

10 Case study NL

Title: Food for the hood



Introduction

In 2005 the Dutch government appeals to social organizations to propose ideas to stick together to approve the social cohesion in the communities of the cities. The background is the tendency in the society, where people have less confidence in each other, where they are not open to other groups and where the climate hardens. One of these social organizations is LSA, a national union of deprived neighbourhoods. Together with housing associations it started the project “CAN DO”.

Method

The project CAN DO uses the ABCD strategy, Asset Based Community Development. This is not problem related, but it stimulates the capacity and knowledge of inhabitants themselves. It uses the opportunities and means available in the neighbourhood. So it stimulates active citizenship and personal initiatives. CAN DO started in England in 2003, and had much success in financing and supporting initiatives. In the Netherlands a pilot project started in 2006 : in 15 cities within 15 month 12 community based initiatives of the inhabitants themselves will be realized with financial and personal support. In every city operates a community coach. The inhabitant who has an idea goes to the community coach. The idea much be new in the neighbourhood, the activity must benefit more groups than her/his own and it must be realistic. Together they investigate whether the idea is feasible, or how it can be made feasible. Each idea can receive maximum € 2500,-. The community coach support the inhabitant to realize her/his idea, but they are responsible themselves. They own the project. It can be an activity which takes place only once, or it is sustainable. Then the coach helps to find other local means or support. The informal learning takes place every minute and everywhere: On the street, during the interview with the coach, by being responsible for the project.

In 2009 there are still several towns, in which Can DO operates. One of them is Spijkenisse, a town near Rotterdam.

Setting

In this neighbourhood in Spijkenisse are a lot of youth groups with diverse ethnical background. Most of the youngsters are from a Dutch-Antillean background. Most of them are unemployed, or are working for a temporary employment agency. Their age is from eighteen to thirty. The image of the group is a bad one, they are supposed to be the trouble makers of the neighbourhood.

Before the project started, there was very little confidence in the abilities of this group. Nobody expected anything to come out.. Now the professionals and official bodies are eager to get involved.

The discrepancy consisted in the expectations. The community coach had confidence in the abilities of the initiators, they didn't.

The project runs from January 2009 to January 2010.

Project Activities

One of the leaders of the group, Ivan, came to the community coach with the idea, to organize something for the youngsters and the neighbourhood, to empower the youngsters and to improve the social cohesion. His wish was to change the bad image this group has.

The community coach and Ivan keep in touch every week, two times a month there is a face to face evaluation or coaching interview. Ivan, supported by the coach, organized the following activities:

Activities: Food for the hood (An event where local youth prepared food for their neighbours. An attempt to meet each other and improve social networks)

Football for the Hood (An football tourney(soccer) in the neighborhood, organized by and for the youth).

- An excursion to another neighborhood project.
- Christmas dinner for the community.

An excursion to the jail, to show that it is something else than a Hilton Hotel.

Level 5 Evaluation Scheme Applied to the Project

We wanted to evaluate Ivan, and we chose the following topics:

Institutional knowledge at the micro level, because you have to deal with a lot of institutions, if you want to organize community related activities:

- Communication: It is important to communicate at different levels, with different groups,
- Self reflection: That was rather poor in the first contacts with Ivan, everything he took as an attack and then you need to protect yourself,
- Empathy towards other groups: Not only to the other youth groups, but also to the shopkeepers, professionals, police,
- Planning and organisation. The idea you have to plan things and that you can make a to-do list came to Ivan very slowly. The beginning was very ad hoc.

The evaluation methods we chose were: observation and interview.

Interviews not only with Ivan, but also with the other inhabitants, the shopkeepers, the professionals. And since the community coach had contact with Ivan every week, and made notes from every interview, we had a lot of material to work with.

Project Impact

The impact of the project was very high. The confidence of the group and of Ivan, in the beginning very low, was higher at the end of the project. The authorities, who first advised

the community coach against working with Ivan, were very curious and wanted to be involved. Level 5 helped to make the results of Ivan visible. Everybody admired Ivan in his handling the youngsters. The community coach tried to get Ivan hired as a youth worker. It almost succeeded, but at the end the authorities were afraid to do so, due to the criminal past of Ivan. But now there is another town, Delft, where the community coach and Ivan are working together, paid by the local authorities, to reach a very difficult target group of youngsters.

Discussion & Perspectives

Level 5 made visible, in which topics Ivan needs more attention and training. Since his coach is still working with him, he especially pays attention to institutional knowledge, because the growth of Ivan was poor in this topic. We like to use Level-5 in more projects of CAN DO, but until now there are no concrete plans.