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**CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE TERM “SOCIAL SPACE ORIENTATION” IN ANY WAY? WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY THIS AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO YOUR WORK WITH (DISADVANTAGED) YOUNG PEOPLE?**

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So in my specific environment it is not related to my work, but within the WUK it is. More or less in one to two projects. So what do I understand by that? This is the inclusion of public space and the offerings in public space and the participation of young people in this area. That's how I would understand it.

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**WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TARGET GROUP “DISADVANTAGED/AT-RISK YOUNG PEOPLE” IN YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT?**

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Young people with disadvantages or disabilities, low-qualified young people. It's about labor market integration and education, low-qualified young people and young people registered with the AMS (Note: Austrian Public Employment Service). We have specializations in psychological impairments and autism and young people with learning difficulties, i.e. young people with learning disabilities, young people with low educational qualifications, i.e. who can take part in an educational measure such as a secondary school leaving certificate, a course or a basic education course in order to refresh their academic skills or be able to obtain their final certificate. So these are people with a lack of education, but also people with a migration background/refugee background who have only been in Austria for a short time, and would therefore like to obtain this formal educational qualification. And then we have people or young people who are currently looking for labor market integration and these are young people with every facet of their life biography that you can imagine. These range from socially emotionally disadvantaged young people to those who have a good educational qualification. People who have long phases of unemployment, dropouts, school dropouts, apprenticeship dropouts, a path that is always marked with many dropouts.

**CAN YOU BRIEFLY INTRODUCE THE PARTICIPATION MODELS USED IN YOUR INSTITUTION? FOR EXAMPLE, ARE THE NEEDS/INTERESTS/POTENTIALS OF YOUNG PEOPLE DEFINED BEFORE STARTING OR DURING THE COOPERATION WITH THEM?**

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This is our work. The WUK actually works exclusively needs-oriented. Now that's nothing special, I would say. So maybe it is, but basically the young people are the ones...- so in counseling it's a very classic coaching approach. This means that the person comes and also specifies the topics. This means that the coaching process is about supporting them in finding the path that the young people themselves want to take and that they consider meaningful. That's why it works so well. Because within a very short time you will realize why you are there and why this advice makes sense. Because it's not about us setting the path or exerting pressure in any way, but rather they can decide for themselves, decide voluntarily, and we are there to accompany them on this path.

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**DO YOUNG PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR WORK IN YOUR INSTITUTION? IF SO, IN WHAT FORM IS THEIR CONTRIBUTION FORMALIZED/INPUT INTEGRATED INTO WORK PRACTICE.**

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In the consulting context it is actually the case that some of them are sent. So from the AMS (note: Austrian Public Employment Service), from parents or whoever, and because of this the motivation is not the highest. As we know, for every person, young or old, when you have to do something, the attitude behind it is different than when I say that I want to do it. And in this respect, it is our job, if possible in the first conversation, to formulate our questions and our objectives in such a way that you can determine for yourself what your goals are. Where you want to go, what your initial situation is and where you think you need our support. And that is of course a completely different message than me saying, I am a labor market policy advice center and we are now looking for a job. No, the approach is that they are asked to think about what they need from us. And if they say I don't need anything, then you can still talk about it and question it. And maybe something emerges where they say: "Well, actually it's true, I would actually like some help when practicing job interviews. I'm actually not that good at that." Then they know why they should come back. And that is the most important thing to us when it comes to consulting. Namely, it's not that we know why they should come back, but that they have to know why they come back. And at the beginning of every consultation you are asked: What brings you here today or what would you like to do today? Not: I have been thinking about and today we'll do this and that. But they are treated like adults, logically. This is often a challenge for young people. Because they are not used to this in school. Our school system is like this: at the front, the teacher says what is being done today and sets the programme and gives tasks and homework and so on. They themselves (note: the young people) are the ones who then do it or not. It's a big change in adolescence that someone suddenly comes and says: We don't have to do anything here. We do what you need and what you need you have to tell me. And how long you need it. And the young people then more or less decide the end themselves. So this is a

big challenge for many young people because when you often ask them at the beginning of the consultation: What do you want to do today? What is important to you, what's up? A lot of people say: I have no idea. And then you just start searching. But the person still sits there. Yes, that's interesting too. And that is an important learning process, from child to adult. The learning process of taking things into your own hands and then doing it with your own motivation and not with external motivation because my mom says that's why I should go or because the AMS consultant says that I should go, that's why I'm here today, because I'm well-behaved. But no, I'm here today because it's important to me! In coaching and in the education sector, it's about training, it's about practicing and so on. Of course, a programme is given, but it is also designed in such a way that it is not a frontal story over long periods, but that it is learning together.

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**DO YOU/YOUR INSTITUTION CONTRIBUTE TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING KEY TOPICS (FROM THE EU YOUTH STRATEGY): INCLUSION, SUSTAINABILITY OR DIGITALIZATION? IF SO, CAN YOU BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW AND WHETHER THIS APPROACH HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOUR WORK PRACTICE? PLEASE GIVE US AN EXAMPLE IF POSSIBLE.**

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Well, of course this is also a project assignment. These are all funded projects and sustainable placement on the labor market is of course a criterion, no question. Always has. Since the projects have been in existence, our goal has been to provide sustainable mediation and not to place them somewhere only to have them (note: the young people) conveyed. So, what does sustainable mediation mean? That means a workplace or apprenticeship or training place where the young person likes to be. Where there are also skills and strengths and it is checked very, very carefully beforehand whether the level is appropriate. So that it doesn't come to a drop-out again, so that it doesn't become too much of a challenge. Well, that is of course something very important, sustainability, sustainability in communication. And also sustainability in consulting. So every effort is being made to ensure that young people are not here to serve their time, but rather that young people are happy to take advantage of the advice on their own initiative and then do not abandon it. But in the best case, if that is also the long-term goal of these young people, the common path is integration and thus inclusion in the labour market and in society. That is also a form of sustainability. If they were to drop out because they did not like the offer or the counselling, then this inclusion or integration in the labour market would probably not be possible or would be delayed again.

In one course program (note: from WUK), sustainability is also lived in the sense of ecology. We have a project in the area of organic plants.

When the young people at the "Future Farm" (note: see [www.wuk.at/wuk-am-zukunftshof/](http://www.wuk.at/wuk-am-zukunftshof/)) work there, for example, and repair bikes or do gardening work or these things. Yes, then of course the topic is very present and is also being discussed.

In classic consulting it can now be incorporated into the topic of “green jobs” or mobility. We definitely have ecological sustainability as a topic. Yes, but that is not the primary focus here (note: in consulting). The primary focus is on job profiles, on strengths and skills, on career orientation, interests, leisure activities and then being able to take professionally the most optimal or most suitable path.

Digitalization, because you also mentioned that: This is of course a very, very important point in all projects. Yes, Corona has of course made it very important that young people learn something or learn even more about digitalization, about the use of social media and the pitfalls of social media. Zoom and these things - how can I hold meetings? We are now also doing digital workshops or we are also doing consultations online. A lot has changed there. And that they (note: the young people) really learn this, because it is also relevant in everyday working life. So I don't think there is any company anymore that doesn't meet in a virtual space for a meeting or something like that.

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#### ARE THERE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND YOUR PRACTICAL WORK?

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Again and again, yes.

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#### IF SO, IS PRACTICE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE AND VICE VERSA?

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So in these projects at least, where this is done in an accompanying manner. We have a number of people (note: employees) who work at the university. So this interaction between science and WUK exists on different levels, i.e. as employees or that we are constantly supported scientifically.

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#### WHAT DO YOU THINK IS NEEDED FROM LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLICY TO IMPROVE YOUTH WORK AND ESPECIALLY WORK WITH DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE?

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Personally, I would like to see even more projects where there is closer cooperation with business. There is already very close cooperation with business. But you're always in one of these projects on the second job market. So I think we still have room for improvement with direct support and integration support directly at companies if they hire people with disabilities. Or let them do an internship there. So there are interesting stories in other countries. We don't have that at all in Austria. In the labour market context, we are more focused on placing the young people or adults in companies through funded projects.

A lot has changed, the job market has changed massively due to Corona. I would say the needs in the economy have now changed in that the exclusion of people who do not meet the requirements of the labour market has improved because the economy needs them now, yes. As an example: Before Corona, it was almost impossible to accommodate someone with a commercial school diploma, when there were Cs (note: grade on the school report) or something like that, or even with good

school certificates, in business. One thinks to oneself, that's not just the compulsory school leaving certificate. But it was actually the case that it was not possible to accommodate the people (note: young people with a business school diploma) in the office area. The economy has found other people who had better qualifications than just a business school diploma and that, for example, is now much easier because the economy really needs people and a business school degree is now sufficient to hire that person. Previously, the economy did not integrate this group, who even had a formal educational qualification from a three-year technical school, into the labour market. Yes, and now it works. So for me it's always been that I think to myself: WHAT do you want from the economy! Even before Corona, the economy always said, "We need apprentices. We need apprentices. We need staff," but then they didn't take on these people who were there in Austria because their skills were too low and they complained terribly about it: "They are not able to count, they can't write and so on. And even if we need apprentices, we won't take them." This means that the economy has acted in a very exclusionary way towards people who perhaps weren't great at school or who had some other handicaps. Something has changed a bit due to Corona and the market situation now.

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**COULD YOU PRESENT THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF YOUR INSTITUTION (E.G. GUIDELINES AND ACTION PLANS CURRENTLY IN USE) - INCLUDING THE DEFINITION OF THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTION, THE LOCATION OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ACTORS (YOUTH WORK AND OTHER ACTORS) IN THE SOCIAL SPACE?**

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There is a mission statement, of course. You can actually look at it on the homepage (note: [www.wuk.at/wuk-bildung-und-beratung/](http://www.wuk.at/wuk-bildung-und-beratung/) under "Our mission statement").

But of course, it is accessibility, equal opportunities, integration, inclusion, education, all of these things. The WUK is much bigger. The WUK has the cultural sector and the education and advice sector. And I'm now only talking about the area of education and advice (note: when answering the previous questions). And then there is the large area of autonomy. Where the entire rooms are used by artists and associations that are based at the WUK. This is the area of autonomy. But sustainability, including sustainability in the ecological sense, is an important topic throughout WUK. It has now been refurbished in a very sustainable manner. I don't know if you noticed that. This has been going on for over a year now, when the WUK is being refurbished and there is now photovoltaics on the roof. And this aspect of sustainable renovation was very, very important. And ecological renovation. There is of course an equal opportunities team at the WUK, where we deal with this topic. Yes, employee satisfaction is important to us. Customer satisfaction is very important to us. We are ISO certified, which means that there are reviews and audits where our structure and our work and our actions are checked

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THIS WONDERFUL INTERVIEW. I WAS VERY HAPPY THAT YOU TOOK THE TIME.**

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