Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

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Professional coursework degrees designed for those seeking graduate qualifications in international and/or community development. These courses will provide both analytical skills for understanding the contexts of development as well as practical skills for the formulation, resourcing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international and community development projects.

The courses are structured around skills-based and knowledge-generation units that address technical and social issues, policy development, project management and analysis of resources. Students are also required to undertake research as part of the course.

Graduates of the courses will have expertise to design and lead creative, effective and culturally-sensitive responses to poverty and disempowerment. The philosophical foundation is based on your commitment to work globally and locally, learn from others and remain people-centred.
Exercise: Reflecting on Community

What is community
Identify a time when you felt part of community

In pairs
What was it about that particular occasion/time period that made you feel part of that community?
How did you feel at that time?
What happened to make you feel part of that community?
ABCD: Origins


- inner city Chicago – shifts in the economy ‘removed the bottom rung from the ladder of opportunity’
- Well-intentioned efforts mostly compromised community capability, engagement and involvement – people stopped helping themselves (individually and together)
- Problem: *focus on needs and assistance by expert* – a deficit focus on the problems and lack, and what is not there, requiring expert intervention
  → Dependency!
**ABCD: Origins**


- Powerful communities built by capacities of local people and their associations
- Proposed ‘capacity-focused development’
- Begin constructing new lenses so communities can “begin to assemble their strengths into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production”
- ABCD Institute - [www.abcdinstitute.org](http://www.abcdinstitute.org)
ABCD: Origins

2003 Alison Mathie & Gord Cunningham,
From Clients to Citizens: ABCD as a strategy for community development (Development in Practice, vol. 13, no. 5, pp. 474-86)

- lead by stepping back
- communities shift from being 'consumers' of services to 'designers' of programmes, and finally, 'producers' of community
- proposed principles, components & steps
- Coady International Institute: http://www.coady.stfx.ca/themes/abcd/stories
ABCD: Key Principles

- recognises individuals and communities often disengage because feel disconnected, powerless, lacking things to contribute, victims of circumstances beyond their control
- takes assets and strengths of the community as starting point, recognises many assets exist even in poorest communities
- draws on tangible and social community assets
- particularly community-based associations and social networks
- mobilises individuals, associations, and institutions to come together
ABCD: Key Principles

Designed to

• combat dynamic: agencies and officials attracted by problem or pressing need, thus commence with overt or implicit analysis of that need in a manner that inadvertently exacerbates feelings of lack and powerlessness

• reignite hope, engagement and entrepreneurial imagination that looks for ways to take control of their own future

• provide empowerment and capacity building based on pre-existing strengths /assets

• generate highly participatory engagement
ABCD: Critiques

- can be slow, clumsy and time consuming for everyone – takes time!
- can the marginalised and poor overcome structural inequalities this way?
- not directly applicable to everything ... *or is it?*

Can adopt the principle in anything:
- don’t do things that leave people feeling powerless or disenfranchised
- build engagement by appreciating strengths and empowering local assets and capabilities available locally
- build from the base of local capacity
ABCD: Components

- appreciative inquiry
- asset mapping
- social network analysis
- social capital (bonding & bridging)
- community-led ... development
- active citizenship and strong civil society

Assets:
- individual/human
- associations/organisations
- institutions
- physical/natural
- built
- economic/financial
- cultural
- social/political
ABCD: *cf traditional approaches*

- identify needs and gaps in service provision, and bring in resources and expertise to meet
- communities come to depend on service agencies, or outside provision for and management of projects.
- focus always on what is wrong and what needs to be fixed
- negative images and complaints become the norm for communities.
- projects often have limited engagement and limited positive outcomes
ABCD: appreciative inquiry

Sources of images used in presentation:
ABCD: *asset mapping examples*

Sources of images used in presentation:
- [http://comparativeassetmapping.org/?p=98](http://comparativeassetmapping.org/?p=98)
- [http://4gprojplanning.pbworks.com/w/page0/26280652/Asset%20Mapping](http://4gprojplanning.pbworks.com/w/page0/26280652/Asset%20Mapping)
- [http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/communities/partners/](http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/communities/partners/)
## ABCD: A summary

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

Community engagement
What Do We Mean By Engagement?

In the broadest sense, engagement is a form of participation, a way of involving (or sometimes, re-involving) citizens in the processes of governance. A fundamental concept in democratic theory, ‘participation’ emerged as a concern in the radical 1960s as a reaction against the dominating influence of big business and big government. ... ‘Engagement’ is clearly a related concept, but it is more instrumentalist in character. By engagement, I mean deliberate strategies for involving those outside government in the policy process (Stewart 2009: 3).

‘Citizen participation is discouraged by insincere consultations and galloping centralisation’ (Coghill and Wright 2012: 1).
Why engage? ....
# Jules Pretty – Ladder of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Participation</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative Participation</td>
<td>Pretence, with nominated representatives having no legitimacy or power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Participation</td>
<td>Unilateral announcements without listening to people’s responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation by Consultation</td>
<td>External agents define problems and information-gathering processes and so control analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation for Material Incentives</td>
<td>People participate by contributing resources (labour) in return for material incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Participation</td>
<td>External agencies encourage participation to meet predetermined objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Participation</td>
<td>People participate (as a right) in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Mobilisation</td>
<td>People take initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Adapted from Cornwall (2008)
## IAP2 Spectrum

**iap2 public participation spectrum**

*developed by the international association for public participation*

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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
<td>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC**

- We will keep you informed.
- We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
- We will implement what you decide.

**EXAMPLE TOOLS**

- Fact sheets
- Websites
- Public comment
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Public meetings
- Workshops
- Deliberate polling
- Citizen Advisory committees
- Consensus-building
- Participatory decision-making

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Source:

# Stewart 2009 – The Continuum Of Engagement

## Table 1.1 The scale of collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of collaboration</th>
<th>What is involved—activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest level: high normative commitment to collaboration;</td>
<td>Transformative interaction between network actors; substantive engagement and empowerment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highest political/managerial risks</td>
<td>search for high degree of stakeholder and inter-actor consensus and cooperation; coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>building by government and non-government actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-high level: strong normative orientation; high level</td>
<td>Strong engagement of stakeholders in decisions or policy process and implementation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of political/managerial risk</td>
<td>devolving decision-making capacities to clients; more complex innovations in policy-delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium level: commitment to multiparty input and buy-in;</td>
<td>Formal commitment to inter-agency consultation and collaboration; joined government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderate levels of political/managerial risk</td>
<td>strategies; formal joint involvement exercises and joint funding initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-low level: operational forms of collaboration to</td>
<td>Forms of co-production; technical improvements in delivery chains; assistance to comply with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘get job done’; some political/managerial risk</td>
<td>obligations; direct consultation with clients over delivery and compliance systems;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>systematic use of evaluation data; public reporting on targets informed by client preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest level: marginal operational adjustments, low levels</td>
<td>Incremental adjustments using consultative processes; client discussions and feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of political/managerial risk</td>
<td>mechanisms; gaining information on needs/expectations of others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Casey Conversations

Revisiting a housing strategy:
Mind Lab

Odense Municipality – the Citizens’ House
(http://mind-lab.dk/en/case/borgereksperiment-paa-gaagaden-odense/)
Speak Outs

First designed by Wendy Sarkissian

Key messages

• You may not have the time to do ‘pure’ ABCD, but you can adopt the underlying values in everything you do
• Wide range of tools and ways of working with a community → don’t just use what you already know!
Recommended Reading


THANK YOU!

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