

Project launch of Research Unit “Resilience”



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The Research Unit “Resilience” studies reactions to radical social upheavals

Interdisciplinary team of Trier University has launched new project

The Research Unit “Resilience – Periods of Upheaval in Society in the Dialogue between Medieval Studies and Sociology”, funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), launched their research project on July 1 at Trier University and is now developing a concept of social resilience. Scholars in German Studies, historians, legal experts and sociologists identify the kinds of options for action that social groups developed and applied between the 13th and 16th century in order to face events that threatened their very existence in the context of social upheavals.

The aim of the interdisciplinary cooperation is to make the concept of resilience, which originates in Individual Psychology and in Human and Social Ecology, applicable for Humanities and Social Sciences and to enhance it. “Organized in six projects, we aim to develop new approaches for the description of historical social upheavals in the late Middle Ages, while reviewing existing definitions of epochs, and scrutinizing alternative concepts like that of crisis or disaster”, says Professor Dr. Lukas Clemens, spokesman of the Research Unit.

The research team enters new territory by translating the concept of resilience, developed to describe present phenomena, to the past and by focusing on the complex and very dynamic processes of coping, adaptation, and transformation in the light of life-threatening challenges in a sophisticated analysis. The comparative analysis of processes, resources, and strategies of resilience uncovers socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural basic patterns when investigating experiences of social upheaval. At the same time it draws attention to both innovative new approaches and unintended consequences of processes of resilience up to their failure whose causes become clearer and can be better described.

At the beginning of November the research group organized a public speech at Trier University as a kick-off for the six-year research cooperation. In his opening speech, Vice-President Professor Dr. Georg Müller-Fürstenberger underlined the crucial importance of the research group for Humanities and Social Sciences at the university. “The DFG-funded Research Unit makes a decisive contribution to Trier remaining a place for high-quality research.” Following a short presentation of the research program by Professor Lukas Clemens, economic historian Professor Dr. Markus A. Denzel from Leipzig University spoke on “From resilience to resilience management”.

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