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## Do cities go global – or only European?

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### Abstract:

The international activities of cities are mushrooming all over Europe. Traditional city partnerships are more frequently giving way to policy-oriented cooperation schemes in city networks. I look at the scalar orientation of the international activities of seven European cities (five from Switzerland, one each from France and Germany). Although some of these international activities of cities are truly global in their orientation, most of them are linked to the EU. The financial incentives from the EU explain why many of the international activities of cities remain scalarly limited to Europe. European cities do mostly also not contest the respective national foreign policy (except for the French "secondary city" Lyon), because the logic behind these international contacts is much more economic than political. The paper concludes that both aspects (the strong role of the EU and the cities' orientation towards competitiveness) are interlinked: The EU and cities strive for more competitiveness, however with a different scalar orientation. Whereas the EU wants to improve its competitiveness towards other continents, cities primarily want to move up in the European urban hierarchy.

Keywords: Urban foreign policy, multi-level governance, glocalisation, competitiveness

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The international activities of cities are mushrooming all over Europe. The traditional way of cities to establish relations beyond their national borders were city partnerships, many of them established in the aftermath of the Second World War (see Wellmann 1998). The goal of these partnerships was to establish peace on the local scale by bringing together politicians and the broader public of cities from formerly war enemy nations. Many of these partnerships followed a traditional protocol of formal visits and did not include policy cooperation. Many of these partnerships exist nowadays only on paper. However, traditional city partnerships are frequently giving way to policy-oriented cooperation schemes in city-to-city networks. Cities have started to cooperate in almost every policy area across national borders and to form networks for the exchange of knowledge, best practice, and to jointly lobby at other scales for their sake (Heinelt and Niederhafner 2008; van der Heiden 2010: 138).

There has been a recent scientific interest in the international activities of cities, many scholars have looked at single cities to analyze the rationale behind the international engagement (see e.g. Payre 2010) or at single networks (see e.g. Bulkeley 2005; Keiner and Kim 2007 for an analysis of networks in environmental politics or for an analysis of Eurocities). However, comparative research is scarce and the scalar orientation of the international activities has not been analyzed so far, especially not in a comparative perspective. In the remainder of this paper, I will therefore look at scalar orientation of the international activities of seven European city regions, five from Switzerland, as well as Lyon in France, and Stuttgart in Germany. I thereby differentiate between a European and a truly global orientation of international activities<sup>2</sup> to see whether the international activities of European cities remain mostly limited to the same cultural-regional context or if they cross European borders. I will additionally investigate whether there has been a shift over the last 30 years in this respect. The comparison of cities from EU member states (France and Germany) and cities from a non-member state (Switzerland) allows for a good test of the EU's influence on the international activities of cities.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is largely based on my book on urban foreign policy and domestic dilemmas (van der Heiden 2010).

<sup>2</sup> An international activity of a city was defined as an engagement in transnational cooperation schemes that involve at least one partner city in another country. I have not analyzed so-called cross-border cooperation schemes that have an even narrower scalar orientation (see Blatter 2004; Perkmann 2003). I looked at the membership structure of the network to determine whether a networking activity has a European scalar perspective or one that goes beyond. If 90% or more of the member cities come from Europe, the network was classified as European

If cities would develop a coherent foreign policy, this would mean that concepts of international relations would need to take a more multi-level approach (Hooghe and Marks 2003; van der Heiden 2011), going away from understanding international relations as only involving national states towards an inclusion of the position of subnational entities on national foreign policy issues and the possible resistance of subnational entities towards the respective national foreign policy.

To do so, I will first present a brief overview of the international activities of the seven cities under scrutiny. The scalar analysis of these international activities will show that they predominantly remain within Europe. I will go on to explain this by the strong influence of the EU in interurban networking. The paper concludes that cities' international activities might indeed change the (multi-level) governance system of the EU but not necessarily the international relations system as the international engagements of most cities are still relatively modest and in line with the respective national foreign policy. In-depth case studies of these cities' international activities, including 83 qualitative interviews with key expert decision-makers in this domain are the basis of my argument.

## **Seven European cities go to Europe (and beyond?)**

### **Berne**

Berne is the most reluctant city of the seven under scrutiny concerning its international engagement. It is only engaged in three city networks<sup>3</sup> and has no partner city (see Table 1). Berne joined a network of European cities in favor of a more liberal drug policy in 1990. As almost all European states have adopted a more liberal drug policy during the 1990s, the network activity came to an end in 2001. Berne is also a member of a network of environmentally progressive European cities (Climate Alliance) and, due to its historic old town which is an UNESCO world heritage, joined the network of the cities with such a heritage (the Organization of World Heritage Cities [OWHC]). Berne has always refused to engage in an official partnership although several cities asked Berne to enter such a partnership. The city council has consistently argued that its role as the capital city would make it highly problematic to privilege certain foreign cities over others. The national state however has never asked the city of Berne to abstain from a partnership and there is no formal

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<sup>3</sup> I have included all networking activities until 2008.

agreement on this respect. It is rather anticipatory obedience that hinders Berne to engage in such an international activity.

Table 1: The international activities of the city of Berne

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
Climate Alliance	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	European
ECDP	Cities for a liberal drug policy (until 2001)	European
OWHC	Cities with a world heritage	Global

The scalar orientation of Berne's international activities is hard to determine with only three such activities (and currently even only two). As the city of Berne lacks a strategy in its international activities, there is no clear scalar orientation of its activities.

## Geneva

Geneva is the Swiss city that is most proactive in its international relations. A special division of the city administration only deals with the city's twelve international activities (see table 2). As Berne, Geneva has no formally established partnership. The city council justifies this with Geneva's role as an international city of peace and solidarity, hosting the headquarters of many IGOs and NGOs. Privileging one city with a partnership with Geneva, where many international negotiations take place is seen as problematic.

Table 2: The international activities of the city of Geneva

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
AIMF	Multi-thematic network	(European)
Eurocities	Multi-thematic network	European
Energie-Cités	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	European
GCD/GDS	Cities for digital solidarity	Global
IAEC	Cities cooperating on education policy	Global
IAPMC	Cities for global peace	Global
ICLEI	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	Global
Les Rencontres	Cities cooperating on cultural policy	European
LUCI	Cities cooperating on lighting policy	Global
UCLG	Multi-thematic network	Global
UCP	Cities fighting poverty	Global
WHC	Cities with a historical old town	Global

Geneva is a member of international city-to-city policy networks in the domains of culture (Les Rencontres), internet use (Global Digital Solidarity Fund), education (International Association of Educating Cities), ecology (International Council for Local Environmental

Initiatives and Energie-Cités), urban lightning (LUCI), international solidarity (United Cities against Poverty), monument protection (Organization of World Historical Cities). It is also a member of the lobby networks Eurocities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and the International Association of French-Speaking Mayors (AIMF). Geneva additionally created a network of cities committed to peace (the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities).

The scalar orientation of Geneva's international activities clearly goes beyond Europe. Most of the networks (seven) where the city participates have a truly global membership structure. Only four out of the twelve networks have a European scalar focus.

### **Lausanne**

The city of Lausanne also has no formally established city partnership. The city council has rejected several requests in this respect referring to the city's status as the host city of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). There is an informal agreement between the IOC and the city of Lausanne that the latter should not enter preferred relations with a foreign city to guarantee the independence of the international sport courts located in Lausanne.

Lausanne is a member of five policy-oriented networks and of two lobby networks (see table 3). The policy networks are in the domains of culture (Les Rencontres), ecology (Energie-Cités, International Federation of Green Regions Association [IFGRA]), "haute cuisine" (Délice) and Olympic Games (Union Mondiale des Villes Olympiques [UMVO]). Two of these networks (IFGRA) and UMVO were even set up by the city of Lausanne. The green mayor of Lausanne wanted to create another network of ecological regions and therefore initiated the IFGRA network. So far, the network's activities have been modest as the competition in this domain is relatively high. The UMVO network was originally founded by Athens but its activities stopped in the 1990s. The city council of Lausanne decided to lead a new effort to bring the network back to activity to strengthen its role as the "capital city of sports". The two networks more oriented towards lobbying that Lausanne joined are the AIMF network and UCLG.

Table 3: The international activities of the city of Lausanne

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
AIMF	Multi-thematic network	(European)
DELICE	Cities with a relation to haute cuisine	Global
Energie-Cités	Cities for sustainable energy policy	European
IFGRA	Cities/Regions for sustainable development	Global
Les Rencontres	Cities cooperating on cultural policy	European
UCLG	Multi-thematic network	Global
UMVO	Cities with a relation to the Olympic games	Global

The scalar orientation of Lausanne's seven international activities is mixed: four of the networks where Lausanne participates have an orientation towards Europe, three go beyond.

### Lucerne

The city of Lucerne follows a very different strategy than the others under scrutiny. Its main focus in its international activities lies on partnerships instead of networks. The city of Lucerne has partnership agreements with six cities, five from Europe (Bournemouth, Cieszyn, Murbach/Guebwiler, Olomouc, and Potsdam), and Chicago from the USA. Whereas the first partnership with Murbach/Guebwiler was established out of historic reasons in 1978, already the second partnership with Bournemouth had the goal to bring more tourists to Lucerne. This was also the reason for the later established partnerships with Potsdam and Chicago. The partnerships with the two cities from Eastern Europe (Cieszyn and Olomouc) were established after the fall of the iron curtain and more oriented towards aid than economic promotion.

Lucerne is currently only member of one city-to-city network in the policy domain ecology (Climate-Alliance) and it used to be a member of the network of cities for a liberal drug policy (see table 4).

Table 4: The international activities of the city of Lucerne

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
Bournemouth (England)	City partnership	European
Chicago (USA)	City partnership	Global
Cieszyn (Poland)	City partnership	European
Murbach/Guebwiler (France)	City partnership	European
Olomouc (Czech Republic)	City partnership	European
Potsdam (Germany)	City partnership	European
Climate Alliance	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	European
ECDP	Cities for a liberal drug policy (until 2001)	European

The scalar orientation of Lucerne's international activities is thus clearly European. The only international contact that goes beyond Europe is its partnership with Chicago. The reluctance to engage in networking and its focus on partnerships explain this scalar orientation.

## Zurich

The city of Zurich has two partnerships with cities beyond Europe (Kunming in China and San Francisco in the USA). The first partnership with Kunming, established in 1982, underwent an interesting change of its orientation: originally a purely development aid cooperation, it is nowadays seen as a door-opener to the Chinese market for Zurich's industry. This partnership was contested several times in parliament but finally approved by a public vote. The second partnership with the American city San Francisco had a more economic orientation from the beginning in 2003 on. Zurich is additionally a member of five policy-specific networks in the domains drug policy (ECDP), ecology (Climate Alliance and ICLEI), space industry (Community of Ariane Cities), and spatial planning (Metrex<sup>4</sup>). Zurich has joined the more lobby oriented networks UCLG and Eurocities relatively late and only after developing a strategy in its international contacts to strategically engage in those networks where the cooperation could bring economic gains for Zurich.

Table 5: The international activities of the city of Zurich

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
Kunming (China)	City partnership	Global
San Francisco (USA)	City partnership	Global
Climate Alliance	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	European
CVA	Cities with a relation to space industry	European
ECDP	Cities for a liberal drug policy (until 2001)	European
Eurocities	Multi-thematic network	European
ICLEI	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	Global
METREX	City-regions cooperating in spatial planning	European
UCLG	Multi-thematic network	Global

The scalar orientation of Zurich's international engagement is mixed: Five of these international contacts stay within a European frame; four of them go beyond Europe.

<sup>4</sup> Formally, the association of regional planning bodies is the member in this network.



## Lyon

The international activities of Lyon<sup>5</sup> are part of a broader strategy to become one of the Top 15 economic areas in Europe. Lyon politicians thus want to move up in the urban hierarchy in Europe as the secondary French city behind Paris. The scale of economic comparison has become a European one. Lyon is engaged in seven partnerships and in 15 city-to-city networks (see table 6). Lyon established partnerships with cities in former enemy states soon after the Second World War (with Birmingham in 1951, with Yokohama in 1959, Frankfurt am Main in 1961, and Milan in 1966). Later, partnerships with a more economic focus were established (with Saint-Louis in the USA in 1975, with Beer-Shiva in Israel in 1980, and with Canton in China in 1988).

Table 6: The international activities of Lyon

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
Birmingham (Great Britain)	City partnership	European
Beer-Sheva (Israel)	City partnership	Global
Canton (China)	City partnership	Global
Frankfurt (Germany)	City partnership	European
Milan (Italy)	City partnership	European
Saint-Louis (USA)	City partnership	Global
Yokohama (Japan)	City partnership	Global
AIMF	Multi-thematic network	(European)
Banlieues d'Europe	Cities cooperating on cultural policy	European
Citynet/Proact	Asian-pacific cities (multi-thematic)	Global
DÉLICE	Cities with a relation to haute cuisine	Global
EMTA	Cities cooperating in transport policy	European
EURADA	Cities cooperating in location promotion	European
Eurocities	Multi-thematic network	European
GCD/GDS	Cities for digital solidarity	Global
IAEC	Cities cooperating on education policy	Global
IRE	Cities cooperating in location promotion	European
Les Rencontres	Cities cooperating on cultural policy	European
LUCI	Cities cooperating on lighting policy	Global
OWHC	Cities with a world heritage	Global
UCLG	Multi-thematic network	Global
UCP	Cities fighting poverty	Global

Lyon is engaged in a variety of policy-oriented networks in the domains of culture (Les Rencontres, Banlieues d'Europe), education (International Association of Educating Cities), internet use (Global Digital Solidarity Fund), locational policy (Innovative Regions Europe

<sup>5</sup> The city and the metropolitan area (Grand Lyon) have merged their international contacts in 2006. I will thus treat these international activities together.

and the European Association of Development Agencies), international solidarity (United Cities against Poverty), public transport (European Metropolitan Transport Authorities), and monument conservation (OWHC).

Additionally, Lyon has set up two city-to-city networks on its own. The LUCI network brings together cities with an interest in public lightning. The Délice network brings together cities with an interest in haute cuisine, reflecting Lyon's self-image as the capital city of food. Lyon is also a member of four networks that have the goal to lobby at upper-level governments: The AIMF, Eurocities, UCLG, and Citynet. The latter network is more or less the Asian equivalent to Eurocities and Lyon has joined this network as the first European city to strengthen its economic ties to the emerging markets in Asia. Lyon was among the founding member of the Eurocities network as this network was set up to give secondary European cities a voice. Lyon was strongly engaged in this network because it perceives itself in the role as the secondary city in France. Lyon has been absent from Eurocities for half a decade after the network changed its orientation and became the primary lobby organization for all larger cities in Europe. Lyon is now back again an active participant in Eurocities.

The scalar orientation of Lyon's international activities is balanced: Ten of its activities have a European focus and twelve have a focus beyond Europe. The more recent networking activities however have all a focus on connecting Lyon with cities all over the globe. The partnerships are slightly more oriented beyond Europe (with four partnerships with cities from outside Europe and three with European cities).

## **Stuttgart**

The city of Stuttgart<sup>6</sup> has ten city partnerships and is engaged in eight international city networks (see table 7). The city partnerships were established in three phases: A first phase after the Second World War establishing ties with cities from former war enemy states (St. Helens in England in 1951, Cardiff in England in 1955, St. Louis from the USA in 1960, and Strasbourg from France in 1962), a second phase in the 1960s and 70s established links to cities from developing countries (Mumbai in India in 1968, Menzel Bourguiba in Tunisia in 1971, and Cairo in Egypt in 1979). In the third phase, Stuttgart offered partnerships to cities from Eastern Europe to help them with the transition process after the end of the Cold War.

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<sup>6</sup> The metropolitan governance body of the Stuttgart area (Verein Metropolitanraum Stuttgart) has its own international activities. For the sake of comparison, I will not deal with them here (see van der Heiden 2010: 126f. for more details).

The partner cities here are Lodz in Poland (established in 1979), Brno in the Czech Republic (in 1987), and Samara in Russia (in 1992). However, in 1992, Stuttgart's city council decided to not enter any new partnership but to focus on networking.

Table 7: The international activities of the city of Stuttgart

International activity	Description	Scalar orientation
Cairo (Egypt)	City partnership	Global
Cardiff (Great Britain)	City partnership	European
Lodz (Poland)	City partnership	European
Menzel Bourguiba (Tunisia)	City partnership	Global
Mumbai (India)	City partnership	Global
Samara (Russia)	City partnership	Global
St. Helens (Great Britain)	City partnership	European
St. Louis (USA)	City partnership	Global
Strasbourg (France)	City partnership	European
Cities for Children	Cities cooperating in youth policy	European
Cities for Mobility	Cities cooperating in transport policy	Global
CIVITAS	Cities cooperating in transport policy	European
Climate Alliance	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	European
CLIP	Cities cooperating in integration policy	European
Energie-Cités	Cities for a liberal environmental policy	European
POLIS	Cities cooperating in transport policy	European
UCLG	Multi-thematic network	Global
URB-AL Nr. 8	Cities cooperating in transport policy	Global

Stuttgart is member of eight policy-oriented city-to-city networks and in one network more devoted to lobbying (UCLG). The main focus of Stuttgart's international activities is in transport policy. Stuttgart is a member of no less than four networks in this domain (URB-AL, POLIS, CIVITAS, and Cities for Mobility). The latter network has been set up by Stuttgart.

Stuttgart also founded two networks in areas where it felt "lonely" within Germany as an economically very prosperous city: The network CLIP (Cities for Local Integration Policy of Migrants) wants to share best practices in integrating foreign people in urban living and the Cities for Children network wants to share best practices in youth policy. Both networks were set up to facilitate the inflow of working people to the Stuttgart economic area. Additionally, Stuttgart is a member of two networks in environmental policy (Climate Alliance and Energie-Cités).

The scalar of Stuttgart's international activities is also mixed: Ten activities are limited to the European scale, eight go beyond it. Contrary to the Swiss cities under scrutiny, Stuttgart has more international city partnerships than European ones, but its networking activity clearly focuses on European networks.

## A first conclusion: Rather European than global

The seven cities under scrutiny clearly show that international activities are nowadays "business as usual" for most cities. Only Berne, the capital city of Switzerland, is still reluctant to develop a strategy in its contacts beyond the national boarder. All other cities have intensified their international contacts over the last three decades. There is a clear shift over time in these international activities: City partnerships were the predominant form of international contacts after the Second World War. Many of them were between cities of former war enemy nations and these partnerships thus predominantly had a European scalar orientation. Only four of the seven cities under scrutiny do have partnerships. The other three strategically renounced such partnerships, either obeying the national state (Berne), the IOC (Lausanne), or its role as a peace negotiation city (Geneva). The total 24 partnerships are exactly equally scalar oriented: Twelve partner cities are located in Europe and twelve are located outside Europe (see table 8). Lyon and Stuttgart have slightly more international partner cities, Zurich has one international ones and Lucerne has a clear majority of European partner cities. Most partner cities from outside Europe are located in Asia, a fact that has been used to re-orient the purpose of many of these partnerships: Away from a development aid project towards a gatekeeper role for economic contacts.

Table 8: The scalar orientation of city partnerships

City Provenance of Partner City	Berne	Geneva	Lausanne	Lucerne	Zurich	Lyon	Stuttgart	Total
Africa	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
America	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	4
Asia	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	6
Europe	-	-	-	5	-	3	4	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>

Looking at the scalar orientation of the cities' networking activities, we can see – as with the partnerships – no clear tendency towards one scale. In total, 29 networking activities are oriented towards Europe, 25 go beyond Europe (see table 9). Three cities are more engaged in European networking, whereas four have more networking activities beyond Europe. Lucerne is the only city that has only networking activities within Europe, all other cities under scrutiny have a scalarly mixed networking strategy.

Table 9: The scalar orientation of city networking

Scalar orientation \ City	City							Total
	Berne	Geneva	Lausanne	Lucerne	Zurich	Lyon	Stuttgart	
European	2	4	3	2	5	7	6	<b>29</b>
Global	1	7	4	0	2	8	3	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>54</b>

Taking both forms of international activities of cities together (partnerships and networking), we can see an almost equal distribution in the scalar orientation of these activities (see table 10). Four cities have more international activities that stay limited to Europe but three have more international activities beyond Europe. All seven cities looked at have at least one activity that goes beyond Europe.

Table 10: The scalar orientation of cities' international activities

Scalar orientation \ City	City							Total
	Berne	Geneva	Lausanne	Lucerne	Zurich	Lyon	Stuttgart	
European	2	4	3	7	5	10	10	<b>41</b>
Global	1	7	4	1	4	12	8	<b>37</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>78</b>

We thus see that both forms of urban foreign policy – the more traditional city partnerships as well as the more recent city-to-city networks – have at least partly stayed within a relatively small scalar framework (Europe). Contrary to the expectation that cities have gone global in the age of globalization, they have rather gone European. We also witness the relative reluctance of the Swiss cities compared to the ones from within the EU (see also Lefèvre and d'Albergo 2007). These two aspects can be explained by the strong influence the EU plays in urban foreign policy nowadays (Leitner 2004; Leitner et al. 2002) and by the dominance of economic competitiveness as the key goal of urban international activities as will be explained in the next two sections.

### Explaining the EU-ness of cities' international activities

The international activities of cities are not as independent from decisions on other scales as one might suggest on a first glance. It is not necessarily the regional or national scale that influences the amount and the orientation of cities' international activities, but rather the

supranational EU. The EU's influence in this respect is twofold: On the one hand, the EU directly sponsors many of the networking activities. Several European city-to-city networks profit from a constant funding of its activities by the EU. Additionally, the EU sponsors the participation of city representatives at international meetings of these networks. City officials participating can be reimbursed by the EU. There are additionally reimbursement options for city partnerships when both partner cities come from within the EU. There is thus a clear financial incentive by the EU for city-to-city cooperation. Marshall (2005) calls this aspect of EU-city relations the downloading aspect of Europeanization, Kern and Bulkeley (2009) describe this as “top-down vertical Europeanization”.

On the other hand, cities use networks to lobby jointly at the EU for their own benefit and to be aware of EU legislation. This aspect is called uploading by Marshall (2005) and "bottom-up vertical Europeanization" by Kern and Bulkeley (2009). With more and more regulations coming directly from the EU, cities are increasingly affected by EU legislation. As the traditional way of influencing these decisions (through their regional and then national governments) is very difficult and uncertain, city networks offer an alternative to be aware of upcoming EU legislation in one policy domain and to participate in the decision making at the EU scale jointly. Several of the studied networks have lobbyists in Brussels to manage this uploading for the cities. Many policy makers have argued that policy making in cities has become increasingly complex with EU legislation. Although the influence is nowadays immediate, knowledge how to deal with this legislation is lacking on the city scale. Networks take over this role for single cities in their policy domain. The EMTA network for example provides its members with information about EU legislation in the domain of public transport and lobbies at the EU for the sake of urban public transport.

This strong influence of the EU in city-to-city cooperation clearly explains the shortfall of the Swiss cities in this respect. Cities from outside the EU can neither profit from the uploading nor from the downloading function of city-to-city networks. Swiss cities are increasingly disconnected from a process of increasing interconnectedness of cities in Europe, although much of the EU legislation also applies to Swiss cities sooner or later as well. Eurocities is the clearest example for this lack of connectivity. Geneva was the only Swiss member city of Eurocities in the 1990s and then even decided to leave the network. It has rejoined the networks and was followed by Zurich. However, both cities are still trying to find its role within this mega-network of cities in Europe and the cooperation is seen as difficult due to the outsider role of Swiss cities in a network that aims at lobbying for the urban sake at the EU.

## **Being competitive instead of being nice**

Many cities have started to strategically reflect on the use of international activities. Whereas partnerships were almost mandatory after the Second World War as part of a multi-level peace achievement plan, the new phenomenon of city networking involves much more strategic reflection on the cost-benefit relation of such international activities. City councils, and often the mayor himself (see Martins and Rodriguez Alvarez 2007; Payre 2010) see the international contacts as part of a larger goal to improve the competitiveness of the city (van der Heiden and Terhorst 2007). Lyon strives to become one of the top 15 economic areas of Europe and its international contacts are part of this strategy. It puts Lyon on the map, as many officials state. It allows the city to find partners outside of France which is desired because of Lyon's role as the secondary city in France and because of a national state unwilling to promote its secondary city economically. Stuttgart, with its relatively high dependence on the automobile industry, puts most effort into networking activities in transport policy, showing the city's competence in this policy domain to other cities. Because many existing networks in transport policy had a focus on public transport, Stuttgart never felt totally at ease in these networks as the city is economically dependent on the use of the automobile. This is why Stuttgart initiated its own network in transport policy that does not only promote public transport but "an intelligent mix of all sorts of mobility" (see below). Geneva sees its economic strength as the world's headquarter of peace negotiations and NGOs/IGOs. It thus engages in international networks that foster peace and global solidarity.

This clear link between a city's economic outline and its international activities even explains the absence of certain international activities. Berne rejects partnerships because it does not want to privilege some cities over others because of its role as the capital city and because its local economy is highly dependent on the national administration. International contacts are consequently not part of Berne's economic strategy. Geneva rejects partnerships because of its role as peace negotiation city, Lausanne because it holds the seat of the IOC and international sport courts. All city councils fear economic losses in case they would enter certain international activities that are not liked by an important economic sector or even by a single organization.

The economic logic behind political networking has also led many city councils to withdraw from certain partnerships and/or not to enter any new ones. Both Lyon and Stuttgart have officially decided not to enter any new partnership. Networking is seen as more efficient in this respect whereas partnerships, especially with cities from countries of the global south, are

increasingly seen as a waste of time. Many European cities have tried to alter the goal of such partnerships. Whereas they used to be part of a local development aid strategy, they have been reoriented and should now function as a gatekeeper for emerging markets. Zurich's partnership with Kunming in China started as a development aid project but got criticized by right wing politicians as "a waste of money". The city council then tried to use the partnership to help Zurich enterprises find a way into the Chinese markets (e.g. ABB). This strategy more or less failed. Stuttgart has also switched the goal of its partnership with Mumbai in India in the same way: Originally set up as a development aid project, it is now a gate-opener for the automobile industry in the Indian market.

There is thus a clear political subordination of the international activities under the economic necessities of a certain city. Political networking nowadays has to bring direct economic gains for a city. Times when cities' international activities were set up purely out of altruistic reasons or out of resistance against the national foreign policy are gone. Policy makers strategically select – and sometimes even set up – international activities in those policy areas where the local economy demands political connectivity.

### **Conclusion: A competitive EU city-network**

City-to-city networking has not become as global as one might have suspected. Almost half of the international activities of the seven cities under scrutiny stay within Europe and have thus a scalarly relatively restricted orientation. Such connections within relatively close distances between cities would not qualify as "international" in other geographical context (as e.g. in the US or in Russia). With the increasing role of the EU as a supranational regulator in Europe, many of the international activities looked at stay within this regulatory framework. Conceptualizing "international" activities of cities in truly global context becomes a difficult task. It is no surprise thus that city-to-city cooperation in Europe is highly influenced by the EU. The EU sponsors city networking and city partnerships and it is at the same time addressee of city networking because cities join networks to bundle their resources in getting linked to EU legislation. City-to-city cooperation is therefore not solely a horizontal relation as the goal of many networks is to establish vertical relations towards the EU. Networks help to bundle these relatively complex, scale-jumping relations. The international activities of European cities have thus only slightly altered the scalar configuration of the multi-level governance system of the EU by bypassing the national states. However, as the logic of these international activities of cities is much more economic than political, the bypassing – and



thereby the possible contradiction of a national foreign policy – is rather the by-product than the aim of these activities.

City-to-city networking has undergone a major ideological switch. It used to be a form of peace building on the local scale (as in the case of city partnerships after the Second World War) or of development aid at the local scale (as in the case of early partnerships with cities from developing countries). It is nowadays part of an urban economic strategy to improve the cities' position in the inter-urban competition. The main goal is to move up in this hierarchy and city networking is seen as a platform to present the economic strengths of a city internationally. It is thus no surprise that cities strategically select those policy areas where they are economically strong to cooperate in city-to-city networks. Lacking such networking possibilities, several cities have even taken the burden to set up such networks, with mixed results.

How are these two aspects (the influence of the EU) and the changed goal (competitiveness) related? The logic of glocalisation (Swyngedouw 1997) helps us to understand this connection. Based on the rescaling argument (see Brenner 2004), one can argue that those two scales that are responsible for the economic well-being of certain places are the supra- and the subnational one. Whereas the national state has lost its influence in policy making in the age of globalization, supra-national and sub-national (on the city or city-region scale) policy making is still possible. Economically strong cities still possess the capacity to regulate the economy (Savitch and Kantor 2002) and supra-national rules can overcome the deficit of national states being trapped in a neoliberal de-regulation struggle due to increasing international competition in the age of globalization.

However, looking at the motives of both scales involved, these hopes are not fulfilled. The EU follows an economic logic in supporting city-to-city cooperation. Policy learning should, as part of the Lisbon goals to increase the overall competitiveness of the EU's economy, lead to globally more competitive European cities. Supporting the economic urban powerhouses to diffuse their knowledge with other European cities should boost the overall strength of the EU's economy towards its competitors from Asia and America. Cities as well follow an economic logic in developing their international activities. We can thus not see any trial to re-regulate the economy and to strengthen the state via city-to-city networking. Quite contrary, city-to-city networking is part of a neoliberal, multi-scalar economic strategy between the EU and the cities. It remains however to be seen whether this strategy will be successful. Looking at the motives of the cities to engage in city-to-city networking has revealed a different scalar

orientation in their perception of competition: Most cities try to move up the latter within the European urban hierarchy. They hardly cooperate – and thereby seek competition – on a global scale, which would be the EU's goal in supporting these city-to-city activities.

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