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Urban Governance and Politics in a Global Context: The Growing Importance of Localities

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One of the intriguing paradoxes of the multifaceted phenomenon called globalization is the marked tendency in many countries (in both the North and the South) toward increased public concern with institutions and issues of a local nature. By local we refer to jurisdictions at the level of municipality, district, local community, or lower still. To capture the binary nature of this emerging tendency, some writers have popularized a Japanese business term of the 1980s, glocalization (Borja and Castells 1997; Luke 1995; Parnwell and Wongsuphasawat 1997; Robertson 1995).[1] Others (many of them environmentalists) have reminded us of the popular slogan "think globally, act locally" (Gilbert and others 1996, pp. 17–18); while still others have systematically examined the extensive evidence of local and community initiatives in response to international forces (Douglass and Friedmann 1998; Eade 1997; Gould, Schnaiberg, and Weinberg 1996; Pile and Keith 1997; Taylor 1995). Whatever the approach taken, however, local politics and governance has proved to be a central preoccupation of both scholars and developmental activists at the beginning of the 21st century. In light of the increasing importance of local initiatives and municipal institutions, this focus on local politics and governance can be traced through three major trajectories: civil society, local democratization, and the new localism. While these trajectories are related, and each in turn relates the local to the global, they all offer different perspectives on the complex restructuring of institutions taking place in both northern and southern countries.

Components of the Local: Urban Civil Society

Because the focus on local aspects of politics and development is relatively new, and because local politics and development take on so many different expressions in diverse parts of the world, generalizations are fraught with uncertainty. However, one major aspect of this tendency is a weakening of state institutions—especially at the national level—at the same time as civil society flourishes. Although the national state is still central to economic, social, and even cultural life, its powers and functions have changed in complex ways. Castells attributes much of the weakening of the national state (in terms of power rather than influence) to global processes beyond the control of the state. He explains that "the nation-state is increasingly powerless in controlling monetary policy, deciding its budget, organizing

[1] Different authors define the term glocalization differently. Robertson, a sociologist, observes that " the concept of globalization has involved the simultaneity and the interpenetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or—in more abstract vein—the universal and the particular" (Robertson 1995, p. 30). Borja and Castells offer a more institutional definition. They explain that "United Nations conferences, and especially the Agenda 21 for the implementation of their agreements, assign a major role to local government, and particularly to policies which can be implemented in urban spheres. This is what has come to be known as glocalization, that is, links between the global and the local. This notion is today applied both to the economy (the city as a good economic medium for optimization of synergies) and to culture (local identities and their dialectic relationship with media based universalism of information). Here, glocalization means placing emphasis on the urban setting and the management-coordination-promotion role of local governments in the implementation of policies which take account of and adopt stances with respect to global terms of reference. In short, globalization plus proximity" (Borja and Castells 1997, pp. 212, 214).

production and trade, collecting its corporate taxes, and fulfilling its commitments to provide social benefits. In sum, it has lost most of its economic power, albeit it still has some regulatory capacity and relative control over its subjects" (Castells 1997, p.254). The degree to which the national state has lost power as a result of political choice or forces outside its control is a matter of debate (Hirst and Thompson 1996; McQuaig 1998).

Associated with these current institutional trends are attitudinal changes among the public in most Western countries. These attitudes include lower levels of respect and deference for national political leaders and institutions (Nevitte 1996; Nye, Zelikow, and King 1997) and a declining willingness in many countries to pay taxes and to support a broad range of national political functions. While support for national institutions has declined, local institutions show more resilience. In the United States, for example, polls routinely show that people have more trust in their local than in federal government institutions. In 1997, a poll reported in *The Washington Post* showed a public confidence rate of only 22 percent in federal institutions, as opposed to a 38-percent confidence rate in local-level institutions (Nye, Zelikow, and King 1997). A 1998 Gallup poll that asked Americans parallel questions concerning their confidence in the federal government to handle "domestic" (that is, national) problems and in their local government to handle "local" problems showed a similar disparity. Thus, 61 percent of the national sample reported that they had either "a great deal" or a "fair amount" of trust in the federal government, while 77 percent of the same sample reported "a great deal" or a "fair amount" of trust or confidence in their local government (Gallup 2000, pp. 49–51).

At the same time, social surveys show a new interest in civil society and nontraditional political activities (Inglehart 1997a) and a new relationship between civil society and government. In current usage, the term civil society refers to "those social organizations, associations and institutions that exist beyond the sphere of direct supervision and control by the state" (Friedmann 1998, p.21). Thus, civil society may include broad-based organizations such as charities and chambers of commerce, rate-payers' associations, environmental groups, religious organizations, and community groups and families. The more organized examples of these kinds of groups and organizations have increasingly taken the initiative in local affairs in many countries. A brief history of urban social movements in Latin America illustrates the growing importance of civil society.

Urban Civil Society in Latin America

During the 1960s and 1970s, the larger cities in many developing countries were the focus of increasingly intense conflicts between the public authorities and large numbers of the urban poor who could not afford the cost of shelter in planned areas with good roads, piped water, sewerage, electricity, and other infrastructural services. Partly as a result of these people's inability to afford the cost of planned areas, so-called squatter or popular settlements (variously named in different countries) developed on unserviced urban land. This land was usually marginal in terms of the quality of the site and the distance from major centers of employment and often compromised in terms of the legality of the land tenure rights of the new occupants. The social science literature of the time extensively investigated both the reasons for the growth of these settlements and the appalling living conditions many of them represented. These studies demonstrated that the massive increase in people living in the popular settlements was not a result of a challenge to the system of authority, but a result of marginal groups attempting to gain a foothold in the urban economy, which could serve as a first step toward integration into the labor market and integration into the institutions of the larger society. Following this logic, a number of policy innovations—such as sites and services schemes and later squatter upgrading programs—were developed to respond to the need of the urban poor to gain entry, at minimal cost, to the formal urban economy. These innovations, promoted by such multilateral agencies as the World Bank and a number of bilateral donor agencies, were the focus of urban policy innovation throughout the developing world during the 1970s and early 1980s.

The attempts by the urban poor to gain access to urban land and services were conceptualized—at least in Latin America—as an important component of what were called urban social movements. The idea of a social movement reflects broad-based, often multiclass, coordinated activity at the local level; at the same time, even though demands are made on the state, political parties and other specialized institutions are not the primary vehicles through which pressure is brought to bear. As the case of Lima from the turn of the century until the early 1970s demonstrates, the formation and establishment of informal, unplanned settlements in the city took place on public land, land under disputed title, and private land. Of some 136 settlements for which information was available, 41 were formed with explicit authorization from the government, 50 were formed through an organized land invasion by groups of squatters, and 41 were formed through gradual occupation (Collier 1976, chapter 3). Although the government resisted informal settlements over the years, those evicted from one area would eventually find space in another area, sometimes with the support of the government. By 1972, "a common way of getting a lot was to participate in an invasion and then get moved to a government-sponsored settlement. Invasions...continue to be a major means through which families acquire land in settlements" (Collier 1976, p.115). In the case of Peru during this period, different governments and political leaders were obliged to support the irregular (and even illegal) occupation of land in the capital city. This support was both a strategy to win political support from large groups of the population and a result of pressure from private landowners who could not otherwise develop their land.

The story of the Pamplona invasion may best illustrate the organization of the squatters in response to political opportunities. In 1971, a group of 80 to 100 families planned this event to coincide with meetings in Lima between the government of Peru and the Inter-American Development Bank. While a contingent of troops arrived to disperse the squatters—whose ranks had grown to some 9,000 families by the fifth day of the occupation—public opinion was such that they were eventually offered sites in another location named Villa el Salvador. By 1986, about 168,000 people lived in Villa el Salvador, most with electricity and over half with domestic water and sewerage. "Despite originally being a desert site, the area now has many trees and gardens, the main roads are paved and bus services link it to central Lima, some 20 kilometers away. Most of these improvements were made by the inhabitants and their organizations, not by government" (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989, p. 85).

The importance of demands for urban land and services as a central element in the local politics of low-income groups is clearly demonstrated by Mexican research conducted during the 1970s. In a major survey of six low-income communities on the periphery of Mexico City, residents indicated that problems relating to increased income, employment, and education for their children were their primary personal concerns. At the neighborhood level, security of tenure was identified as the overwhelming need in the two communities that had not yet been regularized by the government. In the four communities where the government had already granted individual land tenure rights, basic urban services and improvements (such as piped water, sewage systems, and paved streets) were identified as the primary needs. In none of the six communities was improvement of the quality of housing as such a high priority (Cornelius 1975, chapter 7). Similar findings have been obtained in surveys in many other parts of the developing world. Because most countries' national and local government agencies were either unable or unwilling to supply basic urban services to these burgeoning popular settlements—at least not at the pace and quality that the people were demanding—various patterns of community organization and self-help activities developed almost everywhere. In Mexico City, for example, a well-known study of a small, peripheral shantytown that sprawled over the slopes of a ravine looked at the reciprocal social and kinship ties that supported the settlers even though their economic positions in the larger system were marginal. Aside from a dense network of extended family ties, the community of 176 households had four football teams, a medical center (originally financed and organized by middle-class women from the adjacent neighborhood), and a number of temporary associations for specific purposes, often formed by small groups of neighbors (Lomnitz 1974). One important book on Nairobi, which focuses on the emergence of low-income settlements, describes the Kenyan capital as a self-help city (Hake 1977).

The Emergence of Nongovernmental Organizations

In the context of political systems (often under the control of military groups) that did not offer much opportunity for the poor to influence their governments directly, the self-help activities of low-income communities became even more important when they were joined in collective action with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). During the 1960s and 1970s, NGOs occupied the narrow political space between local communities and formal institutions in the domain of social services and the promotion of local development. When many northern countries and foundations did not want to give assistance to authoritarian governments or government-dominated political parties, they were prepared to support local NGOs, which often worked with community groups. In Santiago, Chile, for example, a survey found that in the 1980s, 20 percent of the marginal urban population participated in popular organizations, 33 percent of which were involved with health problems. In the health area, some 673 self-help health organizations were operating at the community level alone, including 201 soup kitchens, 20 community kitchens, 223 cooperative buying organizations, 67 family garden organizations, 25 community bakeries, and 137 health groups. These organizations had 12,956 active members. Most of the members, as well as the leaders and managers of these organizations, have been women (Salinas and Solimano 1995). At the NGO level, thousands of organizations existed in Chile during the authoritarian period, many of them relying on external financing for their operations (Loveman 1995).

In some countries, NGOs helped to maintain political pluralism; in others, they kept authoritarianism at bay. As Hirschman (1984) suggests, such developments reflect a worldwide trend where all citizens demand basic economic (and therefore political) rights. In Brazil beginning in the late 1970s, for example,

> Civil society breathed the air of the political 'opening', which heralded a return to democratic rule after 20 years of authoritarianism. Mobilization took root in the factories, but soon spread beyond the labour movement and political parties. In both poor neighbourhoods...and middle-class areas, the population organized to demand the right to basic services—water supply, sewerage, school facilities, health facilities, roads—and protested against ecological dangers, development plans which ignored residents' interests, housing evictions and a host of other causes (Valladares and Coelho 1995, p. 88).

The emergence of urban social movements in Mexico and Peru, involving particularly the mobilization and organization of low-income communities, predated the Brazilian awakening. However, the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City and a growing concern over urban environmental risk—especially as a result of high levels of air pollution in the capital—led to a diverse range of protests and popular activity in the area of human settlements. As Latin America urbanized, the link between protests and organizational activity to secure land and improved urban services and demands for the reduction and control of air and water pollution in the cities became more pronounced. Both popular organizational activity and demands for pollution control, in any case, were central to the democratization process in Latin America. Rodriguez, Espinoza, and Herzer clarify the importance of urban social movements as an alternative to democracy in systems that fail to offer full political choice. They note that "social movements were crucial to democratic recovery; they served as a means of developing social identity and of organizing political mobilization against dictatorships in Peru, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile" (Rodriguez, Espinoza, and Herzer 1995, p. 237).

Eventually, with the return of democracy in much of South America in the 1980s, the activity of social movements was considerably reduced. If we include the activities of NGOs and grassroots support organizations in the social movement category, three main reasons exist for this declining trend. First, many activists were absorbed into new political party and local state structures, where their initiatives could meet with more immediate responses, and their immediate professional and career needs could be better absorbed. Second, the reformed state structures offered the possibility of concrete action on a range of functions and responsibilities that was not previously accessible to the general population. Third, international organizations and foundations—which had given strong support to NGOs during the

authoritarian period—began to shift their funding to the democratic governments. Where these conditions did not exist, however, NGOs continued to play an active role. In his account of Lima, Dietz (1999, p. 254) observes that, even in the late 1980s (under a succession of civilian governments), "the urban lower classes had long since given up much hope that the state and its policies could or would truly work on their behalf." As a result, at the end of the decade, the urban poor community, NGOs, and overseas aid agencies were supporting an estimated 1,800 communal soup kitchens and some 3,500 Vaso de Leche neighborhood committees delivering 1 million glasses of milk a day (Dietz 1999). This level of local self-help and outside support may have subsequently risen, in the early years of the Fujimori presidency after 1990.

In the 1980s international agencies, with the help of a number of Latin American and African states, began to establish social funds in many countries. These agencies, whose mandate was to relieve poverty and marginality, were, in effect, a large-scale, organized response to many of the social concerns that NGOs had previously embraced. They supplemented—sometimes effectively, sometimes ineffectively—the social policies increasingly being developed by governments to deal with the problems of health, education, and social assistance at the local level (Schteingart 1999). By the mid-1980s, rather than acting on their own, NGOs began to target the newly elected municipal and local governments as they sought to "deliver services, mobilize interests, encourage self-reliance, and act as advocates for improving citizens' life conditions and opportunities" (Reilly 1995, p. 2). Cooperation between NGOs and municipalities was a major theme during the 1990s.

Civil Society and Urbanization in Africa

The development of civil society at the local level has gone through three major phases since the advent of political independence in the 1960s in most of Africa. During the first phase, in the period just following independence, organizations such as trade unions, ethnic and regional associations, women's groups, and farmers' and business associations were active in defining the roles of their membership and defending their interests in relation to the emerging state structures. These civil society groups had been active during the nationalist movements against colonial rule, although in most countries their activities were much more concentrated in the large urban areas than in the more dispersed smaller towns and rural areas.

As these state structures became powerful during the late 1960s and 1970s and military or one-party regimes became the norm at the national level, political space for the expression of local demands was limited, and central controls restricted the autonomy of municipal and local government. During this second phase, the voices of civil society all over Africa were muted. Political initiatives came from the center, and a discourse of development planning—supported by international assistance—concentrated on large-scale formal projects, extensive state and parastatal employment, and widespread regulation of the economy.

In the third phase, from the 1980s through the early 1990s, this system began to break down economically, as formal employment through government and import substitution-led industrialization reached its limits. With the informal sector growing in importance, conflict between the rural (and increasingly urban) poor and the state became more common. According to International Labour Office estimates, if some 60 percent of the African urban population was operating in the informal sector by the late 1970s (ILO 1985), this figure was much higher in the 1980s and 1990s. A leading sociologist from the Côte d'Ivoire estimated that between 1976 and 1985, the number of people working on the street in a variety of informal activities had risen from 25,000 to 53,850 in Abidjan alone. During the same period, the central government complement in Abidjan rose from 31,840 to 56,940. "Given the negligible difference between the two," he argues, "one could conclude that the street offers as much employment and provides a living to as many people as the public service!" (Touré 1985, p. 18). One of the trends of the 1980s and 1990s has been the supplementation of formal sector jobs with informal activities on the part of a large proportion of public sector employees. In the cities, urban services, such as transport,

water supply, and garbage disposal, began to deteriorate, to the point that the growing numbers of low-income citizens were buying water from water vendors; paying more for private, but more accessible, mass transport; and increasingly obtaining unserviced land and housing through the small-scale, unregulated private market (Stren 1988). The growth of informal sector employment on the one hand and the decline in urban services on the other created new pathways for the development of civil society activities at the local level, at least in many of Africa's largest cities.

In the context of globalization and growing localism, two trends are particularly noteworthy. The first is the increasing linkage between the informal sector and spatial relations in African cities. While some informal urban activities—such as minibuses and other low-cost means of public transport—are citywide, most other activities are closely tied to the use of relatively small and often marginal pieces of land. Informal markets for food and used clothing, street lunch kiosks, pavement sellers of curios and tourist souvenirs, street barbers and shoe-shiners, neighborhood informal garages and mechanics are examples of activities that require sites for their operations that are both close to potential customers and not too distant from the workers' place of residence. When informal traders or food sellers are forced to leave their usual location, they often suffer a major loss in trade because of disruption of their customer base.[2] The economic marginality of these occupations makes their locational insecurity greater than would be the case if informal sector operators enjoyed formal premises in a legally protected environment. A classic study of informal beer-brewing by women in a Nairobi shantytown notes the advantages of this activity for women who needed to operate out of, or close to, their homes and their small children. When this activity was outlawed by the government and rendered commercially unviable, less educated women still sought informal activities, such as food preparation, domestic service, teaching, nursing, and sex work, which could either be done in the home, or somewhere relatively nearby. Although women were involved in a limited range of entrepreneurial activities, men employed in the informal sector in this neighborhood undertook a much wider range of activities both locally, and elsewhere in the city (Nelson 1997). Women tended to seek employment "which fit in with child-care responsibilities, sometimes choosing less lucrative work which permit[ted] them to integrate their day-to-day domestic work with their income-generating activity, something noted in many labour markets of the world" (Afshar 1985 cited in Nelson, 1997, p.166).

While both men and women participate in informal activities, women are even more locationally focused than men. Because of the tremendous explosion in the informal sector of the poorest cities, the urban economy has become more and more an expression of the needs of low-income women. In Africa, women's associations, such as savings clubs or parent-teacher associations, have sprung up as methods of pursuing collectively women's economic and social needs, in the context of the failure of national and local governments to provide many services in the areas of education, health, and welfare (Tripp 1994 In South Africa, where the civics movement in the black townships—involving rent and service charge boycotts against illegitimate local authorities—was an important part of the anti-apartheid struggle, women played important roles, although they were absent from leadership positions. South African women were also actively involved in resisting squatter removals and in squatter upgrading struggles (Gwagwa 1991).

The second major trend is one of adaptation of the state to new urban realities. Many studies of Africa now focus on the dynamic changes taking place within civil society and the informal sector, stressing an incipient accommodation that the urban poor and both municipal and national authorities are in the process of reaching (Dauda 1998; Potts 1997;Tripp 1997). In this accommodation, formal civil society

[2] Jellinek's (1997) superb account of the rise and fall in the fortunes of a Jakarta food-stall operator illustrates this point extremely well. Sumira, the senior wife of a casual laborer, lived with her husband and his extended family in her own house. Her business, and through the benefits she could extend, her relatives and friends, prospered until she was forced to move from a good location in the central business district. The move from a privileged location, in addition to other difficulties and competition from off-street restaurants, led to her eventually abandoning her food cart and setting herself up in another location as an itinerant food seller. A combination of factors, including police harassment, low income, and the demands of her extended family eventually caused her to abandon this activity.

groups play an ambivalent role. For example, many African governments are deeply suspicious of local NGOs, because of their alleged foreign support and influence and because of their connections to alternative political formations (Gariyo 1996). As a partial result of this, the NGOs' relations with the state are somewhat problematic. In South Africa, where NGOs and service organizations, or professional associations that supported anti-apartheid community-based organizations, were so important before the 1994 democratic elections, international donors reduced their support for NGOs and other civil society groups once legitimate local governments had been elected locally. Professionals and activists, in turn, began to migrate from civil society organizations to government and the business sector (Marais 1998, chapter 7). In the case of South Africa, these challenges to the NGO sector are occurring in a country whose government is positively disposed towards NGOs. However, changes are taking place more generally in cities—including reduced levels of rural-urban migration in many Sub-Saharan countries; a greater role for community-based and self-help activities in the areas of popular housing, health, and education; institutionalization of informal agricultural production in the cities without significant obstruction from municipal authorities; and a wider spread of small-scale commercial activities in both central city streets and local markets—that reflect the fact that local authorities are beginning to come to terms with the reality of a large, low-income population. This means that the way in which African cities function on an everyday basis is more representative of the culture and social structure of the majority of their populations than was the case in the past.

Violence and Civil Unrest

In many cities, rising levels of urban violence and insecurity emerged as an inescapable issue in the 1990s (Ayres 1998). For some writers, civil society organizations offer a buffer against conflict and urban violence. In a study of local perceptions, causes, and effects of urban violence in poor communities in Jamaica, Moser and Holland note that there were on average three murders per day in 1996 and early 1997. Violent crimes "tend to be geographically concentrated in poor urban communities, with more than half of them occurring in Kingston and St. Andrew, and almost three-quarters of murders and more than 80 percent of shootings taking place in Kingston, St. Andrew, or Spanish Town in 1994" (Moser and Holland 1997, p.1). Based on discussions and focus groups involving local people, the study shows that violence restricts people's movements outside their communities, restricts their access to existing jobs, reduces the incentive for businesses to invest, keeps children from regularly attending school, and prevents communities from investing in housing and community infrastructure. Not only labor training, but social capital—which incorporates levels of trust and local associational life—must be supported and strengthened, the authors argue.[3] A complementary premise underlies the argument of Charles Reilly, who, as do other social scientists, holds that membership in NGOs and social movements "afford[s] their members opportunities to express their views and to participate in decisions, while their leadership learns something of responsiveness and accountability. This experience of 'secondary' citizenship in the associations of civil society multiplies opportunities for negotiation, competition, contained conflict, and the search for consensus" (Reilly 1995, p.2).

However, the growth of civil society in the face of localized economic stress can result in political unrest under certain circumstances. Despite broad economic advances and general democratization, many examples of civil unrest have taken place in Latin America: "[f]or example, the 'el caracazo' social explosion which occurred in Caracas in February of 1989; the assaults on supermarkets and stores in Buenos Aires in May/June of 1989; the burning of the political homes of public functionaries in Santiago de Estero in December of 1993; and the taking to the streets by pobladores in Curanilahue, as a protest for

[3] According to the authors, social capital can be built up if local projects work with established community-level institutions, such as integrated community spaces, including sports facilities, teen centers, and training facilities. Other kinds of social capital investments the authors proposed included support for conflict resolution programs, drug abuse counselling, family life education and parenting courses, and career guidance and job placement services (Moser and Holland 1997).

the closing of carbon mines in Chile in 1994" (Rodriguez and Winchester 1995, p. 18). Because many of these outbursts were related to social and economic dislocation, they have been systematically analyzed by Walton and Seddon (1994) as part of two processes: local responses to austerity and emerging democratization. Out of 146 austerity protests that occurred between 1976 and 1992 (reaching a peak in 1983–85), 62 percent were recorded in Latin America and the Caribbean, 13 percent in Eastern Europe, 10 percent in Africa, 8 percent in North Africa and the Middle East, and 6 percent in Asia. In Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, a demonstrable connection existed between the organization of civil society in the process of opposition to the local state and eventual democratization. Walton and Seddon made the plausible argument that to some extent democratization flowed from protest activities because local groups themselves, including labor unions, neighborhood associations, religious groups, women's organizations, and the like, increasingly made the connection between accepting austerity and popular sovereignty. "If everyone is expected to sacrifice in the interests of economic reform, then everyone should have a voice in deciding how sacrifice is meted out and what reforms are adopted" they suggest (Walton and Seddon 1994, p. 337). Their examples show that most of the protests—although they may have appeared anomic and spontaneous at times—involved groups that had previous experience at the local and community level.

Environmentalism and Local Civil Society in the North

In the northern countries, the development of an environmental movement that had strong roots in local communities played a similar role in expanding the notion of local governance. In North America, the beginnings of serious concern over the effects on people's health of nuclear fallout from atomic testing led scientists to the investigation of the potential dangers of new pesticides. Carson (1962) dramatized the impact of new chemicals on both forests and wildlife, emphasizing the deterioration in quality of life that would ensue in local communities. The pollution of the Great Lakes and a number of major oil spills (beginning with the Torrey Canyon disaster off the English coast in 1967, followed by the blow-out of an oil-rig off Santa Barbara, California in 1969) helped to create and maintain a high level of public apprehension over environmental risk. These concerns were nourished—both in Europe and North America—by the increasing prominence among the public of what Inglehart has called postmaterialist values. In the affluent societies of the postwar period, in which basic human needs such as employment security, housing, and material possessions were satisfied to a relatively high degree, a shift to nonmaterial needs such as self-expression, esteem, and aesthetic satisfaction became much more prominent. Surveys in nine major European countries showed, for a large group of respondents, a strong clustering of five nonmaterialist goals: "more say on the job," "a less impersonal society," "more say in government," "ideas count," and "freedom of speech." In seven of the nine countries, the goal of "more beautiful cities" was also strongly associated with the first five items. However, materialist goals such as "strong defense forces," "fighting rising prices," "achieving a stable economy," "fighting against crime," "economic growth," and "maintaining order" were strongly clustered for another group of respondents (Inglehart 1990, pp. 137–39). In most countries, postmaterialists tended to be younger, more educated, and affluent and to live in more urban and industrial regions of their countries.

Postmaterialist values have proved to be a strong support for environmentalism. Thus, in 1985, among materialists in an opinion survey of the countries in the European Community, 37 percent "strongly approved" of the ecology movement, while among postmaterialists the approval level was 53 percent (Inglehart 1990, p.267). While 0.5 percent of the materialists claimed to be members of an environmental group, 3.3 percent of the postmaterialists—or nearly seven times as many—did so. These value and behavioral changes have also had a direct political impact, as Inglehart (1997b, pp. 242–43) notes:

> The Materialist/Postmaterialist dimension has become the basis of a major new axis of political polarization in Western Europe, leading to the rise of the Green Party in West Germany, and to a realignment of party systems in a number of other countries. During the

1980s, environmentalist parties emerged in West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland. In the 1990s they made breakthroughs in Sweden and France and are beginning to show significant levels of support in Great Britain. In every case, support for these parties comes from a disproportionately Postmaterialist constituency...Pure Postmaterialists are five to 12 times as likely to vote for environmentalist parties as are pure Materialists. Environmentalist parties are not yet strong enough to govern independently and may never be so; but they have successfully advocated environmental protection policies in each of these countries and have forced the established parties to adopt stronger environmental protection policies in order to compete for their voters.

Survey work outside North America and Western Europe in the 1980s and early 1990s showed that the materialist-postmaterialist dimension is not restricted to industrial countries. The patterns hold, although they are less polarized, because fewer people have lived with higher levels of affluence, education, and security over time, in countries such as Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa (Abramson and Inglehart 1995).

Overall, support for environmental groups increased considerably during the 1970s and 1980s in all parts of the world, however, the trend is better documented in North America. In Canada, for example, the government listed 344 "citizens' environmental organizations" in 1973 (Macdonald 1991, pp. 98–99). By the late 1980s this number had risen to about 1,800, with a membership exceeding 1 million people, or about 4 percent of the total population of the country (Government of Canada 1990). In the United States, a poll conducted by Resources for the Future found that 7 percent of the whole population considered themselves "environmentally active," while another 55 percent said they were sympathetic to the aims of the environmental movement (Sale 1993, p. 44). In 1990, a Gallup poll found that 76 percent of U.S. citizens "called themselves environmentalists, and half contributed to environmental organizations" (Sale 1993, p. 80). By 1991, the larger national environmental organizations estimated membership was no less than 14 million individuals, or about one in every seven adults in the country.

Although membership and contribution figures in the large environmental organizations were falling by the mid-1990s (largely, observers suggested, because of the parlous state of the economy, which reduced the marginal propensity for donations), the environmental movement had already had a major impact on local activism. This was particularly evident in the area of solid waste management—whether the concern was toxic industrial wastes or the siting of a refuse dumpsite at the neighborhood level. This grassroots activism, which was often focused on the municipalities responsible for land use and effluent control regulations affecting the communities where people lived and raised their children, was much more heavily influenced by the participation of women than were the large national organizations. One of the most lasting legacies of the environmental movement—at least in industrial countries—is the greater involvement of a wide range of local groups in the local governance process.

Civil Society, Municipal Government, and the Environment: The Case of Thailand

Involvement of community and other environmental organizations in local governance does not always coincide with a higher level of municipal performance, however, which is true even in strictly environmental fields. A comparative study of two medium-sized cities in Thailand (Chiang Mai and Hat Yai, with populations of 173,000 and 157,000 in 1995) looks at municipal politics and performance in the important area of solid waste disposal. Chiang Mai is still struggling to find a solution for its solid waste problem, which has engaged people in the city and politicians for many years. Hat Yai, however, has consistently won national cleanliness and orderliness contests run by the national municipal league of Thailand and the Ministry of the Interior (Kokpol 1998). Chiang Mai's failure to solve its urban environmental problems adequately, is not, however, related to a lack of community involvement in the issue. Compared with Hat Yai, civil society groups in Chiang Mai have organized significantly more activities, such as Walk for a Better Environment, the Recycle Paper for Trees project, and other activities.

Indeed, survey findings show the overall proportion of the population involved in associational activities in Chiang Mai is much higher with 29.6 percent, than in Hat Yai, where 15.9 percent of the population participate. "Such observations suggest," argues a Thai researcher, "that active civil society (in this area at least) appears to be related to worsening waste management problems and the incapacity of the municipality to deal with the problem" (Kokpol 1998, p. 317). Moreover, the waste management issue was at the forefront of the 1995 municipal election campaign in Chiang Mai, where high electoral turnout removed the previous administration from office. Civic groups, such as business associations, the Village Boy Scouts, and the Thai Territory Defense volunteer group play an important role in municipal politics in Chiang Mai, and successful local politicians have used these groups to mobilize voters (Kokpol 1998). In general, this case shows that success in municipal performance—as measured by a high visibility issue—is related more to such factors as local political leadership, the availability of adequate resources to manage the problem, and the maintenance of good relations with the central government, than it is to the level of mobilization of local civic groups. Civic mobilization takes place in response to problems, rather than as a solution to them.

Components of the Local: Democratization

Just as the activism of local groups and communities is to some extent a response to forces and influences that originate outside national boundaries, so are the local institutional changes that have begun to widen the process of democratization at the municipal level. The increased importance of democratic forms at the local level is related to a worldwide wave of democratization from the late 1970s through the 1990s. A democracy in the 21st century may be understood as a system in which the "most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington 1991, p.7). As such, democracy implies the concurrent existence of freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize and of the active functioning of more than one major political party to give voters a choice of alternative leadership groups. Beginning in 1974 in Portugal, and eventually spreading outward, a wave of democratization engulfed more than 30 countries in both industrial and developing areas. During this period, regimes changed from authoritarian structures to democratic systems in 11 one-party systems, 7 regimes based on personal rulers, 16 regimes that had been under military control, and 1 regime (South Africa) that had been dominated by a racial oligarchy (Huntington 1991). For states with a population greater than 1 million, the years 1973–90 saw an increase in what could be classified as democratic states from 30 to 59, and a decrease in nondemocratic states from 92 to 71 (Huntington 1991). While a few states slipped from democratic to nondemocratic rule during this period, the overall democratic trend was particularly marked during the 1970s and early 1980s in Latin America, where democratic transitions took place in such major countries as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This trend continued during the 1990s, to the point where Freedom House estimated that by 1999, 88 of the world's 191 sovereign states could be considered as "free," "meaning that they maintain a high degree of political and economic freedom and respect basic civil liberties" (Karatyncky 1999, p. 1). In addition, 117 states could be considered valid electoral democracies, "based on a stringent standard requiring that all elected national authority must be the product of free and fair electoral processes" (Karatyncky 1999, p. 3).

Although authoritarian governments at the national level can coexist with relatively democratic institutions at the local level,[4] as has been the case in a few countries, democracy at the national level usually

[4] For example, during most of the period, starting in 1996, that Nigeria has been under military rule, local government elections have taken place. Ecuador, which was under military rule in 1972–78, maintained elected local governments during this time. Finally, Brazil, which was ruled by a military regime in 1964–85, maintained the formalities of municipal autonomy and retained municipal elections "with the exception of 201 municipalities that

leads to a meaningful form of democratic government at the local level.[5] The reasoning behind the apparent paradox of the first statement is that authoritarian governments are often prepared to support democratic institutions at the local level—when they have little power—to legitimize their rule. However, when politics (for whatever reasons) becomes open and democratic at the national level, the culture of democracy is inconsistent with authoritarianism at the local level, because people tend to demand more access to political institutions. In Eastern Europe and Latin America in particular, elected municipal councils have proliferated over the political landscape, bringing new forms and styles of governance to a large segment of the population. According to one estimate, democratically chosen executive and legislative officials are now found in more than 13,000 units of subnational government in Latin America (Campbell 1996). In all Latin American countries except Costa Rica the mayor was elected by the mid-1990s (Nickson 1995). This expansion of local democratic government, as the examples of Brazil, India, and South Africa demonstrate, has been substantially reinforced by innovative constitutional reforms.

South Africa

In South Africa, where formal municipal democracy existed previously for a restricted population, municipal democracy is now a functioning process for the whole population (Swilling 1997). The whole process of institutional change in South Africa began in the 1970s with the powerful movement to eradicate apartheid in which organized workers, students, youth, women, and urban residents were mobilized against both national and local state structures. This movement led to local negotiating forums in the 1990s that brought organized civil society into direct contact with government representatives. This remarkable "bottom-up transformation of local government according to non-racial and democratic principles" (Swilling 1997, pp. 226–27) has been influential in new thinking about urban governance throughout the continent. Aside from the active involvement of civil society groups, which led to the current institutional framework, local government in South Africa stands out in another respect; local government in South Africa is elaborately described, and even protected, by the country's constitution.

The new South African Constitution, which was formally adopted in 1996, devotes a whole chapter to local government (Government of South Africa 1996, chapter 7, which contains 14 separate articles). Among other things, this chapter (p. 65) states that the objectives of local government (including municipal government) are "(a) to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; (b) to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; (c) to promote social and economic development; (d) to promote a safe and healthy environment; and (e) to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government" (Section 152). In managing its administration and planning processes, the constitution requires municipalities "to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote the social and economic development of the community" (Section 153, p. 65). The system is still in a process of transition, to be finalized in a structural form following the 1999 elections. However, in 1998, there were 843 municipalities in the country, with over 11,000 democratically elected councilors (Government of South Africa 1998). The majority of these councilors represented communities that had little or no say in government during the apartheid period.

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were either state capitals, national security zones, or mineral-producing areas, where executive heads were appointed by the military. Nevertheless effective autonomy was greatly reduced" (Nickson 1995, p. 119).

[5] Two exceptions are worth noting. Ghana, where national multiparty elections have recently taken place (1995) according to a democratic format, established district assemblies in 1988 in both rural and urban areas. Two-thirds of the members of these assemblies are elected by their constituencies; the other third and the district chief executive who heads the assembly are appointed by the central government. In Costa Rica, where a national multiparty system has been established for some time, municipal councillors are elected, but mayors are not. The executive head of the municipality is a manager appointed by the municipal council.

India

Constitutional reform has also played an important part in municipal revitalization in India. Although India is a federal, democratic state of long standing, for many years state governments exercised their discretionary powers over local, largely municipal, authorities in the form of supercession. By the early 1990s, close to half of all municipal governments in India were under supercession by their state governments. In this situation, the state directly appointed all chief executives and the state governments managed the municipal governments' finances. According to many, "State governments in India [had] used their powers of suspending or dissolving the municipal bodies too liberally, based mostly on political considerations but occasionally sometimes on technical-administrative grounds" (Mathur 1996, p. 117). After many years of discussion, a 1992 amendment to the Constitution (the Constitution [Seventy-fourth] Amendment Act, 1992 on Municipalities, Government of India 1992) reorganized municipal fiscal relations and at the same time significantly weakened the controls over representative municipal councils that higher levels of government had exercised. (A parallel amendment dealt with rural councils, or *panchayats*.) Among the innovative elements of this important constitutional amendment are the requirement for state governments to reconstitute representative municipal councils within six months of their dissolution; the attribution to municipal governments of such tasks as poverty alleviation and planning for economic and social development; the setting up of finance commissions at the state level with the object of improving the financial position of the municipalities; and the requirement that one-third of all the seats in local bodies, including the positions of chairperson, be reserved for women. By the end of the decade, a prominent authority estimated that about 100,000 newly elected officials—many of them women—had entered the political system (Sivaramakrishnan 2000).

Brazil

A third example of constitutional reform with the effect of strengthening democratic local government is Brazil, whose 1988 Constitution strengthened municipal autonomy, validated the participation of community groups in municipal decisionmaking, and extended important social and economic policy functions to municipal authorities. Under the new constitution, municipalities were given the opportunity to establish "organic" laws, which means that they may structure their own operations and set up what are called municipal boards. These boards, in turn, have the formal function of mediating between the local government and organized civil society. A study of the organic laws of the 50 largest Brazilian cities documented that all but three of these cities had created such municipal boards. Thus, the study noted 20 urban development boards, 22 transportation boards, 6 housing boards, 2 sanitation boards, and 35 environmental boards (Ribeiro 1995). The most important functions of these boards were health and education, which were defined in the new Constitution as municipal powers, with 45 and 40, respectively, having been created in the 50 cities studied (Ribeiro 1995). Aside from promoting municipal boards, 18 of the 50 cities instituted the participatory budget. Neighborhood and higher-level committees regularly discuss this budget and determine the allocation of a proportion of a city's capital allocation. Among public management reforms over the last two decades, argues one Brazilian scholar, "participatory budgets constitute what is perhaps the single most advanced experiment in the democratization of local governments" (Boschi 1998, p. 11).

A survey conducted in 1994 of 832 delegates to nine regional forums in Belo Horizonte (a city with slightly more than 2 million people in the southeast, industrial region of Brazil) showed that 45 percent were women and most had low levels of schooling, which made the group representative of the overall population. Nearly 60 percent had resided for no fewer than 10 years in their current neighborhoods and 70 percent regularly participated in voluntary organizations of one kind or another (Boschi 1998). Because the local populations were brought into a more direct relationship with administrators, the participatory budgetary system reinforced the establishment of the 9 regional (decentralized) administrations in Belo Horizonte. Other cases of participatory budgeting, for example, the case of Porto Alegre, where the city was

divided into 16 regions for community participation (Coelho 1996; Pozzobon 1998), have been studied extensively (Martins 1998; Singer 1996). Overall, the results of these studies are positive with respect to participatory budgeting. Porto Alegre increased its total tax receipts by 34 percent in 1992–95 (Pozzobon 1998), while Santos increased its total tax receipts by 41 percent over the same period (Martins 1998).[6] The mayor of Porto Alegre claimed in an interview in 1999 that the city had "practically tripled" municipal revenues in the 10 years since participatory budgeting had been formally introduced (Pont forthcoming).

Local Democracy and Municipal Performance

While the systematic comparative study of these newly endowed municipal institutions is in its infancy, a few examples will help to illustrate the range of policy initiatives and new forms of community involvement that are playing themselves out in the local democratic process. In Mexico and Colombia, for example, certain constitutional and legal reforms passed since the 1980s have guaranteed both more autonomy for municipal governments and more respect for democratic practices. At the same time, in both countries the influence of traditional parties over urban politics has become weaker. A comparison of four cities (Barranquilla in Colombia and Cordoba, Nezahualcoyotl, and Tijuana in Mexico) in which nontraditional parties have been in power in recent years shows that, on balance, the delivery of services has improved for the population at large. This is the case, even though local participatory practices have only marginally improved (Duhau and Schteingart 1998). Other studies of municipal democracy in Latin America have been somewhat more positive. A study of 16 Colombian *municipios'* provision of three services, water, education, and roads, focused on the period after 1988 when mayors were formally elected. The study found that local people trusted local authorities more than the national government, that most of the municipal governments had upgraded the professional quality of their administration, and that many entrepreneurial mayors had been able to carry out important local reforms in the administration of local services (Fiszbein 1997). Another evaluation of municipal government in Colombia makes two major points about performance since decentralization and democratic reforms in 1988. First, municipal governments are being slowly restructured more effectively to deliver services and second, citizens and local organizations are participating more actively in the discussion of local political and financial issues. In general, says Santana Rodriguez (1995, p. 172),

> Municipal institutions are slowly winning legitimacy; today, more people vote in mayoral elections than in congressional and presidential elections. Mayors are generally responsive to community pressures and to the major problems of their municipalities, among other reasons because of the political toll that poor management will take on their parties and movements. Earlier fears that mayors would take a militantly populist line or that public monies would be pillaged have been unfounded; on the contrary, municipal governments are increasing investments while reducing operating expenses.

[6] Paul Singer, the secretary of planning for Sao Paulo from 1989 to 1992, indicates that the participatory budgeting system involved both positive and negative elements: "In Sao Paulo, during Luiza Erundina's government, popular participation in budgeting took several forms. One primary form was the creation of municipal councils for each agency, such as the secretariats of health, of education, and of housing. These councils were comprised of representatives of social movements and NGOs related to their activities. They played a very active role in the preparation of the estimates for the budget proposal. The councils interacted with the officers in allocating funds inside the secretariats, making the policies so adopted more responsive to the needs of the users (actual and potential) of those services. Besides that, the councils certainly contributed to expanding the estimates by pointing out the large amounts of still unmet demands. This intensified the struggle for funds among secretariats inside the government, the outcome of which was largely determined through arbitration by the mayor and her secretary for planning. In this experience popular participation was effective in improving the intrasectoral allocations of funds but frustrating to the extent that it heightened conflicts, contributing thereby to the closing of the process" (Singer 1996, pp. 117–18).

In addition, a longitudinal study of Cubatao, Brazil, shows how local social movements were able to work with elected officials and technical experts to reduce high levels of air and water pollution in an industrial city once democratic governance was restored at the state and urban level (Lemos 1998). Overall, a World Bank study suggests, decentralization and democratic reforms in Latin America amount to a quiet revolution in local governance, in which more educated and professional municipal officers are elected, taxes and revenues have increased, and the community is more involved in municipal affairs (Campbell 1996).

Except for the case of South Africa, local democratization trends in Africa have been more modest than in Latin America. Based on new decentralization legislation in the 1980s and 1990s, incremental but positive improvements in municipal management and financial controls have been reported for Senegal (Diop and Diouf 1993), the C⊥te d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in francophone West Africa (Attahi 1996a,b). By the late 1990s, a number of countries had functioning multiparty systems at the municipal level, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania. For the francophone countries, highly centralized for decades with either military regimes or single-party systems in control at the national level, this represented a major change in local governance. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, for example, where 3,900 municipal councilors were elected in the mid-1990s, attachment to the local communes on the part of urban populations has become a remarkable phenomenon. As an Ivoirian observer comments:

> The role of the communes in the daily life of the people is becoming increasingly evident. In addition to administrative responsibilities transferred by the central government, other functions exercised by the communes include the maintenance of the civil registry, military bureau, census, and public security. Communes are also active in the creation and maintenance of educational infrastructure (both secondary and primary), the maintenance of urban roads, the building of markets, public water taps and latrines, and the removal of household waste. They develop and manage residential and industrial subdivisions. All these services bring satisfaction to the people, who turn increasingly to the communes for their needs...At the local level, people now look first to the commune, in the process shifting the responsibilities of the central administration from urban to rural areas (Attahi 1996b, p. 122).

Perhaps surprisingly, the country's former president, Henri Konan Bédié, seemed to support this analysis. In public forums he extolled the virtues and benefits of democratic local government. In one address, the president observed that: "Democracy was built in an urban setting. The real challenge remains in the city, therefore and nowhere else. We should encourage citizens to reappropriate urban space by helping democracy that is local and close to them to flourish" (Bédié 1998, p. 5). In his remarks, the president went on to support local "associative life and neighborhood councils" and to comment favorably on the increasing tendency of citizens to contact their mayors for their needs (Bédié 1998, p.5). In the specific case of Adjamé, one of the 10 constituent communes of the city of Abidjan, the current mayor represents a political party in opposition to the governing Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire. Since the early 1990s, this commune, with close to 1 million inhabitants, has in the words of a *New York Times* observer "been all but transformed. Once trash-filled streets are now kept clean by broom-wielding city workers. A multistory African-style market is rising to replace a warren of cluttered and dangerous side streets that served as the neighborhood's informal bazaar. And white-smocked inspectors regularly make the rounds of the community's innumerable cafes ensuring that food served to the working class population is not only cheap, but sanitary" (French 1998, p. 4). The mayor attributes these changes, at least in part, to the competitive electoral system. "What is being done here," he says, "represents a night and day change from the past, when elections were formalities and the office of mayor was largely an honorific title. We have managed to triple our budget by raising local taxes, and nobody has complained because they see that local government is giving them valuable services for the first time" (French 1998, p. 5).

Components of the Local: The New Localism

As global changes affect local government areas—especially municipalities and urban regions—local political responses are not necessarily passive or even incoherent. The combined effects of heightened civil society activity in many countries (for example, environmental movements, identity groups with claims for recognition, local organizational representatives of global NGOs), decentralization giving more powers to local governments, and increased importance of local development strategies to attract outside capital investment in a more competitive international environment have enhanced the importance of local jurisdictions. Although much development thinking revolves around the policies of the national state, "Local officials the world over operate under heightened conditions of economic and political uncertainty. They now have social and economic roles and responsibilities that are often new and unanticipated. In each instance, global restructuring pressures compel local officials to reconstruct relations between the public and private sectors at the local level as well as to reconsider the most basic governance issues" (Clarke 1993, pp. 1–2). The important new role local officials play in this context is an aspect of what has been called the new localism. The new localism approach looks at the way cities organize and position themselves within the new globalized economic system. Features of the new localism include shifts in central-local relations, more privatization of local authority functions, the rise of local public entrepreneurs, and the construction of new development coalitions. That the city does not respond to international forces in a mechanical or automatic fashion, despite the economic logic behind these changes, however, is also made clear. Clarke and Gaile (1997) argue that this new localism gives a lot of leeway to local political coalitions and leaders, along with associated epistemic communities, to interpret the correct approach to a local definition of a policy agenda. One of the important reasons for the new emphasis on local coalitions and competitive urban strategies, they point out, is the cutting of national funding to community programs and their indirect replacement with transfer payments to individuals.

Competitive Urban Strategies in the United States

Many researchers, working within the new localism approach stress the strategic choices available to cities within the context of the emerging global economic system. One of the more systematic approaches to this question is a widely read book, *World Class*, by Kanter (1995). In this study, the author explores (mainly within the American experience) the varieties of responses that local governments in partnership with businesses have been promoting since the 1980s. Kanter based her arguments on thousands of interviews with business leaders, public officials, and community leaders in five major urban areas of the United States. She argued that world-class cities, or cities that are successful in meeting global challenges, must excel in at least one of three main roles: as "thinkers" (developers of concepts and ideas), as "makers" (manufacturers or producers), or as "traders" (making connections between cultures and countries). In the process of developing these abilities, cities need certain successful core institutions that attract business (or develop it locally) in the first place, but they must also create and maintain a civic and social infrastructure that will hold businesses in place. Some might dispute her choice as to those cities that are successful,[7] but Kanter (1995, p. 364) argued that cities must achieve a balance between the needs of locals and cosmopolitans:

[7] For example, Shuman (1998, p. 3) argues that Cleveland has not been as successful as Kanter and others have portrayed it. "Beyond the hype about the new Cleveland...are some disquieting facts. Over the past 35 years, nearly half the city's population has moved to the wealthier suburbs, creating an explosive level of economic and racial segregation: Three out of four poor African-Americans live in impoverished neighborhoods in Cleveland; three out of four poor whites, in contrast, live in more affluent areas. A quarter of a million people—42 percent of its residents—live below the poverty line...Two out of three kids never graduate from high school... In the quest to find lower-wage venues elsewhere in the world, local industries have taken 96,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs out of the city since 1979, with offsetting job growth occurring primarily in low-pay professions like sales and clerking."

> The need is urgent in many places. America's cities and surrounding regions must strengthen their infrastructure for collaboration in order to solve pressing urban problems of crime, education, housing, and welfare that trap local isolates in a cycle of disadvantage. Deteriorating quality of community life not only hurts locals directly, but also encourages cosmopolitans to take their concepts, competence, and connections—and their jobs—elsewhere. Cities and their regions must strengthen their community problem-solving and skills-building capacity in order to compete in the global market for investment.

In a recent comparative study of 15 medium-sized American cities Clarke and Gaile (1998) take a closer and more nuanced look at the urban response to global economic restructuring. Their findings stress the new reality of the local policy context as it has been differentially shaped by a variety of external and internal forces. Taking their cue from Reich (1991), whose book *The Work of Nations* argues that nations must change their policy agenda in the face of a new global capitalism, Clarke and Gaile propose that the work of cities must also change. Not only will decisionmaking power shift from national arenas to both supranational and to local-regional arenas, but they argue that successful communities will be those that are able to "reinvent local citizenship." This reinvention would take place through policies that value and reward education and training, while mitigating social polarization and segregation. However, in this enabling—and risky—environment, cities will choose contextually specific paths, "in part because their constitutional, economic, and social features vary, but also in response to political configurations at the local level. [Thus] there is no 'silver bullet' promising successful local adaptation to a global era" (Clarke and Gaile 1998, p. 8).

Best Practice Outside the United States: By Design or Circumstance?

Outside the United States, the experience (and the advice offered) is more uneven. An important comparative study of nine northern and southern cities' responses to structural adjustment yields two interesting, if inconsistent, observations. On the one hand, cities in both the north and the south have reacted to structural adjustment and to the ensuing package of macroeconomic reforms (privatization, downsizing of the public sector, loosening of regulations, freeing of exchange rates) by taking a more active role in thinking about their future, creating new public-private coalitions, developing plans to improve modern urban infrastructure, and promoting themselves internationally through conventions, sports, and cultural events (Harris 1996). On the other hand, echoing some of the points made by Clarke and Gaile, a synthesis chapter in the same book points out that the comparison between northern and southern cities does not yield easy conclusions:

> Although there have been many attempts to identify good practice by city governments, and by public-private partnerships, in confronting the problems that result from economic structural adjustment, the transfer of policies from one context to another is a process with some dangers. Differing resource levels, political and administrative structures and even geographical locations may mean that an approach or a policy successful in one city may be less successful, or just infeasible, elsewhere. Although the problems of cities undergoing structural adjustment may be easy to identify and fairly ubiquitous—a decline in manufacturing, rising unemployment, inner-city decay and dereliction in industrial and port areas, and strong negative social effects—a single policy prescription is unlikely to meet the needs of all, or even most cities (Lever 1996, p.93).

Aside from sheer difference and complexity, cities have a more general reason to pay attention to their own specific contextual circumstances. While the world market in which the successful compete is not completely fixed, the successes of some may very well imply the failure, or even marginalization, of others. Many writers have pointed to the decline of certain regions (even within the United States) as a result of global competition; however, decline extends also to major groups of countries, and even to large parts of continents such as Africa (Castells 1998). In the end, the new localism model of urban

strategic choice cannot embrace all cities, because all do not have the required resources and institutions that can respond to the challenges of the larger market. Poorer cities—particularly in developing countries—may engage in this competitive process only if they can formulate a coherent approach to development that recognizes and incorporates the full range of their people (and not just the elites) that receives support from higher levels of government and that involves genuine collaboration with other cities, either in the North or the South (Stren 2000).

Decentralized Cooperation

The necessity for collaboration is one of the important factors behind the rise of decentralized cooperation over the last decade. This approach to development involves groups or associations of cities helping each other directly, rather than operating through orthodox development channels defined by their national governments. By the late 1990s, two major, broad-based international associations of municipalities: the International Union of Local Authorities, founded in 1913, and the United Towns Organization, founded in 1957. While the International Union of Local Authorities is largely based on national associations of municipalities, the members of the United Towns Organization are mostly individual cities and have a formal membership approaching 2,500. In addition, two international associations' members comprise only major metropolitan areas (Metropolis and the Summit Conference of Major Cities of the World [Summit]). These four organizations, together with a number of regional municipal organizations, became known as the G4+ group and were responsible for important municipal contributions to the Habitat II conference in 1996. In addition to the broad-based organizations, a plethora of thematic or regional groups exist. These include such organizations as the Healthy Cities Network, which includes some 400 cities; Sister Cities International, which includes some 1,040 American cities twinned with more than 1,800 cities in 113 countries; and Medcities, a network of 18 Mediterranean cities (Gilbert and others 1996, chapter 4). Among the explanations for the rapid rise of these networks for cooperation between cities are the relatively low cost and flexible arrangements possible in city-to-city project assistance and the high level of interest among community groups and NGOs in northern cities in support of partner cities in the south.

A good example of the scope of north-south partnerships that have developed over the last decade is the Municipal Partnerships program of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). This program, largely funded by a grant to the FCM by the Canadian International Development Agency currently includes 46 municipal partnerships involving largely small or medium-sized Canadian cities and their counterparts in 15 countries. Typically, the individual partnerships involve some matching by FCM staff at the outset, followed by visits and meetings by municipal officials from both sides. The meetings are businesslike and in most cases result in small-scale projects that are funded by a combination of resources raised by Canadian community organizations, such as Rotary or Lion's clubs, and grant funds indirectly channeled from the Canadian International Development Agency allocation. While FCM officials use their working time to perform partnership activities, many of the municipal officials in Canada use their own time (holidays or time without pay) to participate. In many cases, Canadian municipal officials pay for their own travel and that of their spouses. The programs are judged to be successful because of their relatively low cost, the widespread involvement of community groups in both the north and the south, and the fact that close professional and personal relationships are established on both sides, lasting over a relatively long period. Most of the projects in this program involve sharing expertise and technology and focus on the improvement of municipal management and governance.

Conclusions

We are only beginning to understand some of the institutional and political effects caused by the tendency toward globalization in the world of the early 21st century. As we globalize, we also localize. The emergence of various components of a new localism can be seen in three important ways, each of

which reflects a different institutional logic. First, we can observe the growing importance of organized civil society, particularly in countries in the developing world, but also in the north, as refracted through the environmental movement. Civil society organizations and social movements emerged as central actors in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, when more direct forms of institutional demand-making were not available in many countries. These organizations left in their wake a strong NGO network that is increasingly working with municipal governments to improve services and participatory structures for the relatively disadvantaged majority. In Africa, where civil society and associational life has been slower to develop (except in South Africa), global forces have created an amorphous informal sector that gives increasing importance to women and to nonstate initiatives at the local level. In the north, new concern for the local arises to a significant extent from attention to and concern with environmental risk. It is at the local level that community groups confront their anxieties over unregulated toxic emissions by attempting to influence municipal by-laws and regulations.

As civil society becomes more organized and effective, municipal institutions have been democratizing. Some direct connection between these trends exists in that more active civil society both requires and responds to more participatory local structures. However, decentralization and local responsibility is also a response to global financial imperatives. In any event, local elections (and elected mayors) and multiparty electoral choice have become increasingly common in Latin America and in parts of Africa, South Asia, and South-East Asia. In many cases—such as in Brazil, India, and South Africa— this expansion of local democratic government has been substantially reinforced by innovative constitutional reforms. Although the full evidence is not yet in, encouraging signs indicate that municipal performance is improving in response to democratization. If this is indeed a consistent trend, municipal institutions will attain much more than constitutional and legal justification; they will begin to attain legitimacy.

Given an emerging civil society and democratic municipal institutions, the third political element of what we can call the growing importance of the local has to do with how communities make choices. For better or for worse, local political coalitions in consort with important groups from civil society are attempting to position their cities and towns in such a way that they can maximize what they consider the opportunities to be gained from the global system. This may involve campaigns against crime or plans to improve the local environment to attract tourists, or it may involve strategies to reduce local taxes or develop a more comprehensive educational system to attract outside investment. In either case, municipal officials and their attentive publics are increasingly sensitive to the potential benefits of competitive strategies. By the same token, cities that do not have the resources to attract outside interest and investment may find themselves even more bereft and impoverished. To reduce the potential for such polarization, international assistance focusing on city-to-city programs is growing enormously in number and in popularity. Decentralized cooperation, operating at a global level, reinforces the importance of the local.

What practical implications can we draw from these trends? Three seem to be top priority. First, we need more systematic information on and comparisons of emerging municipal institutions. With this information, we will have a much better idea of what works and what does not under specific circumstances. With a more robust database that includes both contextual and technical information on the functioning of local institutions, we can help the more marginal local governments to better understand some of the options available. A second and related implication is that we need to find ways for local governments to connect with each other, across national boundaries, to seek both ideas and assistance. We need to be able to support this process. Finally, we need to think about more systematic ways of incorporating local communities and municipalities into our conceptual frameworks about development. Until now, the development literature has concentrated on the international and the national arenas. However, as local communities and local governments become more prominent actors in the political and economic life of both nation states and the international community in general, we need to recognize their presence to incorporate this new level of action into our plans and projects.

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