

Reinvigorating Democracy: The Role of Associations in Global Cities

Zachary Callen
Illinois State University
zacalle@ilstu.edu

Starting with Alexis de Tocqueville, associational life and local government have been stressed as one of the primary features in maintaining democracy in the United States. As Tocqueville observed, associational life and decentralized power are valuable for democracy through their creation of an appropriately democratic political culture.¹ Essentially, associations and local government grant individuals an opportunity to be a part of the democratic process. Hence, citizens learn how laws are enforced, the utility of deliberation is imparted through involvement in the legislative process or in directing a local organization, and the operation of the justice system can be witnessed first hand through jury duty. In addition, the presence of an active local government and active local associations provide necessary services. Thereby, political power is not concentrated in the federal government, but is instead diffused throughout society, preventing absolute government. In addition, local individuals are significant actors in the political process. For Tocqueville, local government, and participation in that local government, is the link between the individual and the state – it was this link that imparted a sense of efficacy and democratic responsibility to the individual.² Therefore, since a successful democracy depends on involved citizens who are socially aware as well as politically empowered, local government and active associations serve a critical role in democratic states.

Unfortunately, the link between the individual and local government has been eroding in recent decades. This weakening of the relationship between individuals and government stems from a number of sources. Increasing instrumental rationality and expanding government bureaucracies have effectively separated citizens from active involvement with their own democratic government.³ Furthermore, the growth in individualism in recent decades has also acted to undermine citizen efficacy in government. As social capital – the networks of personal relationships and social trust that bind a society and ease social relations – declines, so also does involvement in associations. These associations have historically served both to limit governmental power, through asserting interests or providing services, as well as to operate as

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Richard D. Heffner (New York: Signet Classic, 1984), 58-73.

² *Ibid*, 95-99.

³ Benjamin R. Barber, *A Place for Us: How to Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 3-6.

zones of democratic education.⁴ Therefore, the growing influence of the national government, coupled with rising atomization of individuals, has led to a declining opportunity to practice democratic decision-making in daily life through local government and neighborhood associations.

Yet, even those who still desire to participate in the democratic process at the local level may find their attempts thwarted by various elite forces. Authors such as Charles E. Lindblom, in addition to Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, have commented that economic elites who control the media, capital for investment and growth, and can afford significant campaign contributions, exert an excessive influence on a democratic political system.⁵ Clarence Stone and Stephen Elkin separately argue that what results is a regime-style government, where political and economic elites use their informal ties and shared interests to govern while at the same time effectively silencing other voices.⁶ The regime structure, found in urban environments, is particularly inimical to democracy because it reduces the voice of the citizen at the local level, which is the most direct link the citizen has to the state and is therefore fundamental to citizen education.

Emerging forces of economic globalization have, in recent years, exacerbated the regime problem of the reduction of citizens' role in government. According to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, globalization is the new paradigm of international relations following the conclusion of the Cold War. Globalization is best described as a compression of both time and space in which the global becomes local (and vice versa).⁷ The rising webs of influence and interdependence of globalization, while providing new opportunities for communication and easier access to many goods, is not conducive to local control. In fact, globalization actually reduces the control that individuals can realistically exert over their own local (or even national) political and economic systems.⁸ The disempowerment of globalization, therefore, further disenfranchises the citizen. A "citizen," in this understanding, is not merely a rights-bearing individual, but an actor who has the power, opportunity, and the sense of responsibility to participate in a democratic forum to a meaningful degree.⁹ From this brief discussion, it can be established that this conception of citizenship is on the decline. Old forces, such as regimes, combined with the new force of globalization, assist in undermining basic democratic values through the minimization of opportunities for meaningful participation in local government for the vast majority of citizens.

⁴ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 15-28; Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xli-xlvii.

⁵ Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 170-188; Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, *On Democracy: Toward a Transformation of American Society* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1983), 47-76.

⁶ Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 4-9; Stephen L. Elkin, *City and Regime in the American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 128-144.

⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), xxi.

⁸ Ibid, 168.

⁹ Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 153-155.

It is rapidly becoming clear that there is a crisis of citizenship in the United States, and local government is suffering greatly. Elite regimes, the erosion of social capital, and globalizing forces are all draining citizens of a sense of efficacy and political involvement. Local government is particularly vulnerable, as public officials and businesses conspire behind closed doors and blight corrodes neighborhood after neighborhood, further disenfranchising residents. The loss of local government is particularly dangerous for democracy, not only because the local matters as a provider of education and basic services, but also more significantly, because the local is where political subjects are reformulated into citizens. Therefore, not only is it necessary to stand against the disempowering forces of regimes and globalization in order to save democracy, but the fate of democracy also depends upon increasing local participation in political matters. In order to enhance democracy, I argue the disempowering effects of regimes and globalization must be alleviated, at the same time that measures are undertaken to overcome the anomie of the average citizen, and thereby increase involvement in local affairs and local institutions. To re-establish democracy, it is necessary to once again impart a democratic ethic onto individuals. Reinvigorated citizen involvement in local associations, specifically democratically-minded and interest-based associations, such as the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation, is key in imparting the values necessary to maintaining a healthy democratic state. Further, I argue that it is only local involvement and national participation that is capable of re-educating subjects into citizens, and therefore, consequently it is also the only way to take a stand against the potentially dangerous processes of globalization.

In order to fully articulate the risks facing democracy, the importance of resurrecting it, and the means by which to revitalize it, first a deeper sense of what is meant by “democracy,” and its worth, must be established. After more fully defining democracy, a brief discussion of the two major threats to local democracy, regimes and globalization, will be considered. Third, the importance of associations in building democratic values, and the role of those associations in addressing the problems of globalization, will be set forth. Through this analysis, I argue that local associations are capable of revitalizing democracy, and redirecting global politics in a more egalitarian, inclusive, and just direction.

Democracy: Defined and Defended

To gain a better sense of current threats to democracy as well as a vision of a preferred, more democratic order, a basic definition of democracy and its value must be articulated. Democracy, as a concept, is not easily defined either in terms of its core values or its proper institutional forms. Nonetheless, I will propose four basic foundations on which democracy is based: autonomy, deliberation, egalitarianism, and community.

Democratic autonomy refers to the right of both individuals and groups to choose. Thus, democracy should encourage independent decision-making; societies should be granted the power to select their own destiny. Autonomy, however, is not understood merely as a rash action. Autonomy implies careful consideration of interests, critical reflection, and a process of reasoning to substantiate claims. In terms of democratic institutions, autonomy suggests public reasoning and justification. Further, autonomy requires the protection of basic liberties such as

freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and a universal voting right. It is only when these rights are protected that individuals and groups are truly free to express themselves and obtain the necessary information for proper reflection. Thus, democracy requires the autonomy to rationally choose one's own destiny, as well as the protection of the basic rights and tools to ensure that the decision reached is a sound one.¹⁰

Beyond autonomy, a democratic order must also have a system of public deliberation. Implied in autonomy, deliberation suggests discussion: citizens present arguments, listen to others, attempt to address faults and refine points, and ultimately achieve a reasoned conclusion to which there is widespread agreement in an open environment where all interested parties may participate if they wish. Institutionally, this could include workplace democracy, a multiplicity of political parties, or even more direct citizen interaction with political candidates. Democracy requires communication, in order that interests can be articulated and grievances aired, so that better solutions can be achieved.¹¹

Third, a democratic government requires egalitarianism. Political equality, in terms of rule of law, generalized enforcement, and all votes carrying equal weight, is of course an essential component of egalitarianism. However, in a broader sense, egalitarianism also necessitates a very strong sense of equal opportunity, meaning not only the opportunity to apply for employment or campaign for office, but also true equal education and basic childcare. Further, a truly egalitarian order includes minimum standards of material equality, so that individuals have the time and energy to engage in politics.¹² Thus, democracy depends on an expanded form of equality that moves beyond liberal adherence to equality before the law, but rather an equality that ensures that all can gain access to the political process.

Finally, a healthy democratic order depends on a sense of community. Democratic decision-making, without denying self-interest, should also be an arena where the public good has a role in deliberation. Furthermore, it is only through collective action that the decisions of a political body can actually be implemented. More than just social bonding and collective action, however, a sense of community also contains some notion of inclusion and tolerance. Community is a shared sense of maintaining civil order. A proper sense of community should heighten individual awareness of social interdependency. There must be a sentiment of bridging social capital – a system of reaching to those beyond immediate community borders – in order to avoid xenophobic violence and exclusion. Furthermore, bridging social capital extends social networks, allowing greater resources to be gathered into public discussion or collective action. A sense of community, then, should impart a sense of shared humanity.¹³ Thus, democratic orders are assisted by the presence of community, in both the sense that collective action becomes

¹⁰ Mark E. Warren, *Democracy and Association* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 62-67; Cohen and Rogers, 152-153.

¹¹ James L. Fishkin, *Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions for Democratic Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 35-41; Cohen and Rogers, 153-157.

¹² Cohen and Rogers, 157-166.

¹³ Putnam, 22-24; Marion Orr, *Black Social Capital: The Politics of School Reform, in Baltimore, 1986-1998* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 8, 22-24.

possible through shared commitments and individuals are willing to reach out to those who might otherwise be labeled as strangers.

Democracy depends upon individuals and institutions reflecting the four basic democratic values of autonomy, deliberation, egalitarianism, and community. Certainly, there are other components that could be important to a democratic regime, such as a theory of public education, but these are the most basic, core constructs. Through this outline of the core democratic ideals, a more insightful analysis of both modern threats to democracy and future solutions for democracy can be achieved. Yet, outlining the basic ideals of democracy does not necessarily defend a democratic system. Since my argument focuses on the importance of restoring American democracy, in addition to counteracting undemocratic forces of regime politics and economic globalization, the actual necessity of revitalizing democracy must be established.

Democracy has two major arguments, both normative and objective, that reinforce its merit as a method of social organization. First, democratic systems have a basic normative benefit that grants them appeal. Democracy is a system of diffusing power to prevent tyranny, and thereby, to protect human dignity. Furthermore, the democratic system diffuses power into the hands of the many. Thus, democracy assures that each and every individual's humanity and unique nature is respected and acknowledged through their inclusion in the democratic process. In democracy, citizens are granted some degree of control over their own lives, and over the collective life of their society. Democracy is valued, then, for the basic respect it grants to all citizens and for its ability to protect human dignity.

Moving beyond ethical concerns, democracy is also worthwhile because of its objective capacity to produce better solutions to problems than do other methods of social organization. Charles Lindblom argues that democratic decision-making is appropriately described as a form of mutual adjustment. In other words, various actors within the system who are cognizant of one another input their interests into the system and work to fulfill their own interests while at the same time accommodating the decisions of others. Democracy proves to be a better decision-making tool than more centralized systems of control because it includes the interests of many actors, and the proliferation of viewpoints allows unique solutions and potentially hidden flaws to come to light. Democracy's bottom-to-top flow of information is a more effective system because it operates through gradual, temporary, and approximate solutions that originate from those who are directly affected by the material situations being considered.¹⁴

Democracy is best described through its core ideas of autonomy, egalitarianism, deliberation, and community. These ideals are relevant, furthermore, not merely for ethical reasons. It is important to sustain a commitment to democratic government because democratic decision-making results in better policy. Thus, due to the moral and instrumental arguments presented, democracy must be defended against antidemocratic forces such as urban regimes and economic globalization.

¹⁴ Charles E. Lindblom, *The Intelligence of Democracy: Decision Making Through Mutual Adjustment* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 28-33, 144-151.

Risks to Democracy: Regime Politics and Globalization

In the context of developing democracy for both moral and utilitarian reasons, local government is particularly useful. Local government, along with local associations, provide the individual with a direct link to the government. Local policies on policing, keeping pets, road upkeep, snow removal, education, and liquor licenses all greatly impact daily life. Furthermore, it is on the local level that individuals can actually become effectively involved in government – whether that be through serving on a jury, joining an organization to lobby local officials, or actually running for office. Unlike the national government, at the local level citizens can actually mobilize and gather enough power to have a significant voice in politics. Therefore, local government – urban politics – is central to developing more active citizens. Forces such as regimes (control of local government by informal ties among business and elected elites) and globalization tend to result in more centralized decisions produced by those farther from the situation; hence the result is less efficient solutions. Thus these forces, due to their own ineffectiveness, require citizen intervention. Ironically, these same forces that necessitate citizens' intervention are also operating to disempower citizens, thereby lessening the impact of much-needed democratic input. Since regimes and economic globalization are both the trends that must be militated against, as well as the initiators of this need for mobilization, a more developed understanding of these concepts and their threat to democracy is important.

Urban Regimes

In defining the urban regime, Clarence Stone suggests the regime is comprised of “the informal arrangements that surround and compliment the formal working of government authority.”¹⁵ Regimes, through cooperation and resources, attempt to satisfy the goals and interests of those who comprise the informal arrangements. Regimes, in the urban scenario, are traditionally composed of political and economic elites. Business interests, through the regime, receive assistance with reshaping city land use to their interest and avoiding local taxes. Political elites are willing to grant these favors to businesses because cities, in general, lack resources and control over investors; therefore they are heavily dependent on economic elites for economic growth. Thus, businesses provide public officials with a (hopefully) strong economy and impressive civic projects, which not only can improve the economy, but also can enhance an elected official's public stature. Thus, these two wings of the urban elite (local business and public officials) assist one another for mutual benefit. Stone emphasizes that cooperation between the two factions is never guaranteed, and negotiation is often required depending on the circumstances. Further, while regimes tend to be resistant to change, Stone recognizes that the players within a regime do alter over time.¹⁶ Therefore, a regime structure is the cooperation of economic and political elites for the benefit primarily of elite interest, and is not necessarily concerned with the public good.

Regarding the effects of regime politics on citizens, generally regimes tend to disenfranchise citizens. It would be a mistake, of course, to characterize the effects of the regime as wholly negative. For example, if a non-elite group can gain electoral power, it may be possible for that group to gain influence within the regime for their own or civic benefit despite

¹⁵ Stone, 3.

¹⁶ Stone, 6-8; Elkin, 18-21, 36-45, 144.

lacking material resources. It is through electoral power within a regime paradigm that African Americans were able to peacefully integrate schools in Atlanta as well as begin construction of new public housing units and a new high school in exchange for their support of a new stadium in Atlanta. African Americans in Atlanta, through regime politics, also increased the number of minority contractors who received contracts with the city. Similarly, African Americans in Baltimore were able to exert a great deal of influence over the selection of the school system's superintendent.¹⁷ Lastly, regime politics results in lower taxes and land reform acts that are favorable for businesses, hopefully providing for the economic success of a city.¹⁸ There are thus, some potential benefits to the regime system.

However, for the most part, the regime structure is undesirable due its detrimental impact on democracy. First, the regime structure undercuts the autonomy that is necessary to democracy. Regime systems grant economic elites a tremendous degree of political influence. Within regimes, pleasing economic elites first, for the sake of a healthy economy, is paramount. This priority ranking, however, limits the choices available to citizens – policies must not disrupt the economic order. Hence, citizens are beholden to the dictates of a form of capitalism that is determined by elites.¹⁹ Thus options are limited, and autonomy is infringed.

Regime politics is not a political order that is conducive to deliberation either. By its very structure, only certain elites have a voice in decision-making. This is not the careful, open discussion that is implied by deliberation. Additionally, even those who are included in the regime are not necessarily partaking in a constructive dialogue to develop policy. For example, attempts at developing site-based management of schools in Baltimore were stalled when parents complained that plans developed by the Blacks Teacher's Union (BTU) and Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) were established without parental input.²⁰ Hence even in a case where a local group, in this case African Americans, has been included in the regime, its regime representatives (BTU and BUILD in this case) remained aloof from the very people they were meant to represent.

Furthermore, this lack of deliberation results in poor decision-making. Building from Lindblom's work, it can be argued that regime-style decision-making utilizes a synoptic decision-making strategy. In synoptic decision-making, it is assumed that a few actors who have complete knowledge of the situation make the best decisions. Unfortunately, because no human(s) can ever obtain complete information of complex social events, and even, if that should happen, human fallibility would still result in mistakes, synoptic decision-making is an ineffective decision-making strategy.²¹ Stone argues that regime decisions lack social intelligence: the decisions of regimes focus merely on economic issues and lack input from those in direct contact with the situation.²² It is a system that is incapable of learning, and actually denies the ability of non-elite actors to have meaningful input to the system. Regimes

¹⁷ Stone, 47-49, 63-65, 144; Orr, 94.

¹⁸ Stone, 38-42, 203.

¹⁹ Rogers and Cohen, 50-53.

²⁰ Orr, 87-88.

²¹ Lindblom, 1965, 138-142, 166-181.

²² Stone, 203-204, 211.

do not incorporate deliberation into their proceedings, and therefore are not merely undemocratic, but also inefficient.

The regime structure is one that is not egalitarian and undermines community. Economic elites are granted incentives and special favors, and hence are treated as privileged. This allows only businesses to further enhance their power. Thus, economic interests become ever more empowered, and are able to offer discretionary benefits, control media, and propagate their own interests. Power becomes more centralized in the hands of a few elites.²³ Finally, the regime structure is also dangerous to community. As already noted, the regime structure splits communities, as witnessed by groups such as the BTU or BUILD becoming separated from those families they were set up to serve. In Atlanta, regime politics assists middle-class African Americans while doing little for the poor in the community.²⁴ Ultimately, the regime structure of economic and political elites guiding local politics results in the collapse of democratic values.

Economic Globalization

The second major threat to the development of democratic citizens is economic globalization. Globalization, as referred to above, refers to the compression of time and space. Hence, that which was once global and distant now is near and exerts influence on the local. The world is both growing smaller and moving faster than ever before. Globalization can refer to a number of social processes, including changes in politics, environment, and culture.²⁵ However, my concern is how the economic facets of globalization are harmful to democratic values. I will examine how economic globalization undermines democratic values of autonomy, deliberation, equality, and community.

To begin, economic globalization reduces the autonomy of citizens. Thomas Friedman suggests that there is a new force of power in the world today: the Electronic Herd. This Herd, Friedman posits, is a composite of the new source of economic might in the world. The Herd is composed of large institutions, such as banks or corporations, as well as individual investors, both of whom have the power to invest in nearly anything: global stock markets, emerging companies around the world, and even international currencies. The Herd rewards those who promote open markets, free trade, and transparency with capital. Nation-states, cities, or companies who establish any policy with which the Herd disagrees (poor economic planning, tariffs), will find themselves in economic ruin as investors pull out both rapidly and en masse. Thus, the control of economic policy has passed from the hands of citizens to the keyboards of investors.²⁶ The effect of this on democracy cannot be underrated. Moreover, the frenzy of mergers has effectively led to the end of local, or even national, companies – seemingly all companies are transnational and beyond any kind of “local” control.²⁷ For example, in Dallas, Texas most banks and companies that were once locally owned are now part of larger

²³ Stone, 227-229; Rogers and Cohen, 62-65.

²⁴ Stone, 146-148.

²⁵ Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (2nd edition) (London: Routledge, 2001), 4-5, 10-25.

²⁶ Friedman, 112-142.

²⁷ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 137-151.

conglomerations that are controlled by forces that lie outside the state lines.²⁸ Growing forces of economic globalization have removed economic choice from the hands of those impacted, and placed that power in the care of a handful of global elites.

Second, these developments of distant economic control not only deny the autonomy of citizens by placing economic decisions in the hands of those outside the country, but they radically limit the influence citizens can muster. Under a regime system, citizens could influence local economics by gathering political power, combined with appeals to local economic elites' sense of civic duty or commitment to the locality. Now, however, the economic elites reside beyond the city limits. The representatives of these new elites, within the urban environment, may lack any semblance of civic duty. Additionally, those local elites who *are* left may have little substantive power in a large, trans-national corporation; hence elites may have little to offer local government, and local activists may have fewer sites of power to contest then. Further, due to the greater mobility of capital, these new elites will also likely be even less interested in negotiation with the political element of a local regime – after all, the grass could always be greener elsewhere. Globalization reduces not only citizen autonomy, then, it also emasculates the limited citizen power that could be previously mobilized through a regime strategy.

Third, economic globalization leads citizens to undervalue their own political choices. Ideologically, the predominant forms of economic globalization argue that first, globalization is a natural phenomenon, in which no one is in charge, and second, that globalization is generally an irreversible and irresistible event.²⁹ This ideological pressure, coupled with homogenizing capitalist forces, leaves little independent spirit in the citizen. As a result of globalization, citizens find themselves democratically reduced both in terms of a more limited control over resources and decision-making, as well as in terms of greater feelings of political insignificance.

In terms of deliberation, economic globalization is the antithesis of constructive dialogue. As Benjamin Barber observes, economic globalization is based around speed, desire, and the individual. A driving force in economic globalization is the immediate gratification of individual needs.³⁰ An approach so heavily reliant on impulse and rapidity is not compatible with the democratic process of deliberation, which focuses on careful discussion and developed reasoning.

Economic globalization also undermines the goal of greater social equality. As reliance on the service sectors grows and manufacturing jobs becomes scarcer, there is rising economic inequality. Unemployment within major urban cities is increasing, the gap between the rich and the poor is growing globally, the richest people hold a larger percentage of material wealth, and what jobs are being generated are both low-paying and short-term.³¹ Economic globalization

²⁸ Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 132-133.

²⁹ Manfred B. Steger, *Globalism: The New Market Ideology* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 54-66.

³⁰ Barber, 1996, 4, 128-136.

³¹ Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (2nd edition) (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2000), 117-137; Thomas Frank, *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 7-9.

creates a much weaker, lower socio-economic class that is even more beholden to economic elites, therefore resulting in a less egalitarian society and thereby a less democratic order. This inequality is particularly salient for major urban centers, which find themselves facing severe economic segregation as wealthier individuals flee to the suburbs (which is only becoming easier due to telecommunications and interstates).³² Large cities, important for a democratic order if for no other reason than the number of potential citizens living within them, thus seem particularly vulnerable to globalizing forces. Economic globalization will enhance already existing inequalities, reducing the degree of democracy in a society as elites gain more control over information, resources, and perhaps even votes.

Lastly, any sense of community also suffers due to economic globalization. Economic globalization, with its focus on desire and entertainment, breeds a strong sense of individualism. Further, individuals are more empowered to work from home or to escape the blight of cities for suburbs, generally destroying existing social networks at the workplace and in neighborhoods. Even those who remain in cities may find themselves in decimated communities, with little social capital. Therefore, economic globalization siphons away a sense of collective action that is important to democratic living.

Through this discussion, it is clear that democracy is not guaranteed. Regimes, which operate on elite communication and cooperation, work to deny many groups and individuals a meaningful place in government. In recent years, this problem has only worsened through economic globalization, which advocates an individualist and fast-paced outlook that is also corrosive towards democracy. At the moment, the future of democracy is bleak unless citizens are empowered *and* these disempowering forces are addressed in some way.

Rebuilding Democracy: Associations and Institutions

The revitalization of democracy is a necessity, both in the sense that it serves a social good as well as in the sense that democracy is currently under assault. The best manner in which to revitalize democracy is through associations, specifically associations that purposefully impart democratic values. Thus, the goal of a democratic association should be to infuse the individual with a democratic ethic, which is comprised of respect for the four democratic values of autonomy, deliberation, egalitarianism, and community discussed above. An ethic is the preferred mechanism because an ethic, when deeply ingrained, becomes a cultural artifact, thus giving it a social permanence that helps ensure its continued existence. Furthermore, an ethic is flexible. An ethic provides a guideline that can be applied differently in specific instances, meaning an ethic is sensitive to context. Also, institutional reform – while providing the opportunity for democracy – does not guarantee that individuals will *practice* democracy. An ethic builds the more democratic character that will increase democratic behavior. Finally, an ethic is an ongoing driving force. No ethic is ever fully realized – an ethic has a utopian character. Therefore, individuals will continue to strive to more fully realize their own ethic even after the basic democratic institutional needs are achieved. Thus, the development of a democratic ethic through associational life is the first, and fundamental, step in creating renewed

³² Peter Dreier, et al., *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century*. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 12-24.

democratic citizens. The next section of this paper constructs a democratic ethic for our time, and considers approaches for spreading that ethic among citizens. Then, to address the very existence of antidemocratic forces, it will be necessary to also consider some institutional changes that should be enacted to help maintain democracy and check more undemocratic forces.

Initially, an approach for educating citizens about a democratic ethic must be developed. The democratic ethic, as suggested by Tocqueville, is best imparted through involvement in associations.³³ Modern commentators, such as Mark E. Warren, tend to agree with Tocqueville's assessment that associations are crucial democratic educators. However, taking Tocqueville's argument a step further, Warren argues that associations tend to develop democracy not just through their influence on individuals, but also through their institutional and public sphere effects.³⁴ For example, different types of associations will develop unique democratic skills. Thus, associations are the preferred delivery mechanism for democratic values because not only do associations encourage democratic behavior such as deliberation or action, but also the actual social structure of the associations produces certain democratic byproducts. However, despite this, it is important to remember that associations alone will *not* build democratic citizens. For example, the Ku Klux Klan, with its intolerance as well as elitism, is certainly *not* a democratic association. Thus, while an association may impart some democratic effects, democratic citizens are only *truly* developed through civil society that is specifically geared towards producing appropriately democratic citizens.³⁵ In order to more fully develop this associational method of developing citizens, and at the same time to defend this approach over others for developing citizens, it will be useful to first consider the democratic effects of associations and then consider a case of how the Industrial Areas Foundations (IAF) in Southwest Texas, and to a lesser degree Baltimore, Maryland, effectively imparted democratic values through a democratically-geared association.

Associations as Democratic Educators

Individuals, through their mere involvement with associations (whether they be social clubs, advocacy groups, or religious institutions), gain skills, experiences, and values that are conducive to sustaining a democratic order. Different associations will, naturally, result in diverse democratic values being acquired. The voluntary nature, the purpose of the association, and the medium of association (money, social, power) will influence exactly which democratic effects will be produced.³⁶ These democratic effects alone, however, are not enough to maintain a productive democracy, and therefore they must be supplemented with actual democratic values. Nonetheless, it is insightful to consider what the specific democratic effects of associations can be, in order to later more comprehensively evaluate how an organization such as the IAF contributes to the maintenance of democracy.

Associations produce positive democratic results in three primary areas: individual effects, public sphere effects, and institutional effects. First, involvement in associations can

³³ Tocqueville, 96.

³⁴ Mark E. Warren, 61.

³⁵ John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 239-244.

³⁶ Mark E. Warren, 94-95.

produce a range of pro-democratic characteristics within individuals. Associations encourage a sense of political efficacy, and serve as a source through which citizens can gain information that is vital to them. Further, within an association citizens can develop political skills such as public speaking, negotiation, coalition-building, and problem solving. Furthermore, associations can serve as incubators for critical thinking skills and a sense of civic virtue, which includes an awareness of the common good, tolerance, and trustworthiness.³⁷ With such skills, citizens can form political associations and interact successfully with the political infrastructure.

Second, associations have significant public sphere effects. For example, associations can serve as vocal mouthpieces that more efficiently spread information on an issue. In addition, associations increase the representation of difference in the public eye by granting groups political presence when they may lack the resources to otherwise obtain media attention. Fundamentally, associations are also a sphere where individuals come together and can develop a sense of common humanity.³⁸ The ability of groups and individual to have their stance represented in a democratic system is key. Without such organization, groups will find their concerns ignored.

Finally, associations contribute institutional effects that are democratic in nature. Associations organize individuals so that their votes and voices can be mobilized to influence representatives to promote policy. Associations organize individuals in order to use civil disobedience or demonstrations to resist government policy as well. Associations can also act as subsidiary powers, to develop and implement more efficient local solutions to social problems. Associations can play a mediating role between public and private bodies, as well as helping establish networks of active citizens that grant a state democratic legitimacy.³⁹ Thus, in the abstract at least, associations develop skills and organize power in order to help ensure the well being of a democratic order. Now that the capacity of associations to produce positive political effects for democracy has been highlighted, we can examine a concrete example of how such a process might work by considering the Industrial Areas Foundation in Texas.

The Industrial Areas Foundation: A Case of Study of Revitalized Democracy

At this point, I have argued that democracy, due to its respect for human dignity and its efficiency at developing social policy, is the preferred governmental structure for society. I have also emphasized that democracy is presently under assault from regime structures in the urban environment and the pressures of economic globalization. And, I have introduced a democratic ethic that provides the resources citizens require to be fully engaged in politics. There is still hope, if a democratic ethic can be instilled through associations. In order to bolster my claim that certain associations, specifically those that are blatantly democratically oriented, can reinvigorate both citizens and democracy, I will present an analysis of how the IAF has been able to impart both the four basic democratic values *and* a number of the democratic benefits of associational life. The IAF is a good example to utilize because of its numerous successes in mobilizing citizens and serving as a democratic educator. Thus, associations such as the IAF will play a crucial role in democratic revitalization. In order to develop this point, a discussion

³⁷ Ibid, 71-74.

³⁸ Ibid, 77-82.

³⁹ Ibid, 83-93.

of the brief history and the utility of IAF methods will be presented, followed by an analysis of the democratic effects of the IAF.

The IAF traces its origins to Saul Alinsky's attempts to mobilize for reform in Chicago. The IAF seeks to reveal to the seemingly powerless that they actually do have considerable power. The IAF does not organize individuals; instead, to maximize its resources, the IAF organizes organizations. Professional organizers assist leaders within the organizations. Leaders interact with their followers, to identify the issues that are of concern in the community. Then, leaders and organizers develop possible plans and actions to address that social ill. However, no organization is compelled to participate. Instead, participation is based on a unanimous decision by the organization. Within these organizations, the IAF establishes a consensual democratic process that stresses deliberation and compromise. However, it maintains a clear hierarchy of authority, in order to facilitate efficiency and accountability. Finally, the IAF utilizes demonstrations, electoral power, and political mobilization to achieve its goals. Crucially, the IAF is not dogmatic – emphasis is placed upon compromise.⁴⁰

The real genius of the IAF, however, is its ability to politicize the most disempowered members of society. It is this success at organizing the disenfranchised that led to my focus on the IAF, not only as a model for revitalizing citizens, but also as an example of how very real is the possibility of revitalization. The ingenuity of the IAF approach is its appeal to *self-interest*.⁴¹ Through appealing to immediate individual and community interests, the IAF is able to encourage individuals to take risks and become politically involved. Through this first involvement with politics, with self-interest as the bridge, individuals develop a broader political consciousness.⁴² The IAF relies on other motivators as well, such as appealing to an existing sense of community attachment or religious values. But the primary motivator is unquestionably self-interest. Certainly, the IAF is a worthwhile organization for democratic revitalization for other fundamental reasons, most notably its commitment to consensual democracy, its focus on involving the community in addressing community issues, and the attention it pays to the disenfranchised. However, it is the creative and productive use of self-interest that imbues the IAF with much of its value as a method for imparting democratic ideals. There is a risk that self-interest in the IAF could become overwhelming, and the common good (a necessary democratic component) could be forgotten. But this seems unlikely, since the IAF encourages consensual democracy and traces its origins to selfless religious traditions. In fact, the development of the self-interested voices of the powerless is an entirely positive development, as it increases the number of actors involved in the democratic process, and thereby, should produce better policy decisions.

Now that a basic understanding of the IAF, and its utility as a democratic educator, is established, the actual democratic effects of the IAF must be ascertained. In order to measure the IAF's democratic influence, I will next address events taken primarily from South Texas organizing around school reform and job training, as well as other issues. The IAF, in fact, is remarkably successful in establishing both democratic values and associational effects within its

⁴⁰ Mark R. Warren, 53-56, 211-238; Dennis Shirley, *Valley Interfaith and School Reform: Organizing for Power in South Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 6-7.

⁴¹ Mark R. Warren, 216.

⁴² Bellah et al., 168-169, 192-195.

members. First I will evaluate the ability of the IAF to impart the four basic democratic values, and then I will consider how the IAF contributes positive civil society effects as well.

Through its political organizing and the real achievements it obtains, the IAF is able to impart a sense of political autonomy onto its members. Most directly, the IAF actively seeks out individuals from within its own organization who would be good leaders. These leaders, when identified, enter into a process of education which involves formal instruction, interaction with academics, guided evaluations, and learning through actually performing actions and negotiations.⁴³ The results of the leadership training and participation in the IAF can be dramatic. Mark R. Warren reports how a number of Mexican American women, who as impoverished victims of a machismo culture are considerably politically disempowered, underwent personal rebirths and emerged as savvy, confident political leaders.⁴⁴

Second, the reforms achieved by the IAF aid in establishing a more egalitarian social order that is, as a consequence, a more fruitful democratic social order as well. IAF work has focused on, for example, increasing health care for the poor and achieving sewer service to economically disadvantaged areas.⁴⁵ In addition, in terms of providing the greater economic independence and opportunity that is crucial to democracy, the IAF has fought for both job training and better education. For instance, the IAF developed long-term job training programs that emphasize skills currently demand in that area. Further, the IAF ensures not only that the jobs it trains pay a living wage, but it also works to assist its graduates in actually securing a position.⁴⁶ Similarly, the IAF is involved in increasing the educational opportunities of the children of the impoverished. The IAF was instrumental in developing the Alliance school system in Texas, which provides qualifying schools with not only more funds but also greater freedom to implement innovative pedagogical techniques.⁴⁷ The IAF also helped obtain dual-language education in some schools, so that students whose primary language is Spanish are not left behind.⁴⁸ Thus, the IAF helps future citizens to become better educated and current citizens to obtain the economic security that will allow both groups to engage more fully in the democratic process.

Third, the IAF plays a significant role in imparting deliberative values onto its adherents. As part of its inherent structure, the IAF operates under a consensual democracy model. The IAF depends on people meeting and talking in order to gather information and make decisions. Such meetings shun voting; thus compromise, understanding, and strong argumentation skills are all fostered through involvement in the IAF. As with other areas, this focus on deliberation extends over to the actual reforms enacted. IAF reforms, such as institutionalizing parental input in decision-making at local schools, and promoting parental engagement, reveal how the IAF imbeds the deliberative ideal into its participants.⁴⁹ This consistency between means and ends is one of the reasons the IAF is such an attractive messenger for democratic values – the IAF

⁴³ Mark R. Warren, 50, 86-89, 214-217, 226.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 218-219.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 77-81.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 167-176, 183.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 83-85.

⁴⁸ Shirley, 32.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 37-38.

commitment to democracy is strong and deep, and its reforms extend its process as well as its goals.

Fourth, the IAF skillfully encourages a sense of community among those who are involved with the organization. As part of its school reform measures, the IAF encouraged teachers to visit students and their parents in their homes, thereby building community by breaking down barriers between the educational administration and the neighborhood.⁵⁰ Similarly, IAF organizations often bridge barriers of race, place, and religion in their attempt to organize. Thus, Anglos, African Americans, and Latinos (of many denominations) from throughout the state of Texas have come together to work for school reform.⁵¹

These few examples demonstrate that the IAF, through both structure and reforms, serves a role in developing basic democratic values within citizens. However, the democratic boons of the IAF do not end there. As an association, the IAF also offers other democratic benefits through individual, public sphere, and institutional effects. The IAF, first, offers its individual members a number of significant democratic skills. As previously mentioned, many people find that their experiences and training within the IAF leads to a political transformation. Thus, even the most politically disenfranchised attain a greater degree of political efficacy. The IAF educates its members in basic political skills of organization, leadership, reflection, critical thought, and negotiation.⁵² Further, the IAF organizes accountability sessions where elected officials appear before IAF organizations. At accountability sessions, public officials are asked questions and only given a moment or two to answer, encouraging brief, straightforward answers. Accountability sessions serve as a mechanism by which IAF members gain a sense of political power, as their elected officials answer their questions. Additionally, the sessions can serve an informative function, an important byproduct of associations, as IAF members gain an opportunity to first-hand learn a candidate's stance on issues. The IAF, through its involved training and encouragement of active political participation, is able to develop once powerless individuals into political leaders.

Beyond individual effects, the IAF also is the source of a number of beneficial public sphere effects. The IAF lifts obscure issues, such as water service for poor communities or indigent health care, and turns them into significant political issues that garner the attention of political leaders. In some cases, to force attention onto issues such as these, the IAF has undertaken actions such as storming the capitol building to demand a special session to ensure that the government addresses IAF concerns.⁵³ The IAF is able to mobilize groups that are often ignored; therefore the IAF is instrumental in representing difference in the public sphere. For example, Dallas had a significant problem with racism, and was essentially controlled by white elites. Yet, the IAF mobilized African American and Latino populations in order to secure a more effective job training program and increase funding for schools.⁵⁴ Finally, the IAF also builds a sense of commonality. Utilizing a shared Judeo-Christian religious tradition, the IAF is able to form a coalition from disparate members of society: men, women, middle-class,

⁵⁰ Shirley, 28-30, 47.

⁵¹ Mark R. Warren, 98-103, 72-80, 106-107, 114, 93-95.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 218-219, 222-226.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 77-81.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 136-137, 143-149.

impoverished, Latinos, African Americans, Anglos, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews from throughout the state.⁵⁵ Hence, IAF involvement results in a number of public sphere effects that have a positive impact on a democratic system.

Lastly, the IAF generates a series of beneficial democratic institutional effects. As discussed above, the IAF shifts ignored populations into a site of influence within the government, as observed through the IAF's success in attaining water service and health care for economically disadvantaged populations. The IAF encourages a spirit of resistance, as seen by parents who mobilized to continue their children's enrollment at an IAF-reformed school despite the opening of a new school in the area.⁵⁶ Finally, organizations such as the IAF assist in mediating between the public and private sphere. Baltimore IAF groups have developed programs to help secure job interviews for successful African American students, and establish a CollegeBound Foundation that provides small scholarships to African American students who are short of having the funds necessary to pay for college.⁵⁷ Thus, IAF-style institutions act as a mediating force to empower citizens to effectively bargain with more powerful entities.

The IAF and similar organizations are an important part of revitalizing democracy. The IAF, as a result of the reforms it pursues, its own ideological slant, and as a result of being an association, does an extraordinary job of building more democratic citizens, empowering the voices of the powerless, and creating a more democratic civil society through education reform and job training. I recommend expanding groups such as the IAF particularly because of their reliance on self-interest. Self-interest, in the modern capitalist world, is one of *the* primary motivators of human action. Appeals to public good, especially in the faster paced modern world, tend to fall on deaf ears. By appealing to this self-interest, the IAF can draw in members and then transform both them and the society around them for democratic purposes.

The IAF approach to politics, however, does contain a few minor flaws. Religious faith is an integral part of the IAF model, as churches are the primary sites of organization and a Christian theology of justice serves as a significant philosophical foundation.⁵⁸ This not only denies atheist and non-Christian involvement, but it also raises questions about the separation of church and state. However, religious values are important in defining public objectives, and the IAF is merely utilizing religion as a springboard to public action and not endorsing a state-sponsored religion. Additionally, accountability sessions – in which officials have little time to respond – are perceived by some as being undemocratic and not conducive to deliberation.⁵⁹ However, accountability sessions are not meant to be sites of deliberation, but are public theater where participants become aware of and comfortable with their own power. Nonetheless, the accountability sessions do raise questions of consistency. Finally, the IAF model is time consuming. For example, it took over three hundred house meetings to begin to organize the campaign for better job training in Texas.⁶⁰ The IAF tends to shun electronic forms of communication, focusing on individual meetings and relationship building. Thus, the IAF model

⁵⁵ Ibid, 117-118.

⁵⁶ Shirley, 51-52.

⁵⁷ Orr, 126-139.

⁵⁸ Mark R. Warren, 242.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 231-234.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 169.

may be *very* slow and require an intense commitment from those who wish to be involved. However, the slow pace and serious commitment are also important democratic values. The IAF (and similar organizations), ultimately, should play a major role in revitalizing democratic citizens, however due to flaws or incompatibilities with some individuals, it is also necessary to encourage an ecology of associations.

Since the IAF may not be suited to everyone, but democratic reinvigoration is still desirable, other methods of developing good citizens must be found. Mark E. Warren argues that different associations produce various democratic effects, with the effect produced dependent on the character of the organization.⁶¹ In fact, despite its excellent record, not even the IAF will produce all the democratic qualities needed. Hence, what is needed is an ecology of associations. Thereby, if most citizens are involved, to some degree, in a number of associations that are geared towards encouraging democracy, in general, the result should be democratic citizens.⁶² Through associations, and especially IAF-style organizations, citizens can be inoculated with a democratic ethic. Once in possession of this ethic, citizens will be more inclined to participate in government and push for their voices to be heard. The goal is not merely to impart the ethic; the goal is to also create a call to action so that citizens engage in a more democratic lifestyle. The result will be the protection of human dignity and more efficient policy. This change alone will significantly reduce the antidemocratic effects of regimes and economic globalization. However, the existence of an ethic alone will not protect democracy, there must also be institutional change to fully develop the democratic ideal.

New Institutions for New Democracy

The infusion of a democratic ethic will be the first step in citizens taking a stand against disempowering forces such as regimes and globalization. However, that stance will only have a significant, lasting impact if there are institutional changes inspired by and in accordance with that ethic. Through the alteration of institutions, citizens can create an order that is more in accordance with democratic ideals. Thus, democracy will be furthered through an ethic that is channeled through democratically responsive (and responsible) institutions. In the end, it is only by changing institutions, in accordance with a new ethic, that citizens will be able to significantly reduce the impact of antidemocratic threats such as regimes and globalization. Institutional reforms to preserve democracy must occur in two spheres: the legislative and the economic.

First, legislative changes are needed to place more local power directly in the hands of citizens. Stephen L. Elkin suggests the development of neighborhood assemblies that would provide an arena in which citizens could meet to deliberate, and would provide a greater degree of power over their own neighborhoods. With actual power, citizens would be encouraged to participate and the result would be better neighborhood organization. Second, Elkin suggests the adoption of citywide referenda. These referenda would allow citizens direct input on the rule of law within a city. Further, the referenda would not be simply yes/no ballots. Instead, the referenda would offer a range of choices and reasons for that choice from which a voter could select. Thus, voting would gain more nuance, and the reasons for a vote failing or passing would be better understood so that future legislation could be guided by that insight into voters'

⁶¹ Mark E. Warren, 96-109.

⁶² *Ibid*, 207-216.

positions. Finally, Elkin argues for the development of a citywide legislature, as compared to a city council, so that more voices could be represented in local government.⁶³ Through arrangements such as these, local government could be organized to be more democratic, granting input to more people and further diffusing power to enhance citizen responsibility and participation. Such a system could, eventually, be scaled upwards so that citizens would play a more direct role in the national government as well.⁶⁴ However, the first step is to encourage change at the local level. This system would effectively counter regime-style government, by giving citizens more direct input. Hence, citizens – now ingrained with a new democratic ethic – would have the tools to truly control their local government, freeing them from the undemocratic force of regime politics.

Of course, legislative reforms are not sufficient for a truly democratic institutional structure. Economic reforms, releasing citizens from the absolute capitalist tyranny that now dominates global politics, are also necessary to enhance democracy. David L. Imbroscio suggests a number of economic reforms, such as community-based economic development and municipal enterprises.⁶⁵ While these reforms are excellent strategies, they are ultimately too large of a shift from the current capitalist order for widespread use in the United States. However, Imbroscio's entrepreneurial-mercantilist strategy is well suited to the American political culture of individualism and entrepreneurial spirit. The entrepreneurial strategy seeks to stimulate small business growth and local ownership, with a focus on reducing imports, conserving resources, tapping local finances, and employment of local residents.⁶⁶ Through this approach, cities become less dependent on economic elites since wealth is more dispersed, thus regimes become less of a problem. Further, as cities become more economically independent, the force of globalization at least becomes less demanding upon citizens and democracy. Obviously, the hope is to create neither a utopian autarky nor an isolationist policy; instead the goal is to seize economic control from elites and grant citizens some greater degree of autonomy over their economic lives. Thus, through the alteration of institutions, through the inspiration of the democratic ethic, democracy is better protected.

Through this discussion, it has become clear that democracy is at risk in the modern world. More and more, local government – the true site of democratic education – is becoming irrelevant in the face of regime politics and economic globalization. However, democracy can still be salvaged through a reinvigoration of associational life. To be effective, a democratic association must first appeal to self-interest to gather members, and then it must impart to its members a democratic ethic. This ethic must also be directed towards institutional reform, in order to ensue that democracy is best served and the voices of the people truly receive recognition. Through this approach of associations crafting democracy, antidemocratic forces such as regime politics and economic globalization can be effectively stalled.

⁶³ Elkin, 171-174.

⁶⁴ Barber, 267-311.

⁶⁵ David L. Imbroscio, *Reconstructing City Politics: Alternative Economic Development and Urban Regimes* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 97-106, 139-144.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 49-59.

Concluding Remarks

Democracy, notably at the local level, is suffering due to regimes and economic globalization. Through my analysis, I have suggested that the development of associations that impart a democratic ethic and strive for more democratic institutions can effectively thwart the antidemocratic effects of regimes and globalization. My focus has been on the local, rather than the global level. It is frivolous to argue for global institutions of democracy or cosmopolitan citizens of the world, when local democracy is being slowly eroded. I suggest that to combat the antidemocratic global forces, the battle should not be joined head-on. Instead of focusing on combating globalization, at any level, democratic activists should focus on building democracy at the local level. To jump to global solutions too quickly will be ineffective and hence only create greater citizen alienation. There are no guarantees that a democratic ethic alone will solve these problems, or that citizens will even be open to democratic ideas through the media onslaught of McWorld. However an ethic developed through relationships and associations, a zone not yet fully controlled by the corporate sector, is an excellent beginning towards a revitalization of democracy. Through a continuous cultivation of democracy, people will become aware of both the importance of democracy as well as the antidemocratic nature of regimes and globalization, and through time when enough power has been gathered, something can be done to address larger-scale social problems.

Further, given time, the democratic local government can make a significant impact on the global arena. It is currently assumed that cities no longer matter – that they have lost the political and economic might they once had due to suburbanization and telecommunications.⁶⁷ In fact, cities are still tremendously important. Major urban centers are still important sites of production and innovation, employ a large number of workers, and offer massive private assets, cultural resources, skilled workers, large knowledge bases, and significant social networks.⁶⁸ Furthermore, cities have become the key locations and marketplaces for the globalized era's major industries of finance, law, media, and real estate. Cities are highly interconnected, and serve as sites of production for new industries as well as the creation of new ideas. Ultimately, cities are the sites of organization for the new globalized economy, housing major banks, law firms, and technology companies.⁶⁹ Cities, because of these resources, are sites of power.

Moreover, due to the ongoing critical role of the city in the new global economy, cities are also sites of opportunity. More and more, with white flight and economic segregation, there is a real opportunity for the disadvantaged in society to organize and gain control of major urban centers.⁷⁰ Essentially, there is a gap emerging in controlling regimes; as old elites flee there is an opportunity for the disenfranchised to truly flex their political muscles. Thus, if those who are currently disempowered are able to seize political control of urban centers, they not only have the power to remake their own city, but due to the ascending importance of the global city, they can also potentially impact national and international policy and opinion. With strategies of building coalitions across regions, states, or even internationally, this power could be even further enhanced. Further strategies must be developed to mold urban power into a wellspring of

⁶⁷ Orr, 75; Dreier et al., 1-3; Sassen, 1.

⁶⁸ Dreier et al., 25.

⁶⁹ Sassen, 1-5.

⁷⁰ Dreier et al., 37-41; Stone, 26-31.

social justice. Thus, the urban environment, while it is currently in a state of despondency and a democratic dead zone, could serve as an important power broker in the quest for global social justice and democracy. Of course, newly empowered, democratic urban regimes would never have absolute control over the firms within them and they would never exert absolute influence on international affairs. Nonetheless, urban politics can act as a major site of political resistance. Cities and local government, vulnerable to electoral domination by oppressed groups, may be one of the great hopes for global justice. However, this more egalitarian and democratic urban advocate can only be mobilized if the disenfranchised within the cities themselves are awakened by associations and claim their right as full democratic citizens.

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