

Pressemitteilung

Jacobs University Bremen gGmbH

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19.12.2017

<http://idw-online.de/de/news686703>

Forschungsergebnisse, Forschungsprojekte
Kulturwissenschaften, Psychologie, Wirtschaft
überregional



What holds Asian societies together?

Economic development supports social cohesion, poverty weakens it. For the first time a team of scientists headed by Prof. Dr. Klaus Boehnke from Jacobs University und Prof. Dr. Jan Delhey from Otto-von-Guericke-University Magdeburg measured cohesion in 22 countries in South, Southeast and East Asia (SSEA). According to the study on behalf of Bertelsmann Stiftung social cohesion is the strongest in Hong Kong and Singapore, followed by Thailand and Bhutan.

Based on data for the years 2004 to 2015 the scientists developed an index which shows the degree of cohesion in each country, depicts the development over time and presents each nation's cohesion-related strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the findings show that social cohesion in SSEA is most pronounced in the most economically advanced countries of the region. This means that economic development, prosperity, human development (especially education and life expectancy) and gender equality are key factors promoting social cohesion. At the same time, however, several less developed countries exist which also exhibit a high level of togetherness.

Extreme poverty has the strongest negative impact on cohesion, followed by discrimination against women. Cultural diversity – meaning linguistic, ethnic, or religious diversity – on the other hand shows no clear discernible effect on social cohesion. Only a very high degree of ethnic and cultural diversity seems to reduce social cohesion.

In the overall index of all countries surveyed over the entire study period, Hong Kong and Singapore take the lead, followed by Thailand and Bhutan. A moderate level of cohesion was found in most of the countries in Southeast Asia, while the South Asian countries evince the lowest levels.

Among the positive outcomes of social cohesion in SSEA is that it contributes to promoting economic productivity and reducing unemployment. At the same time, the results also point to the possible Janus-faced nature of cohesion: Depending on the political framework, it can serve as the glue that holds a society together, allowing for economic progress and enabling "benevolent" political leaders to embrace inclusive development policies, but it can also serve as the foundation of authoritarian regimes.

Further information:

<http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/germany-and-asia/news/what-holds-asian-societies-together/>

About Jacobs University:

Jacobs University is a private, independent, English-medium university in Bremen. Young people from all over the world study here in preparatory, Bachelor, Master, and PhD programs. Internationality and transdisciplinarity are special features of Jacobs University: research and teaching don't just pursue a single approach, they address issues from the perspectives of multiple disciplines. This principle makes Jacobs graduates highly sought-after new talents who successfully strike out on international career paths.



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