

## **Urban Governance – Innovation, Insecurity and the Power of Religion Tenth Berlin Roundtables on Transnationality**

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### **Urbanity as the space for postconventionality – How religions may innovate cities and themselves**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Abstract  | 2  |
| 1 Religion, governability and urbanity            | 3  |
| 2 Innovation, reason and postconventionality      | 5  |
| 3 Stages of political culture and religious faith | 5  |
| 4 Conclusion                                      | 10 |
| Declaration                                       | 10 |
| Bibliography                                      | 11 |

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## **Abstract**

In this theoretical paper, urbanity is defined as the quality of spaces with high levels of innovation in utmost diverse areas. Normatively sound governability can only be expected if politics are pursued in a deliberative approach. Deliberations make sense as long as no result is excluded upfront, in other words, as long as innovations of all kind are welcome. The political culture, which supports such individual and collective learning processes most effectively, can be attributed with postconventionality.

Religions, which have to explain the rationally unexplainable tend to base themselves on traditions, as this is one of the most powerful sources of persuasiveness when no empirical proof is at hand.

To make innovations possible both within and outside of religious matters, it is argued that religious actors have to strive for postconventional cultures of religious faith. The notion of postconventional cultures of religious faith is an advancement of Kohlberg's and Fowler's collective stages of moral culture and individual stages of religious faith. The government can only invite its citizens to participate in individual and collective innovations, both secular and religious, as any coercive measure would hinder if not destroy such learning processes.

[191 words]

## **1 Religion, governability and urbanity**

The core of any religion is a set of more or less coherent answers to the ultimate questions of human existence; they themselves are interdependent and can be formulated for example as follows:

- Where are we from, that is, what, if anything, happens before we come into existence as human beings?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Where are we bound to, that is, what, if anything, happens after death?

As these questions cannot be answered rationally, metaphysical answers come into play. These cannot be proven empirically, so other sources of persuasiveness have to be exploited. One of the most effective sources of persuasiveness is tradition. This is why religions – in particular if they are used as a tool to control power – tend to be reluctant to innovate themselves, as this questions one of their prime sources of persuasiveness.

Governability means the ability to govern. First of all, governability relies on the following three dimensions (Mastronardi, 2007):

- Polity, that is the political entity and its institutions such as the constitution. Polity refers mainly to the general rules and the structures of the game.
- Policy, that is the goals and tasks which shall be pursued within a polity. Policy refers mainly to the political interests, programs and the content.
- Politics, that is the political processes, within which policy decisions are made. Politics refer mainly to the will building, decision making and implementation of policies within a polity.

Beyond these three dimensions, it is decisive if a given government strives for justice and fairness or if it pursues its interests, neglecting those of all other actors. In the context of modern and complex societies in which religions are allowed to play an important role, it can be assumed that governability is sustainable only if certain normative standards are maintained. An example of the formulation of these normative standards can be found in the

theories of deliberative democracy. There, it is argued that just or at least fair political decisions can be assumed only if prior to the decision all political actors were able to deliberate the issues at hand. It can be shown that such deliberations are successful only if certain conditions are met. Firstly, certain institutional requirements such as the rule of law, democracy and the division of power need to be fulfilled. Secondly, a certain political culture is required to dispose the political actors to deliberate reasonably and to compromise in a solidary fashion. (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996). From this, it can be deduced that governability can only be expected if polity, policy, politics and political culture allow innovation.

Urbanity in its broadest term can be defined as the quality of spaces with high levels of innovation in utmost diverse areas such as culture, economics, politics, society and technology. Whereas innovation may take place in any locality, it is in urban spaces where critical masses and high levels of innovation are reached, which also cross-fertilize innovations not necessarily linked to the initial issue. Innovation is a result of individual and collective learning processes. It requires an open configuration, both in terms of structures and in terms of culture.

Summarizing the debate of these three terms, it can be said that

- urbanity as a descriptive concept stands for an open configuration which allows innovations of all kinds,
- governability as a normative concept requires an open configuration in order to innovate itself and to remain sustainable, just and fair,
- religion as a sociological concept tends to be innovation averse, which does not mean that religions cannot trigger innovations and / or renew themselves.

It is the aim of this paper to propose a framework, within which urban spaces remain under the just and fair control of the government. Simultaneously, this framework shall provide for an adequate role of religions. As providers of answers to the ultimate questions of the human existence, religions are a powerful basis for identities, integration and solidarity. Before such a framework can be laid out, the idea of open configuration needs to be clarified.

## **2 Innovation, reason and postconventionality**

Above, innovation has been defined as the result of individual and collective learning processes. It can also be defined as the creation of reasonable strategies toward new problems. Innovation can only take place if new strategies are allowed, that is, if traditions can be transformed easily and actors operate in open configurations. Reason itself “is to be understood as pure reason, meaning that it does not possess any principles. To put it more exactly: it is not in possession of any principles relating to content, rather it possesses formal principles, logical principles alone. [...] The important thing however is that reason is the only faculty for recognizing, correcting, and transcending its own actual impurity. Through self-reflection, reason can free itself from one-sidedness.” (Welsch, 1998). In that sense, reason is the quest for a totally open configuration, so that any innovation becomes possible.

In developmental psychology and in particular in the study of the development of individual moral reasoning, the idea of open configurations has been conceptualized with the notion of postconventionality. Postconventionality means the ability of a person to establish moral judgments on his own, in opposition to preconventional and conventional modes, where an individual is totally determined by an authority or where his cognitive ability allows only limited reasoning within predetermined structures (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984, 1986).

The notion of postconventionality can fruitfully be transferred from the moral to the political realm, by differentiating political culture along the scale of preconventionality, conventionality and postconventionality. By doing so, it becomes clear that normatively sound deliberations in modern and complex societies depend, among other elements, on postconventional political cultures (Rauschenbach, forthcoming). What postconventional political cultures are and how they relate to religions will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **3 Stages of political culture and religious faith**

It has been stated that political cultures dispose political actors to deliberate reasonably and to compromise in a solidary fashion. For further substantiation, political culture can be analytically differentiated into elements of

- moral culture,

- ethical-political culture,
- pragmatic culture and
- culture of balancing interests.

At the same time, different political cultures can be organized along the scale of collective stages of

- preconventional (stages 1 and 2),
- conventional (stages 3 and 4) and
- postconventional nature (stages 5 and 6).

These collective stages of political culture are an advancement of Kohlberg's collective stages of moral culture (Power / Higgins / Kohlberg, 1989, Rauschenbach, forthcoming). A brief description of the six political cultures and their elements is depicted in Table 1.

In the context of postmetaphysical thinking and (at least) partially secularized state structures, religious considerations tend to be minimized within formal governmental institutions. However, this does not prevent religious faith from its existence and its influence on politics. The question of how religious and non-religious matters can be harmonized needs to be reexamined therefore in a continuous way (Casanova, 1994, Norris / Inglehart, 2004, Davie, 2007).

In analogy to Kohlberg's individual stages of moral thinking, Fowler has proposed individual stages of religious faith (Fowler, 1981, 1991). As Kohlberg expanded the individual stages of moral thinking into collective stages of moral culture, Fowler's individual stages of religious faith can be advanced into collective stages of culture of religious faith, as depicted in the bold column in Table 1.

| Stage | Moral culture  | Ethical-political culture  | Pragmatic culture   | Culture of balancing interests   | Political culture                                      | Culture of religious faith                |
|-------|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| 1     | Domination by the authority                              | Very weak need for a collective identity. If at all, identities are imposed by the authority   | Pragmatic aspects are perceived as materialistic, unchangeable and even more importantly as restrictions and/or as threats                                    | No balancing of interests is envisioned. Only the interests of the authority are relevant  | Political culture of fear                              | Culture of intuitive-projective faith     |
| 2     | Moral culture of exchange relationships                  | Collective identities continue to play a minor role. They are perceived as a byproduct of exchanges  | Pragmatic aspects are still perceived as being materialistic and unchangeable. They offer however the opportunity to create competitive advantages            | Interests are solely balanced as long as it is not to the detriment of anybody   | Political culture of egoism                            | Culture of mythic-literal faith           |
| 3     | Moral culture of personal well-being                     | The collective identity is appreciated and results from a positive „family feeling“. Toward outsiders, the collective delineates itself with ideas of supremacy        | Pragmatic aspects are not anymore perceived as being totally unchangeable. The collective is able to influence some pragmatic factors positively              | Balancing interests in favor of the collective may occur   | Political culture of communalites                      | Culture of synthetic-conventional faith   |
| 4     | Moral culture of stabilization and identification        | The collective identity becomes more important. It has an entity-like character and is related to certain places and myths and the rituals and symbols derived thereof | Pragmatic aspects lose their materialistic character and are perceived as increasing abstract categories. Accordingly, the collective can interpret them anew | As more abstract categories become relevant, the balancing of interests is not anymore required to occur at the same time and/or on a one-to-one basis | Political culture of traditions                        | Culture of individuative-reflective faith |
| 5     | Moral culture of the constitutional state (human rights) | Collective identity is based on abstract principles which allow diversity. Civil rights contribute to the formation of identities                                      | As the time horizon is extended, sustainable solutions become appealing   | Apparent renunciations are not necessarily perceived as such. Minorities enjoy special attention   | Political culture of the national constitutional state | Culture of conjunctive faith              |
| 6     | Moral culture of universalization                        | (Collective) identities are cognized as a product of communicative processes   | Pragmatic aspects are perceived in cycles   | Balancing of interests is granted, if at all required  | Political culture of cosmopolitism                     | Culture of universalizing faith           |

Table 1: The six collective stages of political culture and ist elements (Rauschenbach, forthcoming); in parallel, the six collective stages of religious faith (based on Fowler, 1981, 1991).

The nature of collective stages differs from individual stages: first of all, collective stages do not follow an invariant sequence. The culture (be it the political culture or the culture of religious faith) of a group may start at any stage; this depends on the individual stages of the group members and on other circumstances. Regression to lower collective stages occurs more easily than in the case of individual development. Collective stages are not structural wholes: individual stages describe only the cognitive aspect of reasoning where some coherence can be expected. Collective stages do not refer to a “group mind,” even though it is maintained that individuals interacting in groups construct common norms, which in turn influence their thinking in the group. Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that most groups consist of individuals who have developed to different individual stages, which leads in real life to situations of mixed collective stages. Below, abbreviated descriptions of the six stages of the cultures of religious faith are provided.

Collective stage 1 – culture of intuitive projective faith: Religious faith is based on ongoing experiences as well as on freefloating fantasies and is not yet controlled by logical thinking. However, a feeling of selfconsciousness arises and includes the awareness of death.

Collective stage 2 – culture of mythic-literal faith: Religious faith is structured around stories which follow a certain narrative logic. Symbols and their meanings are understood literally.

Collective stage 3 – culture of conventional faith: Religious faith is based on abstract ideas and concepts for making sense of one’s world. The culture of conventional faith is conformistic in the sense that individuals try to live up to the expectations of others without being able to question others in their judgement.

Collective stage 4 – culture of individuative-reflective faith: This stage promotes questioning oneself, one’s worldview and values, as well as those of others. Beliefs change from tacit to explicit, which means that they are now consciously chosen and critically supported.

Collective stage 5 – culture of conjunctive faith: This stage integrates polarities, which appeared on lower stages as unconnectable. Furthermore, affective dimensions are now consciously incorporated in identities and worldviews. The feeling of being part of humankind remains however an abstract vision, as no tangible consequences are drawn from it.

Collective stage 6 – culture of universalizing faith: At stage 6, humankind becomes the focus of action. Social, political, economical or ideological conditions do not stabilize or even protect anymore one's own position but are transgressed to make the world a more just place. The culture of universalizing faith is at peace with other religions.

Fowler's individual stages of religious faith could be identified empirically, at least stage 1 to stage 5 (Fowler, 1981). As Fowler's conception is normatively motivated, it is clear that religious faith at stage 6 is a rare appearance. The notion of culture of religious faith, as laid out in this paper, is a theoretical concept and has not been empirically tested. It is assumed that practices of religious communities could be classified within this scale of stages. Such classifications are however not determined by a specific religion; in fact, it is assumed that all religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam can engender cultures of religious faith of all stages.

As individuals will always raise the above mentioned ultimate questions, religious faith will remain an everpresent phenomenon. Any attempt to suppress religion will in the long run fail or lead to a sacralization of seemingly non-religious endeavours. However, not all religious practices are equally adequate in modern and complex contexts, such as (mega-)urban agglomerations. In these settings, sustainable and just development is only possible if innovations can take place in all fields, also in the religious. To allow religious innovations, open configurations are required, as they can be described with the postconventional collective stages of the culture of religious faith.

The state cannot extort postconventional political culture from the citizens, since it results from (non-coercive) learning processes. It is assumed however, that the availability of processes of direct democracy can favor individual and collective learning processes and help produce postconventional political cultures (Rauschenbach, forthcoming). In analogy, it can be said that postconventional cultures of religious faith cannot be ordained, but it can be assumed, that state configurations, which promote innovation and learning in general, will also favor the emergence of postconventional cultures of religious faith. Simultaneously, the emergence of postconventional cultures of religious faith can only be expected if religious actors aspire to it.

#### **4 Conclusion**

It was the aim of this paper to provide a framework within which urban spaces remain under the just and fair control of the government and within which religions hold an adequate role. Governability can only be assumed if all actors are allowed to deliberate the issues at hand and if these deliberations happen in the spirit of postconventional political culture. Religions can contribute to the governability of modern and complex settings such as (mega-)urban agglomerations insofar as they strive for postconventional cultures of religious faith and, by doing so, contribute to the generation of postconventional political cultures.

[2496 words]

#### **Declaration**

The essay submitted is the work of only the individual whose name appears on the front page as the author; any parts taken from other sources are appropriately referenced in the essay. The essay is unpublished.

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