Inclusive Spaces

“The integration of all students, regardless of their origin or their needs” is one of the main focus points in the conception of the “Neue Mittelschule” (new secondary school) in Austria (BMUKK 2012). However, recent research has shown, that social integration/inclusion remains one of the main challenges in Austrian schools, as students report from stigmatization and bullying. “Inclusive Spaces” tries to tackle this problem. Building on the ‘insider perspectives’ of students, we try to generate knowledge that contributes to foster social cohesion and ‘successful inclusion’ in schools. Social space theory provides the framework for our research.

The first phase of “Inclusive Spaces” consists of participatory research projects at three new middle schools in Vienna, conducted with students of so called ‘integration classes’ (Integrationsklassen). At each school, an open discussion of different aspects of inclusion marks the starting point of the project. At the next stage, students are encouraged to explore the social spaces of their schools, using a creative set of qualitative methods. Results will be presented in science clips, vignettes and quizzes. In addition to the perspective of students, teachers are interviewed on their perceptions of social inclusion and asked to draw their own social maps of their school environments.

The second phase is dedicated to an in depth analysis of the results and materials produced in the first phase. Teams -including researchers, professors of teacher colleges and teachers- transform the gathered insights into learning materials to be inducted into teacher education.

Project’s website: www.inclusivespaces.org