

ECPA/BPC 2008

Please answer the following questions in English.

1. What is the title of the project?

The BalanCity Project

2. Please give a short general description of the project.

The BalanCity Project is an urban renewal program, which focuses on the overall effort through the appreciative method and an asset based approach to an urban area (Noerremarken in Vejle).

The BalanCity Project has a unique focus on using the existing resources, the personal successes and good experiences as a starting point. In short; an appreciative involvement of the local interests in the development of the urban area – by which the BalanCity Project represents the end of the traditional problem based and –oriented method.

As an umbrella organization, the BalanCity Projects develops and initiates and/or supports asset based and appreciative projects and arrangements – for example initiated by the locally trained Culture Carriers.

3. Please describe the objective(s) of the project?

- As an umbrella organization to develop, initiate and support asset based and appreciative projects in Noerremarken – to secure a sustainable development and to urge local internal forces to focus on their own resources and the area's possibilities.
- Through educating local Culture Carriers to enable them to both develop and carry out urban projects via establishing network and mapping their resources, both being essential in working with the appreciative and asset based method (i.e. the Culture Carrier Course)
- To support and promote the transverse cooperation between the administration, institutions, associations, companies and locals (i.e. Colourful Noerremarken)
- To improve the competence and ability to work – especially for the weakest of the unemployed (i.e. the Pocket Money Project 'Tjansen')
- To promote the possibilities and abilities of young talents of all origins – through support of teams of dancing, singing, boxing, Taekwondo and Stand Up comedy (i.e. The Coloured Diamonds and One Way Up)
- To involve children and youngsters in the development of the local urban area.
- To develop the competences of ethnic youngsters through positive role models. (i.e. the Kids in Balance Project)
- To prevent truancy, school fatigue and low self esteem among selected youngsters and to build up their self confidence (i.e. The Through Fire & Water Project)

4. How was the project implemented?

The project is mainly financed by the Ministry of Welfare, but the Ministry of Integration has funded certain sub-projects.

By educating and training local partners on different levels as Culture Carriers, we secured a basic and vital broad understanding and appreciation of the possibilities

within the appreciative and asset based methods. Through this 'platform' of mutual aims and methods, the BalanCity Project now supports a wide range of sub-projects.

5. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

It is a main goal in the BalanCity Project to help the local resources to help themselves to both plan and carry out the projects. By this 'stepping backwards' we secure a far greater possibility to anchor the projects within the community and to obtain local ownership. Support of both existing and upcoming initiatives has shown useful and the focus on creating both formal and informal network has proven essential to both sustainability and ownership within the community. Far most of the sub-projects and arrangements have been implemented by and with local partners. Some by local voluntary work force/individuals, others through local institutions and their leaders - most of which have been trained as Culture Carriers.

6. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project?

Being one of 13 Danish urban renewal projects – all funded by the Ministry of Welfare - the BalanCity Project is evaluated both in 2006, 2008 and 2011 by the well-known and reputable NIRAS Consultants. All evaluation has been conducted in an overall frame, where all 13 projects are evaluated and compared in the same document. Besides this general evaluation, some of the sub-projects are evaluated, i.e. the 'Kids In Balance' Project as mentioned below.

7. Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

Evaluation design:

NIRAS conducted the 1st evaluation in 2006. Its' aim was to illustrate the project frame and terms; being the objectives, organization, coordination, cooperation with and involvement of different municipal and local partners.

The 2008 evaluation's aim was to illustrate the project's experiences and development so far. It was released in July and is based on qualitative data sources, being the project's yearly report and self evaluation. Besides this, the NIRAS Consultants have conducted two focus group interviews with the project manager and four 'focus group interviews' with the primary partners of the projects.

In 2004 the Noerremarken School had a 'bad image'. The Principal resigned, a 100% ethnic class was formed and the general student composition was viewed as negative. The Rambøll Management Consultants investigated the circumstances through studies of laws and politics, management profile, grades etc. They conducted interviews with the new Principal and teachers, screened and group/phone interviewed more than 100 parents, who all chose *not* to enrol their child in the Noerremarken School in 2003-04.

Sub-projects:

The 'Kids in Balance' Project was evaluated by Bøjen Consult and the Ministry of Fugitives, Immigrants and Integration – latest in February 2006.

Both the participants, their parents, the role models and the project committee have been interviewed. Their answers have all been compared, to secure the validity of the evaluation. An interview guide was made to secure both diversity and unification in the interviews. All materials have been exchanged between the Ministry and Vejle

Municipality, and has been included in the overall evaluation.

8. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

In general the results are very positive and uplifting!
In March 2008, the project's overall experiences and lessons learned were presented and discussed at a national conference in Vejle. Both colleagues from the urban renewal and social field attended the event, as did engineers, fire fighters, police officers, architects, volunteers, librarians etc. Most of these sought and found inspiration from the practical experiences with the appreciative and asset based methods. A 2nd Conference is scheduled to be held in March 2009.
Both through the conference in March, the media publicity on the subprojects and several smaller individual workshops held/requested in all of Denmark – the BalanCity Project appears to have spread out the methods to a degree, where all new urban social projects in Denmark are based on the ideas, values and strength of asset based and appreciative thinking and working.
The effect of the Rambøll Management interviews from 2004: According to the recommendations of the interviewed parents (on urban renewal, cooperation between organizations and institutions, promotion of the school as at cultural centre) the School, Municipality and institutions in the area have worked together to change the 'bad image'. Through both the AI and ABCD methods, the school (and Noerremarken in general) now has a better image and a lot of positive media focus. This has allowed the school and staff to work in new and innovative ways; i.e. establishing a unique Company Network with LEGO, Falck, Golden Tulip etc. where whole classes are adopted and coached by the companies. This network was one of three nominees for the Network Prize 2008 in Denmark.
In October 2007 The BalanCity Project was awarded The Integration Prize in the Authority Category.
Sub-projects:
Especially the Through Fire & Water Project with Vejle Fire Department has shown great effect. The immediate effect for the youngsters after one week at the Fire Station is very positive. In 80-85% of the cases, both youngsters and their parents and the class teacher mention an obvious 'change for the better' since the week at the Fire Station. This project was evaluated at a workshop in June 2008, where both a social worker, fire fighters, the school principal and the project leader attended and agreed, that there's an obvious both short- and long term change for the better in the teenagers' behavior after the week of training and team building!
The Kids in Balance Project has reached it's objectives and the criteria set by the Ministry of Fugitives, Immigrants and Integration – both concerning the efforts/effects against crime, and the initiatives to promote safety in the Nørremarken area, which is mainly inhabited by immigrants and fugitives.
The general attitude among the inhabitants of Noerremarken has changed; many have become *proud* of living where they do – as opposed to the shame, they felt just five years ago. To underline this psychological effect of the positive development in the area, we have enclosed a simple list of statistics, comparing 2004-2008 numbers on crime, vandalism and school enrolment in Noerremarken (Encl. A)

9. Are there reports or documents available on the project? In print or on the Web? Please, give references to the most relevant ones.

Encl. A: Lesser crime, lesser vandalism and larger school enrolment from 2004-2008
(All evaluations are available in Danish)

The BalanCity Project has its own homepage (in Danish only) - see www.noerremarken.dk – which main focus is to reflect and bring in to view all the activities, successes and initiatives going on within the Noerremarken community.

A one page description of the project:

The BalanCity Project is an urban renewal program, which focuses on the overall effort through the appreciative method and an asset based approach to the urban area of Noerremarken in the Municipality of Vejle in Denmark.

The project started on the 1.st of January 2005 with a 13,4 million D.kr. grant from the Ministry of Welfare (then; the Ministry of Social Affairs).

The BalanCity Project focuses on three main topics:

- developing new methods in the urban social work
- developing new urban political efforts
- restoring and setting new physical standards in Noerremarken.

Noerremarken is a district with about 7500 people, of which more than half live in public utility blocks. Many would consider the public utility blocks as a "strained ghetto", but the BalanCity Project has as of day one of the project period focused 100 % on the district's resources by an appreciative and asset based approach. The Project is in itself a 'rebellion' against the traditional problem oriented approach to an urban area- and evaluations have shown so far, that we chose right by doing so.

Today Noerremarken is a district filled with optimism and where the individual citizen understands the benefits and value of committing and involving him/herself!

The BalanCity Project is best described as an umbrella organization. It has 'invented' the Culture Carrier Course, where representatives from institutions, administrations, unions and individual citizens are trained in the appreciative and asset based approach to their own local community. The participants learn to establish network and to see and use resources in broad cooperation to develop and carry out locally based projects – of great use to the community.

The BalanCity Project has developed and initiated projects, where we use ethnic role models as positive idols for the ethnic youngsters in the community. The idea is to show the kids, that education and personal ambitions are important! Some of these role models still do voluntary work with youngsters from Noerremarken – i.e. recording a CD with a group of local singing talents.

The Project cooperates with Vejle Fire Station, where local school kids stay for a week at the Fire Station. They learn about team spirit, cooperation and taking responsibility for the group. They are also taught First Aid and general fire fighting. The idea is to help the kids focus on the things they CAN do, instead of always telling them, what they CAN'T do. The effect is great and can be measured both with the kids, their parents, social workers and school teachers.

The BalanCity Project is way ahead, when it comes to preventive and citizen involving efforts in the "strained" urban areas of Denmark. The Project has successfully introduced and implemented the appreciative method (inspired by Appreciative Inquiry) and asset based approach (inspired by the Asset Based Community Development) to the urban social work. There is an on-going exchange of experiences with the Imagine Chicago projects in USA.

In 2007 the BalanCity Project was honored with the Danish Integration Prize.