

# Introduction: Actualising the Caring Turn within Arts and Research

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Care is everywhere – at least, so it seems when looking at the programming announcements of art and academic organisations, art collectives, and global art fairs and biennials. I am not alone in witnessing the incredible rise in new care-centred networks, exhibitions, publications, symposia, and event series on the subject of care. Indigenous studies scholar Hi'iilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and media scholar Tamara Kneese argue that care has re-entered the zeitgeist,<sup>1</sup> while the London-based Care Collective goes as far as to speak of “discursive explosions of care during Covid-19.”<sup>2</sup> This explosive engagement with care – which can be argued to constitute a “caring turn” within arts and academia – has made it almost impossible to map the immense amount of public programming and publications on care in recent years. These have addressed, for example, the relationship between art-making and motherhood, including notable exhibitions such as *Mutter! (Mother!)* at Kunsthalle Mannheim in Germany in 2021 and *Maternar/Mothering. Between Stockholm Syndrome and Acts of Production* at MUAC – University Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico City in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Such shows have visually explored the often taboo and ambivalent depictions of motherhood as well as gendered role expectations and norms around caregiving.<sup>4</sup> However, care has also found its way into the art field

- 1 Hi'iilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, “Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times,” *Social Text* 38 (2020), 1.
- 2 Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal, “From Carewashing to Radical Care: The Discursive Explosions of Care during Covid-19,” *Feminist Media Studies* 20, no. 6 (2020): 1.
- 3 For a detailed discussion of the relationship between artistic production and social reproduction (motherhood in particular), see section 3.1 – “Against All Odds: Mothers in the Arts.” The section also engages with the artwork on the book’s cover, *Ada vs. Abramović* (2018) by Hannah Cooke.
- 4 Other notable exhibitions around motherhood include *Motherhood* at Syker Vorwerk in 2022–23, curated by Nicole Giese-Kroner; *MOTHERHOOD II. Shifting Realities* at Hilbert Raum Berlin in 2024, curated by Hannah van Ginkel; and *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood* with Hayward Gallery Touring in 2024–25, curated by Hettie Judah. For an extensive list of initiatives addressing questions of motherhood and art-making, see this book’s appendix;

through a multitude of readings that, for example, have tended to the relationships between the climate crisis and care,<sup>5</sup> care as labour and maintenance,<sup>6</sup> care as resistance,<sup>7</sup> care as resilience,<sup>8</sup> care as emotional labour and affect,<sup>9</sup> art as care for the community,<sup>10</sup> the commoning of care,<sup>11</sup> care within the digital realm,<sup>12</sup> collectivising self-care,<sup>13</sup> care as concern for spatial justice,<sup>14</sup> queer caring communities,<sup>15</sup> care as anti-ableist inclusion,<sup>16</sup> care as anti-capitalist love,<sup>17</sup> care as solidarity,<sup>18</sup> and so forth.

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for more information on the mentioned exhibitions and projects in this section, see the bibliography.

- 5 The *Climate Care* project by Gilly Karjevsky, and Rosario Talevi, housed at the Berlin-based Floating University, is one such example.
- 6 See the 2015–16 exhibition *Home Works* at Konsthall C., curated by Jenny Richards and Jens Strandberg, and the 2019 event series *Care Matters* at Kunstraum Niederösterreich.
- 7 See the 2023 exhibition *Mothers\*, Warriors, and Poets: Care as Resistance* at StadtPalais Stuttgart, curated by Scasia Bailer and Didem Yazıcı.
- 8 See Elisa Giardina Papa's "Labor of Sleep, Have you been able to change your habits??" as an example.
- 9 For further reading, see Daphne Dragona, "Editorial: Affective Infrastructures," *Transmediale*, no. 3, "Affective Infrastructures" (October 2019): <https://archive.transmediale.de/content/affective-infrastructures-o>.
- 10 See the community art project *Casa Gallina* in Mexico City, initiated by Osvaldo Sanchez and Josefa Ortega.
- 11 See Dyana Gravina's Procreate Project and related 2023 conference "Oxytocin: Collective Care", as well as the 2023 symposium "Commoning Collective Care" by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and OnCurating, and the work of the artist-activist collective *Ultra-Red*.
- 12 See the 2019 exhibition *TechnoCare* at Kunstraum Niederösterreich and Marina Sula's 2016 *Soft Power* at Gabriele Senn Galerie Vienna.
- 13 See artist initiatives such as the international Social Muscle Club and the Leipzig-based GRAND BEAUTY.
- 14 See projects such as Andrea Francke's "Invisible Spaces of Parenthood" at Showroom London in 2012; Isabel Gutiérrez Sánchez's "Infrastructures of Caring Citizenship" project; and the Berlin-based initiative Platz Da!. For further reading, see Angelika Fitz, Elke Krasny, and Architekturzentrum Wien, eds, *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2019).
- 15 Also see Jeremy Wade's platform "The Future Clinic for Critical Care" and the UK-based organisation CUNTemporary.
- 16 See the work of the organisation Sins Invalid and of the artists Johanna Hedva, Constantina Zavitsanos, and Park McArthur. For readings, see "Against Accommodation: Park McArthur. Park McArthur in Conversation with Daniel S. Palmer," *Mousse Magazine*, 2015, <https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/park-mcarthur-daniel-s-palmer-2015/>.
- 17 See Alexa Karolinski and Ingo Niermann's 2020 film *Army of Love*.
- 18 See the international initiative Collective Disaster, the Austrian collective Maiz, and the 2019 show *Soft Solidarity* by Nataša Ilić and Solvej Helweg Ovesen at Galerie Wedding.

These varied examples illustrate how the caring turn has gained importance as an umbrella for otherwise diverse, or possibly more fragmented, conversations on collectivity, social reproduction, responsibility, vulnerability, health, repair, disability, inclusion, gender, and feminism(s). From this perspective, the framework of the caring turn carries the potential to create a transformative momentum within the cultural field, which is in the process of recognising the importance of centring matters of care.

Yet, much of the recent curatorial engagement with care seems to have occurred within the symbolic realm, through exhibitions and public programming that engage with care, feminism(s), and gender on a representational level. While the notion of visibility and representation has carried an emancipatory promise within feminist exhibition-making since the 1970s – framing exhibitions as important spaces to renegotiate the visual and political recognition and representation of so-called marginalised social groups<sup>19</sup> – these mere symbolic engagements with care are not inherently linked to emancipation. Rather, they are ambivalent and contested, as non-self-determined forms of display can lead to the stigmatisation and further marginalisation of the subjects and themes displayed.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, purely symbolic engagements with care carry the risk of falling under the rubric of “care-washing,” which the Care Collective describes as a process in which cultural institutions or businesses reduce care to an empty signifier for political or economic gain.<sup>21</sup>

Feminist curatorial care therefore must be able to hold the ambivalences of the representations of care work and other central feminist concerns – by scrutinising not only what and who is made visible, but also in which form<sup>22</sup> – and it also must be able to go beyond the symbolic realm by constituting real-world caring infrastructures for the actual presence of caregivers and care-receivers, as well as other marginalised subjectivities, within the arts.<sup>23</sup> This form of actualising care is im-

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19 Angela Dimitrakaki and Nizan Shaked, “Feminism, Instituting, and the Politics of Recognition in Global Capitalism,” *OnCurating* no. 52 (November 2021); Johanna Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit: Über die visuellen Strukturen der Anerkennung* (Bielefeld, Germany: transcript, 2008).

20 Johanna Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit: Über die visuellen Strukturen der Anerkennung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008).

21 Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal, “From Carewashing to Radical Care: The Discursive Explosions of Care during Covid-19,” *Feminist Media Studies* 20, no. 6 (2020): 889–95.

22 I further this argument in chapter 5.2, in the section “Proposition #2: Create the Conditions of Visibility for Underrepresented Perspectives.”

23 Structural exclusion is not only an issue within the visual or fine arts. The parents and writers collective Other Writers Need to Concentrate was formed after a member enquired with an artist residency whether their children were welcome and received this response: “And sorry to tell you that we do not accept little kids as it really troubles other writers who need

portant, as the vast public programming on care has brought only few structural changes that aim to introduce fair working conditions, support inclusive ethics, or attend to the lived needs of caregivers and care-receivers. Such structural changes towards care could include art institutions offering childcare during openings, residencies realising that they must consider caregiving artists,<sup>24</sup> or funding institutions becoming more sensitive to the needs of artists and researchers with caring responsibilities.<sup>25</sup>

This disjunction between the performative engagement with trending notions of care, diversity, feminism(s), and social justice and the organisational realities of the often patriarchal, White, and elitist structures of the art institutions that display these politicised works needs urgent address.<sup>26</sup> To actualise care in the arts – and hence, to attain better gender equity, a sincere diversity of voices, and fair working conditions – we must hold art institutions and curators accountable for building support structures so that staff, collaborators, and artists who are caregivers and care-receivers can thrive in the arts. Feminist curating with care must be understood as an infrastructural practice, as a sincere act of “care for presence,” by creating the conditions for a diverse range of practitioners and audiences to form part of the cultural field. To speak with the words of the newly founded US initiative Museums Moving Forward: “Simply put, it is not enough to diversify the artists we are collecting or exhibiting; we must take better care of our people too.”<sup>27</sup>

In light of the raised concerns, the caring turn within the arts and academia cannot be counted as a celebratory moment until the representational engagements

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to concentrate.” Oftentimes such conflicts can serve as a point of departure for artistic works that challenge the aforementioned binary between “art or children” and the structural invisibilities in the field. For more information about their work, see the group’s website at <https://other-writers.de>.

- 24 For examples, see the Canadian residency MOTHRA and the Swiss La Becque Residency.
- 25 The Germany-based Netzwerk Mutterschaft und Wissenschaft (Network Motherhood and Science) is dedicated to making academia more accessible for caregivers by acknowledging their needs; the international network Cultural ReProducers advocates for more support for cultural practitioners in the arts and provides useful resources on their online platform at <https://www.culturalreproducers.org>.
- 26 Note on language: In this research, I capitalise the terms “Black” and “White” in an effort to recognise the racialised dynamics in place. While it has become widely accepted to capitalise “Black” as an anti-racist practice, it remains contested to capitalise “White.” However, I follow the argument that ‘to not name ‘White’ as a race is, in fact, an anti-Black act which frames Whiteness as both neutral and the standard.’ For more, see Ann Thúy Nguyễn and Maya Pendleton, “Recognizing Race in Language: Why We Capitalize ‘Black’ and ‘White,’” March 23, 2020, Center for the Study of Social Policy, <https://cssp.org/2020/03/recognizing-race-in-language-why-we-capitalize-black-and-white/>.
- 27 Museums Moving Forward, “Report 2023: Workplace Equity and Organizational Culture in US Art Museums,” accessed February 24, 2024, <https://museumsmovingforward.com>.

with care are thought and practised *in tandem* with concrete manifestations of feminist care within the (infra)structures of those respective fields. Within the vastly non-transparent field of the arts, this book is dedicated to narrowing the discrepancy between symbolic action and actualised care by providing theoretical and concrete practice-based methodological frameworks for enacting care in the art field. *Caring Infrastructures: Transforming the Arts through Feminist Curating* attempts to articulate an alternative roadmap for curating with care by critically engaging with care on thematic, representational, and (infra)structural levels – in discourse and in practice.

## Research Framework



*Image 1: Leaflet for “Workshop on the Value of Care,” from the series “Care for Caregivers,” M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, Hohenlockstedt, 2019. Artwork: Shira Richter, Push, 2005. Graphic design: Michael Pfisterer.*

Translation of text: “What is the value of my work when it is invisible and unpaid?”

Under my artistic directorship (2019–20) at the non-profit arts foundation M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, I initiated a participatory programme in the small town of Hohenlockstedt in rural Northern Germany – which forms the practice-based

element of this research project. The research undertaking was carried out between late 2018 and late 2023 at the University of Reading and the Zurich University of the Arts.<sup>28</sup> The participatory curatorial program, including its workshop series “Care for Caregivers” (Image 1) departed from the question: Who cares for the ones who care for others?

The curatorial programme served as a discursive framework in which this and other questions could be (re)negotiated and as a way to support artists with caring responsibilities and caring needs to practice their craft. The specific aim was to establish a synchronicity between the thematic, self-determined engagement with care and an actual implementation of support structures as tangible manifestations of care.<sup>29</sup>

In view of the etymological root of “curating” in “caring” (from the Latin *curare*, “to take care”), I sought to challenge and renegotiate this set of relations with this research account: What could an anti-hegemonic curatorial practice of care look like? How can curating be conceived as a methodological practice that targets the (infra)structures within the arts to align them with feminist ethics of care? What are the potentials, agencies, and limitations of such an approach to curating with care?

These research questions are attended to throughout the six chapters of this practice-based, interdisciplinary research project, which weaves together theoretical and historical engagements from curatorial studies, gender studies, museum studies, (queer) feminist art history and contemporary art practices, social reproduction theory and the ethics of care, philosophy, empirical research in the social sciences, feminist economics, and sociological, epistemological, ecological, and political thought. These theoretical strands are set into fruitful dialogue with my own curatorial practice of care as artistic director during 2019–20 at M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung and culminate in a set of hands-on propositions as to how curatorial care can be enacted through the building of caring infrastructures in the arts.

The discussion in this practice-based research revolves around questions of care from a range of angles: from the situated view of a caregiver, from the practice-based experience of a curator-as-carer, and from the activist perspective of a researcher critically engaging with the histories and ambivalences of care and social reproduction within the political economy but also within the arts as a precarious field of labour.

Across this research project, practice, theory, and critical (self-)reflection meander, build upon another, and challenge each other. Due to the local situatedness of

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28 The dissertation was submitted in October 2023 and successfully accepted in March 2024. Hence, the discourses and data in this research project are only covered until the late summer of 2023; only minor updates were carried out in early Spring 2024.

29 See chapter 4 – “Care for Caregivers: A Case Study of a Participatory Curatorial Programming on Care.”

my curatorial practice within Germany, most of the research (especially the empirical data) focuses on this terrain, in order to establish a political, economic, artistic, and theoretical framework that contextualises my curatorial practice and its respective field of social engagement. However, I bring together theories and practice-based examples from a range of scholars situated in various localities to enrich and complicate the historical and contemporary conditions of care within the arts in Germany. In the context of this research, when I refer to “the arts” I mean the discursive and exhibitionary complex (museums, art foundations, independent spaces, cultural institutions) and not the commercial arts realm (art fairs, auctions, galleries), even though the spheres overlap on occasion. This book attends in particular to the perspectives of thinkers and practitioners with relational, socially engaged, activist, and critical artistic and curatorial positions.<sup>30</sup>

## Activist Dimension to Research and Practice

### Micro-politics for an Otherwise

My research and my curatorial practice come with a dedication to social engagement that is inseparable from an activist interest in challenging the status quo of curatorial, artistic, and care practices in a counter-hegemonic spirit. The notion of counter-hegemonic activism embedded in my research and my curatorial practice is influenced by the writings of the political theorist Chantal Mouffe, who defines “hegemony” as something

obtained through the construction of nodal points, which discursively fix the meaning of institutions and social practices and articulate the “common sense” through which a given conception of reality is established. Such a result will always be contingent and precarious and susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic interventions.<sup>31</sup>

For Mouffe, however, radical politics does not equate to the complete withdrawal from existing hegemonic discourses and practices or merely oppositional actions.

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30 For a theoretical engagement with the history of socially engaged art, political art, and participation, see my bachelor’s thesis “Sozialer (T)raum.” Sascia Bailer, “Sozialer (T)raum? Über Das Politische Potenzial Der Kunst Von Joseph Beuys Und Rirkrit Tiravanija. Ein Kunst-theoretischer Vergleich” (Bachelor thesis, Zeppelin University, 2012). Claire Bishop has contributed many pertinent publications to this discourse; see, for example, Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012); Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” February 2006, 178–83.

31 Chantal Mouffe, “Critique as Counter-Hegemonic Intervention,” transversal, August 2008, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0808/mouffe/en>.

Rather, it takes the form of an *engagement* with the present hegemonic conditions, in order to rearticulate them. She writes:

What is needed is therefore a strategy whose objective is, through a set of counter-hegemonic interventions, to disarticulate the existing hegemony and to establish a more progressive one thanks to a process of re-articulation of new and old elements into different configuration of power.<sup>32</sup>

For Mouffe this moment of counter-hegemonic “rearticulation” is central, as a complete withdrawal would otherwise feed into a potentially “chaotic situation of pure dissemination” that would create room for non-progressive forces to take over this process of rearticulation – which would likely not be in alignment with a counter-hegemonic spirit.<sup>33</sup> This counter-hegemonic rearticulation would have to be a collective process, one of “acting in concert” with other social groups, to construct what Mouffe calls a “chain of equivalence.”<sup>34</sup>

By aligning my positioning with other initiatives around care, art, and gender, and by critically engaging with my own position of power and my own agency as artistic director 2019–20 at M.1 as well as a doctoral researcher, I have followed the activist call to seek out possibilities for a curatorial counter-model to the dominant forms of cultural production. The focus of my practice-based research revolved around exploring my curatorial agency to promote questions of care not only at the level of the visible (e.g., in exhibitions, film screenings, and publications) but also in terms of the structural framework of the curatorial field, which oftentimes is invisibilised itself. Under the rubric of “caring infrastructures,” my curatorial work concentrates on care as a theme for participatory engagement and artistic and discursive production and representation, while also fostering support structures that enable artists and participants with caring responsibilities and care needs to join the public programming.<sup>35</sup> My curatorial practice and this research project there-

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32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 According to Mouffe’s proposition of “acting in concert,” marginalised and disadvantaged groups will have to assemble their political strategies in order to undo the current hegemony. The argument is that through “chains of equivalence” and allied democratic struggles, they would collectively fight against different forms of subordination and seek broader transformation processes of existing power relations. For further elaboration on these ideas, see *ibid.*

35 This passage comes from my previous text Sascia Bailer, “Care for Caregivers: Curating against the Care Crisis,” in *Curating with Care*, ed. Elke Krasny, and Lara Perry (London: Routledge, 2023).

fore challenge the conditions of the arts by rearticulating structural propositions for an *otherwise* – in alignment with related activist initiatives.<sup>36</sup>

With this notion of “otherwise,” I follow Hobart and Kneese, who emphasise that radical care is built on praxis and as such doesn’t fall into traps of romanticising care nor ignoring its demons: “As the traditionally undervalued labour of caring becomes recognized as a key element of individual and community resilience, radical care provides a roadmap for an otherwise.”<sup>37</sup>

In addition to Mouffe, I turn to a variety of scholars and practitioners who advocate for small-scale interventions as a more sustainable path towards transformation, in order to spell out the necessary “roadmap for an otherwise.” In this book, I therefore speak of a micro-political approach towards change, which is in close alliance with the notion of “micro-activism” put forth by the political consultant and writer Omkari L. Williams. She shifts focus from the celebrated activism of those comfortable being in the spotlight towards the quieter activism that many people engage in within their everyday lives: “The small, cumulative actions are the ones that add up to the big change. The small, often unnoticed actions are the ones that create the tipping point.”<sup>38</sup> This line of thought is close to work of the Marxist-feminist theoretician Silvia Federici, who frames the sphere of social reproduction as the central terrain for social transformation, which – in a feminist tradition – locates the personal as the site of political struggle and change.<sup>39</sup> Mia Mingus, a writer, educator, and trainer for transformative justice and disability justice, also draws this connection between personal and wider transformations:

If accountability is a skill we value, then we must make room and make commitments to practice it ourselves each day, each week, each year. We can start small and build up our skills from there. We can start with our everyday relationships and those closest to us: our families, our friends, our partners, our coworkers, the earth.<sup>40</sup>

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36 For such counter-hegemonic articulations, see in particular section 5.2 – “In Search of a Practice: Towards a Curatorial Methodology of Caring Infrastructures.”

37 Hobart and Kneese, “Radical Care,” 13.

38 Omkari L. Williams, *Micro Activism: How You can Make a Difference in the World (Without a Bullhorn)* (North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2023), e-book.

39 Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Brooklyn, NY: PM Press, 2012); Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

40 Mia Mingus, “Dreaming Accountability,” *Leaving Evidence* (blog), May 5, 2019, <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2019/05/05/dreaming-accountability-dreaming-a-returning-to-ourselves-and-each-other/>.

While large-scale activism, which happens in the spotlight, might be what many associate with “proper activism,” it may be micro-activism that proves more sustainable over a long period.<sup>41</sup> Taking these positions into consideration, this research is rooted in a notion of micro-politics dedicated to small-scale, everyday, counter-hegemonic interventions and rearticulations within our respective contexts and communities. It is within the sites of our communities and professional contexts where such small-scale counter-hegemonic actions are collectively nourished and fortified. The book follows the assumption that everyone working in the arts is equipped with the agency to act, albeit in varying degrees, and that from this very agency we must collectively build towards a counter-hegemonic otherwise of the cultural field.

## Complicating Care

To offer an entry point into the uneasy terrain of care, I want to draw from the definition of “care” offered by the political economist Bengi Akbulut, which renders care of utmost sociopolitical relevance:

Carework is a basic form of labor that sustains social life and enables any kind of social system to function; it is a field that all of us draw upon to survive. [...] In that sense carework is a commons: it is the most fundamental basis of social reproduction to which we all contribute and to which we all owe our existence.<sup>42</sup>

Following Akbulut, there is no escape from care: all human and non-human beings require care throughout their respective lives, in different degrees and forms. We are each not only a caregiver but also a care-receiver. For the feminist political theorist Joan Tronto, the reciprocity of care is essential and its recognition “requires considerable bravery,” namely, that every individual has to “admit human vulnerability. We are care receivers, all.”<sup>43</sup> She argues that most democratic political theories assume that autonomous actors exist as the starting point for democracy, thereby framing human dependency as a deviation from the norm – as a “flawed condition.”<sup>44</sup> However, the myth that humans can live free from the support of others was pushed to the point of absurdity by the Covid-19 pandemic, as it laid bare the manifold tensions and contradictions between gendered norms, the neoliberal economy, care

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41 Williams, *Micro Activism*.

42 Bengi Akbulut, “Carework as Commons: Towards a Feminist Degrowth Agenda,” *Degrowth*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.degrowth.info/en/2017/02/carework-as-commons-towards-a-feminist-degrowth-agenda/>.

43 Joan Tronto, *Caring Democracy* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 146.

44 *Ibid.*, 31.

work, and supposed notions of autonomy. In this sense, the pandemic's sudden rise in early 2020 – which arrived in the middle of my curatorial project on care at M.1 in rural Northern Germany – both aided and intercepted my process of research-creation. During the pandemic, everyday acts of caregiving, which were the focus of my curatorial programme at M.1, became recognised as an aspect of society without which the system could not be maintained. Societies around the globe could no longer deny it: care is indispensable to life. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic lent quite explicit visibility to societal structures and imbalances which, although widely discussed on a theoretical level, had seldom entered public consciousness so vividly before. I never could have imagined, at the beginning of my doctoral research, that care would become such a deeply discussed topic or that the pandemic would put the *conditions* of my curatorial work at M.1 to the test by making on-site gatherings impossible.<sup>45</sup>

While care in its myriad connotations across cultural contexts and languages withdraws itself from fixed meanings, Tronto and Berenice Fisher have put forth a useful definition of caring

as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our “world” so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.<sup>46</sup>

This definition is rooted in the acknowledgement of entangled support structures that stretch beyond the care relationships between parent and child, between the elderly and their younger carers, and rather includes a rich variety of caring relationships among humans as well as their responsibility towards the natural environment – a notion which is increasingly relevant in times of climate crisis.<sup>47</sup> However, despite the central social function of care that entangles each and every one of us in a life-sustaining web, the ways in which care is organised across societies, and the

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45 I first made this point in Sascia Bailer, *Curating, Care, and Corona*, Kuratieren #6 (Hohenlockstedt: Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, 2020).

46 Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 103.

47 I want to acknowledge the important curatorial and editorial work of my colleagues around care and climate justice: Gilly Karjevsky, and Rosario Talevi, “Climate Care: Theory and Practice on a Natureculture Learning,” *Climate Care*, 2021, <https://floating-berlin.org/programmes/climate-care/>; Angelika Fitz, Elke Krasny, and Architekturzentrum Wien, eds., *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019). For further reading, I suggest Selma James, *Our Time Is Now: Sex, Race, Class, and Caring for People and Planet* (Binghamton, NY: PM Press, 2021); Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2022); Vandana Shiva, “Manifesto on Economies of Care and Earth Democracy,” Navdanya International, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://navdanyainternational.org/publications/manifesto-on-economies-of-care-and-earth-democracy/>.

mechanisms that dictate who cares for whom, do not follow the parameters of equity. Rather, it is important to recognise that care is immensely unevenly distributed and that it therefore must be regarded as attached to wider issues of inequality, exploitation, and structural violence.<sup>48</sup> This notion is mirrored in Akbulut's argument, whereby she frames care work as historically "one of the most exploitative, flexible and invisible forms of labor performed by women."<sup>49</sup> For women, and particularly for racialised women, care work forms the basis of exploitation not only within the (informal) labour force but also as owners of potentially pregnant and birthing bodies. In the UK, Black women are more than four times and Asian women two times as likely as White women to die during pregnancy, while in labour, or shortly thereafter.<sup>50</sup> The labour of care therefore reinforces social injustices while the persistent romanticisation of care veils its oppressive forces, upholding harmful narratives of care as a purely loving and selfless act.<sup>51</sup>

This research thus complicates care and challenges who is naturalised to care for whom and on what terms. It scrutinises these questions within the context of the arts and contemporary, socially engaged curatorial practice. As curating is etymologically tied to the politics of care, this study articulates methodologies of how a curatorial practice of care can come into being in a way that does not reproduce care's oppressive and draining characteristics but which instead serves as an emancipatory method towards social transformation.

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48 Hi'iilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, "Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times," *Social Text* 38 (2020), 8.

49 Akbulut, "Carework as Commons."

50 "The risk of maternal death in 2019–21 was statistically significantly almost four times higher among women from Black ethnic minority backgrounds compared with White women (RR 3.90; 95% CI 2.51 to 5.87); this disparity is higher, but not statistically significantly so, than the disparity in 2018–20. Women from Asian backgrounds also continued to be at higher risk than White women (RR 1.85, 95% CI 1.23 to 2.71); this disparity is higher, but not statistically significantly so, than the disparity in 2018–20." For full study, see National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, University of Oxford, "Maternal Mortality 2019–2021," May 2023. <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbracc-uk/data-brief/maternal-mortality-2019-2021>. Within German medical surveys I could not find data that specifically addressed differences in race in regard to maternal deaths. However, the following journalistic article shares stories of racism experienced by BIPOC people in Germany during their pregnancies and births: Valerie-Siba Rousparast, "Unter weissen Kitteln. Diskriminierung und Rassismus machen auch im Kreißsaal nicht vor den Betroffenen halt. Eine Reportage," *Missy Magazin*, April 8, 2019, <https://missy-magazine.de/blog/2019/04/08/unter-weissen-kitteln/>.

51 While care continues to be predominantly perceived as a feminised concept, there are also strands within critical studies of men and masculinity that investigate the relationship between masculinity and care, referred to as "caring masculinities." For more, see Karla Elliott, "Caring Masculinities: Theorizing an Emerging Concept," *Men and Masculinities* 19, no. 3 (2015): 240–59.

In the next section, I present three readings of care that are central to this research project. Taken together, these three dimensions of care highlight not only the ambivalences, contradictions, and tensions but also the transformative potentials dormant within the notions and practices of care – as care can serve as both a mechanism of oppression, through social conditioning, exploitation, coercion, and exclusion, as well as a concept for liberation,<sup>52</sup> democratisation (feminist care ethics), and arts-based social transformation (caring infrastructures).

## Care as Social Reproduction

Firstly, this volume considers care within the framework of Marxist feminism, which understands care work as an essential labour to the capitalist system that, paradoxically, remains unpaid. Through this historical and theoretical lens, care work is understood as an exploited, gendered, classed, and racialised labour that reproduces the conditions of life (i.e., social reproduction).<sup>53</sup> This reading is complemented with feminist art historical and art theoretical positions that showcase how care within the arts has led to further marginalisations, particularly for artists who are also mothers. I follow the international Wages for Housework movement in its argument to understand care as a prism – as an analytical tool – to comprehend broader uneven sociopolitical and economic conditions within society. To regard care as a prism in particular allows a grasping of the marginalised position of women and racialised people within society and within the arts.<sup>54</sup> Thus the importance of this position within this research project stems from its capacity to render care as a central terrain for social justice while highlighting the transformative potential that lies within care: if the way in which care is organised across society plays a central role in reproducing inequalities, then altering the gendered, racialised, classed, and ableist conditions of care also carries a transformative potential for the wider society. This alludes to the infrastructural thinking that is central to this study.<sup>55</sup>

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- 52 Maggie Nelson, *On Freedom: Four Songs of Care and Constraint* (Dublin: Random House, 2021).
- 53 This publication gives a central place to this particular conceptual trajectory in chapter 2 – “Uncaring Conditions: Care Work Under Capitalism” to provide an understanding of the historical development of today’s uneven distribution of care within the capitalist system.
- 54 Louise Toupin, *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972–77* (London: Pluto, 2018), 3.
- 55 For further elaboration on this line of thinking, see section “Care as Curatorial Method Towards Caring Infrastructures.”

## Care as Feminist Ethics

The ideas and propositions in this book depart from feminist care ethics as a democratising vehicle for transformative curatorial practices of care within the arts. According to Joan Tronto's notion of feminist care ethics, these democratic principles regarding human life are rooted in the recognition that all humans are interrelated and interdependent, all are vulnerable and fragile – and all are caregivers and care-receivers at the same time.<sup>56</sup> Upon this conceptual basis, Tronto allows us to conceive of care as a central democratic principle. She argues that “[n]o state can function without citizens who are produced and reproduced through care.”<sup>57</sup> Her theoretical arguments challenge the boundaries between the private and the public, which have historically delineated matters of care as private ones. However, care needs to be recognised as a central *public* concern, a notion which Tronto refers to as “caring with.”<sup>58</sup> Through this dimension of caring-with, she identifies care as a

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56 Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 30–31.

57 *Ibid.*, 26. The full quote reads: “This move toward inclusion through paid work left unanswered one large question: Who does the care work? Contemporary democratic theory has virtually nothing to say, on the theoretical level, in answer to this question. Why should this lacuna be a concern for democratic theory? Because unless democratic theory deals substantively with the question of ‘who cares,’ it results in an account of politics that misconceives citizens and their lives, overvaluing their lives as workers, devaluing their lives as people engaged in relationships of care. No state can function without citizens who are produced and reproduced through care. If public discussions do not explicitly address this question, then the care dimensions of life remain hidden in the background” (*ibid.*, 94).

58 The relationship between the ethics of care and the ethics of justice have a contested history, which particularly unfold between the two psychologists Carol Gilligan (one of the early, central voices of feminist approaches to feminist care) and Lawrence Kohlberg: “Gilligan faulted Kohlberg’s model of moral development for being gender biased, and reported hearing a ‘different voice’ than the voice of justice presumed in Kohlberg’s model. She found that both men and women articulated the voice of care at different times, but noted that the voice of care, without women, would nearly fall out of their studies. Refuting the charge that the moral reasoning of girls and women is immature because of its preoccupation with immediate relations, Gilligan asserted that the ‘care perspective’ was an alternative, but equally legitimate form of moral reasoning obscured by masculine liberal justice traditions focused on autonomy and independence. She characterized this difference as one of theme, however, rather than of gender. [...] Later, Gilligan vigorously resisted readings of her work that posit care ethics as relating to gender more than theme, and even established the harmony of care and justice ethics (1986), but she never fully abandoned her thesis of an association between women and relational ethics.” Maureen Sander-Staudt, “Care Ethics,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (peer-reviewed), accessed May 11, 2023, <https://iep.utm.edu/care-ethics/>. For further reading on Gilligan’s position, see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

democratising practice that is committed to justice, equality, and freedom for all:<sup>59</sup> “The goal of such practices is to ensure that all of the members of the society can live as well as possible by making the society as democratic as possible. This is the essence of ‘caring with.’”<sup>60</sup>

Feminist care ethics, within this account, are therefore understood as a specifically care-centred framework for social transformation. From this position, feminist care ethics allow for an understanding of “curating with care” as a political, democratising, activist activity rooted in the recognition of our interdependencies. For Tronto, concerns of care cannot be separated from concerns of responsibility:

The task of a democratic politics is to affix responsibility, and as we come to recognize the centrality of care for living a decent human life, then the task of democratic politics needs to be much more fully focused upon care responsibilities: their nature, their allocation, and their fulfilment.<sup>61</sup>

It is this close-knit entanglement of care and responsibility that I would like to transfer from the realm of democratic politics to the curatorial. How can curators-as-carers partake in assuming responsibility for transforming the arts according to feminist democratic care ethics?

Already a range of curatorial approaches are indebted to Tronto’s theory of feminist care ethics, such as Elke Krasny’s notion of “caring activism,” fusing activist ideas of curating with feminist care ethics to render legible the interdependencies within the arts.<sup>62</sup> In this way, the dimension of care as feminist ethics takes on a central role, as it serves as a moral compass for the transformation processes within artistic and curatorial practices. That is to say, feminist care ethics point in *what direction* and *how* rearticulations of the status quo within the arts should occur. In this research project, I argue that curators, due to their profession’s etymological relation to care, must assume the responsibility of caring for the presence of a diversity of artists, audiences, and collaborators – while not neglecting care for themselves.<sup>63</sup>

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59 Manuela Zechner, *Commoning Care & Collective Power: Childcare Commons and the Micropolitics of Municipalism in Barcelona* (Linz, Austria: Transversal Texts, 2021).

60 Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 30.

61 *Ibid.*

62 For an elaboration of Elke Krasny’s notion of caring activism, among other feminist approaches to curating, see chapter 4 – “Curating with Care: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges.”

63 See section 5.2.1 – “Practice-led Propositions towards Building Caring Infrastructures.”

## Care as Curatorial Method towards Caring Infrastructures

The central importance of feminist care ethics lies in the capacity to translate them from abstract theories into lived practices within the arts – to make care as a method tangible in the form of practice-led actions for cultural practitioners who wish to ignite transformative processes within the arts and society. Under the rubric of “caring infrastructures,” my research lays out key theoretical frameworks and practice-based propositions as to how this translation, through a relational, socially engaged curatorial practice, can occur. Building and critically reflecting on my own curatorial practice on care, I have developed the notion of “caring infrastructures” as a thought vehicle that allows care to be understood and practised as a curatorial methodology.

Caring infrastructures are curatorially instituted support structures that respond to the multiple caring needs and capacities of artists, collaborators, audiences, and team members and which foster the conditions of their presence. Infrastructures, within this context, are understood – and made conceptually productive – as relational, invisibilised, malleable constructions that go beyond the scope of institutions. Their potential in relation to social transformation lies in their repetition, that is, their reproductive character, which allows them to uphold social structures, norms, and values – thereby not only enabling the reproduction of oppressive acts but also providing leeway for *reproducing otherwise*. Curating, itself understood as a relational, infrastructural activity that spans people, places, objects, and theories, is thereby situated as a potent practice that can actively reproduce otherwise. Critical thinking along the lines of infrastructures follows the trajectory that micro-political (curatorial) decisions can have positive effects throughout a chain of relations. Building caring infrastructures means to practice curating with care as a radically relational, meaningful, and situated practice across a variety of scales.

To establish caring infrastructures, I propose a set of curatorial methods that shift care from an abstract moral imposition towards a situated praxis of care. The curatorial methodology includes a close look at the multitude of scales and elements of a given curatorial undertaking (what I call “building blocks”) followed by allocating and revising them according to the caring needs and capacities of the specific context. Feminist care ethics serve as the moral compass that guide and shape the ways in which the individual building blocks are rearticulated. Take, for example, the building block of budgeting. I propose to consider budgetary decisions as a central political curatorial concern that should focus on fair pay for all collaborating parties and that should avoid unpaid labour throughout the process. I make a case to consider a curatorial degrowth agenda to downscale curatorial projects to retain suf-

ficient funds to pay all involved people fairly.<sup>64</sup> When taken together, the various building blocks – which have been critically analysed and readjusted in alignment with feminist care ethics – come together in a chain of supporting elements. Together, they form caring infrastructures.

In chapter 5.2 – “In Search of a Practice: Towards a Curatorial Methodology of Caring Infrastructures,” I offer eight curatorial propositions for constructing caring infrastructures. These propositions emerge from my curatorial practice at M.1, thus also enabling me to make tangible the situated experiences in Hohenlockstedt and to cast them as useful learnings for the wider curatorial community. I thus offer these propositions towards caring infrastructures as a professional toolkit of transformation that can be carried out, adjusted, and implemented by curators, artists, and cultural practitioners in their respective contexts.<sup>65</sup> The idea of a professional toolkit shifts away from care as a gendered notion that implies that care is to be carried out by certain social groups, because caring comes “naturally” to them or because their values already align with feminist care ethics. By offering care as a curatorial methodology towards constructing caring infrastructures, I thereby offer it as a *degendered* notion of practising care, as it detaches care from the association of scripted gendered norms to care and rather is enacted as part of a professional code of conduct.

As all three above-described dimensions of care evoke an entangled, ambivalent relationship between theory, practice, and reflection, they demonstrate the challenges of producing relevant knowledge for the wider community of curators who seek to practice with, through, and towards care. “Curating with care,” in this volume, is used as an umbrella term for a range of feminist curatorial approaches that align with notions of feminist care ethics as a lens for social transformation. Many of these approaches are socially engaged, situated, relational, and participatory; some are also conceived as activist practices within museum or gallery spaces. I present my propositions towards caring infrastructures as one possible form of curating with care, sitting alongside the approaches of Maura Reilly’s curatorial activism, Elke Krasny’s caring activism, and Megan Johnston’s slow curating.<sup>66</sup>

The strands of curating that this research project engages with are therefore inseparable from wider discourses around feminism(s), particularly the ongoing heavily loaded political conversations around gender within feminist, trans, and queer

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64 For further details, see Proposition #5: “Consider Curatorial Budgeting to Be Political” in section 5.2.1 – “Practice-led Propositions towards Building Caring Infrastructures.”

65 This dimension of care is conceptually established in chapter 4 – “Curating with Care: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges” and section 5.2 – “In Search of a Practice: Towards a Curatorial Methodology of Caring Infrastructures.”

66 For further discussion on these feminist curatorial approaches, see chapter 4 – “Curating with Care: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges.”

scholarship and movements. As a feminist scholar and a cisgender single mother, I build my research on social reproduction theory, in which care work is understood as a feminised, oppressive labour within capitalism. While this research project acknowledges the troubled yet important role of “women” and “mothers” in relation to care work and domestic labour under capitalism, I use these terms not as biological but as historical, symbolic, and political categories.<sup>67</sup> These histories and presents are brought into conversation with the artistic, scholarly, activist, and writerly voices of communal, queer, single-parent, crip, and Black positions through the various curatorial and editorial facets of this practice-based research project.

In this volume as in all communication, language holds the ambivalent, dual character of being able to address and to point out by reverting to established terms while containing the power to exclude and render already marginalised perspectives invisible. Particularly in official data, trans and non-binary perspectives are structurally excluded, as these statistics mostly operate within the binary categories of gender. Likewise, the perspectives of racialised people – specifically in the German data landscape – frequently go unaccounted for.<sup>68</sup> In an effort to use the most in-

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- 67 For conversations around gendered terms as symbolic, political, and historical categories, see Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 15; Rumaan Alam, Kim Brooks, Jessica Friedmann, Sheila Heti, and Meaghan O’Connell, “What It Means to Write About Motherhood, Part One,” Literary Hub, October 24, 2018, <https://lithub.com/what-it-means-to-write-about-motherhood-part-one/>; Emilia Roig, *Das Ende der Ehe: Für eine Revolution der Liebe. Feministische Impulse für die Abschaffung einer patriarchalen Institution* (Berlin: Ullstein Buchverlage, 2023), 34. For the discourses around the social construction of gender, see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Classics, 2015); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*.
- 68 The German statistic office states: “For methodological reasons, cases with the gender characteristics ‘unknown’ and ‘diverse’ (as of 2019) cannot currently be reported separately. Cases with these gender characteristics are distributed to the gender characteristics male and female using a defined recoding procedure.” Statistisches Bundesamt, “Wie wird mit den Daten von Personen mit den Geschlechtsausprägungen ‘unbekannt’ oder ‘divers’ verfahren?,” accessed July 11, 2023, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/Methoden/Erlauterungen/geschlechtsauspraegungen.html>. My translation. For an example of an empirical study on queer care communities, see Francis Seeck, *Care trans\_formieren* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2021). Non-binary and trans perspectives are not the only ones often excluded from official data generation: the perspectives of Black people – specifically in the German data landscape – also frequently go unaccounted for. Due to the lack of statistical information for African and Afrodiasporic people, the initiative AfroZensus launched its first census in 2020: Each One Teach One e.V. and Citizens for Europe, *AfroZensus 2020*, 2021, <https://afrozensus.de/reports/2020/>. Apart from this lack in official data, much early thinking about reproductive labor among Marxist feminists also did not acknowledge that women of color, poor women, and immigrant women have long been employed in the paid care sector, where they cook, clean, and nanny for wealthier families – thereby becoming unavailable to care for their own. For more on this topic, see Shannon

clusive language, the care workshops at M.1 were always explicitly described as being “open for everyone with caring responsibilities in their private or professional lives,” independent from the participants’ gender identity, sexual orientation, bodily abilities, religion, or ethnicity.<sup>69</sup> However, the conundrum of inclusion/exclusion through language is still present in relation to the seemingly entirely embracing category of “all caregivers,” as fittingly captured by Hettie Judah in her book *How Not to Exclude Artist Mothers (and other parents)*:

Many involved feel very strongly about using the term “mother”: in some cases because the figure of the mother carries huge cultural importance, in others because using the more neutral term “parents” conceals the gender care gap, and erases centuries of unpaid women’s labour and exclusion. Many others feel equally strongly about using the term “parent”, arguing that to continue framing this as a woman’s issue perpetuates gender imbalance: instead, we should be reinforcing the idea that these questions are of equal importance to all.<sup>70</sup>

Caught in this uneasy set of tensions, this research project departs from the specific (“mother”) as an analytical and linguistic tools to understand, criticise, and shift the power dynamics at play and, towards the end of the book, arrives at broader terms (“caregivers” and “care-receivers”). Through this approach, I hope to both acknowledge the troubled, gendered histories of care work while simultaneously contributing to the shift of care as a concern for everyone, regardless of their gender identities.<sup>71</sup> The intention is not to pitch often divisive perspectives against one another

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Mattern, “Maintenance and Care,” *Places Journal* (November: 2018); Mignon Duffy, “Doing the Dirty Work: Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in Historical Perspective,” *Gender & Society* 21, no. 3 (2007): 313–36; Mignon Duffy, *Making Care Count: A Century of Gender, Race, and Paid Care Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011); Eleonore Kofman, “Rethinking Care through Social Reproduction: Articulating Circuits of Migration,” *Social Politics* 19, no. 1 (2012): 142–62. Marxist thinkers have made more recent calls to revisit Marxism in respect of gender and class, paying special attention to queer and trans perspectives; see Holly Lewis, *The Politics of Everybody: Feminism, Queer Theory, and Marxism at the Intersection: A Revised Edition* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022); Jules Joanne Gleeson, and Elle O’Rourke, eds., *Transgender Marxism* (London: Pluto, 2021).

69 However, limitations of accessibility for vulnerable groups are often found in such openness; certain social groups, instead of open invitations, need very specific address in order to feel safe and welcome. I discuss this conundrum between open language and specific address (which also excludes other lived realities) in the concluding chapter 6 – “Limits of Curatorial Care.”

70 Judah, *How Not to Exclude Artist Mothers (and other parents)*, 15.

71 For an enriching text on motherhood, I recommend the conversation between the writers Jessica Friedmann, Sheila Heti, Rumaan Alam, and Kim Brooks. There they share their internal struggles with the contradictions between the binary-coded research at hand and their desire to ungender motherhood. See their “What It Means to Write About Motherhood,

(nor to erase marginalised lived realities) but rather to raise curators' awareness around the necessity to attend to the various caring needs and caring capacities involved in artistic and curatorial projects.

## Chapter Overviews

This practice-based research project is deeply rooted within feminist methodologies, not only to theorise feminism but to actively practise it, as both a curator and a researcher. It brings together strands of art historical, curatorial, political, sociological, philosophical, feminist, and queer scholarship in order to challenge the status quo of the arts and to propose hands-on curatorial strategies for sociopolitical transformations within the arts and research. The different chapters build towards this overall aim.

The first chapter of this book, “Methods as Feminist Practices of Care,” showcases the ways in which the lived experience of the researcher can form part of the knowledge-creation process (auto-theory and auto-ethnography) and establishes these as meaningful positions from which to speak, think, analyse, and act. While this doctoral research is not the result of auto-ethnography or anecdotal theory (per feminist literary scholar Jane Gallop) in a narrow sense, I inscribe my lived experience into the research narration around care, curating, and feminist research-creation as an act of micro-politics in resonance with the feminist slogan of “the personal is political.”<sup>72</sup> The articulated methodological principles explore how to put feminist theory into academic practice – as a method of care. The overall argument of the chapter is that the method in which we conduct our research contains the opportunity – or rather the impetus – to counter the logics of heteronormativity, neoliberal productivity, and compulsory monodisciplinarity as well as traditional perceptions of objectivity within academia.

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Part One,” Literary Hub, October 24, 2018. For an autotheoretical account that engages with queer parenthood, see Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf, 2015). On queering the maternal experience through artistic and discursive practice, see artist Dyana Gravina's website at <https://dyanagravina.com>. For transgender communities and the role of mothers, see Emily A. Arnold, and Marlon M. Bailey, “Constructing Home and Family: How the Ballroom Community Supports African American GLBTQ Youth in the Face of HIV/AIDS,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 21, nos. 2–3 (2009): 171–88.

72 “The personal is political” has been a core phrase of the feminist movement since the 1960s. Its original authorship is unclear, as several feminists decline having coined the phrase and rather attribute it to the collective social movements. For a definition of “micro-politics,” see the section “Activist Dimension to Research and Practice: Micro-politics for an Otherwise” in the introduction of this book.

The second chapter, “Uncaring Conditions: Care Work under Capitalism,” sets the theoretical and historical groundwork in regard to the systemic contradictions of care, capitalism, and art. Through Marxist-feminist scholars such as Silvia Federici and Nancy Fraser and the Black feminist scholar bell hooks, the conditions of (private) care work, with its structural injustices, are analysed as a historically grown system that cannot be thought of outside larger political and economic conditions and social norms. This chapter attempts an – albeit brief – historical trajectory of the origins of the sexual division of labour in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the processes of de-commonisation of land and labour, and the lasting effects of these major transformations on the ideals of the nuclear family as a capitalist institution. The argument is that invisible codes, social norms, and juridical decisions up to today have cemented gendered divisions of labour that naturalise women as default caregivers. The chapter also looks at how such matters of care intersect within the art field in forms of discrimination, access, and representation regarding care work – motherhood, in particular – but also race.

In chapter 3 – “Histories of a Contested Terrain: Gender, Care, Art and Curating,” I build on the historical and theoretical grounds of the previous chapter and shift focus specifically towards the contested histories and ambivalent relationships among curating, art, gender, motherhood, care, and control. I begin by drawing out the precarious situation of parents – mothers in particular – in the contemporary art field and showcase some pertinent historical and current examples of artists who have dared to be both: an artist and a mother. The text then shifts towards the curatorial realm in the section “Unsettling Curatorial Care: Histories, Theories, and Practices,” highlighting the ambivalent relationship between curating, care, and control. Departing from the etymological origin of “curating” in the Latin the verb “to curate” (*curare* = “to take care, to look after”), I argue that curating is tied to the politics of care and thus has to renegotiate these relationships and tensions on a continuous basis. Beginning in the 1970s, this chapter revisits the historical shifts in the associations between curating and care, departing from the concept of the curator-as-carer, moving on to the curator-as-author as a so-called independent practitioner, and then to feminist artists-as-curators.

In the first part of chapter 4 – “Curating with Care: Contemporary Approaches and Challenges,” I provide the contextual framework for my curatorial case study under my artistic directorship in 2019–20 at M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung. In an effort of thinking-with (Donna Haraway, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa) and practising-with, I introduce central scholars and practitioners from whom I have learned as a curator and a scholar, and with whom I regard my practice to be in alliance, in a spirit of companionship towards care. I consider in tandem and think through the following curatorial and artistic approaches and methods: slow curating (Megan Johnston), post-representational curating (Nora Sternfeld), curatorial activism (Maura Reilly), caring activism (Elke Krasny), exhibition-as-alibi (ruangrupa), curating-as-

improvisation (curators of the 11th Berlin Biennale), the building of support structures (Andrea Francke, Céline Condorelli), and the practice of *affidamento* (Gabrielle Moser after the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective), as well as the multiple artistic and curatorial situated examples of Casa Gallina (Mexico City), HOMEBAKED (Liverpool), and Park Fiction (Hamburg); the various practices of *Arte Útil* (“useful art,” around Tania Bruguera); and my proposition of *Curaduría Útil* (“useful curating”). Together, these approaches provide a rich array of inspirational sources and tools that have greatly co-shaped my curatorial practice and those of others in the field.

Drawing from these theoretical and practice-based companions, my curatorial practice, and the practices of others in the field, produces a recalibration of what curating in relationship to care can entail. Beyond the traditional notion of “curatorial care for objects,” the emphasis shifts towards care for artists, participants, collaborators, audience and community members, fellow curators, and their respective support structures. This recalibration positions curating as a relational, useful, ethicopolitical practice of infrastructure building. The commitment to networks, assemblies, and encounters situates the social sphere as the fabric of a radically relational curatorial practice. This approach builds support structures for artistic practices and communal gathering, entwined with the physical-material manifestations of related social and artistic processes.

In the second part of chapter 4, titled 4.2 – “Care for Caregivers: A Case Study of Participatory Curatorial Programming on Care,” I shift from the analysis of companion practices towards my own participatory curatorial practice on care, presenting, describing, analysing, and critically reflecting upon the twenty-month programme at M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung in Hohenlockstedt, located in rural Northern Germany, as a case study. First, I provide an overview of the concepts and formats of my participatory programming on care during my position as artistic director 2019–20 at M.1. By inviting the participation of women artists, most of them with caring responsibilities, and by engaging with local and regional caregivers, the programming addressed central tensions around care work through artistic methods, dialogic formats, and discursive events. Relational curatorial formats – such as the storytelling cafés “Holo Miteinander,” the workshop series “Care for Caregivers,” the exchange event “Social Muscle Club,” and the interactive project “Archive of Encounters” – aimed to counter the hostile societal and economic mechanisms that continue to marginalise care work. The formats sought to foster rather tender links between the scales of the personal, the local, the everyday, and political democratic transformative processes – and to thereby facilitate the construction of new caring infrastructures.<sup>73</sup> In the chapter, I provide a sense of the conceptual framework and the individual curatorial formats and outcomes through recourse to examples. In conclusion, I critically reflect on the programme’s dis/continued processes with the

73 This thought was originally presented in Bailer, *Curating, Care, and Corona*, 35.

aim to gather aspects that may have contributed to the ending of the curatorial cycle without the community-driven and self-organised continuation that my colleagues and I had envisioned for it.

In the fifth chapter, “Caring Infrastructures: Roadmap for an Otherwise,” I embark on a discursive journey to grasp the notion of “caring infrastructures,” both in thought and in practice. In an effort to write-with and think-with (after feminist science and technology scholars Maria Puig de la Bellacasa and Donna Haraway), I engage with the writings that Joan Tronto produced during our collaborative editorial project “Letters to Joan,” held as part of the event “CARING” at M.1 and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in June 2020.<sup>74</sup> Acknowledging the project’s continued theoretical and sociopolitical urgencies, I revisit passages from the letters exchanged between eight thinkers and artists in a close reading. Through a dialogic process of thinking-with Tronto, I establish infrastructures as malleable forms that carry the potential to reproduce otherwise. I re-emphasise curating as a relational, infrastructural activity of care and provide a deeper conceptual understanding of the elements of infrastructures – the “building blocks.” The discursive text concludes that the rearticulation of the building blocks needs to be a radically relational one, in order to address the roots of the urgencies at stake. This radical rearticulation is shaped and guided by feminist care ethics, which acts as the defining factor that turns infrastructures into *caring* infrastructures. I articulate the notion of caring infrastructures as a curatorial methodological configuration, one that produces tangible frameworks for practising in congruence with feminist care ethics. Caring infrastructures within the arts are understood as the result of a methodological sequence centred around the building of support structures. These structures need to be responsive to the multiple caring needs and capacities of artists, collaborators, audiences, and team members across various scales, to foster the conditions of their presences. This part of the chapter forms the basis for the subsequent section, in which I present practice-based methodologies for enacting caring infrastructures as a lived practice of care within the arts.

Section 5.2 – “In Search of a Practice: Towards a Curatorial Methodology of Caring Infrastructures” interweaves this notion of caring infrastructures with my own practice to put forth propositions on how to practice curatorial care with the infrastructural perspective in mind. Departing from my practice-based experiences, I home in on some of the central tensions of and lessons learned from my work at M.1, with the intention to formulate useful propositions for the curatorial community. I identify eight building blocks, among them budgets, communication, agency, and representation. I critically analyse and rearticulate each of these building blocks in a counter-hegemonic effort, rooted in the perspectives of feminist care ethics. The

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74 Sascia Bailer, Gilly Karjevsky, and Rosario Talevi, eds. *Letters to Joan* (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt; Hohenlockstedt, Germany: M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, 2020).

propositions aren't fixed and they aren't all-encompassing, but they are a methodological proposition on how to enact and practice care curatorially – and how to expand on these building blocks by contributing to the construction of more caring infrastructures within the arts. At the end of the chapter, I condense the propositions to produce what I call a “soft manifesto for caring infrastructures.”

In the last chapter, “Limits of Curatorial Care,” I critically reflect on the dangers, limitations, and contradictions around curatorial care and the concept of caring infrastructures. While I propose the latter as concept for an arts-based social transformation, it is equally important to highlight the factors that delimit its agency and potentials. These limitations are mainly rooted within the inherent contradictions between capitalism, care, and curating; curators' double-headed role as both reproducers of hegemonic power relations and spearheads of counter-hegemonic critique; romanticised notions of care as a universally expandable asset; and locating the agency of social transformation within micro-political approaches, without connecting those to larger social movements. This research project thus makes a call to produce synergies with like-minded initiatives in a joint effort to “caring in concert.”

By way of closing this introduction, I turn to an interview with Maggie Nelson, in which she describes how she wrote her novel *The Argonauts* in a variety of moods over time.<sup>75</sup> This account certainly also reflects similar shifts in perspectives and moods that have shaped my own research and writing process over the past five years – variously fuelled by anger in the face of ongoing structural injustices; deeply intrigued by societal mechanisms at work; fatigued by the status quo; facing insecurity and feeling unsettled in the light of the vast literature, theory, and practices on care; defeated by the inconceivable magnitude of contradictions and fault lines; hopeful in the light of theoretical or practice-based sparks of social transformation, which I wanted to hold on to very tightly. I do not aim to flatten out these waves of affective entanglement with the research at hand, which might transmit to the reader; rather, I wish to acknowledge them as the driving force behind this research project.

The affective entanglements across the six chapters of this book have created an account that is many things at once: it is theoretical and practice-based, it is provocative in its methodologies and daring in its propositions, it is at times poetic in its style, and personal and self-critical in its reflections. It is a sharp analysis of uneven conditions and yet a hopeful plea for an otherwise. Within this practice-based research project, I seek to spell out the agency, and limitations, of curatorial care in rearticulating what Hobart and Kneese have referred to as “a roadmap for an otherwise.”<sup>76</sup>

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75 For the full account, see the Nelson's interview on the podcast: David Naimon, “Maggie Nelson: The Argonauts,” *Between the Covers*, podcast, Podcast Republic, July 29, 2015, <https://www.podcastrepublic.net/podcast/583648001>.

76 Hobart and Kneese, “Radical Care,” 13.