

Crisis of Care: Vulnerability, Responsibility and Needs in Times of Corona

CERC-Conference online – 7th May 2021



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Our research: first phase

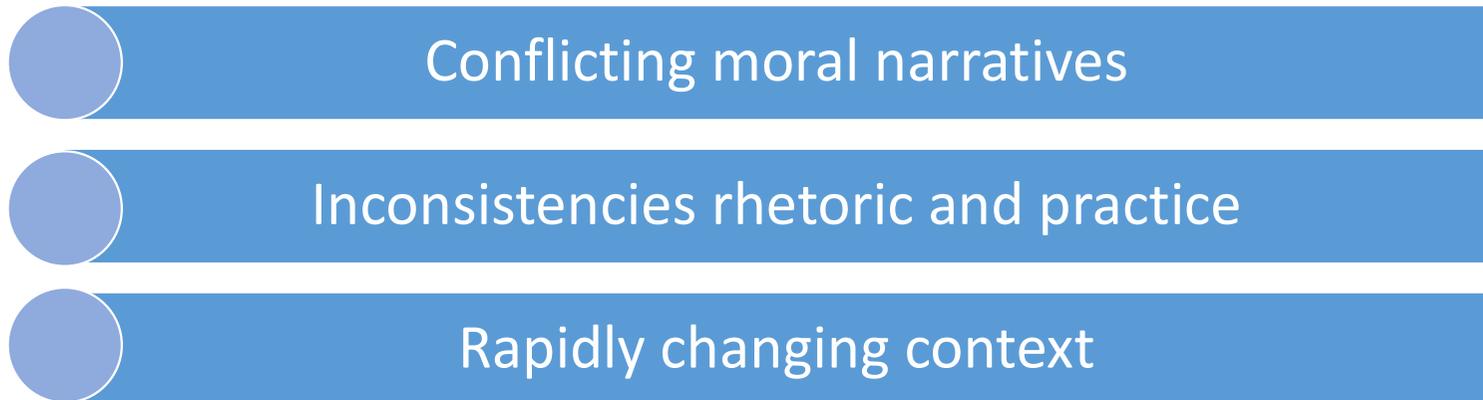
- Aim: Reconstruct moral logic of COVID-19 policy decisions
- How: Analysis of letters sent from Ministry of Health to Parliament
- Period: 27 February - 27 September 2020 (first wave Netherlands)
- Main corpus: 26 letters
- Methods used:
 - Critical discourse analysis
 - Dictionary analysis with R

First findings

- 1) The moral logic presented in the government letters contains a number of inconsistencies and problems.
- 2) Vulnerability, responsibility, and necessity are central concepts that require further analysis.

Moral logic: tensions

- The moral logic presented in the analysed government letters is ambivalent and fragmentary.
- Tensions arise from:



Necessity, vulnerability and responsibility

- Deepen analysis moral logic through focus on key concepts.

The screenshot shows the RStudio interface with the following components:

- Code Editor:** Contains R code for creating dictionaries and processing a corpus. The code defines several dictionaries (dict_5, dict_6) and processes a corpus (testCorpus) into a document frequency matrix (dfm5).
- Environment Pane:** Shows the Global Environment with variables: df_corpus (26 obs. of 8 variables), dict (Formal class dictionary2), dict_5 (Formal class dictionary2), Kamerbrieven (26 obs. of 6 variables), lg_dfm (Formal class dfm), and lg_dfm5 (Formal class dfm).
- Console:** Displays the output of the code execution, showing a table of document frequencies and a list of features.

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109 dict_5 <- dictionary(list(proportionaliteit = c("proportioneel", "proportionalit
110 gezond_verstand = c("verstand", "verstandig", "onverst
111 noodzaak = c("noodzaak", "noodzakelijk", "nodig"),
112 keuze = c("kiezen", "keuze", "afweging"),
113 noodzaak_2 = c("noodzaak", "noodzakelijk"),
114 keuze_2 = c("kiezen", "keuze"),
115 moeten = c("moeten", "moet", "moest", "moesten"),
116 kiezen = c("kiezen", "kiest", "koos", "kozen"),
117 willen = c("willen", "wilt", "wilde", "wilden"),
118 verantwoordelijkheid = c("verantwoord", "verantwoordeli
119 kwetsbaarheid = c("kwetsbaar", "kwetsbare", "kwetsbaar
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122 lg_dfm5 <- dfm(testCorpus, dictionary = dict_5)
123 lg_dfm5
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126 dict_6 <- dictionary(list(besluiten = c("besluiten", "besluit", "besloot", "besl
127 beslissen = c("beslissen", "beslists", "beslistte", "t
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docs	keuze_2	moeten	kiezen	willen	verantwoordelijkheid
KB_2020_03_01.txt	0	3	0	0	0
KB_2020_03_02.txt	0	4	0	0	2
KB_2020_03_10.txt	0	1	0	1	0
KB_2020_03_12.txt	0	13	1	4	3
KB_2020_03_15.txt	0	0	0	1	0
KB_2020_03_17.txt	1	5	1	2	1

Necessity (521 times mentioned in letters)

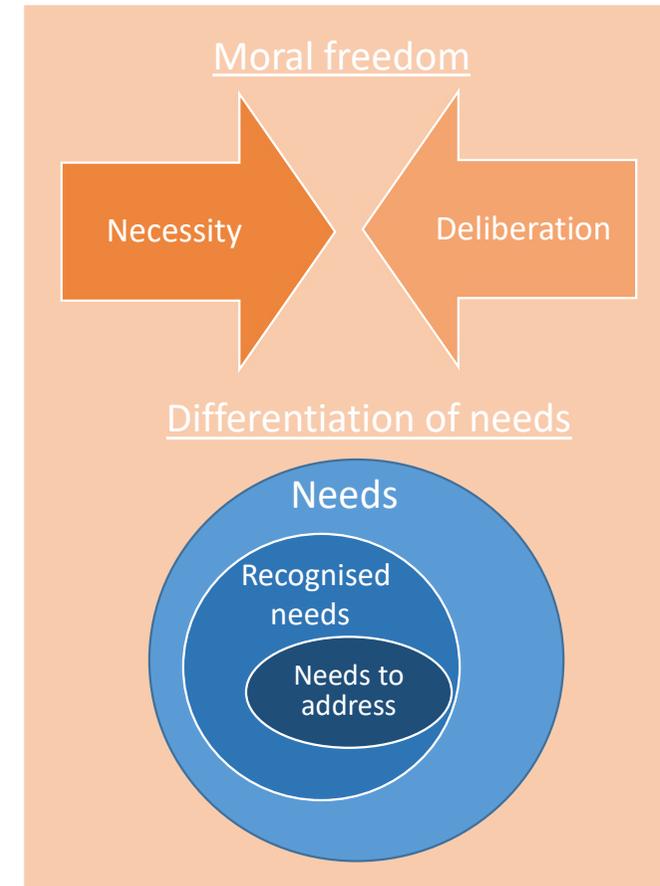
- Appeal to necessity minimises moral/political responsibility.

But it is important to consider:

- How *context* in which necessity arises is shaped by political and social factors.
- How *perception* of necessity is directed by what and whom we consider important (e.g. lack of attention for undocumented migrants + refugees).

Which needs matter? Whose needs matter?

- Needs are mostly considered in an organisational/ logistic sense: e.g. “need for personal protection gear”(12x).
- Less attention for needs of individuals and society: e.g. “need for clerical care”(3x) / “need for information about corona”(3x).
- Needs of organisations with close links to government are recognised more easily.



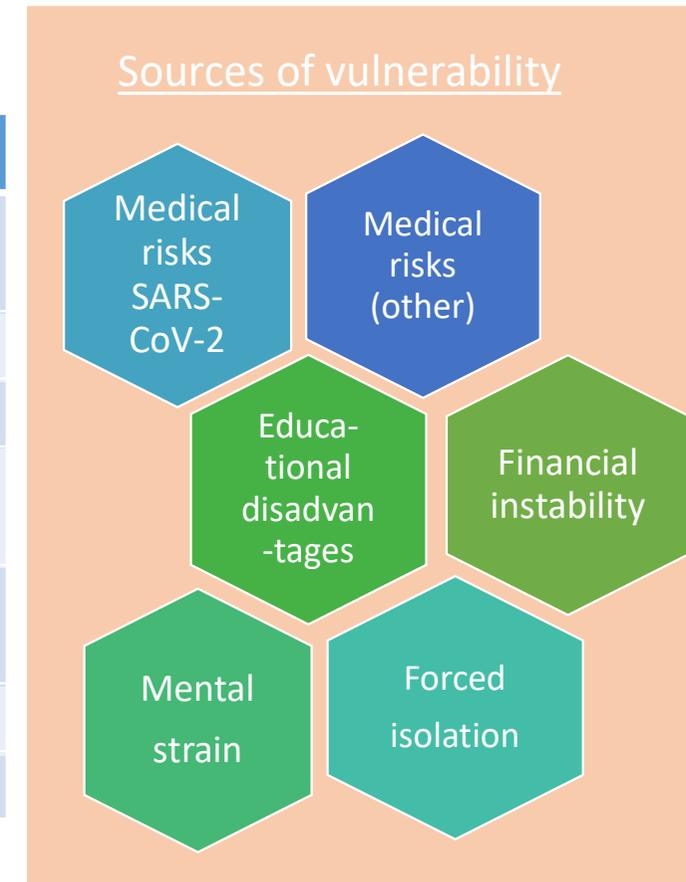
Vulnerability (258 times mentioned in letters)

- Vulnerability narrows down to medical frailty in crisis:

Government letters
People (with underlying conditions or elderly) (72x)
Elderly (29x)
Health (24x)
Persons (22x)
Patients (20x)
Groups (20x)
People/Elderly in nursing homes (8)

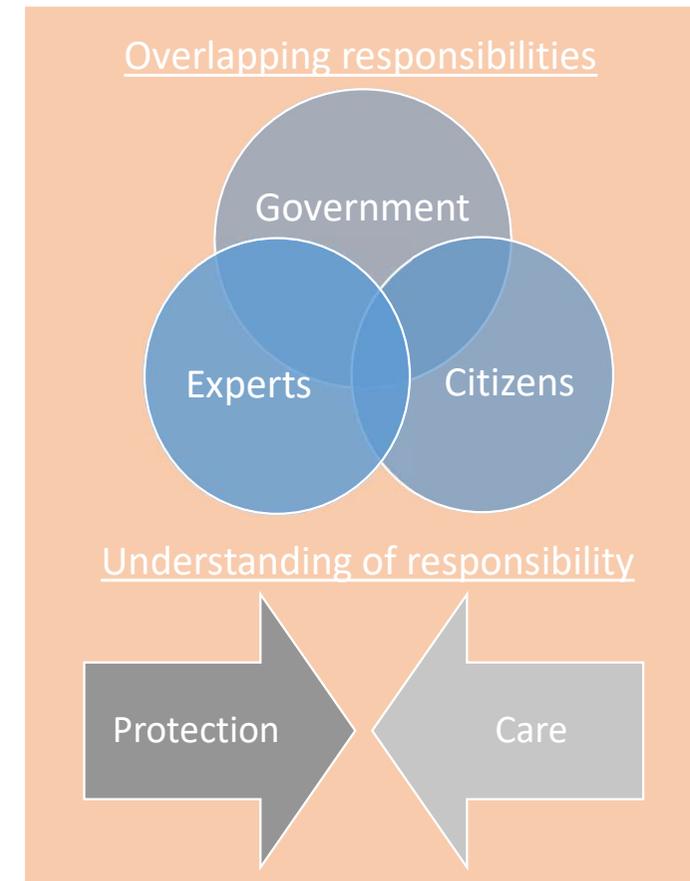
Coalition agreement (2017)
Position of people with disabilities on the job market (2x)
Groups in asylum procedure
Minorities and refugees
Women and children in development aid
Christians and LGBTs in the Middle East
Cyclists and pedestrians in traffic
Entrepreneurs

- International aspects and precarisation are disregarded.



Responsibility (91 times mentioned in letters)

- Letters attribute responsibilities to third parties.
- Government places itself in a facilitating role.
- Decisional impact is minimised in discourse.
- Conflict between different views of the state:
neoliberal state vs. welfare state
- Solution in first wave - “intelligent lockdown”



Conclusions

- Inconsistencies and tensions in moral logic reflect how the COVID-19 crisis unsettles political beliefs about (the role of) the state and its citizens.
- Attempt to hold on to exceptionalism of the crisis may be understood as an effort to hold on to this idea of political order.
- BUT the crisis of care runs deeper than this pandemic.
- This points to the need for a new understanding of vulnerability, needs and responsibility for creating a more responsive and caring political order.

Thank you
for your attention!

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