

Bernd Werse, Gerrit Kamphausen, Dirk Egger

Gentrification and injecting drug users – an exploration of the situation in the Frankfurt ‘open drug scene’

27th ESSD conference, Frankfurt, 23th of September, 2016



Characteristics of the Frankfurt „open drug scene“

- „traditionally“ (since 1970s), there is a large group of hard drugs users in town, e.g. due to Frankfurt’s location and function as a big transport hub
- late 1980s/early 1990s: big (literally) open scene, beneath the bank skyscrapers, rise of the HIV/AIDS problem
- This led to an early implementation of the „Frankfurt Way“: low-threshold drug services/harm reduction, combined with repression, aiming at a „clean-up“ of the open scene
- The hard drugs users scene is still relatively big and visible → still mostly concentrated in the „Bahnhofsviertel“
- Frankfurt and Hamburg are the only German cities with significant prevalence of crack cocaine



Frankfurt Bahnhofsviertel – development since the 1990s (subjective view)

- Pioneers of ‚alternative‘ nightlife started to take over some red light locations in the early 1990s
- Young people started moving into the quarter
- At the same time, the Bahnhofsviertel high street „Kaiserstraße“ started to gentrify with bars, restaurants etc.
- However, the redlight industry resisted to gentrification efforts
- Since the first half of the 2000s (before the FIFA World Cup 2006), authorities tried to divert the scene to other quarters – which didn't really work



MoSyD – Monitoring System Drug Trends

- implemented in 2002, now part of the Frankfurt Way
- first local drug monitoring system in Germany
- funded by the municipal drug policy coordination office of Frankfurt

Some of its aims:

- To provide reliable and timely data on emerging trends in licit and illicit drug use in the city of Frankfurt
- To yield evidence-based information for policy makers and service providers
- To promote this information in public (yearly press conference)

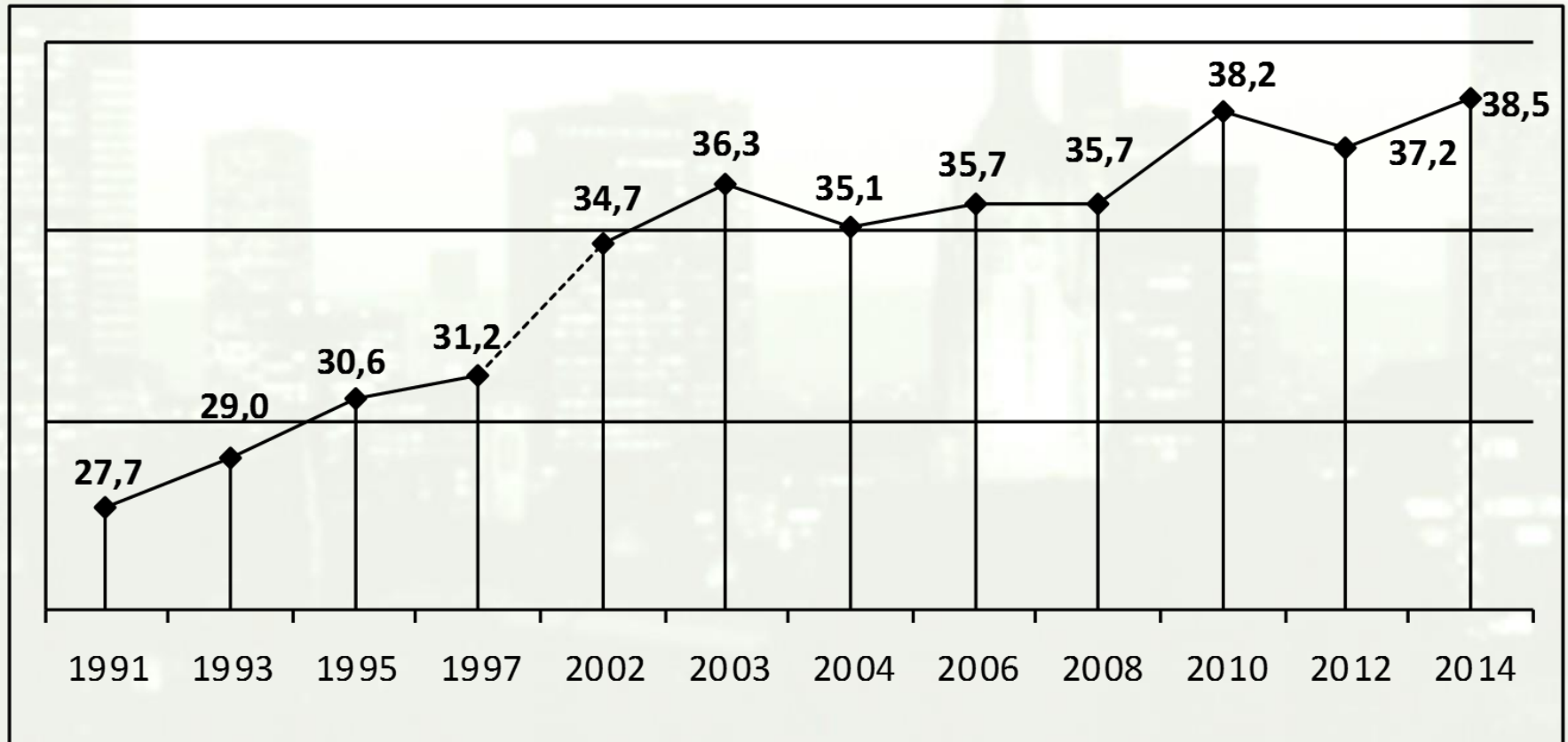


MoSyD - Survey Elements – Overview

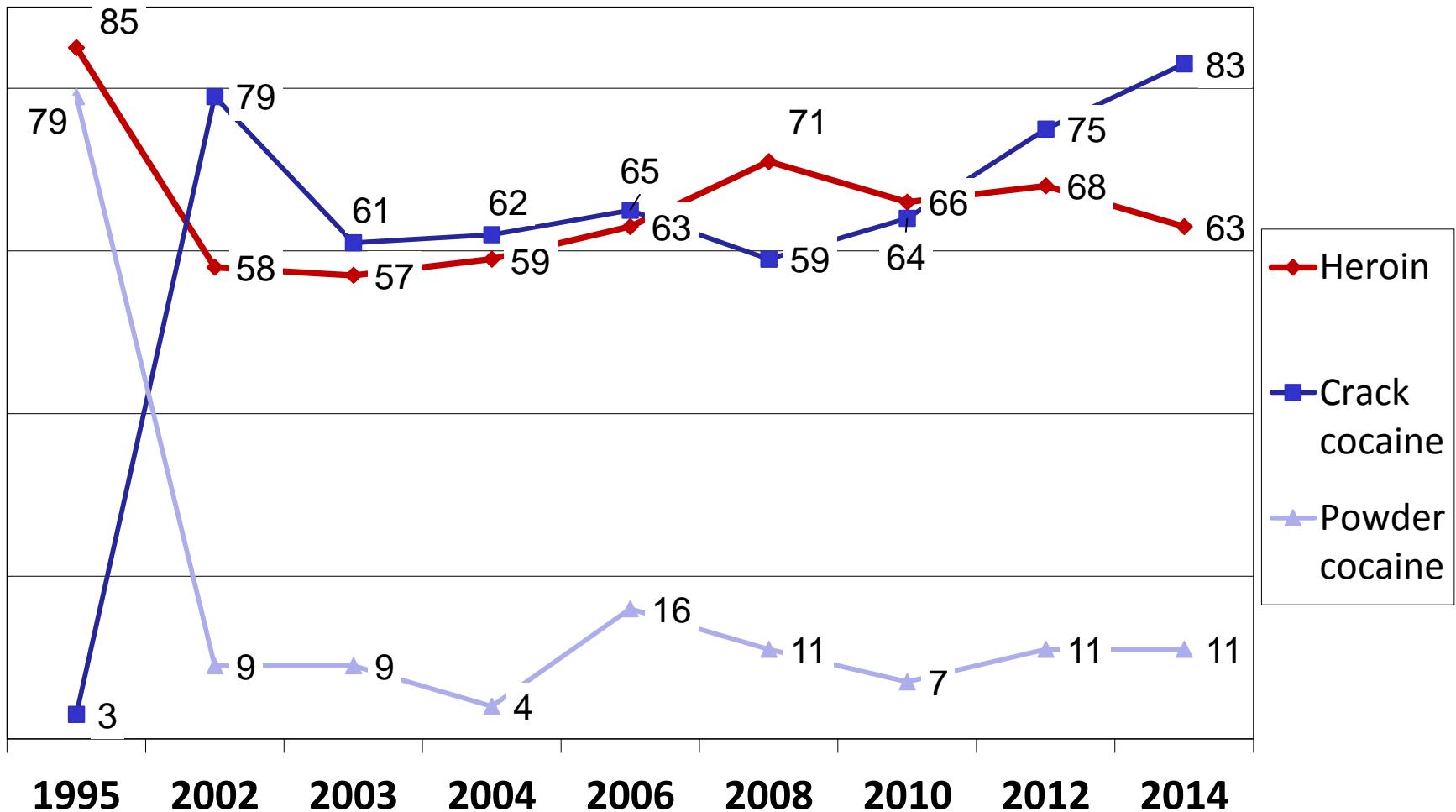
- Experts' panel (n=11)
focus group interviews (drug services, youth welfare service, law enforcement, prevention etc.) / twice a year
- school survey (n=1.500)
standardised questionnaire / once a year
- trend scout panel (n=20)
semi structured qualitative interviews / once a year
- open drug scene survey (n=150)
questionnaire-based face-to-face interviews (on the street or in drug services) / once every two years
→ last (published) results from 2014



Average age of the Frankfurt „open drug scene“, 1991 - 2014



MoSyD open drug scene survey: Use of heroin, crack cocaine and powder cocaine in the last 24 hours (%)



MoSyD open drug scene survey: other drugs with significant prevalence

- Alcohol
- Cannabis
- Benzodiazepines and pregabalin (Lyrica®)
- Non-prescribed methadone and buprenorphine



MoSyD open drug scene survey: some other results

- 82% have been imprisoned at least once, mostly because because they failed to pay a fine, e.g. for fare evasion, theft, drug possession or (small-scale) drug dealing
- On average, the respondents stayed four times in prison, about four years in total
- 95% use drug services at least on a weekly basis (mostly harm reduction services, but also counselling)



Development of the Bahnhofsviertel in recent years (general observations, media and MoSyD experts' panel)

- Second wave of gentrification:
 - More ‚trendy‘ bars, restaurants, hotels and hostels
 - Increase in real estate prices, wealthy people buying flats in the area
 - Resulting in more people complaining about nuisance by ‚junkies‘ (new residents, tradesmen from the quarter)
- 2012: Some media coverage on „unacceptable“ conditions, open letter of residents (disagreed by social workers and law enforcement)
- Public space where drug users can stay becomes smaller, due to gentrification

Back to the MoSyD open drug scene survey: results on repression

- 72% have been subject to identity checks by law enforcement in the prior month
- On average, they experienced 10.4 checks per month
- Recent increase in general prevalence of checks (2010: 56%) and frequency (2010: 7.0)
- Non-German users experience more checks (\bar{x} 14.1) than Germans (8.3); trend: rising (only among non-Germans)
- The proportion of those who have been issued a restraining order („Platzverweis“) has not changed significantly



Discussion

- The Frankfurt open drug scene is an ageing, highly controlled group (identity checks, imprisonment, daily contact to social workers, health professionals etc)
- Patterns of use and also substances may change, due to availability, quality, price etc.; however, the main substances stay the same (exception: cocaine → crack cocaine)
- Criminalisation is – in fact – a big problem for these users, not only regarding prison for petty offences, but also with regard to LE checks in public space
- Frequency of checks in public has risen during the gentrification process, particularly among foreigners – „second code“? Why now?
- Since repression may increase stress among users, and available public space becomes smaller, how will the situation develop in the future?



Thank you very much for your attention!

www.cdr-uni-frankfurt.de

werse@em.uni-frankfurt.de

