



SUSTAINABILITY & RENEWAL

Renewal of members and knowledge ensures continued relevance, adapting to changing needs. Ensures that the CoP sustain the rhythm of the community and drive the community knowledge forward and evolving it, keeping it dynamic and sustainable over time.

Orienting to Context

Referencing to the 7 dimensions of intentional development, it more useful to consider a framework with multiple dimensions along which community maturing or some preferred to label as vibrancy can occur. Think of these dimensions as a set of distinct sliders increasing the brightness level of different settings, as illustrated in the figure below. Some communities may try and turn up some dimensions while ignoring others. Even in a given community, some members may be more interested in pushing some dimensions than others. Not everyone has the same view of the ideal setting.



WHAT

Dimension 7: Context

The maturing of a community of practice is not solely an internal affair. It also has to do with the community's place in its broader context. Questions driving development in this direction include: How do we fit in our organization(s) and our wider discipline? Where are there relevant developments or transformations we may need to respond to?

WHY

Working strategically with the broader context includes:

- **Navigating organizational waters.** The most common form of context orientation is the relation to one or more organizations. Maturing here entails learning to navigate organizational expectations, resources, hierarchies, politics, and culture.

- **Belonging to a broader field.** The domain of many communities of practice is part of a broader field or discipline. Leveraging a broader field usually increases the legitimacy of the community with organizational stakeholders because the community is seen as accountable to a broader, usually more formal, regime of competence.
- **Understanding the wider landscape.** A community of peers is a good forum for making sense of how the world affects one's practice.

HOW

Intentional developmental efforts in this direction include:

- **Navigating organizational waters.** Learn to better articulate the difference the community is making. In some cases, the community can gain support and sponsorship through alignment with strategies, policies, and related initiatives. In other cases, proceeding with integrity as a community of practice entails resisting, challenging, or transforming the organizational context.
- **Belonging to a broader field.** The community needs to make a case for the value it brings in acting as a local door to this field, with its resources, expertise, and networks; this entails arguing for the time and resources to participate in external activities such as conferences, trainings, or online conversations. Publishing in their field's journals and trade magazines is another way members increase the community's legitimacy.
- **Understanding the wider landscape.** What are significant trends? What is happening elsewhere, including new developments, research, and innovations? What is the competition doing? Where are there potential partners? What societal goals are we contributing to? These are the kinds of questions that a community of practice will address if it attempts to mature toward a strategic orientation to its broader context.

Potential upsides	Possible downsides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations provide support • Projects provide concrete contexts to learn from practice • The community gains legitimacy from outside recognition and reputation • Members develop an expanded horizon • Community learning is relevant to a broader set of stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside forces remove some agency from the community • External differences, allegiances, and conflicts seep into the community, potentially splitting it into factions • Belonging becomes defined in terms of "us versus them"