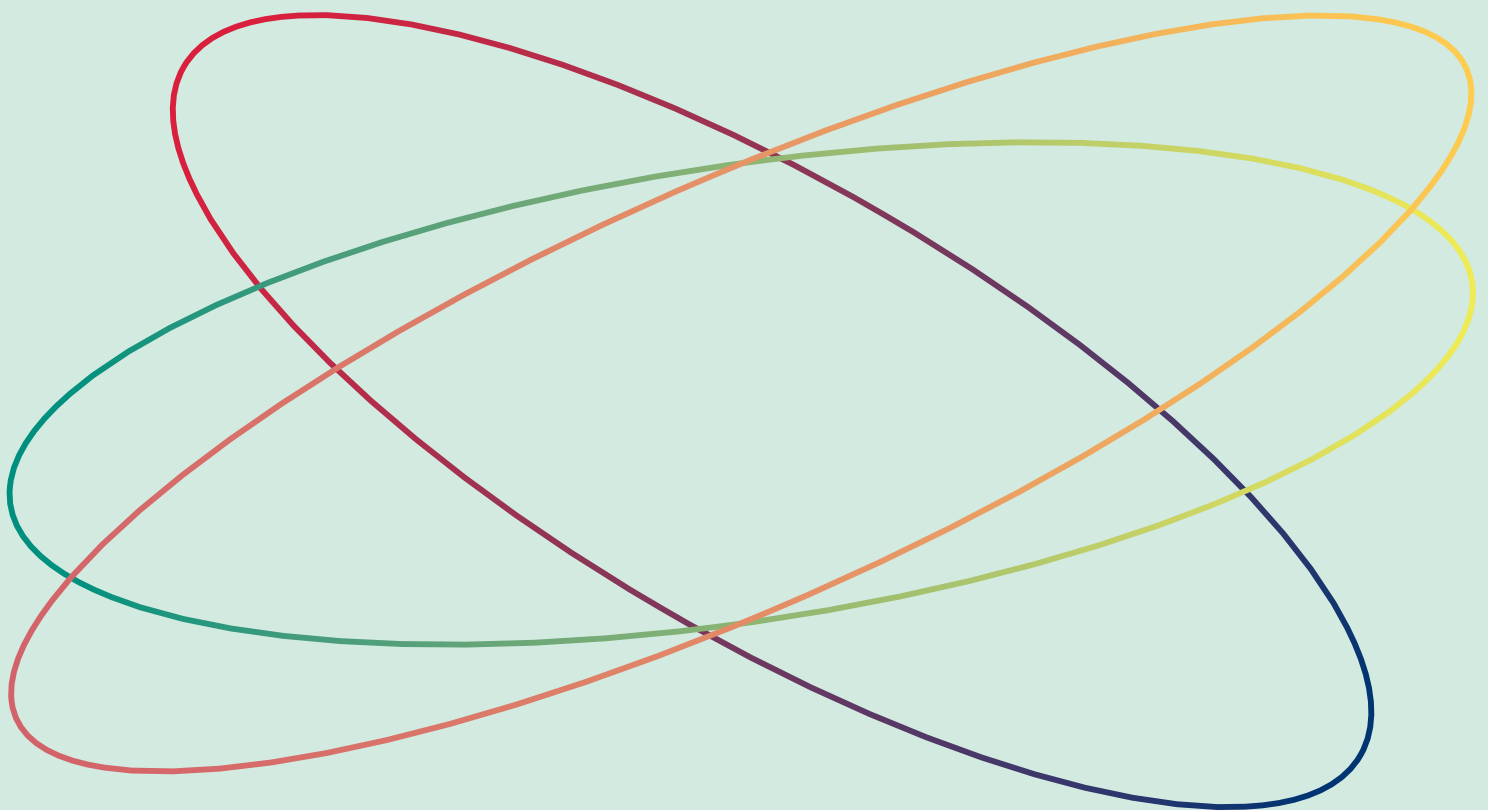


A **documentation report** of the kick-off event
for the project **carat – caring all together** on
28/29.06.2021

Insights into Care Work



carat – caring all together

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September 2022, edition 1

We invite you:
to network, take part
in discussions and act!

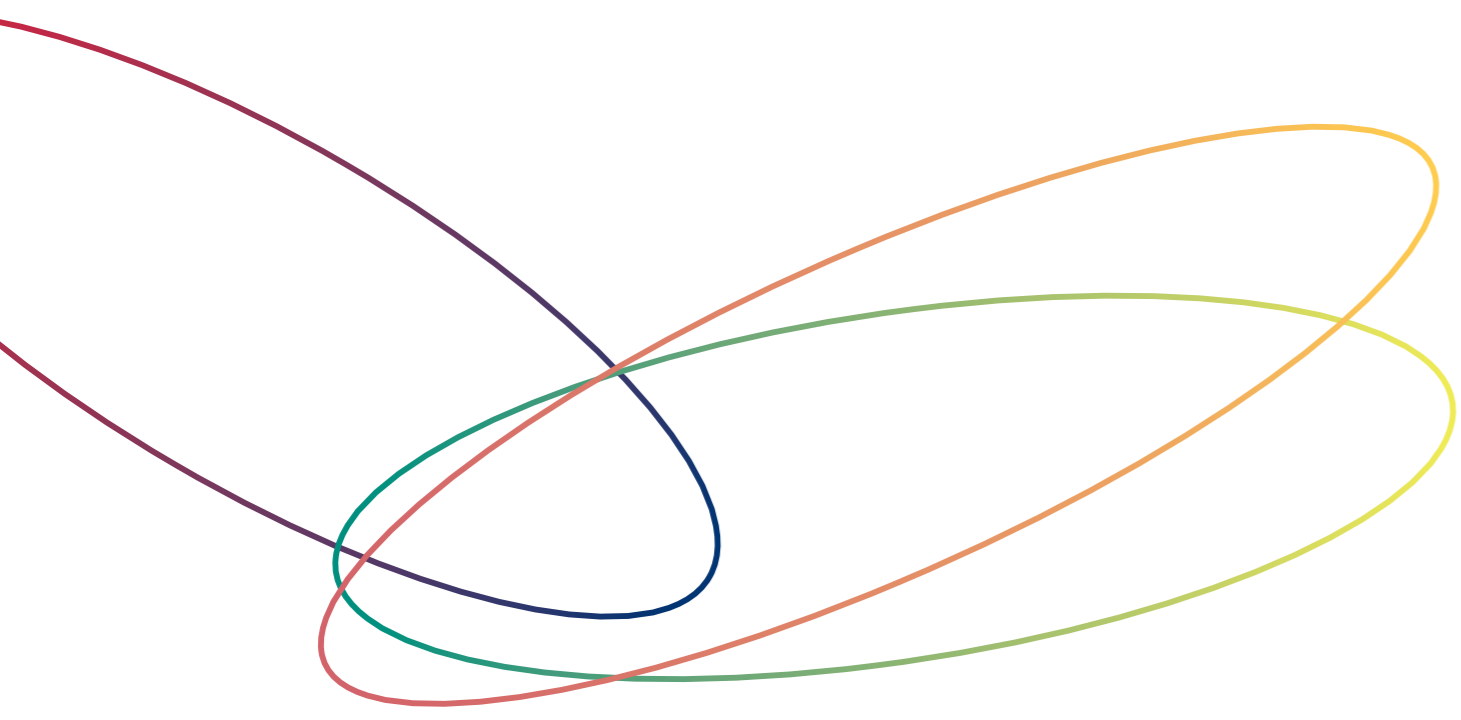
A review and outlook

Looking back and looking forward the unequal distribution of care work , its underfunding and invisibility are problems that have been intensively pointed out by scientists and stakeholders in civil society for decades. In the course of the corona pandemic, the debate about the problems associated with care work is also becoming more visible in political discourse. Current discussions debates in Germany focus primarily on working conditions in nursing and elderly care, as well as the gender-specific distribution of domestic and nursing work, and multiple burdens in families.

The consequences of these problems are immense – both for care providers and care recipients. On the part of the care providers, it is becoming clear again and again that women bear the main burdens as well as the health and economic consequences of the care and relationship work. This hits migrant or disabled women particularly hard. The perspectives of those receiving the care are only being seen at a later stage or are completely ignored in these debates. In view of the increased aging of society and the associated ever greater demand for services, against a background of the shortage of skilled workers or the economisation of the health care system, there is already sufficient reason to reveal the fragility of the care system to us (potential) users.

Tip:

The brochure can be downloaded free of charge from the internet:
<http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>



Currently there seems to be a growing consensus that care work needs to be repositioned societally, and the connection between the economic system and care work needs to be rethought. Knowledge about the problems associated with care work and ideas for solutions already exist but have not yet been implemented.

With the project **carat – caring all together** we are making a start from exactly this point: We invite experts from various fields and create a public, participatory environment for their analyses and solutions for society. We network with scientific, political, and civil society stakeholders from Germany and abroad and promote the networking of the groups with each other.

Our focus is on the federal state of Bremen. Together with stakeholders from the fields of science, politics, business, and civil society, we develop solutions for an effective caring all together which is anchored in the structures of the community. The federal state of Bremen thus has the opportunity to become a pioneering model region and thus to develop significant influence far beyond the region.

A first step on this path was our film **carat – caring all together**, which discusses the current problems of care work and solutions from different perspectives. For this purpose, 28 experts from the fields of science, politics, education, health, and civil society from Bremen, nationwide and internationally will have their say. They present astute insights and outlooks for upgrading the care sector and offer well-founded arguments for a repositioning of the dimensions of the care work that is/has to be carried out in our society on a daily basis. The film also illustrates the objectives of the project carat: it's about profound changes!

In the next step, we connected stakeholders at our two-day kick-off event in order to discuss backgrounds, arguments and practical suggestions for a sustainable and fundamental integration of care work. Experts in the scientific debates, business representatives, experts from relevant societal organisations, committed activists and politicians in key decision-making positions had discussions in various formats and presented their visions for sustainable care work.

We summarise these contributions in the different formats below. The detailed discussions and lectures can be found as an audio recording on our project website: <http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>.

The opening event of **carat – caring all together** was imbued with an exhilarating spirit: We need to rethink!

And beyond: We organisers are already planning the next steps. We will keep you updated on our website: <http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>, via Twitter (@carat_caring) and Facebook (fb.me/caratcaringalltogether).

We hope you enjoy reading about our project.

Bettina Schweizer, Andrea Schäfer and Dr Sonja Bastin

¹ “Care work describes the unpaid and paid (re-)productive activities of caring and nurturing; it is solicitude and self-care. It starts with the support and care of new-born babies and woman giving birth; includes parenting, educating and looking after children of preschool and primary school age, family and professional nursing and support in the event of illness or disability; helping others to help themselves, between friends, neighbours, in the circle of acquaintances; and ends with care of the elderly, caring for the dying and grave maintenance. The term “care”, which is the basis of the Equal Care Day initiative, also means the everyday, recurrent nurturing of and caring for all household members, and the knowledge, organisation and responsibility (“mental load”) that is needed for this. Care does not only mean body-related care work, but also includes cooking, cleaning, repairs and all household chores; and in some countries it starts with the provision of clean drinking water or firewood.” Source: <https://equalcareday.de/was-ist-care/>, accessed on: 01.12.2021

We now invite you to a review of the kick-off event. First a summary of the welcome address given by the Mayor of Bremen, Dr Andreas Bovenschulte.

The full welcome address can be found at:
<http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>



Dr Andreas Bovenschulte

The following is a summary of the welcome address by the rector of the University of Bremen, Prof Dr-Ing. Bernd Scholz-Reiter.

You can find the full welcome address at:
<http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>



Prof Dr-Ing. Bernd Scholz-Reiter

“The issue of care work is an issue which affects society as a whole.”

Mayor Dr Andreas Bovenschulte

Bremen's Mayor Dr Andreas Bovenschulte, the patron of the project **carat – caring all together**, speaks about the unfair distribution of care work. Especially in the pandemic, this has become visible as if under a magnifying glass, because seemingly well-established routines suddenly no longer worked. It is still especially women who suffer from the additional burden. And it is the women who are pushing the issue of care work in the discussion – although the topic concerns us all. He says: “The issue of care work is by no means an issue that concerns only women. It is a social issue with great importance for women, for men, for everyone.” It is a very comprehensive and big task: Business and politics, trade unions and civil society, everyone must find fair solutions together, because only in this way can fair remuneration and a fair distribution of care work be established. The goal must be that everyone involved is doing well in the long term.

Summarized by: Nieki Samar

“The integration of care work at all levels requires courageous measures.”

Prof Dr-Ing. Bernd Scholz-Reiter

In his welcome address, the Rector of the University Prof Dr-Ing. Scholz-Reiter emphasised the systemic relevance and indispensability of care work in our society, while at the same time criticising the lack of concrete and appreciative measures that would structurally reward and value care work. He called for a reduction of hurdles that arise in connection with care tasks, particularly in the world of academia. This must go beyond equal pay and include many more opportunities for advancement or structures that are permeable to the top in order to enable opportunities for professorships and management positions.

Summarized by: Nieki Samar

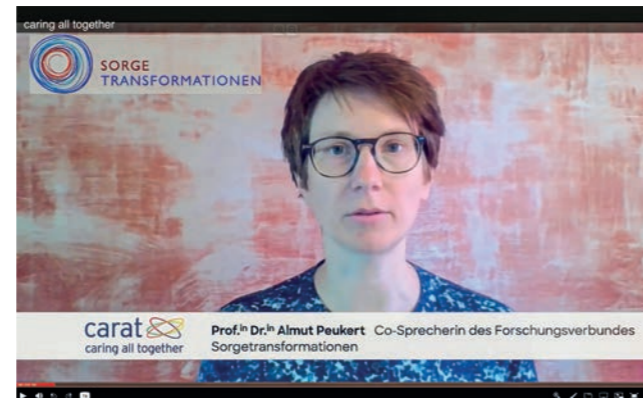


Panel discussion: from left to right: Sascha Verlan, Equal Care Day | Dr Sonja Bastin, carat | Sarah Ryglewsky, Social Democratic Party (SPD) | Christoph Weiss, entrepreneur | Nieki Samar, carat | Bettina Schweizer, carat | Doris Achelwilm, Left Wing Party (DIE LINKE). **On the screen:** Dr Anna Saave, sustainability economist | Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe, budget economist

“Half the world’s population, the women, have been excluded from the economy for thousands of years. If we’re going to bring them into full economic participation, however, we’re going to have to lift the biggest barrier of all. And that is the unequal responsibility for the care of children. [...] world leaders should have learned that affordable, universal, high-quality childcare is economic infrastructure, just like airports and roads. It’s something they need to do to facilitate half their citizen, participating and building national economies.”

Prof Dr Linda Scott, see also: Project Video „carat-caring all together“

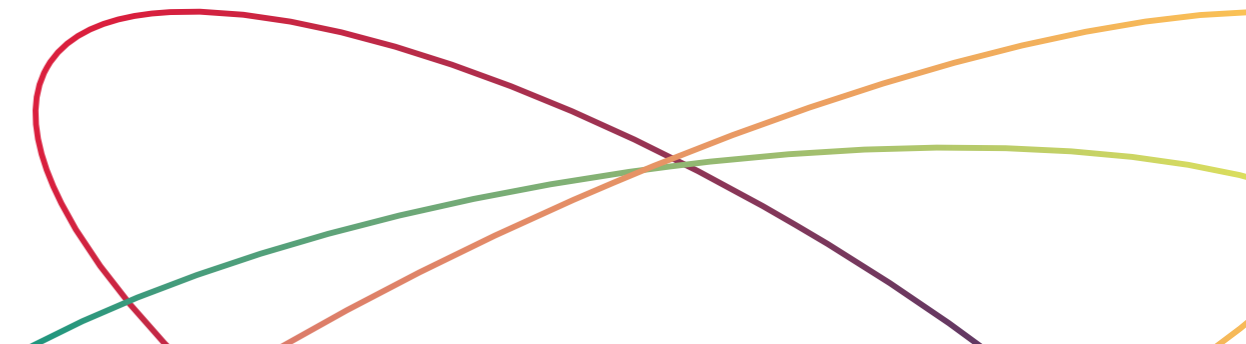
In the German version of the documentation, we have included spoken statements from the speakers. Since we cannot accurately translate these into English, we have decided to present here only an English quote from Prof Dr Linda Scott.

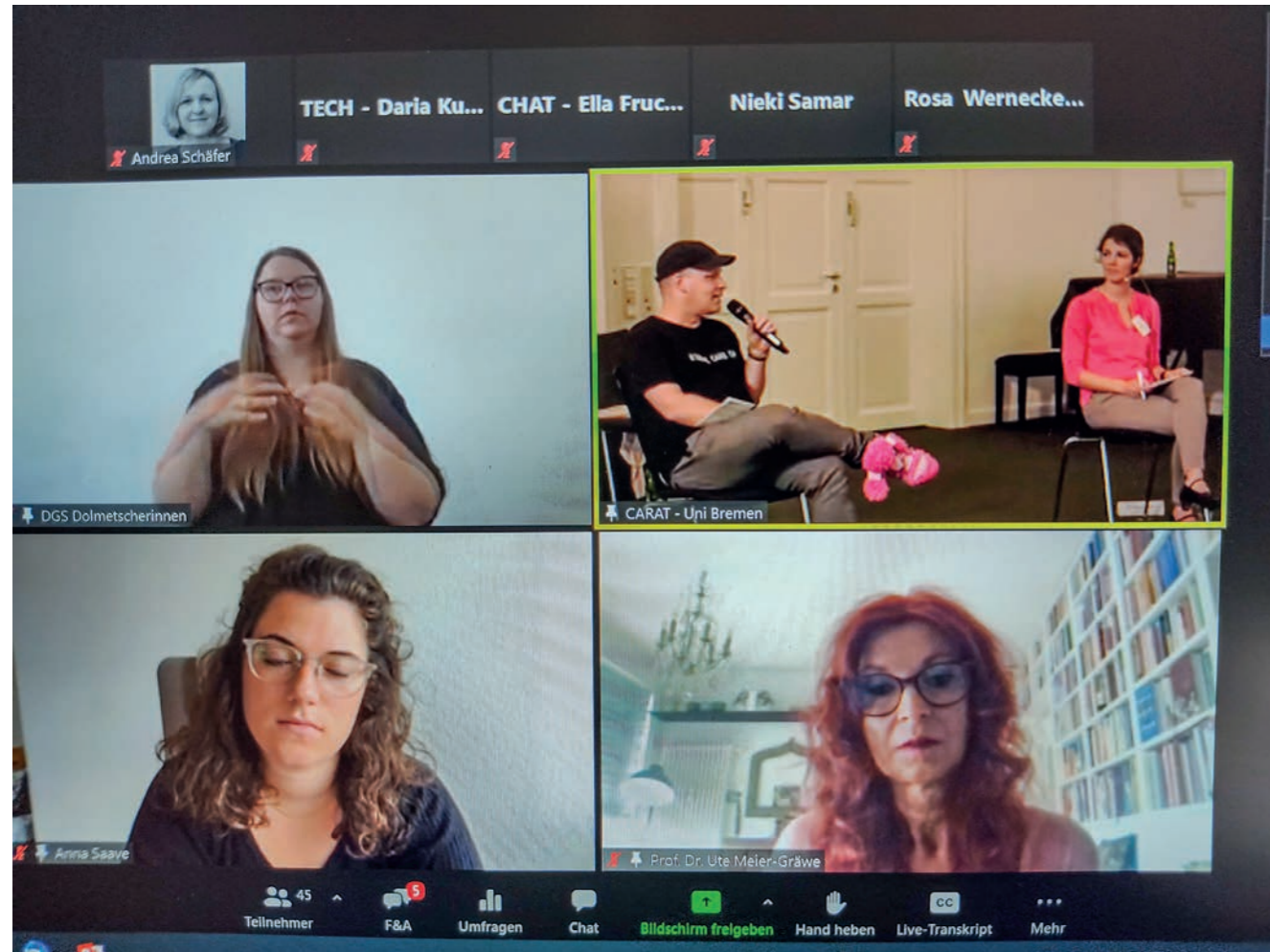


From the project video **carat – caring all together**
Prof Dr Almut Peukert, sociologist



From the project video **carat – caring all together**
Dr Ruth Abramowski, sociologist

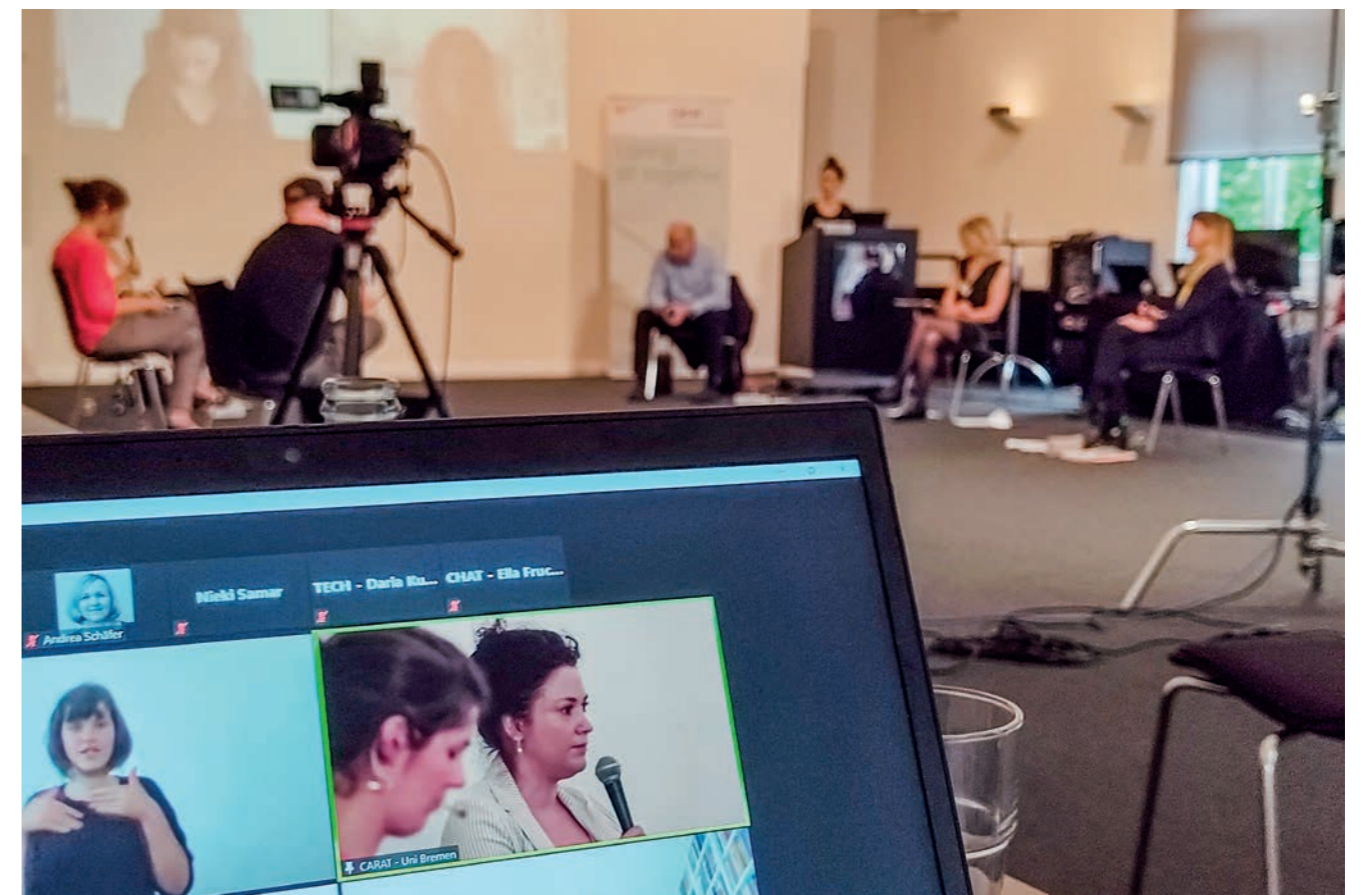




Hybrid panel discussion: clockwise from bottom left. Dr Anna Saave, sustainability economist | DGS translator | Sascha Verlan, ECD | Dr Sonja Bastin, carat | Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe, household economist



From the project video carat – caring all together Prof Dr Achim Truger



Hybrid kick-off event at the Haus der Wissenschaft and online. The panel discussion on the second day



From the project video carat – caring all together Mara Brückner, campaigner, OXFAM





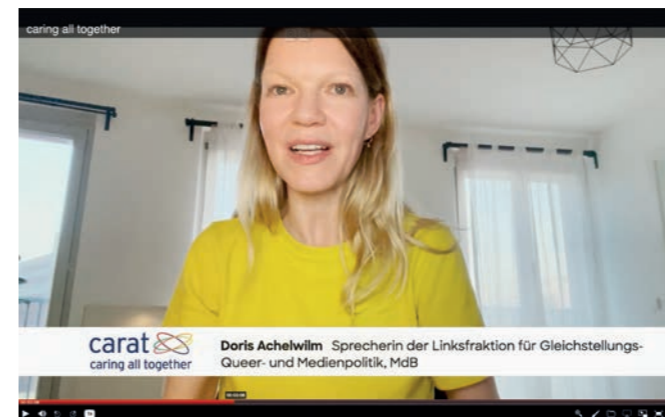
Fishbowl discussion: from front left to right: Elke Heyduck, Managing Director of the Arbeiterkammer Bremen | Jasmina Abo-El-Hemam Heritani, Social Democratic Party | Claudia Bernhard, Bremen Senator for Health, Women and Consumer Protection, Left Wing Party (DIE LINKE) | Andrea Schäfer, carat | Carsten Meyer-Heder, entrepreneur, Christian Democratic Party (CDU) | Nieki Samar, carat | Prof Adelheid Biesecker, economist | Dr Ruth Abramowski, sociologist | Bettina Wilhelm, State Representative for Women, Bremen



Panel discussion on the second kick-off event day; from left to right: Christoph Weiss, entrepreneur | Bettina Schweizer, carat | Doris Achelwilm, Left Wing Party (DIE LINKE) | Sascha Verlan, co-initiator of the Equal Care Initiative.



From the project video **carat - caring all together**
Elke Heyduck

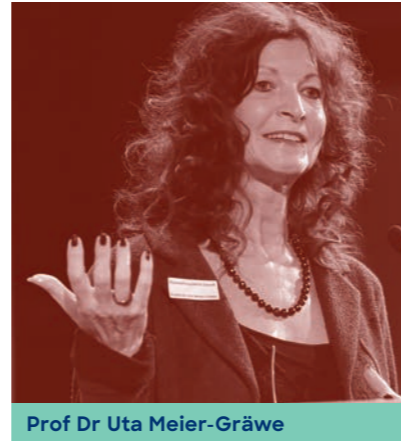


From the project video **carat - caring all together**
Doris Achelwilm



Following this, Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe gave an introductory presentation “Post-covid care economics. Why we need to rethink the economy”, in which she revealed the basic role played by care work in the economy, the status quo we currently assign care work and how we can shape a sustainable economy. You will find a summary of the presentation by Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe below.

You will find the complete presentation at:
<http://unihb.eu/caringaltogether>



“Care work forms the foundation of the German economy.”

Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe

Corona has made it very clear to the general public: Healthy societies are not only dependent on highly qualified people, but also on cleaners, salespeople, garbage workers, nurses, educators, social workers, etc. These are the service providers who have been misunderstood for years and who „are keeping the store running“ – and they often have a migrant background. This fact must no longer receive merely symbolic recognition. In addition, it is mostly mothers who have had to organise childcare, home schooling, housekeeping, and home office privately for months. Really helpful state compensation offers for the private carers were not forthcoming after the elaborately connected and balanced care and supply networks made up of kindergarten, school, afterschool care, childminders, grandparents, or household-related services were cut in the course of the corona pandemic. This is evidence of the lack of social appreciation of care work and a tendency for political decision-makers to forget the realities of everyday life.

After surveying this situation, we established that care work forms the foundation of the German economy. Due to the trivialisation and omission of care work from the national economics accounting system and the current prosperity indicators (GDP), it was completely overlooked throughout society that the diverse activities of nurturing and caring not only form the social framework for social production, but that the raising of children, unpaid and paid care work contributes to maintaining the health and performance of adults, as it is provided privately on a daily basis, but also the care of the sick and frail elderly also represents productive material and personal activities without which capitalistically constituted societies would not be able to survive. Every monetary economy would ultimately come to a standstill if this multifaceted care work was not performed.

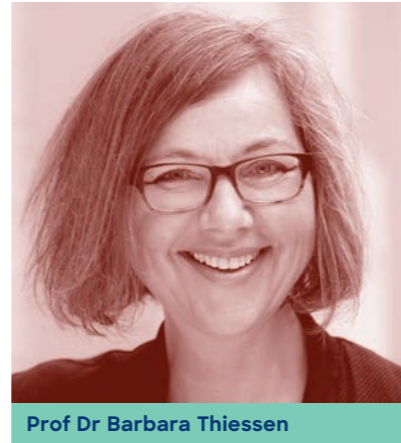
For years, the extremely labour-intensive care professions have been valued far too low and paid too poorly compared to male-related professions. For example, the male-dominated professional group in IT services earns an average of almost 17 euros per hour more than nursing and health professionals despite a comparable degree of work demands and burdens, as studies in industrial science clearly prove. The average earnings of the mostly female employees in care of the elderly are between 30 and 40 percent lower than those of all employees subject to social security contributions in Germany. Years ago, the Bremen education researcher Helga Krüger called the assumption that only industry and the craft-work trades are productive, but social services for people only devour money, an “economic sleepwalking thesis”. Consequently, good wages should no longer be limited to jobs whose productivity can be measured in exportable goods.

After corona, new rules of the game will have to apply to the economy: The primacy of politics could be manifested, for example, in the fact that economic stimulus packages are also used for the introduction of a voucher model for household-related services based on the Belgian model. What’s more, in 2017 the commission of experts for the preparation of the second Equality Report of the federal government had already expressly recommended the development of a coherent strategy for the upgrading and reassessment of the caring professions (social work, housekeeping, household-related services, health, nursing and raising children). Labour market forecasts until 2030 assume a further decline in the workforce required in production-related occupational fields. On the other hand, the totality of activities in education and raising children, housekeeping, the health, and social professions and in personal bodycare will make up by far the largest employment sector in 10 years. Consequently, a one-sided industrial-heavy growth path (even decarbonised!) is not regarded as being future-oriented.

The transformation of our society towards a pandemic-proof economy therefore requires gender-appropriate stimulus packages and budget plans („gender budgeting“), but also tailor-made services that support day-to-day services “on site”, which reliably enable all benefiting groups the chance to build up a substantial work biography, but also time for care work in their curriculum vitae and cushion them financially (keyword: family working time).

Furthermore, in her keynote speech, “Stubborn rhythm. Care from the users’ perspective”, Prof Dr Barbara Thiessen not only advocated highlighting the perspective of the care users, but aligning the quality of care services around it. Below you will find the summary of the presentation of Prof Dr Barbara Thiessen.

You will find the complete presentation at:
<http://unihb.eu/caringaltogether>



“In Germany, the debate about the perspective of the care receivers, i.e., the users of care, is not very pronounced.” *Prof Dr Barbara Thiessen*

The term “care” has been heard frequently, also among the (specialist) political classes since the beginning of the Corona pandemic. The connection of caring activities from private via voluntary to professional work has now become obvious to everyone as a basic prerequisite for the functioning of our everyday life, of business and culture. Care work is integrated into different national welfare state concepts. Germany is considered a conservative-corporatist model, which regards the family to be primarily responsible for care, education, nursing, and support. In Germany, the debate about the perspective of the care receivers, i.e., the users of care, is not very pronounced.

With this change of perspective, the mission statement of organisations whose workforce is dependent on care – such as a university – also comes into focus. What assumption is made about the living conditions and needs of your employees and members of your organisation? The tradition of Western capitalist societies has given rise to a concept of work, which is equated with wage labour. Privately performed care work, which creates the conditions for individual gainful employment, is mostly framed as the exception and a “compatibility problem” that only some of the employees have. In short: by assuming individual, unrestricted operational performance, care activities become an individual problem, they are understood as a private matter and, last but not least, gender hierarchies are hidden. The contingency and mutual dependence of the human condition has so far been largely hidden institutionally. Now the pandemic has taught us to act, starting from the vulnerability of others.

Empirical studies have shown that employees are trying to hide private responsibility for care at the workplace and to reconcile conflicts of loyalty between the place of training and employment on the one hand and their family relationships on the other hand themselves. Added to this is the fact that organisations that – with good intentions – want to provide relief and compatibility often fail because the complex care needs and perspectives of different care users have so far been poorly understood.

Therefore, it is worthwhile systematically examining the quality of care services. In addition to the differentiation of structure, process and result quality, the question of which quality aspects are made relevant for whom is central. The example of children’s daycare shows that social care professionals who work in the facility, the organisations that fund the facility as a compatibility measure, and the users – here, the parents and the children who depend on the service – should be differentiated from one another in terms of quality. Social care professionals want a continuous but as low as possible occupancy in order to be able to implement professional standards of individual support. The funding organisation is interested in low costs and the highest possible occupancy. The parents want a reliable offer that is geared to their working and studying hours, while the children are interested in reliable contact persons, having fun and services that are as close as possible to their place of residence, in order to be able to cultivate new friendships even after the facility has closed for the evening.

Therefore successful care encompasses, firstly, social frameworks that concern both ethical and socio-economic aspects. These are decisive for the backdrop against which, secondly, the relationship facets between care givers and care takers are experienced on a daily basis. Since care relationships are rarely reciprocal, but are usually asymmetrical, space for professional reflection is required in order to do justice to the self-will of the users. On a daily basis, the different needs for closeness and distance have to be met. On the other hand, they are negotiated. These negotiation processes need an institutional place and the consideration of professional standards. In addition, proven concepts of participatory user participation are to be provided. This could serve as a guiding principle for a caring community to provide structures for forms of community-centred life that secure autonomy.

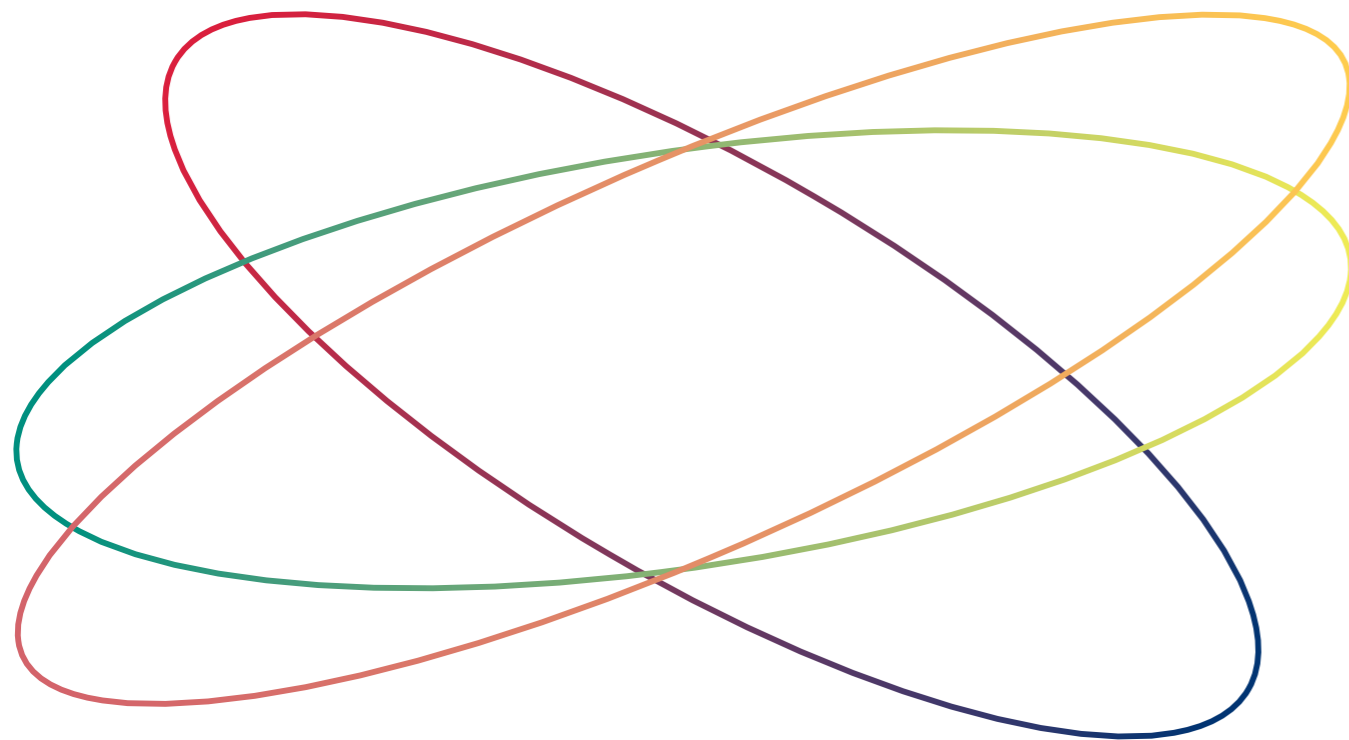
In addition to the scientific analyses, the organisers offered a contribution from an artistic perspective on the topic of care:

You can find the excerpt from the radio play at:

<http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>

Swoosh Lieu – a queer feminist look at care work

Artists from the queer feminist art and cultural scene have been exploring the care problem for some time. The queer feminist theatre and performance collective Swoosh Lieu from Berlin is particularly impressive at achieving this. An excerpt of several minutes from their award-winning radio play: „Who cares? A multi-voiced staff meeting of the care providers” was played during the kick-off event of **carat**. In the radio play, professional speakers present different perspectives of care workers; their statements move through their apt punchlines and precise vocal ranges.



The carat team organised a “fishbowl discussion” on 28 June 2021 as part of the kick-off event. Claudia Bernhard (Bremen Senator for Health, Women and Consumer Protection, Left Wing Party), Carsten Meyer-Heder (MdBB, Federal State Chairman of the CDU, entrepreneur), Dr Ruth Abramowski (sociologist, University of Bremen), Jasmina Abo-El-Hemam Heritani (MdBB, Social Democratic Party), Elke Heyduck (Managing Director of the Chamber of Employees) and people from the audience discussed together with Andrea Schäfer (carat, University of Bremen) for more than an hour. Below we invite you to read the basic argumentations of the fishbowl.

You can find the complete audio recording at:

<http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>

“But unless we organise the economy in a different way, the whole system will not work.”

Claudia Bernhard, Bremen Senator for Health, Women and Consume Protection

How we want to design, distribute and pay for (un)paid care work in Germany and especially in Bremen in the future is still open. One thing is clear: In view of the care crisis, all parties and decision-makers are committed to improvements for care providers and care recipients. It was therefore the right time to discuss existing and future visions and measures along the lines of the question “How can we fundamentally rethink care work in the federal state of Bremen?”. At the beginning of the fishbowl it became clear: The invisibility and underpayment of care work that is fundamentally important to society is not a new topic. Already in the 1970s and 1980s, feminists drew attention to the devaluation of care work and the threat of future care work crises, according to Andrea Schäfer. The German welfare state still supports, with a high degree of work orientation, high incentives for doing family work in private and little public infrastructure; work and family models still assign care work to women. Solutions – in areas such as wage policy, industrial relations, family and time policy as well as anti-discrimination – must be initiated, because they have not been sufficient so far. With reference to Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe, a “social-ecological transformation” is required, i.e. a realignment of the economy which follows the new paradigms of the common good and a focus on care, and which participates in reproduction.

Therefore, the main question in the room was: Do the Bremen politicians have the will to drive such a transformation forward? In a nutshell: Yes. The group was unanimous: A rethink is needed! People disagree about what this rethink should look like.

“There are still difficult tasks ahead.”

In Bremen, women in particular are doing both paid and unpaid care work. Bremen lags behind in many areas, as well as the labour market, notes Bettina Wilhelm: “We have the lowest level of female employment, the highest part-time rate and a previously high quota of women working in minijobs”. We should not allow this work without social security protection because, according to Jasmina Heritani, it leads to a very low pension level – as can be seen in the proportion of women in old-age poverty in Bremen. In addition, the economy in particular benefits from subsidies at state level. Senator Claudia Bernhard notes: The struggle between business and health for money and resources is a “struggle that continues and is far from over”. In addition to the distribution of resources, labour market integration and participation, Bremen has a much more serious problem: the role stereotypes. Bettina Wilhelm explains: “These are very difficult tasks, because we have to get into people’s heads and make a change there.”

“Many, or just one way to a fair, sustainable and equitable distribution of (un)paid care work?”

Changes through rethinking and redistribution are therefore urgently needed. But how is this supposed to work? Companies could make a start. Carsten Meyer-Heder advocates that “the economy is changing”. This includes the fact that companies are offering more flexibility in the organising of employees’ working hours against the background of the compatibility problem and the shortage of skilled workers. Meyer-Heder has a very clear idea of what this can look like: “We assume very concretely as a company that we will only have half of the employees in the office in the future. It’s always a three-day home office, two-day office working week. And, I think, this is a step in the right direction.” The participants were quite sceptical about whether the possibility of working from home can be a means of improving compatibility. Above all, because it can lead to the delimitation of work and leisure time and the problem of compatibility only shifts from the workplace to your own four walls.

Elke Heyduck argued for a path that “divides both the unpaid carework as well as paid care work more equitably, more fairly between the sexes. [...] We need an infrastructure that supports the whole thing and, of course, does not lose sight of childcare, but also nursing. And there really is still a lot to do here”. This is in the interests of the Bremen Senate, which plans to greatly expand the infrastructure for childcare in the future. It is essential not to lose sight of the corresponding personnel dimension, agreed Senator Claudia Bernhard: A comprehensive infrastructure such as this is affordable in Bremen, “only if there are appropriate subsidies for companies and businesses, if such things are covered accordingly”. In addition, Bettina Wilhelm pointed out that positions on unpaid work must be included in the Bremen funds. But infrastructure and staff expansion alone are not enough. The Senator explained the thesis like this: “I think that as long as we don’t take

a hard line with the economy and the men, nothing will change. We can put the perfect state infrastructure in place, which is difficult to finance, so one should not be under any illusions. But without us raising the economy in a different way, the whole thing will not work“.

But how can the economy and the men be involved in unpaid care work? The group had different answers: On the one hand, we need a model that goes beyond the single-earner and additional-earner model, which must become the norm in business and in partnerships. Secondly, there is a need for family models that combine drastic reductions in working hours for all people with care obligations with state-funded support or that offer financed external services for single parents. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) concept of a family working time with a reasonable amount of compensation benefits was cited as a possible option by Jasmina Heritani. And thirdly, politicians are called upon to set the framework conditions for the participation of the economy in care work. Accordingly Claudia Bernhard made it clear that as long as the politicians do not have the “framework conditions set for them, the companies will not move”. Federal and state policies must be considered together.

It is very important in this process to take into account the risks associated with the different phases of life and to develop appropriate measures and framework conditions, asserted Dr Ruth Abramowski. According to Prof Dr Barbara Thiessen, this is possible if the needs of care providers and care recipients are recorded on the basis of care monitoring. To change people’s views, Adelheid Biesecker explained, it is not only necessary to quantify needs, but also to rethink common concepts such as the notion of productivity. At the same time, care work must be recognised as fundamentally necessary.

“The many words must now be followed by deeds.“

So everyone agreed: We need to rethink. But how? That’s where the opinions differ. Alliances are central to this: between politics, business and civil society – this is a good and necessary path to follow. In order to keep an eye on and coordinate all the needs and necessary measures in Bremen, a centralised body or a committee can be the key. Also, to finally turn all these words into deeds. The group agreed that one thing is certain: Bremen still has a long way to go to fundamentally rethink care work!

Text: Andrea Schäfer

Getting into action: that was also the topic of the panel discussion with experts from all over Germany. The participants were: Sarah Ryglewski (Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Finance, Social Democratic Party), Doris Achelwilm (MdB, Left Wing Party), Christoph Weiss (entrepreneur, Christian Democratic Party, MdBB), Sascha Verlan (journalist, co-initiator of the international Equal Care Day), Dr Anna Saave (sustainability economist), Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe (household economist, sociologist), who joined in a discussion together with Dr Sonja Bastin (carat, University of Bremen) and Bettina Schweizer (carat, University of Bremen). Below we invite you to read the basic argumentation of the panel discussion.

You can find the full audio recording of the panel discussion here.

<http://unihb.eu/caringalltogether>

“If you can make eco-taxes,
you can also make care-taxes.”

Dr Anna Saave

Right at the beginning of the panel discussion, Dr Sonja Bastin explains what the current care system causes in terms of economic dependency relationships, overburdening and multiple burdening as well as the scope of the fulfilment of demand. The care system is not sufficient and puts care workers in an extremely stressful, unworthy situation, according to Dr Bastin. This has far-reaching social consequences, such as workers leaving the profession or a loss of trust in democratic processes. It becomes clear that the established processes and structures of care work are not sustainable. On this basis, those present discussed the issue “state-market-care-work. How do we establish sustainable interaction?”. Both the question of who benefits from the current status quo of the care system and how the problems associated with care work present themselves play a role.

“Men, business, society... – many benefit at the
expense of care work(ers).”

These problems, such as the insufficient economic livelihood of women against the background of deficient social benefits, the non-participation of the market in care work and its lack of orientation for the common good, the higher needs for care services associated with the increasing aging of society, as well as an

increasing economisation of the health care system, were intensively discussed by the panel. Not least because of the data from Close2condatagap the group agreed: The burden of care work is unevenly distributed.

But the experts had different opinions on who benefits from this unequal distribution. While Sascha Verlan made it clear that not only do men participate too little in care work professionally and privately, but it is also unevenly distributed according to social and regional background, occupational group or age; Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe pointed in particular to the profitable companies in a globalised economy. The withdrawal of resources from the care sector is generating big profits there. Sarah Ryglewski pointed out that “a lot of the productivity gains we have had in recent decades have to do with the fact that there are more women at work.”. Christoph Weiss agreed with the unequal load distribution, but referred to the different systemic relevance of companies.

“It needs to be improved.”

In order to counteract this distribution crisis of care work, we are facing immense challenges. But first, the group discussed the causes of the problems associated with care work. Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe believed that this, above all, is because care work is not established enough in the consciousness of society and does not represent a systematically integrating economic factor. Sascha Verlan agreed with this and advocated an honest and open discourse at societal-political level. This discourse includes everyone: parents, educational institutions, companies and the public. Sarah Ryglewski also agreed that information and education are fundamental aspects to addressing current problems: The way in which the distribution and the value of care work are discussed in the parental home shapes the next generation, but also how, for example, care work is discussed as part of the economic cycle in schools. Although Sarah Ryglewski pointed out that from her point of view not everyone perceives care work as a “burden”: “Most of my friends who have children don’t just find this a burden.” Sascha Verlan, on the other hand, pointed out that the problem situations are ignored by many – by men, companies and the wealthy. The conclusion from this discussion was clear: we cannot assume that everyone is aware of the problems associated with care work.

All too often, individual solutions are used as a remedy, according to Doris Achelwilm and Dr Sonja Bastin. Structural constraints that lead to traditional distribution would need to be reduced. This provides a strong boost to dependencies, also because the enforcement of interests is difficult. For example, care work cannot simply be boycotted. And as long as everything continues, the work remains an invisible, unquestioned matter of course, Doris Achelwilm warned. As long as this situation is the normal situation, representatives of women’s interests would be treated as supplicants. At the same time, Sarah Ryglewski pointed out

that not enough regulation takes place. The need for the redistribution of care work owing to the general increase in gainful employment is still not sufficiently reflected in the structures. The nursing sector in particular needs to be better regulated by the state in order to meet the increasing demand. Christopher Weiss saw in particular the lack of infrastructure in the form of poor services in the supply sector (e.g. kindergarten places) as the cause – especially in Bremen.

“Change is possible – albeit with great effort.”

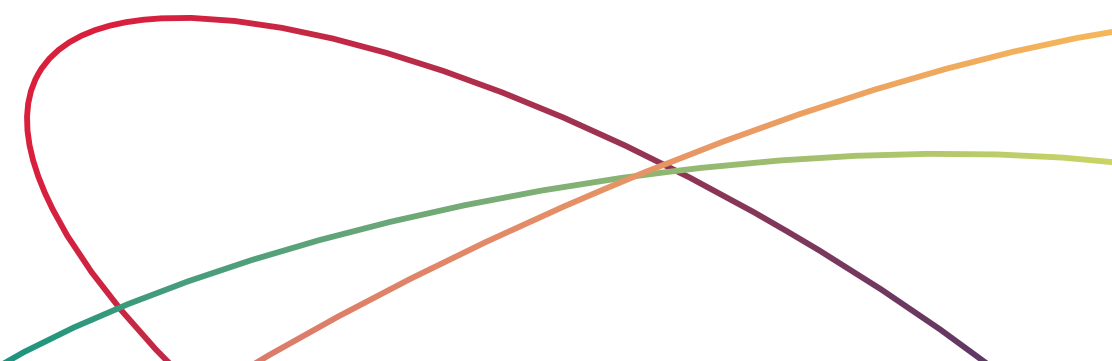
The group not only wanted to point out problems and their causes, but also to present constructive solutions and active initiatives. One starting point, as everyone agreed, is education about the value and scope of care work. But there is also a need for comprehensive education about role models – especially in schools, in families and in all other social contexts – as promoted, for example, by klische*esc e.V. with the Equal Care Day initiative and the Mental Load Test. Quite clearly: “Without a fair distribution of care work, we will not achieve equality,” says Sascha Verlan. And according to the well-rehearsed statement of Prof Dr Achim Truger, these findings must set in motion major economic policy efforts in the future: “Care work is of absolutely fundamental importance to the economy,” says Prof Dr Truger. This also means that economics must rethink its concept of prosperity.

“What we can do in concrete terms.”

But what can be done in concrete terms? The group had a lot to say about that. Christopher Weiss saw individual solutions on the entrepreneur’s side as being a viable path, for example in the case of private compatibility bottlenecks. A constructive solution, which also places companies structurally – analogous to the CO₂ tax - under obligation, was presented by Dr Anna Saave: The care tax. The care tax would compensate for the externalised follow-up costs of using fossil environmental resources. It could contribute to society or companies, who profit from care, create relief for the care workers who are currently being overcharged. The design of the redistribution must be carried out with sensitivity, according to Dr Saave, so that it is not charged at the expense of gainful employment. And there must be a public and transparent discussion about what exactly should be subsidised and what should be taxed.

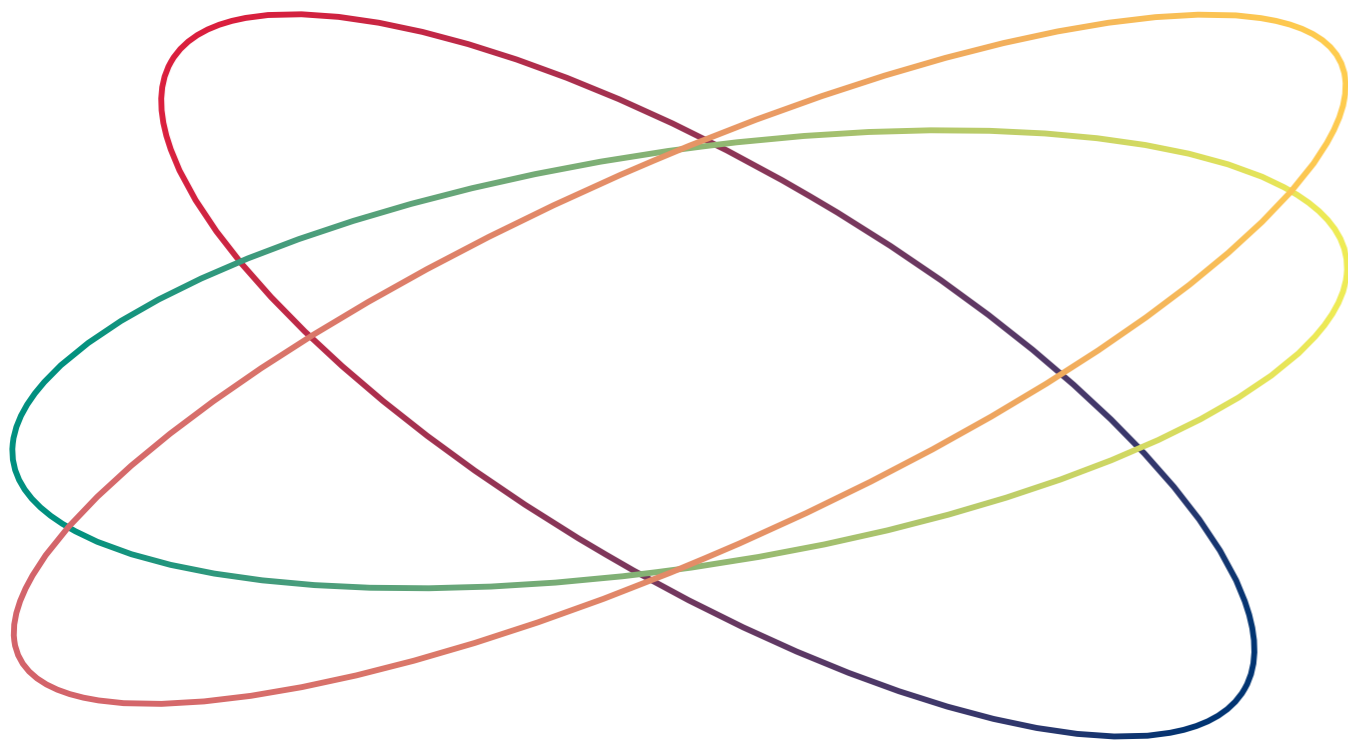
Doris Achelwilm saw the state as having an obligation here, and pleaded for a reduction in the working week. Considering the big picture, and in particular, from a human perspective, the state must create framework conditions before the market fails, Achelwilm said. Sustainable solutions must be addressed as a cross-sector task in the new federal government.

And, of course, with all the proposals, the question of money arose. Sarah Ryglewski agreed that, on the whole, one needs to ask from where the money for this is taken. While some of the group were not yet in complete agreement about the financing and noted the need for discussion, Doris Achelwilm made it clear that it would take “a lot of money” to provide the care sector with adequate time and money. “We are actually fighting an immense battle here,” said Achelwilm. A fight that makes everyone responsible for a large package that includes infrastructure expansion, job security, good wages, a reduction in working hours and a reform of the taxation system for married couples. Everyone must have the well-being of all people in mind. Sascha Verlan pointed out that one must consider how much money is already being used for what, and what follow-up costs the current care system, which is not tailored to needs, entails. In this way, money could be used that is already being deployed anyway – just too late. Christopher Weiss and Sarah Ryglewski called for a care tax to be discussed, in order to minimise costs and for care work to be “priced in” to increase its visibility. But the paths the two of them advocated were very different. Christopher Weiss spoke out against an increase in the tax rate and argued for an increase in tax revenues through productivity gains. Sahra Ryglewski saw scope for redistribution in the area of high income taxation, the regulation of tax evasion, a global minimum taxation, also possibly in the area of corporate tax. She also took the view that nursing insurance (Pfle-geversicherung) is well suited to determine socially what should be financed. An additional idea from the audience was whether measures of prosperity that better reflect the well-being of the population would be a purposeful measure.



Prof Dr Ute Meier-Gräwe also stressed that an effective state instrument would be to check household budgets exactly according to how they benefit typical male or typical female life plans and to adjust them accordingly so that the money benefits all genders. This could lead to a balance of power so that, according to Meier-Gräwe, „[everyone] gets access to the average prosperity of our society; this is not the case at all at the moment.“ The idea of vouchers for household services, already mentioned by Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe in her presentation, was also repeated here.

Dr Sonja Bastin pointed to the structural anchoring using instruments such as a care council or a care quota – analogous to the women’s quota. Political committees could be staffed more often with people who have experience in the practice of professional care work and reflect the realities there, according to Sarah Ryglewski. In addition, Dr Anna Saave highlighted the need to strengthen “communities of care” in order to create joint responsibility for care work, to relieve the small family and at the same time to reduce inner-familial dependencies.



Clear consensus on the need for action

However, the group agreed that this cornucopia of ideas and proposed solutions must now be followed by actions. But how? Since everyone is coming at the issues from different angles: Like all the members of the klische*esc association, Sascha Verlan wants to create a platform for dialogue in order to continue to draw attention to gender roles and stereotypes – especially as part of the Equal Care Day campaign day. Doris Achelwilm and Sarah Ryglewski want to raise awareness of the topic through increased networking and dialogue with politicians. While Doris Achelwilm drew attention to the new initiative “Caring Cities” – Bremen as a caring city – Sarah Ryglewski emphasised that she wants to promote an economic understanding that integrates care work, and she also wants to contribute to the mapping of consequences in the Ministry of Finance. In the area of tax laws, there are some places where gender equality can be made stronger. Christopher Weiss points out that his awareness was raised by the event. He will continue to think about the issue and is looking forward to further discussion. For Dr Anna Saave and Prof Dr Uta Meier-Gräwe, further scientific work on the topic is important – especially its dissemination in the form of book publications, societally relevant texts or university teaching. Dr Anna Saave emphasises that she also wants to give students of economics the tools to be able to design a more sustainable economy, which “understands the environment and care as the foundation and the main stage of economic events”.

Text: Dr Sonja Bastin, Andrea Schäfer

“It’s only possible together.”

carat team

The carat team would like to thank all speakers and participants for their enriching contributions and the joint development of solutions. The existing approaches must now be used to eliminate the structural disadvantages of care providers and care recipients as well as the resulting gender gaps and social distortions in all their diversity.

A big/heartfelt thank you also goes to the volunteer supporters, to the student staff, the interpreters and technicians.

The **carat** team is planning the next discussion with more networking and is initiating initial implementations.

In 23.02.2022 at 6pm, a joint discussion with Dr Franziska Schutzbach will take place on her book “The Exhaustion of Women”. Here it is important for us to promote the visibility of all care providers. Two opportunities to discuss the concept of the “option time model” by Prof. Mückenberger and Dr Karin Jurczyk are planned, to discuss possible model options for Bremen.

A sub-project of **carat** explores the question in Bremen’s largest district „Is everyone being cared for in the Neustadt?“ The project „Stadtteilmapping“ (district mapping) addresses the debate about supply structures and cultures in local living spaces. The Bremen district of Neustadt with its social, cultural and economic characteristics is taken as an example. With a focus on „Strolls through the Neustadt“ and interviews with actors from science, politics and civil society, the care needs in the Neustadt and participatory processes, such as the future development of the area, are discussed. The aim is to develop a deeper knowledge of what people in the district need, what services are available but also necessary.

And the **carat** team, in cooperation with the Bremen Chamber of Employees, has organised three opportunities to discuss the needs of care providers within the framework of the “Städteraum Bremen” of the Equal Care Day initiative on 01.03.2021.

carat – caring all together



Bettina Schweizer



Andrea Schäfer



Dr Sonja Bastin

The initiators



Daria Kulchenko



Nieki Samar

The student employees



