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Title

The Pull and Push of Alliance-Building in China’s Civil Society: The Case of the Zero Waste Alliance

Abstract

This study tries to shed new light on a rarely studied phenomenon in China’s civil society: the building of alliances between NGOs. It draws on evidence from the Zero Waste Alliance—a nationwide alliance of environmental NGOs engaged in waste-related matters. The study argues that a key pull factor for alliance-building has been a decreasing political sensitivity of horizontal collaboration between NGOs. This expansion of the boundaries was the result of pioneering behaviour by entrepreneurial activists and a state that chose not to intervene. NGO activists have been nudged towards alliance-building by three structural conditions: unintended consequences of state measures designed to curtail horizontal linkages in civil society, a cultural shift in the NGO sector and a new generation of NGO leaders, and the emergence of epistemic communities in civil society.

Keyword

Civil society; NGO-alliances; NGO-networks; networks; environmental politics; epistemic communities