

Care-full Municipalisms?

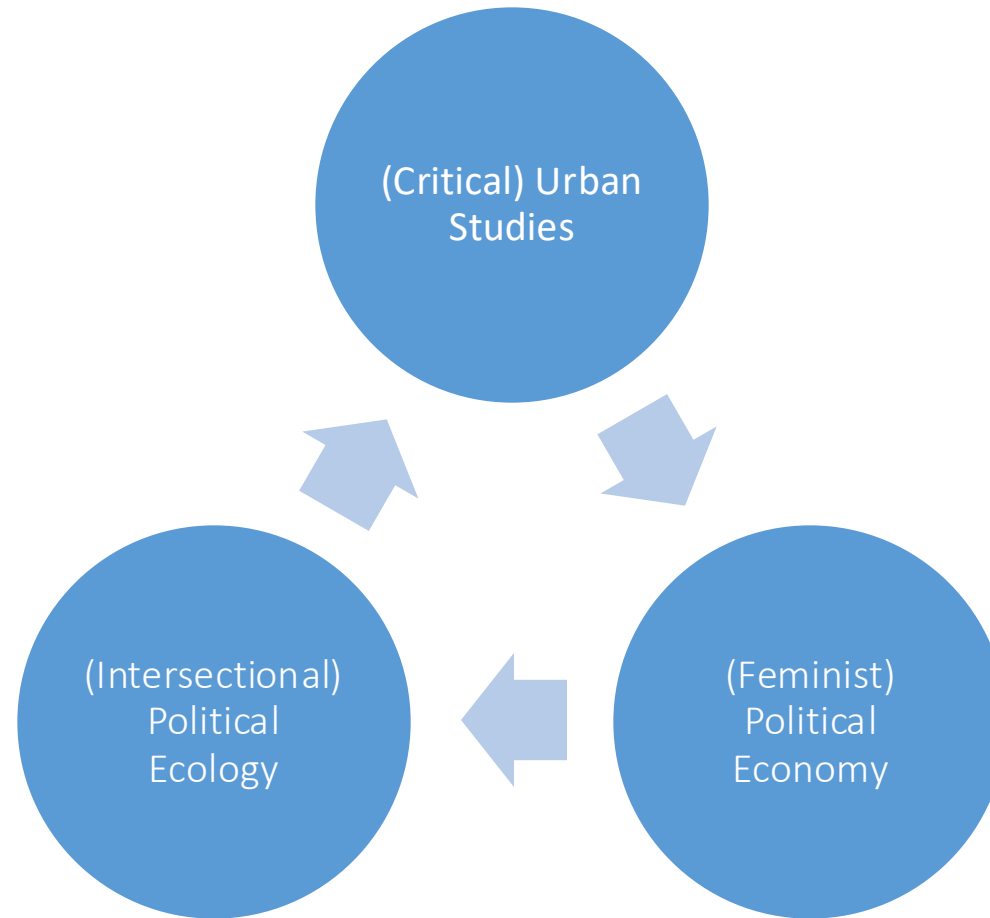
Mitigating the crisis of “care” at the urban scale

Dr. Deniz Ay, deniz.ay@unibe.ch

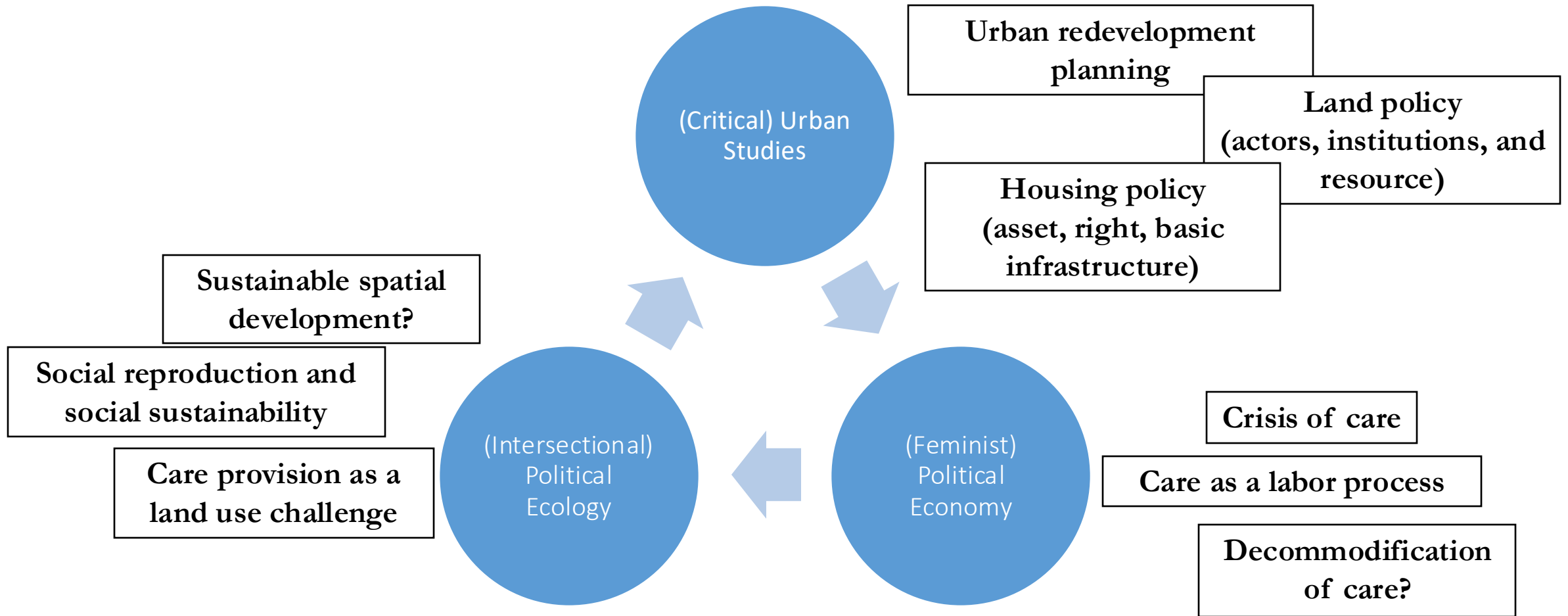
University of Bern

Political Urbanism and Sustainable Spatial Development & Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies

Theoretical home



Theoretical home





“Crisis of care”
epitomizes the making of
care as a resource that is
extracted from
communities by
diminishing the humanly
embodied and ecological
capacities to take care of
the children and the
elderly collectively.

Social Reproduction & Care

“Labor-intensive processes of maintaining and reproducing people daily, generationally, therefore maintaining the labor force for the continuation of the productive economy.”

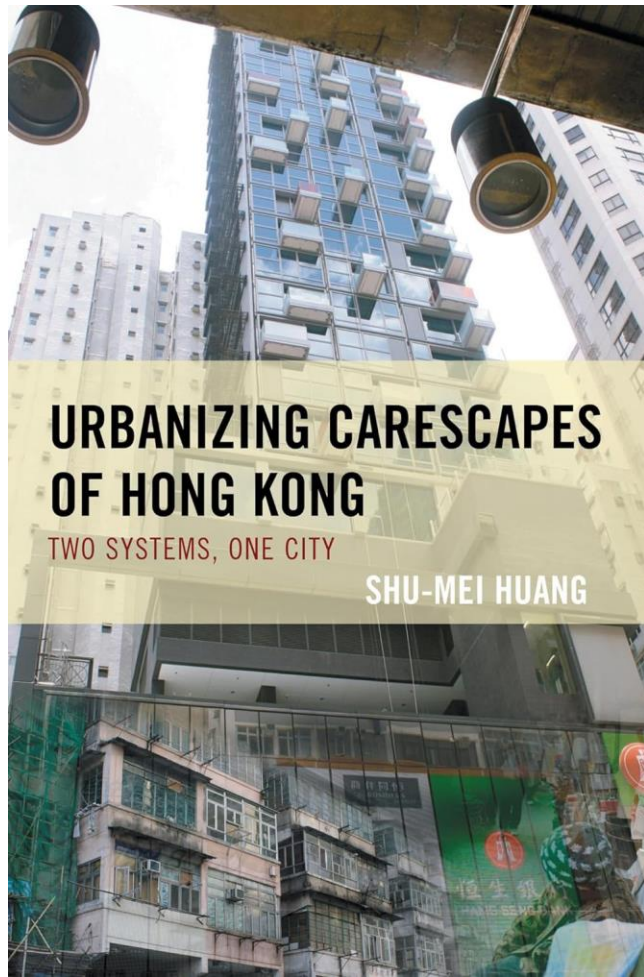
Care as a critical component and essential process enabling social reproduction.

Conceptual and empirical complementarity between child care and elderly care.

Care is...

- "**Activities** we do to maintain, contain, repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Tronto 1993).
- Care is the driver of the social reproduction: **processes** by which a social system reproduces itself (Federici 2019).
- **Work** of maintaining existing life and reproducing the next generation (Laslett & Brenner 1989).

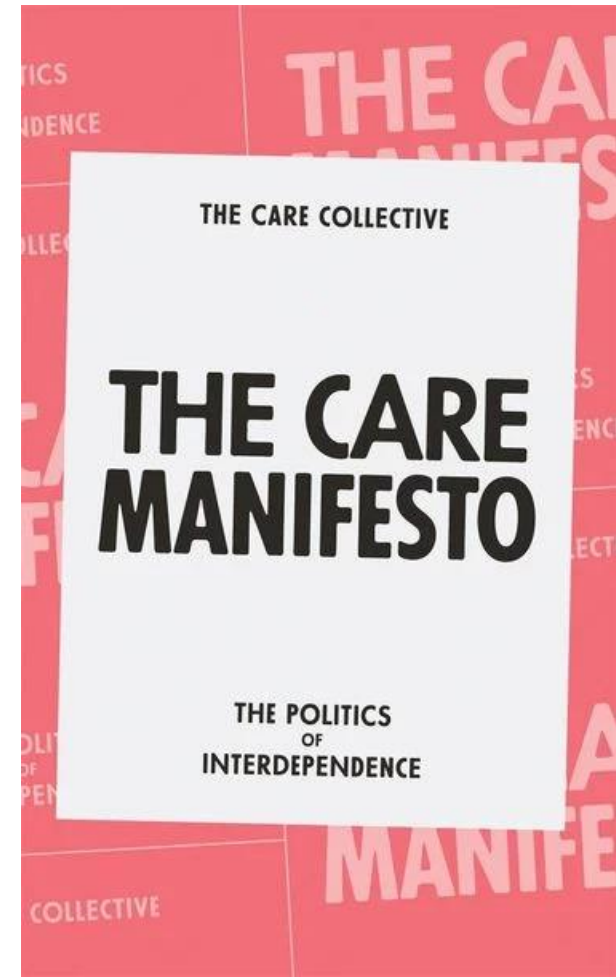




The Care Crisis*

Emma Dowling

*What Caused It and How Can We End It?



A crisis of care?

Care as a resource (?)

- Crisis of care: A crisis of social justice that reduces a key set of social capacities.
- Essential for survival for the youngest, oldest, and physically challenged in the society: child care and elderly care.
- Care cannot be stored, accumulated, or saved. Humanmade and relational.
- Increasingly privatized resource through 1) commodification, 2) individualization
- "No society that systematically undermines social reproduction can endure for long" (Fraser 2017).

Critical resource geographies

Deconstructing the taken-for-grantedness & naturalness of resources.

- “Resources *are* not, they become” (Zimmermann 1951)
- Resources are phenomena, not only materials, socially and politically constructed (Valvida et al. 2021).
- “Resource-making” to highlight the process of becoming: politics, struggle, and often violence (Huber 2019)

Crisis & the process of Resource-Making?

How to **reclaim** the resource of care as a commons to mitigate the crisis?

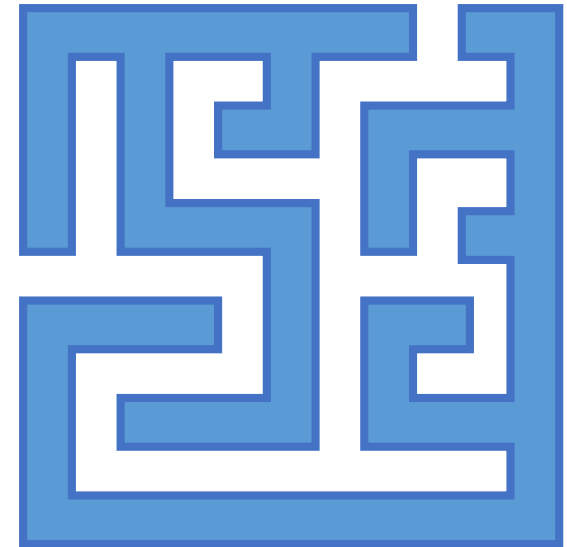
How to **maintain** the resource of care as a commons regarding the institutional constructs?

Municipalism as a radical political strategy?

The puzzle in the literature...

"Municipalist 'movements'
are losing their momentum."

"Municipalism is the only viable policy
alternative to the crisis of care."



Developing a conceptual framework

Care as a resource: material and non-material basis

Care gap materializes within households, communities, neighborhoods.

Urban as a process and the spatial unit of analysis of the care gap.

Spaces for care:

- 1) housing
- 2) care facilities (nursing homes, daycare centers, age-appropriate housing)
- 3) public/green/outdoor spaces

(Radical) Municipalism and Commons

- A feminist narrative of care
- New forms of organizing care, outside and beyond state and the market
- Sociopolitical infrastructures for collective decision-making, decommodification of space (without decommodifying labor)
- Reframing the “local” as a politics of proximity to redistribute power and transform institutions

Kussy, A., Palomera, D., & Silver, D. (2023). The caring city? A critical reflection on Barcelona’s municipal experiments in care and the commons. *Urban Studies*.
Roth et al. 2023

Russell, B., Milburn, K., & Heron, K. (2023). Strategies for a new municipalism: Public–common partnerships against the new enclosures. *Urban Studies*¹³

Double function of **care-full municipalisms**

- Radical political strategy to mitigate the care gap.
- Structural transformation opposed to progressive incremental change.
- Focus on the resource-making process of care to mitigate the crisis of (new) municipalism's electoral defeat and flagship experiences.

Questions to answer...

Conceptual: Care as a resource? What is the added value?

Empirical: Exploring "municipalist strategies" in *ordinary* contexts?