

Governing Religious Differences at the Intersection of Gender and Ethnicity.

ECPR Joint Session in Lisbon, 2009

Sieglinde Rosenberger/Birgit Sauer, University of Vienna and Petra Rostock, Free University
Berlin

Outline of the topic and relation to existing research

In the last decade religious, ethnic and cultural differences have become highly contested issues in many European countries. Particularly, the presence of Islam as a “migrating” religion has been on the political and academic agenda for some time now. Conflicts have evolved around issues such as wearing Muslim headscarves in public institutions (Göle 2002; Berghahn 2004), building mosques and minarets in European town centers and so called traditional violence against women, as for example female circumcision and arranged or forced marriage (Phillips 2007). Some of these conflicting issues did not only trigger heated debates but also have been leading to a wide range of policy action across European countries as for instance bans of headscarves in public institutions (France, Turkey, Germany) (Saharso 2003), changes of laws for abroad marriage (Denmark, UK), amendments of penal laws to punish genital cutting (Austria, Germany) and municipal norms of the length of minarets.

Obviously, migration to western societies has challenged the ideas, institutions and processes of how liberal democracies should accommodate and deal with religious, cultural and ethnic differences. Due to the transformation of global migration patterns – the feminization of migration to the European Union – integration policies and modes of living together have changed tremendously: Migrants and their families will not return to the countries they once migrated from and religious, cultural and ethnic diversity became part of everyday live in western European countries. Therefore the question of recognizing religious and ethnical differences has become an issue of major importance for liberal democracies (Kymlicka 1995; May/Modood/Squires 2004; Bader 2007). However, multiculturalist policies have been disputed since the mid 1990s: After the attacks of 9/11, the Madrid and London bombings and the murder of Theo van Gogh tools of multiculturalism are not perceived as an appropriate approach to deal with religious, cultural and ethnic different minorities. More and more multiculturalism is

associated with the development of “parallel societies”, with ghettoization and non-integration of ethnic and religious minorities.

The contested issues mentioned above reveal that gender is at the core of public discussions and political responses to religious and ethnic differences. Challenges to western European societies created by migration are deeply entangled with gender relations in several ways: On the one hand debates about the “crisis of multiculturalism” point to gendered topics such as veiling or forced marriage. What, if different “cultures” are harmful to women from these minority cultures? How should liberal states react to illiberal, harmful practices towards women? On the other hand, in political controversies about immigration gender equality is used as an argument against “other” cultures and ethnicities in order to show their lack of modernity, as for instance in the Dutch policy debates on domestic violence or Austrian right-wing party campaigns. Thus, debates on religious, ethnic and cultural differences also re-negotiate gender relations in European countries.

And indeed, these issues of religious difference at the intersection of gender and ethnicity challenge fundamental values of liberal democracies as for instance individual freedom of religious practices, toleration, equal treatment of religious beliefs and communities, and equal treatment of the sexes. Moreover, in debates over these issues, European values are being negotiated and collective identities are being constructed. Therefore, this use of discursive logic – especially the discourse on gender equality – runs the risk of being instrumentalized to bring forward racist sentiments and prejudice and anti-foreigner policies.

Scholarly literature in the field of migration and minorities, citizenship and multiculturalism, and religion has been growing in the last 15 years (for instance Bodeman/Yurdakul 2006; Joppke/Morawska 2003; Koopmans et al. 2005; Modood 2007). Also research on “minorities within minorities” became an issue (Eisenberg/Spinner-Halev 2005). While these studies were initially gender-blind, a feminist approach on the issue of multiculturalism developed – starting with the provoking question of Susan Moller Okin if “Multiculturalism is bad for women” (Moller Okin 1999, 2005; Shachar 2001). Another strand of related scholarly debates covers the concept of intersectionality, studying how several structures of inequality – gender, class, religion, race, ethnicity – interact not only in individual identity building but also in policy processes (e.g. Crenshaw 1991; McCall 2005).

The workshop wants to shift existing debates on multiculturalism, feminism and gender equality and give them a new spin by focusing on the *governing* of religious difference at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. The aim of the proposed workshop is to bring together research on multiculturalism, governance and intersectionality and to critically assess the research on governing religious difference at the intersection of ethnicity and gender. It tries to show the potential of a gendered analysis and of the perspective of intersectionality in explaining and analyzing policy-making and policy outcomes in the context of religious and ethnic differences.

The key research questions addressed in this workshop are:

- In the “crises” of multiculturalism, how do European countries govern religious, ethnic and gender differences?
- Which alternatives to multiculturalism are being discussed?
- Which democratic procedures have been developed to address the above mentioned issues?
- Which are the main factors that might explain differences and similarities in governing religious differences in European countries?

The workshop intends to discuss differences and similarities in governing the above mentioned issues, particularly the issue of dress codes in various public settings, with a specific focus on “new” and “old” EU-member states, but also in comparison to Turkey. Four aspects may serve as explaining factors for the governance of religious difference at the intersection of gender and ethnicity as well as differences and similarities across European countries: First, historically established state-church-relations (secularism, neutrality), the current public role of religion and the recognition and accommodation of religious communities (Fetzer/Soper 2005); second, citizenship regimes (civic-assimilationist, ethno-cultural or multi-cultural); third, gender relations, gender images and institutions of gender equality and anti-discrimination; and fourth, the role of frames, embedded in national master frames such as sex equality, national security, secularity or freedom of religion.

The papers might show how state institutions and NGOs in the field frame the issues, how they interact and co-operate and how the different frames (and actors) shape the policies in the context

of multilevel governance in the European Union. Moreover, the workshop asks questions about processes of policy homogenization, policy diffusion and Europeanization – mainly due to integration and asylum policies. Also, the workshop wants to discuss ambivalent outcome of policies. The picture of governing religious differences is puzzling: Anti-discrimination policies, which try to target discrimination due to gender, religion and ethnicity (Skjeie 2007).

The workshop aims at contributing to theory building in the field of political intersectionality and on governance literature (Pierre/Peters 2000; Benz et al. 2007). Papers presented in the workshop will deliver empirical knowledge about “political intersectionality”, i.e. how political actors – state actors as well as civil society actors – actively create intersections, though with possibly different aims (Verloo 2006).

Finally, the workshop wants to discuss how values on a national but also international level of the EU are socially constructed and politically negotiated. Do the debates and policy action at the intersection of religious, ethnic and gender difference (intentionally) contribute to construct a “European identity”? How is the argument of gender equality used in the policy debates? How do gender difference, religious difference and ethnic difference intersect in the policies? Are policy makers aware of the intersections? How do NGOs in the field deal with intersecting and perhaps contradicting norms and values and structures of inequality?

Types of papers solicited

We are looking for in-depth empirical research, which aim at answering the questions raised in this outline. We would like to discuss widespread issues in the field of “governing religious difference”. Papers are welcomed which compare the regulation of issues of gender, religious and ethnic differences in national and European contexts. Cross-national comparisons are very welcomed. However, the empirical work should also give insights in theories and methodologies used for empirical study. The papers are supposed to focus either on the question of governance of difference respectively diversity (with a focus on policy processes and policy analysis), on the role of values and norms in the policy process and public debates and/or on the issue of construction of European identity. All papers should raise the question how they deal with the problem of political intersectionality. As there are a number of funded research projects (EU, national science funds), the workshops aims at bringing together senior and junior researchers

from the different projects. Funds will be partly available from the research projects as well as from national science foundations.

References

- Bader, Veith 2007: *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Benz, Arthur et al. (eds.) 2007: *Handbuch Governance. Theoretische Grundlagen und empirische Anwendungsfelder*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Berghahn, Sabine 2004: *Verfassungspolitischer Streit um ein Stück Stoff: Das Kopftuch der Lehrerin im Konflikt zwischen Grundrechtsschutz, staatlicher Neutralität in Glaubensfragen und föderaler Gesetzgebung*. In: *femina politica, Zeitschrift für feministische Politik-Wissenschaft*, Heft 1, p. 45-56.
- Bodemann, Michal/Yurdakul, Gökce (eds.) 2006: *Migration, Citizenship, Ethnos: Incorporation Regimes in Germany, Western Europe and North America*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé 1991: *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, in: *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6, p. 1241-1279.
- Fetzer, Joel S., and Christopher J. Soper. 2005. *Muslims and the state in Britain, France, and Germany*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Göle, Nilüfer 2002: *Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries*. In: *Public Culture*. No. 14 /1, p. 173-190.
- Joppke, Christian/Morawska, Ewa (eds.) 2003: *Towards Assimilation and Citizenship. Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koopmanns, Ruud et al. 2005: *Contested Citizenship. Political Contention over Migration and Ethnic Relations in Western Europe*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kymlicka, Will (ed.) 1995: *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eisenberg, Avigail/Spinner-Halev, Jeff (eds.) 2005: *Minorities within Minorities. Equality, Rights and Diversity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- May, Stephen J./Modood, Tariq/Squires, Judith (eds.) 2004: *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights*, Cambridge.
- McCall, Leslie 2005: *The Complexity of Intersectionality*. In: *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 1771-1800.
- Modood, Tariq 2007: *Multiculturalism: a Civic Idea*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Okin, Susan Moller 1999: *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* In: Cohen, Jean/Howard, M/Nussbaum, Martha C. (eds.): *Is Multiculturalism bad for Women?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Moller Okin, Susan 2005: *Multiculturalism and feminism: no simple question, no simple answers*. In: Eisenberg, Avigail/Spinner-Halev, Jeff (eds.): *Minorities within Minorities: Equality, Rights and Diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 67-89.
- Saharso, Sawitri 2003: *Culture, Tolerance and Gender. A Contribution from the Netherlands*. In: *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, (10)1, p. 7-27.
- Phillips, Anne 2007: *Multiculturalism without Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shachar, Ayelet 2001: *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skjeie, Hege. 2007. "Headscarves in schools. European comparisons." In: Goldschmidt, Jenny/Loenen, M.L.T. (eds.): *Religious Pluralism and Human Rights in Europe. Where to draw the Line?*, Antwerp and Oxford: Intersentia, p. 129-146.

Verloo, Mieke, 2006: "Multiple Inequalities, Intersectionality and the European Union." In: *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 211-228.

Biographical notes

Sieglinde Rosenberger is professor of political science at the University of Vienna. She was a fellow at the Department of Women's Studies at San Diego State University (1991/92), at Harvard University (2003/04), and the European University Institute/Firenze (2007). Her research interests focus on the governance of religious pluralism, identities and gender relations. Current research projects include "VEIL. Values, Equality and Differences in Liberal Democracies. Debates about Female Muslim Headscarves in Europe" (6th EU Framework Program funded by the EU) and "Participatory Elites".

Birgit Sauer is professor of Political Science at the University of Vienna. She studied in Tübingen and Berlin and was visiting professor in Seoul/Korea, Klagenfurt/Austria, Mainz/Germany and at Florida Atlantic University. Recently she is research visitor at Humboldt University Berlin. Together with Sieglinde Rosenberger she is coordinator of the EU funded research project VEIL (Values and Equality in Liberal Democracies) and of the project "Governing Difference". Her research interest includes feminist state theory, gender and governance and democracy and difference. She edited together with Melissa Hausmann the volume "Gendering the State in the Age of Globalisation" (Roman and Littlefield).

Petra Rostock studied political Science at Free University Berlin and at University of Leipzig. She has a master in Political science from Leipzig University. Since 2006 she is junior researcher at Free University Berlin in the field of family policy in Germany. She is also junior researcher in the project VEIL. Values, Equality and Differences in Liberal Democracies. Debates about Female Muslim Headscarves in Europe" (6th EU Framework Program funded by the EU) and writes her PhD thesis on regulation of headscarves in Germany. Her research interests include migration, cultural diversity and gender.