



Youth Policies and Gender-sensitive Youth Work in Austria. Evidence from a Capability-oriented Perspective.

A Compilation of National Case Study Reports from the EU-Project **SociEtY**
(Social Innovation – Empowering the Young for the Common Good)

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INHALT

<i>FOREWORD</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>YOUTH POVERTY, YOUTH INEQUALITY, AND YOUTH POLICY IN AUSTRIA</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>ABSTRACT.....</i>	<i>3</i>
1. <i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>5</i>
2. <i>DATA AND METHODS.....</i>	<i>6</i>
3. <i>NATIONAL DEFINITIONS</i>	<i>7</i>
4. <i>POLICIES, INSTRUMENTS AND LEVELS OF INTERVENTION.....</i>	<i>15</i>
5. <i>POLICY MAKING, IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICIPATION.....</i>	<i>26</i>
6. <i>SOCIAL INNOVATION</i>	<i>36</i>
7. <i>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>39</i>
8. <i>APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF KEY ISSUES.....</i>	<i>41</i>
9. <i>APPENDIX 2: KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>DATA SOURCES.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>REFERENCES</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN YOUTH POLICIES IN AUSTRIA.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>ABSTRACT.....</i>	<i>53</i>
1. <i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>54</i>
2. <i>METHODS.....</i>	<i>56</i>
3. <i>DESCRIPTION OF AREA IN RELATION TO INEQUALITY/DISADVANTAGED YOUTH</i>	<i>57</i>
4. <i>FOCUS ON PARTICULAR PROBLEMS AND RELATED POLICY AND PRACTICE.....</i>	<i>66</i>
5. <i>PARTICIPATION</i>	<i>71</i>
6. <i>SOCIAL INNOVATION</i>	<i>77</i>

7.	<i>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS</i>	79
	<i>APPENDIX</i>	82
	<i>CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS</i>	84
	<i>REFERENCES</i>	84

***THIS IS A GIRLS' SPACE?! RE-SEARCHING FOR PARTICIPATORY PARITY IN GENDER-SPECIFIC YOUTH WORK*..... 87**

	<i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i>	87
1.	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	91
2.	<i>RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN</i>	93
3.	<i>RESEARCH FINDINGS: GENDERED LIMIT-SITUATIONS AND THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK</i>	98
4.	<i>DISCUSSION, REVIEW AND REFLECTION</i>	105
5.	<i>CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY-RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS</i>	118
	<i>REFERENCES</i>	121

***INTERVENTIONS OF GENDER-SPECIFIC YOUTH WORK IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA: BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND CRITIQUE* 125**

1.	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	125
2.	<i>METHODS</i>	125
3.	<i>SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLITICAL CONTEXT</i>	128
4.	<i>ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AND POLICIES AND STRATEGIES OF LOCAL ACTORS FOR THE AUSTRIAN CASE STUDY</i>	130
5.	<i>THIS IS A GIRLS' SPACE?! RE-SEARCHING FOR PARTICIPATORY PARITY IN GENDER-SPECIFIC YOUTH WORK IN SIMMERING</i>	133
6.	<i>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS</i>	138
	<i>REFERENCES</i>	140

FOREWORD

This FORBA Research Report compiles the main deliverables of the Austrian partners, FORBA and the Department of Theoretical Sociology and Social Analysis of the University Linz, for the EU research project **SociEtY (Social Innovation – Empowering the Young for the Common Good¹)**. The project was carried out together with partners from 11 countries between 2013-2015.

The aim of the SociEtY research project has been to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged young people through social innovation. The purpose has been to enable an innovative and structured dialogue where every participant has equal opportunities to voice their concerns in order to improve the personal and professional situation and perspectives of disadvantaged young people in society. Specifically the SociEtY research project has sought to:

- Improve the quality of life of disadvantaged young people through social innovation;
- Identify opportunities to reduce inequalities; and
- Extend and build knowledge and tools for the ultimate policy goal of a ‘good life for all’.

The project has explored how young people aged 15-24 live in different European countries today; and examined what can be done to create social and institutional opportunities which will better enable them to live the lives they have reason to value. Using Amartya Sen's Capability Approach as a framework, the project has developed a broad knowledge base to foster socially innovative policymaking.²

¹ Grant agreement number: 320136

² This paragraph is cited from Egdell, V., Graham, H., Raeside, R., Atzmüller, R., Otto, H.-U. (2015): Del. 3.3 Collected Volume. SociEtY: Social Innovation - Empowering the Young for the Common Good. Report to the European Commission, Introduction

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YOUTH POVERTY, YOUTH INEQUALITY, AND YOUTH POLICY IN AUSTRIA³

Experts' perception of youth poverty and inequality – active labour market policies and youth work – opportunities of participation – social innovation

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ABSTRACT

Focused on the period after the 2008/09 crises, this qualitative study on the situation of disadvantaged youth in Austria is based on document analyses and 19 semi-structured expert interviews. It shows that from an international perspective Austria seems to be quite good in offering youth adequate pathways into VET and employment. However, deeper analyses show that the Austrian school system continues to be the main mediator of inequalities. Growing problems with the apprenticeship system led to the implementation of a so called “training guarantee” which offers every school leaver an apprenticeship place in a publicly financed VET institution. Furthermore the study reveals that the concept of NEET is becoming more central in both policy making and research as the available structure do not reach every young person. A reported increase in mental ailments and the situation of young women in a NEET situation deem of interest for further investigation.

In this chapter, we describe and analyse policies related to inequality and poverty regarding young people in Austria. Based on expert interviews and a document analysis, we first examine the various definitions of the notion “disadvantaged youth”. In the next step, we look at interventions and measures (against youth inequality) taken in different policy fields, and identify areas of non-intervention. We then analyse young people's opportunities to participate in policy making, in the implementation of youth policy, and in political decisions on a larger scale. In the course of our analysis we also raise the question in which way the concept of social innovation is used in the development of youth policy.

³ This chapter was first published as: Alban Knecht, Karin Kuchler and Roland Atzmüller (2013): Youth Poverty, Youth Inequality, and Youth Policy in Austria. Experts' Perception of Youth Poverty and Inequality – Active Labour Market Policies and Youth Work – Opportunities of Participation – Social Innovation In SocIEtY Work Package 3 Full Report: Socio-economic political context. SocIEtY: Social Innovation - Empowering the Young for the Common Good. Report to the European Commission, http://www.society-youth.eu/images/media/wp_3_2_final_report.pdf

Besides the description of inequality ascriptive criteria such as migrant background and gender, the discussion on disadvantaged youth is shifting more and more to the causes of inequality – and here especially to the education system. Since PISA it has become increasingly evident that the Austrian education system is highly selective: The school enforces social inequality between different family backgrounds. It reinforces these differences by allocating students to different types of schools/tracks and qualification levels. Which qualification is obtained highly predetermines the choice of vocation, the opportunities available on the apprenticeship and job market, and the future level of income. The focus on the system of education resulted in a new ways of describing inequality, and early school leavers and youth in a NEET situation became more visible in research but as well in politics.

Regarding measures and interventions, we found that there is a broad range of measures aimed at improving the situation of disadvantaged youth. Most of them are designed to help with particular problems regarding school, apprenticeships, or jobs, and are not anti-poverty measures, except financial support for poor families. This also holds true when it comes to youth work. Although in principle youth work offers leisure time facilities for all youngsters, in actuality they function as a supportive service for disadvantaged youth. Another finding is that the Austrian school system maintains and reproduces inequalities as it is highly selective and does not respond to the educational needs of disadvantaged youngsters. This has an impact on the amount of early school leavers and youngsters in a NEET situation.

The focus on interventions is concerning the vocational training of young people as making an apprenticeship is considered to be the best way to avoid future unemployment or poverty. This training system, however, has negative aspects, too: There are not enough apprenticeship places and their amount is diminishing continually. In addition, the quality of the training is very low in some companies, so that youngsters have difficulties to pass the final apprenticeship examination; half of the apprentices are dissatisfied with their training and the dropout rate is high.

The fact that there is no co-ordinated anti-poverty youth policy is reflected in the policy making process. The procedures in the field of financial, educational, and vocational measures follow different rationales. Federalism, and the Austrian system of Social Partnership, which includes representative organisations of employees and employers, yield widely spread influence and power. This makes decision making difficult and opaque. This multi-level governance system places high demands on co-operation, a fact that has come to be understood by an increasing number of actors; albeit young people themselves are barely included in decision-making processes.

There is the National Youth Council and some advisory boards, which include young people; however these institutions are more or less toothless. Rather, they are to be seen as “trainings for (democratic) participation” than participation in and for itself. Moreover, they do not reach disadvantaged young people. Two other measures are more useful for youngsters: firstly, the system of youth work councils in companies, and secondly, the lowering of the voting age, which is accompanied by large-scale information campaigns and makes young people a more valuable demographic for politicians.

All in all, there are many measures taken to improve the situation of disadvantaged youth. Most of them, especially in the field of vocational training, work in a paternalistic way: the programmes are mandatory and the possibility to choose between these programmes or to participate in decision making is limited. Often, they do not get sufficient information on their rights. Most of these programmes are oriented towards employability rather than the development of capabilities. Youngsters perceive these programmes as stigmatising. As concerns politics, disadvantaged youth is usually not engaged; at least youth work tries to make political topics attractive to them, and offer them the opportunity to make the experience that their actions can result in real-world changes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth as a concept unifies diverse social positions, effectively hiding differing sets of resources between people of the same age cohort. At the same time it is precisely at the point of transition into adult or working life that inequalities amongst young people in the same age cohort become distinctive and virulent: social circles become ever more closed, leaving young people who are being disadvantaged with even fewer options to choose from (Sting, 2011: 40). This connection can well be understood within the multi-faceted framework of Sen's capability approach (cf. Bonvin, 2013: 4):

- (1) Sen (1990) pointed out the importance of the informational basis for the understanding of inequality and justice. The so-called "informational basis of Judgement of Justice" (IBJJ), i.e. the available knowledge on poverty, inequality or disadvantage (including data, concepts) form the understanding of the phenomena and so predetermine possible interventions. The analysis of the definition of disadvantage and the descriptions of inequalities is based on this idea (cf. sec. 4).
- (2) Focussing on capabilities (instead of commodities/goods) opens the discussion on poverty and inequality towards formal and informal education, which is especially useful for the analysis of the situation of the youth. The education and career decisions they take have far reaching consequences for their lives. In this regard it is important to question whether young people have the freedom to make "choices they value" or if they are forced to accept the limited offers of the market of apprenticeship posts (cf. sec. 5.1.2. ff.).
- (3) Moreover, the capability approach emphasises the importance of public institutions for individuals' capabilities (Sen, 1999). This opens the door for considering the impact of youth policies and policy making for every young person's opportunities (cf. sec. 5 and 6).
- (4) Finally, Sen discusses the importance of democracy, participation and codetermination (e.g. Sen, 1999), which leads us to the question of participation of young people in both, the programmes they take part (see sec. 5.2) and participation in society (cf. sec. 6.2).

Referring to these aspects of Sen's capability approach, this chapter analyses the understanding of youth poverty and inequality as well as youth policy in Austria. The chapter is structured as follows: After describing the method in section 3, in section 4 we analyse the definition and usage of the terms disadvantage, poverty, inequalities when

taken to describe the situation of young people. Section 5 discusses youth policies and interventions concerning disadvantaged young people. The high amount of measures does not increase the opportunities, but rather works in a paternalistic way, by constructing a dispositive (Foucault) around these young people and highly predetermining their individual decisions. Section 6 describes the political procedures concerning youth in Austria and the participation of (disadvantaged) young people in these procedures. The ways in which young people can participate in decisions on their lives are often seen as “learning for democracy” and organised in an “as-if” manner, which serves as a fig leaf. Section 6 deals with the concept of social innovation, which, however, is rarely used in Austria.

2. DATA AND METHODS

The data we used for this study stems from expert interviews and documentary analysis on youth policies and programmes and was collected between September 2013 and February 2014.

Document analysis: The documents used for this study have been identified by a literature search using google, google scholar, bibliographies, springer link, jstor and websites from youth policy institutions. They cover official reports of ministries and administrative institutions, evaluation reports as well as descriptions of measures and programmes, issued by stakeholders of the field of youth policy.

Analysis of interviews: Interview partners were selected on three levels: practitioners, mid-level, and governing body level (national and regional) taking into account the following three criteria of sampling: a) involvement in or responsibility for youth policy, b) particular expertise on groups of youth identified in the literature review, c) mixing practitioners, mid-level governing bodies and service providers, and policy makers.

Table 1: Interviews

National government policy makers	2
Regional government policy makers	2
Training and education providers	2 public 1 th. sec.
Employment support service providers	2 public
Citizen's bodies (e.g. youth parliaments/councils)	1
Youth work organisations	4
Think tanks (governmental and non-governmental)	0
Networks and membership organisations (sector bodies/agencies, campaigns, lobbying, networking, project work, awareness raising)	5
sum	19

In detail, the sample includes two civil servants of National Ministries, a deputy to Vienna's Parliament, a leader of the youth department of a federal province, representatives of the social partners (Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Labour), a board member of the National youth council, a manager of a youth department of the PES as well as programme managers and practitioners working in non-profit associations.

Two team members conducted all 19 interviews together (except of one), which took about 1.5 to 2.5 hours each. Two interviews were conducted with two interviewees. All 21 respondents agreed to audio recording. They were informed that the interviews will be anonymised and that they will not be identified in any analysis or report. An interview guideline ensured that all main topics were discussed, but the interviewed experts could place their own topics. All interviews were entirely transcribed.

With regard to interview data, we conducted a qualitative content analysis following Mayring (2007). The combination of the analysis of documents and of expert interviews allows describing the way experts understand disadvantage, poverty, and inequality of young people (section 4) and therefore the informational basis of judgements of justice (IBJJ) of Austrian politics.

Regarding questions on policies (instrument/measures) and policy making/implementation (section 5 to 7), we applied the policy analysis approach. It serves for analysing the "assortment" of measures and programmes as well as for answering the question of who is making policy and how measures are implemented.

3. NATIONAL DEFINITIONS

3.1. *Disadvantaged youth and inequalities among youth*

3.1.1. *Exclusion in School and the Life Course of Young People in Austria*

The Austrian education system is generally assessed as not sufficiently effective in accounting for existing social differences, (Knapp and Lauermann, 2012: 12), or as reproducing said differences and thereby legitimizing them. Bacher et al. (2013a) found that it is only via the school system that what may be considered disadvantage becomes a risk factor for youth to end up in a NEET situation. Increasing individualization and competition for educational attainment prolongs the time spent in education and training which in turns prolongs economic dependency (Knapp and Lauermann, 2012: 13)

As indicated above, it is within the school system that inequality is reproduced. There are four divisional points within the Austrian education system (highly selective early on), which work to the exclusion of youth who are being disadvantaged:

- (1) Whether students attend general elementary school (Volksschule) or special needs School (Sonderschule)
- (2) Which secondary school they attend at the age of 10: Academic secondary school

- (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule (AHS)), lower secondary school (Hauptschule), or new secondary school (Neue Mittelschule)
- (3) Continuation of / entrance into upper secondary school after nine years of compulsory schooling.
- (4) Pursuit of further education or VET at the end of compulsory school attendance (Vogtenhuber, S. et al., 2012: 62).

In the following section we will analyse the structure of social inequality reproduced in and through the different levels of the Austrian education system.

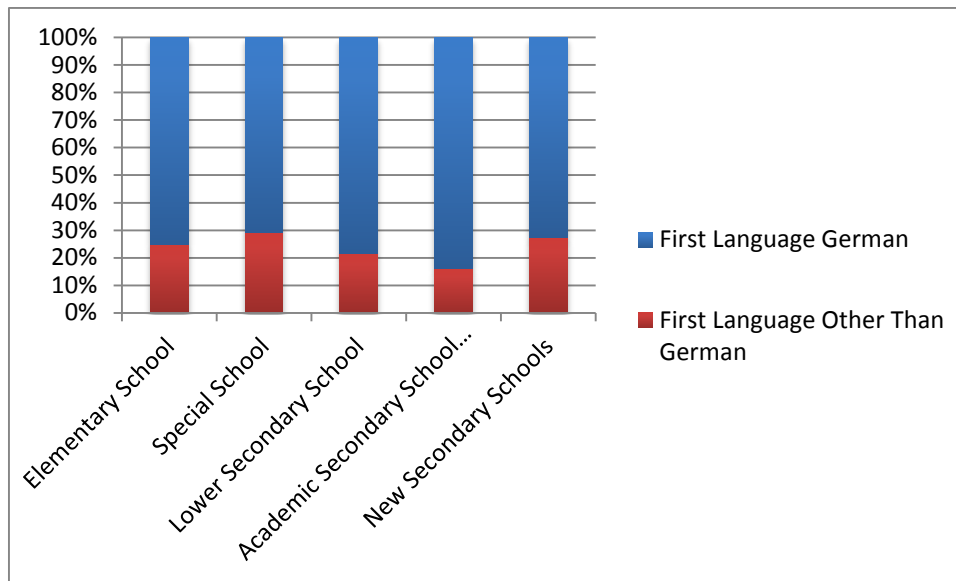
Educational attainment and background are closely linked in Austria: children are at risk, whose parents are first generation immigrants, are affected by poverty or are of low educational attainment (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012c: 22). These factors work cumulatively (ibid.: 24). There is little social mobility from one generation to the next (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012: 125).

In part, this is due to the traditional approach to differing levels of academic ability being traditionally tackled by selective segregation and homogenization by form regarding lower secondary education, and segregation by ability within forms, whereas current policy calls for addressing different levels of ability individually (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012a: 78). Bacher et al. (2013), in following Herzog-Punzenberger (2009, 2012), list the following reasons for the apparent lack in fostering children with a migrant background:

- parents' low educational attainment makes it difficult to support children in a school system which,
- being only half day and lacking individual support, relies on parents to supervise their children's homework.
- Also, the early divisional points enforce the disadvantage of migrant parents with low educational attainment.
- Further elements comprise high numbers of first and second-generation children being put into the same classroom, and the lack of an acknowledgement of multilingualism as a resource.
- And finally, the institutional discrimination of students with a migrant background in assigning a disproportionate number of them to special schools (Sonderschule) (Bacher, 2013: 114).

Elementary School or special needs school

The Austrian educational system reproduces and deepens social inequalities. Thus, students with a migrant background are overrepresented in special needs schools (Sonderschule). Children whose first language is not German make up 19% of the general student population in Austria. They are more likely to attend special needs school: they make up 29% in special schools versus 25% in general elementary schools. Attendance in a special needs school is either granted by parental request or determined by a commission within the first two years of school attendance in elementary school. In practice, however, it is often the children's teachers who will suggest to, or even convince the children's parents to request special needs education, as several of our interview partners report.

Table 2: Students by First Language German/Non-German, 2011/12

Source: Statistics Austria, our Graph.

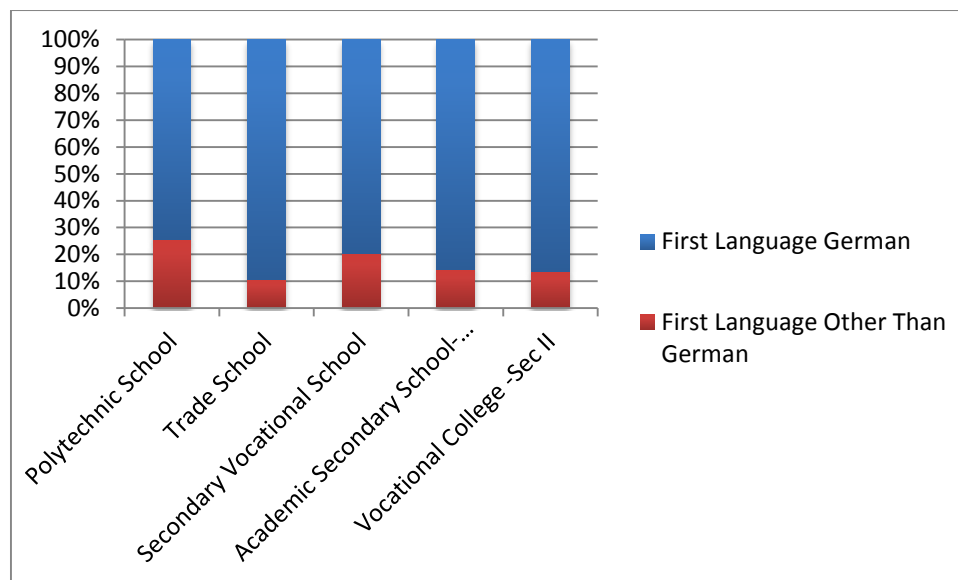
Lower Secondary Level

There are two forms of lower secondary school in Austria: Lower secondary school (Hauptschule) or the first part of the academic secondary school, that is, preparatory schools which may be attended for both lower and upper secondary level. In order to attend the academic secondary school (AHS), which often serves as a gateway to tertiary education, children need to have high marks in German and math upon graduating from elementary school. If not, they need to pass an entrance exam. Vogtenhuber et al. (2012b) report that in 2010, children whose first language is not German made up 20% of students in the lower secondary level, but they made up only 16% of AHS-students; 21% in lower secondary school and 28% of new secondary school. In special needs schools they made up 30% of the student population (2012b: 36). Furthermore, children in larger cities are more likely to attend an academic secondary school (AHS). Girls are more likely to attend an AHS as well. (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012a: 64). Regarding one's parents' educational attainment, attendance rates in different forms of upper secondary schools differ a great deal: Half of the students attending the AHS have at least one parent holding a tertiary degree; another fifth has a parent with an upper secondary level graduation exam (Matura). Only 30% of parents whose children attend the lower secondary school or the new secondary school hold a Matura or tertiary degree. Students whose parents have graduated from VET or not at all only make up 31% of lower secondary of the academic secondary school. Only 8% of children whose parents only have minimum schooling attend academic secondary school (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012b: 70).

Upper Secondary Level

Many youth whose first language is not German leave school after the end of compulsory education (after nine years of schooling at the age of 15); they only make up 13% (14% in 2011) of the student population on the upper secondary level. In upper secondary AHS, 76% of 15 to 16 year olds have at least one parent holding the Matura, and 50% in BHS (Berufsbildende Höhere Schule, upper-level secondary colleges), whereas 25% to 30% youth in BMS (Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule, secondary vocational school), vocational school or polytechnic schools do (Vogtenhuber et al. 2012a: 70) In 2011, 59% of pupils in the 9th grade, which for many youth marks the last year of compulsory schooling as nine year attendance is compulsory, were either in an AHS or BHS. 19% were attending a BMS, 19% in polytechnic school (trade school) and 2% in special school. (Vogtenhuber et al. 2012a: 63).

Table 3: Upper Secondary Levels, 2011/12



Source: Statistics Austria, our Graph.

3.2. Modes of Disadvantage

Chiappero-Martinetti and Spreafico (2013) have pointed out that interpersonal as well as intergroup differences (“diversity”) need to be accounted for in order to complete the shift from a one-dimensional approach on disadvantage: “Indeed, given one’s resources, diverse personal, socio-economic and even environmental conditions can affect differently the extent and type of real opportunities people have” (ibid.: 15).

In applying this in a pragmatic approach to data analysis, it is to be kept in mind that different group membership pertaining to an individual actor might play out very differently over the life-course of said actor. “In both cases, it is not a single factor or a set of separate factors that determine individual (dis)advantage, but the combination and interrelation between personal characteristics and a plurality of contextual factors that

affect individuals' positions and may determine individual differences in terms of opportunities or capabilities" (ibid.: 28).

We will present groups of youth who are being disadvantaged based on existing literature as well as on our experts' notions (IBJJs) of who is a youth being disadvantaged: these comprise groups sharing certain attributes, or, as Chiappero-Martinetti and Spreafico put it, sources of equality (2013: 16), such as gender, first language, citizenship or economic status, as well as groups defined by commonly used indicators such as NEETs or Early School Leavers, and use the relative age span based on the data available, which is relative to the definition of the indicator.

3.2.1. Early School Leavers

Steiner (2005: 22) defined two main indicators for disadvantaged youth in Austria: Early School Leavers and the unemployed. In the most recent national report on education, the EU definition of Early school leavers is expanded to also include youth who

- a) graduate from lower secondary school (Hauptschule),
- b) graduate from polytechnic school (Polytechnische Schule),
- c) graduate from the one year form of a secondary technical and vocational school medium level (Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule),
- d) or leave school on secondary level without graduating (the latter being the EU-indicator) (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012b: 116).

In 2008/09, 7.2% of 14-year old students attended neither further schooling nor VET-training, 6.6% of girls vs. 7.8% of boys (ibid.: 117). Most early school leavers were attending lower secondary school (36%) or polytechnic school (38%); 8% were in special school or secondary technical and vocational school medium level (BMS), only 4% were attending an academic secondary school (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule) or upper-level secondary vocational college (Berufsbildende Höhere Schule). About a third has another first language than German (ibid.: 116).

3.2.2. NEET

More recent research has been focused on the NEETs indicator, as do Bacher et al. (2013). As recent policy has focused strongly on NEETs, we present these groups in depth: Bacher et al. (2013) have found that from 2006 to 2011, 8.6% of 16 to 24 year olds, that is, 78,000 youth could be classified as in a NEET situation, of whom 9.2% were in waiting position (that is, waiting to start further education or to start a job already secured), 46.9% actively seeking employment, 22.4% wanting to work, but not actively seeking employment, 21.5% neither seeking employment nor wanting to work, mostly because they're caregivers – 53.7% of this subgroup live with one or several children under the

age of three; 64.5% are caregivers, frequently young women with a migrant background⁴ (Bacher et al., 2013: 120)

Bacher et al. (2013) identified young men suffering from undefined mental ailments as one of larger groups in the group of disadvantaged in a NEET situation. Several interview partners on different levels report a rise in mental ailments, as did this practitioner, unpromptedly:

“What we’re noticing particularly strongly is the increase of youths and young adults who have psychological problems, partly with massive handicaps in that direction. With or without a diagnosis, which hardly makes any difference. [On being asked which kind of psychological problems:] That is entirely, really, the whole range from anxiety disorders to lacking, to problems with aggression, quote unquote, that is, auto-aggressive behaviour or aggressive behaviour towards a third party. Naturally, the whole circle of forms: borderline, depression, the whole palette.” (int. 17)

3.2.3. Poverty / Social Exclusion

Poverty and social exclusion appear as marginal topics in public discourse on Austrian youth, even though 13% of youth between the age of 15 and 17 are at risk of poverty, 5% of whom are materially deprived (EU-SILC, 2012). While young adults between the age of 18 and 29 are often the focus of labour market research, poverty in this age group is seldom studied, as Laimer and Oismüller note, even though adults in transitioning phases have been identified as running a particularly high risk of poverty (2011: 168). In their secondary analysis of EU-SILC 2004 and 2009, this age group are in risk of poverty, as predicted. (180).

3.3. Labour market position of young people and problems at labour market entry

3.3.1. Entry into the labour market and VET Training, Integrative VET

Being disadvantaged in the context of the labour market can be defined either as young people being unemployed, and thus being disadvantaged, or as being disadvantaged, and thus being unemployed. The focus of the former is on a structural mismatch between the labour and training market and a high youth unemployment rate, which is attempted to be met by mostly individualised measures. The latter puts the focus on potential individual shortcomings, which are attempted to be met by highly structured transition regimes which often go along with a low unemployment rate (Steiner, 2005: 7).

⁴ If the NEET status is defined as lasting for at least two quarters however, the rate is reduced to 4.1% (37,000). If defined as lasting for at least 3 quarters, 2.6% (24,000). 1.4% (12,000) are in a NEET situation for min. 5 quarters

Considering the number of 53,000 Early School Leavers (7.6%) between 18 and 24 (Statistik Austria, 2013a, cf. Stadler and Wiedenhofer-Galik, 2012: 967), 78,000 NEETs (8.6%) in the age group of 16 to 24 (Bacher et al., 2013), and 175,669 (8.7%) unemployed young people between 15 and 24 in 2012 (AMS, 2013: 22), the design of the transition from school to vocational training and work has garnered increased attention during the last years. Most interventions focus on leavers of secondary school (age 14 or 15) and unemployed young people (up to 24), and aim to accelerate the entrance into the labour market. Many programmes try to push school leavers of secondary schools – which have not been successful in school, have had difficulties with the language, or the school system – to enter into an apprenticeship. A successfully completed apprenticeship is still believed to be a guarantee for a job and an adequate income, although the payment during the apprenticeship is comparably low and the long-term opportunities of leavers of continuing upper schools or high schools are much better (cf. Alteneder et al. 2006). An interviewed expert of a municipal labour support organisation, believing that a permanent fulltime job is rather utopian, emphasised, that

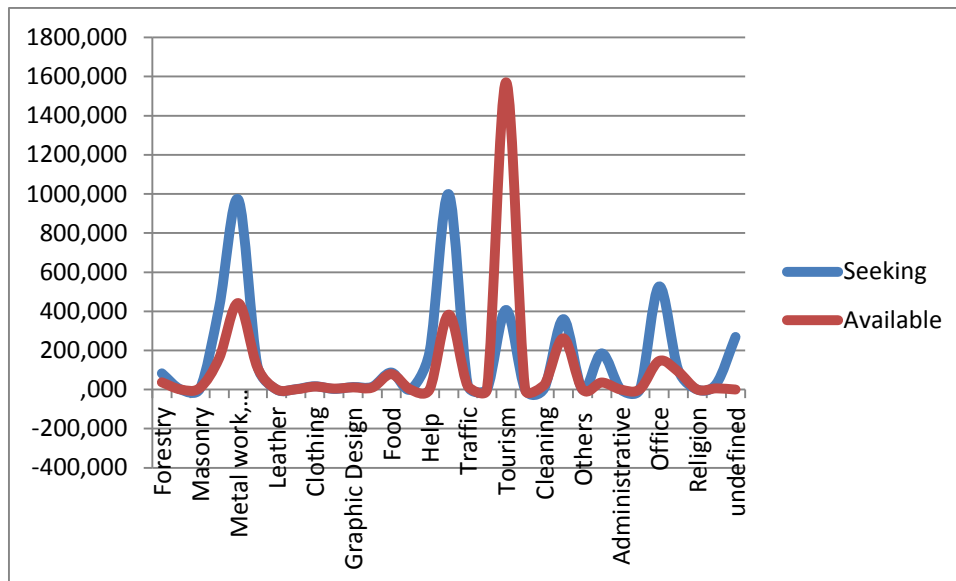
“it makes a difference if you kick out a youngster of 15 and tell him: ‘Apply for a job’ and at the same time: ‘But really, nobody will need you’ – or if you say the same thing to a youngster of 18 with a certain educational foundation and a little bit more stable personality. A boy of 15 or 16 probably just gets the feeling that ‘nobody needs me’. That makes a difference.” (int. 15)

At the End of 2012, 125,000 youngsters were about to do an apprenticeship in one of 33,700 companies (BMSAK, 2013a: 31). About 40% of an age group choose this kind of vocational training (WKO, 2014: 3).

VET is most strongly segregated by gender, but is also very exclusive towards youth with a migrant background: only 8.7% of students in vocational schools for apprentices (Berufsschule) are multilingual, that is, have a migrant background without German as a first language (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell, 2012: 247).

In 2013, 5,727 youth were looking for a VET post, while 3,420 such post were advertised. Furthermore, there is a mismatch between the posts advertised and what young people are actually looking for (Baliweb). In 2011, 11,942 attended public VET, 9,832 of whom in one of two general tracks (ÜBA 1 and ÜBA 2, see below) and 2,018 were attending special needs public VET (Trinko, 2012: 3).⁵

⁵ See also 5.1.3 and 5.1.4.

Table 5: Available VET vs. Youth seeking

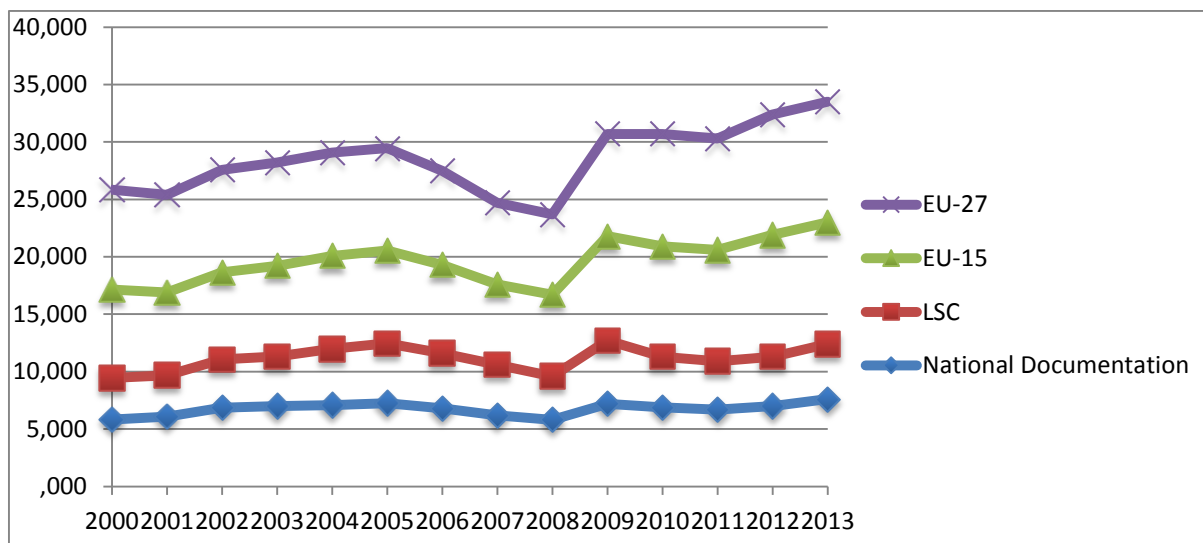
Source: Baliweb, our Graph

The largest mismatch which should work to the advantage of VET post seeking youth, was recorded in tourism: 1,571 posts were advertised whilst only 407 individuals were looking for a post in tourism. Vice versa, there were 383 posts available in trade, but 999 youth looking for an apprenticeship in this profession. In 2013, 26,539 youth between the age of 15 and 24 attended some sort of active labour market policy programme.

3.3.2. Youth Unemployment

The unemployment rate in Austria is low when compared to other European countries. So is the level of qualification of young for example regarding the rate of how few may be classified as early school leavers. The position of people without high attainment in education in the labour market is generally declining. Consequently youth who have only attained compulsory occupation face more difficulties in transitioning from education to the first labour market (Bacher et al., 2013, see also Hirschbichler and Knittler, 2010), but neither the school system nor social security have been adapted to these longer transition phases.

Table 4: Youth Unemployment



Source: Baliweb, our Graph

There was a slight, but insignificant increase of youth seeking employment between 2006 and 2011; there is however, an increase of NEET youth in 2009, which was reduced by 2011 (Bacher, 2013: 78). In 2011, unemployment was particularly high for 15-24 year old early school leavers, at 8.3%; 12.1% of 15-24 year olds who only have basic education were unemployed (Statistik Austria, 2013c).

In 2013, 5.7% of 15 to 19 year olds (9,597) and 11.8% of 20 to 24 (34,516) year olds were registered as unemployed, the average over both age cohorts being 9.9%. This is low by international comparison, which reveals a strong commitment of the Austrian VET-regime and relevant actors (government, social partners, regional und municipal councils etc.) assure that school leavers are offered a VET place. However if the unemployment rate for people of 20 to 24 is taken into account it becomes clear that there are also significant problems for young people in the Austrian labour market. The unemployment rate of this age cohort is high compared to the rate of the general unemployment rate, which was at 7.6% in 2013. The number of unemployed of this age group has considerably increased in the crisis. They belong to the most affected groups. The EUROSTAT unemployment rate for the 15 to 24 year olds was 8.6%.

4. POLICIES, INSTRUMENTS AND LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

4.1. The main instruments to tackle inequalities and poverty

The instruments to tackle inequalities and poverty mainly refer to three fields. Firstly, there is a broad range of financial subsidies for families with children. Secondly, there are measures to improve the fairness of the Austrian school system, which is known to produce immense inequalities in opportunities and competences. These programmes

intend to inform and advise young people, and guide them into further education or offer vocational training to them. Finally, youth work is, at least by professionals, considered as a service that helps disadvantaged young people to improve their abilities and soft skills and thus their long-term opportunities.

4.1.1. Financial support for families

Austria has a generous system of family-oriented financial support. Families receive *child benefits* for each child up to 18 years, or up to 24 years if the child attends a school, higher education, or is in vocational training. The benefits consists of a combination of a family allowance (Familienbeihilfe) and a so-called “child tax credit” (Kinderabsetzbetrag), which are paid out together and in total ranges from € 163 to € 210 per child and month, according to age and number of children in the family. There is extra support for handicapped children, an amount of € 138 per month. For students there is extra support that is, € 100 at the beginning of each school year. These benefits are usually given to the female parent; they are not income related or means tested, which limits their (re)distributional impact. The Austrian state spends about € 4.4 billion on a total of 1.7 million children. In addition, there are tax credits for single parents (Alleinerzieherabsetzbetrag), sole earners (Alleinverdienerabsetzbetrag), payers of child support (Unterhaltsabsetzbetrag), and child care (Kinderbetreuungsabsetzbetrag) as well as a child tax allowance (Kinderfreibetrag), all of which reduce the tax level.

Families without any or with low income also benefit from the means-tested minimum income scheme (bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung). In 2013, this benefit guaranteed a monthly amount of at least € 794 per adult, of € 1,220 for two adults and of € 146 per child up to three children, with € 122 per child for each additional kid. However, all these amounts are below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold according to the EU definition (Statistik Austria, 2013b: 10). Statistical records on the number of adolescents who receive such benefits are not available. The fact that more than 21,700 single parents and 63,300 couples with one or more children received such payments in 2012 (Statistik Austria, 2013: 33) shows the importance of this benefit for the youths. However, minors themselves do not have any entitlements in most federal provinces, as is criticized by the “Poverty Conference – Network against Poverty and Social Exclusion” (Armutskonferenz, 2012; cf. BMASK, 2012: 82).

4.1.2. School world interventions

While formal education is still considered a means of social advancement, the Austrian School System has turned out – as shown above – to be highly selective. Among other things, this results from early school tracking, and from selection instead of support for weak students (int. 1, 5, 8). Some changes have been made during the past few years to render the system more just. Among these improvements are:

(1) Teachers of the first grade in elementary school, in cooperation with the child and the parents, have to develop an individual support plan for students who have on-going

learning difficulties in order to support them in this early stage and to avoid on-going school problems (Eder and Thonhauser, 2010: 559).

(2) In 2008 class sizes were lowered to 25 students (ibid.).

(3) As an attempt to move towards a comprehensive school for all students up to the age of 14 a new type of school called “New Middle School” (neue Mittelschule) was introduced. This was to tackle the growing problems of the so-called Hauptschule (one of three forms of lower secondary education), which has become a so called “school for the rest” (“Restschule”) – at least in urban areas; this notion refers to the fact that, in urban areas, where the majority of children attend an Academic Secondary School (highest level of education), all children with learning difficulties, family problems, migrant backgrounds etc. are placed in these schools. The new middle school often includes after-school programmes.

(4) Up until now the school system is focused on ‘fast knowledge transfer’ in the mornings, relocating studying and doing homework to the afternoons at home, counting on the abilities of parents to help with the homework. As it has become apparent that children might be disadvantaged if their parents are not up-to-date on the specific educational content, or if they simply do not have the time to support their children with their homework (Cf. AK, 2013a), afternoon childcare is being expanded. In 2013, 119,000 out of about 1 million students attended school facilities in the afternoon (Die Presse, 2013); and 23% of all families with children use some kind of afternoon care (AK, 2013a). However, afternoon care is most widely available in academic secondary schools (Bacher, 2013), and thus does not help the disadvantaged youngsters. Some non-profit organisations help youngsters cope with the school requirements for free. One integrative programme (‘Mama lernt Deutsch’ - ‘Mum is learning German’), for instance, includes the parents by teaching German to them as well.

Nevertheless, until now all these efforts have not changed the selective mechanisms of the school system significantly, which is due to a political stalemate at the federal level. The education system is only changeable through a change of the Austrian constitution for which a two-thirds majority is necessary. Some leaders of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) are strictly against the implementation of comprehensive schools (Gesamtschulen) (Kriechhammer, 2012) and even discussed to transform the academic secondary school in an even more elitist school (Burgstaller and Pumberger, 2013; Pumberger, 2013). Interestingly enough, while some interviewees mentioned that the NEETs-quota of Austria is below the Europe-2020-goal of 10 per cent, there seems to be no discussion at all on another educational goal: The EU-strategy urges as well that 40% of a cohort should have a tertiary degree (Commission, 2010). In 2010 the quota of the age group 25 to 34 was only 19% in Austria (Statistik Austria, 2013c: 89). Interventions towards this EU-goal would influence the whole structure of inequality.

With regard to inclusive learning, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons is not fully implemented. Besides inclusive classes, there are still “special educational needs schools” (Sonderschulen) for physically or mentally handicapped children, for weak students or for so-called “problem children”. Whereas this type of school is meant to address the

special needs of these children, it seems that it is still used to park “difficult students”, students with migrant background or with difficulties with the German language (cf. sec. 4): Only 1.7% of all German-speaking students are in a special school, but 2.6% of the students with another colloquial language (Statistik Austria, 2013c: 27). Furthermore 64.1% of special school students are boys (ibid.: 25). Some of the interviewed experts criticized these “removal proceedings” for multiple reasons: During the decision-making process the parents of the students are neither sufficiently informed on the meaning of the procedures or the consequences, nor effectually involved in the procedures (int. 11). In spite of the intended special promotion this type of school “makes students with handicaps out of disadvantaged students” (Luciak, 2009: 369): The attendance in special educational needs schools is stigmatised and later leads to difficulties when looking for an apprenticeship position or a job (int. 11, 13), and there is usually no way back into the regular school system.

4.1.3. Transition from school to vocational training and work

Considering the outlined problems young people leaving school after nine years of compulsory schooling are confronted with, the design of the transition from school to vocational training and work has garnered increased attention during the last years. Thus, a range of activities and programmes have been developed mainly by the PES, the social partners, the government and local and regional councils.

Job information. The job information centres of the Austrian Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, abbr.: PES) offer written information, lectures, and guidance for occupational orientation. This service works in a very formal way and is not always well received, so a new service named “Youth Coaching” (Jugendcoaching) was established throughout Austria in 2013. During their last school year (at age 14 or 15), teachers select students who they think have not yet grappled the subject of vocational training or a job, and would need support. The youth coaches then can use the contacts of this outreach approach to get in touch with them. According to the needs of the young people these coaches offer simple information or an encompassing, continuous support. This service is mainly offered by NGOs. An estimated 35,000 students were coached in 2013 (BMSAK, 2013: 31). This programme was initially developed for the support of disabled youngsters, and was expanded to all schools and students in the hopes of lowering the number of early school leavers (int. 13).

Another kind of advisory programme tries to influence making of career decisions of girls with a focus on better-paid occupations. Young girls are offered to participate in workshops on technical or craft subjects.

Production school. For young people who do not want to enter in an apprenticeship or who are considered not to be ready for this step, “production schools” are offered. Despite the term “school” this institution is not a regular school, but a programme for unemployed young people, which is financed by the PES (with the participation of each Federal province in Austria). Production schools combine practical manual work, vocational guidance, social-pedagogical support, internships and answers to a backlog of

fundamental knowledge. The courses last up to one year. Some young people with difficult school experiences come along better with this practical, occupation-related approach (Bergmann and Schelepa, 2011; AMS, 2013: 22).

A pilot project in Vienna called “Spacelab” combines a low-threshold programme where young people can work on a daily basis with a formal production school. So youngsters can have an initial motivating work experience in the low-threshold programme and then enter in the production school, which could lead to a regular apprenticeship in the end.

4.1.4. Integration into the “dual apprenticeship system”

As mentioned before, in Austria the completion of an apprenticeship is considered a guaranteed path to a stable living situation above the poverty threshold, especially for disadvantaged young people. This approach is taken from statistics, which show that the odds of being unemployed are much lower after an apprenticeship. In 2012 the unemployment risk for economically active/working people with no more than compulsory schooling is 18.7%; the unemployment risk for skilled workers with a completed vocational training is only 6.0% (AMS, 2013: 11; cf. Statistik Austria, 2012). For this many steps are taken to place them in an apprenticeship and to keep them there, even if it seems to be more and more difficult to find a job after an apprenticeship since the beginning of the recent crisis (int. 13, cf. sec. 4). The number of the unemployed aged 19 to 24 increased between 2007 and 2012 by 8 % (from 128.692 to 139.014) (AMS Charts, 2013).

Given the increasing reluctance of companies to offer apprenticeships, public institutions have developed a range of fiscal incentives to increase and stabilise the number of available apprenticeship opportunities. The Chamber of Commerce gives out subsidies for every new apprenticeship and for additional support that companies offer their apprentices. In 2010 € 193 million were distributed (BMSAK, 2014). Furthermore the PES pays out subsidies to companies as an incentive to offer apprenticeships for girls in typical male professions, to young people that are disadvantaged on the labour market, to disabled persons, and to adults over 19 that could not find another job because of lacking qualification. In 2012 the Employment Service spent € 22 million covering 8,000 apprenticeships (AMS, 2013: 22). The “integrated vocational training” (Integrierte Berufsausbildung) is a modification of the normal apprenticeship for people without a secondary school qualification, with handicaps or for students coming from special needs education schools (Sonderschule). These apprenticeships are either longer, so that the apprentices have more time to learn (verlängerte Lehrausbildung) or they cover only a part of the regular apprenticeship (Teilqualifizierungslehre), and sometimes they take place in special training facilities. About 5,700 people took part in an integrated vocational training by the end of 2012 (Dornmayr and Nowak, 2013: 67).

To tackle the problems of the dual system and the transition from education to the labour market, the so-called “Austrian Vocational training Guarantee” for Young People (Ausbildungsgarantie) was developed in 2008 by the social partners and the government (cf. Haidinger and Atzmüller, 2013). Under the Austrian Vocational training Guarantee

for Young People (Ausbildungsgarantie), 11.700 training opportunities are organized at special training centres during the school year 2013/14 (BMSAK, 2013a: 23). There are two options. Either a full apprenticeship is offered as a supra-company vocational training (überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung) with a few internships, or the training takes place in more than one company as an inter-company vocational training (Dornmayr et al., 2012: 28). However during the training the trainees always have the possibility to change to a regular apprenticeship, and one third of trainees use this opportunity (ibid.: 33). Apprentices in these training facilities are paid a remuneration (8 € per day) which is below the payment for a regular apprentice. According to many interview partners it seems that young people do not consider supra-company vocational training a “normal way” to do an apprenticeship; because of that the training is somehow stigmatised (int. 15, 7). Even experts make reservations. An executive of the Chamber of Commerce assumed that they have as many holidays as students, which is not at all the case, as the supra-company vocational training includes according to law the full working hours of a usual apprenticeship:

“What I have often heard, that, how can I say it, that it is more comfortable there, because I have as many holidays as a student and I do not have to be at the shop floor at 6 or 7 in the morning; half past eight is okay as well. I can understand that.”
(int. 6)

The Austria Employment Service spent € 122 million for this programme in 2012 (AMS, 2013: 22); the overall costs were € 613 million (BMSAK, 2013a: 29).

Overall 48.2 % of unemployed youth were integrated in one programme or another. In 2011 more than € 349 million was spent for this group, which is more than a third of the total budget spent for the unemployed, young and old (AMS, 2013: 23). Besides production school and supra-company vocational training there are some more short time training facilities for unemployed young people.

Currently two major modifications are on the way. (1) During the government coalition negotiations it has become clear that the Vocational training Guarantee for Young People will be transformed into a Vocational training Duty (Ausbildungspflicht, Ausbildungsverpflichtung), prescribing that youngster must stay in school or in an apprenticeship up to age of 18. Penalties similar to the impositions of truancy are foreseen (Bundeskanzleramt, 2013: 10; cf. Neuhold and Rosner, 2014). The Social Democratic Minister of Social Affairs pursues this project, and most interview partners endorse the idea (int. 5, 6, 13). Partly they hope that this “education duty” goes along with an expansion of programmes (int. 5, 13). The dangers that young people might be pushed into low-pay apprenticeships, that they do not have the possibility and the freedom to choose (and to fail) and that they have not the opportunity to experience what it mean to be motivated intrinsically is considered fairly insignificant (int. 7).

(2) In a new project a system should be developed that allows collecting certifications for skills acquired in practical work as well as in Employment Service training during periods of unemployment. In the end, these modules should be combined into a certificate on the level of a graduation of an apprenticeship training (int. 15, 13).

At first sight the “dual apprenticeships system” seems to be an easy way to enter the working life; for this reason, other countries in Europe consider adapting it. However, not taking into account the problem of transferring this system in other countries, there are enough problems related to this kind of vocational education in Austria.

- (1) Despite of the huge amounts paid to apprenticing companies (and administrations) there are less and less enterprises offering places. The situation on the market of apprenticeships even worsened at the beginning of the crisis in 2008. Since then, over 12,500 of 128,233 apprentice opportunities were lost.
- (2) Often the offered places do not meet the interests of the young people. A recent study shows that half of the apprentices could not find the place in their preferred field (AK, 2013).
- (3) Moreover, apprentices often are not taken over at the end of their training and have then difficulties to find a job. This means that unemployment might only be postponed instead of being removed. Actually, whereas the unemployment of youngsters between 15 and 19 was 4.7% in 2012, the rate of the age group 20 to 24 is 9.0%.
- (4) In 2012 about 16% of the apprenticeships were discontinued (Dornmayr and Nowak, 2013: 49ff.), partly because of problems with colleagues or the company, or because the apprentices dislike the employment or want to change the occupation / vocation (ibid.; cf. Oehme, Beran and Krisch, 2007: 106).
- (5) Furthermore, about 18% of the apprentices do not pass the final examination at the end of the apprenticeship (Dornmayr and Nowak, 2013: 69ff.); sometimes apprentices are not trained in their vocation, but misused as “cheap workers”; then they get the impression that they have not learned enough, and avoid the examination in fear of disgrace, as a interviewee explained (int. 7).

All in all, the dual apprenticeship system leads to the expectation that youngsters at the age of 15 or 16 enter working life and make far-reaching decisions on their occupational life of which they cannot garner the consequences. A “juvenile moratorium” or stage of orientation is not foreseen; whereas students of the academic secondary school do not have to make similar decisions. Youngsters who are not well orientated or cannot stay in school because of bad marks or because their parents expect them to earn money must enter an apprenticeship immediately or are referred to youth coaching, training programmes, application trainings and supra-company vocational training before long. The expectation of the early entrance in the work life goes along with an “institutionalisation of problems” and the creation of “problematic youngsters”. Within this stigmatising system, organised by the PES and the social partners, the youngsters always have to repeat the “story of their deficiencies and their failure” and learn to become an object of advisors (cf. int. 16).

4.1.5. Youth Work

In Austria youth work is divided into several areas: there is the youth work of the official youth associations (e.g. sports club, musical societies, boy scouts, fire department youth). This is the largest sector, but usually they are used more by middle-class than by disadvantaged youngsters. Open youth work services are open to everybody, but mostly

used by disadvantages youngsters. Furthermore, there is school social work, short time participatory youth projects and youth information (cf. BMWFJ, 2013; Liebentritt, 2013: 842).

Open youth work attracts disadvantaged youngsters as it offers spaces to meet friends and open-minded adults you can talk to in an easy-going atmosphere and without compulsion to buy. The open youth work offers leisure activities like sports and games in youth centres and, especially in Vienna, in parks. As girls often are underrepresented in the activities offered daily, there are some activities especially designed for them (BOJA, 2011). 400 associations in Austria offer these services. In Vienna alone, about 1000 employees work in this field (Krisch and Wehsely, 2013). The services are not oriented towards formal education or employability but focused on development of every-day competencies and skills, flourishing by offering new experiences, and emancipation (Oehme, Beran and Krisch, 2007).

Sometimes conflicts arise when youth workers are asked to give up their ambitious aims for a “more realistic” orientation towards work and employability. This has to do with the realisation that a standard biography is utopic for a lot of these young people (int. 13, 20). All in all, the approach of the youth workers seems very close to Sen’s approach of capabilities that enlarge the scope of action in a broader sense, not just focused on the labour market. Some other theories play an important role in the open youth work: “Social space theory” (“Sozialraumorientierung”) emphasises the importance of the local community (Krisch, 2009; Deinet and Krisch, 2013; Spatscheck, 2012; Oehme, Beran and Krisch, 2007). Often the community offers resources to solve some problems of the youths, e. g. if voluntary support for school work can be found, or possibilities to work and so on.

The orientation towards the “social space” shows another feature of the youth worker’s approach. Whereas all the other measures listed above related to education, apprenticeship and work, focus on the individual person and their problems (bad grades, missing certificates, unemployment etc.), the “social space” approach makes it clear that the constraints as well as the resources of the environment are crucial for the development of a person. This approach includes the awareness of the fact that the youngsters do not have to blame themselves.

Youth workers increasingly face the challenge of reporting the results of their work. A new Federal Budget Law (Bundeshaushaltsgesetz) codified “impact orientation” and “performance budgeting” for many administrative fields. Against this background, many youth work associations has begun to implement an impact-oriented approach in quality management although the analysis technics are hardly elaborated, but complicated. This makes it difficult to concentrate on the work with the youngsters.

4.1.6. Poverty alleviation approaches and coordination

As we have seen, the measures taken against poverty are focused, for the most part, on training and work related interventions; but these interventions are not renowned as anti-

poverty measures. Monetary benefits like the child benefit do not target needy families but aim to support every family with children in Austria. According to this, politics sells this intervention as suitable for the “normal family”. Only the financial aid in the form of the “needs-oriented” minimum income scheme (and similar benefits addressed to individuals and families in need, e.g. housing benefits or public housing), and partly the provision of childcare facilities are understood as specific poverty alleviation measures. This negligence of poverty might be the reason why coordination of anti-poverty policies is weak. However, some federal provinces now established “coordination offices” to align youth work / social pedagogical support and work-related programmes.

4.2. *Voice and Choice of Young People in relation to measures and programmes*

In the theoretical preparatory work for the policy analysis of the SocIEtY-project, Thomas Ley (2013) clarifies the meaning of participation in the context of the capability approach. Doing so, he favours a broad definition of the term that includes the scope of opportunities and the co-determination in every-day decisions. This leads to the question, how youngsters can influence, shape, and determine the measures and programmes provided to them. Furthermore one might ask to what degree they have a real choice between different options – or even the possibility to opt out. In the following section we discuss this freedom of choice in different field of interventions.

(1) In youth centres the participation of youngsters in decisions regarding the leisure programmes is quite normal, even if there are no fixed standards. A special event of some Viennese youth centres is a role reversal (“Seitenwechsel”). Some of the young users take over the responsibility for the youth centre for some weeks. They even have the possibility to change house rules. The pedagogical staffs only serve as advisers for the “new leaders” (int. 20, 5; see Sallaba, 2008). This allows young people to make experiences with taking over responsibilities, bearing of consequences, and criticism through fun and games, even if this is not a sustainable way of co-determination. In addition to such projects, youth centres try to support young people in having a voice by teaching them methods of expressing themselves like graffiti spraying, rap, or hip hop. In some rare cases the users are involved in some team sessions. However, as far as we know from the interviews there are neither complaint procedures nor is there an Ombudsman in youth centres, as the teams think that problems can be productively solved face-to-face (int. 20).

(2) The newly introduced youth coaches (see above) are said to take the wishes of young people more into account than the existing job counselling of the Austrian Employment Service. Nevertheless, especially for the disadvantaged youth “cooling out” – that is working on the lowering of aspirations (Goffman, 1952; du Bois-Reymond, 2002) – is a very common advisory strategy (int. 22, 20). It seems that the “openness” of the coaching is more of a method to “catch the youngsters”, as one interviewed expert repeated several times (int. 15). Thus, consultancy here does not follow the idea of the capability approach to extend the opportunities of choice of individuals, but rather “works on the preferences” to adapt them to the demands of the PES and the labour market. The interviews with

administration experts also showed that problems with finding the right job, profession, or apprenticeship are sometimes interpreted as a lack of motivation. The limited opportunities of young people, however, are not considered (int. 6, 9, 15), and reflection on the implications of the working life – or life as an unemployed – are avoided. A manager of a youth department of the PES in answering the question if young people should be prepared for periods of unemployment:

“I don’t think it’s a good idea to tell them ‘Okay, my dear, now you are at school and I’ll tell you, you will be unemployed in your life.’ The youngster only understands, that this old boy explains me that I should expect that I will be unemployed – top-notch, I flout it! ... I think you rather have to tell them: ‘be careful! What could we do? In which direction can we go? Where can I help you?’ Now, youth-coaches or some social pedagogues do this. I wouldn’t confront them...” (int. 9)

It seems that the consultancy should rather disguise than clarify the perception of their situation. The Vocational training Duty which is part of the coalition contract and is planned to be introduced in 2015 comprises the duty to be consulted / supported (Bundeskanzleramt, 2013: 10). This will change the counselling setting towards a more obvious activating measure.

(3) As concerns the choice of the apprenticeships and the profession linked to it, the common idea is that everybody has the right to choose freely. However, as there are not enough apprenticeships places available, the choice is rather limited (dependent on region and sector); so which apprenticeships are available is determined by the employers. As said above, the situation for youngsters who seek an apprenticeship place worsens. Especially young people with non-majority names, migrant background, bad grades, or without a secondary school qualification have great difficulties to find an adequate apprenticeship or job even if highly motivated (see e.g. Wieser and Häntschel, 2012: 39). This was confirmed by several interviewees (int. 7, 17). Often they have to accept occupations that they do not really like. Then youngsters might try to find another apprenticeship or take part in a programme. According to the interviews, in this case PES usually follows the approach of a second chance (int. 9).

As concerns the choice of apprenticeship place and vocation a ‘vocational training duty’ (Ausbildungsverpflichtung) would limit youngsters’ opportunities again. The possibility that they are forced to enter unacceptable places will be even higher, as there will be no chance to opt out. This is true even if the introduction of a quality management is planned (Bundeskanzleramt, 2013; 10). An executive of the Chamber of Commerce pointed out that the changing of the “balance of power” might cause difficulties for both sides:

“In practice, the problem of a vocation duty obviously will be the burden of proof if one party, be it the youngster or be it the company, will have the whole responsibility for the fulfilment of the vocation duty. I think in the field of the dual education system [combining training on the job and vocational schooling] and apprenticeship training the success story consists in a good cooperation and a good interplay between the young people, the training companies and the vocational school. You can’t give one of the players the whole responsibility for the completion of the vocation duty.” (int. 6)

However, even if the occupational choice is de facto limited, there are legal mechanisms that enable young people to be engaged in the enforcement of their interests.

(4) In the firms the opportunity of co-determination for young people is limited as well. In large companies there might be a youth representative (Jugendvertrauensrat; see below). With regards to the supra-company vocational training the offer of vocational trainings is determined by an advisory committee of the Employment Service, the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Labour according to the current needs of the labour market (int. 5, 9). The interests of the young people play a negligible role. Young people who participate in such trainings can choose only between several vocations, dependant on region and free places in the programmes.⁶

This overview shows that there are a few possibilities for the Austrian youth, and especially for young disadvantaged people, to have voice or to have an impact on decisions that influence their lives. Valuing the opportunities of young people to choose for themselves and to raise a voice for their interests and needs, one should differentiate according to the proximity to the labour market. A general rule of thumb is that the more the labour market is concerned the less is the room for choice, co-determination and voice (cf. int. 13). Furthermore, the degree of formalisation and juridification should be taken into consideration. For example, a youngster without citizenship may take part in the participation offerings in a youth centre, but is not allowed to participate in formal elections.

4.3. Areas of non-intervention

In Austria “new” social topics and problems are often “discovered” and initially discussed by third sector organisations. In the case of politics recognizing these needs, an administration might support the involved NGOs in their work or issue calls for tender for projects. In the following some youth policy subjects will be discussed which have not yet been comprehensively resolved by tangible measures.

1.) A discourse on inequality in health exists for several years now in Austria. In the interviews it was mentioned several times that more and more young people have mental problems, and that in trainings programmes which focus too much on “performing” / “working” such cases may only be perceived as drop outs (int. 15). However there is no public discourse on health problems of disadvantaged young people and hardly any research on this topic (Bacher et al., 2013; regarding Vienna: Veznikova et al., 2011). Similarly, politicians have not taken action on this subject.

2.) In some of the interviews the experts commented on “disappeared girls”. Those are early school leavers or in a NEET situation, who “disappear” for some years, maybe work in the family or become mothers. This leads to an underrepresentation of girls in nearly all training programmes. They “re-emerge in the day care centre as young mothers with

⁶ In Vienna for example youngsters can choose between 30 to 40 apprenticeships (Kleinlerchner and Challupner, 2014)

little knowledge in German; with a delay these young ladies with a low education level and few positive characteristics for labour market integration re-emerge four or five years later.” (int. 15) The research of Bacher et al. (2013) confirms that very little is known about this group. One only can speculate that they missed opportunities to give their lives a direction in a self-determined way.

3.) Another problem of a subgroup of young people is well known, but not treated. There are about 650 adolescents and young adults detained in Austrian prisons. In 2003 special juvenile prisons were abolished. This leads to situations in which young people are threatened and abused by prison inmates (Helige, 2013). An EU study (Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institut, 2013) confirmed these problems: “In the cells happen massive attacks, partly in form of sexual abuse and mistreatment. The fear of reprisal by the fellow inmates prevent them of reporting on such incidences on the stuff” (ibid.: 18). After the reporting of a violation undue statement of the then Minister of Justice, now there is new discussion on the appropriate imprisonment of young offenders.

4.) In 2011 more than 1,300 unaccompanied minors reached Austria as refugees. As long as their asylum procedure is under way the young refugees usually do not have the right to work. Only seasonal work is allowed in some branches. Since 2012 minor refugees are allowed to do an apprenticeship if no Austrian can be found for that position; in April 2013 this right was expanded to refugees under the age of 25. However, they cannot even use support from the PES and they are not allowed to participate in any public training programmes (cf. Watzl, 2013). Therefore, only very few refugees make an apprenticeship or work during the legal procedures (int. 9, 10). In Vienna, a non-profit association, PROSA, in which teachers work voluntarily, helps young refugees to pass the tests for the compulsory school graduation certificate. This service, which only exists in Vienna, is solely financed by charity as no administration supports it.

5. POLICY MAKING, IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

5.1. Development and delivery of policies to tackle inequality and poverty

There are three reasons why the responsibilities for the development and delivery of measures against youth poverty are spread thinly within the political sphere. Firstly, the measures and programmes mentioned above do not set high demands on poverty prevention, poverty alleviation or guaranteeing equality of opportunities, but they are – more simply – thought to place young people in jobs, to “care about the youth” or to improve the situation of young migrants or refugees. Secondly, youth policy is split in several fields, like education, labour market policy, youth work/leisure activities, and youth welfare services, which are not completely integrated. Thirdly, Austria is structured into federal provinces, where the competences are shared between the national, regional and municipal level according to complex legislation. However, the different players are very well linked to each other and networking works well, on the political as well as on the operative level.

5.1.1. *Youth policy and the political system in Austria*

On the national level, different ministries are responsible for the measures and programmes mentioned above. The leading ministry for youth policy is the Federal Ministry for Family and Youth. However, as far as school and education is concerned, the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture is responsible; the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection are responsible for work matters. The idea of “Generation Mainstreaming” makes policy a cross section subject (cf. Liebentritt, 2013: 841). Typical top-down strategies have their origin in the ministries. They pick up the political discourse, communicate the proposals of the ministers, they assign evaluation studies and further research to get the proper overview and are responsible for pilot projects. In accordance with the federal structure of Austria the federal ministries should only provide guidelines, and the individual federal states and municipalities should take the appropriate measures and carry out projects.

Besides the federal structure, “social partnership” is another characteristic of the political landscape in Austria (Tálos, 2009). It consists of a tight institutional cooperation of the representation committees of the employees (Austrian Chamber of Labour⁷ and Austrian Federation of Trade Unions⁸) and the representation committees of the employers (Austrian Economic Chamber⁹ and Federation of Austrian Industries¹⁰). They are included in all formal negotiations of labour-related subjects. The social partners have the right to propose legislation and examine proposals. Due to their still far-reaching activities and influence they are also crucial actors in the process of policy making and implementation concerning young people. Thus, e.g. the training guarantee was the result

⁷ The Austrian Labour Chamber (Arbeiterkammer Österreich) is the representation of all employees in Austria. The membership is compulsory for all employees. The Chamber works on national and regional level (Landesarbeiterkammern). The Austrian Labour Chamber is strictly involved in the discourse about and action for equality, equal opportunity and distributive justice (AK 2012, 2012a, 2013). In regards to young people the Chamber advocates for high-quality vocational training, good work conditions (int. 7) and good education (Sozialpartner, 2013)

⁸ The Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) is the umbrella organisation of all trade unions in Austria. Whereas the trade unions are party to the negotiation of collective labour agreements, the Federation is a social partner. The membership in these organisations is voluntary. All unions and the Federation have youth chairmen. All younger trade union members are organised in the Austria Trade Union Youth (Österreichische Gewerkschaftsjugend), which is the youth organisation of the Federation. The Austrian Trade Union Federation and the Union Youth supports, advises and teaches youth representatives (Jugendvertrauensräte), which are elected in the companies (see above). The interests of the Union youth are quite similar to the Chamber of Labour, although the Union cares more about tangible workplace problems and the political education of the union members

⁹ The Austrian Economic Chamber is the representation of all Austrian Companies and Employers. The membership is compulsory. The Chamber support companies which employ or want to employ apprentices and they provide state-financed subsidies for companies that offer apprenticeships. The interest of the Chamber is that the companies can easily find a sufficient number of well-educated apprentices and employees. At the moment they plead for the introduction of new “low level vocations” like furniture assembler or alteration tailor as there is a need for employees accomplishing these job profiles in companies. The apprentices and skilled workers in these fields would be paid less than in traditional vocations (int. 6)

¹⁰ The Federation of Austrian Industries (Industriellenvereinigung) is the representation of large manufacturing companies. The membership is voluntary. Their interests are quite similar to the Economic Chamber but rather oriented towards the needs of larger companies

of an agreement between the social partners before it became a state wide active labour market and VET strategy.

5.1.2. Education policy und provision of education

According to the Austrian constitution (Art. 14 B-VG), the (federal) Ministry of Education is in charge of education policy and the provision of education. Regarding the maintaining of schools, however, the federal state, federal countries, and municipalities share the responsibility for the construction of new schools, their funding, and for the administration (Bodenhöfer, 2006). Whereas national government administrates higher schools providing general education, the federal provinces administrate basis schools. Up to now, teachers of the diverse tracks were even trained differently. At the regional level, administration is provided by separate federal authorities, i.e. the so-called Province School Boards (Landesschulräte) and District School Boards (Bezirksschulräte).

Reforms of the educational system – especially the introduction of a comprehensive school and all-day school – are frequently discussed (see above) but in the end the system and its weak points seem to be very stable. Some interview partners emphasised that there is little hope for fundamental changes.

“Anyway, I have to say, assumedly I’m sitting in committees for about two decades, but it doesn’t work. I think there is a chance that the school will change little by little [...] But as long as there is no clear cut which completely changes the system, I’m very sceptical.” (int. 4)

An executive of the PES stated:

“I have to be honest ... if I will be back on earth in 300 years, there would be any changes in the school system.” (int. 9)

At the same time the school system is quite closed towards cooperation, e.g. with youth workers. An interviewee with a youth-work background explained that in the meantime cooperation and networking with the PES works quite well, but that it remains very difficult to work together with schools (int. 4).

5.1.3. Employment promotion

The Austrian Employment Service is the main player in the administration of labour and unemployment. It initiates most of the measures and programmes in this field, and partly realises them. In 1994 the Employment Service was separated from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, turned into a “modern public-law service provider and a separate legal entity” (Atzmüller and Krischek, 2010: 35, quoted from Feuerstein, 1997: 516), and was decentralised to be able to react more flexible to the regional requirements and problems (Atzmüller, 2009: 157). The PES consists of a national office, of head offices in each of the nine federal provinces and about 100 regional offices. On the national and federal level the management now includes all social partners (representatives of the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Austrian Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Trade Union Federation, and the Federation of Austrian Industries). “[C]lose

ties between the social partners and Austria's major political parties also ensure a high level of close cooperation with regional and local administrations and thus with the decentralised levels of government" (Atzmüller and Krischek, 2010: 7). The main tasks of the PES are placement services, qualification and support. The PES claims that "compared to other countries the focus is on qualification" (BMAK, 2013: 4). Since the 1980s there have been youth employment programmes (ibid.: 3). Furthermore the Employment Service is responsible for state-financed subsidies for apprentices with handicaps. Often new programmes start as pilot projects, partly financed by the European Social Fund (int. 13). The in-house evaluation is mainly based on placement rates, although the situations vary widely depending on region (int. 9). All programmes are evaluated by external research institutes and often adapted.

The decentralised structure of the Employment Services allows cooperation with federal and regional organisations (Atzmüller and Krischek, 2010: 35). Some federal provinces (Bundesländer) have established their own institutes offering additional support for employment promotion. Vienna, for example, established the "Vienna Employees Promotion Funds" (Wiener Arbeitnehmerinnen Förderungsfond, WAFF). The fund belongs to the resort of finance and economic policy of the city of Vienna. The board consists of members of the social partner institutions and of the political parties of the City Parliament. WAFF counsels unemployed persons and offers a wide spectrum of trainings, qualification programmes and retraining measures for workers, unemployed and companies (ibid.). It develops and delivers its own measures and administrates outsourced programmes and thus broadens and completes the standard services of the PES (int. 15). Often WAFF and PES cooperate and co-finance programmes (Atzmüller and Krischek, 2010: 36). As one expert emphasised, WAFF has extensive know-how and experience in employment promotion and is well connected which made it an outstanding platform for the application and administration of EU subsidies (int. 13). The collaboration of the municipal administration, the Employment Service and the youth work in Vienna has led to the implementation of the pilot project "Spacelab", which combines a low-threshold means for contacting young unemployed people with advanced training programmes (see "social innovation", below) (int. 5, 13, 15, 20). At the moment they plan to offer modular certificates. Training modules attended in periods of unemployment and on-the-job training are combined into a certified qualification on par with the final apprenticeship examination (int. 15).

Aside from the introduced institutions, two kinds of networks try to make the complexity of the work world and support systems manageable. In some federal provinces *coordination offices for youth programmes* (Koordinationsstellen) have been established. They link the administration of the educational, advisory, training and social-pedagogical programmes. Outsourcing allows the cooperation of institutions assigned to different levels, like Federal Ministries, political institutions of the federal provinces and operative institutions like the Employment Service.

Another kind of network is called *Territorial Employment Pacts* (TEP, 2014). These contract-based regional partnerships link employment policies to other policy areas, like education, disability, family, gender, regional aid or structural policies (ibid.). They

should ensure efficient use of resources and improve the support provided for certain target groups. The main aims of TEPs are to create and preserve jobs and to secure financial support for the region concerned to ensure the region's sustainable development (Atzmüller and Krischek, 2010: 10). The pacts are often co-financed by the European Social Fund. At the moment, most pacts aim at the implementation of regional networks (TEP, 2013).

All coordinative measures taken on national and regional level, improve the overview of the administrative experts and the functionality of the measurements. However, as mentioned before, they do not have the focus to tackle inequality or poverty, but concentrate on inclusion in the labour market.

5.1.4. Youth work

Until the end of 2012, the leading ministry for youth policy and youth work was the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth. In the course of the coalition negotiations the governmental departments were newly pooled and a ministry was established that was solely responsible for Family and Youth. This Ministry of Family and Youth coordinates youth topics in inter-departmental workgroups with other ministries (e. g. European Pact for Youth) and in 'strategic groups' with shareholders (BMWFJ, 2009: 7; FPB, 2008: 40). It is responsible for the implementation of the EU recommendations (BMWFJ, 2009: 11). It sponsors only very few projects directly, for example the work of BOJA, the umbrella association of the open youth work.

The extra-curricular child and youth work is a matter of the federal states and the municipality, which finance the institutions and services together. It comprises the offers of the youth work organized in association as well as the open youth work in youth centres. Regarding open youth work, the municipality usually assumes 70% of the costs and the federal province 30%.

In all federal provinces, their own departments (Landesjugendreferate) are responsible for youth policy and work. Umbrella organisations and networks, which develop quality and the political standing of open youth work, exist in some states. These structures are approved and mostly sponsored by the youth departments (Liebentritt, 2013: 846). The federal provinces meet once a year with the Federal Ministry for the development of common strategies at the "conference of the leaders of youth departments" (Konferenz der LandesjugendreferentInnen) (Zimmermann, 2010: 194). Common initiatives are for example an instruction course for youth worker, a work group for youth participation and one for youth information. In the municipalities, local youth officers organise the coordination of the services, the networking of the stakeholders, the financial support of youth organisations as well as the development and realisation of their own projects. Youth centres usually are organised as non-profit associations. Their influence is limited as they depend on the benevolence of politicians. At the same time they are a sensible voice of the interest of (disadvantaged) youth and are acknowledged as openly taking the side of youngsters.

At this point we present three further youth work organisations: BOJA, which is the federal network of the open youth work, the working group participation and the working group for youth information. *BOJA* is the “Federal Network of Open Youth Work”. This association works as a service and network office as well as for the improvement of quality in the field of open youth work. It represents the open youth work at the federal and international level (BOJA, 2013). The board consists of 18 members from all federal provinces (Liebentritt, 2013: 847). BOJA is mainly financed by the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth.

The working group *Youth Participation* (ARGE Jugendpartizipation)¹¹ was established in 1991 just after the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was declared. The members are the youth departments of the federal provinces and of the province of South Tyrol/Alto Adige (Italy), as well as the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth. The ARGE works together with the Austrian Youth Council (see below). It aims to inform young people in Austria on the subject of participation and co-determination and discusses new techniques and experiences in youth participation. Furthermore standards of participation are about to be set (Gartner, 2011: 54).

A further network is the *Austrian Network on Youth Information* (Verein Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfo) that operates information offices in all federal provinces and runs a web portal with youth information.¹² according to the European Charta on Youth Information (ERYICA). Its budget was about € 2.5 million in 2009 (Häfele, 2011: 390). The network is part of the European Youth Information Network EURODESK. The web portal of the network gives information on youth topics in Austria and launches online-surveys as part of the Austrian youth strategy.

5.2. *Young people's participation in policy making*

In the public discourse young people in Austria are said to be politically apathetic and not interested in politics at all. Research, however, shows that this is may be true for traditional party politics, but not for politics in general (Zimmermann, 2010: 195). Instead, Austrian youngsters are very much interested and prepared to engage in shaping their social environments/ neighbourhoods. When defining participation, hence, experts mostly refer to a quite broad understanding of participation, including several forms of participation apart from formal political representation on the municipality level or similar (cf. Zeglovits and Schwarzer, 2011: 256). However, for disadvantaged youth, the situation is different. Although there is very little research on the participation of disadvantaged youth (Wohlmacher, 2013; Rosenberger, Walter and Fuchs, 2008), one must start from the premise that the disadvantaged feel much less addressed by politics than youth in general as the problems on felt distance to the political system are even greater.

¹¹ www.jugendbeteiligung.cc (Accessed 10 January 2014)

¹² www.oesterreichisches-jugendportal.at/; www.jugendinfo.at (Accessed 10 January 2014)

5.2.1. Participation in elections and legislation

Young people are eligible to vote when they are 16 years old. Such a low age limit is unique in the EU and has been introduced in Austria in 2007. Before that people were allowed to vote starting with 18, and to be elected with 19 (Perlot and Zandonella, 2009).

Currently most parties try to show that they aim at representing interests of young people in parliament through young candidates for the National Council. In 2013, the youngest member of the newly elected National Council was 24 years old and ten of the 183 members were younger than 30 years (Parlament, 2013); the youngest minister is 27 years old. Whereas in this context the group of the under 30's is quite well represented, migrants without Austrian citizenship are not. They have no right to vote – only EU citizens are allowed to vote at local level and for EU elections. This means for instance that in Vienna 21 percent of the inhabitants are not allowed to go to polls.

During the first elections after lowering the voting age in 2007, media were highly interested in young people. (Perlot and Zandonella, 2009: 422). An interviewed expert said:

“We noticed that from the moment of the announcement of the lowering of the age limit ... politicians became very interested in young people. Before young people were of absolutely no interest, and then, suddenly, they are potential voters and it may pay off. ... we [the youth centres] ... were perceived stronger as potential gate keepers of politicians.” (int. 20)

When youngsters voted for the first time, this was accompanied by large information campaigns in schools and on the internet (Perlot and Zandonella, 2009: 422; Zimmermann, 2010: 196). Studies confirm that most young people requested information (Zimmermann, 2010: 196), especially in school (Zeglovits and Schwarzer, 2011: 261) and that they had been aware of the campaigns. This need for information was also confirmed by one of the interviewed experts (int. 8); and today some youth associations including the Austrian National Youth Council (see above) urges for a school subject called *political education*.

The possibility of taking part in elections awakened youngsters' interest in politics (Zeglovits and Schwarzer, 2011: 258). Young peoples' election turnout was as high as of the average population (ibid.: 270). It is considered as an advantage of early voting that many young people are still in the institutional context of school and youth work and “learn” to vote there (Zeglovits and Schwarzer, 2011). Compared to youngsters who still go to school at age 16, those who do an apprenticeship or are engaged in a training programme cannot benefit in the same way of information at school and are disadvantaged again (cf. ibid.: 269). In the end, early transition to work of disadvantaged groups might lead to an underrepresentation in elections. Indeed, in the group '16 to 18', employed young people describe themselves less often as interested in politics as do students. Similarly, migrants (who might even not have the right to vote) describe themselves as less interested compared to non-migrants.

With regards to legislation, there are two mechanisms that should ensure the taking into account of the youth. The first one is the National Youth Council (*Bundesjugendvertretung, NYC*). The NYC is the umbrella organisation of all Austria-wide youth associations and the legal representative of the Austrian Youth. The council was founded in 2001 and has more than 50 members including pupil and student committees, associations of the so-called mobile or “open” youth work, of the Austrian Trade Union Youth, of private associations like the Austrian Brass Music Youth and the Austrian Alps Association Youth, and last but not least the youth organisations of each political party (cf. Häfele, 2011: 387). The participating associations comprise 1.5 million members (BMWFJ, 2014). The upper age limit for members in the NYC is 30. The NYC has its own office and four employees (ibid). For youth-related matters the organisation is the representation of interests and has the status of a ‘social partner’ (BJV-G §3 (2)). The Council has the right to introduce and evaluate legislative proposals and to suggest measures and funding recommendations (Häfele, 2011: 388). The NYC sends some youth representatives to the UN General Assembly. They can advocate for youth-relevant subjects and advise diplomats. In Austria the Youth Council fought for lowering the voting age limit, it initialised information campaigns before elections (ibid.) and it was strongly committed to the incorporation of child and youth rights in the Austrian constitution (Hätönen, 2006: 141), which they finally achieved in 2011. The Youth Council campaigned also against child and youth poverty, though this is not their focus. Some authors (ibid.: 60, 97) and interviewed experts (int. 5, 4) consider the influence of the NYC limited. The interviewees said that the contact persons change too often.

The second mechanism that should ensure youths’ taking account in legislation is the so-called ‘youth check’ for legislative projects. It was introduced in the beginning of 2013 as part of the Austrian Youth Strategy. According to the youth check, the impact of laws on the situation of young people must be estimated in form of an outcome-orientated impact evaluation (*wirkungsorientierte Folgeabschätzung*) in order to secure childrens’ and youngsters’ interest. However, young people are not directly involved in the procedure. When introduced, this was roundly criticised for the fact that the youth check is not in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (BJV, 2012). As one might expect there are no special mechanisms for disadvantaged young people.

5.2.2. Co-determination in education, apprenticeship, and job

Co-determination in companies. In companies with at least five employees below 21 years, youngsters can elect a number of youth representatives (*Jugendvertrauensräte*) according to the number of young employees. They have a function similar to the workers council of all employees. There are 2,400 youth representatives in Austrian companies (ÖGJ, 2014). The youth representatives are contact persons for all apprentices and young employees in case of any problems at work. They should care about the economic, social, and cultural interests of young employees, about occupational safety and health. They can propose measures for vocational education and training. Currently, they campaign for higher quality of apprenticeships, for an intermediate examination (in order to decrease problems with the final examination), and for a better compatibility of the apprenticeship

with additional trainings for secondary school examination (called “Lehre mit Matura”) (ibid.). Recently, they achieved that apprentices who have to attend vocational college far off can stay freely in boarding schools. They are also concerned with mobbing, discrimination, and racism.

Usually the youth representatives are organised within the youth section of their responsible trade union. The umbrella organisation of all youth sections is the Austrian Trade Union Youth Group (Österreichische Gewerkschaftsjugend), which is also the youth section of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund). All members of trade unions with less than 26 years, about 41,000 people according to the chair of the youth group of the Austrian Trade Union Federation, are automatically member of the Austrian Trade Union Youth Group. The Austrian Trade Union Youth considers itself responsible for the political training of the youth representatives as well. The Youth Group elects regional chairmen (Landesjugendvorsitzende) in every district and a national chairman (Bundesjugendvorsitzender). These chairmen discuss and collect problematic issues. The national chairman is always a member of the executive board of the Trade Union Federation, which is the highest board of all trade unions in Austria. So, the youth groups have an opportunity to promote their topics at the highest level. The Austrian Trade Union Federation has the status of a “social partner”, is closely linked to political parties on the left, and therefore can feed topics into the political sphere.

Taken as a whole it seems that the institution of youth representatives and their entrenchment in the Trade Union and the Trade Union Youth can allow young people to make experiences with a collective engagement for comprehensive demands and learn to organise political interests.

Co-determination in trainings. Most training programmes for unemployed young people, like production schools or the youth coaching mentioned above, are realised by the Austrian Employment Service, partly in cooperation with or co-financed by other institutions.

Often the administration contracts out the realisation of the programmes to non-profit or for-profit companies. Here, co-determination is neither envisaged for young people nor for adults. There is only feedback by ex-post procedures of “customer satisfaction surveys” and by evaluations of the institution, which funds the programme. Only the Austrian Employment Service itself has a complaints office. Most of our interview partners became irritated when we asked for participation co-determination or the existence of an Ombudsman. One interviewee pointed out that there is a plan to apply focus groups in which the trainees can speak about their experiences in the programmes (int. 5). Since 2010 there are youth representatives (Jugendvertrauensräte) within the supra-company vocational training. As some of the interviewed experts noticed (int. 5, 12), a problem can arise if – as intended – during the programme young people leave for regular apprenticeships and so the continuity of the work is interrupted (the representatives are especially trained by the trade union for example) (int. 5, 12). As only some providers were interested in the election of the youth representative, the mode of

election was changed. It is now the youth department of the Austrian Employment Service that executes the election for the youth representatives (int. 5).

5.2.3. *Participation in daily life*

In daily life there are some opportunities for young people to participate politically. In schools class representatives and school representatives advocate their interests. A peculiarity of the Austrian system of school representatives is that students and representatives are organised in party-affiliated organisations.

Participation in the municipality. In some municipalities and in the Viennese districts (Bezirke) there are “parallel events” for the representation of young people. In rural areas they are organised as youth councils (Jugendräte), which are selectively integrated in political decisions. One possibility is to randomly pick ten to twenty youngsters out of the register and ask them to participate in a mixed-age working group, which deals with a certain subject for several days. Then the results are presented in public. Politicians can use this information for their decisions (TJO, 2014). The participation of the young people consists of a right of proposal, the right to be heard or in the opportunity to take part in a session of a council. As the integration of young people on a board needs experience, specialised non-profit associations offer to support public institution with facilitator teams.¹³ The influence of youth councils is limited and it is to assume that disadvantaged youths are underrepresented.

In Vienna there are child and youth parliaments, which are organised by youth centres in cooperation with schools. Since there are rather disadvantaged young people in youth centres, this approach is suitable for the integration of this group. The child and youth parliaments begin with workshops where 15 or 16-year-old youngsters get information on the decision procedures in the districts. Then they chose their topics (Interview VWJZ). Youth representatives from school classes and youth centres articulate and put forward their demands. When they present their results to adults, facilitators make sure that the youngsters are not functionalised by them (Holzhacker, 2008: 64). Then the demands are discussed by the districts councils. Sometimes the youth parliaments even have their own budget (Int. 5, 20). In addition to such projects, youth centres try to support young people in having a voice by teaching them methods of expressing themselves like graffiti spraying, rap, or hip hop (Int. 22).

These techniques, which were illegally used before, are tamed and legalised now. The project “Viennese Wall” (Vienna Wand) made a dozen of walls in the city available for spraying graffiti, for example. This is very typical for some developments in the Austrian and especially the Viennese youth scene. During the 70’s and 80’s some abandoned houses were squatted (Wächter, 2006). There, cultural and youth centres developed alongside living projects (Nußbaumer and Schwarz, 2012). Some of these projects

¹³ Jugendrat Team Oberösterreich (www.jugend-rat.at); INVO Service für Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung (www.invo.at); beteiligung.st Fachstelle für Kinder-, Jugend- und BürgerInnenbeteiligung (www.beteiligung.st)

managed to become legalized and even subsidized; some of them are still operating today – and this can be taken as a successful form of participation and appropriation of young people; other projects were fought by the municipality and failed. This shows very well the way in which new appropriation techniques are turned-over by politics. Even the youth work in the public parks, which is today presented as a showcase, goes back to a confrontation with youngsters. As the police was not able to keep the parks “clean” of young people in search of open spaces, the municipality of Vienna established social-pedagogical programmes for them.

6. SOCIAL INNOVATION

6.1. How is social innovation defined?

Social innovation as a term is mostly defined and applied by macro and meso level organizations comprising research institutions as well as both the political and NPO/NGO sector.

In particular NPOs/NGOs, as well as critical experts, try to propose a specific understanding of what social innovation could mean in Austria to expand the scope of social policies, related to poverty, employment, education and social inclusion and to foster a bottom up approach which transcends the narrow focus on employability and work first. One instrument for this is to give an award to socially innovative projects. These initiatives are important as they try to open up the field for a wide range of activities. Nevertheless experts such as Hammer and Diebäcker point to the difficulties in defining social innovation from the perspective of bottom up initiatives as well (2009). The Centre for Social Innovation's definition is “Social innovations are new concepts and measures, which are adopted by the societal groups concerned and put to use in solving social challenge” (Zentrum für Soziale Innovation, 2014).

The Unruhe Foundation, a private foundation hosting and funding an annual contest for social innovation named “Sozial Marie” since 2005, sets the following definition for social innovation. “Social innovation drafts solutions to pressing social challenges. It provides room for new approaches, gives innovative answers and lays news paths. Social innovation either reacts to a new social question or it solves a known problem by a new practice. Action can be taken by the affected social group itself, it must in any case be appropriated and co-implemented by those concerned. In this manner, social innovation creates sustainable, exemplary solutions that inspire others” (Unruhe Private Foundation, 2013).

Hammer and Diebäcker (2009) analyse concepts of social innovation based on the projects submitted as well a survey of and focus group discussions with applicants. They found that in defining social innovations three elements are at play, that is, novelty, a specific set of values and the kind of processes involved. Novelty may be meeting a need thus far not met, as well as the combination of new actors or fields, or in bringing something new to a region. Novelty not corresponding to a certain set of values, however,

is not considered as innovative. This set of values is often related to the situation of a certain group, which serves as legitimization for the project submissions. However, the social analysis of these values often remains underdetermined as if it were to be self-evident in the sense of being a consensus. The element of processes is firstly considered in relation to the consideration to an active participation or empowerment of the groups concerned. Secondly, most projects strongly focus on the needs of the groups concerned, that is, they aim to offer solutions, which exactly meet those needs. Very often this is associated with a holistic approach of offers. And thirdly, if processes involve different agents whom had not interacted before. All three elements concur within a normative framework, which is aimed at justice in societal participation, which is hampered by development, current gaps in the social system, and existing inequality (Hammer und Diebäcker, 2009: 1-13).

In his conceptual paper for Society, Jensen Rosendal stresses an element which seems to be lacking in these definitions, but is rather present in social innovation as we encountered it: “At this level it is obvious that social innovations besides the social element are closely linked to the economic aspects of welfare solutions: How it is possible within the public sector to offer welfare to more people for lesser money” (Rosendal, 2013: 128).

Not only NPOs/NGOs try to promote social innovation, but public institutions, such as the PES, develop measures and programmes that may count as socially innovative if a wide definition is taken, too. Several enterprises in Austrian youth policy qualify as social innovation in a double sense: on the one hand, many agents in the field of youth policy meet the criteria for social entrepreneurship insofar as they create social value. This holds true both for the sphere of youth work which is dominated by NPOs, whose work, however, rests mainly on employees rather than volunteers, as well as the sphere of labour market integration, which is dominated by governmental agencies and contractors. Interestingly, the beginning congregation of these spheres in projects that combine social work and labour market integration was mentioned as socially innovative by many of our interview partners.

The most prominent of these projects is spacelab, a low barrier labour market integration project, which gives financial incentives on a day-to-day basis to youth who stay on a whole day at a time to try out different sorts of jobs. It was the winner of the Austrian ESF-Innovation award 2013. It is a cooperative effort of several Viennese NPOs. It is noteworthy that the spacelab project is to be expanded over the next years in preparation for the “Ausbildungsverpflichtung” to become the most low-level entrance point of continuous labour market integration trainings. The fifth and last award-winning place was given to the project “Mia_san” in Styria, which was aimed at improving the language skills of young girls by incorporating theatre pedagogy.¹⁴

In the privately funded Sozial Marie, which is open to projects all over Europe; one project awarded a smaller sum was an online counselling service in support of young girls in Austria who are threatened by forced marriage to be offered by the NPO Orient Express. Another award was given to the Institute for Social Services of Vorarlberg to

¹⁴ www.esf.at (Accessed 10 January 2014)

fund social work focusing on families as networks. A similar approach was introduced to us by one of our experts: his organisation is currently implementing a family network based model in probationary services for youth called social conference, whereby the entire social surroundings of a youth is involved in getting them back on track. Furthermore a project offering storytelling techniques to pupils in order to tell their own tales of migration (NPO Spieltrieb).¹⁵

Another project frequently mentioned by our interview partners, especially on mid-level, is the newly implemented youth coaching: a case management approach in guiding youth in the transition from education to work. It was introduced in 2013 by the Bundessozialämter (Local executives Bureaus of the Ministry of Social Affairs) and 36,000 cases were opened in the first year alone. Prior to 2013, it was a service available exclusively to special needs students, which was then introduced to serve a wider group. The access to job coaching however was criticized quite harshly by some of our experts: according to their report, teachers identify students according to a questionnaire, which by implication might stigmatize candidates.

6.2. Supporting social innovation

Hammer and Diebäcker (2009: 2) found that the overwhelming majority of projects applying for the “Sozial Marie prize” where from non-governmental or commercial organisations.

The two awards were chosen to give examples of which projects is considered as socially innovative by governmental actors and civil society. They all share that they are being developed and implemented by mid-level organizations which have the necessary resources to access funding for such enterprises; one of our interview partners who is from a smaller organization strongly stressed the point that it takes quite an elaborate infrastructure and knowledge to even apply for funding such as the ESF's. On national policy level, the notion of social innovation is frequently stipulated by incentives of the ESF; the Ministry of Social Affairs grants an annual ESF prize for the most socially innovative ESF funded projects. Several noteworthy programs such as spacelab also started out on ESF funding.

Mediating agencies have been installed to guide and evaluate these processes such as the Koordinationsstelle Vienna, which coordinates and evaluates existing youth programmes within the city of Vienna. It does, however, also work to gradually homogenize the programme structure.

Contemporary social innovation is mostly developed and implemented by mid-level organisation in civil society, the chamber system, and NPOs. Our experts report long-term deliberative processes between these organizations in order to establish new programmes; the initiatives, however, are often given top-down, such as the newly established Austrian Vocational training Guarantee. Several of our experts on practitioner

¹⁵ <http://www.sozialmarie.org/winners> (Accessed 10 January 2014)

level have expressed that there seems to be less budget and time for more traditional areas of youth work centred on a more holistic approach.

Hammer and Diebäcker (2009) note that “the economisation of socially innovative work, however, works to suppress justice as an issue, while at the same time the continuing deconstruction of the welfare system appears to let almost anything appear as innovative” (13-14). This is very accurately reflected in one of our expert’s statement: “Well, I think what is being attempted in Vienna right now is not innovative, it is necessary”.

This leaves little space for youth policy not directed at social competence and labour force integration. Some of our experts, especially on practitioner level, spoke of innovative ideas such as integrating more art into youth work. Such projects, they report, are not funded at all, or only for a short period of time. An example would be the Interact theatre project in Graz: the AMS labour market service funded a citizenship building theatre project for a group of unemployed youth who were on their service. Several also addressed that social innovation would need to happen in schools, for example regarding citizenship education.

It is interesting to note that, from what our experts report, contemporary youth policy profits from the squatting scene all over Austria in the 1980s regarding both infrastructure as well as human resource: several actors organizations were founded in this context (such as the WUK, which is home to one of the carriers of the spacelab project). Furthermore, at least one of our experts himself comes from a squatted autonomous youth centre in his province of origin. This does not, however, inform current policy: young people's squats over the past decade have resulted either in eviction, and in one interesting hybrid model: the Pankahytttn in Vienna, where the squatted house was given to its users on the condition that there would be a social service present on the premises.¹⁶

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Disadvantage and vulnerability of youth is defined first and foremost in the context of individuals partaking in the labour market and or education system. Most policy is directed towards the integration in said systems; this gradual process will be implemented ever more strongly with the compulsory education or training starting from 2016. Social innovation is very strongly developed and encouraged within this framework; most agents of social innovation aim at the empowerment of the groups of youth concerned rather than an active participation. Political participation is hindered by socioeconomic factors – youth from financially deprived households often do not participate in youth organizations – and also by a growing demographic of youth who were born in Austria but lack citizenship.

Youth policy may be regarded as innovative in regards to an IBJJ that is very strongly oriented towards labour force integration: youth may be given more apprenticeships in or

¹⁶ <http://www.pankahytttn.at> (Accessed 10 January 2014)

outside the supra-company vocational training in the future, but the social security they can expect remains precarious. The social immobility which is largely produced by the school system forms part of the information basis, however it remains largely untouched by policy. Involvement if any, is given preference over actual participation of youth who are being disadvantaged; forms of participation often are a practise in, rather than a practising of, actual participation: e.g., few of the youth parliaments are actually given any spending money with which to fund the projects they decide on – the actual decision remains with the executive concerned.

What is particularly noteworthy in this regard is that the new system of training that is being established in Austria is an expansion of models that were practised in special needs training prior to the 2000s. It remains to be seen whether this will help reduce stigma and make more functionings possible for more young people, or whether this will work to further hamper opportunities for more socially disadvantaged youth by way of expanding stigma rather than resources. Furthermore, the choice between different modes of education for one, may become larger, but the choice of lifestyle is.

Social innovation in Austria might serve as an example of how the interplay between a welfare regime under pressure, and third sector and NPO agents increasingly under pressure produce a range of projects that is increasingly aimed at labour market conformity.

Austrian youth policy has taken an interesting turning point in late 2013 by introducing compulsory training or schooling up to the age of 18. It will deem worthy of research to see which effects the interplay between a dual VET system and obligatory participation will produce.

Further questions for future research comprise:

- The rise of mental ailments in youth, which was reported both by our experts as well as in several (social scientist) studies.
- The so-called vanishing girls: young women who after compulsory education choose to work as homemakers, whose choices are being problematized.
- The apparent unchangeability of the Austrian school system might prove an interesting subject for political science.

8. **APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF KEY ISSUES**

Key issues	How is this issue defined and which key terms are used to describe this issue
Youth policy	Youth policy is a distinct national government policy area in Austria that the federal Ministry of Family and Youth is in charge of. However, educational and vocational matters are determined and administrated by other Ministries; and the federal provinces and local administration (as well PES) determine the tangible implementation of measures, programmes etc. on a local level. The term youth usually covers young people in the age of about 15 to 24. An example therefore is the Austrian youth strategy which addresses youngsters aged 14 to 24; the labour market statistic differentiates between two groups: Youth (15 to 19) and young adults (19 to 24). Though many programmes directly address young people, especially in the field of labour market and leisure activities, hardly any measures against youth poverty exist.
Youth disadvantage and youth inequality	Interview partners rather mentioned low education and migration background than low income. It is the selective education system which at first reinforces inequalities between young people attributed to their family background and then fixes them by attesting attained (levels of) qualifications. The discourse on youth disadvantage and youth inequality focuses on labour market integration; categories like early school leavers and NEETs become more and more common (see sec. 4).
Social innovation	The term social innovation was unfamiliar to most of the interviewed experts. When asked about innovations they either described adaptations of existing programmes or they talked about new programmes that are better suited to meet the problems or needs of disadvantaged youth. Nobody ever brought into the discussion that innovation could somehow be managed. In research, social innovation is brought into context with funding.
Participation	There are two meanings of participation: one refers to participation in society (having friends, having a job and so on), the other to refers to political participation. Laymen rather understand it to mean political participation. In this chapter, we mainly refer to political participation. As concerns young people there are a lot of measures where they can punctually participate in thematic workshops (e.g. in youth work projects or local youth councils). However the results are not binding for politicians. All in all we got the impression that young people' participation rather signifies "learning how democracy works (when one is an adult)" than taking part in current political discussions or decisions. In public discourse participation there is a focus on participation in the labour market.
The abilities of young people	In our interviews, almost all respondents suggested that professionals working with youngsters should take greater account of youngsters' resources. In spite of the high esteem for the resource-oriented approach (cf. Knecht, 2012), interviewees mostly made deficit-orientated diagnoses of "lacking maturity", of "a need of further maturing" (Nachreifung), and of dysfunctional families. Abilities of youngsters are reflected more in resource focused social work as well as some active labour market programmes.

9. APPENDIX 2: KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Policy area	Policy or Programme	Description
Transition to vocational training	Jugendcoaching (Youth Coaching)	<p>Youth Coaching is a measure to improve the transition from school to vocational training or further schooling by advice and on-going assistance. It aims at reducing the number young people who do not begin an apprenticeship and the number of NEETs. In 2013, the first year when Youth Coaching was offered all over Austria, about 35.000 youngsters were counselled; € 22 million were spent for this programme (Bundeskanzleramt 2013a). In 2015, when the vocational training duty will be introduced, making use of these programmes will become compulsory for youngsters.</p> <p>http://www.bmukk.gv.at/jugendcoaching http://www.neba.at/jugendcoaching/warum.html</p>
Education (soft skills) / Youth work and vocational training	Spacelab, Job Ahoi	<p>Pilot programmes which combine a low-threshold access with the possibility to enter a vocational training or other training programmes of the PES.</p> <p>http://www.spacelab.cc/ http://www.ojad.at/index.php/ojad/jobahoi</p>
Vocational training, employment	vocational training guarantee (Ausbildungs-garantie) and supra-company vocational training (Überbetriebliche Ausbildung)	<p>In Austria young people between 15 and 18 who cannot find an apprenticeship place in a company (or administration) have the possibility to begin an apprenticeship in a supra-company vocational training. This offers the opportunity to make a comparable apprenticeship in a training workshop or office. For the training year 2012 / 2013 the PES offered about 11.700 places and spent about € 150 million for this programme. (Bundeskanzleramt, 2013a: 25) Presumably, the vocational training guarantee will be transformed in a vocational training duty (Ausbildungsverpflichtung) in 2015.</p>
Employment	“AusbildungsFit”	<p>The programme AusbildungsFit is a low-threshold and modular measure for (early) school leavers or NEETs. It offers basic qualification, soft skills, career orientation, catching up of graduations, and social-pedagogical support (Bundeskanzleramt 2013a). This programme started in 2012 as a pilot project. In 2015 it will be extended to the whole of Austria and become part of the vocational training duty (BMASK, 2013).</p>
	Aktion Zukunft Jugend	<p>This programme addresses young adults at the age of 20 to 24. It ensures that unemployed people easily obtain training facilities adapted to their individual needs within six months or that they find a new job. In 2012 about 81,000 young adults took part in qualification programmes and about 96,000 began to work.</p>

Vocational training	Produktionsschulen (production schools)	Production schools offer a combination of manual work, creative methods and support of social workers in programmes of 6 or 12 months. This “school” serves only to support young people in their vocational choices; it is not possible to finalise an apprenticeship there. There are 20 production schools, and about 2.500 places in Austria by now (BMASK, 2013: 213).
Youth policy and participation	Austrian Youth Strategy	The Austrian Youth Strategy is the national adoption and implementation of the European Youth Strategy. It aims at improvements in the fields of employment, education, participation, engagement, and quality of life for the age group 14 to 24. One feature of the Youth Strategy should be “participation” which was mainly realised by online surveys up to now. As part of the youth strategy, qualitative and quantitative indicators shall be established “for the on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of youth policy in the whole of Austria” (BMWFJ, n.y.: 6). http://bmwa.cms.apa.at/cms/content/attachments/8/8/2/C/H0618/CMS1373966310578/jugendstrategie-strategische-ziele-2013-2020.pdf

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LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN YOUTH POLICIES IN AUSTRIA¹⁷

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ABSTRACT

Simmering can be recognized as one of Vienna's *rather* disadvantaged districts although the concept of “disadvantaged” should be handled very carefully and critically. To facilitate a critical stance towards disadvantage, we choose an area-based approach in our research. This means that we did choose a comparably disadvantaged district (in the sense of higher unemployment, lower educational attainment and income) with both a low-resourced and middle-class/petty-bourgeois population. From this starting point we scrutinized what kind of exclusion mechanisms with respect to young people can be observed and are addressed or ignored. Within our research we focused on the open resp. outreach youth work which implies a low-threshold access and keeps the influence of institutionalized settings as low as possible. We focused on policies regarding (gender-specific) youth programs in the context of social work and youth work, expanding our research perspective by local and urban development programmes while employment or formal education policies which are largely formed in a centralized way, mainly by the (Youth) Public Employment Service were not included.

With regard to policies towards young people Simmering is quite a resourceful district, not only in terms of “quantity” but also in terms of “quality”: In Simmering, youth policies and youth programmes cover a broad variety of youth work such as “traditional” youth centers, outreach/mobile youth work, special offers for children, girls (offering exclusive girls spaces), young mothers, youth work with children of refugees. Furthermore, the urban development agency is active in this district. The agency provides locals with legal counselling with regard to renting/housing regulations but also acts as a facilitator in development processes for public and semi-public spaces in the district. The agency also takes part in the “Regionalforum”, a local network of public institutions who meet once a month to share and spread information. The borough mayor herself- as was indicated by various interviewed stakeholders in Simmering's youth programmes – Is strongly committed to and supportive towards youth concerns. Mobile youth work and

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youth centres are low threshold institutions where participation is voluntary and free of cost. It particularly addresses youngsters from disadvantaged background with the goal to expand youngsters' scope of action, supporting appropriation/negotiation of public spaces and its usage by different groups. Eventually, it should be mentioned that youth centers are in general important actors in the district and also serve as hubs. They play an important role mostly as mediators but also as supporters (as for the young people participating in the young parliament) and "framers" or designers of public spaces, together with children and adolescents. Accessing the research field at a low-threshold level allows us to broaden the research perspective what facilitates the access to a big range of "meaningful thematics" and "limit situations" that young people are concerned with.

Starting from youth work's two (among others) core themes – spatial appropriation and "learning" democracy – the report presents and discusses two programmes respectively two policy responses to "limit-situations" (Freire 2009[1970]) youth centres in Simmering focus on. First, we will deal with issues of spatial appropriation, conflicts on public and semi-public spaces and the role of social and youth work to solve those. This also includes conflicts of multicultural and intergenerational cohabitation reported many times by different interviewees. Initiatives tackling this issue can be interpreted as bottom-up approaches resulting from the urgency solving day-to-day problems of living together. Second, we will describe and briefly discuss the youth parliament "Word-up!", an initiative fostering the political participation of young people in the chosen district. This one can be rather interpreted as a "top-down" initiative aiming at the democratic education of young people who – In Austria – have the right to vote from 16 years onwards. In both of these thematic fields youth centres play a crucial role for preparing and implementing tools that shall help to resolve the respective limit-situations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Selection of location

The Austrian region in focus is situated in Vienna; it is the district of Simmering that is Vienna's second biggest. Simmering is a traditional working class district whose population is still quite heterogeneous. Apart from the traditional working class areas, some petty-bourgeois areas can be found as well as very specific neighbourhoods such as "Macondo" where around 3.000 refugees from all over the world live (Statistics Austria, 2012). The district is somehow situated in Vienna's periphery although the in 2000 completed connection to the metro line considerably changed its position resp. the position of some specific neighbourhoods that are close to the metro line. This led to a kind of splitting between "inner" and "outer Simmering" – terms frequently used by our interview partners. Simmering's social structure – due to Vienna's historical housing strategy to build social housing within petty-bourgeois or bourgeois areas – is quite mixed and cannot be simply described as "deprived". Rather, we will examine how

disadvantaged youth as part of a district's population is reached, explicitly addressed and included by municipal social policies on the one hand and mobile low threshold social work initiatives on the other hand.

In comparison with Vienna's overall population, Simmering has a quite young population. As for the whole of Vienna (and Austria), the district's migrant population has risen steadily over the last years – a fact that increasingly challenges local policy and its position towards a multicultural society. In terms of educational attainment, it should be noticed that the share of inhabitants with completed tertiary education is the lowest among all Viennese districts resp. the residents share with only compulsory education is comparably high. As lower educational attainment is known to have a negative effect on employment, it is not surprising that Simmering is among the five Viennese districts with the highest unemployment rate. Apart from unemployment, the weaker economic situation of the district's population becomes apparent in – compared to Viennese average - lower income levels and a higher share of “needs-based minimum income” recipients. As far as the political situation in the district is concerned, the rising of the right-wing “Freedom Party” deserves attention. Several stakeholder interviews referred to racism as a major issue in Simmering.

1.2. Selection of thematic focus: gendered limit-situations

Summing up the statistical evidence presented so far, Simmering is one of Vienna's *rather* disadvantaged districts although the concept of “disadvantaged” should be handled very carefully and critically. People who may have less (economic and educational) resources do not necessarily consider themselves as less advantaged or even disadvantaged as our interviews with local stakeholders (youth workers engaged in outreach work as well as at school, a local politician (borough mayor)) clearly show. Labelling these people as “disadvantaged” would rather mean to (re-) produce existing stereotypes and categories (Dentith et al 2012). To facilitate a critical stance towards disadvantage, we choose a spatial approach in our research. This means that we did choose a comparably disadvantaged district (in the sense of higher unemployment, lower educational attainment and income) where both low-resourced and middle-class/petty-bourgeois people live. From this starting point, we scrutinized what kind of exclusion mechanisms with respect to young people can be observed and are addressed or ignored.

“Disadvantaged” also raises the question about disadvantaged compared to what or to whom and how relations towards the “advantaged” take shape. This reflection also means taking **an intersectional approach** seriously. Therefore, we explicitly address selected socio-structural characteristics of discrimination such as gender and migrant background. This was done by conducting stakeholder interviews on city and local/district level with NGOs and/or institutions putting these particular social disadvantages in the centre of their interventions. Our particular focus is on gender inequality and pro-girls youth work.

1.3. *Selected policy area: Out-reach youth work*

Within our research we focused on the open resp. outreach youth work which implies a low-threshold access and keeps the influence of institutionalized settings as low as possible. Starting from this perspective, we focused on policies regarding (gender-specific) youth programs in the context of social work and youth work, expanding our research perspective by local and urban development programmes while employment or formal education policies which are largely formed in a centralized way, mainly by the (Youth) Public Employment Service were not included.

Accessing the research field at a low-threshold level allows us to broaden the research perspective what (hopefully) facilitates the access to a big range of “meaningful thematics” and “limit situations” that young people are concerned with (Freire 2009[1970], 96, 99). Limit-situations that constrain aspirations or the development of capabilities shall be regarded as challenges: They are not impassable boundaries where possibilities end but the real boundaries where all possibilities start ... a frontier which separates being from being more (Freire 2009[1970], 99; 103). Therefore, partisan and particularly partisan girls youth work was all about signaling interest, respect and recognition and realizing possibilities and experiences that girls did not find as such in their daily lives (Bitzan 2010, 105)

2. **METHODS**

The Austrian local stakeholder network analysis drew its results from several sources including quantitative secondary descriptive data and data from guideline-based stakeholder interviews, one group discussion and field notices of several observations and informal talks in the field of local youth work. In detail, we used:

- A document analysis of the Viennese Social Report (2012) and the Vienna Statistical Yearbook (2013) from which we mostly got quantitative data (the Statistics Austria did not provide data on district level due to data protection regulations). Besides, an interviewed youth worker provided documentation on the youth parliament “word-up” which takes place every other year in several schools (and youth centres) in the district.
- We carried out qualitative guideline-based expert interviews with a local politician (borough mayor) and youth welfare officer/representative as well as with five youth workers engaged in open/outreach youth work. Of them one is the director of the “flash girls’ café”, a space exclusively dedicated for youth work with girls, and two are youth workers employed at several schools in the chosen district. Another expert interview was conducted with a representative of the district’s development agency (“Gebietsbetreuung – Stadtentwicklung”) providing advice in development projects in the district and implementing solutions for public areas (often together with youth work institutions). In addition, the director of the district’s public library (a place where young people pass their spare time), a local youth welfare officer, and a police officer were interviewed.

- A group interview/discussion with a teacher and five young people who participated in the “word up” youth parliament took place in September (when school starts again in Austria). One of the above mentioned youth workers participated in the youth parliament too (supporting the young people in formulating their demands and organizing the discussions that take place before the big plenum sessions with local politicians and other local stakeholders).
- From Mid of May until the End of September we spent one afternoon per week in the “girls’ garden” – a space exclusively for girls and (young) women and the place for our participatory research. The “girls’ garden” is supervised by the youth centre that also serves as our “gatekeeper” in the district. The idea was to establish a period in which we are available for the girls interested in participating in the process (designing a wall just in front of the “girls’ garden”). For each afternoon spent in the girls’ garden or in any other park, every participating researcher wrote an entry into her research journal.
- Within our field research, we spent many hours in several of the districts’ parks where the outreach youth work of our gatekeeper takes place to do participatory observation, informal walks and talks with the people.

Regional/local government policy makers	3 (borough mayor, representative youth welfare office, district councillor)
Training and education providers	4 (2 teachers and 2 school social workers)
Citizen’s bodies (e.g. youth parliaments/councils)	1 (social worker involved in youth parliament)
Youth work organisations	3 (including 1 youth worker specialized in girls’ work)
Networks and membership organisations (sector bodies/agencies, campaigns, lobbying, networking, project work, awareness raising)	1 (Urban Development Agency)
Young people	Several young people in semi-public and public spaces, especially some girls in the “girls’ garden” where our participative research mainly takes place.
Other types of organisations:	2 (director of district library and police officer)

3. DESCRIPTION OF AREA IN RELATION TO INEQUALITY/DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

3.1. Statistical evidence

3.1.1. Demographic development in Simmering

As already referred to in the introduction, Simmering is one of Vienna’s biggest districts with 92.274 residents over a surface of 23km², thereof 44.930 men and 47.344 women,

Vienna's total population being 1,741.246 persons. In comparison with Vienna's overall population the district's population is younger with an average age of 38,8 years (40,5 years for the whole of Vienna); 16,5 % are under the age of 15 (Viennese average of 14,3 % in 2013). Altogether, 29,0 % of Simmering's residents are younger than 25 years (Viennese average 26,5 %) (Vienna Statistical Yearbook 2013, 296). The lower average age among the district's residents goes along with a positive birth rate (defined as number of births minus number of deaths within one year) of 282 persons (only two of Vienna's 23 districts have an even higher birth rate resp. nativities- deaths ratio). At the same time, an on-going ageing process takes place, especially among the district's long-term residents. According to Reinprecht this demographic development can be observed particularly in Vienna's peripheral districts such as Simmering (Reinprecht 2010, 29).

During the last years, the district's migrant population has risen continuously. In absolute numbers, 19.480 persons with a non-Austrian citizenship lived in Simmering in 2013, compared to 72.794 residents with Austrian citizenship; 27.870 of Simmering's residents were born in another country than Austria (compared to 64.404 people born in Austria) (Vienna Statistical Yearbook 2013, 64). Simmering's migrant population rose from 15,5 % in 2011 to 21,1 % in 2013, though the share is still below the Viennese average of 18,7 % in 2011 resp. of 23,0 % in 2013 (here, migrant population is defined as persons with a non-Austrian citizenship) (Vienna Statistical Yearbook 2013, 64). Apart from German citizens residents with Serbian, Montenegrin, and Turkish citizenship represent the second and third biggest migrants' groups in Vienna (with a share of 3,7 % and 2,3 %, 2011).

3.1.2. Educational attainment and unemployment among young people

The comparatively lower **educational attainment** and worse income situation sustains the picture of Simmering as a rather disadvantaged city district. The Viennese Social Report ("Wiener Sozialbericht") from 2012 shows that 27 % of the district's 25- to 64-year-olds only completed compulsory education, compared to 23 % for the whole of Vienna, 8 % hold a university degree compared to 19 % of all Viennese residents, representing the lowest share of tertiary education among all Viennese districts (data from 2010/2011). Though the share of students attending academic secondary school in Simmering corresponds to the Viennese average, the share of pupils attending lower secondary school (the type of school children attend who are not "fit" enough for lower academic secondary schools) is more than double than the Viennese average (25,5 % compared to 11,3 %, cf. Vienna Statistical Yearbook 2013, 297). Statistics giving a more detailed picture about educational attainment levels broken down to gender are not available.

Simmering is with an **unemployment rate** of 10,5% (2011) among the five Viennese districts with the highest unemployment rate. The recent economic crisis led to a worsening of the socio-economic situation in the district – unemployment has risen in the years after 2008; this is also due to the rather low educational attainment among the district's population.

The unemployment rate (as the share of registered unemployed among labour force plus registered unemployed; i.e. national calculation) in Vienna lies above the national average at any point in time since 2008. In 2008, 7,9 % of Vienna's employable population was jobless, in 2013 the number was 10,3 %, men being more frequently unemployed than women: In 2008, 9,2 % of employable men were registered as unemployed in comparison to 6,6 % of employable women; until 2013, the unemployment rate among men had risen to 11,7 % resp. to 8,6 % among women (data by Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, and Consumer Protection¹⁸).

Considering age, younger people are more frequently jobless than the average. Among Vienna's 15-19 and 20- to 24-year-old men unemployment rates have risen from 7,3% and 12,1 % in 2008 to 8% and 16,5 % in 2013 but also young women's unemployment rates rose in the same period (7,6%, 7,5 % in 2008, resp. 7,8%, 10,6 % in 2013) according to national unemployment statistics. Interestingly enough, when applying international standards of unemployment calculation¹⁹ unemployment rates of both 15-19 year old young women and men are higher than those of the older cohorts. For Vienna this tendency is even more pronounced since unemployment is generally higher in Vienna than for the whole of Austria: around 20% of male and female youngsters aged 15-19 (sample size too small to break it down according to sex) in employment (including apprenticeship) or seeking employment or apprenticeship count as unemployed. This is mainly due to two reasons: (1) Those youngsters seeking apprenticeships do not count as unemployed; (2) many of the 15-19 year old have not yet acquired an entitlement to unemployment benefits; therefore, they do not have an incentive to register as such at the PES (information provided by Käthe Knittler, expert at Statistics Austria). In both modes of calculation unemployment rates among young women aged 15-19 are higher than those of their male counterparts whereas unemployment rates among the 20-24 men are higher than those of women of the same age cohort. Unfortunately, unemployment statistics at district level are not available to give a more precise estimate.

Table 1

	Registered Unemployed (PES)				ILO	
	2008 (Vienna)	2013 (Vienna)	2008 (Austria)	2013 (Austria)	2013 (Austria)	2013 (Vienna, m+f)
15-19 (f)	7,6	7,8	5,4	5,7	13,2	14,9 (15-24) 20,6 (15-19) 13,1 (20-24)
20-24 (f)	7,5	10,6	6,6	8,6	7,8	
15-19 (m)	7,3	8	3,7	4,3	9,9	
20-24 (m)	12,2	16,5	7,9	10,7	8,4	

¹⁸ Data available under "BALI web", database of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection: <http://www.dnet.at/bali/> [18.8.2014]

¹⁹ http://www.statistik.at/web_de/static/arbeitsmarktstatistiken_2013_detailergebnisse_f_arbeitslosigkeit_073890.xlsx

Also according to the welfare office's representative girls and young women find themselves more often in unemployment as there is less demand for professions (such as office clerk, Int_8, 20) that are preferred by young women. This also means that finding an apprenticeship is more difficult for girls than for boys as also the statistical evidence proves. Moreover, girls tend to work in professions that offer less income (Int_2, 23; Mairhuber/Papouschek 2010). It has to be considered that apprenticeships are still the main educational scheme for working class people in Austria; e.g., in 2009, 68 % of all 15- and 16-year-olds whose parents completed apprenticeship training or a secondary vocational education were currently enrolled in a vocational school for apprentices (Bruneforth/Lassnigg 2012).

3.1.3. *Income situation, material deprivation and social benefits*

In Simmering, **average income** is below (Viennese) average: The yearly net income is 18.780 Euro (men's average is around 4.000 Euro higher than women's) in comparison to 20.685 for the whole of Vienna (here, men's income exceeds women's even by more than 5.000 Euro per year) (Vienna Statistical Yearbook 2013, 64). This makes Simmering one of the five Viennese districts with the lowest yearly (net) income (cf. Viennese Statistical Yearbook 2013, 147). Not surprisingly, as one youth worker points out, is that young people's income – be it from apprenticeship training or from “regular” employment – represents an indispensable contribution to their families' total income in many cases (Int_2, 23).

The difficulties to make a living from a low income also results from the rise of (housing) rents - though rents in Simmering have been rising less than in other Viennese working class districts where strong gentrification processes took place during the last decade. The rise of rents and living costs in general especially affects welfare recipients. For them, any kind of additional cost such as the beginning of the school year when new materials are needed or when an excursion to a museum exceeds available household budgets can lead to a financial crisis. Another particularly interesting aspect related to economic hardship and social status symbolism should be mentioned at this point, as evidence from stakeholder interviews suggests: Children and adolescents from working class background who attend secondary academic schools are more at risk of facing difficulties to keep pace with the others pupils' dress style meaning an additional (financial) burden for their families. The permanent economic hardship has an impact on the lives of children and adolescents, especially in a society where participation is closely linked to consumption, as the youth welfare officer points out. He also mentions girls stealing cosmetics to keep up with their peers (the district's police informs the youth welfare office about every single act of delinquency committed by adolescents, Int_8, 18). Constant financial pressure also influences the parents' ability to care for and support their children and constrains their abilities to educate their children as almost no time and energy is left to give advice and support on a daily basis (Int_2, 2). Data that show the growing number of working poor in Vienna confirms the youth welfare officer's observations. In the last decade, the number of working poor in Vienna has risen continuously; from 1.744 women

and 2.036 men in 2001 to 4.766 women and 5.130 men in 2008 (cf. Vienna Social Report 2012, 30).

Simmering is one of those four Viennese districts with the highest rate of “**needs-based minimum income**” recipients (“Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung”) with a share of 8,3 % compared to 6,1 % for the whole of Vienna (Viennese Social Report, 2012).²⁰ According to the district’s youth welfare officer the number of people in difficult economic and social conditions has risen significantly over the last decade as more clients apply for financial or material support from the local welfare office. However, non-take-up or “hidden” take up is a major issue. Whereas some families contact the local youth/social welfare office to ask for financial support or where to get cheap (or even free) food/clothes, others – especially middle-class families in financially critical situations – are ashamed to take up the offered services (Int_8, 11). According to Krisch and Schröer (2010) collective cooking in some youth centres became sort of a “free meal” for young people in difficult economic situations (also a form of “hidden” take-up of material support), an observation shared by an interviewed youth worker:

“We have slices of bread and butter, as an additional offer. (...) They [the young people] pounce on this mini-offer; this is crazy. The first thing they ask for: ‘Do you have something to eat today?’ (...) Youngsters from “a good stall”, from an economically secured [family], they do not eat this. Maybe yes, they try it, one slice. But the others, they devour the bread, 3, 4 slices, they can’t get enough of it.” (Int_2, 3)²¹

Concerning non-take-up of programmes Karin Kuchler and Alban Knecht (2013, 6) came across the phenomenon of “disappeared girls”. Those are early school leavers or NEETs who “disappear” for some years, maybe work in the family or become mothers. This leads to an underrepresentation of girls in training programmes. The research of Bacher et al. (2013) confirms that very little is known about this group. The disappeared girls were also referred to in interviews and informal talks for this research report. Youth centres – as will be explained in more detail below – seem to be a boys' domain. Especially, “older” female youngsters (from 16, 17 on) suddenly do not show up any more in local publicly accessible youth clubs.

Furthermore, the youth welfare officer observed a rising number of adolescents from difficult economic background suffering from **psychological problems** what could – at least partly – be attributed to a rising consciousness on these issues during the last decades. The young people mostly suffer from depressions, a condition that makes it

²⁰ The “needs-based minimum income” is granted independently of a preceding income record. It was introduced in 2011 and replaced the previous social assistance (“Sozialhilfe”, see also Vienna Social Report 2012, 69). It shall “prevent poverty and social exclusion” and must be at least 813,99 Euro per person and month (<http://www.wien.gv.at/gesundheitsleistungen/mindestsicherung/index.html> [21.8.2014])

²¹ “Wir haben ein Zusatzangebot Butterbrote. Ich meine, das ist jetzt wirklich so etwas Wundervolles zum Essen, ja. Aber ich meine, da gibt es ein Griss drum, das ist ein Wahnsinn. Das Erste was kommt: “Gibt es heute Brote?” Und das hat nicht nur damit zu tun, dass Jugendliche einfach ständig wachsen und ständig Hunger haben, sondern einfach weil sie Hunger haben. Und diejenigen, die aus dem guten Stall kommen, aus einem finanziell abgesicherten, die essen das nicht. Also schon, die probieren das, ein Stück einmal. Und die anderen verschlingen 3, 4, die werden nicht satt.” (Int_2, 3)

particularly challenging to support them as they (tend to) shut themselves away (Int_8, 20). According to Krisch and Schröer (2010, 47) too much attention is put on youth unemployment as a “biographical burden” whereas young people’s ways of coping with poverty, the role of welfare institutions in this process as well as the implications of poverty for young people’s daily lives are almost ignored. Furthermore, the authors criticise the narrowing down of coping strategies (for youth unemployment) to training and working offers instead of investigating individual and collective consequences of youth unemployment. They point out that experiences of disadvantage during youth can lead to psychosocial impairment, constrains young people’s self-confidence and – of course – their capacity to act (Richter 2005 cit. in Krisch/Schröer 2010, 48). This is mainly because poverty often comes along with shame. In order to hide a difficult economic situation, young people use all their money to pretend a “normal” situation in front of their peers by e.g. using their last money to buy brand-name clothes leaving no money for other things such as food or for paying the cell phone’s bill. The less self-confidence young people gain from participating in the working world, in education, and in the social spheres within and outside the family, the more important consumer goods and specific “youth culture accessories” become to “defend” one’s self-confidence and identity (Krisch/Schröer 2010, 49). Within this context, objects that might be considered mere consume objects can also have a more complex function, such as mobile phones which are needed to stay in touch with peers and friends (Krisch/Schröer 2013, 49).

3.1.4. Political situation

In the last Vienna state elections of 2010, the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) again lost their absolute majority mostly to the Freedom Party (FPÖ), an extremely right-wing populist party. This situation puts the ruling SPÖ in a position of constant pressure. Also in Simmering the Freedom Party gained more than one third of the total votes (35,5%) while the social democrats lost around twelve per cent (comparing elections from 2005 and 2010). According to the elections research institute SORA’s analysis the Freedom Party’s “promise” to stop or at least to make further immigration to Austria as difficult as possible represented one of the two most important reasons to vote for them (right after breaking the absolute majority of the Social Democratic Party) (cf. Analysis of the Vienna state elections 2010²²).

The Freedom Party was especially successful in gaining votes from young males, from people who traditionally have rather been voting for the social democrats as well as from people who are less content with Vienna’s overall living quality (cf. SORA 2010). For instance, whereas only 14 % of all 16- to 20-year-old women living in Vienna voted for the Freedom Party in 2010, the share among same-age-males was 25 % (cf. SORA 2010, 2).

²² Analysis of the Vienna state elections: <http://www.sora.at/themen/wahlverhalten/wahlanalysen/grw-wien10.html> [1.8.2014]

The interviewed local stakeholders talked about the district population's ambivalent positions towards the Freedom Party's program. On the one hand, a number of people – among them also people with migrant background – agree with the party's anti-immigration policy as they fear negative consequences, mainly stronger competition on the labour market (and also more pressure on the housing market). On the other hand, people with migrant background themselves are afraid of being kicked out of the public housing if the Freedom Party gets more votes. The interviewed borough mayor stated that – just before the last Vienna state elections took place – she had to assure various people that they cannot be moved out of their public housing apartments “just like this”. The success of the Freedom Party in the last elections puts the social democrats – including Simmering's social democrats jeopardised of losing the majority in the district following the next election in 2015 - into a defensive position, particularly with respect to integration and migration issues. Since parts of the local youth work is financed out of district funds and parts out of municipal funds, it is likely that the direction of youth work will be altered depending on the political balance of power on municipal and district level and its funding policies for youth work.

Table 2: Results of the Viennese State Elections for the district of Simmering²³

	Social Democratic Party (SPÖ)	Freedom party (FPÖ, right-wing populist party)	Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)	“The Greens” (“Die Grüne Alternative”)
2001	59,15%	21,68%	9,85%	6,33%
2005	60,80%	18,82%	10,64%	7,36%
2010	48,98%	35,50%	7,52%	5,71%
2010 Total Vienna	44,34%	25,77%	13,99%	12,64%

3.2. Selection criteria for Simmering

Heterogenous boroughs: In spite of the statistical data that assumes Simmering to be a disadvantaged area, it has at the same time a quite heterogeneous structure, where traditional working class neighbourhoods exist side-by-side of petty-bourgeois areas. Also, some big public and private companies have their headquarters and/or production facilities in Simmering though it is questionable to what extent locals actually benefit from this as company taxes are collected on city or even federal level. Traditional garden centers producing food are close by, too.

Youth policies: With regard to policies towards young people, Simmering is quite a resourceful district, not only in terms of “quantity” – there are more youth centers in Simmering than in any other Viennese district – but also in terms of “quality”. In Simmering, youth policies and youth programs cover a broad variety of youth work such

²³ Results of the Viennese State Elections 2001 – 2010:
<http://www.wien.gv.at/wahl/NET/GR101/GR101-311.htm> [1.8.2014]

as “traditional” youth centers, outreach/mobile youth work, special offers for children, girls (offering exclusive girls spaces), young mothers, youth work with children of refugees. Mobile and outreach youth work takes place in public and semi-public spaces and therefore offers low-threshold access for all kinds of young people. Additionally, different social programs coordinated on municipal level started recently in the district. The “Step 2 Job” program aims to improve the labour market integration for long-term unemployed (funded by the ESF and the Public Employment Service); the “Youth Coaching” (“Jugendcoaching”) program supports young people that have just completed compulsory education and are uncertain about their future (educational) choices.²⁴ Furthermore, the urban development agency is active in this district (“Stadtentwicklung–Gebietsbetreuung”). The agency provides locals with legal counselling in renting/housing matters. It also – what is more relevant for our research – acts as a facilitator in development processes for public and semi-public district spaces. The agency takes part in the “Regionalforum”, a local network of public institutions meeting once a month to share and spread information (more about the “Regionalforum” see below). The borough mayor herself- as various interviewed stakeholders in Simmering’s youth programs indicated - is strongly committed to and supportive towards youth concerns.

Hardships in Simmering: The economic hardship of some residents along with widespread racism seem to be the main obvious problems for parts of the population in this Viennese district. The economic difficulties are mainly due to low income and a higher percentage of people in unemployment resulting from the higher vulnerability of people with lower (formal) educational attainment to become and stay unemployed as in the case of Simmering’s population. Growing up in a low-income family often means having difficulties to keep up with the consume level of one’s peers and puts adolescents and their parents under financial pressure which causes stress, as an interviewed youth worker and police officer point out (cf. Int_2; 2; Int_9, 22). These parents face economic hardship on a daily basis which eventually may lead to situations where they cannot provide enough (financial but also) emotional support and guidance for their children. Furthermore, the moving in of new inhabitants, sometimes with a migrant background and especially families into public housing buildings leads to conflicts as the “newcomers” time structures and habits are seemingly different from the long-term residents who are mostly older (“native”) Viennese with a low tolerance level and a very high need for rest and quietness. We observed that where poor infrastructure (in terms of public and green spaces) for children, young people, and families with younger children exists conflict potential is higher. Many people with different needs and expectations such as families with small children, adolescents (of different gender!), dog owners or elderly people are urged to use limited public spaces (Int_2, 10).

Institutional landscape in and around Simmering: Considering the issues we are investigating within the SocIEtY project, the relevant institutions in the chosen research

²⁴ See also <http://www.neba.at/jugendcoaching/warum.html> [28.06.2014]. Another support programme called “Job Coaching” supports young people with special needs/disabilities or increased family assistance with finding a job or solving problems at the work place (cf. <http://www.neba.at/downloads/jobcoaching.html>, 28.7.2014)

area are the **local youth centres** and the **outreach youth work** they offer in several parks in the district. One local youth centre “Balu&Du” also runs the so-called “Fair Play Team” providing outreach social work and conflict mediation in (semi-) public spaces. This program was introduced in several districts including Simmering and is entirely financed from the district budget. Most local youth centres are run by “Verein Wiener Jugendzentren” providing open youth work and as such attracting particularly disadvantaged (male) youngsters as they offer space to meet friends and open-minded adults you can talk to in an easy-going atmosphere and without compulsion to buy. The open youth work offers leisure activities such as sports and games in youth centres and in parks. The services are not oriented towards formal education or employability but focused on development of every-day competencies and skills, flourishing by offering new experiences, and emancipation (Oehme, Beran and Krisch, 2007). According to polls among youth workers about gender-specific usage of youth centres, girls often are underrepresented in the activities offered daily; in some institutions, activities and space are offered especially designed for girls (BWJF 2011, 427-428).

In addition, we conducted interviews with the **Youth and Family Welfare Office**, in charge of material and non-material support services such as counselling for families with difficulties, as well as with the **Agency for District Management and Urban Renewal** (“GB3*11- Gebietsbetreuung, Stadterneuerung”). Apart from these institutions, three other institutions are of relevance for the social support network analysis. The **Municipal Department for Health Care and Social Welfare Planning** is “in charge of the strategic planning of Vienna’s health care and social welfare policies” (Summary of the Vienna Social Welfare Report 2012, 15²⁵). The **Municipal Department for Social Welfare, Social and Public Health Law** provides social and public health services and “operates twelve social centres (as at November 2012) and is in charge of granting means-tested basic benefit” (ibid.). Finally, the **Vienna Social Welfare Fund (FSW)** (“Fonds Soziales Wien”) operates in three main areas, namely long-time nursing care and assistance, assistance to the disabled, and assistance for homeless people. The City of Vienna (ibid.) supervises its operation and finances.

With regard to the Austrian **educational system**, it should be mentioned that compulsory schooling is organized and funded by each province – in Vienna by the “Stadtschulrat”, the Viennese Education Authority – whereas secondary and tertiary education are federal competencies. Consequently, school politics are foremost shaped by decisions on provincial or city level with (almost) no possibility to adapt them to local conditions or needs. Only the school buildings themselves are partly maintained out of district funds. In contrast to the educational system which is strongly influenced by top-down policies, the “decentralized structure of the Employment Services allows cooperation with federal and regional organisation” (Atzmüller/Krischek 2010, 35 cited in Knecht/Kuchler 2013, 24). However, decentralisation stops at regional level. Matters of **youth employment and**

²⁵ Accessible under <https://www.wien.gv.at/gesundheits/einrichtungen/planung/pdf/welfare-wealth-2012-print.pdf> [20.8.2014]

unemployment are organised regionally centralised for the whole of Vienna in one public employment service for young people (see Knecht/Kuchler 2013, 17-18).

Cooperation(s) within the local social support network: The **youth centres** in the chosen district are well connected. Apart from the monthly meetings of the “Regionalforum” (see details below), some youth centres also cooperate in specific projects such as the re-make of a skate ramp together with its users – some local adolescents – which was supported by youth workers of two different local youth centers. The “**Regionalforum**” (“regional/district forum” or “panel” in English) is a network of public institutions including youth centres resp. youth workers involved in outreach youth work, youth workers from schools, conflict counsellors of the Vienna public housing institution, representatives from community colleges/adult education centres and the Austrian Integration Fund, the borough mayor and even religious institutions. The main function of the forum is to share and spread all kinds of information that are relevant for and facilitate the work of participants resp. participating institutions. This can be very specific information on a youngster in difficulties (where e.g. school social workers exchange information with outreach youth workers and the representative of the district’s youth welfare office to get a more exhaustive view on his/her situation). Another example of a commonly developed project was the establishment of a shared room in a refugee housing for activities for children/adolescence offered by two local youth centres and that the residents can use as well on their own. This room was the outcome of negotiations between two (or more) youth centres and the local immigration office (Int_1, 13). Another outcome of the “Regionalforum” was the cooperation between “Balu & du” – a local youth centre and our gatekeeper – and the district’s development agency to design public spaces for children and young people in a participative way. To figure out which institutions could collaborate on certain tasks is another aim of the forum’s regular meetings. They take place once per month, every time at a different institution. The main “organizer” –organizing mainly consists of keeping the e-mail-list up-to-date – is the district’s development agency.

4. FOCUS ON PARTICULAR PROBLEMS AND RELATED POLICY AND PRACTICE

Mobile out-reach youth work in public and semi-public spaces (mainly parks and “everywhere where youngsters are”) and youth centres in Simmering are the starting point of our local social support network analysis. Mobile youth work and youth centres are low threshold institutions where participation is voluntary and free of cost. It particularly addresses youngsters from disadvantaged background with the goal to expand young people’s scope of action, supporting appropriation/negotiation of public spaces and its usage by different groups. Eventually, youth centers are in general important actors in the district and serve as hubs. They play an important role mostly as mediators but also as supporters (as for the young people participating in the young parliament) and “framers” or designers of public spaces, together with children and adolescents.

Starting from youth work's two (among others) core themes – spatial appropriation and “learning” democracy – we will present and discuss two programmes respectively two policy responses to “limit-situations” youth centres in Simmering focus on. First, we will deal with issues of **spatial appropriation**, conflicts on public and semi-public spaces and the role of social and youth work to solve those. This also includes **conflicts** of multicultural and intergenerational **cohabitation** reported many times by different interviewees. Initiatives tackling this issue can be interpreted as bottom-up approaches resulting from the urgency solving day-to-day problems of living together. Second, we will describe and briefly discuss the **youth parliament “Word-up!”**, an initiative fostering the political participation of young people in the chosen district. This one can be rather interpreted as a “top-down” initiative aiming at the democratic education of young people who - in Austria- have the right to vote from 16 years onwards. In both of these thematic fields, youth centres play a crucial role for preparing and implementing tools that shall help to resolve the respective limit-situations.

4.1. *Spatial appropriation and outreach youth work*

The focus of our case study is on youth policies at district level which are of course strongly related to other policy areas such as social work and urban development policies, education resp. school policies as well as – though maybe to a lesser extent – social welfare policies. As we decided to cooperate with a youth center that also does many outreach youth work in (semi-) public spaces with children and adolescents, urban planning and urban development policies was considered in our local social support network analysis. Based on our interviews with local stakeholders, we can say that conflict and conflict potentials in the district arise manifold in (semi-) public spaces – particularly where poor infrastructure, high-usage of public spaces converge with resource-poor residents and their different needs resp. ways of using these spaces. Consequently, the district administration supports outreach youth work quite strongly and strengthened its institutional importance. In its attempts to solve conflicts the district administration for instance introduced and finances the “Fair Play Team” (outreach work in (semi-) public spaces provided by the local youth center “Balu & Du”).

At the same time, outreach youth work also serves as a mediator between children/young people and (district) politics and informs the latter. In this way, it facilitates civic involvement and bottom-up processes. Especially in the chosen district, administration (as well as the borough mayor) are quite open to listen to the concerns, problems etc. especially young people express. However, being asked to participate in processes with already fixed outcome (such as the realization of some illustrations on a fence together with children as an “assignment” of the district administration) puts on the question of instrumentalization of children. Another critical aspect is how the outcome of area zoning to specific population groups should be assessed. Who has the power and influence to “conquer” spaces with the backup of institutions? The dog holders, the older population, the kids, the girls or the boys or ...? And who are the ones representing the needs and aspirations of particular groups? In the end of such area zoning processes you have space dedicated for a particular usage: the dog holders have their fenced dog zone, the older

population enjoy flowerbeds instead of simple meadows. The boys get a football cage; the kids get a playground. The simple meadow – a space that could be open for various usages – disappears because it is a contested field. This means that self-organized conflict solution; the democratic contestation among different stakeholders is surrendered and becomes institutionally framed.

Youth centers serve as spaces of social inclusion where young people can meet their peers in a non-consumerist space, where they can simply enjoy their spare time, and – moreover – get offers they (probably) will not get at home. Youth centers are places that grant access to different resources in terms of materials / infrastructure but also in terms of seeking advice (from the youth workers or by simply talking to other adolescents) and spaces of social interaction, for discussions, and for sharing common interests (e.g. for playing games you need a group for or playing music together). The youth centers' aim is to broaden resources and enhance the capabilities' of the young people (with regards to many different areas of their lives)- what corresponds with the aims of the SocIEtY project. Youth work also facilitates social inclusion as it supports and gives advice to young people so that they can shape their lives in a way that is more fulfilling for them (and which "they have reason to value"). In this way, outreach or low-threshold youth work also fosters social and intergenerational justice.

4.1.1. *Housing and demographic change*

Gentrification processes in Vienna's traditional working class districts and areas made many people with migrant background and families with children move out of their previous living areas to other districts such as Simmering. Here, rents are still lower and new public housing projects offer (more) affordable living space. However, long-term residents – "native" Austrians of higher age – do sometimes not warmly welcome the new residents. To shed a light on the shift of housing patterns resp. the structure of residents in peripheral city areas, the study of Reinprecht (Reinprecht 2010) gives important insights. From the 1960ies on, people from Ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey, the two "traditional" migrant groups in Vienna, started moving to districts located at the edges of Vienna such as Simmering, moving out of their flats in more central city areas that usually also came along with (rather) bad housing conditions. Turkish families rather tended to move to specific buildings blocks/areas whereas people with Ex-Yugoslavian background used to spread (Reinprecht 2010, 36). There are two main reasons for this shift: the opening of social housing for people with a different citizenship than Austrian and the improvement of the economic situation among these communities, which made it possible to opt for flats in co-operative ownership (Reinprecht 2010, 36 et seqq.). Both were mainly built in decentralized city areas where more free space is available than in the central city districts. Moving to these decentralized neighborhoods, families and individuals with migrant background met the long-term residents who are of higher age, almost exclusively without migrant background, living in this neighborhood for decades. These observations are very useful for understanding the apparently on-going (potential for) conflicts among residents as repeatedly reported by different interview partners. Also, the district's youth welfare office talks about regular angry phone calls in which

neighbors complain about breaches of the peace as children run around after 10 p.m. and sometimes also express concerns if children are really cared for by their parents (Int_8, 5). Due to the many complains about the non-respect of resting time in the evenings, the borough mayor even introduced a new service. A team of counsellors walks through the public housing areas from Monday to Saturday between 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. from June to September (at 10 p.m. the police is supposed to “take over” conflict solution, before 4 p.m. residents can still call the district administration). Another relevant aspect mentioned by the interviewed borough mayor is the ageing of the residents in public housing buildings leading to (more or less) regular conflicts between residents. The ageing long-term residents have a “higher need for rest and calm” which results in many complaints about breaches of the peace.

According to three interviewees, the borough mayor, the district’s youth welfare officer, and a school social worker, racism against migrant-background families seems to be more widely spread in Simmering than in similar working class districts in Vienna. Long-term residents complain regularly, mostly about noises in the evenings (especially in the semi-public areas around the council housing projects) and noises coming from neighboring apartments or “children screaming around all the time” (Int_8, 5). The interviewed borough mayor sees too much difference in “life styles” or “day structures” between the (Austrian) long-term residents and the one of those newcomers with allegedly migrant background. Whereas some residents tend to use the open-air spaces until late in the evening, others pledge for 8 p.m. as the hour to leave the public space and stay quiet at home (being 10 p.m. the “absolute” beginning of rest time). The borough mayor indirectly refers to these different usages of public space as a class problem: She is reminded of her “own childhood in the life style of the migrant families”. Using green and public non-commercial spaces extensively can be a necessity and / or a choice. Children accompanied mostly by their mothers need “fresh air” and room for play and for cavort; children and youngsters have to get out of narrowness, and limitedness of their flats; however, increasingly public spaces become restricted, dedicated and controlled. Those in need or choosing the public space as “their space” are driven out.

4.1.2. Gendered Spaces

Gender represents a crucial category for youth work as girls as they grow older attend youth centers less and less and move to different (semi-) public spaces than parks or youth centers. Therefore, adolescent girls represent a distinct target group which is often addressed by specific youth work or girls work offers. The notion of the so-called “disappeared girls” (“verschwundene Mädchen”) was already mentioned in the Austrian WP3 report (Knecht/Kuchler 2014, 21), and came up again during the local social support network research of WP4. Various reasons for the “disappearance” of adolescent girls seem to be possible or to intermingle. One reason could be a school change or the beginning of an apprenticeship training as the Austrian education system requires a school change at the age of 14 (in case you do not attend a secondary academic school which are mainly attended by students from mid-class families). Upper secondary schools – more often attended by girls than by boys - involve more afternoon classes and usually a higher

learn expense, both shifting the structure of the girls' spare time (Int_3, 6). In addition, attending school in a different district changes the "daily routes" of the girls who then might spend their spare time in a different place. As adolescent girls begin to enter sexual relationships and spend a bigger part of their spare time with their boyfriends, "girls only" places become less attractive to them. This correlation was mentioned by an interviewed (male) youth worker (Int_3, 3) but was contradicted by another (female) youth worker (Int_3, 4) as, even if girls are in relationships, they still visit the "flash" girls' café or they come back to it once the relationship ended (see also Bitzan 2010, 24 who opposes this assertion too).

A very common policy to address girls is to offer specific time slots exclusively for girls in youth centres as well as "girls only" spaces (BWJF 2011, 418) which are sometimes open to young mothers or women with small children too (as women are in many social groups still mainly in charge of child care). However, youth work with girls in an understanding that acknowledges and reaches beyond the limit-situations girls encounter in our society goes further than solely offering girls-only space – though this is an important stake. It refers to the recognition of girls as girls in youth work, to the enhancement of girls' presence and symbolism in youth and youth work and in the society as a whole (in public space, in language, etc.). It fosters the enhancement of equal opportunities with respect to external conversion factors but also with respect to the recognition of female life course experiences (such as care). It shall facilitate rooms for experimentation and at the same time offer support and foothold (Bitzan 2010). Batsleer (2013, 22) gives some general characteristic explanations for emancipatory work with girls; principals that are often rhetorically admitted but not easy to implement in a daily youth work practice: it offers girls the opportunity to meet without pressures from boys and men. It offers girls the opportunity to build up and value female friendship and support. It enables the creation of a safe environment in which self-confidence can develop and new skills can be tested. It enables the creation of an environment in which silences can be broken and difficult challenging questions explored.

4.2. *The youth parliament "Word up!"²⁶ as a means of political participation of young people*

In terms of empowerment of the young people towards political representation, the youth parliament "Word up!" should be mentioned. "Word up!" takes place throughout Vienna and engages young people of 12 or 13 years who are in the second last school year of compulsory education. Teachers/school directors, youth workers as supporters of the students, and local institutions might be involved in the implementation of the young people's demands in the course of the project. In Simmering, the borough mayor participates personally in the final "word up" plenum; other important local institutions – such as the municipal transport services or the municipal gardening office (who are of particular importance as they design the public spaces where young people spend lots of

²⁶ "Word up!" website (only available in German): <http://typo.jugendzentren.at/viz/index.php?id=55> [18.8.2014]

time) take part, too. The youth parliament takes place every other year and allows adolescents to raise their voice and claim changes that affect their day-to-day life and immediate surroundings. In the following, “Word up” will be described briefly.

In total, the “Word up” youth parliament stretches over a period of nine months (one school year), addresses all seventh-grade-pupils in the district. An “organization team” consisting of six youth workers (two youth workers of three different youth centers in the district) guides them through and supports them within the whole process. First, the organization team informs teachers (and directors) about the process and contacts the “delegates” who will represent their class (elected class representative can serve as delegates or the class can opt for the election of a different person). The district’s secondary schools are divided into three sub-groups (by district area), each sub-group being supported by one social/youth worker of the organization team. In a first workshop with the delegates, the organization team explains the aim of “Word up” and provides the young people with some general information about the district’s political structure(s) and tries to figure out what ideas the young people themselves have on (district) politics. First ideas and demands raised by the delegates are already collected. In the following month, the organization team does a first exploration in specific areas, which the delegates have demands/suggestions for. Subsequently, demands are formulated and grouped in three topics namely “living together/social matters”, “environment and transport”, “leisure and park”. The demands are then presented (each by one youth delegate) at the first plenum session with the borough mayor, the representatives of all political parties in the district, and the district youth representative. After a period of about three months, the second plenum session takes place where the borough mayor, together with other district politicians and experts from the district administration, reacts to the raised demands and suggestions. At the end, the youngsters decide on a few issues they want to have implemented. Moreover, they discuss details concerning the implementation of these issues with the representatives in charge. At the end of the “Word up” process, all participants meet for a last plenum session. Here, the implementation of demands that delegates and politicians agreed on is presented and those that may be realized at a later point are discussed. This last plenum session gives all delegates the possibility to give feedback and share their experiences on the “Word up” process (cf. concept “Word up” youth parliament 2013). In this context, the district administration’s support of the youth parliament “Word up!” can also be perceived as a way of educating young people towards better conflict solving (skills), besides the aspect of creating a better understanding for political processes and decisions. In this way, the administration’s policy has quite a strong educational aspect too.

5. PARTICIPATION

With respect to participation and voice in decision-making processes or in phases of designing and preparing decisions (i.e. opportunity and process freedom), we have to differentiate between several levels and aspects:

(1) What are the different settings of participation? What are the contents they may decide upon?

(2) Who are the youngsters excluded or included from/into representation and participation?

(3) What forms of participation and representation are at stake? What influence do youngsters have to choose and shape different procedures?

As already outlined in the WP 3 Austrian report young people's influence on government policies and strategies is very limited (Knecht/Kuchler 2013, 27-28). What about the involvement of young people on **district and local level**?

In the context of our chosen district **Simmering**, we focused on two forms of participation and youngsters' voicing: the youth parliament "Word up" and the participation in designing specific spatial projects in the district, usually engendered and supported by the district's urban development agency and often engaging local youth centres.

5.1. "Word up and learning democracy"

"Word up and learning democracy" gives the young people the possibility to raise their voice and to be heard, particularly being heard by persons in power positions such as the borough mayor or representatives of public services. As an interviewed youth worker explains (Int_5, 4) this has a positive influence on their self-confidence: "And the kids really had the feeling of being heard."²⁷ It is the young people – and not the politicians, youth workers or other representatives, who raise demands after doing structured walk-throughs in their neighbourhoods what engenders a connection between the spaces of their daily life and the raised issues.

Still, critical light should be shed on the "educative" or "pedagogical" aspect of the youth parliament. In the discussions about how demands could be implemented, the students are supposed to be treated as "equals" with whom one can discuss "like an adult", at the same time, they might be demanded to accept a "no" and respect constraints. At this point, the aspect of "learning how to do democracy" rather than really having a say and a voice, as already mentioned in the Austrian WP3 report (cf. Knecht/Kuchler 2014, 34), comes into play. As an interview youth worker from the "flash girls' café" states: "I don't know, to be honest, I'm a bit skeptical. Still, the people, at least the adults you talk to, they think it's great and they somehow exercise democracy a little bit." (Int_3, 16)²⁸ The following quote of Simmering's borough mayor expresses this "educational" aspect very well: "Also to show them [the young people]: What is democracy? How does a district work? And how can we come into contact?"²⁹ (Int_6, 5).

²⁷ "Und dieses Mal haben die Kids echt das Gefühl gehabt, sie sind gehört worden." (Int_5, 4)

²⁸ "Ich weiß nicht, ich muss ehrlich sagen, ich bin ein bisschen skeptisch. Ja, aber gut, den Leuten, zu mindestens die Erwachsenen, mit denen man redet, die finden das einmal super und wird halt Demokratie geübt ein bisschen." (Int_3, 16)

²⁹ "Ihnen auch zu zeigen: Was ist Demokratie? Wie funktioniert ein Bezirk? Und wie können wir miteinander in Kontakt treten?" (Int_6, 5)

In terms of “having a say” (process freedom) the young people can prioritize different issues, the politicians or youth workers listen to. At the end, however, it is a collective decision what demands are implemented and the question to what extent the youngsters’ aspirations can be “overruled” by factual constraints of the participating politicians and other representatives becomes crucial. “Not all demands are implemented but several are. From 17, ten are considered and five are implemented” a youth worker concedes (Int_5, 4).³⁰ In this context, it is important to mention that young people may already vote at the age of 16 in Austria. This fact somehow boosted politicians’ interest in this new group of voters. “Word up” could potentially work as an “introduction” into political processes although the participants are still very young (around 13 or 14 years old).

The desired way of participation is clearly shaped by the institutionalized setting of the whole process in which the pedagogical aim of “getting an insight into politics” and “learning democracy” is an important aspect. The young people should understand that demands are often constrained by a lack of resources. Some years ago, the youth parliament was suspended, as the young people tend to repeat themselves, complained the interviews borough mayor (Int_6, 5). One of the supporting youth workers confirms this observation: “And then it was suspended because three years ago, it really was only the repetition of the repetition of the repetition. The young people did not want to talk. Really, it was a bit of a flop.” (Int_5, 1).³¹ However, every year different youngsters participate in the word-up process; obviously focusing on the same demands from year to year. The quote “the young people did not want to talk” indicates a certain disappointment and frustration among the participating youngsters what is comprehensible when repeated demands are not implemented. The suspension of the youth parliament could be interpreted as a negative and pedagogically corrective measure to the way the youngsters participate within the youth parliament.

Together with the educational or pedagogical aspect of the participatory process, the idea of “activation”, as often used in employment and training policies, comes into play:

“And if there are smart politicians in charge of youth politics, they do use the chance to active their voters what is important.”³²

Here it should be mentioned that Austria lowered the election age to 16 in 2007 (cf. Perlot and Zandonella, 2009 cited in Knecht/Kuchler 2013, 26) leading to a higher interest among politicians for young people. From this point of view, politicians could also instrumentalize participatory projects. They indicate giving a voice to young people and really care about the needs and demands of their voters as the quote of the borough mayor

³⁰ “Und es wird nicht alles umgesetzt, aber es wird einiges umgesetzt. Also von ihren 17 Forderungen wird auf zehn eingegangen und fünf werden umgesetzt.” (Int_5, 4)

³¹ “Und dann ist es ausgelaufen, weil vor drei Jahren, ist es echt nur eine Wiederholung der Wiederholung der Wiederholung gewesen. Die Jugendlichen wollten nicht reden. Also es war wirklich ein bisschen ei Reinfall.” (Int_5, 1)

³² “Und wenn es da ein gescheite JugendpolitikerInnen gibt, dann nutzen die auch die Chance, dass sie da WählerInnen einfach auch aktivieren, was wichtig ist.” (Int_3, 17)

depicts quite well: “It was my first concern to come into contact with the youth.” (Int_6, 5).³³

5.2. Public Space and Youth’s voice

Some participatory processes are also launched by the district’s urban development agency, often engaging local youth centres, for instance to redesign or design a public space. Usually, the youth workers get in touch with the young people (or children), ask them about their wishes and then take these to the agency. As in many contexts, the youth workers act as promoters for the young people’s needs, fostering bottom-up inclusion and participation processes. They are the contact persons for any kind of demands, as young people usually do not care who actually would be the right person in charge.

In the case of participation processes in urban development, participation of young people is restricted to concrete issues such as the (re-) design of a playground or park. Youth centres invest time and energy to reach young people and to include them into processes of consultation, however again, the scope of decision-making is very restricted. As an example: a skate-ramp should be redesigned. For several months, balu&du together with another local youth centre collected proposals and opinions from youngsters: how should the place look like; what ramps would be needed. What remained uncontested however were the overall costs of the ramp and youngsters’ participation in implementing the process. After consultation respectively “choosing” between different forms of ramps, the participation process ends, and the implementation is handed over to professionals. The same problem came up when designing a park and its facilities in a gender-sensitive manner. Youth workers tried to interview within their out-reach work girls and collect their ideas for designing a public space that is often divided only between children and boys. The children have their swings and climbing nets; the (adolescent) boys get a skate ramp or a football and basketball cage; the girls are somewhere in-between. The project aimed at particularly address girls’ needs for a public space. In the end, some suggestions were taken up, for instance, a hammock that is not easily reached by children and that offers a safer and more comfortable space apart from the boys’ space but at the same time gives girls the opportunity to overview the whole area. The difficulties from the engaged youth workers’ point of view was to “activate” girls for formulating their interest and opinions. This movement from silence to speech is a crucial point – particularly for girls who seem to disappear at a certain age from public space as was mentioned various times by our interview partners. The other deadlock was that girls are asked for their opinion but there is no sustainable strategy of keeping their interest and involve them into concrete implementation processes. Again, you are asked, give your opinion and then the pros take over. This reminds us of how justice can be perceived from the point of view of the producers and not only from users. What matters for justice from this point of view is not only the un-equal distribution of opportunities but inequalities in the availability of meaningful contribution (Gomberg 2007).

³³ “Mir war es ein Anliegen, erstens einmal mit der Jugend in Kontakt zu treten.” (Int_6, 5)

5.3. Forms of participation and representation at stake

Participation to feed concrete policy steps is rather fostered in institutionalized settings such as the youth parliament or within the rather short- to middle-term design processes initiated by the district's urban development agency. In both, participation is possible in terms of raising demands or wishes while it stays unclear to what extent the implementation is constrained by financial and other "practical" impediments. However, an interviewed youth worker cites her superior who participated in one youth parliament session. The quotation refers to the respect and attention officials (in this case from the Viennese Transport Service) show the adolescents when explaining the different restrictions of their daily working routine and decisions:

"And he said, he had never experienced this before that somebody from the Viennese public transport services talked in such a way, so positively, really explaining. Because usually, in other districts, nobody [of the transport services] shows up because he/she is not interested." (Int_6, 13)³⁴

Getting an insight into constraints makes political decisions more comprehensible – and can potentially empower the young people – as a youth worker of the girls' café points out:

"Also, I think that the results [of the youth parliament] sometimes can be quite frustrating if you get many "nos". However, I know this from other districts, that the adolescents comprehend what it's all about. In the fifth district, for example, they redesigned a park together with the youth parliament. They got a certain budget. This was really a huge sum for the adolescents. When they saw how much it costs, [they realized that] it actually was very little. (...) Therefore, they had to prioritize. And I think that these experiences do help to understand politics a bit." (Int_3, 17)³⁵

Another critical point is the youngsters' contribution going beyond their opinion and including their involvement into the concrete implementation of ideas. Therefore, participation remains rather superficial; youngsters' voices may be heard but it remains open if they are listened to. The other question is youth's representation in specific projects fostering participation. The youth parliament for instance is designed only for a particular age group. The district's urban development agency's practice to cooperate with youth centres for participatory processes could also lead to the exclusion of particular (groups of) kids or adolescents (such as girls who are not allowed to go to youth centres or to participate in their activities) if they are not particularly addressed. Apart from girls, young people with another first language than German might be disadvantaged in getting

³⁴ "Und er hat gesagt, er hat das noch nie erlebt. Dass sich wer von den Verkehrslinien so äußert und so positiv, also sehr wohl erklärt und tut. Weil nämlich normalerweise in anderen Bezirken kommt da gar niemand, weil er sich das nicht gibt." (Int_6, 13)

³⁵ "Also ich glaube auch, dass die Resultate manchmal schon frustrierend sein können, wenn man oft ein Nein bekommt. Aber ich kenne das aus anderen Bezirken, wo die Jugendlichen dann einfach nachvollziehen können, warum es nicht geht. Weil ich weiß, dass im 5. Bezirk ein Park gemeinsam umgestaltet worden ist mit so einem SchülerInnenparlament. Die haben ein gewisses Budget zur Verfügung bekommen. Das war für die Jugendlichen total viel. Und wie sie dann gesehen haben, wie viel das kostet, war es eigentlich sehr wenig. (...) Also sie mussten halt dann echt so Prioritäten halt setzen. Und ich glaube, dass diese Erfahrung einfach viel bringt, um Politik ein bisschen zu verstehen." (Int_3, 17)

actively involved in such participatory processes as they feel less able to voice their suggestions or.

These two examples are rather institutionalized settings of conceding participation: On the one hand, youngsters' voices are channeled into representative settings replacing direct disputation and participation ends BEFORE the implementation of demands. On the other hand, the examples show that it is difficult to reach beyond "realistic" aims in participatory processes and to come to those out-spoken aspirations of young people that at the same time reflect upon their limit-situations. As Walther stated: (2012, 200) the "reference to young people's skills and knowledge [...] is used to legitimise limitations rather than possibilities for participation. The majority of youth participation programs intend to inform, educate and teach young people how to participate in predefined ways in regard to predefined issues whereby they risk missing what is subjectively relevant and attractive to young people." We will come to this point again when tackling the issue of social innovation.

From the perspective of a youth centre, engaging young people in participatory processes can be quite a challenge as, especially adolescents, tend to act very spontaneously and are difficult to engage in long- or even mid-term processes. Youth centres resp. the youth workers themselves can find themselves in a difficult situation between supporting the youngsters, giving them a voice and passing their ideas and wishes on to a "higher level" (as district administration etc.) on the one side and accomplishing a specific task, such as redesigning a park or skate ramp, on the other side. Therefore, the "task" potentially constrains the openness of the process. In addition, the youth workers have to come up with a "result" in order to show that they succeeded in the participation process.

Another issue are informal processes of participation: the access to youth workers, often passing the "voice" of the young people to higher administrative or political levels, is very low-threshold. But this also means that young people who are not in touch with youth centres are less likely to raise their voice and be heard. Within **youth centres** the participation of the youngsters in the decisions regarding the leisure programmes of the centres is common, even if there are no fixed standards. A special event of some Viennese youth centres is a role reversal ("Seitenwechsel"). Some of the young users take over the responsibility for the youth centre for some weeks. They even have the possibility to change house rules. The pedagogical staffs only serve as advisers for the "new leaders" (Knecht/Kuchler 2014, int. 20, 5, see Sallaba, 2008). In addition to projects like this, youth centres try to support young people in having a voice by teaching them methods of expressing themselves like graffiti spraying, rap, or hip-hop. In some rare cases, the users are involved in some team sessions. However, as far as we learnt from the interviews in youth centres neither complaint procedures nor an Ombudsman are established, as the teams think that problems can be solved directly and more productively.

6. SOCIAL INNOVATION

As we decided on a low-threshold approach via a local youth centre for our field research, we want to point out the youth centre's perspective and role in participatory processes that are often assumed as socially innovative. Though the involvement of youngsters and their consultation in specific questions and the importance of informal learning in a youth centre setting can be interpreted as a bottom-up approach, youth centres and in particular partisan youth work follow socially innovative guiding principles (top-down) that might be discussed but are not subject to disposition (BWJF 2011, 423, 590). Also feminist youth work was not demanded by girls but initiated by conscious mothers and youth workers (Bitzan 2010, 104-105)

According to Hammer and Diebäcker (2009) social innovation is mainly understood as firstly using bottom-up processes and secondly broadening the focus which – when it comes to “youth topics” – is often narrowed down to employability and “work first”. Innovation always implies novelty (i.e. doing something in a new, different way, involving different/more actors, change focus) as well as a focus on the group(s) concerned and involving new actors who have not been involved before. Besides novelty a specific set of values and the kind of processes involved are central for a critical and empowering understanding of social innovation. To sum it up, social innovation here is strongly linked to the idea of enhancing justice in societal participation.

Two elements of this approach, the focus on the group concerned and the involvement of new actors, are also very much at the heart of the mobile youth work provided by our gatekeeper, one of the district's youth centres. In addition, the above described “Regionalforum” was established with the idea of connecting actors that are concerned with similar topics and work in (more or less) the same area. Another innovative aspect is the “flexibility” of the forum in which actors decide themselves to what extent they want to participate or to get engaged in common projects (as in the case of a special room which was designed for children and youngsters in the “Macondo” housing area for refugees, cf. IP_1, 13).

When it comes to the involvement of new actors, youth centres tend to collaborate with “classical” cooperation partner such as the district's urban development agency, the district administration or other youth centres but also includes representatives of the Federal Ministry of Justice and of community colleges, of charity and clerical organisations, and arts associations. As also pointed out in the WP3 report, bringing in art into youth work is seen as an innovative practice (cf. WP3 report, 32). In Simmering, for example, the “Jura Soyfer Association” collaborated with a local school preparing and rehearsing a performance by the students at the yearly district's festival.³⁶

Innovative approaches and practices can also be found at the crossroads of labour market and employability oriented policies/programmes and youth work (cf. WP3 report, 30). A shift seems to take place that education options for girls have diversified (although many

³⁶ Accessible under (only in German): <http://www.soyfer.at/deutsch/jszentrum.htm> [28.8.2014]

girls still decide for traditional professions as hairdresser or secretary). In Vienna, for instance, the NGO “sprungbrett” (“springboard”) offers vocational counselling for girls with a special focus on technical professions).³⁷

The aspect of putting a strong focus on the needs of the involved persons, as pointed out by Hammer/Diebäcker, also plays a central role in the youth centre’s work we choose as a gatekeeper. Basically, their work emphasises on “what is there”, acknowledging and respecting the aspirations and resources of youngsters and reacting in a supporting or solution orientated way, of course, within the factual constraints (where until now it still stays unclear to what extent the young people’s suggestions and ideas can actually be “brought upwards”). With reference to Freire one crucial step is the articulation of needs and the breaking of silence; therefore socially innovative practices also mean to “poke around”; “poking around” with respect and cautiousness, to tap in the dark and discover ideas that are not yet worked out. Nevertheless, for an idea that is not worked out justification (and funding) becomes harder and it is therefore more difficult to realize.

With respect to girls work we can follow Hammer/Diebäcker’s definition to include a specific set of values combatting inequality. As was pointed out in our WP2 report (Baillergeau Evelyne/ Duyvendak 2014, 96) “The capability is not just about the means but about the goals as well. In social policies and social work projects, some contributions that want to enhance voice are a bit ambivalent. It is not always clear whether or not the understanding of voice is a matter of means and/or a matter of contents”.

Gender, we put our research’s focus on, is an abiding theme, also in the context of youth work. Girls’ work has been established quite a long time ago and, on the one hand, all five youth centres in the chosen district offer “girls only” activities such as specific time slots for girls or even an exclusive space which is only open for girls (as the already mentioned “girls garden” we also chose for the participatory research). In addition, every year a “girls picnic” in parks takes place organised by Verein Wiener Jugendzentren. On the other hand, there are three exclusive girls’ spaces for the whole of Vienna namely the two girls’ cafés “flash” and “peppa” and the girls’ garden (BWJF 2011, 418, 521). Bitzan takes up the question of what contemporary girls work does actually mean and points out some central aspects. First, to support and accompany girls in all spheres of life and to help them to develop a critical stance towards demands by others; second, to investigate their wishes and ideas together and to “free up” spaces as adolescence too has become a period of raised claims and demands (especially in terms of education and employability) (cf. Bitzan 2010, 23). According to Bitzan, pedagogical concepts today should enhance and widen the individual’s scope of action and range of options what also fits very well into a capability approach perspective (cf. Bitzan 2010, 26).

Batsleer (2013, 17) strengthens the fact that work with girls and young women can shift readily from an agenda concerned with challenging existing forms of power relations to an agenda essentially rooted in them whilst prompting the practise of charity. Undertaking separate work with girls does not mean automatically challenging women’s subordination

³⁷ <http://www.sprungbrett.or.at/> (German only) [28.8.2014]

in society – therefore what she calls “autonomus anti sexist work (in contrast to separate spheres work) is based on the breaking-out of the position of women defined and categorised by their sex as persons of secondary importance”. We might ask, does social innovation need in any case the crossing of frontiers? What are these frontiers? They can be “practical” technical or legal impositions and regulations that deny the erection of a specific construct or a construction at a particular place. They can be societal frontiers limiting one’s development in society.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Selection of focus

As mentioned through this reporting our approach towards the selection of the participatory research project was driven by spatial considerations (focus on Simmering) and open towards the target group, however a particular emphasis is put on gender differences and inequality. Along with this “open” approach, we decided to follow a low-threshold access and cooperate with a local youth center that does outreach youth work in the district. Following this decision, the young people to be met are from *rather* disadvantaged families since this is the clientele reached by youth centres. In this sense, it might be better to speak of young people being more exposed to conflicts as resources – such as space for instance – are more limited and therefore conflicts more likely.

What makes the case of Simmering particularly interesting is the close cooperation and collaboration between the different institutions and stakeholders, the youth centres, the district’s youth welfare office and urban development agency, school social workers and even the borough mayor, when it comes to the planning and implementation of youth relevant strategies resp. policies. At the same time, youth workers in such settings can find themselves between passing on demands and wishes from residents and especially young people to politicians and – at the same time – being involved in (more) institutionalized ways of youth – or more general civic – involvement. Our particular focus is on girls-only spaces respectively on spaces where gender-sensitive approaches of youth work are deliberately considered in Simmering.

7.2. IBJJ and intersectionality

Beuret et al (2013) point out that “the cumulative, multidimensional and intersectional character of social inequality must be highlighted within the IBJJ. (...) Insisting on the fact that all individual or social judgements rest on a specific set of information (hence implying the corollary exclusion of all other information), the notion of IBJJ draws the attention to the selection of sources and indicators through which social problems are defined, i.e. the way inequalities are rendered visible and measurable. This cognitive framing of the problem has in turn great influence on the solutions proposed, i.e. the way public action is designed to address the problem.”

Pro-active girls' work was and is a youth work response to inequality and difference among young people stemming not only from the category gender. It is a kind of policy being fed by an informational basis for the judgement of justice that took serious persistent inequalities among girls and boys and consequently between men and women and recognised gender as a major reference point for policy intervention. However, policy priorities in youth work have changed. Janet Batsleer (2013, 30-31) assesses for the UK that youth work initiatives rooted in social justice struggles in the 1980s. Professionalization and changing policy priorities moved focuses towards more competence based learning and labour market orientation. Nowadays, youth policy programmes – as in many other fields of social policy (Bakic/Diebäcker/Hammer 2013) – label young people as clients, as consumer of services offered by public policy and as auditors they have the “power” to voice individual complaints. Youth workers face more and more the challenge to depict the results of their work. This development can also be observed in Austria. A new Federal Budget Law (Bundeshaushaltsgesetz) for instance codified “impact orientation” and “Performance Budgeting” for many administrative fields. Against this background, many youth work associations have begun to implement an impact-oriented approach in quality management although analysis technics are hardly elaborated and complicated. (Knecht/Kuchler 2013, 13-14)

Partisan youth work – including autonomous youth work with girls – in contrast is all about turning cases into issues; and issues into movements (Batsleer, 2013). The emancipation from limit-situations that are the vessels constraining one's room for manoeuvre and not the adaptation of one's life course to them is the big challenge of this kind of policy. Recognition of gender in policy programs and initiatives nowadays often only goes along with the adaptation to the prevailing norms and structures (that is a men's world); and the recognition of subjective differences only comes along with individualisation. Specific life situations are here within interpreted as choice of one's own or in negative terms as self-blamed and not as being part of societal constellation, that structurally disadvantages particular groups of youngsters. On the other hand, it is crucial to recognise differences among girls, girls are unique as subjects and there are many visions of trajectories and many more options of behaviour that can be envisaged and taken up.

By referring on Nancy Fraser's ideas of justice as justice of redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser 2004, 2009) three considerations with respect to intersectionality pervade our social support network analysis and our research on youth work with girls:

- (1) Statistical evidence proves differences with respect to many objective criteria such as income, educational attainment etc. for particular areas or particular groups of people. It is crucial to name and “shame” inequality and oppression that proves different depending on the subjects' positions in a 'multi-oppressive' society. With respect to young people and gender-specific youth work it is about showing the structure of unequal attention and resources dedicated towards girls and boys; differences in aspirations and needs of girls and boys and about uncovering a normality of impediment and harassments towards girls coming along with unequal chances for girls in many aspects of life-world (Bitzan 2010, 104). Girls as they grow

older attend youth centers less and less and move to other (semi-) public spaces than parks or youth centers. Therefore, adolescent girls represent a distinct target group sometimes addressed by specific youth work or girls work offers. The notion of the so-called “disappeared girls” (“verschwundene Mädchen”) was already mentioned in the Austrian WP3 report and came up again during the local stakeholder research of WP4. Various reasons for the “disappearance” of adolescent girls seem to be possible or to intermingle.

- (2) At the same time it is not only about material and data-proven more or less obvious differences but also about scrutinising the reasons for impeding youngsters to interact “on par” with others from an intersectional point of view and with respect to the social status ascribed to a particular group of youngsters and the disrespect they are experiencing in daily life. In other words demands for equal rights and opportunities must be acknowledged while at the same time valuing and recognising differences, some of them marking powerful divisions and injustices. With respect to the category gender this means in Janet Batsleer’s words: “being positioned as woman implies neither shared experiences, shared identity nor shared interpretations but women can consciously collect as a group in relation to that positionality” (Batsleer 2013, 4). A very common policy to address girls is to offer specific time slots exclusively for girls in youth centres as well as “girls only” spaces which are sometimes open to young mothers or women with small children too (as women are in many social groups still mainly in charge of child care). However youth work with girls in an understanding that acknowledges and reaches beyond the limit-situations girls encounter in our society goes beyond solely offering girls-only space – though this is an important stake. It refers to the recognition of girls as girls in youth work, to the enhancement of girls’ presence and symbolism in youth and youth work and in the society as a whole (public space, language, etc) and to the enhancement of equal opportunities with respect to external conversion factors but also with respect to the recognition of female life course experiences (care). What can the role of youth workers for instance as role models be to support a critical stance towards gender norms? Youth work involves the conscious use of self in relation to others as a prerequisite of practice in informal settings; informal education draws strongly on personal relationship as the basis of practice. Self-understanding and the ability to draw on that resource in being with others has long been a central professional task and for women this can be a highly subversive activity (Batsleer 2013, 3)
- (3) On top, we have to ask, how are in multiple ways disadvantaged or oppressed youngsters excluded from representation and participation with respect to direct and indirect, formal and informal forms of representation and participation? What steps for example through informal learning are taken to move from silence to voice and to action (Freire [1970] 2009; Batsleer 2008)? Again, oppression and inequality resulting from gender norms and behaviour shall be named and uncovered, on the other hand “labelling” of ... must be treated cautiously to avoid stigmatisation but in contrast to overcome stigmatisation and limit-situations (Freire [1970] 2009, 99).

Two aims could be formulated as crucial for the continuation of the research project that focuses on young people’s and particularly young girls’ aspirations in a participatory manner. First, to delve into – what Freire calls (2009[1970], 96) – people’s or in our case young people’s thematic universe, their meaningful thematics and at the same time break through limit situations they encounter. Again, for Freire limit-situations and the

consciousness about them are crucial issues: they should not bet impassable boundaries where possibilities end but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin ... a frontier that separates being from being more (surviving vs living) (99; 103). The question is how to get there. This leads us to the second aim. The apparent lack of self-confidence of many young women may be the result of social processes, which render young women either invisible, or visible only as problems to be regulated. Youth workers speak about the “ressources” and motivations youngsters have at their disposal, however, lacking self-esteem hinders them to voice concerns and aspirations. Self-deprivation such as calling themselves as girls ignorant and fatalism and constraints about one’s aspirations and capabilities may derive from the internalization of the opinion the society as a whole holds about this particular group (Freire 2009[1970], 63). Therefore, the power of recognition as girls and of a language that is appropriate to name and address are important aspects of work with girls and young women. The movement from silence to speech, from alleged boredom to lively action, from invisibility to visibility, the emphasis on expression in any form can turn private and individual issues into publicly discussed ones.

APPENDIX

Policy area	Policy or Programme	Description
Youth work	Youth work	<p>There are more youth centers in the chosen district than in any other Viennese district, most of them are part of the “Association of Viennese Youth Centers” (“Verein Wiener Jugendzentren”), the biggest provider of children and youth work in Vienna that exists since 1978 and is financed by the city of Vienna.</p> <p>The Association employs around 300 youth workers in more than 30 facilities offering outreach child and youth work in youth centres, mobile youth work, community work, and training in one facility.</p> <p>Sources: http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/index.php?188 (in English), http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/ (in German)</p>
Educational / social work	“Word up!” youth parliament	<p>Youth parliament where school children of the age of 12/13 can raise their demands and present them to the district administration with the support of youth workers. Demands that are agreed on in the plenum session – consisting of the borough mayor, administrative bodies at district level, and other public entities – are then implemented in cooperation with the later. The participating institutions seem to have quite a big interest in fostering the young people’s insight into how “politics” work and what hinders the implementation of certain demands. The possibility to raise demands and being heard in such a panel still is quite empowering for the students, according to the supporting youth workers.</p> <p>Source (in German): https://www.wien.gv.at/bezirke/simmering/kinderjugendliche/wordup.html and http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/index.php?id=55 (website of the association of Viennese Youth Centers)</p>

Youth work	"Flash" girls café	<p>The "flash" café is a space exclusively for girls (on four days a week for adolescents and younger girls too) and has been existing since 2011. It offers girls' work and also does outreach girls' work in the neighbourhood and surrounding parks. Girls even participated in the (interior) design of the café and chose a logo; in general, the "flash" tries to involve the girls e.g. by providing a blackboard where the girls can suggest activities for the "open" Saturday afternoon.</p> <p>The café was strongly supported by the (Green) district government who invited the youth workers of the former youth centre to establish the "flash" and also co-subsidizes it (the café is situated in the Viennese "bobo" district).</p> <p>Source (only in German): http://typo.jugendzentren.at/flash/.</p>
Youth work	"Peppa" girls café	<p>A similar space as the "flash" is the girls' café "peppa" although it provides more learning aid and vocational counselling as well as support/counselling with regards to public administration. "peppa" has a strong intercultural approach (as it also situated in one of Vienna's district with high migrant population) and offers youth work in several other languages than German; target group are girls and young women between the age of 10 and 20.</p> <p>Beyond the girls' work, "peppa" offers support for families with migrant background.</p> <p>Source (only in German): http://www.caritas-wien.at/hilfe-einrichtungen/asylmigrationintegration/integrationsarbeit/peppa/.</p>
Youth work	Girls only time slots at youth centers (and "Girls Garden")	<p>All youth centers in the chosen district (and throughout Vienna) offer at least one specific time slot per week exclusively for girls (in some centres, another time slots are also offered to adolescents/young women with children). Our chosen youth center even had a specific garden which girls (the focus is on girls between 6- 12 years, adolescents and young women / mothers are welcome too) can access once a week from May to September. Besides the "routine" youth work, the "Girls Garden" offers the possibility to work in the garden, harvest fruits/vegetables.</p> <p>The "Association of Viennese Youth Centers" developed a guideline for girls' work (accessible under http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/fileadmin/pdf_downloads/pdf_f_experts/maedchen_kopie_neu.pdf, only in German). As boys still dominate public spaces, providing and designed spaces for and together with girls is still a crucial topic in girls' work.</p>
Social / educational work	Social work at school	<p>In the chosen district, two social workers cover all seven schools, offering counselling for students and teachers, mediating conflicts among students as well as between students and teachers. They are employed by the school. Their work involves intense cooperation with the local youth centers and especially with the Public Youth Welfare Office when it comes to cases of (suspected) child neglect.</p>
Social / youth work	Fair-Play-Team	<p>The "Fair Play Team" was introduced by the borough mayor to mediate conflicts in (semi-) public spaces, especially in the spaces around public housing compounds where conflicts between the residents have become a common problem in the last decade. The "Fair Play Team", consisting of two social workers, walk through different neighbourhoods, and serves as a contact for all residents.</p> <p>Source (only in German): http://www.parkbetreuung.at/fairplay.</p>

Urban development and planning	Agency for District Management and Urban Renewal	<p>Throughout many Viennese districts, the “Agency for District Management Urban Renewal” (“Gebietsbetreuung und Stadterneuerung”) provides legal advice in terms of residence matters and, moreover, supports and fosters the urban development of certain areas, districts, and neighbourhoods, especially with regards to the participation of residents in urban development processes. In areas of urban densification the Agency tries to support the integration of new building complexes resp. the residents and also promotes open (public) spaces (what is of particular interest for our chosen research area where various housing complexes have been built in the last decade).</p> <p>Source (only in German): http://www.gbstern.at/.</p>
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CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

- Interview 1: representative of Simmering’s urban renewal/development agency
- Interview 2: youth worker at youth center in Simmering
- Interview 3: “flash girls café”, social worker specialized in girls work
- Interview 4: head of district library
- Interview 5: youth worker at youth centre in Simmering
- Interview 6: borough mayor
- Interview 7: 2 school social workers
- Interview 8: district youth welfare officer
- Interview 9: “contact” police officer in charge of work with other institutions and violence prevention and ”legal” education
- Interview 10: teacher and 6 pupils (KMS)
- Interview 11: district councillor

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THIS IS A GIRLS' SPACE?! RE-SEARCHING FOR PARTICIPATORY PARITY IN GENDER-SPECIFIC YOUTH WORK³⁸

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FORSCHUNGS- UND BERATUNGSSTELLE ARBEITSWELT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This chapter presents findings of a participative research project undertaken with girls engaged with open youth work in Simmering, one district in Vienna, Austria. Hence, the focus of the participatory and action research was put on the presence, situation and participation of young girls in open youth work and public and semi-public spaces in Simmering and the role of gender-sensitive youth work in enhancing girls' empowerment.

Research design and research questions

The case study carried out in Austria attempted to implement a participatory action research approach. It was based on four methodical elements: ethnographic methods including observant participation and informal talks in youth centers in Simmering; arts-based methods focusing on street-art; problem-centered interviews both with girls and youth workers; and three reflective sessions in terms of group discussions with stakeholders and informal talks with participants to reflect the research process. The main venue the research process was carried out was the girls' garden, a girls-only programme of a local youth centre in Simmering.

Particular research questions beyond our common research question: “In what way are young people’s narratives, aspirations and conceptions of justice articulated, heard and contested in social policies and practices as well as in other aspects of their daily lives?” encompass on the one hand young girls’ limit-situations revealed in their attendance of public and semi-public spaces. On the other hand, we argue about the added value of girls-only space as an important tool and resource in gender-sensitive youth work. This means to report on the challenges, limits and contestations of gender-sensitive and

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feminist youth work to enhance girls' scope of space appropriation and girls' capacities to aspire from the girls' perspectives and in dialogue with youth workers.

Research findings: Gendered limit-situations and the role of youth work

(1) Spaces of gendered dominance

This chapter empirically shows how girls and boys are using space in a different manner and scrutinizes underlying explanations. Girls' reduced spatial agency is contrasted to boys' expanding spatial agency that manifests itself in the way they playfully occupy public and semi-public space and in the way they communicate with each other and also intersexually. Girls remain comparably invisible and silent in such settings – and are up to different games and used to a different division of tasks. Girls skating, playing football and boys caring for their siblings remain rather the exception.

Going out, strolling around outside appears to be a strategy of girls to escape social control by fearful parents. Teenage girls together with their female friends seem to be much more mobile over distances (“strolling around”). This behaviour might be due to the restriction of possibilities in “fixed” public spaces such as parks or due to the eagerness to get out of the tyranny and control of the local. The

“street or the public transport system are important spaces for being seen, for getting into contact with others, for social interaction with peer groups.

Rumors about unsafety in public space often urge girls into a defensive position having the power to create a felt space of fear that can turn into a real space of fear you use warily. At the same time, the “safe space” private home as opposite to the “unsafe public space” is actually the place where violence against children, girls and women happens. Such dominant discourses restrict girls' (public) space appropriation.

(2) What is the value added of a girls* space? Intersectional aspects of gender-sensitive youth work

Consequently, the next chapter is arguing for spaces that girls can conquer, use and arrange on their own and gives examples for this policy. Gender-sensitive youth work aims at accompanying girls in transition processes in all possible spheres of life, trying to create free spaces and to amplify the girls' scope of action, facilitating “identity building” and transgressing gender roles. Therefore, adequate space and methods for searching and trying out are needed, for “doing gender” and for reflecting the body as a central battlefield of gender norms. Our research shows how girls are using and that girls are appreciating a space that they can occupy for themselves. The girls' garden is an example for such a space. It offers experiences of doing and behaving that are more difficult or impossible to accomplish in mixed settings. It is a place to act and to try out bodily experiences without reference to boys and with less heteronormative pressure. Since it is a garden, girls are not only away from home and its social control but also outside in a safe and semi-public space.

Discussion, review and reflection

(1) Aspirations and the capacity to aspire

Our research shows that the formation of aspirations is closely connected with identity formation and with realising what role is foreseen for girls and boys in a society that is strongly divided along the gendered lines of behaviour, doing and labour. Any kind of projection into the future is constrained or at least shaped by the young person's present embeddedness in terms of his or her material, status and representative situation.

Since modern claims towards girls request to go beyond or to break with traditional gender roles, girls permanently experience "double messages" and have to cope with them: the openness and allegedly "everything goes" attitude of modern life brings along more (at least theoretical) opportunities, however daily routine and normalcy limits this alleged freedom.

In this respect, gender-sensitive youth work plays an important role for recognizing and naming contradictions in processes of identity formation and becoming. Gender-sensitive and feminist youth work aims at accompanying adolescents' processes of searching and finding with a critical perspective and with awareness of the pitfalls of normalcy. Taking seriously young people's aspirations and voice means building upon participatory knowledge, nevertheless a (contradictory) dialogue strengthens and makes visible that gendered, raced, classed and other positionalities play a role in opening up or limiting self-knowledge – and a wider range of imaginable aspirations.

(2) Substantial freedoms of participation

Contributive Justice

This report emphasizes the importance of young people's participation in terms of contribution going beyond their opinion and including their involvement into the concrete implementation of ideas. The girls' garden is an exemplary place where meaningful contributions can happen. Girls together with youth workers and other (female) visitors use the "material" in terms of "nature" and tools this place is offering. They are trying out what is seemingly not possible in other (public) or private (family) spaces, moving from capabilities to functionings in gardening and building/constructing, climbing, showing and moving their bodies – and doing graffiti in a public space.

Transformative character of participation: Underrepresentation of girls in public space and arts-based experiments

Arts-based practices and ethnographic research are fruitful methods to reach beyond explicitly and codified represented narratives. In this section, we debate in how far arts-based practices can tell us something about participants' formation of aspirations at least in small and manageable settings "for the moment". In addition, the practice of street-art is a commitment to visibility and to symbolization in public space. It involves also a commitment to public scrutiny and debate. Girls' spaces and girls-only gangs/groups in public space become symbolized via street-art as a political issue and become subject to

social deliberation. Moreover, it is a public performance with respect to the symbols staying on the wall such as “Mädchengarten” (“Girls’ Garden”) or the girls’ names.

The imperative of participation

Youth work is informal, flexible and it is evaluated in relation to its process as much as its end results. Therefore, participation is more an ends than a means to come to a certain result in youth work. At the same time, youth work is offering services, workshops, material, ideas for leisure activities etc. to consume or to take part in. If youth workers – or we as researchers – bring in ideas or issues we deem interesting, important and worthwhile discussing or working with, the non-binding nature and voluntariness of young people’s participation in such plans often torpedo conceptual and long-term planning and collaboration. Many rather perceive a youth center as a place for just hanging around without an aim and a purpose than just “being” and deliberately reject participation.

(3) Methodological reflection

The Austrian case study included several methods that were combined and that to different degrees fostered an interactive process among the participants. We relied on ethnographic research and observant participation and problem-centred interviews both with young women and youth workers on the one hand. On the other hand, we attempted to implement in a collaborative process with young women and girls a project.

In terms of a methodological reflection, the participatory action research part that we tried to carry out together with girls, was very difficult to conceptualise and to implement in a participatory manner. This was due to the irregular and unpredictable presence of girls in the girls’ garden and also due to their changing motivation to contribute to this process or not. In carrying out a project, some kind of structure has to be followed and a relatively steady commitment of young people to the project is a prerequisite for successful and duly participatory implementation. At the same time, the trials and errors of this process to implement an action that was at the same time part of the ethnographic field research, the permanent interaction with girls, their motivation or reluctance to contribute to our proposals or to bring in their own ideas, were necessary steps for learning about girls’ positionalities and agency in semi-public spaces and the role of feminist or gender-sensitive youth work in it.

Policy-relevant conclusions

Youth work with girls and gender-sensitive youth work necessarily includes a politisation of youth work in at least two directions: First, a back-up of public policy for gender-specific / feminist / participatory youth work is crucial. It is not a separate “niche” subject of individually committed youth workers. It is a political decision, a contested field also on district level where resources are to be allotted or not.

Second, youth centers must follow a “true” commitment to enhance participatory parity between boys and girls. Time constraints and limited personnel resources jeopardise the

involvement and thinking through of adequate practices on the one hand. On the other hand, the principle of gender-sensitive youth work is sometimes interpreted as a “must” or a duty that is anyway kept in mind. The simple assertion that gender-sensitive youth work is a principle is not enough. It must be implemented and lived in daily practice, in dedicated projects, in reflection processes, and in permanent dialogue with girls and boys.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Local area in focus: Simmering, Vienna

The Austrian case study is located in Simmering, the second biggest district of Vienna situated at its Eastern periphery. Simmering is a traditional working class district with a still quite heterogeneous population. Apart from the traditional working class areas, some petty-bourgeois areas can be found as well as very specific neighbourhoods such as “Macondo” where around 3.000 refugees live.

In comparison with Vienna’s overall population, Simmering has a quite young population. As for the whole of Vienna (and Austria), the district’s migrant population has risen steadily over the last years – a fact that increasingly challenges local policy and its position towards a multicultural society. In terms of educational attainment, the share of inhabitants with completed tertiary education is the lowest among all Viennese districts resp. the residents share with only compulsory education is comparably high. As lower educational attainment is known to have a negative impact on employment, it is not surprising that Simmering is among the five Viennese districts with the highest unemployment rate. Apart from unemployment, the weaker economic situation of the district’s population becomes apparent in – compared to Viennese average - lower income levels and a higher share of “needs-based minimum income” recipients (Magistrat der Stadt Wien 2014).

1.2. Selected Policy area: open youth work

Within our research we focused on the open resp. outreach youth work. Out-reach youth work and youth centres are low threshold institutions where participation is voluntary and free of cost. It particularly addresses young people from disadvantaged background with the goal to expand young people’s scope of action, supporting appropriation/negotiation of public spaces and its usage by different groups. Generally, Simmering is quite a resourceful district with regard to policies towards young people, not only in terms of “quantity” – there are more youth centres in Simmering than in any other Viennese district – but also in terms of “quality”: In Simmering, youth policies and youth programs cover a broad variety of youth work such as “traditional” youth centers, outreach/mobile youth work, special offers for children, girls (offering exclusive girls spaces), young mothers, youth work with children of refugees. Starting from this background, we focused on

policies regarding gender-specific youth programs in the context of social work and youth work.

1.3. Program in focus: gender-sensitive youth work and the “girls garden”

The local youth centre “Balu&du” was the entrance point to our research area Simmering's youth work. As we decided on a gender-specific perspective for our participatory research, the “home base” of the project was the *girls' garden*, one of three girls' only spaces in Simmering's youth centre scene. It is a place open from April to September and run by Balu&du where girls and young women can meet. The girls' garden target group are between 7 and 15 years. Besides the girls' garden, we visited other girls-only spaces in Simmering where girls and youth workers with a gender-sensitive approach interact.

Hence, the focus of the participatory research was put on the presence, situation and participation of young girls in open youth work and public and semi-public spaces in Simmering and the role of gender-sensitive youth work in enhancing girls' empowerment.

1.4. Research strategy

The case study carried out in Austria attempted to implement a participatory action research approach. It was based on four methodical elements: ethnographic methods including observant participation and informal talks in youth centers in Simmering; arts-based methods focusing on street-art; problem-centered interviews both with girls and youth workers; and three reflective sessions in terms of group discussions with stakeholders and informal talks with participants to reflect the research process. The whole research process lasted from February 2014 to November 2014.

In the beginning, we very openly visited our gatekeeper Balu&du during the opening hours of its youth centre talking about and listening to young people's and youth workers' particular topics of interest that could become the focus of our research. At one point, we as researchers in accordance with the supporting youth workers had to take the decision where and what to focus on. Once we decided on a gender specific perspective for our participatory (action) research, we especially attended time slots exclusively for girls and girls' spaces such as the girls' garden. Within this process the involved stakeholders decided to put the focus of the participatory research on the presence, situation and participation of young girls in open youth work and public and semi-public spaces and the challenges and chances of gender-sensitive youth work in Simmering.

1.5. Themes to be discussed

Accessing the research field at a low-threshold level allowed us to broaden the research perspective and facilitated the access to a big range of “meaningful thematics” and “limit situations” that girls and young women are concerned with (Freire 2009[1970], 96, 99).

In this report themes to be discussed will on the one hand encompass young girls' limit-situations revealed in their attendance of public and semi-public spaces. On the other hand, we will argue for the added value of girls-only space as an important tool and resource in gender-sensitive youth work. This means to report on the challenges, limits and contestations of gender-sensitive and feminist youth work to enhance girls' scope of space appropriation and girls' capacities to aspire from the girls' perspectives and in dialogue with youth workers following a gender-sensitive and feminist approach in their profession.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The focus of the Austrian case study context was put on feminist and gender-sensitive youth work in Simmering. Bearing in mind our common research question: *“In what way are young people’s narratives, aspirations and conceptions of justice articulated, heard and contested in social policies and practices as well as in other aspects of their daily lives?”* we adapted and extended it according to the particular setting of feminist and gender-sensitive youth work. The following questions guided the research process and the interpretation of results:

- What limit-situations do girls encounter when strolling through and using public space? What is their perception of local and (semi-)public spaces that is allotted to them or that they conquer? How visible are girls in youth work? What is their position in youth work? Do we need girls-only places, and what is their benefit?
- What are girls' perceptions of their living circumstances and girls' narratives concerning their aspirations and identity formation processes? (Young girls' “thematic universe” and “limit-situations”) In this respect, it is important to consider whose and what kind of experiences are told when we ask *girls* about these issues.
- Are principles of feminist girls' work such as partisanship, the focus on the entirety of girls' life worlds, creation of girls' space and participation in place in today's youth work with girls? In what way?

2.1. Gender as a crucial category in youth work

Gender represents a crucial intersectional category for youth work in many ways. By referring to Nancy Fraser's (2004, 2009) ideas of justice as justice of redistribution, recognition and representation three considerations with respect to intersectionality pervade our research on youth work and gender inequality:

Statistical evidence proves differences with respect to many objective criteria such as income, educational attainment etc. for particular areas or particular groups of people, also for young women. It is crucial to name and “shame” inequality on the basis of distributive injustice that proves different depending on the subjects' positions in a 'multi-oppressive' society. With respect to young people and gender-specific youth work it is about showing the structure of unequal attention and resources dedicated towards girls

and boys; differences in girls' and boys' needs and attendance of public and semi-public spaces and about uncovering a normality of impediment and harassments towards girls coming along with unequal chances for girls in many aspects of life-world.

A very common policy to approach girls in youth work is to offer specific time slots exclusively for girls in youth centres as well as girls-only spaces. However, youth work with girls in an understanding that acknowledges and reaches beyond the limit-situations girls encounter in our society goes beyond solely offering girls-only space – though this is an important stake. It refers to the recognition of girls as girls in youth work, to the enhancement of girls' presence and symbolism in youth culture and youth work and in the society as a whole (public space, language, etc). And it aims at the enhancement of equal opportunities with respect to external conversion factors but also with respect to the recognition of female life course experiences (such as care obligations).

This means that besides the material and data-proven more or less obvious differences and inequality between male and female living circumstances (i.e. the injustice of redistribution) we also must scrutinise the reasons for impeding young people to *interact* “on par”. This inequality of recognition is due to the social status ascribed to girls and to the disrespect they are experiencing in daily life. In other words, demands for equal rights and opportunities must be acknowledged and pursued, while at the same time differences should be recognized. Gender-sensitive youth work shall facilitate rooms for experimentation to behave, act, aspire differently but it shall also offer support and foothold in girls' everyday lives and struggles (Bitzan 2010).

On top, we have to ask, how are in multiple ways disadvantaged or oppressed young people excluded from representation and participation with respect to direct and indirect, formal and informal forms of representation and participation? What steps for example through informal learning are taken to move from silence to voice also from a gender-specific perspective? Again, oppression and inequality resulting from gender norms and behaviour shall be named and uncovered. At the same time, “labelling” of girls - girls as victims or as riot girls - must be treated cautiously to avoid stigmatization and to avoid a neoliberal “everything goes” attitude (Bitzan/Daigler 2004, 207). Participatory parity evolves when limit-situations based on redistributive, status and representative inequality are collectively and not individually overcome.

With this conceptual and theoretical background, two notions were accompanying the research process in the girls' garden. First, to delve into – what Freire calls (2009[1970], 96) – people's or in our case young women's thematic universe, their meaningful thematics and their attempts to break through limit situations they encounter. For Freire limit-situations and the consciousness about them are crucial issues: they should not constitute impassable boundaries where possibilities end but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin ... a frontier which separates being from being more (surviving vs living) (99; 103). The question is how to get there. This leads us to the second notion. The apparent lack of self-confidence of many young women may be the result of social processes which render young women either invisible, or visible only as problems to be regulated. Youth workers speak about the “resources” and motivations young people and girls in particular have at their disposal, however, lacking self-esteem hinders them to

voice concerns and aspirations. Self-deprivation such as calling themselves as girls ignorant and fatalism and constraints about one's aspirations and capabilities may derive from the internalization of the opinion the society as a whole holds about this particular group (Freire 2009[1970], 63). Therefore, the power of recognition as girls and of a language that is appropriate to name and address are important aspects of (youth) work with girls and young women. The movement from silence to speech, from alleged boredom to lively action, from invisibility to visibility, the collective emphasis on uncovering unjust practices and expressing valuable aspirations can turn private and individual issues into publicly discussed ones.

2.2. Research design

The participatory research design was based on four main elements: (1) ethnographic methods (Reichert 2012) including observant participation and informal talks in youth centers in Simmering with both young people and youth workers, (2) arts-based methods, (3) problem-centered interviews both with girls and youth workers, and (4) three reflective sessions in form of group discussions with stakeholders and informal talks with participants to reflect the research process. The whole research process lasted from February 2014 to November 2014 (see Overview 2, Research Design).

According to Frisby et al (2009, 14) the combination of a participatory research process methodology and feminist theoretical concepts of gender inequality is useful to “challeng[e] and unsettl[e] entrenched and sometimes invisible power arrangements and mechanisms that are enacted in everyday relationships, organizational and economic structures, cultural and institutional practices, large and small.” Both share social change goals by indicating specifically on power manifestations resulting in (gender) inequalities that have serious consequences for people's lives, yet are often taken for granted and seen as ‘normal or natural’.

We see participation with Cahill (2007: 299) rather as an approach than a concrete method that takes seriously young people's/ girls agency and capacity in particular spaces. Our research design tried to combine data stemming from young people's/girls' experiential knowledge produced in arts-based workshops and sessions and from observant participation with more codified data collection from problem-centered interviews with young people and youth workers focusing on their narratives. What we could gain from this approach “despite ongoing silences [...] was at least a temporary sense of sharing in the making of spaces” (ibid.): How is young people's, girls' local knowledge produced? What embodied practices and experiences are emerging reaching beyond explicitly and codified represented knowledge?

(1) Ethnographic Research

The local youth centre Balu&du was the gatekeeper and entrance point to our research area Simmering. In the beginning of the research process, we launched a “kick-off period” for our participatory research attempts. During that period we visited and carried through informal talks both in the respective youth centre, as well as in public places,

predominantly parks, where Balu&du provides out-reach youth work. Furthermore, three more youth centres in the district were approached. We visited each venue, some of them more than once, to get to know the youth workers and the young people and to collect ideas and young people's points of interest. Once we decided on a gender-specific perspective for our participatory (action) research, we especially attended time slots exclusively for girls and girls' spaces such as the girls' garden (run by our gatekeeper) or JAM (run by Verein Wiener Jugendzentren). From Mid of May until the End of September, we spent one afternoon per week in the girls' garden— a space exclusively for girls and (young) women opened from spring to autumn. Therefore, we decided to put the focus of the participatory research on the presence, situation and participation of young girls in open youth work and semi-public and public spaces in Simmering and organise at least two workshops on Street-Art in the girls' garden. In the forerun of the arts-based workshops, we tried to figure out what kind of activity surrounding Street-Art could be interesting for the girls, also encouraged by the youth workers who recommended “going into the field” with a concrete offer. This process turned out to be quite difficult as will be explained in the section on methodological reflections.

In addition, we spent many hours in several of the districts' parks where the outreach youth work of our gatekeeper takes place to do observant participation as well as informal walks and talks with the young people. Table 1 gives an overview of the chronology of our ethnographic research. Each visit in the girls' garden, in another girls' space in the research area or in another youth centre, was documented in the research diary (RD) by each researcher (starting from March 2014).

Overview 2: Chronology of ethnographic research

Where?	When?
Flugplatz (Container/out-door), run by Balu&du	April-June, three times
Zamenhofgasse (Youth centre), run by Balu&du	March-October, seven times
Mädchengarten (girls' only garden), run by Balu&du	May-September, 14 times + 2 workshops on street-art
Si:ju (Youth centre), run by VWJZ (Verein Wiener Jugendzentren)	May, one time
Eleven (Youth centre), run by VWJZ	May-June, two times
Leberberg (Youth centre), run by VWJZ	May, one time
Jam (girls' only youth centre), run once a week by VWJZ	June-October, three times
Out-reach youth work in parks	June-September, four times

(2) Arts-based methods

Batsleer (2011, 424) regards arts-based practice such as street-art as one alternative form for gathering data to express contradictory, ambivalent, multiple feelings and meanings, to try out new ideas that “have the permission also to be different and silly” and that at the same time are tools for informal learning.

Picture 1: Leaflet



As we took the decision to concentrate on street art, we dedicated the following girls garden sessions as a framework in which we were available for the girls interested in participating in the process (designing a wall just in front of the “girls’ garden”). The aim was to engage the girls as much as possible already during the preparation of the Street-Art workshop so that they can bring in their ideas and topics and decide how to depict these contents and what materials we will use. Together with the girls we designed and distributed flyers and posters to announce the workshops.

In the forerun of the two organised workshops with two Graffiti artists, the Balu&du sessions were used to introduce the girls into street-art methods such as the designing of letters and the cutting of stencils and to make them familiar with the material in use such as stencils and spray cans. In this process, the girls designed bags and tried out stencils and free-style graffiti on a huge banner.

In July and September 2014 finally two Graffiti workshops took place resulting in the design of a wall vis-à-vis the girls' garden. The initial idea – to ask together with the girls for the permission to spray the wall that is owned by the Austrian Railway Company– proved to be difficult due to the irregular attendance of the girls during the whole workshop period, and finally we as organisers of the two workshops arranged the “legalisation” of this wall.

(3) Problem-centered interviews both with girls and youth workers

In addition to the informal talks with girls between 13 and 20 years during our presence in the girls' garden and in the other venues, we conducted problem-centered interviews with 10 girls in order to receive more precise and targeted answers to questions surrounding the life-world of girls in Simmering’s girls-only youth scene. The interviews covered questions about the girls’ motivation to use girls-only space, about their use of public space, about their perceptions of “girls” identities and general questions about their living circumstances. We also conducted five problem-centered interviews with youth workers in Simmering and in another girls-only place in Vienna, the girls' café, about local and gender-sensitive youth work, attendance habits of boys and girls in youth centers and participation opportunities in processes of local policies. We also processed interviews with one female police officer and two school social workers that were conducted for the local support network analysis in WP4.

(4) Reflective sessions

Finally, two reflective sessions in form of group discussions with youth workers from Balu&du and informal talks and feed-back rounds with participants to reflect the research

process and to conclude the whole PAR process were carried out. In addition, preliminary results of the project were presented and discussed at the “Regionalforum”, a monthly local exchange meeting of stakeholders of local youth policies including youth workers, social workers, local politicians, community organisers and school social workers.

Overview 2: Research Design

Kick-off period	Selection of focus and method involving gatekeeper (youth centre) and young people “out-reach” and decentrally organized research work with the girls’ garden as “home base” run by Balu&du
Workshop preparation I + II	Design and distribution of flyers and posters Workshop preparation with girls: introducing them into street-art methods; designing bags and stencils Ethnographic life-world analysis (Mar-Nov 2014); continuous presence in the girls’ garden, youth centers and parks; documentation and reflection in research diary
Workshops	Organisation and implementation of two workshops on Street-art with street-artists (July&Sept 2014)
Follow-up and reflection	Reflective (group) discussions on participatory research design and workshop proceeding with girls, youth workers and other stake holders

3. **RESEARCH FINDINGS: GENDERED LIMIT-SITUATIONS AND THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK**

This section will shed light on “limit situations” (Freire 2009[1970], 96, 99) that young woman and girls are concerned with. By limit-situations we refer to situations that constrain aspirations or the development of capabilities and their usage in daily life. In our case study we focus on the limit-situations girls encounter in public and semi-public spaces. We scrutinize the gendered structural and discursive constraints shaping these limit-situations and how girls are “doing gender” (Gildemeister 2004). Freire interprets limit-situations as challenges: They are not impassable boundaries where possibilities end but the real boundaries where all possibilities start ... a frontier that separates being from being more (Freire 2009[1970], 99; 103). Therefore, partisan and particularly partisan girls youth work was all about signaling interest, respect and recognition and realizing possibilities and experiences that girls did not find as such in their daily lives (Bitzan 2010, 105).

The first section (spaces of gendered dominance) of this chapter will empirically show how girls and boys are using space in a different manner and scrutinize underlying explanations.

The second section (What is the value added of a girls* space? Intersectional aspects of gender-sensitive youth work) is arguing for spaces that girls can conquer, use and arrange on their own and gives examples for this policy.

Chapter 5 will build upon these findings and connect them to our common analytical dimensions: aspirations and freedoms of participation.

3.1. Spaces of gendered dominance

Young girls frequent parks and youth centers but teenage girls seem to “disappear” from certain public spaces and leisure activities. Various reasons for the “disappearance” of adolescent girls seem to be possible or to intermingle from the local stakeholder’s point of view as was laid down in the local support network analysis of SocIEtY’s WP4 (Haidinger/Kasper 2014): at the age of 14 school changes or the beginning of an apprenticeship training are common and spare time becomes scarce. In addition, attending school in a different district changes the daily routes of the girls who then might spend their spare time in different places. Besides these rather practical motivations, a more in-depth scrutiny elucidates the gendered nature of appropriating public or semi-public spaces.

Martina Löw (2001, 92) differentiates between girls’ reduced spatial agency versus boys’ expanding spatial agency. She connects the gender-specific appropriation of public space with gender-specific processes of socialization. Socialization is formed through embodied and naturalized practices within an unequal and gendered setting of division of labour and of space, resulting in a (gender-)specific habitus (Edthofer et al 2015). The expanding spatial agency of boys and particularly of adolescent boys manifests itself in the way they playfully occupy public space such as parks with football or basketball and in the way they communicate with each other and also intersexually:³⁹ painting with chalk big penises on the streets, insulting girls as whores in everyday conversations, screaming and shouting as “normal” practice of talking to each other. They are visible and present with their bodies and their voices. As one of the interviewed girls remarks: *“Yes, I sometimes do not feel in the right place when hanging around alone in parks. It’s somehow boring and annoying. Then I just leave.”*⁴⁰ However, a social youth worker and another police officer pointed us to incidences of violence among girls in public space – Bitzan and Daigler (2004, 34) interpret this behavior of girls as willing to live out and show socially non-accepted behavior. *“Girls are meeting in parks in the afternoon having arranged their meetings via SMS during school time. Then they fight, pulling hair, beating, biting each other, use bodily harm against each other. They really humiliate and bully each other.”*⁴¹

A remarkable incidence⁴² happened when one of our team’s female researcher distributed flyers to announce one of the girls-only workshop in the girls’ garden. The flyers were distributed only to girls; nevertheless, boys became curious about this action and wanted to provoke and challenge it. This was done not only verbally by making fun of a girls-only event but also by physically assaulting the woman distributing the flyers and tearing

³⁹ Research Diary, in the following referred to as RD, pp. 35-36

⁴⁰ Int_G1 (15 years)

⁴¹ Int_SSW, Int_PW (WP 4)

⁴² RD, p.25

the flyers apart when they got hold of them. One girl who was one of those directly addressed by the distributing action and who witnessed this incidence just remained silent and left. She did not build alliances to the boys but placed herself and was placed outside this conflict. The addressee of the aggression was the “active” researcher.

Girls remain comparably invisible and silent in these settings – and are up to different games and used to a different division of tasks: they are those playing parlour games, helping to prepare food with youth workers and they are often those who care about their siblings. As one of the youth workers during our field research noted, *“The boys are for themselves, they take their time. However, girls especially with Turkish background are often with their younger siblings, sometimes for a long time. Both of the parents are at work. Then [the girls] who are sometimes only 13, 14 have their little siblings in tow.”*⁴³ This gendered division of tasks also means that adolescent girls are more often met in mixed public spaces and playgrounds for children *and* young people. As an example: after the *Leberberg* park in Simmering has been reconstructed into a water playground more children and more adolescent girls showed up somehow “driving out” football playing male young people from this place. Where there are children there are less adolescent boys but more adolescent girls. As one of the youth workers observed, since the re-arrangement of this place girls seem to appear with more self-confidence and “expanding spatial agency”.⁴⁴

Often girls also “disappear” to invisible places in parks and take their positions there as spectators or audience of busy scenes such as the skate ramps or the football and basketball cage that are rather used by boys. Girls prefer uncontrollable and unreachable free places (from parents and younger children and boys) in public space for chatting and chilling and being among themselves; places that are not socially controlled. An example is the participatory planning of a girls’ zone in a park in another district than Simmering: girls formulated the wish of being invisible (from outside) and unreachable (for small children); as a result of this participatory planning process high hanging hammocks were installed.⁴⁵

“Girls,” as one girl taking part in a group discussion noted, *“prefer sitting around in parks for three hours or going shopping”*.⁴⁶ At this point, it is crucial to ask if and what alternative practices “subverting” gendered normalcy can be identified. Of course, there are girls skating, playing football and boys caring for their siblings in fact. However, they remain rather the exception than the rule. It appears to be difficult to integrate an unusual and seemingly strange behavior into common practice and daily routine from the girls’ point of view. Here again an assessment of a 15 year old girl:

“I was with my father and my [younger] brother over there in the park and some [boys] were playing football. We just asked if we could join them. This was a cool experience because then some 20 year old joined and some 11 and some 16 year old boys. This was great! So many different people played football. Football connects,

⁴³ Int_YW3

⁴⁴ Int_YW2

⁴⁵ Int_YW1

⁴⁶ GD Word-Up

*you know... (...) the players did not know each other... I found this cool. I would really appreciate it if more often people But people are – so I think – too shy to ask any other people, too wary to ask, too fearful to ask. And then they rather don't do anything but sitting around with their friends and do nothing.*⁴⁷

Below, we come back to the role of gender-sensitive youth work in supporting gendered practices to be turned upside down.

Space – to speak with Henri Lefebvre – has three dimensions (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2005: 137): a material dimension, a conceptual dimension and a dimension of lived experiences. When scrutinizing the gendered structure of space it is not enough to describe the material state of space, i.e. what factual possibilities it does provide for people staying there, or to indicate how it is used differently by girls and boys. The second (of the three dimensions), namely how space is discursively constructed, is of paramount interest as well. Why do girls feel unsafe or uncomfortable in certain places? It is due to sexual harassment in public, semi-public and private spaces, they are *experiencing* in daily lives. However, it is also due to discourses about (girls in) public spaces. Rumors about unsafety in public space often urge girls into a defensive position. A space of violence and fear is constructed when rumors about pedophiles lurking behind the trees⁴⁸ are put into circulation whereas nobody does have certain information about incidences that have happened in fact. This is a strong discourse having the power to create a felt space of fear that can turn into a real space of fear you use warily. Edthofer et al (2015, 94) give a noteworthy example of how to confront such a constructed space of fear – in this case an underground car park – by collective space appropriation of a group of girls using Wen Do techniques (feminist self-defense form) and documenting and reflecting their experiences in a comic strip. Their slogan: “we do not stay at home!”

At the same time, the “safe space” private home as opposite to the “unsafe public space” is actually the place where violence against children, girls and women happens. According to the local stake holder interviews carried out with one police officer in charge for domestic violence and social workers in the district (WP4) barring orders spoken out in Simmering are on the rise. All of the local stakeholder interviewees being asked directly about incidences of domestic sexual violence against children indicated at least one case they came across recently.

Going out, staying in and using public spaces has something uncontrollable. One of the interviewed girls meant: *“Actually, I am not allowed to be outside all the time. My mother says I am a bad girl because I am always outside.”*⁴⁹ Going out, strolling around outside often aims at escaping social control by fearful parents. One female youth worker herself with Turkish background told us:

“I organized a workshop starting at 7 pm let's say and at 8 pm the Turkish girls leave though it's scheduled until 10 pm. I ask them ,why?' The answer was parents don't allow us to be outside that late. Then the girls ask me, “Saida, how come that you are so free? My answer was, I can live as I want. I am already 24 years old. My

⁴⁷ Int_G5 (15 years)

⁴⁸ Int_YW3

⁴⁹ RD, p. 54

parents support me in what I am and what I am doing. We [with girls] talk about this topic. You know, in Turkish families: when you are 10 [as a girl] your brother accompanies you, with 15 your cousin. There always has to be someone around who keeps an eye on you. Girls must not be harmed.”⁵⁰

Balu&du also offers girls-only activities in the neighborhood Macondo, an area where refugees live. Youth workers confirmed the difficulty to reach girls and to get parents’ permission for out-door activities, especially with overnight staying.⁵¹

Interviews with youth workers and young women made us aware of another gender-specific usage of public space: While boys rather stay in their “territory” and are reluctant to move to other districts, teenage girls together with their female friends are much more mobile over distances (“strolling around”). Is this behaviour due to the restriction of possibilities in “fixed” public spaces such as parks or due to the eagerness to get out of the tyranny and control of the local? The “street” (“spazieren gehen”), the park (“abhängen”), the public transport system are important spaces for being seen, for getting into contact with others, for social interaction with peer groups. Our first publicly announced workshop on street art was actually not visited by girls who read the posters and announcements but by incidence: “We were bored, looked around, strolled around and passed by!” When being asked what she means with “strolling around”? a fifteen year old girl explained:⁵²

“Just walking around. When a go for a walk with my cousin then we go out in the evening at 9 pm or so, we go for a walk, we talk, we smoke or go for a coffee to Starbucks. That’s what I mean with strolling around. On weekends, we “go out” you know? But [strolling around] is much cooler than sitting around in a bar. (...) That’s the way to get to know people We for instance take the metro and we go for the last stop. Then we take the way back to the first stop again. Then we take another metro. We have really lots of fun; I mean you have to be with the right partner for enjoying this. With her [cousin] I can talk about everything and it’s really cool with her. (...) Once her parents were not at home and told my parents “I’ll stay overnight [at the cousin’s place]”. Then we were so bored and I had the idea: let’s take a look at the new metro system [it was the first time when the metro ran all night long services in Vienna] on weekends. And we wanted to see how it is to go by metro all night long, so we took the metro until four o’clock in the morning.”

3.2. What is the value added of a girls* space? Intersectional aspects of gender-sensitive youth work

“Girl” is treated in this report as a political category. Referring to a collective group of authors writing about their professional experiences with feminist youth work girl* as political category can be grasped in the following way: *“If you ask girls about their horizons of experiences and you give them space, they will discover “being a girl” as a political category because they share similar and connective experiences of discrimination in daily life when they are addressed as “girls” – even though there are*

⁵⁰ Int_ YW5

⁵¹ RD, p.26

⁵² Int _G10 (15 years)

many more differences (of color, age, sexuality ...) that divide them." (Autor_innen-gruppe 2014, p.250, translation BH)

This is a statement referring to recent discussions in feminist and gender-sensitive youth work. The social work rhetoric and policy moved away from a victim's perspective that sees girls as an entirety as subject to male oppression to resource orientation and diversity of oppression. What different resources, backgrounds and capacities do girls bring along? What other dimensions of inequality among girls such as ethnic background, sexual orientation and identity, financial family background etc. are of importance for addressing girls? What to do in youth work with boys or girls that are not feeling as such? How are we contributing to constructing gender or to deconstructing gender as a social relationship? (Gildemeister 2004) At the same time, feminist youth work is not an individualistic approach but aims at collectivising experiences of daily life: girls shall feel safe in a collective space where their experiences are embedded in and become politicised (Autor_innengruppe 2014, p.252). At the same time, practices of feminist youth work must permanently reflect on the dialectics of being subject to oppressive structures of gender inequality and the way we are reproducing them in daily practice. This means to listen carefully to a range of experiences and reflect upon the discursive nature of these experiences. Though it is necessary taking seriously daily experiences and bothering about them you are trapped in your limit-situations when you do not succeed in reaching beyond the 'daily' and 'local'.

A very common policy to address girls and their particular interests and needs is to offer specific time slots exclusively for girls in youth centres as well as girls-only spaces (BWJF 2011, 418) which are sometimes open to young mothers or women with small children too (as women are still mainly in charge of child care). All youth centers in Simmering (and throughout Vienna) offer at least one specific time slot per week exclusively for girls. A point for discussion herewithin – not finally resolved – is how to treat the presence of girls that feel, behave, and assert oneself as boys in boys-only spaces and the other way around in girls' spaces. May girls* visit the boys* club and the other way round?

Balu&du, the youth center in Simmering we collaborated during the case study, runs a garden, which girls can access once a week from May to September. It is an intergenerational semi-public space; young mothers come with their daughters leaving them there or using the garden together. It is a kind of "extended living room". Older women also pass by collecting vine leaves and fruits. Girls can also privately "rent" (for free) the garden. They carry the responsibility to catch the key and bring it back again; they are trusted not to invite boys to join the. Girls use the garden for birthday parties or for just "hanging around" with friends. It is a semi-public place both away from home and away from sometimes annoying spaces of the streets where "they could sit around together, have fun, joke, talk about all kinds of topics, and cultivate friendships" (Jupp 2007, 2838).

The girls' garden offers the possibility to work in the garden, harvest fruits/vegetables, to build vegetable patches, to construct new facilities for the girls' garden such as a tree house, to cook and barbecue. Youth work in this garden offers more possibilities for

“bodily experiences” (“leibliches Erleben”) than the regular services on offer (Palmetshofer 2010, 73,102). This is first due to the fact that it is a garden where girls and young women are outside often performing bodily work and secondly because it is a garden exclusively for girls. It is a space where girls can feel free and safe to move and show their bodies (e.g. also without headscarf) without being (consciously or without purpose) watched by boys or men.

Batsleer (2013, 22) gives some general characteristic explanations for emancipatory work with girls in girls-only spaces; what are feminist and gender-sensitive approaches in a daily youth work practice aiming at the “empowerment” of girls in many aspects of life?

One aspect is the creation of free and at the same time protected spaces, protected from male assaults, from constraints of their freedom of movement, from hetero-normative dominance and for valuing female friendship, exchange among girls and support (Bitzan/Daigler 2004, 172). Not boys are the ones where attention focuses but differences and issues among the girls themselves.⁵³

“And I think that many girls change their opinion in boys ‘ presence.”⁵⁴

“Yes because they want to be liked by the boys.”⁵⁵

It is a safe space for bodily experiences and where the body can become a topic. Dancing is a favourite activity in girls’ youth clubs. Beauty, bodily changes, menstruation, friendship and respect among girls as topics and problems are discussed and worked out.

“[in a girls’ room] we do things that only girls are interested in; I mean it’s not about make-up and stuff but discussing topics and problems that only girls have.”⁵⁶

This also means, conflicts and difference among girls become more apparent, can evolve and can be argued out⁵⁷: *“When we are only girls then we are always fighting among us.”⁵⁸*

It enables the creation of a safe environment in which self-confidence can develop and new skills can be tested. It enables the creation of an environment in which silences can be broken and difficult challenging questions explored. It is a place that is appreciated and defended: *“The girls really are very strict and cautious that boys do not invade their room of their own. They defended it.”⁵⁹*

It offers a space where girls among them and in exchange with youth workers can reflect upon various transition processes and processes of identity formation and where girls’ scope of action through informal learning processes can be amplified. It shall help transgressing and reflecting about unconventional gender roles and facilitating “identity building” in girls-only spaces, trying out and playing with identities.

⁵³ RD, p.29

⁵⁴ Int_G3 (15 years)

⁵⁵ Int_G4 (16 years)

⁵⁶ Int_G4 (16 years)

⁵⁷ Int_G8 (17 years)

⁵⁸ Int_G5 (15 years)

⁵⁹ Int_YW3

Therefore, partisan and particularly partisan girls youth work is all about signalling interest, respect and recognition (Bitzan 2010, 105):

“One time [the girls] have something for their own. It is something precious for them and they also feel appreciated and receiving attention.”⁶⁰

4. DISCUSSION, REVIEW AND REFLECTION

4.1. Aspirations and the capacity to aspire

“Empowering the disadvantaged to aspire not only implies empowering to access means of making one's heard by the powerful (voice), it also implies empowering a contribution about the contents: what is meant to be voiced as a 'good life'? How is a good life framed? To engage in contest(ing) and alter(ing) the conditions of (one's) own welfare (Appadurai, 2004; Walker, 2006) implies having some understanding of it and some idea of any desirable alternative.” (Baillergeau / Duyvendak 2013)

This section shall give answers to the question how young people frame a desirable future, beyond dreams, expectations and educational/occupational prospects. What aspirations did young people, in our case study girls, formulate or came up in another way? What are innovative practices of triggering aspirations and the motivation to think about them?

The gendered nature of aspirations and projecting oneself into the future

It is difficult to analyse aspirations or the forming of aspirations without the context they are framed. That means that “real” aspirations are impossible to grasp. Any kind of projection into the future is constrained or at least shaped by the young person's present embeddedness in terms of his or her material, status and representative situation (Fraser 2005, 2008). Gender of course is a central category in influencing the formation of aspirations. At the same time, the teenage period is a period of rapid twists and changes with respect to the aspirations the young people have in mind. Our research showed that the formation of aspirations is closely connected with identity formation and with realising what role is foreseen for girls and boys in a society that is strongly divided along the gendered lines of behaviour, doing and labour. The self-perception of being “different”, of being “distinct” to boys and other girls mixes with the realisation that breaking out of beaten tracks of gender roles needs power and endurance. (“None of my (female) friends play football or basketball in parks”). The following interview passages shows that disrespectful behaviour of boys vis-à-vis girls is condemned but also are girls (“mainstream girls”) accepting this behaviour regarded critically:

“Some [boys in our class] are really well known in the district; but they are well known on the ground of what? That you go out every weekend and that you hurt [“mainstream”] girls every weekend when you sleep with them and then you throw them away like toys. (...)”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Int_YW2

⁶¹ Int_G4 (15 years)

*“Most of the girls of our age are swimming with the stream, they are behaving like and doing what is “in” at the time being. (...) You know many girls of age are smoking and going out and have boyfriends. We, my friends and myself, are not like this we have our own way of ...”*⁶²

Between 13 and 17, sexual intercourses, self-consciousness and personal or occupational projections into the future are subject to rapid twists and changes. Aspirations and projections that have been important with 14 might be completely uninteresting with 17. The completion of school with 15 is a caesura in young people’s life course. Delving into the world of work with apprenticeship training or not succeeding in finding a job or an apprenticeship place has major gendered implications. Most of the girls opt for traditional women’s occupations such as retail sales woman, hairdresser or office administrator with very restricted career and income prospects (Mairhuber/Papouschek 2010). Nevertheless, this move is an important step of growing up, of – especially as a girl – standing on your own feet and earning money by your own. When girls do not succeed in finding an apprenticeship place the option of staying at home, marrying and becoming a mother is widespread. Also in these cases, labour market policy is speaking about the “disappeared girls”. Those are early school leavers or NEETs who “disappear” for some years, maybe work in the family or become mothers. This leads to an underrepresentation of girls in training programmes. The research of Bacher et al. (2013) confirms that very little is known about this group.

Self-depreciation of girls concerning their capacities for higher education is common: *“We are too silly for school.”*⁶³ One youth worker observed this development towards girls’ rather conventional projection into the future:

*“It’s interesting how girls’ attitude towards the future and life styles change between 13 and 17. Those who had different ideas in their heads with 13 turn them upside down and follow the life courses of their mothers; ready for a partner with 16 or 17 and then becoming pregnant. I often hear [of girls]: I don’t care about my job prospects; I will be a mother and stay at home with my child. Perhaps from their point of view this is also a viable option: I don’t want all this stress with searching for employment but I search for a husband [financially] caring for me.”*⁶⁴

The book “Sternschnuppen” by Frigga Haug and Ulrike Gschwandtner (2006) analyzed 500 essays of students aged between 13 und 18 about how they see their lives in 25 years. The authors concluded that class and gender are important categories for deciding where someone projects him-/herself into the future. The essays showed that a gender-specific division of work is still in place when deciding about the professional future and implicitly with respect to the responsibility for household and care work. Though labour market participation of women was not questioned (at least on part-time basis) and girls were aspiring a juster division of labour with respect to unpaid care responsibilities between men and women, “family” (as an idyllic phantasma, however) almost only was referred to in girls’ essays, not in the boys’ ones. Boys did not see themselves as part of a family in 25 years onwards in their essays.

⁶² Int_G5 (16 years)

⁶³ RD, p.17

⁶⁴ Int_YW3

Another interesting result of the essays' analysis was that contradictions seldom were named, a harmonious future was imagined, though a necessarily conflict driven daily life is reality. In this respect, gender-sensitive youth work plays an important role for recognizing and naming contradictions in processes of identity formation and becoming. Gender-sensitive and feminist youth work aims at accompanying adolescents' processes of searching and finding with a critical perspective and with awareness of the pitfalls of normalcy. The permanent reflection of societal normalcy and social norms pushing girls into a certain direction is of paramount importance and a challenge. Supporting the formation of girls' aspirations also includes taking into account girls structural positioning in society. Batsleer (2013, 17) strengthens the fact that work with girls and young women can shift readily from an agenda concerned with challenging existing forms of power relations to an agenda essentially rooted in them whilst prompting the practise of charity. Undertaking separate work with girls does not mean automatically challenging women's subordination in society – therefore what she calls “*autonomus anti-sexist work (in contrast to separate spheres work) is based on the breaking-out of the position of women defined and categorised by their sex as persons of secondary importance*”. However, a critical stance towards the gendered division of labour cannot mean just persuading girls into technical occupations and devaluating femally connoted work such as care work. The mainstream discourse identifies those young women responsible for their place in society's unequal division of labour who opted for an unsuccessful career path. Modern claims towards girls request to go beyond or to break with traditional gender roles. Therefore, girls permanently experience “double messages” and have to cope with them: the openness and allegedly “everything goes” attitude of modern life brings along more (at least theoretical) opportunities, however daily routine and normalcy limits this alleged freedom (Bitzan/Daigler 2004, 34).

Youth work involves the conscious use of self in relation to others as a prerequisite of practice in informal settings; informal education draws strongly on personal relationship as the basis of practice. This means that youth workers' role modelling and getting into dialogue and contradictions with young people are conscious social processes in informal education including reflections about gendered behavior and a sexual division of labour. Female role models who are skating, spray-painting and rapping or having sex with women can definitely help to - at least - think about unlike trajectories of forming aspirations. At the same time, such an educational “mission” can clash with a commitment to young people's autonomy, i.e. that girls and young women have the opportunity to develop as subjects of their own lives, rather than merely as the objects of professional intervention (Batsleer 2013). A youth worker with Turkish background talks about her own experiences as a teenager with Austrian youth workers: “For us [Turkish youth] the Austrian [youth workers] were a nuisance, they want to change us. They say: speak German, German, German, German. Religion, religion, religion. They want to change us, but we do not change because we want to stay as we are.”⁶⁵ Taking seriously young people's aspirations and voice means building upon participatory knowledge, nevertheless a (contradictory) dialogue strengthens and makes visible that gendered,

⁶⁵ Int_YW5

raced, classed and other positionalities play a role in opening up or limiting self-knowledge (Dentithetal 2012, 8; Bitzan/Daigler 2004, 182)– and a wider range of imaginable aspirations.

Aspirations and arts-based experiments and practices

Arts-based practices and ethnographic research are fruitful methods to reach beyond explicitly, codified and rationalised represented narratives. In this section, we will think about inhowfar arts-based practices can tell us something about participants' formation of aspirations at least in small and manageable settings “for the moment”. At the same time, to speak with Janet Batsleer (2011, 424) who resumes for her participatory research based on arts-based methods with young people, “codes of *communication implicit in this practice as an artistic practice of symbolisation open up a wider range of communicative possibilities including those of advocacy, recognition and compassionate witnessing. It is when the work of the project moves into public performance that these wider possibilities emerge and the practice can be said to enter the space of democratic empowerment and potentially to engage with a struggle over symbolic capital.*” We will come back to this assessment in the next chapter when discussing aspects of the transformative character of participation with street-art practices.

Arts-based practices beyond our project of conducting two street-art workshops with girls are widespread and popular: drawing mangas;⁶⁶ designing fashion;⁶⁷ writing science-fiction stories⁶⁸ are common practices among girls. Arts-based work give permission to play, to use your fantasy, to think about the impossible or simply to be “silly”.

We consciously proposed graffiti as a particular method as rather not being a girls' domain. However, while strolling around Simmering during the research period we met girls who did have a very hearty access to making graffiti, who already took part in workshops and tried it out on the streets. When accompanying a girl in her neighbourhood she showed us tags and small graffiti that she or friends of her had made and explained what technique she was using.

Picture 2: Stencil Girl with Balloons



During the preparation of the workshops on street-art we encouraged the girls to draw, to try out different fonts and to find their “own style” of writing in block or bubble style going beyond the conventional alphabet learned in school. We encouraged them to cut stencils on their own and think about new motives besides those we have brought with us. Though, they love having motives to choose from. We also brought

⁶⁶ RD, p.4

⁶⁷ RD, p.27

⁶⁸ Int_G7 (20 years); Int_G4 (15 years); Int_G5 (16 years)

bags they could spray-paint with the cut stencils and that they could take home or give as present to someone.

Picture 3: Result of the first street-art workshop



In the beginning of an arts process when just sitting and turning ideas over in their minds, when consulting books or colleagues about new ideas and inspiration, the process seems to stuck: “I can’t draw!” “I don’t know”! “I don’t have any idea!” Finally, the girls in one of the preparation workshops decide for the obvious to spray-paint their names or the initials of their names. This is actually a typical graffiti step:

drawing your own name and putting it into public space. The wonderful aspect of graffiti is that – when you have some support of more experienced colleagues explaining basic techniques – idea, design and implementation can be carried out within three hours. The result is a presentable “oeuvre” that can make you proud of and that is visible publicly.

Picture 4: The MädchenVampirGarten Banner



Another group⁶⁹ succeeded in finding a common theme to spray-paint in preparation of the “big event” to design the 10 metres long wall outside the girls’ garden: *Girls vampire garden* or *girls’ garden is the best (die beste)*. They tried the slogans out on a banner combining the common theme with individual motives and letters and stencils. In comparison of the two preparation workshops, it was interesting to see the differences in self-esteem. The younger girls (10-

12) were much more vivid. They showed no containment, but eagerness to try out the material we brought and to implement their ideas. It was impressive to see their capability and joy in cutting with knives the stencils we prepared but they also did some simple ones (cross, hearts, balloons) by themselves. The older girls (12-14) had much more self-doubts (“No, I can’t...”).

The art of spray-painting seems to have some kind of “magic”. Girls immediately realised what spray cans are made for: to put your mark in public space. They were immediately oriented towards outside (where graffiti anyway has to take place asking: “why don’t we go outside and spray-paint the wall? The wall is ugly. Let’s go outside!”) with their newly designed stencils. We were reluctant and wanted to wait until the “official” workshop that took place only next week together with the end-of-season party. Since this was not a “private” event but taking place under the girls garden custody we were finally “braking” this eagerness and channelled their energy towards the foreseen place, a banner to be spray-painted for this workshop. We showed them to make sketches with chalk and then

⁶⁹ RD, p. 44

using the spray can. They tried out their stencils and learned that it is not too easy to spray free-style. At some time of the afternoon a dynamic was there when the girls just wanted to use the magic cans, they spray-painted everything: the meadow, the flowers, the wood and the trees and themselves. In the beginning, the banner looked very beautiful from our point of view, but in the course of the afternoon, they started to spray-paint anything just to use this tool. Some of the girls were happy to be encouraged in trying out this new method of expressing themselves and proud about the results and the appreciation of their work by us as initiators of the workshops. It was amazing to observe what emotions and behaviour this tool, actually of male-dominated artistic practice - is triggering among the girls.

4.2. Substantial freedoms of participation

This section will discuss participation of young people from a subject-oriented perspective on the one hand and a more processual perspective on the other hand. This approach triggers basic questions of agency and how to achieve the real freedom to express one's aspirations, expectations and desires and make them count when decisions concerning oneself are made. Particular themes addressed: what political issues, i.e. young people's and girls' rights, needs, desires and aspirations are deemed valuable from their perspective? If and how are these issues politicized through feminist and gender-sensitive youth work? How is participation processed in this setting? How do existing inequalities impact on participation, its formal possibility and its effectiveness? And finally, how is the transformative character of participation addressed in this research?

Contributive Justice

Participation to feed concrete *policy* steps is fostered in rather institutionalized settings such as the youth parliament or within the rather short- to middle-term design processes initiated by the district's urban development agency – as was described in the Austrian report on local stakeholder support networks (Haidinger/Kasper 2014). In both, participation is possible in terms of raising demands or wishes while it stays unclear to what extent the implementation of these demands is constrained by financial and other “practical” impediments. Here, a critical point is the young people's contribution going beyond their opinion and including their involvement into the concrete implementation of ideas. In this case, participation remains rather superficial. Youth centres invest time and energy to reach young people and to include them into processes of consultation, however, the scope of decision making is very restricted. After consultation respectively “choosing” between different offers, the participation process ends, and the implementation is handed over to professionals.

As an example: a park should be designed with participation of girls to meet particularly their needs in the planning of the facilities on offer. Youth workers tried to interview through out-reach work girls and their ideas for designing a public space that is often divided only between children and boys. The children have their swings and climbing nets; the (adolescent) boys get a skate ramp or a football and basketball cage; the girls are

somewhere in-between. The project aimed at particularly address girls' needs for a public space. In the end, some suggestions were taken up, for instance, a hammock that is not easily reached by children and that offers a safer and more comfortable space apart from the boys' space but at the same time gives girls the opportunity to overview the whole area. The difficulties from the engaged youth workers' point of view was to "activate" girls for formulating their interest and opinions.⁷⁰ This movement from silence to speech is a crucial point – particularly for girls who seem to disappear at a certain age from public space as was mentioned various times by our interview partners. The other deadlock was that girls are asked for their opinion but there is no sustainable strategy of keeping their interest and involve them into concrete implementation processes. Again, you are asked, give your opinion and then the pros take over. This reminds us of how justice can be perceived from the point of view of the producers and not only from users. What matters for justice from this point of view is not only the un-equal distribution of opportunities but inequalities in the availability of meaningful contribution (Gomberg 2007). An equal opportunity to contribute entails being allowed, expected and encouraged to contribute with one's skills and creativity to society in detail (the girls' garden for instance) and as a whole (Sayer 2011, 9).

The girls' garden is a place where meaningful contributions can happen. Girls together with youth workers and sometimes other adults use the "material" this place is offering. The material is nature on the one hand: the trees, the patches, the meadow are "processed". On the other hand, youth workers provide adequate tools to work with. In this combination, girls have many opportunities to contribute: they are designing and constructing the patches. They are deciding what to plant, they are planting seeds, they are watering the coming plants, they are mowing the meadow, they are weeding the vegetable patches, they are harvesting the fruits they have planted before, they are cooking with the fruits and vegetables they have harvested. Food is in any case an important material for young people. They are always asking if food is provided and have lots of fun in preparing, harvesting and eating collectively.

What is more, the girls present in the girls' garden are also contributing to longer-term projects such as the construction of a tree house or – as in our case – the designing of a wall representing the girls' garden and making it more visible. They are contributing to "their" place. They are trying out what is seemingly not possible in other (public) or private (family) spaces, moving from capabilities to functionings in gardening and building/constructing, climbing, showing and moving their bodies – and doing graffiti in a public space.

Transformative character of participation: Underrepresentation of girls in public space and arts-based experiments

In the previous sections, we described the restricted presence of girls in public spaces such as parks and in many youth cultures and habits such as graffiti as one of the three hip-hop elements (Breakdance, Rap and Graffiti) and its underlying explanations. We

⁷⁰ Int_YW1

gave arguments for the gendered structure of aspirations and the necessity of girls-only spaces as places where girls do have other possibilities to “grow”, to “behave” and to contribute as in mixed youth settings. Already in these findings, the transformative character of participating in and contributing to such a setting from a gender perspective became obvious.

The following section will elucidate in how far arts-based experiments such as graffiti even more have the power to strengthen the transformative character of participation in girls-only settings. How do girls’ ideas and voices in the context of street-art emerge, become visible and find their spots? As mentioned above, Janet Batsleer (2011, 428) sees arts-based practices as projects having the power to open up a wider range of communicative possibilities *“when the work of the project moves into public performance and enter[s] the space of democratic empowerment and potentially engage[s] with a struggle over symbolic capital”*.

On the one hand, we motivated voices through artistic practice *“of the moment, belonging to a pedagogy of the here-and-now”* (ibid.). New ideas and finally whole oeuvres emerged through this artistic process starting from a self-perception of many girls not being capable of drawing. It is a practice carrying the girls from alleged boredom and uneasiness to lively action, from silence to speech, from invisibility to visibility. The practice of street-art involved a commitment to risk-taking. Risk-taking with respect to ideas, fantasies, and oneself becoming visible, public and subject to deliberation when performing in public space. The girls were disappointed of not being allowed to go out on the streets for graffiti-action during the preparing sessions for the “final event” of spray-painting the wall vis-à-vis the girls’ garden. Though they appreciate this safe closed space of the girls’ garden they were absolutely up to “going out” and conquering public space as well. This – we would argue – is a breaking through limit situations in the sense of Freire (1970) and a feminist practice of turning private issues (the restricted space appropriation of girls) into public ones.

On the other hand, the practice of street-art is a commitment to visibility and to symbolization in public space. It involves also a commitment to public scrutiny and debate. Girls’ spaces and girls-only gangs/groups in public space become symbolized through street-art. They are as a political issue made visible and become subject to social deliberation. Street-art is itself a public performance in the making when people stop and are curious to know what is happening there, and are entering a conversation or debate: “What is separate work with girls good for?”, asked one of the passer-bys. Moreover, it is a public performance with respect to the symbols staying on the wall such as “Mädchengarten” or their names. It confronts and perhaps provokes the public with political issues such as the existence and symbolization of girls’ groups and girls’ space as well as with an offensive claim for girls’ appreciation and symbolic visibility in public space.

At the same time, it was in the forerun of the project internally (among the youth workers and ourselves) discussed if the seclusion and safety of this girls-only space is threatened when a 10 meter long graffiti is spray-painted exactly vis-à-vis the girls garden and making it more visible in the sense of vulnerability. Is it important to make the place more

popular? Is it necessary to do a step outside this closed venue, to go out into public space, out to the streets with a particular message? Or is this action jeopardizing the safety of this place?

The imperative of participation

Finally, we come to the issue of participatory practices and approaches in project-based youth work as a burden and imperative – both for the young people and youth workers. The attendance of youth centers and workshops offered by youth centers is voluntary and free of cost. It particularly addresses youngsters from disadvantaged background with the goal to expand young people's scope of action, supporting appropriation/ negotiation of public spaces and its usage by different groups. Participatory approach in Youth Work can be identified as a principle (Haidinger/Kasper 2014). Youth work is informal, flexible and not geared to assessment. It is evaluated in relation to its process as much as its end results. Therefore, participation is more an ends than a means to come to a certain result in youth work. At the same time, youth work is offering services, workshops, material, ideas for leisure activities etc. The rapidity of action in youth centers is often tedious, involving very dynamic dynamics. It is hard to concentrate on one task and stay with it; permanently new impressions, new people, new wishes are present. "I am bored!"⁷¹ Time has to pass, what activities could be consumed?

Youth workers – or we as researchers – bring in ideas or issues we deem interesting, important and worthwhile discussing or working with. These can be "big issues" such as racism⁷² or sexism; these can also be concrete proposals such as painting a container. The non-binding and voluntariness of participation in such plans complicate conceptual and long-term planning and collaboration. If young people do not show up due to most various reasons to discuss and plan the methodological and content-related process of a particular project it is pushed forward by the professionals. This was also an issue we had to deal with in our process of conceptualizing and implementing a project on street-art in the girls' garden.

Participation does have the touch of an imperative, as one youth worker puts it: *"Often we have the impression – without the youngsters directly formulating this critique – that participating is only tedious, just work. They do not feel encouraged or taken seriously or something by 'participating'. It's more like: ah like in school – there I also always have to [play an active part]. (...) Sometimes they stopped us [in motivating them] and said: hey this is not school, ok? This is my spare time. I'd like to talk to you and do something with you but I don't want to be part of a project and work on it every time I pass by."*⁷³ From this perspective, a youth center must also be a place for just hanging around without an aim and a purpose than just "being".

Another aspect of the imperative of participation is that a participatory approach has to be also an issue in the youth work organization as a place of labour. How are work

⁷¹ RD, p.28

⁷² Int_YW3

⁷³ Int_YW3

processes of the organization itself subject to participation? In how far are youth workers themselves motivated to arrange their daily work and organizational structure in a participatory manner? Do they want this? Or are they rather happy with doing what they are expected or what is possible. Participation is a tedious and work-intensive process often requesting particular initiatives and additional efforts; you are confronted with restrictions, external constraints such as financing, regulations, laws, having an educational mission, or an integrative mission. All these issues forced upon hamper participation. The question herein is, if the organisation itself is struggling with participation – how can you request this effort of the young people?

4.3. Research Methods: A methodological reflection

Our research case study included several methods that we combined (see section 3) and that to different degrees fostered an interactive process among the participants. We relied on ethnographic research and observant participation and problem-centred interviews both with young women and youth workers on the one hand. On the other hand, we attempted to implement in a collaborative process with young women and girls a project. In this latter respect, we organised Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). According to Denith et.al (2012: 3-4) this approach includes the following features: participation (researchers and participants co-conceptualizing and implementing research); reflection as collective critique (reflection on practice, relationships and interpretation); communitarian politics (change aimed at justice and satisfaction of participants); research (not only community activism) and education (skills for organizing, disseminating and fostering social change). We already laid down in the previous sections in how far change aimed at justice and satisfaction of participants, research and educational aspects were tackled by our case study on gender-sensitive youth work. Therefore, we will try to reflect upon the other two questions in the following:

Q 1: In how far did researchers and participants co-conceptualize and implement the project?

The local youth centre Balu& du was chosen as a point of access due to its low-threshold approach and the many activities offered in the district's public areas. Moreover, Balu& du commits itself to a gender sensitive approach in youth work. We entered the field of research with an approach that girls should actively participate in the conceptualisation of the idea and its implementation. They should not be "consumers but creators" (Batsleer 2013).

We struggled with the strict corset of time and methodology. The Capability Approach as a concept and its principles turned out to be extremely difficult to translate for youth workers and young people. We asked ourselves if it was ethically correct to just explain one step after the other than holding a sermon about the whole project that has so many levels: local, municipal, national, European. The young people were not at all interested in our complicated concepts. The openness of our methodological approach should help us to take up and process what we will encounter in the field.

During the YPAR, we realized that the youth centre's low- threshold approach makes continuing work with the young people respective girls quite difficult. We also had to cope with a selection bias as we had difficulties of meeting intended age group. We simply had to acknowledge that the attendance especially of young women is very unpredictable as is their motivation to contribute to theoretical and conceptual considerations about participation and graffiti. Consequently, it was difficult to initiate the project process *together* with the girls. We as initiators of the idea to spray-paint the wall outside the girls' garden with a collective graffiti took over the "active part" and also tasks that could have been done together with them (such as the process of getting a legalized graffiti wall) in order to push the process not necessarily of research but of the project. Often participation in the group and in the group's work was understood more in terms of feelings and embodied practices than of discursive processes expressing concrete proposals in the context of the youth club. For example, "feeling comfortable", "feeling bored" were terms which were often used to explain their immediate experiences in the context of our action (Cahill 2007, 299). One of the main lessons learned was that girls' ideas emerge when they do something, deliberating as such "theoretically" turned out not to be every successful. When doing (e.g. spray-painting) they showed much more fantasy, developed ideas, became active and been motivated to realize their ideas.

As both youth (or girls') work and our youth participatory action research are on-going processes, the question of how to "frame" or "delimit" our research process (and evaluate it) became crucial. Here, the frame or succession of the necessary working steps (kick-off period, getting a legalized wall, organizing the Street Art workshop etc.) provided a certain structure that needed to stay flexible at the same time. Being dedicated as a young person to longer processes of research and deliberation is an everlasting issue in youth work and hard to accomplish. From the youth workers side they were curious if we "succeeded" in what they have been trying for so long.

Q 2: reflection on practice, relationships and interpretation

Here, we want to point out the (sometimes) challenging role of being a researcher within a youth work setting. Many times, young people (or parents) perceived us as youth workers; trying to clarify who we are (and what our intentions are) often seemed to be of no interest to them. We adapted to certain pedagogical behaviour such as "should we do ...", "would you like to do..." and being very attentive to the social dynamics of the space. However, we also wanted to delimit us from a social pedagogical mandate, as we did not "educate" girls or remind them of the rules of the girls' garden⁷⁴ such as cleaning up and putting things away. In that way, we were predominantly involved in this setting by putting the graffiti project and its preparations on the agenda.

In terms of our relationship to the youth / girls' workers, being our gatekeepers, we were very much supported by the youth centre's management (the pedagogical and administrative leaders) from the beginning on throughout the project. Still, during the cooperation, questions of unexpressed reservations came up, as the girls' rather irregular

⁷⁴ RD, p.38

attendance also makes the relationship building and continuous work to the youth workers difficult; in some instances, more grown-ups were present than girls, somehow “over-caretaking” the girls. At the same time, we found ourselves in a position of dependence e.g. for promoting our activities, such as the Graffiti workshop, inside and outside the girls’ garden. The relationship to our gatekeepers was characterised by cooperation, dependence and needed support (e.g. for promoting our activities) as well as scepticism of our “success” in realising our project since participatory approaches are not a blank field we invaded.

The project as a whole was regarded by most of the girls involved during this half-year process as “our – the researchers’ – project”. They were polite to support us with ideas for the flyers and posters and with ideas of what wording to take (e.g. no teenager understands the word “workshop”), and recommended to use pictures and drawings for the posters and flyers. When asking (too often, perhaps) if they came next week to continue with collecting ideas and preparing the workshops one of the girls answered, “We are not without hobbies.”⁷⁵ At another time, when we were “chasing” interviews and informal talk opportunities with young people they put their position like this, “Do you fear we would leave if you left us alone right now?”⁷⁶ It was clear: they are the subjects of interest and have the power to withdraw.

Picture 5: The final graffito



The final event, when the “Mädchengarten” graffito was spray-painted on the wall in September during the final season party, was a very dense experience: in short time everything and with comparatively many girls present – from concept, contents and motives to the concrete procedure of spray-painting – was completed. During the whole period of action research we envisaged to

spray-paint a mixture of a common piece and individual artistic pieces in the end.

⁷⁵ RD, p.11

⁷⁶ RD, p.6

Picture 6: The making of the wall vis-a-vis the girls' garden



The procedure was the following: (1) all girls and ourselves together whitened the wall; (2) the two workshop leaders, (one female and one male street-artist⁷⁷), wrote in big bubble letters with chalk “Mädchen Garten” on the wall to structure the piece; (3) girls painted whatever they pleased on the wall: their names, their football clubs, stencils. The small ones used pencils or their fingers, the bigger ones took the spray cans; (4) the outlines of “Mädchen Garten” by the older girls together with the two trainers were drawn “over spray-painting” the graffiti landscape to get a real picture; (5) one of the workshop leaders spray-painted an “artistic piece”, a girls’ head holding a spray can, into the space between the words “Mädchen” and “Garten”.

The main feedback by the participating girls and youth workers was that it would have been important to communicate better, how this workshop was structured and who should and could spray-paint what and where. The girls said in a reflection round that the artistic piece (the girl's head) was beautiful though they “were pissed” that the artist overspray painted parts of their own graffiti.

For us this was a justified objection and an interesting finding: For months, we tried to accompany and trigger a participative process. There would have been all time of the world to come to a common conclusion on what should be spray-painted on the wall and in what way. When the workshop “outside” finally took place “when the serious part” started, time was limited to come to a common consensus and conclusion. The process at this particular event was rather chaotic and hardly participative in its structure also due to the “passing by” of different and many girls at different times. This meant that we were not able to define a common “starting point” for the action. This process as a tension between individual ideas and a collective outcome was very difficult to accompany. Finally, the workshop leaders directed this process straightforwardly to come to an end - and to come to a spray-painted piece that all (future) visitors of the girls' garden might find attractive.

In conclusion of our methodological reflections, we would resume that the “action part” that we tried to carry out together with the young people, was very difficult to conceptualise and implement in a participatory manner. This was due to the irregular and unpredictable presence of girls in the girls' garden and also due to their changing motivation to contribute to this process or not. In carrying out a project, some kind of structure has to be followed. There are things to be done and organised, there are chronological steps to be taken. When permanently new participants show up, a

⁷⁷ We tried to organize two female workshop leaders, however it was impossible to bring two of these rare professionals together to the two workshops. Therefore, we decided to engage one primarily responsible (female) trainer who was supported by a male one who as well had long lasting experiences with graffiti workshops with girls

continuous proceeding with committed participants is not possible. This is – as was also confirmed by the youth workers – a general problem in youth work that proclaims participatory processes as principles in their professional field.

However, all the trials and errors of this process to implement an action that was at the same time part of the ethnographic field research, the permanent interaction with girls, their motivation or reluctance to contribute to our proposals or to bring in their own ideas, were necessary steps for learning about girls' positionalities and agency in semi-public spaces and the role of feminist or gender-sensitive youth work in it. According to Chahill (2007, 299) knowledge produced through participatory techniques in a closed setting is not necessarily and enough for reflecting and articulating wider power relations in society. Therefore, we must in any case link insights from participatory action research processes and interventions to questions of inequality and empowerment in a multi-oppressive society (ApsanFrediani 2010). What remains in addition is the possibility to pursue with a feminist graffiti project: the wall is legalised right now and has more 30 metres to be designed.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY-RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS

The Austrian case study provided insights into challenges and chances of *participatory* and *socially innovative* approaches in gender-sensitive youth work. We took the girls' garden as our home base and starting point for scrutinizing what added-value girls-only spaces and girls' group offer for girls and for a juster society as a whole. The participatory approach of the research was accomplished by the methods used such as arts-based practices and with respect to their possibly transformative character.

The conclusions section will resume first how gender as a relationship of structural inequality pervades aspirations, societal integration and projected trajectories of young people. Secondly, we will argue in what ways gender-sensitive and feminist youth work can support the critical articulation and contestation of young people's (young women's) narratives, aspirations and conceptions of justice in social policies and practices as well as in other aspects of their daily lives?

Gender as a structural category in adolescence and youth work

The necessity for feminist youth work becomes obvious when we take gender as a structural category – for distributive injustice due to the class structure of society, for misrecognition due to status inequality, and for representative exclusion (Fraser 2004, 2008) – pervading human relations among young people and between grown-ups and young women seriously. We showed the prevalence of gender-specific aspects of oppression and violence both in public and semi-public spaces and private spheres. Gender-specific inequality exists in the use of space and concerning the appropriation of public and semi-public spaces. Boys more often than girls frequent youth centres as semi-public and low-threshold places. Hence, girls and boys use and need different offers of support and leisure activities provided by (open) youth work and support in conquering

public space. Although gender-specific youth work must encompass working with girls and boys “only” spaces must follow principles of anti-sexism as a legacy of feminist youth work. Girls-only spaces must not be discredited by equally demanding boys-only spaces on the ground of “equal opportunities”. Structural deficits of youth work as social work are to be met by dedicating resources to less powerful groups.

Gender-sensitive and feminist girls’ work is a youth work response to inequality and difference among young people stemming (not only) from the category gender. It is a kind of policy being fed by an informational basis for the judgement of justice that takes serious persistent inequalities among girls and boys and consequently between men and women and recognises gender as a major reference point for policy intervention. The emancipation from limit-situations that are the vessels constraining one’s room for manoeuvre and not the adaptation of one’s life course to them is the big challenge of this kind of policy.

The added-value of girls-only spaces

It is crucial to accompany girls in transition processes in all possible spheres of life, trying to create free spaces and to amplify the girls’ scope of action, facilitating “identity building” and transgressing gender roles (Bitzan 2010; Batsleer 2013). The teenage period is a critical period of gender identity formation. Therefore, adequate space and methods for searching and trying out are needed, for “doing gender” and for reflecting the body as a central battlefield of gender norms. Our research showed how girls are using and that girls are appreciating a space that they can occupy for themselves. The girls’ garden is an example for such a space. It offers experiences of doing and behaving that are more difficult or impossible to accomplish in mixed settings. It is a place to act and to try out bodily experiences without reference to boys and with less hetero normative pressure. Since it is a garden, girls are not only away from home and its social control but also outside in a safe and semi-public space. We emphasized in this report the importance of young people's contribution going beyond their opinion and including their involvement into the concrete implementation of ideas. The girls’ garden is a place where meaningful contributions can happen. Girls together with youth workers and other (female) visitors use the “material” in terms of “nature” and tools this place is offering. They are trying out what is seemingly not possible in other (public) or private (family) spaces, moving from capabilities to functionings in gardening and building/constructing, climbing, showing and moving their bodies – and doing graffiti in a public space.

Arts-based practices and empowerment of girls

Feminist youth work aims at enhancing girls’ presence and symbolism in youth and youth work and in the society as a whole (in public space, in language, etc.). We showed in how far arts-based experiments such as graffiti have the power to strengthen the transformative character of participation in girls-only settings. How do girls’ ideas and voices in the context of street-art emerge, become visible and find their spots? On the one hand, we motivated voices through artistic practice “*of the moment, belonging to a pedagogy of the here-and-now*” (Batsleer 2011, 428). New ideas and finally whole

oeuvres emerged through this artistic process starting from a self-perception of many girls not being capable of drawing. The practice of street-art involved a commitment to risk-taking with respect to ideas, fantasies, and oneself becoming visible, public and subject to deliberation when performing in public space. This – we would argue – is a breaking through limit situations in the sense of Freire (1970) and a feminist practice of turning private issues (the restricted space appropriation of girls) into public ones.

On the other hand, the practice of street-art is a commitment to visibility and to symbolization in public space. It involves also a commitment to public scrutiny and debate. Girls' spaces and girls-only gangs/groups in public space become symbolized as a political issue and become subject to social deliberation. Moreover, it is a public performance with respect to the symbols staying on the wall such as "Mädchengarten" or their names. It confronts and perhaps provokes the public with political issues such as the existence and symbolization of girls' groups and girls' space as well as with an offensive claim for girls' appreciation and symbolic visibility in public space. This means limit-situations in terms of constrained and contested (public) space become visible and get public attention. At the same time, a careful balancing between publicity and the commitment to the principle of providing a safe, enclosed and targeted space for girls must be born in mind and the tension between these two poles discussed.

Policies towards gender-sensitive youth work

The recognition of gender in policy programs and initiatives nowadays often only goes along with the adaptation to the prevailing norms and structures (that is a capitalist world arranged along male life courses); and the recognition of subjective differences only comes along with individualization. Specific life situations are here within interpreted as choice of one's own or in negative terms as self-blamed and not as being part of societal constellation, that structurally oppresses particular groups of young people. In contrast, feminist youth work uncovers the limit-situations girls encounter in our society (Bitzan/Daigler 2004) and aims at the enhancement of equal opportunities with respect to external conversion factors (such educational, employment and reproductive trajectories) but also with respect to the recognition of female life course experiences (such as care obligations). Our research showed that the formation of aspirations is closely connected with identity formation and with realising what role is foreseen for girls and boys in a society that is strongly divided along the gendered lines of behaviour, doing and labour.

Hence, youth work with girls and gender-sensitive youth work necessarily includes a politisation of youth work in at least two directions: First, a back-up of public policy for gender-specific / feminist / participatory youth work is crucial. It is not a separate "niche" subject of individually committed youth workers (Bitzan/Daigler 2004, 68-70). It is a political decision, a contested field also on district level where resources are to be allotted or not. Positive examples are local policies of Vienna's 7th and 11th districts where gender-sensitive youth policies and girls-only spaces are welcome and supported on local policy level.

Second, youth centers must follow a “true” commitment to enhance participatory parity between boys and girls. Time constraints and limited personnel resources jeopardise the involvement and thinking through of adequate practices on the one hand, as one youth worker admits, “But if we are stuck in daily business and time gets tighter and tighter, those things [gender-specific offers] are the first ones to be cancelled.”⁷⁸ On the other hand, the principle of gender-sensitive youth work is sometimes interpreted as a “must” or a duty that is anyway kept in mind. The “Association of Viennese Youth Centers” developed a (not binding) guideline for girls’ work⁷⁹ recommending – as boys still dominate public spaces – to provide and design spaces for and together with girls. However, the simple assertion that gender-sensitive youth work is a principle is not enough. It must be implemented and lived in daily practice, in dedicated projects, in reflection processes, and in permanent dialogue with young girls and boys.

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⁷⁸ Int_JW3

⁷⁹ http://typo.jugendzentren.at/vjz/fileadmin/pdf_downloads/pdf_f_experts/maedchen_kopie_neu.pdf , only in German

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INTERVENTIONS OF GENDER-SPECIFIC YOUTH WORK IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA: BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND CRITIQUE⁸⁰

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter contributes to the collected volume with findings from the Austrian case study. It brings together insights from three different reports⁸¹ accessing disadvantaged youth, freedoms for participation of young people and their aspirations from various angles. Besides the socio-economic and political context for addressing young people's particular problems, situations and opportunities to participate, also local policies and networks for supporting young people are considered as important field of interventions. We put an emphasis on local policies in a comparably disadvantaged area in Vienna that aim at taking seriously young people's demands for spatial appropriation. Here, the role of youth work as a field of policy intervention in shaping young people's opportunities to participate in policy processes were particularly addressed. Following this focus, the participatory research tracked girls' ways of spatial appropriation and the role and tools of gender-sensitive youth work for enhancing girls' scope of action and desire.

2. METHODS

2.1. National analysis

The data used for the analysis of the socio-economic and political context for the Austrian study stems from expert interviews and documentary analysis on youth policies and programmes. It was collected between September 2013 and February 2014. The documents used for the documentary analysis cover official reports of ministries and

⁸⁰ This chapter was first published as Haidinger, Bettina /Knecht, Alban (2015): Interventions of Gender-specific Youth Work in Vienna, Austria: Between Integration and Critique, In: Del. 3.3 Collected Volume. SocIEtY: Social Innovation – Empowering the Young for the Common Good. Report to the European Commission, 373-391

⁸¹ Knecht/Kuchler, 2013; Haidinger/Kasper, 2014; Haidinger, 2015

administrative institutions, evaluation reports as well as descriptions of measures and programmes issued by stakeholders in the field of youth policy. The partners for the interviews were selected on three levels: practitioners, mid-level, and governing body level taking into account the following three criteria of sampling: a) involvement in or responsibility for youth policy, b) particular expertise on groups of youth identified in the literature review, c) mixing practitioners, mid-level governing bodies and service providers, and policy makers.

Overview 1: Interviews on national level

National government policy makers	2 civil servants of federal ministries
Regional government policy makers	1 deputy to Vienna's Parliament, and 1 leader of the youth department of a federal province
Training and education providers	2 programme managers and 2 practitioner working in non-profit
Employment support service providers	2 managers of the PES youth department
Citizen's bodies	1 board member of the National youth council
Youth work organisations	4 representatives
Networks and membership organisations (sector bodies/agencies, campaigns, lobbying, networking, project work, awareness raising)	5 representatives of the social partners (Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Labour) and other associations.

With regard to interview data, we conducted a qualitative content analysis following Mayring (2007). The combination of the analysis of documents and of expert interviews allows describing the way experts understand disadvantage, poverty, and inequality of young people and the informational basis of judgements of justice (IBJJ) of Austrian politics.

Regarding questions on policies (instrument/measures) and policy making/implementation, we applied the policy analysis approach. It serves for analysing the “assortment” of measures and programmes as well as for describing how measures are implemented.

2.2. Local social support network analysis – Simmering/Vienna/Austria

The Austrian local social support network analysis was carried out between February 2014 and September 2014, in the Viennese district Simmering. It drew its results from several sources including quantitative secondary descriptive data (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, 2012, 2014) and data from guideline-based stakeholder interviews, one group discussion and field notes of several observations and informal talks in the field of local youth work. The table below provides detailed information on expert interviewees. The group discussion was carried out with five young people who participated in the “word up” youth parliament. The data was analysed following a qualitative and thematic content analysis drawing on the core themes of the common WP4 report structure.

Overview 2: Interviews on local level

Regional/local government policy makers	3 (borough mayor, representative youth welfare office, district councillor)
Training and education providers	4 (2 teachers and 2 school social workers)
Citizen's bodies (e.g. youth parliaments/councils)	1 (social worker involved in youth parliament)
Youth work organisations	3 (including 1 youth worker specialised in girls' work)
Networks and membership organisations	1 (urban development agency)
Other types of organisations:	2 (director of district library and police officer)

2.3. Participatory research in Simmering

The case study carried out in Austria attempted to implement a participatory action research approach with young people (Cahill, 2007; Dentith et al., 2012). It was based on four methodical elements (see Overview 3): ethnographic methods including observant participation and informal talks in youth centres in Simmering; arts-based methods focusing on street-art; problem-centred interviews with both girls and youth workers; and three reflective sessions in terms of group discussions with stakeholders and informal talks with participants to reflect the research process. The main venue the research process was carried out was the girls' garden, a girls-only programme of a local youth centre in Simmering.

Overview 3: Participatory Research Design

Kick-off period	Selection of focus and method involving gatekeeper (youth centre) and young people → "out-reach" and decentralised research work with the girls' garden as "home base" run by Balu&du
Workshop preparation I + II	Design and distribution of flyers and posters Workshop preparation with girls: introducing them into street-art methods; designing bags and stencils Ethnographic life-world analysis (Mar-Nov 2014); continuous presence in the girls' garden, youth centres and parks; documentation and reflection in research diary
Workshops	Organisation and implementation of two workshops on street-art with street-artists (July and Sept 2014)
Follow-up and reflection	Reflective (group) discussions on participatory research design and workshop proceeding with girls, youth workers and other stake holders

3. **SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLITICAL CONTEXT**

3.1. ***Disadvantaged youth and inequalities among youth in Austria: the impact of the educational system***

Besides the description of inequality by ascriptive criteria such as migrant background and gender, the discussion on disadvantaged youth in Austria is shifting more and more to the causes of inequality – and here especially to the highly selective education system. The focus on the system of education resulted in new ways of describing inequality, and early school leavers and youth in a NEET situation became more visible in research and targeted by politics (cf. Bacher et al., 2013).

The school enforces social inequality between different family backgrounds (Bruneforth/Lassnigg, 2012). The school system reinforces these differences by allocating students to different types of schools/tracks and qualification levels. The obtained qualification highly predetermines the choice of vocation, the opportunities available on the apprenticeship and job market, and the future level of income. At the same time, the school system does not respond to the educational needs of disadvantaged young people. Children are at risk, whose parents are first generation immigrants, are affected by poverty or have low educational attainment (Vogtenhuber et al., 2012: 22).

With respect to gender differences, the ninth school grade (usually at the age of 14-15) marks an educational turning point: On the one hand, 6 out of 10 girls but only 5 out of 10 boys decide to attend an academic secondary school, higher technical or vocational college ending with an exam that allows them to enrol in university. On the other hand, male apprentices dominate the dual system: two thirds of students are boys. Male youths are also overrepresented in apprenticeships, which still lead to well-paid and stable jobs. In contrast, young women are concentrated in a small number of not very promising apprenticeships in the service sector (Mairhuber/Papouschek, 2010: 443).

3.2. ***Policy interventions targeted at disadvantaged youth***

Regarding measures and interventions, we found that there is a broad range of measures aimed at improving the situation of disadvantaged youth. However, there are hardly any direct anti-poverty measures for young people, except financial support for poor families, and also a co-ordinated anti-poverty youth policy reflected in the policy making process is lacking. The procedures in the field of financial, educational, and vocational measures follow different rationales. Federalism, and the Austrian system of Social Partnership, which includes representative organisations of employees and employers, yield widely spread influence and power. This makes decision making difficult and opaque. The multi-level governance system places high demands on co-operation, a fact that has come to be understood by an increasing number of actors; albeit young people themselves are barely included in decision-making processes.

Most of youth policy measures are designed to help with particular problems regarding school, apprenticeships, or jobs and transition processes from school to work or to apprenticeship training. An apprenticeship is considered to be the best way to avoid future unemployment or poverty. This training system, however, has negative aspects, too: there are not enough apprenticeship places and their number is diminishing continually (Dornmayr/Nowak, 2013). In addition, the quality of the training is very low in some companies, so that youngsters have difficulties to pass the final apprenticeship examination; half of the apprentices are dissatisfied with their training and the dropout rate is high.

A particular Viennese focus is based upon outreach youth work and youth centres. It particularly addresses young people from disadvantaged background, as they are low threshold institutions where participation is voluntary and free of cost. They aim to expand young people's scope of action, supporting appropriation/negotiation of public spaces and its usage by different groups. Youth centres are in general important actors in the district and also serve as hubs. They play an important role mostly as mediators but also as supporters (as for the young people participating in the young parliament) and "framers" or designers of public spaces, together with children and adolescents.

Youth work with girls in Vienna is a youth work response to inequality and difference among young people stemming from the category gender. It is a kind of policy being fed by an informational basis for the judgement of justice that took seriously persistent inequalities among girls and boys and consequently between men and women and recognised gender as a major reference point for policy intervention. Throughout Vienna, there are three exclusive girls' spaces, namely the two girls' cafés "flash" and "peppa" and the girls' garden situated in Simmering (BWJF 2011, 418: 521). In addition, youth centres offer "girls only" activities such as specific time slots for girls or even an exclusive space which is only open for girls.

3.3. Policy making, implementation and participation

With respect to young people's formal opportunities for policy making the National Youth Council and some advisory boards do include young people as delegates; however these institutions are more or less toothless. Rather, they are to be seen as "training for (democratic) participation" rather than participation in and for itself. Moreover, they do not reach disadvantaged young people. Two other measures are more useful for fostering young people's consideration and participation in political and economic decision making processes: firstly, the system of youth work councils in companies (Jugendvertrauensräte), and secondly, the lowering of the voting age, which is accompanied by large-scale information campaigns and makes young people a more valuable population stratum for politicians.

All in all, many measures aim to improve the situation of disadvantaged youth. Most of them, especially in the field of vocational training, work in a paternalistic way: the programmes are mandatory and the possibility to choose between programmes or to participate in decision making is limited (Knecht, 2014). Often, young people do not get

sufficient information on their rights. Most of these programmes are oriented towards employability rather than the development of capabilities (ibid.). Young people perceive these programmes as stigmatising.

In relation to politics, disadvantaged youth is hardly engaged; at least youth work tries to make political topics attractive to them, and offers opportunities for experiencing that their actions can result in real-world changes (cf. Verein Wiener Jugendzentren, 2008). Furthermore, youth work offers informal processes of participation, with youth workers passing the “voice” of the young people to higher administrative or political levels. But this also means that young people who are not in touch with young centres – such as many girls – are less likely to be heard. The involvement of young people in youth centres and their consultation in specific questions are integral part of bottom-up approaches in youth work. At the same time, youth centres and in particular partisan youth work follow and impose (top down) particular (socially innovative) guiding principles such as anti-discriminatory behaviour that are discussed but are not subject to disposition.

4. ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AND POLICIES AND STRATEGIES OF LOCAL ACTORS FOR THE AUSTRIAN CASE STUDY

4.1. Selection of location

The Austrian local area in focus of both the analysis of social support networks and policies of local actors as well as of the participatory research was located in Simmering. It is the second biggest district of Vienna situated at its Eastern periphery. Simmering is a traditional working class district with a quite heterogeneous population. Apart from the traditional working class areas, some petty-bourgeois areas can be found as well as very specific neighbourhoods such as “Macondo” where around 3.000 refugees live.

In comparison with Vienna’s overall population, Simmering has a quite young population. As for the whole of Vienna (and Austria), the district’s migrant population has risen steadily over the last years – a fact that increasingly challenges local policy and its position towards a multicultural society. In terms of educational attainment, the share of inhabitants with completed tertiary education is the lowest among all Viennese districts and the residents share with only compulsory education is comparably high. As lower educational attainment is known to have a negative impact on employment, it is not surprising that Simmering is among the five Viennese districts with the highest unemployment rate. Apart from unemployment, the weaker economic situation of the district’s population becomes apparent in – compared to Viennese average - lower income levels and a higher share of “needs-based minimum income” recipients (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, 2014).

4.2. Selected policy area: (out-reach) youth work (with girls) in Simmering

Within our local social support network research we focused on the open and outreach youth work which implies a low-threshold access and keeps the influence of institutionalised settings as low as possible. Starting from this perspective, we focused on policies regarding (gender-specific) youth programmes in the context of social work and youth work, expanding our research perspective by local and urban development programmes.

With regard to policies towards young people, Simmering is quite a resourceful district, not only in terms of “quantity” – there are more youth centres in Simmering than in any other Viennese district – but also in terms of “quality”: In Simmering, youth policies and youth programmes cover a broad variety of youth work such as “traditional” youth centres, outreach youth work, special offers for children, girls, young mothers, youth work with children of refugees. What makes the case of Simmering particularly interesting is the close cooperation and collaboration between the different institutions and stakeholders, the youth centres, the district’s youth welfare office and urban development agency, school social workers and even the borough mayor, when it comes to the planning and implementation of district policies. The “Regionalforum” for instance is a local network of public institutions meeting once a month to share and spread information about the district, specifically about the district’s youth issues.

We identified two core themes – spatial appropriation and “learning” democracy – within local policy programmes youth centres in Simmering focus on. First, we considered issues of spatial appropriation, conflicts on public and semi-public spaces and the role of social and youth work to solve those. This also includes conflicts of multicultural and intergenerational cohabitation reported many times by different interviewees. Initiatives tackling this issue can be interpreted as bottom-up approaches resulting from the urgency solving day-to-day problems of living together.

Second, we took a closer look at the youth parliament initiative “Word-up!”, fostering the political participation of young people in the chosen district. This one can be rather interpreted as a “top-down” initiative aiming at the democratic education of young people who – in Austria – have the right to vote from 16 years onwards.

In both of these thematic fields youth centres play a crucial role for preparing and implementing tools that shall help to foster young people’s participation on local level.

4.3. Youth participation in local initiatives

Participatory spatial planning: a park should be designed with participation of girls to meet particularly their needs in the planning of the facilities on offer. Through out-reach work youth workers tried to interview girls to collect/identify their ideas for designing a public space that is often divided only between little children and boys. The children have their swings and climbing nets; the (adolescent) boys get a skate ramp or a football and basketball cage; the (teenage) girls are somewhere in-between. The project aimed to particularly address girls’ needs for a public space. In the end, some suggestions were

taken up, for instance, a hammock that is not easily reached by children and that offers a safer and more comfortable space apart from the boys' space but at the same time gives girls the opportunity to overview the whole area. The difficulties from the engaged youth workers' point of view was to "activate" girls for formulating their interest and opinions. This movement from silence to speech is a crucial point – particularly for girls who seem to disappear at a certain age from public space. The other deadlock was that girls are asked for their opinion but there is no sustainable strategy of keeping their interest and involve them into concrete implementation processes. Again, you are asked, give your opinion and then the professionals take over. This reminds us of how justice can be perceived from the point of view of the producers and not only from users. What matters for justice from this point of view is not only the un-equal distribution of opportunities but inequalities in the availability of meaningful contribution (Gomberg, 2007). An equal opportunity to contribute entails being allowed, expected and encouraged to contribute with one's skills and creativity to society in detail (Simmering's girls' garden for instance – as will be shown below) and as a whole (Sayer, 2011: 9).

The local youth parliament initiative "Word up" gives young people the possibility to raise their voice and to be heard, particularly being heard by persons in power positions on local level such as the borough mayor or representatives of public services. It is the young people – and not the politicians, youth workers or other representatives, who raise demands after doing structured walk-throughs in their neighbourhoods what engenders a connection between the spaces of their daily life and the raised issues. Still, critical light should be shed on the educative and pedagogical aspect of the youth parliament. In the discussions about how demands could be implemented, the students are supposed to be treated as equals with whom one can discuss "like an adult". At the same time, they have to accept a "no" and respect constraints. Therefore, young people rather "learn how to do democracy" and compromise than to have a say and a voice and to contest.

In both examples, participation to feed concrete policy steps is fostered in rather institutionalised settings such as the youth parliament or within the rather short- to middle-term design processes initiated by the district's urban development agency (Haidinger/Kasper, 2014). Participation is possible in terms of raising demands or wishes while it stays unclear to what extent the implementation of these demands is constrained by financial and other "practical" impediments. Here, a critical point is the young people's contribution going beyond their opinion and including their involvement into the concrete implementation of ideas. In this case, participation remains rather superficial. Youth centres invest time and energy to reach young people and to include them into processes of consultation, however, the scope of decision making is very restricted. After consultation respectively "choosing" between different offers, the participation process ends, and the implementation is handed over to professionals.

5. THIS IS A GIRLS' SPACE?! RE-SEARCHING FOR PARTICIPATORY PARITY IN GENDER-SPECIFIC YOUTH WORK IN SIMMERING

This section presents findings of a participatory research project undertaken with girls engaged with open youth work in Simmering, one district in Vienna, Austria. Hence, the focus of the participatory and action research was put on the presence, situation and participation of young girls in open youth work and public and semi-public spaces in Simmering and the role of gender-sensitive youth work in enhancing girls' empowerment.

5.1. Research questions and research design

Particular research questions beyond our common research question: “In what way are young people’s narratives, aspirations and conceptions of justice articulated, heard and contested in social policies and practices as well as in other aspects of their daily lives?” encompass young girls’ limit-situations revealed in their attendance of public and semi-public spaces. By “limit-situations” (Freire, 2009[1970]: 96, 99) we refer to situations that constrain aspirations or the development of capabilities and their usage in daily life. In our case study, we focused on the limit-situations girls encounter in public and semi-public spaces. We scrutinised the gendered structural and discursive constraints shaping these limit-situations and how girls are “doing gender” (Gildemeister, 2004).

Freire interprets limit-situations as challenges: They are not impassable boundaries where possibilities end but the real boundaries where all possibilities start ... a frontier that separates being from being more (Freire, 2009[1970]: 99, 103). Therefore, partisan and particularly partisan girls youth work is all about signalling interest, respect and recognition and realising possibilities and experiences that girls do not find as such in their daily lives (Bitzan, 2010: 105).

Therefore, we argue about the added value of girls-only space as an important tool and resource in gender-sensitive youth work. This means to report on the challenges, limits and contestations of gender-sensitive and feminist youth work to enhance girls’ scope of space appropriation and girls’ capacities to aspire from the girls’ perspectives and in dialogue with youth workers.

The local youth centre “Balu&du” was the entrance point to our research area. As we decided on a gender-specific perspective for our participatory research, the “home base” of the project was the girls’ garden, one of three girls’ only spaces in Simmering’s youth centre scene. It is a place open from April to September and run by Balu&du where girls and young women can meet. The girls’ garden target group are between 7 and 15 years. Besides the girls’ garden, we visited other girls-only spaces in Simmering where girls and youth workers with a gender-sensitive approach interact.

Our case study included several methods that we combined (see above section 2.3) and that to different degrees fostered an interactive process among the participants. We relied on ethnographic research and observant participation and problem-centred interviews

both with young women and youth workers on the one hand. On the other hand, we attempted to implement a collaborative process with young women and girls in a street-art- based project. Batsleer (2011: 424) regards arts-based practice such as street-art as one alternative form for gathering data to express contradictory, ambivalent, multiple feelings and meanings, to try out new ideas that “have the permission also to be different and silly” and that at the same time are tools for informal learning.

As we took the decision to concentrate on street art, we dedicated the following girls garden sessions to the preparation of the participatory action research. In this framework, we as initiators were available for the girls interested in participating in the process to design a wall just in front of the girls’ garden. The aim was to engage the girls as much as possible already during the preparation of the street-art workshops so that they can bring in their ideas and topics and decide how to depict these contents and what materials we will use. Together with the girls we designed and distributed flyers and posters to announce the workshops.

In the forerun of the two organised workshops with two Graffiti artists, the Balu&du sessions were used to introduce the girls into street-art methods such as the designing of characters and the cutting of stencils and to make them familiar with the material in use such as stencils and spray cans. In this process, the girls designed bags and tried out stencils and free-style graffiti on a huge banner. In July and September 2014 finally two Graffiti workshops took place resulting in the design of a wall vis-à-vis the girls' garden.

5.2. Spaces of gendered dominance

The Austrian case study showed empirically how girls and boys are using space in a different manner and scrutinised underlying explanations. Girls' reduced spatial agency is contrasted to boys' expanding spatial agency that manifests itself in the way they playfully occupy public and semi-public space and in the way they communicate with each other and also intersexually (Löw, 2001: 92). Girls remain comparably invisible and silent in such settings – and are up to different games and used to a different division of tasks. They are those playing parlour games, helping to prepare food with youth workers and they are often those who care about their siblings. This gendered division of tasks also means that adolescent girls are more often met in mixed public spaces and playgrounds for children and young people. Girls skating on ramps, playing football and boys caring for their siblings remain rather the exception.

Often girls also “disappear” to invisible places in parks and take their positions there as spectators or audience of busy scenes such as the skate ramps or the football and basketball cage that are rather used by boys. Girls prefer uncontrollable and unreachable free places (from parents and younger children and boys) in public space for chatting and chilling and being among themselves; places that are not socially controlled. An example is the participatory planning of a girls’ zone in a park described in section 4.3: girls formulated the wish of being invisible (from outside) and unreachable (for small children); as a result of this participatory planning process high hanging hammocks were installed.

At the same time, going out, strolling around outside appears to be a strategy of girls to escape social control by fearful parents. Teenage girls together with their female friends seem to be much more mobile over distances (“strolling around”). This behaviour might be due to the restriction of possibilities in “fixed” public spaces such as parks or due to the eagerness to get out of the tyranny and control of the local. The “street” or the public transport system are important spaces for being seen, for getting into contact with others, for social interaction with peer groups.

Rumours about unsafety in public space often urge girls into a defensive position having the power to create a felt space of fear that can turn into a real space of fear you use warily. At the same time, the “safe space” private home as opposite to the “unsafe public space” is actually the place where violence against children, girls and women happens. Such dominant discourses restrict girls’ (public) space appropriation. Edthofer et al (2015: 94) give a noteworthy example of how to confront such a constructed space of fear – in this case an underground car park - by collective space appropriation of a group of girls using Wen Do techniques (feminist self-defence form) and documenting and reflecting their experiences in a comic strip. Their slogan: “we do not stay at home!”

5.3. *Gendered aspirations, and the role of gender-sensitive youth work*

Our research showed that the formation of aspirations is closely connected with identity formation and with realising what role is foreseen for girls and boys in a society that is strongly divided along the gendered lines of behaviour, doing and labour. Any kind of projection into the future is constrained or at least shaped by the young person’s present embeddedness in terms of his or her material position, status and representative situation (Fraser, 2005, 2009).

At the same time, between the age of 13 and 17, sexual intercourses, self-consciousness and personal or occupational projections into the future are subject to rapid twists and changes. Aspirations and projections that have been important at 14 might be completely uninteresting at 17. The completion of school at 15 is a turning point in young people’s life course. Delving into the world of work with apprenticeship training or not succeeding in finding a job or an apprenticeship place has major gendered implications. Most of the girls opt for traditionally female occupations such as retail sales, hairdressing or office administrator work with very restricted career and income prospects (Mairhuber/Papouschek, 2010). Nevertheless, this move is an important step of growing up, of – especially as a girl - standing on your own feet and earning money on your own. When girls do not succeed in finding an apprenticeship place the option of staying at home, marrying and becoming a mother is widespread. In these cases, labour market policy is speaking about the “disappeared girls”. Those are early school leavers or NEETs who “disappear” for some years and are difficult to be reached by public policy. This leads to an underrepresentation of girls in training programmes. The research of Bacher et al. (2013) confirms that very little is known about this group.

Since modern claims towards girls request to go beyond or to break with traditional gender roles especially with respect to the world of work, girls permanently experience

“double messages” and have to cope with them. A critical stance towards the gendered division of labour cannot mean just persuading girls into technical occupations and devaluing traditionally female occupations such as care work. The mainstream discourse identifies these young women responsible for their place in society’s unequal division of labour who opted for an unsuccessful career path. The openness and allegedly “everything goes” attitude of modern life brings along more (at least theoretical) opportunities for girls, however daily routine and adaptive preferences limit this alleged freedom (Bitzan/Daigler, 2004: 34). At the same time, a self-perception of being “different”, of being “distinct” to boys and other girls mixes with the realisation that breaking out of conventional gender roles needs power and endurance.

In this respect, gender-sensitive youth work plays an important role for recognising and naming contradictions in processes of identity formation and becoming. Gender-sensitive and feminist youth work aims at accompanying adolescents’ processes of searching and finding with a critical perspective and with awareness of the pitfalls of normalcy. Taking seriously young people’s aspirations and voice means building upon participatory knowledge, nevertheless a (contradictory) dialogue strengthens and makes visible that gendered, raced, classed and other positionalities play a role in opening up or limiting self-knowledge (Dentith et al, 2012: 8; Bitzan/Daigler, 2004: 182) – and a wider range of imaginable aspirations.

Following recent discussions in feminist and gender-sensitive youth work (Autor_innengruppe, 2014), social work rhetoric and policy moved away from a victim's perspective that sees girls as an entirety as subject to male oppression to resource orientation and diversity of oppression. What different resources, backgrounds and capacities do girls bring along? What other dimensions of inequality among girls such as ethnic background, sexual orientation and identity, financial family background etc. are of importance for addressing girls? What to do in youth work with boys or girls that are not feeling as such? How are we contributing to constructing gender or to deconstructing gender as a social relationship? (Gildemeister, 2004). At the same time, feminist youth work is not an individualistic approach but aims at collectivising experiences of daily life: girls shall feel safe in a collective space where their experiences are embedded in and become politicised (Autor_innengruppe, 2014: 252). Practices of feminist youth work must permanently reflect on the dialectics of being subject to oppressive structures of gender inequality and the way we are reproducing them in daily practice. This means to listen carefully to a range of experiences and reflect upon the discursive nature of these experiences. Though it is necessary taking seriously daily experiences and bothering about them you are trapped in your limit-situations when you do not succeed in reaching beyond the ‘daily’ and ‘local’.

5.4. *The added-value of girls-only spaces*

It is crucial to accompany girls in transition processes in all possible spheres of life – work, leisure, family, friendship, education, sexuality - trying to create free spaces and to amplify the girls’ scope of action, facilitating “identity building” and transgressing gender

roles (Bitzan, 2010; Batsleer, 2013). The teenage period is a critical period of gender identity formation. Therefore, adequate space and methods for searching and trying out are needed, for “doing gender” and for reflecting the body as a central battlefield of gender norms.

A very common policy to address girls and their particular interests and needs is to offer specific time slots exclusively for girls in youth centres as well as girls-only spaces (BWJF, 2011: 418) which are sometimes open to young mothers or women with small children too (as women are still mainly in charge of child care). All youth centres in Simmering (and throughout Vienna) offer at least one specific time slot per week exclusively for girls.

Our research showed how girls are using and that girls are appreciating a space that they can occupy for themselves. The girls’ garden is an example for such a space. It offers experiences of doing and behaving that are more difficult or impossible to accomplish in mixed settings. It is a place to act and to try out bodily experiences without reference to boys and with less hetero normative pressure. Since it is a garden, girls are not only away from home and its social control but also outside in a safe and semi-public space. We emphasised in this report the importance of young people's contribution going beyond their opinion and including their involvement into the concrete implementation of ideas. The girls’ garden is a place where meaningful contributions can happen. Girls together with youth workers and other (female) visitors use the “material” in terms of “nature” and tools this place is offering. They are trying out what is seemingly not possible in other (public) or private (family) spaces, moving from capabilities to functionings in gardening and building/constructing, climbing, showing and moving their bodies – and doing graffiti in a public space as was the focus of our participatory action research.

5.5. *Arts-based practices and empowerment of girls*

Feminist youth work aims at enhancing girls' presence and symbolism in youth and youth work and in the society as a whole (in public space, in language, etc.). Arts-based experiments such as graffiti have the power to strengthen the transformative character of participation in girls-only settings. How do girls’ ideas and voices in the context of street-art emerge, become visible and find their spots?

On the one hand, we motivated voices through artistic practice “of the moment, belonging to a pedagogy of the here-and-now” (Batsleer, 2011: 428). New ideas and finally whole oeuvres emerged through this artistic process starting from a self-perception of many girls not being capable of drawing. The practice of street-art involved a commitment to risk-taking with respect to ideas, fantasies, and oneself becoming visible, public and subject to deliberation when performing in public space. This – we would argue – is a breaking through limit situations in the sense of Freire (2009[1970]) and a feminist practice of turning private issues (the restricted space appropriation of girls) into public ones.

On the other hand, the practice of street-art is a commitment to visibility and to symbolisation in public space. It involves also a commitment to public scrutiny and

debate. Girls' spaces and girls-only gangs/groups in public space become symbolised as a political issue and become subject to social deliberation. Moreover, it is a public performance with respect to the symbols staying on the wall such as "Mädchengarten" or their names. It confronts and perhaps provokes the public with political issues such as the existence and symbolisation of girls' groups and girls' space as well as with an offensive claim for girls' appreciation and symbolic visibility in public space. This means limit-situations in terms of constrained and contested (public) space become visible and get public attention. At the same time, a careful balancing between publicity and the commitment to the principle of providing a safe, enclosed and targeted space for girls must be borne in mind and the tension between these two poles discussed.

5.6. *The imperative of participation*

Engaging young people in participatory processes can be quite a challenge as, especially adolescents, tend to act very spontaneously and are difficult to hold in long- or even mid-term processes. Youth centres and youth workers themselves can find themselves in a difficult situation between supporting the young people, giving them a voice and passing their ideas and wishes on to a "higher level" (as district administration etc.) on the one side and accomplishing a specific task, such as redesigning a park or skate ramp, on the other side. Therefore, the "task" potentially constrains the openness of the process. In addition, the youth workers have to come up with a "result" in order to show that they succeeded in the participation process.

One of the main difficulties from the youth workers' point of view was to "activate" young people for formulating their interest and opinions. This movement from silence to speech is a crucial point – particularly for girls who seem to disappear at a certain age from particular (semi-) public spaces.

At the same time, young people perceive participation sometimes as an imperative they are exposed to in many aspects of their lives, for example at school. Therefore, from this perspective, a youth centre must also be a place for just hanging around without "participating in a project", without claims, without an obvious aim and a purpose than just "being".

6. *DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS*

6.1. *Gender as a structural category for youth policies*

The necessity for gender-sensitive youth policies becomes obvious when we take gender as a structural category – for distributive injustice due to the class structure of society, for misrecognition due to status inequality, and for representative exclusion (Fraser, 2004, 2008) – pervading human relations among young people and between grown-ups and young women seriously.

Our case study showed the prevalence of gender-specific aspects of inequality, oppression and violence both in public and semi-public spaces and private spheres. Gender-specific inequality and difference exists in the use of space and concerning the appropriation of public and semi-public spaces. Boys frequent youth centres as semi-public and low-threshold places more often than girls. Hence, girls and boys use and need different offers of support and leisure activities provided by (open) youth work and support in conquering public space and critically coping with gender norms.

With respect to educational trajectories, girls more often than boys opt for higher education, however the Austrian “flagship” against youth unemployment, i.e. apprenticeship training, comes along with a strong gender bias. Male youths are overrepresented in apprenticeships, which lead to well-paid and stable jobs. In contrast, young women are concentrated in a small number of not very promising apprenticeships in the service sector.

Youth policy in general is a much disrupted policy field where coherent strategies are lacking. Many measures on federal and provincial level for disadvantaged youth focus on educational and employment issues following a rather employability oriented approach offering little scope for young people’s voice and choice. They work as thoroughly structured systems, with little room for manoeuvre to develop self-determined and freely chosen capabilities (Haidinger/Kasper, 2012). To better grasp young people’s voices and aspirations, this research switched and focused on a stronger subject-oriented policy field, i.e. youth work.

6.2. *Gender-sensitive youth work: a political issue*

Gender-sensitive girls’ work is a youth work response to inequality and difference among young people stemming (not only) from the category gender. It is a kind of policy being fed by an informational basis for the judgement of justice that takes serious persistent inequalities among girls and boys and consequently between men and women and recognises gender as a major reference point for policy intervention. The emancipation from limit-situations that are the vessels constraining one’s room for manoeuvre and not the adaptation of one’s life course to them is the big challenge of this kind of policy.

However, policy priorities in youth work make explicitly feminist youth work harder. Janet Batsleer (2013: 30-31) assesses for the UK that youth work initiatives rooted in social justice struggles in the 1980s. Professionalisation and changing policy priorities moved focuses towards more competence based learning and labour market orientation and “case management”. Recognition of gender in policy programmes and initiatives nowadays often only goes along with the adaptation to the prevailing norms and structures (that is a men’s world); and the recognition of subjective differences only comes along with individualisation. Specific life situations are here within interpreted as choice of one’s own or in negative terms as self-blamed and not as being part of societal constellation, that structurally disadvantages particular groups of young people. Although gender-specific youth work must encompass working with girls and boys, “only” spaces and initiatives must follow principles of anti-sexism as a legacy of feminist youth work.

Girls-only activities must not be discredited by equally demanding boys-only spaces on the ground of “equal opportunities”. Structural deficits of youth work as social work are to be met by dedicating resources to less powerful groups.

Youth work with girls and gender-sensitive youth work necessarily includes a politisation of youth work in at least three directions: First, a back-up of public policy for gender-specific / feminist / participatory youth work is crucial. It is not a separate “niche” subject of individually committed youth workers. It is a political decision, a contested field also on district level where resources are to be allotted or not.

Second, youth centres must follow a “true” commitment to enhance participatory parity between boys and girls. Time constraints and limited personnel resources jeopardise the involvement and thinking through of adequate practices on the one hand. On the other hand, the principle of gender-sensitive youth work is sometimes interpreted as a “must” or a duty that is anyway kept in mind. The simple assertion that gender-sensitive youth work is a principle is not enough. It must be implemented and lived in daily practice, in dedicated projects, in reflection processes, and in permanent dialogue with girls and boys.

Finally, work with girls and young women might be jeopardised to shift from an agenda concerned with challenging existing forms of power relations to an agenda essentially rooted in them, upholding difference and enhancing adaptive preferences. Therefore, gender-sensitive youth work must be based on the breaking-out of the position of women defined and categorised by their sex as persons and contributors of minor importance in society, work and politics.

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