

“No Sex Please, We are Catholic”. Reproduction and Partnership in the Area of Conflict between (De-)Secularisation and (De-)Privatisation of Religion in Ireland and Poland

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The project's aim is to question current results in the field of Sociology of Religion that interpret recent developments in Irish and Polish societies either as "secularisation" (the case of Ireland) or "de-privatisation" (Poland). This is especially observable in the field of sexuality and sexual politics. Comparing two societies with similarities in history and culture – the long dominance of the Catholic Church, the agricultural character of society until the 1950s, processes of modernisation in the second half of the 20th century – gives us a broader insight in the parameters that led (or did not lead) to changes of values that are equated by Sociologists of Religion with the above-mentioned theories. Therefore, the project is able to look at the relation between religion and modernising societies from a new broader perspective and takes a look at long-term developments focusing on discourses on reproduction and partnership. These two issues are not (as Ronald Inglehart suggested) a “silent revolution,” but because of their controversial nature they can be explicitly observed and therefore analysed. The developments in the Republic of Ireland are a good example of how fast such a change of values can occur: It was only 35 years between the referendum on the “unborn’s right to life” almost entirely banning abortion (1983) and the legalisation of the procedure on a woman’s request (2018).

Using Foucauldian analysis of discourse, the project analyses constellations of power that led to (the loss of) dominance in discourse of certain actors, e.g. the Catholic Church in Ireland and Poland, in the second half of the 20th century. This is seen as one factor that allowed or hindered a change of values. The project analyses a broad sample of source and its contents to identify discursive rules and limits. This analysis of discourse has two aims: First, its aim is to analyse the preconditions leading to a shift in power and hegemony between the different actors as participants in this specific discourse. Second, closely connected to above-mentioned shift of power, the analysis aims to detect factors that enabled to widen or narrow the discursive limits influencing the change of values.

Furthermore, the project reconstructs the impact of these discourses on the society using empirical materials (statistics on abortion, divorce, and birth rate). In general, it focuses on periods of discursive condensation (e.g. social and legal debates on abortion, marriage, family, contraception etc.) and on periods of “accelerated modernisation” after 1945 (e.g. the 1970s and

1990s). One further aspect in the analysis are the discussions on eve of the countries' entry into the EC/EU (1973/2004) that led to conflicts between "progressive (pro-EU)" and "traditionalist (nationalist)" forces; the latter fearing the ousting of "traditional values" by a "godless" supranational European entity.