

New Partnerships For A New Millennium

The Stuttgart Model



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Table of contents :

I.	THE INTERGENERATIONAL HOUSE WEST	4
	The House on Ludwigstrasse	4
	Why document this experience?	7
	GROOTS International	8
	Mother Centers	9
II.	THE VISION:	11
	Reclaiming a sense of community	11
III.	BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS	14
	Consensus building through collective planning	14
	Mechanisms for participation	15
	Negotiating power differentials	17
	Recognizing strengths and weaknesses of actors	20
	Good partnerships require good mediation	22
	Meaningful participation	25
	Investing in intra-organizational consensus building	27
	Ingredients of a good partnership	27
IV.	DESIGN ELEMENTS	28
V.	MAKING VISIBLE WOMEN'S AGENDAS	33
VI.	THE FUTURE	35



I. THE INTERGENERATIONAL HOUSE WEST

The House on Ludwigstrasse

Curious neighbors looking into the house on Ludwigstrasse in Stuttgart West must wonder at the goings-on here. If they saw the Mayor lay the foundation stone or read about the house in the newspapers they might have learnt that it is something of a social housing project - a public building being constructed by the City of Stuttgart. But somehow the look of the place seems to contradict its public housing status. This state-of-the-art structure designed by a prominent Stuttgart architect is nothing like any social housing project that Stuttgart has ever seen.



Anyone watching the place is probably confused about whom this house is really for. All they can tell is that there is an incessant buzz of activity around the place. At 9 a.m. parents come by to drop their children off here. It is obvious that the building houses a kindergarten. It is clear however, that this place is more than the average kindergarten. Through the glass façade, a clearly visible coffee bar beckons invitingly. Anyone who walks in for a cup of coffee will find a cheerful café opening out into a garden where adults sit alongside children. A closer look would reveal that the children here are not just pre-schoolers, some of the children are too old for kindergarten while others are much too young. A visitor to the café on a Wednesday morning, may be greeted by a group of mothers learning children's songs!





Should the visitor stay on for a quick bite (of freshly baked chocolate cake) at the Café Ludwigslust she might enjoy the company of women from the neighborhood. She might also simply enjoy the bustling about or have her senses assaulted by the aroma of 'home cooked' meals. Visitors may be pleasantly surprised to see construction workers, building the road outside, come in for a quick coffee in the garden. They might hear the thundering footsteps of some hundred children running down the ramps that lead directly from their kindergarten rooms into the garden. Someone walking around the garden might notice an elderly woman arranging flowers. If they exchanged a view words the visitor would probably be delighted to learn that she not a resident in the eldercare apartments - she is simply a neighbor who came by to the rescue wilting plants.

Wandering visitors will find a meeting room where Irish women are running a conference on peace. A passer-by who walks in might chance upon a cozy reading room where they can 'escape' from their busy schedules for a bit. Anyone so bold as to explore the entire building might come across the kindergarten on the first floor and apartments for the elderly upstairs with winter gardens next to them and a charming terrace on the roof of the building. But what visitors will be most excited about is the fact that this building - the Intergenerational House West - is not just for the elderly who live there, or for children or mothers who use the kindergarten and daycare but for anyone who cares to come by and use it.



Behind this state-of-the-art construction and high-tech façade are women doing ordinary everyday activities - childcare, cooking, gardening, ... It is precisely all these ordinary, everyday things going on under one roof that makes this an extraordinary place.

This building is The Intergenerational House West in Stuttgart. This unique city- led project is the result of a 3 year participatory planning process and partnership venture between the Mother Center Stuttgart, the Municipality of Stuttgart, the local Brothers Schmid Foundation, a Stuttgart architect and municipal institutions and organizations involved in childcare and eldercare. The House combines ten apartments for the elderly, assisted living services for the elderly, a kindergarten for 120 children, a flexible childcare program, and the local Mother Center with open collective spaces for the neighborhood in the densely populated Stuttgart West.



The innovative architecture reflects the participatory, inclusive nature of the process, in which the users of the building were involved in a three year- long consultative process in designing the Euro 11 million building. The house includes generous indoor and outdoor recreational and working spaces: a rooftop garden, a cafe, a secondhand store, catering services, a handicraft atelier, as well as gymnastic and sport facilities for collective use by all the groups in the house as well as by the neighborhood.



Why document this experience?

This experience is worth documenting for several reasons. The Intergenerational House West and the planning process around it represent an unprecedented experience for all the participants. While all the actors involved in this endeavor were excited by the idea of an intergenerational house, they were unsure as to whether it was really a viable concept. In fact, many of those involved in the project were downright skeptical about it. How could a set of organizations with such diverse needs occupy and share the same space? There appeared to be no blueprint for how the concept of an intergenerational house could be realized.



This document - commissioned by GROOTS International with funding from the Ford Foundation, EKIZ and the Mother Center International Network - looks at the project primarily from the perspective of the Mother Centers. The reason for this bias lies in the fact that the Mother Centers represents an informal, grassroots women's organization with a perspective and operational style that is almost diametrically opposite of that of the city planners and professionals. Grassroots women's organizations in similar situations all over the globe are grappling with the difficulties of working with mainstream market-driven and state or para-statal agencies. Frequently where goals are common, unequal power relations and disparate work cultures and organizational structures obstruct partnership processes. For GROOTS International this initiative represents a case study in which collaborators have had to confront the challenges of collaborations between formal, mainstream institutions and informal grassroots non-professional organizations of civil society.



This experience provides some insights into how, in spite of their differences, partnerships among a diverse set of actors, *can* work if there is adequate investment in learning, mediating, negotiating and consensus building, leading to the collective ownership of a project. Thus there are lessons to be learnt both on the part of grassroots groups and how they voice their interests as well as governments who wish to transform state institutions in ways that allow people to participate in decision-making processes, thus increasing institutional responsiveness.

GROOTS International

(Grassroots Operating Together in Sisterhood)

GROOTS International is an international network of women's organizations supporting grassroots initiatives and facilitating learning exchanges across grassroots communities. The network currently reaches out to women's organizations in over forty countries. Women's groups linked to GROOTS International through their local organizations are active in a range of issues including credit and asset creation, small business development, food security, housing, education, healthcare and local planning. GROOTS International has organized several learning fora in which grassroots women from different backgrounds exchange experiences and learn to build strong communities to address grassroots women's priorities.



Objectives of GROOTS International are:

- 4 To strengthen participation of grassroots women in development of communities
- 4 To identify and share the successful development approaches and methods of urban and rural grassroots women's groups globally
- 4 To focus international attention on women's needs and capacities
- 4 To increase opportunities to network directly across national boundaries.

Mother Centers

The Mother Centers Network which began in 1985 is an initiative that mobilizes women's everyday expertise to advocate for a greater role for women in public decision making. Its purpose is to counter the alienation from public sphere that women as caregivers suffer from. While the traditional feminist route to participation in public life has been more in the areas of professionalisation and labor market participation, the efforts of the Mother Centers are more oriented towards creating mechanisms for non-professional, grassroots women to participate in local planning, claiming public spaces and getting the city to respond to the needs of these women and children.

Rather than providing professional social services in which *professional* expertise is remunerated the Mother Centers' efforts are focused towards creating a self-managed initiatives in which women's everyday knowledge is mobilized and used to advocate for state support to transform neighborhoods into communities that will support the needs of mothers and children. The core of the mother centers is a daily drop-in coffee shop which includes childcare. The centers create a platform to bring resources and talents back into a public space in the community, out of the confined area of private homes of women who stay at home to take care of their children.

Inspired by the success of the early mother centers, the movement has spread rapidly across Germany. The Mother Centers Network currently includes 400 centers in Germany.

"This place is more than just day care. We see it as our public living room. Here we can meet and talk about things. Not just stay home alone. Here we can share work and share problems. We are somehow bringing the problems out of our individual, isolated ways and trying to address them collectively here."
(Iris Kauffeld-Donhauser, Mother Center)

The objectives of the Mother



Centers are:

- ✓ To create such opportunities in neighborhoods where everyday expertise and knowledge of community women can be mobilized, consolidated and channeled into community decision-making.
- ✓ To create a public culture that is inclusive of women and children's needs.
- ✓ To advocate for greater support from the state, in terms of resources, allocations, to improve the living conditions of families with children.
- ✓ To claim public space for women, particularly in their roles as parents and caregivers.



II. THE VISION:

Reclaiming a sense of community

Moving away from the traditional social welfare approach that tends to compartmentalize different groups, providing them with highly specialized facilities, the Intergenerational House West is conceived as a physical and social space for a diverse range of users with the idea that the multiple users of the house will act as a mutual support network. In a context in which city administrations are becoming increasingly specialized and people are increasingly divided by age, culture and economic and social status, the house in some sense represents the recognition that the highly specialized facilities may serve to further isolate already marginalised groups. This Intergenerational House West is thus an attempt to reclaim a lost sense of neighborhood, community and family.



*"Neighborhoods are no longer intact - perhaps this house can become a demonstration of what a neighborhood can really be. People can come here and meet each other."
(Visitor of Café Ludwigslust)*

For Deputy Mayor Gabriele Müller-Trimbusch, who conceived of this project, the notion of different generations sharing a space is not really that unusual. *„It is quite normal. It is the way that we all grew up - with children, parents and grandparents all in one place. But now we seem to have lost that. The way I see it, this is normal, but it is the normal that is special.“*





The unique thing about this house is that it is not restricted to partner groups who have been formally contracted to use it. It is accessible to the entire neighborhood. The cafeteria, the garden, the terrace on the roof are all open to the public. Thus it is hoped that the house will become a meeting place for the neighborhood and thus revitalize the community by bringing about a greater sense of community.



For some single mothers who have been coming to the Mother Center for some years now, the house and its community represent a surrogate family. *"Here we have support, space, a place to leave the children, people with ideas and even some money to carry out these ideas. ... Perhaps this new intergenerational center will demonstrate a new kind of family for those who come here."* (Daniela Rapp, Mother Center)

Although the house has only just opened, people acknowledge that it has a warmth, and community feeling which similar houses supported by the city lack.

"Many older people from the neighborhood have been coming. They ask what this is, and how it works. They are surprised that they can use the garden and all the other facilities without any kind of fees. Also, women from the neighborhood say, *What? My child can use the garden too? I can come too and sit in the garden?* Many have also already asked how they can help, what they can contribute. What they often say is, *You have it nice here, and how wonderful that I can join.*" (Elke Arenskrieger, Mother Center)



Edgar Kurz, a trustee of the Brothers Schmid Foundation that funded this project says, *"This place has heart. You can see clearly that this is a place where people have a sense of community. It works because people here are willing to give... there is a sense of solidarity not just preoccupation with one's own piece or share of space. The city has built several similar houses but this house has a special quality. People are joyful here and this place has a heart. It may not be a perfect place -it may not adhere to all the rules- sometimes people have had to improvise ...but its imperfection brings the same kind of joy that comes from*



a gift hand-made by a child rather than bought from the shop."



This sense of community has been hard won. All the stakeholders in the project spent three years working together to create a structure that is not just a building but will hopefully become the nucleus of the community.



III. BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Consensus building through collective planning

Generally, collective planning processes appear to be undertaken by actors who are part of something that resembles a collective *prior* to the planning and negotiation process. In this case however, it was the collective planning process that became the basis of a set of robust relationships - among a range of actors with diverse interests -that turned the participants into partners with a common commitment to the house.

Almost all the actors admitted that when the planning process began, they had been skeptical about working together. When the project began they were, in fact, strangers with little or no idea of what the other organizations involved in this project were really about. At the end of three years of dialogue and negotiations, they can now say that they are friends, who not only know each other and understand one another's needs, but are deeply committed to ensuring that the house



is a space that responds to everyone's needs. It is this very sense of togetherness and collective ownership that has committed all actors involved to work towards the success of this project. One of the crucial insights of the actors in this participatory planning process is that they realize that meeting regularly, getting to know one another and discussing ideas must all be *central* to the planning process rather than a supplementary element.



"Three years ago I was skeptical about our ability to work together. How could all of us use this house together. But it was not so difficult. Initially, at the meetings, we were careful about what we said. But now things are different. In the last three years we have got to know each other well. Now we can understand each others' difficulties and we know one another so I can be relaxed when I interact with the others. We don't have to fight now. We have finished doing that three years ago. Now I feel that this idea of the intergenerational place and different organizations here is quite normal but this is because of the past three years of learning...I learnt that it is important for us to take this time to sit together and know each other. This process should not be by-the-way (it should be central to the planning) I learnt and understood the views of the administration, architect and other partners for the first time. It widened my own views." (Stephanie Braunstein, Assistant Director, Kindergarten.)

Mechanisms for participation

While participatory planning entered into the development vocabulary at least two decades ago and is currently seen as an important criteria for good governance there is still a great deal of ambiguity around *how* grassroots groups can participate in planning, an area which has traditionally been bastion of state institutions and technical professionals.



Over the last decade, the Mother Center in Stuttgart has been actively involved in getting the City to respond to the needs of women and children. It was in recognition of this that the Mother Center was offered a place in the house. The women of the Mother Center decided that their participation would be conditional on participation in *every stage of planning* the house. Having participated in the Habitat II preparatory process and being familiar with the Habitat Agenda, women from the Mother Center assumed that the citizen's participation in city planning must be the norm. But they were mistaken.



"In Baden Wuerttemberg, mothers had worked on the Habitat Agenda which emphasized the citizens' participation in planning process. We were sure that it was only natural to expect that we would now be involved in the planning of the house - in the way it had been talked about in the Habitat Agenda, but somehow the officials really did not know yet how to involve us." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center, Stuttgart)



Even among those who supported people's participation in the planning of the house, few were aware of what kind of mechanisms were needed to get a group of grassroots women, unfamiliar with official planning processes, to participate in a city led planning process. After a few starting problems in which occupants of the house went unrepresented at the initial meetings in which the architects for the house were short listed, the administration became more conscientious about involving partner groups in the subsequent decision-making processes. The city made amends by quickly instituting a participatory planning process. The mechanisms for participation in the planning of the house consisted of two dialogue fora at which all participants were encouraged to introspect, articulate and negotiate. Architect, Sven Kohlhoff, accustomed mainly to interventions in planning by funders or property developers rather than users, candidly admits, „we had to learn about participation (by users).“

Weekly meetings with the architect

The participatory planning process was centered around weekly meetings with the architect in which all the partners involved discussed the physical structure of the house. Here, it was important that all the actors were given an opportunity to express themselves and that the architect communicated to the group in a manner that everyone understood. For each of the options that the group agreed to, the architect and his team attempted to demonstrate visually to the group the different alternatives. The architect and his team would show the group diagrams and models of different sizes in order to convey how the ideas could be translated into reality. In addition to the regular discussions, the group visited the building site regularly to get a sense of how the place would ultimately look. While the process was time consuming and expensive, the architect felt that in the long run it was worth investing in this participatory planning process because it would mean high acceptance of the structure by the users of the house.



"It was important to look at what kind of culture we wanted to create here and convey to the neighborhood. When people walk by, they should be attracted to the place - they should be able to walk in even if it is an eldercare and kindergarten. The design should be such that it conveys a culture of community feeling and inclusion." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)

Values and vision meetings

A second set of meetings - facilitated by a professional facilitator funded by insurance giant Allianz, - was organized in order to build a consensus around the values and vision that would inform the Intergenerational House West. This process began with a three-day workshop at which stakeholders created a collective vision of what the house should be and then began meeting regularly to work out how this could be achieved.

Negotiating power differentials



While a presence at collective planning fora represents the first step towards participatory planning processes, it is clearly not adequate. One of the principles that inform successful partnerships is that each partner should *have an equal voice in the negotiations*. This is often a tricky problem since the power differentials among stakeholders tend to create an atmosphere in which some partners find it easier to voice their needs and preferences while others, intimidated by the formal atmosphere and the technical language used, are unable to voice theirs. But there are several simple strategies that can be used to counter these problems and increase the leverage of non-professional, grassroots groups who would otherwise suffer from a disadvantage in the negotiation process.

Numbers matter

Only one person from each group was invited to represent their group during these discussions. The Mother Center leadership found that as sole representatives of their group at such meetings, they felt isolated and intimidated and would not be able to adequately articulate their interests to a group of professionals and planners. Ultimately the Mother Center leader, Andrea decided that she would attend these meetings as a three or four member team.

"There were five models of the house presented when the final selections were to be made. I was the only person from the Mother Center, invited to participate in the decision making process. I was quite scared - this sort of meeting was not really



part of our culture - everyone else present was either from the administration or a technical expert of some sort. This kind of fear means that you cannot express yourself or put forward your point of view. We looked up the Habitat Agenda - it says here that we - people or citizen's groups should be 'equal partners' We can only be equal partners if we feel equal to the others and feel confident enough to voice our concerns." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)

Doing your homework matters

Secondly the Mother Center team members ensured that they were always well prepared for the meetings. Before attending stakeholder consultations they would hold extensive discussions among themselves in order to build a consensus around what kind of structure they needed and the extent to which they were ready to compromise on their needs. Similarly, within the kindergarten, a team of teachers and parents discussed the needs of the kindergarten before they attended the multi-stakeholder meetings with the architect.

"In order to make ourselves 'equal to the others' and effective participants in the planning meetings we had to do a lot of homework before we could participate properly. We found that we had two architects among our friends who were ready to help us to understand the technical aspects of construction. About ten to fifteen of us went through a series of meetings with our architect friends where we talked about the kind of features that we wanted our building to have. What was important for us was that we had to be prepared. We had to decide what is non-negotiable and what areas we could compromise on. And the extent to which we would compromise. When we had meetings with the Youth Department, we were well prepared, unlike some of the others. People then began to say that we had insider information, but we didn't. It was just that we had prepared well. In fact we assumed that this is how everyone works." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)



Participatory processes are difficult for both mainstream state institutions as well as grassroots groups who have no previous experience of participation in collective decision making. Both require different kinds of preparation to make the participatory planning process meaningful.

Grassroots experience matters

The Mother Centers people brought a lot of create energy to this process. They are very powerful because they have a lot of experience. (Stephanie Braunstein, Asst. Director, Kindergarten)

One of the ways in which grassroots, non-professional organizations gain leverage in negotiations is to demonstrate to participants that while they may lack certain skills or be unfamiliar with the technical language being used, the Mother Center women, as users of the building and as a group with over 15 years of experience brings valuable insights to the project.



"We have a different way of looking at things. It is more holistic - it 's not so professional or specialized. When you are with the city administration - you specialize so you look at only one aspect: your own job- your little part, and you try to perfect that piece of it. For us we think of all the aspects - health, money, future, past mistakes, neighbors, children...We brought this into the process"
(Andrea Laux, Mother Center)



Recognizing strengths and weaknesses of actors

A crucial element in a strong partnership is the respect that each partner has for the others. It is important to recognize the strengths of each actor and acknowledge that they contribute something unique to the collaboration.

The regular meetings among partners resulted in actors gaining a healthy respect for one another and getting rid of some of the prejudices they had towards other groups. One of the mothers stated how impressed she was by the other groups at the meetings. Like many others, she had believed that those in the government would have a narrow perspective 'because they only sit at desks in their offices,' but she found that the officials involved in the planning process brought valuable insights and were 'creative, cooperative and flexible.'

"It was important that the groups got to know each other well. That everybody knew each other personally and had a sense of their strengths and weaknesses ... I asked each actor to give an image of themselves that portrays the strengths and weaknesses and for each person to also state what they needed in order for their weaknesses not to hinder the process- a sort of users manual, so to speak for each major player in this cooperative effort. (Christa van Winsen, Facilitator)

Seeing 'enemies' as friends constrained by their institutional framework

The government, by virtue of its powerful financial and political status is often perceived as an adversary, thwarting users' needs and ideas at every turn or stifling all attempts at innovation with their rules and regulations. During the intensive interactions that actors had in the course of their collective planning efforts, actors began to understand each others' positions and constraints more clearly. The idea was to see others as partners *"whom we must work with rather than as enemies with whom we want to have minimal contact. I learned that we must see everyone as partners and not as enemies."* (Iris Kauffeld-Donhauser, Mother Center)

I tried to respect all partners and recognize the different competencies of each of them. My philosophy is to go and 'listen to the others' groups. Each partner brings his own knowledge and feeling to his work.... Initially the Mother Center people thought that the administration is very closed. But I believe that after we started talking this feeling went away. We searched for answers together in this process. (Heidi Menge, Regional Coordinator, Kindergartens)

It was important that we had direct representatives of the users, and that the partners were treated equally, everyone had equal say. (Christine Heizmann- Kerres)



Getting to know the Mother Center

The regular interactions among the stakeholders in the project led to actors gradually recognizing the strengths that others brought to the collective planning process. At a more theoretical level officials and professionals acknowledged that the Mother Center's contribution was invaluable because they were primary users of the space as opposed to other participants who were seen as planners, or service providers. However, it was through the intense process of working together that the Mother Center women themselves and other actors gained a more practical understanding of what it meant for an organization like the Mother Center to be centrally involved in the planning of the house.



The Mother Center's efforts have always been informed by a self-help approach. When they need services such as childcare for kindergarten children, they simply mobilize a group of women and organize the required services. Similarly anyone who feels the need to take on any community issue simply needs to find a few others who are interested and go ahead and take the initiative and do something. We work differently. If we see, we need a program for the school kids, then we just do it. We don't have a huge discussion and it doesn't need a huge process. We just do it. (Felizitas Keller, Mother Center)

The mother center women are women who can organize very spontaneously - on the spur of the moment. They are super financial wizards - making something out of nothing, without being constrained by formalities. They had a big role in this house and I think they got most all their interests covered in the end. But it was often difficult to make them willing to compromise. What they needed to learn was how to negotiate, how to cope with situations of conflict. (Christa van Winsen, Facilitator)

"The Mother Centers' people brought a lot of creative energy to this process. They are very powerful because they have a lot of experience." (Stephanie Braunstein, Asst. Director, Kindergarten)



"At the weekly meetings, we would have three or four of us every time-we would bring in our experts. We didn't change our language - we just asked questions that we wanted the answers to- just like we would ask questions at the kitchen table. For us, it was very important that things felt more normal. If we had been afraid it would be very difficult for us to change anything...We always talked about ourselves and our experiences -we were complicated partners to have. We were always giving examples from our own experiences to explain what we, as mothers, need." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)

„The approach of the Mother Center was more solution-oriented, more pragmatic. They did not look right away at the rules and regulations that would prevent them from carrying out their ideas. They always asked why something would not work. They often asked why rules could not be changed to accommodate the needs of users. The Mother Center took a lot of initiative to do things themselves. Their approach was always one in which they said how can we solve this problem ourselves first." (Elke Arenskrieger, Mother Center)

„Maybe this flavor or feeling (of a vibrant community) comes from grassroots organizations - from people like the Mother Center who are not saturated but have had to stand together to struggle to get things and must work together ...relying on -as we say in German- things that come from the belly not out of the head. Here practical experience informs wisdom. (Edgar Kurz, R. H. Schmid Foundation)

Good partnerships require good mediation

In order to overcome power differentials among stakeholders and facilitate consensus building, partnership processes require strong mediators. Mediators ensured that the planning process was not dominated by a single actor, particularly the most powerful actor in this process, the city authorities. Mediators often found that less powerful groups had valuable contributions to make but were sometimes unable to articulate them and so these mediators sometimes assisted the women from the Mother Center in articulating their needs and encouraged the rest of the group to listen to them. The planning process for the Intergenerational House West had not just one, but several actors who played a significant role in mediating between the conflicting demands of the different actors.

The Architect as mediator

Architect, Sven Kohlhoff had the challenging task of translating a vision into reality while striking a fine balance between the needs of all the stakeholders. He had to ensure that the users, the funders and the municipality were all happy with the end product. Kohlhoff says that one of the crucial factors in the success of the collective planning process lies in the fact that there was a concerted effort to create a horizontal participation process in which *"you don't let the powerful*



dominate. At the weekly meetings we tried not to create any kind of hierarchy - everyone was encouraged to bring ideas, ask stupid questions ..."

Iris from the Mother Center observed that sometimes when officials vetoed the women's ideas, the architect would find ways of bringing these ideas back into the building 'through the back door.'

Kindergarten Coordinator, as 'Translator'

"The mother centers have a different language from social workers and psychologists. In the meetings it became clear that you can't just expect everybody to speak the same language or assume that they understand your language."
(Isolde Bartel, Youth Welfare Department.)

One of the problems that multi stakeholder partnerships must counter is the wide variety of 'languages' being spoken at the negotiating table. Sometimes it was not the ideas of different groups that were different but the problems in articulating and expressing them which led to difficulties in reaching agreements. Frau Menge Regional Kindergarten Coordinator says, *"I sometimes became a sort of mediator between the groups and the city administration. Andrea Laux had good ideas but she would express them in an emotional way and I would sometimes translate her idea for the administration to understand."*

On the other hand the women from the Mother Center sometimes found that they did not understand the technical language that city officials used at meetings. Andrea Laux of the Mother Center pointed out that *"sometimes the Youth Department would talk*



about the children and the kindergarten in a language that I don't follow... in these meetings no one understood our language. Frau Menge often acted as a 'translator' - she understood our ideas and would explain them to the Youth Department in a language that they understood."



Professional mediation

The professional coach or mediator, Christa van Winsen played an important role in helping the group to come to a consensus on the collective vision that they had for the house. While such professional coaches have been considered vital in corporate mergers and acquisition to help employees cope with the conflicting work cultures, the need for such services has not been recognised in the non-profit or non-market driven sectors. The facilitator played a key role in helping actors to get to know each other well both personally and professionally.

Having gone through the values and vision discussions mediated by Christa van Winsen many women agreed that it is important to have such a coach for several reasons. While collective decision making processes are always fraught with difficulty, the differences in cultures of the actors involved, the differences in language used and the path-breaking work being carried out by all participants in this project all added to the high level of stress, requiring constant affirmation and support for actors to stay in the process.

"The administration needs training to understand how the self help groups think, just as self help groups need training to understand under what conditions administrations work." (Elke Arenskrieger, Mother Center)

Collectively developing rules of engagement

A diverse group of actors interacting for the first time also means that there are no rules of engagement. These rules need to be set in order to make interactions smoother.

The facilitator, Christa van Winsen spoke of some of the agreements that were set up to facilitate the interactions among partners:

"We had to ensure that no mobbing happens and that the culture stays positive in the house. We needed a balanced culture of giving and taking and each partner is respected for the contribution, resources and competence they are bringing to the table." (Christa van Winsen, facilitator)

"Rules and agreements on how to deal with one another was an important concept introduced in this process. I asked each actor to give an image of themselves that portrays the strengths and weaknesses. I then asked them to state what they needed in order for their weaknesses not to hinder the process- a sort of users manual, so to speak for each major player in this cooperative effort... This set of agreements represents a sort of team hygiene that needs to be put in place for such group dynamics to not be disruptive."



"Another agreement was to encourage regular communication to ensure that problems can be cleared right away so that they don't fester and undermine the entire group process."



"Language is an important factor in this process. Many words have a negative connotation. For instance for professionals it is common to talk about their clients. But the Mother Center did not feel comfortable with this term being used for them. It is important to take such things seriously, to listen to them and then to collectively look for new words that everyone can be happy with."

Meaningful participation

Ongoing participation versus one-off dialogue opportunities

One of the problems with what is being labeled 'participation' in mainstream development processes is the fact that citizens, particularly grassroots groups are given few opportunities to dialogue with officials. Often grassroots organizations are invited to one-time consultations which have the potential to make or break their partnerships with mainstream actors such as the state. If, for any

reason they are unable to attend or are unable to adequately articulate their interests, it is likely that they will not be given a 'second chance'. An ongoing participatory process helps actors to understand one another's goals and principles and enables actors to 'learn' how collective decision making occurs, learn about one another and understand the constraints of other actors. The planning process around the Intergenerational House West is unique because in spite of difficulties and differences, stakeholders persevered. Rather than occasional consultations the actors were continually involved in a three-year planning process.



Participation in planning versus implementation

The dominant model of participation in city or state led projects is one in which citizens are invited to participate in the implementation of the project rather than the earlier phase of planning. Also participation is generally within a narrow framework in which many crucial decisions are not opened up for consultation. In general the debate opens when the programming phase has ended and functions, spaces and budgets have been allocated. Often the only input the users can give is (dis-)approval of a finished design. Reversing this trend in which only a few issues around implementation are opened up for participation, this project was one in which almost every minute detail of the project was opened up for participation. This led to high ownership of the house.



Recognizing women's contribution to planning

While motherhood is something important in terms of the social roles ascribed to women, planning processes rarely respond to the different roles and contributions that men and women make to a city. Moreover, grassroots women are not seen as capable of participating in decision making processes. Instead, they are subject to policies made by professionals who have little experience of these women's realities. The participatory planning process in which women from the Mother Center played a significant role, recognizes women's expertise in areas that impact the lives of their families and neighborhoods and challenges the assertion that planners and professionals are the experts who know best.



Investing in intra-organizational consensus building

It is important to realize that state and city administrations, like other organizations, are not monolithic structures. Sometimes, where senior policymakers support initiatives, middle management may not. Just as partner organizations such as the Mother Center and the Kindergarten needed to invest in consensus building within their organization, so too must city administrations invest in such processes. Many project participants observed that middle management often had a different perspective from senior planners and policy makers even though they belonged to the same office.

Ingredients of a good partnership

- ✓ Creating mechanisms for long -term participation
- ✓ Investing in getting to know partners, recognizing their contributions and capacities
- ✓ Giving each partner equal voice, overcoming power differentials
- ✓ Good mediation
- ✓ Intra-organizational consensus building
- ✓ Making regular dialogue and participation central to the process.
- ✓ Ongoing dialogue rather than one time consultation
- ✓ Perceiving other stakeholders as potential collaborators rather than enemies



IV. DESIGN ELEMENTS

The architect Kohlhoff and his model for the house were selected by the city primarily because it was different and symbolized the uniqueness of the project says the mayor. The design of the space mirrors the values that the stakeholders agreed the house should project.



Common Spaces

The most exciting aspect of the structure of the Intergenerational House West is the emphasis given to common spaces within the building. It was not easy to get the organizations to agree to sharing space. These common spaces are at the heart of the community building process that the house represents. Yet, it was one of the most difficult ideas to build a consensus around. When the planning process began there was a strong tendency for partners to compete for space for their own organization rather than consider the possibility of collective space that could be shared by the different groups. It was the Mother Center participants, motivated by their social mobilization agenda, who encouraged the use of common spaces within the house. The notion of shared spaces is at the heart of the idea of an intergenerational community. The common spaces are meant to encourage users -from different age groups and different organizations- to interact. While generally, the common areas are the first to be eliminated when budgets are tightened, this project laid emphasis on the creation and use of shared spaces.

„In a regular building the first things that are cutback on are the common rooms and common areas. These common areas are exactly what bring the most in terms of civic engagement. Everybody is talking about civil society, but if you don't have public rooms where people can meet, you will not have it. You don't meet in private rooms in the same way... and in Germany, for most of the year, it is too cold to meet outside.“ (Michaela Bolland, Youth Welfare Planning Department)



"We insisted on having rooms that all the groups could use together. Otherwise, on weekends, we couldn't use the space that belongs to the kindergarten, we couldn't use the art room or gym room. Now all these are commonly managed and we all have access to them." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)

Breaking down the 'fences'

It was not easy for four organizations to come to an agreement to share the same space. This requires a high degree of trust. In addition, there are also administrative, financial and security issues. For example if everyone uses a particular room then how would maintenance costs be divided. If there is open access to a space then who is responsible for its security? If children from the kindergarten use the Mother Center daycare facilities then who is responsible for their safety. Success in terms of the collective use of these common spaces will mean an ongoing process of inter-organizational cooperation in which all these issues are sorted out.

„In the beginning there was talk of fences dividing the daycare children from the kindergarten children because they were really the responsibility of different organizations but these were really more 'fences in the mind'. As a result of all the groups working together, negotiating with one another and building a high level of trust there is now an open courtyard for all the children to share, regardless of age and which organization they are part of." (Sven Kohlhoff, Architect)



Common terrace open to the public

While the terrace on the roof was initially thought of as a place for the elderly residents to use, it was ultimately decided that it should be opened up to the public.

"We pushed for a common terrace where the neighbors can come and sit. Previously it was thought that only the elderly would have access to it." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)



Multi-activity, Multi-generational spaces

Since there was not adequate workspaces for each of the activities that the Mother Center wanted, the group along with the architect found ways to use existing spaces for multiple activities. For example it was felt that the winter gardens have a lot of excess space so the Mother Center decided to use the winter gardens to keep their sewing machines and washing machines as well as use these spaces for services such as massage and hair-care. This not only economizes on the amount of space they require but the multiple activities in one place ensures that the different generations interact here.



Common rooms are clustered together

Common areas have been clustered together to facilitate easy access for all the groups.

"The common group rooms were put together. Originally they were in the different sections of the building. Each group had their own group room. Now they are all in the center and all the different groups in the building have access to them, including the elderly who now do not have a group room of their own but can share the café, the gymnastic room, the handicrafts and tools room etc., (Christine Heizmann-Kerres, Municipal Construction Department)"

Everyone has access to the garden

What is interesting about the building is that all groups have access to the garden, no group is excluded. The garden is accessible from café, from the terrace doors on the ground floor and from the kindergarten over the ramps. "All major rooms point to the south, where the garden is. This is very democratic," says Alexander Hoffmann, a city planner. In most constructions access or even the view of the garden is reserved for a privileged few.



Glass facade for maximum visibility

"It is nice to work here because this place makes women's work and housework visible to the community. It brings it into a public space. That is the great thing about this center. The other center was hidden." (Antje Reiferscheidt, Mother Center)

The group agreed on a glass façade for the building so that the neighbors can look into the building and see even the garden on the other side. The glass gives a sense of transparency and openness, welcoming everyone from the neighborhood into the house. The high visibility of the structure, the glass facade, and the functional design of the spaces inside all serve to make visible women's everyday tasks.



"It is important that you can see through the house, that it is transparent what is going on in the rooms and in the garden, that not everything is locked up or closed by curtains." (Christine Heizmann Kerres, Municipal Construction Department)



This place is more than just day care. We see it as our public living room. (Iris Kauffeld-Donhauser, Mother Center)



A smile at the entrance

The group wanted some sort of informal, reception area where visitors could come in and find out more about the house.

"For us it was important that the kind of space this is - be conveyed to a passerby. We wanted to be visible and the entrance was very important. That is why we have the espresso bar - people can see this when they enter and there are people at the bar so visitors can come in and talk and find out what is going on." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)



Multiple activity rooms for the kindergarten

In the kindergarten the architect suggested allotting each group of children two large rooms. But we preferred to divide them into smaller rooms so that we could undertake different activities with different groups of children in each room" (Stephanie Braunstein, Asst. Director, Kindergarten)



V. MAKING VISIBLE WOMEN'S AGENDAS

The city authorities decided that an innovative project such as this should be provided greater visibility. For the first time a social housing or social welfare project has been given a real estate location and the kind of high visibility that rivals the best arts and cultural centers in the city.

"Usually the best spaces in the city are reserved for art and culture." (Gabriele Müller-Trimbusch, Deputy Mayor)

According to the mayor the high visibility of the project is already paying off because city councilors are already taking about the new intergenerational center in which old people will live side by side with children and a community of neighbors around them.



The Mother Center represents the needs of women who need a supportive space that fulfils their everyday needs, such as childcare, while providing opportunities to organize themselves politically on issues that are important to women and their neighborhoods. For several years they have been trying to sensitize both state and market driven institutions to this reality. By selecting the Mother Center in Stuttgart to participate in a high profile project such as the house on Ludwigstrasse, the city authorities are making a strong political statement that supports the work of such an organization. The project acknowledges the key roles that women play in the everyday lives of cities and seeks to support their self-help efforts.



"We used to operate out of a good space - centrally located in the neighborhood it was not visible to the public so in that sense we are now in a more public space where the neighborhood will have greater access to us - we always wanted such a place." (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)

Although they acknowledge motherhood as an important role that women play in society, state planning processes generally do not see mothers as capable of making responsible choices about their own needs. Instead, planners and policy makers are



perceived as the experts who are better able to decide what is best for women¹. Reversing the logic of traditional planning processes, this project gives a central role to women as caregivers, challenging the assumption that planners and policymakers are the only experts.

While the project does on the one hand support women's access to public spaces and recognizes the role that women can play in planning, this recognition does not extend to the fact that women are often constrained from participating in the public sphere because of their social roles as care givers. For example women from the Mother Center were never compensated for participating in the planning process, nor were they provided support facilities such as childcare in order to facilitate and support their participation in this process.

„I often felt the difference between us and the other groups - especially when we sat in long meetings at which nothing got decided. Others present were compensated for their time. We were not. We really could not afford to spend this kind of time like this.“ (Elke Arenskrieger, Mother Center)



¹ See Kabeer, Naila (1994) Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought, Kali for Women, New Delhi.



VI. THE FUTURE

The Intergenerational House West has several elements within it that represent good governance: citizen's participation in planning, transparency and access to information for citizens, responsiveness to gender needs. In addition, the collective planning process has led to what the architect calls 'high acceptance among users' which means costs that would normally have been incurred to modify the structure will be significantly reduced.



„When it was done together like this then people love the outcome and are ready to defend it. As for the city planners of Stuttgart they would later have had to pay for all the mistakes. The effort and energy that has gone into the process before construction will surely reduce this.“ (Andrea Laux, Mother Center)

For those who are interested in the long term policy implications of this initiative, the question is, to what extent will this kind of participatory planning process really inform future policy and will it transform the city planning process?

There is no easy answer to this question. This project has been given the sort of 'special' status which implies that it would be difficult to replicate such projects because of several unique elements. The funders, the architect, the city officials, experienced citizen's group are all seen as a set of exceptional individuals (rather than institutions) who have brought about the success of this project so far.

The extent to which the lessons from this experience will inform future planning efforts depends on the extent to which policy makers and planners perceive the Intergenerational House West to be a success. For the City it appears to be a question of watching and waiting. The Mayor believes that her *"conviction must translate into success -then support is forthcoming from all quarters- "everyone wants to participate in success."*



In some sense, the high visibility of the project also puts tremendous pressure on this project to succeed. While stakeholders admit that the house is far from perfect and mistakes have been made, there is a strong sense of collective ownership and everyone is strongly committed to ensuring that the house is a success.

Several issues regarding the operation and maintenance of the house are yet to be decided. One of the contentious issues is should the house have an external coordinator funded by the city to oversee the overall running and management of the house. The Mother Centers is opposed to this idea - it believes that it would be better for all parties concerned for the house to be self-managed and for the city to fund the operating costs of the Mother Center instead.

The apartments for the elderly are yet to be occupied. Some admit that it was a mistake not to involve representatives of elderly people who will ultimately occupy the apartments.

Having functioned until now on shoestring budgets and a handful of dedicated volunteers, when they worked out of a small drop-in center, the Mother Center is also concerned about the challenges that this new scale of operation represents. Even the simple task of cleaning the place could turn into a nightmare.

But for those who are looking to learn from this experience, it would perhaps be worthwhile to separate the process from the outcome. From the sense of shared commitment and collective ownership that the actors feel towards this project, it is clear that the planning process has certainly accomplished a great deal. It is true that perhaps all the ingredients in this partnership cannot be replicated. The mayor's vision and support, funders who gave free reign, the architect who found creative solutions to the multiple demands of the many actors, were all a vital part of the successful participatory planning. However it is possible to look at the processes, mechanisms and innovations that have occurred thus far and draw lessons from the ways in which the planning of the Intergenerational House West provided mechanisms and process for participation of grassroots women in a large mainstream project framework.

"All you need to do is ask people to see for themselves. So far no one has set foot in the house without being impressed."
(Gabriele Müller-Trimbusch, Deputy Mayor)

