

A photograph showing a group of diverse people's hands clasped together in a circle, symbolizing unity and teamwork. The hands are of various skin tones and are wearing different colored sleeves (white, blue, grey, and a dark blue patterned sleeve). The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a meeting table with papers.

# **ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**EXAMPLES** of Integrated Community Care (ICC) can be found all over the world. This document belongs to a series that highlights a number of emblematic approaches utilized by a wide range of existing ICC practices.

**INTEGRATED COMMUNITY CARE** is both a set of principles, and a movement towards better health and care systems. ICC implies a shift in traditional thinking from problem-based, disease-oriented care towards a goal-oriented, person-centred care that aims to enhance the quality of life of vulnerable individuals and improve population health among communities. It is a whole-of-society approach to health and well-being that is determined by the needs and preferences of individuals and the communities in which they live.

**TRANSFORM**, the Transnational Partnership on Integrated Community Care, is a joint initiative of foundations in Europe and Canada that aims to put the community at the centre of integrated primary care. Learn more about ICC and TransForm: [www.transform-integratedcommunitycare.com](http://www.transform-integratedcommunitycare.com)

### START WITH WHAT'S STRONG, NOT WITH WHAT'S WRONG<sup>1</sup>

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to sustainable community-driven development. Asset Based Community Development's premise is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognised assets, such as:

- **The skills of local residents**
- **The power of local associations**
- **The resources of public, private and non-profit institutions**
- **The physical resources and ecology of local places**
- **The economic resources of local places**
- **The stories and heritage of local places**

thereby responding to challenges and creating local social improvement and economic development.

ABCD offers a radical shift of perspective: to move away from a one-directional giver-receiver paradigm to facilitating the space for citizens to join together and co-create what matters to them as communities.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5xR4QB1ADw&list=PLepYF6CS4H9VyFta2kImAVFnXBI85WVPK&index=9>

### EXAMPLE OF BØMLO MUNICIPALITY (NORWAY)

The ABCD approach in Bømlo municipality, Norway:

- **enabled dialogue between the inhabitants of different towns and places**
- **empowered connections and discussions about the future of Bømlo**
- **changed people's perspective: focusing on what I can do myself rather than what others can do for me.**
- **helped mobilize citizens that were not active before.**
- **shifted from the project ideas to the real achievements.**

ABCD approach in Bømlo resulted in a more democratic, empowered, engaged and self-governing community.

## ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### 1. A recognized problem: a lack of social change despite institutional and organizational reforms

The origins of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) starts with the work of Professor John McKnight, Professor Jody Kretzmann and eighteen of their associates in the late 1980s. They were looking for a solution towards increased racial tensions in the US, observing a lack of effective institutional reform. They started to question the basic assumption that institutional reform was the means to achieving social change, which led them to embark on a four-year journey to work with thousands of people who had largely been defined by their issues – unemployment, teenage pregnancies, poverty, poor housing. When John and Jody entered these communities, they sought to understand how, despite multiple socio-economic and political challenges, has citizenship and community prevailed in low-income neighbourhoods, how the social change is happening?

They came to the conclusion that a major challenge to social change is the underlying assumption and belief that some external force will come and rescue them. This scarcity perspective would have citizens believe that the most valuable resources exist outside of their communities which routinely results in top-down, bureaucratic solutions. It follows the belief that bigger, better resourced, more professionalised organisational systems equate to better outcomes for all.

Research shows that environmental and social change is not the result of behavioural change, nor does it come about as a consequence of institutional reform. Social change happens as a result of effective grassroots community building at the neighbourhood level.<sup>2</sup>

Using only open and participatory processes, John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann gathered 3,000 stories in response to questions such as, “can you tell us a story about a time when you and your neighbours came together to make things better around here?” The stories they gathered had in common some mix of the six key community building blocks. While not every story possessed of all six, across the 3,000 stories gathered, these are the strengths that were most recurrent:

- The skills of local residents
- The power of local associations
- The resources of public, private and non-profit institutions
- The physical resources and ecology of local places
- The economic resources of local places
- The stories and heritage of local places

These building blocks, which were eventually categorised as “community assets”, reflected the local residents ‘real-world’ accounts of their experiences in nurturing their health and wellbeing, protecting the environment and the local economy, raising happy children, ageing actively and comfortably at home, responding to natural or man-made disasters, as well as being good stewards of local ecology and of deepening democracy, achieving social justice and nurturing local wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/08/take-back-control-bottom-up-communities>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/blog/a-potted-early-history-of-asset-based-community-development/>

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## **2. The key solution to the problem – Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)**

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In John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann seminal work, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (1993), John and Jody described in detail this four-year participatory research project and laid out the principles and practices of the asset based approaches which were informed by their findings.

An understanding of the existence and value of these 'community assets' has since served to directly challenge traditional approaches to urban and rural development initiatives.

The key distinction of ABCD is that it is not providing a service to or for people, neither are they co-producing a service with people. They are facilitating space for citizens to join together to co-create what matters to them as communities – largely outside of services and contracts – including love, laughter and friendship, all of which are critical determinants of well-being.

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## **3. Key components of the ABCD approach**

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Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) challenges the traditional deficit-based approach that tries to solve urban and rural development problems by focusing on the needs and deficiencies of individuals, neighbourhoods, towns, villages, etc. ABCD demonstrates that local assets (people, physical assets etc.) and individual strengths are key to ensure sustainable community development, and that people have a life of their own choosing.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of starting with a focus on what's wrong, ABCD invites us to start with a focus on what's strong so that we can use what is strong to address what is wrong.

### **Five key aspects of ABCD**

- 1. Asset Based Approach**
- 2. Deficit Based vs Asset Based Comparison**
- 3. Power of Associations**
- 4. Principles for facilitating Asset Based Community Development**
- 5. Asset Based Community Development in Practice<sup>5</sup>**

4 <https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/about-abcd/>

5 <https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/>

## 1 The first key aspect of ABCD: Asset Based Approach

Asset Based Community Development builds on the **assets that are found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths.** This makes it different from a Deficit Based approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. From the start an Asset Based approach spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community. The identified assets from an individual are matched with people or groups who have an interest in or need for those strengths. The key is beginning to use what is already in the community, and then work together to build on the identified assets of all involved.

The first key method of the ABCD approach is that development begins with the recognition of asset categories that can be uncovered in any community and place. When applying ABCD principles, communities are not thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather they focus on discovering diverse and capable webs of gifts<sup>6</sup> and assets that exist within their community.

Asset Based Community Development categorizes asset inventories into five groups, **Individuals, Associations, Institutions, Place Based and Connections.**

### --> INDIVIDUALS – EVERYONE HAS ASSETS AND GIFTS.

At the centre are residents of the community who all have gifts and skills. Individual gifts and assets need to be recognized and identified. In ABCD, you cannot do anything with people’s needs, only their assets.

#### Assets:

- The skills of local residents
- The power of local associations
- The resources of public, private and non-profit institutions
- The physical resources and ecology of local places
- The economic resources of local places
- The stories and heritage of local places

### --> ASSOCIATIONS – PEOPLE DISCOVER EACH OTHER’S GIFTS

Small informal groups of people, such as clubs, working with a common interest as volunteers are called associations in ABCD, and are critical to community mobilization. They don’t control anything; they are just coming together around a common interest by their individual choice.

### --> INSTITUTIONS – PEOPLE ORGANISED AROUND ASSETS

Paid groups of people that generally are professionals who are structurally organized are called institutions. They include government agencies and private business, as well as schools, etc. The assets of these institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.

6 [https://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels2/pdf/90s/90/90-MCC-McKnight\\_Kretzmann.pdf](https://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels2/pdf/90s/90/90-MCC-McKnight_Kretzmann.pdf)

--> **PLACE-BASED ASSETS – PEOPLE LIVE  
HERE FOR A REASON**

Land, buildings, heritage, public and green spaces are all examples of place-based assets for the community. Every place where people choose to be was chosen for good reasons. A place might be a centre of natural resources, a hub of activity, living skills, transit connection or marketplace.

--> **CONNECTIONS – INDIVIDUALS CONNECT  
INTO A COMMUNITY**

Asset Based Community Development recognises that the exchange between people sharing their gifts and assets creates connections, and these connections are a vital asset to the community. People whose gift is to find and create these connections are called connectors. The social relationships, networks and trust form the social capital of a community, which is recognized as a key asset in the ABCD approach.

**2 The second key aspect of ABCD: Deficit Based vs Asset Based Comparison**

<b>DEFICIT BASED VS ASSET BASED</b>	
Problems	Possibilities
Blame	Shared ownership
What's missing	What's there
Scarcity	Abundance
Risks	Courageous leadership
Needs	Strengths, capacities, assets
Control-outside in	Lead by stepping back
Top-down	Inside-out
Do to	Do with & enable to do
Clients & passive receivers	Co-producers & active creators
Provider-led	Citizen-led
<b>Different Perspectives of Deficit Based vs Asset Based</b>	

In deficit based approaches, people are encouraged to seek institutional and professionalized support, thus distancing themselves from the support of their neighbours, who may think that they are too removed and unqualified to help. This can lead to isolation of individuals. When in difficulty, people

must identify themselves by their special needs that can only be validated and serviced by an outside agency. But within the ABCD approach, these assumptions and intent can be altered through the process of recognising community assets rather than deficits.

	<b>Deficit Based</b>	<b>Asset Based</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Changing community through increased services	Changing community through citizen involvement
<b>Method</b>	Institutional reform	Citizen-centred production
<b>Accountability</b>	Leaders are professional staff, accountable to institutional stakeholders.	Leaders area widening circles of volunteer citizens. Accountable to the community.
<b>Significance of Assets</b>	Assets are system inputs. Asset mapping is data collection.	Assets are relationships to be discovered and connected. Asset mapping is self-realization and leadership development.
<b>Production Resource</b>	Money is the key resource. Falls apart without money.	Relationships are the key resource. Falls apart when money becomes the focus.
<b>Operating Challenge</b>	How do we get citizens involved?	How do we channel and build on all this citizen participation?
<b>System Dynamic</b>	Tends to spread itself thinner over time.	Tends to snowball over time.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Success is service outcomes, measured mostly by institutional stakeholders.	Success is capacity, measured mostly by relationships.
<b>Deficit Based Process vs Sustainable Community Development Asset Based Approach</b>		

**3** The third key aspect of ABCD: Power of Associations

	<b>Associations</b>	<b>Institutions</b>
<b>How Governed</b>	Power by consent	Directors following policy
<b>How Decisions Made</b>	Choice of members	Managing executives
<b>How Designed</b>	By members for themselves	To meet production demands
<b>Who Decides What To Do</b>	Members	Contractors
<b>Who Runs</b>	Member volunteers	Employees
<b>Who Are Beneficiaries</b>	Members	Contractor, employees, directors and consumers
<b>Function</b>	To do more together	To do more for less
<b>What drives</b>	Capacity of members	Drive to meet contractual obligations
<b>Amount of Control</b>	Voluntary agreement	Tight hierarchical control
<b>Strengths</b>	Fun, creative and adaptable	Reliable repetitive production
<b>Associations vs Institutions</b>		

Users of the ABCD approach are deliberate in their intentions to lead by stepping back. Existing associations and networks (whether formal or informal) are assumed to be the source of constructive energy in the community. Rather than development driven by external agencies that divide their capacity and expertise between service provision and priorities, Community-driven development is the focus.

ABCD draws out strengths and successes in a community’s shared history as its starting point for change. Among all the assets that exist in the community, ABCD pays particular attention to the assets inherent in social relationships, as evident in formal and informal associations and networks.

ABCD’s community-driven approach aligns with participatory approaches, where active participation and empowerment (and the prevention of disempowerment) are the basis of practice. It is a strategy directed towards sustainable, economic and social development that is community-driven.

## 4 The fourth key aspect of ABCD: Principles for facilitating Asset Based Community Development

Facilitating ABCD follows these principles:

### EVERYONE HAS GIFTS

With rare exception; people can contribute and want to contribute. Everyone in a community has something to offer. There is no one who is not needed. Gifts must be discovered.

### RELATIONSHIPS BUILD A COMMUNITY

See them, make them, and utilize them. An intentional effort to build and nourish relationships is the core of ABCD and of all community building.

### CITIZENS AT THE CENTRE

It is essential to engage the wider community as actors (citizens) not just as recipients of services (clients).

### LEADERS INVOLVE OTHERS AS ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Leaders from the wider community of voluntary associations, congregations, neighbourhoods, and local business, can engage others from their sector. This form of leadership utilises relationships, inclusion, showing and sharing to lead involvement based on trust.

### PEOPLE CARE ABOUT SOMETHING

Agencies and neighbourhood groups often feel trapped by perceived apathetic responses. Apathy is a sign of bad listening. People in communities can be motivated to act. The challenge is to discover what their motivation is.

### MOTIVATION TO ACT

People act on certain themes they feel strongly about, such as; concerns to address, dreams to realize, and personal talents to contribute. Every community is filled with invisible “motivations for action” that must be identified. Listen for it.

### LISTENING CONVERSATION

One-on-one dialogue or small group conversations are ways of discovering motivation and invite participation. Forms, surveys and asset maps can be useful to guide intentional listening and relationship building but cannot replace generous and attentive listening. .

### ASK, ASK, ASK

Asking and inviting are key community-building actions. It is integral to show that people have been listened to and their gifts are recognised.

### ASKING QUESTIONS RATHER THAN GIVING ANSWERS INVITES STRONGER PARTICIPATION

People in communities are usually asked to follow an outside expert’s answers for their community problems. A more powerful way to engage people is to invite communities to address ‘questions’ and find their own answers, changing the role of agencies to follow up with support.

## A CITIZEN-CENTRED “INSIDE-OUT” ORGANIZATION IS THE KEY TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A “citizen-centred” organization is one where local people control the organization and set the organization’s agenda.

## INSTITUTIONS HAVE REACHED THEIR LIMITS IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

All institutions such as government, not-for-profits, and businesses are stretched thin in their ability to solve community problems. They cannot be successful without engaging the rest of the community in solutions.

## INSTITUTIONS AS SERVANTS

Local people are better than outside institutions in engaging the wider community. Leaders in institutions have an essential role in community-building as they lead by “stepping back,” creating opportunities for citizenship, letting people show they care, and engaging in real democracy.

### **5** The fifth key aspect of ABCD: Asset Based Community Development in Practice

ABCD is an approach built on tried and tested methods from sustainable community development practice. It is not a set formula that can be prescribed in a one size fits all manner. Here are basic common steps reflecting the experience and principles of applying an asset based approach.

### **1** COLLECT STORIES

Stories are collections of the cultural capital of a community. The listening conversation can engage people’s experience of successful activities that will help to uncover the gifts, skills, talents and assets within the community. From the stories, what people care about and their motivations to act can be discovered. Importantly, this form of inquiry does not diminish but reinforces citizens as the centre of their community.

### **2** BRING TOGETHER A CORE GROUP

From the stories, people will emerge who have shown commitment and leadership in the past or who are currently taking a leadership role. This should be followed by bringing together a group of these committed individuals who are interested in exploring the community’s assets, identifying opportunities and leading developmental action. Engaged and motivated to act on what they care about, using their strengths and gifts, these individuals will open networks of relationships inside the community.

### **3** MAP THE GIFTS, CAPACITIES AND ASSETS OF INDIVIDUALS, ASSOCIATIONS, AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Citizens and their associations do the asset mapping so that they build new relationships, learn more about the contributions and talents of community members, identify connections that open opportunities and enable change. The objectives are:

– **Identifying associations**

A list of associations can then be clustered by type and those associations most likely to participate in working together for a common purpose can be identified. In the process of identifying associations, the list of leaders in the community also expands.

– **Identifying individual gifts, skills, and capacities**

The focus is to show people that their abilities and contributions are appreciated. A capacity inventory will be developed listing these capacities in categories such as community-building, enterprise, teaching, artistic or other skills. The categories should reflect the self-identified strengths of the community, and not an external requirements list.

– **Identifying the assets of local institutions**

This includes government services, non-government service providers and private sector businesses. These assets could be the services they provide, meeting places, the equipment and other supplies they can make available, communications links and staff who can envision the wider benefits for the whole community.

– **Identifying physical assets and natural resources**

This is a list of the potentials of a place, in which new ideas and re-imaginings can emerge. It is not a dry list for valuations, but revealing an understanding of the foundations on which development can be built. Because access and use have different conditions those which are communally owned and managed should be identified separately from those which are individually owned and managed.

– **Mapping the local economy**

By mapping the local economy, people can see how well local resources are maximised for local economic benefit and evaluate plans for economic development that can enhance local provision for otherwise externally provided services.

**4 FIND AND ENGAGE CONNECTORS WHO CAN BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**

Lasting change comes from within the community and local people know what needs to change. Possibly the most vital step of Asset Based Community Development is encouraging the building of new relationships and strengthening and expanding existing ones. This is the heart of community building and participation will lead to the immeasurable benefit that communities protect and support what they create.

**5 ASK THE GATHERED COMMUNITY TO LEAD THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY VISION AND PLAN**

Asset Based Community Development's core idea is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognised, assets. This requires a strong commitment to community driven efforts through active citizenship and participatory democratic methods.

**6 ENGAGE THE SELF MOBILISATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S ASSETS BY ACTION APPLIED THROUGH ASSOCIATION**

When people know what to do to succeed, know what success looks like, can see where to start and that it can be achieved within available resources, the chosen activity will have a unifying

and strengthening outcome. This creates the self-mobilisation as an ongoing process. Associations lead transformative efforts for local social and economic development. This leads to information sharing and realisation of what can further be achieved through new connections and association. From this emerges larger community-wide connected associations with common purpose.

#### 7 LEVER KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMUNITY'S ASSETS AND STRENGTHS TO SECURE INVESTMENTS AND RESOURCES NEEDED FROM OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY

Institutions lead by “stepping back” into a supporting and helping role, leaving decision-making within the community. Achieving a community vision begins with people that realise the power of their associations and accepting the challenge of making things happen. External resources are not sought until local resources have been utilised and clear understanding of what is needed is known.

This crucially changes the dynamic of community interaction with institutions, stepping away from top-down, deficit-oriented processes to utilising local as well as external resource and investment that creates sustainable community development.

#### 4. Example of the ABCD approach – Bømlo municipality from Norway

**Welcome to Bømlo – the saga island where creativity lies in the soul of the people!**

The island municipality of Bømlo is an Eldorado for fishing enthusiasts, and has many accommodation options where one can get the right to fish from a boat or land. From Siggjo (474 meters), the highest mountain peak, there is a view from the glacier Folgefonna in the east to the city of Haugesund in the south, and this popular hiking destination is a well-known landmark.

The maritime environment characterizes the business community. The sea is also an important factor for the tourism industry, where the archipelago attracts with islets and islands, sheltered coves and canals. At Bømlo you will find a changing nature, from the barren landscape at the far end of the sea, to more lush areas.<sup>7</sup>

#### Facts

- 12,006 inhabitants
- Surface content: 247 km<sup>2</sup>
- Municipal center: Svortland
- 5 local community centers: Finnås, Langevåg, Moster, Rubbestadneset and Svortland
- 9 primary schools with 1721 students
- 2 county municipal upper secondary schools (Bømlo upper secondary school and Rubbestadnes upper secondary school)
- 1 folk high school (Bømlo folk high school)
- Full kindergarten coverage with 8 kindergartens
- 150 municipal housing units
- Over 700 companies, a high-tech environment, mechanical industry, shipping, aquaculture industry, tourism, trade and service industries
- Over 300 voluntary teams and organizations

In 2016 the municipality was looking into ways of activating citizens through an asset based approach and entered into cooperation with Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and Nurture Development.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bomlo.kommune.no/om-oss/fakta-om-kommunen/>

Three communities participated in a project, using the ABCD method to mobilize the communities, map their resources and initialize community led projects. As a result, there was a shift in focus from what financing the communities could achieve participating in projects, to implementing community led projects based on local resources.<sup>8</sup>

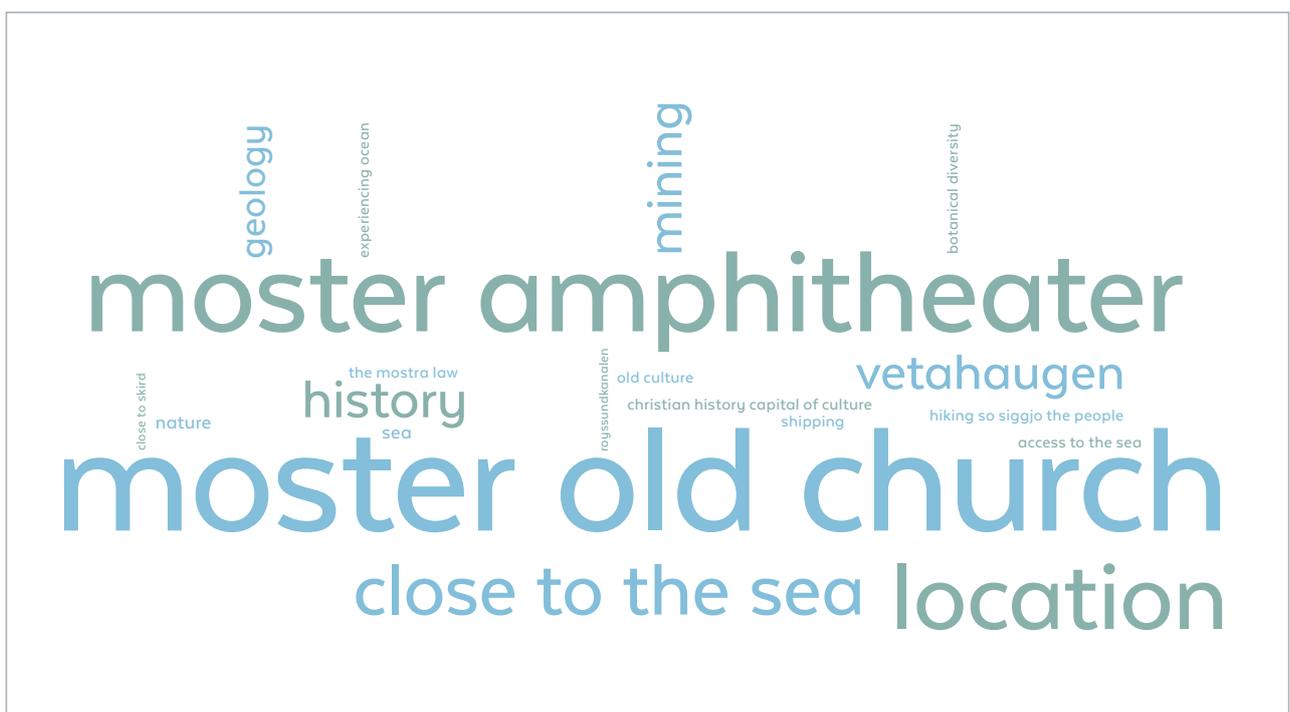
The municipality also mobilized all the 12 community councils of Bømlo as part of the process of making the 2040 development plan. ABCD approach manifested in practice was through questions posed during town meetings at the early stages of implementation:

- what is unique about your community?
- what do you think matters to make your town attractive?
- What personal traits, skills and motivations can you contribute with?

- How can you contribute to develop your community?
- what do you think matters to make our municipality attractive?

A small group sat down to organize 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.



8 <https://youtu.be/B2BcDMe5QKw>

This was summarised in a table,<sup>9</sup> 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 with opinions and commitments to what they cared enough about to take action on with their neighbours. People’s resources were taken seriously, with the premise that everyone can contribute something towards a better community.

A local community building process based on ABCD does not require rigid. Adaptation, measures and evaluation developed by the community should be integrated in the implementation. Participation and engagement can be fluid and based on a personal decision. The objective is to focus on empowering people to act and avoid potentially hindering rigid frameworks.

This we can do ourselves	Input for municipal planning	Input about health	Input about school	Input public transport and road safety	Suggestions involving local business
Local responsibility		For the health and welfare department	For the school management	Municipality/highway authorities	
Clean up Vetahaugen	Downtown homes for the elderly, with a seaview	Various input regarding the service centre	Bullying	Lacking bike lanes, lights, pedestrian areas	Café
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					

9 [https://www.hvl.no/globalassets/hvl-internett/dokument/20200211\\_abcd-booklet-f.pdf](https://www.hvl.no/globalassets/hvl-internett/dokument/20200211_abcd-booklet-f.pdf)

A local community building process based on ABCD does not require rigid framework.<sup>10</sup> Adaptation, measures and evaluation developed by the community should be integrated in the implementation. Participation and engagement can be fluid and based on a personal decision. The objective is to focus on empowering people to act and avoid potentially hindering rigid frameworks.

## 5. Governance

Governance at ABCD is citizens led and it are citizens who must be at the centre of any authentic and powerful democratic response to challenges. With this in mind, community-building work cannot be done without addressing power dynamics and relocating authority to the community.

It is also in line with **place-based governance** – place-based approach in defining urban policies means to involve local communities, to use their knowledge, to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders and to promote the inter-institutional cooperation.

Similarly, to **citizen-driven** service – which is one step on from citizen-centric service where citizens themselves play a direct role at one or several points along the service value chain.

## 6. Lesson learned & Insight

The result of ABCD is the enabled dialogue between different towns and places; empowered connections and discussions about the future of Bømlo; and clarifying its needs and development of new initiatives. ABCD changed people's perspective: focusing on what individuals and the community can do themselves rather than what others can do for them. It has helped to mobilize citizens that had not yet been actively engaged in community decision-making or processes. The evaluation is still in progress, for now gathering the qualitative inputs and insights, including the development of more quantitative measures as well. The ongoing project is also exploring how the youth can contribute and co create throughout the schools, the kindergartens and youth council.

The other way ABCD brought a change to Bømlo is to shift from many ideas to the implemented projects.

Previously when asked, a lot of people came up with many ideas, but they did miss capacity and infrastructure to implement them. Now the municipality is using infrastructure of their society – kindergartens, schools, youth council, also working hard to take the labels off from some people, to empower collaboration and participation rather than prejudice and exclusion.

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.hvl.no/globalassets/hvl-internett/dokument/20200211\\_abcd-booklet-f.pdf](https://www.hvl.no/globalassets/hvl-internett/dokument/20200211_abcd-booklet-f.pdf)

Teachers, pupils, student councils, youth councils, community councils, the leader of a jubilee committee and employees of institutions such as the public library and the volunteer central participated in ABCD courses and the public health program. The examples of projects that were implemented are:

- Work on the beach together with the Outdoor recreation boards (Friluftsrådet)<sup>11</sup>
- Meeting places for all generations,
- Organizing an activity day to support families that cannot afford going to a holiday
- Lifting the youth voice through a debate forum called Mostratinget
- Creating new activities for the youth in Bømlo

The municipality decided not to fight with the specific characteristics of a community, but rather to find a way to work with it and include it the way it is.

It is an ongoing work towards more democratic, empowered, engaged and self-governing community.

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## 7. COVID-19 impact on Bømlo

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Luckily for the communities of Bømlo, there were no casualties due to COVID-19 (38 infected in total until March 2021). Nevertheless, the social distancing measures have been very disruptive, especially among young people. It became almost impossible to engage them when only online meetings were possible. It was also challenging regarding youth council meetings – normally held offline in the form of discussion, exchange, and sharing – became very difficult to be recreated online. On one hand, the pandemic has fostered and accelerated everyone’s digital competencies, and on the other hand it became clear that offline interaction is necessary to engage with youth. They were so tired of online lessons, activities, that engaging them on a voluntary basis also and make them contribute online became impossible. Even though there had been relatively short periods with lockdown in Bømlo, young people still have experienced restrictions making it more difficult to make friends and participate in both organized and non-organized activities. However, youth council has been able to meet physically most of the time and even if the restrictions has been less severe in comparison to big cities, this time has affected them (e.g. alcohol misuse numbers went up among youth).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.friluftsrad.no/om-fl/in-english>

What is one of the big questions remaining is how find a new equilibrium in a post-COVID context. This includes rebuilding trust and engagement, combating loneliness, supporting children who suffered from abuse in the home, etc. One of the feedbacks from public health nurses working at schools during the pandemic was that young people started to approach professional mental specialist not having a serious mental illness but looking for someone that would listen to them in a compassionate and understanding way. This again emphasizes the importance of building a strong community and the devastating impact of professionalizing many basic functions of human interaction.

Young people feedback provided during municipality sessions engaging youth, was that they have realized they would like activities and places to meet that are not adult-led. However, they would like adults to be present as a safety measure.

Apart from challenges there we also positives – previously offline learning ABCD sessions took full 2-3 days, which made people exhausted, and it was difficult to fully embrace and internalize the content. In the pandemic, when sessions were organized with online lecturer and the group coming together in Bømlø, they were much shorter and there was a time (few days at least) in between them, which allowed people to digest the knowledge, put some of its parts into practice, come back to the next session with feedback and this became a major improvement towards the way of learning.

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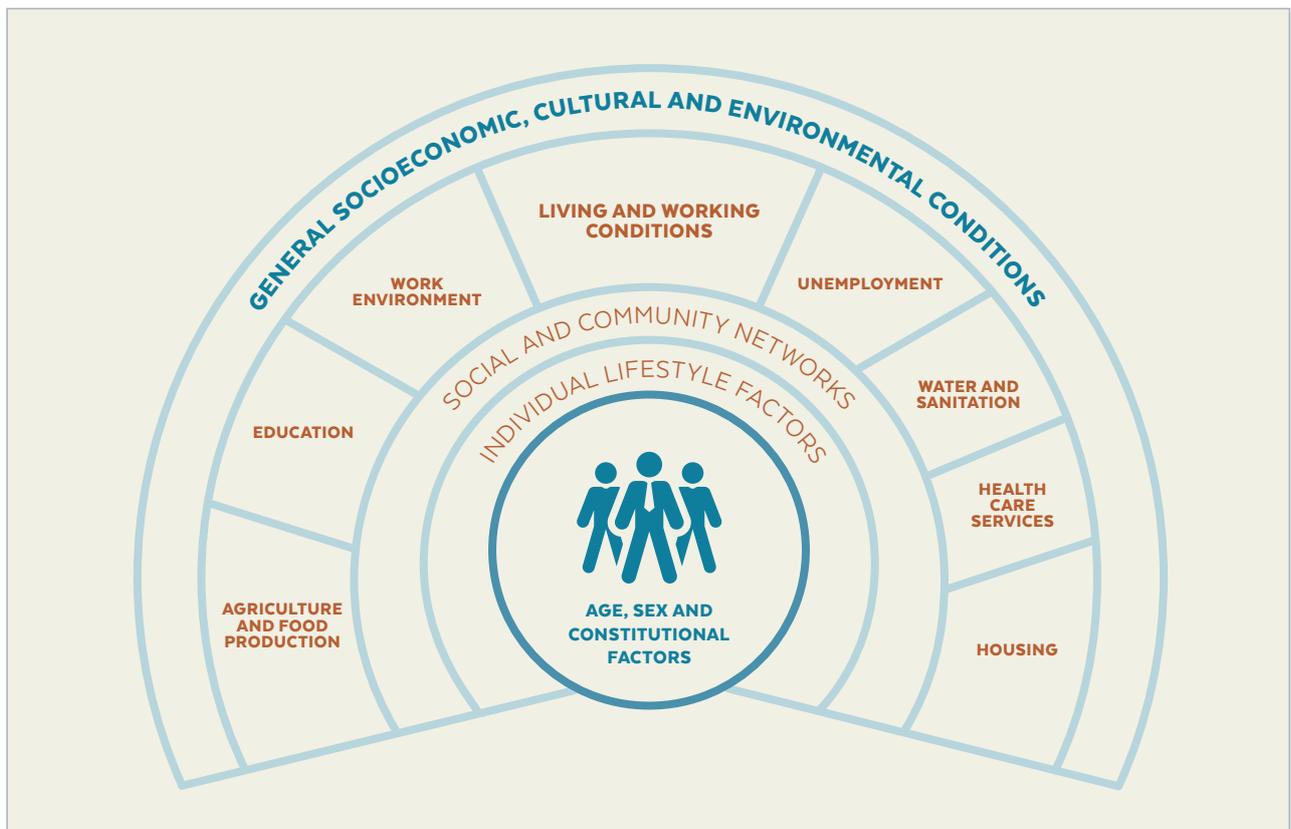
## **8. How does ABCD exemplify Integrated Community Care?**

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Integrated Community Care (ICC) points towards a paradigm shift at the citizen, community and system level. Lived experience, a shared vision on the common goals of a local community, distributed power and collective learning are its cornerstones.<sup>12</sup>

Integrated community care represents such an approach that is delivered to distinct communities where care delivery can be planned and delivered to truly reflect on local circumstances and needs. Hence, it seeks to focus on the key priorities for improving health and wellbeing with a specific focus on tackling inequalities in care, addressing services for hard-to-reach groups and promoting social justice. In this respect, integrated community care is an approach to tackle the wider determinants of ill-health by putting people and communities at the centre:

<sup>12</sup> <https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/strategy/>



[https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/transform-hamburg-conference\\_input-paper.pdf](https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/transform-hamburg-conference_input-paper.pdf)

A shift in the integrated care work is, therefore, necessary to better link the shared values and knowledge on health with the transformations in health and social care. The purpose of these other forms of integration is to “enhance individual assets as part of whole community health” rather than only addressing the crisis of actual hospital care.

ABCD approach emphasizes the need to look at the world and more specifically communities in a systemic way – questioning status quo, seeing the connections and exploring the strength of the com-

munities, rather than judging and forcing the services. ABCD focuses on realizing privileges and preventing disabling communities by forcing solutions upon them. It also aims at disrupting institutional patriarchy, and misuse of power, which is spent on things that are causing even more problems. Instead, ABCD focuses on empowering neighbourhoods, building trust and authentic community building. It addresses the ripped fabric of our society and aims to create fundamentals of a thriving society where integrated care can flourish.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See also [https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/transform-hamburg-report\\_final.pdf](https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/transform-hamburg-report_final.pdf)

ABCD can be seen in all ICC 7 Effectiveness Principles:<sup>14</sup>

### Co-develop health and wellbeing, enable participation

1. Value and foster the capacities of **all actors**, including citizens, in the community to become change agents and to coproduce health and wellbeing. This requires the active involvement of all actors, with an extra sensitivity to the most vulnerable ones.
2. Foster the creation of **local alliances** among all actors which are involved in the production of health and wellbeing in the community. Develop a **shared vision and common goals**. Actively strive for balanced power relations and mutual trust within these alliances.
3. Strengthen community-oriented primary care that **stimulates people's capabilities** to maintain health and/or to live in the community with complex chronic conditions. Take people's life goals as the starting point to define the desired outcomes of care and support.

### Build resilient communities

4. Improve the health of the population and **reduce health disparities** by addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health in the community and investing in prevention and health promotion.
5. Support healthy and inclusive communities by providing opportunities to bring people together and by investing in both social care and social infrastructure.
6. Develop the legal and financial conditions to enable the co-creation of care and support at community level.

### Monitor, evaluate and adapt

7. **Evaluate continuously** the quality of care and support and the status of health and wellbeing in the community by using methods and indicators which are grounded within the foregoing principles and documented by participatory 'community diagnosis' involving all stakeholders. Provide opportunities for joint learning. Adapt policies, services and activities in accordance with the evaluation outcomes.

<sup>14</sup> <https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/strategy/>

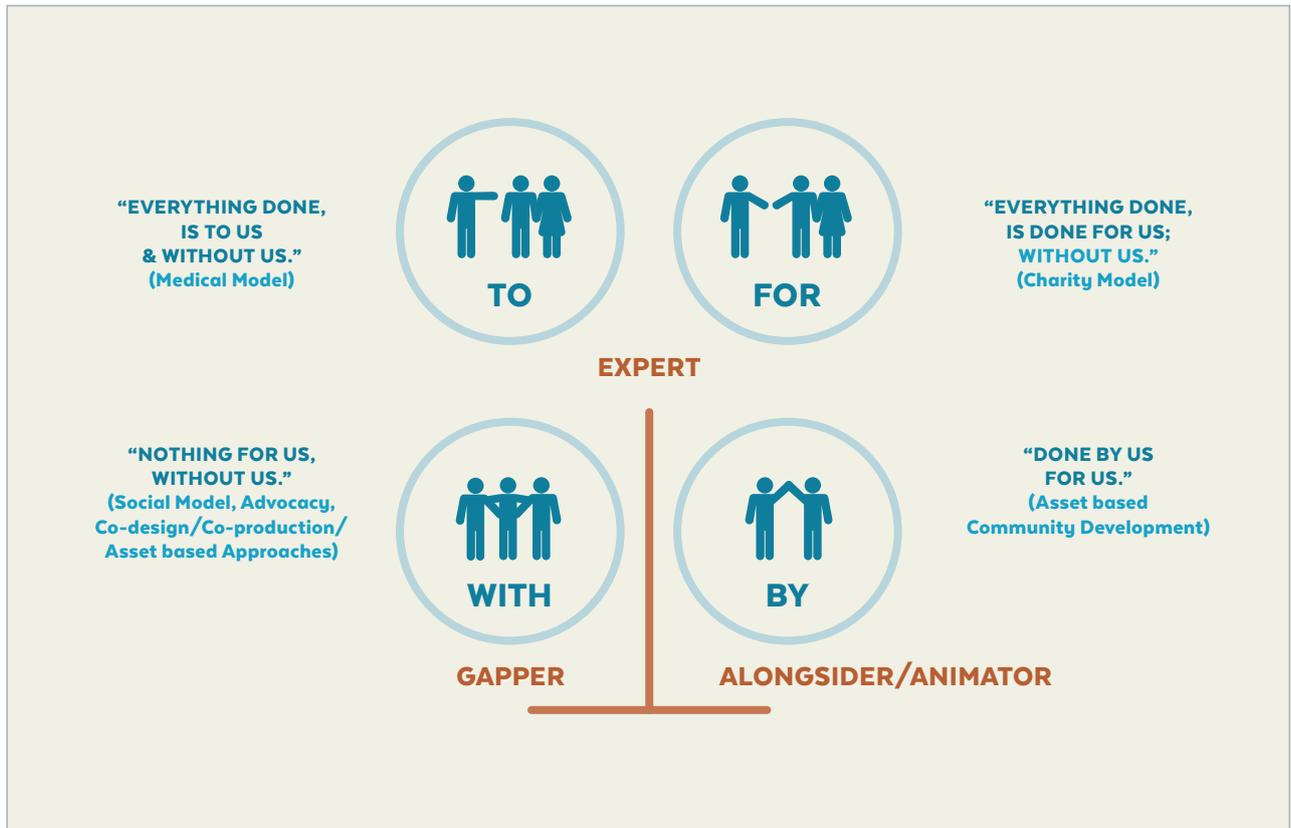


Image source: <https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/blog/abcd-approach/off-the-roundabout/>

- Doing to community, which is commonly taken as an infringement or aggression.
- Doing for community, a charity model where we try to rescue those with misfortunes.
- Doing with community, or the collaborative co-production that is familiar to many working in this space.
- Doing by community, or efforts that are truly community-led – for the people, by the people.

## FURTHER RESOURCES AND CONTACT

<https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/Documents/GreenBookIntro%202018.pdf>

[https://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels2/pdf/90s/90/90-MCC-McKnight\\_Kretzmann.pdf](https://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels2/pdf/90s/90/90-MCC-McKnight_Kretzmann.pdf)

<https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/>

Cormac Russel: [Cormac@nurturedevelopment.org](mailto:Cormac@nurturedevelopment.org) Managing Director of Nurture Development and a faculty member of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute, at DePaul University, Chicago

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/53820032-rekindling-democracy>

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/guide-asset-based-community-development-at-a-glance>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSRAakkWNT0>  
*Rekindling Democracy – An Interview with Cormac Russell*

<https://www.bomlo.kommune.no/>

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