

## BOOK REVIEWS

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Thad Williamson, David Imbroscio, and Gar Alperovitz, *Making a Place for Community: Local Democracy in a Global Era*. (New York: Routledge, 2002) 412 pp., \$29.95 (hardcover).

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The authors are well positioned to address the relationship between economy and community. Thad Williamson is a graduate student with extensive community advocacy experience. David Imbroscio is a professor of political science at the University of Louisville. Gar Alperovitz has championed community development efforts for years and is currently president of the National Center for Economic and Security Alternatives. Their well-written treatise is tightly reasoned, factually based, and satisfactorily documented. Although the book is polemic, it will be of interest to scholars and is also suitable for classroom use.

The skeleton of their argument is easy to follow: (1) The viability of American democracy is threatened by the loss of “geographically demarcated communities in which a diverse array of citizens join together in self-governance—in short the building blocks of democratic practice” (p. 22). (2) The disruption of place-based social and political ties is due to increasing economic dislocation caused by the vagaries of the market in an era of rapid change and ineffective public policies. (3) There are policy solutions that can ameliorate this problem. As in most good polemics, complexity is sacrificed for clarity, focus, and a good plot line.

The introduction sets the course for the book. In providing an overview, it describes the importance of community to a well-functioning polity and to democracy in general. Concern for community and the welfare of fellow citizens, as opposed to blatant self-interest, justifies forms of collective action. In their discussion of democracy and community, the authors ignore factors other than the loss of place-based community that have been undermining democracy such as the media’s lack of substance and the U.S. system of campaign finance. Similarly, the authors identify alternative rationale for seeking stable communities (other than an improved democracy), but these are not emphasized.

The rapidity of economic change is responsible for weakening communities. Although specific mechanisms are not elaborated, it is reasonable to assume that when residents are insecure about their own jobs and those of their children, they are less likely to invest in establishing friendships or otherwise improving their communities. As this kind of anomie increases, so does the sense of powerlessness and apathy that reinforces the factors that caused the initial decline of the community.

The first part of the book examines the “triple threat” (p. 23) to community stability: the loss of jobs because of globalization, the shifting location of jobs within the

United States, and urban sprawl. Other economic factors that may pose even greater threats are ignored, including slow macroeconomic job creation and declines in job quality. Consideration of these factors would strengthen the authors' contention that there is a material basis for the loss of community life.

Employment loss owing to globalization is small compared to dislocations caused by internal factors such as shifting demand among domestic producers and corporate reorganizations of production sites. Nevertheless, some regions have been hit hard by globalization. Currently, job loss due to outsourcing is a high-profile problem, possibly because high-technology workers are being affected. Whether jobs are shipped overseas or goods formerly produced in the United States are imported, workers recognize the threat. Individuals having only labor to sell will indirectly be competing with workers throughout the world, and global wages will tend to equalize worldwide. The productivity advantage of the American workforce will diminish as education spreads. Economic theory suggests that foreign trade will increase average incomes (given some assumptions that may not apply to the world today), but the majority of the population may lose from globalization.

The second cause of local economic insecurity is "the mobility of capital within national borders" (p. 52). As location factors, such as transportation costs, diminish in importance, firms become more footloose. In many cases, location preferences of essential employees are a major anchor holding jobs to a place. Unfortunately, as the sense of community weakens, employees will have fewer local ties and may be more willing to relocate, further eroding community ties. Public policies that give firms incentives to relocate aggravate this problem. The authors consider cluster economies as a counterweight, binding firms to places. The authors, however, are not entirely confident that agglomeration economies will become strong or widespread enough to substantially reduce business mobility.

Urban sprawl is a third factor undercutting community. The authors show that land-use decisions have not been based on decisions of the market. Suburbanization is subsidized by expensive government programs, such as mortgage assistance and infrastructure construction. Besides, many Americans have strong preferences for this kind of low-density suburban living. Unless policies make older communities, especially central cities, more desirable, it is unlikely that such development will abate.

The last parts of the book describe the history and future prospects of community stabilization efforts. A smorgasbord of policy approaches that may ultimately provide meaningful, constructive work to individuals in their communities is reviewed. Unfortunately, the scope of the problem seems immense compared to the potency of the available tools. For instance, the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act provides assistance to workers displaced due to international competition. The authors believe that if the program had more funding and were better managed, gains from trade could be split more equally between capitalists and workers. Unfortunately, specific recommendations for better funding and administering the program are sketchy.

In pursuit of efficiency, the once symbiotic relationship between society and economy is changing. As a consequence, families are losing the traditional support of

community at a time when their economic prospects are even less secure and their community ties do provide them with gainful employment. Without providing a detailed blueprint, the authors suggest that existing programs can be expanded and coordinated to provide more sustainable communities. Deciding whether the authors' solutions are up to this daunting task will be the challenge for the reader.

—*John P. Blair*  
Wright State University

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Mark Abrahamson, *Global Cities* (New York & Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 179 pp., \$24.95 (paper)

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Mark Abrahamson's *Global Cities* breaks new ground because it shows that the economic and cultural dimensions of globalization are thoroughly intertwined. The recognition that tourism and culture are as important as any other global sectors in shaping cities is long overdue. Taking this into account, it is fair to say that Abrahamson's book offers the first truly comprehensive account of the impact of globalization on cities, despite the fact that the book is very lean (170 pages of text). Its brevity means that some topics are treated rather superficially, but this disadvantage is outweighed by the book's convincing argument that to understand the urban impacts of globalization, economics and culture must be woven together into a singular analysis.

Abrahamson begins Chapter 2 with a rather conventional recounting of the role that the financial services sector has played in the economy of global cities. But he follows this with a discussion of "yuppies and dinks," international tourism, and tourism and hyperconsumption. He succeeds at showing that these seemingly disparate topics are intimately linked. Financial services employs a workforce made up disproportionately of single young professionals and dual-income, no-kids couples. This highly paid workforce drives up real estate values and leads the gentrification of neighborhoods. They drive the demand for restaurants, bars, and personal services; and more generally, they want to live in cities that have an exciting streetlife and nightlife. Global cities aggressively compete for a share of international tourists (by some statistics, the leading global export sector); as it happens, young professionals connected to the global economy use the same amenities and facilities that draw visitors, and the environments they inhabit (and help bring into being) are part of the local tourist ecology. When the web of connections among the economic, social, and cultural facets of global cities comes into focus, as it does in Abrahamson's book, it becomes apparent just how much has been missed in the global cities literature until now.

To appreciate the originality of Abrahamson's analysis, it is useful to note that tourism has been virtually absent from the globalization literature—despite the fact that it is one of the leading industries in the world. In his definitive book, *Global Shift* (4th ed., 2003), Peter Dicken does not include a single index reference to tourism,