

CODE Forum 2026

Introduction to the Papers and Workshops

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(No) Local Congregations in Caring Cities? Relations and Potential

Urban life in the twenty-first century is marked by growing social fragmentation, demographic change, and widening inequalities, alongside increasing demands for care infrastructures that are both resilient and inclusive. Within this context, the concept of “caring cities” has emerged as a framework for rethinking urban environments as spaces that actively sustain the well-being of all residents. My contribution explores the relationships between caring city initiatives and local congregations, examining the potential of faith-based, diaconal communities as actors in urban care networks.

Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from urban studies, sociology of religion, and social policy, my contribution analyses how congregations participate in and shape caring urban ecosystems. It asks for three dimensions of their engagement: first, as providers of direct care; second, as creators of social infrastructure; and third, as advocates for social justice. Thereby also critical examinations of the limitations and tensions inherent in these relationships have to be faced. The contribution argues for a reframing of urban care that recognizes the plural and hybrid nature of care infrastructures, in which faith-based actors are acknowledged as partners rather than peripheral contributors.