

Forskerlinjen

Project description: Meaning-making under COVID-19

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Introduction:

Since April 2020, we have been running a longitudinal qualitative project on experiences and narratives on COVID-19 in Norway. We interviewed 16 people at the very beginning of the pandemic here in Norway, and have interviewed 8 of these 16 people an additional 4 times, asking them about their everyday experiences, their thoughts on the government handling of the situation, their own handling of the measures, interpersonal relations, changes in norms etc. We would very much welcome onboard a student interested to explore the impact of the pandemic on people's lives, who speaks Scandinavian, and who is interested in qualitative approaches. The student does not need to know qualitative approaches prior to joining the project.

Background:

Placed within narrative cultural psychology, drawing on both critical psychology and political psychology, we wanted to explore a variety of everyday experiences of the pandemic. How were people engaging in meaning-making of the pandemic? How were people coping with a new everyday life? How were different groups of people narrating the pandemic? (older/younger/people with children/without children/people with/without partner or family/people in vulnerable groups/people who were laid off work etc.) How were people experiencing and talking about the measures? Were they trusting the government? How did they experience other people's handling of the pandemic? The qualitative approach allowed us to follow these eight people through the pandemic, which also gives an interesting window into changing narratives with the situation. Someone could be very worried at one point, and then not care much about the pandemic in the next interview.

So far, we have published two articles on the material:

1. Moss, S. M., & Sandbakken, E. M. (2021). "Everybody needs to do their part, so we can get this under control." Reactions to the Norwegian government meta-narratives on COVID-19 Measures. *Political Psychology*, 42(5), 881-898.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12727>
2. Sandbakken, E. M., & Moss, S. M. (2021). "Now we are all in the same boat. At the same time, we are not." Meaning-making and coping under COVID-19 lockdown in Norway. *Human Arenas*, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00208-z>

A third article is currently under review:

3. Moss, S. M., & Sandbakken, E. M. Pushing Too Far? The Case of the Norwegian Cabin Ban and the Dictator's Dilemma in COVID-19 Measures. Manuscript under review.

Theoretically, the first article is placed within a narrative psychology framework and meaning-making, the second relates to the individual and communal coping literature, and the third uses Foucault, discursive psychology and dictatorship theory from political science.

Research questions:

The overarching research questions for the project are:

How are people experiencing and making meaning of the pandemic in their everyday lives?

How are people narrating the pandemic? Are there overlapping or contrasting narratives?

Objectives and method:

The goal of the project is to explore everyday life during the pandemic, in both practices and narratives.

We are not using statistical methods, since this is a qualitative project, but rather we use qualitative methods such as thematic analysis and narrative analysis to investigate our research questions. We have longitudinal qualitative data with 16 participants (T1) and 8 of those 16 have been interviewed a further four times (T2-T5). This data speaks to a wide variety of topics (coping with the new situation, handling everyday life, handling measures, thoughts about restrictions, trust, norms, thoughts on the future, worry). We have also conducted document analysis of the official corona press-conferences here in Norway in our research.

We would suggest the student collects further data on a topic within these different topics (e.g. 7-10 interviews), and we can then together draw on both those new interviews and the existing material.

Student assignments:

Learning to conduct qualitative studies, it is essential to get to the craftmanship of the approaches, which is only possible through hands on experience. We have thus proposed the following tasks:

1. The student will transcribe a selection (2-4) of the previous interviews conducted by Moss to familiarise themselves with the topic
2. The student will conduct 7-10 interviews on a topic within the overarching COVID-research. That includes creating an interview-guide and deciding on a sample, as well as recruiting the sample
3. The student will transcribe these interviews
4. The student will code these interviews
5. The student will analyse these interviews
6. The student will through the analysis explore questions for the article
7. The student will explore relevant theory and framework
8. Together with Moss and Sandbakken, the student will analyse the longitudinal material specifically exploring the topic at hand
9. Combining the material from the new interviews that the student will conduct and the longitudinal material, the research group combined will discuss and carry out the analysis
10. The research group will write the article together, with the student as the first author, taking the lead in the article writing.

About the research environment:

We are two main researchers on the project, Sigrun Marie Moss as project leader, and PhD candidate at PSI and university college lecturer at Oslo New University College, Ella Marie

Sandbakken. We meet every second week. As a part of the project, we also have international collaboration with Professor Brady Wagoner at Aalborg University.

The student will also be included in the monthly Cultural and Community psychology-meetings, where we discuss current topics and present research. We will also include the student in another network, the Kitchen-seminars, which are international weekly meetings within cultural psychology where researchers meet online to discuss a given paper.

Supervision:

Moss will be main supervisor and Sandbakken the assistant supervisor.

In the supervision we will first make a plan for the project and the different milestones. We will structure the supervision around these milestones, so that the student undertakes readings and preparations for each of the milestones. We will also have close contact with regards to the research that the student takes on.

Researching the COVID-19 pandemic is interesting as we are all insiders in the process, living and having lived the COVID-situation whilst researching the COVID-situation. The student will thus be an expert from the get go, and we will all three contribute actively to exploring the topics at hand continuously.

Ethical approvals and data:

We have longitudinal qualitative data with 16 participants (T1) and 8 of those 16 have been interviewed a further four times (T2-T5). This data speaks to a wide variety of topics (coping with the new situation, handling measures, thoughts about restrictions, trust, norms, thoughts on the future, worry). We would suggest the student collects further data on this topic (e.g. 10 interviews).

We have an NSD-approval for the project. A new sample will be added to the approval for the new 7-10 interviews that the student will conduct, based on what the student candidate is most interested in. This amendment to the NSD-approval takes approximately 2 days for NSD to process.

Tentative article:

The article that we propose that the candidate write together with us, is focused on one of the following topics (which we will discuss further with the candidate):

- a) **Lessons learned relevant to the climate crisis:** Adapting to a new situation and thoughts about the future related to the changes people have now incorporated in their daily lives. What can we learn from that which is relevant to the climate crisis?
- b) **«The pandemic does discriminate» - Narratives by groups who have been most affected by measures.** It would be interesting to recruit and interview people in groups that have been hardest hit by the measures over time (people in bars/restaurants/tourism, old people, sick or isolated people). How are these people narrating the measures and the virus? Do they speak of it in terms of “dugnad” and shared efforts? Do they feel betrayed? How are they narrating the approaches taken by the government?

Contact:

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