Title

Creating multi-use buildings as community place of service and neighbourhood meeting place in rural areas as pilot project in the "Stettiner Haff" that was especially affected by the demographic change

"Old Village Schoolhouse m.H." – from vacancy to multi-use building


(Image 1)

Created by   rb architekten
                  Jana Reichenbach-Behnisch
                  Dipl.Ing.Architektin TU
                  info@rbarchitekten-le.de

Design
Technical   Ingenieurbüro ZBP Leipzig
Systems for   Zimmermann, Becker und Partner
Buildings   Jörg Koenigsdorff
                   Dipl.Ing. FH
                   zbp.leipzig@t-online.de

Occasion / Initial Situation

In particular in rural areas, the demographic change leads to an aging population and therefore to the loss of mobility in the population. In contrast, the increasing centralization of services on a communal level but also of the basic care by creating shopping centres, medical centres, etc. The declining

village infrastructure should now be reactivated by using historical vacant buildings for multiple purposes. (Image 2)
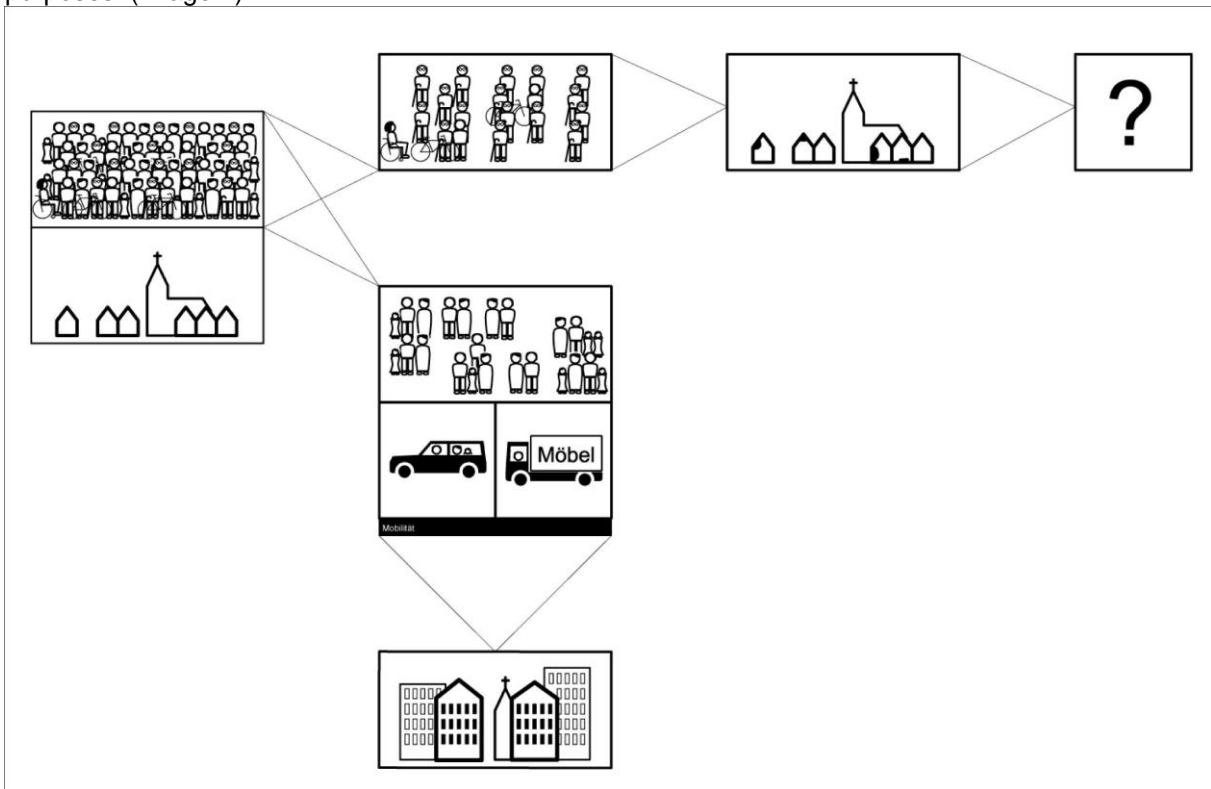

The mobile young population is leaving rural regions due to unemployment and a lack of infrastructure.

### Subject of the Research Project

The result of the research project is the development of a prototype building as structural shell suitable for multiple types of use that can alternate in daily cycles. It serves the reactivation of lost infrastructure and therefore increases the quality of life in rural areas. Only vacant structures should be utilized such as community centres, schools, railway stations, or secular buildings such as old village pubs. The most important goal is the stabilization of the village centres, the installation of a social infrastructure, and determination and support of the village typology.

The multi-use building is an ecologically and financially responsible response to multiple problems created by the increasingly limited mobility of an aging society in rural areas. The increasing lack of quality of life is a type of poverty, which spreads further and further. The loss of infrastructure and traffic accessibility carries the risk of excluding entire population segments from public life. For communal regions this can mean that entire villages are abandoned. (Image 3)
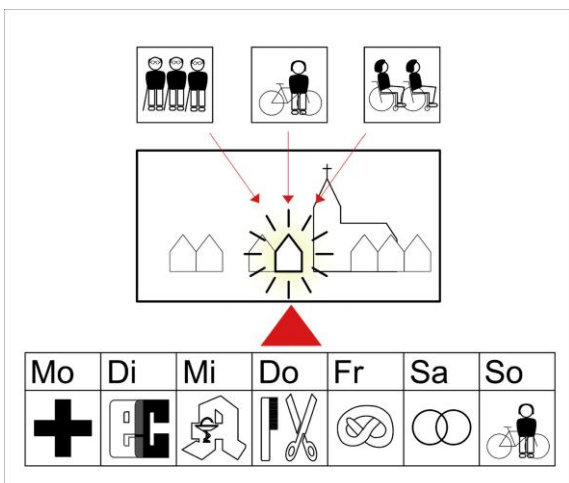
Multi-use house: change of use in daily cycles

The multi-use house should replace the villagers' immobility with the mobility of the "service providers." As "firm" users, they split the basic rent and ancillary costs for the house according to the principle of "car sharing." The use of space may change. Therefore, neighbouring villages with a network of multi-use homes offer an attractive work environment for physicians, grocers, hair dressers, etc. who for financial reasons can only afford to visit the village once per week or once per month. The more villages start such a network, the smaller are the routes for the service providers and their engagement becomes more economically feasible. On all vacant days, the rooms are available for flexible use such as for afternoon coffee meetings, evening card games, and slide presentations. Especially in small villages, the concept will depend initially largely on villagers providing volunteer time, dedication, and a will to activate their village. (Image 4)
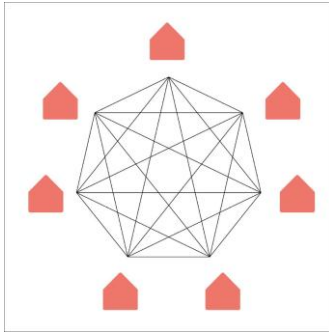

Networks of multi-use homes – regional and national

The initial goal is to activate fundamentally the selected buildings by furnishing them pragmatically with the basic necessities: a "bench" for seating in the main entrance area, a "counter" to sell products and pass along stories, lockable "lockers" for the permanent users of rooms. The interior of the multi-use house must receive modern technology and professional furnishings; the regionally typical architecture must enhance the village identity and provide the villagers with a sense of home and belonging.

In general, one to two rooms are sufficient to operate a multi-use house depending on the desired use. Today, in many villages the primary schools are vacant. We demonstrate how unused structures can be activated step-by-step: dry, safe, warm. Initially simple cold rooms may serve e.g. as summer accommodations for bicyclists in addition to a few warm rooms. This is practically illustrated with an innovative energy concept, construction cost estimate, grant money application, and floor plan, which are illustrated on various actually existing buildings.

In particular, we have shown "sponsoring" opportunities for fix expenses incurred during the operation of a house such as a waiver of property taxes by the communities, special conditions for construction loans by Sparkassen, or the waiver of connection fees by the utility providers. However, part of it is the personnel support as "firm user," by the postal service or Sparkasse integrating multi-use houses in their network of service centres in cooperation with communal administrations. The energy concept for the multi-use house helps reduce the operating costs. If a photovoltaic system is integrated, a part of the buildings energy costs are covered. The technical systems assure simple and economic operations of the building. Special systems to record consumption allow allocating consumption costs exactly even if the type of use alters several times during the day. (Image 5)
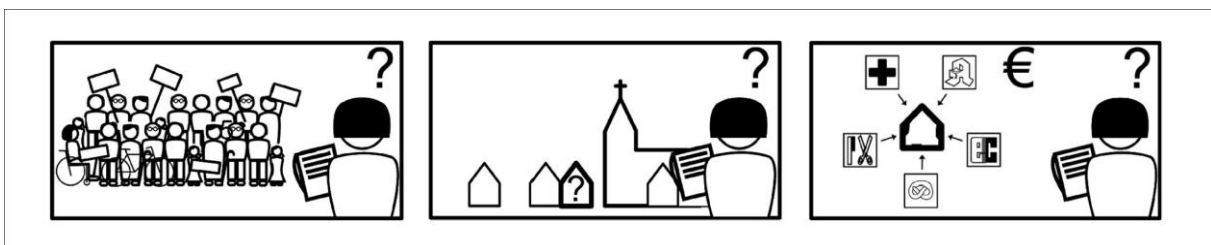

Within the scope of this work, there was an active cooperation in interviews and workshops with stakeholders, political and financial decision makers, and with four villages in the "model region Stettiner Haff" in the northeast of Germany. Therefore, the idea of a multi-use house was evaluated in real life applications from the start of the project. Action recommendations, a building schedule, and need and criteria catalogue provides stakeholders, mayors, and municipalities with working tools to install multi-use houses. (Image 6)
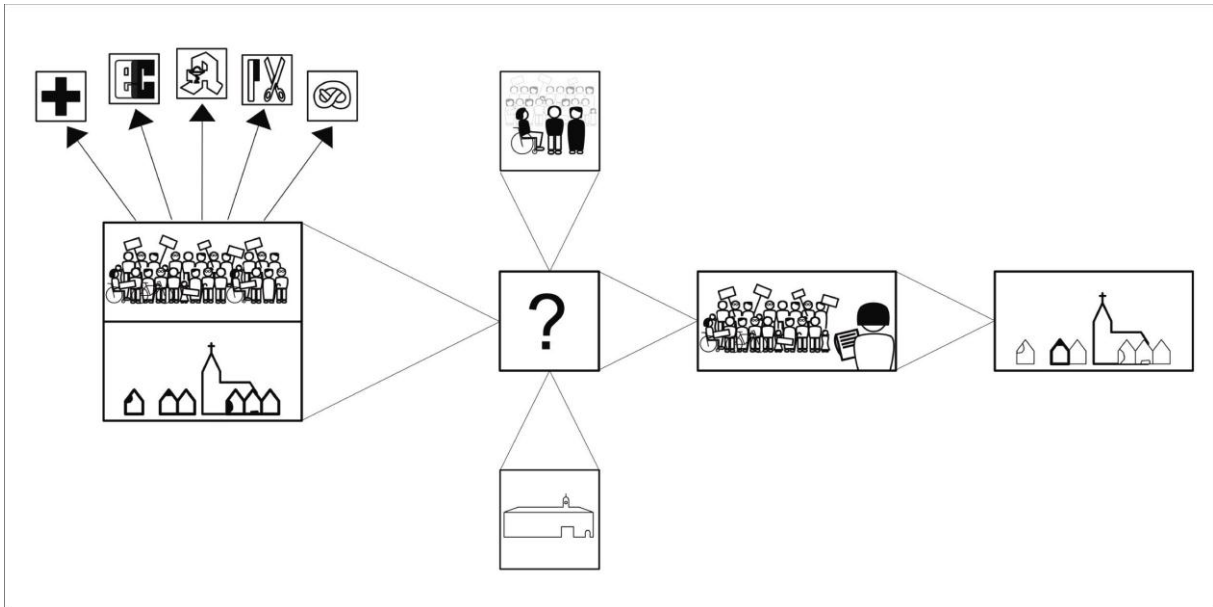
From vacancy to multi-use building

"The multi-use building in the village is the structure that is centrally located. It is noticed by its design typical for the area and by its characteristics typical for the location. It is inviting to villagers and visitors alike. It can easily be identified by visitors while driving through the village. Both, villagers and visitors will find the centre of the village here for information, communication, services, and neighbours, the many uses of which may alter daily." (Image 7)
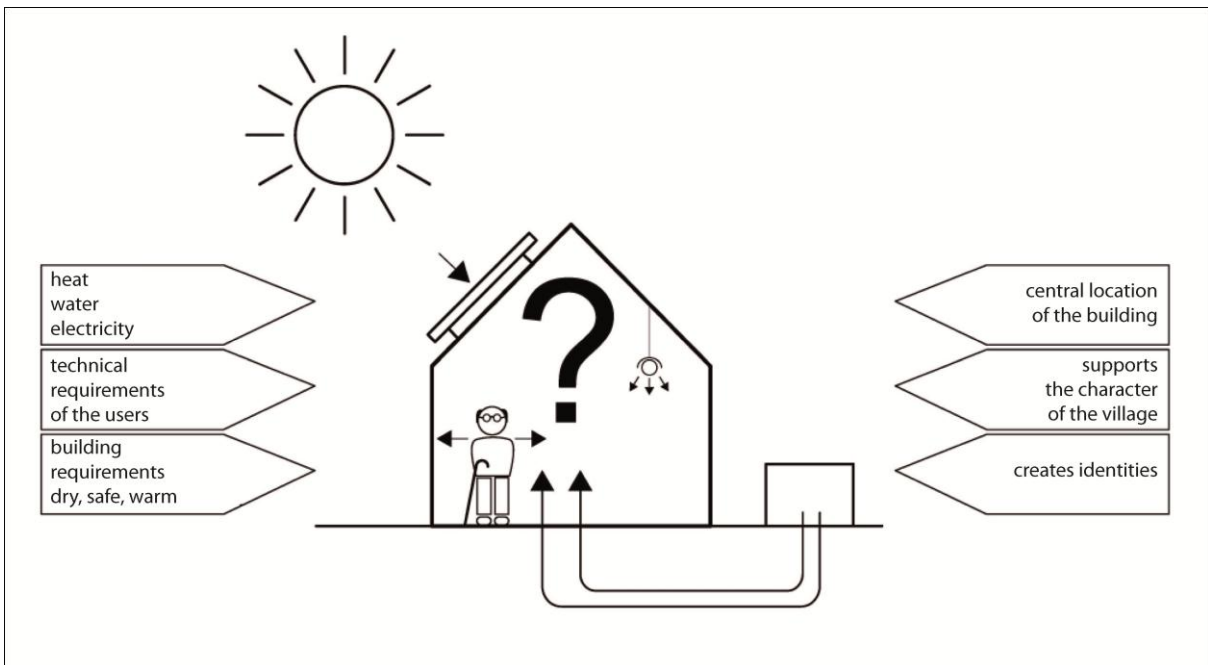
Criteria for a multi-use building: basic requirements and regional needs.

Conclusion

"Alte Dorfschule m.H. or old village schoolhouse" – by simply adding m.H., the abbreviation for "Multiples Haus" or multi-use house, to its name, a structure is designated as multi-use building making it identifiable regionally and beyond the region. It retains its identity and shows "history." The label "Multiples Haus [multi-use building]" should create a legally binding foundation for buildings and contracts allowing easy and swift planning and permit processes. The goal of labelling is the recognition effect and the marketing effectiveness but in addition, the creation of a national network. The next step is starting pilot projects in the model villages in the Stettiner Haff region, which are modernized and managed in a first network of multi-use buildings. (Image 8)