

## Intergenerational Collaboration

Intergenerational collaboration was characterized by alternating periods of ups and downs. Already at the beginning it turned out to be very difficult to reach the younger generation and to interest them in our project. This implied a strategy attracting different age groups between 5 to 30 years with diverse topics in order to obtain multi-layered viewpoints. In doing so the main focus of our generation-spanning project was laid on children, adolescents and young adults. As cooperative partners we have gained educational institutions which added our activities to their calendar of events. The process of establishing contacts and the different group activities took place from mid-2009 to early-2010 and are specified below.

### Discussion between the elderly and children on “Children’s Play Culture – Then and Now”

In order to get children interested in the intergenerational project and to win them over to further collaboration they were expected to be attracted by the initiative “Children’s Play Culture – Then and Now“. By means of old toys brought along by the elderly (e.g. “Flohknipsen”, hopscotch, marbles) it was planned to acquaint the children with the subject in a literally playful way. For this purpose a **multigenerational house** was contacted to add the initiative to their calendar of events. There, a “Generations Day” accompanied by a family afternoon programme took place. As, however, only few families with children were present on that day no follow-up activities were organized for our project. Furthermore, we went to a local kindergarten where children guided us through a small collection of a specially established museum comprising old toys, school utensils and household items from grandma’s times. Subsequently, the children could interrogate our contemporary witnesses about what kind of experiences they have gained in dealing with those household items back then and could test the toys brought along.

### Discussion between the elderly and adolescents on “Technology – Then and Now”

Within the scope of the winter holiday programme our team organized an afternoon in one of Dresden’s **children and youth clubs**: “There were no mobiles in the past. Oh my God, how did we survive? – Let you take into the world of technology beyond mobiles and internet.” Old typewriters, calculators, slide rules, tube radios, tape recorders and telephones were set up for this afternoon. We had expected interesting findings from how the children and adolescents of different ages and social backgrounds reacted to our project topics and what degree of interest they display. One thing we found out was that participants until the age of 12 years got very enthusiastic about the subject and tested everything, while participants from the age of 12 years upwards were quite indifferent and did not show any interest at all. The younger the participants were the more interested they were in the subject.

### Discussion between the elderly and students on different topics around playing, housing and technical innovations

From October 2009 until early in January 2010 we met up with students of the Protestant Student Parish (PSP) twice a month to hold evening talks in a cosy lounge atmosphere on the premises of the PSP. Topics like ‘playing and family games of past times and today’, ‘how did students live in former times and how do they live now’, ‘housing during childhood and youth - then and now’, ‘how does technological development change housing conditions and family life’ were set forth and discussed (see figure). The students were invited beforehand at a semester orientation meeting of the PSP and via a mailing list. Attendance at these discussions varied from event to event and was in fact exceedingly low at some of them. Nevertheless, we have obtained interesting findings which will contribute to the project work. For instance, children’s former play culture varies immensely from that of today due to the development of computers. Some of the younger participants knew the toys brought along only by hearsay. This in mind, the pros and cons of renouncing parlour games and of turning towards virtual worlds were discussed. Besides, the participants debated on how life would be without technological achievements and whether this way of life would be conceivable today. Last but not least comparisons between student housing in GDR times and today were drawn. The younger participants marvelled at and stewed over student hostels designed for 6 persons and equipped with bunk beds and shared sanitary installations, while the elderly listened with great interest to personal stories about the students’ present living conditions (e.g. flats shared with students from all over the world).

**Figure: Calendar of Discussion Topics**

Date	Discussion Topic
October 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Housing During Youth and Childhood Living in the Countryside – Then and Now
November 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2009	Student Housing – Then and Now Part 1 – Expectations
November 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Children's Housing Conditions and Their Way of Playing
November 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Technology, Communication and Calculating During the Fifties Till the Seventies
December 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Open Talks In the Advent Season
January 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2010	Technology At Home
January 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2010	Student Housing – Then and Now Part 2 – Expectations Fulfilled?

In summary, it is to be stipulated that we have gained more insightful knowledge from the collaboration with young adults than with children and adolescents. For summer 2010, a generation-spanning event, where the participants of the VECU project are invited to join in workshops, is planned on the part of the PSP.

### **Methodical Approach**

A multifaceted approach has been applied to our project. **Generally**, we proceeded the following way: studying internet, press, literature and database resources; questioning contemporary witnesses; visiting archives, libraries and museums; drafting residential biographies and episodes and documenting results (records, posters, website). In the context of the **generation-spanning collaboration** we conducted discussions and interviews with young adults, held informative meetings, carried out experience exchanges with children and adolescents and also exchanged our residential biographies with our grandchildren. **Intercultural collaboration** was characterized by the participation in the project – conferences in Graz in April 2009, in Groningen in October 2009 and in Brno in April 2010 as well as triple conferences in Brno in May 2009 and in Dresden in November 2009.