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Neighbourhoods and the politics of scale

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It is argued that the process of globalisation undermines the nation-state. From the perspective of the rescaling theory, however, the argument would rather be that the spatial dimensions of the state are being reorganised, leading to an upscaling as well as a downscaling of political steering capacities. With global cities becoming more important as nodes of capital accumulation, this results in a greater significance of locational politics for these cities. Although it has been researched how the neoliberal agenda has trickled down from the national level to the city, literature on rescaling has widely ignored the role of the sub-local scale. We argue that the neighbourhood scale has gained importance in the "politics of scale" because city governments and even national governments are increasingly shifting neoliberal projects to the sub-local scale.

We present empirical evidence on the Swiss politics of neighbourhood scale with a case study analysis of two deprived Zurich neighbourhoods. Based on qualitative expert interviews and an in-depth document analysis, we show that the cities' policy to increase the quality of life in distressed neighbourhoods is closely related to Zurich's overall economic strategy to promote the attractiveness of the city as a whole. We also show that political entities have discovered neighbourhoods as a relevant scale. We thus conclude our paper by pleading for a scalarly open analysis of the neoliberal turn, which has to include the sub-local scale.

Keywords: politics of scale, neighbourhood policy, rescaling, urban entrepreneurialism

Introduction[1]

For the first time in history, more people nowadays live in urban than in rural areas (United Nations 2008). The implications of this ongoing urbanization trend go way beyond a pure population effect. The physical growth of cities has caused problems on several scales: An unbowed urban sprawl leads to increased coordination problems between core cities and agglomeration communities (i.e. metropolitan governance, see Heinelt and Kübler 2005); the multi-level governance scheme of national states is confronted with mega cities blasting communal, regional, and sometimes even national political scales; and to a certain extent these mega cities have become "ungovernable" due to their size and their rapid growth (Keiner and Schmid 2006).

At the same time, we witness diminishing participation rates in city elections in several countries (Kushner and Siegel 2006; Wood 2002). Whether this points to a democratic deficit is a hotly debated topic (Purcell 2007). It is however to a certain extent unsurprising if we look at the spatial orientation of the inhabitants of cities. The every-day radius of ordinary citizens is relatively small even in larger urban areas (leaving besides commuting to the work place where distances have increased). The neighbourhood is consequently the most important scale for the daily life of citizens, whereas the scale of the steadily growing city itself has lost importance in this respect. Additionally, scholars (as e.g. Bolt et al. 1998; Musterd and Ostendorf 1998) have pointed to an increasing spatial segregation of modern cities into business districts, distressed neighbourhoods, nightlife districts and many more. The inhabitants, the users, the visitors, and the workpeople of one of these spatially specialised neighbourhoods might have nothing in common with those of an adjacent neighbourhood. Even more so, the differences of the everyday life of the citizens of two neighbourhoods of one and the same city are often bigger than the differences of the everyday life of the residents of two comparable neighbourhoods in two different cities. It has thus become debatable whether the city as a political space is still a relevant scale for its citizens.

Consequently it is questionable if *urban governance* is still the correct term to describe political action in modern cities. Many scholars have pointed to a retreat of the state also on the urban scale (see e.g. Brenner and Theodore 2002; Swyngedouw et al. 2002) but have not analysed the scalar component of governance questions and the role of neighbourhoods

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[1] This article is based on research conducted within the international comparative research project 'Regenerating Urban Neighbourhoods' (RUN). A first version of this article has been presented at the EURA conference in Darmstadt in September 2010.

therein (for the exception that proves the rule, see Whitehead 2003). Neighbourhood governance studies (see e.g. Lowndes and Sullivan 2008) usually put a focus on distressed neighbourhoods and possible solutions to problems inherent in these areas. However, scholars (see e.g. Lees 2008; Slater 2006) have pointed to unintended effects of such neighbourhood renewal programs: Gentrification describes the process of displacement of long-term residents due to increasing rent levels and the increased attractiveness of renewed neighbourhoods for middle-class people (Smith 2002). Common to these analyses of neighbourhood governance is that they often fail to investigate links to urban governance as such.

What is standard to analyses of urban governance and neighbourhood initiatives is their "scalar blindness". They usually equal space with scale by looking only at the political-administrative borders and by ignoring the possibility of constructing or producing scales and shifting scales out of strategic interests of political actors at several political scales. They thus ignore what has been coined the "politics of scale" (Cox 1998; Gonzalez 2006).

In the remainder of this paper, we will take up the argument of Whitehead (2003) and plea for an integration of neighbourhoods in the politics of scale debate. We will argue that within Swiss federalism, the politics of scale has only recently discovered neighbourhoods. We can thus compare whether the politics of the neighbourhood scale has changed over the last ten years and whether the politics of scale in Switzerland is diverging from trends in other countries, where the politics of the neighbourhood scale has started earlier.

To do so, we will provide a brief introduction into the theoretical notion of the politics of scale. Pointing to the missing inclusion of the sub-urban (i.e. the neighbourhood) scale in the rescaling debate, we will show how important neighbourhood politics has become in the age of a globalised economy and a glocalised statehood. We provide empirical evidence for this argument on the city of Zurich and its neighbourhood governance. We conclude that the original hope that the politics of neighbourhood scale might lead to a democratic empowerment and to more social cohesion has to be revised and that political-institutional borders remain relevant in Switzerland's politics of scale.

Politics of the neighbourhood scale

The rescaling approach develops its argument from an economic deterministic position. It is the scalar reorganisation of the global economy that is followed by corresponding political

adaptation processes (Brenner 2004)[2]. The transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist regime goes hand in hand with a transition of statehood Jessop 2002. In the Fordist era, national states were able to generate revenues due to consistent years of steady GDP growth. The national state then redistributed part of its revenues downwards to the communal level which allowed cities to overcome the social inequalities that were most persistent within their borders with large redistribution programmes (Jessop 1994: 254ff.). The economic crisis of the 1970s then changed this system of a hierarchical interplay between the national and the local state as the income basis of the national state eroded. Conflicts on financial redistribution from the national to the regional and/or the local state consequently increased (Peck and Tickell 1994: 306). With an accelerating economic globalisation from the 1980s onwards, state revenues further decrease due to a neoliberal agenda of the national state. However, as proponents of the rescaling approach highlight, this "hollowing out" (Jessop 2004) of the national state is not necessarily a retreat of statehood as such, but might be better conceived as a complex scalar redefinition of statehood (Wood 2005). This rescaling of statehood happens through the two inextricably interlinked processes of up- and downscaling. Upscaling refers to the increasing importance of global and especially supranational political bodies as the EU or the WTO and the shift of political decision making power from the national global institutions (Jessop 1994: 270f.). Downscaling refers to the shift of political steering capacities to the urban scale due to the latter's gained scalar importance in the global economy Goodwin et al. 2006. From the economic deterministic logic of the rescaling approach, cities gain political steering capacities as they gain economic importance as nodal points of capital accumulation in a globalised economy (Scott 1996). The economy as well as politics are thus organized in a *glocal* way (Swyngedouw 1997).

Cities thus gained political importance in the age of economic globalisation. However, it is unclear how cities use these newly gained political steering capacities: Do they contest the neoliberal turn or are they in line with the shift towards a neo-liberal economically oriented policy-making (van der Heiden and Uffer 2010)? Most authors within the rescaling approach predict pessimistically that the latter will happen. The entrepreneurial city (Hall and Hubbart 1996) is increasingly engaged in a global economic interurban competition (Mayer 1994: 318f.). This implicates "a reorientation of urban governance away from the local provision of welfare and services to a more outward-oriented stance designed to foster and encourage local growth and economic development" (Hall and Hubbard 1996: 153). This new form of

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[2] See Jessop et al. (2008) for an in-depth analysis of the different terms in spatial geography.

governance aims to promote the city as an attractive location for business interests and investment. Wealth redistribution and welfare are considered as antagonistic to the overriding objectives of economic development (Peck & Tickell 2002: 394; Jessop 2002: 465). The new entrepreneurial strategy leads to a system where cities are considered as the main actors in global competitiveness (Brenner 2004: 172f.). This leads to a mechanism of inter-urban competition, where locational policy becomes the dominant part of urban politics. This implicates a scalar change of economic competition from national states to large urban areas, what Brenner (2004: 260) calls "a rescaled competition state regime". It is a system in which cities become masters of their (economic) faith (Savitch and Kantor 2002) instead of being firmly integrated in a national urban hierarchy as under the Fordist state structure.

It is our goal to investigate the politics of scale with neighbourhoods and its relation to the entrepreneurial city. But what is actually meant by a politics of scale? The idea is that state rescaling processes are not just economically driven but politically steered. Policy makers do have the capacity to shift scales and to decide on which scale a certain policy (or certain aspects of a policy) should be dealt with. Gonzalez (2006) argues in her analysis of the neo-liberal discourse in the city of Bilbao that the scalar interplay can only by seen as constructed by the involved policy-makers. The actors use the politics of scale to "explain, justify, defend and even try to impose the link between a particular scale or scalar configuration and a political project. [...] In this process, actors engage in a discursive strategy to make their scalar political project seem as natural, normal and legitimate as possible" (Gonzalez 2006: 838).

This aspect of a politics of scale in a rescaled statehood has been analysed in metropolitan governance in depth, where the politics of scale between the core city and the metropolitan region are of special interest for the neoliberal urban turn (Boudreau et al. 2007; Brenner 2003). Usually, the metropolitan scale with its weak democratic control is seen as the scale where shifts towards neoliberal policy making are more easily accomplishable. Policy makers trying to put forward goals of the entrepreneurial city thus try to upscale these policy decisions from the city to the metropolitan level, thereby evading resistance in the city.

However, we argue that this politics of scale is not limited to the city-metropolitan level only, but can be applied to any multi-level analysis. One can draw an analogy to national-local rescaling processes here. The large spatial redistribution programs of the Fordist state from urban to rural areas led to an equalisation of economic prosperity throughout the whole country (Jessop 1994: 254ff.). The post-Fordist rescaled competition state lost this power and

the gained political steering capacities of large urban areas led to a competition of city-regions. Neither the national state nor the city-regions in competition are thus able to equalise spatial social inequalities anymore. The same process can be hypothesised for the city-neighbourhood scalar relation. Whereas the city used to be able to equalise social inequalities between different neighbourhoods, this becomes increasingly difficult when political steering capacity is downscaled to the neighbourhoods themselves. The first analysis of the politics of scale in neighbourhoods (see Whitehead 2003) has seen a potential for a comeback of social welfare programs in neighbourhoods due to their gained independence in the politics of scale debate in the UK in the 1970s and onwards. However, we are much more critical in this respect and will show that the contrary outcome is possible too with a politics of the neighbourhood scale. It is no surprise to see certain policy projects being placed in neighbourhoods as the democratic procedures are usually very weak. The neighbourhood is in many countries not an entity with political rights, as most often the city is the lowest scale on which democratic input procedures are institutionally established. On the sub-local scale of neighbourhoods, democratic procedures are often much more informal and the impetus into the political system of neighbourhood governance attempts is anything but guaranteed Purdue 2001. Shifting neoliberal projects to the sub-urban scale might thus accomplish the goal of evading democratic control as much as an upscaling towards the metropolitan scale.

The goal of the following case study of the politics of the neighbourhood scale in the city of Zurich is thus twofold. On the one hand, we want to investigate the neighbourhood policies in Zurich's two deprived neighbourhoods. On the other hand, we will look at the politics of scale in and with Zurich's neighbourhoods. In doing so, we first discuss the relevance of the neighbourhood as a scale. Second, we discuss possible shifts over time towards entrepreneurial goals. Third, we will analyse the democratic control of this politics of scale processes.

Neighbourhood regeneration in Zurich: social mixing, image improvement, and participation

Our research on Zurich's neighbourhood governance and the politics of scale is based on a qualitative case study[3] on neighbourhood regeneration policies in two areas with a relatively

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[3] We analysed official and nonofficial documents concerning neighbourhood regeneration strategies, specific policy interventions, program reports, project evaluation, and newspaper articles and we conducted eight semi-structured interviews in 2008 with members of neighbourhood and commerce associations, with representatives

high level of poverty: *Langstrasse* and *Schwamendingen*. Although other state levels are also involved in neighbourhood development processes, it is the city that is predominantly involved in neighbourhood regeneration policies. This section provides an overlook of Zurich's local structure of politics and governance followed by a description of the two neighbourhoods under scrutiny and the area-based problems therein. Then, neighbourhood policies are characterized on the city and on the neighbourhood level. To allow for the multi-level dimension of the politics of the neighbourhood scale, we then look at the federal neighbourhood development initiatives.

Zurich's local structure of politics and governance and the inclusion of the sub-local level

The city of Zurich has a total of about 370'000 inhabitants with about 30'000 people living in *Schwamendingen*, and around 10'000 people living in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood. The city of Zurich is divided into 12 districts. These districts cover the historic neighbourhood structure. The population of the twelve districts ranges from around 5'600 to 63'000 residents. But there is no coherent definition of "neighbourhood" for policy purposes. Sometimes "neighbourhood" refers to an urban district, sometimes only to a specific area within a district. Therefore, boundaries of the neighbourhood-policy arena are not always precisely defined and interventions do not cover consistent areas. The *Langstrasse* neighbourhood is part of Zurich's district 4, known as *Aussersihl*. *Schwamendingen* is the district 12.

The city of Zurich is a municipality, which is the lowest governmental level in Switzerland, and it has a directly elected government (executive) and a directly elected parliament. The next upper level of government is the canton of Zurich that also has its own government and parliament. The city of Zurich as a municipality enjoys significant decision-making power and autonomy within Switzerland's political system. The neighbourhood level is not legally institutionalised in Swiss federalism; hence the political system delegates no competences to the sub-local level.

The city government consist of nine members and operates as a collegiate authority. The mayor acts as a prima inter pares. Therefore Zurich's executive structure has a collective form. The citizens elect the city government directly every four years. The Mayor's Office

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of the Office for Urban Development, the Department of Social Services and the Police Department, and with a member of the city parliament and an external expert on urban development.

includes the Office for Urban Development, which is in charge of regeneration policies (see below).

The city parliament (legislative authority) is made up of 125 members, with elections held every four years. The members of the legislative body are elected by district. The nine electoral districts are in line with the twelve urban niehgbourhoods except for the districts 1 and 2, 4 and 5, and 7 and 8, which are each put together to form one common electoral district. The average population size of the electoral districts is around 42'000. As the nine electoral districts cover Zurich's neighbourhood structure to some extent, the districts thus have their own representatives in the city's legislative. The twelve city districts and accordingly the sub-local scale in Zurich do not have any formal local authority, but have only administrative functions. This means that no distinct executive or legislative body exists on the sub-local level; the districts only operate as electoral districts for the city as well as for the cantonal parliament.[4]

Since the neighbourhood is important for everyday life, countless civic organisations exist on the sub-local level. Most important are the neighbourhood associations. They are politically and religiously neutral, privately organized associations that are open to all interested neighbourhood residents. There is at least one neighbourhood association in each district. Zurich's city authorities recognize neighbourhood associations as the official representatives of the local population. They get financial support from the city for their administration and for cultural and community activities.[5] Once a year, the city government gets in contact with the chiefs of the neighbourhood associations at an informal meeting. However, there is no guarantee that all resident-interests are covered by neighbourhood associations. On the contrary, certain resident groups – e.g. foreign residents – are rarely represented in neighbourhood associations. Furthermore, the Zurich neighbourhood associations are very different in inclusion of different resident groups. Their activities and collaboration with other communities of interests or with the city administration varies too. Therefore, neighbourhood associations are neither democratically authorised nor representative bodies.

Due to Switzerland's forms of direct democracy, residents principally have the possibility to articulate their requests via initiatives (Kriesi 2005). Therefore, residents can bring neighbourhood topics to the table (such as the prevention of public building projects which

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[4] The degree of institutionalization of the inclusion of the sub-local scale in Zurich is rather low in comparison with other Swiss cities (Joye et al. 1995).

[5] All together they get a contribution of 275'000 Swiss francs a year (Decision of the city parliament GR-Nr. 2007/116).

affects the view or everyday life in a certain neighbourhood) by launching initiatives on the city scale. 3'000 signatures are needed to enforce a vote.[6] However, the direct democratic instruments are tied to the political-administrative federal structure, i.e. they can only be launched at the city scale. It is therefore easily possible that such neighbourhood requests can be outvoted by a majority of the inhabitants of other areas.

Langstrasse and Schwamendingen: two deprived neighbourhoods

Concerning the assessable income for its residents, *Langstrasse* and *Schwamendingen* are among the most deprived neighbourhoods of the city of Zurich (Statistik Stadt Zürich 2007: 385). Furthermore, the percentages of foreigners and of people receiving welfare payments are considerably above city average. Both neighbourhoods were a main focus within the city of Zurich's neighbourhood regeneration strategy from 1998 to 2006[7].

Schwamendingen is located on the north-eastern boundaries of Zurich and can be categorized as a marginalized peripheral working class neighbourhood (Heye and Leuthold 2004). Since the 1980, it has witnessed a considerable rise of the proportion of foreigners.[8] This is perceived as a potential threat to community life: According to a neighbourhood representative, the old Swiss residents "feel aliens in their own neighbourhood". Government officials also worry about an insufficient population mixture in *Schwamendingen*. The general assumption is that concentration of marginalized population reinforces problems in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. *Schwamendingen's* image is thus negative due to the integration tensions, the traffic noise, pollution, and its generally low social status (see e.g. Dol et al. 2008: 42).

The *Langstrasse* neighbourhood (and the district 4 as a whole) is a former working class neighbourhood in the heart of the city with an above average percentage of foreigners.[9] Around 1980, the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood became the red light district of Zurich. In the 1990s, the districts 4 and 5 suffered from the dislocation of the drug users as a result of the first attempt to shut down the open drug scene in 1992. But despite this burden, the former

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[6] Gemeindeordnung der Stadt Zürich, Art. 15.

[7] It must be said, however, that in Zurich and in Swiss urban neighbourhoods in general, concentration of socio-economic problems is not as severe as in other (European) cities.

[8] The proportion of foreigners in *Schwamendingen* increased from about 16% (citywide around 20%) in 1982 up to over 35% (citywide about 30%) in 2007 (data according to statistics office city of Zurich).

[9] It increased from around 40% in 1982 up to almost 50% at the beginning of the 1990s and then decreased slowly again to 40% in 2007 (data according to statistics office city of Zurich).

enterprise zone became a famous clubbing scene and gained attractiveness as a living environment for higher income residents. We can observe displacement processes and a reinforcing gentrification process in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood (Craviolini et al. 2008). Nevertheles,s the drug problem and prostitution remain hotly debated problems in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood. In comparison with other inner-city neighbourhoods, this area has a higher concentration of drug-related crime, sexual offences, and violence (Schwarzenegger et al. 2006). Segregation is viewed as a serious problem in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood too. Government officials and neighbourhood representatives regret the alleged exodus of families over the past decade and this exodus is predicted to continue for the following decade. Wealthy Swiss families are idealised to be the sound population especially for such a distressed neighbourhood. Furthermore, the bad reputation of the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood famous for drug dealing and prostitution is perceived as a serious problem according to officials and neighbourhood residents. Creative industries and other "good" businesses are seen to play a decisive role for the improvement of the image.

Neighbourhood policies in the Schwamendingen and in the Langstrasse neighbourhood

Before 1998, explicit neighbourhood policies did not exist in Zurich.[10] For the legislation period from 1998 to 2002, the city government defined, for the first time, the improvement of the quality of life in distressed neighbourhoods as a key goal with the programme "*Aufwertung von Stadtgebieten*" (improvement of urban areas) (Stadt Zürich 2001: 13). In the following period from 2002 to 2006, neighbourhood regeneration was again a focal issue on the political agenda of the city government – this time labelled "*Lebensqualität in allen Quartieren*" (quality of life in all neighbourhoods). Hence from 1998 until 2006, area-based neighbourhood development policy appears as a citywide priority on the agenda. In 2006, neighbourhood development ceased to be a key focus of urban development policy.

The Swiss federal neighbourhood policy is hardly relevant for Zurich's neighbourhoods. In many European and North American countries, policy interventions in deprived neighbourhood have been strongly steered and funded by central government since the end of the 1990s (cf. Durose and Lowndes 2010), E.g. in 1993, the Clinton Administration launched the US-nationwide programme "Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community". Also in Germany, the federal program "Socially Integrative City" played an important role in

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[10] The Department of Social Services did the neighbourhood work (community work) until 1998.

neighbourhood development processes since the end of the 1990s. And in the United Kingdom, several neighbourhood initiatives were introduced at a national level (e.g. "New Deal for Communities" 1998, "National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal Policy" 2001, see Lowndes and Sullivan 2008; Whitehead 2003).

In Switzerland, the federal government started to address neighbourhood topics in 2004. In 2007, the federal government passed a report concerning measures of integration which made arrangements for a neighbourhood program called "Projects urbains". This federal program was aimed to foster the social cohesion of the local population in distressed neighbourhoods and to improve the quality of life in these neighbourhood. With these projects, the federal government offers small and medium-sized cities financial and technical support for the implementation of appropriate tools of urban planning and measures for social integration for neighbourhood development processes. Neighbourhood regeneration in Zurich was on the local agenda before the federal program "Projects urbains" was launched. Therefore, federal neighbourhood policy is unimportant for neighbourhood regeneration in the city of Zurich. Hence neighbourhood policies in Zurich are not funded by the national government, with one exception: the European Community Initiative INTERREG IIIB program for image improvement in *Schwamendingen* was funded by the city of Zurich, by the canton of Zurich, and by the federal government (see Dol et al. 2008).

Neighbourhood policy in Zurich is understood as a broad array of policies to improve the quality of life, especially in distressed neighbourhoods. The idea of a cross-service approach is very common in neighbourhood regeneration strategies across European cities (see e.g. Alisch 2002; Durose and Lowndes 2010) and is also relevant for Zurich area-based policies. In our research, we could not identify a comprehensive strategy beyond this broad understanding of policies to improve quality of life for Zurich's neighbourhood policy (see Widmer 2008: 33f.). A multiplicity of administrative units is involved in Zurich's neighbourhood policy. Although the Office for Urban Development was designated to coordinate the implementation of the new neighbourhood policies, it has no power to effectively do so. According to city administration professionals, coordination is mostly based on informal contacts. Nevertheless, some common characteristics can be found in the various policy interventions related to the city's neighbourhood development: We found a frequently expressed claim for participatory processes; participation seems to be a major tool in Zurich's regeneration policy. Another focus of these area-based policies is counteracting segregation. Neighbourhood policies should prevent so-called "socially stable" and economically

successful residents and most notably families from moving away from distressed neighbourhoods. It should even attract these parts of the population to move into these neighbourhoods. These efforts fall into the category of so-called "social mixing policies" or "poverty deconcentration strategies", which are very common in neighbourhood regeneration (see Lees 2008: 2451).[11] Another focus of the area-based policies is the improvement of the image of distressed neighbourhoods. It is argued that a negative image itself causes problems and can provoke a decline of the quality of life in a neighbourhood and therefore the image has to be improved (Dol et al. 2008).

The two neighbourhoods under scrutiny differ significantly in the kind of interventions taken by the city government. In the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood the focus is on public order problems (drug policy and red-light milieu) and physical renewal, whereas interventions focus more on formation of social capital in *Schwamendingen*. Several interventions in *Schwamendingen* were initiated by the Department of Social Services, and they rely on community-based organisations but also on professionally provided services. There were several interventions in selected smaller areas within the neighbourhood, e.g. some actions were taken to reduce traffic, and a playground was built to meet the demand of children and youngsters, or participative language teaching for mothers and their children of preschool age was offered (Stadt Zürich 2005; Stadtrat Stadt Zürich 2001). The Office for Urban development organised discussion forums for neighbourhood development (Fachstelle für Stadtentwicklung and Gesundheits- und Umweltdepartement 2000). It was mainly the Office for Urban development that was in charge of the image improvement process. The project "Image Schwamendingen 2005-2007" was one of the most significant neighbourhood regeneration initiatives of the last years in Zurich.

Under the legislative focal point concerning neighbourhood regeneration, the *Langstrasse* was identified as a deprived area (Emmenegger 2000: 11; Stadtrat Stadt Zürich 1998). However, regeneration policies in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood were still carried out mostly within the scope of the legislative focal point "security" from 1998 to 2002 and were subordinated to the Police Department. In 2001 the city government authorized the new project "Langstrasse PLUS", which became Zurich's most important program in the field of the "socially integrative city" (Wehrli-Schindler 2002: 12). This project, which was lead-managed by the Police Department, should guarantee sustainable improvement of quality of life in the neighbourhood (Vieli 2005). The project involved a multiplicity of measures ranging from

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[11] For detailed information about content and tools of Zurich neighbourhood policies, see Widmer (2008).

housing to security. But the project itself had only limited resources for project publicity and most of the activities were funded by allied projects. Image improvement belonged to the "Langstrasse PLUS" project too: to strengthen local business against the red light industry, the city administration created and funded an association for marketing actions (Vieli 2005: 21).

Politics of scale in and with Zurich's neighbourhoods
The neighbourhood as a relevant scale

The emergence of neighbourhood regeneration policies in Zurich shows that neighbourhoods gained attractiveness for area-based policy making. Policy makers identified the neighbourhood as a relevant scale for certain policies: Instead of making an effort to equalise spatial social inequalities within the whole city by means of redistribution programs, deprived neighbourhoods should develop their own initiatives to regenerate. But the sub-locale scale turned out to be a relevant scale not only for city, but also for regional and national politics. The new Swiss federal program "Projects urbains" is a first intervention of the federal government at the communal level. The – allowedly financially marginal – program "Projects urbains" does not conform to the traditional federal hierarchy as it jumps scales. We can therefore see that neighbourhoods became a relevant scale even for national politics. The emergence of the federal neighbourhood initiatives indicates a slight change in the scalar hierarchy of the Swiss federal system.

Even though the canton of Zurich is not involved in neighbourhood development policies, we find evidence for the construction of a sub-local scale by cantonal politics. In 2005, the canton of Zurich passed a new constitution that now enables communes to alienate tasks to district or neighbourhood agencies (Art. 88 KV). Originally, this new constitutional right was conceived to facilitate the amalgamation of communes. But during the development of the new constitution, representatives of urban communes argued that the new constitution should enable participation and self-determination at the neighbourhood level and that certain tasks could be delegated to sub-local districts.[12] This indicates the emergence of the sub-local scale also in cantonal politics. It also shows that scales are not "naturally" given or fix (Jessop et al. 2008). Rather they are a product of debates on different political-administrative levels. Therefore the sub-local scale and its production are relevant for analysing urban governance.

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[12] See „Protokoll des Zürcher Verfassungsrats, 8. Sitzung 21. März 2002".

Shift of neighbourhood governance towards entrepreneurial goals

But why did neighbourhood policies became a citywide priority on the political agenda in Zurich at the end of the 1990s? It seems that the severity of the problem does not explain the emergence of neighbourhood regeneration policy in Zurich as there were no major problems in Zurich's neighbourhoods at the end of the 1990s. Neither one of the neighbourhoods analysed here would (have) qualify as a distressed neighbourhood in an international comparison. Nevertheless, the city government of Zurich has used a discourse of urban revitalization that argues along the same lines as in cities with severe problems in certain areas.

Zurich's neighbourhood policy is related to a paradigm shift that occurred in the 1990s.[13] In those years, the strategy of urban development, which used to focus on social issues, changed towards an imperative for economic growth in order to position the city in the international benchmark of city regions (Schmid 2006: 167). Harvey (1989) called this the transformation from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance. Since 1998, the city of Zurich's government is dominated by a social-liberal coalition which promotes economic development and competitiveness policies (Eberle 2003: 67). This newly elected city government actually defined the improvement of the quality of life in distressed neighbourhoods as an official legislative focal point. At the same time, a new administration unit was established: the Office for Urban Development, which reflects this new entrepreneurial urban governance strategy (see Eberle 2003: 135). Whereas it used to be the Department of Social Services that was in charge of community work up to then, the new Office for Urban Development became responsible for the legislative focal points relating neighbourhood policies from 1998-2006. The institutional consolidation of neighbourhood development policies in the Office of Urban Development indicates that these interventions are related to the new entrepreneurial urban governance strategy, since one of the major tasks of this new administration unit is to improve international economic competitiveness of the city (van der Heiden 2010: 84ff.). The attention to quality of life issues in distressed urban neighbourhoods is implicitly contained in the strategy to promote the attractiveness of the location of Zurich. The goal of these policy interventions is to prevent one of these neighbourhoods to become one that might hinder the international competitiveness of Zurich. This also explains the focus on improving the image within Zurich's revitalization policy: The city cannot afford the poor international image it gets because of its most deprived

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[13] The following argument has already been developed in Widmer (2009).

neighbourhoods. This means that the neighbourhood scale becomes an important scale for the inter-urban competition (see also Durose and Lowndes 2010: 356). Furthermore, a high quality of life in all neighbourhoods is seen as helpful in order to position the city in the international benchmark of cities. Neighbourhood regeneration policy – in a broad understanding of policies to improve the quality of life – is therefore consistent with this new paradigm of urban development as entrepreneurial urban governance.

On closer examination, the focus on so-called "social-mixing" policies in Zurich area-based policies is also in line with the strategy to improve the international economic competitiveness of the city region (Widmer 2008: 76ff.): The idea of counteracting segregation through neighbourhood regeneration promises to prevent good tax payers to move out and to attract wealthy residents to live in the city. This means higher tax revenues for the city. This then allows the city to improve the provision of services, which is finally helpful to position the city in the international benchmark of cities.

We thus see different rationales at work on the different federal state levels when it comes to neighbourhood policies (see Durose and Lowndes 2010). Whitehead (2003), as well as Durose and Lowndes (2010) showed that actors at the city level in the UK aim to facilitate entrepreneurial urban strategies with neighbourhood interventions, whereas national and neighbourhood based policy makers focus more on empowering citizens. In Zurich, actors at the city level – at least implicitly – aim to foster the international economic competitiveness of the city region with neighbourhood interventions. At first sight – in line with the empirical evidence from the UK – the Swiss federal state follows rather a civic and social rational in its neighbourhood policy.

Democratic neighbourhood development as politics of scale

As mentioned before, participation is generally stated as an important tool in neighbourhood policies in Zurich. The city administration sees neighbourhood associations as important partners for the participatory processes. Neighbourhood associations of the city districts differ strongly concerning their inclusion of different resident groups and concerning their overall activity. An active, well-organized, and cooperative neighbourhood association is a criterion for the city administration to select the respective neighbourhood for a policy intervention. In the *Schwamendingen* area, the neighbourhood association is an important partner for the administration: The Office of Urban Development initiated several participation processes in *Schwamendingen*. However, pthese articipatory approaches are also called into question:

First, it is not possible to include all the approximately 30'000 neighbourhood residents in the participation processes. Second, there is a bias inherent in the mobilisation of residents for participatory approaches because the foreign population tends not to attend participation processes. Third, there is only a small minority of neighbourhood residents that wants to be actively involved in such projects. Therefore, the diverse neighbourhood regeneration projects with a participatory claim risk overburdening those people that participate regularly.

The situation is quite different in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood, where there is a tension between the neighbourhood association and the city administration. In this working class district, there has always been a variety of different interest groups and the relation between the city administration, the city government, and the neighbourhood residents is traditionally tense. Furthermore, this neighbourhood association in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood is not as widely supported by the respective residents as the neighbourhood association of *Schwamendingen*. Unlike in *Schwamendingen*, where many of the impulses for revitalization interventions came from resident organisation, the information flow rather runs in the opposite direction in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood. E.g. although the "Langstrasse PLUS" project created the impression of being a citizens' initiative, it was in fact initiated and led by the Police Department (see Widmer 2008: 56). Thus, despite the participatory approaches pursued officially, neighbourhood regeneration rather follows a top-down approach in the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood and participation does not necessarily mean an official involvement of community residents in the design of the program and in the implementation of neighbourhood policies, but rather only a consultation process.

We argued that not only does the sub-local scale gain importance but also that the new place-based policies imply a shift of certain tasks and competences from the city scale towards the neighbourhood scale. But how does the demand for participatory processes fit into this? At first sight, citizen engagement should lead to more democratic control of neighbourhood development processes. Interestingly, the language of neighbourhood-based work as a means for the empowerment of citizens, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, is very common in regeneration policies across Europe (Guarneros-Meza and Geddes 2010: 121). In Zurich, the idea of community engagement seems to be also a strategy to govern more effectively. For example in the case of *Schwamendingen*, the city left the definition of contents of regeneration policies to the neighbourhood association. This can be taken as a delegation of responsibilities towards the sub-local level. Government officials probably expect better

compliance by the use of participatory tools and participatory processes certainly help to legitimize policies.

In the case of the *Langstrasse* neighbourhood too, we can see a shift of tasks from the city scale towards the neighbourhood scale: e.g. various interest organizations were established on behalf of the city administration (e.g. the association of real estate owners or the association for marketing actions). This can be understood as stimulation for self-helping mechanisms in a distressed urban area, where – from a city administration's point of view – citizens did not engage 'enough' to improve the quality of life in their own neighbourhood. Therefore, the claim for participatory processes does not necessarily lead to higher democratic control of neighbourhood regeneration processes, but rather signifies a strategy to govern more effectively. This also shows that policy makers use their capacity to shift scales.

Conclusion

Analysing Zurich's neighbourhood policy has revealed that reflections on the rescaled statehood (Brenner 2004) and the ones on the politics of scale (Cox 1998; Gonzalez 2006; Whitehead 2003) have to incorporate processes and contents of neighbourhood governance. Proponents of this theoretical debate should consequently investigate trends even below the lowest level of the political-administrative system and analyze how and by whom the neighbourhood scale is constructed and used to follow certain policy goals. With the increasing importance of the city scale in a glocalised statehood (Swyngedouw 1997), the processes of neighbourhood governance so far understood as marginal, internal aspects of cities become crucial for the question of statehood as such.

It is partly because of the missing integration into the institutionalised political-administrative system that the neighbourhood scale has gained attractiveness for projects that can be summarized under the label of the entrepreneurial city. The missing democratic control on the sub-local scale makes a possible resistance towards neoliberal projects difficult to articulate. Politicians consequently use a politics of scale approach (Heeg et al. 2008; Swyngedouw 1997) as part of their concept of the entrepreneurial city. We thus see a new interrelation between the internal and the external aspects of urban politics. Whereas neighbourhood governance has traditionally been used to decrease social inequalities (Kempen 2009; Whitehead 2003), it has now partly shifted and has become part of a project of international visibility, branding and city-to-city competition. The poor image of the two neighbourhoods under scrutiny is increasingly seen as problematic for the international reputation of the city

as a whole. Whereas several scholars use a distinction between social and economic goals a city pursues (see e.g. Ache et al. 2008; Savitch and Kantor 2002), we argue for a more interrelated understanding of the two goals of urban politics. Social policies, as e.g. the social mixing of certain deprived neighbourhoods have become part of a strategy of competitiveness (Durose and Lowndes 2010: 356; Widmer 2009).

Analysing Zurich's neighbourhood governance has additionally revealed problems of democratic governance. The inclusion of neighbourhood associations in the neighbourhood revitalization projects of the city differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. The openness of the neighbourhood associations concerning participatory possibilities differs greatly, as there is no institutionalised form of democratic governance in Zurich's neighbourhoods. Consequently, using the neighbourhood as the scale for urban entrepreneurial strategies puts the newly established democratic inclusion processes in neighbourhoods into a different light. The spread of participatory practices in neighbourhoods does not necessarily lead to citizen empowerment (Blakeley 2010: 142), but might contrariwise be part of a neoliberal strategy (see e.g. Elwood 2002; Guarneros-Meza and Geddes 2010; Kamleithner 2009; Künkel 2008). The case study of Zurich showed that the empowerment strategies of the city government in neighbourhoods partially failed to provide a democratic legitimacy for its neighbourhood revitalization programmes.

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