Inequality

COVID-19 and Inequality

Cluster of Excellence
The Politics of Inequality
COVID-19 and Inequality

Research Magazine of the Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality” at the University of Konstanz
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OPEN DATA

Nils B. Weidmann is Professor of Comparative Politics of Non-democratic States at the University of Konstanz and Co-Speaker of the Cluster. Claudia Diehl is Professor of Microsociology at the University of Konstanz and Co-Speaker of the Cluster. Marius R. Buscheyer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Konstanz and Speaker of the Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality”. 

Editorial
DEAR READERS

When our Cluster of Excellence, “The Politics of Inequality,” was approved in 2018, no one could have guessed that the first edition of our research magazine would carry the name of a virus. SARS-CoV-2 has changed our lives and our research, both on a grand scale and in very practical terms. For example, we did manage to hold a retreat on Reichenau Island in fall 2020, but it was only possible with everyone wearing masks, observing social distancing and strict hygiene measures. Chance meetings at the coffee machine and face-to-face discussions are sorely missed. Among scientists, pandemic-related delays create uncertainty. And our fellows’ planned research stays could only be partially realized, or had to be postponed.

The pandemic has not only changed how we do research but also what our research is about. As the effects of the pandemic are directly relevant to matters of inequality, many look for the social sciences to respond to questions such as: To what extent is the risk of infection distributed unequally among the population? Where has the pandemic exacerbated inequalities, where has it possibly even helped to reduce them—and why? Aside from these key aspects, scholars studying “The Politics of Inequality” are also interested in differences in citizens’ support for anti-COVID-19 policies and the effects of the crisis on their political attitudes.

Given that situations and moods often change fast in a crisis, it has been especially important to produce and communicate research results quickly. Such results should not only be current, they should also be accurate—a major challenge, which we discussed extensively in the Cluster. Fortunately, the Cluster operates on a highly flexible funding format, allowing us to respond quickly to situations and comply with scientific standards when performing empirical research and publishing results.

Among other things, we were able to quickly design a new survey program. It built on the disciplinary competence and broad knowledge of Cluster researchers, combining them to study specific questions relevant to the pandemic. Cluster members’ research expertise on gender inequality, political trust, or social movements informed the design of thematic survey modules. The most important results have not only been reviewed and published externally, they have also been edited and disseminated as policy papers. Additionally, Cluster members shared their expertise with the local public in Konstanz through lectures and a panel discussion—our response to the fact that the city had temporarily become a gathering place for the science-critical “Querdenken” movement in fall 2020.

The magazine you are holding in your hands or reading on your screen is offering written and visual insights into how we dealt with this exceptional situation in practical and scientific terms. Enjoy the read! We are excited to receive your feedback and are already looking forward to the next issue—let’s hope it will be virus free!

Yours
MARIUS R. BUSEMeyer,
CLAUDIA DIEHL &
NILS B. WEIDMANN
Citizens’ trust in the government and its actions is arguably the most important resource in combating the coronavirus crisis. Political decision-makers in Germany must be very careful not to squander this resource. Has the coronavirus crisis already done long-term damage to people’s trust in politics? Or are we still seeing the high levels of support for the government’s policies that emerged at the beginning of the crisis? Marius R. Busemeyer, Claudia Diehl, and Felix Wolter search for clues.

The center holds, the margins are eroding: Political trust during the coronavirus crisis

(M. R. Busemeyer, C. Diehl, F. Wolter)
Are citizens losing trust in politics as the pandemic draws on? Criticism is coming from multiple sides. Some anti-COVID-19 measures seem contradictory; German businesses have waited a long time for the coronavirus relief that was promised months ago; the executive branch of government calls all the shots, whereas legislators are relegated to the sidelines. Does this amount to a crisis of trust then? Drawing on data from the Cluster’s survey program “COVID-19 and inequality” we examine whether and how citizens’ trust in politics has changed between the first and the second lockdown in 2020.

Our core finding is that the vast majority of respondents supports the government’s course of action: most people continue to show a high level of trust in politics. There is a small minority, however, that turns its back on the social mainstream. This trend emerged even before the coronavirus crisis. It became evident with the rise of the right-wing populist AfD, but it may have gained momentum as a result of the pandemic.

General trust in political institutions and the healthcare system
Political scientists distinguish between general and specific trust in politics. General political trust refers to trust in the effectiveness and legitimacy of political institutions and actors such as the executive, the legislature and the media, but also science, the courts, or the police. Specific trust, by contrast, refers to people’s attitudes towards concrete political decisions and their satisfaction with these decisions. Therefore citizens assess the government’s performance in fighting the coronavirus pandemic is an example of specific trust.

In our survey, we wanted to know about both types of trust. When asked about their general trust in institutions and actors, respondents gave widely differing answers. Science and the healthcare system tend to enjoy the highest levels of trust, whereas trust in social media is lowest among our respondents. And, perhaps more importantly, we found no evidence that people’s general trust in political institutions has dropped as a result of the crisis. In May 2020, 45 percent of respondents reported a high level of trust in politics—a level that remained stable (46 percent) in the second survey wave in November. This finding is confirmed by other studies, such as the “Integrationsbarometer” of the Expert Council on Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat Deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration). To be sure, we do find sharp differences between the supporters of different parties. AfD voters, for example, show very little political trust, unlike the supporters of the other parties. But there is no evidence of a general crisis of trust among the population.

The same is true of people’s specific trust. In the May survey, a relative majority of respondents (53 percent) gave a positive assessment of the efficiency of the healthcare system’s response to the crisis. That figure increased to 57 percent in November. When thinking of the possibility of falling ill with COVID-19, a stable two-thirds majority of respondents in both surveys expected to get the necessary treatment if they needed it.
Social dividing lines

Such averages, of course, tell us little about what is going on at the margins of society. That is why we subjected our survey data to a more comprehensive analysis, based on changing attitudes towards the pandemic: the extent to which respondents are personally impacted by the containment measures, their personal assessment of the dangerousness of the pandemic, calls for lifting restrictions, trust in the government, and several more. As a result, we identified three different subgroups in the population.

A look at these subgroups quickly reveals that we are not witnessing a division of society. What is emerging, rather, is wide-ranging consensus in society on the one hand and an erosion at the margins. More than three in four respondents displayed an attitude of “understanding and acceptance” (“acceptance group”). In this group, a high level of trust in politics is accompanied by general support for the government’s decisions. The other, more critical respondents are by no means a homogeneous minority. One group of about 12 percent may be characterized by words such as “impact, compliance, doubt” (“doubters”); another group of similar size is characterized by “trivialization, conspiracy, protest” (“conspiracy theorists”). The figure gives a detailed breakdown of how the characteristics are distributed across these three types.

Nearly half of all respondents in the “acceptance group” belong to the at-risk population; there is practically no one in this group who does not take the coronavirus threat seriously. By contrast, many of those who trivialize the coronavirus also tend to espouse conspiracy theories; more than one in four would attend a protest against the containment measures or has already done so. The group of “doubters” feels threatened by the restrictions in economic or family-related terms but does take the virus seriously. In this group, only about one third (so far) has little trust in the government. Even though they are heavily affected by the COVID-19 restrictions, only a small minority of about 10 percent in this group opposes the measures. However, one in three persons in this group also believes in conspiracy theories.

Outlook:

Is trust eroding after all?

The data on which our analysis is based were collected prior to the winter of 2020/21. Since then, a second and then a third wave of infections have hit Germany with full force. The country’s vaccination strategy, the prolonged lockdown without clear relaxation plans, the slow trickle of promised economic relief—all of this has led to mounting public criticism of the government’s decisions. It is therefore quite possible that support for certain decisions (or non-decisions) and political personalities has declined sharply since early 2021. Growing skepticism is to be expected primarily from the group of “doubters”. They suffer heavily from...
the containment measures and are susceptible to conspiracy theories. There is some potential for members of this group to drift off into the group of “conspiracy theorists.”

So far, however, there have been no indications of a sweeping erosion of political trust. It would hence be misleading to talk of social divisions; we rather see broad consensus. Although this consensus is further challenged as the economic and family situation becomes increasingly difficult for many citizens, those who respond by promoting conspiracy theories and denying the problem are only a small minority.

Despite all criticism, the social mainstream in Germany continues to uphold the pillars of democracy. Given the crucial importance of political trust as a resource for combating the crisis, political decision-makers should be very careful to maintain the high level of general political trust in order not to do long-term damage to this resource, especially among the “doubters” most affected by the restrictions.

As the most important starting point this requires a departure from the current style of decision-making which is heavily driven by the executive branch, towards a stronger involvement of federal and state legislatures. The longer the crisis continues, the more important it is to engage in an open political discourse about the decisions to be made—even if such discourse is likely to involve conflict. After all, arguments about the best course of action are at the very core of democracy.
What are the effects of the pandemic on housework and childcare burdens? Have it impacted gender roles and life satisfaction? To assess the situation of women (and men), sociologists Susanne Strauß and Ariane Bertogg have sought for answers on many questions. The picture that emerges is a complex one.

Even at the outset of the coronavirus crisis, some people feared that the measures to contain the pandemic, especially the shutdown of schools and childcare facilities, might exacerbate existing gender inequalities. For example, Jutta Allmendinger, President of the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB), warned that women may be sent back three decades in their struggle for equal rights. Nearly one year later and after going through the ups and downs of the second lockdown, researchers ask: Were these fears really warranted?

To answer this question, we analyzed data we collected as part of the online survey program “COVID-19 and Inequality”, conducted by the Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality” at the University of Konstanz in May and November 2020. On the one hand, respondents were asked about the effect of the crisis on gender inequalities in terms of housework and childcare. On the other hand, we wanted to learn more about how the crisis affects women’s life satisfaction and the importance of paid work in that context.
A re-traditionalization of gender roles?

When the crisis hit, many people experienced a higher burden (Figure 1). The vast majority of respondents with children in the household reported a sharp increase in the work devoted to childcare during the first wave of the pandemic. Women were more strongly involved in this than men. During the second wave of the pandemic, we again see an increase in the amount of childcare, possibly because grandparents are no longer available as caregivers, but gender differences were less pronounced now.

When it comes to housework, we find the burden to be more stable: roughly half of the respondents report the amount of housework to have stayed the same. Again, however, among those who report a higher burden, the proportion of women is much higher.

This means that women had to and still have to make up for a major share of the additional unpaid family work. Is this possibly linked to the fact that women reduced their paid work (and hence their income) to have more time available for childcare (Figure 2)? When it comes to getting involved in housework, both men and women do more if they contribute less to the household income. With respect to childcare, however, we see that women increased their involvement regardless of whether their contribution to the household income changed or not. The picture is different for men: their contribution to childcare shows the strongest increase after their contribution to the household income goes down. But if their contribution to the household income goes up, their childcare involvement is the same as before the crisis.
Unequal burden, unequal satisfaction?

So during the crisis responsibilities and burdens have evolved differently for women and men. Does that also affect their life satisfaction? Women more frequently report a decrease in their quality of life during the first lockdown (Figure 3, page 16); the difference between men and women was significant in our survey. In the second survey wave, by contrast, we no longer observe a major gender gap when it comes to changes in life satisfaction.

Aside from the housework and childcare burden, individual employment situations may be another factor in our respondents’ life satisfaction. What are the differences to be found between people in full-time employment, part-time employment, and those who are not employed (Figure 4, page 16)? Part-time workers were the most satisfied group overall in the first lockdown, and the least satisfied group in the second. Non-employed persons were least satisfied in →
the first wave of the pandemic but most satisfied during the second lockdown. Women in full-time employment experienced a decrease in life satisfaction in both waves, and a sharp one at that.

Now what does this mean? The “hard” lockdown during the first wave, which included the shutdown of schools and childcare facilities, meant a much heavier burden for women working full-time than for women working part-time. But non-employed women, too, suffered from the restrictions to their personal network outside the family. In the second survey wave, non-employed women were less dissatisfied, possibly because their personal network was not yet as heavily restricted as in the first wave when the survey took place. Working women, by contrast, report being exposed to a higher burden than in the first wave—even though schools and childcare facilities were open at this later stage and interactions with non-family members were less heavily restricted.
Sent back thirty years?

The shutdown of schools and childcare facilities was the most important driver of growing gender inequalities. This effect is most notable for parents, of course. Women perform much more of the additional childcare work than men, regardless of how much they contribute to the household income.

Moreover, we also observed an impact of the crisis on people’s life satisfaction. During the first stage of the pandemic, women were on average more likely than men to experience a deterioration in their quality of life. In this phase, the burden was heaviest for mothers working full-time because of the shutdown of schools and childcare facilities. But contact restrictions meant a lower quality of life for non-employed persons as well, because they often have less extensive networks outside the family.

In the second survey wave in November 2020, we found gender differences to be less pronounced. However, these data were collected at the beginning of the “light” lockdown, at a time when schools and childcare facilities continued to operate as usual for a few more weeks. Today, the situation is different, of course: schools and childcare facilities were closed for a long time; some of them recently re-opened. That is why a third survey wave in the first half of 2021 will provide useful insights for gaining a better understanding of the long-term burden in the pandemic.

Are the patterns we observed long term in nature? Will women in fact be sent back thirty years in terms of gender equality? Whether Jutta Allmendinger’s warning will be confirmed remains to be seen. In our survey, we asked respondents for their subjective perceptions and self-assessment, which are difficult to verify in an objective manner. One thing seems safe to say according to what respondents told us: the burden brought on by the crisis is felt differently and more heavily by women than by men. In that sense, the pandemic has indeed already exacerbated gender inequalities.
Voluntary or enforced?

How to get people to support COVID-19 containment policies

(K. Schmelz)

Having grown up in a restricted area of the German Democratic Republic bordering on the West, next to the so-called “death strip” with its heavily guarded double fence and minefields, I always wondered what experiencing such drastic enforced restrictions and surveillance does to people. When the first lockdown hit Germany, I was curious: would East and West Germans respond differently to anti-COVID-19 restrictions?

My initial thought evolved into a bigger question. When combating the COVID-19 pandemic, how should governments proceed: Should they rely on enforced rules? Or should they rather rely on people’s sense of responsibility and voluntary compliance? When our Cluster “The Politics of Inequality” called for questions for an ad-hoc survey on COVID-19, I was excited to pursue my curiosity.

Ideally, all citizens contribute their share to contain the pandemic. But there are always those who freeride on others’ contributions to society. Therefore, enforcing certain rules will obviously be necessary to maintain motivation. On the other hand, compulsory rules may reduce people’s voluntary motivation, resulting in what is known as “control aversion”: sometimes people are intrinsically motivated, but external control or enforcement kills their motivation.

I explored these two countervailing effects of enforcement on motivation with respect to measures combating COVID-19 in five domains: contact tracing apps, vaccination, contact restrictions, limitations on travel, and wearing masks. Are people more likely to support these policies if compliance is voluntary (but strongly encouraged by the government), or if they are enforced? In the survey, a representative sample of the German population was asked these questions at the end of the first lockdown.
Limiting social contacts, wearing masks in public spaces, a “corona-virus app” for tracing possible infection sources—measures to combat the pandemic take many forms. Implementing policies to contain the spread of infection is one thing, but getting people to support them is a very different beast altogether. Psychologist and behavioral economist Katrin Schmelz looks into the acceptance of voluntary and enforced containment measures and the surprising impact of East German biographies.
Enforcing a policy does not create greater agreement

The answers give a clear picture, which I find quite positive. As Figure 1 shows, many people are willing to comply with the policies voluntarily in all five domains. By contrast, forcing them to use contact tracing apps, to limit personal contacts, or to get vaccinated actually lowers their acceptance of such measures. Apparently, enforced travel limitations or mask-wearing are easier to accept, but voluntary support is just as high. There is no domain in which people clearly endorse an enforced policy more than a voluntary one. But how do these averages come about?
Voluntary or enforced?

Control aversion, especially concerning the app and vaccinations

This drop in agreement with enforced policies occurs because many people are “control averse”: enforcement harms their intrinsic motivation. As a consequence, they agree less under enforced conditions than under voluntary ones. This control aversion comes into play with all policies, as the blue slices in Figure 2 show. It is most severe for the app, for vaccination, and contact restrictions: more than one third will oppose these measures if they are mandatory.

But I also find the opposite reaction: some people respond positively to control, they are happier with an enforced regime than with a voluntary one. However, this reaction is less frequent than control aversion and it also varies across domains (dark green slices). Together, roughly half of the population responds to control in some way (positively or negatively). The other half does not care how a policy is implemented, showing the same level of support whether it is voluntary or compulsory (light green slices).
People with GDR experience are less opposed to control

Now what about East and West Germans? Much has been made of the protests against COVID-19 policies in East Germany (although the West, including Konstanz, saw quite a few of these as well). You might therefore expect to find a difference between East and West Germans when it comes to control aversion.

What I found gave me goose bumps: even three decades into a democratic Germany, people who experienced the coercive East German regime are in fact less opposed to enforced anti-COVID-19 measures today. The longer people had lived in the GDR, the less control averse they are. This is an impressive example of the long-lasting effects of political inequalities. Even after an autocratic regime is long gone, its former citizens still show how much they have internalized their strategies in dealing with it.
Older East Germans are clearly less opposed to enforcement than older West Germans in all domains—except for mask-wearing. I believe this can be explained with the so-called “effect of mere exposure”: those brought up in East Germany prior to 1990 experienced ubiquitous surveillance, compulsory vaccination, and restrictions on movements, whereas wearing masks is rather exotic and not part of the experience of East (and West) Germans prior to the pandemic.

Many people, including journalists, are surprised by this East-West difference and find it counterintuitive. How does more acceptance of control among East Germans make any sense? What about all those coronavirus protests in East Germany? Well, the East-West difference in my data holds for older generations. Typically, these are not the people taking part in such rallies.

I have frequently been asked: “Given your findings, should our government rather not rely on enforcement?” At the risk of sounding like the stereotypical social scientist, my answer is: “It depends.” For example, it is relatively easy to implement enforced mask-wearing; neither does it, according to my data, provoke much resistance. At the same time, a voluntary mask policy would very likely be ineffective, as too few people would comply with it. Therefore, enforcement is certainly the way to go with masks.

In contrast, up to two thirds of respondents are willing to get vaccinated voluntarily, which may be enough to reach herd immunity. Enforced vaccination would provoke heavy opposition and is therefore not the strategy I believe in. Even though personally, I would not be opposed to it, since compulsory vaccination feels very natural to me, an East German.
Katharina Hecht, Kate Summers (2020)

← Nevena Kulic, Giulia Dotti Sani, Susanne Strauß, Luna Bellani (2020)

Dirk Leuffen, Julian Schuessler, Jana Gómez Díaz (2020)

Stephan E. Maurer, Andrei V. Potlogea (2021)

Ariane Bertogg, Susanne Strauß, Leen Vandecasteele (2021)


Wolfgang Dauth, Sebastian Findeisen, Jens Suedekum, Nicole Woessner (2021)

Claudia Diehl, Elisabeth Liebau, Peter Muehlau (2021)
Doctoral Studies in Inequality Research

Doctoral Studies in inequality? Very much possible in Konstanz, at the newly established Graduate School of the Social and Behavioural Sciences (GSBS). The Graduate School’s PhD program is singular in Germany, bringing together the full range of social and behavioural sciences and offering specializations in “Collective Behaviour”, “Decision Sciences” — and “Inequality”.

The GSBS combines perspectives from the various fields of inequality research, yet remains grounded in the contributing disciplines. Doctoral students at the Cluster are offered a top-class curriculum: besides numerous Cluster PIs, for instance, our guests Rogers Brubaker (University of California, Los Angeles), Fabian Pfeffer (University of Michigan) and Richard Traummüller (University of Mannheim) all taught courses here during the latest winter term. Doctoral positions are filled for 1 + 3 years, to enable early career staff to benefit from in-depth research and methods training phases on an internationally competitive level.

Established in collaboration with our colleagues of the second Konstanz-based Cluster of Excellence, the “Center for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour”, the Graduate School now provides an inspiring and attractive environment for doctoral researchers.

More detailed information on the GSBS is available online at https://www.gsbs.uni-konstanz.de/

Nils Röper (2020)
Between Substantive and Symbolic Influence: Diffusion, Translation and Bricolage in German Pension Politics. Review of International Political Economy. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1790405

↓ Katrin Schmelz (2021)

Tobias Tober, Marius R. Busemeyer (2020)
Prof. Dr. Miriam Butt was elected chairwoman by the general meeting of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft (DGfS) on February 25, 2021.

Prof. Dr. Katharina Holzinger received her official letter of appointment as new rector of the University of Konstanz from the Minister of Science, Research, and Art, Theresia Bauer, on February 24, 2021. Her election to this office took place on December 9, 2020.

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Sebastian Koos was appointed by the President of the Bavarian State Parliament on November 26, 2020, to serve on the “Forum Antworten” committee, a new group of experts to advise state legislators on how to deal with conspiracy theories and “fake news”.

Prof. Dr. Stephan Schumann, on February 4, 2021, was appointed by the Baden-Württemberg State Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sport, Dr. Susanne Eisenmann, to serve on the Ministry’s scientific advisory council to share her expertise on digital teaching-learning formats.

**Honors, memberships, appointments, and awards for Cluster members (October 2020–March 2021)**

**Viola Asri**
Postdoc, Cluster Project: “Increasing State Capacity and Accountability to Improve Local Governance: Evidence for the Targeting of Social Pensions in Bangladesh”

**Luna Bellani**
PI, Head of Research Group: “The Politics of Intergenerational Mobility: The Role of Preferences, Perceptions and Attitudes”

**Kumar Biswas**
Independent Doctoral Fellow

**Benita Combet**
Interim Professor stepping in for Prof. Dr. Thomas Hinz

**Amber Griffioen**
Managing Office, Early Career Coordination

**Katharina Hecht**
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
ARRIVALS

New Cluster members and PIs
(October 2020–March 2021)

Anna-Lena Hönig
Postdoctoral Researcher, Research
Group: “Communication, Networks
and Contention”

Alexander Horn
PI, Head of Emmy Noether Group
“Varieties of Egalitarianism:
Mapping the Politics of Inequality
with Online Crowdcoding”

Moath Hussien
Doctoral Student, Cluster Project:
"Selection into Leadership and
Perceptions of Inequality: The Case
of Consistency”

Billy Kalima
Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Eda Keremoğlu
PI, Co-Head Cluster Project:
“Perceptions of Inequality in a
Socialist Dictatorship: Evidence
from the German Democratic
Republic”

Philipp Kling
Managing Office,
Research and Data Management

Benjamin Korman
Postdoc, Cluster Project:
“Integration at Work”

Thomas Kurer
PI, Head of Research Group:
“The Politics of Labor Market
Inequality and Occupational
Mobility”

Ann Sophie Lauterbach
Doctoral Student, Cluster Project:
“Digitalization, Automation and
the Future of Work in Post-Industrial
Welfare States”

Ulrich Leicht-Deobald
Interim Professor stepping in for
Prof. Dr. Florian Kunze

Thomas Malang
Interim Professor stepping in for
Prof. Dr. Dirk Leuffen

Elisabeth Musch
Interim Professor stepping in for
Jun.-Prof. Dr. Christina Zuber

Oliver Schlenker
Doctoral Student, Cluster Project:
“Digitalization, Automation and the
Future of Work in Post-Industrial
Welfare States”

Patrick Sullivan
Independent Doctor Fellow

Gerlinde Theunissen
Independent Doctoral Fellow

Tobias Tober
Postdoc Researcher, Cluster
Project: “Digitalization, Auto-
mation and the Future of Work in
Post-Industrial Welfare States”

Patrick Zworschke
Postdoc Researcher, Cluster
Project: “Perceptions of Inequality
in a Socialist Dictatorship: Evidence
from the German Democratic
Republic”
On Tuesdays, 11:45 AM–1:15 PM
(online)

Clustering in summer term 2021

18/05
Markus Gangl
“Is Rising Inequality a Threat to Democracy? Some Analytical and Empirical Observations Towards a Middle-Range Theory of Democratic Trust”

06/07
Benita Combet
“Gender Segregation in Fields of Study. Analysing the Role of ‘Gender-Essentialist Preferences’ with a Choice Experiment”

25/05
Armin Schäfer
“When Representation Fails. Unequal Responsiveness and the Populist Revolt”

13/07
Simon Weschle
“Moonlighting Legislators”

08/06
Christian Dustmann
“Labor Markets and Inequality”

15/06
Richard Traunmüller
“Is Free Speech in Danger on University Campus?”

20/07
Kathrin Zippel
“What Do We Say When We Talk about ‘Women in Science’? Framing Problems and Policy Solutions in Germany, the EU and US”

08–10
06/2021
Progressive Governance Digital Summit 2021

06–08
04/2022
Cluster Conference Bodenseeforum, Konstanz

29/06
Johannes Karremans
“Responsiveness and Responsibility in the Eurozone between 2008 and 2020: A Comparative Study of Budget Speeches”

For the full program and information on how to participate in the Cluster Colloquium, see: https://inequality.uni.kn/cluster-colloquium/
Selected media coverage of the Cluster & its members.

(Selection, October 2020–March 2021)

HEADLINES

Benita Combet
“Bildungspolitik—der Weg zu mehr Chancengleichheit”, by Daniel Oesch (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 02 March, 2021)

Christian Breunig
“Vielfält im Bundestag: Beim besten Willen”, by Bernd Kramer (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 01 March, 2021)

Florian Kunze
“Arbeitnehmer loben Arbeitgeber”, by Dietrich Creutzburg (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14 February, 2021)

Marius R. Busemeyer
“Corona stressst die Demokratie” (Deutsche Welle, 28 January, 2021)

Peter Selb
“Für einen Fünfer pro Download wären die Nutzer dabei”, by Jörg Breithut (Spiegel Online, 22 January, 2021)

Sebastian Koos
“Großes bürgerliches Lager, das nicht originär demokratiefeindlich ist”, by Matthias Kamann (Welt, 18 January, 2021)

Daniel Thym
“Wie Flüchtlinge zum Sicherheitsrisiko gemacht werden”, by Benjamin Dierks (Deutschlandfunk, 17 January, 2021)

Claudia Diehl
“Ankommen im Lockdown”, by Birgit Leyendecker und Claudia Diehl (FAZ, 07 January, 2021)

Katrin Schmelz
“Studie: Besser ohne Zwang durch die Pandemie”, by N.N. (Zeit Online, 22 December, 2020)

Claudia Diehl
“Wie Querdenker Misstrauensgesellschaften bilden”, by N.N. (Welt, 14 December, 2020)

Nils Röper
“Finanzmärkte bestimmen zunehmend die Altersvorsorge—was zu tun ist”, by Nils Röper (Der Tagesspiegel, 5 November, 2020)

Anke Hoeffler
Peter Thisted Dinesen is Professor of Political Science at the University of Copenhagen. *His work centers on the formation of social and political attitudes.* Peter was External Senior Fellow at the Cluster, staying from September until December 2020. Here he talks about his experience, the impact the coronavirus crisis has had on his work, and the role of the social sciences during the pandemic.
IN_EQUALITY This has not been the easiest year for travelling and meeting colleagues. Just a few weeks after your arrival in Konstanz, infection rates started to rise again. Did you ever wish you had stayed in Denmark?

PETER THISTED DINESEN Not at all. Actually, being in Konstanz, where I was able to go to the office every day, allowed me to have a much more normal work routine than if I’d been at home, where my department has been closed since October because of COVID-19. I had a great and very productive stay in Konstanz. I got excellent feedback on my work, made new professional connections, and had more time to do “deep work” than normal. This is what all academics dream of, and I really couldn’t ask for more.

After three months as Senior Fellow, what is your takeaway?

Yes, indeed. Above all, there was just a good vibe and a great energy in the Cluster. You get the sense that everyone is working together with great dedication to realize the ambitions of the Cluster. I also have to say that I am very impressed with how well everything—both the academic and the organizational side—worked →
in the Cluster. Academically, it was very valuable to get input on my own project on the consequences of local economic inequality. After I gave my talk at the Cluster Colloquium, a number of people came by my office or sent e-mails with their feedback. This kind of engagement is very unique, I think.

*The Cluster’s Fellowship programs are intended to foster collaboration and exchange. Has that even been possible for you to any extent?*

I think the sparring I received—and hopefully also gave back—is an important example of that. This is what helps us sharpen our arguments and ultimately do better research. I talked about various ideas for collaborations with Cluster people, but this has not resulted in a concrete project yet. However, it has been my experience that the type of connections I formed here can often prove highly productive further down the line, so I could easily imagine that my stay will spawn future projects.

*How has your work been impacted by the coronavirus crisis—during your stay in Konstanz and beyond?*

The coronavirus is a unique collective event. As for many others, it has shaped my research agenda to a degree: it just raises so many interesting and important questions! I think many scholars feel an urge to contribute—even if just a little bit—to our collective understanding of the pandemic and its consequences.

On a personal level, the pandemic has interrupted my usual work routine and made me cancel various plans. This has not been ideal, but at the same time, I am keenly aware that I am very privileged compared to most others. For instance, I actually have a job that allows me to work from home—in that, I have more flexibility than most. That being said, I certainly look forward to when we are finally on the far side of this pandemic...
All of a sudden, scientific results get almost unprecedented amounts of media attention. Laypeople argue about the meaning of this or that study, the daily newspaper uses scholarly jargon, scientists and scholars from the life sciences get as much screen time as top politicians. What can the social sciences in general, and inequality research in particular, contribute in these times?

I think we can contribute a great deal—in fact, I believe we already do! Beyond the health consequences, there is a huge need to understand how the pandemic impacts society more generally. Do people comply with the restrictions and recommendations of the government regarding the virus? Do they choose to become vaccinated? Does the pandemic erode support for civil liberties at the cost of safety and security? Will the lockdowns exacerbate existing inequalities in economic, educational, political, and health-related outcomes? I could go on and on. I would say there is a bigger need than ever for social science to make itself heard in the public discourse.

Your work focuses partly on social trust. Faced with the global pandemic, societies all over the world have recently discovered or rediscovered what an important commodity that is. What is your take, is there more or less trust nowadays?

That is a very interesting question. I have collected data in Denmark since the beginning of the pandemic and compared it to previous measurements. It seems like trust in other people that we don’t know is not changing all that much. From what I gather, this is also the pattern observed elsewhere. This is not too surprising, given that we know that social trust only changes gradually over time. My hypothesis: there are two opposing dynamics that have cancelled each other out during the pandemic. We know that socializing with other people increases social trust, and so does trust in state institutions. Socializing has obviously gone down during the pandemic, while trust in state institutions has gone up: a typical “rallying” response in times of crisis. The net change may now simply be close to zero. This is just speculation, of course, but who knows? As a researcher, I may just be able to put it to the empirical test at some point.

Is there anything you would like to let future fellows at the Cluster know in advance, any warnings or words of advice?

One piece of advice: do yourself a favor and apply for a fellowship! And maybe the additional pro-tip: “Laib und Seele” in Reichenau has the most delicious cakes, totally worth the bike ride. The beautiful surroundings come as a bonus.
Last spring, Germany not only saw the outbreak of a pandemic but also a new-found euphoria about working from home. The pseudo-anglicism “homeoffice” was on everybody’s lips. The issue is a complex one, however, and has many facets for those who are affected. Organizational scientist Florian Kunze created six charts to illustrate selected aspects of this trend. How do employers and employees deal with the new work arrangement? How does it affect their performance and mental health? And how has the situation changed since the beginning of the pandemic?
Remote work euphoria in the first coronavirus crisis

In spring 2020, millions of employees in Germany suddenly found themselves working from home. Initially, many believed the benefits of this arrangement outweighed the disadvantages. Figure 1 shows the proportion of those who (somewhat) agreed that their performance, involvement, loneliness, and emotional exhaustion were higher than before. About 80 percent of respondents felt they were more productive working from home. Only one in five said he or she felt more loneliness or emotional exhaustion.

A little bit of “homeoffice”, please. The majority prefers two days per week.

A preference for hybrid work arrangements

Figure 2 shows the number of days per week that employees would like to spend working from home. In May 2020, most respondents still said that three days would be best; in October, that preference was down to two days. Over the same period, we also see a declining share of those who would prefer working from home all week. While many employees continue to appreciate the benefits of working remotely, they have also grown somewhat tired of the pandemic.

(Survey: April 1, 2020, 600 respondents; percentages)
Back to the workplace: lower performance, higher exhaustion

Over the course of the survey, some employees returned to their offices. Figure 3 shows how this change affected their wellbeing. The share of those who reported their productivity (upper line) to be “high” or “very high” declined steadily among in-office workers. Conversely, their level of emotional exhaustion (lower line) saw a sharp increase after returning to the workplace.

(Surveys: March–October 2020, 699 respondents; January 2021, 384 respondents; percentages)

Remote work might help reduce infections

Does the work arrangement influence the risk of a COVID-19 infection? Our data suggest a number of links, some of which are quite clear (Figure 4). Open staff canteens, for example, led to a fourfold increase in infection rates among respondents. No less than one-third of them also attend face-to-face meetings, which even led to an eightfold increase. We do not claim to have epidemiological expertise, but we do believe these figures suggest that some aspects of face-to-face work run counter to offering employees the best possible protection.

(Survey: January 2021, 384 respondents; percentages)
Only 16 percent of employers trained their employees for remote work.

In supporting their remote workers, companies have some catching up to do

As shown in Figure 5, there is still room for improvement for employers when it comes to supporting their mobile workers. Six months into the pandemic, the majority of respondents working from home said they still lacked appropriate technical equipment. A mere 16 percent had already received special training. And just over a third of employers had bothered to ask their employees whether they would like to work from home in the first place.

(Survey: October 2020, 699 respondents; percentages)

The works council was already committed to supporting remote work before the COVID-19 crisis.

Company agreements on remote work were already in place before the COVID-19 crisis.

The works council is committed to supporting remote work during the COVID-19 crisis.

Works councils and employee representatives are slow to adapt to the new work environment

The issue of mobile work is only considered a medium priority among employee representatives. As shown in Figure 6, only a slight majority of respondents received active support for mobile work from their works councils before the coronavirus hit, and a mere 40 percent of employers had company agreements in place. After the coronavirus crisis unfolded, commitment to mobile work among the works councils representing our respondents rose to 60 percent.

(Survey: April and May 2020, 699 respondents; percentages, rounded) /
Social inequality, conspiracy theories, and anti-lockdown protests in Germany (S. Koos)
Some consider the “Querdenken” protests a temporary phenomenon. Others see them as a threat to democracy. But who are the protesters? Sociologist and organizational researcher Sebastian Koos conducted a survey during a “Querdenken” rally in order to understand what motivates the protesters. In the course of doing so, he also ran into some bizarre characters.

The last decade was marked by a series of social crises: first the financial crisis, followed by the European debt crisis and the so-called refugee crisis. And as these crises continue to reverberate in politics and society, the past year has seen not only Germany and Europe but the whole world struggling to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Crises such as these always facilitate the emergence of social movements and political protest. Social inequality plays a key role in this process; in fact, it is often the main driver of political protest. At the same time, crisis situations, given their complexity, make people experience contingency and uncertainty, triggering a desire for simple explanations. In such situations, conspiracy theories offer interpretations that allow for seemingly clear explanations of what caused a crisis. Frequently, for example, events are supposedly orchestrated by a secret elite intentionally plunging the “common people” into crisis to expand their own power.

The first so-called “hygiene protests” in Berlin were staged as early as April 2020, in response to the German government’s far-reaching measures to curb coronavirus infections in the spring of 2020, and with some protesters already voicing conspiracy theories. Around the same time, Baden-Württemberg saw the formation of a group called “Querdenken 711”, which began to organize demonstrations calling for an end to pandemic restrictions in Stuttgart (“Querdenken” means “lateral thinking,” and 0711 is Stuttgart’s area code). As spring unfolded, “Querdenken” chapters popped up across Germany, organizing protests at key locations on a regular basis. In the summer, these protests drew substantial crowds. The largest rally to date, held on 01 August in Berlin, saw some 38,000 participants, according to police estimates. When marchers stormed the steps of the Reichstag parliament building on 28 August, it became clear that the protests were becoming increasingly radicalized, with peace flags being waved alongside the “Reichsflagge” (the black, white, and red flag of the German Empire that served as the basis for that used by the Nazi regime) and victims of the Nazi dictatorship being mocked through comparisons. In all of this, it remained relatively unclear who these protesters were and what actually brought them to the streets. Why, editorialists wondered, are they doing this? Is concern about social inequality driving the protests? And what is the role of conspiracy theories?

Konstanz had its own local “Querdenken” chapter, called “Querdenken 753”. When they announced a major demonstration to be held in Konstanz on the first weekend in October, we had an opportunity to go on a targeted search for answers. We would do research on the coronavirus protests and try to get a better understanding of what the “Querdenken” movement is all about. In the past, standardized surveys during demonstrations have proven to be a useful method for gaining insights into protesters’ socio-structural makeup and motivation. However, surveying a group of protesters openly critical of science, and doing so under pandemic conditions to boot, is a different challenge altogether. Still we joined the main rally at Lake Constance in a group of six students and researchers, observing a set of safety precautions. We randomly approached a total of 586 participants out of an estimated 3,000 and handed them a written invitation to participate in an online survey. We also interviewed protesters on location to rule out bias in the sample of online respondents.

The online survey was completed by 138 individuals— not a bad response rate. The results show that older, better educated people were more frequently found at the protests and that, interestingly, the male-female ratio was roughly →
another striking finding was the strong representation of self-employed persons (20 percent).

By contrast, “losers of the crisis” only make up a comparatively small group (see Figure 1). Being personally impacted does not seem to be a major reason for attending an anti-lockdown protest. One exception to this rule is the widespread feeling of seeing one’s own fundamental rights threatened. Otherwise, the majority of respondents take to the streets because they believe the common good is in jeopardy. When comparing our findings with the views of the total population, as collected by the Cluster’s survey program, the result is equally clear: perceived restrictions of fundamental rights are more likely to make people protest than personal economic fears. The general direction society is taking is viewed much more pessimistically among protesters than among the total population.
Anti-lockdown protests in Germany

Compared to the total population, protesters show stronger support for conspiracy theories (see Figure 2), combined with deep-seated distrust in political institutions and the mainstream media. People have come together to form a community of distrust that also views the science system critically.

Additionally, we had the chance to interview many participants face to face, especially during the short survey. We came away with a wide range of impressions. The vast majority of respondents were friendly and willing to talk to us, offering various reasons for being there, some of them disarmingly simple. When asked why he attended the protests, an elderly man told me: “I just want my old life back.” Others, by contrast, flat-out rejected the legitimacy of the government and the coronavirus restrictions, with some even calling for a “tribunal”. Many wanted to know which side we were on as researchers, “good” or “evil”.

Aside from scientific curiosity, there were some episodes and bizarre encounters that will remain unforgettable. For a while, for example, we were followed by a man in a Darth Vader costume carrying a light saber and a boom box blaring a Star Wars tune in infinite loop. To his credit, Darth Vader was wearing a mask, albeit probably not as a protection against infections.

Later, a self-proclaimed shaman—all dressed in pink, with wavy hair and platform shoes—was arguing with counter-protesters over the meaning of “Mother Earth”. These figures at the margins may tempt some people to dismiss the “Querdenken” protests as somewhat quaint. The “lateral thinking” we found, however, means thinking in populist categories separating the “corrupt elite” from the “good people”. It is based on deep-seated distrust and the belief in conspiracy narratives. The appearance and utterances of this movement make it difficult to engage in an open debate and a much-needed appropriate, yet critical assessment of the government’s COVID-19 policies.

Such concerns, however, should not mislead anyone into thinking that the “Querdenken” movement is a mass movement. Only about 15 percent of the population in Germany think these protesters may have a point. Right now, therefore, it seems rather unlikely for the protests to see the kind of growth that may lead to the emergence of a long-term movement and hence a force to be reckoned with in the political system. As things stand today, Darth Vader is not a big threat to democracy.

Figure 2: Inclination to believe in conspiracy theories (percentages)

“Influential business leaders want to force the population to get vaccinated.”

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<th>Population survey</th>
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“Inconceivable
Neither conceivable nor inconceivable
Conceivable

“Groups of scientists manipulate, make up, or suppress evidence to deceive the public.”

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“Inequality

Sebastian Koos is Assistant Professor of Corporate Social Responsibility at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.
No contact. How the coronavirus pandemic forces a Cluster project to keep social distance (F. Bergmann)

In the spring of 2020, it was easy to get the impression that exponential growth not only applied to coronavirus infections but also to social science surveys. The opportunity to gain brand-new insights into the effects of a radical change in our daily lives was, of course, not to be missed by survey researchers.

But if you thought it was easier to implement surveys in times of a pandemic, and that all potential respondents were only waiting to be contacted for a telephone interview to escape the loneliness of working from home, you would be wrong. In fact, the coronavirus
situation poses quite a challenge to any survey that cannot simply be realized using existing online samples or randomly selected telephone numbers. It certainly impacted our project at the Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality.” In this project, we look at the situation and coexistence of the indigenous Sámi people and the majority populations in northern Norway and Sweden from the perspective of linguistics and political science.

Specifically, we are interested in the extent to which forms of social inequality can also be found in these two countries, which are often praised for their highly egalitarian character. Previous research suggests that even today, Sámi are more likely to feel discriminated against than members of the majority populations—more than half a century after rigid assimilation (Norway) and segregation (Sweden) policies were abolished. However, there are next to no studies that examine the background and evaluate the Sámi people’s own economic and political status. Likewise, little is known about the Sámi languages, their distribution today, the levels of proficiency among the Sámi population, and the reasons why someone chooses to speak Sámi rather than Norwegian or Swedish (or vice versa).

My doctoral thesis is in political science, and I focus on the role that governmental policies play in the Sámi people’s perception of being discriminated against. The Norwegian government grants different rights and opportunities for →

What do you do when your field research is called off? The original plan for political scientist Fabian Bergmann was to travel to Norway and Sweden to do research for his doctoral thesis on the indigenous Sámi people. Then the coronavirus hit. Now the project faces the challenge of making contacts at a distance.
self-determination to the Sámi as an indigenous group than the Swedish government. What I want to find out, therefore, is whether the Norwegian Sámi assess their social, political, and economic situation differently than the Sámi in neighbouring Sweden.

To clarify these and other aspects of the project, we plan to conduct a survey asking respondents to assess their own social, political, and economic status and to rate their satisfaction with various Sámi policies. In addition, the survey is designed to measure respondents’ language skills. To identify potential inequalities, we want to compare the answers of Sámi respondents to those of the majority population.

For sound conclusions to be drawn, each group needs to have a sufficiently large number of participants. When it comes to the Sámi, however, this involves multiple challenges. First, compared to the total population, they are a small group in both countries to begin with. Second, they have been the object of a disproportionate number of scientific studies in a wide range of disciplines, often making them very vulnerable in the process. In the early 20th century, for example, some studies forced on them from the outside under the guise of scientific discovery were used to propagate inhuman, racist ideologies.

What can be done, therefore, to convince this group of the benefits of participating in an endeavor that, at first glance, looks like just another survey from just another foreign university? The first thing to do is to introduce oneself, the survey, and its purpose to potential participants. And what is the best way to do so? Neither email nor Zoom will do the job, unfortunately. You need to go there in person, make connections, meet people face to face, and shake hands. That is why we had planned a two-week tour: Oslo—Stockholm—Kiruna—Kautokeino—Karajok—Tromsø. Meetings were scheduled for each of these stops—with researchers we know who are working on similar topics and with some of their contacts in academia, society, and politics. After all, it is the same in Scandinavia as elsewhere: it is always helpful to know someone.
who knows someone. Using this snowball strategy, we hoped to gather the support of local administrators, as well as political and civil society Sámi organizations, in spreading information about the project among the local populations.

Yet up until now, travel restrictions and quarantine policies have kept us from making that trip, dealing a blow to our plans. As a consequence, the past months saw us embark on a grand experiment using various videoconferencing platforms. To be sure, these are useful tools, enabling people to hold meetings quickly and flexibly across national boundaries and contact restrictions. What they cannot replace, unfortunately, are the informal, interpersonal interactions during a face-to-face meeting. And these interactions can be crucial, especially in the initial stage of getting to know one another, when the goal is to convince the other person to provide constructive support to the project one has presented. As a result, we did manage to discuss organizational matters with collaborating survey institutes and present our project to other researchers. However, we hardly succeeded in establishing new contacts with community representatives and Sámi representatives and organizations. Most of our introductory emails asking for a virtual meeting went unanswered, even after multiple attempts. And those who did agree to meet us in a video call showed little more than polite interest. Our snowball was caught up in avalanche barriers before it could really pick up speed.

In short, the pandemic severely limited our opportunities for spreading information about the survey among local residents and effectively adapting it to local conditions. What this will ultimately mean with regard to the number of participants and, as a consequence, the quality of our research, is unclear at this point. But if it is legitimate to make inferences about other people’s situation based on one’s own, there is at least one factor working strongly in our favor: after months of contact restrictions and isolation, the residents of Northern Scandinavia, like everybody else, are certainly happy about every phone call they get. Even if it’s just another survey from just another German university!

Editor’s note

After a delay of many months, the project team has finally received permission for a field trip right before our editorial deadline.

Fabian Bergmann is a researcher in the Cluster project “Ethnic Policies — Remedy for Between-Group Inequalities?”
So how was your media year?” Two waves into the pandemic, scientists need to face this question. In the ongoing turmoil of media and opinions, have they been successful in making a broad public familiar with the methods, possibilities, and limits of producing scientific knowledge? This question is not a trivial one. The pressure on researchers to explain themselves has been mounting for years—in the life sciences, of course, but also in the social sciences.
Journalist Paul Stoop was the founding fellow of the Cluster’s Journalist-in-Residence program in the winter of 2019/20. One pandemic year after his departure from Konstanz, he looks into the pros and cons of the unusually extensive science coverage in the media.

Never before has science seen such extensive media coverage: that’s on the plus side. Researchers are regularly featured in talk shows. Press conferences with virologists, epidemiologists, modeling experts, and statisticians are no longer just for connoisseurs. The German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina is now widely known; technical terms such as peer review or pre-print publication no longer sound exotic to people outside academia. Complex processes of infection are being presented in understandable ways and patiently explained.

That said, there are also some massive risks and side effects. Virologist Christian Drosten, now a public figure, has become the object of caricature and satire. But that is only the least troublesome part. More critically, we have seen a heat build-up in the media that no lockdown can stop. It leads quite a few researchers less inclined to prudence and self-reflection than Mr. Drosten to serve as useful mouthpieces for media outlets looking →
for drama and headlines. In talk shows, minor differences in the details are re-interpreted as fundamental disagreements. This may leave audiences with the impression that science is arbitrary after all—a mere smorgasbord of opinions.

The result may be a blanket discrediting of science. When Monika Sieverding, a professor of health psychology, wanted to underscore a statement on infections in schools by referring to a recent study, she was interrupted by talk show host Frank Plasberg. “Have you recently met with Lauterbach,” he interjected, presumably trying to be funny, “he is also fond of citing a study whenever he makes a statement!” (hart aber fair, 01/25/2021). Yes, dammit, Plasberg, one is tempted to shout—there are good reasons for reading studies and learning something from them!

A recent opinion piece by Harald Martenstein in the daily Tagespiegel illustrates the extremes to which such (fake?) skepticism may go. Echoing the arguments of the anti-lockdown “Querdenken” movement, he claims that “science as such is a phantom, it does not exist”, and goes on to cast (supposedly non-existent) science as the new despot, working to undermine democracy (02/14/2021). This will surely give him a boost in the citation index of conspiracy narratives.

For social scientists, who are less in the spotlight at this point, this may involve a useful lesson with regard to the foreseeable economic and social effects of the pandemic. They are called upon to raise their voice once public debates increasingly shift to educational and gender inequality, the
distribution of wealth, fair taxation, and political participation. They will have to use clear and accessible language, be careful not to be instrumentalized, and call out dangerous nonsense when they see it.

And what about scientific institutions? They should continue to facilitate conversations, invite journalists to share their research, and explain science to the public. For the time being, Sisyphus will remain the patron saint of science communication.
The Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality. Perceptions, Participation and Policies” is an interdisciplinary Cluster of Excellence at the University of Konstanz within the framework of the Excellence Strategy of the federal and state governments. The gap separating the poor from the rich, the worldwide rise of populism, the division of burdens in the fight against climate change, unfairly distributed access to education—many current debates are as much about inequality as they are about other issues. These topics pose highly complex questions, yet scientifically grounded answers are still few and far between. This is where we come in to investigate “The Politics of Inequality”: the political causes and consequences of inequality.

The Cluster of Excellence is grateful to the University of Konstanz and the German Research Foundation for their funding and support.

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Credits
p. 6 Ines Janas
p. 9 IMAGO / Frank Sorge
p. 11 Ines Janas
p. 12 IMAGO / Wassilis Aswestopoulos
p. 17 Ines Janas (left), Inka Reiter (right)
p. 19/22 IMAGO / Bildgehege
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p. 50 Das Progressive Zentrum (top), Guido Kaspar (bottom)
p. 52 Claudia Diehl (top left, top center, bottom center), Jessica Haase (top right), Thomas Wöhler (bottom left), Fabian Bergmann (bottom right)
As the coronavirus crisis began to unfold, the initial focus was on medical and epidemiological aspects. But debates now increasingly concentrate on political, social and economic questions and relationships. To gain a better understanding of how people in Germany cope with the social and political effects of the coronavirus crisis, we initiated a multifaceted survey program.

The issues covered in this program are as diverse as the Cluster itself; the contributions in this magazine show a small selection. A total of 18 Cluster researchers from various disciplines are involved in this cross-cutting project, which brings together the Cluster’s research areas and individual projects. The program is coordinated by the so-called Methods Hub, a central institution that provides Cluster researchers with method skills and practical support. The data are collected by the University of Konstanz survey-LAB.

The online surveys were implemented in two waves: from April to May 2020 with close to 8,000 respondents and from October to November 2020 with slightly more than 7,000 respondents (individuals in private households aged 18 years and older, resident in Germany). The majority of respondents in the second wave was already part of the first wave, enabling us to make statements not only on the general population but also on changes in individual attitudes.

For topics that require a particularly representative sample of the population, we used the Kantar panel (a permanent group of respondents) for our survey. Other research questions rely on a large number of cases, meaning the survey needs to cover as many groups of the population as possible. For these questions, we used the Respondi panel, making sure that certain characteristics—age, gender, state, and education—are well represented.

Based on our Open Data strategy, the data collected as part of this survey program are free to use for scientific purposes. They are accessible via the data archive of our partner GESIS—The Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.

Comprehensive information on the survey program is available on our website. Alongside descriptions of the topic-oriented modules and their results, the page also contains complete information on methods and the underlying data.
Kreativer Umgang mit Eindämmungsmaßnahmen
Creative interpretation of containment measures
Nach 14 Jahren doch wieder ein Zaun: "Kunstgrenze" zwischen Konstanz und Kreuzlingen

Ähnliche Probleme überall. Hier: Toronto, Kanada

Similar problems plague us all. Here: Toronto, Canada

Menschenleer...
Devoid of human life...