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Call for Papers

Religion, Democracy and Citizenship

10 - 13 October 2019, Wuerzburg (Germany)

The conference offers an opportunity to share theoretical and empirical reflections on the concepts of religion, democracy and citizenship, as well as the relationship between them. The central focus is on the impact of religion on attitudes towards democracy and citizenship. Contributions from theology, religious studies, sociology-psychology of religion and political sciences are welcome. The conference also serves as the kick-off meeting for the preparation of an international empirical research project. Participants are invited to join the research project.

Starting point

There is a widespread agreement that the sense of social cohesion in Western societies is dwindling. Some observers see a dramatic lack of a fundamentally positive civic attitude. For them liberal democratic societies are in serious danger. The changes within society are accompanied by political transformation processes, such as the electoral success of populist movements in many countries, the rise of nationalism and violations of checks and balances, a rise of in-group and out-group thinking, conflicts about rules of international economy, the shift in political power relations, territorial claims and military threats. People complain that the feeling of security and stability regarding social and political life and international affairs is diminishing. Within the context of globalisation, migration processes have become a permanent challenge. Migration leads to religious and ethnic pluralization and not all immigrants have experiences with a Western style of liberal democracy. Right-wing populist parties in Europe, but not only there, are getting approval if they warn against the consequences of the migration processes for the stability of democracy. However, others see right-wing populist parties as a threat to democracy, and with them the emergence of authoritarian and neo-national thinking. These developments stimulate the discourse about the desirability of democracy and the conceptualisation of citizenship.

Religious traditions and religiously motivated people are actors in civil society and they are by no means neutral. But in what way do religious worldviews and convictions correspond with which ideas of citizenship in a modern democratic society? How do religious people perceive, assess and respond to the processes which have just been described? Which concepts are supported and which are rejected, if religiosity is connected with issues of democracy and citizenship at all?

Citizenship

With the ongoing process of globalisation and migration, the concept of citizenship that consists of being a member of a nation-state and holding a passport of this nation state proves to be complex. A multitude of

concepts of citizenship have been developed. They vary according to the context in which they are anchored (right-wing, left-wing, liberal, communitarian). Neo-nationalists build citizenship on a strong attachment to the nation state and they are exclusive in the sense of who has a right to this citizenship. Others argue that this position cannot be sustained in a time of globalisation. Living in a specific region or nation state and having the national identity card of this state does exclude a number of people from being citizens. It is also asked if nationality at all should be a criterion of citizenship instead of belonging to a specific group of people (e.g., ethnic, cultural, religious, language, etc.). Other positions go even further if they call for a discussion on the possibility of global or cosmopolitan citizenship. On the cultural level it is questioned if citizenship requires the assimilation of certain values and the integration in a certain cultural milieu or if citizenship has to be conceptualised as multicultural. The problem behind this is how much unity must be demanded so that society does not break apart, and how much diversity must be possible to prevent despotism? Last but not least, is citizenship characterised by a number of rights (social, civil and political rights) that citizens may enjoy, or is it an active process in which people fulfil certain obligations and responsibilities?

Democracy

Citizenship refers to the relation between the citizen and a constitutional democracy. Citizenship is based on the principle of popular sovereignty that people create laws by themselves in order to comply with the norms which are inscribed in them. It is the people that make laws and observe them, they are the laws' author and addressee at the same time. Vital citizenship is both *precondition* and *active domain* of democracy. It is the principal expression of being political as belonging. It is a form of government and a mode of associated living. Many authors emphasise the active side of democracy as most important. The question is how the political community, the political regime and the political authorities are perceived, how institutions work and actors perform. The performance of the political system counts as an important indicator of how people evaluate the political democratic system. It is the recognition and support by the people that gives the political system the legitimation it needs. Without support by the people the democratic political system risk its survival. In this context "doing democracy" is connected with expectations about what citizenship should be.

The current crisis of Western societies seems to underline the need for an active role of citizens, but what qualities are necessary to maintain the stability of a democratic society? Many aspects are reflected in the academic discussion. Scholars refer to the ability to shape identity in the face of national, ethnic and religious plurality. They underline the importance of the ability to cooperate with people who are different, the willingness to participate in social and political processes, respect for the rule of law and preparedness for the common good. It is suggested that the functioning of democracy also requires that people hold political authorities basically as legitimate and righteous. Citizens should exercise self-restraint and demonstrate responsibility in the areas of the economy, health and the environment. If citizens are not responsible and self-restrained in these regards, a democratic society would be difficult to govern and could become unstable. In this perspective, citizenship is more than a legal status, it becomes a desirable activity.

Religion

What then is the contribution of religion to democracy and citizenship? More precisely: How does religion as social actor interact with these domains and does religious belief influence the conceptualisation of citizenship and democracy of religious people? Most of the religions have developed a specific concept of the community, which is primarily restricted to the faithful and reserved for the inner realm of the religious community. In most cases, the structures are not democratic. Therefore, there is a principle suspicion whether religions can be strong defenders of democratic orders. Examples from various religious traditions prove that this suspicion is not unfounded. On the other hand, religious convictions include ethical aspects such as empathy, support and solidarity, which can be important virtues for living together. They also have an idea of how a person should live in order not to fall into sin. With regard to the order of society: do religious concepts of belief overlap with the civic attitudes preferred in a liberal democracy?

Many religions have developed a comprehensive theory for the entire society. Religions can deal with the claim of the state to regulate the coexistence of people in different ways. Within an imperial conceptualisation, religions claim to dominate the state order by referring to a divine order. In a transnational conceptualisation, religions withdraw themselves entirely from the category of states by defining community as something global.

The Protestant world developed the teaching about the two kingdoms, which concedes the autonomy of the state. Some Evangelical Free Churches have only a weak theory of society. Within the Catholic realm, an alterity concept was developed in which the Church is understood as a "contrast society". Cooperative concepts of religion and society differentiate between the religious community and the State, but collaboration is intended if it is meaningful for both (e.g., in health care, education, etc.). Finally a religion can be convinced that a critical role vis-à-vis the state can be required if the state violates rules that are essential in regard to a religious doctrine (e.g. protection of life).

The social doctrine of a religion is one side, the other side is the believers, who can commit themselves in different ways to religious teachings. It is not a trivial question to ask to which attitudes towards democracy and citizenship religions motivate their members.

The conference will benefit from **keynotes** from **Prof. em. Dr. Rolf Schieder**, until 2018 head of the research unit Religion and Politics at the Humboldt University of Berlin, and **Prof. Dr. Richard Traummüller**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Mannheim and expert on empirical democracy research.

Call for papers

Participants are invited to present theoretical and empirical **collegial papers**.

Research papers are welcome which help to clarify the concept of citizenship and its dimensions from different disciplinary perspectives; which show ways to operationalise citizenship for empirical purposes; research about the viability of instruments; and empirical findings about how people understand and practice citizenship. From a pedagogical point of view, the question arises which characteristics of citizenship merit support in processes of education.

Secondly papers are welcome that clarify the concept of democracy in relation to citizenship, especially given the current societal challenges and populist criticism to the functioning of democratic institutions; papers on the issue of how far democracy and citizenship overlap and differ; and empirical research which shows how dimensions of democracy are understood, valued and lived by people.

Thirdly, research is needed which deepens the insight into how institutionalised religion and how individual belief are related to the diversity of concepts of democracy and citizenship; if there is an impact of religious affiliation, belief and practice on types of democracy and citizenship and if religious and non-religious people differ. If there is an impact, papers can elaborate how strong religious convictions and practices count compared to other civic and political attitudes, values and personal traits. Do data confirm that religions contribute to the societal quest for common goals and that they motivate believers to play an active part in the civil society? Alternatively, do research data suggest that religiosity is hardly societally oriented but individualised, privatised and focussed on the inner spiritual realm of a religious community?

Organisation

Timetable

15 April 2019	Final date for submission of the abstract and registration form (see below)
15 May 2019	Letter of acceptance
10 October 2019	Begin of the conference at 6 p.m., registration desk is open from 4 p.m.
13 October 2019	End of the conference after breakfast.

Note: A collegial paper presentation is counted in with 45 minutes, including discussion. Participation without paper-presentation is possible.

Costs

There is no conference fee. If registration is confirmed the following meals are included without extra charge: Buffet-Dinner on the 10th, Lunch and Dinner on the 11th and lunch at the 12th as well as coffee, tea and cookies during the breaks. It also includes the special dinner on the 12th after the reception, dedicated to Prof Ziebertz. In the registration form please confirm if you will exclude meals.

Travel expenses cannot be refunded. Participants have to book a hotel room individually.

Registration

The registration form (see below) has to be returned by email until 15 April 2019.

Abstract

The abstract must include the full name, academic title, institutional address, email address and phone number, further the title of the presentation and a text of about 250 words with research question, conceptual terms and methodology (see below).

Accommodation

There are several hotels nearby. A pre-reservation is made at the Franziskaner Hotel. A single room incl. breakfast can be booked for 216 Euro per 3 nights.

E-Mail: info@hotel-franziskaner.de (Code: Uni-Scheller)

Conference location

Burkardushaus, Am Bruderhof 1, 97070 Würzburg. The Burkardushaus is located at the southern part of the cathedral (Dom) in the city center. All presentations take place there as well as Lunch and Dinner.

Publication

We invite presenters to offer their paper for publication; guidelines will be distributed.

Communication

Addresses for submitting the abstract, registration and other communication are

hg.ziebertz@uni-wuerzburg.de and Sylvia.scheller@uni-wuerzburg.de

Registration Form

Religion, Democracy and Citizenship, 10. – 13. October 2019 in Wuerzburg, Germany.

(return this form to Sylvia.scheller@uni-wuerzburg.de and hg.ziebertz@uni-wuerzburg.de until **15th April 2019**)

Surname	
Forename(s)	
Academic title(s)	
Postal address	
E-mail	
Mobile phone number	

I will be present from 10 Oct 18:00 until 13 Oct morning and participate at all meals	Yes / No
I will miss the following meals:	

Please be aware that a **full participation is expected**. Flying in and out for a paper presentation is not desired.

Other comments	
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I will present a paper! Add the abstract below.	Title:
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Place and date

Signature

Abstract

Full name and academic title.....

Institutional address.....

Email address and phone number,

Titel of the presentation

Abstract text of about 250 words that includes a research question, conceptual terms and methodology.

Return this together with the registration form until 15th April 2019 to

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