

Globalization from below Through Entrepreneurial Governance

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ABSTRACT

The territorial dimensions of the state are undergoing changes, due to the processes associated with globalization. In processes of governance, cities are (re)constructed as key sites where “the work of globalization gets done”. Are city governments the entrepreneurial architects of globalization in this “new territorial politics of Europe”? Entrepreneurial governance includes a reinforced emphasis on both the content and the organization of local politics, highlighting how public officials adopt growth oriented policies and form partnerships with private (business) actors to implement them. With the shift towards entrepreneurial governance, we might be witnessing a fundamental challenge to the traditional conceptualization of local politics as well as to globalization as a top-down process disconnected from the political realm.

The aim of my paper is to argue that applying the perspective of entrepreneurial governance – occupying a rather marginal position within political science – is necessary if we are to understand certain contemporary trends in the politics of Western cities. This theoretical ambition will be illuminated through an analysis of the political strategies used in a specific city – the city of Malmö in south Sweden. The question guiding the analysis is whether entrepreneurial governance challenges the traditional notion of the local welfare state and the idea of a municipality as a political unit with clear demarcations in space. Towards the end of the paper I will open up for a critical discussion on the implications of entrepreneurial governance. Central for my discussion is that this kind of governance must be conceptualized not as something apolitical, but as policy prioritizing specific ideas about the political regulation of the economy.

Key Words: globalization, entrepreneurial governance, the local welfare state