

**Title of the research**

European Mediterranean art scene analysis from a care ethics perspective.

**Key Words**

Care ethics, contemporary art, Mediterranean, feminism, commons

**Summary**

My work is focused on the history of Care ethics as a part of feminist theory and the historical gender division of care labour that influences this thinking. Ethics of care as a theory starts in the second half of the last century with authors like Carol Gilligan (1936), Virginia Held (1929), or Nel Noddings (1929). However, it is rooted in the very beginning of the feminist movement and based on the demand for an equal division of maintenance labour. This theory arises in the second-wave feminist movement (1960-1980) as was connected to the demands of wages for housework movement and continues developing until today. Nowadays, there is a huge quantity of academic literature discussing the possibilities of care as a possible moral theory as Joan Tronto (1952) argues and the benefits in remarking the social importance of care as a practice as Daniel Engster (1965) defends.

In this thesis research proposal, the care theory is linked to its influence on contemporary artistic movements. Considering that there is a strong influence of this mostly Anglo-Saxon thinking in the Mediterranean culture that is gaining force through the cultural movement. That is why the focus of this research is to study European Mediterranean artistic contexts based on these ideas. There is also a whole chapter of the thesis that explores the paper of the space and its use in community relations. This chapter focuses especially on how spaces shape care labour and on how the perception of space is shaped and modified by care labour and gender issues. These themes are described in different studies on human and feminist geography and on care-focused architecture. Some important authors in this fields are Sara McLafferty, Valerie Preston, Anzhelika Antipova, Susan Hanson, Geraldine Pratt, Elke Krasny, Angelika Fitz, Kim Kullman and Charlotte Bates.

**Objectives**

To assess the context of Southern Europe as a setting for aesthetic proposals related to the ethics of care.

To explore the feminist theory of care as a methodological tool analysis of contemporary art in Mediterranean Europe.

To study the role and influence of the theory of care in the artistic creation of the XXI century.

To decipher the influence of certain artistic practices as agents of change towards more sustainable and equitable social models.

**Description:****Background**

The work of artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Suzzane Lacy can be used as examples of the background of this proposal because of their relation to care ethics and the focus on a gender perception of the public space. Mierle Laderman Ukeles (Colorado, United States, 1939)

highlights the put-down of the maintenance work of public spaces through various performances. In the work *Hartford Wash/Maintenance/Inside* (1973) the artist made a performance in which she takes care of cleaning the museum. Pointing out the incredible political meaning that can be hidden in something as simple as cleaning as a woman artist. Similarly, Suzanne Lacy (California, United States, 1945) in her work *Three Weeks in May* (1977) combines different public actions, such as interventions on the street and in shopping malls, illustrating the high number of rapes that were taking place in the city of Los Angeles to point out the need for safer spaces for women.

### **Innovation**

The Mediterranean area has never been especially related to the ethics of care, that is why linking the own cultural life and social supporting systems of this kind of culture with the care theory is a very innovative way of approach. Mediterranean cultures are more family and community-based systems, because of that its organization adopts a lot of care-based systems. Even if it is not common to approach the Mediterranean area based on care, we are witnessing an increase in the use of this term in the cultural agenda. This is due to two main reasons, one is the increasing importance of citizen support systems that has been reflected in relational art, and the second is the arise of artistic, not hierarchical, collectives.

The search, in the art panorama, of new ways to approach life in common and to create a real public space, is seen in some big events like *Manifesta*, the European Nomadic Biennial, but also in a lot of different museums like *Palazzo Strozzi* in Florence or even in the simplest and smaller young collectives creating little pieces all over Europe. To approach all this diversity in the conformation of care-based systems a fieldwork based on interviews with the artists, curators, and planners of these events is being done. In order to do improve field research, this thesis proposal includes two research periods abroad, one that has been made in Florence and another to make in Lisbon.

### **Methodology**

The study is based on a hypothetical-deductive method that leads us from the general concepts of ethics of care to specific examples of its practical applications in artistic projects. The results of the interviews with art sector professionals will be analysed in a systematic way. Grouping the information by affinity and key concepts to draw some conclusions regarding the awareness of the application of care in the different groups work. The analysis will also be focused on the levels of intentionality shown by the interviewees related to care thinking. Then, the study will focus on the similarities and differences between the different geographical areas concluding what kind of actions is getting better results and more social influence.

### **Selected references**

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### **Schedule**

#### October 2021-March 2022

- Study delimitation
- Theory research
  - Care ethics

#### April 2022-September 2022

- 20th century artistic background
- Article nº 1: *The city of care: Infrastructure for a common art* -Going to be publish in January by the journal: *Arte, Individual y Sociedad*
- Four-month stay at the European University Institute (Florence), under the supervision of Professor Benno Gammerl, May-September 2022

#### October 2022-March 2023

- Launch interviews
- Biennials: new proposals for urban intervention based on care
- Artists whose work focuses on care practices, 21st century

#### April 2023-September 2023 – to make during the period in Lisbon

- Stay three months Lisbon May-July
- Care related proposals in institutions in the 21st century:
  - Palazzo Strozzi (Florence)
  - MUSAC (Leon)
  - Palazzo Riso (Palermo)
  - Quadrum Gallery (Lisbon)
- Interviews analysis

#### October 2023-March 2024

- Article no. 2 dissemination of results
- Research results/conclusions

#### April 2024-March 2025

- Postdoctoral period
- Article no. 3 dissemination of results
- Study: application of results to other geographical areas of the Mediterranean
- Article nº4 on postdoctoral research