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### **Civil Society in Vietnam: a challenge in the development debate**

**Rather than taking about the presence of democracy or not in Vietnam it may be more fruitful to discuss whether there is a civil society in the country. And if it can be agreed on that there is a civil society, what is the role of it? In this paper the role of civil society in relation to the development cooperation will be discussed. The point of departure is that there is a civil society also in a country of Vietnam's character with a basically authoritarian type of governance. The approach to civil society takes departure in looking in all types of activities of associations outside of strictly governance character. Space for civil activities it may be called.**

**In present discourses of development cooperation in most of the so-called like-minded countries, civil society is mentioned to take an important role with the purpose to increase the popular basis of development cooperation.**

**Is that happening and is it possible to predict a development with more engagement of civil society in Vietnam? Or is the government rule too dominant for activities of the civil society?**