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Juveniles in rural areas live in the tension between "two worlds": on the one hand in a modern, urban world that is conveyed via education, training, mass media and consumption, on the other hand in a still traditionally influenced rural world with its specific communication structures. However, just as there is no such a thing as "the" rural area, so there is no such thing as "the" rural youth. Juveniles in rural regions develop differing orientations - depending on age, location and socio-cultural environment.

Above all those juveniles that are to develop a greater autonomy are often confronted with an environment that affords little opportunity for an independent processes of development. Thus in village environments there are rarely youth-specific facilities for leisure time encounters. Social supervision and an adaptation to the norm are - then as now - part of everyday village life.

Especially at a time of technological and cultural upheaval, juveniles in rural regions need stimulating environments to be able to process the direct juxtaposition of traditional, urban and medial influences. Environmentally orientated audio and visual media work is a commensurate possibility.

In 1985 a media project with juveniles and young adults, based on the media-educational praxis in the extra-curricular juvenile education, was started in the Odenwald area. The Odenwald is approx. 70 km south of Frankfurt/Main and is thus not peripherally located but in relatively close proximity to the conurbations Frankfurt/Offenbach and Mannheim/Heidelberg. It is an area with a population of about 87.000 and has a relatively stable and mixed economic structure. In this region live about 14.000 juveniles and young adults between the ages of 15 and 25.

The concept fused the two aspects, viz. "situation of juveniles in rural areas" and "support of active media work" into a praxis and research project. The idea was to find out how, by means of active media work, juveniles and young adults coming from a rural area, could be assisted in developing their own ideas of everyday life in the village and the region.

The aim of the project was:

*1) To motivate juveniles and young adults to study their experiences of "life in two worlds" - e.g. leisure time possibilities in the village and in the region, training and work situation, media usage.*

2) *Familiarity with the use of the media, especially audio and visual media as genuine means of expression and characterisation, e.g. shooting own video films, sound-slide shows, contributions to the regional broadcasting programme.*

3) *To encourage the juveniles and groups involved to show their own productions to the traditional local public and to set about establishing a new public in order to depict their own requirements and to break down communication barriers.*

4) *Through the establishing and support of communal endeavours (e.g. regional youth film festivals, regional video magazines, video busses) to encourage contact and communication among juveniles and groups in the whole region as an association of various initiatives.*

5) *To establish in this context a media-practical infrastructure on a wider local level (media studio, qualification seminars, mutual help and advice, specialist meetings) that can be used by interested groups and persons in the sphere of education, culture and social work as well as independent initiatives in the realisation of specific intentions.*

The project was designed, primarily, for the following groups:

- *juveniles and young adults from various locations and socio-cultural environments in the Odenwald area (age group 15 to 25 years), especially juveniles organised in associations, clubs and sponsored initiatives of juvenile work.*

- *juveniles and young adults threatened or actually affected by juvenile unemployment.*

- *derivative groups of juvenile education and juvenile social work in the area.*

In accordance with the intentions and the research character of the project, the media educational aspect was not aiming primarily to fulfill journalistic and aesthetic-artistic criteria. Environmentally relevant media work concentrated rather on the aspect of process orientation than on product orientation. This necessitated an open-minded attitude concerning the totality of environmental experiences, various media forms of depiction and a diverse audience. The acquisition of media competence was to start with the subjective expression forms of juveniles and, on this basis, was designed to convey media-aesthetic knowledge.

During the project period approximately 30 video films, sound/slide and audio shows were produced. We succeeded in contacting and integrating various juvenile groups. For most juveniles and groups this was the first experience with video and sound/slide equipment.

## Media Work as Opportunity to Cope with Village-Life

A local youth initiative, dissatisfied with the leisure-time possibilities available in a village used, for example, the resources of the project as a medium for self-analysis and self depiction. The leisure time possibilities in the village were considered feeble by the 14 to 17-year-olds. Above all, they lacked room to meet independently from adults. The "own production" project offered them the possibility to symbolically express their frustrations. This experience process did not end in despair and escape from the village, but rather in the attempt to intervene in the local conditions on the basis of an enhanced self-esteem.

The collage-like form affords the possibility to proceed spontaneously, to allow the imagination full scope. The production of the film was not based on a pre-set plan, but as an open-end process. Starting from a thematic motive fragments from the everyday life were collected and converted into 'playlets'; pre-recorded film and sound material was also selected. Sequences from other films were integrated as a contrast or enhancement. Although the film was very much an amateur production with breaks in the depiction and dramatic sequences as well as a liberal dosage of clichés, it nevertheless gave an accurate impression of life in the village and the corresponding emotions and contradictions. The interaction with the rural world was both provocative and dispassionate. In this phase the film was an distancing medium, designed to enable a processing of frustrations and to distance oneself from unwanted aspects.

## Media Work as Associative-Illustrative Processing of Experiences

A lot of productions demonstrate the juvenile self-evidence to assemble pictures from diverse contexts to form a personal statement, it shows their use of pictures as "raw material" for their statements. In numerous productions we were able to experience how an associative-illustrative process and collage-like shaping possibilities triggers the imagination of juveniles. This was especially important for those juveniles who experienced problems with "film script outlines" and cognitive-conceptual exposés of the whole film. In an associative process, the juveniles were able to realize new ideas in every production phase, try out alternatives and discover a form concept for pictures and sounds through the assistance of media-technical and media-aesthetic advice from staff members.

During such a media workshop, older juveniles from a motorcycle gang and three pupils completed a clip-and-collage production: "I watch TV!"

Starting from the framework topic of the workshop ("Between Disco, Dallas and the village pub") the group parodied the media consumption of others. They chose the (title) song by Nina Hagen (as a structuring element, as it were), listened to it several times, collected visual ideas, then worked out the various camera alignments. Subsequently the juveniles ambled around the village with the camera, spontaneously recording scenes from the group and seminar life. Picture material was collected intuitively. "We recorded many things, because we thought: this is our everyday life, how we sit here, celebrate, dance, play and drink - that's how it is, after all ... and then there's the music and everything ..."

In this manner a lot of ideas and recordings came about that would never have been achieved in a "script-sketch-outline". The clip-and-collage depiction form left sufficient opportunity for associations and symbolic allusions.

### Media Work as Encouragement of Regional Youth Culture.

Mainly older juveniles contributed to the regional media workshops and regional communal activities like the "Odenwälder Jugendfilmtage", the "Odenwälder video magazine" and multi-media productions. They were the ones who tried to get away from the village environment and were on the look-out for "scene" involvement in the regions. They were interested in activities and events to be able to present their own productions to a juvenile public. They wanted to juxtapose cultural counter-weights to the local "majority culture" and also wanted to make use of controversial local political subject matter. The regional media workshops and the annual "Odenwälder youth film festival" developed into communal production and communication centres. It was important to show the final productions at those locations where juveniles tended to gather: in regional meeting places like youth cafés, pubs or at local cultural events.

### Infrastructure Perspectives of Rural Media Work

A single institution or association is generally not able to afford the necessary infra-structural preconditions for media work that transcends occasional and single events.

A sensible mode of procedure, in our experience, is:

*- a cooperation of independent and national mentors of youth work, for example in a regional "specialized circle media work": exchange of experience, qualification seminars, participation of media experts from non-educational professions (residing in the region), further education, communal praxis*

*activities;*

*- the establishment of a regional media studio as a permanent institution, with an equipment pool (with corresponding usage and maintenance possibilities) for introduction and further education purposes, for additional productions, to cater for juveniles who are involved in regional media initiatives;*

*- the development of mobile media offers e.g. in form of a media van that contains basic facilities in the photo, video, sound and computer sphere and which caters, above all, for peripheral communities and is available to interested juveniles in local media activities;*

*- the establishment of annual festivals as a communal activity of diverse groups and persons as a regional "stage" for the presentation of own productions and as a forum for the exchange of experience.*

Above all a flexible combination of local and regional, mobile and stationary possibilities is important - and not a concentration of means for a central facility, with correspondingly expensive equipment and operating costs. The set-up of infrastructures cannot be equated with the creation of organisatory, technical and facility structures. It is rather a matter of understanding media work so that juveniles have sufficient space to create their own cultural production with qualified advice afforded by staff members.

### Bibliography

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<sup>2</sup> Horst Niesyto: Erfahrungsproduktion mit Medien. Selbstbilder - Darstellungsformen - Gruppenprozesse. Juventa-Verlag, Weinheim und München 1991. (272 S.)