

Against ‘Partnership’: Toward a Local Challenge to Global Neoliberalism

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a critique of the global fashion for partnership. Drawing on research undertaken in the Scottish city of Dundee and the English City of Hull, it is argued that collaborative structures are becoming increasingly exclusionary and managerialist in orientation.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s critical sociology, it is also argued that even in more favourable deliberative environments than those in Dundee and Hull subtle manifestations of power in culture discourse and bearing would undermine the potential for a Habermasian consensus between radically unequal actors. In a radical departure from the network governance paradigm, it is argued that empowerment may depend less on enhanced network democracy than on strong independent community organisation capable of acting separately and coercively against governing institutions and elites “an exit-action strategy”.

Key Words: partnership, neo-liberalism, exit