

## Reviews

DIRK MESSNER, *Die Netzwerkgesellschaft. Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und internationale Wettbewerbsfähigkeit als Probleme gesellschaftlicher Steuerung.* (Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Instituts für Entwicklungspolitik, 108). Köln: Weltforum Verlag, 1995. XV, 407 pages, DM 42,80. ISBN 3-8039-0440-4

The unsatisfying results of the industrialization strategies implemented in developing countries are the starting point of the author. Modifications of macro-economic framework conditions were not leading to a dynamic process of economic development.

Based on the international debate on determining factors of competitiveness Messner presents different approaches, e.g. the model of Porter, which highlights the modification of the roles of the state and of enterprises during the different phases of economic development. In his analysis of the concept of industrial districts the author focuses on characteristics of successful clusters such as the close collaboration between enterprises and public and private institutions, the local and regional character of industrial development, the co-existence of competition and collaboration and the importance of non-economic factors.

Weaknesses of these theoretical approaches lead him to concentrate on a dynamic concept of systemic competitiveness including the development of comparative advantages and disadvantages through corresponding learning processes. Systemic competitiveness is considered to also depend on non-economic factors such as sociocultural conditions, attitudes and values, basic patterns of eco-political organization and the social capacity to develop and implement strategies and policies. Social steering capacity (*gesellschaftliche Steuerungsfähigkeit*) is thus considered to be of essential importance.

This leads the author to analyze in depth theoretical concepts of social steering capacity. The main question is no longer "more or less government" (intensity of government regulation), but concerns the development of (innovative) forms and methods of social and economic organization and steering. Theoretical approaches are increasingly taking into consideration the community which is based on the capacity of self-organization and self-help of its members. But, because of their restrictive basic assumptions, these approaches do not - so the author concludes - contribute to adequate understanding of modern societies.

Therefore, Messner focuses on further elaboration of a theoretical approach to social steering capacity leading to the development of instruments for the analysis of modern societies based on networking structures. These qualitatively new structures with their own internal logic are constituted by independent, relatively autonomous organizations. But the existence of dynamic structures which are potentially capable of networking does not mean that in practice only rational, innovative and sustainable solutions are identified. The author thus also presents specific problems of network structures and essential principles regarding the solution of these problems. He

reaches the conclusion that networking structures based solely on maximising individual benefits and utilities can not function well.

Networking structures are becoming more and more important because of the increasing incapacity of governments to centrally govern and steer society and implement their policies. Taking into consideration the risks related to the use of such structures, government and networking structures should be regarded as complementary. The problem of steering networks can be reduced by their integration into hierarchical structures and by specific government interventions. The topic of international competitiveness is covered by the author only briefly in the last chapter where he refers to other studies published by the German Development Institute, Berlin.

This very interesting book contains an in-depth analysis of theoretical approaches in the field of steering capacity of societies and network structures. Although Messner refers selectively also to traditional network structures and to southern countries such as Brazil, network structures are considered as characteristic of industrialized countries with a highly developed division of labour, increasing functional differentiation and corresponding capable institutions and organizations. It is not clear whether the significance of networking structures for industrialization strategies of developing countries has already been analyzed by the author in other publications of the German Development Institute or not.

*Agnes M. Gerold*

GEORG BERKEMER, TILMAN FRASCH (Hrsg.), *Die deutsche Zusammenarbeit mit Süd-asien, 6. Heidelberger Südasiens-Gespräche*. (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, 176). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997. XIX, 171 Seiten, DM 66,-. ISBN 3-515-07091-5

Aus dem Titel des Sammelbandes geht hervor, daß die 6. Südasiens-Gespräche nicht den einzelnen Ländern der Region, wie es in den vorhergehenden Südasiens-Gesprächen der Fall war, sondern den verschiedenen Formen der deutschen Zusammenarbeit mit der Region gewidmet sind. Neben der Begrüßung durch den Rektor der Universität Heidelberg umfaßt der Band 16 Beiträge, die ein breites Spektrum abdecken. Nach den einführenden Übersichtsbeiträgen folgen spezifische Abhandlungen zu den Themen Naturwissenschaft und Technik, Unternehmenskooperationen, entwicklungspolitische Zusammenarbeit, den wirtschaftlichen Reformbestrebungen und zur rechtlichen Sicherung der deutschen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit den Ländern Südasiens, aber auch zu den politischen Beziehungen, zur Arbeit einer deutschen politischen Stiftung in Südasiens, zu Kulturbeziehungen und zur Förderung der deutschen Sprache in südasiatischen Ländern.

Die Heidelberger Südasiens-Gespräche haben das Ziel, neuere Entwicklungen in dieser Region vorzustellen und zu diskutieren. Sie leisten somit auch einen wichtigen Beitrag, dieser Region die angemessene Aufmerksamkeit zukommen zu lassen. Die Beiträge zeichnen sich dadurch aus, daß sie sich auf die Präsentation neuer Tendenzen konzentrieren und auch in sehr persönliche Erfahrungen Einblick geben. So berichtet beispielsweise der Unternehmer Hermann Weiler über seine Erfahrungen