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BASIC SOCIO-POLITICAL CONCEPTS IN GERMAN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES FROM THE 20TH CENTURY

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Germany's diverse history in the 20th century raises the question of how social upheavals were constituted in and through political discourse. By analysing basic concepts, the research network "The 20th century in basic concepts" (based at the Leibniz institutes IDS, ZfL, ZZF) aims to identify continuities and discontinuities in political and social discourse. In this way, historical sediments of the present are to be uncovered and those challenges identified that emerged in the course of the 20th century and continue to shape political discourse until the present.

One of the projects of the outlined research network will be presented in the talk: "Basic Socio-Political Concepts with Large Scope and Duration". In the tradition of historical semantics (Müller/Schmieder 2016), the project conceives of conceptual history ("Begriffsgeschichte") as an undertaking to be explored linguistically, which, complementary to the classical hermeneutic investigation of highbrow literature, must be oriented towards the empirical analysis of wider linguistic corpora (cf. Busse/Teubert 2014). The project presented focuses on the parliamentary protocols of the 20th century in a discourse-semantic and corpus-pragmatic way. With the intention of tracing modes of use and changes in meaning of central political-social concepts in the political communication space of parliament, the project addresses the important desideratum of a linguistically-empirically founded conceptual history for a clearly defined core area of political discourse.

On the basis of German-language parliamentary debates (Reichstag and Bundestag minutes), the project looks at basic political-social concepts of the 20th century and examines their modes of use in parliamentary communication by means of corpus-pragmatic and discourse-semantic methods. The focus is on parliament as a space of communication in which the constitution of meaning(s), competing and shifting patterns of interpretation and identificatory use of political-social basic concepts can be observed in a specifically condensed but homogenous communicative setting. The central aim of the project is to analyse how these semantic processes took place in the parliamentary communication space against the background of their pragmatic contexts and how they can be described in terms of conceptual history.

The talk will outline the project corpus, which consists of the Reichstag minutes of the German Empire, the Weimar Republic and National Socialism as well as the Bundestag minutes of the 20th century.

For the project, which combines quantitative-corpus linguistic and qualitative-hermeneutic analytical perspectives, concepts are selected that had considerable social and political reach throughout the 20th century and were also at the centre of (party-)political interpretive struggles (e.g. 'democracy', 'people'/'nation'). A three-stage discourse-semantic heuristic will be presented in the talk:

- 1) explorative identification of semantic clusters and diachronic condensations,
- 2) contextualisation of concept-constituting lexical items,
- 3) qualitative-hermeneutic analysis of parliamentary concept formation.

In the talk we present an excerpt from our ongoing work on the concept of *democracy*. The resulting article connects to the *democracy* article in “Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe” (Conze et al. 1972), which, however, only marginally refers to the 20th century. Using data from 20th century parliamentary minutes, we present exploratory steps towards a corpus-based understanding of democracy. Following the idea that the corpus-based identification of candidates of concept-constituting lexical items complements the forthcoming lexicon articles, we identify semantic clusters relevant to the concept of democracy by means of corpus-linguistic analyses.

We conduct the analysis of explorative identification of semantic clusters and diachronic condensations in four steps: Our exploration starts following the assumption that *-demokrati-* is highly productive with regard to possible concept-relevant (1a) word formations. We identify (1b) collocates and (1c) n-gram clusters that co-occur with those word formations. And finally, we conduct a diachronic, cohort-wise (1d) keyword analysis based on the different parliamentary session periods in the German Reichstag and Bundestag.

The second step consists of selecting concept-relevant candidates for (2) concordance lines on the basis of the corpus linguistic evaluations and annotating them with regard to their pragmatic uses. On the one hand, this makes the data hermeneutically accessible in a manually editable way; on the other hand, a qualified quantification is carried out.

The concepts can thus be traced back to the lexical usage patterns, which in a further step are analysed (3) qualitatively-hermeneutically on the basis of selected key phases and sessions of parliamentary discourse, also with regard to their interactional-communicative dynamics. The results of the micro-analysis will be checked for their patternedness or semantic equivalences by means of quantitative queries of longer periods. The results of the analysis form the basis for articles that will be the outcome of the research network in the form of a conceptual history lexicon.

References

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