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Being temporary employed –
an in-depth study of four social
workers in Germany

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Abstract

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Labour markets in Europe are changing from permanent employment to more flexible structures. Atypical work such as temporary work become more prevalent. In Germany, there is a high share of temporary work contracts within social work. The aim of this study was to understand what temporary employment means for the employees and which effect it has on the lives of the employees. The chosen method for this study was a qualitative research method with in-depth interviews of four temporary employed social workers in Germany. The analysis was done through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach based on the concept of Van Manen (1997). The study found that temporary employment is perceived differently by each person and depends on personal factors, such as age, family status, private back-up systems, being responsible for others and career prospects. Temporary employment can be a chance of trying out different work fields and developing a boundaryless career through gaining specific skills within different employments. When founding a family and being financial responsible for a family, temporary employment can be problematic, and the perceived job insecurity can be high. Here, the transition period after each contract is a highly insecure time for the employee. Further impacts are the inability of getting loans and a disadvantageous position on the housing market. Back-up systems such as the welfare state as well as private mechanisms such as financial support within a family are crucial when being temporary employed.

Key words: Temporary work, Fixed-term employment, non-standard employment, job insecurity, hermeneutic phenomenology

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1 Introduction

Labour markets in Europe are changing from standard employment, that means full-time permanent employment, to more flexible structures. This generates more atypical employment such as part time work, temporary employment, temporary agency work or self-employment (O'Connor 2013: 46). In contrast to permanent work contracts, temporary employment is the most common form of non-standard employment next to part-time work and hence a relevant form of employment on the labour market (Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 408; Marica 2018: 154). Temporary work is a controversial topic. A positive aspect of non-standard employment is the reduction of unemployment (Marica 2018). Furthermore, temporary employment is a way to react flexibly to unforeseen events, crisis and replacements of regular staff. As a tool for flexibility, temporary employment gains importance for employers and the labour markets, but at the same time raises questions about the situation of the employees. Previous quantitative research shows that there are influences of temporary employment forms on e.g. relationships (Niehaus 2013), the decision of founding a family (Laß 2020) and on the working as well as the private life (Waijjer et al. 2017). Therefore, the assumption is adopted that temporary work has an influence on the lives of the employees which can be positive or negative. However, all these studies are of quantitative nature and lack a full picture of the situation of the employees. To complement previous studies, this thesis consists of an in-depth study focusing on four temporary employed social workers in Germany. This thesis concentrates on social workers, as fixed-term employment occurs more often within social work than in other sectors of the German labour market (Giesecke 2012: 29). Social work is the sector with the highest rate of non-standard employment forms in Germany (Chassé 2013: 15). The resulting research questions which are underlying the research and driving this work are the following:

- What does it mean for employees to be temporary employed?
- How does temporary employment impact the lives of the employees?

This thesis aims at getting a holistic picture of the situation of temporary employed workers by hearing the employees' voices, gaining an insight into their lives, and understanding the situation of being temporary employed. Therefore, a qualitative

study was conducted with an inductive research approach. With in-depth interviews, data was derived from four temporary employed social workers in Germany who are giving an insight into their reality of life and experiences with temporary employment. Furthermore, the impact and consequences of temporary employment on the employees' lives is of interest. A hermeneutic phenomenology approach based on Van Manen (1997) is chosen to fully grasp the experience of being temporary employed in all its facets. This allows a better understanding of the situation the interviewed people are in and gives an insight into how it is to be temporary employed.

The findings of this study can provide information for employers, union officials as well as for prospective temporary employees to give a better understanding about the situation being temporary employed and the effects of it. Furthermore, it could also be relevant to identify the needs of temporary employed people and e.g. to adjust social policies within the welfare state.

2 Fixed-term employment

Temporary employment is classified as a form of non-standard employment. Non-standard employment is the opposite of standard employment which is defined as “full-time, indefinite, dependent employment that is equally spread over the work week and takes place at a single employer” (Leschke 2008: 15f.). Hence, all other types of work which do not fulfil these requirements are considered as non-standard employment such as part-time work, temporary employment, self-employment, seasonal work, temporary work agencies and special training programs (O'Connor 2013: 58; Leschke 2008: 15f.; Van Lancker 2013: 192). There is a broad variety of employment forms and different prospects of the employees which can range from low paid jobs to highly educated people (Van Lancker 2013: 192). Temporary employment is a type of employment with a specific end of the contract by completing a certain task, by working a specific timeframe or when the person being replaced returns (Marica 2018: 154; Laß 2020; European Commission 2020). To clarify the framework of this study, this paper is focusing on social workers employed within temporary contracts with a predefined end date of the contract,

which is possible to be prolonged for specific reasons. The terms “fixed-term employment” and “temporary employment” are used equally in this thesis as they are forms of employment which have a set end. Temporary agency work is a special form of temporary work and is not considered in this research.

In Germany, fixed-term employment encompassed 8 % of all employed people between 25 years and the age of retirement in the year 2018 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020a). Hereby young employees between the age 25 and 34 are disproportionately often employed within temporary work contracts. Here, 16,9 % are temporary employed (ibid.). Reasons for temporary work are various. Temporary employment is among others a flexibility tool for employers to be able to react to demand peaks and absence of other employees in the case of e.g. sickness or parental leave (Atkinson et al. 1996: 1; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 247; Nollen 1996: 576f.). This employment form is a tool for the employer to gain more possibilities to react to unforeseeable events and to react to the complexity of the market (Atkinson et al. 1996: 7). 55,5 % of temporary employed people have a work contract for one year or less (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020a).

Fixed-term contracts can also be used as an extension of a trial period. Trial periods are often legally limited in their duration (in Germany six months). The aim is to get to know the employees and their working habits better, before deciding to offer a new contract (Hohendanner 2010: 1; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 247). Ludera-Ruszel marks that this is often the case for high-skilled workers with a general qualification, where it is challenging to figure out the capabilities in the selection process (2016: 412). There is also the case of an “ungrounded limitation” where the contract is limited with no specific reason such as in the case of replacement of an absent employee or a limited funding of a project. In that case, an “ungrounded limitation” can serve as a steppingstone into a permanent employment as there is no specific reason for the set end of the contract and it can easily be changed into a permanent one (Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 137; Hohendanner 2014: 7).

In some cases, temporary work is the desired form of employment by the employees e.g. in summer breaks for students or seasonal work (Marica 2018). But often, temporary employment is an involuntary form of employment as there are limited permanent positions on the job market (Atkinson et al. 1996: 51; O’Connor 2013: 52; Statistisches Bundesamt 2020b). Employees take temporary jobs due to economical constraints as employment is more desirable than unemployment

(Marica 2018: 157; Atkinson et al. 1996: 51). Thereby, it can lead to reduced unemployment in general (O'Connor 2013: 58; Leschke 2008: 219).

Temporary employment is prevalent in the social sector in Germany as the funding of social work is influencing the contract types as it is often time limited (Chassé 2013: 12; Giesecke 2012: 31; Hohendanner 2010: 7; Hohendanner et al. 2019: 106). Hence, the social sector can be called a pioneer of non-standard employment with a deregulated and flexible labour market in Germany (Chassé 2013: 15; Giesecke 2012: 29; Hohendanner et al. 2019: 111).

3 Relevant previous research

In order to gain an understanding of the academic relevance of this topic and the role of this study in the context of existing research, previous research will be presented. Temporary employment can be looked at from different angles as it has different impacts on different parties, e.g. on the labour market, the employers and the employees. As this paper concentrates on the experiences of the employees, a selection of previous research is presented which focuses on the employees within temporary employment.

Non-standard employment such as temporary employment leads to lower unemployment rates (Leschke 2008: 219). This can be seen as a positive aspect of temporary employment. At the same time, it leads to a more segmented labour market which goes together with a higher job insecurity (Leschke 2008: 219; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 443). Despite the negative effect of non-standard employment creating a more segmented labour market, temporary employment can serve as a stepping stone into permanent work contracts (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.; Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 147; Hohendanner 2010: 8; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412; Nollen 1996: 576f.). This is especially the case for young people in transition between education and labour market entry (McGinnity, Mertens & Gundert 2005: 369). Here, temporary employments pose a chance on entering the labour market for young people as there are no negative effects on the career prospects after five years of starting to work (ibid.). On the one hand, temporary contracts can serve as a bridge into permanent work, but on the other hand it can reinforce unstable careers

(Hohendanner 2010: 8; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 248). People within fixed-term employment are more exposed to the risk of unemployment than permanent workers (Bookmann 2006: 24; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 251). Whether people who have a fixed-term contract are more likely to be re-employed in temporary work contracts in the long-term is controversial discussed and there are opposite positions (Bookmann 2006: 24; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 251). However, personal qualifications of an employee matter and the effects of temporary employment depend on the reason for the limitation of a contract which leads to different future career prospects (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.). A contract that is limited in duration in order to prolong the probationary period is more likely to be followed by a permanent contract (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412). For a contract limited in duration due to a temporary increase in demand for personnel this is less often the case (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.; Nollen 1996: 576f.). Then, temporary employment lasts only for a relatively short time as it is changed into a permanent contract with the same benefits and stability that comes with a permanent position (Boockmann & Hagen 2005: 320). Negative consequences of temporary employment are lower for high-skilled workers as for them temporary contracts often serve as a prolonged probation time to select the right employee (Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412). Furthermore, temporary work contracts affect future employment, salaries and personal life plans negatively which are important effects (Bookmann 2006: 35; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f; Hohendanner 2010: 1). These effects are higher for low-skilled workers (Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412, Niehaus 2013: 588f.). Even if for low skilled workers the effects are intensified, high educated employees are suffering from fixed- term employment, too. Waaijer et al. are stating, that temporary employment does have negative effects for people with high education, in their case PhD graduates (2017: 336). These effects are the inability of getting mortgage, the negative impact on family stability as well as a negative influence on starting a family (Waaijer et al. 2017: 335). Women obtaining a fixed-term contract are more affected in starting a family as men in regard to delaying the birth of the first child until obtaining a permanent contract (Laß 2020). A permanent contract gives the security for women of a labour market re-entry after parental leave. As fathers are less likely taking parental leave in Germany than women, the effect of temporary employed men is lower on the birth of the first child (ibid.). Furthermore, temporary employment can cause

conflicts within partnerships and is also an important factor in family planning for the employees (Niehaus 2013: 589; Scherer 2009: 542).

Another effect of fixed-term employment is the negative impact on the health of the employees (Gash, Mertens & Gordo 2007: 452; Voßemer et al. 2018: 1254). This arises as fixed-term employment leads to higher insecurity which results in high psychological pressure and is affecting physical health negatively (Gash et al. 2007: 452). Moreover, temporary employment is leading to a lower general life satisfaction and lower happiness compared to a permanent contract (Scherer 2009: 535; Voßemer et al. 2018: 1254).

Gundert and Hohendanner (2014) draw a connection between temporary employment and social inclusion. Compared to permanent employed people, employees with a temporary work contract experience less social inclusion (Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 147). Hence, temporary employment is not integrating people into the society to the same extent as permanent positions do (ibid.). However, Gundert and Hohendanner call attention to the fact that there are significant differences for the type of temporary employment, as the results are even higher for temporary agency work (ibid.).

Furthermore, temporary employment bears a higher poverty risk than permanent employment due to differences in salaries (Van Lancker 2013: 202). Different factors within the household like age, education, children and the number of earners in a family play a significant role of suffering of in-work poverty with temporary employment or not. In addition to that the risk varies in different countries as the welfare systems support temporary employed people differently (ibid. 202ff.). However, Van Lancker emphasizes that the risk of poverty is mitigated when living in a dual-earner household (ibid.).

As people with a temporary contract are more exposed to unemployment, the welfare system plays an important role for temporary employed people. The problem hereby is that fixed-term employed people have insufficient access to social insurance and to welfare provisions such as unemployment benefits (Leschke 2008: 219). Often these benefits are dependent on previous income and have a minimum contribution requirement, such as working for a specific time which can disqualify temporary employed people who switch between temporary contracts and unemployment (Leschke 2008: 18, 225; Nollen 1996: 574). At the same time, the importance of the welfare state is crucial especially for temporary employed

people as they have a lower job security and are in greater need of these provisions. Here the provisions of the welfare state can reduce the negative consequences in case of unemployment (Scherer 2009: 540).

However, the situations of temporary employed people are different due to different factors like composition of the private household, education, occupation and age. A positive way of making use of temporary employment is to develop specific skills during each contract period at different employers to improve the employability (Marler, Barringer & Milkovich 2002). Here, the concept is to develop a boundaryless career where temporary employed people profit from experiences from different employments which increase the employability while having at the same time more flexibility and autonomy (Marler et al. 2002: 450). The people preferring temporary employment and are voluntarily taking fixed-term jobs, are often highly qualified, well paid and mostly have another income in their household as a security back-up system (ibid.: 446f.). They see temporary employment as a chance to accumulate knowledge and skills (ibid.).

Temporary employment leads to a higher job insecurity as there is a high threat of job loss (Laß 2020: 9). However temporary employment does not per se mean a higher job insecurity as subjective perceptions of the employees can vary from the objective classification of temporary employment as an employment form with high job insecurity (De Witte & Näswall 2003: 177; Richter 2011: 9). De Witte and Näswall call attention to the subjective perception of the individual employment situation whether the individual experience temporary employment equivalent to job insecurity or if there is no perceived job insecurity even with temporary employment (2003: 177). The perceptions whether a fixed-term job contract is insecure depends on different personal factors such as education, age and available resources and the family situation (Richter 2011: 9f.).

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt are examining how job insecurity is perceived by the employees and which factors are playing a role in the perception of the insecurity (1984). Individuals react differently to job insecurity as there are differences from individual perceptions of job insecurity, different levels on job dependency, and different levels of social support for the employee (ibid.). However, job insecurity is often perceived as the powerlessness of staying in the job with the given continuity (ibid.). The level of how job insecurity is perceived is also dependent on the role employment plays in life for the employee. Jahoda highlights that

employment can fulfil different roles and can serve as a way to give a time structure, a regular activity, a way of maintaining social contacts and purposes, but also be a way of maintaining status and building identity (1981: 189).

Most of the pre-existing research is consisting of quantitative studies which are focusing on one specific aspect of temporary employment (e.g. career prospects, salary, family founding process). In contrast to that, this paper is focusing on the individual employee and the perception of fixed-term employment. The research which is conducted in this paper is qualitative and focuses on the employees in a more holistic way. Through that, important aspects of the effects of temporary employment on the lives of the employees are gained. In that way this research complements already existing studies about temporary employment and helps to better understand the situation from the employees view of being temporary employed.

4 Method

To fully grasp the situation of being temporary employed and to get to know the effects of temporary work on the lives of the employees, a qualitative research approach was chosen. This seems to be suitable as it allows the researcher to gain an insight into the life of a temporary employed person and to understand the situation the person is in. Further research considerations about the research design, the sampling strategy, the data collection method and the analysis are presented in this section which is concluding with thoughts about limitations of this study.

4.1 Research design

This study is based on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach with the aim to fully grasp the situation of temporary employed social workers.

Hermeneutics has a long history and was shaped by different philosophical approaches on how to understand the experiences of people, their reality and the

truth. In general, hermeneutics tries to understand the participant's world by the stories told by the person concerned with the examined phenomenon. It tries to uncover the unspoken thoughts, values and ideas in order to understand the world of the participant and the perception of the specific phenomenon (Moules et al. 2015: 3; Crowther et al. 2017: 829). It is crucial for the research to understand and interpret the experiences, events and stories told by participants as Moules et al. are stating:

“Hermeneutics has been described as the practice and theory of interpretation and understanding in human contexts; the science, art, and philosophy of interpretation [...]” (Moules et al. 2015: 3).

Hermeneutics tries to get to the essence of a phenomenon and reveals the truth by interpreting the text through trying to understand the reality of life of the participant.

For this study, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of Van Manen (1997) was chosen, and the lived experiences of the participants are in focus (1997: 35ff.). Here, lived experiences are the experiences of the participants which are described by them retrospectively in the form of stories reflected on as worth to tell the researcher (Van Manen 1997: 35ff.). The aim is to understand the situation of being temporary employed and the lived experiences of the participants (ibid.) The experiences of temporary employed social workers are in focus and how they make sense out of it in their life and interpret it. The truth in this research is seen as the stories and the experiences from the participants as they experience temporary employment. Van Manen describes that phenomenological research is keen to find out the essence of the phenomenon and the meaning behind it (1997: 10). In this research, the focus lies on the subjective experiences of being temporary employed and on the essence of it. The research design of this study is an inductive approach with a focus on the individual person working in a fixed-term employment. With that, the interview partners prioritise their topics about temporary employment and share what is most important for them. In-depth interviews were conducted to get an insight into the participant's reality of life and a holistic picture of the situation of these people. The strength of this method is to be able to focus on the individual experience, which is understood as the truth, which is valid, not deniable and of high utility for research (Moules et al. 2015: 184ff.). This research design is chosen in this study as it allows a unique perspective on the experiences and perceptions of

fixed-term employment. As the individual angle of this topic is missing within previous research, this study can complement previous findings and contribute to a more complete picture of fixed-term employment.

Gaining an insight into the view of how the participants see the world they are living in and how they make sense out of their situation is a way to understand their experiences (Bryman 2016: 27). By getting to know the social reality of the participants and revealing their understanding of common sense regarding the researched topic, it is possible to grasp their situation and experiences with the research topic (ibid.). In this research, one participant was known before the research, but most participants were only met twice, once in person and once online for an interview. As there is not much knowledge about the backgrounds of the participants, all gained information about their lives and understandings of their situation derives from the collected data. In the analysis of the interviews, there is the attempt of grasping their subjective views and their understanding of the world especially about labour and thereby understand their situation with temporary employment. Within phenomenological research, each participant contributes to the research with subjective experiences, but does at the same time share common experiences with other people who experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth 2017: 76).

The critique on hermeneutics is that different researchers can come to different conclusions as the text with the information-rich in-depth cases offer room for different interpretations, depending on which aspect the researcher is focusing on (Moules et al. 2015: 180). Each case contains multiple aspects of a phenomenon with different meanings which need to be uncovered (Crowther et al. 2017: 828). Furthermore, this method is focusing on the particular case and the individual experiences which is a strength as well as a limitation at the same time (Moules et al. 2015: 180). In qualitative research, there is always the challenge to ensure the quality and credibility of the research process and the results. All researchers bring own experiences, assumptions, biases and generalizations with them which affects how they understand the world and the phenomenon. Own experiences are immediately accessible for the researcher and can serve as a way to address to a phenomenon and be a starting point as own experiences can also be the experiences of others (Van Manen 1997: 54). In order to ensure that the interpretation of the data is not manipulated by own assumptions, it is crucial that the researcher is aware

of own understandings of the phenomenon and the taken-for-granted aspects and needs to test it against the interpretation results so they do not influence the analysis. This process is named “bracketing” or “reduction” within hermeneutics and is also applied in this research (Hein & Austin 2001: 5f.; Moules et al. 2015: 20f.; Van Manen 1997: 46f.). In this paper, I as the researcher have at the same time experiences of being temporary employed as a social worker as well. Here, there is the danger that my experiences are influencing the results of the analysis. Problematizing this topic here is an attempt to build trust in the research process by granting transparency. Through clarifying my own experiences and being aware of them at every stage of the research, the aim is that this knowledge is not falsifying the analysis of this research. This is a way to ensure that the results solely derive from the collected data. Another strategy which is applied in this thesis in order to secure the trustworthiness of the research is the thick description, that means a detail rich description of the data (Bryman 2016: 384ff.). Detail rich information and long quotes of the participants are aiming at offering a ground on which the reader can judge the trustworthiness of the analysis and the transferability to other contexts (ibid.).

4.2 Sampling and data collection

In order to understand the experiences of temporary employed social workers in Germany, a purposive sampling strategy is used in this research. The target group is identified by specific categories based on previous research which seem important to the research design. Hence, the study uses a criterion-based sampling strategy for the purpose of identifying the eligible persons for the research (Patton 2015: 267). As the research is examining the experiences of social workers being employed in temporary contracts, one precondition is that the interviewees are social workers holding a university degree within social work. Previous research shows that vulnerable groups of people are more likely to be employed in fixed-term contracts in general (Marica 2018: 157). This includes among others young people at the age of 15 to 29 (ibid.). The same trend is seen within social work where young people under the age of 30 are more often employed in temporary forms of employment (Giesecke 2012: 29). For this reason, the focus in this study is on social

workers between the age of 25 and 35. Here, the age range is chosen according to the age categories of the Federal Office of Statistics in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt) which found that this group on the labour market is most affected by temporary employment (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020a). Furthermore, there is the remark, that people under the age of 25 are often still in education or apprenticeships with special work contracts (ibid.). With the chosen age range between 25 and 35 it is most likely that the participants finished their university studies and already gained some work experience. In this study, the participants were between 27 and 33 years old.

Furthermore, all participants need to live and work in Germany and have experience with temporary employment. In the best case, they were at least the second time employed in a temporary contract, so they experienced the transition time in between jobs. This was the case for three interviewees. One person started a temporary job directly after finishing the university degree and had experiences of the transition period between university education and job start. In this research, there is no special focus on the work scope of the employees whether they are employed full-time or part-time. Two people are having full-time contracts and two participants work part-time. A short description of the topic and data collection method was spread with a letter through my personal contacts and a network of social workers in Germany (see appendix 1). The effect that all interviewees live in the same region makes the experiences on the labour market more comparable as they all face the same challenges. Within these categories, the goal was to find a heterogenous group of people in terms of e.g. gender, children, and work experience. That allows to include diversity within the sample in order to gain a wide range of experiences from different angles and to gain more understanding for different aspects of the consequences of temporary employment (Ritchie et al. 2014: 113ff.). In total, four people were interviewed two times. Three participants are female, and one is male. Two participants have children, and all participants have a partner. The duration of the interviews varied between one and two hours. Within phenomenology there is a great variation in the total number of participants in a study which can be as small as one participant or encompass several hundreds of people (Creswell & Poth 2017: 159). However, Moules et al. call attention to the fact that the selection of cases with their contexts is crucial for the research (2015:64). Hence, the quality of a case is of higher importance than the number of

cases. In this study a small number of four people is chosen in order to gain in-depth information from two interviews per person. The small sample size allows to gain a deep understanding of the topic and the experiences of the participants. Furthermore, with the research design of this study, the aim is to fully grasp and understand the situation of employees with a fixed-term contract. Here, each data set is information rich and contains detailed information about the experiences of the participants. In order to do justice to the detailed data, it is necessary to focus on a reasonable number of interviews in order to keep the data manageable (Ritchie et al. 2014: 117). Due to the limitation of resources and time restrictions that was only possible for a small number of four participants.

The data of this research has been derived from in-depth interviews conducted for this research. This method allows to gather information about the experiences of the interviewees and their perceptions of the world (Yeo et al. 2014: 178). Therefore, life story interviews were conducted (Van Manen 1997: 66). The starting point for data collection and hence the interviews was the first employment after graduating as a social worker from university. Two interviews per person were conducted. The overarching theme of the first interview was the current situation of the interview partners, the process of their careers and the effects of temporary employment on their lives. As the participants decide which information is important for them to share about this topic, one general question was asked in the beginning to invite people to tell their story (Bryman 2016: 591). With that, the participants prioritise the topics which are most important for them. The idea was to create an environment that encouraged the interviewees to tell freely about their lives and feelings (Atkinson 1998: 40). Often people entered the interviews eager to tell their story of temporary employment. The interviews got going with the main question about their experiences of temporary employment and the effects on their private lives. Even if Atkinson states that interviews are more effective and get a better insight into people's own story the less structure the interview has, the interviewer still needs to be prepared for the interview to make sure the conversation and the interviewees' story is developing (1998: 41f.). Therefore, an interview guide was created with open-ended questions as back-up questions in the case of a stagnation of the interview (Leavy 2011:42). However, this guideline was not needed in all interviews and questions were also adapted in the situation of the interview. In the first interview all participants gave an overview of their current

and previous workplaces after graduating from university. That went together with telling their experiences of temporary employment and which effects they have on their private lives.

For the second interview, the advice of Leavy was taken into consideration. She advises the researcher to listen for specific markers in stories e.g. where information is dropped about a different topic within the conversation and deeper questions can be followed afterwards (2011: 46). Furthermore, questions were asked about already mentioned experiences which seemed to encompass further details, feelings or the meaning behind it or contradictions which were mentioned in the first interview. This was an attempt to get a fuller picture of the situation of the participants with their experiences, opinions, values, feelings, and perceptions of the topic (Yeo et al. 2014: 184). The second interview completed the gained picture from the first interview or clarified aspects which were mentioned in an incomplete way before.

The first interview with every person was conducted in person in Germany in the cities the interview partners lived in. It was important to get to know the interviewees in person and to build up a base of trust where they feel comfortable talking about their lives and situations. One interview person was known before this study, but three interviewees were unknown to the researcher. The participants were free to choose a convenient place for them where they feel comfortable and can openly talk about their experiences. Here, the interviews were either conducted at a café, the university they studied at or their homes. The second follow-up interviews were all conducted online through video conferences due to time, resource, and health restrictions. The interviews were conducted in the participants mother tongue, German. This was the favourable language to ensure that there is no language barrier and people can freely talk about their experiences and feelings without translating it into another language or having to deal with restrictions due to a lack of language skills. This ensures spontaneous responses and a free expression of their feelings. As German is also the mother tongue of me, the researcher, there was no obstacle to understand the participants.

4.3 Data analysis

The conducted interviews which were recorded constitute the source of this research. They were transcribed manually and as closely as possible to the original recordings in order to keep all details. As the research approach is data-driven, all themes only derive from the collected data (Patton 2015: 542). There are no theory-derived hypotheses which are tested in the analysis (ibid. 543). The inductive research approach allows to let the data speak and fully concentrate on the lives and experiences of the participants (ibid. 545). Previous research is used in the analysis to make sense of the data and to display it for the reader (ibid.). The analysis is done with a hermeneutic approach. In hermeneutics, analysis is done via interpretation of the data in the different cycles and steps of working with the material (Moules et al. 2015: 117f.). Thereby themes are a tool to reveal the complexity and facets of the topic by focusing on the differences between the experiences of the participants and the similarities (Moules et al. 2015: 119). However, in hermeneutics the presentation of the themes is not enough as one needs to look behind the themes to get to the essence of the topic and to explore a topic in-depth through interpretation of the themes (ibid.).

In hermeneutics, the analysis of the material is done via interpretation of the content (Moules et al. 2015: 117). The approach of understanding, analysing, and interpreting the data is built on the hermeneutic circle (ibid. 122). The hermeneutic circle, sometimes referred to as the hermeneutic spiral or arc, is a strategy to work with the material in order to understand the text and to interpret it. This is done through an interplay between parts of the text and the whole meaning (Moules et al. 2015: 44). Through reading and re-reading a deeper understanding of the text as a whole and parts of it is gained (Moules et al. 2015: 122). When focusing on parts of the text a deeper understanding or a different viewpoint of particular parts of the text derives which contributes to a new understanding of the text as a whole (ibid.: 44). New findings lead to a new understanding of a particular part of the data and is then again reflected in the whole meaning of the text (Moules et al. 2015: 122). Through this process the text is revealing more and more of its essence. Through repeating this process, the researcher gets a deeper understanding of the meaning of the text with the perceptions of the participant. There is a constant cycle of working and understanding the meaning of the text and interpreting it. However,

there is no standard procedure within hermeneutics to do the analysis, but rather engaging with the text back and forth between a detailed look of specific sections and the text as a whole.

Therefore, different cycles were applied in order to carefully analyse and interpret the transcribed interviews. In a first step all interviews were read and a general impression of the understanding of temporary employment in the eyes of the participants was gained. The second step consisted of a detailed analysis with the line-by-line approach (Van Manen 1997: 94f.). Here, every sentence or a sentence cluster is read carefully and asked what it tells about the experience or nature of being temporary employed and the effects on the private lives (ibid.). That serves as an in-depth engagement with the texts. At the same time sequences were marked which seemed to be important, crucial or where the logic of it was not fully understood or the ideas of the interviewee behind it needed a closer look. In the course of the interviews, not all sentences and sections of the interviews contained information about the personal experiences of the interviewee but rather generalizations, assumptions and information off topic. These sentences were not interpreted to the same extent as all the other sentences of the interview as sometimes they did not contain information about temporary employment. With that detailed process an understanding of the whole text was gained. In a third cycle the marked sequences were looked at and it was tried to gain an understanding of them in-depth but also in prospect of the meaning of the whole text. Then the identified themes were classified in incidental or essential themes and thus a selection was made (Van Manen 1997:106). This helps to distinct the themes that are unique to the phenomenon of temporary employed people and are relevant for answering the research questions. Some themes were linked to the topic but were not essential for the phenomenon. To distinguish essential and incidental themes, the free imaginative variation (Van Manen 1997: 107) was applied. Asking if the experience would still be the same if that theme would not occur, is a method to determine if a theme is essential or incidental. If the theme is not relevant to this situation it is an incidental theme. In this research some of the incidental themes were excluded in the final analysis e.g. the experience with the unemployment agency regarding the bureaucracy in times of unemployment, or the low wages of social workers in general. These themes are not specific for being temporary employed and the phenomenon of being temporary employed is still the same

without these topics. The fourth cycle contained of going back to the text as a whole and look at how the identified themes comply with the whole meaning of the text. These cycles were conducted for all interviews in the research. However, sometimes the transition from one cycle to another was shaped by going back and forth in the text and reading up on other sequences to make sure the text is understood in the correct way. Even, if there were sometimes exceptional thoughts and extra steps in between the cycles or phases of stepping back from the text to gain the whole impression within a cycle, the procedures were roughly followed. Furthermore, that is characteristic for hermeneutics and is describing the work with the text and the engagement of parts and the whole of it. There is no end as the analysis is circular and always reveals different aspects and different understanding evolve with further engaging with the text (Hein & Austin 2001: 9). Hein and Austin state that it is impossible to reveal all aspects of the phenomenon (ibid.). However, in this research the end of the analysis was defined after the described cycles of analysis.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Conducting research always goes together with ethical considerations as sensitive data is gathered. In this research, the participants disclosed information about their experiences in their work life with their employers, contractual agreements, colleagues, but also about their private life with their partner and family. An informed consent form was provided and was orally agreed to by the participants before conducting the interviews (see appendix 2). This is important for the participants in order to make a well-informed choice whether and under which conditions to take part in the research (Bryman 2016: 129). The consent form contained information about the aim of the research, the method, confidentiality, voluntary participation, possibility of declining answers and the scope of the research. In that way the conditions of the research, the voluntary participation and the rights of the participants were stated.

The participants of the study responded to a contact letter which was sent by e-mail and chose to take part in the study on a voluntary basis. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research project at any time without the need to

provide a reason. An important topic for the interviewees was the aspect of confidentiality. Bryman states that it is difficult in qualitative research to maintain the confidentiality of participants and therefore there is the danger to harm people (2016: 127). This research is using pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the interviewees. Furthermore, names of persons or employers mentioned by the participants in the research are changed. The cities and the region where the participants live and work in is not mentioned as this seems not relevant for the research. However, there is the danger of recognizing the participants if the region is mentioned as there is a strong network of social workers. These measurements were implemented to secure that there is no possibility that one can draw conclusions about the identity of the interviewees. In that way the anonymity of the interview partners is maintained and the risk of harming the participants is mitigated.

The participants of the study were given the possibility to check the transcripts of both interviews in order to make changes or clarify information and to audit the process of anonymisation. Hence, the participants were given the power to control the collected data from the interviews and to make comments on it. Leavy remarks that this is one way to settle and arrange the roles of the researcher and the interview partner in the research and to establish adequate expectations in order to prevent conflicts in the research process (2011: 37f.). Participants have power over the collected data and are able to review it as the collection was done orally before it was used in the research project. However, even if there was the offer to review the material, only one out of four persons made use of this offer. The other participants did not have the time and resources to verify the transcripts. They gave an approval of the collected material based on the knowledge what they said in the interviews and the trust in the researcher to anonymise and handle the data in a responsible way.

4.5 Possible weaknesses

A possible weakness of the study which is already mentioned above is the small number of participants in the study. One can question if the small sample size of four people is sufficient for the presented study. A small sample size bears the risk

of containing less diversity within the sample and therefore missing out aspects (Ritchie et al. 2014: 118f). On the one hand, a limited number of possible participants responded to the contact letter about the research. On the other hand, cases needed to be ruled out as they did not fulfil the sampling criteria. This led to a limited number of possible participants. However, this research is a qualitative research based on in-depth interviews which contain detailed information about the experiences with temporary employment. The small sample size allows a detailed analysis of the mentioned aspects within the restrictions of time, resources and the scope of the study.

Another aspect which needs to be kept in mind is that the participants have chosen voluntarily to participate in this research. The participants who replied to the contact letter about the research made an active choice to participate in this study without a benefit in return. That leads to the fact, that people who are choosing to participate in the research have a story worth telling and tend to be more affected by temporary employment than others. Here, there may be a bias as only people who are extraordinarily affected by the consequences of fixed-term employment might be motivated to participate in the study and to share their experiences. There is a possibility, that people who are less affected by temporary forms of employment are not represented in the study due to a lack of motivation to participate in the research because the topic is of lower relevance in their lives. However, the advantage that comes with this unintended selection process is that information-rich cases are represented in the study from people who want to share their valuable experiences.

One could argue that the research question is too broad as it is focusing on the experiences of the employees with temporary employment which can vary a lot and encompasses various aspects. Despite of that it might bear the risk of losing focus within the research, it enables to follow the inductive research approach and to fully concentrate on the experiences of the participants and the effects of temporary employment on their lives. As this kind of qualitative research is missing within already existing literature, this is seen as a strength of the research to fully understand the situation of employees with fixed-term contracts.

5 Findings being temporary employed

In this section, the findings of the analysis are presented. The experiences with fixed-term employment and the effects on the lives of the employees are in focus. A short overview of the interview partners is included in Table 1 which aims at giving a general view on their situation. Furthermore, it is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the answers and to keep track of the different respondents in this section. An outline of information about relevant employments, family and education is included in order to be able to better understand the answers of the respondents.

Table 1: overview of the participants in the study

	Tobias	Johanna	Isabelle	Frida
age	29	33	27	33
family status	married	partner and one child (1,5 years old)	partner (engaged)	married and two children (4 years and 6 months old)
overview of relevant employments and current situation	<p>fixed-term contract</p> <p>duration: contract ended with end of studies</p> <p>work field: youth living group</p> <hr/> <p>fixed-term contract</p> <p>duration: in total 3 years, contracts were on an annual basis and prolonged two times</p>	<p>permanent job</p> <p>duration: 4 years, she resigned due to a feeling of being unsafe at work</p> <p>work field: mother-child facility</p> <hr/> <p>fixed-term contract</p> <p>duration: in total two years, contract was prolonged after one year as she replaced a woman on</p>	<p>current situation:</p> <p>fixed-term contract</p> <p>duration: 1 year with prospect of prolonging for one additional year and then possibility to change into permanent position</p> <p>work field: home for parents who need support with their children</p>	<p>fixed-term contract</p> <p>duration: in total 2,5 years, contract was prolonged after one year for another 1,5 years</p> <p>work field: consultation for children and youth</p> <hr/> <p>fixed-term contract</p> <p>duration: in total almost 2 years, the first contract was limited to</p>

	work field: home for refugees	parental leave who extended her leave		5 months and was prolonged for another 1,5 years
	current situation: permanent job	work field: consulting for families with young children		work field: social work in a school
	work field: child protection services	current situation: fixed-term contract		current situation: parental leave
		duration: 9,5 months due to delays in start		
		work field: coordination for traumatised refugees		

The following sections contain the findings of the conducted analysis. The interpretations of the derived themes from the interviews give an insight into how it is to be temporary employed and which effects it has on the lives of the employees. First, the ambivalence of temporary employment is in focus as the perceptions of fixed-term contracts vary for different persons. The times of transition is of relevance, as the future is not predictable and there is often the hope that the contract will be prolonged. Furthermore, being temporary employed and having a family is an important topic for the respondents and further effects on the private lives are in focus. When being temporary employed, back-up systems are of relevance which is discussed in the last section.

5.1 The ambivalence of temporary employment

Temporary employment cannot be seen as a negative employment form per se. There are different factors which play an important role of how temporary employment is perceived. It is connected to other contractual agreements like working hours and salary, the content of work as well as private factors like the composition of the household.

Johanna obtained a permanent position but resigned due to a feeling of personal insecurity on her permanent job after an attempted murder on one of her clients. She took the opportunity to change her work field and start a career within consulting in social work. She accepted the temporary contract as it was a chance for her to build her career and to explore another field within social work.

“And um I accepted the things [jobs] anyway, because I wasn't attracted by “A” there is a time limit, but because I was attracted by the fact that I can do this and that, and that [topic] I find that very exciting and um so. So, I want to be part of it, I kind of want that... that's a chance to gain a foothold. Maybe something more comes out of it. Uhm and I think it does something to me that I haven't paid attention to the fact that when looking for a job, whether it says temporary or not, as long as it didn't say only 5 months. So, for me it was always somehow yes, so ten months are okay, but somehow everything under seven months is not worth it. Because it's tedious to take care of all the other steps, which then come up again” (Johanna, Interview 2).

“J (Johanna): But I'm picky. Well, there's lots of jobs. But there are also a lot of jobs in... in uh areas that I'm not interested in right now, because I really like to work in consulting again. So, and then you have to accept things. So...

R (Researcher): So, it's also a lot about the content...

J: For me, yes. Well, I'm highly motivated when I'm behind the topic, because on the one hand I'm excited about it and maybe... or yes in any case it also belongs to the topics I'm interested in” (Johanna, Interview 1).

For Johanna having a temporary work contract is not a very important factor as long as the contract is not too short. She quit her permanent employment and took a temporary work contract. She does not seem to feel a job insecurity with a temporary contract as her focus lies on the content of the work and not on the duration of the contract. Here, temporary employment does not automatically imply a subjective job insecurity (De Witte & Näswall 2003: 177). Her new temporary

job posed a chance of trying out a new work field for gaining more experience within different fields and in that way built specific knowledge for further employments. This brings up the topic that temporary employment can serve as a tool to gain more skills throughout different employers and increase the employability (Marler et al. 2002: 450). Through that, employees are not bound to one lifelong employer and can obtain more autonomy and flexibility (ibid.). A boundaryless career can be developed through the course of having different employers in their career (ibid.). In that case, temporary employment enriches the skills and experiences of the employees and is helpful for them in order to be able to obtain a career outside the standard form of employment. However, this is mostly prevalent for highly qualified people with good employment prospects and who are living in a multiple earner household (ibid.: 447). This is the case for Johanna as she is well-educated and trusts in her employability. This is a way of making use of temporary employment for own purposes.

Johanna states that she was interested in the job content and that it was her motivation to accept a temporary work position. Here, the length of a temporary contract is also crucial for her. She has the hope that she can be further employed after her contract expires. For her, the work content is more important than the contractual agreements. She gets motivation for her job if she is interested in the job content which is a crucial requirement for her.

Johanna mentioned that a fixed-term employment is no obstacle for her to not apply for a new job. Right now, she is in a situation to accept temporary forms of employment if the work content is interesting to her. At the same time, she reflects on her private situation and mentions that the importance of a permanent contract can become more relevant to her in the future and then she most likely would not apply to fixed-term employment. But that depends on her private situation and her personal resilience.

Frida saw a chance in the temporary contract to try out a field within social work and to decide if she wants to work within this field for a longer time

“Um, right after my studies, I started working. A 20-hour job at a small welfare provider here in the child and youth welfare service in the counselling department. And the contract was of course limited to one year. At first, I didn't think that was bad at all, because I didn't know whether I wanted to work in this field or not. And there I saw the fixed-term contract as a chance to think about it, is it actually

something for me or not. So, I just finished my master thesis at the university and um I thought it was a good idea for me to get into the fixed-term employment contract and not into an unlimited employment contract. So, I thought that there was still the advantage and the chance” (Frida, Interview 1).

“I think I imagined that a permanent position would have a stronger connection to the employer. Uhm and because there is no time limit, I have to think about how long I want to work there. Because there is a time limit for a fixed-term contract, it was clear for me, okay I have one year to try out the profession, um, the job and then decide again how... whether I want to continue working there and under what conditions. Um, and I think that was helpful for me to have a time limit. So to speak okay, I'm working from September to September okay in any case in this job and after that I'll just keep looking what comes next. It was... I think on the one hand it was an idea and on the other hand this job was only existing as a temporary one and there was no reason for me to say oh that's why I don't take it. Exactly, but rather the opposite to say yes it makes no difference to me if it is limited or not. It's about the job that I would like to do now and um exactly, whether I will continue it one year later or not or whether it will be limited or not or something like that, I didn't even think about it at that moment” (Frida, Interview 2).

For Frida, a fixed-term contract provides an opportunity to try out a work field within social work for a specific time. It is a specific time frame which allows her to figure out if she likes the job or not. With a temporary work contract, she did not feel being bound to her employer and therefore she had no obligations towards her employer. For her, temporary work was positive as she felt less stressed about deciding about the duration of the contract and a possibility to get to know a new task (Nollen 1996: 576f.).

The fact that her work contract was temporary did not play an important role for Frida as other contractual agreements and the work content were more important for her.

“[...] the contractual conditions with the 20 [working] hours that was actually too few hours for me, well I could have worked 30 hours. I thought that was too bad, but I decided to take the job anyway. Well, it is that, um, this low number of hours actually bothered me even more than that it was a temporary job. So, there we had also had the conversation in the interview where it was said that maybe I can also increase my hours or maybe the job will also sometime be unlimited in time.

Exactly and that was the reason for me to say okay the general conditions play a minor role, the contents are simply more important for me now” (Frida, Interview 2).

Frida’s first job was offered as a temporary one, but it was not at all a reason for her to decline the offer. After her studies, a temporary job was not connotated as a negative factor which could have effects on her life. The number of working hours were even more important for her than the temporary nature of her work contract. The effects of the low number of working hours were present as they define the salary and also the structure of a day. The fact that the contract had a limited duration did not have a significant impact on her life when starting the job.

For Tobias getting a job at all was more important than the contractual agreements.

“At first, I was glad that I... also because it was my first real job after my studies, or even during my studies. Um... yes, I was glad to have a job at all and contractual agreements were in the background. But I think more because of the content of the work” (Tobias, Interview 1).

When starting his job, the fact that the contract was temporary did not play a significant role for him. He was glad he found a job after his studies with a content he liked as this was an important factor for him. For him, temporary employment posed an alternative to unemployment and a way to enter the labour market after his studies (Leschke 2008: 219).

The restrictions of the labour market with the lack of permanent positions within social work is an important factor for accepting temporary employment. Isabelle looked for a permanent contract but did not find a suitable job. For her it was a compromise to take a fixed-term employment for one year with the prospect of prolonging it and changing it to a permanent work contract. For her it was clear from the beginning that she wants security through a stable income and a job guarantee. This is also important for her in the light of her desire to get children in the nearer future. However, due to the restrictions of the labour market she could not find a permanent position. She also had the pressure to get out of unemployment and therefore accepted a temporary work contract. Often, jobs with a fixed-term contract are taken when there is a lack of alternatives (Nollen 1996: 576). That was also the case for Isabelle as she could not find any suitable permanent position for

her. In that case temporary employment is involuntary (Atkinson et al. 1996: 51; O'Connor 2013: 52; Statistisches Bundesamt 2020b). However, Isabelle is hoping to get a permanent position in the future within the same employer and tries to use the temporary employment as a stepping stone into permanent employment (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.; Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 147; Hohendanner 2010: 8; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412; Nollen 1996: 576f.).

Being temporary employed, can lead to a feeling of lack of appreciation of the work by the employer. The employee is not “worth” to get a permanent contract. Both Frida and Isabelle describe a workplace with a mix of employees with permanent contracts and with temporary contracts. Isabelle describes that she does not understand why there is only a chance for her to get a permanent work contract after two year.

“And then I asked in the job interview, why this is handled in this way with the temporary employment, um, exactly, and I think I already told it the last time that it is generally always um, that it is sometimes that this work is very much changing and sometimes not enough places [within the parent-child home] are used and it can be that the work on itself changes somehow and then somehow you can... have a look, if it still fits from both sides, is it still the work I have applied for? She explained it to me in that way. And, um, the probation period is of course 6 months as usual, but uhm because it is changing constantly there is still the limitation of the work contract. [...] Well, actually I could not quite understand the given reason, because clearly everything is changing all the time and now there is also a lot changing and it must be looked at... Yeah, many facilities can not work right now or well... But since somehow a lot of other factors are good, I've come to terms with it. Exactly, but only with that one year. Because one year...it's somehow a time, okay, it's not that long, and even if I say after one year I'm looking for something else, it would be okay. But I think that's still the feeling to be on probation. [...] I think in the end it can be decided already after a few months whether the work fits, whether I feel comfortable, whether my colleagues feel comfortable with me, if I... if I somehow satisfy the demand or the other way round. I think it's just not necessary to have a two-year probationary period... or it's not a probationary period, but I think it feels a little like one” (Isabelle, Interview 2).

For her it feels like the employer does not trust her and needs an extended probation time to two years. She does not agree with this time and cannot understand why her

contract is not changed into an unlimited one after a shorter time. However, she has the perspective that her work contract is changed into a permanent one after two years which offers her more stability and mitigates the risk of negative consequences with a temporary work contract (Boockmann & Hagen 2005: 320; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412). In contrast to that, she has the desire to become pregnant. When being pregnant, this could be a reason for not changing her temporary contract to a permanent one as it happened to one of her colleagues.

There seems to be different levels of what it means in daily life to be employed within a fixed-term employment. Johanna and Tobias have quite different experiences. Johanna does not see a significant influence of her temporary work contract on her daily life.

“Well, I don't feel... stressed or insecure... it's... but I'm not free from thoughts either, so. Well, I'm not totally worried or anything, but it's definitely so, that I have thoughts in my mind now and then... uhm then, what will happen next” (Johanna, Interview 2).

Although, the situation of being temporary employed is not very present for her in daily life, she has thoughts about her future and what will happen when her contract ends. But for her, stress or insecurity is not the prevalent feeling in life. She focuses more on the work she likes instead of constantly worrying about her contract. Nonetheless she is wishing for a more stable job with more continuity.

“And there is also my need to be in one place again, uh, a lot. So at least two years, maybe four. If I like it, I'll stay there for ten years. [...] Well, I would like to have a permanent contract” (Johanna, Interview 1).

“And for me a year is actually a minimum, but actually I would like to be in a field that interests me for a long time and I would like to have a contract that is unlimited and where I can decide on my own for how long I stay” (Johanna, Interview 1).

Johanna prefers a permanent contract with the possibility of getting out of the passive role of being dependent on her employer and the length of her work contract. With temporary employment, she has no power over the length of her contract, and she needs to rely on her employer to prolong the work contract if possible. Even if she liked her work and wanted to stay there, she still had to leave her workplace as her contract could not be prolonged.

For Tobias, temporary employment has a significant influence on his life. He is now employed in a permanent contract and retrospectively evaluates his situation with his temporary contracts and compares it to his current permanent contract.

“Well, it's such a yes... it's such a small burden that's gone. I think that with the contracts before, with the temporary ones, there was always um... it was always a situation that was so stressful from the point of view of the thoughts and the head. So not the fact itself, oh man, I would like to have a credit or something, but just so damn... no idea how it will go on. Just this uncertainty, right? It was very annoying, plus it's not only that you have to find a way with yourself, but you also have um... work colleagues who feel the same way and people who have different ways of dealing with it. So, I think I got along pretty well. But there were a lot of colleagues at work, who always carried their, I say, insecurities um out, or I say, transferred them to the others, which does a lot to the atmosphere and where you think: "Hey, I actually want to work now. I know the topic and I have closed with it for me as far as possible with the uncertainty I am in, um ... yes, I somehow find my way.” But if there is so much coming from the outside, too, then it is adding up on top of it. [They] make me more aware of that or where I thought I, okay I uh have my way here now and uh I can actually switch off from that quite well. So also... So things that are socially stressful, also from work, that were difficult, um I had a great way of dealing with it. When I was at home, I was at home, I didn't take things home from work. And so I also found my way, that uh through the contract conditions, so the burdens that arose from it, I also found my way somehow, so to speak. But because you were reminded again and again in your everyday life by your work colleagues how terrible everything is, it is difficult to distance yourself from it” (Tobias, Interview 1).

Tobias felt insecure with the temporary contract in an existential way. For him it was not the immediate effects that resulted from a temporary contract like the inability of getting a loan, but he felt insecure on a more basic level. He was concerned about the future and how everything will develop. He perceived job insecurity with his temporary work contract and had concerns about his future. These different perceptions of job insecurity are connected to personal factors such as age, education, family status and personal resources (Richter 2011: 9f.) Tobias is the breadwinner in his family and has no private back-up system to fall on in times of insecurity. The situation was stressful for him and he constantly had thoughts in his head. Gash et al. remark that temporary employment can lead to a

higher psychological pressure due to higher insecurity levels (2007: 452). Tobias describes that the limitation of his contract was a burden that has gone now that he is permanently employed. However, to not face his worries every day, he tried a way to deal with his situation by suppressing the thoughts and to focus on his work instead. But he got permanently reminded by his colleagues who did not find a way to cope with their feelings without bringing it up at work. Avoidance is one strategy of overcoming job insecurity which is deriving in this case from a temporary job (Richter 2011: 62). However, this strategy can lead to lower job satisfaction and can negatively influence mental health which was not the case for Tobias (ibid.). The connection between temporary employment and health which is existing in previous research is not mentioned by the participants in this study (Gash et al. 2007: 452; Voßemer et al. 2018:1254).

5.2 Insecurity in times of transition

The time before a fixed-term contract ends is characterized by different options. On the one hand, there is hope that the contract will be prolonged or even changed into a permanent one. On the other hand, there is the risk of unemployment, and the need to apply for new jobs and being in contact with the unemployment agencies. Prolonging the contract is often bound to the funding of the project or workplace (Giesecke 2012: 31). In that case, the employees are dependent on their employer to secure the funding for the future and save the employee's job. This phase of insecurity and waiting for a decision is described by the interview partners as "grueling" (Johanna), "insecure" (Tobias), a "nail-biting process" and "delicate" (both Frida). In this situation, the future is unclear for the employees. On the one hand, there is the hope that the contract will be prolonged. But on the other hand, the contract is clearly stated as fixed-term and there is the possibility of not getting a prolongation of the contract.

"T (Tobias): That was always unclear... They [the employer] always raised hope in us. Even at the end of the project, so to speak, when it was actually over, um ... exactly. So it was always uncertain... But it was clear from the beginning.

R (Researcher): That it is limited in time?

T: Exactly. Yeah." (Tobias, Interview 1)

Tobias describes the hope of prolonging the work contract each year. But even when the project finally ended in the last year, the hope was still raised that there will be an extension. During this time, the employees are unable to act and are completely depending on others without having a security that the job will continue. This phase is described as one of the most insecure periods within a temporary employment. The high insecurity is exhausting for the employees as there is a limited scope of action for them. Even for the participants who are not affected that much in their daily life by temporary employment, this time is a highly insecure time. Of course, there is the possibility to decline an offer for prolongation and look for a completely new job. Then the employees can get active themselves in finding a new job. However, the scope of action is also limited in the application process and they are dependent on the decisions of future employers.

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt are describing the powerlessness of the individual as a prevalent feeling within job insecurity (1984:438ff.). This powerlessness is the predominant feeling while having the desire of keeping the continuity of the job (ibid.). The threat hereby is intensified as there is also a loss of the organization the employee is a part of e.g. colleagues, known surroundings, specific tasks (ibid.: 441). A workplace can have a prevalent status in life and serve many purposes besides securing living through an income, such as e.g. giving a time structure, having social contacts and form one's identity (Jahoda 1981: 189). The powerlessness connected to job insecurity is perceived differently and depends on the characteristic traits of a person such as dealing with losing control, the importance of continuity, the importance of work in life and the overall need of security (ibid. 444). This change of work environment and the insecurity while starting a new job is mentioned by Johanna. Often, the employees want to stay in their job, as they already know the work, the conditions and the colleagues. Johanna remarks that when she is employed with fixed-term employment, she is often changing jobs. With each job change, she feels as a professional newcomer as she does not have the same benefits as people working for a long time in this job.

“Uhm so people who start new in a company have to start with lower ones... uhm with worse ones..., well they just have worse conditions. They have worse contracts, um, they first have to get used to the work for many years. And if they are on fixed-term contracts anyway, then they never get the chance to do that... to get a raise, because every new job is always paid from scratch. And that's also the

question of whether previous experience is recognized, if it's not exactly in the specialized field. I have the experience that it will not be recognized in the same way. Then you always feel like a new entrant, which of course makes a difference to those who specialize in one thing all the time. But I still don't think that it does justice to what you bring with you" (Johanna, Interview 2).

She mentions the lower salary, due to the lack of financial reward of her experiences she brings. But she also describes that every time she feels like a new job entrant which is not true in her case, as she already gained experiences in her previous work positions. The frequent change of workplaces is leading to lower social integration and recognition in work places (Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 146f.; Laß 2020: 9).

However, as the time in between contracts is a critical one, the duration of the new contract is important. It must be a time where it is worth to become familiar with a job, the content and routines of it. That was also a consideration Johanna had after it was clear that her new employer could only secure her a job for less than ten months. In the beginning, the employer wanted to prolong the contract, but then Johanna did not get the job and was hired additionally without the prospect of a prolongation of her contract due to insecure funding of the project.

"[The employer said]: "We can make you this offer, but only for a limited time and only until the end of December." And then that was for me. Hm... shit, I didn't want to be employed so totally temporary again. So, I... um, I ... on my application, I knew they couldn't promise me more than December. But, that... that the goal is to hire me for a longer time. And that was over with this statement. So that's more like... okay, it's over in December. Do I want that or do I not want this? For me, it's a time that's worthwhile. A time when I can become acquainted with the work, also a time where I think, yes, something... something else may come up. The employer is a safe one... is big. Maybe something else will come up" (Johanna, Interview 1).

For her, the contract needs to have a certain duration in order to recover from the uncertainty during the time of transition. She does not want to experience the same situation in a few months again. It is clear, that the contract is formally limited, but she still has the hope that she will find a new job within the same employer and that her contract can act as a stepping stone for a new employment or even a permanent position (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.; Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 147;

Hohendanner 2010: 8; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412; Nollen 1996: 576f.). The minimum time is different for each individual, and the responses of the participants in this study range between five months (with the prospect of an extension) to one year. But Tobias remarks that even one year is a very limited time scope where it is not possible to make long term plans. For him it was important that his new contract would last at least four years. With that time span he could think again about making plans for the future and maybe getting a loan. He lowered his demands of the length of a work contract during the time being temporary employed as he got used to the one-year contracts and the insecurities that comes with it.

“So and how much more has it changed during these 3 years... I said, well a two year contract, that would be almost... like a holiday. Pure recreation. Um... yes, because you were already so used to it [one-year contract] and then when you had reflected it a bit you thought, no actually not even 5 years... you can't plan for anything big with it” (Tobias, Interview 1).

For Johanna it is important that the duration of the contract is long enough for her to be a worthy time and that is long enough to gain new experiences. For her a temporary work is also a way to gain new insights into a field and new skills for her (Marler et al. 2002: 446f.).

“J (Johanna): For me, a time has to be worth it, which is exciting, but which is also long enough for me, that it feels right and that I continue to profit from it and have further experiences, I think so, especially in terms of content. Um and I know that motivation gives me a lot and I get it from projects that I am convinced of or that I just find super exciting. Ahem. And with ... if I am involved in projects from the beginning, then I think two years is a great time, which is definitely worth it. So... But I don't want to be part of something for just one year, that's already... yes. It's a consideration.

R (Researcher): Mhh. Okay. It's a consideration between...

J: What's in it for me, how resilient am I maybe just so I don't know how I'll be in three years. So I... so a little bit resilient you always have to feel for it” (Johanna, Interview 2).

At the same time, she remarks that a person needs to be resilient when having a temporary employment, as it is a stressful and insecure situation for the employee.

When a contract ended, the participants describe that it was a sad process to leave their job, but it was also predictable and clear from the beginning that it is limited. At the same time there is a high subjective employment security for the participants in this study and they are optimistic in finding a new job. The situation when the insecurity of whether the contract will be prolonged or not is over and it is clear that a contract ends is not necessarily perceived as negative.

“I was undecided... At the beginning I told myself that I would continue to work there and that was also what was promised to me, um... and at some point I was at the point where I thought... no, somehow it is good that it is over now. Because it was really exhausting. The prolongation and everything that comes with it, what that does to you” (Tobias, Interview 1).

Tobias saw the termination of the contract as a relief as he perceived his situation as exhausting. In that case, the hope of an extension is vanished, and the employees are able to react to the termination by getting active and looking for another job. Here, he is not in the passive role anymore of being dependent on the employer to ensure the contract is prolonged. He can get active now to influence his future and apply for new jobs. For Tobias it was clear that he was looking for a long-term employment. The positive attitude towards finding a new employment is justified from the interview partners due to trust in their good education and the demands of the labour markets. They know that there is a lack of social workers on the job market and are trusting in their employability.

5.3 Being temporary employed in prospect of a family

In contrast to the situation after finishing the studies and start into working life, the perception of fixed-term employment changed in prospect of being responsible for a family. Having a fixed-term employment and having children or thinking about having children is an important topic for the participants in the study. Both Johanna and Frida have children and had far-reaching consequences of being temporary employed in the vulnerable time of being pregnant and starting a family. For both it was a critical time with financial losses and income insecurity. For them, getting a child related to a high insecurity and sorrows due to their temporary work contracts.

Johanna's contract meant to be over before she was supposed to get her child. That heavily affected her parental leave in a negative way. She needed to negotiate with her employer that her contract would be extended until her maternity leave in order to be able to receive parental leave benefits based on her previous salary. If there would not have been the possibility of prolonging her contract, she would have needed to apply for unemployment benefits. However, the contract was prolonged, but her working hours were reduced because the employer had budget restrictions. With the prolonged work contract and the reduced working hours, her salary was lower than before. In order to be financially sustainable she needed to find a side job while being pregnant. An additional side job meant a physical and emotional burden for her, but also a chance to preserve her salary level. That shows her insecure situation while being pregnant, one of the most vulnerable moments in life. In her case temporary employment had a significant negative effect on her life during that time.

“But it was clear that I had to negotiate with them [the employer] if I could turn something in favour for me, so that I didn't have all the disadvantages and in the end I couldn't finance myself. Um...it was clear that I had to figure something out. And besides... uh, I had to work, I was feeling super bad. At first it was, um not official, that I was already pregnant, that was super exhausting. It was... I was sick, I had to work, I had to function, and I had a lot of things to figure out. [...] It was a tough two, three months. And then it eased up. Then I uh... I figured out most of what was going on for me. I phoned some offices, the health insurance company, the unemployment office, the parental benefits office too, there I had to reassure myself again... and then I found this compromise with my employer... that was of course a relief. Then I found this part-time job and then I found out that I'm on leave” (Johanna, Interview 1).

Here, temporary employment was the cause not only for a negative financial impact, but also caused a lot of planning and stress as she started a side job while being pregnant. She was in a situation where she was unable to work and find a new job after her old would have been expired. She needed to deal with bureaucracy and different actors of the welfare system and find out different rules that applied to her, as her case was not a standard case. This shows that temporary employment is regarded as an extraordinary case which is not the standard, and which is not in focus in the welfare system. For Johanna, temporary employment was the reason

for a highly insecure financial situation in connection with the birth of her first child.

Frida was in a similar situation during her first pregnancy. Her work contract expired before she could go on maternity leave which led to the consequence, that her family needed financial social assistance during the first time with the newborn. With the experiences Frida made during the birth of her first child, her priorities changed. She reflects on her situation of being naive in the beginning and not thinking about the consequences when taking her first temporary job after her studies. With a child she realised that her temporary employment has consequences and effects on her private life. For her, having a family calls for financial stability. Now, she chooses the type of contract over the content for her job. She would not apply for project placements which are limited to a certain time scope anymore. For her, a permanent position with a secured income is the priority now in prospect of a family.

“Yeah, if I look back on it that way. When I started to work after my studies, I didn't really care about the general conditions and the content was very important to me. And that has already changed, that the general conditions are becoming more important for me now and that I can perhaps cut back a little bit in terms of the content. Um so where I once thought when I started to work... I don't know, maybe I'll become an education officer or something like that and youth participation and um organise some democracy projects for example. Um, I think that would have been my dream job when I started to work. And if I could find exactly the same job now, um, so to speak, as a job advertisement, here in the city they are looking for an education officer and it is limited to one year. Well, I don't know whether I would apply then. Well, I would definitely have applied right after my studies. Guaranteed and would have said wow great I really like it. But now I would be insecure because I know that there is much more depending on my work” (Frida, Interview 2).

The insecurity of temporary employment forms comes to light in prospect of being responsible for other persons as it is within a family. There is a big difference in the perception of temporary employment when being responsible for other persons. Frida's family is relying on her job which increases the importance of her job contract. The content of the job is not the main focus anymore but rather the contractual agreements. Due to Frida's negative experience with temporary

employment with her first child, she decided that the preconditions for getting a second child need to be different. She learned from her drastic experience of being at risk of poverty with a newborn. For her and her husband it was clear that she needs coverage of her work contract for the time being pregnant and giving birth in order to secure the family's income as a precondition to get a second child.

Temporary employment does influence the birth of a child especially for women and has a negative effect on family planning (Laß 2020: 24; Scherer 2009: 542; Waaijer et al. 2017: 335). Family planning in regard to a temporary work contract is also a topic Isabelle is concerned with.

“So also, even when I think about becoming a mother someday. And then I... yes, I just would need the security, like this. That is nothing to talk about right now, that's also... just to see what's coming, but I find that difficult. [...] And I'm really looking forward to work now, but if I become a mother one day I want to be secured. And yes, I find that difficult” (Isabelle, Interview 1).

“Well, I have to say, I don't really want to adjust my life somehow, my private life to my work life. And I don't really want to say, okay, now I'm changing my work... so now my contract has been changed to a permanent one and now I want to think about it. I want, I don't really want to plan it in that way. So, of course I know that somehow it plays a role for me in the next two years and that I'm getting married in the summer and um that I... that this is something in life that I'm planning to do in general. Yeah but it's affecting me, not right now because I just started in this job and I'm really looking forward to trying it out, but I know it's going to play a role somehow. So exactly. I don't know when, but maybe in... maybe already in one year” (Isabelle, Interview 1).

For her, it is clear that she needs security when founding a family which is not given with a fixed-term contract. For Isabelle, having children is an important topic in the near future. On the one hand, she is concerned about her fixed-term contract while having thoughts about family planning, on the other hand, she does not want her work contract to define the right time for having children. She wants to plan her family not according to her work contract, but to her personal feelings and circumstances. Right now, she is not able to do that because of her temporary work contract and the insecurity of her income that comes with it. Isabelle feels a high job insecurity when thinking about caring for a child. Furthermore, the job guarantee after parental leave does not apply for temporary workers which bears

the risk of a job loss during parental leave and thus unemployment (Laß 2020: 9). Her employer gave her the perspective to change her work contract into a permanent one after two years if they are satisfied with her work. However, if Isabelle would get pregnant during her temporary work contract, it is most likely that the contract will not be prolonged. That happened to one of her colleagues. In that case, getting a child is a risk to not getting a permanent position.

For Tobias, a temporary work contract is not compatible with founding a family. He is currently employed with a permanent contract and now he feels confident that he would be able to financially support his family. With his temporary employments it seemed impossible for him to support a family as the stability of his income over a longer time span was not secured.

“So, um... I just see myself in a position to say okay, um, assuming we want a child as well or a second one, or we want to move, then I see myself in a position to do so because I know that I am financially secured right now” (Tobias, Interview 1).

Both, Tobias and Isabelle state that it is crucial for them to have a secured income if they want to have kids. For them, that is not given with a fixed-term contract and thus interferes with their family planning. A highly personal and important aspect of temporary employment is the negative effect on life planning, including family planning of the employees as it does not allow to make long term plans (Hohendanner 2010: 1; Laß 2020: 9). Temporary employment leads to a lower birth rate, especially when women are temporary employed (Laß 2020: 24). Reasons for that are that the financial security and the job security which includes the possibility to return to a job after parental leave is not given with a temporary work contract. (ibid.: 9). The job guarantee after parental leave does not apply to a temporary work contract and the job contract can expire (ibid.). The compatibility of a family and temporary work depends on the level of welfare as it can buffer the negative impacts of temporary work contracts (Scherer 2009: 543).

5.4 Effects on private life

Temporary employment poses an obstacle to make long term plans and affects life planning of an employee (Hohendanner 2010: 1). The consequences of temporary

employment are different for each person as the life course look differently. Furthermore, the impacts of temporary employment on the life of the employee are also weighed differently for each person.

While being employed with a fixed-term contract it is difficult, often impossible, to get loans. Frida, a mother of two, describes the situation of buying a bike trailer and pay by instalments. Not only in this situation, but also when she wanted to buy a mobile home, her work contract was an obstacle to do purchases with monthly payments.

“And I also notice that we simply need more planning security in our private lives. We bought a bicycle trailer the other day, and I was sitting there to somehow sign the instalment financing, and my husband was, uh, going through the store with my son. And at some point she [the vendor] was like: "Yes, and who is your employer?" And then I said "I don't have an employer." And I told her "No, my employment contract has expired". - “Oh well, then I can't make any instalment funding with you at all.” And then I thought, that's not possible. Now you're sitting here at the age of 33 and can't make any stupid financing for a bicycle trailer, just because you don't have an employment contract right now. Mhh. And, um, I honestly think that, um, I thought that, I thought that was stupid, being in that situation. [...]

Yes, that was annoying me or also things like we wanted to buy a caravan. [...] and then we went to the bank when I was pregnant with him [her second child] and then she [the bank employee] said “Yeah we can do it now, but we have to hurry because your contract is expiring.” And somehow you can only get financing for a caravan or a car loan if you still have a valid employment contract. So, and uhm that means the whole thing failed in the end because my work contract is not long enough. And I have such ... such, um, ways of thinking I don't have always in my head, because I always think, um, for a social worker there is full employment. Thus, that means I will always be able to work and I can choose my work. I will never be unemployed. And that has become so firmly anchored in my head that I don't have this different way of thinking, namely that of the banks. Namely, oh this women uhh with two children, she has no work contract, or the employment contract expires in six months. Um... I don't have that. Well, I have the feeling that I don't really need the security of always having an employment contract. I also think it's not bad to be a bit freer and to say, well, then you can still travel or you can also work with something else, or work two different things or something like that. But then I somehow noticed that this is just

my way of thinking and that I reach my limits when it comes to planning and financing a family. And I think that's... I think that's a pity. But in the end, it forces me to think about it at my next job and to take a closer look if it is a fixed-term contract, when will it be changed into a permanent one, and with what salary levels I will start" (Frida, Interview 1).

For her, getting loans are an essential part of funding her family and being able to maintain the living standard she wants to have for her family. By not having the possibility to be able to sign monthly instalment payments she is not able to do purchases she wants to do. For her personal security feeling a permanent work contract is not necessarily needed. She does not feel insecure with temporary employment and does not perceive job insecurity as she feels a high employment security. But in the light of financing her family the way she wants to, it is crucial to have a secured income. Being temporary employed is not a problem per se for Frida as she does not need the security of having a permanent job. However, her scope of action is limited as the conditions of getting a loan is built on the idea of having a stable income through a permanent work contract. Temporary employment is an obstacle to get a loan as it often goes together with times of unemployment. In her world view, getting a loan is also a sign of being independent and grown-up. For Frida, this part of life is disclosed to her because of her temporary work contract. This shows Frida the relevance of a stable income secured over a long time. She describes that her family needs more planning security through a secured income. Even if she has a high employment security as she trusts in always being able to find a new job, she reaches her limits with temporary employment. The inability of getting a loan showed her that the society is based on the concept of permanent employment. Therefore, she decided for herself that her next work contract needs to be permanent or offer a prospect of being extended for an indefinite time.

Another topic which comes together with the lack of possibility of getting a loan is the inability to react to unforeseen events. Tobias describes that temporary employment reduces the ability to act in times of crisis and therefore poses an insecure situation for the employees.

"T (Tobias): Or something can easily happen... where you suddenly have to act for whatever reason. And to suddenly you have to pay some bills and you need the credit for that. That can happen as well.

R (Researcher): Yeah. What do you mean by that?

T: Yeah... I don't know. Somebody dies in my wife's home country and we have to go there all of a sudden. Now as an example. Or yes, any other accidents, something happens to the house... I don't know. Then you have to see, or the car and suddenly you need something new” (Tobias, Interview 1).

Tobias has no financial back-up system he can fall on if he is facing a crisis. For him, a loan would be a solution to act in unforeseen event. However, due to his type of work contract he is not able to obtain a loan and therefore he is not able to react to unforeseen events. This limits his scope of action and is leading to insecurity as he knows he would have difficulties to overcome a financial crisis.

Another impact Tobias is remarking is that temporary employment has an effect on his private life in terms of not being able to make long term plans. He had troubles planning vacation with his wife or his friends as he had annual contracts and was not sure if he would be re-employed the next year. Therefore, he could never plan his vacation together with his friends.

“So it [work contract] is temporary, you don't know how it will go on, you can never plan a vacation for example, um... I say so, now it is October and you assume that it will go on or not, you still can't plan a vacation for February or March. Right? Um, because it's just uncertain.[...] There were really some situations in the uh... in my... at my last job, where I had to wait for a long time and I had to say to my wife or to my friends depending on how we had planned the holidays, I often had to say that I can't tell you yet if I'm coming or not. And I can't apply for it [vacation] yet, because my boss can't approve anything if he doesn't know if the work will continue. Um yes... That was stupid” (Tobias, Interview 1).

He could never book a vacation in long term. And he could never actively plan it with other people. He always needed to wait until the last moment where it was clear if his contract would be prolonged. This led to an uncomfortable and frustrating situation for himself as he could not actively plan it. This bears the danger of social exclusion due to his unstable work contract.

When looking for a new home, the effects of having a temporary work contract are notable. Isabelle describes that there is a high competition on rental apartments. She currently looks for an apartment to move in with her boyfriend. Here, it is a significant disadvantage for her being temporary employed. Other candidates with permanent contracts are favoured in the process of renting an apartment as there is

the security for the landlord that they have a stable income and therefore can pay the rent.

“I (Isabelle): And yes, besides, the thing is that I'm looking for an apartment with my boyfriend together to move in together, um... and of course I have to submit certain documents, somehow three months salary. I've only got one month now, that's already difficult and it's difficult that I only have a permanent contract.

R (Researcher): A fixed-term..?

I: Uh yes, sorry, exactly a temporary one. Because, well we often went to open viewings which is catastrophic, exactly, where there are hundreds of people standing there, mhh. There was a queue up to the street and we once asked the real-estate agent on which basis he actually decides, because there are already many people and it is a challenge to make such a decision, who may move in now. And there he meant, among other things, well you would have to earn at least 2000 € net and have an unlimited work contract. And exactly in that respect it is just disadvantageous” (Isabelle, Interview 1).

In that situation it becomes clear, that temporary employed people are highly disadvantaged on the housing market and are having a hard time finding housing due to the type of the work contract. Due to a high competition on the housing market, people with temporary work contracts have an inferior position as people with permanent work contracts are preferred. Therefore, it seems impossible to get an apartment with a temporary work contract. Here, temporary employment is not seen as a stable income by the landlords as there is no income security when the contract ends.

Also, Frida mentions that she doubts that she and her husband would have gotten their apartment without her husband's permanent work contract. She remarks that people with temporary employment are negatively affected in getting housing.

Another aspect of housing which needs to be looked at is the purchase or the building of an own home. Here, a fixed-term contract is a burden. Tobias informed himself about the possibilities while having an annual work contract.

“Well, we are currently further away from that point, but every now and then there were already a few thoughts, especially because friends of ours have built a house... so, we just thought, how would that be for us? Because they also had a rather low income, but only the fact that my contract is just yearly...uhm... we

wouldn't have had the chance to get a loan. If we wanted it. [...] Well, that's another point. That should be recalled” (Tobias, Interview 1).

With a fixed-term contract on an annual basis, there is no chance to get a loan for him to buy own property. Even if Tobias does not have concrete plans yet, it is still an important topic for him. His housing situation is affected by his income and is rather insecure. If his temporary contract would end and he would not find a new job quickly after, then he is considering that he and his wife would have to move to a different place. The fact of having no income guarantee for a longer time affects the housing situation. However, there is no further research on this topic which can support the connection between housing and temporary employment.

5.5 Importance of security systems with temporary employment

With fixed-term employment, times of unemployment and income insecurity are occurring more often than with permanent work contracts (Bookmann 2006: 24; Giesecke & Groß 2006: 251; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 443). Security systems are gaining importance for temporary employed people after a contract ends.

This study focuses on social workers in Germany. As highly educated and young employees, they are optimistic to find a new job after a temporary employment ends. They trust in the labour market and their skills that they would always find a job in the long run, even if it might not be a preferred job. However, there is no job guarantee and transition periods between jobs are occurring. But not only transition periods call for back-up solutions in order to secure living, there are also times where the employees are not able to work e.g. when getting a baby. Here, private security systems as well as public welfare can reduce the poverty risk among temporary employed people (Van Lancker 2013:198). The welfare system can pose a back-up system in times of unemployment through unemployment benefits or financial social assistance. Another back-up system can be of private nature, thus living in a multiple income household where the members support and rely on each other. In this research, the need and the importance of both security systems are stressed by the participants.

5.5.1 Welfare state

With the insecurity of temporary employment, the role of the welfare state is gaining importance in reducing the risk of poverty (Van Lancker 2013: 198f.). The welfare state secures among other welfare benefits unemployment benefits and social assistance in times of unemployment. In that regard, the welfare state is an important back-up system for temporary employed people as their work contracts are ending and it is not sure if they would find a job immediately after their previous employment. Transition periods are most likely to occur while being temporary employed. Here, the welfare system is necessary for people in between contracts and poses a back-up system.

Johanna is counting on the welfare benefits in between jobs when being unemployed. For her it is important to know her entitlement to unemployment benefits and the scope of them. She counts on those benefits as a back-up system in times of unemployment. Before even starting her new temporary job she already has thoughts on how she can bridge the next unemployment period and what benefits she can take out of the public unemployment insurance.

“So, the current situation is that, um... assuming I work from 1st of April. Mhh... I have not yet exhausted my ALG I [German unemployment benefit, Arbeitslosengeld I] entitlement and if I needed ALG I would still have a claim of four months. This is just about acceptable for me, because I think, okay, if I start looking early enough, then I'm sure I can find something new even with an emergency transition period of four months. So... Well, it's more like I try to anticipate the next situation, to think about how I'm going to... what I have to find out... ah okay, I would have an entitlement, um so. I can live with that. So.. [...] It's important to me that I know the consequences of what happens if I don't look after that. The knowledge at least, if I don't have a job after that. Like how would I... worst case scenario have to bridge that time” (Johanna, Interview 1).

In her case, unemployment benefits are crucial and serve as a back-up system which are securing the times in between jobs. Even if people in temporary contracts are more likely to be in need of security systems as there is a threat of unemployment after a contract ends, they do not have the same entitlement to various welfare benefits as people employed in permanent work contracts. They often depend on minimum contribution requirements or on the current employment status which is not secured with temporary contracts (Leschke 2008:18; Nollen 1996: 574). That

shows that the welfare system in Germany does not pay the same attention to employees in non-standard employments, here temporary work, as to people employed in full-time permanent work contracts (Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 443).

Johanna and Frida made the experience of how it is to be temporary employed and not having full access to welfare benefits, in their case unemployment benefits and maternity leave. Both of them were in precarious situations while getting their first child as they were not entitled to parental leave benefits to the same extent as people with a permanent contract. They had disadvantages of being temporary employed when applying for parental leave.

Frida experienced a social and financial hole after the birth of her first child. She was not entitled to unemployment benefits as her job was the first one after graduation from university and she did not fulfil the minimum contribution requirements for unemployment benefits. In the German conservative-corporatist welfare regime, there are minimum contribution regulations for some benefits which are often hard to meet when being temporary employed (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27; Leschke 2008: 18). Frida received financial social assistance which posed a drastic deterioration of the family's financial situation. During that time, they felt left out of the society and the social security system. The benefits residents get when they become parents were to a large extent not granted, because Frida's contract was of temporary nature. If it had been a permanent work contract the whole family's situation would have been different as they could fully benefit from the parental leave system which supports parents with financial support while caring for their baby. In that case the fixed-term employment lead to significant disadvantages for the young family.

“Um I actually got pregnant relatively quickly in my first job and um then I realized for the first time what this actually means for me as a woman who is in the middle of family planning to be in a fixed-term contract. My work contract ended during my maternity protection period. So that means I was on maternity leave for about two weeks and then my employment contract ended. That meant for me in this situation that I had almost no financial security. So there was an interim arrangement, normally I would have got the employer's allowance in the amount of my complete salary. And in that case, I didn't get that. I then got a small allowance from the health insurance. But that meant that I suddenly missed 50% of my salary and of course shortly before and shortly after the birth. So... And I

found that pretty extreme. Um... when I suddenly thought. So okay, now you have studied, you are a super trained academic person, my husband was currently still in training, to become a pre-school teacher and now you are having a child and suddenly you are almost on the poverty line somehow with a Hartz IV rate [income support] and you have no work contract anymore. I found that quite severe. Suddenly falling into a social financial hole. Exactly and oh well, we had to supplement our income with Hartz IV shortly after the birth of my daughter 4 years ago. Exactly, because otherwise [with a permanent contract] I would have had these two months completely bridged before I would have gotten parental allowance. But that was not enough and because my husband got student's allowance, we could not secure ourselves in a different way. Exactly, and I found that quite frustrating. So uhm and that would have been different, of course, if I have had a different employment contract” (Frida, Interview 1).

For Frida, her temporary employment contract lead to a drastic financial deterioration. With a permanent position she would have gotten parental leave based on her previous income and the family would have been in a different situation. Here the welfare state benefits are built on the idea of permanent employment and do not consider temporary employment to the same extent.

These situations show that temporary employed people are disadvantaged regarding welfare benefits but are more likely in need of welfare benefits because of repeated times of unemployment. Scherer emphasizes that especially in the case of temporary employment, the welfare state plays a significant role in compensating the risks of temporary employment which is job loss (2009: 540). However, European countries differ in protecting employees from poverty which is depending on the welfare system and labour laws (Van Lancker 2013: 190). In Germany, the amount of parental leave benefit is tied to previous income (Laß 2020: 6). Furthermore, Leschke calls attention to the fact that in general it is hard for temporary employed people to meet the minimum contribution requirements for social benefits e.g. unemployment benefits while being temporary employed and switching between jobs (2008: 18). This is the case for Germany as unemployment benefits are insurance based (ibid.: 19). O’Connor describes the conflict of more flexible labour markets which are promoted by the EU and are colliding with a welfare system built on standard employment (2013: 59f). There, people with a

fixed-term contract are disadvantaged as it is also in the case of parental leave benefits for Frida and Johanna due to their temporary work contracts,

5.5.2 The role of the partner

Besides welfare provisions which can buffer the negative effects of temporary employment, the role of a private back-up system is gaining importance with temporary employment. As shown in this research, employees with a temporary work contract may reach limits when it comes to being financial responsible for a partner or children. Temporary employment poses difficulties providing for others as there is no income security over a long time. Here, a security net can be the income of the partner within a household.

Frida learned of her experiences when being temporary employed and getting a child. In this situation her work contract ended and neither her nor her husband had a secured income. Frida and her husband decided that at least one of them need a permanent position within their family. In that way they are adjusting their employments.

“Um, so I think that, um, so I realize that if I have a family, that goes together with financial stability for me, which I would really like to have. And um, that at least an employment contract, an unlimited employment contract is definitely an advantage. And that's what my husband has at the moment. And that's very nice. Through this we got for example our apartment or a car loan or a bicycle trailer loan or something like that. And we know that even now in times of crisis there is always money flowing. Um, that this is not a problem at all, we are secured like this. Now of course, uhm that is of course like that, that my husband and I both earn about the same, that means when I go back to work I will tend to earn more, uhm and he also wants to change his job. And I find it important that one of us still has a permanent contract. Just to be able to guarantee this stability. [...] And, um, that's exactly why it's important for me to get a permanent contract as quickly as possible, so that we still have the stability we need, even if my husband then thinks about doing something else. He is now five years in his job and works in a home for children and teenagers and would like to do something different and uhm exactly waits until I start working again and uhm until I have stability in my profession, in my job. So that he can then perhaps again somehow accept something which then has less stability. And where he then perhaps first of all in an unlimited, uh where he then perhaps starts in a new job and then gets a limited

contract. [...] So I realize now that I am of course in a dependency right now, on the other hand, um, we are married somehow and it is also okay to be in a dependency. Because you can rely on each other” (Frida, Interview 2).

Through the permanent contract of Frida’s husband, the family gains a lot of opportunities. Not only does it improve the chance of getting better housing and to be able to do the purchases they want to, but the family can rely on a secure income during crisis. The family would be in a completely different situation without having a permanent income in the household. They experienced the income insecurity of a temporary employment in the time of the birth of their first child. With the end of Frida’s work contract the family did not have an income and needed to apply for social assistance. Thus, Frida and her husband decided that it is necessary for the security of the family that at least one parent needs to obtain a permanent work contract. For that reason, the parents are adjusting their work contracts to each other so there is at least one person having a permanent work contract in the family. Frida realizes that she is dependent on her husband in that prospect, but for her that is okay as they committed to a shared life together.

Also Johanna states that it is a relief that her husband has a permanent position now. At the time she got her child neither her nor her partner had a secured income. Now with the permanent position of her husband the family does not have financial problems. And it gives Johanna freedom and is a back-up system in case she has troubles finding a job after her temporary employment. For her it is important to know that the family can provide for the child and in times of crisis they have the possibility to act. With Johanna’s job loss they would have to adapt their life a bit, but they would not be in a financial critical and existential crisis.

“Privately, of course, there is also an influence on how one is positioned in the family. My boyfriend was only working part-time at the time. And has written part-time his master thesis. That was another stress factor. He was not very well positioned financially because of that. Because he also had an additional illness and had to pay a high premium for health insurance [...]. That means that all in all we had felt for a long time we had drawn the shortest straw” (Johanna, Interview 1).

The financial situation for the family changed after her boyfriend got a permanent position. That shows the precarious situation with a temporary employment contract

and the importance of the employment status of other people within the household. After her boyfriend got the permanent position Johanna felt huge changes for their family.

“I didn't have huge financial worries right now. Because I knew that he could definitely pay for the child or if there was a larger sum to pay, that he could afford it. But it didn't take away the worry that if I don't have anything left, well... however, but it improved. It definitely improved. I remember that in those moments when I was very stressed with the job search and wasn't sure how strict the employment office was et cetera. I told myself in those moments that in case of emergency we would have to look at the money again and save a bit, but if we could use his money to bridge a month or two or three or so. So yes, yes it helped the thought” (Johanna, Interview 2).

For Tobias, the situation is different. He is the breadwinner in his relationship and had a fixed-term work contract. He likes being in that position of being responsible for his wife, but also describes the difficulties that come with a temporary contract. For him it is not easy to provide security for his family without having the security of a stable income.

“Or even if I don't have any big projects for me privately right now, that I somehow can just say: The money I bring home now to take care of my wife or even family... that's also a point if you want to start a family and you can't give the security that you'll bring home the same money in half a year. [...] Yes and also the responsibility is there in any case ... which I like to be in, I must say. But the conditions must be right somehow, right? How is it with that... now I have a permanent contract, that's a different story” (Tobias, Interview 1).

“It was important for me at first, I don't want to sit around on unemployment benefits for long. [...] So just because of the apartment, I'm sure, okay then we would have had to say, okay we have to move now and lower our standards, which is okay” (Tobias, Interview 1).

If he would not find a new job, he and his wife need to adjust their standards and move to a cheaper apartment. He feels a higher pressure on finding a new employment as his job is financing his household and he has no private back-up system to fall back on. This would mean far-reaching consequences for him and his wife regarding their lives. Existential goods such as housing would be in danger and they would need to find a cheaper option. Tobias already arranged with this

thought of having to move if he can not find a new job as he has no different option. Tobias is very dependent on his job as his work income is financing his household and among others the housing situation of his family (Richter 2011: 37). That means he has a high economic insecurity with the loss of his job and his income is necessary for his household (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt 1984: 445). For him temporary employment means an insecurity of the funding of his household when his work contract is over.

Even if the income of a partner serves as a back-up system within a family, Isabelle calls attention to the possible negative impact of the partner as a back-up system. She benefits from her partner's income as it improves their chances of getting housing. However, she emphasizes that it bears the danger that she is dependent on her partner. For her it is important not to be reliant on her partners' work contract and to stay independent. This poses the risk of being financial dependent on the partner within a relationship because of the temporary employment contract. She wants to be able to support herself independent of her partners contract.

“Yeah, so it [the permanent contract of the partner] gives me security, sure. And he [partner] also earns more, works for a big company somehow, is a... well, has somehow for a real-estate agent a different position than I do as a social worker. Um, but totally independent of him, I would like to be able to take care of myself anyway and not necessarily depend only on him. Sure, I am not, I earn money and, um, have ... have my employment and know that I would always find a job. Yeah, but I think that annoys me a little. That it... yes in general in the social sector. I also have, when I looked for jobs before, it was very difficult to find something permanent, that [a temporary position] is actually relatively... relatively normal and that... that annoys me a bit” (Isabelle, Interview 1).

The back-up system in a family plays a significant role in being temporary employed. To have the possibility of relying on a second income of a partner poses a great relief for a person being employed with a fixed-term contract. A dual earner household mitigates the risk of poverty (Van Lancker 2013: 202). Here, the type of income is not of relevance, e.g. from low waged jobs, but rather than the fact of having a dual earner in the household (ibid.: 198).

But it can also bear the danger of being dependent on a partner even though an own income is contributing to the household's income. In this research all

participants live in a relationship and together with others in a household. However not all participants have the security of a second income which can mitigate the income insecurity of temporary employment through a job loss which results in an insecure financial situation for the whole household.

6 Conclusion

In this study the underlying research questions are what temporary employment means for the employees and whether and how it affects their lives. In general, it is possible to conclude from this study that there are different perceptions of fixed-term employment. The importance of temporary employment for the lives of the employees and the perceived job insecurity that can come with it is depending on the personal situation of the employee (Richter 2011: 9f.). Here, factors such as being responsible for a family or having a private back-up system are relevant. However, temporary employment can not be seen as a bad employment form per se (Waaiker et al. 2017). It can pose an alternative to unemployment (Leschke 2008: 219) and can act as a stepping stone into a permanent work contract (Giesecke & Groß 2006: 253f.; Gundert & Hohendanner 2014: 147; Hohendanner 2010: 8; Ludera-Ruszel 2016: 412; Nollen 1996: 576f.). Directly after education and when not being responsible for other persons, it can serve as a possibility to enter the labour market and poses an alternative to unemployment. The temporality of the contract was not important for the participants in the study directly after their education and not a reason to decline the job. On the one hand, they were glad to find a job and overcome unemployment. But on the other hand, they also felt a high employment security and are optimistic to find a new employment after the temporary contract expires. Furthermore, fixed-term employment can serve as a way to try out different work fields and to test whether one wants to work in this field for a longer time. It is possible to gain specific skills within different employments and use them in the future career (Marler et al. 2002: 450).

However, besides the positive effects of temporary employment, there are also negative effects which are relevant for the employees. The time in between

contracts is perceived as a critical phase. Here, the insecurity whether the contract is prolonged is experienced as a stressful time.

In contrast to the situation when being a young and independent employee and temporary employment is not linked to an inferior situation and more seen as a chance of trying out different work fields, the perception changes in prospect of a family. In this research the participants were negatively affected by being temporary employed when they need to care for other people. When being responsible for other people like children or a partner, temporary employment is seen as an insecure source of income. Employees are disadvantaged when the birth of a child and the end of a contract come together. Here, temporary employment contains the danger of a critical financial situation. When the work contract ends before the child is born, parental benefits are not available to the same extent for temporary employed people as for permanent workers in Germany. Furthermore, there is no job guarantee after taking parental leave and often the employees need to find a new job (Laß 2020: 9). When founding of a family, a higher need for personal security is arising for the interviewed people. Here, temporary employment is lacking income security and is not securing the funding of a family in the long run. Therefore, temporary employment is an important factor when planning a family and when being responsible for the financial situation for the family.

Another effect of temporary employment on the private life is the inability of making long term plans in life. One aspect is the inability of getting loans which affects the lifestyle of the employees. The reasons vary from big purchases for a family, a loan for buying housing or the ability to react to unforeseen events. In all these cases it is impossible with a temporary work contract to do so. Institutions who give loans to people connect temporary employment automatically to an insecure financial situation. That makes it difficult for temporary employed people to access these possibilities as they are built on the idea of permanent employment.

Besides the inability of getting loans, it is not possible to plan vacation with friends and family long time in advance with temporary work contracts as it is not clear if the work contract will be prolonged. Another important aspect which is relevant when being temporary employed is the disadvantaged position on the housing market with a temporary work contract. Here, the participants describe

having an inferior position as landlords prefer to rent out their apartments to persons with a secured income through a permanent work contract.

While being temporary employed, there is the need of having a working security system for a better planning perspective in the long run, but also to buffer the effect of income insecurity which is occurring when the contract ends, in times of transition, but also in times where the employee is not able to work, e.g. giving birth to a child. As there is no job security with temporary employment and times of unemployment are most likely to occur, different security systems gain importance in order to secure living. Here, the welfare state and private back-up systems are relevant. The welfare state offers unemployment benefits in times of unemployment, however, there are minimum contribution requirements which are hard to fulfil when being temporary employed (Leschke 2008: 18, 225; Nollen 1996: 574). As stated above, temporary employed people are disadvantaged in maternity leave and parental leave benefits in Germany when the work contract ends before the parental leave start. In that case the parents are not entitled to the same extent to parental leave benefits as people with permanent contracts. This can lead to precarious situations after the birth of a child. This shows that the welfare system is built on the idea of having a secure permanent work contract. With the rise of flexible forms of employment, the welfare system needs to be aware of atypical work and needs to be adapted in order to ensure temporary employed people the same benefits as permanent employed people.

As temporary employed people do not have the same access to welfare benefits as permanent employed people, the importance of a private back-up system within a household is coming to light. The employment form of the partner is relevant as it can fulfil the functions a temporary employment can not fulfil. Through a permanent position, it is possible to be able to get a loan, to secure a stable income for a landlord and thereby be able to rent housing, to have an income security during times of crisis and a stable source of income in times of unemployment of the temporary employed partner. A second income within a household can buffer the negative effects of temporary employment and thereby reduce the risk of poverty (Van Lancker 2013: 202). However, even if the income of a partner within a household can be an opportunity for a family, there is also the danger of undesired dependency within a household which can be reinforced.

In this study, the focus lied on temporary employment as a form of non-standard employment. However, two participants were working part-time with a fixed-term contract which poses a double form of non-standard employment. There was no special attention paid to this fact in the study as the focus was only on temporary work contracts independent of their scope. Further research which pays attention to accumulated forms of non-standard employment can be enriching and providing further information of the interplay of several factors of non-standard employment.

As this research is based on interviews which were made with people within a relationship, it would be interesting to examine the situation of single parents. They have the responsibility for their children, but at the same time there could be a lack of a private security system within the household. Most likely, they do not have a second earner in their household. For them, the effects of temporary employment must be fortified.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Contact letter

(translated from German)

Search for interview partners for a Master thesis on fixed-term employment within social work in Germany

My name is Michaela Vorderegger and I'm currently studying a Master program with a major in social work at Lund University, Sweden.

For my master's thesis I am looking for interview partners who are working within social work and have experience with temporary employment. My aim is to examine the effects of fixed-term contracts on the lives of employees.

The criteria for participation are that the person worked at least in two fixed-term contracts or the second is currently ongoing. Furthermore, I focus on people who are between 24 and 35 years old.

In order to understand the effects of fixed-term contracts in detail, two interviews of approximately 60 minutes each are scheduled per person. The first interview is about the experiences of a fixed-term employment in general. In the following interview, there will be room for questions and more in-depth information.

During the interviews you can decide for yourself which topics are addressed, and which aspects are discussed. In general, the interview will have a conversational character, open questions as a guideline are possible.

If you are interested or have any questions, you can reach me at the following e-mail address: michaela.vorderegger.5673@student.lu.se

I would be glad if you consider my request. If the profile does not apply to you, I would also be happy if you refer me to your network. That would help me a lot.

Thank you very much and best regards

Michaela

Appendix 2 - Informed consent

(translated from German)

Research over fixed-term employment in social work in Germany

Responsible person for this research

Michaela Vorderegger, Lund university mi5673vo-s@student.lu.se

The following research is conducted for a Master thesis within the Master program “Welfare Policies and Management” with a major in social work at Lund University, Sweden.

Research Purpose

In my research, I try to find out how the situation of temporary employed social workers in Germany is. As people in the age of 24-35 are most likely employed on a fixed-term, I focus on people in this age range.

Research Method

To gain an insight into how fixed-term employment effects the lives of employees, I will collect qualitative data. Here, in-depth interviews are conducted. In total, two interviews per person will be conducted with an estimated interview time of approximately 60minutes each. The interviews will be recorded (audio) for the purpose of transcription. The recordings will not be published at any time. The participant can review the transcripts of the interviews before the data will be used within the research. In that way it is possible to make comments, to clarify possible misunderstandings and to approve the material for the research.

The interviews are conducted in German, the Master thesis for which the research is used is written in English.

Confidentiality

In the research it is made sure that the anonymity of the participant is kept during the whole research process. Names will be changed, and possible mentioned employers are anonymised. Details which can identify the participant as well as people the interviewee talks about in the interview will be falsified.

Voluntary Participation

The interviewee is participating in the research on a voluntary basis. The person can always withdraw from the participation without mentioning any reasons and without consequences. The participant is free to deny the answer to asked questions and to stop the interviews at any time.