

ASIEN 105 (Oktober 2007)

Abstract

Einleitung - Bürgerschaftliches Engagement in Asien: neuere Entwicklungen in Korea, Japan und Vietnam

Gesine Foljanty-Jost

The emergence of a vivid civil society in Asian countries has become the focus of scientific interest for at least one decade. Until now some international surveys have presented basic data concerning the quantity and quality of civil society in various Asian countries. They allow rough descriptions concerning similarities and differences. South Korea, Japan and Viet Nam share the relatively small quantity of citizens associations, but while in South Korea associations tend to be catch-all organisations with a strong impact on policy-making, citizens associations in Japan are mostly local with rare political influence. Viet Nam in contrast can be characterized by both state sponsored and independent organisations, but social mass organisations under state control play a pivotal role. Political impact is said to be low. Japan, China, South Korea, Viet Nam differ with regard to the political system's preconditions and the legal grounding for civil engagement. These differences may explain differences whether or not citizens interact with the state, but they do not explain the degree of political involvement of citizens associations or the fact that in all of these countries the so called association "boom" only emerged in the mid 1990ies. Therefore besides political system conditions we should take into consideration factors like experiences of national resistance and colonialism, the tradition of reliance on the state, or the tradition of community based neighbourhood groups.

Manuscript received on 2007-08-23, accepted on 2007-09-04

Keywords: civil society, non-governmental organizations, Asia, international comparison