



## Two PhD Vacancies at Humboldt University Berlin and the University of Amsterdam

We are recruiting to fill two PhD positions (German public servant employment, part-time, 65%, E 13 TV-L HU, 4 years) on a new international research project investigating Transformations in Housing and Intergenerational Contracts in Europe ([THICE](#)), funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The PhD supervision will be supported by a joint, co-tutelle arrangement between Humboldt Universität zu Berlin in Germany and the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The successful applicants will be part of an international research team consisting of four PhD students, one postdoc, and five professors, working at the forefront of housing research within Europe.

The work is primarily based in Berlin (including German social security benefits, health care, pension fund, etc.), but will also involve extended research visits of between six months and a year in Amsterdam, as well as periodic meetings with international partners in Ireland (Dublin) and Spain (Granada). Through the collaborative approach and co-tutelle agreements both PhD students will benefit from advanced training workshops, practitioner exchanges and engagement in international networks. The training as experience gained from this project will provide an outstanding basis for the pursuit of an international academic career.

### The Project

The “Transformations in Housing and Intergenerational Contracts in Europe” ([THICE](#)) project aims to deepen understanding of how housing wealth is reshaping intergenerational relationships in Europe. Increasing housing inequalities with growing concentrations of wealth among homeowners, especially older ones, and diminishing access to affordable housing, especially among younger adults, have affected European societies in recent decades. At the same time, there has been a revival of family dependencies and intergenerational transfers that sustain welfare and life-course transitions for younger generations. Intergenerational support, both financial and in kind, has increasingly centered on housing with, for example, rising adult co-residence with parents and family assistance for people buying their first property, marking a profound shift in the intergenerational contract.

To investigate this restructuring, the project applies a comparative, cross-disciplinary approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative analyses. Work packages 1 to 4 focus on the institutional foundations of intergenerational relations, the varying meanings and practices of family and kinship and their intersection with housing and household formation, the intergenerational support and its outcomes, and the inequalities between and within generations in the context of housing. The ultimate objective of the project is to develop visions of best practices for Intergenerational housing futures.

THICE is supported through the Volkswagen Foundation call ‘Challenges and Potentials for Europe: Intergenerational Futures’. Led by Humboldt University Berlin (Prof. Ilse Helbrecht), THICE brings

together four research teams from the University of Amsterdam (Prof. Richard Ronald, Dr. Rowan Arundel), University of Granada (Dr. Ricardo Duque) and University College Dublin (Dr. Stephan Köppe) to address the question of intergenerational fairness and housing wealth through a comparative, interdisciplinary and multi-scalar perspective.

### The PhD positions

There are two vacancies demanding different skills and expertise, which align with two different work packages within the project

#### Position One: Institutional Configurations

This PhD candidate will work on Work Package one (WP1), which focuses on institutional configurations and changing structural alignments affecting the intergenerational contract. The transition away from traditional welfare configurations (community organisations and welfare states) to reliance on markets and individual assets (especially housing) predates the last financial crisis but has since intensified by an increasingly financialized economy. Recent policy shifts have mostly undermined Keynesian modes of intergenerational transfers via the state in favour of more privatised ones, enhancing reliance on housing assets. WP1 thus addresses the operation of, and changes in, institutions, policies and practices across European societies with particular attention to changing institutional ties between generations (featuring, for example, inheritance laws, pension policies, care obligations) and their reliance on housing assets.

The core question for this research position is thus, *how do institutions shape the intergenerational contract in different contexts and how is housing (re)structuring the balance between the state, market and family in each?*

This chiefly desk-based study will tap into economic datasets and diverse literatures on economic, social and cultural systems. The first stage involves mapping institutional configurations across Europe through a comparative policy analysis, drawing on existing datasets to contextualise national cases within wider welfare and housing regimes. A key aim is to draw a comprehensive picture of how welfare states shape and distribute housing wealth between and within generations. The second stage focuses more directly on the four national cases in THICE, and the social and political forces behind specific policy regimes. Through policy process tracing, the research goes on to examine policy characteristics and reforms as well as their underlying drivers.

### Selection Criteria

Selection criteria below outline the qualifications, skills, knowledge and/or experience that the successful candidate would need to complete this PhD project. Applications will be assessed on the basis of how well candidates satisfy these criteria.

#### Essential

- A primary degree and a master's degree in a relevant social sciences subject (Social Policy, Political science, Sociology, Human Geography, Economics, Public Policy and Public Administration)
- Quantitative methods background demonstrated through training and application (e.g. master thesis, assignments)
- Experience with social science statistical data analysis software (STATA/R/SPSS)
- Analytical and critical evaluation skills

- Excellent English communication skills including report writing and presentation skills.
- Attention to detail and strong organisational skills as well as capacity to work in a team
- Ability to manage a complex workload and work to tight deadlines

#### Desirable

- Experience of social science research on housing and intergenerational transfers
- Ability to communicate in German
- Experience with large, cross-country household surveys (e.g. GGS, HFCS, TILDA, SHARE)

#### **Position Two: Interpersonal Relations**

This PhD candidate will work on Work Package two (WP2), focused on the interpersonal level of analysis. Interactions between different generations of families are changing, with housing playing specific roles as both a driver and ameliorator of stress. While growing cohort inequalities underlie *macro-level* tensions between generations (for example, older cohorts preferring policies sustaining house price growth and younger ones the reverse), at the *micro-level* housing-poor younger generations are often the children of older homeowners and bound together by complex reciprocal ties. The shifting intergenerational contract has thus brought new pressures to bear on the family requiring a renegotiation of these ties. While academic research has begun to address changing household behaviour such as later home-leaving and wealth-transfers, this study will take familial adaptations to shifting housing and economic conditions as a focus, building on in-depth empirical comparisons to identify patterns of inter- and intra-generational solidarity and conflict.

The core question for this research position is thus, *how do individual and interpersonal dynamics of intergenerational contracts both shape and reflect household and kinship relationships, and what role does housing play?*

WP2 employs a qualitative approach to explore family, kinship and generational relations, focusing on related processes, meanings and dynamics across contrasting socioeconomic and housing environments. Empirically, the PhD will build upon semi-structured interviews that the candidate will carry out in Germany and the Netherlands. The interviews will initially target young people aged 25-40, and will later be complemented by interviews with parents, grandparents or other kin who have provided, or assisted in the acquisition of housing.

The research design seeks to scrutinize the social discourses and practices, strategies and decisions of our research interlocutors in order to better understand how each generation engages with housing, both individually and collectively and what role family and kinship. The findings of this work-package contribute to a wider framework for the interpretation of quantitative analyses of interpersonal transfers (WP3), and country focused institutional analysis (WP1). The interviews will be anchored in the spatial contexts of Amsterdam and Berlin, and will mirror a complementary study being carried out in Ireland (Dublin) and Spain (Granada) by another PhD student based at another THICE partner institution.

#### **Selection Criteria**

Selection criteria below outline the qualifications, skills, knowledge and/or experience that the successful candidate would need to complete this PhD project. Applications will be assessed on the basis of how well candidates satisfy these criteria.

### Essential

- A primary degree and (preferably) a master's degree in a relevant social sciences subject (Human Geography, Sociology, Anthropology)
- Qualitative/interpretive methods background demonstrated through training and application (e.g. master thesis, assignments)
- Analytical and critical evaluation skills
- Excellent English communication skills including report writing and presentation skills.
- Fluency in German or Dutch (or both)
- Attention to detail and strong organisational skills as well as capacity to work in a team
- Ability to manage a complex workload and work to tight deadlines

### Desirable

- Experience of social science research on housing and intergenerational transfers
- Experience with state-of-the-art interview methods and research design (such as ethnography) as well as qualitative data coding and analysis techniques
- Familiarity with appropriate software (e.g. MAXQDA)

Closing date for applications: 24 May 2024

Start date: 01 September 2024

### Application

Please send your application until May 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 electronically to Barbara Richter, the assistant of Prof. Ilse Helbrecht, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Geographisches Institut, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin. E-mail: [barbara.richter@geographie.hu-berlin.de](mailto:barbara.richter@geographie.hu-berlin.de)

Ideally, all documents are submitted as one pdf file. Please indicate, which position you are applying for (PhD #1 with the acronym DR/056/24 or PhD #2 with the acronym DR/055/24). The application must include:

- Detailed curriculum vitae including the names of two referees
- Application letter including a personal statement outlining suitability for the PhD position (2-4 pages).
- Up to three work samples, e.g. Master thesis, publication (if available)
- Diploma and Transcripts of records (e.g. BA/SocSc and MA/MSocSc)

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU) is committed to promoting diversity and providing equal opportunities. One strategic goal is to increase the proportion of women in the scientific field. As such, we emphatically invite qualified female candidates to apply. Individuals with disabilities will receive preferential treatment if other qualifications are the same.

Interviews are expected to take place on June 18<sup>th</sup> in Berlin.

For more information [Click Here](#)

<https://www.geographie.hu-berlin.de/de/abteilungen/kulturozialgeographie/forschung/forschungsprojekte/job-advertisement>