Urban ‘foreign policy’ and domestic dilemmas in Swiss and European city regions. Local, regional and multi-level impacts of transnational city cooperation

Summary / Zusammenfassung
This research project suggests to examine ‘foreign policy’ activities developed by city governments in six Swiss city regions, as well as in three European city-regions outside Switzerland. The basic hypothesis is that transnational city-cooperation is pursued as a means of strengthening a city’s or a city-region’s position in the face of global pressures. More precisely, we are interested in whether and how transnational city-cooperation contributes to the integration of (a) the relationships between actors at the level of the city (local governance), (b) the intergovernmental relations between local constituencies within the city-region (regional governance), and (c) the relationships between cities and upper-level governments (multi-level governance).

‘Urban foreign policy’ as the object of this research will be defined as a city’s engagement in transnational cooperation schemes that involve at least one partner city in another country. The research design is based on comparative case studies of six Swiss city-regions (Zurich, Bern, Lucerne, Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano), and three European city-regions outside Switzerland (Stuttgart, Lyon, Milano). The analysis will rely on data collected through qualitative research instruments: secondary literature, analysis of documents, as well as an expected total of 90 in-depth interviews. The project is to be executed in a period of 2 years (30 months), starting in November 2004.

Besides its scientific interest, the proposed research is also expected to yield results that are of practical relevance. On the one hand, we hope to isolate conditions for success or failure of transnational city-cooperation and identify ‘best practices’ in this realm. On the other hand, we hope to establish to what extent transnational cooperation of Swiss cities can compensate the drawbacks from Switzerland’s non-membership in the European Union.

Publications / Publikationen


Keywords / Suchbegriffe
urban foreign policy, multilevel governance, rescaling, metropolitan governance

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