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Conviviality-Inequality during the Pandemic The Case of Berlin

Sérgio Costa, Mariana Teixeira, and Thomás Mattos



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Sérgio Costa, Mariana Teixeira, and Thomás Mattos

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected conviviality and inequality in societies worldwide. This research article examines the dynamic interplay between these dimensions in Berlin, Germany, during the pandemic. The study's main question explores how the relationship between inequality and conviviality evolved in the context of the pandemic and the correspondent containment measures. Four sub-questions address specific aspects: 1) the hierarchy of infection and disease trajectory based on access to protection, 2) the effects of containment measures on income, education, and well-being among various social groups, 3) changes in conviviality at the microlevel (households, neighbourhoods, etc.), and 4) shifts in virtual interaction and media usage during "social distancing". The survey in Berlin involved 2,502 households and spanned three collection periods. Computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) was used, ensuring representative responses. The findings are analyzed through Goran Therborn's three levels of analysis: resource, vital, and existential inequalities (Therborn 2013).

Keywords: COVID-19 | Berlin | conviviality-inequality

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the two complementary dimensions of social life addressed by Mecila's research programme: conviviality and inequality. Although its effects have been far-reaching in all four countries in which Mecila's member institutions are based (Argentina, Brazil, Germany and Mexico), they have been vastly diverse in each society. To study the impacts of the pandemic in the configuration of conviviality-inequality in these different contexts, we conducted an extensive comparative survey in the largest cities in each country: Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Berlin and Mexico City. Due to our interest in analysing micro-sociological transformations, a comparative survey focussing on single cities appeared to be more appropriate than national surveys that would not have been able to draw a representative picture of changes that were specific to different segments of the population.¹

The main question addressed in this comparative enquiry is the following: how did the nexus between inequality and conviviality shift in the context of the pandemic and the measures adopted to contain it? This question takes shape at different levels and comprises four sub-questions:

- 1. How did unequally distributed access to protection against the virus generate a hierarchy structured by region, gender, stratum and ethnicity of both infection and the trajectory of the disease among different social groups?
- 2. How did the containment measures (contact and mobility restrictions and state aid) affect income, educational opportunities and general well-being according to stratum, gender, region and ethnicity?
- 3. How did the containment measures change forms of conviviality at the microlevel of households, neighbourhoods, friendships and extended families: shifts in family and gender arrangements, shared care work, reorganization of leisure time, etc.?
- 4. How did virtual interaction and media usage change during "social distancing"?

This paper discusses the results of the survey conducted in Berlin in 2022 by the company Info Markt- und Meinungsforschung GmbH in a representative sample of 2,502 households within three different collection periods: between 27 January and 14 February 2022, covering 500 households; between 11 March and 30 March 2022, covering 1,000 households; and between 28 April and 1 June 2022, covering 1,002 households (FU Berlin 2022). The company conducted computer-assisted telephone

¹ In Buenos Aires, Mexico City and São Paulo, focus groups were conducted to better understand changes observed among the various existing social groups. In the case of Berlin, the unequivocal tendencies derived from our own survey, combined with evidence found in the secondary literature, constitute the basis for the inferences and interpretations presented in this paper.

interviewing (CATI) and selected the interviewees in each household on the basis of a next-birthday method to create similar probabilities for each adult member of the households to respond to the questions.² The weighting in the sample was based on five characteristics: highest school degree, household size, age groups, district, and gender. In the survey, an original questionnaire was used with multiple choice and rating scale questions which included sections on socio-demographic profile; housing situation; household composition; use of digital media and access to information; political participation; opinions on government measures in relation to the pandemic; occurrence of the disease and use of health services; networks of solidarity; state support; perception of state performance; impacts of the pandemic on household consumption and finances; social relations, free time activities and general mood; household and caregiving tasks; schooling, and occupational status.

This paper consists of three sections. First, we discuss the theoretical-analytical framework applied for formulating the questionnaire and analysing the findings. We then present the cycles of the pandemic in Berlin as well as the measures adopted to contain the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the social effects of the pandemic. Finally, we analyse the impacts of the pandemic considering Göran Therborn's three levels of analysis: resource, vital and existential inequalities (Therborn 2013).

2. Theoretical Framework and State of the Art

The theoretical starting point of this paper is the research programme of the Maria Sibylla Maria Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (Costa 2019; Mecila 2022). The programme proposes that conviviality and inequality are reciprocally constituted. That is, while (social) inequalities condition and shape social interactions, they only acquire meaning and produce social impacts in concrete social interactions.

In Mecila's research programme, conviviality is not defined as a place in the social topography marked by a more symmetrical pattern of relations, as elaborated mainly by authors who apply the concept in research on migration and multiculturality in Europe (i.e., Gilroy 2004; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014). We understand conviviality in a strictly analytical sense and define it as a situational category to refer to the interactional moment of social relations. Obviously, this does not imply that the context in which social relations take place are unimportant or ignored. We always take into account

² Due to the selection methodology as well as the different accessibility and the different willingness to participate in interviews in different population groups, the real distribution of the socio-demographic structure in the sample usually deviates from the actual distribution in the population aged 18 and over. These distortions are balanced by weighting (i.e. the sociodemographic structure of the sample is adjusted to the actual structure in the population aged 18 and over). Disproportionalities arising in the course of the sample design or survey implementation were compensated for by a complex weighting of the net sample based on the latest data from the State Statistical Office (Statistisches Landesamt) of Berlin as of December 31, 2020.

the structures in which social interactions are inserted. Accordingly, we focus on social interactions observed in everyday life and integrate social context into our analysis to help interpret these interactions (Costa 2019).³

We understand social inequalities in a broad sense and examine not only economic inequalities, as is usually the case in research on inequality, but also inequalities related to other vectors of stratification such as power, knowledge, environmental risks, etc. It is important to note that social inequalities, understood as distances in the positions occupied in social hierarchies, refer not only to individuals or social strata, but also to groups defined on the basis of differences (self-attributed or externally assigned) in terms of gender, ethnicity or any other relevant traits.

We use the typology coined by Therborn to describe existing inequalities we examine in this paper. Therborn distinguishes between three types of inequalities: resource inequalities, vital inequalities and existential inequalities (Therborn 2013). Resource inequalities describe social distances in terms of ownership of or access to material resources that can usually be converted or translated into money. These inequalities concern income, property, assets, etc. Vital inequalities concern distances in terms of physical well-being and vital prospects and can be measured by indicators such as social vulnerability to illness or premature death, infant mortality, average life expectancy, etc. Finally, existential inequalities concern the "unequal allocation of personhood, i.e. of autonomy, dignity, degrees of freedom, and of rights to respect and self-development" (Therborn 2013: 49). Although less easily gauged through the more common social indicators such as inequality indices, existential inequalities are crucial for assessing the well-being of individuals, a particular group, or an entire population. Existential inequalities also introduce the temporal perspective into the discussion of inequalities, showing that the issue is not only present inequalities, but the unequal possibilities of realizing medium and long-term aspirations and expectations.

The already vast literature on the impacts of the pandemic on social inequalities tend to focus on resource inequalities (e.g. Therborn 2020; Stevano et al. 2021), vital inequalities (e.g. Lima et al. 2020; Barron et al. 2022), or both (e.g. different contributions in Fassin and Fourcade 2021; Nederveen Pieterse et al. 2021). Existential inequalities, though abundantly documented, at least indirectly, in news coverage and even in artistic responses to the pandemic, have so far received less attention from academic studies. The relationship between conviviality and inequality during the pandemic has also received little attention so far.

³ It should be noted that in Mecila's research programme, conviviality also involves the interdependent relations between human and non-human living beings (plants, animals, bacteria, etc.) – see for example Given (2017); for an illustrative example in the context of the pandemic, see Price (2020). In this paper, however, we only focus on relations between humans during the pandemic.

These research gaps grounded the formulation of the two guiding hypotheses of this study. The first is that the public policies adopted to contain the effects of the pandemic in Germany, and in Berlin in particular, were relatively effective in limiting the growth of resource inequalities and vital inequalities during the pandemic. These measures were not, however, as effective in mitigating existential inequalities that grew significantly during the pandemic. The second hypothesis, associated with the first, is that families and the domestic space became the main sphere in which the expression, interpretation and negotiation of social inequalities took place, particularly at times of greater restrictive measures to contain the pandemic (lockdowns, etc.). The explanatory hypothesis is that both trends can be justified by the nature of the prevailing welfare model in Germany, which views families as the central instrument for generating welfare. That is, welfare policies in Germany are frequently based on offering support to the families to provide care services for children or elderly people while in countries such as Sweden these care services are more often outsourced to public institutions (daily care centers, retirement homes, etc.) (Bariola and Collins 2021; see also OECD 2021; Kolb 2023). This blind spot in German welfare policies comes to a head when the measures to contain the pandemic cause activities that normally take place outside the domestic space (work, school, etc.) to be transferred to the home.

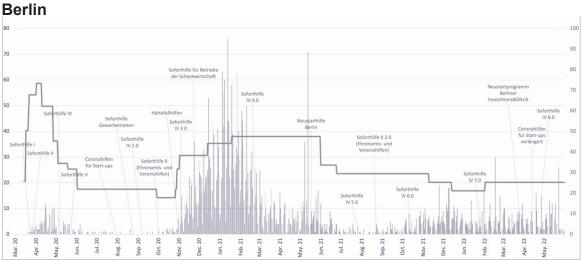
3. Context for the Berlin Survey

To situate our findings, it is crucial to contextualize the phase of the pandemic in which the survey was carried out (January-June 2022), especially considering the particularities of the Berlin city-state during the period. With 3,850,809 inhabitants in 31 December 2022, Berlin is both the German capital city, including a metropolitan region, and one of the 16 states which constitute the German Federal Republic. Among the residents of Berlin, 2,950,665 are German (586,769 of which have a migration background), and 900,144 are foreign citizens (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2022).

Berlin experienced a peak of COVID-19 infections in January and February of 2022. The months of March to May were marked by a falling number of cases, even though the number of people infected was still very high. Nevertheless, differently from the previous waves of COVID-19 infections which started at the end of 2020, 2022 was not marked by a peak in COVID-19-induced deaths. The fact that a peak in infections was not followed by a peak in deaths in the region can be explained by the higher rates of vaccinations than in the previous periods as well as the availability of better treatment and approved drugs for COVID-19 patients. The rate of COVID-19-induced deaths and infections were the main indicators used to guide the restrictions enforced by the German government that aimed to reduce the spread of the virus.

Graph 1 shows the number of COVID-19-induced deaths in Berlin, the financial aid provided by the government for the citizens of this area, and the public health and social measures (PHSM) index for the city, which indicates the severity of COVID-19-related restrictions. The World Health Organization (WHO) calculates this value for each country, based on federal level restrictions. Because this survey was conducted exclusively in Berlin, we calculated the PHSM index exclusively for Berlin based on the open-source methodology provided by the WHO and the regulations approved by the Berlin Senate and its federal counterpart during the COVID-19 pandemic. The index for Berlin was calculated to more precisely apprehend how the pandemic and the restrictions affected inhabitants of the city in their daily life. The aim here was to better understand the impact of the restrictions in each moment of time, which would in turn assist in interpreting the results of our survey. The PHSM index is represented by the dark grey line in Graph 1, and its methodology is presented below.

Another factor which impacts the daily life of the inhabitants in Berlin and helps to contextualize the moment the survey was conducted is the financial aid provided by the government. For this reason, Graph 1 also includes the date of introduction of all financial aid packages for the Berlin area.⁴ A glossary including a brief description of each financial aid package is included in the Annex.



Graph 1: COVID-19-induced deaths, PHSM severity index, and economic aid in

Source: Authors' elaboration based on WHO (2020), Abteilung Gesundheit, Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Gesundheit und Pflege, Berlin (n.d.), Bereich Justiz, Senatsverwaltung für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz, Berlin (n.d.), and Bezirksamt, Treptow-Köpenick, Berlin (n.d.).

⁴ In the interest of the timely publishing of these results as a working paper, some of the figures and graphs in this preliminary discussion paper are presented in the same format as in the internal research report documentation.

3.1 Methodology of PHSM index - Berlin

The PHSM index measures various forms of restrictions imposed by the state at different moments of time; these are displayed as a number from 0 to 100 where 0 implies no restrictions and 100 the highest level of restrictions. The index aggregates six indicators, including the mandatory use of masks, closure of schools, closure of businesses, limitations on gatherings, as well as restrictions on domestic and international travel. To calculate the index, each of the six indicators is quantified. The WHO methodology includes a specific ordinal scale for each indicator. It also includes a binary classification, which distinguishes general measures for the entire population, in this case Germany, from targeted measures for a specific subnational locality, in this case Berlin. The WHO methodology also includes a set of coding principles and a validation process which was used to calculate the PHSM index for Berlin. Each of the six indicators was calculated by comparing the specific ordinal scale of each indicator to information from regulations passed at the local level in Berlin and at the national level in Germany.⁵

During the pandemic, updates on regulations were posted several times per week; later they became less frequent, appearing only once every couple of weeks. These updates on regulations, usually based on the number of infections, deaths and hospitalizations, are marked by the dark grey line in Graph 1, the PHSM index for Berlin.

The PHSM index for Berlin reached its highest value in April 2020, during the peak of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this period, all non-essential businesses and schools were closed, domestic movement was restricted, and gatherings were prohibited. The local government, in coordination with its federal counterparts, was quick to impose restrictions to control the spread of the virus. A steep fall in COVID-19-induced deaths can be observed in Graph 1 in May 2020 after a rise in restrictions. This period was also marked by the first wave of financial aid packages (Annex), which aimed to provide interest-free credit to small enterprises during the period they remained closed for business due to restrictions. After a decrease in the number of infections and deaths in the following months, restrictions dropped to their lowest level in October 2020.

The second wave of COVID-19-induced deaths, which started in November 2020, was followed by a new set of restrictions. These did not limit national travel and small

$$I_d = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=0}^{5} n_{i,d}$$

⁵ The PHSM index can be calculated once all indicators are defined. The PHSM index aggregates six factors, each with equal weight, using the PHSM Severity Index formula:

gatherings as strictly as in the first wave, but they did call for offices and schools to once again be closed. In this period, financial aid was given in the form of grants to businesses which remained closed or were still affected by the reduced functioning of offices and shops. The second wave ended at the start of the year 2021 as the administration of vaccines started and the number of cases declined. In the middle of 2021, many of the restrictions were dropped and by the end of the year, with most of the population vaccinated, people in Germany were able to live with limited restrictions and COVID-19-induced deaths remained stable until the beginning of 2022, the time the survey ended.

4. Analysis of the Survey Data on the Impacts of the Pandemic in Berlin

4.1 Resource Inequality

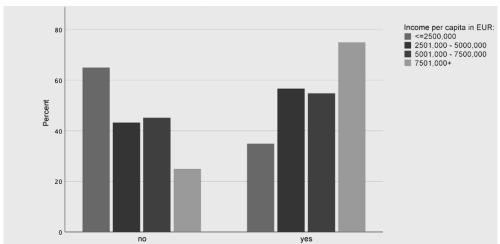
As mentioned above, Therborn's concept of resource inequality is based primarily on inequalities related to income and wealth (Therborn 2013). Germany is, in international comparisons, a country with low levels of income inequality, even within the European Union, the world region with the lowest national levels of income inequality (OECD 2019). Since 2010, income inequality measured by household income has been relatively stable in the country, although a slight decrease in inequality measured by the Gini coefficient was observed during the pandemic. This is explained by state aid as well as by the fact that the self-employed experienced an income drop during the pandemic and related restrictions. As this population group has an above average income, the drop in their earnings while the rest of the population had more stable earnings led to a more equal income distribution and lower Gini Index (DIW 2021: 312).

In our investigation of the Berlin case, the analysis of resource inequality was based on three questions: 1) Who received financial aid from the government? 2) Who was able to save money? 3) Who experienced an increase or drop in income? The survey format imposed some limitations on which aspect of resource inequality could be accessed since the questions could hardly account for wealth inequality or asset distribution but did focus on income and the perception of savings.

Results for the first question revealed that individuals with a higher level of education received more financial help from the government compared to individuals with lower education, and when family size is considered, the results indicate that, according to their own perceptions, families with children received less financial aid than families without children. These findings are contrary to what was expected considering that

some forms of financial aid were dedicated exclusively to families with children. The level of income per capita did not affect perceptions concerning aid received.

Concerning which households were able to save money during the pandemic, the results show that, as expected, wealthier families could more frequently save money than poorer families. Graph 2 displays the perception of savings for families divided by income levels. It is possible to observe that families with the highest levels of per capita income, above 7,500 euros, were the ones most able to save money. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the poorest families, with per capita income below 2,500, saved the least. As shown by our data, more educated individuals were also able to save more. In the comparison of families with and without children, families with children saw a slightly negative impact and were able to save less.

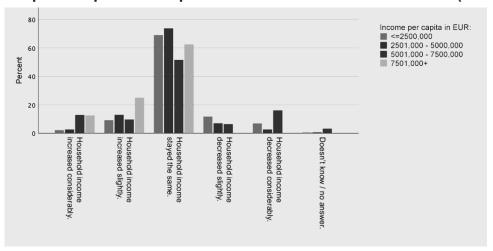


Graph 2: Who saved money during the pandemic (income per capita)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

The third question addressed income increase and decrease. The results indicate that a higher percentage of richer families saw their income rise or drop whereas a higher percentage of poorer families had a stable income, as seen in Graph 3. The survey responde data show that for around 70% of families with an income of less than 5,000 euros per capita, earnings remained constant throughout the pandemic. Level of education and number of children did not affect the increase or decrease in income.

Results from our survey confirm some of the available macro data at the national level (DIW 2021), according to which lower income classes saw more stability in their incomes during the pandemic than upper classes. The results highlight the role of the government in providing financial aid to the poorest in times of economic instability, as its absence could have resulted in higher levels of resource inequality.



Graph 3: Impact of the pandemic on the household income (income per capita)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

4.2 Vital Inequalities

Therborn's category of vital inequalities is particularly relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic as it refers to distances in terms of physical well-being and vital prospects which were decisively impacted by the sanitary crisis. When the pandemic first hit the world in 2020, some drew attention to how the new disease – highly infectious, often fatal, and very little known – showcased our collective vulnerability to illness and death and thus our shared human fragility in the face of nature. According to this view, the disease has a "democratic" dimension, as no one is safe and we are all mortal (Segato 2020), regardless of how wealthy and privileged one might be. As the different waves of infections came and went, however, it became increasingly clear that although we are all mortal, some are – to use Rosi Braidotti's expression (Braidotti 2013: 13) – "more mortal" than others: in our unequal societies, the constitutive vulnerability of human life shared by all manifests itself in the form of a contingent vulnerability that is unequally distributed among structurally unequal social groups (Butler 2009; Gilson 2014; Teixeira 2022).

The data from the Mecila survey for Berlin confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic did not impact all people equally when it comes to the rates of infections and deaths, and the connected rates of vaccination and quarantine. Regarding infection rates, one of the starkest contrasts in our findings is between households with and without children (Graph 4). While less than 20% of respondents in households without children said someone in their household has been infected with the disease, this number jumps to over 50% of respondents in households with children.

Household without children with children

80

40

20

no yes

"Did any member(s) of the household have a COVID-19 infection?"

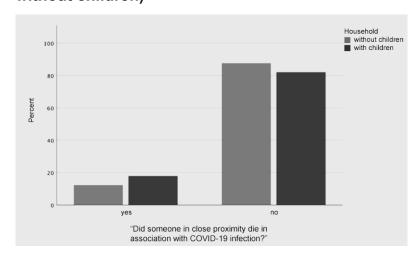
Graph 4: COVID-19 infections (households with or without children)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

A hypothesis to explain this is that while for adults in many cases it was possible to work in the home-office modality throughout the pandemic, schools were closed only in the high peaks of infection rates, leaving children (and their families) comparatively more exposed to the virus. Thus, in households composed only of adults, the virus circulated less.

The death rate due to a COVID-19 infection was also higher in families with children (Graph 5), though the contrast with regard to households without children is far less sharp than in the case of infection rates. This can probably be explained by the fact that the disease has had less severe or deadly effects in the younger population, especially children (Bhopal et al. 2021).

Graph 5: COVID-19-induced deaths in close proximity (households with or without children)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

As expected, the number of respondents in households with children who said that someone in their household had to quarantine at home was considerably higher when compared to households without children (Graph 6). This indicates that a higher number of families with children had to accommodate the necessities of the quarantined family members, which implies a heavier load of care work and a decreased level of mobility and disposal of one's time.

Household without children with children

4 and more members of the household

7 members of the household

80

1 to 2 members of the household

Graph 6: Necessity of quarantine (households with or without children)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

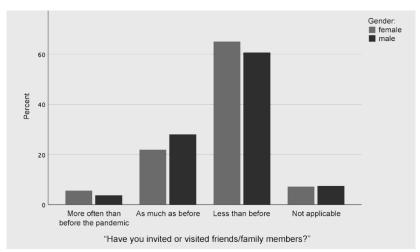
As our data show in the comparison of households with and without children, far from being an equalizer, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted different groups with varying degrees of intensity, and in the end reinforced existing vital inequalities. Since the three kinds of inequalities addressed here – resources, vital and existential – are not clear cut, independent variables, it should be expected that the vital inequalities between households with and without children manifest themselves in forms of resource and existential inequalities. As showed before regarding resource inequalities, families with children have been negatively impacted in terms of the ability to save money during the pandemic. The impact was, however, not severe because of the financial aid offered by the government. The same does not apply to existential inequalities, which are more diffuse and thus less easily mitigated by social policies focusing on the redistribution of goods and income.

4.3 Existential Inequalities

As previously highlighted, existential inequalities are more difficult to detect with conventional social indicators because well-being and living in accordance with one's own expectations and aspirations imply subjective perceptions better acknowledged by qualitative research methods. To measure existential inequalities in our survey, we aimed to detect how restrictions on structuring everyday life imposed by the pandemic and the containment policies affected different individuals or groups of individuals. We

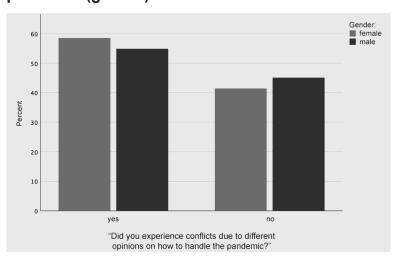
also looked at the ways that people coped with these new difficulties and examined how different groups in the researched population have accessed the alternatives to overcome these new constraints.

Our data show a consistent unequal gender distribution of the existential costs of the pandemic at both levels: women were more affected by the problems that emerged and less able to access alternatives to cope with the new situation. As showed below, women suffered more restrictions than men in their social contacts (Graph 7) and were more likely to be involved in conflicts related to different opinions concerning the policies to contain the pandemic (Graph 8).



Graph 7: Social contacts (gender)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).



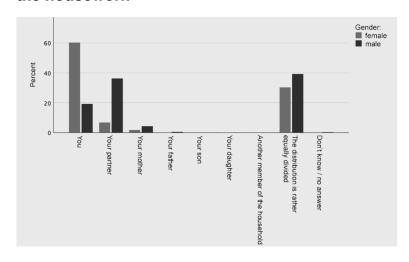
Graph 8: Involvement in conflicts due to different opinions on how to handle the pandemic (gender)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

As shown in Graph 8, although the majority of the respondents, both women and men, reported conflicts motivated by different opinions concerning the pandemic, many more female respondents reported these conflicts. The reasons for these differences rest probably in the greater exposure of women to situations in which different ways to handle the pandemic were in dispute as women are generally more involved in care activities.

Thus, the distribution of care activities has been particularly unequal. According to the majority of respondents (86%), the pandemic did not change the distribution of these activities among the members of a household. This suggests that, in most cases, women assumed the additional care work associated with the pandemic in the periods in which schools and day care centres were closed, especially in households with children. As shown in Graph 9, 60% of the women and less then 20% of the men are the main person responsible for doing the housework. Equally relevant is the different perceptions of women and men about the distribution of the housework. Accordingly, about 40% of the male respondents and only about 30% of the female respondents perceive the housework activities as equally distributed.

Graph 9: Division of time dedicated to housework (gender): main responsible for the housework

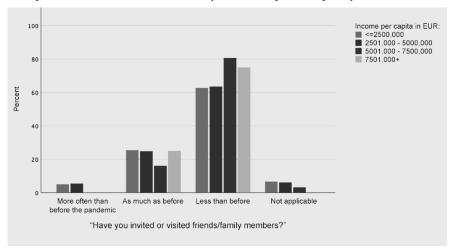


Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

Our survey also shows that the differences between East Berlin and West Berlin in the gender division of care labour are significant as respondents in the former socialist part of the city report a more equal gender distribution of care activities than respondents in former West Berlin. This is particularly clear in families with children during the periods in which schools and child care facilities were closed: 54% of the respondents in the Eastern part and 70% in the Western part of the city declared the mothers were responsible for care during these periods. Based on the secondary literature, these differences can be explained by the persistence of the consequences of the different

family arrangements and professional profiles of women and men in the socialist and capitalist parts of the city until the German reunification in 1989. As showed by Dietman Hobler and Svenja Pfahl, while the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) tried to promote the externalization of care activities to public facilities (day care centres, fulltime schooling, etc.), the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) supported the model of families as the main provider of care services (Hobler and Pfahl 2020).⁶ Despite changes and migrations in the unified city, these different models of welfare and family arrangements are still reflected in our survey.

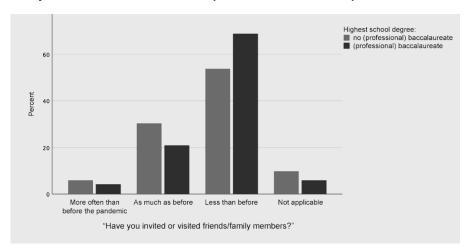
The variations in the distribution of existential inequalities during the pandemic are less consistently related to stratification based on age, levels of education and income than to gender stratification. Accordingly, respondents with lower levels of income and education were less affected in their social contacts by the pandemic than respondents with higher levels of education and income, as showed in Graphs 10 and 11. This is particularly evident in case of the different levels of formal education (Graph 11) as people with a baccalaureate (*Abitur*) tended to restrict much more their social contacts than those without a baccalaureate. These various behaviour patterns seem to show that less formally educated people are more likely to take risks than those who are more educated.



Graph 10: Social contacts (income per capita)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

While the former German Democratic Republic developed policies, especially from the 1960s, to integrate women into the labour market, in the Federal Republic of Germany wives needed the legal approval of their husbands to assume formal employment until 1977 (!) (Hobler and Pfahl 2020: 3).

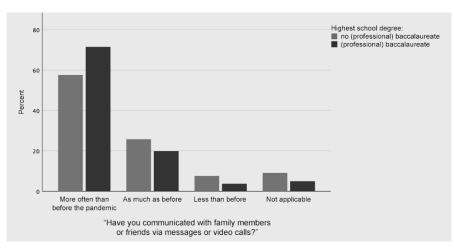


Graph 11: Social contacts (level of education)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

In relation to the use of digital devices for social contacts, inequalities are more explicit: more formally educated people were able to profit much more from virtual communication technology than less educated respondents, as showed in Graph 12: whereas about 70% of respondents with a baccalaureate could increase their use of digital means for communicating with their families and friends, only about 55% of respondents without baccalaureate increased their use of digital means for personal contacts.

Graph 12: Communication with family members or friends via messages or video calls (level of education)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on FU Berlin (2022).

5. Conclusions

The pandemic, in its various phases, produced important shifts in the nexus between conviviality and inequality. In this paper we sought to analyse these shifts in the city-state Berlin based on a comprehensive survey conducted at a time when there was an increase (January-February 2022), then a decrease (May-June 2022) in the number of COVID-19 infections in the first half of 2022. To better interpret the results obtained, we adopted Therborn's distinction between resource inequalities, vital inequalities and existential inequalities (Therborn 2013). Our findings show a rather differentiated picture of the changes in the relationships between conviviality and inequality during the pandemic.

At the level of resource inequalities, as measured particularly by perceived variations in income, inequalities did not increase. With regard to vital inequalities, differences between households with children and households without children were significant as families with children were much more affected by the pandemic. With regard to existential inequalities, we observed varied trends. The first and most relevant is the persistence and even deepening of gender inequalities to the extent that women and mothers, in the case of families with children, took on most of the new caregiving tasks that came with the pandemic, particularly at times when more restrictive measures such as school and childcare closures were in force. In addition, women were more involved in conflicts related to the pandemic.

With regard to income, age and education groups, we observed that younger and better-educated people were more involved in conflicts for reasons related to the pandemic, probably because they have more information and more consolidated opinions about the pandemic and the containment policies adopted and, in the case of young people, were more exposed to conflict situations than the elderly. Moreover, people with less education changed their social life less, while more educated people restricted their physical social contact and made more use of virtual communication technology.

The survey data confirm the two main hypotheses of our research, namely: the welfare model established in Germany that guided the policies to contain the pandemic and mitigate its social effects was able to contain the growth in resource inequalities and, to a large extent, vital inequalities. At the same time, the measures adopted have further emphasized a feature of the German welfare model that views the family as the fundamental factor of welfare promotion. As a result, existential inequalities, particularly those related to gender, have widened. Additionally, in consonance with our second hypotheses, distributional conflicts have been carried even more strongly into the sphere of the household. Future analyses and especially the work comparing the

impacts of the pandemic in the other three cities of this study (Buenos Aires, São Paulo and Mexico City) will allow us to deepen and nuance the findings for Berlin.

6. Annex: Measures Introduced in Berlin to Support Citizens and Businesses during COVID-19, 2020- 2022

Date	COVID-19	Description	Details
	Economic Aid		
19/3/20	Soforthilfe I	Protective shield	The rescue aid consists of
	(Emergency Aid I)	for small and	interest-free bridging loans
		medium-sized	of up to 500,000 euros with
		enterprises with up	a term of up to two years. It
		to 250 employees	can be used by SMEs.
27/3/20	Soforthilfe II	State subsidy	The subsidy passed by the
	(Emergency Aid II)	programme	Senate can be claimed by
		for solo self-	solo self-employed persons,
		employed,	freelancers and micro-
		freelancers and	enterprises with up to five
		micro-enterprises	employees in the amount
			of 5,000 euros from state
			funds and a further 9,000
			euros from federal funds.
7/5/20	Soforthilfe IV	State subsidy	
	(Emergency Aid IV)	programme for	
		cultural and media	
		companies with	
		more than 10	
		employees in the	
		amount of up to	
		25,000 euros	

18/5/20	Soforthilfe V	Subsidy	Small and medium-sized
	(Emergency Aid V)	programme for	enterprises in Berlin's
		small and medium-	economy with more
		sized enterprises	than 10 and up to 100
		and freelancers	employees that have been
		in the commercial	hit particularly hard by the
		sector	COVID-19 crisis can apply
			for repayment subsidies for
			the KfW Quick Loan 2020
			or a loan from the KfW
			Special Programme 2020,
			or, on a lower priority basis,
			emergency aid subsidies
			of up to 25,000 euros to
			overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence.
29/7/20	Coronahilfen für	Targeted	Together with the Credit
	Start-ups (COVID-	assistance from	Institute for Reconstruction
	19Corona aid for	the federal	(Kreditanstalt für
	start-ups)	government, the	Wiederaufbau, KfW), the
		state of Berlin,	state of Berlin supported
		KfW and IBB	start-ups and small and
		initiated for Berlin	medium-sized enterprises
		start-ups that have	in Berlin that had run into
		run into a financing	difficulties as a result of
		bottleneck through	the COVID-19 crisis. The
		no fault of their	funds of up to 2.3 million
		own as a result of	euros per company or
		COVID-19	group of companies for this
			programme were allocated
			on a case-by-case basis.

17/8/20	Soforthilfe Gewerbemieten (Emergency aid for commercial rent costs)	Subsidy programme for Berlin's small and medium-sized enterprises	Berlin SMEs with more than 10 and up to 249 employees that have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 crisis can apply for subsidies amounting to 50% of their commercial rents or leases for the months of April and May 2020.
31/8/20	Soforthilfe IV 2.0 (Emergency Aid IV 2.0)	State subsidy programme for cultural and media companies with at least two employees	Cultural and media enterprises with at least two employees that have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 crisis can apply for grants of up to 25,000 euros to overcome an economic situation that threatens their existence. In justified exceptional cases, up to 500,000 euros can be applied for.
1/10/20	Soforthilfe X (Ehrenamts- und Vereinshilfen) (Emergency Aid X – for voluntary work and associations)	State subsidy programme for non-profit organizations and associations	Non-profit organizations and associations whose existence is financially threatened by the COVID-19 crisis can receive grants of up to 20,000 euros as emergency aid.
30/10/20	Coronahilfen für Modelabels (COVID-19 aid for fashion labels)	Interest-free loans for fashion labels in Berlin	IBB grants interest- free loans to Berlin fashion labels that have experienced a drop in sales due to the COVID-19 crisis and therefore do not have sufficient financial resources to pre-finance the upcoming collection or parts of it.

1/11/20	Härtefallhilfen	Subsidy	Companies that are affected
	(Hardship Aid)	programme for	by the pandemic and have
		companies	not received sufficient or
			any support from other aid
			programmes can apply.
			The amount of funding may
			not exceed 100,000 euros.
			A de minimis limit of 2,000
			euros applies.
3/11/20	Soforthilfe IV 3.0	State subsidy	Cultural and media
	(Emergency Aid IV	programme for	enterprises with at least
	3.0)	cultural and	two employees that have
		media companies	been hit particularly hard
		with at least two	by the COVID-19 crisis
		employees	can apply for grants to
			overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence. Grants are based
			on a calculated liquidity
			bottleneck (in justified
			exceptional cases up to
			500,000 euros).
23/11/20	Soforthilfe für	State subsidy	Bars and restaurants that
	Betriebe der	programme for	were affected by turnover
	Schankwirtschaft	pubs and late-	losses in October due to the
	(Emergency aid	night shops	pandemic-related closing
	for pubs and		time (11 pm to 6 am) receive
	restaurants)		a subsidy of up to 3,000
			euros per establishment
			to cover the costs of
			commercial rents.

22/2/21	Soforthilfe IV 4.0	State subsidy	Cultural and media
	(Emergency Aid IV	programme for	enterprises with at least
	(4.0)	cultural and	·
	4.0)		two employees that have
		media companies	been hit particularly hard
		with at least two	by the COVID-19 crisis
		employees	can apply for grants to
			overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence. Grants are based
			on a calculated liquidity
			bottleneck (in justified
			exceptional cases up to
			500,000 euros).
17/5/21	Neustarthilfe Berlin	State subsidy	The state of Berlin supports
	(Berlin Restart Aid)	programme for	Berlin's solo self-employed
		solo self-employed	and micro-enterprises with
		and micro-	up to five employees for
		enterprises with up	a better start out of the
		to five employees	lockdown. In the process,
			the subsidies granted by
			the federal government will
			be increased by a further
			25% to a maximum of
			7,500 euros in total for solo
			self-employed persons.
			SMEs can receive up to
			6,000 euros in additional
			subsidies.

26/7/21	Soforthilfe IV 5.0	State subsidy	Cultural and media
	(Emergency Aid IV	programme for	enterprises with at least
	5.0)	cultural and	two employees that have
		media companies	been hit particularly hard
		with at least two	by the COVID-19 crisis
		employees	can apply for grants to
			overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence. Grants are based
			on a calculated liquidity
			bottleneck (in justified
			exceptional cases up to
			500,000 euros).
23/8/21	Soforthilfe X 2.0	State subsidy	Non-profit organizations
	(Ehrenamts- und	programme	and associations whose
	Vereinshilfen)	for non-profit	existence is financially
	(Emergency	organizations and	threatened by the COVID-19
	Aid X 2.0 – for	associations	crisis and in which voluntary
	voluntary work and		work plays a key role can
	associations)		receive grants of up to
			20,000 euros as emergency
11110101			aid.
14/10/21	Soforthilfe IV 6.0	State subsidy	Cultural and media
	(Emergency Aid IV	programme for	enterprises with at least
	6.0)	cultural and	two employees that have
		media companies	been hit particularly hard
		with at least two	by the COVID-19 crisis
		employees	can apply for grants to
			overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence. Grants are based
			on a calculated liquidity
			bottleneck (in justified
			exceptional cases up to
			500,000 euros).

25/1/22	Soforthilfe IV 7.0	State subsidy	Cultural and media
207 1722	(Emergency Aid IV	programme for	enterprises with at least
	7.0)	cultural and	two employees that have
	7.0)	media companies	been hit particularly hard
		with at least two	by the COVID-19 crisis
		employees	can apply for grants to
		employees	overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence. Grants are based
			on a calculated liquidity
			bottleneck (in justified
			exceptional cases, up to
05/0/00	Nove to uture as assessed	Otata invastraciat	500,000 euros).
25/3/22	Neustartprogramm	State investment	The Restart Programme
	Berliner	subsidy for small	is essentially open to
	InvestitionsBONUS	and medium-sized	all sectors but primarily
	(Restart Programme	enterprises as well	those that have been
	Berlin Investment	as full-time solo	particularly weakened by
	BONUS)	self-employed	the pandemic, such as
		and freelancers	retail, gastronomy, the
		with company	tourism industry and service
		headquarters in	and craft enterprises. This
		Berlin	closes the previous funding
			gap. The funding amount
			based on the de minimis
			rule is limited to a maximum
			of 200,000 euros. These
			maximum funding amounts
			may not be exceeded even
			if the sustainability bonus is
			claimed. If de minimis rules
			have already been used, the
			maximum funding amount is
			reduced accordingly.
13/4/22	COVID-19 aid for		
	start-ups extended		

27/4/22	Soforthilfe IV 8.0	State subsidy	Cultural and media
	(Emergency Aid IV	programme for	enterprises with at least
	8.0)	cultural and	two employees that have
		media companies	been hit particularly hard
		with at least two	by the COVID-19 crisis
		employees	can apply for grants to
			overcome an economic
			situation that threatens their
			existence. Grants are based
			on a calculated liquidity
			bottleneck (in justified
			exceptional cases up to
			500,000 euros).

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