

## Chapter One - Introduction: Localism in American Life

In middle March 2009, folklorist, author, union man, and cultural activist Archie Green had little more than a week to live. Typically, he agreed nonetheless to be interviewed by his former student, public radio host Nick Spitzer. Settled in a wooden chair by the picture window of his modest home in San Francisco's Mission District, Green spoke to Spitzer for a couple of hours while friends and relatives dropped by. That he would bring up localism in the final interview of his ninety plus years suggests the essential issues the topic raises. Much of what Green said about localism in 2009 would have resonated with the framers of the Constitution of the United States in 1787:

How to break that pattern...how to diversify power is the big political problem of the day. It becomes compounded because in diverging power out of Washington you also strengthen the hands of the fundamentalists, reactionary groups in American life that as a mantra talk about less government. How you can blend the notion of more government, that is a strong federal power, with the notion of local autonomy and community control is a huge, huge problem for American life.<sup>1</sup>

In Carrboro, North Carolina, a small progressive city next door to Chapel Hill, sustaining and growing a Living Local Economy provides an official municipal goal in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. This resulted from an 18 month study by a special task force.<sup>2</sup> Their recommendations relied heavily on the localist principles described by Michael Shuman in *The Small-Mart Revolution*, perhaps the best-known text for contemporary localism.<sup>3</sup>

The Carrboro Board of Alderman appoints an official city body called the Economic Sustainability Commission. Like most municipal economic development groups, its members

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<sup>1</sup> From a March 2009 interview with Nick Spitzer quoted in Sean Burns, *Archie Green: The Making of a Working Class Hero* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> "Local Living Economy Task Force: Recommendations for the Town of Carrboro"  
<http://www.ci.carrboro.nc.us/DocumentCenter/View/2154>

<sup>3</sup> Michael H. Shuman, *The Small-Mart Revolution: How Local Businesses are Beating the Global Competition* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006)

spend a lot of time reviewing business zoning applications and issues, encouraging new businesses, and approving applications to the town's small business loan funds. The Carrboro ESC, on the other hand, also regularly studies BALLE (the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies) materials, views videos by left wing activists such as Rha Goddess, and encouraging a local business organization, the Carrboro Business Alliance, to initiate Buy Local First campaigns.

In 1997, 24 year-old Adam Werbach served as the youngest president ever of the Sierra Club. Werbach had gained notice, not always positive, by spearheading a grassroots-based youth movement within what had become a stodgy environmental organization. Supported, tellingly, by an 87 years old board member and David Brower, a former Sierra Club executive director ousted way back in 1969, Werbach had ascended quickly to the leadership.

Just as audaciously, Werbach penned a mostly anecdotal 300 page memoir and manifesto called *Act Now, Apologize Later*. The book mixed stories of awkward encounters with First Nations leaders, Al Gore, and Bill Clinton with inspiring profiles of grassroots environmental workers. Werbach espoused what he called "radical localism," defining it with his "radical localist pact:"

I will do my best to:

1. Buy products produced locally, products made with local ingredients and local labor
2. Demand that outside corporations respect local and incorporate local products in their product base
3. Know my community, human and wild<sup>4</sup>

Likely inspired by Wendell Berry's *Unsettling of America*, Werbach also presented radical localism as the key to rebuilding communities. He offered five steps to save the environment, the fifth being "community:"

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<sup>4</sup> Adam Werbach, *Act Now, Apologize Later* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1997) p. 242; Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (Sierra Club Books, 1977)

Today the roots of environmental problems stem from the disintegration of our communities.... It's time to form a new movement of radical locals to reclaim the character, economy, and wildness of America. It's time for environmentalists to care for the Bronx as much as they care for the Grand Canyon. Radical localism offers us a chance to lessen our impact on the environment through a return to community.... The root of many of our environmental and social ills is a global trend away from local communities. We can't be perfect, but we need to strive to support the most local product possible in order to support local communities and keep people connected to them. Although a radical local community focuses on developing its own strengths and resources, it is not isolationist. Instead, it supports diversity in life and in people. It readily accepts people from outside communities who wish to bring their skills and ideas to better the community. Radical localism in no way serves as an excuse for fearful isolationism.<sup>5</sup>

More than two centuries before Werbach's 1973 birth in southern California, settlers in the backwoods of North Carolina took up voices, pens, and finally arms against the colony's government. Living far from the coastal capital of New Bern, these Regulators believed that neither the eastern dominated provincial assembly nor Royal Governor William Tryon understood or sympathized with their needs and issues.<sup>6</sup> In other words, they wanted local government since the colony of North Carolina seemed too large and too eastern-oriented.

Long after their defeat at the May 1771 Battle of Alamance, the Regulators lived on through epistolary debates in newspapers primarily in Mid-Atlantic and northern colonies.<sup>7</sup> Ignoring that the Regulators disputed provincial, not imperial, government, localism became a theme running through the justification for the colonies' revolt and a far more significant matter in the two decades thereafter. Localism's plasticity – its ability to be source or solution of so many problems became an enduring legacy, as would its widely varying meanings.

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<sup>5</sup> Werbach, p. 240

<sup>6</sup> Paul David Nelson, *William Tryon and the Course of Empire: A Life in the British Imperial Service* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1990), pp. 54-70.

<sup>7</sup> Art Menius, "The regulators of North Carolina and the colonial press : a collection of documents" (Chapel Hill: UNC Honors Thesis, 1977)

In 1994, just three years prior to Werbach's call for radical localism, a fellow who styled himself "Roger Allen Davis of the Lord Jesus Christ" published a legal notice in Seattle. Renouncing "de facto corporate governments," Davis declared himself "a De Jure Fellow-citizen Of The Saints Of The HouseHold of God living in The Kingdom of God." Davis sent a batch of documents to the same effect to President Bill Clinton to establish his expatriation.<sup>8</sup>

No matter how rococo his notice, Davis was not exactly a lone wolf. Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, activists far on the other end of the political spectrum from Werbach, Green, or Carrboro's ESC also adopted localism. As described by Michael Barkun, the overly legalistic and perhaps undertrained members of such groups as Posse Comitatus, Montana Freeman, and Illinois Jural Society endeavored to place county government as "the ultimate civil authority."

These groups did have a point in asserting the deep roots of localism in American thought. Columbia law professor Richard Briffault, distant in every way from those groups, asserted in 1990 that "Two themes dominate the jurisprudence of American local government law: the descriptive assertion that American localities lack power and the normative call for greater local autonomy.... Localism as a value is deeply embedded in the American legal and political culture."<sup>9</sup>

Localism has remained an enduring aspect of American political thinking for 250 years, surviving in American political thought as if a hydra. Multifaceted and many headed, localism springs up on the left, on the right, and in the middle, malleable in a way that perhaps no other political philosophy can be. Today a Localist can be Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Green, Anarchist, Socialist, or none of the above. Localism cycles in and out of American political

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Barkun, "Purifying the Law: The Legal World of 'Christian Patriots,'" *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Spring 2007), p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Briffault, "Our Localism: Part I--The Structure of Local Government Law" *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 90, No. 1 (Jan., 1990), p. 1

thought, disappearing, such as during World War II, or showing up on the wrong side of history as during the Civil Rights movement. Thereby, localism traces a great arc in American life reaching from late colonial times, through opposition to ratification of the Constitution, and all the way to early 21<sup>st</sup> century environmental, anti-globalization, and locavore movements.

Localism demonstrates a pervasive presence almost two centuries after Chief Justice John Marshall thought he had settled the matter in *McCullough v Maryland*. Even a casual Google search finds localism here, there, and everywhere. That a 2015 book *The Localist* explores one woman's commitment to a year of buying locally hardly proves surprising.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, localism appears in books and articles about surfing, community policing practices, public policy advocacy, broadcasting regulation and programming choices by public radio, environmentalism, religious studies, banking and investing, grade school curricula, zoning, tourism development, etymology, and, at times, seemingly every other topic under the sun and moon. Despite all this and numerous studies of particular localist aspects or manifestations, localism as an enduring theme in American life has never received a comprehensive historical study until this effort.

*Localism in American Life* will attempt to trace the winding path of localist thinking through American history. Patrick Henry, St. George Tucker, Alexis de Tocqueville, Thomas Jefferson, Louis Brandeis, Shuman, BALLE, AMIBA (American Independent Business Association), Englishman Rob Hopkins, Berry, and Hess, even novelist Barbara Kingsolver, and many others have contributed to fluid beliefs that lie outside any conventional American binary system. Considering localism a free market, free choice, capitalist methodology, Rollwagen expressed shock at being called a "liberal" during her one year experiment in exclusive local buying.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Carrie Rollwagen, *The Localist: Think Independent, Buy Local and Reclaim the American Dream* (Birmingham, AL: Carrie Rollwagen, 2015)

<sup>11</sup> Rollwagen, location 797

At its most basic historical level, often expressed as “all politics are local,” localism was based on “spatial closeness, shared religious and political worldviews within local communities, and geographical segregation between them.”<sup>12</sup> Localism has evolved. Today a Localist can be described as believing in liberating herself and her community from the grip of the global marketplace and unmediated capitalism through intentional choices at ground level that support local business, addressing environmental, economic, and social justice issues in the process.<sup>13</sup>

Sociologist David J. Hess possessed the courage to attempt to construct definitional structures for the maze of localist activities in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In its purest form, he believes localism involves locally sourced resources turned into products by locally owned industries and sold through locally owned businesses to local consumers. While admitting that pure localism rarely exists, Hess nonetheless asserts optimistically that “the localist model of privately held companies with a mission of community stewardship and an ability to choose environmental and social values over growth provides one pathway for restructuring the global economy.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet localism must contend with a series of issues. Given its breadth and plasticity, however, localism can easily have negative implications. Wrote Melanie DuPuis and Davis Goodman of UC-Santa Cruz, “Localism can be based on the interests of a narrow, sectional, even authoritarian, elite, what we call an ‘unreflexive’ politics.”<sup>15</sup> One, for example, is what legal theorist Richard Schragger calls “the boundary problem.” “The creation of a place for meaningful self-government (in space and in politics) for those inside the (metaphorical and sometimes literal) gates always affects (and often injures) those who are outside the gates. The

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<sup>12</sup> Henning Hillmann, “Localism and the Limits of Political Brokerage: Evidence from Revolutionary Vermont” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 114, No. 2 (September 2008), p. 291

<sup>13</sup> David J. Hess, *Localist Movements in a Global Economy: Sustainability, Justice, and Urban Development in the United States* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), p. 2; Rollwagen, *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Hess, pp. 7-8, 11, 15

<sup>15</sup> E. Melanie DuPuis and David Goodman, “Should we go ‘Home’ to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 21 (2005), p. 361

boundary problem in local government law thus is the problem of pluralism.”<sup>16</sup> Hess notes how aspects of localism, such as the local foods movement, can appear elitist and exclusionary.<sup>17</sup>

Localism comprises a large part of the American story. This book, therefore, touches on a vast amount of American political, business, educational, and intellectual history covering both the mainstream and the highly marginalized. Following localist thought in America alone requires a journey through revolution and civil war, the formation of the Union and its reconstruction four score later, public school curricula and desegregation, corporate expansion and the reaction against it.

Chapter Two, “Good Seed Sowed in Fertile Ground,” examines localism before and during the American Revolution and its essential role in the ratification of the Constitution. “It is vain to tell us that we ought to overlook local interests. It is only by protecting local concerns, that the interest of the whole is preserved,” wrote James Winthrop at the end of 1787.<sup>18</sup>

The objection to transatlantic governance expressed in “no taxation without representation” expresses a basic localism. Whig writers would use the Regulators as straw men to project their arguments for reform or independence. In many other ways, however, the Regulators of North Carolina presaged not the American Revolution, but the crisis of national government that dominated the 1780s.

Studying Vermont during the Revolutionary years, sociologist Henning Hillmann found that localists adapted very successfully during the years of state and nation formation. Localist “coordinators” used the very process of centralization to build powerful local networks, generally annealed by place and financial relationships, to influence state and national office

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<sup>16</sup> Richard C. Schragger, “The Limits of Localism” *Michigan Law Review* Vol. 100, No. 2 (Nov., 2001), p. 374

<sup>17</sup> Hess, pp. 136-138

<sup>18</sup> James Winthrop, “To the People” December 11, 1787

holders and provide a link to central governments that served to protect, rather than erode, local interests.<sup>19</sup> This dynamic very much resembles contemporary models for effecting global change through localist networks.

As constitutional historian Saul Cornell tells the story in *The Other Founders*, a type of radical localism formed a core value for the rural populist wing of the Anti-Federalists who opposed adoption of the United States Constitution as originally proposed for ratification.<sup>20</sup> One of Cornell's greatest contributions comes from parsing the multiple varieties of Anti-Federalist thought. In so doing, he demonstrates that many, if not most, Anti-Federalists in fact advocated for a federation as opposed to the nationalist impulses of Alexander Hamilton and other Federalist supporters of the Constitution without a Bill of Rights. The framers of the Constitution wrestled with the very issues Archie Green described, seeking a balance of local and national powers. Anti-Federalists founders envisioned the states acting as a constitutional check on the central government. Anti-Federalist localists also saw democracy based on the public sphere, a commons. This meant discussion through newspapers would assume an importance equal to legislative bodies.<sup>21</sup> Two centuries before the Internet, this concept resembles what Hess calls "global localism" today.

The first ten amendments addressed the concerns of many Anti-Federalists, at least enough so that all thirteen original states would ratify it. Yet the Bill of Rights overwhelmingly addressed the rights of individuals, rather than the rights of states so dear to Anti-Federalists. Most significantly, the Tenth Amendment omitted the proposed word "expressly" in limiting federal government power and thus reserving unspecified powers to those states. This provided the key

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<sup>19</sup> Hillmann, pp. 287, 290-291, 322-323

<sup>20</sup> Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) pp. 114-116

<sup>21</sup> Cornell, pp. 140, 181

loophole for the expansion of federal powers that Alexander Hamilton would soon employ in creating the First Bank of the United States.<sup>22</sup>

Localism manifested itself in other ways during the early days of the Republic. The most prominent included Shay's Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion, the Carlisle (Pennsylvania) Riot, the short lived, self-proclaimed State of Franklin in what is now northeastern Tennessee followed by the creation of Tennessee from North Carolina, Vermont from New York, Maine from Massachusetts, and Kentucky from Virginia.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, in Hillman's felicitous phrase, "the logic of localist oppositions" overwhelmed Federalism.<sup>24</sup>

Chapter Three, "Aggressive Nationalism," shows how Jefferson's Democratic Republicans reframed Anti-Federalist localist thought for their own purposes while John Marshall's Supreme Court endeavored to squash localism once and for all.

Faced with a dozen years of Federalist rule, Jefferson and Madison, in different ways, revived Anti-Federalist views. First the Whiskey Rebellion and then The Alien and Sedition Acts under John Adams accentuated this process. Indeed, the Jeffersonian Republicans have been disparagingly described as "a kind of extended localism and parochialism, and little more."<sup>25</sup> Yet the Jefferson and his party embraced the nationalism inherent in the Louisiana Purchase and the chartering of the Second Bank of the United States. That revived what perhaps was the original "public-private partnership," one that could not have existed had "expressly" remained in the Tenth Amendment.

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<sup>22</sup> Cornell, pp. 160-164

<sup>23</sup> Hillmann, p. 298

<sup>24</sup> Hillmann, p. 320

<sup>25</sup> Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 27

At the dawn of the Nineteenth Century, localism gained one of its most powerful and persuasive voices from the bench, William & Mary professor, Virginia State Supreme Court justice, and US District Court Judge St. George Tucker. He wrote, in his popular 1803 edition of *Blackstone's Commentaries*, that “All governments have a natural tendency towards an increase, and assumption of power, and the administration of the federal government, has too frequently demonstrated that the people of America are not exempt from this vice in their constitution. We have seen that parchment chains are not sufficient to correct this unhappy propensity.”<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, Tucker argued against the Supreme Court as the ultimate arbiter rather than the individual sovereign states. “If the federal government ever became the final judge of its own powers, then constitutional liberty would become an empty phrase. The federal government would invariably conclude that there are, in fact, no limits to its power.”<sup>27</sup>

Left as the most powerful Federalist office holder, Chief Justice Marshall stuck to his guns. Once individual states began taxation either for income or as to act as checks against the Second Bank, Marshall was ready. In the manufactured case of *McCullough v Maryland*, the Marshall court not only upheld the bank, but stretched constitutional logic to its maximum to make the case for “aggressive nationalism.” In so doing, Marshall established that the United States are a nation, not a confederation of sovereign states.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the usage of United States as plural (“the United States are”) rather than singular remained common until the Civil War.

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<sup>26</sup> St. George Tucker, *Blackstone's Commentaries with notes of reference to the constitution and laws, of the federal government of the United States, and of the Commonwealth of Virginia: with an appendix to each volume, containing short tracts upon such subjects as appeared necessary to form a connected view of the laws of Virginia as a member of the federal union*, (Philadelphia: Birch and Small, 1803), p. 173

<sup>27</sup> St. George Tucker, *A View of the Constitution with Selected Writings* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1999), p. 249

<sup>28</sup> Theodore Voorhees, “Retirement and You: Departure from the Top,” *American Bar Association Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (April 1978), p. 612; Richard E. Ellis, *Aggressive Nationalism: McCulloch v. Maryland and the Foundation of Federal Authority in the Young Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Chapter Four, “Radical Localism,” finds President Andrew Jackson bringing a version of localism back into the forefront, especially in killing the Second Bank of the United States once and for all. Theodore Vorhees, who believed Marshall “more influential than any other in the building of this nation,” used “radical localism” in a 1978 *American Bar Association Journal* article to describe Chief Justice Marshall’s view of the Jacksonian politics which threatened to overturn his federal system. Marshall, thus, stayed on the bench until death, vainly hoping to outlast Old Hickory.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville stressed the significance of localism to the new American democracy. In praise of town meetings, he wrote in the first volume of *Democracy in America*, “Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the people’s reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and acustom them to make use of it. With local institutions a nation may give itself a free government, but it has not got the spirit of liberty.”<sup>30</sup>

Contradictions abounded. Far from being an era of triumphant localism, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century local governments began to complain of their loss of power to state and federal bodies.<sup>31</sup>

The selfsame Jackson acted to hold Marshall’s Union together in the face of South Carolina’s secessionist threats. Remarkably, John C. Calhoun made the case for States rights and thus secession using arguments based in Federalist theory, rather than Anti-Federalist thought. He recast The Federalist Papers themselves as a States rights text.<sup>32</sup>

Chapter Five, “In Blood Consecrated,” explores localism during the Civil War and in framing resistance to reconstruction afterwards. The Confederate States, as a government, struggled

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<sup>29</sup> Voorhees, p. 612

<sup>30</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 62-63

<sup>31</sup> Briffault, p. 1

<sup>32</sup> Cornell, pp. 294-299

mightily with its commitment to States rights, although the task undoubtedly would have proven much more difficult absent the annealing effect of a war. Even to the north, localism can be viewed as a primary motivator first of the Copperheads who opposed Lincoln and second of McClellan's peace campaign in 1864.

While Abraham Lincoln and William Tecumseh Sherman may have desired an immediate healing once the Confederates laid down their arms, post-assassination Washington would have no part of that. During Reconstruction, the states formerly in rebellion faced the cold reality of lacking most states rights for a dozen years.

Chapter Six, "In a Time of Transformation," views localism's twisted relationship with populism, the reassertion of white supremacist rule, and an America experiencing a rapid industrial transformation. The latter spawned the anti-chain store movement of the 1920s and early 1930s, which provides the clearest antecedent to 21<sup>st</sup> Century localism.

In the northern states following the Civil War, farmers, among others, viewed as threatening the consolidation of economic power as a new industrial and business order, characterized for decades by the "robber barons," developed. Concentrated economic power, not to mention populations, varied dramatically from the Jeffersonian vision assumed to be the enduring American reality. Many farmers, northern and southern, would turn to the Grange movement and populism to oppose en masse these changes, as localism became the antipode to cosmopolitanism. In rural northern areas, roads – symbolic of self-reliant home rule – became the battleground between changing local and broader interests between 1870 and 1930. By the end of those sixty years, state dominance in road building and maintenance had become well established through a process of state and, after 1921, federal government assuming more and

more of their cost. The process symbolized the decline in all aspects of local government relative to state and federal.<sup>33</sup>

In the South after 1877, Democrats regained control of state governments. During the 1890s, however, Populist and Republican-Populist fusion candidates made great gains at the expense of Democrats. Nowhere did the fusionists experience more success than in North Carolina. Perhaps the most violent single act of terroristic, racist localism in American history occurred in November 1898 in Wilmington, North Carolina, a port city on the Cape Fear River with a significant black majority population. In what was long called a race riot, but more accurately a coup d'etat, a well-organized armed white mob overthrew the city's legally elected black Republican and fusionist municipal government and drove the leaders of the town's African-American community out of town. Both state and federal governments remained on the sideline and allowed this virulent manifestation of race-based localism to transpire.<sup>34</sup>

The Wilmington riot kick started a two year period during which blacks lost the right to vote, destroying fusion politics and establishing the Democrats as the only party that mattered for seventy years. As one party rule became the norm in the south during this time, localism achieved extraordinary significance. Geography often became the only factor primary voters had to choose between candidates.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Hal S. Barron, "And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight: Public Road Administration and the Decline of Localism in the Rural North, 1870-1930" *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 81-82, 90, 93

<sup>34</sup> David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, editors, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998); Timothy B. Tyson, "The Ghosts of 1898: Wilmington's Race Riot and the Rise of White Supremacy" *The News and Observer* (November 17, 2006). In 1898 the Raleigh News and Observer, then edited by future Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, fanned the fires leading to the bloody coup.

<sup>35</sup> John R. Van Wingen, "Localism, Factional Fluidity, and Factionalism: Louisiana and Mississippi Gubernatorial Contests" *Social Science History* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter, 1984) p. 10

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed anti-chain store movement, a middle class-driven localist, populist, and anti-monopolist movement that presages, albeit in a more oppositional fashion, localist stances in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The rapid spread of the A&P Stores to more than 15,700 stores by 1930, just eighteen years after opening the first one in 1912, along with other emerging chains in groceries, drugs, gasoline, variety, and cigars, inspired the movement. During the 1920s, A&P became the fifth largest corporation in the nation, while chain store sales jumped from 4% to 20% of retail overall and 40% in groceries. During that decade retail chain store outlets jumped in number from 30,000 to 150,000.<sup>36</sup>

Gaining its greatest momentum during the early years of the Great Depression, the anti-chain store advocates called for, with success in several states, additional taxes on chain stores, and for amendments to federal anti-trust legislation. With their greatest strength in the South and Midwest, they bemoaned the demise of small towns and how each downtown appeared to house the same stores as if created by cookie cutters, ultimately undermining participatory democracy. Like today, local independent merchant associations - then often called “Merchants Minute Men” - formed the first line of resistance with some 400 existing by 1930. Although only four anti-chain store laws existed in 1927, by 1935 state and local governments would pass eight hundred, mostly taxes.<sup>37</sup> Just as in contemporary localism, the anti-chain store advocates crossed traditional party and progressive-reactionary political lines. They included *The Nation* and the *New Republic* and ranged from Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis to populist politician Huey Long to popular African-American recording preacher, Rev. J.M. Gates. Columbia

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<sup>36</sup> Hess, pp. 114-116

<sup>37</sup> Daniel Scroop, “The Anti-Chain Store Movement and the Politics of Consumption” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Dec., 2008), pp. 925-949; Richard C. Schragger, “The Anti-Chain Store Movement, Localist Ideology, and the Remnants of the Progressive Constitution, 1920-1940” *Iowa Law Review* v. 90-3 (2005), pp. 1011-1094; Hess, pp. 56-57, 113-133; Carl J. Ryant, “The South and the Movement Against Chain Stores” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (May, 1973), pp. 207-222

Records, which depended on the chain stores for retail sales, suppressed Rev. Gates' "Good Bye to Chain Stores, Parts 1 and 2" record for sixty years.

William K. Henderson, owner of KWKH radio in Shreveport, Louisiana used his airways to attack the chain stores. The emotion-laden reasoning of Henderson's 1930 congressional testimony would resonate well more than 80 years later:

We have sought to portray the iniquities attendant with short weights and inferior quality of merchandise sold by the chain store. We have attempted to bring to light the ruinous and devastating effect of sending the profits of business out of our local communities to a common center, Wall Street. We have appealed to the fathers and mothers who entertain the fond hope of their children becoming prosperous business leaders-to awaken to a realization of the dangers of the chain stores' closing this door of opportunity. We have insisted that the payment of starvation wages, such as the chain-store system fosters, must be eradicated . . . . We have importuned those who labor to join in striking down the chain system in every form and character, before it enslaves the masses and holds them prisoners of an economic system which will destroy every vestige of individual initiative and personal incentive to progress.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, legislation introduced in 1938 and again in 1940 in Congressman Wright Patman of Texas with some 75 co-sponsors never made its way out of committee. The bill would have imposed heavy federal taxes on chain stores to such a level that it could have doomed A&P and Woolworths. The opposition included co-ops, such as Farm Bureau, fearing taxation on their businesses, unions, now benefitting from organizing chain store workers, and self-described consumer interest groups that expressed fear of the loss of low prices.<sup>39</sup>

University of Virginia law professor Richard Schragger finds in the anti-chain store movement a vision of the role of the modern state that, like modern localism, offers a path different from both liberalism and neo-liberalism:

[I]n its purest form, anti-chain store advocates argued on behalf of an aggressive regulatory state, the purpose of which was to distribute widely economic and political

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Ryant, p. 209.

<sup>39</sup> Ryant, pp. 214-218

power in the service of an economically-based citizenship. The movement suggested the possibility that the state could exercise power in the service of decentralization, not inevitably in the service of centralization, and that government could make as its aim an ideal of democratic citizenship and not just a policy of social welfare. The anti-chain store movement urged federal and state interference into the workings of the national market in order to preserve local economic and political independence, not to supersede it.<sup>40</sup>

Simultaneous efforts, especially between 1927 and 1934, endeavored to check commercial radio.

These reformers wanted the airwaves to belong to local educational and religious entities.

Outspent by commercial broadcasters, media localism was defeated with the passage of the Communications Act of 1934.<sup>41</sup>

Chapter Seven, “Nadir: Friends in low places,” finds localism in the hands of Christian Reconstructionist groups and the Christian Identity movement and prominently those employing States rights as a means to oppose Civil Rights. Despite some very positive contributions to Great Society programs that aimed to build communities, localism often found itself blamed for the failure of school reform, sexism, and racism during the final three decades of liberal America.

In 1943, a Massachusetts attorney named Howard Rand articulated the tenets of Christian Identity.<sup>42</sup> Along with Henry Ford’s partner in Anti-Semitism, William J. Cameron, and Gerald L.K. Smith, Rand developed and propagated ideas that would evolve over the decades into a worldview that saw Judaism as a powerful, hidden, conspiratorial force. Believing that ZOG, the Zionist Occupation Government, controlled state and federal governments, the Identity movement withdrew into their own form of “radical localism.”

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<sup>40</sup> Schragger, p. 1016

<sup>41</sup> Hess, p. 188

<sup>42</sup> Barkun, p. 60

By the 1970s, Christian Identity groups mixed the Bible, common law, and the Constitution they often disavowed into flamboyant political theory.<sup>43</sup> Headquartered in Sublimity, Oregon, the Assembly of Heaven Church established its own new world order, for example. The Assembly required its members to renounce United States citizenship, drivers' licenses, public employment, and even library cards. Members instead carried passports and photo IDs issued by the church, materials the devotees believed would protect them from persecution.<sup>44</sup>

Following the Supreme Court's *Brown v Board* decision, states rights – already elevated by Strom Thurmond's 1948 Dixiecrat campaign – soared into popular currency as the southern states' last line of defense against integration. Just as states rights had been used a century before to mask the defense of slavery itself, now the concept permitted its advocates to avoid directly supporting Jim Crow. Instead, they could support an abstract constitutional principle. Ironically, the localist impulse proved so strong with the resurgent Ku Klux Klan groups, particularly the United Klans of America, that the FBI easily succeeded in encouraging them to splinter into smaller and smaller klans during the late 1960s.<sup>45</sup>

American academics, echoing Green's concerns, painted localism as facilitating "the perpetuation of injustice.... An obstacle to efforts to reduce inequality and ameliorate class and race antagonism."<sup>46</sup> Others blamed the intractability of problems plaguing sprawling suburbs on localism.<sup>47</sup> Sociologists from the 1950s onward characterized localists as sexist, "narrow-minded, provincial, prejudiced, and reactionary.... Culturally local persons would feel that

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<sup>43</sup> Barkun, pp. 61-62

<sup>44</sup> Barkun, p. 58

<sup>45</sup> David Cunningham, *Klanville U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 150 - 213.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Briffault, "Our Localism: Part II – Localism and Legal Theory" *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 90 (March 1990), p. 453

<sup>47</sup> Arnold Silverman and Linda Schneider, "Suburban Localism and Long Island's Regional Crisis" *Built Environment* Vol. 17, No. 3/4, (1991), pp. 191-204

locally-oriented lifestyles are of intrinsic and primary importance. They would assume that 'local' is good, noble, valuable, and important, while extra-local entities and events are of secondary or tertiary importance.”<sup>48</sup>

While federal involvement in education had accelerated steadily since the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, localism took the blame for shortcomings in American education in the eyes of E.D. Hirsch, writing in 1996. “Extreme localism has proven to be a formula for failure and inequity.... Extreme localism has failed not only American children but also the teachers themselves who, to do their jobs properly, need agreed-on goals and the benefit of cooperation with their colleagues.”<sup>49</sup>

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 exposed the facility for localism to preserve de facto segregation in New Orleans decades after the end of de jure segregation. The destruction fell on all classes, but disproportionately far more on black and poor residents. This resulted from local policies that concentrated those populations in low lying, flood prone areas.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, some Great Society programs of the 1960s endeavored to build local government and institutions by designing new community-level entities that would involve populations previously excluded from participation in public affairs. Cannon called this an “enlightened brand of localism,” Intended to become an enduring part of government. The local, community-based approach allowed federal agencies to bypass state and municipal governments that were perhaps less enthusiastic about the “War on Poverty.” Finally, according to Cannon,

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<sup>48</sup> Edward C. Lehman, Jr. “Localism and Sexism: A Replication and Extension” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (March 1990) pp. 184-185

<sup>49</sup> E.D. Hirsch, Jr. *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p. 98; Cannon p. 33

<sup>50</sup> David D. Troutt, “Localism and Segregation” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Summer 2007), p. 323.

rather than the abstraction of community, localism was “an idea which has long held an august place in the American political tradition,” including with President Lyndon Johnson himself.<sup>51</sup> Given this “utopian yet realizable form of localism” aspect of Johnson’s Great Society, localism unsurprisingly hit rock bottom in mainstream politics during the 1980s and 1990s, appearing to drown in wave upon wave of deregulation and globalization during which the liberal assumptions of the Great Society were rejected. The localist Community Action Program ended in 1981.<sup>52</sup> The breakdown during the Reagan and Clinton years of the regulatory system which protected local economies from the full effects of global Capitalism weakened community in America and led to ever widening income disparity. Yet this neo-liberal push symbolized by Reagan’s election in 1980 would provide the impetus for an extraordinary renaissance of localism in America.

Chapter Eight, “Rebirth,” examines the resurgence of localist thought during the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. Starting around 1995, “Buy Local” and “Local First” campaigns have gained great traction, as have local food initiatives. By 2010 some 30,000 webpages extolled “Buy Local,” thus proposing an alternate global economy based on localism.<sup>53</sup> Claiming that more than two million people worldwide had actively involved themselves in the movement by 2008, some advocates call this “The Great Turning” and compare it to the agricultural and industrial revolutions.<sup>54</sup>

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century a strong localist impulse builds upon Small-Mart or BALLE principles for vibrant local economies. Shuman advanced the idea of local and individual actions being a

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<sup>51</sup> William B. Cannon, “Enlightened Localism: A Narrative Account of Poverty and Education in the Great Society” *Yale Law & Policy Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fall - Winter, 1985), pp. 7, 16, 18

<sup>52</sup> Cannon, pp. 8, 31

<sup>53</sup> Hess, pp. 9, 17, 19

<sup>54</sup> Joanna Macy, “Five Ways of Being That Can Change the World” *FilmsForAction.org* (July 6, 2014)

form of policy that can affect vast change in *The Small-Mart Revolution: How Local Businesses are Beating the Global Competition*. A number of Americans have embraced similar concepts through the Transitions Network, which Rob Hopkins began in England.<sup>55</sup> Carrie Rollwagen, among others, has extended these ideas into empowering individual citizens and communities to reshape policy to build an enduring America based on strong local economies, participatory local democracy, and sustainable environment through the intentional individual choices they make. In this theory, the localist takes the long term view, sacrificing short term gains, making intentional and often initially expensive choices for the good of the community.<sup>56</sup>

Asheville, North Carolina activist and gadfly politician Cecil Bothwell expressed those thoughts in an essay in his 2008 collection *Gorillas in the Myth*:

Here is the front line in the battle against Wal-Martization, against tax-funded, corporate-welfare schemes to lure multinational business development, and against the export of jobs. The radical localist isn't fooled by smiley faces and low prices that help destroy downtown businesses while funneling money into distant banks. It is pie simple to join the growing ranks of thoughtful consumers, who understand that dollars are votes, and those votes shape the places we live.<sup>57</sup>

Simultaneously, the radical localism phrase gained popularity in Britain during the devolution under the Localism Act that permitted greater local autonomy in Scotland and Wales. In a sense, the September 2014 vote for Scottish Independence provided the first wide scale plebiscite on Localism writ quite large, reversing national policy and proposing to break up a world power nation state.

Manuel Castells in his trilogy, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, describes three fundamental shifts empowering the localist resurgence and creating what he called the

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<sup>55</sup> Rob Hopkins, *The Power of Just Doing Stuff: How Local Action Can Change the World* (London: UIT Cambridge Ltd, 2013)

<sup>56</sup> Rollwagen, *passim*; Hess, pp. 52-55

<sup>57</sup> Cecil Bothwell, *Gorillas in the Myth: A Duck Soup Reader* (Asheville: Brave Ulysses Books, 2008)

“Network Society:” 1) emerging technologies; 2) crises in both capitalism and communism; and 3) new social movements. Localism thus forms a new social movement addressing the crisis of outdated economic systems and enabled by new technology.<sup>58</sup>

Hess states that “democracy deficits that have weakened public participation” in policy making at the national level have fueled the political manifestations of localism.<sup>59</sup> E. Russell Cole, also a sociologist, expressed similar ideas in his 2010 dissertation, later summarized in a 21 page essay “Radical Localism in the Network Society.” Studying Green and Populist Party use of social media, Cole identified radical localism as a potential means to break through the two-party choke hold on power in the USA. “[T]he morphology of the third-party should resemble the decentralized communicative infrastructure that the Internet permits.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, from the ground up with policy built locally first.

Localists today believe in buying, investing, banking, and donating locally making for Local Living Economies somewhat insulated from national and global marketplaces. Hess believes this “emphasis on the role of small-business and nonprofit organizations, the call for independent and local ownership, and the goal of extending that project” globally distinguishes localism from radical and mainstream thought.<sup>61</sup> Some focus on the acts individuals can take, while others see localism as a way for citizens and local polities to shape national policy.

Both the culture of local control and formal institutions of governance are resilient and are likely to play central roles for decades to come. Even as residential migration and a nationalized media and culture weaken Americans’ ties to unique places, we see widespread evidence of Americans’ yearning for a sense of community and for the

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<sup>58</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), *The Power of Identity* (1997), and *End of Millennium* (1998)

<sup>59</sup> Hess, p. 242

<sup>60</sup> Edward Russell Cole, “Radical localism in the Network Society” (PhD. Dissertation: SUNY-Albany, 2010), p. 37; Edward R. Cole, “Radical localism in the Network Society” <http://doctoredwardrcole.wordpress.com/radical-localism-in-the-network-society/>

<sup>61</sup> Hess, pp. 52, 58

importance of social capital and relationships of trust that may be more easily nurtured locally. And, critically, geographic space is hardwired into our political system.<sup>62</sup>

Unsurprisingly, recent localism involves a great amount of direct citizen action outside previously existing structures. Hess categorizes them as “the local retailer, credit union, restaurant, city government department, radio station, or non-profit organization.”<sup>63</sup> In Minneapolis, in one shining example, the Northeast Investment Cooperative took advantage of Minnesota’s liberal cooperative laws to assemble some 200 members investing at least \$1000 each to revitalize successfully a section of Central Avenue.<sup>64</sup>

Well into the second decade of the new century, localism faces a significant degree of opportunity, especially in face of the environmental problems and economic inequality produced by the neoliberal era. Localism offers a smaller scale easier to attract activists that giant global issues, a means of taking action by changing shopping, investing, and consuming patterns rather taking to the barricades, a broad base of support than potentially encompasses most businesses and non-profits in the USA, and a facility for forming coalitions across class and ethnic lines. The growth of all sorts of American localist organizations ranging from credit unions to biofuels businesses to community media to farmers markets provides grounds for optimism. Nonetheless, challenges remain if what Hess calls “global localism” will emerge without being co-opted by big business or thwarted by governments or financial markets.<sup>65</sup>

The resurgence of localism over the past twenty years suggests some basic conclusions about localism that will be explored in Chapter Nine, “Conclusions.”

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<sup>62</sup> Jeffrey R. Henig and Frederick M. Hess; “The Declining Significance of Space and Geography,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* Vol. 92, No. 3 (November 2010), p. 59

<sup>63</sup> Hess, p. 14

<sup>64</sup> Olivia LaVecchia, “The Do-It-Yourself Downtown” *Institute for Local Self-Reliance* and *Yes! Magazine* (February 23, 2015)

<sup>65</sup> Hess, pp. 245-255

First, localism throughout American history has emerged as a response to specific conditions existing at certain times, which partially explains its adaptability and many different manifestations. The localist renaissance comes in many ways as a direct response to the neoliberal globalization and deregulation, combined with a rejection of the unchallenged assumption shared by liberals and neo-liberals of the essential nature of the multi-national corporation. Localism today can be as simple as believing in trade protectionism rather than neo-liberal free markets. Hess accurately reports that contemporary “localism borrows from previous political ideologies but is also... a unique response to the historical situation of corporate-led globalization.”<sup>66</sup> While the Regulators, for one example, moved against the government of North Carolina, many localists today act against corporations with “global” becoming equated with “capitalist” and “local” with “just,” “equitable,” and “sustainable.”<sup>67</sup> That which cannot be contested on the global plane can be negated in the local space.

Second, contemporary localists also reject the top-down, whole nation state solutions proposed by liberals, fascists, and socialists. Here they distinguish themselves from neoliberals in that they distrust the multi-national corporations and global trade pacts even more than they do their governments.

Third, food issues hold overarching symbolic and practical importance for localists today. Food often serves as the gateway to localism in an era of genetically modified organism and aggressive growth and patent protection by corporations such as Monsanto. Food movements also have the best developed localist literature.<sup>68</sup> Eat local initiatives have become the most visible in the form of farmers’ markets and community supported agriculture (CSA). These local

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<sup>66</sup> Hess, pp. 23, 30-31, 78

<sup>67</sup> DuPois and Goodman, pp. 359, 368-369

<sup>68</sup> Hess, pp. 135-136

food movements have often aligned themselves with environmental and social justice initiatives.<sup>69</sup> The Kansas City Food Circle, for example, defines its role as “to connect all actors in the food system in a sensible and sustainable way that sustains the community, is healthy for people and the environment, and returns control of the food system to local communities.”<sup>70</sup>

Inspired by the slow food movement, slow money or “locavesting” involves creating networks that bring local investors into direct contact with businesses seeking cash.<sup>71</sup> SlowMoneyNC, part of Pittsboro’s Abundance Foundation, in just two years achieved sufficient success to refinance a \$400,000 note for the local grocery co-op.<sup>72</sup>

Fourth, while vibrant in the United Kingdom and other countries as demonstrated by the Transitions Network, localism exerts a special appeal to Americans. “The beauty of the Great Turning,” writes advocate Joanna Macy, “is that each of us takes part in distinctive ways. Given our different circumstances and with our different dispositions and capacities, our stories are all unique. All have something fresh to reveal. All can help inspire others.”<sup>73</sup> The ethos of individual liberty that dates back to the times described in Chapter Two retains a romantic hold on the American political mind. Just as the generation of Frenchmen represented by Alexis de Tocqueville romanticized the French Revolution in which they were just a bit too young to have experienced, localist activism appeals to those Americans who look back on the revolutionary 1960s and the final decade of liberalism in the 1970s.<sup>74</sup> In this regard it becomes obvious that

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<sup>69</sup> DuPuis and Goodman, p. 259

<sup>70</sup> DuPuis and Goodman, p. 361

<sup>71</sup> Michael H. Shuman, *Local Dollars, Local Sense How to Shift Your Money from Wall Street to Main Street and Achieve Real Prosperity* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2012); Amy Cortese, *Locavesting: The Revolution in Local Investing* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2011)

<sup>72</sup> Carol Peppe Hewitt, *Financing Our Foodshed: Growing Local Food With Slow Money* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2013)

<sup>73</sup> Macy

<sup>74</sup> On de Tocqueville’s generation, see Corey Robin, *Fear: the History of a Political Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* provides a foundational text for localist economic analysis.<sup>75</sup>

Fifth, modern localism has become a platform to address multiple concerns about the economy, the foodshed, the environment, and social justice. Localism today proves anything but monolithic. Localists of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century are not necessarily anarchists, states rights advocates, anti-capitalists, religious zealots, occupiers, or end-of-the-roaders. They are a diverse and varied lot spread across most of the political spectrum. Many express frustration at the inability of conventional political interests, whether liberal, neo-liberal, or socialist, to provide viable and comprehensive solutions to economic and environmental challenges.<sup>76</sup> At the most basic level localists share two beliefs. First and most important, business should be local and independent rather than controlled by multinational corporations. Second and not quite as universally held, public policy should be made at the lowest and most participatory level of government.<sup>77</sup>

Thus localism has survived in American thought and life for 250 years. Few concepts have been employed for so many different purposes, high, low, left, right, and in between. Few ideas have endured so many defeats to return to currency. Localism seems especially vibrant in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. How this occurred forms a story well worth telling and exploring.

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<sup>75</sup> E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered* (London: Blond & Biggs, 1973)

<sup>76</sup> Hess, pp.51, 242

<sup>77</sup> This is a current plank in the platform of the British Liberal Democratic Party,