

What Parliamentary Rhetoric tells us about Changing Democratic Culture

Day of Parliamentary Research

Panel: What do plenary debates tell us about power relations and democratic culture?

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Media reception: attack on parliament = attack on democracy



Foto: The Associated Press



Foto: Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland

1. Theoretical framework: Attack on parliament = attack on democracy–



Parliament = symbolic centre of democracy (Habermas,
Palonen, Patzelt)

Parliament as symbolic centre of democracy

- parliamentary rhetoric is part of democratic culture (boundaries of the sayable, understandings of democracy and democratic culture)
- parliamentary rhetoric allows for analysing shifts of democratic culture over time

Case study: Antisemitism as a political strategy and the development of democracy (FWF Project)

Analysis of parliamentary rhetoric and democratic culture nexus

- reconstruct shifts of boundaries of the sayable regarding antisemitism including understandings of democracy and demos

VIA

- reconstructing rhetorical strategies of dealing with antisemitism

Methodology

Interdisciplinary Approach

CDA (Ruth Wodak), PRA (Cornelia Ilie), Politolinguistik (Burkhardt), Conceptual History (Koselleck), philosophy of rhetoric (Hetzel) etc.

Corpus: 1.432 debates between 1945 and 2020

Findings: Strategies of dealing with AS...

1. Coding of antisemitism („emigrants“) and political use as rhetorical cement for a coalition consensus
2. Strategies of denial and trivialisation of antisemitism (coalition consensus)
3. Strategies for re-evaluating antisemitism (sensitisation) and instrumental ‘philosemitism’ (after Waldheim Scandal)
4. Strategies of accusations of antisemitism and aggressive defense against these accusations („Nazi-cudgel“)

... and what they tell about democratic culture

- Boundaries of the sayable become increasingly narrow over time
- until Waldheim scandal, (distancing from) AS was a matter of consensual silence in Great Coalition – from Waldheim on a matter of competitive democratic self-presentation
- from formal understanding of democracy to certain sensitisation: more equality-oriented understanding of democracy evolved in 1980ies
- (aggressive defense against) accusations of AS as „weapons“ („Silberstein“)

What democratic culture has to do with power relations

- Party political power relations are crucial context of competitive democratic self-presentation in parliamentary rhetoric
- equality oriented understanding of democracy introduces societal power relations as a topic (gender hierarchy, discrimination of minorities)
- Parliamentary rhetoric mirrors societal power relations (“hierarchies of belonging”-Henderson)

Thank you

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