

EURO CONFERENCE MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS

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Workshop IV Integration - Presentation Bremen-Tenever, Germany Joachim Barloschky and Hafid Catruat

We come from Bremen, the city you may perhaps know from the fairytale of the 'Town Musicians of Bremen': i-ah,i-ah; wuf,wuf; miau,miau; cock-a-doodle do, cock-a doodle do! The donkey, the dog, the cat and the cock formed the first intercultural self-help group, working in solidarity to defend their interests - for we too, residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, know that you can't expect presents, nothing is given away, you have to fight for everything!

Our international neighbourhood

In Bremen - Tenever we are just like everywhere else in the world, Rotterdam, Norrkoping or wherever: we laugh and we cry, we love and we hate, we are apathetic or full of energy - we are just like you. But we have five special features:

(Firstly) **Tenever is high**

Tenever is a **high-rise estate built in the 70ies** of the last century. It is all social housing, and though the planners and architects promised 'an urban community through density', today we can see that this satellite town, given the social and political situation, was and is a sin in town planning terms.

Furthermore, as the poet Christian Morgenstern said, "The architect however fled to Africa or America". The 6000 residents experience that the housing associations want above all to see money, but have held back over tens of years with maintenance and modernisation.

The second, and probably the most significant feature, is one we share with you.

It is disadvantage through poverty and well above average unemployment.

35% of all residents, that is, above all children and young people, are dependent on welfare payments, with all the harsh consequences of poverty, such as worse health and lower life expectancy as well as socio-cultural disadvantages (see the Pisa report, which identifies Germany as the world leader in social selection in education).

Thirdly, **Tenever is young**, the area with the greatest number of children in the whole of Bremen. A third of the residents are under 18 years of age.

This is where in some ways the future of Bremen and of the system of social insurance is growing up. (The only point to note is that as a rule children don't have a lobby, as do investors, for whom town mayors roll out the red carpet.)

The fourth feature is also a sign of the future: **Tenever is international**

People from 88 countries have found their home here.

40% foreigners, 30% Aussiedler = that is 70% migrants.

We don't ask: who integrates whom into what?

We say: we are international, as international as our world and as the future. We live in mutual acceptance next to each other and with each other.

We appreciate the riches of cultural diversity, which demands tolerance, and which promotes tolerance.

But we also note that migrants have fewer rights, especially in the labour market, and they haven't full voting rights. It is difficult to be a new arrival in a country, with language difficulties

and a different culture and mode of life.

For us, integration does not mean conformity! Nor does it mean indifference!

To be integrated means to live in solidarity, with equal rights and peacefully next to and with each other, respecting human dignity and cultural identities.

This demands understanding - and at same time encouragement and support for those who are disadvantaged.

The fifth [and last] feature is **the engagement of the residents**

Participation ranks high. We are seeking, in collaboration with the city's neighbourhood renewal programmes ("Social City", "WiN - Wohnen in Nachbarschaften - Living in neighbourhoods" and the EU programme LOS) to effect an improvement in the housing and living conditions in our area, suffering as it does from deficiencies in its infrastructure and facilities. 350.000 Euros have been set annually for additional improvement programmes, for example a farm for children, sport projects, projects to promote qualifications and employment, redevelopment of urban and school playgrounds, swimming for women only on certain days, an internet-café.

Decisions are reached by **consensus**.

The residents, whether they have a German passport or not, have the right of veto.

Excurs

The core of all these efforts has been to focus on the residents and to strengthen their organisation and participation.

So, for instance, we told residents that we were travelling to Rotterdam and would contribute to a discussion on "Gettoes". Most of them just could not believe this. "But we aren't a ghetto!" (though some deliberately call themselves 'ghetto-rats') but in the image of the public Tenever has always been seen as a ghetto, with a very, very bad image. Or are we after all a ghetto? Let's hear what Hafid Catruat, a voluntary, very actively involved representative of the intercultural workshop Tenever, has to say about this:

"No, because in a ghetto the power is in the hands of the mafia.

With us the power lies with the Stadtteilgruppe Tenever!"

Indeed: the **Local Community Group Tenever (Stadtteilgruppe) is the centre**, in which all sections of the community of Tenever are linked together. (Note: Of course, 'power' is something else.) For the last 13 years a meeting has been taking place every 6 to 8 weeks of politicians from the city and the local authority public services (social services, town planning department, housing department, the police, the department for the environment, etc) representatives of welfare institutions and schools, Tenever businesses, housing associations and of course resident groups and interested residents.

The Local Community Group Tenever has three functions:

- 1 It is a forum for discussions in the local community. This becomes especially clear with the first item on the agenda: "Current issues and problems". Here residents can raise issues which they feel strongly about, the little nuisances of everyday and neighbourhood life, but also fundamental questions for the community, such as the direction of its development, its infrastructure, etc. Since all those who have some involvement in the community or bear some responsibility for it are present, dialogue and the beginning of solutions quickly develop.
- 2 These play a central role in the second function of the Local Community Group, which is to bring together ideas for projects to improve conditions in the community, to develop these projects collectively and to arrange them collectively in an order of priority.
- 3 And in order to avoid lengthy official procedures for the realisation of these projects, which often also means their cancellation, the group is able to call on public funds to support projects. 270.000 Euros are available to the group annually from the programmes "Social City" and "Living in Neighbourhoods" to support or provide initial funding for construction, economic, social, educational etc projects. Decisions are taken according to the principle of consensus. This means that all have a right of veto, and we have agreed that funds are only released when consensus is obtained. This works wonderfully. Over 200 projects have been agreed consensually in the last 15 years and have received small or large funding.

The public meetings of the Local Community Group are attended by 60 to 90 people. In the last few years they have included foreigners and migrants in growing measure, although their number still does not correspond to their proportion in the population. In our view these figures represent a high level of participation, although we would naturally welcome the attendance of an even greater number of residents at the meetings of the Local Community Group.

Beside this, there are of course quite a number of other forms of resident participation (house assemblies, planning groups, meetings for specific purposes and workshops, gatherings for specific groups, for instance the annual meetings of senior citizens, which are attended by 10% of all retired people in Tenever).

You will have noticed in any case: the Local Community Group is a quite central forum, which holds together and engages in dialogue members of the community and can also bring about real changes and improvements in the area.

However, this is still not "power", because the Local Community Group with its budget has naturally no influence on developments affecting the whole of society, such as the gap between rich and poor or unemployment. Nor can it dispose of funds which in any way match those available to housing associations.

How does this work - this mixture of everyday orientation and ground force group orientation, of area group deliberations and voluntary citizens' involvement, of funding for the area and of good social infrastructure? Hafid Catruat, volunteer and activist of the Intercultural Meeting Point Tenever, is now going to describe this.

Hafid Catruat:

It is the first time for me to explain something in English. I am so sorry, but my English is not very well and I am very nervous. I hope you can understand me very well. I will try today to give you a look into my life in Tenever and the social working in the Interkulturelle Werkstatt Tenever. My name is Hafid Catruat. I was born in Marok in nineteen seventy one. In nineteen seventy seven, my father took my mother, me and my 5 brothers to Bremen-Tenever. We have lived there in a four room flat with 2 double beds. My father is here as an immigrant since nineteen sixty eight. Living in Tenever has formed my life with good and bad times. In time I study social working at the university in Bremen.

This is about my person and now I want to explain something about the work in the Interkulturelle Werkstatt Tenever. Besides all activities Barlo told there was a group of people started in nineteen ninety five to fight the problems here. From this time the company Interkulturelle Werkstatt Tenever e. V. was born.

At first we started to rebuild an old washing-house into an intercultural meetingpoint, the meetingpoint MOSAIK. All the work was done by volunteers.

We are a centre for all nations. We are engaged for the rights of the migrants, help them in everyday-living questions. We organize sports-activities, cooperate with a lot of social initiatives and support residents - projects.

Projekcs of the meeting point Mosaik are:

- daily opening meeting from 18 pm
- Aussiedlertreff
- groups of man
- groups of woman
- german lessons for adults
- arabic lessons for kids and teens
- offers of sport for kids and teens and adults
- clearing talks about money problems
- deliverys of help to Maroc
- EDGA Ex junkys active in drugs work
- the CREW looking for jobs
- Hoodworker - teens' selforganization
- **international gardens** - That is

If you have some questions I can answer them in the next break. The IWT is there for the cooperation partner for many, many projects in this district.

**Ten findings,
which we have made during the intercultural activity in our district.**

1. International life and life lived as a community is possible in our districts and interesting.

The starting point is **everyday shared life**, the international neighbourhood. This is life and the shared everyday existence and not idealised pictures or prejudices.

We are a **country of immigration** -whether everybody likes that or not. We should not only come to terms with this reality, but actively give it positive expression.

Part and parcel of this is above all that migrants should not only be "tolerated", but accepted as members of our communities with equal rights.

And that means they should be granted **equal rights**.

2. Viewed in this light, the whole of our activity, whether in the development of an area, a social service or school, or even a housing development or business, should be organised internationally and interculturally.

Residents are residents

- A landlord does not distinguish between "locals", immigrants and foreigners - what matters is that the rent (the profit) is right.

- If a block is dilapidated and the surroundings are neglected, everyone suffers equally, regardless of what passport they hold.

- All parents want the best for their children, regardless of what country they come from and what other cultural and moral values they have.

3. Reflecting the international composition of the population, the staff of (social) institutions should also be international. We have approached this issue jointly since 1991. Since then **intercultural teams in our day nurseries, youth work and welfare provision have been a matter of course (oh how I wish that in government social service departments, in schools and housing associations there should also be a higher proportion of staff with an immigrant background!)**

4. One has to be **alert against racism and hostility towards foreigners because again and again there are tendencies to define social problems and conflicts in ethnic terms.**

And also to be active against nazis. In our district we have as a matter of course initiatives like "Disco for everyone", which provides an experience for our young people who, as "black heads", are not allowed into the big discohalls.

Probably also because of the large international presence, we have no

Skinheads (which of course does not mean there may not be skinhead thoughts in some people. Because reality is, that nearly 50% of the Germans means that "too much foreigners are living in Germany". In Tenever, caused by the international reality, the habituation and the neighbourhood-activities, only 11% think so.).

5. However, with us no one has to keep his mouth shut.

Just because one lays stress on resident opinion and resident participation, there must

also be room for "opinion". The residents speak their minds, but there is also a clear answer and explanation.

And only where reservations and diffidence can be (freely) expressed, but also be countered with argument and practical experience, does life in an immigrant country become worth living.

That's as it should be - but watch out! "Language courses, integration projects, "hippy families" support for migrants, demands for equal employment chances for immigrants - there are projects all the time for foreigners. Think about us for a change."

In an area with 70% immigrants such sentiments have to be taken into account when presenting one's plans, even if of course most projects are not meant "exclusively" for immigrants but for the population as a whole.

6. In such an international area it is important to **break down a feeling of alienation**. For of course alienation exists - and prejudices.

It's a question of different cultures, different languages and different interests. To deal with them is not a matter of a one-off initiative or a one-year campaign. There have to be possibilities to meet and to communicate. The best way is through joint actions and joint activities. Festive occasions play a large role in this, and starting with the children is the best way to organise this and also to involve adults. And you need open arms and community spaces, meeting places and infrastructure.

We provide information about the various intercultural groups and events. The mothers centre, for instance, regularly organises a big, well-attended international evening, in which there are special presentations of particular cultures.

Not the whole of Tenever attends, but at least the compatriots of the culture on which that evening focusses do come along. Some of their neighbours come too, and also - and we welcome that - people from the city, who know that as regards internationality Tenever knows a thing or two is worth listening to.

But, as we said earlier, the best way is through actions, shared experiences, whether it is our big clean up and planting operation Tenever Picobello, which takes place every two years and in which over 1000 people take part, or an operation against nazis, or when people lend a hand with the setting up or improvement of playgrounds and playing fields. People come together, there is a sharing of experiences, communication develops. Thus we can say: In Tenever there is no need for special operations marked 'Care - multicultural inside' because every operation is planned from the start to be international and interculturally effective.

After all, it's about support for the residents and the organisations they have created.

Participation and active engagement, for " he who takes part is no stranger " to quote the great masterpoet Goethe.

A large role is played by **integration through sport**, especially for the younger generation. Sport brings people together. Clubs in particular offer great opportunities for self-development. Against a background of poverty and generally of tendencies in society that stop people from becoming members of sporting clubs, we in Tenever have created a range of widely available provision in sport. The most important and finest example is certainly the Tenever League, in which over 30 football leisure teams with over 300 kids in different age groups play twice a week for the championship. Young volunteers act as trainers for the kids and the teams are international throughout. They learn that in sport an opponent is a partner, since without him no play could take place.

Now we also have a 'Fit Point', which is the centre, as it were, for all sporting activities in Tenever. Here trainers offer instruction and suggestions for all sporting activities and direct people who are interested toward the relevant clubs and associations. At the same time the 'Fit-Point' is a place where - from 2 o'clock onwards - one can borrow balls and

other sports equipment, where one can also find support and meet other interested people who then form temporary groups or teams.

Just recently we have celebrated the opening of our big 'hall for movement' which includes a large 'movement landscape'. For a modest cost, this can be used by our Nurseries and Primary Schools, but also through Parent-Child groups

There is, however a special problem: Over the last years to our traditional Osterholz Tenever sport club (OT Sportverein), which is a great integrational factor for our area, a new sport club has been added: SV Mardin. Created originally mainly through the initiative of Kurds, it was at first in competition with the official sporting activities of the city. Of course there are good reasons to say that they should really all become part of the big club of our area. But if you take people as they are and they would like their own club, there is nothing that speaks against this. You shouldn't put obstacles in their way, and our Local Community Group has supported the new club so that it has equal rights to the use of good grounds and good indoor facilities. In the meantime the SV Mardin has also become an international club that takes part successfully in the sporting events of the city of Bremen.

7. **It is necessary to have understanding of immigrants. And for them to be able to maintain their cultural identity.**

For us in Tenever it is a matter of course, for example, that we should have a mosque and a temple for Hindus (Tamils). Or that we should fight for the maintenance of the Advice Bureau for foreigners and immigrants, because that's where they get help with day-to-day worries or with approaches to the authorities or, most importantly, with representatives of insurance.

Some more examples: If a meeting of over 120 young immigrants requests extra tuition, given in Russian, for Mathematics and Science, then the Stadtteilgruppe and the Social Services Department make that possible. In our leisure facilities we offer free access times to young people, regardless of whether their group is national or international. If Somalis need a large room for their meetings, we do our best to support this, and if Aliano would like to set up a Romanian cultural group and needs music practice rooms for this, we arrange it from our resident funds. Similarly for the CD of the Moroccan Berbergroup El-Salam. However we especially promote and support intercultural effective projects.

Naturally, the local economy has adapted, so that it is possible to shop in Russian, Turkish or other national shops.

One has to take account of specific cultural customs. It is natural in an International district such as ours that no pork is served in our nurseries and all-day schools, and that in certain weeks special international dishes are provided. It is also obvious that international feast days play a role, such as the feast of sugar or the feast of sacrifice (Bayramin) and the whole period of Ramadan. It is above all the children in schools and nurseries who show us that shared international life is quite normal and their example is followed more and more throughout.

8. **Language is the central integrative factor.** There have always been in our district a number of language courses, provided at low level by social institutions through recognised educational establishments. And, following intercultural educational findings, there are also mother tongue courses in schools and social institutions.

But with so many nationalities we don't talk about bilingualism. **In Tenever we communicate in German** (although it would be desirable if for really essential issues, official notices etc. more translations into the most common languages were available)

And all this works. Whoever has been in the nursery for three years speaks fluent, if not formal, German. However, given the high level of fluctuation in the district's population (20%), it is not surprising that again and again neighbours meet without language being used. We need to realise that in respect of language integration proceeds over more than one generation. Nevertheless, I have to report that just recently opinions about speaking German have become stronger. "It's time that they learn German", "Parents should only speak German at home" and so on. Take this to be more a reflection of what is said by increasingly less tolerant politicians and not so much a real everyday problem. The continuing economic crisis, which is hitting the poor in particular with its unsocial consequences, is being used demagogically by some politicians and by the media to sharpen competition and pressure and set immigrants and Germans against each other. The debate about the law regulating immigration is an example of this.

Excurs Special attention needs to be given to the relationship between foreigners and immigrants of German origin.

9. **The essential point in our view is that social disadvantage has to be fought. Every resident of Tenever, from whatever country, needs employment. Our young people need education and training. Our children need encouragement and support. Whoever wants equality of opportunity for all, must give greater support to disadvantaged areas and the people who live in them.**

That also seems to us to be the best reply to the debate about the so-called Muslim **parallel communities**. Politics and the media seem to be far away from our districts. For this is the dilemma: many try to justify their hostility towards immigration and immigrants with the allegedly "negative results of integration". First you cancel support lessons and do too little towards integration and equality, and then you complain about the consequences. This reminds us of the poet Janosch

*Piglet whined aloud
Who's messed up my sty?
We'll tell you straight
It was you, you little pig.*

If one can speak of parallel communities, it should be about rich areas and disadvantaged areas, those on top and those at the bottom.

10. **Our districts are those parts of the city where integration takes place.** What our districts achieve for our city in regard to integration is enormous. But we have to make sure that they receive a corresponding level of support, so that their work towards integration is (even) more successful. We realise that we have presented our findings in a very positive light. But we thought that was necessary against the background of the current European debate. There is a call for our districts to act socially and politically. We can do that with self confidence as integration areas. For through their achievements for the city as a whole, and through their activities within the district renewal programmes, they are helping to ensure that the "social and cooperative city" still has a chance.

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