

Studiengang Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaften

Tréfás, David. (2013). The Role of Libraries in the Political Public Sphere. The Aspect of Nation Building.

Abstract

The building of democratic states and nations is one of the biggest challenges in the world today. It is largely believed that only tolerance, social progress and, as it is maintained in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, „better standards of life in larger freedom“ are warrants for a more peaceful and prosperous world. Various international public and private organisations are involved in preparing the grounds for democratic development in so-called developing countries. Today, among the dominant issues, emphasis is placed on the education of all sectors of the population eg through literacy, alongside securing access to information for all. It is widely acknowledged that information is the resource of the 21st century. In this, I argue, libraries play a crucial role, as they are specialised in gathering, preserving, and passing on information of all kinds. Despite this, libraries still play a marginal role in international development policies.

First world intervention and aid for developing countries, however, are highly disputed. It is to be asked, therefore, whether the way aid for libraries is organised today reaches its objectives or whether there is more reflexion needed about colonialism, post-colonialism, and the effects aid can have in general.

Based on a theoretical framework concerning the connection of democracy and public sphere combined with the role of libraries in this context I will examine whether the commonly used concept of the Anglo-American public library can be adopted by developing countries. This question will be addressed by introducing the library aid programs concerning the Busia Community Library in Kenya. From the critique raised, I will outline how libraries could be helped in developing countries nevertheless.