



CODE

Diaconal community development

Community Development and Diakonia

Paradigm changes within *diakonia*, social & community development work and international development work have led to a renewed focus on the role of local actors in both urban and rural contexts. People are viewed as actors and subjects who bring their own resources and expertise; they are seen not only as ‘individuals’, but are persons interwoven into communities, groups and networks. Community development seeks to explore how communities, especially marginalised communities and groups, can contribute to their own development and become actors for change locally and in the wider society. CODE seeks to explore how citizens, professionals and volunteer activists use their resources in the development of sustainable communities and working for political change.

CODE in VID Specialized University

CODE is an interdisciplinary research group at VID Specialized University that brings together researchers and practitioners concerned with community development and diakonia. VID CODE research-group focuses on *research on practice* in order to develop innovative practice theory, support more effective practice and develop diaconal reflection. The group consists of academic staff from different VID campuses, from the Faculty of Theology, Diakonia and Leadership, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Centre for Intercultural Communication, in addition to international participants. The VID CODE research group includes PhD researchers with an interest in community development and Diakonia and organises regular seminars amongst its members. The regional interests of the research group include Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

CODE FORUM

A wider cooperation of professionals involved into the development and practice of community development theories and methodologies has its roots in a workshop organised at the ReDi conference in Helsinki. The Code Forum brings together researchers and practitioners from three different approaches to community development and diakonia:

- **Use Your Talents**, which is an asset, based approach to working on development on the basis of local congregations in had pressed areas. This is one important element in the CODE research group in VID
- **CABLE**, which is an approach to community-based learning for empowerment that has been used in many different settings in at least 8 countries. CABLE is supported by a European network that is developing the approach.
- **Seeking Conviviality**, which is an international process of reflection on local diakonia in the framework of the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation in Europe.

All three strands of the CODE Forum focus research on the participation of people in developing their own understanding of their situation and creating action on the basis of relationships and resources in the context. On the other hand, they also seek to influence decision making on various levels to secure the developments and to press for change where it is needed. CODE and the CODE Forum therefore seek to support research that explores the dynamics of community development, involving church, civil society and other local actors.

Activities of the CODE Forum

Since the initial meeting at the Helsinki ReDi conference, the **CODE FORUM** has had two international seminars. The first seminar was in Oslo and had with 50 participants and the second meeting was in Helsinki in 2019 and had around 40 participants. Altogether people from 24 countries have been involved in the main network meetings. Overall participants come from European countries including Eastern Europe, Southern and Eastern Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia. In between the two

seminars, a workshop was organised at the ReDi conference in Berlin and this also attracted a large number of the participants. In 2019, a steering group was launched which is involved in mapping the research in the field and is aiming to encourage research project applications within the network. Other activities include curating a special edition of the Journal Diaconia and working on other publication proposals. The CODE Forum is organising a one-day seminar before the ReDi conference in Oslo on 15th September 2020 and we welcome interest from others who share the CODE approach in this workshop and all activities.

Organisation of the CODE FORUM

The CODE Forum has two coordinators and works with the CODE research group at VID and with members in the location where the meetings are organised. CODE Forum does not have a specific structure other than being a network that facilitates communication and space for meeting. More information about the three strands of CODE Forum is available from the organisers.

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Select Bibliography

Use Your Talents

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Seeking Conviviality

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Ulla Siirto, 'Conviviality: A Core Value of Diakonia', In Burghardt, Anne (ed.) *LWF guide material to the themes of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation: Human Beings – not for sale*. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2015)

CABLE

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Titus Schlatmann & Rob van Waarde, *That's the Name of the Game – on empowerment and community, an account of practical research*, (Tubbergen: Van der Ros Verlag)