

City's Foreign Policy – Competitiveness through Citizens Exclusion?

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ABSTRACT

According to the rescaling literature, the increasing global economic competition between metropolitan areas leads to new necessities for a political response to these developments. City partnerships and international networking are one of the instruments of such a response where cities try to increase their room for manoeuvre in the multi-level governance setting. It is theoretically unclear whether cities do this to stay competitive and therefore follow a neoliberal way of policy-making within these activities or if they try to regain political steering capacities to foster social cohesion through international networking. In general, there is a tendency of exclusion of the public in these international activities as they are mostly carried out in a top-down way of government and do not involve citizens or parliamentary inclusion. The increased engagement of cities in international activities raises though questions of democratic legitimacy. Our empirical analysis of the international activities of five Swiss and two European cities shows that not all cities are increasingly engaged in international activities. But those which are, they clearly target an increase of their global economic position with these activities. Additionally, the role of the European Union in city networking is crucial in a twofold way: It is firstly fostering city networking with financial initiatives and secondly, it is at the same time the addressee of such networking as these networks are lobbying the European scale for money and an increasing influence of the city scale.

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