International Workshop

Political Participation, Citizenship and Regime Legitimacy in Contemporary China. Urban and Rural China in the Age of Local Governance Reform

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State-led institutional innovation and political reform in China have been most notable at the local level in recent years. Whilst direct village elections became obligatory nationwide in 1998, new modes of participation have also been introduced to China’s cities. All these measures - and others belonging to institutional innovation and reform of local governance - are promoted by the Chinese government to enhance social stability, cadre efficiency and accountablility, and overall regime legitimacy. This workshop asks how successful they have been in those terms so far. A special focus is set in this context on the people’s attitudes shaped by political reform that have been investigated by a joint German-Chinese research project on rural and urban political participation. Participation, citizenship and legitimacy are the key notions for comparing China’s villages and urban neighborhoods in order to assess the political awareness of China’s peasants and city dwellers, the current relationship between the local cadre bureaucracy and the people, the degree of tension and trust in the local state and, consequently, the scope and limits of a “harmonious society” from the perspectives of the local population and local cadres.