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## **Imaginamics. New Perspectives on Social Imagining**

### **Abstract**

A functioning society requires not only rules, procedures and institutions, but also shared ideas, narratives and images. The social practices of sharing these ideas, narratives and images constitute what we call ‘social imagining’. It involves the creation of communally distributed, intersubjectively recognised imaginaries that provide orientation and stability in everyday life. Social imagining can hold societies together and promote solidarity, but it can also generate differences and divisions. It can facilitate unity and forge bonds, but it can also lead to forms of exclusion and violence. It can strengthen and stabilise social structures, but it can also trigger new dynamics and spark change.

Though social life is replete with examples of the relevance and power of social imaginaries, it is nevertheless difficult to explain their existence, persistence and mutability. Previous research has focused primarily on specific social imaginaries and their content, whereas the question of how they arise and persist remains largely unanswered. By focussing on practices, the new established Cluster of Excellence “Imaginamics” addresses the fundamental question of how it is possible for imaginaries to be socially shared. To this end, it (1) combines research approaches from the cultural sciences, humanities and social sciences; (2) links foundational theoretical approaches with empirical studies and digital explorations; (3) expands upon current debates on social imagining by including trans-epochal and trans-cultural perspectives; and (4) develops a set of instruments to describe and explain social dynamics more precisely and to enable critical reflection on them.

### **CV**

Following positions in Basel, Paris and Bielefeld, Johannes Grave has been Professor of Modern Art History at Friedrich Schiller University in Jena since 2019. He has published several books, including works on Caspar David Friedrich, Goethe, Giovanni Bellini and the depiction of architecture in early Italian Renaissance painting. His most recent publications are “Bild und Zeit. Eine Theorie des Bildbetrachens” (2022) and “Freiheit? Eugène Delacroix, die Revolution von 1830 und die Politik der Bilder” (2024). He has also been involved as a co-curator in exhibition projects, including “Caspar David Friedrich. Art for a New Age” (Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2023/24) and “Caspar David Friedrich, Goethe and Romanticism in Weimar” (Klassik Stiftung Weimar, 2024/25). In 2020, he was awarded the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize. Since 2024, he has been one of the Vice-Presidents of the German Research Foundation. He is one of the spokespersons for the new Cluster of Excellence “Imaginamics. Practices and Dynamics of Social Imagining”, which took up its work at the beginning of 2026.