

# **The Deventer Community-based approach**

## **A method of community management and development**

### **The Netherlands**

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#### **History and philosophy**

The Deventer Community-Based Approach was developed by the Raster Foundation (Stitching Raster), the umbrella organization of the Deventer community development services. In view of the fact that the quality of urban life largely depends on the vitality of social networks and processes at the social networks and processes at the district and neighbourhood levels, the Deventer Community-Based Approach stresses active community participation. Problems should be identified and solved primarily by community members, organizations and businesses themselves. The authorities are to be facilitators, providing support where necessary.

The Deventer Community-Based Approach is a procedure or method for mobilization, selection, and implementation. In this process, a municipal district officer (municipality) and a community worker (welfare organization) act as initiators/motivators. While various tasks and responsibilities are separated, they are closely co-ordinate in terms of time frames and perception. The Deventer Community-Based Approach, adopted for the city as a whole, was introduced in January 1992. The approach covers every social aspect: not only the physical living environment (greenery, pavements, playgrounds, etc), but also the social living environment (security, training, education, etc).

Large groups of organized and non-organized community members (approx.700 a year) are involved in the community-development effort. Group composition policy aims to establish mixed groups (young/old). An additional element of the Deventer Community-Based Approach is the agreement between the municipality, the organizations for community development, the housing corporations the police, the educational centre and geriatric care centres. To help improve the quality of life in Deventer's neighbourhoods and districts, these partners have agreed to collaborate on the basis of the Deventer Community-Based Approach method, Agreements have also been made to divide the municipality into five districts and in regards to the use of funds and manpower.

#### **Actors in the GO-NGO partnerships**

Participants include community members, the municipality, grass-roots initiative supporting professional organizations, and institutions and housing corporations.

#### **Organization and participation**

The Deventer Community-Based Approach is a structured and systematic approach of community management and development and has a cyclical character. The model aims to stimulate community members in bringing local problems to the notice of the authorities and to elicit popular support for possible solutions. At every step along the way, the

citizen's potential is tapped into for the implementation of solutions. The model consists of three steps:

1. Problems are identified through consultation by means of panels and research activities. The outcome is laid down in a plan of action.
2. Solutions suggested by community members are discussed and selected at several community meetings. The deliberation process is laid down in a district plan.
3. Utilizing the community members' individual potential, the district budget and existing resources, implementation is undertaken by a task group of community members and representatives of different bodies and agencies. Their task is to design and implement the solutions suggested by the community members.

This developmental process is repeated every year. Residents are mobilized during each of the three steps of the process, creating an upward spiral in the community development cycle. There is no proportional representation, but team composition does reflect the demographic make-up of the various neighbourhoods and population groups involved. The process managers make sure that this is the case. 70% of the district team consists of community members. Only they have voting rights. The other 30% comprises representatives of the participating institutions.

The problem-solving potential of individual community members is addressed first. This is the instrument of choice for solving neighbourhood tensions caused by ethnic, cultural, and age differences. The aim is to initiate a process of cooperation. The second problem is application of the annual municipal community development budget of 1.2 million guilders. These funds are allocated to the five districts on the basis of a distribution code. The third problem is the application of specific disciplines offered by the organizations overseeing the district. These organizations (key actors) have concluded a covenant with one another and with the municipality and the districts, which they undertake to apply themselves. Contractual agreements between the district team (represented by a municipal district officer), community members, the municipality, organizations, etc, are made concerning implementation of the measures. A task group consisting of community members and representatives of organizations is set up to supervise the realization of each solution. Finally, the district team is adopted by the municipal executive.

## **Results**

From 1993 onwards, district-oriented organizations and politicians have played an important role in the Deventer Community-Based Approach. Being key actors in the process, organizations have undertaken to consult and negotiate about the application of their regular resources on the basis of the community action plans, in which they present their activities to the people. In addition, the political parties represented in the city council have appointed council members for each district, who regularly attend meetings. A survey conducted in April 1995 showed that 93% of all Deventer citizens are familiar with the Deventer Community-Based Approach, 59% felt that the method had resulted in

real improvements. Every year, 125 community (task) groups are active in the city, realizing some 250 solutions a year.

The Netherlands

Community participation

Community development

Neighbourhoods

Partnership

Social living environment

District plan