

## Submission

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## 6. ÖSTERREICHISCHER WORKSHOP FEMINISTISCHER ÖKONOM\_INNEN (FEMÖK)

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### Title of Submission:

**A feminist exploration into the for-profit provisioning of ambulant care services for the elderly.**

### Abstract

Over the past two decades, there has been a marked shift in government policy to ensure long-term care for the elderly. Most prominent in this policy has been the move away from in-kind provision of services in favour of private procurement (Simonazzi 2009, Allen et. al. 2011). Most European states have thus introduced a system of conditional or unconditional cash benefits paid directly to care recipients for financing their care services (Simonazzi 2009). Among other policy goals, such as increasing the capacity and diversity of providers, the cash allowances are aimed to promote home care as an alternative to institutional care for qualitative and financial reasons. The elderly clearly prefer living at home to institutionalization (Kane and Kane 2001, Eckert et.al. 2004, Wolff et. al. 2008), and their quality of life may be enhanced by this choice (OECD/European Commission 2013). Findings also suggest, that home-based care is less costly than institutional care (Chappell et. al. 2004). Spurred by the growing demand, the introduction of these benefits generated a rapidly expanding new market for the provisioning of home care services for the elderly (Bailly et. al. 2013). New entrants can be by and large attributed to the voluntary non-profit or the private for-profit sector providing home care services according to governmental contracts and legislations. While feminist economics, especially care economics, has put forward theoretical concepts of care, care labour and relationships between care and socio-economic developments (Nelson 1999, Jochimsen 2003, Folbre 2006, Himmelweit 2007, Folbre 2012),<sup>1</sup> very little attention has been paid to understand which forms of organizations and business

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of literature in German: Gubitzer and Mader (2011), in English: Rummery and Fine, M. (2012).

model emerge in this new niche of for-profit ambulant care services. Therefore the main goal of our contribution is to find answers to the following key questions:

- Who is entering into the growing ambulant care market, and what are their motivations, business models and strategies to gain market shares? What are the roles of (business) women and their contributions to the development of this emerging service industry?
- To which extent do ambulant care providers in the for-profit sector fulfil requirements that are intrinsic to care work resulting in high quality for both care givers and care receivers? How do they organize the provisioning and how do they manage and pay their staff ?
- What kind of services are financed with conditional and unconditional cash transfers (care or non-care services like e.g. agency fees), and how do cash benefits influence the price setting behaviour of new entrants?

Finding answers to these questions is important for care economics and women studies in entrepreneurship for the following reasons. From a theoretical perspective, findings will contribute to new insights into emerging business models in the for-profit provisioning of care services, and will reveal perceptions and concepts of female entrepreneurship in personal care services (Brush 1992, Akehurst et al. 2012). Moreover, our research improves the understanding of organizational and managerial models of ambulant care provisioning satisfying prerequisites of care work as outlined by feminist economics.

The practical implications of our research are twofold. First, the research identifies imperatives for the regulation of the for-profit ambulant care-market aiming at the creation of a formal care market considering findings from feminist care economics. Second, findings might serve to develop strategies to empower female self-employed care-givers, more specifically *female care-entrepreneurs*, to establish their care business and provide ambulant care to sustain their lives without jeopardizing their own service quality or the quality of life for their dependent clients.

Our contribution is exploratory and aims to inductively generate feminist theory of the social provisioning of ambulant care services. In our research we employ and adapt a grounded theory approach as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to analyze data and contribute to theory building in feminist economics and women entrepreneurship. As our research aims at theory building calling for a close connection with empirical data, we use expert interviews and interpretive case studies in the field of ambulant care as our methodological approach. The data was collected during the period of January 2014 to June 2014 (with more data available in October 2014) in the countries of Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Austria. Additional important datasources were web-based research of business models and care service providers, semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

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