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.

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?*

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.

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?*

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 nees 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.

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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