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IMPRESSUM

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ABSTRACT

From December 4th to 6th, 2023, the international conference organized by the research project "DOC-team 114: The Contested Provisioning of Care and Housing" took place at the Johannes Kepler University Linz. The project is funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Johannes Kepler University Linz and the WU Vienna. The conference was carried out in cooperation with the International Karl Polanyi Society, the Competence Centre for Infrastructure Economics, Public Services and Social Provisioning, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care, and Sorgenetz, Association for the promotion of societal care culture, Life, old age, dementia and dying. Two crucial aspects of human existence - care and housing - formed the thematic focal points of the international conference. Due to decades of neoliberalization driven by processes of privatization, commodification, financialization, and marketization, these fundamental areas of life are in deep crises. In recent years, care and housing have experienced increased interest from transdisciplinary international research as a promising research field.

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Care and Housing in Transition- Polanyian Perspectives on Two Contested Fields

Kristin Bürbaumer¹, Alexander Eigner², Stefan Schütz³, Julia Wurm⁴

1. INTRODUCTION

From December 4th to 6th, 2023, the international conference organized by the research project "DOC-team 114: The Contested Provisioning of Care and Housing" took place at the Johannes Kepler University Linz. The project is funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Johannes Kepler University Linz and the WU Vienna. The conference was carried out in cooperation with the International Karl Polanyi Society, the Competence Centre for Infrastructure Economics, Public Services and Social Provisioning, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care, and Sorgenetz, Association for the promotion of societal care culture, Life, old age, dementia and dying.

Two crucial aspects of human existence - care and housing - formed the thematic focal points of the international conference. Due to decades of neoliberalization driven by processes of privatization, commodification, financialization, and marketization, these fundamental areas of life are in deep crises. In recent years, care and housing have experienced increased interest from transdisciplinary international research as a promising research field. Therefore, the DOC-team, consisting of doctoral candidates Benjamin Baumgartner, Valentin Fröhlich, Florian Pimminger, and Hans Volmary, alongside mentors Brigitte Aulenbacher and Andreas Novy, focuses its research on the intersection of care and housing.

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2. REDISCOVERING POLANYI IN THE FIELDS OF CARE AND HOUSING

Crisis-ridden areas of life, like care and housing, are of great interest in the field of sociology, which is the shared research discipline of all four co-authors of this paper. Therefore, these topics have shaped their academic journey immensely. As Karl Polanyi's concepts present a helpful toolbox to understand and analyze these developments in contemporary capitalism, the following paper looks at the conference from a Polanyian perspective.

The corresponding debate is founded in the theories of the Austro-Hungarian economist Karl Polanyi and his main opus "The Great Transformation" ([1944] 1977), which, despite being published almost 80 years ago, remains highly relevant today. Aulenbacher et al. (2020) describe Polanyi as an unconventional thinker and a pioneer in the critique of capitalism who worked in different disciplines, such as economics, journalism, law and the social sciences.

Polanyi, who was born in 1886, witnessed both World Wars. Consequently, he saw how the failure of an unbridled capitalist system produced the perfect breeding ground for fascist regimes. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the focus of Polanyi's attention lay on the concept of freedom. Within his work, he uncovered the inherent connection between the promise of freedom and the reality of inequality within a society shaped by a globalized self-regulating market system (Brie & Thomasberger, 2020) and famously said during a lecture in Vienna in 1927: "If I cannot grasp the consequences of my own free decisions, if my own freedom is inextricably linked to the suffering or death of others, then capitalist society is 'not just unjust but also un-free'" (Polanyi, 1927/2018, as cited in Brie & Thomasberger, 2020, p. 57).

Polanyi's point of reference lies in developments of the industrial revolution, during which the factory system was organized as part of the trading system. This resulted in the treatment of labor, land, and money as commodities to uphold production. However, according to Polanyi, labor, land, and money are in fact not 'real' but rather 'fictitious' commodities. This is attributed to the fact that, unlike 'real' commodities, labor, land, and money can not be produced in order to be sold on a market. Nonetheless, this 'commodity fiction' became the organizing principle of capitalist societies as fictitious commodities were sold according to market principles. Polanyi however, recognized labor as just another term to address the lives of ordinary people, which led him to the conclusion that the treatment of labor as a commodity rendered humans subordinates to the economic system (Polanyi, 1995, p. 111). Moreover, Polanyi prognosticated that a market based society would inevitably lead to the destruction of labor, land, and money (Polanyi, 1995, p. 108-109).



Therefore, unlike some of his contemporaries, Polanyi advocated for socialism instead of liberalism as a way out of inherently unfree and unequal fascist forms of government. Such socialist societies would - based on democratic principles – ensure the highest level of freedom for everyone and end the rule of the self-regulating market (Brie & Thomasberger, 2020). With regards to his present relevance, Aulenbacher et al. (2019) emphasize the rediscovery of Karl Polanyi’s work as a result of processes of neoliberal globalization of the 1990s. Alongside protests contesting potential consequences of neoliberalism, financialization and free trade, Polanyi and his theories have found their way back into both academic and public discourse.

„Since the (new round of) globalisation after 1989, new conflicts and protests have arisen and a re-ordering of society has again been put on the agenda. Karl Polanyi has become a key reference in research efforts to understand the contradictions inherent to the market economy and neoliberal globalisation“ (Aulenbacher et al., 2019, p. 106).

This contextualization underpins how Polanyian Perspectives are well-suited to examine current dynamics of privatization, financialization, commodification, and marketization in the domains of care and housing. In both fields - care as well as housing - it can be observed that market-based mechanisms are gaining importance in addressing both the housing and the care crisis, thereby further intensifying the dynamics of commodification and marketization. Plank et al. (2023) have already demonstrated that commodification in the critical social infrastructure sector, which deals with aspects of health, care and living, represents a lucrative business model for transnational corporations and financial investors, leading to a significant increase of investments in this sector. This trend is well advanced in countries highly affected by neoliberal restructuring like England, where chronic underfunding in the care and health sectors has led to a strong dependence on private, profit-oriented providers. Structural problems of access to and affordability of care and housing, like insufficient supply of housing and care facilities in lower-income regions, have intensified, resulting in socioeconomic and spatial polarization, which has also exacerbated social inequalities in terms of gender, race, and class. Although Austria due to its comparatively strong welfare state in the past has not yet reached this point, studies depict a discernible trend of private capital interests infiltrating critical social infrastructure, thereby endangering common welfare and the stability of society and economy alike.

The Polanyian Perspectives do not only shed light on the cause of the problem, however. Through the concepts of double movement (movement and countermovement) Polanyi was also able to take



society's reaction to "the overextension of the market – and the resulting risks to the fictitious factors of production: labour, land and capital." (Aulenbacher et al., 2018, p. 3) into consideration.

Furthermore, Polanyi describes double movement as a dynamic and contested development of society, exemplified by the England experience during the advancing industrialization and liberalization of the 19th and 20th century. Among other things, he recognized the dangers of the exploitation of workers, the pollution of nature, and precarious housing conditions. This is primarily attributed to the fact that land, labor, and money are traded as commodities. However, Polanyi disputes the commodity status attributed to land, labor, and money, hence coining the term *fictitious commodities* (Décieux et al., 2019, p. 388).

According to the principles of economic liberalism, the market expands and aims to create a self-regulating market. Polanyi defines these ongoing processes of marketization as movement. Therefore, a countermovement is to be understood as the principle of safeguarding society, particularly those who are first impacted by the harmful effects of the market, including people and nature. Interventional measures include protective laws, associations, and other alternatives (Polanyi, [1944] 1977, p. 172). Thus, Polanyi regards the notion of the self-regulating market as a threat to the existence of society, since it entails the disembedding of the market and its dominance over the realm of the social. These developments are leading to both global and local counter-movements against the transformation of society into a market society (Décieux et al., 2019, p. 388).

This brief overview over key aspects of the body of work of the great thinker Karl Polanyi underscores the present-day relevance of his theories. Concepts like commodification, financialization, and marketization, various organized forms of civic protest taking on the shape of Polanyian countermovements as reactions to an increasingly inaccessible and unequal care and housing sector ran through the three-day international conference like a common thread, connecting various plenary presentations, parallel sessions, and discussions. Therefore, the following conference report will be structured by the topics of (De-)Commodification, (Re-)Production of Inequalities, and Alternatives and Countermovements. This structure, which was guided by focal points of Polanyi's work, enabled the organization of the report while simultaneously emphasizing the central findings of the contributions.



2.1. (DE-)COMMODIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

As shown above, Polanyi's concepts can be used to examine and to criticize current dynamics of commodification and marketization. Many presentations at the conference dealt with these topics in the areas of care and housing and are summarized in this chapter.

Hans Volmar (Vienna University of Economics and Business) presented an analysis of transnational investment in care and housing, contributing to the ongoing discussion on the financialization of these sectors. The comprehensive approach included a comparison of these sectors between Austria and Germany. Previous contributions on the marketization of critical infrastructure (housing, care, health) have already concluded that this sector proves to be an attractive business field for private investors. Simultaneously, there are substantial risks for employees and those dependent on these services (Plank, et al., 2021). Furthermore, private capital interests (stock-oriented companies, insurance companies, etc.) infiltrate critical infrastructure with the aim of increasing investors' capital (Plank, et al., 2023). The comparison between these countries revealed that transnational investments play a more significant role in Germany than in Austria, despite both having the character of a conservative-corporatist welfare state. The German housing system has undergone significant restructuring, with approximately two million state-owned apartments privatized since 1990, whereas Austria has seen no notable shifts. Nevertheless, Austria has also implemented landlord-friendly reforms in recent decades.

Margaret Haderer (Vienna University of Technology) presented her new book *Rebuilding Cities and Citizens - Mass Housing in Red Vienna and Cold War Berlin* thus taking up the topic of social housing. In the book, she describes that the provision of mass housing in Vienna after World War I and in Berlin after World War II served both as a response to a dire need of the population and as a key lever for building variations of socialism and liberalism. Haderer recognizes an interplay between political ideologies and the production of space, emphasizing that the question of how people live is profoundly political.

Novy et al. (2019) describe the phase of Red Vienna (1919-1934) as a social democratic counter-movement with transformative goals and focused on the above-mentioned housing and social policy. Many people who had previously been excluded benefited from the decommodified housing sector: "An essentially decommodified housing sector sustained socio-economic habitation, which was framed culturally based on the dignity of the formerly excluded segments of the population such as women" (Novy et al., 2019, p. 235).



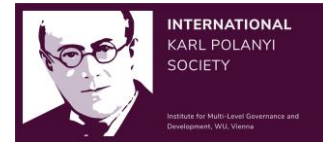
Similarly, the urban designer **Jana Bogdanović** ('Infrastruktura' PE) and her colleagues ventured to address the problem of decent housing in today's city of Šabac, Serbia. Their presentation centered around the successful re-creation of a mass housing estate dating back to socialist times. The processes of re-designing were shaped by citizen participation and resulted in a revitalization of the formerly run down neighborhood.

Raphael Deindl (Johannes Kepler University Linz) illustrated that capitalist societies show inherent problems with social reproduction due to the division between production and social reproduction. Deindl made clear how capitalism commodifies daily activities of human beings, by the attempts of shifting them into a 'productive' mode. An example is the development from the male-bread-winner to the adult-worker model. The latter leads to problems with reproduction, as women are still perceived as responsible for care work. Deindl emphasized that family policies must be seen as regulatory key elements, which front the dysfunctional characteristics of the capitalist production mode. Family policies can reorganize social reproduction and at the same time function as decommodification instruments. However, family policies affect different families in different ways as Deindl does not observe a general transformation from familialism to defamilialism in his research. Instead, some family policies work in one and some in the other direction.

How the quality of elderly care declined in northern Europe was explained by **Teppo Kröger** (University of Jyväskylä). Although originally the Nordic Model of elderly care implied care for all in need, either by home or residential care, austerity and the marketization of care led to severe care gaps, which failed to comply with the Nordic vision.

In his presentation **Kristofer Pitz** (Friedrich-Schiller University Jena) analyzed care within capitalism using a two step approach. First, he located the production of labor power in the household and advocated a Marxian Perspective. Second, Pitz introduced unpaid domestic care into the Sraffian model of production. With this approach Pitz wanted to give an explanation on how the capitalist production mode subordinates and misuses unpaid care work for its persistence. Pitz concludes that less domestic labor can increase the economic surplus in the capitalist economy. However, this goes along with the exploitation of care workers and necessarily leads to problems of social reproduction in capitalist societies.

Katharina Litschauer (Vienna University of Economics and Business) raised the question of what is required for housing to become a product for people and not for profit making. In her research she investigates the process by which housing becomes a commodity. Litschauer emphasizes that it is



urgently needed to strengthen the use value and limit the exchange value of housing. Litschauer concludes that social housing is not enough. The development of new forms of housing as well as the evaluation of the provisioning is needed.

The philosopher **Cornelia Klinger** described that Europe and North America were facing a division between the productive and the reproductive sphere in the 19th century. She attributed this to processes of industrialization and urbanization, in short capitalism. Capitalist promises of freedom and equality could not be redeemed. Instead, these developments resulted in a structurally careless society (Aulenbacher & Dammayr, 2014, p. 136). According to Klinger it was a fundamental societal need to create a sphere where life is possible. This sphere was the family (the household), a place of protection where capitalism seemingly could not intervene. Klinger described the upbringing of young men within this sphere as the core reason for the reproduction of inequalities along the dimensions of gender, race, and class. Men were raised with the idea that relationships were self-granted and unchangeable, which resulted in a gridlocked reality. However, the seeming independence of the private sphere was only a pretense: attempts to commodify and commercialize ‘the private’ take place frequently.

Furthermore, **Attila Melegh** (Corvinus University Budapest) presented his recently published book *The Migration Turn and Eastern Europe – A Global Historical Sociological Analysis* at the conference, which investigates the current anti-migration discourse in Eastern Europe. The context in which this discourse takes place was ascribed a significant importance and simplified answers – such as the assumption of nationalist propaganda as the main reason – were rejected. For the analysis a historical materialist Perspective was taken on. Melegh emphasized that marketization is the most relevant cause for the polarization within the societal discourse on the topic of migration.

Flavia Martinelli (Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria) emphasized that in Europe, the neoliberal movement led to the growing of inequalities and to a weakening of welfare states. The Italian scholar indicates that exclusionary processes - both territorial as well as social - can be observed all over Europe (Martinelli et al., 2017, p. 397). Additionally, Martinelli outlined developments in Italy, like the central state giving up its role in coordinating social policies. Instead, responsibility was shifted to regional and local authorities, while the question of resource allocation remained unanswered. Martinelli urges for a redistribution from richer to poorer places as well as from richer to poorer people. Hereby, Martinelli highlights the redistribution potential of the welfare state. The strengthening of welfare states in Europe could be an answer to damages caused by neoliberal austerity policies of the past decades.



Commodification and commercialisation of care and housing lead to several severe social problems, like the rise of social inequalities, processes of polarization, devaluation and exploitation as well as the erosion of the welfare state and its societal role. Therefore, the conference contributions presented under the topic of (De-)Commodification showcase the various implications of the current crises in care and housing. The following chapter unites contributions, which allow a deeper understanding of varying social inequalities as well as power structures embedded in the fields of care and housing.

2.2. THE (RE-)PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN THE FIELDS OF CARE AND HOUSING

The different access to adequate care and housing is determined by power structures regarding class, race and gender. During the conference the (re-)production of social inequalities as well as the intermingling and interdependence of both fields were represented by the following presentations:

Ilaria De March and **Victoria Juen** (Vienna University of Economics and Business) focused on the nuclear family as a main cause for the reproduction of gender inequalities. The aim of their research was to identify factors which favor equal distribution of unpaid care work between the genders. The analysis of qualitative in-depth interviews with heterosexual feminist parents of children below the age of four years led them to the recognition of three main interacting factors with the potential to overcome gender unequal distribution of care arrangements in nuclear families. On the macro level they identified institutional arrangements, which allow both parents equal access to gainful employment. On the micro level they found individual strategies like conscious decisions of both parents regarding equally shared care arrangements. Finally, they highlighted the importance of feminist ideals to redefine gender roles.

The distribution of elderly care in Austria was thematized by **Lukas Milo Strauss** (University Klagenfurt). In his research he looked into quality assurance visits that were introduced by the Austrian government in order to professionalize the live-in care sector. In Austria, 'home' is characterized as a sphere for naturalized, 'warm' informal family care whereas institutions of the public sphere are perceived as providers of 'cold', yet professional care (Aulenbacher et al., 2021). Live-in care is almost exclusively performed by migrant care workers without formal training that are placed in the households through intermediary agencies. Compared to the formally trained nurses, who perform the quality assurance visits, migrant care workers are perceived as lay carers. This happens against a backdrop of a normative order distinguishing between 'proper' care provided by professionals and informal care and



housekeeping tasks executed by female migrant live-ins, whose purpose is to keep established routines going while making their presence as foreigners and strangers invisible. Therefore, Strauss identified the assessment process as a ritualized mobilization of gendered public-private dichotomies (Weintraub, 1997).

Fabienne Décieux (University of Vienna) focused in her research on institutional early child care arrangements in Vienna, which reflect the already mentioned traditional and strongly feminized perception of care in Austria. Although care is regarded mainly as women's responsibility, the potential workforce of women becomes more and more important to the state. Well organized institutional early child care could make gainful employment accessible to mothers and therefore reduce problems like poverty in old age and the gender pay gap. However, institutional care does not always reach the ones who are in need in the way it is needed. Moreover, low public recognition of feminized care work influences working conditions and quality standards of institutional care. During her research, Décieux came to the conclusion that framework conditions like unpaid overtime work, the use of private technical resources for documentation purposes, below average child care ratios, etc. do neither match the demands of educators nor the ones of children and leave all parties involved in an unacceptable position.

Sigrid Betzelt (Berlin School of Economics and Law) and **Ingo Bode** (University of Kassel) addressed similar problems regarding institutional care in Germany, like the risk of burnout, fears of failure and the feeling of being overtaxed care workers face. In Germany, institutional care is regarded as early education and preparation for school, at the same time, it is expected of care givers to meet individual needs of children and to provide inclusivity for diverse family models. These high demands are met with low public recognition, poor working conditions, and low resources. This puts pressure on institutional child care institutions in Germany and Austria and has led to public resistance and protests in both countries.

Governmental measures have the power to improve educational standards or gender equality. However, they can also be used to intensify inequalities of gender, class, and race as **Noemi Katona** (Centre of Sciences Budapest) explained, referring to Hungary's *carefare regime* (Fodor, 2022). To "fight population decline" Hungary's current government introduced a broad range of (financial) benefits for heterosexual, married upper-class couples with at least three children. Hungarian women are regarded as solely responsible for care work while at the same time being expected to increase their wage work to full time employment without receiving equal wages (Fodor, 2022, p. 39).



Consequently, due to this lack of governmental support, women working part time as well as lower class women in full time employment are faced with a higher risk of poverty. Governmental measures did not only affect impoverished women and their children but also other vulnerable groups, like unemployed, disabled people or people with minimum pensions, due to the reduction of social spendings. Politically loyal churches stepped in to provide education and child care as well as elderly care. In exchange for their services, they received property rights and higher subsidies. On the one hand, this commodification of care led to “political dependence” of care work and on the other hand to the “ideological indoctrination of children” (Fodor, 2022, p. 38).

The interconnectedness of feminized care responsibilities and housing was studied by **Irene Sabeté Muriel** (University of Barcelona). With her research she examined the housing crisis in Barcelona and its particular impact on women. Using an approach from feminist political economy, she pointed to the connection between the fact that care activities continue to be predominantly the responsibility of women, influencing their employment and income opportunities, and thus reducing their chances in the housing market. Sabaté Muriel recognized care as a factor that shapes the housing needs and opportunities of women, whether it be in the case of mothers at risk of homelessness due to rising rents or migrant women experiencing intersectional consequences of the housing crisis in Barcelona. Additionally, women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence, often leading to their escape from shared living spaces. The term *feminization of poverty* further underscores the researchers’ description of a *gendered crisis* in the housing market in Barcelona.

Another feminist Perspective on the intersection of care and housing was articulated by **Janne Martha Lentz** (Karl-Franzens-University Graz), who illustrated how housing shapes single mothers’ capacities to care. Based on her research on single mothers in public housing in Hamburg, she recognizes that they are often at risk of poverty, have to allocate a significant portion of their income to housing, and face high housing insecurity in the private rental market. Moreover, single mothers have specific requirements for their living space to manage childcare, housework, employment, and self-care. She notes that while Hamburg's housing policy takes these needs into account, social housing still lags behind. For single mothers, it is challenging to find suitable housing. They must either accept conditions that restrict their capacity to care or, by moving, risk losing their social resources that support them in caring for their children. Like Lentz, **Nejra-Nuna Cengic** (Karl-Franzens University Graz) addressed the interconnectedness of housing problems and reproductive work in her research. Her focus lies on specific struggles of housing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their effects on domestic care.



The numerous facets of housing inequalities were brought to attention by **Mike Laufenberg** (Friedrich-Schiller University Jena) and **Jenny Preunkert** (University of Duisburg-Essen). Preunkert stresses that housing is a question of unequal distribution in Europe. Furthermore she emphasizes that housing space and quality depend on income, the family situation, and the national institutional framework. Laufenberg observed unequal distribution of housing within Germany. He especially problematized urban out-migration and its negative effects on rural residents. Some of the consequences were shortages of affordable housing for low-income working class households, which led to increased peripheralization. Laufenberg identified the socio-economic status, the family status, gender, and the national framework as common causes for housing problems.

The contributions of **Stefanie Wöhl** (University of Applied Sciences BFI Vienna) approach the topic of housing, examining gender roles and power relations. Wöhl addressed the situation of single parents in the Austrian housing market by emphasizing their susceptibility to energy poverty. This vulnerability arises from difficulties in covering basic energy services like heating, hot water, electricity etc. for their households. Triggered by multiple crises, rents in Austria have risen in recent years, accompanied by an increase in fixed term renting that pose challenges for many tenants. She observes changes in the housing market, highlighting trends of a shift from social housing towards investment capital. These processes of financialization increasingly limit affordable housing for part-time workers or individuals with migration backgrounds.

A link between housing and digital capitalism with a focus on gender roles and power relations was established by **Julia Gruhlich** (Georg-August University Göttingen). In her research project *SmartUp* she explored the impacts of digital technologies in Smart Homes on the gender-housing relationship. Therefore, she examined the configuration of care work and gender within private households. The marketization of Smart Homes along the 'lifestyles' of white, heterosexual, middle-class nuclear families reveal the capitalist-patriarchal power hierarchies in the use of new technologies. Even though men may take on the digital aspects of household tasks, such as setting up and operating digital technologies like heating or robot vacuum cleaners, the remaining areas like child care or elderly care typically continue to be predominantly handled by women. Additionally, Gruhlich addressed less-explored aspects of the field, including household control, surveillance through sensors and cameras, potential privacy infringements, and the risk that new technologies may contribute to mental strain.

Rivka Saltiel (Karl-Franzens University Graz) shed light on the initiative *Hébergement*, which was founded as an informal housing organization in Brussels in 2017 as the residents of Belgium's capital



were faced with an increasing number of undocumented refugees. For the refugees, who mainly originated from East Africa, Brussels was a pitstop on their way to the United Kingdom, where they intended to seek asylum. However, due to their (lack of) legal status in Belgium they were forced to sleep in the streets of Brussels. In response to these untenable ‘housing’ and living conditions, volunteers from across Belgium, predominantly women, organized to offer their private living spaces to refugees as temporary accommodations. Saltiel examined with this project the extent to which the social relationships that emerged from that cohabitation in the intimate space of private homes can break with the unequal hierarchical distribution of care and its classifications in Western European capitalist societies.

Class, race or gender do not only determine societal expectations concerning care responsibilities. Furthermore, conference contributions have showcased the inherent connection between unequally distributed (unpaid) care work, the potential extent of gainful employment, and consequently, access to quality housing. As care work is deeply gendered, the devaluation of care work is crucially linked to female poverty. While class and race have a negative effect on an individual's access to prosperity, conference contributions highlighted how the intersection with gender and its linkage to undervalued care work can further deepen the consequences of structural inequalities. The following section therefore collects contributions that highlight potential solutions.

2.3. BALANCING THE SCALES: ALTERNATIVES AND COUNTERMOVEMENTS

The conference’s aim was not only to articulate profound criticism, but also to provide solutions. The following chapter outlines several practices and ideas, which can be perceived as persuasive alternatives to given social injustices in Austria and other European countries. In further consequence, countermovements in a Polanyian sense could be identified.

Simona Ďurišová (IG24 – Interest Group of 24-H-Carers in Austria) and **Maria Sagmeister** (University Vienna) analyzed live-in care in Austria. Both emphasized that the changes of regulations concerning the legal status of live-in care workers was implemented by the Austrian government to facilitate the exploitation of live-in caregivers’ labor force. They argue that the quasi-self-employment of live-in carers would lead to precarious working conditions. In order to improve working conditions, social protection is needed. Instead, Austrian policy makers found a destructive (but legal) way to introduce live-in carers to the labor market. Aiming at improving the situation of live-in carers in Austria, Ďurišová



and Sagmeister presented the organization of live-in care via an interest group as well as several other promising models from all over Europe. As co-founder and representative of IG24 – the first interest group for Austrian live-in care workers – Ďurišová brought the voices of the live-in carers to the conference.

Research on another strategy, which enables home care, was presented by **Julia Radlherr** (Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna) and **August Österle** (Vienna University for Economics and Business). In the past years, the Austrian federal states Upper Austria and Burgenland implemented models of employment for family carers that include regular salary and insurance coverage. The study showed the contrasting impacts of the model. On the one hand, family care as paid work gives carers social security and creates a narrative of family care as ‘real’ (wage-)work. However, these employment models potentially solidify long-term care in the domestic sphere. Nonetheless, employment of family members as caregivers still is a marginal phenomenon with currently approximately 30 people in Upper Austria and roughly 300 persons taking advantage of this model in Burgenland. While policy makers in Burgenland advocate for this model as the solution for the Austrian family care issue, it is still not clear whether the employment of family carers would work on a national scale or if it would even lead to an increased risk of excluding people in need of care.

Self-determined living at home and the use of technical assistance systems was **Andrea Kastl**’s (Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences) focus at the conference. Together with an interdisciplinary team, Kastl is engaged in the research project DeinHaus 4.0 Oberbayern. With their project, they are looking into ideas of people in old age or with physical and mental illnesses, who want to live and be cared for outside of institutional settings in their own homes. To explore and experience the supportive capabilities of aid and assistance systems, equipped apartments have been established. This interactive and participatory approach aims to enhance the utility, acceptance, effectiveness, and satisfaction among the target audience.

A relatively new field in terms of housing and healing was mentioned by **Anna Martin** (Corvinus University of Budapest): the role of trauma informed design in the supportive housing sector. Martin emphasized the importance of a safe environment regarding trauma informed design. Traumatized people have special needs, which is why a ‘safe’ room is crucial to their wellbeing. She argues that the needs of traumatized people should be considered in any social housing program, whether at the European, national or local level.

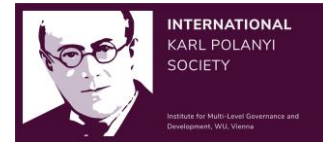


Another population group with special needs that have been disregarded by society in the past, are homeless people. Going in that direction, **Ingo Bode** (University of Kassel) presented his research on homelessness in Germany. The welfare state as well as housing policies include measures against homelessness. Authorities and other actors (e.g. non-government organizations) create a mixture of actions, which aim to reduce homelessness. In his research, Bode found out that the hybrid form and the involvement of multiple actors in homelessness assistance takes a toll on the individuals working in the field. Furthermore, the sociologist advocated for a multidimensional view on homelessness. Not just housing, but also mental health, citizenship, and the way services are provided are relevant factors to consider when looking at the issue of homelessness.

The anthropologist **Chiara Cacciotti** (Polytechnic University of Turin) elucidated the positive perception of former illegal housing strategies in Rome. Especially during the pandemic, housing squats received a high acceptance rate in society as they provided accessible housing solutions and networks of care and solidarity for those in need. In her research, Cacciotti focused on a housing squat, which initiated the association *SOLID Roma*, a cooperation aiming to improve living conditions and access to care in and around Italy's capital city.

With her research, **Amy Horton** (University College London) investigates care and housing as social infrastructures, which she understands as “ambivalent, uneven, and contested configurations of places, people, and practices that differentially afford sociality, social reproduction, and survival” (Horton & Penny, 2023, p. 2). Horton understands social infrastructures to be shaped by processes of financialization, which were in past decades increasingly enabled through a national regime of austerity. Different state strategies to attract flows of private capital have led to the emergence of the *speculative city*. While this practice is oftentimes framed as a progressive use of public assets to prevent further consequences of austerity, Horton argues that the speculative city is rooted in classed and racialized dispossession. As private real estate actors seek to increase the potential monetary value of an urban area, different social stigma, like low rents leading to higher criminal rates are used against current residents of lower-income areas. In an effort to overcome the threat of being displaced from their neighbourhoods, an oppositional coalition made up of NGOs and social movements was formed and successfully managed to disrupt the *speculative city*.

A potential alternative in the field of housing was introduced by **Darinka Czischke** (Delft University of Technology) presenting one of her research projects. Czischke examined the tense situation in the Dutch housing market, considering the living and housing conditions of different generations. Older



individuals often reside alone in large apartments, while young people and families struggle to afford living space. A concept that can provide an alternative to traditional housing options is *Collaborative Housing*. This overarching term encompasses a wide range of collective, self-organized, and self-managed living arrangements (Czischke et. al., 2020). On one hand, the approach aims at the de-commodification of living spaces, and on the other hand, residents have the opportunity to play a central role in shaping their housing and care needs. Czischke emphasizes the transformative potential of *Collaborative Housing* through a case study in Delft, Netherlands, illustrating it with successful projects such as the intergenerational *CALICO project* (care and living in community) in Brussels and the older women co-housing project in London.

Almut Peukert (University of Hamburg) and **Anne Vogelpohl** (Borough of Hamburg-Altona) drew parallels between the housing crisis and the care crisis and emphasized their interconnectedness. Due to the interwovenness of both fields, possible solutions can be found in realizing similar goals like affordability, availability, quality, and social inclusivity. Organizing care and housing in a communal form could not only meet care needs of families, disabled or elderly people, it also opens the possibility of affordable, qualitative living spaces for people with lower income. An example for social housing was the *Röder Village*, which was designed for diverse social groups based in a multigenerational neighbourhood. The goal of creating possibilities of social inclusion for people with mental illnesses was realized through community kitchens, libraries, and gardens. Another goal was meeting diverse care needs of villagers in an adequate way, which was accomplished through mutual support and professional assistance. In their research, Peukert and Vogelpohl stressed the central role of community housing and projects like the *Röder Village* to meet housing and caring needs of a diverse population and to reach accessibility in both fields regardless of the socio-economic background of the people in need.

Another example of a community based approach was presented by **Klaus Wegleitner** and **Patrick Schuchter** (Karl-Franzens University Graz), who introduced the concept of *caring communities* at the conference, which refers to an approach in public health that combines multiple efforts by several actors aimed at increasing wellbeing and health of vulnerable individuals (Wegleitner & Schuchter, 2018, p. 2). Both presenters emphasized that the interplay of measures and actors is crucial to the improvement of the situation of individuals. In their research, Wegleitner and Schuchter underline that three major forms of resistance were found related to the critical potential of caring communities: First, “resistance to the commercialization and fragmentation of care”, second, “resistance to the privatization of care” and third, “resistance to dynamics of disempowerment in communities”



(Wegleitner & Schuchter, 2018, p. 12). *Caring communities* defy the subordination of care to logics of the market as well as to the negative effects of exuberant individualism (ibid., p. 13). Therefore, *caring community* initiatives can be conceived as counter movements, which seek social protection in a society, where market logics undermine the Austrian health care system and present promising alternatives for current care related challenges.

Crises in the sectors of care and housing are likely to be linked to one another as both are rooted in processes of commodification and structures of inequality. The presented attempts of social housing and caring communities are generally aimed at generating an adequate supply of quality housing and care for people in need by considering the interwovenness of both fields. In order to overcome social deprivation in the fields of care and housing, it is necessary to continue this path and develop new forms of housing regarding caring needs of residents. This is crucial as the access to social security and adequate living standards, both affected by care and housing, are part of the human rights convention and have to be independent of the socio-economic status or identity of individuals.

3. “IT’S TIME FOR A CHANGE” – IN CARE AND HOUSING

As illustrated in the brief introduction to the great thinker, Karl Polanyi, the Polanyian framework provides the opportunity to address socio-economic developments and their interrelations within contemporary capitalism. This was evident in the numerous presentations and discussions at the conference as some of Polanyi's concepts were implicitly or explicitly utilized to advance the interdisciplinary research dealing with care and housing alike. As Polanyi cautioned during his lifetime, the modern self-regulating market is a threat to mankind's very existence. The conference strikingly showed how a critical interaction with modern day capitalism is more relevant than ever.

Another task the international conference set out to achieve was to strengthen the interconnection between the thematic fields of care and housing through transdisciplinary research. The insights into the plenary as well as parallel sessions and book presentations provided above, categorized into the topics (De-)Commodification, (Re-)Production of Inequalities, and Alternatives, illustrate the broad spectrum of current research covered during the conference.



The inclusion of different disciplines is entirely in Polanyi's sense: "His approach has been - and, to some extent, still is - unconventional. Polanyi transgressed not only traditional disciplinary but also academic boundaries, deliberately moving between disciplines and engaging with extra-scientific actors. (...) Polanyi may have pointed the way ahead towards what today is known as transdisciplinary research" (Aulenbacher et al., 2019, p. 111). The organizers and participants of the conference aimed to fulfill this intention, which was attempted to be demonstrated here.

Nonetheless, there is still a lot of research to be done: "We can, however, not stop here. The challenge ahead of us will be to integrate extra-scientific actors into processes of knowledge production, thus, breaking down the all too artificial boundaries between science, policy, and society" (Aulenbacher et al., 2019, p. 111). Karl Polanyi's theories offer plenty of scope for rethinking society and transforming capitalism, or, as Novy & Aulenbacher (2020, p. 189) put in: "It's time for a change – putting economy back in its place".

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