



Bayerisches Staatsministerium für
Familie, Arbeit und Soziales



TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE NÜRNBERG
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On the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Everyday Lives and Coping Strategies of Homeless People

15th European Research Conference on Homelessness 2021

Seminar 14: Impact of Covid-19 II.

24th September 2021

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Projects

- **Project 1:** „Rough sleeping and homelessness during the corona pandemic: The case study of Nuremberg metropolitan region“
 - Data: 17 narrative guided interviews with homeless people in Nuremberg, Germany (April – September 2020)
- **Project 2:** „Vulnerable Youth in Changing Risk Environments: Figurations of Urban Youth Homelessness in Germany, Denmark and the UK“
 - Field access still in progress
- **Evaluation methods:** Mix of a grounded theory approach and sequential analysis

Basic assumptions

1. We identified three overarching coping strategies of homeless people:

- a) Use of institutional support
- b) Use of informal networks
- c) Non-use of support

2. Our research refers to three periods of the pandemic:

- a) Before the pandemic
- b) Onset of the pandemic
- c) During the pandemic

Preliminary results

1. Adam (early 20s)

	Before the pandemic	Onset of the pandemic	During the pandemic
Housing situation	Secured housing condition	Unsecured housing condition	Lives on the streets
Coping Strategy	Not homeless	Search for new job, unsuccessfully	Uses mix of informal and institutional support
Consequences	Not homeless	Lost his job, lost his home	Lives in homelessness



Preliminary results

1. Adam (early 20s)

“[...] when Corona came, my dreams were all fucked at once. Because, exactly when Corona came, I had planned to become a DJ and I had already organized everything [...] And then all of a sudden Corona comes, all of a sudden bye-bye everything. [...] I wanted to work at [fast food chain], [...] full time, to get money. [...] After two weeks, Corona came, and I got kicked out right away. Then I applied a thousand times somewhere [...]. It was Corona time, lockdown, and nobody accepted me.”

Preliminary results

2. Michael (early 20s)

	Before the pandemic	Onset of the pandemic	During the pandemic
Housing situation	Unsecured housing conditions	Streets	Shelter for homeless people
Coping Strategy	Use of informal network	Non-use of support	Use of institutional support
Consequences	Independent from homeless support system	Loss of accommodation of informal network	Loss of independence from institutional support



Preliminary results

2. Michael (early 20s)

"I feel like shit. I feel like I've been screwed by the system a bit, because, I don't know, I can't help it. Something like that [homelessness, author's note] can happen to anyone [...] and that I am then punished for my own protection, so to speak, because of a pandemic [...]. It's not my fault if I don't have a place to live, if I don't have anywhere to stay. And if there are rules like you're not allowed to have visitors at home, it's clear that I won't chill in someone's room. Because I don't want to get fined. Because if the police come in, it's stupid. Then you pay 1000 euros or something. And that I then have to crash outside, that's just the way it is, unfortunately. And that I then get a fine because I somehow stick to the rules, but somehow I don't, I think that sucks." (Interview 07: para. 82)

Preliminary results

3. Susanne (early 20s)

	Before the pandemic	Onset of the pandemic	During the pandemic
Housing situation	Unsecured housing conditions	Unsecured housing conditions	Shelter for homeless people
Coping Strategy	Use of institutional & informal network	Reduced use of institutional support & use of informal network	Use of institutional support
Consequences	High dependence on welfare and social work services	Loss of daily structure; high levels of psychological distress; idle time in biography; Increased conflict with informal network	Loss of parts of the informal network; Higher dependence on welfare and social work services

Preliminary results

4. Rolf (mid-40s)

	Before the pandemic	Onset of the pandemic	During the pandemic
Housing situation	Long-term shelter for homeless people	Long-term shelter for homeless people	Long-term shelter for homeless people
Coping Strategy	Uses institutional support & work	Uses institutional support, but loses work and daily structure	Use of institutional support; unofficial resumption of work
Consequences	Political and social involvement; structured everyday life	Loss of daily structure; frustration, boredom and maladaptive behaviour	Unpaid work; regain of everyday structure



Conclusions

- The COVID-19 pandemic can **further worsen** the already critical living situations of homeless people.
- **Their agency is restricted**, and many homeless people need to **change their coping strategies**.
- Homelessness in times of the pandemic often means an **increased dependence on institutional support**.



Conclusions

- Because numbers of homeless people are rising, while social work facilities have to reduce their room occupancy, it is important to **maintain** as many **services** as possible, and possibly **create new services**:
 - Create **new housing** opportunities (e.g. in hotels)
 - **Maintain contact** with homeless people
 - Expansion of **digital support** services
 - Establish low-threshold, outreach **counseling centers** that provide advice on the current crisis, job opportunities, and housing options



Discussion

Thank you for your attention!

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