

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community development is a process-oriented and participative approach in social work aimed at achieving lasting improvements in living conditions for and together with the residents in a city district.

Principles of community development

- Community development is concerned with the needs and interests of the people living in a city district, and promotes their taking part in economic, political, social and cultural life.
- The starting-point for community development is the citizens' ability to organize and to help themselves: they are encouraged to actively publicize and lobby for their interests.
- Community development addresses more than one target group and a number of administrative fields (housing, health, employment, leisure, education, culture etc.) – a prerequisite for dealing satisfactorily with the complex issues involved.
- Community development has a mediating function, i.e. it acts as an interface between citizens' interests and activities and the city's resources, and structures negotiation processes between decision-makers and citizens.
- One vital task involves developing a network of cooperation between the staff of the various facilities and the stakeholders in the district in question. Here resources and potential on the ground are tapped and linked together, and social networks created / strengthened.

You will find more details about community development on the following pages:

>> [Aims, methods and prerequisites](#)

>> [Scope, approach and limits](#)

Case histories

You will find examples of community development in practice here:

>> [Inline Skater Park 'Am Schöpfwerk'](#)

>> [Different origins – shared future: cultural bridging in Krems](#)

>> [Community organizing in Vienna \(Volkert- und Alliiertenviertel\)](#)

Links

You will find more information about this subject here:

>> [District Work](#) (in German)

>> [Socially Integrative City](#)

>> [QuarterNet - networked community organizing](#) (in German)

>> [Social and Community Development](#) - Website of the Combined European Bureau for Social Development CEBSD

AIMS, METHODS AND PREREQUISITES

Aims

Community development is intended to

- encourage the people in a city district to stand up for their interests and needs (= empowerment) and thus improve their quality of life, and support them in the process;
- improve the material situation in the district in question, i.e. the public spaces, the housing and employment situation, the traffic situation, the playgrounds, the range of cultural activities etc.;
- and strengthen / improve immaterial factors such as the social climate, the extent to which people identify with their surroundings, public-spiritedness, democratic awareness etc.

In this way community development contributes to city (district) development.

Methods

In community development several different methods are employed, depending on the assignment and the target group, such as:

- >> [Activating opinion survey](#)
- Interview with experts
- Project and idea workshop
- >> [Citizen panel](#)
- Assistance and support in implementing specific projects
- Steering and mediation in negotiation processes
- Conflict management
- Public relations (e.g. by means of special-purpose media such as newsletter, radio etc., or via existing media)

Prerequisites

- „Suitably- sized district: community development can take effect where people share community-related interests
- Interdisciplinary teams: for the many different tasks in community development a wide range of specialists are needed (e.g.: social workers, planners, psychologists, social scientists, etc.)
- Open-ended remits (in which the results are not a foregone conclusion) from the decision-makers
- Sound financial footing for an extended process.

Links

You will find more information on methods of Community Development here

>> [Community Organizing Toolbox](#)

>> [The Citizen´s Handbook](#)

>> [Community Organizing Action Pack](#)

SCOPE, APPROACH AND LIMITS

Scope

Community development (first developed in the 1970s) involves orienting social work largely toward the physical environment. For instance, the content and principles of community development are applied to the process of developing disadvantaged city districts, and also play a vital part in modern district management.

Approach

The community is seen as a theatre in which community developers identify the inhabitants' **needs, interests or sources of vexation**, draw attention to these and discuss them with stakeholders (aiming at positive change). Joint action is taken together with stakeholders to draw attention to existing problems in the district, or work is started on reconfiguring squares, parks and other spaces there. The emphasis is not on externally controlled processes of change, but on **complex forms of intervention aimed at structuring residents' surroundings or their existential situation** to fit in with their needs.

Community development **involves everyone with a stake in the district**: people of all ages and from all social and ethnic groups. Special support is provided for disadvantaged segments of the population.

Community development acts as a link between residents' interests and activities and the resources and institutions of the city / district; it has the function of **interpreting**, i.e. making the citizens' concerns intelligible to decision-makers and administrators and vice versa. The mediation and networking characteristic of community development make it possible to treat social conflicts with lasting effect.

Limits

Community development reaches its limits where it is faced with problems affecting society as a whole (such as unemployment) that cannot be solved at a local or regional level. Community development can draw attention to such problems, though.

Source: [http:// www.partizipation.at/ community_develop.html](http://www.partizipation.at/community_develop.html)