

Lecture Series Public Theology: An International and Intercontextual Assessment

*Task sheet: Torsten Meireis * The 'Public' in 'Public Theology'. Dimensions of a Contested Concept*

This lecture is available free of charge as comprehensive video file (mp4) or as audio file (mp3) with accompanying slides in pdf-format.

This task sheet contains:

1. Three questions for group discussion
2. Three suggested titles for further reading
3. A timeline to match audio file and pdf slide presentation
4. A list of references for the lecture

1. Three questions for group discussion:

1. In the lecture, the public is empirically sketched as many publics: the public as a 'fragmented space of articulation'. Additionally, those publics are characterized as places where different objectives, interests, and causes collide while the power to make oneself heard is most unevenly distributed: the public as a 'space of asymmetric conflict'.

Identify different publics and different layers of power in your context!

2. In spite of the empirical evidence, we use the term 'the public' as a generic and general term, often referring to 'the public' in the singular. In the lecture, this term is understood as a regulative idea, a concept that contains descriptive and prescriptive, normative elements. Thus, 'the public' always carries the notion that it is a space for deliberation of the common good where everybody concerned should have a say and get the opportunity to make him or herself heard without regard to gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and the likes.

Are there actual or virtual spaces in your context that come close to an inclusive place where everybody can make his- or herself heard without fear of oppression or social repercussions? Discuss!

3. In the lecture (delivered by a Protestant Christian male theologian from a global north-western context), public theology is presented as a critical reflection obliging churches to
a) contribute to a public of universal access and participation as God in Jesus Christ bestows human dignity and human rights to every person and commands us to love our neighbours regardless

- b) remain self-critical regarding their own quest for power and wealth keeping the universality of sin in mind
- c) refrain from becoming 'churches in excess' (struggling for public hegemony) or 'churches in defect' (withholding their critical witness from the public for reasons of fear or accomodation).

Are those obligations theologically sound? Are they applicable to your context? Discuss!

2. Three suggested titles for further reading

1. Sunday B. Agang, H. Jurgens Hendriks, Dion A. Forster (Eds.)(2020), African Public Theology, Bukuru, Carlisle: Langham/HippoBooks.
2. Torsten Meireis, Rolf Schieder (Eds.)(2017), Religion and Democracy. Studies in Public Theology, Baden-Baden: Nomos.
3. Nancy Fraser (1990), Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy, in: Social Text 25/26, 56-80.

3. A timeline to match audio file and pdf slide-presentation

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|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Slide | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Time | 00'16 | 03'13 | 04'48 | 06'27 | 06'52 | 07'16 | 09'55 | 10'28 | 11'44 |
| Slide | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| Time | 13'07 | 14'17 | 16'05 | 17'27 | 19'19 | 21'35 | 22'29 | 23'50 | 29'53 |

4. References

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