

Thematic Panel 6 – Marketisation of care: Strategic policy approach or unintended corollary?

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Conveners:

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Numerous states during the life course require care and support by others. Different countries and regimes have developed complex answers ranging from family based solutions to publicly financed institutions and the market, and any combinations thereof. However, most current possibilities face difficulties due to both demographic and economic developments that lead to pressures on both family and public spending. States reduce or at least refuse to increase their expenditure on care, in particular in relation to institutional investments. Additionally to these materialist compressions, the field of care is increasingly evaluated according to an economisation strategy in which concepts such as efficiency, privatisation, outsourcing of services and consumerism install the market logic within an increasing area of the lifeworld. In the light of both materialist and ideological pressures, a process of marketisation of care has taken shape in which a particular sector – traditionally not belonging to the market sphere – is increasingly commodified. On the surface this process could be understood as inevitable expansion of capitalist production where the market is expanding its reach and taking over areas of life originally characterised by alternative logics and structures. Empirically, however, the dynamics are more complex and the deliberate extension of markets is both augmented and contested by other policy decisions and developments.

In this thematic panel we want to investigate the intersections of policies and strategies that foster marketisation dynamics of different fields of care. In particular we are interested in innovative theoretical conceptualisations that seek to develop tools and perspectives to grasp the dynamics of policy prioritisations that result from complex amalgamations of institutional, ideological and materialist concepts and practices. Additionally we aim to engage with comparative perspectives that allow a context-dependent analysis of the empirical processes underpinning the

extension or restriction of markets in the field of care.