



### Transcript Ep.53: Landscapes of Care and Control

**[Intro]** *This is the Urban Political. The podcast on urban theory, research, and activism.*

**[Talja Blokland]** I'm very happy that we managed to get you around the virtual table here of the Urban Political podcast. We're going to talk about the urban landscapes of care and control, as we call it very broadly, in three cities today. In Bogotá, in Colombia, in Berlin, in Germany, and in Santiago de Chile, in Chile, with María José Álvarez-Rivadulla, Felipe Link, Hannah Schilling, and Nina Margies today. So may I give you the possibility to say in a few sentences, what you think about the question of how the pandemic has affected state interventions in health in your city. And what comes to your mind thinking about the perspective from your city in terms of the care arrangements or different arrangements of care that have been developed in neighbourhoods in Bogotá, María. As I know that that is one of the things that you've been working on.

**[María José Álvarez-Rivadulla]** I'm very pleased to be here and to learn from your cities and participate in the podcast. I'm going to talk about health, but in a broad sense, and I like the name of this podcast, the control and care. Because when I was thinking about what happened with Bogotá welfare system or welfare regime during the pandemic, I could think of the left and right hands of the state, meaning the care-hand and the police-hand or repression-hand. And many things happen in Bogotá and in the country like poverty skyrocketed, maternity mortality, adolescent pregnancy, adolescence abuse. Most of those pregnancies came from rapes, from family members during lockdown. So many terrible things happened. Of course, like in many other cities, deaths are not equally distributed by social class, the poor died in a higher rate. But to kind of put order to the interventions, I would say that there's something very interesting in terms of care and something very interesting and worrisome in terms of repression.

In terms of care, I think it's very interesting that one important intervention was created during the pandemic. And those are the care blocks, which are an initiative that started before the pandemic, but was implemented during the pandemic and it's a local initiative, initiated by the Women's secretary of local government, and it has to do with putting in very busy blocks in deprived neighbourhoods, a block of care with services, both for those who need care and especially for the women that take care. And that's a very interesting initiative, that gives classes, from yoga classes to high school classes, while you have your kids or the people that you have to care for there, you can take classes as a caregiver. So, it's a very interesting initiative, there are other services as well. And it's expanding. I think the pandemic gave the local government the leverage to expand that initiative that at the beginning it was only in two places, and now it's projected for about 50 other places, 50 more care blocks, they call it. So that's, I think, very interesting.

And on the other hand, the repression-hand of the state. So, during the pandemic and during the lockdown, there were several strikes and street demonstrations that were victims of great police repression. Many people died. And this is a very repressive police, it's not new, but the discourse of repression in many ways was shaped by the lockdown rhetoric. In particular, the first police killing was because the police killed one guy that violated the lockdown and someone filmed the police brutality, and then the man died. And he was, please I have to go out. He was in his motorbike and the police, I mean, they beat him to death.

And that was filmed so people got a lot of rage. They went out to the streets and according to an UN investigation, 11 people were killed by the police in those protests police brutality and the mayor of the city recognized her guilt in that, her responsibility on that. So, a lot of interesting things happened both in the care side and in the more repressive or controlled side.

**[Talja Blokland]** Felipe, that difference between care on the one hand and control or violence from the side of the state on the other hand, I think that shouldn't be too difficult for you to jump in on that from Santiago de Chile, right?

**[Felipe Link]** Yes. Also, thank you very much for this invitation and to participate in this podcast. Yes, these two ways of the pandemic situation in general. You know, the care or the health measures or control and the social control is also very strong in Santiago. And also, because, as we talked before, in Santiago it was totally overlapped with the social movement and social protest from October 2019. And then in March of 2020, we have these lockdowns and the whole spread of the pandemic, of the COVID. Both are very overlapped and in terms of social control, there was still the feeling from the riots, the social riots. So, we lost a lot of trust in the institutional structures, not only the governments, but also the politicians, the police, the whole institutional structure was very affected by the protests, the social protests in 2019. It affected the health measures too, that came in March of the next year. I think that was a very particular point in Santiago because we have to deal with these two dimensions of the crisis. But then, I think, in this specific issue of the social control policies, it was also a very individual responsibility oriented, there were individual responsibility-oriented policies. And that was not a good thing because it was more overlapped with the social crisis, so the repression was oriented to particular people who didn't respect the lockdowns or the other policies or measures, in order to deal with the pandemic situation. And the people who couldn't deal with these restrictions were called obstinate people.

And this is very strange because it was a whole situation in the city where people have to go out to work or to take care of different people and they were called obstinate people. So, the first step was very difficult in these terms because it was still with the memories of the social protest and a lot of repression, not very violent, but very violent in a symbolic way. The lockdown was very hard lockdown in Santiago, a very long one and also very strict. We had to go home at seven o'clock, eight o'clock or something like that until the next day for weeks and months. So, it was a very strange thing. Also, we have the memory from the dictatorship and the restriction of circulation and to go out in the public spaces, was a lot of years ago. And this dimension of the pandemic situation was very hard in these terms. But on the other hand, it seems to be a good thing. And the health measures and the vaccination process, then, I don't remember exactly, six months or one year later, we started with this whole organization process for the vaccination.

The other thing, I think it was a particular thing from Santiago maybe. But it was not a good thing for the control of the whole situation. In addition to this individual responsibility, was this scale or the national scale of the whole policies. We didn't have local or specific territorial measures. So, all the policies were adopted for the central government, for the whole country. And that was a bad thing because they didn't put in value the local organizations, the local confident, local networks of the people who can take care of each other in this situation. Also, the health system was very general in these terms. So, the municipalities also can take some measures in order to deal with this in the local scale. And so, I think it's important this distinction between the social control, with more or less violent processes and the health situation in particular with these different measures, in terms of different

scales and the local organization for people in the neighbourhoods and in the municipalities scale in Santiago.

**[Talja Blokland]** Thank you, Felipe. So, I think that both those two elements now, that where the care becomes control, and that question of scale of various scale policies being imposed on various scales or developed on various scales, have also been issues that maybe Berlin has been situated in. Hannah, would you like to take some time to come in from the perspective of Berlin on what you heard, and connect it to some of your own observations?

**[Hannah Schilling]** Yeah, of course. Thank you for inviting me to participate in the podcast, and it's just fascinating to listen to both of you and to bring this into perspective to the Berlin situation. I think, one element that is probably, I would say different to Bogotá, and I don't know, Santiago de Chile maybe not. But you spoke a lot about control in a violent way, like state control in terms of physical violence, and I think in the care and control continuum for the Berlin case, I would say we more experienced symbolic violence or the violence of maybe standardized categorizations and top-down approach of thinking care through the lens of the state. In terms of categories like, the family should now take care of the children, and that it's more the way we thought how care is a private issue.

And so, in that sense, I think we could also discuss, when you ask, for example, Talja, when does care turn into control? I think it is exactly tricky because, for the Berlin case, it's not that suddenly the state came out with the police force and tried to enforce new rules to the population, but the form of control was much more subtle in the way they interfered in the everyday life of residents, I would say. Maybe Nina, you also then want to add your opinion on this question. And I also was struck by your example, María, about these collective care blocks, because I think that shows that we also could discuss in what way care is sort of a collective endeavour or a collective, not task, but something that has to bundle people and resources to maybe provide for others. And I think in Germany it was much about the trope of solidarity. That was the major narrative to push or to incite people to follow the rules, so to say, but it was not a solidarity that appealed to certain care collectives or maybe blocks in the city, but more it was about individual discipline, to care for others through disciplining yourself by distance or by staying at home, et cetera. So, I think in that sense, it could be interesting to discuss with you how you experienced, in what form the care was featured. And I think in terms of scale, it's also interesting that the Berlin case, I mean, Germany has a federal system. And in that sense, I think we can maybe also discuss how that differs or how in that sense the policies and the presence of the state was different in each of our cities.

But I also must say that even if it was decided maybe in different federal states, there were different measures. And for Berlin, there was a particular set of rules or policies, I think, from our research with residents and professionals, that really try to continue their work in the neighbourhoods with residents, it still felt that it was like a top-down policy in that way. I don't know, we could discuss if the federal system changed in any ways the way residents on the local, in the everyday and in their interactions with each other experienced that this more localized perspective, I mean, it still was a policy that didn't respect their specific local living conditions.

**[Talja Blokland]** I think you're making an interesting point there, Hannah, that exactly what María was describing. In terms of how it's a collective process of care in the middle of the pandemic. It very much feels like that wasn't so much what the Berlin case was about and even maybe in contrast. There was

an active attempt to stop all forms of collective behaviour in public space everywhere. And I know that you and Nina, you've been working on this research project during the pandemic that looked at community workers basically, that were engaged with residents and looked at how they managed to do their work. Nina, maybe you want to describe a few things very directly from that case and then we go back to the more conceptual level.

**[Nina Margies]** Yes, of course, and thanks for having me here as well. So, Hannah already mentioned that we were doing this project during the pandemic. And it was basically to learn more about the experiences of people, frontline workers, that were doing social work and to find out how they adapted to these new measures introduced in the context of the pandemic and also how their work routines and their work with their clients were affected by this. It was different youths and migrant organization, but also local authorities, specifically those that deal with children and family related challenges. And we also participated in various activities in the neighbourhood organizations. So, for example, when they did handicrafts or when they offered space to sit outside or offered cups of tea.

So, we were taking part in these activities and talking to these people. And what became quite clear from this, and this connects with what you just said, Talja, the question where care becomes control, because these social workers or frontline workers in the community organizations, they felt very much caught in between two different logics. On the one hand, these state logics of health prevention, all the measures that now came from this top down and they had to implement in their work. And on the other hand, these everyday logics, their routines and the way they normally organize their work, also their pedagogical work with children and young people, for instance. So, these two different ways of doing their work and organizing their routines. They clashed and they felt in between these two and had to adapt new roles they didn't know before. These tasks of explaining the new measures of disciplining their clients, even of controlling their clients of wearing a mask or of having their vaccination passport and of keeping the distance, which clashed often with their role of being there to support them, to care for them, or even to hug them when they were in worries or when they were crying.

So, these two ways of working clashed and they're very present in the way they describe how their work changed during the pandemic. And how this also affected then the work with their clients, the relationships of trust they can build, or which then did not exist any longer. So, it really had a concrete impact on the work.

**[Talja Blokland]** So, I've heard the word trust in both your explanations, Nina, of those mechanisms of everyday routines on the one hand and the institutional processes on the other. María, would you say that if you thought about what you've seen in the pandemic through the lens of trust, would you say that that community or care blocks that you've been describing, has that generated a new sense of, I'm being careful in not saying trust, but because I think I heard in Felipe's words that there is a bit of a crisis of trust due to the way that the control has been implemented. Maybe a crisis is not my word. And I can hear in Nina's last case, because I know it quite well, obviously, because I'm from Berlin myself, that this is a thing there's a lot of talk about this. Does that play any role in Bogotá? How is trust seen in the context of the pandemic?

**[María José Álvarez-Rivadulla]** Well, I think it's a complicated question because it's trust about whom? And definitely institutional trust decreases, especially with the police. I mean, the police is going under

reform. I heard what Felipe said about the memories of the dictatorship. Colombia didn't have a dictatorship, unlike many other countries in Latin America, but had a war. So, this is a police prepared for war. And now with powers to put people inside their houses in a country that has 50 percent informality, so people cannot stay in their homes. And the police is repressing them for doing what they have to do, which is care for their survival. So, in many ways, institutional trust decreases, especially with the police.

Then, of course, these innovations are very important, but their impact, which I haven't measured the impact yet, I would really like to do a project evaluating how this is working. It's very interesting, many things happen because at the same time that you get these care blocks implemented, you have an increase in poverty, an increase in informality. Many forces are eroding the trust with the state. I did do an evaluation of another interesting policy, which was a cash transfer, an unconditional cash transfer to compensate for the regressiveness of a tax, of the consumption tax to poor families, and people really didn't know why they were receiving that. They didn't have an idea that they were receiving it because they were overpaying for the consumption tax. But they thought that the government was giving them that because of the pandemic.

So, you have a lot of interventions getting into homes, but they are all insufficient to satisfy the needs for people. Maybe, and I was thinking about what Nina and Hannah were saying, is that the point of departure is very important here. So, of course, in Colombia, you have much more room to innovate in terms of policies and do things that have a real impact. But at the same time, there's 44, 50 million people here. Immigration from Venezuela coming. And I didn't speak about that in the first, but that's also an urban challenge coming to the cities. So, it's very difficult to do things that have an impact in an economy that's in recession. In terms of what you can do from the state, the state spending, government spending is still very low. Yet I do think it would be very interesting to measure this or observe it or follow this specific impact of the blocks of care because that has to have an impact, you see it in the life of these women that go there. I would love to follow up on that intervention, but don't have clear answers right now about the impact.

**[Talja Blokland]** That seems to address both the sort of interpersonal trust of people working out trust relationships of caring relationships on their everyday levels or in their everyday logics, as well as the sort of institutional trust that I think you addressed very well. Felipe, in your earlier comment, I think you were talking more about the institutional trust, right? The sort of trust in the police, trust in the state. I know you've been doing a lot of work during the pandemic. We've all been doing all sorts of work during the pandemic. But from the research that you've been doing in that time, is that something you've been looking at?

**[Felipe Link]** Yes, I think it's important, this distinction between the institutional trust and the everyday life trust from people, in each other, in the neighbourhoods or social contact. The institutional, I think, we talk about it, and it has to do with this overlapping situation with the social movements. For example, the first lockdown was interpreted as a measure of social control because of the social riots, not as a health thing, the first one in March. How the people have interpreted it was as a social control measure. They don't want people in the streets. So, we implemented the first lockdown. Then I think it was a little bit different because the pandemic situation was in all the steps, and we know a little bit more about it. The institutional trust is, I think, another thing, very clear in Santiago because of this social tension that we have from 2019. And in terms of a more local scale, or what I meant about scale and the relations in neighbourhoods, we also observed a lot of increase of social relations in general

terms. For example, we saw a revival of a thing that we didn't see since the 80s. I'm not sure about the translation, but I think it could be the common pot or something like that. Maybe María can help me. *Ollas comunes*.

**[María José Álvarez-Rivadulla]** Soup kitchens.

**[Felipe Link]** Okay, sorry about my translation. But this kind of things were very common in the 80s, to deal with poverty and things like that. And we didn't see that kind of organization. But in the first year of the pandemic context, it was very common to see that in the neighbourhoods. These kinds of things and also the care networks between neighbours and people in the local scale of the city was also a very new thing. Because in Santiago, last year I think, it was a very individual city in terms of these kind of organization, social organizations, local organizations, we don't have a lot of this kind of relations in the city.

But with the pandemic, I think, it increased a lot. And also, because the policies, and the lockdown specifically, was a very urban problem. Also, for example, because the housing conditions of the population in Santiago. Santiago is a very segregated city, so it's not the same thing to deal with lockdown in the upper middle-class districts as in the poorer areas of the city. To deal with, I don't know, 15 square meters house where a whole family lives the whole day in this lockdown situation. So, I think it was a double sense of social relations. On the one hand we observed an increase of relations, social trust, organizations, this kind of collaboration in the neighbourhoods, but on the other hand it was also an issue of tension because of this conviviality in a reduced space of housing and also of violent neighbourhoods and things like that in a very segregated city. So, I think it has two ways, these new patterns of social context, of social conviviality in this period of time.

**[Talja Blokland]** It's very interesting that you bring up that point of soup kitchen being back during the pandemic, which is the opposite of the Berlin situation where such things were closed down. And I'm going to go back to Hannah for a minute. I seem to recall a story about a food activity for youths that was closed down at a youth centre, in the research project?

**[Hannah Schilling]** Yeah.

**[Talja Blokland]** Maybe you can talk about that because I think that is exactly the opposite, it's maybe not exactly the opposite, but it is a bit of the opposite movement or social development of what some of Felipe was describing. And maybe you can link that to explore a little bit about your own work, which is a lot on, in your comparative work between Abidjan and Berlin, which we can't talk about today extensively. But at least I know from your work that you've been very involved in discussions about households and community in terms of households and networks and what the collective is and what care is and what household is. Could you try and link these things somehow?

**[Hannah Schilling]** Yeah, I'm really glad that you bring up this vignette from the empirical fieldwork we did, together with Nina. Because I remember as well, the situation where we were sitting with social

workers and professionals. And they were telling about their situation, how they can still provide for their clients, for their youth. And they said that one aspect, that doesn't come up in the media and in the public discussion, is that if we close down the activities that maybe, I don't know, young people can come by accidentally, or that they can, I don't know, just come to the youth club without any pre-registration and all this, then they don't only get access to the official program, but also all kinds of site resources. I think that is what you meant, Talja, maybe you can also correct me. But I think what is important to think of, is that institutions are localities, foci of interactions. Where activities take place, they bring resources to others that are not intended, but that maybe you can get a free meal or something. And then when all these activities close down, these families, that maybe have really limited resources, cannot use all these maybe public or semi-public spaces in the city to provide for themselves. And I think that can be the link, also to the question, what are the sites that we need to look at? If you think about care and provision and livelihood in the city. And also, where the limits of the household are? If you think of household as householding, as providing for dependent children and relatives and it's maybe not only the place of residence but also all kinds of other networks and sites where people make a living in the city and care for themselves and others. And in that sense, this is what I said before about these limitations. The policies, they didn't acknowledge this complexity of urban life, but instead they called for people to stay at home and with this call, they kind of reinforced a standard and in that sense a category of control.

That is the heteronormative idea of the small family living in one place and in a fixed unit of residence. And I think that is a problem we need to address in order to understand, also how cities work and how inequalities get reproduced.

And I think during Corona, during the COVID policies, or the COVID policies have made this more clear even. Because their answer to the pandemic was to actually reinforce these ideas about city life as lived by a minority of people, who have their own property with a huge garden and can live inward orientated, only by themselves. But that's a minority and the majority needs all these in-between spaces of the city. And in my research in Abidjan, or where I did comparative work of the making of livelihood in Abidjan and in Berlin. I make this argument that we need to think of the way people make their living in cities. I mean, that's not a new argument, but I think it's new in the way we need to think about this also in context like Berlin. And I think the pandemic made this even more clear that we, in order to understand what are the effects of such policies, we need to think of household and provision and economic lives in a different way.

**[Talja Blokland]** And I'm already seeing that we need like five hours of podcast time because I'm having new questions coming up all the time. Because now I'm reminded of something, Felipe, that you've been telling me about at some other moment, where we were talking about COVID, and we were right in the middle of it. And I think you were explaining how some of the controls took place in the major areas, the middle class central, not major, but the central areas of the city. And in some neighbourhoods the control wasn't so harsh because there was no way of doing it, because the amount of people living on informality was so huge that you couldn't force them. Am I correct?

**[Felipe Link]** Yes, it was very different in these different parts of the city. And the idea was to deal with the whole population in the same terms, but in everyday lives it was impossible. But I think the government insisted on this individual responsibility that I mentioned and also on this obstination of the population. That was not a good form to deal with it because all of the people understood that some people have to or need to go out to work or have to go out into public spaces to have a little

time of rest, in terms of these housing conditions. So, it was impossible to have the same restrictions for the whole city considering these special differences, or housing difference, or socioeconomic differences.

Also, for example, the technologies or the access to internet or the possibility to work at home. Now that is very different in Santiago. It's very limited to a part of the city and part of the population. We also observed, finally, that the people didn't accomplish these measures. It was impossible, not because they didn't want it, because they can't stay at home, or they can't stop working because they have to get money for their families. We saw that. And I think the government never understood [unintelligible] way in terms of designed all the kinds of policies or to differentiate it in terms of different communities or municipalities or local governments or things like that.

**[Talja Blokland]** It seems that the massiveness of not being able to do that, that I think, María, you've also described for Bogotá, that massive scale, Berlin did not have. How people that worked informally, or people without paperwork, people *sans-papiers*. So how people that don't have legal status in the city and were completely dependent on these informal ways. And I know we have to think about the use of the word informal and what informality is, and there is a lot of informal in the formal, and this would be a podcast in itself, so let's just pragmatically skip over this discussion for now. But that seems to be something where, there's a lot to explore of what happens to work that was not done according to visible, formal labour. Positions in the city of Berlin and it could well be that the absence of, the total absence of facilities like soup kitchen and things like that during the pandemic has actually affected people on an individual level, much more harshly than we know so far.

Nina, I wanted to turn to you and ask you to reflect on what we've had, we had a few questions and we've derivated from those questions. But because we very much talked about the first period of the pandemic. And would you say that the atmosphere or, as the sociology of the emotions is your specialty, that the emotions around the pandemic or the sort of public observations of what this solidarity of taking care of yourself so you can take care of others, staying at home is a form of care and not shaking hands, not hugging, that was very much the first phase and I think there was a sense of maybe that there was that trap of solidarity. How has that developed over the time? And what is that now if you look at that today?

**[Nina Margies]** Maybe we can take this back to the question also of trust, we were earlier talking on. Because so far, we were mainly talking about this interpersonal trust, like not trusting people at the beginning because we did not know, in the city, whether they had COVID or not. So, we were not getting close to these people or, I remember there was a situation in the park where a child fell from a bicycle, and nobody helped because the people around didn't know whether the child maybe had COVID or not. So, something that before was no problem, everybody would've gone there and help.

Nobody did. So, this mistrust in the beginning, in the city, towards strangers, this was, I think, very much felt. And I think this had changed over the time because COVID is now so long with us. But this is something, I would say, we could observe in the beginning when we talk about this interpersonal trust. And then we mentioned also the institutional trust. And I think what's also interesting there is that, it's not only about people trusting the institutions or not trusting them, but also how the people that work for these institutions were creating trust or trust relations to people in the city before and how, and there we come back to the emotions, how they were trying to do this during the pandemic, because building trust depends a lot on emotion work. Like comforting people when they're in situations of worries or sadness, but also encouraging people and giving them hope. This is something



we also saw in our project. That this was very difficult during the lockdown or the pandemic because of all these social distancing, but also the mistrust.

Like who is maybe carrying COVID and who is not and how to behave. And so, what we learned during this research project was that social workers really had a challenge of how to do their work in terms of comforting people, encouraging people. When they were sitting in the room with them but two meters away, they couldn't get close to them and hug them. They had to wear the masks where they didn't really see whether the people were smiling or not. So, this really post a challenge to them and also when their work shifted from the physical space in the city to the digital space. We haven't talked so much now. But when all the work they were doing was on Zoom, like we're doing now. How can you do social work and emotion work when you maybe have a black screen in front of you or where you cannot look people in the eyes, and they know that they're addressed when we talk to you. All these different ways of dealing with people and working with people impacted a lot how the emotions in the city in general developed and also how trust was affected throughout the lockdowns and the pandemic.

**[Talja Blokland]** María, I thought I saw you move in?

**[María José Álvarez-Rivadulla]** Yeah, I was just thinking about what Nina was saying and I don't have numbers, just impressions about this, but the number of people begging in the streets has increased enormously in Bogotá in the last two, three years. You see a lot of children and a lot of adults begging. Many are from Venezuela and many people are living in the streets. The level of indifference, I think, the social level of indifference has increased in many ways because of fear. You could also see a lot in these cities, in farewell cities, you get indifferent to that with time, and you close your window in your car, or you just say, I'm sorry, I don't have today, because you cannot be giving away 10 times in the same walk. And that has increased. And that fact with school lockdowns, school closed for a year and a half. So, I was just thinking about a personal experience in my own neighbourhood.

There's a mom with two kids that come from Buenaventura, a very poor city in the Pacific coast. And over this year and a half, they've been begging in my neighbourhood every day. And two years ago, one year and a half ago. One day I found them in the park, and I invited the kids to play soccer with my kid. Over the passing of this last year, these kids are very different now. I mean, they haven't been in school. They probably don't have a house. They are begging. You can see their eyes are different than they were a year and a half ago. And that's terrible because if you lock schools down for a year and a half, what's the level of inequality? I mean, they have to beg, they have to be in the street, they have to be with their mom, the mom has to beg. The level of disadvantage of these families just increases and increases with the pandemic. And on the other hand, people are becoming more indifferent to their suffering.

**[Talja Blokland]** Thank you for sharing that, María. When we were talking about the story about the institution that Hannah was saying, that was providing the youth workers facilities, I think. One of the other things that youth workers were saying was that some of the kids that came there to a special cooking class. They had a class how to cook and the youth came here to cook, but they didn't really come there to cook. They came there to eat. So, with the closure of the class, the big question was what happens to these kids and where do they eat now? Which doesn't have that kind of scale that you're describing, but I think in the intensity of inequal experience of the pandemic is massive.

And is in sharp contrast to this idea of individual responsibility, and everybody's as an individual is involved in this pandemic, and we're all exposed to the same kind of conditions and dangers. And I think we've been spending the last two years talking about how this is not true. But the consequences, the long-term consequences of that this is not true statement, of the observation that the impact of the COVID measurements has tremendously different impact. This is not a very good sentence. In the last two years we have been talking about this and we have been saying, this will increase inequalities, and I think now we're at the point that you see the consequences of that statement. That that what we knew, from the very beginning when they closed the schools, how this was going to have an unequal impact. On kids in cities and on families in cities. I think we now see the consequences of that. Hannah, do you want to comment on this?

**[Hannah Schilling]** I just wanted to add one personal thought that is not based on any research, but I have the impression that, from the position that I'm living in Berlin, this what you all just described is even, I think more, or sharpening and more problematic or dangerous as on the other side. I observe colleagues, friends, et cetera, people in my bubble, so to say, getting comfortable with the situation of living quite separate from any public sphere or any encounters with different people. So, you can live at home in front of your computer, and you don't need to engage as much as you needed before. And I think for some of the urban residents, it's quite comfortable. And that, I think, brings to the table the question, how can we create the conviviality that you spoke about, Felipe, or the form of publicness that you also write about often, Talja, what should we do in order to recreate public life in the city? At least in Berlin, I have the impression, that's not based on any research, but I think it's an important point to add, how in the long time of the COVID situation, that's now two years, it's a new routine. You don't need to go out. You can just share your insights with your best friends, but you are not in a form of collective conviviality that is necessary to be even aware of the differences in the city, of the unequalness of cities. It's a personal thought that I had.

**[ Talja Blokland]** I guess it's not just a personal thought. I think we've all done types of research that show that there is a retreat of middle classes, an inward oriented of certain parts of the population, that is a form of privatization that COVID has fostered, that COVID has, or the COVID regulations have made more possible to do. And now we don't need to have gated communities in terms of we used to conceptualize them because they've taken on new forms with people living their lives from a digital perspective. And I wonder at the moment that we speak, and maybe this is not good to bring it up because we'll expand.

And I think we have to, you can, while I talk, you can think about the last thing you want to say, maybe on this question of what could we imagine that needs to be done with the public to change that. But the moment that we are speaking is actually the third day now of, I think it's the third day of trains of the Deutsche Bahn arriving at our central station here in Berlin with refugees from the Ukraine. And because it's so quickly, there is no way of organizing this in a sort of bureaucratic German regulated way. So, what people have been asked to do is come with a sign that says how many places they have for people to sleep and come to the station and show the sign. And then there's volunteers that try to locate, she can have three people, he has a woman with two kids, and kind of match the people. And it's interesting, I saw a picture of these signs and a lot of the signs say two places or three places for two weeks. And this is the minimum. They said you can come and host people for at least two weeks. But I'm very, very wondering about this outpour of sudden moment of empathy and solidarity that hasn't, the date that's stamped on it says it's two weeks. So, I wonder whether, in my positive moments, I think this is the outburst of solidarity that COVID has prevented us from sharing. And at

my more dark moments, I think this is the feel good motive of sheltering someone for two weeks, but after two weeks, we'll see. So, I think that that is related to the very basic question of what is the public?

What is the togetherness, what is the cohesion? What is the urban fabric? Is that neighbourhoods where people have care blocks? And is that the right way to go? Should we try to think of care and care arrangement on that very small level? Or are the questions that Felipe has also brought up and Hannah as well, and I'm sure María has thought about this too, of scale. And can we do these things on the neighbourhood level or is that the forms of segregation and inequality and resources, are we reinforcing these when we stick to the neighbourhood level, and if it's not going to be the neighbourhood level, are we going to be back with Simo and say, well, it's the only thing that's possible because everything else is so immense and so big and so large that we have to develop an attitude of *blasé* and care is not possible. Your last statements on this, please.

**[Felipe Link]** I think that inequalities is a big issue, I think, that we have to deal with in all the crises. I also think, which will be the next crisis in the next month because in Santiago, we have to deal with three, or in the last semesters in the university time. So, which will be the next one that we have to deal with? And inequality appears as the common base of these different crises that we have to confront. So, the last years was COVID and this segregation. I think it's very interesting that both sides, that María and Hannah put there in the conversation. The one hand, a lot of people in the streets, in Santiago it's the same thing because of the migration, but also because of the economic crisis that was also here with the COVID. But on the other hand, this middle class or professionals that are very satisfied with this new everyday life. They stay at home, they can work. They have digital connectivity. They can ask for delivery, and all their needs, they can cover it with the computer. So, I think this difference between both sides of the social structure to say something like that, it's increasing and it's a bad thing in terms of inequality. And you can see that in the streets, in the everyday life in the city, you can see that. A lot of delivery guys, motorcycles, less people in the street, less difference in the streets, less old people in the streets, less children in the streets. So, the landscape, at least in some places of the city centre or public spaces, I think is changing.

And the future of that, I'm not sure how it will be at the end, but I think there are some things that are more stable. This new difference between people working at home and people living in the streets in these two points of the range, I think it's more stable than we want to. And also, I think about [unintelligible], in terms of this solidarity, this temporary solidarity. I have the memory about our natural disasters. We have a lot of, for example, earthquakes. The last one was in 2010. And after the earthquakes of 2010, it was an explosion of solidarity, but it was not a long term one. Two years after that we came back to the normal times. I think with this crisis, maybe it's the same thing. I don't know, but it's difficult to imagine a new community and a new form, a stable form of solidarity. I'm not sure about that. I think there are a lot of good initiatives in the last years, but I think they are not long term.

**[Talja Blokland]** I think two years of solidarity with the people that are arriving at the rail station should really be enough. Two weeks seems a bit on the short side. But who knows. María?

**[María José Álvarez-Rivadulla]** I was thinking about the two weeks of solidarity, and they are still personal ways of dealing with it, which ties with what Hannah was saying about the individualized way that the care took place in Berlin. I think the state has a huge role there. Of course, the people have to

contribute to that. But the state has to engage with the solidarity, is the main responsible of the solidarity. And at the beginning of the pandemic, we did another podcast about policies, and I was very hopeful about recreating the social contract in Colombia, and for the first time the idea of a basic income was coming through many political parties. Saying that there were indeed a lot of cash transfers, a lot of money going to cash transfers. Because the state realized these people were not going to have any income security or food security. But then my initial hope faded because I don't see great changes in terms of state welfare in these poor countries or middle-income countries. I don't see a change towards basic services. Of course, there's a lot of innovation and I don't want to erase them with this overall narrative, pessimistic narrative. We have to pay attention to those initiatives, but I don't see a new social contract coming through.

**[Talja Blokland]** Maybe that's where we should stop. We don't see any social contracts come through yet. Nina, Hannah, brief last words, last thoughts?

**[Nina Margies]** Maybe I can just quickly say, because your question was also about whether we should forget the neighbourhood level at all and not pay attention anymore to this, or just look at the global transnational things that are going on. And I think we should stay also or not forget the neighbourhood level because I think this is where people still have the feeling that they can still change something, even if the state for instance is not dealing with the solidarity or the social contract as we hope for. But this is where we can do small practices, small things. Even when they're in grey areas and bypassing the rules, but this is where care or solidarity is still practiced. And I think we shouldn't forget about this.

**[Talja Blokland]** Hannah, you brought up the mast, you can now wrap up.

**[Hannah Schilling]** I think I'm not feeling so comfortable with this either-or with this question, if we should forget the neighbourhood. I think what we should do is to look at forms of collective life. I think that is an expression that, I think, borrow from Abdoumalig Simone, but I think we should see where it happens. And that's also referring to your project, Talja, that you are doing with the SFB, about what is the neighbourhood actually? I mean, we cannot say we should look at the neighbourhood or at the individual because what is the neighbourhood after all? So, we should look at the ways in which people create forms of collective life and that could be a transnational. So maybe we should think of all the, I think we, during the field work, we, or you, Talja, talked about people who are actually traveling between Lebanon and Berlin, and bring medication.

And that was blocked during the Corona times or during the COVID policies because the borders were closed. So, in that sense, we need to look at how people live and organize care and organize their livelihoods. And that could be at different levels. And I think for us as sociologists or as urban researchers it could mean that we should be aware of not falling into the trap of looking at individuals, but looking at how we are all dependent on each other. And even if someone tells you, I lived at home all the time during Corona, there must be some forms of Interaction and that is something that we, I think, should be aware of, when we want to understand how society works.

**[Talja Blokland]** Thank you, Hannah. I think that's very well put. And I also think that it wasn't so much, it was a provocation to say, should we forget about the neighbourhood level because the way it can impose, it can stimulate, it can enforce forms of inequalities because people live depending on where they are in the city. Now segregation automatically means that if you do everything on a neighbourhood level, that there are certain resources that never leave that neighbourhood. That's exactly the thing, to look where is collective life really practiced and how can we build on that and if that collective life means that my softball team partner rents a car to drive to Ukraine because he's from there and we all organize goods for him to take there. Then that is a transnational form and in society-based softball club-based form that has no neighbourhood connection. That would never work if he was going to do that in the neighbourhood, with the same level of speed and intensity that it did because we are the team. I'm sure he got very many other people involved in it and not just the team. But the fact that the team was a team, and the team has a WhatsApp group that produces this exchange of I'm donating this, I'm donating this, in a matter of minutes. And I think that that was in my neighbourhood, that would never happen because there isn't a type of. So, I think that's a very important point to always think about the block of care and but to refuse to buy into the idea that this block has also has to be a block that I can actually walk. Whereas in other contexts, I think that you were describing María, it's a precondition that it's a block that you can walk, because the care situations in which you're in mean that you can't be further connected than in the local space that you have. Where you have to be with your child, or you have to be with other people that you're caring for.

This is very interesting. Thank you very much. I think I, the podcast hosts, mediators, can say that in conversation was interesting. But I'm hoping that the audience of the podcast is also going to find this as interesting as I found it. Thank you very much for this input today. And we hope to have you back on another occasion soon.

**[Outro]** *Thanks to you for listening. For more information visit our website [urbanpolitical.podigee.io](http://urbanpolitical.podigee.io) Please subscribe and follow us on Twitter.*