

A lifeworld-oriented physiotherapy (by Nadia El-Seoud)

Critical Physiotherapy Network blogpost

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We all know the following situations from our professional or private everyday life: Senior citizens living in rural areas with poor infrastructure; people living with chronic diseases and disabilities; people without education and without work, people living in large families (in cramped housing) and people with special migration experience. This listing of difficult yet all-too-common living conditions can be continued at length. It is generally known that living conditions have a considerable influence on people's health and life expectancy. This influence is certainly amplified at present by the Covid 19 pandemic.



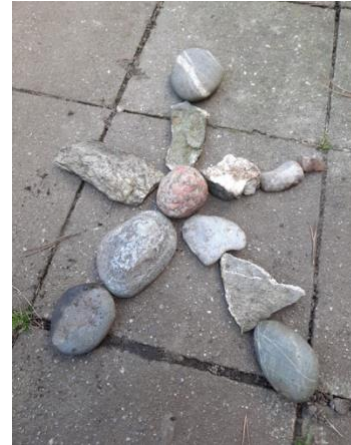
Physiotherapy must ask itself what influence individual living conditions have on the therapy process and the associated therapy success. Against this background, the question of physiotherapy's attitude toward and dealing with social changes also arises.

Briefly outlined at this point, it can be stated that physiotherapy certainly has points of contact with social issues. It is already the case that people who come to us for therapy are in precarious living conditions or may be threatened by precariousness. As a logical consequence, such living conditions influence the physiotherapeutic treatment process and conversely, physiotherapy also influences the living conditions of people.

In my ongoing PhD project *Perspectives of lifeworld-oriented physiotherapy* I am investigating how exactly this influence or the orientation of physiotherapy to people's lifeworlds is represented in physiotherapy.

At one of the monthly online meetings of the German-speaking section of the Critical Physiotherapy Network on 23. Feb. 2021, I had the opportunity to present and discuss elements from the research project. The project first explores the question of how a lifeworld orientation is represented in physiotherapy, to further examine whether the theoretical concept of lifeworld orientation drawn from social work can be transferred to the particular framework of physiotherapy.

The opening question for the discussion following the presentation was: What role can physiotherapy play in society, with regard to social issues like e.g. people's living conditions? A lively discussion sparked among the participants – touching on perspectives from "What more should we do?" to "What more can we do?". The guiding element of the discussion - the question of physiotherapy's engagement in the areas of life and society – opened further questions about the professional identity and physiotherapy competences. Where do physiotherapy competences end? Where can synergies be found and how can networks be formed?



About the author:



[Nadia El-Seoud](#) is a physiotherapist and graduated in 2013 with a Master's degree in Social Work and Health in the context of Social Cohesion. Since 2019, she is a PhD candidate Public Health at the University of Bremen, Human and Health Sciences, in Germany. She is doing her PhD on the topic of perspectives of lifeworld-oriented physiotherapy.