors more closely in a targeted manner in line with the core idea,
- to make the community experienceable for all (prioritised) groups of actors as a whole and to enable community experiences for them, and
- in order to make it possible for the (prioritised) groups of actors to continuously experience the joint realisation of the core idea in a sensual way and thus to have a motivating sense of achievement.

A central part of operational community development is the conception, installation and maintenance of concrete and attractive analogue and digital **communication and interaction opportunities** for the (prioritised) groups of actors. These can be, for example, permanently usable media channels, analogue and digital meeting places and one-off and regular events. Through these, specific actors and groups of actors can be brought together in a targeted way and tandems, sub-groups and teams can be formed that are active on a one-off or continuous basis for the realisation of the core idea. The temporal and spatial sequences and rhythms of these communications and interactions can be dramaturgically designed in such a way that they can in turn be told as a community story that creates identification.

As an operational basis, the classic "community management" and "hosting" can also be located in this Building Block, where it is a matter of establishing processes that guarantee **concrete and attentive relationship management** in everyday community life. A related operational task is "onboarding": Here, inviting processes are desirable that make it very easy for potential or new members to become part of the community and feel a sense of belonging. These processes need to be designed and implemented and should be linked to strategic tasks of community development, since the "pulse of the community" is particularly perceptible in these areas of responsibility.

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## ACCESS

*In the context of ACCESS, it is advisable to analyse the current situation in relation to activities and projects that have already been carried out and those already planned, to draw up an interim balance sheet, to define a new target situation in relation to activities and projects that promote the community and to develop concrete ideas and plans for action.*

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# Building Block 9: Determine Responsibilities for Community Development

This last component is about who takes **responsibility** for community development and how. Different models are conceivable here, depending on the context, organisation and culture. As discussed above, however, responsibility for this approach should not only be linked to individual functions or hierarchical levels, but should be balanced as a mixture of top-down and bottom-up responsibility. A lively community is characterised by the fact that as many actors and groups of actors as possible take on community development tasks. In this respect, it is desirable that all groups of actors familiarise themselves with the community development approach. It is very beneficial if the management level is convinced of the approach and is prepared to facilitate useful structures and to moderate community development as a participation and communication process with all relevant groups of actors. A "Chief Community Officer" at board level is also conceivable. However, the approach could also be taken from the bottom up by a particular group of actors in the context, so that the work of persuasion and mediation is initiated from there. Regardless of where the initiative comes from, it is crucial that this initiative is taken up by other groups of actors and that it results in a continuous participation and communication process within the community.

In any case, to establish community development in context, it can be helpful to create a role **on team with a kick-off function**

- to promote the approach in context and train groups of actors accordingly,
- to design and initiate a participation and communication process of community development,
- to develop a strategy on how to delegate community development tasks to stakeholder groups,
- to describe development needs for the task area in a medium and long-term perspective,
- to ensure on an ongoing basis that community development is tracked and maintained over the long term, and
- to start prototypical projects and impulse-giving activities of community development.

For the "start-up team", it is important at the beginning

- to define the team's scope of responsibility and resources in its starting lineup,
- to develop their own understanding of the field of community development,
- to realise the individual and collective role finding as a team, and
- to form an identity and trust within the context.

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## ACCESS

*For the ACCESS context, the following questions arise:*

- *How are the (sub-)cultures of the ACCESS context shaped and what are the facilitating and hindering factors for the necessary continuous communication and participation process?*
  - *How can planned community development tasks be transferred to as many actors and groups of actors as possible in the ACCESS context?*
  - *In what ways can the community development approach be disseminated in the ACCESS context?*
  - *How can management levels be brought on board in the ACCESS context and what supportive structures can they facilitate?*
  - *Which groups of actors in the ACCESS context could be particularly enthusiastic about this approach?*
  - *How can a community development role or team be created in the ACCESS context in the near future? How should this ideally be staffed?*
  - *Which roles in the ACCESS context have a high affinity with the community development tasks outlined? How could they be integrated into the start-up team or how could synergies be created?*
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# Conclusion

Since all Building Blocks taken together are a demanding task that is to be regarded as long-term, it is advisable to develop a **sequence that is suitable and feasible** for the respective context. The decisive factor is not the complete and comprehensive implementation of all Building Blocks, but a continuous processing of this field.

The approach of community development wants to encourage people to get an **overview without delusions of control**. It is about looking at the totality, understanding it and including it in community development processes. At the same time, it helps to have an awareness of the complexity of each community and an awareness that the desired overview will always be incomplete, i.e. an ideal. It is rather a matter of developing a feeling for the community and, from this attitude, taking an ongoing and attentive interest in the entire community, nurturing and developing it. And it is about developing the ability to assess and use the possibilities and limits of shaping a complex social structure.

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## **ACCESS**

*A suggestion for the first step: The group from the ACCESS context that is dealing with the guideline for the first time (not synonymous with the start-up team from **Building Block 9**) can prioritise the building blocks and the individual questions. Each member of the initial group selects two building blocks and five questions that they feel are most urgent and important to the community development of the ACCESS context. These selections can be presented and discussed by all participants in a group meeting with rationale. Subsequently, the two building blocks and five questions selected by the majority are crystallised. Next steps can then be derived from this.*

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