Comparative Analysis of the Third Sector in Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan

Abstract

In the captioned study we have conducted a comparative analysis of the third sectors in Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan, which exhibit considerable similarities and differences in accordance with their developmental contexts. By employing the research methods of literature review, case studies and in-depth interviews, we have compared the third sectors in the three places with respect to the following aspects: (1) major characteristics; (2) relevant legal enactments; (3) public accountability and supervision system; (4) relationship with market; (5) accounting and supervision system; (6) staff structure and management; and (7) internal governance and decision-making mechanism. The theoretical framework of this study is articulated on the basis of the “competing values framework”, which delineates four competing yet equally indispensable criteria of effectiveness and governance for any organization, including the non-profit one. The third-sector organizations are accordingly compared and analyzed along four dimensions or sub-systems, which include human relation system (the inner operations of the organization as relevant to its personnel), open system (the relationship between the organization and its social environment), rational goal system (the regulations, ordinances and laws imposed upon the operations of the organization) and internal process system (the self-regulations of the organization, including internal supervision, accountability system, evaluation schemes, etc.). Our general conclusion is that while the third sector in Hong Kong is the most organized and developed, it is largely dependent upon government support. The third sector in Taiwan, on the other hand, reveals the highest level of spontaneity and autonomy from government intervention; but that means it could elicit limited support from the latter. Finally the third sector in China remains state-driven, as evident above all in the official requirement of its subordination under prescribed organizations. These conclusions are instructive in conveying us a macroscopic picture of the overall contours of the third sectors in the three societies, and thereby orienting future research on their respective trajectories of development.