

Für Mensch & Umwelt

Umwelt 
Bundesamt

Social-ecological transformation and collective trauma – some food for thoughts

Webinar „Trauma – between memory and hope“
15 May 2025 – STIAS

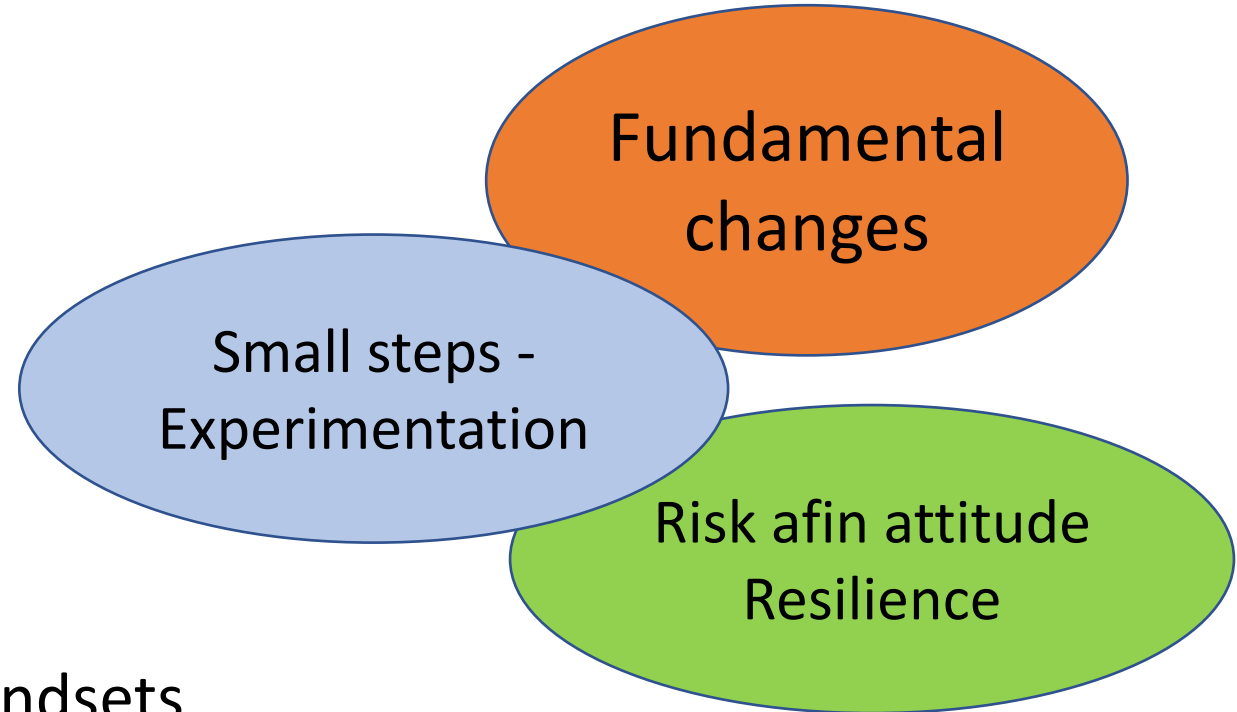
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Social-ecological transformation

- Ongoing climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution (plastics)
 - Planetary boundaries
- Social and racial injustice
- Poverty and hunger
- Military conflicts
- A necessity: no time left
- Technological developments
- Change of Interactions and mindsets



Traumatisation – individual

- Event which overburdened the emotional capacities/intelligence of individual
 - Rape, inner family violence, emotional abuse (parents/kids)
 - Even worse: long-term duration and/or person of trust
- Often not memorized later on
 - Trauma experience often not accessible for individual

**Important: Behaviour of victim
reasonable for the trauma situation**

Survival strategy

Frozen emotions (not present
emotionally), hyper-active



Conflict solving mechanism
repeated unintentionally later on
Not appropriate for future
challenges

Collective Trauma - The case of Germany

- Little novel
- War experiences during second world war
 - Soldiers as offenders
 - Bomb attacks in Germany
 - Rape of German women
 - Refugees
 - Hunger
- Whole society affected
- Transgenerational collective trauma – somehow transferred from one generation to the next

Collective trauma

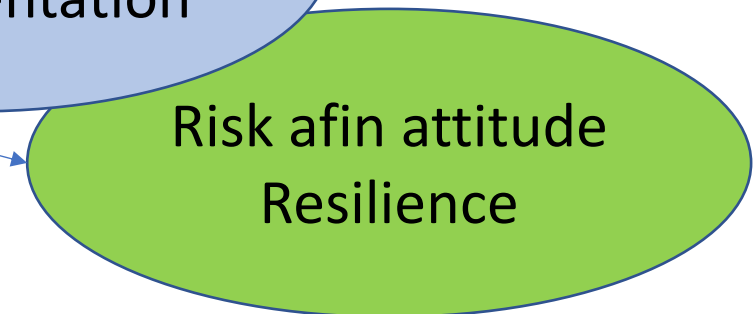
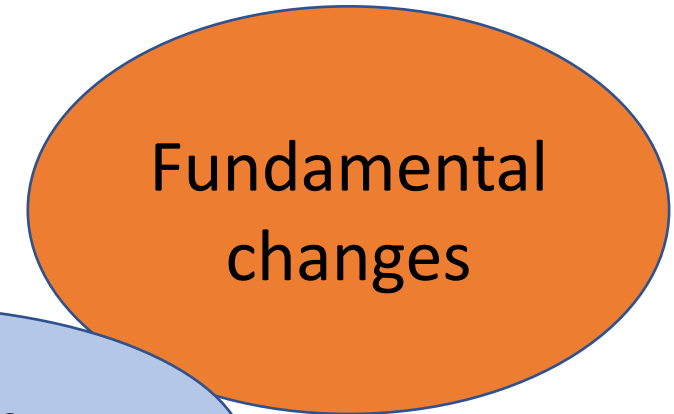
- Overburdening situations for a society
 - War, hunger, migration, racial policies
 - Gaza and Ukraine
 - South Africa: Racism and Apartheid
- Individual trauma theory applied to collective trauma
 - Limited access to trauma mindsets – due to traumatisation
 - Conflict solution strategies due to traumatisation – often not adequate for future situations
 - **Risk avers attitude**

“we – as a society - do not know what we are doing and why”

Collective trauma and SET

**“we do not know what we are doing and why”
mindset not memorized, wrong approaches**

Risk averse attitude



Two recommendations and two questions

- Research on collective/individual trauma and on the interface of SET and collective/individual trauma
- Political debate on collective/individual trauma
- The two questions:
 - Is collective trauma more than the compilation/the sum of the individual traumas ?
 - Do collective trauma cause the same “blind spots” as individual traumas ?

Many thanks for your
attention

• **Harald Ginzky**

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