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The current disaster response to the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the existing care crisis and led to a re-traditionalization of gender relations. Mostly women work in critical infrastructure and in the care sector, while they are at the same time responsible for most of the unpaid care work. Feminist economists and political scientists have repeatedly highlighted the fatal constitution of care regimes in western capitalist societies, which are characterized by the marginalization, marketization and privatization of care and its role in exacerbating intersectional gender inequalities.

In the midst of the global COVID-19 health crisis, care and (health) care infrastructure is on the contrary portrayed as critical infrastructure and its crucial role for our society is emphasized. But is this rhetoric commitment reflected in public policies and the governance of care? This contribution reviews the current governmental crisis response during COVID-19 in Europe and analyses how different care regimes (dual-earner-model, breadwinner model, neoliberal care regime) deal with care needs, relations, actors and resources. By focusing on the ways care is governed during the pandemic, we want to highlight the ambivalent role of care in our society, the capitalist economy and its implications for social and gender inequalities.

Caring about and Care in Disasters: On Privileges, Marginalisation and the Making of Critical (Social) Infrastructure Protection