

## Abstract

Title: **Youth Care on Home Ground.** Ideas - Development - Practice.  
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Juveniles who are rowdy, who commit crime, abuse drugs, have difficulty functioning in school or in the home are the subject of constant attention: from indignant voices in newspaper reports, to demands in parliament for action, all the way to the informal conversations at the lunch table and in the home in front of the television. This dissertation is about society's attempts to normalize them, in a time when institutional care has gained a bad reputation. All over the western world there are attempts to replace institutions with qualified non-institutional measures. In Sweden a rather broad range of activities has emerged under designations such as home-based solutions, intermediary care or simply alternatives to institutional care. Among these we can find both all-embracing and innovative endeavours and more limited expansions of established patterns of thought. Although there are numerous studies of individual ventures, often in the form of project evaluations, there are no approaches with an overall perspective on the field. This dissertation seeks to remedy this by studying ideas articulated when activities are planned and how daily life between juveniles and employees is formed in a typical home-based solution. These studies are conceptualized through a description of the development of juvenile care during the 20th century.

The study is based on the methods of discourse analysis and focuses on how communication is shaped and given a specific function in an institutional order.

The first study shows how the social worker as a rescuing subject is linked with the juvenile as an object needing rescue through the technology involved in the home-based solution. Four main forms of home-based care are identified in accordance with the way they relate to the mother organization (integrated – free-standing), and the way they handle problems that arise (ad hoc – a priori). The study of the special school "Pilen" analyses in detail how everyday life is shaped and maintained. Therapeutic work is perceived in the dissertation as actions accompanied by power with the intention of achieving dominance within a social space. In the special school it becomes evident how the employees' claims for power encounter the juveniles' counter-power, and how this is expressed in a reciprocal positioning game. The juveniles often have great potential to neutralize the employees' direct interventions. At the same time, they have little opportunity to change the social and cultural framework which dictates why they are there – and hence also little opportunity to avoid being captured in the category of "problem children". In this way the special school was simultaneously a sanctuary from the excessive pressures of ordinary school and a place of banishment from it, and from what is perceived as the reference of normality.