

Workshop Report:

Partnerships in Changing Communities: Cooperation between local authorities, citizens and service providers as a response to demographic change

Anke Boeckenhoff, German Association for Public and Private Welfare

Ulrich Kuhn, Reinventing Social Affairs (SONG), Stiftung Liebenau

The workshop aimed presenting one of the successful projects from the network [Reinventing social Affairs](#) and discussing the idea of multigenerational housing.

The foundation *Stiftung Liebenau* is an important member of the network *Reinventing social Affairs*. This foundation realizes its projects in cooperation with municipalities that are members of the [German Association of Towns and Municipalities](#). *Stiftung Liebenau* as well as the *German Association of Towns and Municipalities* are both member organisations of the [German Association for Public and Private Welfare](#), a joint forum of local governments and social welfare organisations. The German Association of Public and Private Welfare had the chair of the workshop.

Since 2006 members of the Network of Social Economy Organisations *Reinventing Social Affairs* have supported the creation of new housing solutions and services that are based on cooperation between citizens, local authorities, housing associations and service providers. This includes projects such as multi-generational housing, neighbourhood activities or new funding models.

Tackling the challenges following from the demographic change, the members of the Network *Reinventing Social Affairs* develop projects with solutions at the local level that combine the ideas of multigenerational housing, small-spatial support and strengthening the individual responsibility as well as the solidarity between citizens. Therefore a welfare mix is developed where neighbours, relatives, volunteers and professionals work together in the local authority. The success of this concept of a caring community is deeply interrelated to the political support and the integration of all elements so that a home can be formed for the elderly, for families, for single parents, for children, for singles ...

The crucial point is cooperation: at the institutional level, at the level of civil society, at the individual level. To avoid critical conflicts and thus the failure of this caring community, a community worker is essential. This professional social worker can act as a mediator, moderator and supporter for the creation of new networks. In sum, these caring communities result in positive effects for the individuals, for the service providers and for the local authority.

Within three breakout groups the workshop participants discussed the presented ideas of cooperation between local authorities, citizens and service providers along some discussion questions. Here are some of the main issues that we raised:

- co-operations between non-formal and formal helpers can lead to new knowledge and early risk detection
- How can older people get convinced to live with younger ones?
- Initiatives should come from the citizens (bottom-up) and be supported by local authorities (not only money, but also structures)
- Crucial role of professionals: coach and moderator
- Information & sensitisation is essential
- client has to stay in charge (e.g. coordination platform)
- legal contract for cooperation