

# PULSE OF THE CITY: SOCIAL SPACE ANALYSIS FOCUSING ON ADOLESCENTS IN URBAN AREAS

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## Who is the contributor?

MOJA is a mobile youth work organization in Graz, Austria, with 6 youth workers conducting streetwork.

## How was it conducted?

Structured social space observations were conducted using a semi-standardized questionnaire, resulting in 105 protocols.

The "Needle Method" involved young individuals marking favorite spots and places to avoid in the city, with adults identifying youth presence areas.

Qualitative interviews with four MOJA youth workers were conducted to gather professional perspectives.

## What's the practice?

The first Social Space Analysis by MOJA in Graz from March to October 2023 focused on youth hotspots, evaluating their offerings, functions, meanings, and potential conflicts. The ongoing process produces annual reports for self-assessment and communication with decision makers.

The approach views public spaces as socially constructed areas where diverse groups compete to shape and utilize the space based on varying interests and power dynamics. Social spaces are more than physical structures; they are defined through social negotiations and meaning associated with them.

## Why is it relevant for (the future of) youth work?

Youth work serves as a voice for youth concerns. The social space analysis provides a tool in order to collect, sample, analyze and share meaningful experiences within the field of youth work. A critical examination of the connection between space and social issues as well as an understanding of the local social space and its challenges is a prerequisite for targeted and effective youth work. This tool helps to structure and plan youth work efficiently within the organizational framework and limitations given.

Sharing the empirical data on a higher level of policy makers aims to facilitate positive systemic change.

