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Mobile Youth Work as a Complex Security Measure

Insights from the KIRAS Project JA_SICHER



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The JA_SICHER study, funded by the KIRAS Security Research Programme, investigated the mechanisms of mobile youth work. These offers to juveniles in the public sphere provide complex security work taking the communal level into account. The project used elaborate methodological tools to generate meaningful insights and derive evidence-based recommendations for the optimisation of mobile youth work and social peace in the community. The article presents selected findings from the impact assessment, in which the selection criterion was relevant to the police's security and prevention work. The various methodological evaluations initially showed a significant tolerance-enhancing role model effect on the basis of trusting relationships between juveniles and youth workers, for example, in the dimensions of gender, sexual orientation, as well as national or ethnic origin. They reveal the large potential of mobile youth work to promote de-escalated ways of dealing with conflicts that are also oriented towards understanding. The data obtained also show a statistically demonstrable link between interventions of mobile youth work and the reduction of offences with juvenile suspects – both in general and also in terms of specific offences such as bodily harm. The achievable effects concerning the handling of legal requirements and prohibitions in general, as well as in terms of various types of addictive drugs, are more heterogeneous. However, mobile youth work also has a significant impact here, especially in long-term contact with juveniles. In practice, the interface design between youth workers and the police requires a professionally reflected alternation between proximity and distance in order to ensure supportive relationships in the overlapping areas of professional activity.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Mobile youth work is employed in the public sphere and constitutes exploratory, life-oriented social support, counselling and assistance, which seeks to access hard-to-reach young people. It is aimed primarily at a socially vulnerable target group, namely juveniles with precarious social inclusion opportunities living in conditions that jeopardise their security and spending

large portions of their leisure time in the public sphere. Mobile youth workers work both on the individual and the collective level (community/social sphere) to promote positive personality development, personal resilience, the ability to act, mutual understanding in the community, democratic ability and social cohesion, thus preventing violence and crime. By applying a comprehensive security concept, as laid down in the KIRAS Security Research

Programme, it can be said that youth work provides complex security work in the public sphere, taking into account the communal level. It is also often employed in an intercultural context.

The objective of the research project JA_SICHER “Youth work in the public sphere as a multidimensional security measure: approaches to the impact assessment”, carried out between January 2014 and May 2016 under the project management of the IRKS (Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology) was to gain scientifically sound knowledge about the actual effects of these security-relevant intervention measures. In association with KOSAR (Competence Centre for Social Work, Viennese Campus of the University of Applied Sciences) and in close cooperation with two practitioners from the Open Youth Work in Vienna (Association of Viennese Youth Centres) and Lower Austria (TENDER Association), as well as the Federal Ministry of the Interior in the role of public stakeholders, impact indicators were identified, and relevant research tools were developed for the impact assessment and applied to youth work projects in Vienna and Lower Austria. The findings are comprehensive and varied, thus cannot be reproduced in full here. Therefore, following a brief outline of the methodological approach, individual findings are selected as examples in order to demonstrate the variety of possible impacts and their interaction, and also to illustrate what the various methodological instruments are capable of collecting.

2. METHODOLOGY FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Due to the characteristics of this professional field (such as abstract or flexible design objectives that are individually oriented towards the addressees, soft and adaptive interventions, many complex inter-

acting influence factors that accumulate over the course of time, etc.), there are significant limitations to the transmission of the concept of evidence-based practice and its methodical standards (“levels of evidence”) to mobile youth work (Mayrhofer 2013; Mayrhofer 2016). Therefore, appropriate methodological foundation and methodological transformations, which also include qualitative reconstructive procedures and help to understand complex interrelationships with context factors, are required (Albus/Ziegler 2013; May 2011; Otto 2007; Schneider 2011).

The research design of the evaluation project JA_SICHER met these challenges with a multi-perspective research design as well as a broad and triangulating range of methods. The methodological approach included the following approaches:

- ▶ Standardised questionnaire surveys (n=130) among current users in four different mobile youth work institutions in Vienna and Lower Austria for the statistical recording of the impact of the interventions on the attitudes and behaviour of juveniles (inter alia by comparing subgroups which use mobile youth work for different periods of time); descriptive and inferential statistical evaluation procedures, including multiple regression and variance analyses.
- ▶ Four ethnographic and socio-spatial case studies (a total of 25 observations and 22 ethnographical or qualitative guided interviews) over a long period of time at different locations or on different initiatives; use of a content-analytical evaluation method extended by hermeneutic elements.
- ▶ Narrative and biographical conversations with former users (n=9) between the ages of mid-twenties and mid-thirties; qualitative, reconstructive evaluation method for biographical interviews, developed in the research process based

on Schütze (Schütze 1983), Riemann (Riemann 1987) and Rosenthal (Rosenthal 1995); exemplary reconstruction of the individual processing methods for events and social work interventions using two individual case analyses.

- ▶ Network surveys and analyses using network maps at a socio-spatial or institutional level.
- ▶ Secondary statistical evaluations of longitudinal data (from between 2005 and 2014) of the security monitor¹ (in cooperation with the Federal Criminal Police Office/Federal Ministry of the Interior) for eight intervention and six comparison areas in mobile youth work; subdivision into core regions where youth workers are operating, as well as the wider regions, which also include adjacent areas, in order to collect spillover effects; analysis of the data in four fixed-effect panel models that take different variables into account, such as intervention and duration, trend reversal after 2007, seasonal variations, period effects, etc.

This complex research design and the method mix appropriate to it should be suitable for the high complexity of impact dynamics and interrelations in the field of mobile youth work in order to generate the most valid impact assessments. In order to ensure that the findings provide favourable prerequisites for high practical relevance and effectiveness, the research project processes for cooperative knowledge creation (cf. Hüttemann 2016) were integrated not only between research and practice, but also with training and municipal policy, as well as between the representatives of the management and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The main goal of this process was to combine scientific knowledge with the practical knowledge of experience in the interest of cooperative knowledge creation.

3. CENTRAL IMPACT INSIGHTS

In the following, selected findings from the impact assessment will be presented with the key selection criterion being the relevance to the police's security and prevention work. It should be borne in mind in the case of the findings that the actual achievable impacts should always be considered within the context of the given framework conditions for interventions and impetuses for change. Mobile youth work is only an extremely small factor in the complex interrelationships between young people. Social pedagogical interventions are part of many factors which interact with each other in a multicausal manner and cannot be broken down into deterministic relationships. In this respect, neither exaggerated expectations of the potentials of mobile youth work nor unrealistic claims to the empirically unambiguous verifiability of actual impacts are satisfactory for the subject.

The high significance of the knowledge gained is demonstrated by precisely these very limited framework conditions, both for the potential of mobile youth work and also for their empirical verifiability. The synthesis of the various partial results stemming from the different methodological approaches produce particularly valid results. The overall findings of the study are significantly more comprehensive. They are expected to be published by the end of April 2017.

3.1 Trusting relationships and tolerance-enhancing role models

The insights gained initially reveal that mobile youth work succeeds in many ways in establishing trusting relationships with juveniles, which are sometimes regarded as hard to achieve. This often leads to longer-term relationships, which can be regarded as the basis for various opportunities to exercise influence. The increasing duration of the contact is manifested as an influence-

reinforcing factor in many aspects. This is particularly evident in the multiple regression analyses of the questionnaire findings, but partly also in the other methodological approaches, for example in the evaluation of the security monitor data.

This can be demonstrated by way of example of the findings of the following item block of the standardised survey instrument, which referred to non-discriminatory behaviour or similar settings: The interviewed users of mobile youth work first had to indicate on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = “does not apply at all”, 10 = “totally agree”) how much, in their opinion, the below statements applied to the employees of the respective mobile youth work establishments. If they gave five or more points, they were then asked whether this also increased their own acceptance. The descriptive statistic findings are shown in medians as responses do not show normal distributions. The (inter)quartile range (IQR=span of the mean 50 %) is given in brackets as a measure of dispersion. In addition, multiple regression models were anticipated in the follow-up, including age, gender, duration of contact, frequency of contact and institution.

First of all, the juveniles questioned attest that the youth workers have a very conscious approach towards diversity,

which aims at equivalent recognition of difference. In addition, the findings show relatively high agreements to the resulting influence on their own attitudes, but at the same time exhibit, in part, extreme dispersion, i.e. considerable differences between the persons questioned:

► Acceptance of gender equality: The majority of the respondents indicate that through the role model of the mobile youth work, they can observe a higher acceptance of the equality of boys and girls in themselves. The median is 9 out of 10 possible points, the mean 50 % of the values are significantly dispersed however, with 6.75 points. Few differences are identified between male and female respondents. The multivariate regression models revealed two counteracting factors that are active simultaneously (this underlines the complexity of the interactions!): as the duration of the contact with mobile youth work increases, agreement with the statement increases significantly (test statistics: $t=2.071$, $p=0.040$), i.e. juveniles who have had longer contact appreciate the influence the youth workers have had on their attitudes better than those with shorter contact. At the same time, the agreement with the statement decreases significantly with age (test statistics:

Source: Mayrhofer

Statements (rated on a scale of 0 to 10)	TOTAL Median (IQR)	male Median (IQR)	female Median (IQR)
a) Boys and girls are equal at [name of institution].	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)
→ Thus, it's easier for me to accept that boys and girls are equal.	9 (6.75)	9 (5)	9 (7.5)
b) The employees of [name of institution] accept that people have different sexual orientations.	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)
→ Thus it's easier for me to accept that some people have a different sexual orientation than me.	6 (10)	5 (10)	9.5 (10)
c) People from different countries are equal at [name of institution].	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)
→ Thus, it's easier for to accept that people from different countries are equal.	10 (6.5)	9.5 (5)	10 (9.5)

Table 1: Non-discriminatory attitudes and the reduction of heterophobia, median and dispersion (IQR) for total sample and partial samples by gender; n=between 123 and 130

$t=-2.603$, $p=0.010$), older juveniles or young adults give lower agreement values.

- ▶ Acceptance of different sexual orientations: Here, the role model effect of the mobile youth workers on their own attitude is still evaluated as above the centre of the scale with a median of 6, but still markedly lower. At the same time, considerable gender differences in the response behaviour can be identified at the descriptive level: female users rate the influence of mobile youth work on their acceptance of other sexual orientations with a median of 9.5 points, significantly higher than boys (median: 5). It is also interesting to note that the responses as a whole show the greatest dispersion, i.e. they are extremely heterogeneous – the subject is obviously extremely divisive. The multivariate calculations showed that contact frequency (but not the duration) has a significant influence on the response behaviour. In the case of higher contact frequency, the agreement with the statement increases significantly (contact frequency several times per week: test statistics: $t=2.476$, $p=0.015$; contact frequency approx. once per week: test statistics: $t=2.678$, $p=0.008$), i.e. people who are in contact with mobile youth work more frequently, on the other hand, are increasingly aware, on the basis of this, of their own acceptance of other sexual orientations.
- ▶ Acceptance of national or ethnic differences: A clear majority of the juveniles questioned perceived in themselves an increased acceptance of people from other countries. The median is 10 (in boys: 9.5) and the dispersion of the answers is also significant here, with the highest among female juveniles, with a value of 9.5. Similar to the area of gender, age and contact duration have a significant influence on response behav-

iour, whereby agreement decreases with increasing age (test statistics: $t=-2.905$, $p=0.04$), whilst increasing with increasing contact with mobile youth work (test statistics: $t=1.985$, $p=0.049$).

According to the empirical findings, youth workers promote non-discriminatory attitudes in juveniles to a considerable degree, for example in the areas of “gender” and “nationality/ethnicity”, and also to a somewhat lesser extent in the area of “sexual orientations”, or at least to a certain degree, reduce such attitudes. The self-assessments of juveniles point to considerable influence, even if this is often (still) less visible to the youth workers in the actual behaviour of the juveniles, which is indicated by discussions of the findings in knowledge transfer workshops. It should also be noted that the diversity-sensitive behaviour of the youth workers is clearly perceived by juveniles and their own perceptions are also disturbed by it.

The findings, enabled by two biographical case constructions, are much more complex in this aspect: in the individual case study “Johann”, an approach with migrant neighbours that is more sensitive to interaction and easing conflict is now emerging, however, as before, he is still keeping a fundamental distance from them. In the case of “Roxane”, the contact with mobile youth work was a great support to the young woman’s ability to develop a hybrid identity in ethnic, cultural and gender-specific terms, which youth workers accepted and encouraged, while the rest of her social environment was likely to be opposed to this.

3.2 Conflict resolution and the reduction of offences involving juvenile suspects

Mobile youth work has great potential to change the way that juveniles deal with conflicts: The questionnaire findings show

that juveniles are able to perceive the conflict behaviour of youth workers, which is aimed at reaching agreement and compromise quite clearly and, to a certain extent, to adopt it. The openly collected responses show that their own conflict behaviour is perceived and described very differently, and often also includes conflict-escalation or non-communicative behaviour. On the other hand, the behaviour of youth workers in a dispute or conflict situation is described predominantly in words that suggest non-violent compromise, understanding and calming action (the responses to both questions were raised openly and subsequently encoded). What is particularly noteworthy in these responses is that juveniles are also able to perceive this and may thereby also be able to acquire new ways of dealing with a conflict situation.

Respondents were then asked to indicate on a scale of 0 to 10 the extent to which the statement "I also learn from this how to behave differently than usual in conflict situations" is true for them. The mean value (median) is relatively high, i.e. seven points, indicating that the juveniles and young adults surveyed generally see a learning effect in themselves or often accept the youth workers as "role models". However, overall, the responses are widely scattered, i.e. the individual respondents give extremely heterogeneous responses. In the calculated multiple regression models (taking into account the gender, age, duration and frequency of contact as well as the mobile youth work institution the respondent is in contact with), the age of the respondents and the duration of their contact are shown as opposing influence factors on the response behaviour: with increasing age, the statement is agreed with significantly less (test statistics: $t=-2.023$, $p=0.046$), i.e. the role model of the youth workers will have less influence on their own conflict behaviour. The increasing

duration of contact with mobile youth work, on the other hand, significantly increases the agreement with the statement values (test statistics: $t=2.183$, $p=0.031$). People who have been in contact for a longer time thus show a greater degree of the role model function of the youth workers in their own conflict behaviour. The fact that only active users were consulted should be taken into account with these findings. Therefore, the extent to which an increasing selection effect (those young people who feel less addressed by the service and no longer actively seek contact) could contribute to these findings is not known. Nevertheless, it seems feasible to interpret the findings as the impact indication of mobile youth work.

The narrative and biographical case reconstructions provide a deeper insight into how such constructive conflict-resolution know-how can be communicated to juveniles and can consequently become a resource for the rest of their lives. They underline the fact that the activities of mobile youth work contribute to the reduction of conflicts in the community by imparting know-how for the de-escalation and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The socio-spatial case studies demonstrate that youth workers can sometimes, but not always, successfully include a direct conflict-mediating role in conflict constellations between juveniles and other actors in the community. There may sometimes be limits to mediation, especially in highly escalated conflicts, or if they are unable to satisfactorily escape the conflict dynamic themselves. It should be borne in mind that youth workers do not always have the required equidistance to all parties involved (including the juveniles) in the direct encounter with the conflict parties due to their critical, partisan role for the juveniles – and it should also be added that they do not want to keep such equidistance. Therefore,

they do not enter into an explicit mediation role, which is different from that of a youth worker.

At the level of the security monitor, which also includes a considerable number of conflict-based offences, statistical analyses show strong indications of a decline in offences involving juvenile suspects. These calculations were possible because the institutions in four of the eight regions where mobile youth work is employed only began their activities after 2005. Thus, the data available from the security monitor since 2005 enabled a before-and-after comparison. Table 2, line “All offences” summarises the regression coefficients for the joint development of all five offence groups, determined on the basis of fixed-

effect (FE) models for panel data. This table contains the results of the four analysed FE models for both the core regions and the extended region. The following variables were taken into account in these analysis models:

- ▶ Model 1: Use of mobile youth work (MYW), trend, change in trend between 2007 and 2008.
- ▶ Model 2: Use of MYW, trend, change in trend between 2007 and 2008, season.
- ▶ Model 3: Use of MYW, trend, change in trend between 2007 and 2008, season, year.
- ▶ Model 4: Use of MYW, trend, change in trend between 2007 and 2008, season, year, duration of intervention by MYW.

Source: Bengesser

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
		Core regions	incl. extension						
All criminal offences	Use of MYW	-1.29*	-1.90	-1.30*	-1.83	-1.21*	-1.84	-0.65	-0.54
	[Std. err.]	[0.57]	[1.04]	[0.37]	[1.10]	[0.39]	[1.07]	[0.41]	[1.05]
	Duration of use							-0.04*	-0.11
	[Std. err.]							[0.02]	[0.06]
Bodily injury	Use of MYW	-0.38	-1.15*	-0.38	-1.14*	-0.37	-1.22*	-0.20	-0.55
	[Std. err.]	[0.21]	[0.54]	[0.21]	[0.56]	[0.22]	[0.54]	[0.20]	[0.48]
	Duration of use							-0.01*	-0.06*
	[Std. err.]							[0.00]	[0.02]
Damage to property	Use of MYW	-0.35	-0.76	-0.35	-0.75	-0.33	-0.86	-0.29	-0.33
	[Std. err.]	[0.18]	[0.42]	[0.18]	[0.42]	[0.24]	[0.48]	[0.23]	[0.42]
	Duration of use							-0.00	-0.04
	[Std. err.]							[0.01]	[0.02]
Narcotic Drugs Act	Use of MYW	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.14
	[Std. err.]	[0.17]	[0.51]	[0.17]	[0.48]	[0.20]	[0.46]	[0.21]	[0.42]
	Duration of use							-0.01	0.017
	[Std. err.]							[0.01]	[0.02]
Theft	Use of MYW	-0.27	-0.72	-0.27	-0.71	-0.28	-0.65	0.03	-0.10
	[Std. err.]	[0.32]	[0.53]	[0.30]	[0.56]	[0.30]	[0.54]	[0.32]	[0.54]
	Duration of use							-0.03	-0.04
	[Std. err.]							[0.02]	[0.04]
Robbery	Intervention	0.03	0.22*	0.04	0.22*	0.02	0.21*	0.02	0.10
	[Std. err.]	[0.03]	[0.09]	[0.03]	[0.09]	[0.03]	[0.09]	[0.03]	[0.10]
	Duration of use							-0.00	0.01
	[Std. err.]							[0.00]	[0.01]
	Adj. R ²	0.06	0.18	0.06	0.18	0.07	0.19	0.06	0.19

* Statistical significance at the 5 % level; Std. err.: standard errors of the regression coefficients were determined robustly (cf. test findings of the forest test)

Table 2: Analysis results of the development of offences for various offence groups

The actual (causal) effect of the employment of mobile youth work on the number of offences is indicated with the variable “Use of MYW”. The most important finding is that the signs for the coefficients of the intervention are negative (cf. Table 2, page 26). This means that a decline in the number of offences with juvenile suspects in the employment regions – compared with regions without any employment of mobile youth work – can be observed in all models in the periods in which interventions by mobile youth work took place. However, when interpreting the findings, it should be borne in mind that responsibility for the decline observed could lie with other causes which occurred in those regions examined simultaneously with the activities of open youth work, and which could not be taken into account in the regression models.

The coefficients for mobile youth work in the extended region are between -0.54 (cf. column Model 4) and -1.90 (cf. Model 3). This means that in those quarters where interventions occurred, on average up to two offences fewer were committed compared to those quarters without intervention. At first glance, this may seem low. However, if the fact that an average of around nine offences per quarter were registered in the regions is taken into account, this can then be interpreted as a reduction in offences up to around 20 %. However, it must be pointed out that this reduction is not hedged in the extended regions to a 5 % critical level of significance, so they could also have happened randomly. It must also be added in this context that in FE models, effects tend to become less frequently significant. If only the offences in the core region (i.e. core employment areas of mobile youth work) are taken into account, statistically proven evidence of reduction in offences can be provided in all models other than Model 4.

Model 4 takes into account the duration of mobile youth work in addition to the variables contained in Model 3. Since there are negative coefficients in both the expanded regions and the core regions (-0.11 and -0.05 respectively), this indicates a slight decline in the number of offences the longer mobile youth work is employed. This finding suggests that the influence of mobile youth work increases with its continuing employment. However, this effect is slight and is not statistically proven neither in the core regions nor in the extended regions.

3.3 Influence on violent action

There is a close connection between conflict behaviour and violent action, however, it also goes beyond that in part, for example in the case of a robbery, which should not always be regarded as a conflict-based offence. Initially, the findings of the survey suggest that mobile youth work results in a certain amount of violence reduction. For example, the agreement values with the statement “As a result of contact with [name of institution], I am more peaceful towards others” (collected on a four-part Likert scale) suggest a relatively high influence (see Figure 1, page 29): the median is at “I tend to agree”. The importance of the findings is increased considerably by the fact that of the 64 persons (i.e. 49 % of respondents) who responded with “I tend to disagree” or “I totally disagree”, the overwhelming majority of 43 people indicated on request that the statement did not apply to them, as they are fundamentally peaceful regardless. Furthermore, the review using the Mann-Whitney-U-test for independent samples showed that “heavy users”, i.e. those juveniles who are more often in contact with mobile youth work, felt a significantly higher degree of positive influence on themselves (test statistics: $u=1.601$; $p=0.036$; $n=130$).

The two biographical case studies enable more comprehensive insights, indicating a considerable potential for influence, but also recognising that personal behavioural changes require a longer developmental period, and that the personal environment also makes such changes difficult if physical violence is the dominant interpersonal “means of communication” there. Taking the example of the biographical case study “Johann” as an example, it becomes clear that although physical violence is not completely replaced as a basic form of relationships, alternative forms of relationship management are available through the experiences with mobile youth work. Moreover, dialogue is recognised as an effective way of negotiating interests. The case study “Roxane” also shows that juveniles who have themselves been subjected to violence receive support from the youth workers in order to be able to deal with the exposure to violence better and protect themselves from it. Mobile youth work also opened up access to the institutions of the Austrian legal state to juveniles and later young adults, which might have been very uncertain without this support.

The evaluations of the data from the security monitor also show statistically that fewer physical injuries were observed by law enforcement agents in those areas where mobile youth work is employed after their activities had begun. All models which were calculated for this offence group have negative coefficients when employing mobile youth work. Therefore, a decrease in physical injuries was determined during the periods of its employment. In the expanded regions, the coefficients are between -1.14 (Model 2) and -1.22 (Model 3) and at -0.55 in Model 4, taking into consideration the period of use (cf. Table 2, page 26, line “Bodily injury”). For Models 1 to 3, this decrease is hedged at a 5 % critical level of significance. In the case of physical

injuries, a longer period of use of mobile youth work is accompanied by a significant reduction in physical injury. This effect is also significant in the core regions. A significant reduction in physical injuries was only observed in the extended regions during the periods in which mobile youth work was used when given a generous defined critical level of significance of 10 %. A drop can also be observed in the number of offences relating to property damage during the period in which mobile youth work was used, but this is statistically less strongly hedged (cf. Table 2, row “Damage to property”).

3.4 Dealing with rules, law and addictive substances

Taking the example of how mobile youth work deals with situations when they meet juveniles using addictive substances or discuss drug use with them, it becomes clear that youth workers realise a “low-threshold pedagogical situation” in the public sphere (Deinet/Krisch 2013, 416). Direct criticism of the behaviour of juveniles is used sparingly, in particular in the case of initial contacts, as demonstrated by insights into the socio-spatial case studies of a park in an urban area that placed building a trusting relationship in the foreground. Accordingly, the findings of the evaluations of the security monitor come as no surprise: no significant changes were observed in the relevant violations of the law on addictive substances during the periods in which mobile youth work was used (cf. Table 2, page 26, line “Narcotic Drugs Act”). The statistical analyses of the questionnaire surveys also show that the majority only observe a minor influence on their own behaviour by the youth workers with regards to reduction in consumption, partly because they use no or hardly any addictive substances anyway (drugs, alcohol, cigarettes). The

findings of this item block also make it clear that youth workers are important sources of information for juveniles in general regarding legal regulations.

If the reasons for low consumption given when requested are taken into account, the impact assessments are considerably increased. For example, three-quarters of 63 people who answered statement b) “Thanks to the contact with [name of institution], I do fewer things that are punishable” with “tend to disagree” or “totally disagree” justified this by saying that they generally did not commit criminal acts and so the statement was not applicable to them. Follow-ups to statements d) and e) showed that knowledge about addictive substances had often already been conveyed by other institutions, such as school. The role of mobile youth work is less central in this case than in imparting knowledge about legal requirements and prohibitions.

The multivariate statistical analyses show that juveniles who have more intensive contact with mobile youth work experience a significantly higher degree of corresponding influence. All six statements show a significantly higher level of agreement in the partial test of “heavy users”,

Source: Mayrhofer

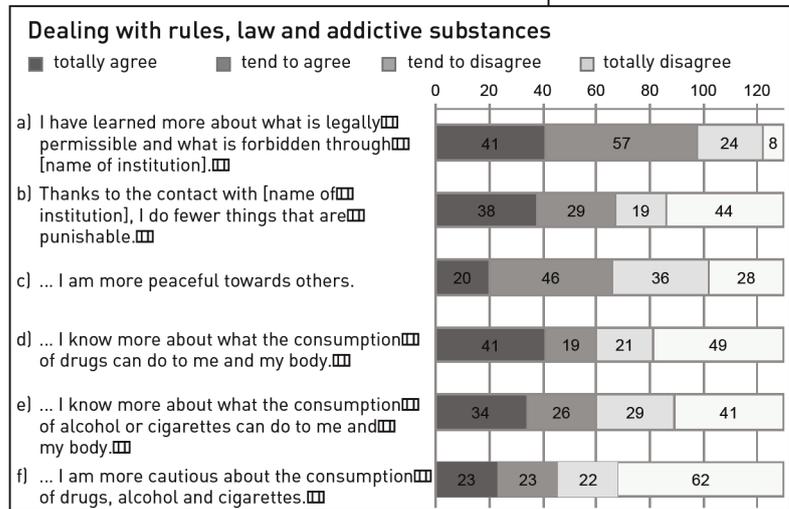


Figure 1: Dealing with rules, law and addictive substances, four-part Likert-response scale; n=130

i.e. those juveniles surveyed who have greater and more frequent contact with mobile youth work. Table 3 summarises the medians and findings of the significance test (Mann-Whitney-U-test for independent samples).

The abovementioned socio-spatial case study and the discussion of the research findings in a workshop with youth workers on cooperative knowledge creation also made it clear that mobile youth work is trying to offer alternatives to the “adventure playground drug scene”. Moreover, there are also close contacts with other actors active

Source: Mayrhofer/Bengesser

Statement	Median	Significance test (M.-W.-U-test)
a) I have learned more about what is legally permissible and what is forbidden through [name of institution].	tend to agree	“heavy user” = significantly higher level of agreement (Mann-Whitney-U-test statistics: 1.401; p=0.002; n=130)
b) Thanks to the contact with [name of institution], I do fewer things that are punishable.	tend to agree	“heavy user” = significantly higher level of agreement (Mann-Whitney-U-test statistics: 1.451; p=0.004; n=130)
c) ... I am more peaceful towards others.	tend to agree	“heavy user” = significantly higher level of agreement (Mann-Whitney-U-test statistics: 1.601; p=0.036; n=130)
d) ... I know more about what the consumption of drugs can do to me and my body.	... tend to disagree	“heavy user” = significantly higher level of agreement (Mann-Whitney-U-test statistics: 1.474; p=0.006; n=130)
e) ... I know more about what the consumption of alcohol or cigarettes can do to me and my body.	... tend to disagree	“heavy user” = significantly higher level of agreement (Mann-Whitney-U-test statistics: 1.479; p=0.007; n=130)
f) ... I am more cautious about the consumption of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes.	... tend to disagree	“heavy user” = significantly higher level of agreement (Mann-Whitney-U-test statistics: 1.564; p=0.019; n=130)

Table 3: Findings of the statistical analysis (significance test) on statements about rules, law and addictive substances; n=130

in this field, such as specialised support for addiction problems or the police.

3.5 Interface between mobile youth work and the police

The study findings show that the police and mobile youth work have very different, but important complementary roles. At the same time, contact is also sometimes demonstrated to be a sensitive area. It becomes clear on the basis of the biographical case study of “Johann” that the police cannot offer a suitable means of conflict resolution in certain conflict constellations between young people and other actors in the community; instead, compromise and dialogue should be the basis of negotiating interests. In this case, mobile youth work enabled a more peaceful cooperation, or in any event, coexistence, with the neighbours. It can also be seen from a socio-spatial case study on a youth playground in a rural area that some problems in the community, such as that of vandalism, are difficult to solve exclusively with law enforcement officers (or even with private security services). This is rather about the interaction of different levels of players, and most likely about developing calmness regarding a certain amount of damage to property.

Furthermore, the socio-spatial case studies show that youth workers jeopardise their trust relationship with juveniles if they themselves act as controlling bodies and demonstrate too obvious normative, pedagogical behaviour, or indeed are suspected of being the extended arm of the police. The biographical case study of “Roxane” also provides a good example of the fact that in the case of danger, mobile youth work is an important link to the police for their juvenile users, who are often at a great distance from law enforcement officers, and enables them to gain protection and support from this party too.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations, derived from all evaluation findings and the workshops on cooperative knowledge creation with the practitioners and stakeholders allow us to draw two conclusions with particular relevance for the main focus of this article:

If youth workers are involved in conflict mediation between juveniles and other actors in the community, it is necessary to reflect what kind of role they can play in the given conflict constellation and which they are assigned by the conflict participants. The impartial role essential to the task of mediation is somewhat contradictory to their (professionally reflected) partiality for the juveniles. Practitioners stress that a specific mediation role in the community does not number among the tasks of youth workers. Therefore, in some cases of conflict, it is advisable to relinquish the conflict mediation to a third party, insofar as it is possible. There may not always be framework conditions or willingness for this, or a conflict may well also be too “small” for this. Then the area of tension, in which their own role as youth workers enables the task of conflict mediation between the juveniles and other people, can be reduced in some cases by a separate discussion about the conflict with the different parties.

There needs to be a high level of sensitivity and acceptance between mobile youth work and the police for the different roles of both sides regarding contact points or in areas of their overlapping professional activities. Beneficial relationships between the two are characterised by both a familiar distance and also a discreet proximity: it is helpful to know and understand very well how the other party acts in a professional sense, while at the same time distinguishing themselves clearly from each other, as well as conveying the difference in roles to the juveniles. At the same time, personal contact and close exchange (with the ne-

cessary confidentiality) facilitates daily work and supports the interface design.

¹ Andreas Bengesser is the author of the article sections on the security monitor.

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Further literature and links

<http://www.irks.at/forschung/sicherheitsforschung/ja-sicher.html>.