

English version of our article in the “Bündner Woche”, May 6, 2020

Research in Graubünden

Time to rethink habits

The pandemic is changing the daily routine of research



Cordula Seger, head of the Institut für Kulturforschung Graubünden ikg. Image: ikg

The coronavirus has suddenly turned our lives upside down. The Graubünden research institutes have also reacted to the extraordinary situation. Cordula Seger, head of the Institute for Cultural Research Graubünden (ikg), reports on how the institute and its staff are dealing with the challenge: “Our staff currently work mainly in their home offices. Anyone who wants to can still come to the office, as each and every one of the permanent staff

has their own room to work in. We exchange information regularly, we often make phone calls. Researching cultural studies can be done well in the home office, provided that sources and books are available. This can bridge a month or two: You can concentrate more on the analysis and the writing process. But we are all looking forward to the time when libraries and archives will be accessible again. We had to cancel all our events until the summer: Talks, presentations, workshops and conferences - that hurts. Not only because we have put a lot of love and work into the planning together with our cooperation partners, but also because the interaction with other interested people, which is central to our work, is no longer possible.”

Seger observes that the use of digital aids is becoming increasingly important in the current situation: “The importance of digitization for research and education is currently becoming very clear. We are also becoming aware of where there is still a need to catch up and where there is room for improvement in this respect. On the positive side, it can be said that a concentrated exchange via Skype, video conference or increasingly by telephone can replace being on the road all the time, at least to a certain extent.”

Seger also hopes for a change in thinking in favor of working parents in science and research: “Those who have school-age children at home are among those people who do not have too much, but too little time during the lock-down. Scientists are even more required than usual to bring different things and aspects together. However, experience shows that they have good prerequisites for this. What seems positive to me is that our society has become more aware in recent weeks that working in the home office, family life and childcare are not mutually exclusive. It would be important now to incorporate this collective experience into new, creative and much more flexible work and career models that not only guarantee but also make it desirable to combine work, academic career and family.”

The ikg conducts research in the fields of the humanities, social and cultural history with a focus on Graubünden, taking into account the entire Alpine arc. The spectrum of research topics ranges from smuggling on Graubünden’s southern borders, to the question of how the people of Graubünden feel about multilingualism in their canton, to the reappraisal of the history of viticulture. A highlight in 2020 is the start of the project “Atlas on the History of Graubünden 1524-2024”. 2024 marks the 500th anniversary of the founding of the “Freistaat der Drei Bünde”. The project takes this important anniversary as an opportunity to present central aspects of the history of Graubünden in the course of time in a concise and vivid way. The cantonal government provides substantial support for this project.

More about the ikg and the ongoing projects at www.kulturforschung.ch

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Find out more about research in Graubünden: www.academiarætica.ch, www.graduateschool.ch.