European Journal of Social Work

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cesw20

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To cite this article: Johanna Brandstetter, Bettina Brüschweiler, Christian Reutlinger & Christina Rosenberger (02 Dec 2024): The figure of transformation and its effects on the professional spatial practices in the field of youth welfare, European Journal of Social Work, DOI: 10.1080/13691457.2024.2430503

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2024.2430503

Published online: 02 Dec 2024.

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WORK
https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2024.2430503

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The figure of transformation and its effects on the professional spatial practices in the field of youth welfare

Die Figur der Transformation und ihre Auswirkungen auf die professionellen räumlichen Praktiken in der Jugendhilfe

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ABSTRACT

Socio-pedagogical spaces such as youth centres or residential group homes are always located in specific places and are established to meet specific local and national needs. Accordingly, the professionals working there are confronted with external demands from both their immediate environment as well as those stemming from professional or social transformations. Drawing on case studies from the research project, 'Places of Social Pedagogy in society – practices of relationing and (re)shaping', this article examines how Swiss social workers change and justify their spatial practices in response to transformations in the field of youth welfare. Applying – and relating to each other – both spatial theory and an ethnographic approach to professional practices, this article presents empirical findings on how transformations and the socio-pedagogical places where social work takes place affect to each other. Moreover, it draws on these examples to explore how spatial theory positions social workers as professional space-shapers. This offers potential für reflection both for social work practice and for the debate on spatial theory.

ABSTRAKT

Sozialpädagogische Einrichtungen der Jugendhilfe wie Jugendzentren oder Wohngruppen befinden sich immer an bestimmten Orten und werden gestaltet, um auch spezifischen lokalen und nationalen Bedürfnissen gerecht zu werden. Dementsprechend sind die dort tätigen Fachkräfte mit externen Anforderungen konfrontiert, die sowohl aus ihrem unmittelbaren Umfeld als auch aus beruflichen oder gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen resultieren. Anhand von Fallstudien aus dem Forschungsprojekt 'Orte der Sozialpädagogik in der Gesellschaft – Praktiken der Relationierung und Gestaltung' untersucht dieser Artikel, wie Professionelle der Sozialen Arbeit im schweizerischen Kontext ihre räumlichen Praktiken als Reaktion auf Transformationen im Bereich der Jugendhilfe verändern und erklären. Unter Anwendung

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 28 February 2024
Accepted 28 October 2024

KEYWORDS
Transformation; social work; socio-pedagogical place; spatial practices; youth welfare

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER
Transformation; Soziale Arbeit; sozialpädagogischer Ort; räumliche Praktiken; Jugendhilfe

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sowohl der Raumtheorie als auch eines ethnografischen Ansatzes auf die Berufspraxis präsentiert dieser Artikel empirische Erkenntnisse darüber, wie sich Transformationen auf die sozialpädagogischen Orte auswirken, an denen Soziale Arbeit stattfindet. Darüber hinaus wird anhand dieser Beispiele untersucht, wie die Raumtheorie Professionelle der Sozialen Arbeit auch als professionelle Raumgestaltende positioniert.

The youth worker describes how they thought long and hard about why older young people were no longer coming to the youth centre. There was no question that the centre needed to develop a suitable programme for them; after all, this is the mission of youth work. One reason for the lack of participation among the older youths could be that mostly younger people were coming to the socio-pedagogical *space, the 'youth centre'. The older ones didn't find it particularly attractive that they would have to mingle with the 'little ones'. In their discussions, the youth workers concluded that a new space was needed for older youths, one that was in another neighbourhood and offered tailor-made programs for them. The young people in question would be much more likely to spend time there anyway since it was in their immediate vicinity—close to their school and the railway station. This second location would therefore address the different needs of the target group in an age-appropriate manner and would bring the youth centre closer to their other meeting and learning places.*

This example from the research project, Places of Social Pedagogy[1] in society – practices of relationing and (re)shaping'[2], describes a situation that we repeatedly encounter in the analyses of social pedagogical place-making practices and which we explore in greater depth in the following article. In response to transformations, social workers are continually adopting their social practices to ensure that they can uphold the principles of youth welfare. Before outlining the structure and conceptual framework for this article, we will briefly clarify our perspective on social work and its connection to processes of social transformation.

Dealing with the demanding character of transformations in social work

Diverse professional discourses are constantly negotiating what constitutes social work and its subjects. There is a broad consensus that social work and associated services are located at the interface between the individual and society (see, for example Dollinger et al., 2012, pp. 7–11; Thole, 2012, pp. 24–25; Herrmann, 2016, p. 245; Otto et al., 2018; Paulus & Grubenmann, 2020). Social work is therefore always part of society and can be understood as 'publicly defined socialisation' (Kessl, 2013, p. 8, own translation). Accordingly, transformations act as drivers of change for social work and professional practices. Current discussions on the design and regulation of subjective lifestyles and post-welfare state security systems are characterised by a socio-political environment that has increasingly shifted towards an activating welfare state (Kessl, 2013, p. 8). Terms such as activation, responsibilisation, and economisation of the social sphere are gaining acceptance as methods of political rationalisation (Kessl, 2013, pp. 8–9) and are thus also becoming central drivers of transformations in social work. The nation-state has a strong influence on how the social sphere is changing both culturally and discursively. Accordingly, such transformations appear to be specific in their intensity and quality. As service providers in crisis-ridden constellations, social workers are therefore confronted with requirements that they fundamentally alter their practices to adhere to new demands (Dollinger, 2006, p. 13ff; Kessl, 2013, p. 10; Scherr, 2014).

Social transformation and processes of spatial change

This post-welfare state transformation has coincided with the emergence of new processes and dynamics that have affected and shaped the relationship between society and social work. For

the first time, the nation-state no longer frames such transformations that emerge instead from spatial and social disembedding or disanchoring processes (Werlen, 1993), i.e. the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space' (Giddens, 1990, p. 21). Commonly, the economically and culturally influenced dynamics of globalisation are used to explain this disembedding (Dürrschmidt, 2002; Noller, 2000; Omae, 1990). The socio-spatial consequences of such transformations mean that people's everyday lives are characterised by experiences of and coping with processes of re-embedding or re-anchoring (Berking, 2008; Garhammer, 2003; Robertson, 1995), as human geography and sociological discourses, in particular, have shown in increasingly sophisticated and nuanced ways since the 1980s (Giddens, 1979, 1981; Harvey, 2006). The renewed strengthening of national borders (Thränhardt, 2012) is also effective in spatial terms, as the examples of the global Covid-19 pandemic, migration crises, and the struggle for energy and resources—and their associated transmigration social consequences (Pries, 2008)—impressively illustrate. Political dynamics such as the end and resurgence of the East–West divide, territorial conflicts and wars or supranational alliances such as the EU, which temporarily devalued the nation-state order (Albrow, 1997), gave rise to new political blocs in the context of (re-) nationalisation and regionalisation processes and have, at the same time, revitalised demarcation (Massey, 1999a; Wissen et al., 2008). Furthermore, technical and technological innovations as well as digitalisation make it possible to connect heterogeneous physical and virtual relationships (Hipfl, 2004; Klaus & Drüeke, 2010), making them increasingly more entangled (Bauman, 2000; Castells, 2000). Since the 1960s, everyday life, especially in the global North, has been characterised by increasing complexity (Asbrand, 2002; Strunk, 2019; Urry, 2003). Together, all these transformations require concomitant changes in social work practices.

Since the 1990s, the 'transition to digital communication technologies has 'extended intensive multiplication of spaces' (Löw & Knoblauch, 2021, p. 51). This led to a rapid increase in the complexity of social relationships, which changed the connections between space and action. Accordingly, scholars began to question the previously prevailing homogeneous notion of space as a container (Löw & Knoblauch, 2021, p. 52) and places as 'frozen scenes for human activity' (Pred, 1985, p. 337).

Theoretical and empirical references, article structure and aim

We assume that the connections between social work and social structures outlined in the previous sections mean that national, global, and socio-political transformation processes always—either directly or indirectly—shape social work. Social workers as professional space-shapers are required to react to external transformations impact and also to justify these reactions in professional terms. Therefore, the question is not whether and which transformations impact the field of youth welfare. In this article, we focus instead on the *how* of the reaction and the reasoning behind it. We do this from a socio-spatial perspective, which allows us to focus on the spatial practices of the professionals on the one hand and their justifications against the background of current social transformations on the other. In our view, such a spatial-theoretical approach is necessary because it can show that professional practices are more than just a passive reaction to external conditions. Rather, they mean an active dealing with the concrete conditions on place. The professionals translate the transformation in their spatial practices to the specific location an justify them by referring to the specific embedding. With these relational references, social work professionals in the field of youth welfare also have a formative effect on social contexts.

Drawing on case studies from the research project 'Places of Social Pedagogy in society – practices of relationing and (re)shaping', this article points to how social work professionals in the field of youth welfare in the Swiss context react differently with their spatial practices in times of transformation and how they justify their chosen courses of action. The case-contrasting analysis of the research project reveals this difference not only with regards to the various fields of action, but also with regard to the way in which these specific places are located and simultaneously situated in their environment. The spatial-theoretical view makes it possible to uncover spatial practices

and their justifications and to bring them into a new context, as outlined above. To do dis, its first necessary to explain our (socio)spatial perspective on social work practices in reference to spatial theory. For this we expand on Michael Winkler's 'pedagogical place' (Winkler, 1988, 2022) approach with Martina Löw's sociology of space and the concepts of spacing and synthesis (2016). This enables us to apply our conceptual approach of socio-pedagogical place-making and the concept of rationalisation to our analysis. After this conceptual positioning, our empirical results from the ethnographic research project are used as detailed examples to show how transformations and subsequent professional reactions manifest themselves in everyday professional lives. The final section contextualises the results within the framework of our theoretical approach. The aim of the article is therefore to make the different reactions to transformations empirically accessible and to show that these only become concretely shapable and justifiable when spatial embedding is taken into account. Whit the chosen structure of the article, we aim to make our empirical approach reflectable against the background of theoretical concepts. This provides a driving force for the development of new perspectives.

Social work practices as spatial practices – conceptual foundation

The outlined post-national inter- and transdisciplinary debates on place and space and the conceptual orientation of educational approaches have had a strong influence on the German-language social work literature of the past 30 years Kessl & Reutlinger, 2024; Spatscheck & Wolf-Ostermann, 2009), particularly in terms of youth welfare. In recent decades, such approaches have been differentiated under the label of social spatiality, socio-space orientation, or socio-space work (Kessl & Reutlinger, 2022). Roughly summarised, on the one hand, social work now has its own spatially based conceptual approaches, such as Winkler's 'pedagogical place' (1988) or Böhnisch's (1992) Klicken oder tippen Sie hier, um Text einzugeben. 'socio-spatial principle', which form important foci for a changing discipline and profession. However, Winkler and Böhnisch developed their concepts with few direct references to current spatial theoretical considerations in neighbouring disciplines such as sociology or geography, as they were developed in the 1980s and thus at a time when the social sciences themselves were still in a 'spatially blind' state (Löw & Sturm, 2019, p. 8). This has changed in recent years, as today spatial thinking in social work is repeatedly and increasingly systematically linked to other disciplines, particularly the fields of sociology and geography (Diebäcker, 2014; Haag, 2023; Huber, 2014; Kessl & Otto, 2007; Kessl & Reutlinger, 2022)

From professional perspectives, it seems appropriate both to strengthen and develop the traditions of social work and to combine these with findings and ideas from other disciplines, which is where we come in with the conceptual approach of *socio-pedagogical place-making* in our research project. A beneficial starting point is spatial sociology, which proposes 'that at one place different spaces can be spanned' (Löw, 2016, p. 17). On the one hand, this brings the processes of space creation into focus, which are part of everyday social work practices by both recipients and professionals. On the other hand, this concept offers the opportunity to analytically distinguish between space (Thrift, 1996, 2003) and place (Cresswell, 2015; Massey, 1999b). Such a distinction was already present in Winkler's pedagogical place but not systematically developed: 'Space becomes a pedagogical place […] when it is organized with education in mind, either by consciously preserving it in its everyday form or by staging and instrumentalizing it in order to trigger learning or development […]' (Winkler, 2011, p. 30f, own translation).

According to spatial-sociological definitions, 'places are defined as the goal and result of placements' (Löw, 2016, p. 17). 'They are indissolubly intermeshed with spaces inasmuch as they are generated by spaces (sense of place develops with placement) and inasmuch as in terms of location they are a presupposition for the constitution of space. In contrast to spaces, places are always markable, nameable, and unique' (Löw, 2016, p. 17). We take up this direction in the conceptual approach to socio-pedagogical place-making. On the one hand, we focus on professionals' space creation processes in a socio-pedagogical place, such as a youth centre or residential group home. On the

other hand, we can show how these place-making processes create, change, or transform socio-pedagogical places. Social workers' practices must therefore be understood spatially, which conceptually entails reconstructing them using a spatial analysis (Löw, 2016, p. v): as doing or spacing and the justifications/rationalisations or operations of synthesis.

In a nutshell, the operations of synthesis refer to how objects are linked to spaces in processes of perception, memory, imagination, etc. (Löw, 2016, p. 9). Spacing refers to the placement and positioning of social goods and people or the positioning of primarily symbolic markings in order to recognise ensembles of goods and people as such (Löw, 2016, p. 134). Both processes are essentially the result of a practice of understanding and organising. Löw 'proposes that space ought to be initially understood as a relational arrangement of social goods and living beings physically arranged in places (spacing). For Löw, in reference to Giddens's (1979) Klicken oder tippen Sie hier, um Text einzugeben. 'duality of structure', the duality of space describes how spaces do not simply exist, but are created in action and that spatial structures are embodied in institutions that pre-structure action. Space, in other words, is shaped by and shapes action. Container space, such as a territory, is just one possible, though comparatively rare, form of spatial constitution' (Fuller & Löw, 2017, p. 476). Thus, space is constituted through both physical spacing and processes of sense-making.

The professional organisation of socio-pedagogical youth welfare places – empirical insights

As the previous sections have described, we understand social work, professional practices, and the socio-pedagogical places in which they take place as being located in social structures. In professionals' spatial practices at the socio-pedagogical place, these relations become recognisable and shape the respective places. In this article, we analyse professionals' spatial practices in relation to transformations in social work.

The research project, 'Places of Social Pedagogy in society – practices of relationing and (re)shaping[3], focuses on the relational practices of social pedagogy and how socio-pedagogical spaces are conceptualised. These relations can manifest themselves in both socio-pedagogical place as well as in actions and (partially implicit) speech acts (Löw, 2016). The research project focused on the one hand on professional practices that manifest themselves in the pedagogical place, and, on the other hand, on the implicit, unconscious relationship between the socio-pedagogical place and its environment, which is embedded in actions and speech acts.

The project is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Cases were collected using ethnographic methods and were analysed using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). To obtain as broad a spectrum of socio-pedagogical places as possible, the project works with contrasts; so far, two pairs of cases, i.e. a total of four cases (A-D), have been surveyed from a total of six planned cases. We define a case as a specific socio-pedagogical place in the field of youth welfare. In the following sections, the four cases are organised according to maximum and minimum contrasts. The maximum contrast results from child and youth work (youth centres, cases A and C) and inpatient care (residential group homes for young people, cases B and D). While youth work is characterised by a voluntary and low-threshold nature and by their participatory and emancipatory principles, the educational mandate of residential care requires that it intervenes in young people's lives in a more disciplinary, standardising, and corrective manner. The minimal contrast in this division relates to the facilities' conceptual orientations. Cases A and B have a socio-spatial orientation, in the sense that they are integrated in their surrounding vicinity, communities and region. By contrast, cases C and D are characterised more by an inward-looking conceptual orientation as these socio-pedagogical spaces tend to function independently on their own and there is little evidence of an outward socio-spatial orientation (Figure 1).

All cases have similar target groups in terms of age and gender and the institutions employ professionals. The heterogeneity of the cases created through maximum and minimum contrast allows

	Outward-facing and oriented towards the local and regional surroundings located in the neighbourhood, integrated into the community	Inward-looking, largely independent of community life
Youth centre	Case A	Case C
Inpatient residential group	Case B	Case D

Figure. 1. Overview of the four contrasting cases.

cross-case comparisons and thus offer informative insights into the organisation of the socio-pedagogical spaces of youth welfare. The following section describes both the youth work cases and then the residential group homes and analyses them in terms of how they have faced transformations, spatially altered practices, and how professionals justify their choices.

Empirical insights into changing spatial practices in youth work

Cases A and C are from the field of youth work, which Schnurr (2012) categorises as 'general support for children, young people and families' (p. 23) in the Swiss child and youth welfare system. Youth work comprises informal education and offers young people opportunities outside of school structures for diverse experiences and largely self-directed activities. Young people can participate in programmes regardless of membership or other prerequisites (Schnurr, 2012, p. 24).

Case A – Youth work: being where the young people are

Case A is a youth centre that is funded by a rural town and used for youth work exclusively. It is a single-storey building in the town centre, close to the church, a retirement home, and a main thoroughfare. The youth centre is open twice a week at different times (afternoons and evenings) and two trained youth workers are present during these hours. The youth centre has a kiosk, a selection of available board games, places to relax and chill as well as computers and a PlayStation. The youth workers organise other projects, events, or specific programmes such as a girls' club both during and outside the usual opening hours. They announce the events during personal discussions with the youth at the centre and on social media, and also hang posters in the youth centre and the display case on the youth centre's outside wall. To help reach youth in the town, the centre's staff are active on social media and also offer a mobile meeting point at the local primary school grounds during the warmer months of the year.

The youth centre has been offering services for years and the youth workers are a well-coordinated team. Lately, however, they began to notice—and this brings us back to the situation described at the beginning of this article—that older youths hardly come to the centre. Even on Friday evenings, which are actually intended for this target group, youth between the ages of 12 to 15 are increasingly turning up, and the centre is often empty at later hours. Through their constant observations and assessments of the young people and their interests, the youth workers realised that they were no longer fully reaching their target group at this location and thus were not upholding their mandate. In response, they concluded that they should create an attractive programme for older youth. But they would need to find another location; older youth would not want to hang out

in a space dominated by younger people. As such, they sought out a new space in the town, finally deciding on a new meeting place, closer to the railway station and the high school where most of the older young people spend their free time.

Changing practice was not easily done; there is a long way to go before a new meeting place can be opened, organised and used. The youth workers have been working on the preparations at a strategic and political level for a long time, observing the situation and the key players, providing arguments, establishing facts, and identifying needs. The main barrier was finances as there was no money to pay the workers for the additional hours needed to operate another site. This barrier was only overcome when the youth workers identified that they could build upon already existing social services. Together with the integration specialists, the youth workers were able to apply for the funds to successfully implement a pilot project for a site that would also house the youth centre. They noted that they would not only fill a gap in the services that older youth receive but would also offer attractive leisure activities in a part of the town where there seems to be no competition regarding youth work. The space is also very well suited for event-related and project-based work, as it has a large kitchen and lounge. To make their case, the youth workers strengthened their argument and offered several key reasons why they should expand their services to this new space. In their pilot concept, they outlined how they plan to change how they've always worked, arguing that they had set new priorities that meant they would need less time for office hours. Accordingly, they claimed that they could offer services at both locations without reducing the centre's availability to its younger clientele. Thus, the youth workers could serve both target groups without impacting their access. Through their reasoning, they communicated that they were prepared to make a compromise to achieve what they see as a desirable change.

During the pilot phase, the youth workers described that they were constantly gathering new evidence on how the new space is developing, what needs it actually meets, and any unexpected consequences of the shift in their approach. These observations offer the youth workers proof of the effectiveness of their change in practices, which they hope they can use later to argue for more staff and further financial investment. They believe that it is unlikely that such requests would be rejected as the centre has already become part of the town's landscape.

Case C – Youth work: Preserving the centre because it is the right thing to do

This youth centre is located in a medium-sized town in the middle of a residential area. The space is rented and is located on the bottom floor of a large apartment block and is similar to a flat in terms of the room layout. In addition to the youth worker's office, it also has two common rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The young people who go to the centre can also use the hallway for individual games and the immediate outdoor area for relaxing and smoking. The meeting place is open once a week from early evening until around 10 pm and its target audience is young people aged 12 and over.

The youth worker who runs the centre is trained in socio-cultural outreach and has been working there for many years. He is employed by the church that offers this meeting place to young people. He knows the neighbourhood well, including its young people—and even their parents in some cases. In addition to the youth centre, the youth worker oversees several popular events throughout the year, which attract a high number of participants. The target audience and location changes depending on the event. Some events are for children, and some are conceptualised for the youths who use the youth centre. While the church and the youth centre can also be used for events, the youth worker sometimes seeks out external spaces. These can be temporary rentals outside the city, where young people can engage in a larger project in a summer-camp-like atmosphere. These events depend on the support of a large group of volunteers.

The youth centre is characterised by a high degree of stability and continuity in its activities. For many years, meet-ups had been dedicated to a set programme, such as cooking, watching films, or playing games. The young people then knew what to expect each night, but they could also collaborate with the youth worker to develop the programme. They could also change things that they did

not like. If they did not want to participate in a specific activity, they were also allowed to just come to the centre to hang out. Recently, the youth worker changed his approach, discarding the fixed programme and allowing the young people who are present to decide spontaneously whether they want to do an activity together, such as cooking or playing a game, or whether they simply want to hang out together in one of the common rooms.

Although the fixed programme is no longer in place, the youth worker nonetheless emphasises that the youth centre is different from other youth clubs in the city, including others in that specific neighbourhood, because there had been a programme there for so long and the young people can do an activity together if they want. He sees himself as a platform provider that young people can use, so he does not have to be part of these activities himself. All he has to do is provide the infrastructure, resources, and guidance where needed. He is therefore present in the centre and maintains an open-door approach so that young people can come to him when they have concerns or problems. He also participates actively in some of the games but he does not lead the activities; it is up to the young people how they choose to fill the youth centre evenings.

The youth worker strongly justifies his choices with his professional approach and draws on the principles of socio-cultural outreach. Similarly, he argues that the youth centre has been hosting specific events for years within the same framework, but young people decide on the topics and the projects can then take on different forms within those frameworks, depending on the young people's interests. He contends that such an approach is successful because the basic structure remains the same: the young people know what they are getting involved in and that they can still develop the concept further and fill it with their own interests and concerns. In comparison to case A, case C is therefore a form of youth work that maintains, stabilises, and preserves continuity.

This holds even in times of uncertainty. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing rules meant that the number of people who could be in the same room had to be restricted. As the church had ample space available, the youth work team was able to switch to sufficiently large rooms and keep hosting meetings. The pandemic therefore had little impact on the church's youth work programmes. Similarly, discussions in the youth workers' local and national professional networks have little influence. While he is actively involved and contributes to the development of professional standards in youth work in Switzerland, he is also adamant that he will not change course if regulations or principles that apply equally to everyone restrict his work as he does not feel he is dependent on such networks and expresses that he could always leave them if needed. Restriction is not something he welcomes in his youth centre. The church only enforces limitations when individual actions infringe on how others can enjoy the space, for example, when young people fail to adhere to the rules. This can include not cleaning up after youth activities that are hosted in public spaces. Once, the youth worker received a complaint that the young people had left a mess after an activity. With the support of the youth worker, the young people then removed the rubbish and apologised. Similarly, there are limits to how the church premises can be used. The young people are not allowed to disturb the church, i.e. the prayer room. The youth worker reflects that he had also received a complaint about that once. As such, he concluded that the youth centre should be located in a separate building, outside the church, and one that was dedicated to youth work. This would provide the young people the freedom to layout and use the space as they wished. Long-term, continuous use is also important so that they can leave their projects in a space where they will not be disturbed or where their furniture will not be put back.

Empirical insights into changing spatial practices in residential care groups

Cases B and D are residential care homes, which Schnurr (2012, p. 23) categorises as 'supplementary educational support' in the Swiss child and youth welfare system. This is one of the most important forms of publicly funded education for children and young people outside their families. Such supports focus on fostering the competencies needed to help the recipient lead an independent life after reaching the age of majority (Schnurr, 2012, p. 27).

Case B – Inpatient residential group home: Opening up new paths by breaking with the old

Case B is an inpatient mixed-gender residential group home where six young people between the ages of 12 and 17 live together in a small village in an old farmhouse that is visually indistinguishable from the neighbouring houses. A married couple had established the residential group home and managed it until they retired. After the couple left, the home underwent fundamental changes. External demands meant that the care home system needed to be modernised, with the cantonal administration leading the charge to develop a new, modern concept for the residential group home.

The introduction and implementation of the new concept coincided with the change in management; unlike the couple, the new manager is a trained social worker. This led to a caesura between what was there before and what was to be implemented, with the new manager in charge of a modern socio-pedagogical concept according to the 'New Authority[4]' (cf. Schlippe & Omer, 2016). These factors required a change in attitude, moving away the 'dusty home image[5]' of residential care 'to rehabilitate residential care'. Going forward, the centre would be a modern, open, participatory socio-pedagogical space rather than a regulated, sanction-laden, strict home. The previous framework and spatial practices of the socio-pedagogical place were thus called into question: within a short amount of time, social workers were expected to act according to the 'New Authority' concept. According to this approach, neither punishment and sanctions nor rationing food are allowed to be included in the repertoire of actions that keep the space in order. The young people are now expected to participate in the centre's new spatial orientation, which encourages them to experience 'development' outside the residential group home. Thereby, they are now 'visible' in the outside world as the residential group home is no longer sealed off from the public.

The new guidelines established the home as a socio-pedagogical place, and these changes were then used to justify the associated changes in (spatial) practices. The requirements not only affected the internal socio-pedagogical approach but also how the group home was presented externally in the village. Conceptually, the residential group is now seen as being embedded in the local area and community structures, with an emphasis on how it cooperates with child and youth stakeholders and partners as well as the surrounding village. The young people who live in the residential home are no longer contained within the space. To adhere to the new rules, the internal school was closed and house rules were reduced to just a few points. The young people can now have visitors and they have planned an 'open house event' for the residential group home. Additionally, a so-called 'free space' was established, where residents could spend time without strict socio-pedagogical supervision. However, this project ended after a few weeks as the young people did not use the space provided.

Against the background of such changes, the old farmhouse has been deemed unsuitable for the new needs as it lacks the appropriate structures. As such, the social workers have already begun the search for a new property that should be less noisy, have a single room for each young person as well as a sperate staff room and office for the employees. To achieve this, the space needs to be larger and more modern so that it can ensure the youths' privacy, with a private space where the young people—as well as the social workers—can just be on their own.

The idea of reorganisation and breaking with the old resonates in all of these processes. Although the cantonal administration triggered the changes, the youth and their social workers along with the centre's management constantly challenged and negotiated what the space would be. This includes the current search to find a space that will uphold the centre's new professional self-image.

Case D – Inpatient residential group home: strengthening the inner community in order to grow together

Case D is an inpatient residential group home characterised by a structured everyday life for adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16 to 22 regardless of gender. It offers ten spaces—spread over two houses—and includes residential training, where young people can practise the steps into independent living. The institution aims to provide young people from challenging

backgrounds with the individual support they need to achieve professional integration into the primary labour market.

This inpatient facility is located in a rural area, but neither its conceptual orientation nor its self-presentation provides any evidence that it is integrated into the village structure. In contrast to case B, case D has only a few points of reference to the surrounding village structure. The residential group home tends to function in isolation and largely independently, as an island in the village so to speak. Conflicts with the villagers are avoided and no active contact is sought unless necessary. The residential group home has a daily programme for young people who are out of education and employment, having left school or discontinued their apprenticeship. Its programme also demonstrates a certain level of independence from external services, such as schools or job centres, which place young people in training or jobs. As such, the social workers are able to conceptualise a programme that can be adapted depending on their professional approach. This allows them to centre individualised support as much as possible, and the programme is designed according to the special needs of the young people who use the services. For example, the pedagogical programme has a balance between theoretical and practical units. At the same time, the social workers depend on a good working relationship with businesses in the area, as such relationships can help to ensure that the young people who use their services would have the opportunity to gain insight into working life. Here, the social workers see themselves in a mediating role whereby they raise local businesses' awareness of young people's life situations and their needs.

The residential group home's building is divided and the space is versatile enough to be used in such a way that it covers the various needs of both the young people and the social workers; there seems to be little need for change. Unlike in the residential group home in case B, where the social workers are busy redesigning the spatial conditions to make them more open and flexible (e.g. closing the internal school, establishing the open space), such efforts can hardly be observed in case D. While there are common spaces that both the social workers and the young people use, the two groups also have spaces to which they can retreat separately. For example, both groups use the balcony to smoke together and informal conversations and get-togethers take place here time and again. By contrast, the social workers use the offices exclusively. These divisions and the utilisation of different spaces within the residential group home are seemingly unquestioned and the 'rules' around use appear to be clear and functional for everyone involved.

The residential group home aims to promote and strengthen its own internal community. The social workers are closely involved in financial and personnel decisions, for example, and therefore bear joint responsibility for the home's continued existence and maintenance. They value close relationships with the young people who use their services and involve them where they can in decisions that affect them, for example, through group evenings or experiential pedagogical activities. This community-strengthening and participation-oriented approach is also methodically strengthened by youth-centric activities, such as the use of sociocratic votes. The social workers explain that sharing decision-making powers allows them to involve the young people. This, in turn, has led to more sustainable solutions and therefore increased the home's stability. Shared experiences during excursions in nature are used to strengthen relationships between the young people as well as between the social workers and the young people. The social workers plan to intensify and expand these programmes, but this is always a question of often scarce financial, human, and time resources. Strengthening the community within the residential group is emphasised as a central component of the home's socio-pedagogical purpose, with the justification that this helps the social workers discuss difficult issues with young people and overcome crises together. How they have navigated crises in the past has also become an integral part of the group home's shared history and is used to further develop the idea of the home as a community.

The socio-pedagogical work in the residential group home is also changing, but the changes are triggered by the needs of the young people who use the home and the social workers who work there. As such, the home seems to have a certain degree of independence from external factors.

Securing the structures within the residential group home and maintaining internal stability contribute to this independence; such processes are clearly visible in the analysis as the central practices of the social workers who work at the home.

Activism or stabilisation: spatial approaches to transformation requirements and the respective reactions and justifications

The preliminary results of the research project depict how all four cases have been confronted with a requirement to transform their practices and spaces (s. chapter 1), which has resulted in a change in spatial practices and justifications according to their spatial embedding. The maximum case contrast, i.e. the selection of two cases each from youth work and residential youth welfare, results in different options for spatial practices. Initially, spatial practices are derived from the basic conceptual orientation of the youth centre or the group home. The youth centre programmes, for example, target all young people from the catchment area as a target group. As centres for leisure and the associated principles of voluntary, low-threshold participation in the general promotion of children and youth (Schnurr et al., 2017, p. 11), the professionals generally align their spatial practices with the constantly changing needs and demands of different groups of young people (age, youth cultures, trends, etc.). The situation is different for the analysed residential group homes where young people usually temporarily live in the socio-pedagogical location and can also live there long-term. Importantly, such services are not voluntary, as youth welfare measures like residential group homes are often mandated, with supplementary educational support (Schnurr et al., 2017, p. 11) that has more of a disciplinary function that aims to standardise behaviour in all aspects of the lives of those affected (housing, education, leisure time, etc.). These different programme requirements also shape spatial practices. Although conceptual orientation still places young people's needs at the focal point, the problems the young people face also necessitate the implementation and enforcement of educational measures and require that professionals adapt their practices accordingly.

In addition to these differences stemming from the different fields of youth welfare practiced, further interesting findings are evident in the minimal contrast. The minimal contrast, which differs in terms of the conceptually defined and thus explicit spatial orientation of the individual organisations, appears to have a concrete effect on how the spatial practices are designed in response to a need to transform practices. As section 5 describes, cases A and B are more strongly oriented towards their local and regional environments. Accordingly, external demands often catalyse transformations in spatial practices. Cases C and D, on the other hand, are characterised by a more inward-looking conceptual orientation; these socio-pedagogical places tend to function on their own and make changes according to their unique requirements. The spatial practices in cases C and D are characterised by the needs of the socio-pedagogical place and not the external community.

The outward orientation of cases A and B are also clearly evident in the transformation of their spatial practices. Both cases are characterised by a certain activism in the placement of social goods and people (spacing) in relation to the external environment, which is also justified accordingly (operations of synthesis, Löw, 2016, p. 9). However, activism emerges differently in the two cases. In the youth centre in case A, changed spatial practices are evident in the search for and establishment of a new meeting place that would help realise the required transformation into a centre that is also used by older youths. The youth workers are sensitive to changes in the local environment and adapt their work and thus their spatial practices by expanding and creating additional services. In the inpatient residential group in case B, the canton's requirements led to far-reaching changes in the home concept and, accordingly, its spatial practices. Adapting the socio-pedagogical location to these transformation requirements calls the previous model into question, which is reflected, for example, in the search for a new property, as the old farmhouse is no longer considered suitable for a 'modern' group home. Alternative spatial practices are negotiated, established, and

attempted— spacing and operations of synthesis are thus closely coordinated in this case. As change unfolds, the spatial practices still seem to be in negotiation and are thus uncertain.

In cases C and D, which function more autonomously and are less dependent on their environment due to their conceptual orientation, the spatial practices tend to be stable and maintained over time. For the youth centre in case C, this is evident in the continuity in the services offered; the young people can avail of reliable structures that they can use individually and according to their needs. However, in principle and over the years, there has been no perceived need to change the structures and programmes themselves. Rather, the youth worker seems to characterise the continuous services as a quality feature of the youth centre. Although the foundation remains the same, the structure allows the youth worker to absorb any demands for transformation, for example, in the form of the topics and concerns that the young people would like to see addressed. Such stabilisation tendencies are also visible in the inpatient residential group in case D, albeit in a different form. Here, spatial practices are particularly evident in relation to building and maintaining a community within the residential group. The social workers perceive this strengthening of inner stability to be their central role in order to withstand wider transformations' requirements, for example, during crises, and to integrate these as part of their internal development.

With regard to the transformation requirements and the associated (changed) spatial practices, the analysis – based on the empirical approach and the socio-spatial perspective – underscores how none of these socio-pedagogical places is independent of and unaffected by transformations. This reflects the relational relationship between social work, socio-pedagogical places, and social structures, as the conceptual section in this article describes. In the case studies this can be seen for example in the requirements for modernisation of residential care or the integration of young people into the primary labour market (case B and D) or also through the needs and logics of different groups of young people are changing in line with changes in the locale environment or social trends towards disembedding or disanchoring processes (case A and C). At the same time, how professionals respond to a need to transform differs in terms of their chosen spatial practices and their justifications. These differences— as one might assume—are not merely the product of different fields of action, that is, in our examples of youth work versus youth care. Instead, we show that the outward-looking, spatial integration or, in contrast, the inward-looking orientation of the socio-pedagogical locations plays a significant role in how professionals conceptualise their spatial practices and thus find different strategies to successfully navigate transformations requirements. This shows that the reactions to the requirements on the part of social work professionals are not passive-adaptive, but that they actively shape them in conformation with the concrete spatial conditions and the way which the transformation requirements are met. This makes it possible to act appropriately and in a way that it suitable and justified for the respective socio-pedagogical location. In turn also to influence the requirements themselves and the spatial conditions in a relational way. Due to their empirical and socio-spatial approach, the results presented in the article offer potential for impulses in fields of social work practice, as well as for spatial theoretical discussions.

Notes

1. Social pedagogy, understood as a subfield of social work (cf. Thole, 2012, p. 20) has broad theoretical and practice frameworks (e.g. overview Grasshoff et al., 2018). This article distinguishes social work, social pedagogy, youth work and socio-cultural outreach at those points where the professionals from the case studies explicitly refer to their work using a specific phrase.
2. Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and carried out at the Institute for Social Work and Spaces at the OST – Ostschweizer Fachhochschule St.Gallen (Switzerland). For further information on the project, see chapter 5.
3. Details on the project can be found at https://data.snf.ch/grants/grant/188925
4. The 'new authority' originally emerged from Haim Omer's parenting approach; the core idea is non-violent resistance in the style of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The concept has since been further developed and forms the basis of various educational settings (see Schlippe & Omer, 2016).
5. Terms are quoted from the ethnographic interview material case B 2021

Acknowledgements

The authors of this article work at the Institute for Social Work and Spaces (IFSAR) at the OST – Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences, which focusses on the socio-spatial approach to social work topics. The authors conduct research on place-making practices in the field of child and youth welfare in Switzerland. This article is based on findings from the research project 'Places of Social Pedagogy in society – practices of relationing and (re)shaping' funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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