

Meier, Tobias (2024): Community Organizing and municipal religious policy in the post-secular city, Waxmann, Münster.

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Zusammenfassung

Using examples from Cologne, Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig, the publication analyses local policy actor networks and policy fields of religious communities and reflects on the role of Faith-Based Community Organizing (FBCO) in these networks and policy fields.

The starting point of the research is the discussion about the post-secular society (according to Jürgen Habermas), which was taken up in social science urban research by Justin Beaumont and Christopher Baker. The focus on coalition building in the post-secular city in particular can be productively combined with other research on interreligious activities in the city in Germany and other disciplinary approaches (from urban sociology and urban planning, theology, religious studies and political science).

In an Extended Case Study Method, different methods were applied in a mixed-method design. To map the actor networks, an affiliation matrix of religious communities and urban actors was created for interreligious encounter structures in order to identify central actors and connections between the individual structures. In addition, further data was collected through interviews and observations. This made it possible to describe the joint municipal policy fields and further deepen the affiliation matrix. Finally, the data collected was triangulated on the basis of local press coverage.

As a result, clear traces of religion in the public sphere can be found in both the past and present in the four cities studied. This shows a high relevance of the church involvement of the Roman Catholic and Protestant religious communities. The role of those meeting structures that already act as an association of religious communities and in some cases also fulfill the function of a counterpart to the state is also increasing. In addition, it can be seen

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that the state actors in the cities studied are usually very conscious of religion and have developed post-secular approaches. A distinction can be made between two approaches:

- a. In the corporatist approach, the aim is to establish a representative counterpart of representatives of the most important religious communities.
- b. The integrative approach, on the other hand, is open to those religious communities that have little institutionalization or consist of only a few members.

In this respect, the FBCO acts as a complement to the respective approaches and offers an alternative approach to participation in each case. This applies in particular to participation structures in inner-city or former working-class areas, which have a basic participation structure but whose interests are not yet sufficiently heard. The value of FBCO therefore does not lie in the development of participation structures, but rather in helping to shape the existing opportunities for political action. Of great relevance here is the existing system of structured interfaith encounters in FBCO, which is not yet as well developed in other encounter structures. While there is usually a very local and person-specific approach, the basis of FBCO is an established set of methods within which the actors represent their urban political interests but also develop relationships with each other. FBCO thus offers a complementary local political framework for action which, in contrast to other meeting structures, takes place at a disputable distance from state actors. This is where the real value of community organizing lies: in reviving a local political experience of arguing and negotiating issues that affect the everyday lives of local people - not in the negation of other forms of participation, but as their contentious but lovingly connected sibling.