

Call for Papers

Contentious Politics within Civil Society

How the rise of new cleavages and the far right transform civil society

Workshop

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Location: WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Date: Thursday/Friday, 7–8 November 2024

Call for Papers

Contemporary societies in Europe and beyond have seen the emergence of new cleavages, often driven by far-right challengers and cross-cutting traditional political divides. Importantly, these new cleavages have not only put traditional political parties under pressure but have also resulted in a profound **politicization of civil society**. This development can be observed in a series of trends. For example, a large number of civil society organizations with sociopolitical objectives compared to leisure activities has emerged. At the same time, established civil society organizations (from unions, religious associations, to sports clubs) have been challenged also from within their own ranks by the rise of new political parties and movements and forced to take sides in controversial political debates. The growing politicization of civil society poses a number of **theoretical and empirical questions**: How do nativist and nationalist actors politicize civil society? What are differences and similarities of politicization dynamics across different civil society fields? How do established civil society actors respond to these challenges? How do they deal with conflict within their own organizations? What kind of counter strategies work? What are the implications for cleavage politics, social cohesion, and democracy?

At this workshop, we would like to discuss these questions with researchers interested in far-right contention and the politicization of contemporary civil society in Europe and elsewhere. Thereby, we would like to **bridge traditional divisions** between social movement studies and civil society research. On the one hand, social movement studies have been primarily interested in conflict between challengers and the state and have paid less attention to contention within civil society. On the other hand, civil society research has focused on the realization of social cohesion, civility, and respect and has been less interested in the “dark side” of civil society. We suggest that integrating both areas of research more closely is key to understanding the politicization of civil society.

We invite **conceptual, theoretical, and empirical papers** that focus on the dynamics of contention within civil society, including the rise of far-right social movements and protest, far-right contention within organized civil society, movement-counter-movement interactions, organizational responses to contention, and civil society in divided societies. We welcome all methodological approaches.

Next to intensive discussions of the submitted papers, the workshop will feature a public roundtable titled “How to counter the far-right: the role of civil society.”

How to participate?

Scholars interested to participate are invited to submit an **abstract of about 250 words** and a short bio, including affiliation and contact information.

Please use the following form to submit your abstract and bio:

<https://poll.wzb.eu/index.php/198657?lang=en>

No conference fees are required. We cannot cover travel costs, but we will provide logistical support, catering and a conference dinner.

If you have any questions, please send an email to: zz.office@wzb.eu

Please do not email abstracts, use the submission form instead.

Timeline

31 May 2024: Deadline submission of abstracts

14 June 2024: Notification of selection

30 October 2024: Submission of full papers

7-8 November 2024: Workshop