

# Project P6

## Hermeneutic Dynamics of Individual and Communal Endowment of Life with Christian-Religious Meaning in a Culture of Digitality

### OUTPUT:

- 1 Editorship
- 6 Contributions to anthologies
- 13 Articles
- 3 Monographs
- 13 Public Science Communications
- 4 Presentations



#### Outlook

The potential of **religious influencers** and digital networks advocating **Queer Theology, gender justice, postcolonial and anti-racism initiatives**, as well as issues of **climate justice** inside and outside the framework of the church, has not yet been explored in the practical-theological landscape: What are the specific concerns of different actors and networks? What theological interpretative patterns emerge in dealing with experiences of discrimination, and what implications does this have theoretically for the church, as well as for an intersectional and ecologically sensitive Practical Theology?

Exploring the concept of **Faith in the app store**, we also intend to delve deeper into inquiries concerning spiritual and (trans)religious apps. We want to know more about Smartphones as gateways to (multi)religious resonance spheres: How do spiritual apps shape individual spirituality across diverse religious traditions? Is the smartphone perceived as a medium or as a sacred item itself?

In doing so, we aim to **develop the Citizen Science paradigm further** and make it fruitful for digital theology and digital research in toto.



#### Religious and Spiritual Apps

In a **Citizen Science project** involving users and the developer of the EVERMORE app, we investigated the **extent to which the app could foster a sense of community**. This inquiry aimed to benefit both academic research and app development in terms of user satisfaction. Users shared their experiences with the app-based meditations in chat rooms.

What emerged was an intermittent, emergent form of communal faith—a **digital caring community** for a limited time—benefiting from the fluid boundaries between pastoral care, self-expression, proclamation, and private life.

Furthermore, we have exploratively engaged with other transreligious apps such as Insight Timer and digital spiritual offerings through platforms like WhatsApp (for example netzgemeinde dazwischen).

At a **conference in December 2022**, we collaborated with various stakeholders from academia and practice to develop further research questions related to religious apps. The analysis and addressing of the questions developed there will be a task for the second phase of the URPP.

#### Contributions to the URPPs' Objectives

##### Internal collaboration

- Cluster with P4, P5, P9, and P11
- Participatory Conference with P9: We developed research questions with different URPP colleagues and various citizens. For this purpose, we successfully secured the GRC Grant.
- Cooperation with Jasmine Hieronymi: digitality as an aspect of Transformative Homiletics.

##### International collaboration

EKD, Citizen Science Center Zurich, KHP Wien, IMK Austria, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, CONTOC-Study.

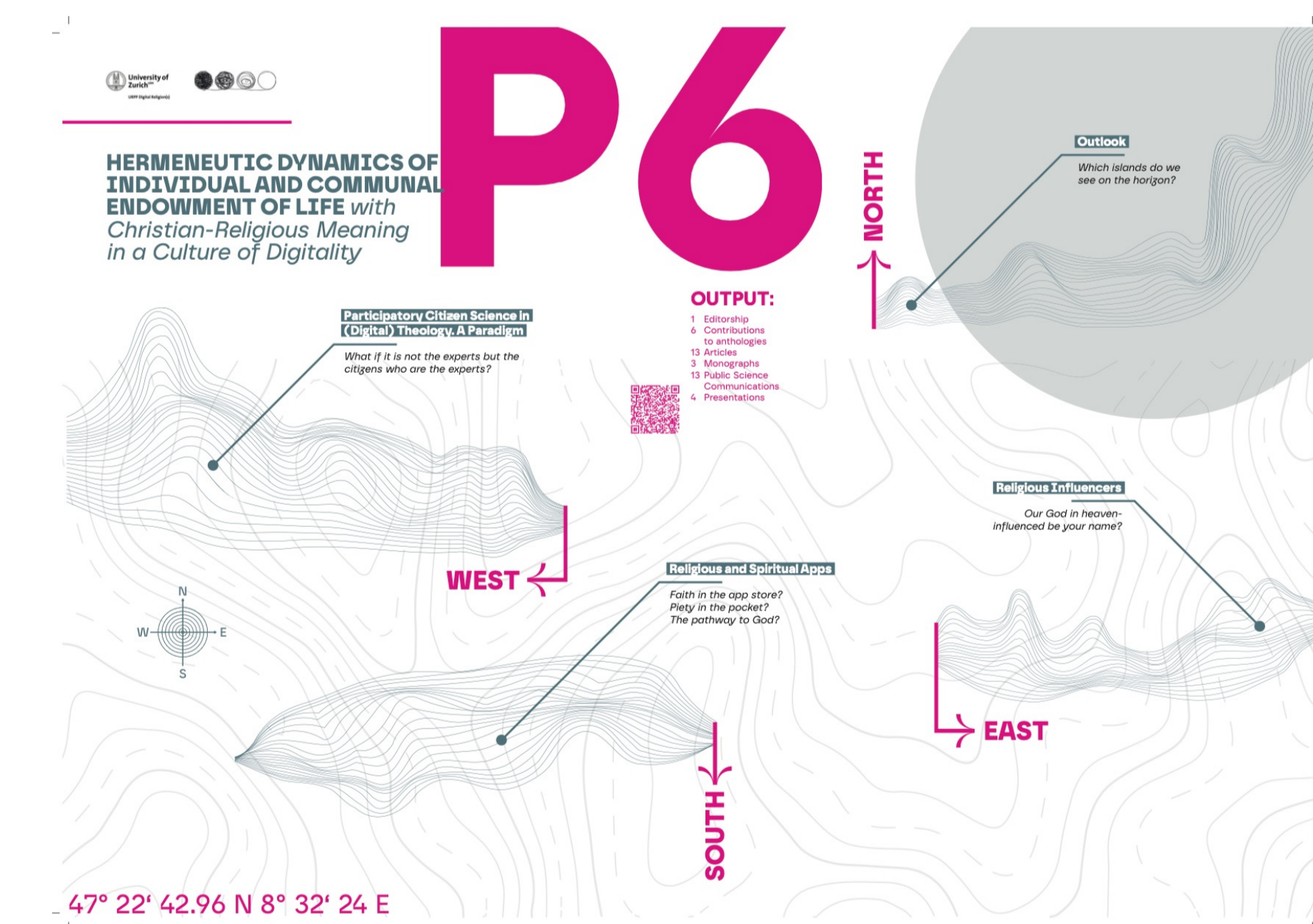
##### Public Science Communication

educational video on citizen science, contributions to podcasts, radio and tv, a two-part YouTube series with the Swiss National TV (SRF) on religious influencers.



#### Religious Influencers

In various **qualitative studies** on Christian influencers, we have identified traits defining a **Pastoral Theology of Digitality**: Individuals and their daily lives wield more influence than formal ordination and theological education. **Perceived authenticity is a pivotal currency** in Christian faith communication, as evidenced in our work on influencing faith. Digital networks like YEET emerge as significant pastoral theological actors in theological and #digitalchurch discourses. We found that the **democratization of ministry** unfolds in two ways: Lay individuals assume priestly roles, as indicated in studies examining the self-conception of Christian influencers, and lay people can now select their "pastor" on platforms like Instagram.



#### Participatory Citizen Science

**PCS is highly pertinent for digital research:** Participatory research can help researchers precisely capture changes related to religious authority and religious communities within digital settings. At the same time, religious actors without extensive theological education can be encouraged to shape digital spaces in a way that benefits their spirituality. **P6, therefore, established PCS as an important research strategy for digital research.**

In our approach, the level of participation is very high. Co-researchers act as co-producers, meaning they are engaged in almost all aspects of the research process: formulating the research question, developing the research design, data collection, etc. A high degree of participation ensures that the research is also relevant to the co-researchers. Participatory research focuses on people, their lifeworld, and their abilities. The research strategy thus promotes a new type of research that also does justice to the concerns of post-colonial and feminist theologies.

#### People involved

##### Project Lead

Prof. Dr. Sabrina Müller

##### Team

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