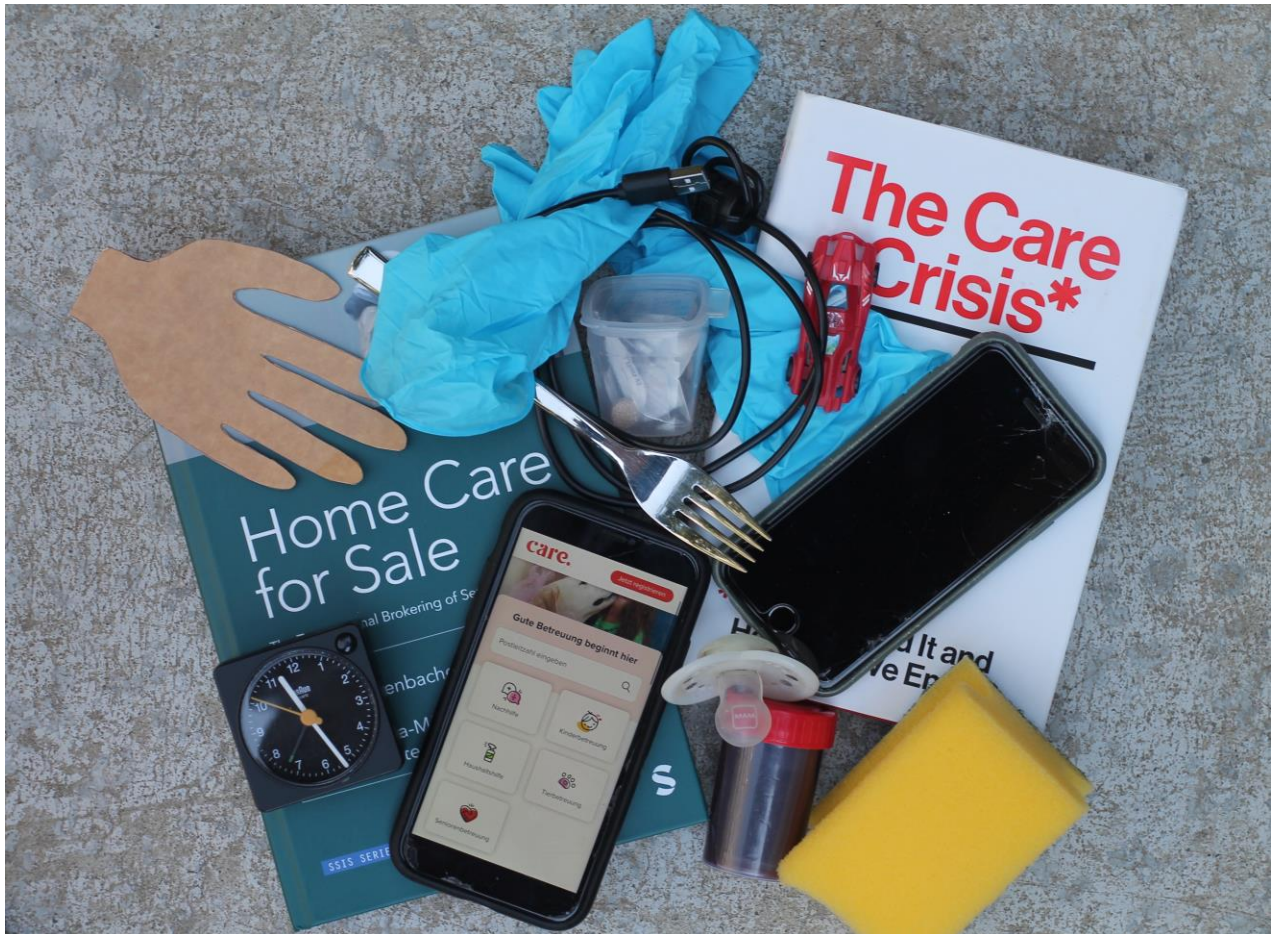


# Feministische Geo-RundMail

Informationen rund um feministische Geographie

Nr. 97 | August 2024

---



©Christiane Meyer-Habighorst

---

**Themenheft:**

**Schnittstellen von Care und Digitalisierung**

**Buchvorstellung:**

**Karin Schwiter**

**Home Care for Sale**  
**The Transnational Brokering of Senior Care in Europe**



*Edited by: Brigitte Aulenbacher, Helma Lutz, Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck & Karin Schwiter*

*Publisher: London: SAGE*

This edited book just came out in spring 2024. It critically discusses the rise of labour market intermediaries that broker live-in care workers to seniors in Europe. It draws together and synthesises the most recent research on the commodification,

marketisation and formalisation of senior care from more than 20 European countries.

The book sheds light on the unique European model of live-in care migration that does not build on long-distance and long-term migration as is common in other world regions. Instead, care migration in Europe is characterised by short-term and circular East-West-migration: Care workers typically shuttle back and forth between their homes in Central and Eastern Europe and their workplaces in Western Europe every few weeks or months.

The book demonstrates how this transnational care arrangement is increasingly being formalised and becomes embedded in national welfare regimes. It identifies the care agencies who recruit the workers and mediate them to the households as key drivers of this formalisation. These agencies have become powerful players in the care market. They do not only shape working conditions and service provision in the households. They also employ strategic lobbying to reshape care, migration, labour and welfare policies in their favour.

Critically assessing the impact of this transnational care arrangement, the book points to the care extractivism at its core: While it helps the richer regions in the West satisfy their increasing care needs, the poorer regions in the East are left with widening care gaps. Furthermore, the book demonstrates the fragility of a senior care regime that relies on bringing in fresh workers from abroad every few weeks. As the COVID-19 pandemic showed, the supply of temporary foreign workers can dry up very quickly.

Regarding the workers – nearly all of them women – the book problematises the deskilling and often exploitative working conditions. In this regard, it identifies the live-in setting as the key problematic: As care workers live in the households of the seniors they care for, they are typically expected to be available 24 hours a day. They are forced to live along the lives of the elderly, while their own lives are on hold.

On a more positive note, the book shows how care workers have organised, have built alliances and developed practices of protest and of solidarity. It discusses fair-care initiatives and union campaigns that work towards improving working conditions. But it also outlines the tremendous difficulties of organising in a sector with such unequal power relations between the employer on the one side and

the temporary migrant worker who lives and works in insolation in the former's private home on the other.

Several chapters point to how digitalisation reshapes this mode of labour brokerage as well as labour organising: On the one hand, digital platforms facilitate labour recruiting and mediating processes and make this care arrangement more easily available. On the other hand, social media and other digital technologies are increasingly used in grassroots organising and can help create visibility and solidarity.

In sum, the book wants to draw awareness to how care agencies work towards further commodifying care and formalising the live-in care arrangement. They aim to embed themselves in national care and welfare policies to access public funds and establish themselves as a central pillar in the European senior care regimes – without improving labour conditions for the workers. It is a wake-up call to publics and policy makers across Europe to rethink how our societies want provide care for seniors in the future.