Advocating diversity in housing cooperatives

Quality assurance through Gender Mainstreaming
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The Senate Department for Urban Development is testing the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in different policy and fields of action since 2002. In the field of action “housing”, the most recent project subsidised with means of the Equal Opportunity Framework Programme of the state of Berlin (GPR) has been “Cooperative Housing as a Self-determined Way of Life”. The here presented project “Advocating Diversity in Housing Cooperatives – Quality Assurance through Gender Mainstreaming” was started at this point. A team of the Berlin gender consultancy network gender+ developed in coordination with the Senate Department a process consultation concept to acquaint housing cooperatives with Gender Mainstreaming as an instrument for quality assurance.

Supported by the Senate Department and the Berlin Real Estate Management Academy (BBA) gender+ addressed eight housing cooperatives concerning their potential interest in this project. Four of these housing cooperatives, with different housing stock structures in the Eastern and Western parts of the city took part in an innovative Public Private Partnership for the implementation of this approach in selected fields of action of housing management. The participation of a fifth cooperative could not be realized within the limited project phase, the other cooperatives saw for different reasons no possibility to take part in the project.

The project had a term of 18 months and was managed by the Senate Department for Urban Development (department housing: Dr. Jochen Hucke; gender representative of the Senate Department: Sibylle Krönert) and Christiane Droste from the network gender+. The Department gave financial support to the cooperatives in terms of an external gender diversity process consultation and project realization support; the cooperatives put forth personnel resources (especially at board level, on the level of executive management, local real estate management and social work) and in some cases also external planning expertise. The cooperatives were only obliged to participate in the consultation process. As for the realization of the results of this process, they made independent decisions. The investment for the realization of the projects had to be taken on by the cooperatives themselves. There was no state funding on this level. The Berlin-Brandenburg Housing Associations’ Umbrella Organisation (BBU) as well as its Berlin Real Estate Management Academy (BBA) supported the project by taking part in three workshops regarding all projects.

Project structure

Why was cooperative housing the focus of this project? Housing cooperatives are collectively and democratically organised entities whose main objective is the optimal support of its members and a self-determined way of life. Their basic principles include transparency in terms of resources, especially with regard to shares, capital resources and capital expenditure for the project to be promoted. The participation of a fifth cooperative could not be realized within the limited project phase, the other cooperatives saw for different reasons no possibility to take part in the project.

The variety of women’s housing projects which have nationwide selected this organisational model selected by these organisations points...
to the fact that cooperatives offer good structural starting points for the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming. The ExWoSt research project “Models of Cooperative Housing” also came to this conclusion among others. According to their findings, “women who live alone and single mothers value economic independence, a possible combination of living and working, sole power of disposition over the apartment or house and a reliable rent policy.” Cooperative housing is thus particularly attractive for women: it matches their wishes for equitable housing conditions, solidarity in action and economic independence. Women are represented to a higher degree in cooperative projects designed to include members of both genders, and this can also be assumed to be the case with regard to traditional cooperatives and their members.

It is therefore natural for the cooperatives to differentiate more according to cultural, gender or social and familial roles in their analysis of housing needs and those regarding working space for potential target groups during the development of housing concepts tailored to their needs. The project proved that the systematic application of gender criteria in the area of housing contributed to the development of high quality, cross-generational, life style oriented living that especially corresponds to the needs of women and families in their diverse manifestations. The analytical and participation oriented instruments of Gender Mainstreaming offer support in incorporating the diversity of lifestyles and aspirations of women and men of different social and cultural background and age into the tasks of the cooperative housing economy optimally and systematically. Fields of action in which this is particularly well demonstrated include membership development, structural stock development, organisational structure, marketing and activities with regard to the neighbourhood. In the following section, a description of the main courses of action in these four fields will precede the description of the pilot projects.

Membership development
Contemporary stock structures and a corresponding development of membership are of particular importance to Berlin cooperatives, as their members tend to be older than residents in other housing economy sectors, the houses are in part very difficult to adapt to suit changing needs of the ageing residents, and investments are also required for renovation to suit new regulations with regard to energy. In addition to this, demographic change and the diversity of lifestyles require an increasingly quick adaptation of housing types. To what extent does the work with gender criteria support the development of successful strategies in this entrepreneurial field?

- Gender differentiated target group analyses based on statistical data and qualitative findings that include other categories such as social and cultural difference, age, disability, etc. qualify the development of mission statements, strategies and goals of housing associations in general and particularly in cooperatives. They enable the identification of development potentials, gender inequalities and conflicts of interest or objectives.
- Gender sensitive public relations work enables a differentiated target group approach, avoids stereotypical gender role attribution and supports the identification of new target groups for the implementation of new ideas within the cooperative.
- Gender diversity oriented letting aims for an equitable access to homes tailored to suit the needs of different target groups and lifestyles. It avoids discrimination and access barriers in its conditions of admission and selection criteria for potential members. The German General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) prevents discrimination, but allows addressing special or previously underrepresented target groups to apply for membership in a cooperative.
- A gender diversity oriented service reduces access barriers (time management, service, language competence, intercultural communication etc.) for current as well as potential members. The conditions for this include corresponding competence development in the administration and service institutions, the employment of qualified personnel with migration background as well as flexible service times that take the different time patterns of women and men or people in different phases of life and family structures into consideration.

Structural stock development
Generally recognised criteria of gender sensitive structural stock development include security and accessibility. A key concern of the gender diversity approach in this field however is taking into account the diversity of current lifestyles in new building activities. For the cooperative this means the agreement at all decision-making levels on a common mission statement and a corresponding definition of objectives that aim to fulfil the needs of all lifestyle groups living in their stock. In this regard the expectations of two groups become more important: those who take care and provide for others and those of older people still living independently. For them, an adaptation of their homes (spatial, technical, social) to suit their changing needs in old age is essential. It is therefore necessary to achieve a quality of rooms and areas that enable a combination of living and working through their design and flexibility, consider user interests and help
avoid user conflicts, and support different space appropriation behaviour. An element that combines these aspects can include, in addition to corresponding layout solutions, technical service, differentiated living environment design and space that promotes community building, a strategy for social infrastructure and services located in the neighbourhood area. Cooperative or other self-help projects as potential allies can play an important role here. Through stock development that is gender diverse, the bonding of residents is strengthened and the development of new target groups optimised.

Cooperative organisational structure
The ExwSt expertise revealed that in traditional housing cooperative reality, the dominance of men in boards and organizational bodies becomes higher, the more the administration is removed from the membership base. Men dominate also in cooperatives function-related operative steering committees working in long-term structures; women get more easily involved in committees that concern themselves with the interests of the residents, and in different fields of self-help. This is nationwide different in the setting up of smaller cooperatives and also more generally in Berlin, where the share of women in leading management positions in the cooperatives increased during the last 30-40 years, not least because in GDR time, there were (and still are) more women in leading housing management positions in the eastern part of the city. There is a hope for a change towards a higher participation of women in traditional cooperatives’ leadership due to many cooperatives’ efforts to support the reconciliation of professional and family work and due to the changing gender ratio amongst junior skilled employees. At present, there is a vivid and controversial discussion on quota for women in leadership in Germany. On the short term, women quota are however hardly a promising instrument to increase women’s leadership in cooperatives and nor would they be likely to be an instrument to increase a parity in members committees. Even without any restrictions, many traditional cooperatives face severe problems to motivate the necessary members’ voluntary work in local neighbourhood committees. However, organisational structures that are sensitive to gender diversity however support, even without quotas, the equitable participation and representation of women and men in cooperative self-administration and motivate and ensure the potential for self-help.

Communication and decision-making processes can be designed to employ methods that represent preferably all interest groups of the residents and use their resources for the solution of problems and the making of decisions. A diversity of lifestyle in this context is an important potential for cooperatives that can be supported by an organisational culture which gives space and recognition to the different requirements and activities of the members.

Housing cooperatives are reliant on their capital and their members and have to administer their capital according to the diverse needs of different target groups and in a transparent manner. In case of a necessary adaptation of the stock which require a cost sharing of the members, it would be an important aspect of cooperative equality to take in account the gender bias in middle and lower income groups. Another aspect of equality in housing is that still, women hardly acquire housing property as provisions for old age. The membership in and shares of a cooperative may provide an alternative to safeguard an affordable place to live in old age. The membership in and shares of a cooperative may provide an alternative to safeguard an affordable place to live in old age. Particularly for the traditional cooperatives, it would be a challenge to detect women’s specific needs and to develop adequate housing offers.

Neighbourhood management
In many cases cooperatives, as independent actors in neighbourhood management, provide resources for the development of a stable social structure. In this regard they can make a contribution at several levels to ease the domestic or voluntary work of employed persons: through neighbourhood-related service facilities, the promotion of neighbourly help and employment that is within the neighbourhood area. In addition to this they support social integration in heterogeneous neighbourhoods by availing space and reasons for different member groups to meet.

Marketing
Current marketing analyses and campaigns show that a target group specific approach to women and men of different culture, phases of life and lifestyles and in particular an open approach to same-sex life forms holds promise for housing cooperations. To a large extent women still decide on the choice of a residence. Before this background and in view of the demographic change, marketing that is sensitive to gender diversity with regard to content, language and images as well as with regard to the targeted recruitment of members with migration backgrounds has an increasing relevance for housing cooperations.

Innovation in real estate management through gender sensitive practice: four pilot projects
The four housing cooperatives that took part in this pilot project, the Charlottenburger Bau- genossenschaft e.G., the Beamten-Wohnungs- Verein zu Köpenick e.G., the Berliner Bau- und Wohnungsgenossenschaft von 1892 e.G. and the Marzahner Tor e.G., have been implementing lifestyle oriented projects in their stock for years or have been carrying out extensive modernisation processes. The objective of the project was to support these cooperative actors in quality development within the context of demographic change and engage them in a Public Private Partnership for the explicit implementation of equal opportunity goals. The consultation process allowed for experiences which showed how gender, age and culturally differentiated and process oriented thinking can be requisite know-how for the current societal and housing economic challenges. The most essential components of the projects and thus of the process facilitation and monitoring were:
- the sensitisation for the relevance and systematic use of gender diversity aspects for successful and high-quality dealings in the housing economy;
- the conveyance of subject-specific gender diversity knowledge with regard to types of housing, housing environment, social infrastructure, service and housing economy marketing approaches as well as with regard to gender aspects of internal communication in the organisation;
- practical use of gender criteria or gender and culture sensitive methods or instruments in procedures, workshops and projects (especially resident participation).
The objective of the project “A Green Oasis for Young and Old” was to enable a car-free, generation-spanning utilisation of a ca. 4000 m² large courtyard which had so far been used as parking space and for garbage collection. The participation process was to motivate an increased neighbourly togetherness. On the basis of the target group analysis, very different needs were established for the courtyard that can be used by about 200 households (about 114 women and 120 men, average age 53 years, few families, some households with migration backgrounds). The cooperative decided on a two-phase planning workshop methodically oriented to the methods of the future workshop and the Planning for real. Self-organisation, cognitive ability and creativity of the participants are fostered in these processes through dialogical, open and unbiased methods. These methods are gender and diversity equitable as they give room for different communication behaviours, contain non-verbal elements and target planning consensus for projects that take different age and lifestyle groups into consideration. The steering group (board, administration, engineering, social workers, landscape architect, gender+) clarified target agreements and framework conditions that were transparent for all participants. Gender criteria gave structure to the planning (e.g. zoning according to needs regarding rest and movement, security aspects, visual relations, functions taking the needs of the ageing residents into consideration) and planning workshops (gender and culture sensitive approach, gender differentiated group work and evaluation, mobility aid, child care and (if required) interpretation).
Planning workshops – developing visions, recognising need for compromise, going from vision to reality

More than 90 participants accepted the invitation to the first workshop, from small children to very old persons. After a short introduction on the meaning of Gender Mainstreaming, which framework conditions and “rules of the game” would apply, a random process helped to build four gender and age differentiated work groups, who developed visions for the utilisation of the courtyard on a model. This revealed the disparity of needs and of the communication and decision-making processes. Gender stereotypes and conflicts of utilisation came to light. In the harmonisation of visions the foundations for a gender diversity equitable planning arose quasi “by themselves”. Proposals and wishes for neighbourhood activities were collected on so called “talent sheets”.

The draft design presented by landscape planner Katharina Niproschke in the second workshop contained places of sojourn and movement for all groups using the courtyard, a lighting concept, and good visual relations and connecting footpaths. Central aspects were elements to bring about neighbourly communication (e.g. a community flowerbed/vegetable patch) and the long-term flexibility of the design. The reasons for the unrealised visions were made transparent and lively discussion led to the last changes in the plan. A “Café Europa” offered the participants once again to get together for neighbourly activities and plan the opening event together...
Opening of the new courtyard

The attractiveness of the facility for all age groups is beyond doubt. The structure of the process as well as the soft skills of the steering team and the regular presence of the landscape architect are to thank for the creative and functional quality of the facility. Whether the use of the courtyard will correspond to the high amount of effort that went into its planning or whether a lively neighbourhood will arise will become apparent in the next two years. It is expected that the courtyard will be used, conditional on life phases, more strongly by older members and young families, and that occasional minimal incentives will be required of the cooperative in order to motivate neighbourly activities.

Preliminary design, based on the first planning workshop

Explanation regarding the plan

Ceremonial opening

Left: Playground

Below: Community flowerbed/vegetable patch
Project II
“Gender sensitive communication regarding the project “Adapting homes to suit the needs of an ageing resident population” (Beamten-Wohnungs-Verein zu Köpenick eG)

Project team: Board, staff members of the Beamten-Wohnungs-Verein zu Köpenick, project support gender+: Christiane Droste, Pamela Dorsch and Dr. Gabriele Schambach, interpretation of statistical data: Dr. Gabriele Schambach.

From 2008, the Beamten-Wohnungs-Verein zu Köpenick eG (BWV) cooperative pursued a special project entitled “Future Low Barrier Housing” that had the aim of enabling their members a continued life in their habitual environment even with limited mobility. In order to enable corresponding measures to be taken in the apartments and immediate environment, the representative council forewent their dividend payout of the previous year to the tune of 400,000 EUR in June 2008. The aim of the project “Gender sensitive communication with regard to adapting homes to suit the needs of an ageing resident population” was to identify the needs in the cooperative’s stock in a more differentiated manner, achieve equal opportunity in the setting of priorities (financing/carrying out of measures) and to develop a communication concept for the perpetuation of the special project. The project was of strategic importance for the cooperative concerning the most extensive consideration possible of demands. The aim therefore, was also to develop a concept for a socially acceptable setting of priorities.

In the first phase of the project, which was communicated to the members through the cooperative’s jubilee celebrations and the members’ magazine, letters of interest from over 98 households in two settlements of the BWV in Köpenick and Berlin Marienfelde / Schmargendorf were received by the administration within a time period of three months. Consultation sessions were carried out on a personal basis as well as with the help of questionnaires with the interested parties in their apartments, and the practicability of the desired renovations assessed. This was followed by prioritization and successive implementation of the alterations in consultation with the construction management and architects. Regular updates on progress are published in the members’ magazine.

Gender aspects in strategy formation and communication in the project “Future Barrier Free Living”
The first component of the project was an introductory workshop regarding the use of gender differentiated data analysis using the example of the data and data collection structure of the on-going operation. This was followed by a comparative analysis of the existing inventory data of the cooperative, an anonymised special evaluation of the residents’ registration data for the stock of the BVW as well as population data at state and district level. The result of this analysis revealed that in comparison to the overall population in Berlin, the population structure of the residents in BVW property is characterised by:

- a considerably lower percentage of children and people between 18 and 44 years of age
- an only slightly higher percentage of older people between 44 and 65 years of age
- an almost twice as high percentage of people of the pensionable age of 65 years and above, as well as a considerably higher percentage of women of 65 years of age and above

Workshop I Introduction
Benefit of taking a gender perspective in adapting the stock to the needs of the ageing population gender differentiated data analysis
The cooperative’s scope for action

Target group analysis
Target agreements, special evaluation of the population data at state and district level

Workshop II Communication structures with the tenants/members and the within the administration
Age- and gender-specific communication patterns

Project phase “realization of measures”
Face to face consultation, ascertainment of demand, setting of priorities, technical realization

Workshop III
Communication concept internal/external

Process evaluation

Project Evaluation 2011?

- Sporting equipment for elderly people
- A percentage of the adult population that becomes less with an increase in age in Berlin, whereas in the stock of the BVW, people of pensionable age represent the largest age group. It also became clear that no interest was expressed in sections in which, according to residents’ registration data, an extremely high percentage of older and aged people lived. The data analysis gave cause to design the questionnaire in a more gender differentiated manner and to use knowledge about the gender differentiated health-related behaviour of the current older generation as well as their general and in particular, their health-related communication forms in future discussions or consultations. The results of the analysis also suggested that the following aspects be taken into consideration in the future at the management level and the actual process level:

- The share of women/men in the older age groups of the residents (not only members), differentiated according to gender, their earning capacity and predominant mobility impairments;
- Preferred residential models for people of old age separated according to gender, whether living alone or as couples, under consideration of cultural differences;
- Gender and age differences in communication behaviour and the use of communication media, here as well the consideration of cultural differences;

- Competence development needs of those involved in the construction and communication process, supervision needs of the same group

Further components of the project were competence building in the management team of the cooperative (members of the board, staff members from the areas of technical management, social and public relations work, commissioned architects) with regard to central gender aspects concerning the adaptation of residences to suit the needs of an ageing residential population and the corresponding communication processes. These include target group analysis (updating of gender differentiated data on the residential population, inclusion of additional gender aspects such as same-sex life forms, migration), a transparent communication with regard to the possible discrepancy between need and affordability as well as transparent and gender differentiated criteria of prioritisation. At construction level, knowledge about gender differentiated living in the broadest sense is required in addition to technical knowledge on barrier free living; at the social and service levels new functions such as information and offers on health maintenance measures are gaining in importance in the provision of living space, first as a subject in cooperative media and addressed in particular to men.

Communication structure in the process of adapting homes to suit the needs of an ageing resident population

![Graph showing distribution according to age group and sex](image_url)
In the basic structure of the project communication, there should be a differentiation according to the target groups that takes into consideration the aspects of function, whether one is affected and also future concerns. In the communication with the residential population it is necessary to further develop offers that correspond to the communication patterns of the target groups (options: outreach information, audio or hands-on information, house channel), avoidance of gender stereotypes in pictures and texts (for example in the internet, information sheet and other print media) or specific gender differentiated ways of addressing people (e.g. in the area of taking precautions). A process oriented communication concept was developed for the area of internal communication. This takes the different communication forms and content of the involved professional fields as well as the possibly different project experiences of men and women into account. In the best case scenario such a concept is supported by the use of appropriate project management software.

The new field of action of the cooperative poses an increased pressure for the staff members involved in the project. Here there is a need for supervision or similar protected room for communication for those who, with few resources, work in direct contact with the residents interested in adaptation measures and their family members. On the basis of the consultation process the BWV developed an internal communication concept towards the perpetuation of the special project and was able to again persuade the representative council to use the dividends of the year 2008 for the perpetuation of the special project and to allow further investment in the programme “Low Barrier Housing”. 

### Share of women in the age groups of the resident population of the BWV

![Bar chart showing the percentage of women in different age groups of the BWV's population](image1)

### Population structure of the BWV compared with the Members' population structure of the state of Berlin 2009

![Bar chart showing the comparison of the BWV's population structure with the state of Berlin's population structure](image2)

### Comparison of the BWV's population structure and the general population structure in the district of Berlin-Wilmersdorf (diagrams in the right column)

![Bar chart showing the comparison of the BWV's population structure with the general population structure in Berlin-Wilmersdorf](image3)
Project III
“A cooperative on the path to intercultural communication” (Berliner Bau- und Wohnungsgenossenschaft von 1892 eG, BBWO 1892)

The project of the BBWO 1892 aimed to motivate intercultural neighbourly togetherness in a settlement in Spandau built in the 1970s. The cooperative’s stock is comprising 555 apartments that are today in need of renovation and were constructed as social housing projects. It is characterized by an attractive green housing environment. The location will soon gain in quality due to the opening of Berlin Brandenburg International Airport; it currently belongs to the areas of Berlin which became due to their high share of unemployed, inhabitants depending on state transfer and with migrant backgrounds a so called area “action plus” (Aktionsraum plus), forming part of the city’s Socially Integrative City programme. A decisive factor for participation in the project was that persons with migration backgrounds are increasingly interested in living in the settlement. At the same time the management observed first signs of a strained atmosphere between the long-term members amongst the residents and those who moved in during the last 10-15 years, amongst them about 15% younger members with migration backgrounds. At a 15% vacancy rate at the beginning of the project, the cooperative thus had an urgent need to take action to improve the state of the buildings and the neighbourly relations.

Intercultural competence helps to avoid ethnicisation of neighbourhood conflicts
In the first phase, gender+ analysed the initial communicative situation and the location conditions. Based on this, knowledge was built up with regard to gender diversity aspects in member recruitment and intercultural competence in internal organizational communication as well as communication with the resident population in the management team (board, technical management, staff members from the areas of service, social work and administration). In the workshops work was done in gender differentiated small groups, each of which was assigned a staff member with migration background. Apart from their professional competence they contributed to the discussion with their description of situations which they evaluated as being culturally different or having a cultural attribution. On the ground, communication barriers amongst the ethnicities and member generations living in the settlement in particular were to be worked on. The development of a positive intercultural communication aimed to counteract the ethnicisation of neighbourly everyday life problems.

Living diversity and reviving cooperative tradition
In the second phase results of a good-practice research in German-speaking European countries about the integration of persons with migration backgrounds were taken into account in the cooperatives. The management team, supported by gender+, developed different options for action addressing the development of an intercultural togetherness in the neighbourhood and the building of a better understanding of cooperative tradition and policy amongst the resident population with (predominantly Turkish) migration backgrounds. An apprentice training project of the cooperation that dealt with matters of the settlement was included in the project implementation. In addition to the reformulation of the profile of the settlement committee, a translation of information regarding the settlement committee into Turkish and a concept for member recruitment, the concept arose of a “neighbourhood day”, to be organised in cooperation with the settlement committee. The gender sensitive analysis of local conditions revealed to...
the cooperative potential for the development of its stock. The board authorized two options for a place of neighbourly communication: the conversion of a little-used washhouse to a hamam organized by a start up self-employed business and the conversion of an empty apartment to a laundry-café organised by members (a combination of washing room and neighbourhood café, with a visual relationship and direct access to the playground). Supported by gender+, the members were involved on the “Day of the Spandau neighbourhood” in the decision between the hamam and the laundry-café and consequently in the design of a neighbourhood café. The bilingual and outreach invitation procedure led to a high and active participation even of the resident population with migration background in the day event. Both options enjoyed a lot of popularity amongst the participants; the particular interest of the older members in the hammam was surprising.

The use of intercultural competence for the cooperation

While the board gave a new gender sensitive and up-to-date place to cooperative tradition with its subject of “laundry-café”, the not yet realised option of a hamam was a more innovative though economically significantly riskier approach. The underlying idea was to establish a positive experience of oriental culture in the settlement. With this, a space was to be created for a particular lifestyle – with health maintenance aspects – and protected communication (not only) for women. Like the existing sauna, the offer was, if necessary, to take the reduced consumption opportunities of the resident population into account. Apart from increasing the quality of living and the attractiveness of the settlement, such a project could contribute to the integration of members with different cultural backgrounds who moved in during the last years and those who will potentially move in in the future. The integrative would have been the acceptance and appreciation of an aspect of these members’ culture as well as the common participation in the development or building of the place.

The internal administrative sensitisation process enabled the cooperative to gather experiences with regard to the use of intercultural competence building in different areas of work of the organisation. Both the knowledge acquisition as well as the process experience with regard to the “Day of the Spandau neighbourhood” opened new perspectives for the interpretation of events presented as cultural conflicts but which, upon a closer, more differentiated look, can often be evaluated as normal neighbourly conflicts. These require moderation which has the knowledge of mutual ethnic-cultural attributions. Apart from a structural upgrading of the stock, the cooperative had the purpose, as part of its social objectives and work towards the development of the local stock, of achieving an improved mixture of different age groups in the resident population as well as promoting the participation of migrants in the committees of the cooperative, especially in the settlement committees.

Laundry-café on the “Day of the Spandau neighbourhood”
At the beginning of the project, the cooperative was involved in a further external consultation process regarding the development of a new corporate identity (CI), which a publicity agency had been commissioned to undertake. The gender consultation that addressed marketing as well as the development of a concept for cross-generational living was carried out subordinate to the CI process in close coordination with a member of the board. The cooperative, which was founded in 1979, is located in the pre-fab panel housing estate Marzahn at the city’s eastern periphery. In one of Europe’s largest large housing estates, it owns about 4,600 modern and affordable apartments in a green environment, 39 commercial units, nine guest apartments and two senior citizen meeting venues in a refurbished stock. The cooperative had already taken first steps explicitly in the sense of housing suitable for women’s needs before the beginning of the process: in cases of new occupancy, the cooperative offers changes in the layout according to the desires of the future residents with regard to their mobility-related needs or those having to do with the phase of life they are in.

The consultation process followed two guidelines with regard to content after the introductory workshop for the management group (board, staff members from the areas of controlling, public relations, letting and social affairs, gender+) on gender aspects in the fields of action of target group and mission statement development as well as housing: the communication with members and potential target groups in the wider town public as well as the conception of a participation oriented, cross-generational residential project that suits particularly women’s needs in a property that was to be renovated by the cooperative.

Future-oriented target group orientation: an area of tension for traditional cooperatives

Specifically including gender and diversity aspects in the area of marketing requires knowledge of the members and the structural property as well as of the general local location conditions. Consequently, at the beginning of the project, a location inspection was carried out deliberately on foot and by bicycle, there was an evaluation of the existing member data from a members’ questionnaire and a discussion of the current target group definition. It became clear that the board and the persons responsible for marketing act in an area of tension between the lifestyles and expectations of the current members and the visions of a membership that the board has to currently develop and prepare in the mid-term in its economic foresight and for demographic reasons. Therefore it was discussed to successively and explicitly address the following target groups in member recruitment: women of different age groups (in particular for community oriented life forms, not necessarily defined as a pure women’s project), persons with migration backgrounds, patchwork families and persons with same-sex ways of life. Directly approaching these would be preceded by, if necessary, visualising these target groups in the cooperative’s current population within the context of regular reports about life in the cooperative and in so doing without, in good faith, ultimately discriminating against corresponding persons or groups. Currently there are only very few persons with migration background who live in the cooperative, mostly immigrants of German nationality. Nevertheless a contribution towards the inclusion of the resident population with migration background in social activities in the neighbourhood and the reporting of these (especially in cases where children and parents are addressed) is being strived for. Within this context, sponsoring of the cooperative was also discussed and a differentiation in allotment undertaken: the preferred sports club will continue to be sponsored, but the funding should particularly benefit the non-professional area of training and the promotion of girls’ and women’s football.

In a further workshop, the management group and the commissioned publicity agency were equipped with knowledge on gender diversity aspects in public image and the communication of the cooperative in print media and on its website with regard to content, language, pictures as well as gender and age differences in the use of media. On this basis the staff member responsible for public relations work...
was offered support in the editing of the text of a couple of issues of the members’ magazine. Also, the cooperative received a suggestion for a gender diversity sensitive presentation for all pages and sub-pages of its website, as well as in part, pointers with regard to content, setting and the compatibility of living and working e.g. concerning the starting up of businesses.

**Promoting housing suitable particularly for women’s needs and cross-generational living – visions for a participation oriented project development**

As preparation for a participation process, the management group first developed own visions for the planned residential project in a workshop. In gender differentiated workgroups they used a gender matrix developed by Bargen/Schambach, including six dimensions for the development of gender equitable construction projects:

- location / location qualities
- target group analysis
- residential forms and needs (layout plans, accessibility, communal / communal oriented living, compatibility of family, nursing and employment work, room for nursing personnel,

- options for the combination of “working” and “living” (residential quality within the building and in the outdoor facilities, security, compatibility of family, nursing and employment work, accessibility, communication)
- social togetherness (facilities, flexible space supply, communal areas)
- representation and participation (composition of the teams responsible for the project as well as the committees, participation of the future residents, methods of participation)

**Learning from Berlin examples of cross-generational living**

Accompanied by members of the cooperative championing for cross-generational living, the management group visited selected Berlin residential projects in which partly only women, partly women and men practise a community oriented and cross-generational way of living. gender+ selected projects that had been realized mainly, that had been realised mainly in cooperative stock or in that of municipal companies, motivating experiences could be gathered and critical questions formulated for the Marzahn project.

Where family or neighbourly togetherness cannot bear nursing needs or other forms of support of continued residence for a long a time as possible in the own apartment, the cooperative tries to find a solution in services for the needs of the ageing residents. Gender diversity aspects of such an offer that were worked on in the last workshop include

- gender difference in the income situations of older persons
- cultural differences in the ways of dealing with older persons
- dealing with and communication of health conditions
- options for participation procedures regarding the planned services to be offered.

Due to unforeseeable changes within the organisation at the beginning of the residential project, it could not be implemented as planned. The results of the consultation process are however being successively incorporated in the development of the stock and the marketing of the cooperative, which can be seen not least in the members’ magazine.
Conclusion

All four projects helped to encourage a change in corporate culture, to raise an understanding for the significance and use of gender sensitive practice in the selected areas of action and thus achieve an opening in a field that is otherwise rather “resistant” to equal opportunity policy measures.

Process oriented work however involves also the analysis of “stumbling stones” in the course of the process and to find solution approaches for future procedures. In this process these included the necessity of finding periods of time in the everyday housing management life for dialogue with regard to the project and the process, defining corresponding internal communication structures and economically justifying the investment and personnel costs that arose during the process. Previous regulation procedures were called into question due to the new perspective on the selected fields of action, this required a continuous, constructive dialogue with the staff members.

The learning process of the cooperatives was linked to an internal administrative learning process on the subject of Gender Mainstreaming and housing economy. Significant factors of success were the commitment of the administrative as well as the steering groups. Looked at methodologically, the handling of the fields of action as “project” and “top management issue” in the cooperatives led just as much to the success of the whole project as the willingness of the cooperatives to let themselves be guided by an external gender consultation company. The incorporation of specialised gender knowledge proved helpful to the process. The documentation of the four projects revealed the improvement in quality, especially in participation processes, that can be achieved through a gender diversity oriented process. A comprehensive project documentation in German language will be published in spring 2011.

Photos and illustrations

Beamten-Wohnungs-Verein zu Köpenick: p.1 bottom left, p.7

Berliner Bau- und Wohnungsgenossenschaft von 1892 eG / Uwe Boek: p.1 bottom right, p.10,11 top

Berliner Bau- und Wohnungsgenossenschaft von 1892 eG*/photographed at the inauguration of the laundry café in Spandau, August 2010: p.11 bottom

Droste, Jonas: p.1 top left, p.4,5,6 top

Knorr-Siedow, Thomas: p.6 in the middle and bottom

Marzahner Tor eG: p.13

Niproschke, Katharina: p.6 top (landscape plan)
This abstract in English of the publication ‘Vielfalt fördern in Wohnungsbaugenossenschaften – Qualitätssicherung durch Gender Mainstreaming’ was financed by the Senate Department for Urban Development, within the context of the Berlin Gender Equality Framework Programme. The overall documentation of the project will be published online in German in October 2011 and also in a print edition (edition arkadien, 2011).