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The Relational Constitution of Institutional Spaces. Balancing Act between Openness and Pedagogical Space Shaping in Open Child and Youth Work

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Introduction

Drawing on the concept of *institutional space*, this article critically examines the paradox of institution-based but "open" social work (Diebäcker & Reutlinger, 2018), with a focus on the complexities of socio-spatial relationships. It starts from the point of the often-overlooked socio-spatial approach to social work, which understands "social spatiality as a professional-conceptual characteristic" and underscores how "spatiality has a constitutive dimension in every process of upbringing, education and care" (ibid.). According to this positioning, appropriate settings for educational, upbringing and care processes only succeed when they are designed according to the principles of openness and as spaces for social pedagogy (cf. Bernfeld, 1969; Winkler, 1988; Dirks & Kessl, 2012, Hüllemann & Reutlinger, 2014; Reutlinger et al., 2021). This dynamic relationship thus raises questions about whether socio-pedagogical openness can be guaranteed through institutional structures or if such openness can only be achieved through the adoption of deinstitutionalised processes for child and youth work.

In this paper, I explore how the socio-educational field of Youth Work (cf. Batsleer/Davies, 2010; Jeffs/Smith, 2010; Williamson/Basarab, 2019), especially child and youth work (Offene Kinder- und Jugendarbeit) was established and developed in the Federal Republic of Germany and in German-speaking Switzerland over the course of the 20th century (Deinet, 2008; Deinet et al., 2021; Gerodetti et al., 2021). Open child and youth work aims at establishing "open access" (Davies/Merton, 2009, p. 8) to youth work facilities that provides an "open door" (Davies, 2010, p. 12) or "inclusive 'openness'" (Davies/Merton, 2009, p. 8), which is "traditionally so central to youth work" (Davies, 2010, p. 14). In many countries, however, austerity-oriented policies are threatening youth work (Davies, 2013): "In the contemporary political and socio-economic context the future of open access youth work remains uncertain" (Manson, 2015, p. 55).

In the German-speaking context, *openness (Offenheit)* is embedded in a specific pedagogical approach. Users of such spaces, on the contrary, encounter pre-structured social institutions that have defined objectives and frameworks, including the supplies needed to serve a specific social order that is nonetheless open and permeable in different ways (Johnsen et. al., 2005). This interrelation between space, professional staff, and users results in a complex socio-spatial dynamic that needs to be understood in the context of an overall institutional structure that shapes how youth workers and the people they serve act, not the least in spatial terms (cf. McCorkel, 1998; Parr, 2000: Quirk et.al., 2006). This dynamic relationship thus raises questions about whether socio-pedagogical openness can be guaranteed through institutional structures or if such openness can only be achieved through the adoption of deinstitutionalised processes for child and youth work.

It is this paradoxical openness that this paper examines: What exactly does this openness mean? Can an institutionalized socio-educational field be open? Or is child and youth work characterized precisely by the fact that it is not – and when it is, it is only *somewhat* – institutionalized? What happens when the first generation of young people who call the youth center or youth home theirs moves on? Do the walls, the place's symbolic meaning, and the people who work there continue to have an impact on the community? Are such youth spaces institutionalized for the next generation of youth? Or can youth workers successfully de-institutionalize the space and allow the space for young people to openly define it themselves?

I explore these questions by drawing on empirical research from a foundational research project, "Practices of designing pedagogical spaces: An ethnographic study of the socio-pedagogical field of open youth work" (Reutlinger et al., 2021). It reconstructed youth workers' practices of pedagogical place-making at different Swiss youth centers using a spatial approach to researching social work in practice. The socio-spatial approach recognizes place as well as related placemaking as a basic determinant of socio-educational practices (see Dirks & Kessl, 2012; Hüllemann & Reutlinger, 2014). Thus, pedagogical placemaking is accorded an important role on both theoretical and conceptual levels (see Winkler, 1988, p. 263).

The article begins with a reconstruction of how youth adopted the process of openness and successfully developed a youth center as an institute for social work. It then describes how a challenging lull followed this initial success as other groups of young people began to see the space as being closed for only particular groups. Third, the article reflects on youth workers' processes of openness and exclusion and how they use such practices to successfully navigate the everyday "jungle" of their work. The article concludes with an overview of the institutionalization of institutes of social work like youth centers as they are spatially shaped but also professionally constructed.

Practices of designing pedagogical spaces: Remarks on the methodological approach
The foundational research project, "Practices of designing pedagogical spaces: An ethnographic study of the socio-pedagogical field of open youth work," funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), was conducted from 2014 to 2017 at the Department of Social Work at FHS St. Gallen under the direction of the author. It reconstructed youth workers' practices of pedagogical placemaking at different Swiss Youth Centers. This research allowed for an analytical differentiation of different practices and for an understanding of how such practices are spatially shaped. To capture the pedagogical dynamics of such placemaking, the study used an ethnographic approach (e.g., Hammersley/Atkinson, 1997; Spradley, 1980; Amann/Hirschauer, 1997) to empirically reconstruct practices and relate them to the explicit, speech acts. Ethnographies allow for an empirical analysis of how individuals construct cultural realities in their everyday life through participant observation, fieldwork, and surveys (Cloos et al. 2007). Participant observation can be particularly helpful in observing practices that are only partially articulated or—in the sense of "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 2002 [1958])—are often unspoken. As researchers are directly on site, they participate in what is happening and can then bring what is happening to words by writing thick descriptions of practices that can then be analyzed (Hirschauer/Amann, 1997). To augment the participant observations, ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 2011) were conducted with youth workers to, on the one hand, uncover explicit knowledge, such as how they thematized the reasons behind their actions and how they reflect on conceptual considerations and enabling and inhibiting pedagogical frameworks related to place and, on the other hand, to stimulate the articulation of implicit knowledge prompted by

reflective questions. Participant observations were documented in field notes as per observation protocols created following the observation period (Emerson et al., 2011). Field notes were then analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser/Strauss, 1967; Strauss/Corbin, 1996), which aims at theory building by reconstructing individual cases first and then completing cross-case analyses. The aim was to elaborate forms of pedagogical placemaking and to identify different forms that are contextualized in prior research to further sharpen and refine the findings. Before discussing the typologies uncovered in the analysis which sheds light on the processes and challenges of (de)institutionalization, the following section elaborates the specific meaning of openness in child and youth work in the German-speaking context.

The Openness of Social Education

In trying to understand how open child and youth work developed as a field of social work, it is first necessary to look at the history of open child and youth work in Germany and parts of German-speaking Switzerland, especially after 1945 (see Hafeneger, 2021). In these contexts, open child and youth work is described as an "unknown relatively 'autonomous' institution" (Hafeneger, 2021, p. 101). In the 1960s, the emergence of youth clubs as new organizational forms brought terminology into the vernacular that is still widely recognized today: openness, co-determination, and a youth-centered focus on young people's cultural interests and needs (see, for example, Gerodetti et al., 2021; Sturzenhecker & Richter, 2012).

To explore the relationship between "openness" and the institutional setting in which open child and youth work is integrated or which it (co-)constitutes, Sturzenhecker and Richter's observations are helpful:

> "The central structural feature of youth work is the voluntary nature of participation. […] The institution of youth work is furthermore characterised by the almost complete absence of a formal means of power. The youth club has neither the internal possibility of exerting coercive influence on its voluntary participants nor can it influence other external institutions. The only institutional means of power available to open child and youth work is client exclusion." (Sturzenhecker & Richter, 2012, p. 696)

Here, the connection between the structural principle of openness and the voluntary nature of open child and youth work is particularly interesting. Institutionally, openness remains a central condition of open child and youth work until today as it is the indispensable foundation of the field's conceptual design. The empirical results of the present study, however, indicate that how youth workers shape the spaces of youth work in the context of openness and voluntariness can also result in processes of specialization and exclusion as the following case study underscores.

1   The youth center's becoming – a case study

This case study focuses on a youth center that is organized by a politically and denominationally independent non-profit that acts on behalf of a large Swiss city. The youth center is located close to the city center and railway station. It offers young people a place where they can meet in indoor and outdoor spaces. When approaching the youth center from the outside, however, the first thing that catches the eye is the urban-looking skatepark with numerous different skateboard obstacles and ramps, surrounded by graffitied walls. The center's services are offered in a container building, which includes pool and foosball tables, a canteen, places to sit, a music system and a small stage. The skatepark almost completely surrounds the container; to access the space, a person needs to walk to the middle of the

skatepark. Four youth workers, who are employed in 60-80 per cent positions, are present while the center is open. They are not, however, responsible for all the areas and have organized a division of labor. In contrast to the other services, the skatepark is accessible 24/7.

1.1 The youth center's early days: Construction, Growth and Boom

The youth center was built in the 1990s on an industrial site that the city had made available to the association. The area was surrounded by walls and was accessible through a tunnel made of mesh wire, which one youth worker describes as looking like the entrance to a high-security prison. The way to the square was so labyrinthine that only insiders knew how to get there. In the early years, services and space were provided in a barrack, which was later replaced by the more modern container building I mentioned before.

Next to the barrack, which was also used by young people who did not belong to the skater culture, was a simple wooden ramp for skateboarding. Gradually, more skatepark obstacles and ramps were added, built largely by the young people themselves. During this construction phase, one of the youth workers, who was still working there at the time of our research, was hired. He had previous training as a craftsman and thus had exactly the skills that were needed to build more secure skate obstacles and ramps with the young people, increasingly out of metal rather than wood.

In these early days, according to the youth workers' own narratives, the youth workers were neither in charge of the activities nor were the young people completely on their own. Instead, a process of co-creation emerged. For the predominantly male youths, skating was not a sport or a hobby, but a youth culture that shaped their entire lives: their leisure time, their interests and goals, their friendships, the places they went to, and how they acquired the knowledge and skills needed, for example, to build skatepark obstacles or produce skate films.

According to their recollections, the youth workers tried to create supportive and enabling structures so that the young people could live their youth culture. This took place at a time when skate culture had a rather 'dirty image'. This contrasts the image that has emerged today of a mainstream sport, a hip, urban lifestyle, a part of consumer culture. In the early days of the open youth work with skaters, however, it was hard to find places where they could skate and where their presence was tolerated. Skateboarding was normally done in public spaces, which did not meet with a very positive response and skaters were often chased away. Thus, young people need to construct their own skate places so they could train. Skateboarding in public spaces remained a central part of skate culture despite—or perhaps because of—its rebellious character.

The skaters' clearly recognizable and strong interest in skateboarding formed the central starting point for the youth workers' open work. According to the youth workers, the skaters were not interested in offers FOR them—on the contrary: any hint of organization and a too pedagogical appearance would have driven them away. Nevertheless, the youth workers provided them with a general framework, for example, in terms of safety or the quality of the craftsmanship of their builds.

In the youth center's early days, the young people and the youth workers bonded as they built the obstacles. Throughout the construction process, both groups became closer as, in the end, they had made something that everyone could identify with in their own way. As they built the obstacles, the young people began to appropriate the space and increasingly identified

with it. At the same time, the youth workers also began to carve the space out as a place for their youth work and the young people became "their" young people. The youth workers' narratives reflect a great sympathy for "their" skaters. They give the impression that the young people, their youth culture, the place and the youth workers as well as their pedagogy grew together and upon each other—a skater-oriented pedagogy emerged as a form of youth work. Initially, this was characterized by how the youth workers clearly positioned themselves on the side of the skaters and their project ideas, and how they provided them with the support they needed to smoothly implement their ideas. Over time, however, this skater pedagogy transformed, and the youth workers increasingly took the sceptics' side, so that the young people could learn to negotiate and stand up for their project ideas.

The construction and growing together phase comprised—in retrospect—a relatively short period during which the center underwent what the youth workers termed a 'boom'. During the boom, there was—as one youth worker put it—a particularly 'vibrant' atmosphere and the youth workers were more successful than they had been at other times in setting up projects and organizing events together with the young people. Externally, the youth center now enjoys a positive image, and its attractiveness radiates beyond the city limits.

1.2 The youth center establishes itself: Skatepark boom, youth center lull

However, on closer inspection, the youth center's boom was primarily experienced at the skatepark. It coincided with an increasing lull in the center's open offers: at the time of the observations, very few young people were using the open activities area. Hardly any new young people found their way to the youth center on their own. Therefore, the youth workers were no longer—as they described in their recollection of the center's history—able to develop ideas and initiatives with the young people and establish participatory projects with them. There are still many skaters at the skatepark, but they are not or are hardly interested in the open offers. Moreover, many of the skaters are no longer the primary target group of the youth work, as many of them have already "grown up" and started their studies or are employed and are therefore actually too old for youth work.

At the time of the observation, the youth center was also experiencing difficulties with recruiting new staff. The youth workers realized that they can no longer continue as they had before. That young people are not coming to the center triggered a pedagogical crisis for the youth workers, which, at the time of the observation, was mainly discussed amongst the youth workers. The youth center as a whole, on the other hand, is not (yet) facing a crisis of legitimacy or finances in terms of their funding or their public image because the skatepark is still very popular and the number of visitors is still rather high. The open youth work currently benefits from the positive image of the place and the skaters, that is, it is primarily built upon the center's early days within the framework of open work together with the skaters.

Because of the lull in open work, the youth workers face a relatively unknown and very challenging situation: young people no longer come to the meeting place on their own accord because they are looking for enabling structures to realize their ideas but stay away or use other places and structures that are not accessible to open youth work. The youth workers are therefore increasingly left to wonder why there is hardly any demand for their services and how the youth center should continue in the medium term.

2 From openness to exclusivity – a success story?

Up to the boom phase, the history of the youth center can initially be read as a success story in several respects: Within the framework of their open work, the youth workers had succeeded in creating and running a collaborative space with young people, and it was a place that young people were able to appropriate and which they helped to shape. Throughout this process, the place was not only constructed – from a purely physical point of view – but was also given meaning. Rules and routines, etc., were established; the conditions of being part of the youth center were not only known to insiders but were also communicated to outsiders through the symbolism of the space. In the skater scene in particular, the youth center is known beyond the city limits in the surrounding area. It enjoys an excellent image and is thus actively used.

The history of the youth center can also, however, be read as a process of institutionalization. It started from the openness of the youth workers towards young people of a certain youth culture. However, the strong orientation towards the principles of voluntary work with young people, which was consistently open both in terms of addressees and results, fostered the emergence of a specialized institution, a kind of club with an exclusive character. Closely connected to institutionalization is therefore a process of exclusion, which closed the youth center off to other groups on several levels. First, the target group has been narrowed to skaters. As such, the youth center now has a targeted design as a skatepark, not only physically and materially but also symbolically. Its primary aim is seen as ensuring that skaters can engage in their preferred activity under increasingly better conditions. To this end, disruptive activities are banned from the space, for example, through the definition of skatepark rules.

Simultaneously, the youth workers have developed a target group and location-specific pedagogy, the 'skater pedagogy', which enables them to work in this special place with this special target group. On the one hand, the exclusivity or club character of the youth center is crucial for its success. On the other hand, this very definition of exclusion could fundamentally undermine the youth workers' legitimacy. In the field of open work with young people, openness is actually institutionalized and is therefore acts as the foundation according to which offers are legitimized.

By opening up to their target group and their needs and interests in the material construction of place, which the youth workers consistently pursued during the construction and boom phases, the center and accordingly the youth work became increasingly exclusive and thereby lost its openness. The collaborative (construction) process between the youth workers and the skaters established common basic values, interests, and attitudes, which are also reflected in how the space was designed and how it is used today. Young people from other groups who did not or could not actively participate in the process of producing the space usually ascribe completely different meanings to the place. Questions about how the space is perceived and used are rather difficult for the skaters as well as the youth workers, as exclusivity could ultimately lead to questions about or even the destruction of the place they have created. For new groups of young people, on the other hand, the skatepark's uniqueness and exclusivity act as barriers that they have to overcome to access the space, which, for the time being, offers hardly any possibilities to try out the space as a place of experimentation.

The big challenges of youth work that has imposed openness as a structural principle on itself, but at the same time wants to make addressee-oriented offers that young people can use voluntarily, became far more apparent in the present case with the beginning of the lull phase. The process of exclusion that I described before and the fact that young people stay away

from the youth center have led to a pedagogical crisis as the structural principles of open work with young people are no longer being fulfilled as the following section describes.

3   Settler or Trapper? – Survival strategies in the jungle of open child and youth work

The institutionalization of openness as a structural principle in the field of open child and youth work entails great challenges for youth workers and their pedagogical practices. It also has its price: it is a field that identifies itself so fundamentally with openness that it ultimately also remains a relatively unmanageable "jungle of tasks and responsibilities" (Müller, 2021, p. 162), as Burkhart Müller put it.

In this jungle, the youth workers in the case study have cut a path by developing a skater pedagogy and constructing the youth center through a targeted design. While the everyday life of open child and youth work is precisely not a special field in which professional competence equals expert competence in everyday understanding (Müller, 2021, p. 170), the youth workers in the case study have occupied a special niche and shaped their space through their actions and their own—quite literal—constructions as professionals whose work was justified by the youth they served. They have achieved perfection within this niche. Beyond this space, for example in relation to other target groups, other pedagogical approaches, and methods of spatial (re)production, their expertise ends. If, for example, other young people come to the skatepark, they are told directly, indirectly, or subliminally that other experts are responsible for them if they disturb the operation.

This is illustrated by the example of a group of young people who have chosen the skatepark as a meeting place to consume alcohol and drugs and hang out. The youth workers have not even tried to establish a working relationship with this group because these young people do not "fit" their space (Cloos et al., 2007). This example clearly shows that occupying a niche, establishing clear demarcations, or engaging with processes of exclusion makes it possible to gain expertise within a specific field. Müller refers to how youth workers deal with the overwhelmingness of institutionalized openness as the "settler model of professional competence" (Müller, 2021, p. 163). Following this model, the unmanageability of the youth work jungle is mastered by cutting a path that one can "settle, that is, control" (ibid.).

According to Müller, however, the settler model fails to encompass the "professional quality of open child and youth work" (Müller, 2021, p. 163). In the case study I presented, this can be seen in how as the skaters get older and gradually outgrow youth work, other youth groups no longer use the youth center's open offers. The problem with young people is that the clearing that the youth workers have painstakingly created and in which they have achieved expert status based on openness towards their target group is apparently no longer being populated by new young people.

An obvious question would be to consider how this clearing can be made attractive and accessible to young people from outside. Through such reflections, the strategies that the youth workers in the case study used can be justified: The development of new, more attractive offers or advertising that can pull young people in the neighborhood into the youth center. Such strategies aim at either connecting young people to existing offers or providing new, smaller niches that other young people can populate. The desired approach, however, is to bring or lure young people out of the jungle and back into the clearing that the youth workers have already prepared and not to set out to clear a new place where young people can settle or adapt the current place to the young people who might already be settling on the margins. An example of such an offer would be establishing a game room, which is well

equipped and clearly designed as something that should be attractive to young people. With the game room, the youth workers hope to bring the neighborhood youth back to the meeting place, that is, it is meant to entice young people to come to the center again.

Against the background of such strategies, questions arise: Does and can this work? And: is this still open youth work at all? According to Müller's argumentation, the settler model inevitably leads to exclusivity and thus to the loss of the structural principle of openness that is actually meant to characterize the field of open child and youth work. He therefore proposes the trapper model as a possibility for youth workers to move safely in the jungle and navigate the "manifold demands of 'open' work and to find the best possible ways and what is proportionally feasible in each case" (Müller, 2021, p. 163) and thus to remain capable of acting without excluding. However, this means giving up the claim to perfection or expert status: Trappers cannot master their fields, but can maintain their bearings; they make decisions, but lack full control over what is happening. A trapper thus cultivates the "skills of skillful reaction" (Müller, 2021, p. 164) without claiming to act in a targeted or planned way. For the youth workers in the case study, the question is how they can leave their clearing and venture into the dangerous jungle without getting lost in it. How can they go from being settlers back to being trappers? Looking through a spatial lens, the question is how the youth workers can open themselves and the place to new young people again.

4　(De)institutionalization through conscious placemaking?

The youth center case study reveals that youth workers are indeed engaged in opening the space to other users. A starting point for the youth workers, for example, was the question of the symbolic effect that the youth center has on outsiders: 'How do young people, who are not skaters, see our youth center when they walk past it and what does it evoke in them?' By asking such questions, the very concrete material design of the youth center—its construction—comes into view: This includes the skateboard obstacles and ramps, the graffiti as well as the people who go there. Since the skatepark is a skate-scene hotspot and is usually well frequented, many skaters hang out there. Because skating is a male-dominated youth culture, the center is predominantly used by young men between 18 and 25. This could be a big hurdle for other young people, for example, girls from Muslim families. As many Muslim parents walk past the skatepark to reach the nearby mosque, they see the groups of young men and might forbid their daughters from going to the skatepark. According to the youth workers, these parents see the youth center's offers that directly target girls as being secondary to the skatepark's masculine culture. By adopting such a questioning perspective, which Müller also suggests as a means to ascertain how it is possible to "keep the house open" (Müller, 2021, p. 166), the youth workers have been engaged in a process that leads them to increasingly question elements of their proven routines. They have thus gradually become aware of the limits and exclusiveness that coincided with their successful niche occupation.

Through spatial and design aspects, through questions about their offers and exploring the possibilities of targeted advertising and cooperation with other youth groups, they finally arrived at a point where they could begin to question their skater pedagogy and thus let go of many parts of what has proven itself over the years and ultimately led the youth center to success. It is possible to speak of the necessity of deinstitutionalization here. In the face of the crisis of a lull, youth workers are becoming increasingly aware that a shift from the settler model to the trapper model must take place to ensure that they can open their space to new young people and expand their work on several levels. How this change can succeed in the face of materializations and institutionalizations that strongly connote subjective meanings

(see contributions in Diebäcker & Reutlinger, 2018), however, remains unknown for the time being.

5   The Relational Construction of Institutional Spaces – conceptual perspective

In conclusion, I would like to draw a relational picture of the construction of institutional spaces of social work, based on two key perspectives: a physical-territorial "horizontal" dimension, which is directed inwards and outwards, as well as an organizational-social "vertical" dimension. These two perspectives look at the abstract from "below to above" in the sense of spatial scales (for a detailed description see Diebäcker & Reutlinger, 2018).

> "Institutional space, which can be delimited from the outside in physical-territorial terms, is a highly differentiated internal mosaic of diverse social subspaces" (ibid. pp. 38f.).

This mosaic of subspaces can partly develop along architectural designs and institutional functionalities, but it does not necessarily need constructed boundaries because social positioning and appropriation, social distinction and group formation as well as solitude and absence can take place simultaneously and can also be observed in the same space.

Because of their physical geographic location, social institutions are also always constructed by their surroundings.

> "They have 'found their place' in a community or city, be it due to financial possibilities, the impacts of real estate markets, functional considerations, or professional objectives. Moreover, external relations structure the inner life of the institution, including its spatial distance from its users or the target group, any complaints from the neighborhood, the qualities of public spaces or local transportation connections" (ibid. p. 39).

"Being inside" and "being outside," proximity and distance, opening and closing times, etc., determine the concrete conditions of institutions of social work. Being open and questions of openness and exclusion cannot be answered unambiguously but can only be addressed by reconstructing and questioning an institution's becoming, as this article shows. In the observed case study, youth workers' self-perceptions of openness slowly moved in the direction of exclusion: the longer the youth workers worked with a specific group of young people to create their own place, the more the youth center became those young people's space. "Places of openness" (Batsleer, 2008, p. 107), as they are described, for example, in research on the informal learning processes of youth work (ibid.), are not only ambivalent in terms of content ("places of joy" and places of "wounding and hurt" ibid., p. 135) but also because of their connection to exclusion through youth workers' institutionalization of specific topics and services for specific groups. In contrast to fears that "talking about boundaries and limits" (ibid., p. 107) can be an obstacle to openness, this article proposes that it is necessary to increase the willingness to discuss and reflect on the "boundaries and limits" that such openness creates. While discussions of "children's geographies" (Holt 2011; Mills/Kraftl 2014) have so far underscored the mechanisms of exclusion that questions of economic resources enact for disadvantaged children and adolescents (Holloway/Pimlott-Wilson, 2012), which are reinforced by an increasingly "institutionalizing childhood" (Holloway/Pimlott-Wilson, 2014), this article also shows that the exclusionary criteria of institutionalization processes can be found in many different guises.

A spatial-relational understanding of institutional social workspaces always contextualizes the institution by relating the social practice located within it to other social worlds or spaces (Kessl & Reutlinger, 2022). The fact that socially disadvantageous, precarious, or crisis-ridden life situations also manifest themselves in institutions exemplifies a social-spatial relation. The analytical differentiation employed in this article, which looks at social work institutions using different spatial scales (horizontal and vertical), provides insight into the structuring processes and interactions that occur between different levels of structure and action (Diebäcker & Reutlinger, 2018). The vertical view of functional, professional, and personal internal differentiation as well as the analysis of programs and conditions is an essential component of understanding the practices and modes of rationalization that occur at different organizational levels. Expanding the focus beyond the individual organization to further spatial scale levels helps to ascertain how institutions are discursively embedded, strategically positioned, and constructed in a larger institutional context and—especially in terms of an open child and youth work—to continually find ways to open social work up, again and again.

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