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Ulf Tranow receives drupa Prize 2011:

How does solidarity work?

This year's drupa Prize goes to Ulf Tranow from Düsseldorf for his doctoral thesis "Solidarity and Sociological Analysis – a Theoretical Contribution to the Concept of Solidarity". With this annual prize, drupa – the world's biggest trade fair for the printing and media industry – honours the best doctoral thesis of the Faculty of Humanities at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf. The 2011 award was conferred by Martin Weickenmeier (President of drupa 2012), Werner M. Dornscheidt (President & CEO of Messe Düsseldorf) and Prof. H. Michael Piper, Ph.D (President of the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf) at the Industry Club in Düsseldorf on 23 May.

The thesis centres around the broad topic of solidarity. And solidarity was therefore also the key note in Martin Weickenmeier's laudatory speech when he used the forthcoming 60th anniversary of drupa on 26 May 2011 as an occasion to emphasise the close cooperation between industry and the trade fair. The drupa President also commented on the value of solidarity in this day and age, especially for digital natives: "Despite all the individualism and image cultivation of digital natives," he concluded, "solidarity and the collective are now celebrating a comeback."

"Solidarity" is a moral principle that characterises almost every socio-political debate. Although the term is often used in everyday speech, academics are still rather uncertain about its definition, its basic meaning and the conditions that determine how and why it works in the first place. In his thesis Ulf Tranow set himself the aim of developing a concept of solidarity that should resolve this problem of defining solidarity.

Whether it is a small family community, an industrial organisation, a political group or an ideas-based community or whether we are talking about the sociology of large-scale international relations, solidarity is perceived as a core issue that pervades the whole of sociology as an



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academic discipline and indeed all sections of our societies and cultures, so that the deficit becomes even clearer. Academics are generally in agreement that every social order requires a certain willingness to make sacrifices and that social cohesion cannot work on the basis of everyone's individual pursuit of their own interests. In his thesis Tranow expresses the view that standards are required which the members of a given group need to observe – or not, as the case may be. In either case, to encourage solidarity, it is vital to provide sufficient incentives, for instance monetary aspects or at least recognition from others. But it is also possible for a person to act out of a certain bond and the conviction of “doing the right thing”. In most contexts, any regular observance of “solidarity standards” can only be ensured if the relevant persons are suitably motivated. This poses the basic question how such motivation can be sustainably developed or fostered by a culture of recognition and through the development of identification with the community.

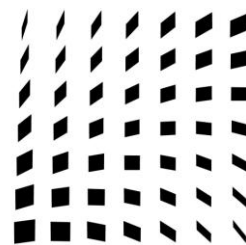
Ulf Tranow was born in Münster in 1975 and read sociology, media studies and psychology at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf (HHU) from October 1996 to November 2003. He worked as an academic assistant from May 2004 and has been a management assistant in the Department of Social Sciences at HHU since June 2010.

The drupa Prize

Starting in 1978, Messe Düsseldorf, the organiser of drupa, has honoured outstanding monographs at the Faculty of Humanities at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf for many years now. Its sponsorship for the publication and propagation of an award-winning thesis amounts to EUR 6,000. Each year the drupa Prize is awarded by a specialist committee, comprising the President and Vice President of the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, the President of drupa and the Chief Executive Officer of Messe Düsseldorf.

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