

**ABSTRACT: KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PROF. DR. NORA STERNFELD,  
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DEMOCRATIC METHODS OF EDUCATION RELATING TO THE RULE OF LAW**

## **Introduction**

The Stiftung Forum Recht understands itself as not only an institution but as a platform, an arena – a forum – where people can discuss and form opinions together. In order to live up to this premise, Prof. Sternfeld knows that taking a radically democratic approach is crucial.

Even though the Stiftung is not a court, nor a parliament, nor a street where a protest can be held, it is a public institution that belongs to everyone. This means it must be accessible for all– not just by opening the doors to the public, but by being democratic and inclusive. To achieve that, we have to ask ourselves, who is “everyone”, who is excluded from this narrative and how can we conquer possible exclusions?

The Stiftung should therefore be a place to gather, discuss, debate and dispute ideas regarding the rule of law, as well as a place where the conflictuality that comes with the complexity of the topic can be dealt with.

## **What must be done to transfer and disseminate knowledge and educate?**

We must think of democracy, the separation of powers and the rule of law together, as they depend on each other and go hand in hand. The rule of law has to be looked at through the lenses of democracy and vice versa. We need to ask ourselves how legislation, the courts, the media and social movements are connected. Despite the fact, that verdicts can only be overturned by courts, investigative journalistic as well as artistic methods should be used to discuss judicial decisions openly and publicly, with a focus on verdicts that feel unjust to the public.

Furthermore, the Forum Recht Foundation has the responsibility to inform citizens about their rights, asking who already has access to information regarding their rights and who does not. At the moment, knowledge and education are not accessible to everyone, therefore the Forum Recht Foundation should also become a place to educate and provide more access regarding everyone’s rights and how to enforce them.

## **How can the Forum Recht Foundation operate democratically when it comes to transferring knowledge?**

Prof. Sternfeld thinks that the Stiftung can learn something from social movements: Initiatives often think goals and methods together – there is no rigid distinction between designing a strategy and deciding on a goal, no rigid distinction between didactics, methodology and implementing. When operating democratically, you act flexible with regards to goals, approaches and methods– they are designed, negotiated and agreed on during the process, together.

Social movements work with prefiguration: They want the world they are fighting for NOW. Democracy as a goal cannot be achieved with undemocratic means.