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Säkularisierung und die Veränderungsdynamiken religiöser Organisation. Eine vergleichende Studie der römisch-katholischen (Erz-)Diözesen Freiburg, München und Freising sowie Trier, Baden-Banden: Ergon, 2022.

Secularization and the Change of Religious Organization. A Comparative Study of the Roman Catholic (Arch-)Dioceses Freiburg, München und Freising as well as Trier

Abstract:

The Catholic Church in Germany as an established religious organization is actually facing major challenges. The loss of priests, declining membership and lack of participation in church activities increase organizational insecurity and put the dioceses under pressure to act, while at the same time church tax revenues still stabilize the organizational structures. Whereas secularization theory conducted a lot of research on the individual and societal level, the question of how religious organizations change in the face of secularizing processes is merely unattended. A theoretical framework based on organizational theory (contingency theory, resource-dependence theory, neoinstitutionalism and the theory of sensemaking) supposes possible reactions of religious organizations to growing uncertainty. The empirical study compares three different change processes in the (arch-)dioceses of Freiburg (organizational restabilization), Munich and Freising (organizational professionalization), and Trier (spiritual democratization) from 2010 to 2018/19. The subsequent most similar systems comparison distills shared attributes (historical background, institutionalized myths, diffuse organizational purpose) as well as differing factors which are mediated through the professional socialization of the organizational leaders (reference environment of the organization, experience with organizational change and constellation of the leadership) that influence and explain the variance the diocesan uncertainty processing. Finally, the study outlines a model of organizational uncertainty processing, which explains the reactions of religious organizations to a steadily unstabilizing environment.

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