INTRODUCTION

Creativity in groups has to deal with the following dilemma: on the one hand, creativity needs the opportunity for retreat where people can focus on the challenge they wish to meet, intensively communicate without being distracted by business driven interruption, and also experience a flow. On the other hand, everyday life and its problems represent a source of inspirational data which helps to generate new ideas, and a set of cases which challenge the appropriateness of new ideas.

To overcome this dilemma we have developed a workshop concept which allows the participants to exclusively focus on a problem but which also introduces aspects of everyday experiences and additional electronically-mediated information. This workshop has specifically been conceived to support an ideation process where it is important to develop as many good ideas as possible. In our case, ideas are needed about how elderly people can be supported to live their own life for as long as possible in their own home. All kinds of support had to be taken into account such as commercial services, help from neighbors or care-taking by relatives. This type of workshop covers a series of brainstorming rounds which are carried out by the participants and are triggered by material and activities which represent the relevant parts of the everyday life outside the workshop – in our case the everyday life of elderly people and those persons who try to take care of them.

The workshop’s participants represent various perspectives since the numbers of creative ideas probably increase if different stakeholders with differing backgrounds and expertise provide a “synergy of many sources” ([1] 23). A group of different people who don’t know each other very well is faced with a number of creativity barriers (cf. production blocking, free-riding, evaluation apprehension; [5]). To overcome these limitations it is reasonable to employ technical support [4]. We focus on a support for face-to-face meetings with a large screen (4.8 m x 1.2 m,) which is seamlessly interactive and located in a room for co-located meeting support in facilitation (Modlab). The way we use this technology is guided by a set of six heuristics which have been developed in [2].

Compared to the literature on brainstorming and ideation, our approach is to focus on creativity techniques or strategies of facilitators which systematically employ the experience of everyday life as an inspirational source. This

Fig. 1. Process of the creativity workshop and interactive large screen
requires a preparation phase before the ideation starts: the challenge which has to be met and the underlying facts and data have to be intensively analyzed (cf. “mess finding” and “data-collection” by the Osborne/Parnes scheme; [3]) With respect to a brainstorming workshop, the empirical preparation has either to be done by some participants in advance or individuals have to be involved who contribute their experience in the relevant field.

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS OF THE WORKSHOP
The workshop was planned to last approx. 3.5 hours. The collaborative work was subdivided into three phases: divergence, transition and convergence (see fig. 1). The technical facilities of the Modlab-room helped to build a constellation of technology enhanced creativity, where electronic media and pens, paper cards and pinboards were combined. The brainstorming stimuli were based on the everyday experience gathered by ethnographical research.

The smooth transition between old and new media was pursued because most of the participants were not used to this type of technology and we wanted to give them the opportunity to gradually adopt the new possibilities.

One important goal of the workshop was to convey an illustrative picture of what the everyday life of elderly people looks like and to understand their fears and preferences. This includes the insight that elderly people may need to be supported but do not wish to admit this freely.

Kinds of material and information which is used as an inspirational source (stimuli)
The combination of different phases, questions and modes of collaboration offered the opportunity to introduce experience with elderly people step-by-step in various forms.

The divergence phase started with the question: What kind of support do elderly people need. After the phase of individually noting down the answers, the work of small groups (three persons each) started. For their support, several aspects, facts and examples of elderly peoples’ everyday life were introduced by text descriptions which were integrated into a Powerpoint loop. The loop was displayed on the large screen and was en passant visible from every part of the room. The data for the loop had been gathered in the ethnographical and analytical work before the workshop. The information was presented as headlines, graphical diagrams or with mind maps.

In the phase of transition, one individual provided story telling which was derived from the ethnographical research. The groups freely decided to ask for a story to be told. A further stimulus was presented by a scenario which questioned the needs of an eccentric VIP. During the discussion in the phase of convergence these stories were completed by reports which were provided by the two professional service providers participating in the workshop. The convergence was continued by building clusters and by identifying the most unusual or novel ideas.

LESSONS LEARNED
Based on a first exploratory analysis it became apparent that the stimuli which refer to everyday experience influenced the participants in various ways: The pictures were only taken into account en passant. The participants were not able to indicate whether the pictures had inspired them to find new ideas. The powerpoint loop did not draw sufficient attention from the small groups (3 people). We assume that the presentation was too far away from the groups although it was clearly visible. The presentation on the interactive large screen only has a direct effect if people are standing close to the wall and feel directly involved. The discussion in the groups was so intensive that they had no leisure time to search around for further information. We suggest that such a presentation of everyday experience is only clearly effective if the participants start searching around for further inspiration. By contrast, the story-telling, which took place in the phase of transition, was more effective – at least from the viewpoints of the participants. It helped them to find new ideas and seems to represent the strongest stimuli.

During the phase of convergence, the large screen was used as a medium by which the information units could be easily manipulated by pointing and dragging with a finger. It offered the participants the opportunity to deal actively with the contributions of others and to become familiar with their ideas. It could be observed that the interacting with the information items by some participants was accompanied by stories which were told on the basis of the everyday experience of other participants.

The approach which is presented with this case study goes beyond the current ideation research with respect to the following aspects:

- We focus on everyday experience as stimuli,
- various modes of collaboration between the participants and technical support are mixed
- the perspectives of the participating stakeholders are highly heterogeneous.

REFERENCES