Introduction

The course is based on a workshop by students of TU Berlin – and possibly other Berlin Universities – and students from Ain Shams University, Cairo, and focusses on the topic of pluralism and plurality in theory and practice in both the German and Egyptian society. It is part of a project funded by DAAD under the programme *Transformation: Change by Exchange - German-Arabic Transformation Partnership*.

In modern democracies, differentiation and plurality is acknowledged as an inherent condition of ‘open’ societies, which democracy as a political regime is intended to uphold and defend. This extends from conditions like class and gender to issues concerned with the sphere of personal choice and values, such as religion, political belief, cultural expression, sexuality, consumer behavior, and others. Democracies are therefore backed by principles of pluralism that aim at granting liberty of expression and universal access to individual, civil, and political rights across these differences. These formal constitutional principles are hallmarks of a democratic culture and important foundations for democratic practice.

However, the conditions for the expression of pluralism, even in the most advanced democracies, are always constrained and unevenly distributed, as any social and political system entails differences in access to institutions and to political representation, differences in material and immaterial resources, and differences in power and influence. This makes it necessary for any social and political system not only to provide the formal-institutional conditions for pluralism, but also to actively engage in practices that make the expression of pluralism possible under concrete conditions and allow reflecting and reacting upon the challenges it may face.

In other words, a modern democratic culture requires not only a set of formal principles in order to uphold the value of pluralism, but also sustained and diffuse practices in order to realize it. In this sense, we could say, it is the combination and on-going interplay between these principles – its ‘formal constitution’ – and the practices that substantiate it – its ‘material constitution’ – that defines the democratic culture of a society.

This project proposes to explore the interplay between these two dimensions in Germany, and to reflect upon this experience in light of the prospects of democratization in Egypt. The project will focus
on the observation of the way the interplay of principles and practices of pluralism defines different key areas of social life – through the initiative and participation of various actors, groups, institutions and organizations, both public and private – and on reflecting upon the challenges and difficulties that are encountered in their everyday application. The assumption is that the exchange thus realized may represent an opportunity for critical reflection for both citizens of an established and evolving democracy as with citizens of an emergent democracy.

Aims of the Workshop

The aim of the workshop is a comprehensive discussion of the concept and issues related to plurality and pluralism with regard to both countries. By this, we expect to gain a deeper understanding of society in the own as well as in the other country, as well as to contribute to the participants’ capacity to work together in order to strengthen pluralism both in the university and in society as a whole in the future.

Topics of the Workshop

While the thematic complexes of the workshop will be defined beforehand, according to the approved programme, the specific issues discussed in each of them will be handled in a flexible manner, allowing the groups to define them by themselves according to their interest, knowledge and experience.

The topics of the workshop include:
1. Gender Issues
2. Political representation of pluralism – Politics and the State
3. Religiousness
4. Engagement of civil society
5. Political participation
6. Discrimination
7. Pluralism in the media

Period

The workshop is planned to take place over a period of eleven days, beginning with the arrival of the Egyptian group on July 1st 2013 and their departure to be on July 11th 2013.

Participants

There will be up to 18 participants (including one professor) each from Ain Shams University Cairo and TU Berlin. The groups will be interdisciplinary and heterogeneous.

The organizational team of each country carries out the selection of participants on their own, following their self-defined rules as well as the rules laid out by the DAAD.

Selection of participants at TU Berlin will be based on a ‘call for participants’ and will be open also to students from other Berlin universities.

Activities and duties

The course is based on:
- preliminary activities in preparation of the workshop,
- workshop,
- final report.
The preparation for the workshop will include preparatory meetings to deal with the programme of the workshop in terms of contents and organization, e.g. including the collection and reading of introductory texts.

The workshop will be based on a programme of activities based on meetings, discussions and workshops with several institutions and actors related to the subject, and will include recreational parts as well.

Upon conclusion of the course, a report of the workshop and of the experience made will be drafted by participants and submitted to DAAD as part of the project accounting procedure.

Participation to the activities of the course will be generally defined in a collegial way through discussions and division of tasks within the participants’ group under the coordination of the local organizing committee.

**Credit points and workload**

Participation to the activities of the course is mandatory and the granting of study credits is subject to evaluation by the responsible professor. The course is ungraded.

Course participants will be granted 3 ECTS (ungraded) which will be acknowledged as a free elective upon conclusion of all activities.

The approx. workload for each participant resulting from participation to the activities is as follows:

- preliminary activities: ca. 6 x 4 hours = 24
- workshop: ca. 7 x 8 hours = 56
- report: ca. 10 hours = 10