

Foreword

Many scientific publications at least claim to be interdisciplinary; the work of Nora Sánchez Gassen truly meets this challenge: By combining political with demographic analysis her thesis enriches not only both disciplines but is also of importance for all legislators dealing with electoral law.

The composition of the electorate is fundamental to democracy for different reasons: First, voters decide through their electoral behaviour about the political orientation of a country. Second, the (quantitative) relation between the electorate and the population of a country becomes increasingly important for the democratic legitimacy of political decisions.

Who may and who may not vote in public elections is defined by electoral law, as is the size and composition of the electorate. But demographic developments too, determine what the electoral clientele eligible to elect the government will look like. The development of every electorate is mainly due to changes in the fertility behaviour and the development of life expectancy. The book analyses not only the influence of fertility and mortality trends on population and electorate with regard to Germany but also the changes due to migration and the fertility behaviour of immigrants. Based on a clear analytical perspective Nora Sánchez Gassen identifies in a very inspiring and readable way the different dependencies between demographic facts and political/judicial interventions.

In the second part of her thesis the author examines the extent to which demographic developments will change the size and age structure of the electorate up to 2030. Her projections based on the cohort component method combine not only different population scenarios but also different policy scenarios. With the German fertility and mortality trends in mind her very accurate and complex calculations show that the electorate will age in the future and that the proportion of the population not eligible to vote – this will include in the main people living in Germany without having German citizenship and

children – will increase. It is symptomatic for this outstanding interdisciplinary approach that Nora Sánchez Gassen does not limit her work to this analysis but that she combines her demographic work with the question about the appropriate political reaction to these challenges. The elaboration shows that both developments could be influenced, at least attenuated, by amendments to electoral laws and citizenship laws.

In the future the German population and the German electorate may become increasingly less congruent. This development has to be part of the political agenda. Besides this relevance for political consulting the work of Nora Sánchez Gassen delivers important impulses for both disciplines: Due to her profound expertise in both fields not only demographers interested in the political and sociological significance of their own research will benefit; but also political scientists with an orientation to demographic questions. And those who do not belong to one of these groups should read the book in order to learn more about one of the most important questions of democratic theory for the next generations.

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Germany's future electors

Developments of the German electorate in times of
demographic change

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