

Conference

**Covid, Crisis, Care and Change?**

19.03.2021

TU Dresden, Germany

Chair of Macro-Sociology

**Call for papers**

Due to the intensification of contradictions during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis social inequalities in the social spheres of production, reproduction and state regulation that had been inherent to the pre-pandemic world became more visible than ever before. The conference *Covid, Crisis, Care and Change?* will examine how fundamental and sustainable the social changes over the course of the pandemic are at the social levels of labour, care work and state regulation in their gender dimensions.

In Germany, these contradictory developments are clearly reflected in the political discussions about so-called system-relevant professions. The contradictory organisation of **labour** and life under capitalist conditions and their gender relations is particularly visible in the service sector as well as in the sectors of health, care and childcare. The areas of labour that are ensuring the most fundamental provision of life are at the same time characterised by low social recognition and wages while a majority of the staff is female and works under precarious working conditions. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the social appreciation of these previously devalued activities has risen to new heights. Also new tasks such as pandemic-related controlling customers and clients added the workload. However, gestures of symbolic acknowledgements do not meet with comprehensive material recognition. So how (strongly) do processes of recognition and appropriation in system-relevant professions actually change in times of social crisis and what role do gender relations play?

In addition to the gender ratio of system-relevant professions und the unequal distribution of risks in the social sphere of labour and production, the pandemic has brought the unequal distribution of **reproductive work** along the gender lines into sharper focus. The organisation of care during the crisis is characterised by the invocation of family as the primary and determinant place of care and reproduction. As a result, processes of retraditionalisation, the strengthening of family structures and the manifestation of gender hierarchies in the family are emerging. Other ways of living and organisation of care remain excluded from public debate and communication. The unequal distribution of risks in the sphere of labour and reproductive work is perpetuated by the comprehensive state crisis management in Germany. **State regulation** of the crisis intervenes comprehensively and preventively in the work and life of individuals to ensure the experience of continuous normality and consumption under changing conditions and to maintain the old order of inequality.

The critical illumination of social problems - precarious wage labour relations, unequal distribution of care work, violence against women and LGBTTI\* and the exclusion of lifestyles beyond the

heterosexual family norm - also offers the opportunity to reflect on the fundamental structuring of society, on work, reproduction and care responsibility as well as the relationship between state and individual, and brings progressive strategies, new orders and utopias into the discussion. The conference *Covid, Crisis, Care and Change?* would like to open the space to reflect on possibilities of (transnational) solidarity and social change in the current situation, while also following speculative or utopian ways of thinking.

We invite scholars from social sciences and related disciplines like philosophy to submit an abstract on the following questions:

- Do realization of system relevance and the pandemic-related additional tasks in the service sector and health care system lead to a sustainable upgrading of the professions and how is the development perceived and assessed by the workers?
- In the border areas of work-related exploitation (e.g. extreme working conditions of migrant harvest workers or in slaughterhouses and domestic care) the unequal distribution of health risks and the different vulnerability of bodies becomes particularly visible. Do these developments provide an opportunity to bring about fundamental social improvements?
- Can we assume a sustained retraditionalisation of gender relations, the strengthening of family structures and the manifestation of gender hierarchies in the family?
- How is care and interpersonal connections for people beyond the heterosexual small family norm organised in times of crisis?
- How does the different vulnerability of bodies manifest itself in intersectional entanglements with structural power relations between gender, class and race?
- How does state regulation change over the course of the pandemic and in international comparison?
- How do social negotiations on the relationship between freedom and equality unfold along generational lines in times of pandemic?
- How far are state regulations and invocations gendered?
- Which new structures and solidarity practices have emerged so far and which are thinkable?

---

The conference language is English.

The conference is planned in a hybrid format as a face-to-face event with the possibility to attend online. If the conditions do not allow for an event with presence at the TU Dresden next March, the conference will be held only digitally. Unfortunately, it is not possible to cover travel and accommodation costs.

Please send your abstract of no more than 500 words by 15.12.2020 to:

antonia.kupfer@tu-dresden.de and constanze.stutz@tu-dresden.de

We will inform about your conference participation until 22.12.2020.

The contributions will be published in an anthology. Deadline for papers is the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2021.